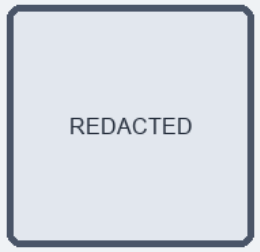
The Lacquered Synthesis—Material, Society, Politics, and Worldview in the State of Chu

(7th century B.C.-3rd century B.C.)

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgement ..... ***i***

Abstract ..... ***iv***

1 Introduction: The Chu Paradox ***1***

1.1 The Lacquer Intervention: A Material Answer to a Historical Question 2

1.2 Methodology: An Interdisciplinary and Contextual Approach 3

1.3 Historical and Archaeological Context 4

1.4 Situating the Research: An Archaeological Approach to a Socio-Cultural Question 10

1.5 Thesis Overview: A Journey Through the Chapters 11

2 The First Golden Age: Early Chinese Lacquerware in the Neolithic ***14***

2.1 The Extraordinary Medium: An Introduction to Lacquer 14

2.2 The Rise of Lacquer in Prehistoric China 17

2.3 The Apex of Neolithic Lacquerware: A Tale of Two Traditions 20

2.4 Conclusion 26

3 The Sensory World of Lacquer: Materiality, Philosophy, and the Eastern Zhou Awakening ***28***

3.1 Material, Materiality, and the Philosophical Wheel 28

3.2 Sensory Dimensions of Lacquer 29

3.3 Materiality Reconsidered: Lacquer in the Eastern Zhou Mind 40

4 The Stage for Lacquer: Chu Tomb Contexts ***49***

4.1 The Zhou Legacy: a Northern Benchmark after the Ritual Reform 50

4.2 The Formation of a Chu Tradition (Before the 5th century B.C.) 51

4.3 The Zenith of the Chu Tomb (post-5th century B.C.): Standardisation and Innovation 59

4.4 Conclusion 62

5 A New Ritual Order: The Transformation of Chu Vessel Assemblages ***64***

5.1 The Zhou Legacy and Its Transformation in Chu (before 5th century B.C.) 65

5.2 Forging a New Symbol: A Case Study of the *Sheng* tripods 67

5.3 The Rise of the *Shi* Class and Material Diversification 73

5.4 The Lacquer Intervention: A New Synthesis 77

5.5 Conclusion 82

6 A Chu Feast: The Senses, Diets, and the Politics of Dining ***84***

6.1 The Feast as a Ritual Stage: From Zhou Tradition to Chu Innovation 85

6.2 The Diet of the Spirits: From Meat Sacrifices to Botanical Aromas 90

6.3 The Diet of the Living: New Tastes, New Vessels, New Politics 94

6.4 Conclusion 111

7 The Material of Power: Lacquered Chariots, Weapons, and Networks ***113***

7.1 The Blueprint of a Network: The *Qiance* Inventory Lists 114

7.2 Instruments of Power I: The Chariot and the Politics of Display 121

7.3 Instruments of Power II: Weaponry and the Performance of Personal Prestige 132

7.4 Conclusion 137

8 The Sculpted World: Lacquer, Hybrids, and the Chu Ontology 140
8.1 Ontology as a Framework: Zhou Precedent and Chu Divergence 140
8.2 Nature Reimagined: Animal Combat and the Tamed Wild 146
8.3 The World Between: Tomb Guardian Figures and the Realm of Hybrids 152
8.4 Conclusion 163
9 The Lacquered Synthesis 165
9.1 The Fluidity of Material and Ideology: From Eternity to Flux 165
9.2 The Fluidity of Order and Power: New Stages and New Networks 166
9.3 The Fluidity of Worldview: An Ontology Made of Lacquer 167
9.4 Conclusion: A Synthesis Forged in Material 167
List of Figures 169
Chapter 1 169
Chapter 2 170
Chapter 3 174
Chapter 4 185
Chapter 5 193
Chapter 6 203
Chapter 7 222
Chapter 8 240
Appendices 254
Appendix. 6.1a Food Contents in Major Chu Tombs 254
Appendix. 6.1b Food Contents in Xiasi Tombs and Marquis Yi's 255
Appendix. 6.2 *Dou* Plate (round) 256
Appendix. 6.3 Eared Cups in Major Tombs 261
Appendix. 6.4 Number of Lacquered Vessels and Tables in Comparison 264
Appendix. 7.1 *Qiance* Inventory Lists 265
Appendix 7.2 The Gift Givers and Gifted Chariots in Marquis Yi's *qiance* 266
Appendix 7.3a Chariots and the Matched Horses in Marquis Yi's *qiance* 267
Appendix 7.3b The Gifted Horses and Their Colours in Marquis Yi's *qiance* 274
Appendix 7.3c Chariots and Drivers in Marquis Yi's *qiance* 278
Appendix. 7.4a Weapons in Marquis Yi's tomb 280
Appendix. 7.4b Chariot Parts in Marquis Yi's Tomb 280
Appendix 7.5 Chariot Parts in Major Chu Tombs 281
Abbreviations 285
Traditional Texts 286
Bibliography 288

Abstract

This thesis confronts the historical paradox of the State of Chu (7th-3rd centuries B.C.), a political power consistently portrayed as a cultural "barbarian" by Central Plains states. It argues that the key to resolving this paradox lies in its defining material culture: lacquerware. This study proposes a new analytical framework of the "Lacquered Synthesis". The rise of lacquer was not a mere shift in aesthetics but a comprehensive reordering of society, politics, and worldview, with fluidity as its core principle.

Employing an interdisciplinary methodology that prioritizes archaeological evidence over biased textual records, this thesis examines lacquerware as an active agent in social change. The research traces the ritual transition from bronze to lacquer, linking it to the social ambitions of the expanding *shi* (scholar-official) class. It analyses how lacquer's unique sensory properties reshaped daily rituals, particularly the feast, turning it into a primary stage for political performance. Furthermore, the study investigates how lacquered chariots and weapons, characterized by a unique "inward facing" aesthetic, became instruments for forging new, personalised political networks. Finally, through an analysis of fantastical lacquered sculptures, this thesis explores Chu's distinct ontology—a fluid worldview centred on a transactional "Middle Kingdom" where nature and culture interpenetrate, populated by hybrid beings assembled from potent attributes.

The thesis concludes that lacquerware was not a symptom of Chu's cultural distinction but a primary cause. It was through the inherent fluidity of this medium that the Chu elite navigated a world in flux, constructed a new social order, and ultimately forged the dynamic and influential cultural synthesis that defined their state.

1 Introduction: The Chu Paradox

An exploration of the Eastern Zhou period (771–221 B.C.) reveals a central paradox embodied by the state of Chu (楚). It is referred to a synthesis which comprises many different aspects including the state, its territory, its people and material culture.[1] Historically, it is more commonly known as the state of Chu, which is also the scope in this research.[2] Situated on the southern periphery of the Central Plains, Chu was a formidable political and military power.[3] The relatively peripheral Chu fiercely participated in the competition for dominance. The Chu state claimed to be a vassal of the once powerful Zhou. Chu became one of the major domains during the Eastern Zhou period (771-221 B.C.).[4] Yet, it was consistently portrayed in the biased records of the Zhou heartland as a cultural outsider, a 'barbarian' *man* (蛮) entity whose legitimacy was perpetually in question.[5] Archaeological evidence, however, tells a different, more intricate story. An estimate of over ten thousand 'Chu' tombs have been scientifically

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[1] Material culture is 'meaningfully constituted'; it does not passively reflect society but actively shapes social realities and identities. This concept, articulated by Hodder, is foundational to the thesis. See Hodder, Ian and Hutson, Scott (2003), *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 12-3.

[2] Li Ling criticises the treatment of Chu as an ever-expanding 'super culture' and proposes that the scope of study be restricted to the Chu state. This thesis incorporates his perspective. Li, Ling (李零) (2004), 'Lun Chu guo tongqi de leixing (论楚国铜器的类型)', *Rushan yu chusai (入山与出塞)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 400-3. Due to the word limits in the footnotes, all Chinese references would be found with English translation in the references at the end of this thesis.

[3] The Central Plain is an area on the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River. Key capital cities of preceding dynasties, such as Shang and Zhou, were located there. Powerful domains such as the Jin, Qi and Lu etc. in Chu's contemporary times were also situated in this area. Consequently, it is often regarded as the political heart of ancient China. See Shelach-Lavi, Gideon (2015), *The Archaeology of Early China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 9-12.

[4] The Eastern Zhou period is subdivided into two sub-periods: the Spring and Autumn period (771-481 B.C.) and the Warring States period (480-221 B.C.). The exact dating is sometimes debated; this thesis follows the chronology used in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*. See Loewe, Michael and Shaughnessy, Edward L (eds.) (1999), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

[5] Although Zhou rulership was largely titular during the Eastern Zhou, its ritual standards remained influential. The concept of 'China' *Zhongguo* (中国), originating from the Western Zhou feudal system, established a clear distinction between the central states (insiders) and others (outsiders). This dualistic worldview intensified during the Eastern Zhou, with outsiders often being disparaged in textual records. The self-perception of the Zhou heartland elite helps to explain their consistent portrayal of Chu as inferior. See Rawson, Jessica (2017), 'China and the Steppe: Reception and Resistance', *Antiquity*, 91 (356), 375-88; Rawson, Jessica (2023), 'The Steppe Frontier', *Life and Afterlife in Ancient China* (London: Penguin Random House UK), 179-204.

discovered with abundant archaeological remains.[6] These tombs are dated to a relatively late date after the seventh century B.C., which is the focus of this thesis.[7] From the thousands of excavated Chu tombs emerges a material culture of unparalleled sophistication and influence, defined above all by an extraordinary medium: lacquerware.

1.1 The Lacquer Intervention: A Material Answer to a Historical Question

This thesis confronts the Chu paradox by proposing that the key to understanding this seeming contradiction lies within the material that came to define it. The profusion of lacquerware, often substituting the ritual bronze vessels of the old Zhou order, signals more than a shift in aesthetic preference;[8] it marks a fundamental departure in ritual, social, and political life that would profoundly shape succeeding dynasties.

This study asks not only why this material became so important, but how it actively shaped the lives of the Chu elites—intellectually, politically, and socially. It further investigates how the synthesis of Chu culture came into being through this process. To answer this, this thesis puts forward a new analytical framework, viewing the rise of lacquerware as the catalyst for a 'Lacquered Synthesis': a comprehensive reordering of Chu society built upon a core principle of fluidity. It will be argued that the inherent qualities of lacquer provided the ideal medium for a culture that was itself navigating a world of unprecedented social and political flux. Through the manifestation of the lacquered objects, this thesis explores Chu's difference from the former Zhou and analyses the process of forming a so-called Chu culture. Conversely, the northern lacquerware of the Zhou Dynasty is more challenging to preserve, rendering it impossible for their lacquerware to accurately represent the ethnic distinctions and distinctiveness from those

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[6] von Falkenhausen, Lothar (2006), *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC): The Archaeological Evidence* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology), 371-372.

[7] Archaeological evidence shows no distinct material culture that can be identified as 'Chu' prior to the end of the Western Zhou in the eighth century B.C. Cook, Constance A (2004), 'Introduction', in Cook, Constance A and Major, John S (eds.), *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China*; (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), 3.

[8] Xu, Shaohua (徐少华) (2004), 'Chu Culture: An Archaeological Overview', in Cook, Constance A and Major, John S (eds.), *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), 21-32.

of Chu.[9] Therefore, it is also imperative that we exercise caution in the placement of lacquerware's significance in Chu and throughout the entire period.

1.2 Methodology: An Interdisciplinary and Contextual Approach

To address the complex questions at the heart of this thesis, this study employs a multi-faceted, interdisciplinary methodology that integrates archaeological analysis with a critical reading of historical texts, anthropological theory, and philosophical inquiry. While transmitted texts such as the *Zuo Tradition* provide invaluable, if biased, narratives, the primary evidence is drawn from the archaeological record. This reliance on material evidence allows for a reconstruction of Chu society that can challenge, corroborate, and ultimately move beyond the limitations of the textual tradition.

At the core of this study lies a commitment to contextual analysis. Artefacts are not treated as static objects of typological classification but as active agents within dynamic social assemblages.[10] Lacquerware is examined within the specific contexts in which it was deployed: the tomb is understood as a performative stage (Chapter 4); vessel sets are analysed as components of a shifting ritual system (Chapter 5); and daily implements are situated within the multi-sensory environment of the feast (Chapter 6). This approach allows us to understand how objects were not merely used, but how they actively shaped human experience and social relations.

The empirical analysis is guided by the central theoretical framework of the 'Lacquered Synthesis', which posits fluidity as the defining characteristic of Chu's cultural formation. This framework draws inspiration from contemporary material culture studies, which explore the reciprocal relationship between humans and things, and from anthropology, which examines how worldviews are materialised in ritual and art (Chapter 8). This is further enriched by an engagement with classical Chinese philosophy, particularly the thought of Zhuangzi, which

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[9] von Falkenhausen (2006), 294.

[10] On the agency of art and the entanglement of humans and things, see Gell, Alfred (1998), *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 17; Hodder, Ian (2012), *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships Between Humans and Things* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell), 90.

provides an indigenous intellectual context for understanding the era's deep contemplation of materiality, craftsmanship, and utility (Chapter 3).

Finally, this approach is strengthened by both comparative and diachronic perspectives. The cultural practices of Chu are consistently compared with the 'Zhou benchmark' as well as with other contemporaneous polities to precisely delineate what was unique about the Chu synthesis. This is interwoven with a diachronic analysis that traces the long-term evolution of lacquer technology and use, from its Neolithic origins to its zenith in the Warring States period. By integrating these methodologies, this thesis aims not only to describe the rise of lacquerware, but to explain how and why it became an indispensable medium in the making of Chu culture.

1.3 Historical and Archaeological Context

1.3.1 Historical Context

The textual tradition, primarily transmitted through works such as the *Zuo Tradition* and Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian*, consistently frames Chu within a core-periphery dynamic. A clear distinction is possibly intentionally drawn in later texts between the early founders of the Chu state, and the local Chu *man*s ('barbarians'). As the name of an ethic group, Chu was ancient and it referred to an uncivilised world.[11] This area was originally occupied by the "barbarians" (*Chu man* 楚蛮) in Chu in today's Hubei and Hunan provinces.[12] The region was considered to have been Zhou's land to its South since the Xia times.[13] The *Records* compiled by Sima Qian (ca.145-86 B.C.) of the Han dynasty, tells an account of the lineage of Chu.[14]

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[11] There are also Palaeographical studies on the character Chu. This is a traditional method mainly used by Chinese scholars in studying origins. See Wang, Guanggao (王光镐) (1988), *Chu wenhua yuanliu xinzheng (楚文化源流新证)* (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe), 48-72.

[12] Xu, Xusheng (徐旭生) (1960), *Zhongguo gushi de chuanshuo shidai (zengding ben) (中国古史的传说时代-增订本)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe), 57-66.

[13] This refers to the *Zuo Tradition* on the Spring and Autumn Annals: 'The king sent Zhan Huanbo with a message of refusal to Jin, saying, "From the time of Xia, Houji, Wei, Tai, Rui, Qi, and Bi have been our western lands. When King Wu conquered Shang, Pugu and Shangyan became our eastern lands; Ba, Pu, Chu, and Deng our southern lands; and Sushen, Yan, and Bo our northern lands."' 王使詹桓伯辞于晋曰：'我自夏以后稷，魏，骀，芮，岐，毕，吾西土也。及武王克商，蒲姑，商奄，吾东土也，巴濮，楚邓，吾南土也，肃慎，燕，亳，吾北土也'. Durrant, Stephen W *et al.* (2016), *Zuo Tradition* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press), 1446-1447.

[14] The *Records of the Grand Historian* is considered China's first official history (*zhengshi* 正史), and its

The ancestors of Chu were traced back to legendary times such as Zhuanxu, an early mythological emperor and Zhurong, the God of Fire and the south.[15] Nevertheless, it is more likely that the Chu group derived from a non-Zhou background.[16] This background remained a crux of its identity. Chu's marginal status was not passively accepted. The Chu state adopted different strategies towards the ruling house of Zhou, whose supremacy it could never formally equal. Though concerned about Chu's rapid growth, the Zhou court took little interest in a so-called *man* state.

Historical texts record several events about how the Chu kings strove for Zhou's recognition. After being rejected by the Zhou court, the ruler of Chu took the defiant step of declaring himself king (*wang* 王) in 708 B.C., making no secret of his ambition.[17] This political tension is vividly captured in the famed episode of 606 B.C., when the King of Chu's inquiry into the weight of the nine royal *ding* tripods—the ultimate symbols of Zhou sovereignty as the universally-recognized ruler (天下共主). The Chu King was rebuffed with a lecture on virtue, a subtle but stinging reminder of Chu's perceived inferiority.[18] This narrative will be revisited, and this contrasting relationship will consistently be evident in Chu's material culture, with the mention of Zhou's ritual practice included in the subsequent chapters. This mode of thought is also present throughout the entire Eastern Zhou Dynasty and is also incorporated into the concepts of the Chu people.

Throughout the *Zuo Tradition*, this marginalisation is consistently reinforced. Given that Chu had become politically and militarily powerful, the lower rank of *zi* (子) assigned to its ruler

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account of the Chu lineage is therefore widely accepted. See Li, Ling (李零) (2017), 'Di xi, zu xing de lishi huanyuan: du Xu Xusheng "Zhongguo gushi de chuanshuo shidai" (帝系、族姓的历史还原——读徐旭生《中国古史的传说时代》)', *Wenshi (文史)*, (3), 5-33.

[15] Alternate versions of Chu's ancestry are given in the *Zuo Tradition* and the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*. There appears to have been a scholarly inclination to trace ancestral roots to mythological figures and even astral deities.

[16] Hsu, Cho-yun (1999), 'The Spring and Autumn Period', in Loewe, Michael and Shaughnessy, Edward L. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 545-86.

[17] '而王不加位，我自尊耳' ('If the [Zhou] king does not elevate my rank, I shall ennoble myself.') in 'Chu shijia [The Chu Lineage] (楚世家) in Sima, Qian (司马迁) (Han dynasty; 2014), *Shi ji* [Records of the Grand Historian] *(史记)*, 10 vols., (5; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 1697; Hsu (1999), 556.

[18] *Shiji* (Han dynasty; 2014), 1700.

could not match their actual status. Yet, this title remained unchanged throughout the text. The rulers from other central domains, on the other hand, are entitled higher ranks, such as *gong* duke (公), *hou* prince (侯), or *bo* liege (伯).[19] There are only five instances in which the Chu ruler was addressed as the king (*Chu wang* 楚王). These occur within conversations among officials from other states, often in a context of negative criticism.[20] For example, Shuzhan, the minister of Zheng concluded that the "King of Chu" will not become a hegemon. He will not die naturally because he had failed to maintain the proper boundaries between men and women in a ritual ceremony to honour of Chu's military assistance.[21] There are two more cases which tell that the ministers of Zheng predicted that fatal events would happen to the Chu ruler.[22] Zheng and Chu were allies for most of the time. Yet, Zheng had never considered Chu as one of 'them'. Therefore, even if other domains feared its military and political power, the barbarian *man* state impression had been long established.

Since the Zhou king urged Chu to mind its own business, suppressing and keeping the barbarians away from the central states (ca. 672 B.C.), Chu had seized the opportunity to develop herself.[23] Chu was simultaneously engaged in a relentless process of territorial expansion. Chu assimilated smaller domains such as Zeng and Jiao and extended its influence eastward. Specifically, Zeng had served as a link between Chu and the north, but it was eventually assimilated into the Chu territory. Later on, Chu further expanded its influence toward the eastern states, such as the Liu, Qunshu and Shuliao groups, which were located in

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19 *Ibid.*, xxxvii.

20 The Chu ruler is called 'king' seven times, but in three instances it is part of a repeated criticism of his extravagance during Duke Zhao's time. See Duke Zhao 1, 4 and 5 in Durrant *et al.* (2016). For example, '楚王汰侈已甚，子其戒之！' ('The King of Chu has gone beyond all bounds in his extravagance. Beware of him, sir!'), Lord Zhao 5, *ibid.*, 1392-3.

21 '楚王其不沒乎，為禮卒於無別，無別不可謂禮，將何以沒？諸侯是以知其不遂霸也。' ('The ruler of Chu will probably not die a natural death. In performing the rites, he ended up with no distinctions. When there are no distinctions, it cannot be called ritual. How could he die a natural death?' The feudal lords knew from this that he would not succeed in becoming hegemon.) Lord Xi 22, *ibid.*, 358-9.

22 Prior to the Battle of Yanling, Chu's defeat was predicted. The King of Chu is mentioned again when he was shot in the eye: '射共王中目' ('[He] shot King Gong in the eye'). Lord Cheng 26, *ibid.* 836-7. See also '楚王將死矣' ('The King of Chu is about to die'), Lord Zhao 25, *ibid.*, 1654-5.

23 '鎮爾南方夷越之亂，無侵中國。' ('Quell the disorders of the Yi and Yue barbarians in your southern regions, and do not invade the central states.') See *Shiji* (Han dynasty; 2014),1697.

today's Jiangsu.[24]

1.3.2 Archaeological Context

This textual geography describes Chu occupying a vast territory across modern-day Hubei, Hunan, Henan, Anhui, and Jiangsu. The geography is also qualified by the archaeological record. The Chu people originated from the area along the Han River, which lies to the south of the Central Plain and in the centre of ancient China (Fig. 1.1). According to the *Records of the Grand Historian,* as early as the seventh century B.C. in the time of King Cheng of Chu, the southern China had been under Chu's control.[25] However, the archaeology has only provided little evidence about Chu's firm control over the south. This area had never aroused the interest of states in the Central Plain. Archaeological excavations reveal a more concentrated cultural heartland in the southern and eastern Henan, Hubei, and Hunan provinces.[26] This study, therefore, concentrates on this central area, with a particular focus on Hubei province, the long-standing locus of Chu's origin. The Jiangling area (modern Jingzhou), the site of the capital city Ying (郢), emerges as the epicentre where lacquer artefacts of the highest quality and in the greatest numbers have been consistently unearthed (Fig. 1.2).

The systematic exploration of this heartland began after the founding of the People's Republic of China. Early large-scale excavations in the 1950s were centred in Changsha, Hunan. Though the initial chronology proposed in the *Changsha fajue baogao* (長沙發掘報告) was later refined, this work laid an essential foundation.[27] A breakthrough occurred from the 1960s onwards with

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[24] See Blakeley, Barry B. (2004), 'The Geography of Chu', in Cook, Constance A and Major, John S (eds.), *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), 9-20; Durrant *et al.* (2016), 94-117, 486-7.

[25] See Footnote 17.

[26] Drawing fixed geographical boundaries for the Chu state is difficult due to the political turmoil of the Eastern Zhou. The capital was moved several times, and even in the later Han dynasty, these regions were still regarded as 'Chu'. See Lai, Guolong (2015), *Excavating the Afterlife: The Archaeology of Early Chinese Religion* (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 17; Gao, Chongwen (高崇文) (2014), 'Shilun Xizhou shiqi de Zhou Chu guanxi--jianlun Chu zu judi bianqian (试论西周时期的周楚关系——兼论楚族居地变迁)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (3), 49-56.

[27] Although this foundational report contained flaws, particularly its preliminary chronology of Chu tombs, it was later corrected. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, (中國社會科學院考古研究所) (1957), *Changsha fajue baogao (長沙發掘報告)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe); for the critique, see Gao, Zhixi (高至喜) (1962), 'Ping "Changsha fajue baogao" (评《長沙發掘報告》)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (1),

the excavation of the Spring and Autumn period tombs at Xichuan Xiasi in Henan.[28] The bronze inscriptions found there provided crucial chronological data and a firm basis for comparing the ritual assemblages of Zhou and Chu. Concurrently, attention increasingly turned to the Jiangling region. Extensive investigations were conducted around the capital, Ying, revealing its urban layout, while the excavation of nearby elite tombs such as Wangshan (望山) and Tianxingguan (天星观).[29] They belonged to high officials who served in the capital during lifetime. Thus, the proportion of elite tombs in Jiangling is higher than those in other regions. Over five hundred small tombs were found in the nearby Yutaishan (雨台山) site. Together with Zhaojiahu（赵家湖）in Dangyang county, these large commoner cemeteries allowed archaeologists to establish a detailed and continuous chronological sequence for the core region from the late Western Zhou to the end of the Warring States period.[30]

Discoveries have continued apace, with important sites such as the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng. This is an important instance as Zeng was a channel between the Chu and the north. The marquis' intact tomb provides invaluable information on the structure and contents of the top elites' tombs, as well as parts of the Zhou and Chu characteristics. Up until now, the archaeology of the Chu culture has kept a fast pace. The discoveries of important Chu tombs sites, such as the Jiuliandun tombs, have constantly enriched our knowledge on the Chu.[31]

46-49.

[28] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (河南省文物考古研究所) and Xichuan xian bowuguan, (淅川县博物馆) (1991), *Xichuan Xiasi Chunqiu Chu mu (淅川下寺春秋楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe).

[29] Hubei sheng bowuguan, (湖北省博物馆) (1982b), 'Chu du Jinan cheng de kancha yu fajue shang (楚都纪南城的勘查与发掘(上))', *Kaogu xuebao (考古学报)*, (3), 325-50; Hubei sheng bowuguan, (湖北省博物馆) (1982a), 'Chu du Jinan cheng de kancha yu fajue xia (楚都纪南城的勘查与发掘(下))', *Kaogu xuebao (考古学报)*, (4), 477-507; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) (1996a), *Jiangling Wangshan Shazhong Chu mu (江陵望山沙冢楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe); Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan, (湖北省荆州博物馆) (2003), *Jingzhou Tianxingguan er hao Chu mu (荆州天星观二号楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe).

[30] Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan, (湖北省荆州地区博物馆) (1984), *Jiangling Yutaishan Chu mu (江陵雨台山楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe); Yichang diqu bowuguan, (宜昌地区博物馆) and Beijing daxue kaoguxi, (北京大学考古系) (1992), *Dangyang Zhaojiahu Chu mu (当阳赵家湖楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe).

[31] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) *et al.* (2019), 'Hubei Zaoyang Jiuliandun M1 fajue jianbao (湖北枣阳九连墩 M1 发掘简报)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (162), 20-70; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) *et al.* (2018), 'Hubei Zaoyang

It is from these excavations that the sheer scale of Chu's lacquerware production has become apparent. While scattered findings appear from the Neolithic, their number explodes in the Eastern Zhou archaeological record. Post-1950s advances in excavation and conservation have enabled the preservation of a vast corpus of these organic artefacts. The tombs in Hubei, often sealed with a layer of greenish-white oily clay, created a stable, saturated environment ideal for preservation, making the region an unparalleled repository.[32] The quantity is staggering. Though preservation conditions were less ideal in Hunan, the number of lacquered finds still exceeds ten thousand.[33] As most Chu tombs date to after 600 B.C., the extant lacquerware belongs primarily to the Warring States period.[34] At the Yutaishan cemetery, over 900 pieces were recovered.[35] As prestige goods, their numbers correlate with social status. It was common for a single high-ranking tomb to contain over one hundred items. A prime example is Tianxingguan M2, the tomb of a local lord's wife, from which 177 lacquer objects were unearthed.[36] This assemblage included a wide range of categories: 12 musical instruments, 141 daily food and drinking vessels (including 18 eared cups and 54 *dou* dishes), 8 chariot pieces, and 18 ritual objects for the afterlife, such as tomb figurines and a tomb-guardian figure.[37] The evidence is unequivocal: the people of Chu, especially the elites, favoured lacquered products to such an extent that they effectively "replaced" the bronze vessels of former periods, integrating them into every facet of their lives and afterlives.[38]

Jiuliandun M2 fajue jianbao (湖北枣阳九连墩 M2 发掘简报)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (159), 3-55.

[32] *Ibid.,* 244; Lai (2015), 89.

[33] Gao, Zhixi (高至喜) (2012), *Hunan Chu mu yu Chu wenhua (湖南楚墓与楚文化)* (Wuhan: Yuelu shushe), 172.

[34] The 600 B.C. is viewed as a break in archaeological record, which is shown by the Zhaojiahu sequence. See von Falkenhausen, Lothar (1999), 'The Waning of the Bronze Age: Material Culture and Social Developments, 770–481 BCE', in Loewe, Michael and Edward L. Shaughnessy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 515.

[35] Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1984), 93.

[36] Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan (2003), 113.

[37] Jingzhou bowuguan, (荆州博物馆) (2001), 'Hubei sheng Jingzhou shi Tianxingguan er hao mu fajue jianbao (湖北省荆州市天星观二号墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (9), 1, 3, 6-23, 53.

[38] Xu (2004), 21-32.

1.4 Situating the Research: An Archaeological Approach to a Socio-Cultural Question

The study of this remarkable material culture has a rich scholarly history. Foundational research by scholars such as Hou Dejun illuminates the technical aspects of Chu lacquer production, from the superior quality of raw lacquer in western Hubei to the detailed processes of carving and decoration, even offering an early comparison with Ba-Shu lacquerware.[39] Hong Shi's doctoral thesis was a breakthrough synthetic study. It establishes a preliminary typology and explores production and circulation through both archaeology and inscribed texts.[40] Chen Zhenyu advances the field by analysing lacquerware in sets (*qiqiqun* 漆器群), dating from the Warring State to the Han dynasty. As the lacquerware of Chu and Qin constitute the majority, he attaches greater importance to these two cultures.[41] He correlates tomb status with assemblages and creating a finer timescale for understanding their development. In the conclusion, he summarises the different changes in sets at three stages (early, middle, late) of the Warring States and indicates that these changes represent different functions and burial customs.[42] His research on Chu lacquerware is comprehensive, by using a traditional Chinese way of making categories and lists, without exploring the more contextual meanings and social contexts. Nie Fei narrowed down the research topic to the lacquerware excavated in Hunan province, which is believed to be the southern region of Chu.[43] Over ten thousand lacquerware have been found in Hunan, allowing for the performing of a thorough study.[44] Nie's regional study on Hunan lacquerware rightly emphasised the need to re-contextualise these objects within tomb layouts, death rituals, and daily customs.[45]

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[39] Hou, Dejun (后德俊) (1995), *Chu guo de kuangye xiuqi he boli zhizao (楚国的矿冶髹漆和玻璃制造)* (Wuhan: Hubei jiaoyu chubanshe), 203, 219-28.
[40] Hong, Shi (洪石) (2002), *Zhanguo Qin Han qiqi yanjiu (战国秦汉漆器研究)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 39, 98-9.
[41] Chen, Zhenyu (陈振裕) (2007), *Zhanguo Qin Han qiqi qun yanjiu (战国秦汉漆器群研究)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe).
[42] *Ibid.*, 436.
[43] Nie, Fei (聂菲) (2013), *Hunan Chu Han qi mu qi yanjiu (湖南楚汉漆木器研究)* (Changsha: Yuelu shushe).
[44] *Ibid.*, 294.
[45] However, in her arguments, she still followed a traditional way by separating the objects from the contexts and described more on the phenomena rather than reasoning.

These major works in lacquerware contribute to a solid understanding from several aspects. Dates and functions remain the biggest concern among most lacquer specialists. However, more contextual analyses should be conducted with a more comprehensive typology. One of the aims of this thesis is to fill the gap regarding the contextual analyses. In addition, lacquerware should not be regarded as motionless objects. They should be valued as indicators of identities, relations, influences and ontologies. Another focal point of this thesis is to examine how lacquerware actively influenced the elites and how the elites, in turn, altered the lacquerware through interactions.

This thesis builds upon this essential groundwork. However, it departs from previous scholarship by moving beyond typology and technical analysis to propose an integrated, socio-cultural interpretation. While earlier studies have expertly catalogued *what these objects are*, this thesis focuses on *what they did*. It treats lacquerware not as a passive reflection of social change, but as an active agent in that change. This study will be the first to systematically connect the material properties of lacquer, the transformation of ritual and social structures, and the underlying ontology of the Chu worldview into a single, coherent narrative.

1.5 Thesis Overview: A Journey Through the Chapters

This investigation will unfold progressively, addressing its central questions chapter by chapter. Why and how did lacquerware shape the Chu elites' lives? How was the synthesis of the Chu culture coming into being intellectually, ritually, politically, and ontologically?

Chapter 2 examines the deep historical and geographical context of lacquer, tracing its Neolithic origins in southern (Liangzhu) and northern (Taosi) centres. It explores how the material's fundamental properties were understood and exploited by ancient cultures, creating a foundational technological and aesthetic repertoire that influenced the later development in Chu.

Chapter 3 provides the theoretical core for the thesis. It delves into the sensory attributes and material properties of lacquer, contrasting them with other substances. This chapter argues that a new, more comprehensive understanding of the material world emerged during this era.

Lacquerware, as a lively and interactive medium, profoundly shaped the Chu elites' perspective on social life, etiquette, and interpersonal relations.

Chapter 4 turns to the burial contexts, analysing the structure of Chu tombs as the stage for lacquerware's ritual performance. By comparing Chu tomb designs with Zhou and non-Zhou traditions, it highlights the development of a unique funerary space. The wooden construction and partitions created the ideal environment for the ascent of lacquerware. They also provided insight into the social and functional significance of these objects.

From 300 BC on, tombs reflect an underworld bureaucracy for the dead comparable to that which is also emerging above ground.[46] The separation from the living is more emphasized due to the changing fact that the dead were no longer ancestors but ancestors underground that may cause harm to the living. Therefore, the following two chapters reflect a form of echo between the ancestors and the living.

Chapter 5 investigates the contents of these tombs, focusing on the transformation of ritual vessel assemblages. It traces the declining prestige of bronze sets and the corresponding rise of ceramic and lacquer alternatives. This material diversification is linked directly to the social and ritual demands of the rapidly expanding *shi* class. For the *shi*, lacquerware became an essential new representation of status as traditional rites no longer aligned with the evolving times.

Chapter 6 explores the new forms of ritual that this material diversification enabled, focusing on the senses and the feast. It examines how lacquered implements for daily use, through the stimulation of multiple senses, elevated the banquet into a primary arena for ritual performance. It argues that lacquer served as a crucial intermediary. Lacquerware shaped new procedures and rules through which elites could manipulate their status and display their inner virtues.

Chapter 7 extends this analysis of social performance to the political sphere. It begins with an examination of the bamboo inventory lists *qiance* (遣策) to map the complex internal and external networks of the Chu elite. It then argues that lacquered weapons and chariot parts became symbolic tools for reinforcing these tightly knit, individual-centred networks, evidenced

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[46] Lagerwey, John and Kalinowski, Marc (2010), 'Introduction', in Lagerwey, John and Kalinowski, Marc (eds.), *Early Chinese Religion* (Leiden: Brill), 18.

by a shift towards an inward-facing aesthetic meant for a restricted audience.

Chapter 8 delves into the ontological foundations of the Chu worldview. The chapter argues that the beliefs of the Chu people are inextricably linked to their material culture. Through an analysis of animal combat scenes and fantastical hybrid sculptures, this chapter explores how Chu elites perceived nature, wildness, and culture. The chapter also explores how lacquer provided an inexpensive and expressive medium to materialise these beliefs and disseminate them across all social classes.

This structured journey, moving from the material and philosophical foundations of lacquer to its application within specific social, political, and ritual contexts, is designed to resolve the central paradox with which this thesis began. By the end of this investigation, it will be demonstrated that the rise of lacquerware was not merely a symptom of Chu's cultural distinction but also a primary cause. The following chapters will collectively argue that it was through the unique medium of lacquer—with its inherent fluidity—that the Chu elites navigated their complex world, constructed a new social order, and ultimately forged the enduring and influential cultural synthesis that defined their state.

2 The First Golden Age: Early Chinese Lacquerware in the Neolithic

To understand the celebrated lacquerware of Chu culture, one must first consider the medium itself: *qi* (漆), a lustrous, durable resin harvested from the *Toxicodendron vernicifluum* tree. Unlike bronze or jade, whose value stemmed from rarity and arduous extraction, lacquer presented a compelling paradox. While its raw sap was easily harvested, the meticulous process of its transformation imbued it with prestige, embedding it within elite ceremonial and socio-political life. Bennett's notion of "vibrant matter" finds resonance here: lacquer was, in many ways, a "living" material.[1] Lacquer was no inert substance; sourced from a living organism and reborn through human artistry, it became a dynamic medium that actively shaped culture across generations.

The artistic zenith of this medium, reached in the state of Chu, was itself the culmination of a long and patient history. Humanity's first encounters with lacquer date to the Neolithic period. Crucial innovations were made during the Shang and Zhou dynasties, paving the way for the Eastern Zhou florescence. By tracing these early key moments of ancient experimentation, we can more accurately situate Chu lacquerware within the broader historical narrative of this extraordinary medium.

2.1 The Extraordinary Medium: An Introduction to Lacquer

2.1.1 The composition and Craft of Qi (漆)

To comprehend the spirit of this extraordinary material, one must first understand its physical substance. As Joseph Needham observed, lacquer is one of humanity's earliest engineered polymers.[2] Its source, *Toxicodendron vernicifluum*, is indigenous to the subtropical belt stretching

[1] Bennett investigates non-modern modes of thought, such as animism, and poses questions about the life-matter binary that informs classical vitalism. See Bennett, Jane (2010), 'Neither Vitalism nor Mechanism', *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 62-81.

[2] T'ien-Ch'in, Ts'ao *et al.* (1959), 'An Early Mediaeval Chinese Alchemical Text on Aqueous Solutions', *Ambix*, 7 (3), 121-55.

from the Himalayas to Japan.[3] The quality of its sap, a viscous fluid, hinges upon its concentration of urushiol; a higher percentage, typically 60 to 65%, yields a superior grade.[4] The remainder is a delicate balance of polysaccharide gums (4%), glycoproteins (1–2%), and water (25–30%) (Fig. 2.1).[5]

Tapping this 'lifeblood' involves precise, angular incisions that preserve the tree, a stark contrast to the destructive felling long since abandoned for its unsustainability. The seventeenth-century *Xiushilu* (修饰录 *Records of Lacquering*) affirms that the ideal season for extraction begins at the summer solstice, a time when lower moisture levels in the tree coincide with peak urushiol content.[6] The yield is astonishingly scarce. A single tree offers a mere 200 millilitres per season, a fact that has constrained its availability through the ages, irrespective of technical advancements.[7]

Once harvested and meticulously prepared, the raw lacquer is infused with pigments—most iconically the mineral cinnabar for red and carbon for black. This treated medium is then applied in successive layers to a core, often of carved wood, but also of bamboo or linen. The artistry lies in this patient accumulation. This is a process of building depth and luster layer by layer that some have likened to a meditative practice. The result is a lustrous, indomitable surface—impervious to water, oil, and wear.[8] The drying process of raw lacquer is also

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[3] While other cultures developed similar plant-derived coatings - such as those from *Anacardium occidentale* in South America - these differ fundamentally from Asian lacquer in their chemical composition and polymerization mechanisms. Nagatoshi, Onishi (2022), *qi- Yazhou xueye (漆——亚洲血液)*, trans. Yang, Lishan (杨立山), (Nanjing: Jiangsu Fenghuang chubanshe), 234.

[4] Zhou, Jianshi (周剑石) (2015a), 'Cong Kuahuqiao chufa: Zhongguo yiqi 8000 nian (shang) (从跨湖桥出发:中国漆艺 8000 年(上))', *Zhongguo shengqi (中国生漆)*, 34 (3), 5.

[5] Lu, Rong *et al.* (2006), 'Studies on a Newly Designed Natural Lacquer', *Materials Chemistry and Physics*, 100 (1), 158-61.

[6] The classic phrase '夏日至，斧斫漆' ('When summer solstice arrives, axe the lacquer tree') suggests a specific tapping season. See Wang, Shixiang (王世襄) (2013), *Xiushilu jieshuo (髹饰录解说)* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 32. According to lacquer tappers' recollections, their work indeed began in early summer. See Akagi, Akito (2017), *Qitu shi wuyu (漆涂师物语)* (Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan chubanshe), 60. Deng, Yufang (邓毓芳) *et al.* (1982), 'Butong geqi qiye huaxue chengfen ji yepian yingyang yuansu bianhua de yanjiu (不同割期漆液化学成分及叶片营养元素变化的研究)', *Zhongguo shengqi (中国生漆)*, 3, 16-20. While scientific data provides statistical norms, the quality of lacquer is ultimately best judged by a skilled artisan's experience-based intuition. See Guo, Xiaoyi (郭小一) (2020), *Xiuqi gongyi (髹漆工艺)* (Beijing: Huaxue gongye chubanshe), 22; Nagatoshi (2022), 186.

[7] Akagi (2017), 60-61.

[8] Xiong, Songqing (熊松青) (1996), 'Luetan qishu ji qi liyong yuanliu (略谈漆树及漆利用源流)',

completely different from that of ordinary chemical coatings. Rather than a dry, ventilated environment, lacquer requires warmth and high humidity to polymerize, forming a perfect film only within a narrow climatic range (18–25°C and 70–95% humidity).[9] The sultry, windless air after a summer rain provides the ideal cradle for a newly coated piece.[10] This climatic peculiarity meant that regions as the humid Chu heartland were a natural nursery for the art of lacquerware, granting their artisans an inherent advantage.

2.1.2 A Landscape of Lacquer: Distribution and Early Economics

The highest-grade lacquer is derived from *Toxicodendron vernicifluum* (commonly known as the Chinese lacquer tree), which represents the most technologically significant lacquer-producing species in East Asia. Other regional variants include *Toxicodendron succedaneum* (wild lacquer tree), *Melanorrhoea laccifera* (Khmer lacquer), and *Melanorrhoea usitata* (Burmese red lacquer), which are predominantly distributed across the Southeast Asian peninsula.[11] China contains approximately 80 to 90% of the world's lacquer tree population, with its optimal growth range spanning latitudes 25°N to 42°N and longitudes 95°E to 125°E, at elevations between 200 and 2,000 meters.[12] Notably, the Qinling Mountains exhibit the highest genetic diversity of *T. vernicifluum* subspecies, resulting in superior raw lacquer quality.[13] This region's southern foothills, encompassing the historical Yangtze River basin, formed the core of ancient Chinese lacquer production due to their consistently warm and humid microclimate.[14] Consequently, the former Chu and Ba-Shu territories emerged as ideal centres for lacquerware manufacturing[15]

Sichuan wenwu (四川文物), (6), 10-12.

[9] Guo (2020), 24.

[10] Wang, Yiren (王义仁) (1983), 'Zenyang duo ge shengqi (怎样多割生漆)', *Zhongguo shengqi (中国生漆)*, 1, 40-44.

[11] He, Zhenji (何振纪) (2022c), *Shijie qiyi xunli (世界漆艺巡礼)* (Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan chubanshe), 2.

[12] Zhou (2015a). 5.

[13] Wang, Qi (王齐) *et al.* (2022), 'Qin Ba shanqu qishu de yichuan duoyangxing fenxi (秦巴山区漆树的遗传多样性分析)', *Jiyinzuxue yu yingyong shengwuxue (基因组学与应用生物学)*, 41 (5), 7.

[14] Zhou (2015a). 6.

[15] Hou, Dejun (后德俊) (1982), 'Shilun Chu guo qiqi daliang chutu de yuanyin (试论楚国漆器大量出土的原因)', *Zhongguo shengqi (中国生漆)*, 1, 44-46.

The economic and fiscal significance of lacquer is well-documented in early texts. The *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli*, 周礼) lists lacquer trees among the most heavily taxed natural resources. The sap was a product of nature requiring minimal human labour to generate, it represented a pure and highly taxable source of wealth.[16] Further attesting to its status as a managed commodity, the Han historian Sima Qian describes vast plantations of "thousands of *mu*" (亩) of lacquer trees cultivated as cash crops in the region of Chen and Xia (陈夏), near modern-day southern Henan.[17] This evidence suggests that precisely because of its immense natural value, lacquer was systematically managed and exploited from the Zhou dynasty onward, through both state taxation and large-scale cultivation.

2.2 The Rise of Lacquer in Prehistoric China

2.2.1 Early exploitations (ca. 7th – 4th millennium B.C.)

Archaeological evidence reveals two primary zones of early lacquer production in Neolithic China: a northern and a southern sphere, separated by a significant geographical and chronological gap.[18] The cradle of this technology, however, lies unequivocally in the south. The sultry climate of the lower Yangtze River Delta is essential for the curing of lacquer, making it the earliest known birthplace of the art.[19]

From the 7th millennium B.C. onward, scattered finds chart a long and patient journey of development in the region. This evidence comes from a succession of Neolithic cultures,

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16 In the *Rites of Zhou*, it is recorded that the tax rate for lacquer trees was twenty-five per cent: '唯其漆林之征，二十而五'. See *Zhouli [Rites of Zhou]* (周礼), (2014), trans. Xu, Zhengying (徐正英) and Chang, Peiyu (常佩雨), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 280-1.

17 The *Records of the Grand Historian* states '陈、夏千亩漆' ('Chen and Xia have a thousand *mu* of lacquer trees'). *Shiji* (Han dynasty; 2014), 3970-1; Cao, Jinzhu (曹金柱) (1982), 'Zhongguo Qin zhi Qing dai qishu dili fenbu de shiliao kaozheng (qianpian) (221 B.C-1911 A.D.) (中国秦至清代漆树地理分布的史料考证 (前篇) (公元前 221——公元 1911 年))', *Zhongguo shengqi (中国生漆)*, 1, 39.

18 Lu, Yi (卢一) (2020), 'Xian Qin liang Han shiqi qiqi de kaoguxue yanjiu (先秦两汉时期漆器的考古学研究)', (Peking University), 19-25; Wang, Wei (王巍) (1987), 'Guanyu Xizhou qiqi de jige wenti (关于西周漆器的几个问题)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (8), 734-44.

19 It has been suggested that the earliest use of lacquer dates to 10,000–11,000 B.P. in Japan, though no physical evidence survives; the original materials supporting this argument were reportedly lost in a fire. Yotsuyanagi, Kasho (2021), *Riben qi wenhuashi (日本漆文化史)*, trans. Yang, Lishan (杨立山) and Li, Yiyan (李逸琰) (Nanjing: Jiangsu Fenghuang meishu chubanshe), 3-6.

beginning with Kuahuqiao (ca. 7th–6th millennium B.C.) and Hemudu (ca. 5,000–3,300 B.C.) and extending to the later Majiabang and Liangzhu (ca. 3,300–2,300 B.C.) in the southeastern China. Applied to both wood and pottery, these early artifacts reveal a growing command of the medium. Yet their sporadic appearance before the Liangzhu cultural apex suggests a long period of experimentation, not systematic production. During these millennia, lacquer was an emergent technology. Its evolution was deeply intertwined with the rising social complexity of the region's settled communities.

2.2.2 Subsistence

The nexus between early lacquer technology and subsistence strategies is vividly illustrated at sites from the Kuahuqiao culture (ca. 7th–6th millennium B.C.). The latest research confirms that the use of lacquer has been advanced to the Jingtou Mountain site. It is a shell mound in the Yangtze River Delta, dating to 8,000 years ago.[20] This site has yielded building remnants and wooden tools coated in an artificial paint, fortified with raw lacquer (Fig. 2.2a).[21] The inhabitants of this lacustrine environment relied heavily on hunting, fishing, and gathering. The site is rich with a sophisticated toolkit of wood and bone implements, including axes, paddles, and bowls.[22] A prime example is a bow from the Kuahuqiao site. Its wooden structure was reinforced with tree bark and coated in red lacquer (Fig. 2.2b).[23] This nascent industry was nurtured by uniquely favourable environmental preconditions.[24] The climate, with average temperatures between 16–17°C, fell squarely within the ideal range for curing lacquer. The temperatures allowed for the creation of durable coatings even without the refined seasonal knowledge of later periods.[25] Furthermore, the region's botany offered abundant resources.

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[20] Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (浙江省文物考古研究所) *et al.* (2021), 'Zhejiang Yuyao shi Jingtoushan xinshiqi shidai yizhi (浙江余姚市井头山新石器时代遗址)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (7), 3-26; Zhai, Kuanrong *et al.* (2022), 'The Earliest Lacquerwares of China Were Discovered at Jingtoushan Site in the Yangtze River Delta', *Archaeometry*, 64 (1), 218-26.

[21] Song, Ruixue (宋瑞雪) (2021), 'Zhejiang Jingtoushan yizhi 8000 duo nianqian de mu qiqi chutu (浙江井头山遗址 8000 多年前的木漆器出土)', *Zhongguo shengqi (中国生漆)*, (2), 12.

[22] Zhai *et al.* (2022). 218-226.

[23] Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (浙江省文物考古研究所) and Xiaoshan bowuguan, (萧山博物馆) (2004), *Kua Hu Qiao (跨湖桥)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 202, fig. 152, Colour Plate 40.

[24] *Ibid.,* 229-233.

[25] *Ibid.,* 272.

Plant remains show a high prevalence of the southern jujube (*Choerospondias axillaris*), a fruit-bearing member of the same *Anacardiaceae* family as the lacquer tree.[26] By the Liangzhu period at Bianjiashan, the proportion of the southern jujube was second only to rice, accounting for 21.2%.[27] The dominance of this plant family, valued for its multiple functions, suggests that lacquer-producing trees were a common feature of the local ecosystem.

Given this intimate reliance on forest resources, Kuahuqiao people's discovery of lacquer seems less a matter of coincidence than of practical inevitability. Their deep, empirical knowledge of wood would have naturally led to an awareness of the unique properties of the sap from certain trees. The canoe's wooden support at Kuahuqiao, for instance, is constructed from jujube wood.[28] While direct evidence of their harvesting methods remains elusive, this hypothesis finds resonance in comparative archaeology; at later Jōmon period sites in Japan (ca. 2,500–1,300 B.C.), for instance, lacquer trees were systematically tapped for their sap before the wood was recycled for use in fishing weirs.[29] This suggests a widespread, ancient pattern of integrating lacquer harvesting into the subsistence economies of coastal and riverine communities.

2.2.3 Technical developments

This developing technology did not remain static. By the Hemudu period (ca. 5,000–3,300 B.C.), craftsmanship shows a marked advance, suggesting that human ingenuity was beginning to transcend simple environmental determinism. The primary evidence is a lacquered wooden bowl from Hemudu, (5.7 cm in height, with a rim diameter of 9.2–10.6 cm), hollowed from a single log and coated in a thin, even layer of red lacquer (Fig. 2.3).[30] While the basic form is consistent with earlier finds, the execution demonstrates a new level of finesse.[31] This technical

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[26] *Ibid.*, 271.

[27] Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (浙江省文物考古研究所) (2014), *Bianjiashan (卞家山)*, 2 vols. (1; Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 418.

[28] Shi, Jianong (施加农) (2018), *Kuahuqiao wenhua (跨湖桥文化)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 115.

[29] Yotsuyanagi (2021), 20.

[30] Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (浙江省文物考古研究所) (2003), *Hemudu——xinshiqi shidai yizhi kaogu fajue baogao (河姆渡——新石器时代遗址考古发掘报告)*, 2 vols, (1; Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 291, Colour Plate 53, plate 171 (hereafter pl.).

[31] A sample tested from the Tianluoshan site, also part of the Hemudu culture, confirmed the presence of lacquer. Wu, Meng *et al.* (2017), 'Determination of Lacquer Contained in Samples of Cultural Relics by Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay', *New Journal of Chemistry*, 41 (14), 6226-31.

skill is corroborated by the broader context of Hemudu's robust handicraft industries. Despite a lack of preserved textiles, the site has yielded numerous components from weaving looms, attesting to a society adept at delicate manual work.[32]

The Hemudu bowl is significant not only for its technical execution but for what it signals: a shift from the purely functional towards the aesthetic. Whereas at Kuahuqiao lacquer served a primarily protective purpose on utilitarian tools, the Hemudu bowl's vibrant red coating speaks to an emerging symbolic or decorative intent. On a technical level, these artifacts confirm that the fundamental properties of lacquer had been well explored. The ability to create stable pigments, to apply lacquer evenly to finer objects, and to trial it on varied media such as wood and pottery, all point to the maturation of the craft through a long accumulation of skill and knowledge.[33] In addition, the choice of colour, the careful application, and the object's inherent rarity due to the demanding craft suggest it was a prestige good. It may have been commissioned by or reserved for a social elite, marking lacquer's first transformation from a practical material into a marker of status.

Despite these advances, Neolithic lacquerware remains exceptionally rare in the archaeological record. This scarcity is partly due to the poor preservation conditions for organic materials, yet it may also be a true reflection of lacquer's contemporary value. The demanding, multi-stage process of its creation likely limited production, making each finished piece a testament to significant labour and specialised knowledge. It is in the subsequent Liangzhu culture, and at northern sites like Taosi, that this trajectory culminates, and lacquerware fully solidifies its role as an emblem of elite identity.

2.3 The Apex of Neolithic Lacquerware: A Tale of Two Traditions

The trajectory of lacquerware as a prestige good reached its prehistoric zenith within the

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[32] Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2003), 377.

[33] The bases were mostly pottery. Early painted pottery with red and black decorations emerged during the Majiabang culture. See Wu, Su (吴苏) (1978), 'Weidun xinshiqi shidai yizhi fajue jianbao (圩墩新石器时代遗址发掘简报)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (4), 223-40+89-91; Jiangsu sheng wenwu gongzuodui, (江苏省文物工作队) (1963), 'Jiangsu Wujiang Meiyan xinshiqi shidai yizhi (江苏吴江梅堰新石器时代遗址)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (06), 308-18+7-9; Zhang, Feilong (张飞龙) and Zhao, Ye (赵晔) (2013), 'Liangzhu wenhua de xiuqi yishu (良渚文化的髹漆艺术)', *Zhongguo shengqi (中国生漆)*, (4), 6-12.

Liangzhu culture (ca. 3,300–2,300 B.C.) of the south.[34] Centered in the Lower Yangtze River basin, Liangzhu was a complex society characterized by mature rice agriculture, a stratified social structure, and an astonishingly sophisticated handicraft industry.[35] This environment fostered an unprecedented flourishing of ritual objects, most famously jade, but also a remarkable array of lacquerware. The hallmark of Liangzhu lacquer is its sheer diversity and quantity. Lacquerware was unearthed from the Fanshan, Yaoshan, Bianjiashan and other sites.[36] The Bianjiashan site alone has yielded over seventy distinct items, including goblets—a form first seen in this period, as well as plates, and cylindrical containers.[37]

Following the eventual decline of Liangzhu, its cultural influence radiated outward. Its most iconic ritual objects, the jade *cong* (琮), have been discovered far to the north, within the orbit of the contemporaneous Taosi culture (ca. 2,300–1,900 B.C.).[38] Situated near the Yellow River, the Taosi site reveals a similarly complex, large-scale society with its own elite burials rich in painted pottery, jade, and notably lacquerware.[39] This established link through the transmission of jade poses a compelling question: did lacquerware, as a craft, an aesthetic, and a symbol of status, travel northward as part of this same "prestige bundle"? In short, was the sophisticated lacquer tradition of the north seeded, or at least significantly influenced, by the earlier southern masters?

2.3.1 The Southern Zenith: Liangzhu (ca. 3,300–2,300 B.C.)

The Liangzhu culture represents a period of profound socio-economic upheaval, a transition that reshaped the role of lacquerware. The subsistence economy shifted dramatically: where

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[34] Zhang, Feilong (张飞龙) and Wu, Hao (吴昊) (2016), 'Qiqi de faxian yu chengzhang: cong shiqian dao zhanguo (漆器的发现与成长:从史前到战国)', *Zhongguo shengqi (中国生漆)*, 35 (3), 22-28.

[35] Zhao, Ye (赵晔) (2022), *Liangzhu ceying: Bianjiashan (良渚侧影：卞家山)* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe), 3-4.

[36] Li, Na (李娜) (2020), 'Liangzhu wenhua qiqi chutan (良渚文化漆器初探)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (3), 49-56.

[37] Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2014), 313.

[38] He, Zhenji (何振纪) (2018), 'Kuahuqiao: huaxia qiqi wenhua de fayuan (跨湖桥:华夏漆器文化的发源)', *Zhongguo shengqi (中国生漆)*, (2), 6-9+54.

[39] He, Nu (何努) (2022a), *Taosi: Zhongguo wenming hexin xingcheng de qidian (陶寺：中国文明核心形成的起点)* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe), 29-30.

earlier cultures had primarily engaged in fishing and hunting, Liangzhu society was anchored by animal husbandry and mature rice agriculture.[40] This settled, intensive way of life led to large-scale tree cutting and land modification, straining the natural environment and necessitating the careful management of valuable materials, including lacquer trees.[41] The lacquer resource, therefore, was transformed into a form of managed scarcity. Control over the resource and its demanding production techniques became a source of power, likely wielded by an emergent ruling class. Evidence of this advanced resource management can also be seen at sites such as Putaofan. A pottery cup was found containing hardened raw lacquer residue. This suggests a dedicated space and possibly production division for lacquer preparation.[42]

Lacquer was inextricably linked with jade, the ultimate symbol of status. The most potent evidence comes from the Fanshan cemetery, where a lacquered wooden jar from a top-tier tomb (M12) showcases the apex of Liangzhu craftsmanship.[43] Its body was decorated with fine bas-relief carvings. It was then inlaid with jade granules set in swirling patterns of red and black lacquer (Fig. 2.4). The craftsmen have been able to utilize lacquer as both glue and the colouring agent by skilfully mixing cinnabar pigments into lacquer.[44] In this tomb, abundant jades were buried altogether, indicating the high status and ritual significance of the tomb owner.[45] In another tomb (M14), a jade-inlaid lacquer cup was discovered alongside ritual jade *yue* axes. These objects were interred near the tomb owner's head, signifying their profound importance. This combination is also echoed at the related Haochuan site. A consistent pattern emerged.

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40 Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xiaoshan bowuguan (2004), 270-7.

41 The theory of passive development posits that the exploitation of natural resources is constrained by the environment, which may explain resource depletion during the Liangzhu period. See Jing, Yuan and Flad, Rowan K (2002), 'Pig Domestication in Ancient China', *Antiquity*, 76 (293), 724-32; Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xiaoshan bowuguan (2004), 269; Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (浙江省文物考古研究所) (2014), 416-8.

42 Zhou, Yang (周炀) (2019), 'Liangzhu gucheng yizhi chutu qiqi jiance baogao (良渚古城遗址出土漆器检测报告)', in Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (浙江省文物考古研究所) (2019), *Liangzhu gucheng zonghe yanjiu baogao (良渚古城综合研究报告)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 473-76.

43 Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (浙江省文物考古研究所) (2022), *Fanshan (反山)*, 2 vols. (1; Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 98-9.

44 Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2019), 45-46, 56.

45 Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (浙江省文物考古研究所) (1988), 'Yuhang Yaoshan Liangzhu wenhua jitan yizhi fajue jianbao (余杭瑶山良渚文化祭坛遗址发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (1), 33-36; Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2022), 29, 88-90.

One piece of lacquered woodware was excavated in eight cases, constantly discovered near the owners' skulls and, coexisting with jade axes.[46]

Yet, the archaeological record presents a compelling paradox regarding lacquer's circulation. A large quantity of lacquerware, particularly *gu* (觚) goblets, was found not only in burials of lesser status but also in communal waste-deposit trenches at the Bianjiashan site.[47] This puzzling distribution suggests that while lacquer was becoming a prestige good, its ritual use was not yet rigidly restricted. Its role may have been complex and multifaceted. Although reserved for the elite burials, the lacquer was also perhaps used in communal feasts or rituals. The lacquer remains were disposed of in a symbolic manner. Liangzhu, therefore, captures lacquerware at a fascinating moment: a material ascending towards higher ritual status, yet with its social circulation still in flux.

2.3.2 The Northern Counterpart: Taosi (ca. 2,300–1,900 B.C.)

In the contemporaneous north, the Taosi culture offers a clearer, more rigid picture of lacquer's role as a symbol of elite power. Of more than 1,300 tombs excavated, the 156 unearthed lacquer objects were concentrated in just 27 high-status burials. The tomb of a second-tier elite alone (M2001) contained nearly thirty painted wooden wares. This suggests that the top tier of rulers might have possessed even more.[48] Access to these objects, along with painted pottery, jade, and bone artifacts, was a privilege strictly confined to these elites.

Technically, the Taosi artisans were great innovators. While still using lacquer as an adhesive

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[46] The Haochuan culture overlaps significantly with Liangzhu, though the specific relationship remains to be explored. Some scholars argue for a strong pairing of jade and lacquerware in this context. See Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (浙江省文物考古研究所) and Suichang xian wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, (遂昌县文物管理委员会) (2001), *Haochuan mudi (好川墓地)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 91-100; Fang, Xiangming (方向明) (2018), 'Haochuan he Liangzhu wenhua de qi gu, gunzhuangwu, ji yu zhuixingqi (好川和良渚文化的漆觚，棍状物及玉锥形器)', *Huanghe, Huangtu, Huangzhongren (黄河、黄土、黄种人)*, (3X), 15-22. Scholars such as Hong Shi are more confident in pairing jade and lacquerware. Hong, Shi (洪石) (2022), *Zhonghua zaoqi qiqi yanjiu (中华早期漆器研究)* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe), 51.

[47] Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2014), 314; Zhao (2022), 136, 145-6.

[48] Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, (中国社会科学院考古研究所) and Shanxi sheng Linfen shi wenwuju, (山西省临汾市文物局) (2015), *Xiangfen Taosi— 1978-1985 nian fajue baogao (襄汾陶寺——1978—1985 年发掘报告)*, 4 vols. (2; Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 531.

for decorative inlays, they pioneered its use as a primer.[49] On a high-footed *dou* plate from tomb M3015, analysis revealed a base layer of black sticky substance applied to the wood, over which pigments mixed with another binder (such as $Ca(OH)_2$) were painted.[50] This method, which created a durable, protective foundation for later colouring process, was a major technical advance that prefigured lacquer techniques of later dynasties. It was in line with the applying logic of lacquer, which is to wait for one layer to dry before applying another.[51] This innovation highlights Taosi's unique technological path.

This technical foundation supported an unprecedented diversity of forms. The variety included drums, *pan* (盘) plates, *dou* (豆) dishes, and *an* (案) low tables.[52] For example, *zu* (俎) chopping boards, sometimes found with sacrificial pork bones atop them, were discovered in nine elite tombs, one in each (Fig. 2.5).[53] They were probably used as the serving plates for the ancestors. Painted drums, some over a meter high (M3015:15) and decorated with exquisite cloud and *panchi* (蟠螭) patterns (Coiled dragon) in red lacquer, likely provided the rhythm for sacred rites.[54] A peculiar candlestick-shaped *dou* plate, 25–50 cm in height, found almost exclusively in sixteen large and medium tombs of male elites. Their deposition further illustrates the link between specific lacquer forms and founded social or ritual roles (Fig. 2.6).[55] The importance of lacquer at rituals had been unprecedently raised by the Taosi people.

2.3.3 A Dialogue in Style: Transmission and Transformation

The circulation of these prestigious objects was not merely a transfer of wealth, but a dialogue in style and meaning. As anthropologist Alfred Gell argued, art objects are not simply expressions of an interior aesthetic judgement; they are active agents produced and circulated

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[49] *Ibid.,* 635.
[50] *Ibid.,* 635; Li, Naisheng (李乃胜) *et al.* (2008), 'Taosi yizhi taoqi caihui yanliao de guangpu fenxi (陶寺遗址陶器彩绘颜料的光谱分析)', *Guangpuxue yu guangpu fenxi (光谱学与光谱分析)*, (4), 946-48.
[51] Li *et al.* (2008).
[52] Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo and Shanxi sheng Linfen shi wenwuju (2015), 642-7.
[53] Lu, Yi (卢一) (2019), 'Lun xian Qin liqi zhong de qiqi chuantong (论先秦礼器中的漆器传统)', in Li, Boqian (李伯谦) (ed.), *Gudai wenming (di 13 juan)(古代文明（第 13 卷）)* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe), 28-56.
[54] Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo and Shanxi sheng Linfen shi wenwuju (2015), 636-9.
[55] *Ibid.,* 653-55; He (2022a), 77-8.

within a physical and social landscape.[56] In this landscape, styles do not merely replace one another. Rather, as Chris Gosden has pointed out, they tend to accumulate, with new forms and ideas being absorbed and transformed alongside existing traditions.[57] The development of lacquerware in Neolithic China offers a perfect illustration of this process.

One of the most enduring aesthetic threads, a clear example of accumulation, is the preference for the colour red.[58] The vibrant red on the Kuahuqiao bow, achieved by mixing lacquer with cinnabar, finds its echo in the Hemudu bowl and later in the refined lacquerware of Liangzhu. This shared preference suggests a long-standing symbolic tradition in the south. An aesthetic was accumulated and passed down through millennia, even into Chu with changed meanings. Taosi had demonstrated the accumulation and mutual influence of aesthetics between the pottery and lacquerware. The aesthetics was gradually transformed from the painted pottery into forming the characteristics of the lacquerware itself, with red and black as the main colours. The transmission of specific forms, however, reveals a more complex, multi-linear pattern of exchange. The slender, elegant *gu* goblet, a hallmark of Liangzhu, is a case in point. While similar goblets appear at Taosi, they are often cruder in craftsmanship and more robust in form. They are stylistically closer to the barrel-shaped cups of the northwestern Yangshao culture than to their supposed Liangzhu prototypes.[59] Yet, further east, at the Dadianzi site (Lower Xiajiadian culture), the excavated lacquer *gu* goblets are strikingly similar to the slender Liangzhu type, suggesting a more direct connection (Fig. 2.7).[60] This evidence challenges a

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56 Gell (1998), 3.

57 Gosden, Chris and Hill, J.D. (2008), 'Introduction: Re-integrating 'Celtic' Art', in Garrow, Duncan *et al.* (eds.), *Rethinking Celtic Art*; (Oxford: Oxbow books), 1-14.

58 Li (2020), 50.

59 Zou, Heng (邹衡) (1980), 'Shi lun Yinxu wenhua fenqi (试论殷墟文化分期)', *Xia Shang Zhou kaoguxue lunwenji (夏商周考古学论文集)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 31-92. 46-7, 52-5; Zhejiang Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology (2014), 399; Gao, Wei (高炜) (1986), 'Taosi Longshan wenhua muqi de chubu yanjiu——jianlun beifang qiqi de qiyuan wenti (陶寺龙山文化木器的初步研究——兼论北方漆器的起源问题)', in Zhongguo Kaoguxue Yanjiu Bianweihui (《中国考古学研究》编委会) (ed.), *Zhongguo kaoguxue yanjiu——Xia Nai xiansheng kaogu wushi nian jinian lunwenji (中国考古学研究——夏鼐先生考古五十年纪念论文集)*, 2; (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe), 24-36.

60 Tomb M726 and five other tombs (666, 672, 853, 905, and 931) yielded this type of *gu* goblet. See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, (中国社会科学院考古研究所) (1996), *Dadianzi: Xiajiadian xiaceng wenhua yizhi yu mudi fajue baogao (大甸子：夏家店下层文化遗址与墓地发掘报告)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe [Science Press]), 191-3, table. 17.

simple model of south-to-north transmission. Instead, multiple, crisscrossing routes of influence and local adaptation can be implied, working as a perfect example of styles accumulating and transforming as they travel.

2.4 Conclusion

The Neolithic era represents the long, formative childhood of Chinese lacquerware. From the first applications at Kuahuqiao to the sophisticated ritual assemblages of Taosi, the fundamental properties of lacquer were fully explored and mastered. Lacquer works as a durable coating, an adhesive, and a brilliant pigment binder. This journey established a foundational technological repertoire and a core aesthetic vocabulary. It primarily centred on the interplay of red and black, that would define the craft for millennia to come.

This long prehistory finds a curious, retrospective echo in a much later text, the *Hanfeizi* (ca. 300 B.C.). It recounts a mytho-historical progression where the sage-king Shun (舜) first used unadorned black lacquer, his successor Yu（禹）added red interiors, and later dynasties introduced intricate patterns.[61] This narrative serves as a powerful allegory for the very trajectory uncovered by archaeology: a development from merely utility to ritual purpose, and finally added with complex decoration.

This millennia-long process, in which human ingenuity and a unique natural material shaped one another, exemplifies what material culture theorist Tim Ingold describes as a state of "becoming".[62] According to Hahn and Soentgen, "materials in practise have no absolute ends, only transformations". Therefore, some characteristics of the material remain constant while

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[61] '尧禅天下，虞舜受之，作为食器，斩山木而财子，削锯修其迹，流漆墨其上，输之于宫以为食器。诸侯以为益侈，国之不服者十三。舜禅天下而传之于禹，禹作为祭器，墨染其外，而硃画书其内，缦帛为茵，将席颇缘，触酌有采，而樽俎有饰。此弥侈矣，而国之不服者三十三。' ('Yao abdicated, and Shun received the throne. He made food vessels, felling trees... applying lacquer... The feudal lords deemed this excessive... Shun abdicated in favour of Yu, who crafted ritual vessels, adorned with black lacquer outside and scarlet inside... The extravagance exceeded previous levels, and thirty-three vassal states refused to comply.') Han, Fei (韩非) (the Warring States period) (2010), 'Shi guo [Ten Mistakes] (十过)', *Hanfeizi yizhu (韩非子译注),* annotated by Gao, Huaping (高华平) *et al.* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju [Zhonghua Book Company]), 93-7.

[62] Drazin, Adam (2015), 'To Live in a Materials World', *The Social Life of Materials: Studies in Materials and Society*, 3.

others alter.[63] The material was not merely a passive recipient of human design, but an active participant whose properties guided and constrained the hands of artisans. There were moments in which materials are more developed than previously. The knowledge accumulated during the Neolithic laid the groundwork for the lacquer industries of the Shang and Zhou dynasties. It was this deep, inherited understanding that enabled the craftsmen of the Eastern Zhou, particularly in the state of Chu, to elevate lacquer to an unprecedented height, imbuing it with the political and philosophical meanings that the following chapters will explore.

[63] Hahn, Hans Peter and Soentgen, Jens (2011), 'Acknowledging Substances: Looking at the Hidden Side of the Material World', *Philosophy & Technology*, 30.

3 The Sensory World of Lacquer: Materiality, Philosophy, and the Eastern Zhou Awakening

The ascendancy of lacquer during the Eastern Zhou dynasty signifies more than a mere change in material preference; it marks a profound shift in the sensory and intellectual landscape. As the ritual authority of bronze waned, lacquer emerged, challenging elites to navigate a new world of textures, colours, and scents. This chapter delves into this transformation. The chapter uses lacquerware as the primary lens to explore a central question: how did the unique sensory experience of this material reflect and shape the philosophical currents and the very concept of materiality in Eastern Zhou China? To answer this, we must first establish a theoretical framework, bridging the insights of modern anthropology with the distinct philosophical traditions of the period.

3.1 Material, Materiality, and the Philosophical Wheel

In modern anthropology, the distinction between a *material* and its *materiality* is foundational.[1] A material, such as the resin of the lacquer tree, possesses inherent physical properties. Its materiality, however, encompasses the entire web of social, cultural, and symbolic relationships that humans build around it. According to archaeologist Christopher Tilley, an object's meaning transcends its physical substance. To truly understand it, one must investigate its materiality: the entire web of relationships encompassing its origin, its manufacture, its role in human practices, and its context within specific places and social landscapes.[2] Materiality, therefore, includes the tangible embodiment of the intangible: the way that beliefs, ideas, and social structures are given concrete form.

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[1] For a series of discussions on materiality, see the following contributions in *Archaeological Dialogues*, 14 (1): Ingold, T. (2007a), 'Materials against Materiality', 1–16; Tilley, C. (2007), 'Materiality in Materials', 16–20; Knappett, C. (2007), 'Materials with Materiality?', 20–23; Miller, D. (2007), 'Stone Age or Plastic Age?', 23–27; Nilsson, B. (2007), 'An Archaeology of Material Stories: Dioramas as Illustration and the Desire of a Thingless Archaeology', 27–30; Ingold, T. (2007b), 'Writing Texts, Reading Materials: A Response to My Critics', 31–38.

[2] Tilley (2007), 18.

This focus on the human-material relationship inevitably builds a bridge between anthropology and philosophy. For, as Daniel Miller notes, scholars of materiality are often destined to reinvent "a specific philosophical wheel".[3] They uncover the profound link between a society's practical engagement with the material world and the unique philosophical beliefs that emerge from that engagement. This connection is the key to comprehension. It is what anthropologist Tim Ingold terms "actual participation,"[4] and what Colin Renfrew's Engagement Theory explores as the link between the intangible mind and the physical world.[5] A powerful example is James Davidson's study of fifth-century B.C. Athens. He successfully connected modes of fish consumption to the rise of specific political and philosophical systems.[6]

To apply this "philosophical wheel" to ancient China requires a methodological adjustment. While the Western philosophical tradition since Plato has often relied on analytical language and abstract logic, classical Chinese philosophy, as Feng Youlan observed, frequently expresses ideas through metaphor, analogy, and allusion.[7] The challenge is not to find a direct counterpart to Western theory, but to recognize the philosophical depth embedded within these metaphorical expressions. In this context, lacquer—a substance of natural origin, transformed by human skill, embodying time, and stimulating the senses—serves as a perfect vehicle for such analogies. It is through this lens, attuned to both material practice and metaphorical meaning, that we can begin to explore the sensory and philosophical world of the Eastern Zhou.

3.2 Sensory Dimensions of Lacquer

To truly grasp the shift in materiality that lacquer engendered, we must turn to the senses. The experience of a material is inherently sensory, a process profoundly influenced by cultural and

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[3] Miller, Daniel (2005), 'Materiality: An Introduction', in Miller, Daniel (ed.), *Materiality*, 1 (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 2.

[4] This argument is further developed in a later publication. Ingold, Tim (2011), 'Materials Against Materiality', *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*: Routledge), 20.

[5] *Ibid.*, 20.

[6] Davidson, James N (1998), *Courtesans & Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens* (London: Fortana Press), 3-35, 309-15.

[7] As Feng Youlan noted, '中国哲学家的语言如此不明晰，而其中所含的暗示则几乎是无限的。' ('The language of Chinese philosophers is so unspecific, while the suggestion that it contains is almost infinite.') Feng, Youlan (冯友兰) (2019), 'Zhongguo zhexuejia biaoda ziji sixiang de fangshi (中国哲学家表达自己思想的方式)', *Zhongguo zhexue jianshi (中国哲学简史)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 24-7.

historical factors. As anthropologist David Howes argues, sensory experience transcends the practical, allowing for aesthetic appreciation in the very act of making and using.[8] As Carl Knappett notes, the skilled hand of a potter, for instance, often judges by touch rather than by sight, embedding sensory knowledge into the object from its very creation.[9] Sensory experience transcends mere utility, allowing for aesthetic pleasure in the feel of a tool or the resonance of a space. For the Chu elites of the Eastern Zhou, encountering a world increasingly populated by lacquerware after the long dominance of bronze was a fundamentally reordering of their sensory reality.

This presents a methodological challenge. David Howes, for instance, cautions against a simplistic 'one-sense-at-a-time' analysis, rightly emphasizing that the senses are fundamentally interconnected, creating a holistic experience.[10] While this analysis will approach these senses one by one for the sake of clarity, it is with the crucial understanding that they are fundamentally interconnected. We will investigate the unique properties of lacquer: its organic aroma, its warm tactility, and its vibrant colour. It was this holistic sensory experience that ultimately allowed lacquer to displace bronze and become the defining material of the age.

3.2.1 Scent: From Natural Aroma to Ritual Scent

3.2.1.1 Scent during the Production

The olfactory perception of lacquer is a prominent and immediate means of experiencing its character. A finished piece of lacquerware, however, offers few aromatic cues. Its coating is remarkably stable, resistant to acids, alkalis, and high temperatures.[11] Thus, its scent is not readily apparent to the user, in particular the elites who would not be involved in the production process. Nevertheless, an analysis of lacquer's scent must therefore begin at its source: the raw material. Unrefined lacquer, according to practitioners, possesses a natural, subjective sweetness,

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[8] Howes, David (2022), 'In Defense of Materiality: Attending to the Sensori-Social Life of Things', *Journal of Material Culture*, 27 (3), 326.
[9] Knappett (2007), 21.
[10] Howes, David and Classen, Constance (2013), *Ways of Sensing: Understanding the Senses in Society* (New York: Routledge), 154.
[11] Gettens, Rutherford John and Stout, George Leslie (1966), *Painting Materials: A Short Encyclopaedia* (New York: Courier Corporation), 32.

sometimes reminiscent of pine nuts or fruits.[12] The fragrance of lacquer is also heavily influenced by its variety and origins. Some scent sour and some are fragrant.[13]

This natural aroma is then deliberately transformed during production. To achieve the proper film-forming condition, the sap is combined with additives, most typically tung oil.[14] Tung oil is primarily composed of glyceryl oleate.[15] The addition of tung oil, a key technological advance of the Eastern Zhou, served multiple purposes.[16] It increased the liquid's transparency for colour blending and also boosted the final film's vibrancy.[17] Most importantly, the tung oil is processed and heated to produce a much stronger odour that matches with the modem definition of "lacquer". In this crafting process, the natural scent of the material was deliberately altered and engineered to achieve desired technical and aesthetic outcomes.

3.2.1.2 Scent at rituals

The finished, fully cured object is largely inert and odourless. Consequently, the scent is often perceived as a transient byproduct of the process rather than an essential characteristic of the final product. Yet, this modern neglect belies the historical significance of the olfactory.[18] In specific ritual contexts, the engineered aroma of lacquer was not merely an afterthought, but a deliberately deployed and highly valued sensory tool. The scent was probable employed for

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[12] The aroma can also be used to distinguish between authentic and counterfeit raw lacquer; adulterated lacquer has a bitter odour. See Cai, Wen (蔡文) (2022), *Yi qi zao wu: qiyi jifa quan jie (以漆造物：漆艺技法全解)* (Shanghai: Shanghai kexue jishu chubanshe), 21; Zhang, Li (张丽) (2012b), *Qiyi jiaocheng (漆艺教程)* (Chongqing: Chongqing daxue chubanshe). A lacquer practitioner recalls tasting raw lacquer at a tapping site in Japan in an online blog post, available at: https://www.kiinii.com/blog/100064 (accessed 17 September 2025). See also Akagi (2017), 79.

[13] Geng, Yuhua (耿玉花) and Liu, Ye (刘也) (2019), *Xiuqi gongyi yu shijian (髹漆工艺与实践)* (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe), 23.

[14] To modify its performance for various art forms, lacquer sap was mixed with additives. Tung oil is the most common, used to adjust the colour and mechanical properties of the lacquer film. Gu, An *et al.* (2022), 'Study of Tung Oil Content in Ancient Lacquer by Noninvasive Quantitative Methods: Near Infrared and Chemometrics', Studies in Conservation, 67 (6), 373-80.

[15] Zhang, Feilong (张飞龙) (2010a), *Zhongguo xiuqi gongyi yu qiqi baohu (中国髹漆工艺与漆器保护)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe), 288.

[16] *Ibid.*, 72.

[17] *Ibid.*, 52.

[18] In his otherwise comprehensive overview, lacquer expert Zhang Feilong discusses properties ranging from the material's allergenic nature to its durability, yet makes no mention of its scent. This omission is common; craftsmen's records and historical tutorials frequently neglect the topic of odour. *Ibid.*, 42; Zhang (2012b), 47-9.

similar purposes as spiritual aids as that of alcohol, which would yield comparable results.[19] In contrast to the peculiar, metallic smell of bronze, lacquerware, derived from a living plant, offered a different vibrancy and a subtle woody aroma. This also means that if lacquerware was used to replace conventional, bulky pottery and higher-grade bronze vessels, as the intense scent of tung oil additives volatilised, users would be more likely to be exposed to the relatively faint natural woody aroma.

This distinction became critical in the context of elite funerals. Elaborate funerary procedures described in the *Book of Rites* require improved preservation of corpses. The preservation would take months for elites, and even years for kings.[20] According to the *Zuo Tradition*, a few of lords' remains were preserved for years due to interruption of wars.[21] The newly coated layers of a coffin, with their tung oil-infused lacquer scent, served as the primary barrier. This was often supplemented by the unique fragrance of scattered cinnabar (mercury sulfide), a long-standing

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[19] Kern, Martin (2000), '*Shi jing* Songs as Performance Texts: A Case Study of "*Chu Ci*"(*Thorny Caltrop*)', Early China, 25, 49-111.

[20] According to the *Book of Rites*, the prescribed mourning periods were as follows: '天子七日而殡，七月而葬。诸侯五日而殡，五月而葬。大夫、士、庶人，三日而殡，三月而葬。' ('For the Son of Heaven, the encoffining is on the seventh day and the burial in the seventh month. For a feudal lord, the encoffining is on the fifth day and the burial in the fifth month. For a great officer, an ordinary officer, or a commoner, the encoffining is on the third day and the burial in the third month.') dynasty), *Liji* (*Book of Rites* 礼记), (Han dynasty; 2019), trans. Hu, Pingsheng (胡平生) and Zhang, Meng (张萌), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 257. In practice, however, exceptions occurred; for example, King Huan of Zhou was buried after seven years due to political chaos.

[21] A slightly different timeline is given in the *Zuo Tradition*: '天子七月而葬，同轨毕至；诸侯五月，同盟至；大夫三月，同位至；士逾月，外姻至。' ('The Son of Heaven is buried after seven months, leaders of the same axle standard attending; a prince after five months, those joined with him in covenants attending; a high officer after three months, those of the same rank attending; and a regular officer after a full month, his relatives by marriage attending.') Durrant *et al.* (2016). 14-5. Scholars have noted that the interment timing for Zhou kings and lords often deviated from these ritual prescriptions, suggesting a progressive standardisation of hierarchical practices over time. For comprehensive studies on this topic, see Li, Yujie (李玉洁) (1991b), *Xian Qin sangzang zhidu yanjiu (先秦丧葬制度研究)* (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe). 118-9; Liu, Xu (刘绪) (1994), 'Chunqiu shiqi sangzang zhidu zhong de zang yue yu zang ri (春秋时期丧葬制度中的葬月与葬日)', in (北京大学考古系), Beijing Daxue Kaoguxi (ed.), *Kaoguxue yanjiu (er) (考古学研究（二）)* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe), 189-200; Zhang, Huaitong (张怀通) (2002), 'Chunqiu zhuhou "binqi" kaolun (春秋诸侯"殡期"考论)', *Zhou Qin shehui yu wenhua yanjiu: jinian Zhongguo xian Qin shi xuehui chengli 20 zhounian xueshu yantaohui lunwenji (周秦社会与文化研究——纪念中国先秦史学会成立 20 周年学术研讨会论文集)*; (Xi'an: Shaanxi shifan daxue chubanshe), 396-415; Shao, Bei (邵蓓) (2016), 'The Spring and Autumn period', in Wu, Liyu (吴丽娱) (ed.), *Li yu Zhongguo gudai shehui (礼与中国古代社会)* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe), 173-82.

tradition in elite Shang and Zhou burials (Fig. 3.1).[22] In Chu tombs, this aromatic toolkit was further expanded with the addition of peppercorns (*Zanthoxylum bungeanum*) and the use of openwork-carved *ling* (笭) beds, which promoted ventilation (Fig. 3.2).[23]

This scent served to mask the smell of decay, transforming the tomb into a sealed, sacred, and aromatic space. Thus, a property of the material—its smell—was consciously adopted and amplified by the Chu elites. The scent became a valued tool in the complex ritual management of death. Due to the bundling of senses mentioned earlier, the smell will be revisited in later sections along with other sensory such as the vision.

3.2.2 Touch: From Surface to Substance

Prior to the dominance of lacquer, only jade objects could be compared, with a particular focus on their tactility. Jade as a material is already empowered with divine powers in itself.[24] During the Warring States Period, the need for tactility undoubtedly drove the refinement of lacquerware craftsmanship to meet this sensory demand. The texture of lacquerware, as perceived through touch, is a function of two distinct qualities. On the one hand, it depends on the smoothness of the surface; on the other hand, its thermal conductivity governs the temperature feedback to the user's skin.

3.2.2.1 Smoothness

The smoothness of a lacquered object is determined by a meticulous two-stage process. The first is the creation of the base. Techniques such as chopping, chipping, and chiselling were mastered to produce a uniform foundation.[25] Thick-walled lacquered woodware continued to

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[22] Cinnabar is a stony substance with inclusions, produced in small quantities, and must be crushed to isolate the red pigment. Nagatoshi (2022), 269.

[23] On the naming of carved panels from Chu tombs, see Ye, Dinghou (叶定侯) (1956), 'Changsha Chu mu chutu "diaoke huaban" mingcheng de shangtao (长沙楚墓出土"雕刻花板"名称的商讨)', *Wenwu (文物)*, 12, 23-25+1; Wu, Mingsheng (吴铭生) (1957), 'Changsha Chu mu chutu de qiqi (长沙楚墓出土的漆器)', *Wenwu cankao ziliao (文物参考资料)*, 7, 18-19; He, Gang (贺刚) (1991), '"Ling chuang" zhengyi ("笭床"正义)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (4), 88-92.

[24] The meaning and role of touch has evolved; in later periods, for instance, touching religious images came to be seen as a way of facilitating physical contact with the divine, expanding the sense beyond intuition to include divinity and healing. See Howes and Classen (2013), 18-9.

[25] Zhang (2010a), 58-59.

dominate the Warring States period. Items, such as arrow bags, eared cups, *dou* plates, and wooden handles, demonstrate that the smoothness and relative uniformity of the base were given considerable consideration. The skills of carving and polishing create the groundwork for the following phase of refining, which includes ornamentation and carving on the lacquered surfaces. The application of the lacquer is the next crucial step in achieving an intuitive tactile sensation. After the addition of substances such as tung oil, the surface was subjected to repeated sanding and polishing. Craftsmen used auxiliary tools and fine abrasives of varying particle sizes, such as charcoal powder or cuttlefish bones, to methodically reduce the plane of the lacquerware. The surface ultimately achieves a fine, smooth, and oily texture that fulfilled the expectations of both maker and user.[26]

3.2.2.2 Handling and Thermal Conductivity

The warm and supple texture of lacquerware is largely attributable to the low thermal conductivity of its wooden base. This is a key factor in its intentional selection for daily use. Bronze vessels, by contrast, rapidly transfer the temperature of food to the hands, making them impractical for holding in the palms. Other materials as jade and pottery, while having lower thermal conductivity than metal, are still significantly higher than lacquered wood. Thus, the two feel cold and are alien to the touch. Wood and linen, being naturally porous and less dense, provide an inherently warmer feel.

This insulating property is enhanced even further by the application of lacquer. This natural plastic coating conducts heat even less effectively than the wood beneath.[27] Due to this poor thermal conductivity, heat from the user's hands dissipates slowly, resulting in an immediate and constant sensation of body-temperature-like warmth upon first contact. Modern lacquer artists assert that the true appeal of a lacquered vessel is revealed in the act of holding it.[28] Monks in Tibet and Japan continued this legacy by using lacquered bowls for hot tea.[29] They can better fulfil the monks' requirements for constant travels than other materials.

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[26] Nagatoshi (2022), 217-9.
[27] *Ibid.,* 106.
[28] *Ibid.,* 153.
[29] *Ibid.,* 14-5.

This appreciation for the practical, thermal properties of lacquered wood is well-supported by early archaeological evidence. In a Shang elite tomb at Luoshan Tianhu, a black lacquered wooden bowl (M12:34) was discovered inside a bronze *yan* (甗) steamer, indicating the two objects were used together.[30] The bowl's surface is smooth and flat after the turning technique (Fig. 3.3). The bottom and walls were comparatively thick, serving to insulate and hold steamed foods.[31] Even more telling are the bronze *gu* (觚) goblets from Ba-state elite burials of the mid-Western Zhou (10th century B.C.), which were discovered with turned wooden cavities fitted inside (Figs. 3.4a and 3.4b).[32] Other examples can also be found from the Yan-state marquis' tomb. These wooden inserts often maintained the traditional structure of earlier wooden goblets with a securing plug such as the *gu* at Liangzhu (Fig. 3.4c). The plug at the bottom made the bronze vessels easier to hold with warm or iced liquid, while also ensuring watertightness and heat preservation.

The tactile relationship between lacquer and metal continued to evolve.[33] Bronze components were sometimes lacquered, presumably for colour but also for a warmer texture, such as a small bronze ring attached to some vessels, discovered in a tomb in Ye County.[34] After the Eastern Zhou Period, the dynamic inverted: copper handles and bases were commonly added to lacquered woodware to reinforce and embellish them.[35] This stands in stark contrast to the earlier lacquered bronze vessels. The cold, slippery surface of a bronze vessel was increasingly

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30 Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui, (河南省信阳地区文管会) and Henan sheng Luoshan xian wenhuaguan, (河南省罗山县文化馆) (1986), 'Luoshan Tianhu Shang Zhou mudi (罗山天湖商周墓地)', *Kaogu xuebao (考古学报)*, (2), 153-97.

31 Ou, Tansheng (欧潭生) (1986), 'Henan Luoshan xian Tianhu chutu de Shang dai qimuqi (河南罗山县天湖出土的商代漆木器)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (9), 25+101.

32 Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, (山西省考古研究所) *et al.* (2021), *Ba Jin Jicui: Shanxi Yicheng Dahekou Xizhou mudi chutu qingtongqi (霸金集萃：山西翼城大河口西周墓地出土青铜器)*, ed. Xie, Yaoting (谢尧亭), (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe), 128-32.

33 Scholars have summarised that lacquering on metal serves two purposes: altering the metal's appearance for a distinct visual effect, and preventing corrosion and rust. Hou, Dejun (后德俊) and Chen, Fuli (陈赋理) (1983), 'Chu guo qizhipin shengchan yu shiyong zhong de jige wenti (楚国漆制品生产与使用中的几个问题)', *Zhongguo shengqi (中国生漆)*, 1, 35-39.

34 Henan sheng wenwu yanjiusuo, (河南省文物研究所) *et al.* (1988), 'Henan sheng Ye xian jiuxian yi hao mu de qingli (河南省叶县旧县 1 号墓的清理)', *Huaxia kaogu (华夏考古)*, (3), 1-18.

35 Such objects are known as *kouqi* (釦器). See Zhang (2010a), 61.

seen as a defect, whereas lightweight lacquerware, with its warm and stable touch, became the more suitable implement for the era.

3.2.3 Vision

The visual experience of lacquerware is perhaps its most powerful dimension; one deeply interconnected with the other senses. As discussed previously, the Neolithic period saw the accumulation of styles and aesthetics.[36] Dried raw lacquer naturally acquires a dark brown tone, a colour that conforms to ancient preferences. The *Book of Rites*, for instance, notes a symbolic colour progression. The text associates black with the Xia, white with the Shang, and red with the Zhou dynasty in ritual contexts.[37] The prevalence of red and black lacquerware in Chu thus represents a clear inheritance of this deep-rooted tradition.

3.2.3.1 Tomb space

In the elite tombs of Chu, the Zhou tradition of spreading cinnabar was largely substituted by the practice of lacquering coffins, creating a powerful and symbolic visual environment (Fig. 3.5). The colour scheme was surprisingly uniform. Black lacquer was consistently applied to the outer coffins, while red lacquer was utilised for the interior coffins.[38] This pattern, where the interior was especially emphasized, is seen in the M2 tomb at Yaojiagang. The coffin interior is completely coated in crimson lacquer despite its absence on the exterior.[39] This tradition perpetuated into the Han Dynasty, as evidenced by the famous nested coffins at Mawangdui, which were mostly lacquered red on the interior and black on the exterior (Fig. 3.6).[40] Although

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[36] Gosden and Hill (2008), 1-14.

[37] It is recorded: '夏后氏尚黑，大事殓用昏…殷人尚白，大事殓用日中…周人尚赤，大事殓用日出' ('The Xia dynasty esteemed black, and for major funerals, the encoffining was done at dusk... The Yin people esteemed white, and for major funerals, the encoffining was at midday... The Zhou people esteemed red, and for major funerals, the encoffining was at sunrise.') in *Liji* (Han dynasty; 2019), 105-6.

[38] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (河南省文物考古研究所) (2003), *Xincai Geling Chu mu (新蔡葛陵楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 36.

[39] Hubei sheng Yichang diqu bowuguan, (湖北省宜昌地区博物馆) (1988b), 'Hubei Zhijiang xian Yaojiagang Chu mu fajue baogao (湖北枝江县姚家港楚墓发掘报告)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (2), 159-61.

[40] Hunan sheng bowuguan, (湖南省博物馆) *et al.* (1972), *Changsha Mawangdui yi hao Han mu fajue jianbao (长沙马王堆一号汉墓发掘简报)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 4; Hunan sheng bowuguan, (湖南省博物馆) and Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖南省文物考古研究所) (2004), *Changsha Mawangdui er san hao Han mu: tianye kaogu fajue baogao Vol. 1 (长沙马王堆二、三号汉墓：田野考古发掘报告. 第1卷)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 38-41.

physical cinnabar was no longer present, its visual and symbolic influence persisted through the use of lacquer blended with cinnabar pigments as well as fabrics. At Changtaiguan M1, the complete inner coffin is lacquered black with paintings in colours, but the bottom and top of both the inner and outer coffins have been adorned with red fabrics.[41] Some scholars argue that it resembles crimson blood, symbolising the sun and vitality.[42] The choice to replace the costly mineral with a craft-based application may also reflect the control of valued resources by the ruling class. The practice of spreading cinnabar was perhaps restricted from the lower *shi* (士) class.

3.2.3.2 Dwellings

The lacquered tomb space was conceived as a mirror of the living space, a conviction rooted in a belief in the afterlife. While archaeological remains of above-ground dwellings are scarce, texts such as the *Hanshu* (汉书) describe elite residences where 'the courtyard is brightly lit in red, and the hall is lacquered'.[43] This textual evidence, combined with the archaeology of the tomb, reveals a coherent elite perception of colour, space, and status.[44]

Chu elites strewn a large quantity of peppercorns throughout their tombs and coated the interiors of the burial chambers/coffins with crimson lacquer. The practice finds a parallel in later Han historical accounts where the Queen's residence was referred to as the "Pepper

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[41] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (河南省文物考古研究所) (1986), *Xinyang Chu mu (信阳楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 18.

[42] Yotsuyanagi (2021), 27。

[43] '其中庭彤朱，而殿上髹漆' ('The central courtyard was painted vermilion, whereas the palace halls were lacquered.') In the chapter 'Biographies of the Imperial Maternal Relatives', it is stated that after Zhao Feiyan became Empress to Emperor Cheng of Han (ca. 51–7 B.C.), gilded bronze thresholds and jade steps were installed to signify her prestige. Ban, Gu (班固) (Han dynasty, 32-92 A.D.; 2020), *Hanshu* (*The History of the Han Dynasty* 汉书), ed. Yan, Shigu (颜师古) (581-645 A.D), 4 vols., (4; Beijing: Zhong Hua Book Company), 3412.

[44] However, cinnabar and lacquer appear to have been used sparingly prior to the Warring States Period. In the tomb of the Guo duke (M2001) from the late Western Zhou Dynasty, archaeologists observed that the walls were trimmed and coated with a layer of light green paint. Wall ornamentation is found in the tombs of the highest-ranking nobles. There shows no signs of intentional wall plastering with cinnabars or lacquering. Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (河南省文物考古研究所) (1999), *Sanmenxia Guo guo mu (三门峡虢国墓)*, 2 vols., (1; Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 15. This probably indicates it a new tradition only in the late Eastern Zhou period.

Chamber" (椒房).[45] The peppercorns provided a warm and aromatic scent, a signifier of high status. They also possessed medicinal properties well-suited to the humid Yangtze River region.[46] It is plausible, therefore, that an ideal Chu subterranean residence was recreated by lacquering coffin walls with crimson paint and imitating the scent of a high-status home with peppercorns. This combination, sometimes augmented by architectural features such as doors and windows carved onto the coffins, created a powerful visual and olfactory link between the underworld and the domain of the living (Fig. 3.7). The Western Han Dynasty tomb of King Chu were built in Beidong Mountain, Xuzhou. The stone walls were coated with a primer, dark lacquer, and a final layer of cinnabar (Fig. 3.8).[47] This case attests to the persistence of this tradition of creating privileged, lacquered spaces. In both spaces, sensory bundling was recreated in a greater detail.

3.2.3.3 Objects: The Visual Dialogue of Lacquer and Bronze

The continuity of the red-and-black palette from the Shang to the Eastern Zhou reveals a profound aesthetic tradition. It transcended groups and regions and endure alongside the transmission of materials. There was a shift in the primary colour scheme of ritual vessels, away from the golden bronze to the vibrant lacquerware. This process is visible in the complex visual dialogue between the two materials.

Initially, in the late Western Zhou and early Eastern Zhou, lacquer served to accentuate bronze. It is possible that the practise was an imitation of lacquerware such as the Liangzhu lacquer goblet at Bianjiashan mentioned in the previous chapter as the early source. It is decorated with

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[45] Yan Shigu notes: '椒房，殿名，皇后所居也，以椒和泥涂壁，取其温而芳也。' ('"Pepper Chamber" is the name of a palace hall where the empress resides. The walls are coated with a mixture of pepper and clay to create a warm and fragrant ambiance.') in *Hanshu* (Han dynasty; 2020), 2499-500, 2542. The term also came to refer to the empress herself or her powerful relatives. See *ibid.,* 3387, 3400-2, 3405.

[46] Various species of the genus *Zanthoxylum* have been found in the Chu region. Yang, Chunyu (杨纯瑜) (1992), 'Zhongguo huajiao shu de yaoyong zhiwu (中国花椒属的药用植物)', *Zhongcaoyao (中草药)*, 23 (1), 45-46.

[47] Floors in the side chambers were uniformly coated with cinnabars, whereas those in the main chambers were only lacquered. Xuzhou bowuguan, (徐州博物馆) and Nanjing daxue lishixue xi kaogu zhuanye, (南京大学历史学系考古专业) (2003), *Xuzhou Beidongshan xi Han Chuwang mu (徐州北洞山西汉楚王墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 14-31, Colour Plates 6-11.

red lines filled with black lacquer in between to depict deformed cloud and thunder patterns.[48] On a *gu* (觚) goblet from the Zhuangbai bronze hoard, a thin line of vermilion lacquer was painted on the interior of the rim.[49] On lidded *dou* (豆) plates from the Jin state, the grooves intended for gold inlays were partially filled with black and brown lacquer (Fig. 3.9a).[50] The early Chu tombs closer to the north also exhibit such features. In early Chu tombs, such as at Wangpo and Xiasi, black lacquer was similarly applied to the fine grooves of bronze *ding* (鼎) tripods to make the patterns stand out with greater clarity through the colour contrast (Fig. 3.9b).[51] Lacquered bronze vessels of a similar style were also discovered in tombs at Xiasi and Heshangling in Xichuan county, both of which belonged to high-ranking elites in the Chu state (Fig. 3.9c).[52] Tripods of this type were commonplace in elites' everyday meals. Lacquer was mainly applied to the fine grooves all over the surface with patterns. The whole body was then polished to remove the additional lacquer on the convex lines.[53] Their motifs were made more distinct and accentuated by the colour contrast between gold and black, resulting in more clarity. Although this way of decoration lasted very briefly, this practice demonstrates an increased desire among elites to make the designs on their ritual vessels more noticeable in detail. This marks a departure from the stylistic restraints of the earlier Western Zhou Ritual Reforms.[54] Over time, this relationship between bronze and lacuqer inverted. The limited period during which bronze was coated with lacquer may have been indicative of the increased significance

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48 Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2014), 400.

49 Shanxi Bowuguan, (山西博物院) and Baoji qingtongqi bowuyuan, (宝鸡青铜器博物院) (2015), *Fengming Qishan: Zhouyuan qingtong yishu (凤鸣岐山：周原青铜艺术)* (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe), 115.

50 Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, (山西省考古研究所) *et al.* (1996), *Taiyuan Jin guo Zhao qing mu (太原晋国赵卿墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 38-40, fig. 18, pl. 30.

51 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) *et al.* (2005), *Xiangyang Wangpo dong Zhou Qin Han mu (襄阳王坡东周秦汉墓)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe), 30-1, figs. 19, 20, 21, Colour Plates 4-1, 5, pls. 1, 3.

52 M7:6 and M36:1, 2 at Xiasi, see Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xichuan xian bowuguan (1991), 28, 39-40, figs. 21, 22-1, 12-2, pl. 12-1, 2, fig. 32, pl. 16-1. M1:9 and 4 in Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (河南省文物考古研究所) *et al.* (2004), *Xichuan Heshangling yu Xujialing Chu mu (淅川和尚岭与徐家岭楚墓)* (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe), 9, 12; Xichuan xian bowuguan, (淅川县博物馆) (2013), *Xichuan Chu guo qingtongqi jingcui (淅川楚国青铜器精粹)* (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe), 4.

53 Xichuan xian bowuguan (2013), 31.

54 See a brief summary in section 5.1.1 Chapter 5, 65.

of lacquer in subsequent eras. Bronze ceased to be associated with ostentation and its nearly exclusive ritual function, which it had during the preceding Zhou Dynasty. In the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng, the bronze figurines on the great bell-stand were intentionally coated in dark lacquer. Their metallic nature was concealed to harmonise with the predominantly lacquered wooden structure (Fig. 3.10).[55] By the late Warring States period (4th century B.C.), at sites such as Mayishunxiang, the transformation was complete. A bronze *ding* tripod was lacquered entirely under intricate cloud and scroll patterns, its bronze carcass reduced to a mere structural core (Fig. 3.11).[56] The situation had become the opposite of that in the Western Zhou. The bronze vessel had begun to imitate the lacquer vessel in both its lightweight form and its decorative patterns, a clear testament to lacquer's triumph as the defining aesthetic of the age.

3.3 Materiality Reconsidered: Lacquer in the Eastern Zhou Mind

The sensory experiences engendered by lacquer laid the foundation for a deeper epistemological shift during the Eastern Zhou. The experiences also provide a clear comparison of the 'philosophical wheel' introduced at the outset of this chapter. The discussion on *materiality* is made under a Chinese context. Especially during the Eastern Zhou period, the elites demonstrated a heightened understanding of technical advancements. The awareness enabled them to explore previously overlooked realms of thoughts. This led to significant advancements in both theoretical and practical knowledge pertaining to lacquer, as well as a more nuanced comprehension of the emotional and physical reactions elicited by this material. The philosopher Zhuangzi himself may have been the official responsible for managing the lacquer tree forest for seven years.[57] On this basis, his philosophical reflections may have been aided by his appointment. In this period, the knowledge of the material and procedures linked with lacquer is a result of a learned process, which involves extensive usage and experimentation of

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[55] Hubei sheng bowuguan, (湖北省博物馆) (1989a), *Zeng Hou Yi mu (曾侯乙墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 77-9.

[56] Changsha shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (长沙市文物考古研究所) (2003), 'Changsha shi Mayi Shunxiang yi hao Chu mu (长沙市马益顺巷一号楚墓)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (4), 50-73.

[57] Zhuangzi, a native of Meng county in the state of Song, was once the 'official in charge of the lacquer garden' ('尝为漆园吏'). *Shiji* (Han dynasty; 2014), 2608-9.

lacquer craftsmanship. As the dramatic material change from bronze to lacquer, it provided fertile ground for a corresponding flourishing of philosophical inquiry. This inquiry often revolved around a central tension: the relationship between an object's practical utility and its deeper, intrinsic nature.

3.3.1 Utility and Uselessness: A Daoist Critique

The concept of 用 (yòng, utility) was paramount in Eastern Zhou thought. Considerable attention and intellectual inquiry have been directed towards elucidating the intricate interplay between materiality, craftsmanship, utility, aesthetic forms, and conducive circumstances. These elements serve as indicators of the social and philosophical changes pertaining to the materials in question.

A passage in the *Rites of the Zhou* titled *Kaogongji* (考工记 *the Artificers' records*) highlights the beauty of materials and the creativity of craftsmanship.[58] Good craftsmanship arises from the perfect marriage of quality materials and skilled application, dictated by time and place. This represents the valuation of usefulness. The philosophers of the era, however, offered a powerful critique of this single-minded focus on utility. The *Zhuangzi* famously laments the fate of the lacquer tree: 'The cinnamon can be eaten, so it is cut down; the lacquer tree can be used, so it is hacked apart. All men know the use of the useful, but nobody knows the use of the useless'.[59] This observation reveals a deep anxiety about a world where an object's value is reduced to its practical function. Usefulness and uselessness are not absolute but contingent on circumstances.

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[58] '天有时，地有气，材有美，工有巧，合此四者，然后可以为良。' ('Heaven has its seasons, Earth has its vital energy (*qi*), materials have their beauty, and artisans have their skill. When these four are combined, excellence can be achieved.') dynasty), *"Zhouli" yizhu* (*Translation and Annotation on the Rites of the Zhou* 《周礼》译注), (2016), trans. Yang, Tianyu (杨天宇), (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe), 793-4. Anonymous (2014). 864-8.

[59] '山木，自寇也；膏火，自煎也。桂可食，故伐之；漆可用，故割之。人皆知有用之用，而莫知无用之用也。' ('The mountain tree is its own robber; the torch is its own consumer. The cinnamon tree is edible, so it is felled; the lacquer tree is usable, so it is tapped. Everyone knows the use of the useful, but no one knows the use of the useless.'). See 'Renjian shi [In the World of Men] (人间世)' in Zhuang, Zhou (庄周) (the Warring States period; 2003), *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings*, trans. Watson, Burton, (New York: Columbia University Press), 49-62; 'Renjian shi (人间世)', in Fang, Yong (方勇) and Liu, Tao (刘涛) (eds.), *Zhuangzi yizhu [Translation and Annoration on Zhuangzi] (庄子译注)* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe), 75-6.

Lacquer, is undoubtedly more effortlessly 'useful', whose utility extends beyond bronze. Copper melting requires a great deal of labour and material resources of a higher quality. Lacquer, on the other hand, is simpler to produce on a small scale and more practical and economical. Lacquer's utility simultaneously became a focal point for critiques about the very nature of value. This philosophical current also manifested in a decreased emphasis on altering vessel forms. This phenomenon likely arises from a shift in emphasis towards the material properties and the interplay between materials, forms, and users. Form was seen as subordinate to its intended utility. As anthropologist Daniel Miller posits, form is not the object itself but entails all the 'subtle connections' that its qualities elicit.[60] This also suggests that subordination, within the discussion of either materials, forms, or materiality, is thus essential as a defining characteristic of what separates the natural from the artificial.[61]

Bearing the emphasis on subordination in mind, the user contributes to the object's usefulness, but is in turn acted upon by the object, a concept similar to modern theories of object agency.[62] This is strikingly articulated in Zhuangzi's philosophy: the world employs the mighty Emperor Yao while he simultaneously governs the entire domain.[63] In this view, individuals are also 'used' by the things of the world, rendering the nature of utility partial and relational.[64]

This intellectual climate, which placed a higher stress on a material's natural state of being, helps to explain a key feature of the Eastern Zhou period. The emphasis of lacquerware was on

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60 Howes (2022), 330.

61 Yang, Lihua (杨立华) (2018), *Yiben yu shengsheng: li yiyuan lun gangyao (一本与生生：理一元论纲要)* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian), 109.

62 Gell (1998), 12-27. See two articles in Chua, Liana and Elliott, Mark (eds.), *Distributed Objects: Meaning and Mattering after Alfred Gell* (New York: Berghahn): Chua, Liana and Elliott, Mark (2015), 'Adventures in the Art Nexus', 1-24; Küchler, Susanne (2015), 'Threads of Thought', 25-39.

63 Zhuangzi highlights the relativity of utility. In 'Free and Easy Wandering', Xu You declines rulership of the world, stating: '予无所用于天下' ('I have no use for rulership of the world'). Yao, after visiting the Four Masters, '窅然丧其天下焉' ('was dazed and had forgotten his kingdom there'). See Zhuang, Zhou (庄周) (the Warring States period; 2020), 'Xiaoyaoyou [Free and Easy Wandering] (逍遥游)', in *Zhuangzi jin zhu jin yi [Contemporary Notes and Translations of the Zhuangzi] (庄子今注今译)*, translated and annotated by Chen, Guying (陈鼓应), (1;Beijing: Zhonghua shuju [Zhonghua Book Company]), 3-35; 'Free and Easy Wandering (逍遥游)' in *Zhuangzi* (the Warring States period; 2003), 21-30. See a full discussion in Yang, Lihua (杨立华) (2020), *Zhuangzi zhexue yanjiu (庄子哲学研究)* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe), 301.

64 Yang (2020), 301.

the substitution of materials within existing vessel types, rather than on the invention of new forms. As the significance of the relationship between user and object surpassed that of form itself, a new concept of 'utility' emerged, supported by a refined sensory experience. The ritual connotations of bronze, traditionally rooted in its inherent properties such as weight and enduring shape, were gradually separated from the physical material itself. This separation substantially weakened the ontological significance of bronze, decentring it from its long-held position as the most venerated of materials. The transition from bronze to lacquer, therefore, even while maintaining most of the same vessel forms, represents a profound change in societal perception, signifying a new preference for lightness and functional versatility in both daily and ritual settings.

3.3.2 The Artisan's Way: Body, Mind, and Time

Beyond abstract utility, the very craft of lacquer offered a unique philosophical paradigm centred on the artisan's embodied knowledge and relationship with time.

3.3.2.1 Body and Heart-Mind (心)

The essence of lacquer is not innate. Its 'lacquerness' is achieved through the intimate intervention of the artisan. The 16th century book *Xiushilu* (*Records of Lacquering*) captures this with a powerful allegory: the wooden base is the 'skeleton', while the lacquer layers are the 'flesh'.[65] This allegory promoting life is uncommon in other sources. The widespread belief that lacquer can "bite" and induce skin allergies also makes it vital.[66] Bronze and jade are monolithic; they have no 'flesh' and 'bone'. 'Lacquerness' is thus an impression born from skill, achieved through the hands of the craftsman. This process is analogous to how an unworked stone is transformed by artificial skills such as cutting and polishing to reveal the 'real' quality of jade.[67]

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65 '巧法造化、质则人身、文象阴阳' ('Skill emulates creation, substance is based on the human body, and patterns symbolise yin and yang.') Wang (2013), 28-9, 43.

66 The allergic reaction to raw lacquer (rhus dermatitis) is caused by urushiol reacting with skin protein. As little as 0.001 mg can cause redness, swelling, and blistering. See Guo (2020), 24. See the description on the allergies by a lacquer artist. Akagi (2017), 74-95.

67 Wu, Hung (巫鸿) (2023), '"Caizhi" yu Zhongguo yishu de qiyuan ("材质"与中国艺术的起源)', in Wu, Hung 巫鸿 (ed.), *Yishu yu wuxing [Art and Materiality] (艺术与物性)* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe), 7-32.

This intimate process enhanced the sensory experience for both maker and user, and this deeper comprehension drove technical innovation during the Eastern Zhou.

To achieve this quality, a craftsman's expertise had to be integrated with his entire being. While separated by millennia, Chinese philosophy and Western anthropology share similar concepts on the extension of mind and body. In the Western framework, for instance, anthropologist Lambros Malafouris posits that the mind is not confined to the brain but extends into the world through the transactional relationship between hands, tools, and materials.[68] The Chinese tradition, however, conceptualises this nexus not as an external process, but through an internal organ: the heart-mind (心, xīn). The *Zhuangzi* provides the ultimate epistemological framework for this in the story of Cook Ding, who no longer saw the ox with his eyes but encountered it with his spirit (神).[69] Active cognition ceases. Only then can the intuitive heart-mind—the capacity for skilful, embodied knowledge—begin to function. The interaction of hand, knife, and ox becomes an act of unfettered creation, much like the later ideal in calligraphy of the seamless flow between mind, hand, and brushstroke.[70] To acquire such freedom in tool mastery, therefore, requires the harmonisation of a sequence of subject-object relationships: first between

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[68] Malafouris, Lambros (2021), 'Making Hands and Tools: Steps to a Process Archaeology of Mind', *World Archaeology*, 53 (1), 38-55. Alessandroni, Nicolás and Malafouris, Lambros (2022), 'Blurring Ontological Boundaries: The Transactional Nature of Material Engagement', *Adaptive Behavior*, 127-31.

[69] '臣之所好者道也，进乎技矣。始臣之解牛之时，所见无非全牛者。三年之后，未尝见全牛也。方今之时，臣以神遇而不以目视，官知止而神欲行。' ('What I care about is the Way, which goes beyond skill. When I first began cutting up oxen, all I could see was the ox itself. After three years I no longer saw the whole ox. And now—now I go at it by spirit and don't look with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop and spirit moves where it wants.') See *Zhuangzi* (the Warring States period; 2003; 2019). Sterckx, Roel (2022), *Zhongguo sixiang: Cong Kongfuzi dao Paoding (中国思想: 从孔夫子到庖丁)* (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe), 57-82.

[70] The Song dynasty poet Su Shi argued that to paint bamboo, one must first have the complete image 'in one's mind' ('成竹于胸中'). The Qing painter Zheng Banqiao later developed this into three concepts: 'bamboo in the eyes' (眼中之竹), 'bamboo in the mind' (胸中之竹), and 'bamboo in the hands' (手中之竹), suggesting artistic expression should not be constrained by reality. See Su, Shi (苏轼) (Northern Song, 1037- 1101 A.D.; 1986), 'Wen Yuke hua Yundang gu yan zhu ji (文与可画筼筜谷偃竹记)', *Su Shi wenji (苏轼文集)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju [Zhonghua Book Company]), 365-7; Zheng, Xie (郑燮) (Qing dynasty, 1693-1766 A.D.; 1985), *Zheng Banqiao quanji* [Collections of Works by Zheng Banqiao] *(郑板桥全集)*, ed. Bian, Xiaoxuan (卞孝萱), (Jinan: Shandong Qilu shushe [Shandong Qilu Publishing Co., Ltd.]), 198-203; Liu, Yue (刘越) (2019), '"Xiong you cheng zhu" yu "xiong wu cheng zhu"——tan shanshuihua xiesheng zhong de "guifan" yu "ziyou" ("胸有成竹"与"胸无成竹"——谈山水画写生中的"规范"与"自由")', *Meishu guancha (美术观察)*, 2, 61-62.

the heart-mind and the hand, and then between the hand and the material itself.

This profound contemplation of craftsmanship was facilitated by alterations in the tools themselves. No lacquer-making tools from the period have been identified. However, when compared to the Western Zhou other elite toolkits, there shows a tendency towards becoming finer with the addition of more categories for cutting, carving, sharpening and writing on bamboo slips (Fig. 3.12). The delicate and compact tools of the Eastern Zhou period were likely employed to sharpen and repair writing bamboo slips. We may identify parallels and differences by comparing them to the tools on the workstation of contemporary lacquer artists (Fig. 3.13). The intricate designs of Warring States lacquerware suggest that their production tools must have been similarly small, refined, and accurate. As craftsmen's tools became more sophisticated, the elites' own perception of tools was refined through their engagement in delicate manual tasks such as writing on bamboo slips. This interaction, for both artisan and user, represents a further integration of body and mind, leading to a state of 'spontaneity' (zìrán, 自然), just as with Cook Ding.

Creating a lacquer masterpiece in this era required more than sophisticated tools and techniques; it demanded a specific philosophical approach. The ultimate goal was to grasp the correlation between the physical instrument and the human body, a process guided by the intuitive heart-mind (心, xīn). This understanding established a clear hierarchy: technique was not an end in itself but was always subordinated and adapted to the unique texture and properties of the material. Crucially, this deep material consciousness was an experience shared not only by the craftsmen but also by the elite users who were increasingly involved in the production process.

3.3.2.2 The Passage of Time (Temporality)

A profound, and often overlooked, aspect of lacquer craftsmanship is its unique relationship with time. Unlike the relatively swift process of bronze casting, lacquering is an art of patience and cycles. As modern lacquer artists attest, the process is considerably more complex than painting. The viscous lacquer must be applied in the thinnest possible layer with a brush that

requires considerable strength, or 'tendon'.[71] Therefore, the development of instruments (skillful use of brushes) is only a part of the lacquerware manufacturing process. More importantly, craftsmen must comprehend and grasp the scope of time in the continuous advance and retreat and time cycles.

Unfortunately, temporality is an aspect of Chinese philosophy that has either been disregarded or is difficult to articulate. Temporality is the method of perceiving the passage of time as a cycle or a decline, a drop or instability, a return or a constant presence.[72] A distinction in perception likely existed between the artisan and the patron. The elites were primarily concerned with the usage of the final lacquered product and its role in the afterlife. Their awareness of the temporality generated during the production process was likely indirect. The craftsman, by contrast, gained a direct, internalised experience of time's cyclical nature through the demands of the material itself.

In the manufacture of lacquer, time assumes a constant and cyclical conception of existence. Several operations must wait for the previous layer to cure, a process that could take months for small objects and years for larger ones. Time itself becomes embedded in the object, each layer a physical stratum of labour and patience (Fig. 3.14).[73] The object's infinite depth can be read as a vertical archaeological stratum, a manifestation of time itself eternally unfolding. The understanding of lacquer's temporal nature has also facilitated the administration of lacquerware production during this era. Specifically, additional production procedures and divisions were allocated in accordance with the various lacquering layers and procedures. This comprehension may have played a role in the emergence of lacquer craftsmanship characterised by enhanced proficiency during the subsequent Qin and Han dynasties.

As Alfred Gell observed, a collection of artworks can form 'a macro-object, or temporal object,

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[71] Nagatoshi (2022). 98-100. Totoki, Akiyoshi (十时启悦) *et al.* (2018), *Qiqi xiutu zhuangshi xiushan jifa quanshu (漆器髹涂·装饰·修缮技法全书)*, trans. Wu, Zhenzhen (吴珍珍), (Beijing: Huaxue gongye chubanshe), 18.

[72] Latour, Bruno, (2010), 'Women congwei xiandai guo: duichengxing renleixue lunji [We Have Never Been Modern] (我们从未现代过: 对称性人类学论集)', (Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe), 140.

[73] It will take one to two months to complete a conventional lacquer bowl in Japanese style using modern techniques. Totoki *et al.* (2018), 50.

which evolves over time'.[74] A single piece of lacquerware, with its layered construction, is already such a macro-object, condensing time within its production. This value, as Claude Lévi-Strauss commented regarding traditional Japanese lacquer art, is derived from having truly experienced time and cannot be replicated by modern shortcuts.[75] In essence, this demonstrates that the time precipitation of objects is not merely the result of having comparable appearances, but that they actually experience time in temporality and obtain life and afterlife. The end result is a harmonious expression of the artisan's sensibility and the passage of time.

This temporality was also made manifest in ritual. The larger artefacts, including the elites' coffins, were mostly lacquered at least twice. The lacquering process has also become a ritual itself. The practice of a king beginning the construction of his own inner coffin upon ascension, with a new layer of lacquer applied annually, transforms the object into a chronicle of his reign.[76] The coffin's production, perpetually incomplete until death, becomes a representation of the reign's persistence. This ritualised production process could serve as a constant reminder to the ruler, urging a clear judgement of the regime and a cherishing of life's process, even while acknowledging temporality.

3.3.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the ascendancy of lacquer in the Eastern Zhou period was not merely a change of material, but a revolution in sense, society, and philosophy. As this chapter has demonstrated, the transition from bronze introduced a new sensory world: the ritualised aromas of the tomb, the warm tactility of daily vessels, and the powerful visual language of red and black that came to dominate elite spaces. This new material reality, in turn, provided the impetus for profound intellectual inquiry. It forced a confrontation with the concept of utility (yòng), as captured in

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74 Gell (1998), 233; Chua and Elliott (2015), 10.

75 Yotsuyanagi (2021), 274. In 1977, the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss investigates lacquer work in Wajima under the direction of the renowned lacquer art master Weisaburo. 'Lévi-Strauss hoped that the lacquer artists would be more conservative,' he recalled. This may also indicate that he believes that the layers of lacquerware are sufficiently mature and complex, so that the overall visual presentation and meaning are relatively complete, and there is no need to add more. Akagi (2017), 5.

76 '君即位而为椑（内棺），岁一漆之，藏焉。' ('Following his ascension, the king initiated the production of his inner coffee. It was lacquered annually and subsequently stored until his death.') See the article *Tangong* 檀弓 in *Liji* (Han dynasty; 2019), 165.

the Daoist critique of pragmatism, and illuminated a unique epistemology of craft rooted in the artisan's embodied knowledge (xīn, heart-mind) and intimate relationship with time.

The value of bronze was ontological, divine, and suited to a rigid, ancestral hierarchy. The value of lacquer, by contrast, was a testament to human endeavour. It was created through immense and highly organised investments of labour, specialised knowledge, and patience. Therefore, lacquer became the ideal medium through which the emergent elite could demonstrate their power—not through inherited right alone, but through their command over craft, resources, and time. This is powerfully summarised in *On Salt and Iron* (盐铁论), a Han-dynasty text reflecting on the immense cost of these objects: 'A cup requires the labour of one hundred individuals, while a screen demands the effort of ten thousand'.[77] It was this deep, inherited understanding that enabled the craftsmen of the Eastern Zhou, particularly in the state of Chu, to imbue lacquer with the social, political and philosophical meanings that the following chapters, with their focus on specific applications such as feasts, will explore.

[77] '一杯棬用百人之力,一屏风就万人之功。' ('One lacquered cup requires the labour of a hundred men; one screen, the work of ten thousand.') Huan, Kuan (桓宽) (1st century B.C Western Han; 2017), *Yan tie lun jiaozhu (盐铁论校注)*, collated and annotated by Wang, Liqi (王利器), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 330-1, 373.

4 The Stage for Lacquer: Chu Tomb Contexts

The preceding chapters have established the many advantages of lacquerware as a prestige good. This chapter now turns to the tomb contexts in which these objects performed their most significant social and ritual roles. Tombs are controversial spaces.[1] They, primarily their structure, furnishings and contents, can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Tomb spaces are ideal for examining the interplay of social relations, historical memory, and cosmology.[2] To understand the profound changes in Chu ritual vessel assemblages, one must first understand the evolving burial contexts they inhabited.

The ritual framework of the entire Zhou cultural sphere, including Chu, was profoundly shaped by the Ritual Reform of the mid- to late Western Zhou period. Ritual sets are routinely recurring collections of vessels to make ritual food and drink offerings to ancestors.[3] Based on the types, assemblages and patterns of the vessels, Jessica Rawson firstly points out a major change at the mid-late Western Zhou period, represented by a line of ritual sets from the same family in the Zhuangbai hoard at Fufeng, Shaanxi.[4] The Chu ritual tradition, while inheriting this legacy, underwent its own significant modifications. Key characteristics from the northwest, and significant influences from the east, also contributed to Chu in creating a style that was uniquely its own. Hence, it is imperative to possess a fundamental comprehension of the Reform as a preliminary step. It provides the benchmark against which we can measure the resemblances, disparities, and ultimate transformations that defined the unique ritual characteristics of Chu.

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1 In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault describes archaeology as a method that studies 'discursive formations' in spaces of controversy. See Foucault, Michel (2003), *zhishi kaoguxue [L'Archéologie du savoir The Archaeology of Knowledge] (知识考古学)* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian), 169.

2 Wu, Hung (巫鸿) (2010), *Huangquan xia de meishu (黄泉下的美术)* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian), 3.

3 Rawson, Jessica (1986), 'A Bronze-Casting Revolution in the Western Zhou and Its Impact on Provincial Industries', in Maddin, R. (ed.), *The Beginning of the Use of Metals and Alloys* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press), 228-9.

4 The ritual set was widely utilised during the Western Zhou period, particularly in the metropolitan region of the Zhou realm, which comprised sections of Shaanxi, Henan, Hebei, and Shandong. *Ibid.* 228-30. Rawson, Jessica (1989), 'Statesmen or Barbarians? The Western Zhou as Seen Through Their Bronzes', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 75, 71-95.

4.1 The Zhou Legacy: a Northern Benchmark after the Ritual Reform

To trace the development of Chu tombs, a traditional Zhou cemetery must serve as a benchmark. The State of Guo maintains a reasonably intact Zhou tradition.[5] The Guo state tombs (8th-7th century B.C.)[6] locate at Sanmenxia, the northwest of today's Henan, west of the Eastern Zhou capital, Luoyang.[7] There are typical Zhou tomb features after the Ritual Reform as were shown by Duke Ji's tomb in the Guo-state cemetery (Fig. 4.1). The main pit, accessed by a ramp, contained a wooden encasement with secondary ledges for offerings. Grave goods were placed in sections, but without physical partitions or compartments. The space for these goods was a mere 16 square metres. The abundant items must be arranged in a stacked formation.[8] The composition of these goods was also traditional: over ninety per cent were bronze or jade, the long-established symbols of status. The tomb also contained prestige objects of foreign origin, such as an iron sword with a jade handle, suggesting contact with regions to

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[5] To date, no Western Zhou royal tombs have been excavated. Therefore, burials of the feudal states of Guo and Zheng, which were close allies of the Zhou, are often used to reconstruct Zhou ritual traditions. The Zuo Tradition notes Guo's high status: '夏，虢公忌父始作卿士于周。' ('In summer, Jifu, the Duke of Guo, began to act as chief minister in Zhou.') See Lord Yin 8 (715 B.C.), in Durrant *et al.* (2016), 48-9. The text also records rituals performed by Guo specialists, suggesting a well-established system: '神居莘六月。虢公使祝应、宗区、史嚚享焉。' ('The spirit dwelled in Shen for six months. The Duke of Guo had the invocator Ying, the ancestral attendant Qu, and the scribe Yin make offerings to it.'). See Lord Zhuang 32 (662 B.C.) *ibid.,* 222-3.

[6] The excavator's opinion is that the date is the late Western Zhou period of the Xuan and You reigns (ca. 825-771 B.C.). The dating of the Guo state cemetery is debated. Excavators initially placed it in the late Western Zhou (ca. 825–771 B.C.). However, recent scholarship, based on textual evidence and bronzeware typology, suggests a later date in the early Spring and Autumn period (8th–7th century B.C.). For the initial dating, see Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1999a), 225, 313, 379; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, (中国社会科学院考古研究所) (1959), *Shangcunling Guoguo mudi (上村岭虢国墓地)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe), 50; Peng, Yushang (彭裕商) (2006), 'Guoguo dongqian kao (虢国东迁考)', *Lishi yanjiu (历史研究)*, 5, 12-22; Wang, Entian (王恩田) (2012), '"Erwang bingli" yu Guoguo mudi niandai shangxian — jianlun yihao jiuhao damu ji Guogong Ji mu yu Guozhong Linfu mu ("二王并立"与虢国墓地年代上限——兼论一号，九号大墓即虢公忌墓与虢仲林父墓)', *Huaxia kaogu (华夏考古)*, (4), 85-91; Jia, Hongbo (贾洪波) (2014), 'Guanyu Guoguo mudi de niandai he M2001, M2009 de muzhu wenti (关于虢国墓地的年代和 M2001, M2009 的墓主问题)', *Zhongyuan wenwu (中原文物)*, (6), 17-25; Scholars generally agree that the state was destroyed in 655 B.C., as recorded in the *Zuo Tradition*: '冬，十二月丙子，朔，晋灭虢' ('In the winter, in the twelfth month, on the bingzi day, Jin destroyed Guo.'). See Lord Xi 5 (655 B.C.) in Durrant *et al.* (2016), 278-9.

[7] Two major excavations of the cemetery, in the 1950s and 1990s, yielded the tombs of Guo's high-ranking elites. The tombs include Guo prince's tomb (M1052) as well as Guo duke's (M2001) and his wife (Liangji)'s tomb (M2012). See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo (1959); Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1999).

[8] The number is reached by the calculation of the area in between the encasement and the coffins. Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1999),15-9.

the north and northwest.[9] In a separate pit, a grand entourage of sixteen chariots, sixty-four horses, and six dogs was buried.[10] These features collectively represent the Zhou ritual tradition that Chu both inherited and radically transformed.

4.2 The Formation of a Chu Tradition (Before the 5th century B.C.)

Chu tombs exhibit changing features as they reflect influences and sources, as well as changes in practises over time. Using the 5th century B.C. as a chronological benchmark, we can identify four primary spheres of influence that shaped the formative stages of Chu burial traditions (Fig.1.1). These include the Han River basin, a core of early Chu elite tombs showing outsider features; the Huai River basin, a portal to Chu's northern and eastern neighbours; the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, distinguished by the early adoption of lacquer ritual vessels; and the powerful neighbouring state of Zeng. Understanding the unique characteristics of each region, represented by major tombs, provides the necessary context for analysing the later shifts in Chu ritual sets.

4.2.1 The Northeastern Connection: The Han River Basin

The major cemeteries of the early Chu elite, such as the generational burial site at Xiasi in Xichuan (ca. 600–476 B.C.), are located in the Han and Dan River basins.[11] Situated only 180 kilometres from the former Guo state, this region reveals a tradition markedly distinct from the Zhou benchmark.[12] The tomb chambers at Xiasi were more spacious, allowing burial goods to be laid flat rather than stacked.[13] The primary departure was the tomb's orientation. The consistent east-west alignment found at Xiasi, Xujialing, and Heshangling stands in stark contrast to the Zhou north-south model.[14] Yet, the Xiasi cemetery finds a precedent in the 11th-

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[9] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1999), 126-127; See Gao, Zhixi (高至喜) (1995), *Chu wenhua de nanjian* [The Southward Diffusion of Chu Culture] *(楚文化的南渐)* (Wuhan: Hubei jiaoyu chubanshe [Hubei Education Press]), 278.
[10] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1999), 227.
[11] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (河南省文物考古研究所) and Xichuan xian bowuguan, (淅川县博物馆) (1991), 23-45.
[12] This is a linear distance calculated using modern online maps.
[13] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xichuan xian bowuguan (1991), 50-1.
[14] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2004), 5, 122.

century B.C. tombs of the Yu state in the northwest, suggesting a deliberate indication of a non-Zhou provenance.[15]

This connection to the northwest is further evidenced by the tradition of burying human attendants with the deceased, a practice found in numerous 7th to 6th-century B.C. Chu tombs in this area (Fig. 4.2). At Xiasi, the deceased was buried on his back with more jades, while the attendant had very few goods, indicating a difference in status.[16] There was also a clear status distinction between attendants in parallel coffins and those surrounding the owner at Qiaojiayuan cemetery. The attendant, for example, was coffined in Qiaojiayuan M4, whereas the human companions in his wife's tomb were merely wrapped in linen and buried at her foot.[17] These examples echo earlier practices at the Yu state site of Rujiazhuang (11th-century B.C.), where a leader was buried surrounded by children and girls in simple wooden boxes. Some of them were also wearing linen clothes with hands tied for death.[18]

The choice of specific burial goods also reinforces this link. The use of thick layers of cinnabar, not seen in Guo tombs but abundant in 11th to 10th-century B.C. burials of the Yu and Ying states, appears in the earliest Chu tombs at Qiaojiayuan and Xiasi (M7 and M8 of the 7th century B.C.). The use of cinnabar suggests the continuation of a specific regional or clan tradition. Even more unusual is the ritual burial of antlers. At Xichuan and Qiaojiayuan, pairs of antlers were placed near the tomb owner's head (Figs. 4.3a and b).[19] A few show signs of handling with a smooth surface. The ends were cut with rectangular mortise and tenon holes or drilled holes, and they may have been fixed to a base.[20] The practice persisted from the 7th to the 4th century. One instance shows that antlers were even lacquered in black and decorated

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15 Lu, Liancheng (卢连成) *et al.* (1988), *Baoji Yuguo mudi (宝鸡(弓鱼)国墓地)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 43-5, fig. 32.

16 This is seen in the earliest group of burials, M7/8, from the seventh century BC. Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xichuan xian bowuguan (1991), 5.

17 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) and Hubei sheng wenwuju nanshui beidiao bangongshi, (湖北省文物局南水北调办公室) (2008), 'Hubei Yun xian Qiaojiayuan Chunqiu xunren mu (湖北郧县乔家院春秋殉人墓)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (04), 28-50+99-101.

18 Lu *et al.* (1988), 361.

19 Examples include tombs Xiasi M3/10, Qiaojiayuan M5/6, and Xujialing M3. Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xichuan xian bowuguan (1991), 212-3.

20 Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2004), 172.

with gold foil in the 6th century BC.[21] This gold foil, on the other hand, has shown an outside aesthetic. This practice, persisting for centuries, also finds its earliest precedent in the tomb of a Yu state leader, where antlers were similarly placed near the deceased's head.[22] They were incised and filled with red cinnabar and holes were drilled for unknown reasons.[23] In the north-west and south-west, respectively, there were also antlers found in 6th-century B.C. Qin tomb and Ba tomb after the 3th century B.C.[24] As a result, although antlers may have had varied implications in burial practises, they have survived for a long time in a much broader geographic region.

Overall, burials in this region have some common characteristics in tomb layout, attendant burial, and ritual objects. They are likely to be seen as an assimilation and refinement of funerary practices, combining those of the local and north-western elites. Thus, the Chu elites of this area were likely in long-term communication with the north-west. Despite Chu's political ambitions towards the Zhou heartland, the elites in this region were more concerned with preserving and adapting powerful traditions from the northwest.

4.2.2 The Eastern Influence: Huai River and branches

With its strategic location around modern-day Xinyang, the Huai River basin served as a stronghold for frequent exchanges and conflicts between Chu, its eastern neighbours, and the northern states. The tombs in this region are consequently a complex hybrid, presenting a variety of both Zhou and non-Zhou features.[25] The earliest Chu-associated burials here are not purely Chu, but belong to smaller states such as Fan and Huang which were absorbed by Chu

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[21] Hubei sheng bowuguan, (湖北省博物館) (1983), 'Xiangyang Shanwan Dongzhou muzang fajue baogao (襄阳山湾东周墓葬发掘报告)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (2), 24-5.
[22] Lu *et al.* (1988), 379, 383.
[23] *Ibid.*, 379, 383.
[24] Zaoqi Qin wenhua lianhe kaogudui, (早期秦文化联合考古队) (2008), '2006 nian Gansu Lixian Dapuzishan dongzhou muzang fajue jianbao (2006 年甘肃礼县大堡子山东周墓葬发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (11), 30-49+1; Chongqing shi wenhua yichan yanjiuyuan, (重庆市文化遗产研究院) *et al.* (2016), 'Chongqing Fuling Xiaotianxi muzangqun M12 fajue jianbao (重庆涪陵小田溪墓群 M12 发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (09), 4-27+2+1.
[25] Wang, Xun (王迅) (1994), *Dong Yi wenhua yu Huai Yi wenhua yanjiu (东夷文化与淮夷文化研究)*, (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe), 56-79.

in the 7th century B.C.[26] While these burials show some northwestern connections, such as the east-west orientation and joint couple burials seen at Zhangjiapo, the predominant influences in this region point eastward.[27]

A clear link to the east is the inclusion of a secondary ledge or separate chamber for grave goods as can be seen in the Huang and Fan burials.[28] In the eastern areas, this practise was prevalent such as the Liujiadianzi in Shandong, which is believed to be a Ju leader (Fig. 4.4).[29] This connection is further solidified by specific artefacts. A bronze basin and tray inscribed with the name of a Huang state prince found at a Ju site illustrates remote but direct personal contact. Even more telling are the funeral goods of the Huang lord's wife: a rare surviving piece of purple-dyed *juan* (绢) silk, a textile strongly indicative of a connection with the eastern state of Qi.[30]

Layouts and attendants also reveal a blend of influences. The most typical are the two tombs at Hougudui and Baishizidi, which were only five hundred metres apart (Figs. 4.5 and 4.6).[31] In each tomb, the central pit was surrounded by coffins and a few attendants on an outer platform on four sides. A total of thirteen attendants of both females and males were buried at Baishizidi,

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[26] The Huang state was a small vassal state that fell to Chu in 648 B.C. The *Zuo Tradition* records: '夏，楚灭黄。' ('In summer, Chu destroyed Huang.'). See Yang (2018). 289-290.

[27] Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui, (河南省信阳地区文管会) (1984), 'Chunqiu zaoqi Huangjun meng fufu mu fajue baogao (春秋早期黄君孟夫妇墓发掘报告)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (4), 302; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, (中国社会科学院考古研究所) (1999), *Zhangjiapo xi Zhou mudi (张家坡西周墓地)* (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaike quanshu chubanshe). 16-34.

[28] Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui (1984), 302-4; Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (河南省文物考古研究所) (1981), 'Henan Xinyangshi Pingqiao chunqiu mu fajue jianbao (河南信阳市平桥春秋墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (1), 9.

[29] The Ju state, according to the *Zuo tradition*, was called *Ju Yi* (莒夷) – a descendant subgroup of the Eastern Yi. See Yang (2018), 17-18; 30-32; 48-49.

[30] According to the *Hanfeizi*, purple was the prestige colour of the eastern state of Qi, favoured by Duke Huan: '齐桓公好服紫，一国尽服紫，当是时也，五素不得一紫。' ('Duke Huan of Qi favoured purple attire, so the entire state wore purple. At that time, five bolts of undyed fabric were not worth one bolt of purple cloth.') *Hanfeizi* (the Warring States period; 2010), 422-3.

[31] The discussion can be found in Jessica Rawson's conference paper, Rawson, Jessica, 'The Tomb of the First Emperor: Steppe Contacts and the Origins of the Attendant Burials', *The Age of Empires: Comparisons and Interactions between East and West in Antiquity* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum, 2020); Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui, (河南省信阳地区文管会) (1981), 'Gushi Baishizidi yihao he erhao mu qingli jianbao (固始白狮子地一号和二号墓清理简报)', *Zhongyuan wenwu (中原文物)*, (4), 23-30; Gushi Hougudui yi hao mu fajue zu, (固始侯古堆一号墓发掘组) (1981), 'Henan Gushi Hougudui yi hao mu fajue jianbao (河南固始侯古堆一号墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (1), 1-8.

while seventeen at Hougudui.[32] Attendants at Baishizidi lay on their sides.[33] Occasionally, such body position is also found in the earliest Chu tombs along the Han River of the first region.[34] A very similar burial layout can also be seen at Bengbu, along the lower reaches of the Huai River, which belonged to the ruler of Zhongli state in the 6th century B.C.[35] A tradition of burying attendants in tombs surrounding the central pit were also shared among the Qi tombs at Langjiazhuang, Linzi and at Juanshan (Zibo, Shandong).[36] All these examples indicate remote contacts with the east and possibly the steppe through these eastern neighbours.

Besides, the infill of the tomb also strengthens the above argument. The 1,800-cubic-metre tomb pit at Hougudui was filled with a mixture of oily clay and stones. The use of greenish oily clay was characteristic of the Wu and Yue regions to the east.[37] The early 5th-century B.C. tomb at Yinshan that belonged to the king of Yue, for example, was filled with about 5,700 cubic metres of greenish oily clay.[38] Oily clay as infill was later adopted as a typical Chu feature during the Warring States period instead of stones. The stone-piling tradition seen at Hougudui, however, was particularly favoured by the northern Jin state. This practice of borrowing from multiple neighbours is also seen in the 6th-century B.C. Chu tomb at Pingdingshan.[39] The tomb combines stone usage from the north with tomb partitions characteristic of the east. As a whole, the funerary practices in this region show prominent non-Zhou origins, a testament to

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[32] *Ibid.*

[33] Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui (1981), 22.

[34] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Hubei sheng wenwuju nanshui beidiao bangongshi (2008), 28-33.

[35] Jessica Rawson identifies firm evidence of Steppe contact in the Hougudui tomb, noting its unusual round layout, which imitates kurgans, and the presence of coffined attendants surrounding the central pit. She argues these features result from long-distance contact combined with local traditions. It remains unclear whether the Zhongli state derived these ideas directly from the Steppe or was an outsider itself, as texts offer no information on its foreignness. Rawson (2020).

[36] Shandong bowuguan (山东博物馆) (1977), 'Linzi Langjiazhuang yihao dongzhou xunrenmu (临淄郎家庄一号东周殉人墓)', *Kaogu xuebao (考古学报)*, (1), 73-104; Shandong sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (山东省文物考古研究所) and Zibo shi wenwuju (淄博市文物局) (2016), 'Shandong Zibo Juanshan Zhanguo mu fajue jianbao (山东淄博隽山战国墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (10), 4-22, +2.

[37] In the Hougudui tomb, a large quantity of sandy stones was transported from forty kilometres away to seal the tomb, mixed with greenish oily clay. The stones weighed over ten kilograms on average, with the largest exceeding one hundred kilograms. Gushi Hougudui yi hao mu fajue zu (1981). 1-8.

[38] Peng, Yun (彭云) (2004), 'Yin shan Yue wang ling (印山越王陵)', *Wenwu shizhi (文史知识)*, (9), 118-20.

[39] Henan sheng wenwu yanjiusuo *et al.* (1988).

the many external cultural injections Chu was absorbing.

4.2.3 The Southern Heartland: The Yangze River and branches

The burial practices in the middle Yangtze River basin show a strong consistency with the Han River region. Features such as an east-west orientation and the use of attendants were common. This region, however, is distinguished by one crucial development. As early as the 6th century B.C., lacquer ritual vessels were included in high-ranking elite tombs, a stark contrast to the bronze-dominated traditions further north.

This southern heartland also reveals evidence of more elaborate performances within the burial rite. At the Zhaoxiang tomb, for instance, the male deceased was accompanied by five young female attendants, all estimated to be under twenty-four years old, possibly his servants or concubines.[40] This was a continuation of the northern tradition. A unique feature was the placement of lacquered musical instruments atop the attendants' coffins. This detail suggests their role was possibly tied to a specific performance. Another performative characteristic is the unusual burial of animal sacrifices. Outside the outer coffin, animals including at least thirteen cattle, one pig, one goat and one dog were aligned from the southwest corner to the east. Animal sacrifices are believed to be a steppe feature.[41] This combination of attendants and animal sacrifice finds parallels in the 6th-century B.C. burials of the eastern state of Ju, indicating a complex web of ritual exchange (Fig. 4.7).[42]

Furthermore, tomb contents from sites such as Zhaoxiang and Caojiagang reflect Chu elites' deep engagement with long-distance exchange networks and their interest in 'foreign' prestige goods. Both tombs have yielded the earliest forged tin foil with patterns found so far. Yingchen Wang *et al.* argues that the forging technology demonstrates the departure from the mainstream

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[40] One attendant accompanied the deceased in a parallel smaller coffin, while four others were found at his feet. See Yichang diqu bowuguan, (宜昌地区博物馆) (1990), 'Hubei Dangyang Zhaoxiang 4 hao Chunqiu mu fajue jianbao (湖北当阳赵巷 4 号春秋墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (10), 25-32.

[41] Rawson (2020).

[42] For example, the Ju tombs contain animal sacrifices alongside human ones. See Shandong sheng bowuguan (山东省博物馆), Linyi diqu wenwuzu (临沂地区文物组), and Junan xian wenhuaguan (莒南县文化馆) (1978), 'Junan dadian Chunqiu shiqi Juguo xunrenmu (莒南大店春秋时期莒国殉人墓)', *Kaogu xuebao (考古学报)*, (3), 317-36, 398-405.

piece-mould casting bronze technology to the pursuit of personal distinction and the remote links with Eurasian steppe.[43] Similar gold versions of these foils, together with antlers and cowrie shells, were found at Xiasi, attesting to these extensive external contacts.[44] From at least three sites, spring-shaped objects were also found in this region, pointing to a steppe connection.[45] These prestige goods demonstrate that the Chu elites in their southern heartland were active participants in a broader network of power, using these exotic objects to construct a distinct social standing that was less reliant on conventional Zhou ritual markers.

4.2.4 The Zeng state: A Pivotal Hybrid

The state of Zeng, situated in a transitional zone between cultural spheres of the north, east, and south, offers a particularly revealing case study of this process of fusion. Once a powerful Zhou vassal state centred in modern-day Suizhou, Zeng eventually turned to Chu. The discovery of a group of marquis' tombs at Yejiashan in Suizhou, dating to the 12th–11th centuries B.C., attests to the deep-rooted presence of the Zeng state in this region from the early Western Zhou period.[46] Zeng elites had shown a strong tradition of using both bronze and ritual vessels.

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43 Wang, Yingchen *et al.* (2019), 'Imported or Indigenous? The Earliest Forged Tin Foil Found in China', *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 1-6. The idea of Steppe influence has been stressed by Rawson in several papers. See Rawson, Jessica (2015), 'Steppe Weapons in Ancient China and the Role of Hand-to-hand Combat', *故宮學術季刊* 33 (1), 37-95; Rawson (2017).

44 Tombs with cowries include M9 at Xujialing and M2, M10, M11 at Xiasi in Xichuan. In M2, there are 4432 pieces of cowrie shells and in M10, there are cowrie shells made of bone and antlers. Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2004), 214; Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xichuan xian bowuguan (1991), 203, 292, 307.

45 Similar objects have been found in tombs M12 at Caipo in Xiangyang, No. 5 at Caojiagang, M1022 at Shengang, and M544 at Jiudian. See Xiangyang shoujie yigong yinong kaogu xunlianban, (襄阳首届亦工亦农考古训练班) (1976), 'Xiangyang Caipo shier hao mu chutu Wuwang Fuchai jian deng wenwu (襄阳蔡坡 12 号墓出土吴王夫差剑等文物)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (11), 65-71+98; Hubei sheng Yichang diqu bowuguan, (湖北省宜昌地区博物馆) (1988a), 'Dangyang Caojiagang 5 hao Chu mu (当阳曹家岗 5 号楚墓)', *Kaogu xuebao (考古学报)*, (4), 455-500; Xiangyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (襄阳市文物考古研究所) (2013), 'Hubei Xiangyang Shengang mudi M1022 fajue jianbao (湖北襄阳沈岗墓地 M1022 发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (7), 4-19; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) (1995), *Jiangling Jiudian Dong-Zhou mu (江陵九店东周墓)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe), 259.

46 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) and Suizhou shi bowuguan, (随州市博物馆) (2011), 'Hubei Suizhou Yejiashan Xizhou mudi fajue jianbao (湖北随州叶家山西周墓地发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (11), 4-60+3; Hubei sheng bowuguan, (湖北省博物馆) *et al.* (2013), *Suizhou Yejiashan: Xizhou zaoqi Zeng guo mudi (随州叶家山：西周早期曾国墓地)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 10-5.

Zeng state later turned to Chu in awe of its power during the Eastern Zhou.[47] The 5th-century B.C. tomb of its ruler, Marquis Yi, is a crucial reference. It is neither Zhou nor Chu, but a hybrid of the two, bridging its own and regional traits. Its north-south orientation, for instance, is distinct from Chu practice, while its use of stone and charcoal infill combines northern and eastern features.[48] The tomb's structure offers a potential link between the simple wooden encasements of earlier periods and the well-structured compartments that would come to define mature Chu tombs.

The marquis's tomb is vast and irregular. Its 220-square-metre wooden encasement is divided into four distinct chambers with partition walls (Fig. 4.8).[49] The marquis himself was placed in the eastern chamber with eight attendants, while the western chamber housed an additional thirteen.[50] The outer rooms were dedicated to grave goods. This clear delineation supports the idea that each chamber was assigned a specific function. The careful arrangement of objects and attendants suggests that the tomb was conceived as a stage for specific activities or performances, a practice that may indicate connections to northern burial traditions.[51] Moreover, the clear delineation of sub-chambers reflects their changing understanding of tomb space, which can also be evidenced by the modification of the later Chu elite burials after the 5th century BC.

4.2.5 Synthesis: Changes and Developments

When the four regions are considered together, a clear picture emerges of Chu's formative period. The funerary practices before the 5th century B.C. were defined by a dynamic process of syncretism, a fluid intermingling of local and external elements. Chu elites consistently favoured a non-Zhou, east-west tomb orientation and perpetuated the complex, often non-

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47 Sui was a constant target of Chu's expansion, with the *Zuo Tradition* recording at least five attacks in different years. See Yang (2018), 108-109, 111-113, 138-140, 329.
48 Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 7-11.
49 *Ibid.*, 12-5.
50 *Ibid.*, 19, 45-7.
51 A similar example can be found from the Chu tomb at Ye County, Pingdingshan. See Henan sheng wenwu yanjiusuo *et al.* (1988), 1-4, figs. 2-4, 6.

Zhou, tradition of attendant burials. They actively participated in a wide network of exchange, circulating prestige goods with strong exotic characteristics, such as forged tin or gold foils and spring-shaped objects, as symbols of power.

Concurrently, a more distinct perception of space was cultivated. The gradual appearance of divisions and compartmentalisation within the tomb actively shaped funerary performances, moving beyond the simple vertical stacking of the Zhou tradition. This evolving stage was set against a crucial backdrop: the gradual increase in the proportion of lacquerwares in tombs across the Yangtze and Huai River basins. This trend reflected not only the strengthening of local southern traditions but also the slow decline of the traditional Zhou bronze-centric ritual system. The state of Zeng serves as a perfect microcosm of this era, showing both the addition of lacquer to bronze wares and the rise of new ritual traditions with its lacquerwares. This synthesis of features created the unique cultural foundation upon which the mature Chu tradition would be built.

4.3 The Zenith of the Chu Tomb (post-5th century B.C.): Standardisation and Innovation

4.3.1 A Paradox: Political Decline vs. Funerary Maturity

The funerary landscape of the mature Chu period (post-5th century B.C.) presents a compelling historical paradox. While literary accounts describe the beginning of Chu's political decline during this era, the archaeological record reveals the very opposite: a period of unprecedented 'maturity' and standardisation in tomb features. This apparent contradiction suggests that, far from being a sign of weakness, the consolidation of burial practices was a deliberate strategy by the ruling class. In the face of external pressures, the Chu elite likely sought to forge a more cohesive cultural identity, reinforcing social hierarchies and projecting an image of stability through a unified and sophisticated ritual landscape.

4.3.2 The Standardised Form of the State Control

The mature Chu tomb of this period was defined by a set of increasingly standardised features.

The east-west orientation of its predecessors was maintained, now often accompanied by east-facing ramps and segmented compartments. While the grandest royal tombs, such as Xiongjiazhong, still featured chariot pits and human attendants, a significant shift occurred among the broader elite: human attendants largely disappeared, replaced by the prominence of figurines.[52] Paradoxically, the physical size of elite tombs often became much smaller.[53] A 4th-century B.C. local lord's tomb at Tianxinguan measured only forty square metres, compared to the 220 square metres of the earlier tomb of Marquis Yi. This pattern of reduction is consistent. The 6th-century B.C. minister's tomb (M2) at Xiasi (over sixty square metres) being more than double the size of his 4th-century B.C. equivalent, Zhaotuo, the minister 左尹, at Baoshan (some thirty square metres). This suggests not a decline in extravagance, but perhaps a shift in how burial space was conceptualised, alongside the imposition of a more rigid social hierarchy and institutional management.[54]

The most direct evidence for this increased state control comes from the coffins themselves. The exterior coffin of Wangshan M2 bears seared stamps that read 'Zuo Wang Ji Jiu Zheng' (佐王既杘正), identified as the official seal of the *yousi* (有司), the agency responsible for royal coffin timbers.[55] The central casket is further inscribed with twenty-one repetitive brand marks, 'Shao Lv Zhu Yu' (邵吕竹于), which excavators believe could be the *yousi*'s personal name. This demonstrates that the coffins utilised by elites of varying ranks were subject to strict state regulations in detail, signalling a more stringent hierarchical classification and a comprehensive political system in Chu.

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[52] Jingzhou bowuguan, (荆州博物馆) (2008), 'Hubei Jingzhou Xiongjiazhong mudi kaogu fajue jianxun (湖北荆州熊家冢墓地考古发掘简讯)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, 2008 (2), 67-67.

[53] Wu Hung contrasts the significantly larger Changtaiguan Tomb No. 1 with the tomb of Marquis Yi, constructed half a century later. See Hung, Wu (2015), 'The Invisible Miniature: Framing the Soul in Chinese Art and Architecture', *Art History*, 38 (2), 286-303.

[54] von Falkenhausen, Lothar (2003), 'Social Ranking in Chu Tombs the Mortuary Background of the Warring States Manuscript Finds', *Monumenta Serica*, 51 (1), 439-526.

[55] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 117.

4.3.3 The Tomb as a Dwelling: Space, Performance, and the Afterlife

The most important feature of the mature Chu tomb is the sophisticated use of compartments, which transformed the burial space into an imagined dwelling for the afterlife. The tomb of a local lord at Jiuliandun, for instance, measuring fifty-five square metres, was divided into five distinct compartments (Fig. 4.9).[56] The centre was reserved for the tomb owner's coffin, surrounded by jade items.[57] The remaining four 'rooms' were dedicated to specific categories of burial objects: bronze ritual vessels in the eastern chamber; weapons and chariot components in the south; and more lacquerware, musical instruments, and sculptures in the west. This elaborate and compact planning shows a continuous pattern in the accompanying wife's tomb.[58] The structure was widely adopted by elites of all statuses in varied scales.

This conceptual transformation of space into functional 'rooms' is confirmed by the tomb inventory lists, the inventory list *qiance* (遣策). In the 4th-century B.C. tomb at Baoshan, the *qiance* found in the eastern chamber, which held food containers, explicitly refers to the space as a 'room' (室) for food and vessels.[59] Even though these tombs were substantially smaller than the vast space of Marquis Yi's tomb, the burial goods, understood as extensions of intention and labelled by the *qiance*, also allowed the compartments to function equally as real 'rooms' despite their physical size differences. This represents a marked change in the Chu understanding of tomb space, where symbolic function and ritual performance became more important than sheer physical scale.

These compartments were not merely storage spaces; they were stages for ritual performance. An examination of the object layout at the Changtaiguan tombs reveals that chambers were assigned specific functions. The western chamber, in particular, featured a tomb-guardian beast in the centre with a human figurine in each of the four corners (Fig. 4.10). This condensed

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56 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 20-1.
57 *Ibid.*
58 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2018), 3-5.
59 Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui, (湖北省荆沙铁路考古队) (1991), *Baoshan Chu mu (包山楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 275-6.

layout bears some resemblance to the 8th-century B.C. Rui burial at Liangdai Village (Fig. 4.11).[60] This arrangement suggests the space was associated with specific performances. This performative intent is also visible at Lu'an in the lower reaches of the Huai River. Shallower and 'floating' compartments surrounded the central coffin (Fig. 4.12).[61] These compartments, though varying in depth and volume to suit different object types, were constructed with their openings flush with the main burial floor. This design choice created a powerful visual illusion of uniform depth, a performative strategy likely intended to present an exaggerated tableau of richness to the audience at the funeral ritual.

4.4 Conclusion

The Chu tomb structure reveals a process of active and selective identity formation. Rather than passively adhering to conventional Zhou traditions, Chu elites engaged in a dynamic process of syncretism, absorbing influences from multiple origins to create their own distinct burial practices. The consistent use of non-Zhou features, such as the east-west tomb orientation and complex attendant burials, alongside the enthusiastic adoption of exotic prestige goods, demonstrates a clear intent to forge an identity apart from the Zhou heartland. Over time, particularly after the 5th century B.C., these once-fluid regional practices began to intensify and standardise across the expanding Chu territory.

The most profound innovation in this process was the conceptual transformation of the tomb space. In traditional Zhou tombs, such as those of the Guo state, funerary goods were arranged by completing rites on the ground and then stacking them vertically in the pit. In Chu, however, there was a greater focus on constructing the tomb as a dwelling for the afterlife. The layouts

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[60] This example will be referred to again in Chapter 8. See Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 19; Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, (陕西省考古研究所) *et al.* (2010), *Liangdai cun Rui guo mudi——er ling ling qi niandu fajue baogao (梁带村芮国墓地——二零零七年度发掘报告)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 47-9, 224-5, figs. 45-48.

[61] Anhui sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (安徽省文物考古研究所) and Lu'an shi wenwu guanliju, (六安市文物管理局) (2012a), 'Anhui Lu'an Bailuzhou Zhanguo mu M566 de fajue (安徽六安市白鹭洲战国墓 M566 的发掘)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (05), 29-40+98-106+09; Anhui sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (安徽省文物考古研究所) and Lu'an shi wenwu guanliju, (六安市文物管理局) (2012b), 'Anhui Lu'an Bailuzhou Zhanguo mu M585 de fajue (安徽六安市白鹭洲战国墓 M585 的发掘)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (11), 23-32+1+103-08.

and functions of compartments were given increased consideration, becoming an essential part of the funeral ritual performance itself. The tomb was no longer a mere repository, but a performative space. This new style of expression, with its emphasis on a horizontal, room-like layout, became prevalent in Chu tombs after the 5th century B.C. The structural change created the ideal stage for the inclusion of different lacquer items. Having now understood the unique tomb contexts within which funeral goods were deposited, the following chapters will explore the roles of these tomb contents in context. This is to further study what roles the lacquered ones played in the ritual, social and political lives of the Chu elites.

5 A New Ritual Order: The Transformation of Chu Vessel Assemblages

The previous chapter established the Chu tomb as an evolving stage, a complex space where a unique and uniform Chu identity was gradually forged. As the tomb transformed from a simple burial space into a multifaceted 'household' for the afterlife, it demanded a wider range of grave goods that, in turn, helped to shape its new functions.[1] Vessels are integral in shaping space and functionality, particularly through their shapes and combinations that reflect the creators' perception of space. The present chapter will primarily centre on scrutinising the attributes of the most significant ritual sets and exploring the developing discourse among bronze, ceramic, and lacquered ritual vessels, which jointly cater to the dynamic ritual systems at a relatively early time (mostly before 5th century B.C.). In its early development, the role of lacquerware as a ritual vessel is not as significant as that of the two preceding materials.

After the 5th century B.C., Chu ritual sets underwent a profound process of decentralisation and diversification. While inheriting the legacy of the Western Zhou Ritual Reform, Chu elites adapted this tradition to suit a dynamic political landscape. This chapter will explore the waning prestige of bronze, the corresponding proliferation of ceramic alternatives, and the critical role played by the rising *shi* (士) class. As scholars such as Elizabeth Beckman have noted, the concurrent use of different materials such as bronze and pottery was a key strategy. It serves to highlight the active, performative role that ostentatious grave goods were intended to play within the funeral ceremony itself, for the living and for the deceased.[2] It is this context of material diversification that created a conducive background for the widespread adoption of lacquerware. It worked not merely as a substitute, but as an integral component of creating a

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[1] Rawson, Jessica (1998), 'Chinese Burial Patterns: Sources of Information of Thought and Beliefs', in Renfrew, Colin and Scarre, Chris (eds.), *Cognition and Material Culture: The archaeology of symbolic storage*; (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research), 107-33; Rawson, Jessica (1999), 'Western Zhou Archaeology', in Loewe, Michael and Shaughnessy, Edward L. (eds.), *The Cambridge history of ancient China: From the origins of civilization to 221 BC*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 352-449; Lewis, Mark Edward (2012), *The Construction of Space in Early China* (New York: SUNY Press), 119-134.

[2] Beckman, Joy Elizabeth (2013), 'The Meaning of Material: Ritual Vessel Assemblages in Chu Burials of the Fourth and Third Centuries BC, China', *Antiquity*, 87 (337), 772-87.

new ritual order which would be further explained in the following chapters.

5.1 The Zhou Legacy and Its Transformation in Chu (before 5th century B.C.)

5.1.1 The Post-Reform Zhou Benchmark

As has been emphasized in the beginning of last chapter, the post-Ritual Reform established in the Western Zhou Dynasty continues to be adhered to by the elites as a result of their veneration for authority and desire for peer approval in the following Eastern Zhou period.[3] The tomb of Duke Ji of Guo at Sanmenxia (8th–7th centuries B.C.) provides an almost intact example of this tradition. His major set is composed of thirty-seven solid bronze vessels and eight chime bells, weighing almost 360 kilogrammes (Fig. 5.1 and 5.2).[4] The assemblage demonstrates the key characteristics of the Reform. First, it adheres to the strict hierarchical sumptuary system, with matching numbers of seven *ding* (鼎) tripods in decreasing sizes and six *gui* (簋) containers for the Duke and a slightly lower rank of five *ding* and four *gui* for his wife.[5] Second, the assemblage includes additional new food vessel types such as the *xu* 盨, *fu* 簠, and *fu* 甫（豆）in pairs. Both *fu* were significant types that became increasingly prominent in the Chu region. Third, personal bronze drinking vessels have largely vanished, replaced by larger communal *hu* (壶) jars, signalling a shift in ritual practice. It is worth noting that the "big-bird patterns 大鸟纹" on the *hu* 壶 were typical in the early phase of middle Western Zhou (ca. 1st millennium B.C.)

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[3] Yu, Weichao (俞伟超) and Gao, Ming (高明) (1978), 'Zhou dai yongding zhidu yanjiu zhong (周代用鼎制度研究（中）)', *Beijing daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexueban) (北京大学学报(哲学社会科学版))*, (2), 84-97, Yu, Weichao (俞伟超) and Gao, Ming (高明) (1979), 'Zhou dai yongding zhidu yanjiu xia (周代用鼎制度研究（下）)', *Beijing daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexueban) (北京大学学报(哲学社会科学版))*, vol.16 (1), 85-98.

[4] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1999), 30-71.

[5] *Ibid.* 242. Rawson (1989). The tendency to use a set of descending sizes became more prevalent after the early Western Zhou. However, additional tripods were sometimes used when the original set was insufficient. For instance, tombs M1 and M2 at Ruijiazhuang, dating to the early Western Zhou, each contain a five-tripod set with two to three different tripod shapes. From the late Western Zhou to the mid-Spring and Autumn period, arrogation of ritual vessel sets became more common, reflecting the political unrest of the era. In general, however, the rule of diminishing tripod sizes remained relatively stable, as elaborately summarised by scholars such as Yu Weichao and Gao Ming. See Yu and Gao (1978), 89.

Its shape is innovative, but the pattern indicates stagnation and continuity of the former preference.[6] Fourth, the customary usage of comprehensive ritual sets and musical instruments had become deeply entrenched in both the daily and ritual events of the top elites. Owing to its comparatively late chronology in the early Spring and Autumn period, Duke Ji's assemblage can be directly juxtaposed with the Chu examples from the middle Spring and Autumn period that will be deliberated upon subsequently.

5.1.2 Early Chu Adaptations: The Xiasi Cemetery (6th Century B.C.)

The family cemetery of Chu top elites at Xiasi (ca. 600–476 B.C.) serves as a prime illustration of this complex dynamic of inheritance and transformation.[7] The tomb of Peng (M2)[8], a *lingyin* (令尹) prime minister of Chu, reveals a significant departure from the Zhou model in terms of scale. The space for his grave goods was 54 square metres, more than three times the size of Duke Ji's.[9] Within this more capacious layout, most of Peng's funeral goods were placed in rows rather than stacked, with the bronze ritual vessels positioned in a deliberate order at the northernmost end (Fig. 5.3). The set of nine *ding*s was possibly deposited first. While the number of *ding* signals an adherence to Zhou ritual language, the vessel types themselves demonstrate a distinct Chu identity. The collection contains mainly four categories: the vessels (stand/table) for food, drink, and hygiene with musical instruments (Fig. 5.4). The assemblage retains a core

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[6] *Hu* jars with a similar pattern are also seen in the tombs of the Duke of Rui (M26, M27) at Liangdaicun. To date, only eight examples of this type have been discovered, primarily in the Guo and Rui family cemeteries. This suggests a combination of old decorations with contemporary shapes, possibly indicating both a tendency to maintain older customs and a relatively distant political connection to the central Zhou court. See Han, Wei (韩巍) (2020), 'Shilun Xizhou qingtongqi yanbian guochengzhong de "yanzhi" xianxiang (试论西周青铜器演变过程中的"延滞"现象)', in Archaeology, Zhejiang University the Center for the Study of Art And (ed.), *Zhongguo zaoqi shushu, yishu yu wenhua jiaoliu: Li Ling xiansheng qizhi huadan qingshou lunwenji (中國早期數術、藝術與文化交流：李零先生七秩華誕慶壽論文集)* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe), 75.

[7] Group A: M7-8-36 (620-571 B.C.); Group B: M4-1-2-3 (570-521 B.C.); Group C: M10-11 (520-476 B.C.). See Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xichuan xian bowuguan (1991). 318-9.

[8] Li Ling's discussion on the tomb occupant is convincing. See Li, Ling (李零) (1981), '"Chushu zhi sun Peng" jiujing shi shei—Henan Xichuan Xiasi erhao mu zhi muzhu he niandai wenti de taolun ("楚叔之孙倗" 究竟是谁——河南淅川下寺二号墓之墓主和年代问题的讨论)', *Zhongyuan wenwu (中原文物)*, (4), 38-39; Li, Ling (李零) (1994), 'Ping Xichuan Xiasi chunqiu chu mu (评《淅川下寺春秋楚墓》)', *Kaogu [Archaeology] (考古)*, (12), 1142-46; Li, Ling (李零) (1996), 'Zai lun Xichuan Xiasi Chu mu di Xichuan Xiasi Chu mu (再论淅川下寺楚墓——读《淅川下寺楚墓》)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (1), 47-60.

[9] This number has been calculated by subtracting the area occupied by the two coffins. Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xichuan xian bowuguan (1991), 103.

of later Western Zhou vessel types, in particular the *ding* and *gui*, as well as the *li*, *fu*, *pan* and *yi*. However, this core is supplemented by large wine vessels, such as the *zunfou* (尊缶), and bathing vessels such as the *yufou* (浴缶), reflecting a progressive change in Chu rituals surrounding drinking, bathing, and feasting activities. Most significantly, the traditional round-bottomed Zhou *ding* were replaced by seven flat-based, eared Chu-style tripods known as *sheng* (升), which are absent in the preceding, lower-status tombs (M7/8) of the same family. This deliberate substitution of the most important ritual vessel type marks a clear and early assertion of a unique Chu ritual system, distinct from that of the Central Plains.

5.2 Forging a New Symbol: A Case Study of the *Sheng* tripods

5.2.1 The Internal Political Struggle

The most significant departure from the Zhou ritual tradition was Chu's adoption of the *sheng* (升) tripod—a flat-based vessel with eared handles—as its primary indicator of elite status. This is a form that is peculiar to Chu and its neighbouring regions.[10] The adoption of these objects reveals the internal politics of the Chu court. However, it is important to note that no known Chu elites had interred their own casting of complete sets of *sheng* in tombs before the 5th century B.C. A powerful example comes from a 7th-century B.C. *sheng* found in an early-5th-century tomb at Heshangling. The tripod was inscribed with the name of its former owner, 'Kehuang' (克黄), a minister from a prominent Chu family. The deposition means that the artefact was already over one hundred years old when buried (Fig. 5.5).[11] This practice of transmitting the *sheng* as a treasured antique underscores its immense value and sets the stage for its use as a potent symbol in the political struggles of the Chu court.

A compelling case study is the set of *sheng* tripods belonging to the prime minister Peng in his

[10] According to Li Ling, the exclusive use of the name *sheng* in Chu bronze inscriptions challenges Gao Ming and Yu Weichao's general classification of *sheng*-type tripods for all Zhou states. He argues that *sheng* tripods in Chu were designed to denote social standing through distinct set combinations. See Li, Ling (李零), (1991), 'On the typology of Chu bronzes', *Beiträge zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Archäologie 11*; (Mainz: P. von Zabern), 57-113.

[11] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2004), 7-9.

tomb at Xiasi (M2). The inscriptions reveal they were originally owned by his predecessor, Prince Wu (Zigeng), who had failed in a political turmoil.[12] Peng's tenure was brief, and he apparently did not cast his own tripods but assumed possession of Wu's existing set. Unusually, the original owner's name was not erased; rather, Peng's name was engraved onto the lid. This stands in stark contrast to the *sheng* tripods belonging to Peng's wife in tomb M1, where the original owner's name was deliberately crossed out. As Lai Guolong suggests, erasing an inscription can be an act of retribution; by not doing so, Peng's act of appropriation became a powerful and public display of his victory in a political competition, a showing-off of prestige.[13] This use of the *sheng* as a political emblem intensified during the reign of King Kang of Chu (559-551 B.C.). Faced with powerful ministers who were all his uncles, the young king appointed Peng.[14] He was not from the core royal family, as prime minister. This decision effectively decentralised power and disrupted the existing political dominance. The young master was able to regain authority and to restore a balance between traditional blood relatives and others.[15] Bestowing upon Peng the *sheng* set—an object that formerly represented the merging of royal position and familial connections—thus became a radical political act. It emphasised that elite status was now being granted based on political allegiance to the king, rather than through ancestral connections alone. The *sheng* became a key instrument in Chu's political system of power transition.

5.2.2 The Stylistic dialogue within the Zhou Sphere

The *sheng*, as a Zhou variant, was also exclusively used by the Chu court for rewarding political and military allegiance. Falkenhausen's assumption suggests that the 'Special assemblage', which includes the *sheng*, implies that a specific group of elites were given special privileges and allowed to participate in specialised rites, as opposed to the 'Ordinary assemblage' commonly

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[12] In the *Zuo Tradition*, for the 15th year of Duke Xiang (558 B.C.), it is recorded: '楚公子午為令尹……蒍子馮為大司馬' ('Gongzi Wu of Chu became the chief minister... Wei Zifeng, the grand supervisor of the military'). Durrant *et al.* (2016), 49.
[13] Lai (2015), 40.
[14] Li (1996), 53.
[15] von Falkenhausen (2006), 337-48.

used by most Chu elites.[16] *Sheng*'s symbolic meaning has become more important than its actual ritualistic contents. The distribution method serves as a crucial means of linking the political affiliations and annexating territories of the Chu in the process of its expansion. Essentially, the system still emulates the traditional enfeoffment system, albeit with an altered object of exchange.

A consensus has already been reached that no later than the end of Spring and Autumn period, the 'Chu-style' (楚式) vessels have been widely found along the middle reach of the Yangtze River.[17] Prior to the Xiasi tombs, elites in minor eastern states, namely the Huang and the Fan states, did not incorporate this particular *sheng* until the obliteration of Chu.[18] The Zhou round-bellied and open-top tripod remains the customary ritual vessel. The ones found in the M1/2 Fan state tombs are similar to those in Guo duke's with a slight difference in the placement of the handles (Fig. 5.6). In addition, the typological link between the Zhoujiagang tripod and the Liujiaya sheng tripod has been duly acknowledged by experts, who have additionally traced this relationship to the Zhou-style flat-bottomed variant (Fig. 5.7).[19] Therefore, to be effective, this new symbol had to be legible within the broader Zhou cultural sphere, leading to a complex stylistic dialogue.

The Chu *sheng* shared key characteristics with the Zhou tripod, such as the use of *panchi* (蟠螭 coiled dragon) patterns and the practice of progressively diminishing sizes within a set, suggesting Chu's imitation of Zhou ritual grammar.[20] Thus, the Chu during the Spring and Autumn period as a polity very much in the Zhou mould.[21] Transitional forms observed in the

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16 von Falkenhausen (2006), 337-48.

17 Gao, Chongwen (高崇文) (1983), 'Dongzhou chushi ding xingtai fenxi (东周楚式鼎形态分析)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (1), 1-18; von Falkenhausen (1999), 513; Zhang, Changping (张昌平) (2016), 'Zeng guo tongqi de fenqi ji qi xiangguan wenti (曾国铜器的分期及其相关问题)', *Shangzhou shiqi nanfang qingtongqi yanjiu (商周时期南方青铜器研究)* (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan), 195-6.

18 Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui (1984). Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1981).

19 Suizhou shi bowuguan, (随州市博物馆) (1982), 'Hubei Sui xian Liujiaya faxian gudai qingtongqi (湖北随县刘家崖发现古代青铜器)', *Kaogu (考古)*, 2, 142-6, pl. 5; Gao (1983),11-3; Ye, Zhi (叶植) (1991), 'Chu shi ding chuyi (楚式鼎刍议)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (4), 71-75.

20 Zhang, Changping (张昌平) (2009), *Zeng guo qingtongqi yanjiu (曾国青铜器研究)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 211.

21 von Falkenhausen (1999), 523-5.

border regions further indicate a reciprocal infiltration of styles. The tombs at Liulige (ca. 550 B.C.), contemporary with Peng's, contained a primary assemblage of five tripods identical in size and attributes to Chu *sheng* tripods (Fig. 5.8a). They were distinguished by the protrudings, extended handle and vertical ridges that run along its vessel body. These are all comparable in design to the Chu *sheng* tripods.[22] One *sheng*, attributed to a Duke of the Zheng state, exhibits a fusion of traditional ridges with the then-fashionable *panchi* motifs (Fig. 5.8b).[23] The handles on the rim edges exhibit a prominent outward inclination with a curved shape.[24] The correlation between the Zhou and Chu types is indisputable.

This correlation can be best supported by an early-6th-century B.C. set of *sheng* from the burial of Duke Ning of the Xǔ (許) state. It had been relocated to the Chu's northern border with Chu's assistance (Fig. 5.9).[25] The Xǔ State was initially situated in the northern region of the Central Plains, subject to frequent harassment by the states of Zheng and Qi.[26] The adoption of the *sheng* by these northern polities demonstrates Chu's success in establishing their own bronzes as part of a universally recognised language among peers.

The appearance of the *sheng* around 600 B.C. was therefore not a mere happenstance. It is plausible to hypothesise that during the latter half of the 7th century, a sequence of reforms

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[22] Henan bowuyuan, (河南博物院) and National Museum of History (Taipei), (國立歷史博物館) (2003), *Huixian Liulige jiayi er mu (辉县琉璃阁甲乙二墓)* (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe), 24-5, 60-5, 198-202.

[23] Henan bowuyuan, (河南博物院) and National Museum of History (Taipei), (國立歷史博物館) (2001), *Xinzheng Zhenggong damu qingtongqi (新郑郑公大墓青铜器)* (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe), 43-52.

[24] Li (1991), 57-113; Zhang, Changping (张昌平) (1992), 'Zeng guo tongqi de fenqi ji qi xiangguan wenti (曾国铜器的分期及其相关问题)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (3), 60-66; Su, Rongyu (苏荣誉) (2020), 'Kuaifan fa yu Zhongyuan shi shila fa (块范法与中原式失蜡法)', in The Center for the Study of Art and Archaeology, Zhejiang University (ed.), *Zhongguo zaoqi shushu, yishu yu wenhua jiaoliu: Li Ling xiansheng qizhi huadan qingshou lunwenji (中國早期數術、藝術與文化交流：李零先生七秩華誕慶壽論文集)*; (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe), 134.

[25] The *Zuo Tradition* records: '八月壬午，許男甯卒于楚。' ('In the eighth month, on the renwu day, Ning, the Lord of Xu, died in Chu.') See Durrant *et al.* (2016), 1158-9. See also Pingdingshan shi wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, (平顶山市文物管理委员会) and Ye xian wenhuaguan, (叶县文化馆) (2007), 'Henan Ye xian jiuxian si hao Chunqiu mu fajue jianbao (河南叶县旧县四号春秋墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (9), 4-37.

[26] The state of Xǔ is mentioned multiple times in the *Zuo Tradition* for the years 592, 589, 576, 557, and 547 B.C. Thus, it is unsurprising to find a set of *sheng* tripods in a tomb of a Lord of Xǔ. Durrant *et al.* (2016), 688, 732-3, 816-23, 1036-7, 1158-9.

occurred within Chu, encompassing political propaganda, military expansion, and ritual practices. The *sheng* tripod and its associated assemblage represent a distinctive modification—a reaction to the Zhou mould and an endeavour by Chu to establish their own bronze vessels as a language of power. As Chu displayed a more conspicuous aesthetic, this capability allowed it to traverse vast regions and integrate smaller domains into its framework. In this context, a key ally like the Marquis of Zeng may have been 'permitted' to retain an exceptionally large quantity of Zhou elements as a diplomatic gesture.

5.2.3 The Waning of Essence and a Shift in Craftsmanship

While the political symbolism of the *sheng* intensified, its actual ritual essence began to wane. Archaeological evidence indicates that these artefacts were often not used as primary cooking implements. The absence of soot residue at the bases of *sheng* vessels from Heshangling M1 and Xiasi M1/M2 points to their function as vessels for merely containing, not cooking, food offerings.[27] Furthermore, analysis of the food contents within Peng's tripods reveals that they contained only a single animal species, a departure from the Central Plains tradition of cooking various sacrifices together in a single vessel.[28] This suggests the Chu were adhering to their own local customs. The *sheng* was a means of displaying social status, while its original Zhou-derived ritual function became secondary.

Over time, its political significance also diminished, and its manufacture became cruder. This is starkly illustrated in the 4th-century B.C. tomb of a regional lord's wife at Tianxingguan. Out of the five bronze *sheng* tripods buried with her, only two possess exceptional craftsmanship and show signs of use. The remaining three are notably coarser in appearance, with the smallest weighing merely one-third of the finer ones (Fig. 5.10).[29] The *sheng*, like other bronze ritual vessels, had become a memorial to ancient Zhou practices. It was altered to conform to Chu rites in practice, but in doing so, it lost the Zhou essence. This superficial adherence and decline

[27] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2004), 7-9; Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xichuan xian bowuguan (1991), 112-25.
[28] Li (1996), 55-6.
[29] Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan (2003), 40-9.

in quality signals a significant fall in the value of the entire ritual bronze system, paving the way for the ascent of other materials, including lacquerware.

Beyond the rise and fall of the *sheng* tripod, the broader bronze industry underwent significant transformations in design, technology, and organisation. According to Su Rongyu, a major shift began in the middle of the Spring and Autumn period, as bronze workshops, once under the exclusive jurisdiction of state dukes, were transformed to cater to a wider elite population across a larger geographical area, resembling a form of commodity production.[30] Production efficiency was also significantly enhanced by advancements in the section-mould method. This enabled elites of minor states, such as the Marquis of Zeng, to acquire bronze objects that were not only large in scale but also intricate in design. Consequently, there was a discernible shift towards a greater emphasis on economic profits in an age of intense interstate competition.

The most unparalleled technical innovation of this period was the sudden appearance of the lost-wax casting method, exemplified by the exceptional bronze *jin* (禁) table from Xiasi. The intricate, openwork construction of the *jin* showcases a remarkable level of craftsmanship that remains a puzzling phenomenon, given its abrupt appearance and subsequent disappearance in the region.[31] Besides this masterpiece, lost-wax casting was primarily used for accessories on washing vessels such as *yi* (匜) and *he* (盉), and was mainly found in the southeastern regions. South-eastern regions such as Tang, Huang, Xu, Chu, Zeng, Zhongli, Yue, and Yan are the primary sources of such bronze vessels, particularly in the Han and Huai River basins and the lower reaches of the Yangtze.[32] The transition from conventional tripods to these alternative, often more elaborate, artefacts signifies the waning ceremonial importance attributed to traditional ancestral cults. The rise of other more individualised daily rituals became prominent. This highly specialised technology was ultimately ephemeral precisely because it was ill-suited to the demands of wider, scaled-up production.

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[30] Su (2020), 146
[31] *Ibid.,*153-161.
[32] *Ibid.,* 165.

5.2.4 Conclusion

The ceremonial role of the bronze sets, particularly the *sheng*, was thus diminishing, even as their political symbolism persisted. The elite focus was shifting away from the intrinsic qualities of bronze—its heft and singular craftsmanship—towards concerns of scaled-up production and new technologies. The production of key ritual vessels became progressively less refined and the most advanced techniques were transferred to other applications. This process indicates a hollowing out of the traditional Zhou system. The greater the archaism and superficial imitation of old forms, the more it reflected a desire for political authority in the absence of genuine ritual essence. Ultimately, to understand the rise of new materials, one must look beyond the highest-ranking individuals. It is in the artefacts used by the larger number of lower-ranking elites that the true connection between the decline of bronze, the diversification of ritual vessels, and the widespread adoption of lacquerware is revealed.

5.3 The Rise of the *Shi* Class and Material Diversification

5.3.1 Ideological Shifts and the *Shi* Class

The waning of the bronze ritual system was not only a material phenomenon but also an ideological one. During the mid-Warring States period, the concept of 'elevating the worthy' (尚贤) gained widespread acceptance.[33] It shifts the basis of ideological leadership from inherited lineage to the intellectual prowess of the *shi* (士), or scholar-official class.[34] Philosophies such as Daoism, which asserted that the Way could be attained by anyone through appropriate 'inner training', further suggested that individual enlightenment could surpass the intrinsic calibre of one's origins.[35]

This intellectual climate, which resonated with the political interests of a non-Zhou state like Chu, led to a significant increase in the status and influence of the *shi* class. As this group expanded, so too did the demand for ritual vessels, creating a challenge that the traditional,

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[33] Pines, Yuri (2009), *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), 119.
[34] *Ibid.,* 123-31.
[35] *Ibid.,* 124.

centrally controlled bronze system could not meet. Subsequently, it will become apparent in the later chapters that the increasing significance attributed to lacquerware is primarily attributable to individuals and the larger collective. This can also be interpreted as the overarching context of the entire Warring States era, with particular emphasis on the latter half of the Warring States period.

5.3.2 Bronze for the Many: A New Set

The Xiasi case marks an early known case of a *shi* rising to the top position through intellectual power. This new social demand is reflected in the transformation of bronze vessel assemblages. Most noteworthy is a significant increase in the number of other tripod types, suggesting a loosening of traditional Zhou sumptuary rules. In Peng's tomb at Xiasi, nineteen tripods were found in total. The round-bellied tripods of inferior ranks have been further categorised into medium and small sizes (Fig. 5.4).[36] The medium-sized *qiao* tripod, with its distinctive reclining bovine knobs, emerged as the predominant form during this period, supplanting earlier types. The smaller tripods, similar in type, were not restricted in number and were usually used in pairs, a regional feature along the Jiang and Huai Rivers. This significant increase in number, and the greater degree of freedom in their use, allowed a larger number of individuals, especially the upwardly mobile *shi* class, to acquire these vessels, establishing connections among the various strata of elites.

Concurrently, a 'lighter' trend is noticeable in these tripods. A comparison of bronze vessels of the same rank from the 6th-century B.C. tombs at Xiasi with those comparable from the fifth and fourth centuries, for instance, reveals a shift in identical vessels. The quality of identical *sheng* tripods declines proportionally. Peng's wife's *sheng* tripods are at least twenty percent lighter than those of Peng's own.[37] The quality of casting also often declined, with less material and cruder production processes being employed to create vessels of a similar volume. The trend towards reduced weight is most consistent in the more prevalent round-bellied tripods. Based

[36] Li, Ling (李零) (1995), 'Chu ding tu shuo, (楚鼎图说)', *Wenwu tiandi, (文物天地)*, (6), 31-36.
[37] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xichuan xian bowuguan (1991), 52-84.

on their weight, it is conceivable to calculate a relative range for bronze vessels classed according to their scenario of usage. For example, in the Late Spring and Autumn period Xiasi tombs, one *si* (飤) tripod was excavated from each tomb, and it was basically no more than 9 kg. Similarly, a tripod discovered with dry paste inside weighed around half as much as the others, indicating that both its function and weight range were set. This steady reduction in weight made the introduction of lacquerware more acceptable and achievable. This signifies an alternative technological trajectory and a profound shift in material preference.

5.3.3 The Ceramic Alternative

A greater amount of scholarly investigation has been devoted to sets from the Warring States Period onward. [38] The diversification of ritual assemblages was not limited to the transformation of bronzes. A more significant development was the increasing substitution of bronze sets with versions made from other materials, primarily pottery. These ceramic variants were mostly in grey and red. Possibly as *mingqi* (spirit vessels), they appear to have been made specifically for funerary purposes, fired at moderate temperatures. [39] Mid-ranking elites continued to use the lighter bronze sets. Lower-level elites, however, increasingly resorted to ceramic alternatives. This allowed individuals of all social strata to have their own mix-and-match ritual sets. The practice signified a decline in the symbolic significance of conventional manners and provided additional room for the expanding *shi* class to grow.

In contrast to the low-fired grey pottery, another intriguing collection of polished black pottery is particularly relevant to this discussion. At the Zhaojiahu cemetery in the Chu heartland, tombs dated to prior to 600 B.C. housed meticulously crafted black pottery alongside bronze ritual vessels. The vessel types exhibited a remarkable resemblance to those of the Central Plains and other adjacent regions with a Zhou connection. After this point, there was a notable transition to smaller tombs containing coarser pottery of the later, typical Chu-style, a shift that

[38] von Falkenhausen (2003). Shang, Ruchun (尚如春) (2019), 'Dongzhou shiqi Chu guo shehui bianqian yanjiu ,(东周时期楚国社会变迁研究)', (Jilin University).

[39] Yichang diqu bowuguan and Beijing daxue kaoguxi (1992), 94-113.

has led scholars such as Falkenhausen to hypothesise about population replacement.[40] Regardless of the population's identity, the prevalence of black polished pottery, with forms such as tripods that resemble the early *sheng*, indicates a strong indigenous tradition of using finely-made black pottery as ritual sets .

For an extended duration, the combination of black polished pottery and lacquerware appears to have been widely embraced. The tomb M9 at Jinjiashan, Zhaojiahu (late 7th century B.C.), for example, yielded five wooden *zu* (俎) chopping boards alongside a full set of polished black pottery. This set included nine *li* (鬲), eight *dou* (豆), two *yu* (盂), one tripod, and one jar, all skilfully crafted and adorned with fine geometric patterns (Figs. 5.11a, 5.11b).[41] Such intricate pieces were likely not purely *mingqi*, but served a practical and prestige usage, suggesting a local preference for black pottery as part of the ritual collection. This is further highlighted by the contrast with the bronze ritual sets at Xiasi, which do not include *dou* or *fu* (簠), indicating distinct ritual preferences at an early stage. Furthermore, over one fifth of the 297 tombs at Zhaojiahu contain niches, a funerary custom that conforms to that of the local and the Yue people in the south.[42] Therefore, the Zhaojiahu group shows a relatively mixed affiliation with neighbouring regions, while also displaying a certain alignment with traditionally known Zhou and northern features.[43] In this area, the fusion and conversion of lacquerware and black pottery appear to be more readily attainable and embraced, both in terms of practical form, visual and tactile qualities.

Although we will not delve deeper into the specific typology of the variants here, it is worth mentioning the examination and validation of a hierarchical compatibility, a concept that has been widely employed in various archaeological research, including the study of lacquerware in collective settings.[44] Scholarly analysis of such hierarchical compatibility often commences

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[40] von Falkenhausen (1999), 515-6. He later revised his argument, indicating these were Chu people from the beginning. See von Falkenhausen (2003), 455.

[41] Hubei sheng Yichang diqu wenwu gongzuodui, (湖北省宜昌地区文物工作队) (1982), 'Dangyang Jinjiashan jiu hao Chunqiu Chu mu, (当阳金家山九号春秋楚墓)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (4), 41-45.

[42] Yichang diqu bowuguan and Beijing daxue kaoguxi (1992), 20.

[43] *Ibid.*, 20.

[44] For example, Chen Zhenyu's classification also strictly follows the stratification of tombs. Chen

with the highest tier of society and progresses downwards.[45] Conversely, the case of the ceramic alternative highlights the importance of a bottom-up influence. The polished black pottery of Zhaojiahu vividly demonstrates that an indigenous, mature, non-metallic ritual vessel tradition already existed in the Chu territories, running parallel to the northern bronze tradition. This deep-rooted local preference for a lustrous black aesthetic, embodied first in pottery, ultimately paved the way for the later prevalence of lacquerware.

5.4 The Lacquer Intervention: A New Synthesis

The diversification of the Chu ritual system provided the perfect context for the ascent of lacquerware. Based on the above analyses, Chu's 'reform' of the ritual sets, as some may call,[46] encompassed a broader spectrum of middle and lower-ranking elites by incorporating ceramic copies of bronze versions. Chapter 3 has provided an analysis of its ascent from both material and philosophical perspectives. In conjunction with the content discussed in chapter 4, it is evident that the tomb structure during the fifth century B.C. also exhibited a significant sense of comprehensive cohesion. The question remains, however, as to when and under what circumstances this incorporation occurred. Evidence suggests that lacquer entered the Chu ritual sphere through two parallel trajectories: a long-standing, bottom-up appreciation for its utilitarian qualities, and a top-down assimilation of its use as a prestige good from neighbouring states.

5.4.1 The Bottom-Up Trajectory: Utilitarian Objects and Local Traditions

There is a strong likelihood that utilitarian lacquered wooden vessels were employed in

(2007).

[45] Hence, this section refrains from providing further typological details. Li Ling categorised Chu tombs into three groups based on their contents: those with only bronze artefacts, those with both bronze and pottery, and those with only pottery. Falkenhausen also developed a detailed social ranking based on tomb assemblages. See Li (1991); Li, Ling (李零) (1992), 'Lun Dong Zhou shiqi de Chu guo dianxing tongqiqun (论东周时期的楚国典型铜器群)', *Zhongguo kaoguxue yanjiu (中国考古学研究)*, 19 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 136-78; von Falkenhausen (2003), 445.

[46] Zhang, Wenjie (张闻捷) (2015), 'You qingtong zishengqi lun Chu guo de lizhi biange (由青铜粢盛器论楚国的礼制变革)', *Nanfang wenwu (南方文物)*, (04), 169-78+59.

everyday activities from a much earlier period. An instance from the Shang dynasty site of Luoshan Tianhu shows a lacquered wooden bowl discovered inside a bronze *zeng* (甑) steamer, suggesting their combined practical use.[47] Even in the 8th-century B.C. tomb of Duke Ji of Guo, a rudimentary wooden bowl was found, indicating such artefacts served practical purposes.[48] By the middle Spring and Autumn Period, the Paimashan site in Jiangling yielded the earliest reported Chu examples of lacquered eared cups.[49] These were found in the relatively small tombs of modest-rank nobles, suggesting that lacquerware was recognised for its utility among the broader, lower-ranking elites at a much earlier age. While the limited number indicates an inferior status compared to bronzes at this stage, it points to a deep-rooted, practical foundation for lacquer's later widespread adoption.

5.4.2 The Top-Down Influence: Lacquerware as a Prestige Good in Neighbouring States and the Steppe

While Chu core elites were slow to adopt lacquer for high ritual, the practice of burying lacquerware as prestige goods was prevalent in the 'peripheral' states surrounding them. Tombs in the Ba state at Dahekou (Western Zhou period to 7th century B.C.), the Rui at Liangdaicun (7th century B.C.), and the Jin state all contained lacquered ritual vessels, especially *dou* (豆) dishes, alongside the bronze vessels (Fig. 5.12).[50] In Xinyang region, lacquered *dou* has also

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47 Ou (1986), 25.

48 Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, 河南省文物考古研究所 (1999), 209.

49 Hubei sheng bowuguan, (湖北省博物馆) *et al.* (1973), 'Hubei Jiangling Paimashan Chu mu fajue jianbao (湖北江陵拍馬山楚墓发掘簡报)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (03), 158.

50 Apart from lacquered vessels such as *dou* in M27 at Liangdaicun, unusual pieces were found, including wooden sculptures (M502) and other exquisite utilitarian objects. Lacquered *dou* are predominantly found in Zhou tombs, particularly in the western regions such as Zhangjiapo. In the Jin state, at least one piece of lacquerware was typically interred with elites. Textual records such as the *Book of Rites* confirm *dou* vessels as a recurring category of ritual utensil during the Western Zhou. The bronze *fu* is a newer classification that emerged after the ritual reforms; some scholars believe it is the prototype for the later *dou*. Beijing daxue kaoguxue xi Shang Zhou zu, (北京大学考古学系商周组) and Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, (山西省考古研究所) (2000), *Tianma-Qucun 1989-1990 (天马-曲村 (1980-1989))*, ed. Zou, Heng (邹衡), (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe), 313. In textual records such as the *Book of Rites*, it is noted that *dou* vessels were employed as a recurring category of ritual utensils during the Western Zhou Dynasty. Bronze *fu* is among the novel classifications that emerged subsequent to the Reform. Some scholars associate it with later *dou*, believing it to be the prototype. Zhang, Wenjie (张闻捷) (2011), 'Luelun dong Zhou yong dou zhidu (略论东周用豆制度)', *Kaogu yu wenwu (考古与文物)*, (1), 43-52; Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo Dahekou mudi lianhe kaogudui, (山西省考古研究所大河口

been buried in tombs as prestige goods since the Shang dynasty.[51] In textual records such as the *Book of Rites*, it is noted that *dou* vessels were employed as a recurring category of ritual utensils during the Western Zhou Dynasty.[52] *Dou* features a dish or plate positioned atop it. Some scholars associate the bronze *fu* that emerged subsequent to the Reform, with later *dou*, believing it to be the prototype.[53] In the Jin state, at least one *dou* is typically interred with the elites.[54] The southern regions along the Jiang and Huai rivers in the east in later Chu's vicinity, once ruled by the potent Zeng State, also shows such a long tradition of burying lacquerware in top elites' tombs. In tombs of the Zeng marquises, it is customary to bury lacquered *dou*s alongside them.[55] The *dou* contains two small pebbles, which may signify a unique burial practise.[56] Similarly, within the tomb of the lord of Huang state during the mid-seventh century B.C., relatively early lacquerware including a *dou*, a spoon and a lid were found, prior to the destruction by Chu.[57] The lacquered coffin within his wife's tomb exhibits exceptional rarity and remains impeccably intact. These lacquered objects feature a black background adorned with a vermilion painted *qiequ* vein (窃曲) pattern, showing the unity of decoration. This observation implies that a well-established lacquerware tradition had existed on Chu's borders for a considerable period. The discovery of lacquered *dou* as well as lacquered coffins in Chu at an early age may be a direct inheritance from the much earlier Zhou and northern traditions.

墓地联合考古队) (2011), 'Shanxi Yicheng xian Dahekou Xi Zhou mudi (山西翼城县大河口西周墓地)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (7), 9-18; Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2010). 46, 155-9; Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, (陕西省考古研究所) *et al.* (2020), *Liangdai cun Rui guo mudi——2005, 2006 niandu fajue baogao (梁带村芮国墓地——2005、2006 年度发掘报告)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 68-70, 356-7.

51 Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui and Henan sheng Luoshan xian wenhuaguan (1986).

52 Zhang (2011).

53 Liu, Xiang (刘翔) (1995), 'Fu qi lüeshuo (簠器略说)', in Zhongguo Guwenzi Yanjiuhui, (中国古文字研究会) *et al.* (eds.), *Guwenzi yanjiu (di shisan ji) (古文字研究（第十三辑）)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 458-63; Li, Xueqin (李学勤) (2005), 'Qingtongqi zhong de fu yu pu (青铜器中的簠与铺)', *Zhongguo gudai wenming yanjiu (中国古代文明研究)* (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe), 76-81; Zhang, Chong (张翀) 'Qingtong dou yu qita qilei de guanxi (青铜豆与其他器类的关系)', in Zhang, Maorong (张懋镕) (ed.), *Zhongguo gudai qingtongqi zhengli yu yanjiu——qingtong dou juan (中国古代青铜器整理与研究——青铜豆卷)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe), 76-90.

54 Beijing daxue kaoguxue xi Shang Zhou zu and Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo (2000), 313.

55 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Suizhou shi bowuguan (2011), 56.

56 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) and Suizhou shi bowuguan, (随州市博物馆) (2016), 'Hubei Suizhou Yejiashan M107 fajue jianbao (湖北随州叶家山 M107 发掘简报)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (03), 38-9.

57 Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui (1984), 328.

Perhaps the most spectacular example comes from the eastern state of Ju. The previous Chapter 4 has already revealed that the Xinyang region served as the originating hub for the earlier Chu culture and maintained significant affiliations with this eastern region. Thus, the early influece can also be received from the east. At Liujiadianzi, a 7th-century B.C. tomb of a Ju leader yielded a lacquered spoon with a distinctly 'foreign' style (Fig. 5.13a).[58] Measuring eight centimetres in diameter with a fifteen centimetres handle, the spoon was extravagantly decorated in three distinct layers of rhombus-shaped gold leaf and alternating golden shells. The arrangement of elements in the layout does not deviate entirely from the conventional Zhou style. The presence of other unusual artefacts at Liujiadianzi, such as the rare golden sword hilt adorned with an animal face, indicates a potential connection to the far north, despite the funeral customs associated with this region (Fig. 13b). A bronze basin with a very rare nail pattern, originally attributed to the prince of the Huang state in its west further confirms the mutual close association (Fig. 13c).[59] The basin, similar to the one found in Xinyang region, may have been bestowed upon or acquired by the tomb owner as a gift or as part of a booty. Whether tailored to suit the aesthetic preferences and social standing of the tomb owner, the lacquered spoons with gold foils and inlays exemplifies the significance of the treasured lacquered objects. The application of gold is uncommon, given the scarcity of gold mines in the Central Plains.[60] The shell is a currency that traverses Eurasia. Therefore, the replication of the shell in gold demonstrates a more remote connection to the steppe through the northeast and other localities such as the southwest and northwest.[61] Consequently, the combination of gold and lacquer represents the elites' aspirations for social distinction.

Thus, upon comparing the lacquerwares with those of the Zhou, it becomes evident that they

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58 von Falkenhausen (2006), 252-4; Shandong sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (山东省文物考古研究所) and Yishui xian wenwu guanlizhan, (沂水县文物管理站) (1984), 'Shandong Yishui Liujiadianzi Chunqiu mu fajue jianbao (山东沂水刘家店子春秋墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (9), 1-10.

59 See M1:41 in Shandong sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Yishui xian wenwu guanlizhan (1984), 4-5.

60 A recent survey of gold mines in China revealed they are most abundant in the north-eastern, north-western, and south-eastern regions. Cai, Changjin (蔡长金) *et al.* (1994), *Zhongguo jin kuangwu zhi (中国金矿物志)* (Beijing: Yejin gongye chubanshe), 139.

61 Li, Min (李旻) (2017b), 'Chongfan Xiaxu: shehui jiyi yu jingdian de fasheng (重返夏墟:社会记忆与经典的发生)', *Kaogu xuebao (考古学报)*, (03), 287-316.

adhere predominantly to the conventional Zhou motifs. The close relationship between the Central Plains, Chu and its eastern regions is evident. Hence, due to the proximity, the Chu elites in Xinyang region, despite participating in the competition held in the Central Plains, are diligently endeavouring to assimilate the customs and practises of neighbouring states. Therefore, the transmission of lacquerware traditions should have been discreetly perpetuated during its contacts with the east and the north, just as the incorporation of the prototype of the *sheng*. The assimilation of these well-established traditions of using lacquerware as a premier prestige good was a crucial factor in its eventual incorporation into the Chu ritual system.

5.4.3 The Chu Synthesis and Assimilation Strategies

The culmination of these intersecting trajectories—the bottom-up adoption of utilitarian wares and the top-down assimilation of prestige goods—is powerfully demonstrated in the late Warring States period tombs at Jiuliandun. There, in the tomb of the local lord's wife, a complete set of bronze ritual vessels was entirely substituted with lacquered replicas (Fig. 5.14).[62] This act represents the final synthesis. Lacquer was no longer just a utilitarian supplement, nor a foreign prestige good to be emulated. It had become a comprehensive medium, capable of fulfilling the highest ritual functions. Lacquered vessels signified a new, more diverse, and uniquely Chu ritual order.

This substitution was neither merely an aesthetic choice, but the result of a deliberate assimilation strategy enacted by the Chu court. Faced with the challenge of managing and integrating a vast and diverse territory, the Chu elites employed a flexible, often bottom-up, approach to build cultural cohesion. Instead of rigidly imposing a single top-down ritual system, they strategically incorporated and standardised materials, such as lacquer, that were already popular among local and lower-ranking elites. By embracing a medium that was adaptable, economically viable, and already part of regional traditions, the Chu court could create a more

[62] In comparison, the couple buried at Tianxingguan each had their own set of *sheng* tripods, though of a cruder form, indicating that the deposition of such ritual vessels could be flexible and symbolic. Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 22; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2018), 5-6.

integrated network that bound the expanding *shi* class and non-Chu elites into a larger Chu collective. The lacquerware seen at Jiuliandun, therefore, is not just a replacement for bronze; it is the material embodiment of a successful political and cultural assimilation, paving the way for its influence in all aspects of life in the subsequent Han dynasty.

5.5 Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, the transformation of ritual vessel assemblages in the Eastern Zhou was not a simple, linear evolution, but a dynamic arena of political negotiation, social ambition, and material innovation. The story of Chu is not one of a passive recipient of a declining Zhou tradition, but that of an active agent that dismantled the old order and forged a new one. The bronze-centric system, with its rigid sumptuary rules rooted in ancestral authority, was progressively hollowed out, becoming a mere spectre of its former self whose spirit was fading.

This ritual vacuum was filled by two powerful, intersecting forces. From the 'bottom up', the explosive growth of the *shi* class created an unprecedented demand for the symbolic currency of ritual. Their social ambition drove the diversification of materials, leading to the proliferation of simpler bronzes, ceramic alternatives, and utilitarian lacquerware. From the 'top down', the Chu court weaponised this diversification. It used the distribution of novel prestige goods, such as the sheng tripod, as a flexible instrument of statecraft, managing its vast and heterogeneous territory by creating a new, more inclusive, and distinctly Chu-centric network of allegiance.

In this new, dynamic environment, lacquer was uniquely positioned as a seamless link to meet the needs from both ends (top-down and bottom-up). Unlike bronze, whose value was ontological and rooted in scarce metal, the value of lacquer was a direct testament to human organisation and artistry—the mastery of a complex craft and the command of immense labour. Ultimately, the function of lacquerware was multi-folded. The substitution of a bronze set with lacquer replicas at Jiuliandun, therefore, represents more than a change in taste. It is the material manifestation of a new social and political order, one that valued achieved status over inherited right, and human ingenuity over ancestral precedent. In the tomb of Marquis Yi of

Zeng, a clear distinction can be seen between simpler lacquered *dou* intended for funeral ritual and a second, more numerous and exquisitely crafted group used for daily feasts. This demonstrates that lacquerware's role as a traditional ritual vessel was not as prominent as that of bronze or pottery. They were not simply replaced by lacquer. Instead, its great advantage was its versatility. It allowed all ranks of Chu elites, both indigenous and non-indigenous, to modify their own ritual practices and create unique assemblages. They worked as aids in establishing connections across social strata and vast regions. Lacquer was not simply added into the ritual system; it provided the very medium through which a new one could be built.

6 A Chu Feast: The Senses, Diets, and the Politics of Dining

The previous chapter detailed the diversification of ritual assemblages. The rapid expansion of the *shi* (士) class resulted in the choice of more economic materials such as clay and lacquer. This chapter delves deeper into the primary context where these new vessel sets were used, and their combinational changes can be observed: the feast. A feast, the communal consumption of food and drink, is a particular form of ritual activity where sacrifices and banquets often alternate and intertwine.[1] It is, as Lothar von Falkenhausen saw it, a 'multi-media happenings' where music, dance, fragrance, and material artefacts merge to create a powerful social and religious experience.[2] Consequently, uncommon shared meals on any occasion can be considered a feast.[3] All feasts are already ritual in nature.

In the *Zuo Tradition* and other ritual texts, the sage's ritual authority is associated with or even mirrors the multiple ritual vessels applied and their sensory effects.[4] They are viewed as the externalised forms and metaphors of a person's internal virtue, which can express the inherent order of his various actions.[5] As Li Wai-yee states, the surface/appearance equates the underlying meaning, as the central issue is not the monarch's personality but rather his behaviour.[6] Sensory effects associated with a ruler are the most intuitive metric for gauging his virtue, which was unquestionably on the rise during this era.

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[1] Dietler, Michael and Hayden, Brian (2001), 'Digesting the Feast—Good to Eat, Good to Drink, Good to Think: An Introduction', *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power*, 3.

[2] von Falkenhausen, Lothar (1988), *Ritual Music in Bronze Age China: An Archaeological Perspective* (PhD diss.: Harvard University), 693.

[3] Hayden, Brian (2001), 'Fabulous Feasts: A Prolegomenon to the Importance of Feasting', *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power*, 23-64; Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (1996), 69-70.

[4] The *Zuo Tradition* notes that in ritual contexts, '大羹不致，粢食不凿，昭其俭也。' ('the great stew is not seasoned, and the sacrificial grains are not pounded, to manifest frugality.'). See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* (*Commentary on the Zuo Tradition of the Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋左传注), (the Warring States period; 2018), annotated by Yang, Bojun (杨伯峻) , 2 vols., (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 73-4.

[5] Sterckx, Roel (2011), *Food, Sacrifice, and Sagehood in Early China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 173-4.

[6] Li, Wai-yee (2007), *The Readability of the Past in Early Chinese Historiography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center Publications Program), 111-112.

This chapter argues that the feast in the Eastern Zhou evolved from a formal ancestral ceremony into a complex political theatre. As Martin Kern has noted, at banquets, ancestors were present and entertained in exact parallel to rulers and their living subordinates, making the event both a religious and a political one.[7] However, the division between the ritual vessels of the living and those buried with the dead marks an early stage in the shift away from a Western Zhou world based on the shared existence of the living and the deceased.[8] As Mark Lewis points out, the separation of the living and the dead became a more prominent aim of funerary rituals in the late Warring States period, with lineal ties being superseded by hierarchical ranks and political standing.[9] Consequently, while the importance of banquets increased, their attendees and their meaning changed. This chapter will use the feast as a starting point to examine how Chu elites used sensory effects and changing diets, particularly through the medium of lacquerware, to manifest their virtue and political positions in this dynamic new landscape.

6.1 The Feast as a Ritual Stage: From Zhou Tradition to Chu Innovation

6.1.1 The Traditional Zhou Feast: A Political Consolidation

The inscribed bronze tripod, *da yu ding* (大盂鼎), from the early 10th century B.C., illustrates how a traditional Zhou feast was integrated with ancestral cults and served to consolidate political power.[10] Cast to commemorate a successful military campaign, the inscription describes a grand ceremony where the king received the spoils of war from his official, Yu. The feast was a critical part of this event, serving as a stage for important social transactions such as

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[7] Thote, Alain (2009), 'Shang and Zhou Funeral Practices: Interpretation of Material Vestiges', *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang Through Han (1250 BC-220 AD)* (Leiden: Brill), 103-42; Kern, Martin (2009), 'Bronze Inscriptions, the Shijing and the Shangshu: The Evolution of the Ancestral Sacrifice During the Western Zhou', in Lagerwey, John and Kalinowski, Marc (eds.), *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang Through Han (1250 BC-220 AD)* (Leiden: Brill), 169-172.

[8] von Falkenhausen, Lothar (1994), 'Sources of Taoism: Reflections on Archaeological Indicators of Religious Change in Eastern Zhou China', *Taoist Resources*, 5 (2), 1-12.

[9] Lewis (2012), 121.

[10] Shaughnessy, Edward L (1999), 'Western Zhou History', in Loewe, Michael and Shaughnessy, Edward L (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 BC*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 320-2.

the prestation of valuables and the forging of alliances, addressed to a wide audience of officials, guests, captives, and the ancestors themselves.[11] Multiple toasts and offerings of drinks were carried out at different time points and places in the process of the ceremony, within the temple, either on the courtyards or inside the court.[12] Through feasts with repetitions of performances, messages were created, intensified, and emphasized each time to reach a consensus to consolidate the power of the authority and awe groups of audiences. In the end, an ancestral cult with a victim was dedicated to the former dead kings, followed by a grander feast with "toasts after toasts". These toasts and feasts were integrated both as part of the ceremonies but also worked as nodes, signifying the successful completion of a ritual activity. Apart from the condensed meanings intensified each time, the ritual experience and feelings were also accumulated and progressive for repetitive reinforcement. Instead of thinking of the feast as an ending set-up, the feasts grew into a grander one each time along with the accumulation and intensification of both actions and feelings to let out the feeling and a final celebration.[13]

As has been suggested by scholars such as Jessica Rawson, a conspicuous choice was made following the Ritual Reform, with more massive, spectacular vessels added.[14] It is also inferred that the abolition of personal drinking ritual vessels in tombs also resulted by the abolition of personal ritual toasting. If this was the case, it would also fit with what some scholars have asserted: that the visual aspect has taken precedence and has become more of a political statement than a personal and physical engagement with the ritual activities among a larger audience.

However, as evidence by the *da yu ding* tripod, both large and personal drinking vessels were involved due to the volume of toasts, which contradicts with the above hypothesis about the disappearance of personal drinking. If toasts continued to exist, what was used as a personal drinking vessel and where did they go? As we may see in the following, the feasting did not

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11 Wiessner, Polly (2001), 'Of Feasting and Value: Enga Feasts in a Historical Perspective', in Dietler, Michael and Hayden, Brian (eds.), *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power*), 115-43.

12 Shaughnessy (1999), 320-2.

13 Dietler and Hayden (2001), 1-20; Kern (2000).

14 Rawson (1989), 71-95.

vanish, but that its context and meanings were expanded.

6.1.2 The Eastern-Zhou Feast: A Distinctive Practice

By the Eastern Zhou period, the focus of the feast began to shift from the strict ritual process, as recorded in bronze inscriptions, to the cultivation of a specific atmosphere. As Martin Kern reminds us, poems from the *Book of Songs* (Shijing), likely idealised versions of Western Zhou rituals but used as references in the Eastern Zhou, emphasise the use of poetic language, music, sounds, and scents to enhance the ritual experience.[15]

Textual evidence suggests that the Chu elites cultivated their own distinctive way of feasting. The *Guoyu* (国语), for example, records that when Prince Chong'er of Jin visited Chu, King Cheng of Chu employed Zhou rituals to host him, involving nine toasts and hundreds of food containers.[16] The very fact that the King needed to consciously switch to the Zhou ritual implies that the daily Chu practice was different. Some scholars even speculate that ritual specialists were employed to supervise these formal diplomatic events, which served as a commonly acknowledged protocol for states wishing to join the peer polities.[17]

Contemporary pictorial scenes on incised bronze vessels, which originated in the southeast and travelled north, offer a visual representation of these new, more integrated feasts.[18] As a product of prestige, the bronze entails a forging and engraving technique that was popular around the late 6th century B.C.[19] Originating in the Wuyue region in the southeast, the bronze vessel travelled northward along the east coast and into the Central Plains.[20] It further reaches north

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15 Kern (2000), 60.

16 The *Guoyu* records: '（重耳）遂如楚，楚成王以周礼享之，九献，庭实旅百。' ('Chong Er thus went to Chu. King Cheng of Chu treated him according to Zhou ritual. The king offered drinks nine times, and the courtyard was filled with hundreds of food vessels.'). See *Guoyu yizhu (Translation and Annotation of the "Discourses of the States"*《国语》译注*)*, translated and annotated by Wu, Guoyi (邬国义), *et al.* (2018), (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe), 305.

17 Zhang, Wenjie (张闻捷) (2010), 'Shilun Chu mu de yongding zhidu (试论楚墓的用鼎制度)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (04), 94.

18 For the most recent overview of incised bronzes, see Teng, Mingyu (滕铭予) (2020), 'Dongzhou shiqi kewen tongqi zai jiantao (东周时期刻纹铜器再检讨)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (9), 93-111.

19 Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (1996), 69.

20 Zhenjiang bowuguan, (镇江博物馆) (1987), 'Jiangsu Zhenjiang Jianbi Wangjiashan dongzhou mu (江苏镇江谏壁王家山东周墓)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (12), 24-37+97+102; Jiangsu sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, (江苏省文物管理委员会) and Nanjing bowuyuan, (南京博物院) (1965), 'Jiangsu Liuhe

in relation to the steppe.

Diverse scenes including feasts, hunting, and gaming were all integrated together with no clear separation, indicating that the feasting rituals were more commonly incorporated into elites' lives (Fig. 6.1).[21] There is a remarkable degree of consistency in both composition and topic matter, but also some local adaptations of themes as it travels northward.[22] One of the most significant contributions of these incised bronzes is that they provide a rare visual representation—a form of ethnographic detail—of how different artefacts were used together in complex scenes. Specifically, they consistently depict the combination of bronze *ding* tripods and, possibly, lacquered *dou* dishes being used as a set for serving food at feasts (Fig. 6.2). The images show meat cooked in the large *ding* being transferred into *dou* vessels. Attendants then pass the *dou* dishes to hosts or guests, who sit at small tables in pavilions. In addition, larger *hu* jars are shown placed on top of *jin* tables, ready for toasts (Fig. 6.1b). The *dou* thus becomes the most prevalent vessel type for these specific feasts. This relates fundamentally to the large quantity of lacquered remnants found in various states.[23] The dynamic, multi-activity scenes depicted suggest that elites on the move, for travel or hunting, would have carried a great deal more lighter vessels, such as bronzes with thinner walls and lacquerwares, for their portability. Crucially, however, the known number of these incised bronzes discovered in Chu is significantly lower than in the east and the north, despite Chu's close relations with these regions.[24] Only four have been discovered, and exclusively in the tombs of middle-class Chu elites (*shi*), with none found in the tombs of the top elites.[25] It is possible, therefore, that Chu's own feasting patterns were still distinct from those depicted on these vessels, even if Chu feasting

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Chengqiao Dong-Zhou mu (江苏六合程桥东周墓)', *Kaogu (考古)*, 3; Huaiyin shi bowuguan, (淮阴市博物馆) (1988), 'Huaiyin Gaozhuang Zhanguo mu (淮阴高庄战国墓)', *Kaogu xuebao (考古学报)*, (2), 189-232.

[21] This is also consistent with what Hayden stated, i.e., uncommon shared meals on any occasion that could be considered a feast. Hayden (2001); Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (1996), 69-70.

[22] Teng (2020), 99-101. It is possible that local craftsmen made bronze copies of original types due to regional differences in myths, outfits, and architecture.

[23] See Chapter 5, section 5.3.2, 24-5.

[24] See the appendix in Teng's recent article, Teng (2020), Appendix. 1.

[25] Incised *yi* basins are found in tombs M173 at Yugang, M1 at Huangshangang, M10 at Pingdingshan, and M5 at Huangnikeng, all dated to the early Warring States period (ca. 470–370 B.C.).

behaviours can be partly extrapolated through the functional commonalities of the vessels. This raises a key question that the remainder of this chapter will address: how did Chu feasts demonstrate a particular and diverse tradition, and what specific function did lacquerware perform at these banquets?

6.1.3 Feasts as Commemorative Performance

As the textual and pictorial evidence suggests, the feast in the Eastern Zhou was treated as a legacy to be commemorated, a performance designed to evoke specific memories. According to bronze inscriptions and poems, 'what occurred' was often less relevant than 'who we wish to remember';[26] Words and images were honed to generate a specific memory formula . These accounts function as a type of recipe, outlining the procedures for attaining a desired ritual efficacy. Likewise, the scenes on incised bronzes served to reconstruct, recall, and instruct ritual conduct for future generations.

This performative recollection is evident in the puzzling appearance of goblet-shaped vessels, possibly the ancient *gu* (觚) goblets, in these scenes. The *gu*, a vessel type from the Shang and early Western Zhou, was largely absent in this period, so its portrayal reflects a deliberate 'reverence for the ancient' (*shanggu* 尚古) in order to demonstrate an idealised, archaic ritual feast. [27] This indicates that the context and atmosphere became increasingly valued components of ritual practice. Feasts evoked not just ancient ceremonies, but embodied, sensory memories. The senses were thus both a component of the ritual and a criterion for its success. It is through this lens of reconstructing embodied memory that we can best approach the changes in Chu, where the introduction of new utensils such as lacquerware manifested these evolving ritual and sensory priorities.

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[26] Shaughnessy (1999), 322–23.

[27] It is also likely that comparable drinking jars were still in use in the southeast but have not been preserved. In the Zhenjiang tomb where these incised bronzes were found, no goblets or *dou* were present, but lacquerware fragments were discovered, which could have belonged to such vessels. See Zhenjiang bowuguan (1987). 37. Furthermore, widespread instances of reviving and copying ancient bronzes can be observed during this period. See Zhang, Wenjie (张闻捷) (2017), 'Zhanguo shidai de tongqi fugu (战国时代的铜器复古)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (4), 91-102.

6.2 The Diet of the Spirits: From Meat Sacrifices to Botanical Aromas

As with the feasts of the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, a representative Chu feast required the participation of the spirits and maintained a significant focus on scents as the primary medium of communication. The Chu, however, exhibited a distinct preference in the aromas offered to the divine, marking a significant departure from the northern tradition.

According to the above-mentioned traditional texts, feasting rituals may differ from state to state. In general, detailed descriptions of vessels that were utilised in these texts are relatively simple. Classical texts, such as the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*, indicate that processes were the focus rather the quantity of food and vessels. A typical linguistic and ritual tradition is to utilise specific food terms such as *fuhai* (脯醢) dried meat and meat sauce to refer to the containers offered.[28] Thus, these texts focus on standardized ritual process that obscure specific regional characteristics and offer only a partial representation of the feasts. Food contents hold greater significance than the quantity or even the variety of vessels. The food itself should be firstly discussed as it forms the basis for the latter two and the feasts as well. The foods can also be further categorized according to the audiences who enjoyed them, namely the spirits and the living.

6.2.1 The Scent of Sacrifice: The Zhou Tradition

The *Book of Rites* illustrates a hierarchical structure in sacrificial offerings. The type of meat corresponded to the recipient. Raw meat was for the ancestors, medium-rare for the gods, and cooked meat for the general spirits.[29] The most valued aspect of these offerings was often their fragrance. The Zhou king would bestow upon his feudal princes valued gifts of dried meats and

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[28] *Yili* (*Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* 仪礼), (the Warring States period; 2019), trans. Peng, Lin (彭林), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 7, 15-17.

[29] '郊血，大飨腥，三献爓，一献熟；至敬不飨味而贵气臭也。诸侯为宾，灌用郁鬯。灌用臭也，大飨，尚腶修而已矣。' ('At the suburban sacrifice to Heaven (*jiao*), blood is offered; at the grand feast (*da xiang*), raw meat is presented; for the third libation (*san xian*), the meat is scorched; and for the first libation (*yi xian*), it is fully cooked. This demonstrates that the utmost reverence is not found in partaking of flavors, but in valuing the vital essence and aroma (*qi xiu*). When the feudal lords attend as guests, the libation is performed with a fragrant spirit made from black millet and herbs (*yu chang*). The purpose of this libation is to offer the fragrance. Thus, at the grand feast, what is truly esteemed is simply the dried, cured meat.'). *Liji* (Han dynasty; 2019), 474-5.

spices for their aroma. This emphasis on scent dates back to the Shang era, when the *liao* (燎) or burnt sacrifice recorded in oracle bones and the *Shijing* was prevalent.[30] The burning of firewood with the addition of animal fat produces sizzling sounds, infused with a large quantity of dense smoke. Meanwhile, coniferous trees and artemisia plants generate distinct scents.[31] They illustrate that the burnt sacrifice greatly emphasizes on the visual and olfactory senses of animal sacrifices. The aroma's intensity is more essential than its flavour.

6.2.2 The Fragrance of the South: The Chu Preference for Plants

As those of the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, a representative Chu feast, requires the participation of the spirits and maintains a significant focus on the scents. However, they exhibited distinct preferences for scents. The Chu placed greater emphasis on plant aromas. This preference is vividly described in the *Songs of the South* (*Chuci*). In poems such as 'The Oriental Supreme' (*Donghuang taiyi* 东皇太一), offerings to the divine consist of all types of aromatic foods and botanical fragrances, accompanied by drumming and music to delight the spirits.[32] The poems mention up to a hundred plant species, including thirty-four aromatic plants and woods.[33] In *Lisao* (离骚), the poet cultivated herbs such as 'divine pepper' and a 'myriad of fragrances' to adorn his outfit. He used the blending of distinct botanical smells as a portal to attract the divine's presence.[34] Milled rice mixed with peppercorns was served to greet the arrival of

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[30] In the poem 'Shengmin' from the *Shijing*, the *liao* sacrifice is conducted by burning mugwort along with beef lard to produce fragrance. See *Shijing* (*Book of Odes* 诗经), (2015), trans. Wang, Xiumei (王秀梅), 2 vols., (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 628-9.

[31] Xu, Ke (许科) (2008), 'Gudai liaoji yongwu ji qi yiyi (古代燎祭用物及其意义)', *Journal of Sichuan University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)*, (3), 138-43.

[32] '扬枹兮拊鼓，疏缓节兮安歌；陈竽瑟兮浩倡；灵偃蹇兮姣服，芳菲菲兮满堂；五音纷兮繁会，君欣欣兮乐康。' ('Strike the drum, beat it slow, sing a calm and leisurely song; reed pipes and zithers play in harmony, a grand chorus begins; the spirits, in beautiful robes, dance gracefully, their sweet fragrance filling the hall; the five tones blend in a complex symphony, bringing joy and peace to the lord.') 'Donghuang taiyi [The Oriental Supreme] (东皇太一)' in Qu, Yuan (屈原) (the Warring States period; 2018) *Chuci* (*The Songs of the South* 楚辞), trans. Lin, Jiali (林家骊), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 36-39.

[33] Li, Qixia (李其霞) (2016), '"Chuci" zhi chongxiang ji xian Qin xiang wenhua (《楚辞》之崇香及先秦香文化)', *Journal of Changchun University of Science and Technology (Social Sciences Edition)*, 29 (5), 105-08. Pan, Fujun (潘富俊) (2014), *Chuci zhiwu tujian (楚辞植物图鉴)* (Beijing: Jiuzhou chubanshe), 14.

[34] '杂申椒与菌桂兮。' ('I gathered shin-pepper and fragrant cinnamon.') '余既滋兰之九畹兮，又树蕙之百亩。畦留夷与揭车兮，杂杜衡与芳芷。' ('I had tended nine patches of orchids, and

spirits.[35] This affinity for botanical fragrance demonstrates a changing belief that spirits appreciate a wider variety of aromas beyond those of traditional meat sacrifices, and that they exist everywhere, accompanying the living.

In addition, the offerings can be wrapped in a variety of herbs (*hui* 蕙, or modern-day basils) instead of actual vessels and put on a jade table with intricate carvings.[36] This was followed by a pillow of fragrant orchid leaves served with laurel and pepper-infused alcohol.[37] The many scents of the contents assumed a greater significance. The natural herbs worked as containers that transcends the initial vessels. Descriptions of odours reflect perceptions based on the cultural assessment and memory formula to which smells, and bodily memories adhere. In conclusion, the change of the fragrance implies changing rituals that were possibly different from the previous times. Compared to the Shang and Zhou feasts, a variety of aroma extended beyond traditional feasts of heavy meats, fats and oils. Fragrance of plants and spices was stressed in virtually all aspects of Chu ritual and elite lives.

6.2.3 The Food of the Divine: Jades, Pebbles, and the Tasteless Taste

Beyond aroma, a higher state of offering, often odourless and tasteless to the human tongue, was considered the true sustenance of the divine. The odourless *qi* (气) indicates a higher state, which attracts and is experienced by ancestors and spirits.[38] The ordourlessness also becomes an essential sensory medium for humans communicating with them. This concept is evident in

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planted a hundred acres of melilotus. I had raised beds of asarums and angelicas.') '佩缤纷其繁饰兮，芳菲菲其弥章。' ('My girdle was a tangle of dazzling ornaments, their odours ever increasing their brilliance.') 'Lisao [Sublimating Sorrow] (离骚)' in *Chuci* (the Warring States period; 2018), 1-33. 6-13.

35 In the poem *Lisao*, the poet mentions fragrant offerings for divinations: '巫咸将夕降兮，怀椒糈而要之。' ('The shaman Wu Xian was to descend in the evening; I went to meet him with offerings of peppered rice.') *Ibid.*, 25-30.

36 'On the offering table were placed both jades and handfuls of aromatic plants.' ('瑶席兮玉瑱，盍将把兮琼芳。') *Ibid.*, 38-9.

37 'To appease the supreme gods, sacrifices are enveloped in *hui* herbs with orchid leaves underneath, and cinnamon peppers are soaked in wine syrup.' ('蕙肴蒸兮兰藉，奠桂酒兮椒浆'). *Ibid.* 38-9.

38 'Ghosts and spirits will absorb the *qi* contained in them, whereas gentlemen will enjoy their taste (wei 味).' ('鬼神享其气焉，君子食其味焉。'). *Guanzi* (管子), (the Spring and Autum period; 2019), attributed to Guan Zhong (管仲), trans. Li, Shan (李山) and Xuan, Xinli (轩新丽), 2 vols., (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 85.

the use of beautiful jade, which is highly praised in the *Songs of the South*. The practice of offering jade-like materials as foods for the spirits has deep roots, as seen in the burials of the Zeng marquises during the early Western Zhou at Yejiashan, where two to three polished pebbles were prevalently placed in *dou* dishes.[39] This long-standing custom finds a perfect parallel in the Chu tombs at Changtaiguan. *Dou* dishes were found containing an average of three to seven plum kernels. Both pebbles and plants functioned as symbolic food offerings.

This practice was further developed and incorporated into daily implements that were brought into the ritual sphere. At the Baoshan Chu tomb, for example, seven *zu* (俎) chopping boards, considered to have been used as offering tables, had their faces inlaid with quartz stones and coated with white powder (Fig. 6.3).[40] This is comparable to a black lacquered table from Changtaiguan M2, which was uniformly inlaid with twenty irregular pieces of white jade.[41] This situation is reminiscent of the jade tables mentioned in the *Chuci*. Although only pebbles were used in some instances, the scope of what constituted 'beautiful jade' was evidently much broader than one may now perceive. Furthermore, the analogy and progression from sacrificial *zu* chopping boards to *ji* tables indicate that the daily implements have been incorporated into the ritual. The *ji*'s ritual significance will be revisited in a subsequent section.

Both plants and jades, in these similar archaeological instances show that comparable beliefs were latent in the actual rites. This is also consistent with what is recorded in the *Book of Rites*, which states that the *dou* should primarily contain vegetation from the water or the earth as the divine's foods.[42] Although this reconciliation of literature and archaeology cannot be considered conclusive, both the textual and archaeological findings demonstrate that, among the many senses, the sense of the smell and the taste are the most important. They are the first to be perceived by ancestors and spirits. The concept also extends to daily life, where the aroma

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[39] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Suizhou shi bowuguan (2011), 6-7; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Suizhou shi bowuguan (2016), 38-9.
[40] Tomb M2 at Baoshan, Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 130, fig. 80, pl. 39:4.
[41] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 102, fig. 70:4, Colour Plate 15:2, pl. 94:2.
[42] The sacrificial foods placed in the *dou* vessels are all 'products of water and earth' ('笾豆之荐，水土之品也'). *Liji* (Han dynasty; 2019), 494-5.

is the focal point to unite with the spirits, followed by the taste in the following section.

6.3 The Diet of the Living: New Tastes, New Vessels, New Politics

The transformation of offerings for the spirits was mirrored by a profound change in the diet of the living.[43] In the *Book of Rites*, it is stated that the food offered to the gods does not need to be delectable for human consumption, but should instead emphasize a wide variety.[44] David Knechtges considers a portion of the soul-calling content in the *Songs of the South* to be an early endowment on Chu's diet.[45] This applies to the Chu's case. The food contents, its smell, and the taste evidenced by the additions of plants and spices all contribute to the richness of a feast and spiritual aids that transcend its simple association with not only daily life but more ritualised and socialised.

6.3.1 A Lighter Feast: The Shift in Food Content

6.3.1.1 The Fragrance

Archaeological evidence demonstrates this new emphasis on fragrance in two primary ways. The first is the discovery of the actual spices themselves. Increasing numbers of plant-based foods and spices, such as peppercorns, are frequently discovered in Chu tombs. In a 5th-century B.C. tomb at Hougudui, for instance, a significant quantity of peppercorns was unearthed from a small bronze square box found by a noble woman's side.[46] By contrast, the few actual food items, such as ox bones, were recovered from a separate storage pit.[47] This suggests that the

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43 *Thote (2009)*. 103.

44 '不敢用亵味而贵多品，所以交于旦明之义也。' ('One does not dare to use profane flavors but rather values a multitude of items; this is to engage with the meaning of the bright dawn.') *Liji* (Han dynasty; 2019), 476-7.

45 Knechtges, David R (1986), 'A Literary Feast: Food in Early Chinese Literature', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 106 (1), 54-57.

46 Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (河南省文物考古研究所) (2004), *Gushi Hougudui yi hao mu (固始侯古堆一号墓)* (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe), 18, 47, fig. 51-1, Colour Plate 18-2.

47 Peppercorns in Chu burials may indicate a regional feature in the Jianghuai River basin, a practice also observed during the Shang. It is likely that many more peppercorns were strewn in tombs than is mentioned in excavation reports. See Yao, Zhiyuan (姚智远) and Xu, Chanfei (徐婵菲) (2008), 'Xian Qin liang Han huajiao de yongtu ji wenhua yiyi (先秦两汉花椒的用途及文化意义)', *Nongye kaogu (农业考古)*, (1), 168-76. Yang, Junfeng (杨俊峰) (2012), 'Yinxu "Yazhang" mu suizang huajiao zangsu qianyi (殷墟"亚长"墓随葬花椒葬俗浅议)', *Nongye kaogu (农业考古)*, (4), 8-12.

peppercorns were treated as intimate personal belongings, valued for their fragrance and possible medicinal nature, rather than as simple offerings. While the practice of sprinkling peppercorns across a tomb was a form of death rite, the plain, non-ritual style of the container suggests its contents were prominent in the tomb owner's daily life.

The second line of evidence is the prevalence of exquisitely crafted incense burners in elite tombs, attesting to the importance of aroma in daily life and feasts. Such burners have been found in tombs at Wangshan, Baoshan, Baishizidi, and the tomb of Marquis Yi.[48] The Marquis's tomb, for example, contained two different types: a long, teardrop-shaped burner with a chimney-like vent, and an openwork smoker, a form also found at other sites with plant remains still inside (Fig. 6.4a).[49] These burners, intricately gilded and inlaid with turquoise, were prestige objects discovered in the eastern chamber near the marquis's coffin. They were placed alongside the marquis' most exquisite lacquered *dou* vessels, suggesting their frequent and combined use at feasts. As are also shown by the example at Baishizidi, the incense burner was used altogether with a round wooden container (Fig. 6.4b). Notably, the incense burners found in later tombs, such as the one possibly belonging to King You of Chu at Lisangudui (mid-3rd century B.C.), are exceptionally refined.[50] Their superb craftsmanship stands in stark contrast to the crudely made traditional ritual bronzes found in the same tomb (Fig. 6.4c). This rising significance of fragrance indicates a shift in ritual contexts, where the owner's status was elevated by sharing these personal, sensory experiences with the spirits as part of their daily 'diet'.

6.3.1.2 The Variety of Foods

The emphasis of the Chu feast turned increasingly to the food itself, with fruits and plants

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[48] Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui (1981), 23-4, pl. 7. Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 248-9, fig. 145.

[49] Hubei Sheng bowuguan, 湖北省博物馆 (1989b), *Zeng Hou Yi mu 曾侯乙墓* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe). 247-50. Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991). 189, pl. 56-3, Colour Plate 11-2. An incense burner (WM1:T81) with plant remains *in situ* was also found at Wangshan. See Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996a). 78, fig. 54, pl.24-2.

[50] The Lisangudui tomb contained four burners. Another silver-inlaid round burner, now in Japan, is also believed to have originated from a Chu royal tomb. Zhang, Changping (张昌平) (2012a), 'Jijin leixi——haiwai bowuguan cang Zhongguo gudai qingtongqi (si): Lisan gudui qingtongqi (吉金类系——海外博物馆藏中国古代青铜器 (四): 李三孤堆青铜器)', *Nanfang wenwu (南方文物)*, (2), 162-3.

becoming more prevalent in elite burials and accounting for a major share of the dietary categories (Appendix. 6.1a). A comparison of the food contents from the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng with those from the Chu tombs at Xiasi from fifty years prior reveals a significant expansion in the diversity of meals (Appendix. 6.1b). The conventional predominance of oxen, goats, and pigs found in the bronze tripods at Xiasi is consistent with Western Zhou tradition.[51] In later tombs, however, sacrifices of oxen and goats are far less common, and rarely are whole animal sacrifices found in the containers of elite burials.

Instead, the Chu elites appear to have adopted a diet consisting of fruits, poultry, and fish. In Marquis Yi's tomb, adult pigs were only utilised in ritual *ding* tripods, but a suckling pig was discovered in tripods for daily feasts along with a wild goose.[52] Suckling pigs were also discovered in the later Baoshan Chu tomb. The choice of these younger animals indicates the elites' preference for more delicate foods, signalling an increasingly refined diet and elevated status. This is further supported by the discovery at the 4th-century tomb at Baoshan with sixty-nine pieces of bamboo baskets, some of which containing foods had been discovered.[53] Plant leaves and straws were wrapped around jars containing preserved foods such as plums, seeds and fishes.[54] This manner of wrappings corresponds to the use of above-mentioned herbs *hui* to wrap sacrifices as described in the *Songs of the South*.[55] This suggests that elites can have the freedom to enjoy these delicacies placed in bamboo containers just as the way foods were presented to the spirits.

The tomb of Lord Bai of the Zhongli state at the Shuangdun site, while not belonging to a Chu elite, shares cultural proximities and provides a telling parallel.[56] Numerous fish and chicken bones were also discovered within two bronze tripods in Lord Bai of Zhongli state's tomb at the Shuangdun site (Fig. 6.5).[57] Due to the contents of the tripods, these bronzes were regarded as

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51 Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xichuan xian bowuguan (1991), 104-22.
52 Hubei Sheng bowuguan (1989), 189-201.
53 Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 150-163, Table 16.
54 *Ibid.,* 196-201.
55 See footnote 37 above, 92.
56 Wang *et al.* (2019).
57 In tripods numbered M1:293 and M1:294, see Kan, Xuhang (阚绪杭) (2013), *Zhongli jun Bai mu (钟离君柏墓)*, 3 vols. (1; Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 50-2, figs. 17, 18-1, 18-2, pls. 46, 47.

daily vessels instead of ritual ones. In this tomb, no known bronze tripods that were traditionally intended for rituals such as the *sheng*s were found. The five *ding* tripods were constituted of two different updated types.[58] The four *fu* grain containers inscribed as 食 (for food) indicate the practical daily usage.[59] Therefore, the hierarchical designations found in this tomb, specifically five *ding* and four *fu* according to some scholars' standards, merely served as a surface-level indication of social standing. A ritual 'set' made from daily bronzes for the purpose of the burial rite, perhaps by an outsider seeking to imitate his peers.[60]

This commonality of burying game and fish is in accordance with texts such as the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial.*[61] These animals, categorised as 'lighter' and 'everyday' in this era, assumed greater symbolic and ceremonial significance. Lighter foods became more important. They were placed in the conventional *ding*s, challenging the prestige of these traditional vessels which were once reserved for precious heavy meats such as oxen. Through the freedom to choose and display extravagantly prepared dishes in a greater variety of vessels, the social standing of the elites was further elevated.

6.3.1.3 The Visible Food Processing and Culinary Skills

Closely related to the food, culinary skills were rarely mentioned in earlier historical and archaeological sources. This is because the specialised culinary processes were normally carried out by chefs, and the elites seldom witnessed them. The incised bronze vessels, for instance, reveal a clear distance between the seated lord and the separate cooking space where specialised personnel were involved.[62] Thus, cooking was not considered an essential part of elite lives.

A major departure from this tradition occurred during the Eastern Zhou, when some culinary procedures became more visible and were even conducted in front of the Chu and Zeng elites.

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[58] *Ibid.,* 50-3.
[59] *Ibid.,* 56-61.
[60] See 'Circling South', in Rawson (2023), 205-11.
[61] As recorded in the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*, geese were incorporated into every aspect of gift-giving in wedding rituals. For example, '纳吉，用雁……请期，用雁。' ('For the acceptance of the betrothal, geese are used... for requesting the wedding date, geese are used.') Wild geese were also presented as a token of goodwill when lower-ranking officers met for the first time: '下大夫相见以雁。'. *Yili* (the Warring States period; 2019), 41, 42, 79.
[62] Zhenjiang bowuguan (1987), 29, fig. 7.

Several sets of cooking vessels, for instance, were discovered in the tomb of Marquis Yi. Based on the residues of charcoal and fish, one plain bronze plate with little design appears to be a regular everyday utensil used for grilling.[63] The direct presentation of freshly cooked items, such as grilled fish, to the elites' tables was not only a practical consideration for keeping food warm, but also a dynamic performance. It enabled a more personalised feast, directed by the elites and tied to shared sensory experiences. The flavour and aroma of a dish were created and reconstructed based on immediate evaluations, strengthening the practical knowledge and culinary skills that the elite's body and heart-mind could now embody. This new method of cooking and eating likely became widespread, as such bronze cooking plates were increasingly prevalent in the Chu state.

Through these new cooking skills, novel flavours and memories were produced and shared among the Chu elites. As Tim Ingold has emphasised, sensory skills are cultivated through an ongoing process of an 'education of attention' across generations.[64] The Chu elites were likely cultivated with a newly created social sensory formula, through which social classes were distinguished and disciplined.[65] Furthermore, as scholars such as Roel Sterckx indicate, by this time, the processes of cooking and slaughtering were being used as powerful metaphors for self-cultivation and governing the state, with chefs and butchers seen on par with sages and monarchs.[66] The emergence of this concept is consistent with the archaeological evidence, providing a rationale for the new prominence of culinary arts as well as performances among elites. Through this direct engagement with cooking, the condensed meanings of a prior ritualistic feast and a shared memory of the senses were combined and made accessible to the Chu elites.

6.3.1.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this section is not to stimulate new senses or to examine culinary abilities in a

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63 See C. 197 in Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 204, 206-7, fig. 106.

64 Ingold, Tim (2001), 'Beyond Art and Technology: The Anthropology of Skill', *Anthropological Perspectives on Technology*), 17-31.

65 According to Marx, the worker's sense of freedom is limited to animalistic activities such as eating, drinking, and reproducing. See Howes (2022), 308

66 Sterckx (2011), 49-81.

technical manner.[67] The sensory aspects of food and cooking in Chu were deeply related to social dimensions. In contrast to a Western emphasis on a hierarchy of the senses, as discussed by David Howes, the senses in this period were characterised by a desire for comprehensiveness and equilibrium.[68] As has been illustrated in the beginning of this chapter, there are no superior or inferior senses, but they must be well balanced and managed by elites to show his strong abilities and virtue. For instance, the *Zuo Tradition* implies that the monarch's ability to regulate his taste and appetite will ultimately influence his political decision-making. In the body metaphors related to senses, breath/smell, taste, will, and speech are all integrated into one. Different officials can even be viewed as the emperor's various sensory organs, just as the left and right limbs are of equal importance.[69] Senses, particularly the harmony of sounds, aromas, and flavours, were a vital conduit to both divine and political power, and this self-cultivation through the senses occurred most often in daily life, with food as the mediating factor.[70] As food became increasingly varied, so did the perception of the taste and the smell, resulting in a distinct set of Chu 'senses' from the Zhou.

The Chu elite diet, with its increasing inclusion of fruit and light meat such as fish and fowl, reflects this new emphasis on refinement and control. This trend towards a 'lighter' diet can be interpreted as a change in the markers of social status. As Pierre Bourdieu asserts, dominant classes often achieve distinction by eating lighter, less filling food, a practice that signals freedom

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67 Sutton, David (2006), 'Cooking Skill, the Senses, and Memory: The Fate of Practical Knowledge', in Edwards, Elizabeth *et al.* (eds.), *Sensible Objects*; (Oxford: Berg),110.

68 For instance, the upper class in the West has traditionally been associated with the 'higher' senses of vision and hearing. The lower classes, due to their manual labour, are associated with the 'lower' senses of taste and scent; employees are sometimes referred to simply as 'hands'. This suggests that different social classes may have different sensory priorities. See Howes, David (2014), *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Modern Age* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing). 67.

69 During a banquet hosted by the Duke of Jin, his master chef Kuai remarked that musicians act as the ruler's ears, and courtiers his eyes. The chef, however, skilfully combines flavours to optimise the monarch's physiological well-being, activating his vital energy (*qi*) and blood, thereby fortifying his intent and enabling the issuance of effective commands: '味以行气，气以实志，志以定言，言以出令。臣实司味。'. See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* (the Warring States period; 2018), 1139-41; Durrant *et al.* (2016), 1448-51; Sterckx (2011), 63-5.

70 David Schaberg concludes that cooking transcended ordinary sensory experience to become a paradigm for political relationships. Schaberg, David (2001), *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (205; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center), 228-230; Li (2007), 119-121.

from necessity.[71] The working class, on the other hand, had a "whole-body schema" in which fish was frequently considered as inadequate and insufficiently "filling."[72] In the Zhou tradition, the heaviest meat is given to the highest-ranking ancestors. In the Chu case, however, the variety and delicacy of the food intake became more highly prized than the sheer weight of the meat, indicating a social and ritual elevation in status. It was an intentional manipulation of status by the elites, who shaped their position by offering more varieties of plants to the spirits and cultivating the senses in a more accessible, daily manner. As we shall see in the following, the lacquerware's advantages become apparent. The Chu elites prioritised the quality and quantity of lacquerwares (see Chapter 3). The senses were made even more tangible and quantifiable by lacquered vessels and sets as aids. A new trend of lightness has emerged because of the emphasis on senses and processes, but also in one's political and social standing.

6.3.2 New Vessels for a New Diet: The Rise of the *Dou* and the Eared Cup

During this period, and possibly during most periods, elites never promoted specific recipes. Instead, a certain memory of the taste was always embodied and significant.[73] This section is also intended to clarify the topic, especially the social relationship between foods and containers. The demand for "lightness" seems disrupt the original link between food and traditional bronze vessels. The fish dish in the shallow bronze plate from the tomb of Marquis Yi and the two bronze *dou* next to the plate testify the changing connections. The vessel types such as the *dou* came to be linked with lighter foods in elites' regular feasts. The typical bronze ritual containers were no longer adequate for the transformation of the various ritual scenes.

In contrast, the lacquerware facilitates a different sensory experience from other materials. Its significance was partly related to the increasing desire and needs at various occasions for feasts. These events were marked by a distinct requirement for visualisation and were motivated by

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[71] Bourdieu, Pierre (2010), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group), 180-91.
[72] *Ibid.,* 188.
[73] Sutton (2006), 97.

political and ritualistic aims. We will also ponder on questions such as how lacquerwares are made more qualitatively and quantitatively suitable for the feasts of the time. More lighter lacquered containers, particularly the *dou* vessels and eared cups detailed next, were required to complement the feast scenes in a more contemplative way.

6.3.2.1 Dou vessels: From Ritual Container to Performative Stage

The *dou* (豆) vessel, due to its long ritual history and rapid proliferation, is an excellent case study for the changing requirements of the feast. Originating from bronze prototypes in the Western Zhou, such as the *fu* (簠), the *dou* existed in both lidded and open-plate forms. Bronze versions continued to be used for ritual sacrifices but tended to become simpler in decoration, indicating their decreasing importance (Fig. 6.6). For example, the bronze *dou*, presumably of a Zhou origin, were discovered containing charred millets in the late-6th-century tomb of the Jin official, Zhao Qing, at Jinsheng village, Taiyuan.[74] Similarly, bronze versions with intricate turquoise inlays were also discovered in the tomb of Marquis Yi.[75] The bronze *dou* were also occasionally seen in Chu. In most Chu and Zeng tombs, however, the majority of *dou* were lacquered wooden implements with significant typological variations (Fig. 6.7).[76] This has led scholars like Zhang Wenjie to classify *dou*s into two distinct regional traditions—Central Plains and Chu—based on textual sources such as the *Book of Rites* and archaeological finds.[77] His research begins with the texts, deduces particular types from archaeological evidences, and establishes fundamental typological distinctions. The configurations of *huang* 皇 with thick supports, lidded *he* 合, and *jia* 加 *dou* with horizontal stripes on the stem, are concluded according to the texts in the *Rites of the Zhou* and the *Book of Rites*. The *huang dou* in Baoshan, for instance, are inlaid with quartz stones.[78] The unlidded *dou* without the lacquer in the Zuozhong

[74] Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (1996), 34-42.
[75] See C. 196, fig. 111-1 in Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 211.
[76] An exception is a few uncommon varieties of *dou*, such as the unadorned, thin-bodied bronze implements discovered at Jiuliandun. See Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2018), 9.
[77] Zhang (2011).
[78] Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991).

tomb in Jingmen indicates that it was not utilised on a daily basis.[79] Four small pebbles are inlaid along the outer wall of the plate that is painted black. These similarities indicate that the *dou*, whether covered or not, serve a similar sacrificial purpose during rituals.

Nonetheless, these rules established by scholars based on traditional texts appear implausible when analysed case by case archaeologically.[80] For instance, the tomb of a local lord at Tianxingguan contained only four lidded *dou*s, far short of the minimum of twelve his rank supposedly required.[81] Likewise, the tomb of Marquis Yi, whose social standing was far greater, contained the same number of four lidded *dou* as the lower-ranked tombs at Wangshan and Baoshan.[82] This phenomenon implies that not all Chu tombs adhere to the rigorous rule of using *dou*s. Traditional ancestral sacrifices are frequently reduced in scope and only become superficially symbolic. The traditional rituals where the *dou*s were involved are constrained with a greatly diminishing importance.

The most significant transition is the move towards a progressively shallower plate. The earlier bronze lidded *dou* containing millets in Zhao Qing's tomb is deeper. Even in unlidded *dou*s that are relatively shallow, discernible depth remains. The bronze *dou*s for sacrifices in the highest-ranking elites' tombs during the Middle and Late Warring States Period continue to retain their depth. In contrast, the *dou* for daily usage, *jiadou* (加豆) as some scholars assumed, taking the traditional form, had changed with much shallower plates in this period, though their overall proportions remained similar (Appendix. 6.2).[83] The textual record describing banquets with 'the display of hundreds of vessels in the courtyard' is therefore congruent with this

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[79] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) (2006), *Jingmen Zuozhong Chu mu (荆门左冢楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 83.

[80] Zhang (2011). This possibly because only a limited number of bronze *dou* and *fu* (also known as *he* 合豆 and *huang* 皇豆 in some Chu inventory lists) from various regions and periods are available for comparison according to rules recorded in texts.

[81] Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan (2003), 136-8, Table. 12.

[82] Hubei Sheng bowuguan (1989), 367-9. On the inventory list at Baoshan, there are four lidded 合豆 and *huang dou* 皇豆. See Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 370.

[83] The heights of the supports are between 10 and 30 centimetres, with 15 to 20 centimetres being the most prevalent. The majority of plate diameters range from 15 to 20 centimetres. The conclusion is reached based on a summary of the sizes of the *dou* on major excavation reports mentioned in this thesis.

archaeological finding. The shallow plate transformed the *dou* from a mere container into a miniature stage. It allowed a greater quantity of food to be presented in a more visually extravagant manner, entirely exposed and prominently showcased to the guests. Thus, the great increase in the number of the *jiadou* for daily feasts, in contrast to the traditional ritual *huang* and *he dou*s, suggests an increased emphasis on social and political scenes. Economic and social standings have rapidly supplanted ritual and hereditary ranks.[84] These aspects were ultimately linked with the rising status of the owner as the centre of the feast but also bridging further communications with other guests and spirits over ancestors.

This formal change reflects a profound shift in belief. As the worship of ancestors became less significant than sacrifices to natural deities and other spirits, the presentation of food also changed.[85] The new belief that spirits permeated the surroundings of the living required that offerings be made visible and observable by both human and supernatural audiences, rather than being confined within deep containers for secret consumption by the ancestors. The transformation of the *dou* is thus a testament to the rising importance of the social and political performance of the feast, where economic and social standing was demonstrated through a new, more perceptible sensory elaboration.

6.3.2.2 Eared Cups: An Extension of the Body, An Instrument of Control

In addition to the *dou*, which was adapted from traditional forms, the eared cup (ěr bēi, 耳杯) was the most characteristic vessel of the period, inspiring a greater focus on the physical and sensory aspects of the bodily contact. The eared cup became a widely used drinking and food utensil, its compact, hand-like design making it a practical vessel that was easy for elites to handle (Fig. 6.8). From an anthropological perspective, the hand is not just for holding but can also be utilised as a measuring instrument for quantity and volume.[86] A proficient cook, for

[84] Sterckx (2011), 144; von Falkenhausen (2006), 391; Powers, Martin Joseph (2006), *Pattern and Person: Ornament, Society, and Self in Classical China* (262; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Council on East Asian Studies), 206.
[85] Lai (2015), 32-6.
[86] Sutton (2006), 87-120.

instance, can feel the magnitude and weight of ingredients with their hands. The eared cup serves a similar purpose. It adopts a more compact size of a hand-like design, making it a practical vessel and easier for the elites to handle and play with. Its dimensions, typically 12 to 20 centimetres in length and 8 to 12 centimetres in width, are comparable to those of an adult's palm, allowing a degree of gauging through its almost uniform specification (Appendix. 6.3). Hence, the cup is not just a support device, but an extension of the body. Holding the cup created a more intimate contact between the individual and the food, a stark contrast to the experience of using heavy bronze vessels. Through the frequent use of these cups at feasts, the elite user's perception of weight, warmth, and volume became more precise. This is why the eared cup might be defined as the elite's 'second hand'. The increasing demand for a variety of foods sharpened the elite perception of and demand for lacquerwares that could enhance this direct sensory experience.

In addition, eared cups attain a high degree of standardization, unlike other prestige lacquerware such as *dou,* cups for personal drinking and foods, or lacquered cosmetic boxes with various sizes and extremely intricate designs (Fig. 6.9).[87] Exceptions to the standard eared cup form are rarely found. This standardisation indicates their role as fundamental tools. More importantly, it meant that the feast routines and the sensory experiences generated from using the cups were themselves bounded and made uniform. As described in texts such as the *Book of Rites*, the sage is adept at integrating political power and etiquette norms, using the regulation of daily life to suit political needs.[88] They are experts in daily foods and discerning consumers, but also good at making rules to suit their political and ritual needs.[89] The standardisation of eared cups can thus be seen as a reflection of this political control over wider groups of elites through social norms. Chu elites sought status through consistency over individuality. This form of control was far more thorough than the observable rituals of the Zhou, encompassing all aspects of elite life, from tomb structures to the everyday objects discussed here.

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87 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 33, pl. 16.
88 Sterckx (2011), 15.
89 von Falkenhausen (2006), 126.

6.3.2.3 Summary

It is important to note that neither the *dou* nor the eared cup originated in Chu. Both were adaptations of existing forms, but they served different, complementary roles in the new Chu feast. The *dou* evolved from a formal Zhou tradition. Its great increase in number, however, indicates its infiltration into everyday etiquette. It became a vessel that emphasised the visual and the social aspects. The group of *dou*s became a stage for displaying extravagant foods, either daily or symbolic such as the inedible items as the pebbles found in the tombs of the Zeng Marquises.

The eared cup, by contrast, served to enforce consistency and function. Its form was essentially fixed by necessity, designed for a more functional and interactive experience where the sense of bodily contact—of touch—was paramount. By being lightweight and hand-like, the function of the cup was to enhance the user's direct, physical perception of the food and drink within it. Ultimately, banquets of any kind, whether served in the visually oriented *dou* or the tactile eared cup, served to elevate and diversify the sensory experience of the elites. Their combined usage facilitated a more refined feasting procedure.

6.3.3 The Feast as Performance and Self-Cultivation

6.3.3.1 The Rise of the Lacquered 'Set'

The decreasing importance of the bronze ritual set suggests a shift away from the purposeful ancestral ceremonies of the past. Greater importance was placed on the lacquered 'set' as a performance aid in this period. As is addressed in the early part of this chapter, in the *Rites of Zhou*, even the everyday practise of feasting was ritualistic in nature in Chu and other Eastern Zhou states. The "offering of dried meat and sauces" is a crucial stage in several rituals at feasts.[90] After the host and guests are seated, the wooden *bian* and *dou* are placed at each guest's table. Firstly, and repeatedly, the food and drink contained in these lacquerwares are sacrificed to the spirits. However, there is no mention of a more specific deity or an object of worship; rather, a role analogous to that of the 'creator' of the meal is invited into this more general ritual

[90] See footnote 28 above, 90.

occasion, so visualising the ritual process.[91] Without 'thinking' of the divine or ancestors, mental activity is substituted by the physical performance of the multiple procedures. In these feasts, mental activity, such as thinking of the ancestors, was substituted by the physical performance of multiple procedures. The lacquered sets as a whole thus gained importance as signifiers of these fixed actions and their associated rituals.

6.3.3.2 The Personalised Feast: The Lacquered Box

At feasts, each guest has a growing number of *dou* and drinking vessels for multiple toasts to meet the ritual and feasting needs. The prevalence of a standardised lacquered box for food and drinking sets in Chu elite tombs is the evidence of this new focus on portable, personalised assemblages (Fig. 6.10). The example from the Baoshan tomb is particularly illustrative (M2:4). The wooden container (71.5 cm in height, 25.6 cm in width) is lacquered black on the exterior and crimson on the interior, with motifs of two-headed monsters, scales over the body, and cloud patterns.[92] The monster motif suggests a significantly more extensive history of amalgamating the two 'animals'. Furthermore, it embodies the metaphorical links between a pig's penchant for water and containers for food and beverages.[93] The box shows clear divisions, just as the compartments of Chu tombs.[94] Its compartmentalised interior, which made it easier for organising and packaging, fulfilled its role as a 'travelling vessel'. The box contains two sets of four eared cups, two drinking jugs, and a large square plate, all of which are plain with no decorations.

While the dimensions of such cases vary, and they are only found in a few elite tombs, their existence points to a new feasting culture. The bamboo basket *si* can sometimes work as a substitute as is evidenced by the eleven eared cups nested in pairs in the *si* in Tomb No. 1 of

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[91] The host is required to arrange a feast on the western side of the room. The head of the table is oriented to the west, and a *ji* (armrest) is placed on the right side for the guest of honour: '主人筵于户西，西上，右几。' *Yili* (the Warring States period; 2019), 37-9.

[92] Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 133.

[93] Yuan, Jing (袁靖) (2019), 'Yu zhu tongxing——zhu nian shuo zhu (与猪同行——猪年说猪)', *Zhongguo wenwu bao*.

[94] The concept of division infiltrated macro- and micro-spaces during this period, as can be seen in the tomb structures discussed in Section 4.2, Chapter 4, 51-8.

Mashan.[95] In contrast to complicated combination of bronze vessels, the matching of various undecorated lacquered types into a single set is simple. Their internal compartments also differ from case to case. This indicates that the item is custom-made and has a distinct personal touch. Thus, the case is sometimes a showing-off, intended to emphasise the owner's high social standing with a lot more banquet needs. The formerly grandiose feast scene with bronze vessels has been compressed into this new group of much smaller personalised setups, benefiting from the lacquerware's compactness, portability, and versatility.

6.3.3.3 Etiquette and Virtue: The Inscribed Cups

These personalised sets were nonetheless governed by complex etiquette, with the artefacts themselves fixing the rules of engagement. On the bottoms of eared cups from Wangshanqiao, Jingzhou, there are unusual engravings that read 'outer cup 外杯' and 'outer outer cup 外外杯' respectively (Fig. 6.11).[96] The cups were evidently used or placed in a particular order, demonstrating the complexity of conventional etiquette. To follow these instructions, the user must have experienced the lacquerware's weight, texture, and visual aspects even further. The use of such equipment can be viewed not only as a quest for a higher quality of life, but also as the reflection of an intimate, engaging process conducted on a smaller scale by the elites themselves.

As prescribed in the *Book of Etiquette*, the exact tally of toasts was regulated, serving as evidence of the stringent rules at feasts.[97] The series of activities and the procedure of a banquet, the number of dishes and the order of toasts between host and guest, and the tableware all reflect the status and the ranks of attendants.[98] The inscribed cups may have served the purpose of

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[95] Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan, (湖北省荆州地区博物馆) (1985), *Jiangling Mashan yihao Chu mu (江陵马山一号楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 77.

[96] Jingzhou bowuguan, (荆州博物馆) (2017), 'Hubei Jingzhou Wangshanqiao yihao Chu mu fajue jianbao (湖北荆州望山桥一号楚墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (2), 4-37.

[97] See feasting etiquette among the elites (*xiang yin jiu* 乡饮酒) in *Yili* (the Warring States period; 2019), 88-116.

[98] Banquets (*yan*) were used to convey benevolence, while feasts (*xiang*) were used to instil frugality and reverence: '享以训共俭，宴以示慈惠'. Fundamental table manners governed greetings, tableware arrangement, serving sequence, and drinking decorum. Sterckx (2011), 39-41; Powers (2006), 72-74.

demonstrating one's own ability and adherence to this etiquette in front of his/her guests. These drinking sets thus came to symbolise one's interior quality, character, and social standing. The banquet became a venue for evaluating a person's moral character and observing their social and political abilities, with the lacquered containers facilitating the user's comprehension and performance of the intricate ritual procedures.

6.3.3.4 The Table as a Stage: Defining Ritual Space

Concurrent with the proliferation of lacquered vessels during the latter half of the Warring States period, the quantity of *an* (案) tables interred in the tombs of the elite also increased in a larger quantity. Their significance is substantially neglected as they typically function as tables for daily feasts. Nevertheless, while the *an/ji* tables originated from the traditional *zu* cutting boards of the Shang and Zhou periods and shared some similarities in appearance for sacrificial offerings, they became significantly different in function in the Warring States in the Chu.[99] The *an/ji* tables helped define and modify the division of dining space. They serve as the basis for a Chu feast.

The table acted as a crucial node in the ritual process, particularly in managing the boundary between the spirit and human worlds. As texts describe, a feast would often begin with offerings to the spirits as honoured 'guests'.[100] Following this, the tables and mats in the dining hall were replaced and rearranged in another direction, signifying the commencement of the feast for the living guests.[101] The act of rotating the tables thus represents a symbolic and performative boundary, transitioning the event from a sacred, ritual context to a more politically charged, worldly environment. The table also served as a stage for exchanges between host and guest, with rites such as the host symbolically wiping and passing the table underscoring its role in

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[99] Nie, Fei (聂菲) (1996), 'Chu xi muzang chutu qi an lüelun (楚系墓葬出土漆案略论)', *Nanfang wenwu (南方文物)*, (1), 100-05; Nie, Fei (聂菲) (1998), 'Chu shi zu yanjiu (楚式俎研究)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (05), 35-40; Nie, Fei (聂菲) (2004), 'Chu xi muzang chutu qimu ji yanjiu (楚系墓葬出土漆木几研究)', *Zhongguo lishi wenwu (中国历史文物)*, (5), 4-14.

[100] See footnote 91 above, 106.

[101] The host removes the *ji* tables and changes the mats, with the place of honour now facing east: '主人彻几，改筵，东上。'. *Yili* (the Warring States period; 2019), 39-41.

mediating social relationships.[102] The significance of the *an* and *ji* is increased, as demonstrated by the portability of its materials and the increase in size and number. They are closely related to the smooth flow of the feasting procedures,

The patterns on the tabletops were also modified in nuanced ways to meet these feasting needs. The decorations often served as guides for the placement of vessels (Fig. 6.12). A lacquered *an* table from Changtaiguan, for example, had two purposefully concave squares carved onto its surface, which aligned with two square boxes also excavated nearby.[103] Tabletops from Wangshan were painted with division lines, with clay jugs placed on each half upon excavation.[104] This practice suggests that the function of the bronze *jin* table was imitated and supplanted by these more versatile lacquered counterparts.[105] The distinction between the various tables became even more obscure (Fig. 6.13). This is further supported by the tomb of Marquis Yi, where a lacquered *jin* was found. Its patterns corresponded to the placement of four lidded *dou*s (Fig. 6.14).[106] The fixed combination thus changed from the traditional bronze drinking sets to more lacquered ritual vessels.

The ritualistic nature of the table was further incorporated into sets, becoming a matching piece of furniture for *dou* and other vessels. A surge in the demand for matching tables mirrored the growth in demand for *dou* and sets of eared cups (Appendix. 6.4). With the addition of the tables, the lacquered sets may be utilised altogether to reconstruct a more tangible and relatively fixed physical space that has been further incorporated into feasts. Therefore, more tables accompanying the tomb owner suggest the higher status of his with an increase of feasts in his life and possibly afterlife.

The technique of decoration also has shifted from relief carving on bronzes to patterns painted on a flat surface on the lacquered versions (Fig. 6.12e). The transition from the two convex

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[102] The host bows after wiping the table for the guest and presenting it to him. The guest receives it and places it to his left before going to the western steps to express his gratitude: '主人拂几授校，拜送。宾以几辟，北面设于坐，左之，西阶上答拜。'. *Ibid.,* 39.

[103] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 41, pls. 27, 29.

[104] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 91.

[105] The inconsistent classification and naming of similar objects indicate that these items became functionally mixed in this period, such as the jin and the an. Nie (1996), 100-5; Nie (1998), 35-40; Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991); Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 273-4.

circles carved at Changtaiguan to this multitude of circular motifs grouped in rows exemplifies the expansion of feast scenes to accommodate increasing lacquered drinking vessels. The rows of swirls serve as a guide. They are basically ten centimetres in diameter. For example, the Wangshan M2 case has a vortex diameter of 12.8 cm.[107] It exactly matches the approximate bottom diameters of the *dou* and the eared cups. The diameter of the circular scroll pattern in Zuozhong tombs, Jingmen is nearly 15 centimetres, which is consistent with the bottom diameter of the *dou*.[108] Images from Mawangdui during the later Han dynasty as well as murals from the Eastern Han dynasty may have offered some clue (Fig. 6.15).[109] This further supports the positive correlation between the quantity of *dou*s and tables mentioned above. Thus, it suggests a visual shift of indications from bigger, more display-oriented vessels, such as enormous alcohol jugs, to a larger quantity of lacquered *dou*, eared cups, etc., likely arrayed in rows. Although only a few tables have been discovered, their presence, one to two each in top elites' tombs shows that the top elites held many more feasts, each requiring its own table to accommodate the ever-increasing number of food and drinking vessels.

In conclusion, the increasing number of scrolls and patterns are also expressive of the owner's status, who are eligible for more dishes at feasts. The patterns, once more, function as a guide for the ritual behaviour without the need for further contemplation. Conversely, as guides, the patterns also imposed specific restrictions. The user's actions are also influenced and bounded by these layouts of patterns and other visual elements.[110] The hand movements and the space that it forms, in connection with the patterns, tables and vessels, all point to the underlying thoughts and rules on daily rituals, reflecting the political and social etiquettes.[111] Therefore,

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[107] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 145.
[108] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2006), 76, fig 49; 83, Table. 9.
[109] Hunan sheng bowuguan, (湖南省博物馆) (2014), *Mawangdui Han mu chuanqi (马王堆汉墓传奇)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 130-1.
[110] As Webb Keane explains, signs and patterns are textual, expressing both hierarchies and meanings. Keane, Webb (2005), 'Signs Are Not the Garb of Meaning: On the Social Analysis of Material Things', in Miller, Daniel (ed.), *Materiality* (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 191-196.
[111] Susanne Küchler has noted that 'thought can conduct itself in objects', and things can be 'thought-like'. Küchler, Susanne (2005), 'Materiality and Cognition: The Changing Face of Things', in Miller, Daniel (ed.), *Materiality* (Durham: Duke University Press), 221-5.

the manner in which elites presented their utensils during the feast also holds equal importance to the quality and quantity of food and vessels and the senses.

6.4 Conclusion

Overall, the transformation of rituals integrates multi-media cultural practices into a more mundane one, permeating all facets of life, involving foods extensively. A lifestyle including a diet that was chosen also becomes a way of evaluating one's ability and virtue. The boundaries between the ritual and the daily are further blurred. The above correlation is reflected in foods and vegetations, but more importantly, it is subtly reflected in the vessels and sets.

Chu feasts were thus conducted and experienced through lacquered objects. The increasing number of lacquered sets actively shaped the space and strengthened the quest for refined sensory experiences and ritual procedures. These cultivated senses became personal tools for controlling and displaying one's elevated social and economic status. This resolves the fundamental dichotomy between the sage and daily life discussed by Sterckx.[112] Power becomes pervasive in the everyday, evidenced by the ubiquitous presence of lacquerware, and the performance of ritual procedures becomes a reflection of inner virtues. The elite aim was not to secularise rituals, but to ritualise every aspect of life. Its emphasis on etiquette, order, and perception demonstrates the era's ever-changing social and political needs. In Chu, lacquerware replaced bronze as the ideal medium for grafting social rights and symbolising economic affluence.

Due to the widespread accessibility of lacquer as a material and the simple, unified types of vessels used, the Chu elite were able to be remarkably organised, well-connected, and efficient in all facets of their lives and social management. The following chapter will continue this discussion. The next chapter explores how other common objects, such as weapons, also became materialisations of power and status on a much larger scale, shaping social and political networks as a whole. Just as with food vessels, these other categories of objects and their

[112] Sterckx (2011), 190-4.

combinations afforded various possibilities for elite use, with rules being established by the 'objects' themselves in their shape, numbers, and sometimes pattern.

7 The Material of Power: Lacquered Chariots, Weapons, and Networks

As seen in the previous chapters, lacquer-related daily rituals progressively split from the traditional bronze-dominated Zhou tradition. The concept of the lacquered 'set' became more tightly integrated into daily life. The increasing number of lacquered sets were modified into types with less depth to indicate a full display of the sumptuous feast. Through the manipulation of the sensory aspects, inviting spirits for feasts, the Chu elites gained an elevated status. By proficiently 'playing' with the sets with a certain order, the table in front of the elites became the stage for the performance of their virtue and inner ability. The space was further restricted and under control by the elites that the feast was turned into a grander performative scene, consisted of each individual elite as an actor to fulfil and following ritual procedure with tools, *i.e.* the lacquered vessels in front of them. Referring to the transition from the bronze to the lacquered objects in the Warring States period as a "ritual reform" is overly simplified.[1] Instead of obsessing on discerning the 'secularisation of rituals' from the 'ritualisation of daily life', we must concentrate on social relationships. Particularly, the combination and relationships of things are the key to answering the question of how people are interconnected in various ways.[2] Increased sensory acuity aided the elites in gaining a tacit awareness and mastery of their social standing, dominance, and authority.

This chapter builds on this discussion to explore the social relations of the Chu elites during the Warring States period, through the lens of chariots, horse parts, and weapons. The transition from bronze to lacquer reflects a fundamental change in how people were interconnected, signalling a shift from a society bound by ancestral lineage to one defined by more fluid, personal alliances. This chapter will investigate the networks and agencies embedded behind the

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[1] Zhang (2010). Zhang proposed that Chu developed its own 'Ritual Revolution' during the Eastern Zhou period, corresponding to the 'Ritual Reform' of the Western Zhou. However, the social and political context had changed significantly from the previous era. The unified political body that could have implemented such reforms was gradually lost. Therefore, it is more accurate to speak of diverse political and religious transformations among the various vassal states, rather than a coherent, unified reform.

[2] Gosden, Chris (2018), 'Trade and Exchange', in Haselgrove, Colin *et al.* (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the European Iron Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1-18.

exchange of these lacquered objects and explore how elite authority and status were consequently restructured, confirmed, and expressed through them.

This investigation proceeds in two main parts. It begins with an investigation of the *qiance* (遣策), the bamboo inventory lists found in tombs, before moving on to the actual archaeological remains. The lists, being contemporaneous with the burials, offer a unique and invaluable window into the social links and ideological changes of the period. They function not merely as catalogues of objects, but as conceptual maps of a tomb's contents and the social world they represented. They therefore provide an essential framework for understanding the shifting categories of value and the significant addition of lacquered objects, especially chariots and weapons, to the funerary assemblage.

7.1 The Blueprint of a Network: The *Qiance* Inventory Lists

7.1.1 A Record of Associations

The *qiance*, an inventory list of burial goods, is a culturally specific regional characteristic of Chu, with the earliest examples dating from the start of the 5th century B.C.[3] Though less than thirty lists have been uncovered from the thousands of excavated Chu tombs, they provide invaluable information on the structure of elite society.[4] Seven illustrative cases of *qiance* in Chu or Chu-related tombs are provided (Appendix. 7.1). The list from the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng (mid-5th century B.C.) is the earliest and most comprehensive example found to date.[5] The lists were discovered in the northern chamber. Due to the low weight of bamboo scrolls and the water-filled environment of the tomb, the scrolls were scattered or drifted around the tomb when it was excavated, disrupting their placement.[6] Nevertheless, its contents mostly match the

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[3] Liu, Guosheng (刘国胜) (2011), *Chu sangzang jiandu jishi (楚丧葬简牍集释)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe), iii. Inventory lists (*qiance*) were also discovered in later periods, from the Han to the Jin dynasties, and were likely derived from the Chu tradition. Since the 20th century, more than 160 such documents have been found across China, primarily in Hubei (40), Gansu (25), Jiangsu (13), and Xinjiang (69). See Tian, He (田河) (2018), 'Chutu qiance yu gudai mingwu yanjiu (出土遣策与古代名物研究)', *Shehui kexue zhanxian (社会科学战线)*, (10), 130.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Xiao, Shengzhong (萧圣中) (2005), *Zenghou Yi mu zhujian shiwen buzheng ji chema zhidu yanjiu (曾侯乙墓竹简释文补正暨车马制度研究)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe), 3.

[6] Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 452-458; Xiao (2005),1-3.

chariots, horses, and weaponry recorded on the slips and buried in that same chamber, demonstrating a meticulous correspondence between text and object.[7]

Other samples likewise indicate this stable association. Later lists, such as the 4th-century B.C. example from Baoshan, are organised according to the function of the objects and their designated burial chambers, such as the 'dining room' (食室), 'kitchen' (大庖), the 'travelling necessities' (相徙), and the 'chariots' (用车).[8] This same kind of classification can be observed in the Changtaiguan list, where the term 'chamber' (室) is also used to categorize funeral goods as 'kitchen utensils' (集厨之器) and 'entertaining objects' (乐人之器) and *etc.*[9] This practice reveals a conceptual ordering of the afterlife. In a much later, early 3rd-century B.C. burial at Yangjiawan in Changsha (Example. e in Appendix. 7.1), 72 bamboo slips were found centrally placed in a 34-centimetre-long lacquered box, each slip written with a single character representing a burial object.[10] The correspondence between *qiance* and burial artefacts seems very stable, but the texts on the list turned to be extremely simplified.

In some cases, the actual archaeological artefacts match the types and quantities recorded with remarkable accuracy. The Changtaiguan tomb, for instance, contains thirty eared cups and *dou* goblets, ten lidded *dou* goblets and *etc*., all adding up to the right total listed in the *qiance*.[11] This confirms that the *qiance* provides a full account of the interred items and reveals the Chu's idealised understanding of tomb space as a structured, functional dwelling.

7.1.2 The *Qiance* as Ritual Performance and Social Document

After reviewing the fundamentals of the *qiance*, its function is worth investigating. Much of the early scholarly discussion centred on a linguistic debate: whether the lists recorded self-supplied

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7 Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 64, 452-3.

8 Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 265, 275-6; Liu (2011), 41.

9 Liu (2011), 4-7; Fan, Changxi (范常喜) (2021), 'Xinyang chujian leren zhi qi suoji bianzhong zhongchuiming xinshi (信阳楚简"乐人之器"所记编钟、钟槌名新释)', *Wenwu (文物)*, 56-60.

10 Hunan sheng bowuguan, (湖南省博物馆) (2000), *Changsha Chu mu (长沙楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 428.

11 Entry 2-020: '…杯豆三十，杯三十' ('...thirty *bei-dou* vessels, thirty cups'); Entry 2-025: '十皇豆' ('ten *huang-dou* vessels'). Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 129-30.

goods (*fengfang* 賵方) or presents from other elites (*qiance* 遣策).[12] This focus, however, overlooks their primary role. As a unique form of funeral goods, the *qiance* is, like the rest of the tomb's contents, a framework and testimony for a series of complex activities and rituals

The physical nature of the slips points to their specific ritual purpose. Most examples from high-ranking tombs are at least 65 centimetres in length, often crudely made compared to the polished administrative documents found in the same burials (Examples. a to d in Appendix. 7.1).[13] Their awkward length and coarse production suggest they were not intended for frequent handling but were created for the singular occasion of the funerary ceremony. In the late Warring States period (4th to 3rd century B.C), the minimum length of the *qiance* was shortened to 13 centimetres (Samples. e to g).[14] This is partially owing to the tomb owner, *shi*'s lesser social rank.[15] At the same time, probably because of the loosening and eventual collapse of Chu control towards the end of the Warring States period, formality was unconstrained.[16] Hence, alongside the ritual procedure, the *qiance* reveals greater individuality. On the other hand, the function of the *qiance* tends to be simpler and more fixed for lower-ranking elites.

Furthermore, the lists contain a variety of marking symbols—short lines, circles, triangles—to

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[12] The *Yili* specifies: '书賵于方，若九，若七，若五。书遣于策。' ('Gifts for the funeral are recorded on a square board (*fengfang*), in nine, seven, or five lines. Items for the afterlife journey are recorded on slips (*qiance*).') See *Yili* (the Warring States period; 2019), 449. There are two primary scholarly perspectives on these documents. One views them as having the same nature. Gao, Dalun (高大伦) (1988), '"Qiance" yu "Maofang" ("遣策"与"赗方")', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (2), 106-08. The other argues that *qiance* were longer documents on bamboo slips listing the deceased's possessions, whereas *fengfang* were shorter documents on wooden boards listing mourners' gifts. See Chen, Wei (陈伟) (1996a), 'Guanyu Baoshan chujian zhong de sangzang wenshu (关于包山楚简中的丧葬文书)', *Kaogu yu wenwu (考古与文物)*, (2), 70-74; Yang, Hua (杨华) (2003), 'Sui, feng, qian: Jiandu suojian Chu di zhusang yili yanjiu (椻·賵·遣——简牍所见楚地助丧礼制研究)', *Xueshu yuekan (学术月刊)*, (9), 49-58.

[13] Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 266-7; Similarly, the divination slip from Wangshan Tomb M1 is 52.1 cm long. See Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 109. The *qiance* from Changtaiguan Tomb No. 1 also differs significantly from other texts found in the same tomb. See Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 67.

[14] Hunan sheng wenwu guanli weiyuan hui, (湖南省文物管理委员会) (1954), 'Changsha Yangjiawan M006 hao mu qingli jianbao (长沙杨家湾 M006 号墓清理简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (12), 20-46; Hunan sheng bowuguan (2000), 428.

[15] The occupants of tombs (e)–(g) were of a lower status than those of the earlier tombs.

[16] Lewis, Mark Edward (1999), 'Warring States Political History', in Loewe, Michael and Shaughnessy, Edward L. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 627.

denote the beginning and end of check-off records, suggesting a system of accounting within the ritual process.[17] This ritualistic nature is most powerfully expressed in the *qiance*'s performative function. It is highly probable that, before the tomb was sealed, a ritual performer would read the contents of the list aloud. This act would transform the silent text into a public proclamation, delivering a final testament to the deceased's power and status to the living audience.[18] The burial goods were then interred along with the writing implements, the writing brushes, used to record them.[19] The *qiance* was therefore much more than a static inventory; it performed a dynamic function, becoming an integral component of the ritual itself.

7.1.3 Mapping the Network: Gift Givers and Receivers

As Marcel Mauss has demonstrated, the exchange of gifts fosters and solidifies social links and obligations.[20] Edward Schieffelin, who studied gift-giving practises in modern English and Indian society, came to the conclusion that in both cultures, presents were exchanged as favours to forge links of obligation and loyalty.[21] The Han dynasty text *Yili* commemorates a wide variety of ritual occasions across all strata of society, and each one of them begins with the exchange of gifts.[22] This wasn't just a concern among the upper-class, but addressing a wider public. Both the tomb and its contents can be interpreted as gifts.

Marquis Yi's list is more comprehensive than the majority. the content of Marquis Yi's inventory list includes four categories: gifts including the chariots and horses, the burial objects carried by the chariots, the mourners who gave them, and the chariot drivers (Appendices 7.2 and 7.3). Specifically, the latter two are mostly absent from others. This disparity is presumably attributable to the high standing of Marquis Yi. Xiao Shengzhong reports that Marquis Yi had

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17 Hubei Sheng bowuguan (1989b). 452-3. Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991). 267. Lai (2015). 138.

18 The *Yili* states: '主人之史请读赗，执算从。' ('The host's scribe requests to read the gift list, and his assistant follows with the counting rods.') See the funeral rituals started since the Jixi day, *jixili* in *Yili* Yili [Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial] (仪礼) (2019). 453.

19 Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991). 264-5.

20 Mauss, Marcel (2002), *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London and New York: Routledge). 10-23.

21 Schieffelin, Edward L (1980), 'Reciprocity and the Construction of Reality', *Man*, 502-17.

22 Gift-giving was prevalent in personal relations, including weddings, meetings, funerals, and political gatherings. See *Yili* (the Warring States period; 2019), 37, 74, 214, 262, 403, 441.

a total of 79 chariots in his *qiance*; 43 of these were his personal property, while the remaining 36 were gifts from other elites and officials.[23] The data on the 207 horses is equally detailed, including its owner, fur colour and position in the chariot.[24] Roughly half of Marquis Yi's chariots were gifts, indicating a prevalent custom of delivering gifts prior to or at funerals. Although archaeological excavations have not yet uncovered a chariot or horse pit for the tomb, the records in the *qiance* seem to strengthen our belief in the plausibility of its presence.[25] This textual evidence reveals the elites' deep preoccupation with the gesture of gift-giving itself and provides a detailed map of the marquis's political and social ties. Who, then, gave these chariots to the marquis, and what were their social and political identities? Were they political allies of Marquis Yi? Using Marquis Yi as the focal point, two kinds of relationships may be reinstated and distinguished: one outside the palace and the other within.

7.1.3.1 Outside the Court: Superiors and peers

The first tier of this network consists of the marquis's superiors and peers outside his court. The king of Chu and various feudal lords contributed most of the gifted chariots and horses (Appendix. 7.2). The geographic reach of these gift-givers was extensive, extending beyond the borders of Zeng to states such as Song, Lu, and Cai, in today's Shandong, Henan and Anhui.[26] They were also geographically closer to the Chu territory, which suggests they had also been politically integrated with the Chu. This indicates a wide web of carefully maintained political

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[23] The content and categorisation of each entry on the inventory lists have been exhaustively researched. The information in this study on the number of chariots and horses in the tomb of Marquis Yi is based on Xiao Shengzhong's corrected interpretation of the list. See Xiao (2005), 225-8.

[24] *Ibid.*, 162-5.

[25] Although no chariot pits have yet been discovered at the Marquis Yi tomb complex, their existence is highly probable given the discovery of chariot parts in the tomb and bronze canopy fittings in adjacent pits. See Wuhan daxue lishi xueyuan, (武汉大学历史学院) *et al.* (2017), 'Hubei Suizhou shi Zenghou yi mu yihao peizangkeng fajue jiabao (湖北随州市曾侯乙墓一号陪葬坑发掘简报)', *Kaogu (考古)*, 31-44; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) *et al.* (2021), *Zenghou Yi mu peizangkeng (曾侯乙墓陪葬坑)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe), 91-168.

[26] Examples of donors from other states include officials from Yan (Appendix 7.1-5), Cai (Appendix. 7.2a-3), and Song (Appendix. 7.2a-113) as well as officials in today's Shandong (Appendix. 7.2a-41, 54, 74). Xu Shaohua has validated a number of pertinent place names, including *li*, a Chu feoff ruler in present-day Xincai, Henan province. Cai is the focus of increased controversy. According to tradition, Cai's homeland was the Chu fief of Shangcai, whereas Xiacai was in Anhui. Xu, Shaohua (徐少华) (1996), 'Baoshan chu jian shidi shize (包山楚简释地十则)', *Wenwu 文物*, (12), 60-66. Since there is no clear indication of which Cai is in the *qiance* of Marquis Yi, no conclusive opinion has been reached.

alliances and confirms Zeng's subservience to Chu in a volatile political landscape. This textual evidence is powerfully corroborated by the archaeological finds. A vast number of artefacts in Marquis Yi's tomb bear a consistent inscription of his own name. Hence, it is evident that almost everything was made specifically for him. And yet, there are also some conspicuous presents to be found. The largest bell in the marquis's famous chime set was a gift from the king of Chu.[27] In terms of size and tone, this bell does not belong to the same system as the rest of the chimes.[28] He must have had an entire set of chimes. The king's gift is clearly superior.[29] The marquis, therefore, had this piece as a replacement to supersede and dominate his own original set. This is partly a sign of the penetration of Chu's influence, as well as Marquis Yi's desire to deepen his political relationships with stronger political entities.

7.1.3.2 Within the Court: High officials

The second tier of the network was internal, consisting of the high-ranking officials such as the left *yin* and right *yin* (prime ministers). Various court officials who gave the gifts were also listed in detail and they were in charge of gardens, horses, vehicles, craftsmen, archery, ceremonies, and palaces.[30] Notable is the fact that the same gift giver owned multiple horses (Appendix. 7.3b).[31] Using horses of the same colour to pull a single chariot was perhaps more common among Zhou than Chu, according to some researchers.[32] Its revival in the later Han dynasty at Mawangdui provides evidence that Chu may have continued it. There is a good chance that Zeng, as a link between Zhou and Chu, would have kept this custom as well. The detailed records of which official provided which horse, its colour, and its position in the chariot team, functioned as a textual performance of political integration. The higher the rank of the gift-giver, such as the feudal lord Ji (集𠂤 君), the more frequently his horses were distributed in

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27 Hubei Sheng bowuguan (1989), 87-8.
28 *Ibid.,* 108-18.
29 The distinction between 'old' and 'new' items on inventory lists became more detailed after the middle Warring States period. The Yangtianhu bamboo slips, for instance, distinguish between old and new garments. See Hunan sheng bowuguan (2000), 422. The fact that the bell is not just "new," but was also expressly crafted for Marquis Yi by the king of Chu as a gift, demonstrates its significance. It is therefore not surprising that it is somewhat out of place among the whole set.
30 Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 452-8.
31 E.g., Appendix 7.2b-7-11 shows officials who owned multiple horses used on different chariots.
32 Xiao (2005), 230-1.

vehicles of greater significance (six horses in a row and horses of the same colour), such as the *Mocheng* (墨乘, lacquered chariot) and the *Yixuan* (俴轩, war chariot) (Appendix. 7.3b-2). In many cases, different-coloured horses or those of the same colour from the same official were assigned to different vehicles such as the red horses with black tails provided by the craftsman-in-charge (*dagong yin* 大工尹) (Appendix. 7.3b-8). This seems to be a deliberate act. The mingling of horses from different officials to form a single, harmonious chariot team was a visual and symbolic representation of the marquis's personal authority over his court.

Furthermore, the officials including the *lianao* 连敖 (who handled the vehicles), the horse *yin*, and the palace *yin*, not only drove the chariots and delivered the horses, but they were also heavily involved in the burial preparations (Appendix. 7.3c-2,4, 6, 7, and 11).[33] The records of the chariots' owners, drivers, and officials can be cross-referenced. More noteworthy is the emphasis placed on these internal relations. In a period of such fierce competition, knitting a tighter web of alliances with the marquis himself at the centre became a political necessity. Through the recording and matching of these horses, a political network was created, consisting of officials and elites inside and outside the court, all bound in a complex web of reciprocity and obligation. The tomb and its contents thus become a symbolic microcosm of these intricate social interactions.

7.1.4 Conclusion: Flows and Networks of Power

As a record of this ritual, the *qiance* served as a map of the deceased's social world. As Marcel Mauss has demonstrated, reciprocal gift-giving fosters social links and connections.[34] The tomb of Marquis Yi can be interpreted as a symbolic microcosm of such interactions, an alliance network made manifest through objects. The gift-givers of the marquis, who were lower-ranking officials, completed the upward transfer of authority and assurance of loyalty. It is even reasonable to speculate that the same official gave spontaneous gifts of varying horses to satisfy the mix-and-match. On the other hand, more distant allies reinforced their political ties to one

[33] *Ibid.,* 251-4.
[34] Mauss (2002), 10-23.

another and were related to the presents of officials within the palace of the marquis. It is quite probable that this was done on purpose. In the end, the marquis, his kin, peers and competitors all strove to shape the society and replicate the power to their advantage through this peer-and-subordinate networks of reciprocity and obligation.

The debate over whether the *qiance* lists gifts or self-supplied items becomes secondary. In essence, there is no difference, because the list's primary function is to record the flow of goods, information, and authority. This is powerfully illustrated in the *qiance* from the Yangjiahu tomb, where the character '已' (yǐ) signifies that goods had been deposited, whereas '句' (gōu) indicates goods had been received but not yet placed in the tomb, and could thus still be utilised by the living kin.[35] In this broader sense, it is also possible that certain lack of listed goods in tombs was due to the fact that they are of greater importance to the living. The *qiance* became a tool for managing the complex, time-bound process of the funeral. Changes in the list's content, the status of the donor, and the network of relationships are also more representative of the living's demand for confirmation of their material needs, rights and status.

The *qiance* thus provides a blueprint, posing a set of crucial questions for the archaeological remains that follow. What differences in type and aesthetic can be observed between the chariots and weapons found in Chu tombs and those of the Western Zhou? And why do these variations exist? Having established the importance of interwoven external and internal networks, this study posits that the answers lie primarily within the latter. It is through a closer examination of these internal connections that we can best comprehend the causes of the specific material changes in Chu.

7.2 Instruments of Power I: The Chariot and the Politics of Display

Horses and chariots, both of which originated in the steppe, were instrumental in the Zhou's military triumph.[36] The tradition of burying them persisted in Chu, but with a different

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[35] Hunan sheng bowuguan (2000), 420-8; Chen, Wei (陈伟) (1996b), *Baoshan Chujian chutan (包山楚简初探)* (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe), 191.

[36] Rawson, Jessica *et al.* (2021), 'Seeking Horses: Allies, Clients and Exchanges in the Zhou Period (1045–221 BC)', *Journal of World Prehistory*, 34 (4), 489-530.

emphasis and a significant shift in material expression, as shown by a comparison between traditional texts and archaeological remains.

7.2.1 From 'Golden' to 'Lacquered': A Shift in Material and Meaning

Let us firstly compare a golden chariot of Zhou described in the inscriptions of the late 9th-century B.C. Mao Gong *ding* with the Zeng chariot in the *qiance*.

Part of the Mao Gong *ding* inscription says *"... I confer upon you: a jar of sacrificial wine, and a libation ladle with jade handle; an apron of scarlet, with leaf-green jade pendants; a demi-circlet of jade and a jade hu tablet; a golden chariot, with a decorated cover on the handrail; a front-rail and breast trappings of soft leather, painted scarlet, for the horses; a canopy of tiger skin, with a reddish brown lining; yoke-bar bindings and axle couplings of painted leather; bronze jingle-bells for the yoke bar; a draught-pole rear-end fitting and brake fittings, bound with leather and painted gilt; a gilt bow-press and a fish-skin quiver; a team of four horses, with bits and bridles, bronze frontlets, and gilt girth straps; a scarlet banner with two bells..."*[37]

On one of the bamboo slips (Slip No. 89) in Marquis Yi's tomb, it details: *bundled purple linings; layered silk tassels with fine braids; a duck-patterned banner; kingfisher-feather adornments on the collar; a sable-fur trimmed neckpiece; embossed leather fittings; chariot axle guards and white leather horse collars; a dark felt rug; a wildcat-fur pelt; purple-yellow silk ties; an embroidered waist sash ; wildcat-fur headgear; a wrapped frame; bridle reins; and iron fastenings.*[38]

The inscription on the 9th-century B.C. Mao Gong *ding* tripod (毛公鼎) describes a 'golden chariot' bestowed by the Zhou king as a gift of the highest honour.[39] Gold, or bronze, was the

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[37] An inscription reads: '…易女秬鬯一卣、裸圭、瓚寶、朱芾、蔥衡、玉環、玉瑽、金車：羁絳較（較）、朱鞎囘（靃）斬（靳）、虎邕熏裹、右厄（軛）、畫轉、畫轎、金甬、錯衡、金踵、金象、約震、金簟弼、魚筍（服）、馬三（四）匹、攸（鉴）勒、金蔃、金雁（膺）、朱旂二鈴。…'. See Wu, Hsiao-yun (2013), *Chariots in Early China: Origins, cultural interaction, and identity* (Oxford: BAR Publishing), 57.

[38] An inscription reads: '屯紫裹，屯壢（纚）緝（組）之綏。鳥旂（旂），驂（翠）首，靃（貂）定之頸。鞹敗，靃韜，顯（轖）、鞅皓。緇毯，鬠（貌）尾之殿。紫黃紡之繫，腹綆（紳），鬠（貌）蒙，韁，鞁緲（轡），鏢皓。' See Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 495.

[39] Wu Hsiao-yun's analysis of inscriptions indicates that the 'golden chariot' was a highly prized item, a trend established in the Western Zhou. Wu (2013), 59, 74.

material of ultimate prestige in the Western Zhou.[40] Its value was intrinsic and self-evident. In the Chu texts, a notable shift occurs. Despite the status difference from the kings, the inventory lists of both Marquis Yi and the Baoshan tomb demonstrate that the black lacquered chariot, the *mocheng* (墨乘), had superseded the 'golden chariot' as the elite's top choice. According to later commentaries on the *Rites of Zhou*, the *mocheng* was an unadorned carriage for a lower-ranking official (*dafu* 大夫).[41] Yet, Marquis Yi's six-horse *mocheng* was lavishly ornamented and belonged to a ruler whose status far surpassed that of a *dafu* (Appendix. 7.3a-109).[42] This indicates that the status of the lacquered chariot had been radically elevated in the Chu context. In addition, the *qiance* reveals that Marquis Yi's chariot was a testament to the most prestigious materials and colours of the time, primarily a vibrant palette of purple and yellow. Its wheels were decorated with feathers and wrapped in purple bands and mats. Painted shields were present, alongside spears adorned with purple patterns. The entire vehicle was a symphony of luxurious textures. Animal skins and furs were used extensively. The quiver bags were lined with purple and edged with fish skin, while the main banner shimmered with kingfisher feathers, its stem wrapped in mink skin.[43] Academics have already noted that purple and green fish skin along with coloured silk or leather straps and linings were only available to those of the highest status.[44] Despite the fact that the materials gold or bronze remain a magnificent status symbol, the traditional texts illustrate that the lacquer grew in popularity. An abundance of other leathered goods, such as harnesses, completed this picture of mobile abundance.[45]

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[40] Cook, Constance A (1997), 'Wealth and the Western Zhou', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 60 (2), 253-94.

[41] '...大夫乘墨车...' ('...a great officer rides in a black chariot...') See 春官·巾车(Spring Official: Chariot Master) *Zhouli* (2014), 571-2; Xiao (2005). 178.

[42] Some six-horse chariots such as the one CHMK1:CH24 have been found in the chariot pit of the Chu king. However, significant questions persist regarding both this specific number of horses and their specific organization. Jingzhou bowuguan (荆州博物馆) (2011), 'Hubei Jingzhou Xiongjiazhong mudi 2008 nian fajue jianbao (湖北荆州熊家冢墓地 2008 年发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (2), 13-5, fig. 23.

[43] Hubei Sheng bowuguan (1989b). 490.

[44] Cao, Jingjing (曹菁菁) (2015), '"Che zhi wubing" xin zheng— yi Zeng Hou Yi mu qiance wei zhongxin ("车之五兵"新证——以曾侯乙墓遣册为中心)', *Zhongguo dianji yu wenhua (中国典籍与文化)*, (3), 4-10.

[45] Xiao (2005), 77, 93, 96, 136-7.

7.2.2 The Chariot in the Tomb: From Whole to Part

The deposition of chariot parts in tombs also reveals a profound shift in ritual focus, moving from literal provision towards symbolic representation. The tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng, for instance, demonstrates the persistence of the tradition of burying weapons (Appendix. 7.4). A tiered wooden shelf, comparable to the layout in the late Western Zhou tomb of Duke Guo, likely stood in the centre of the northern chamber (Figs. 4.8 and 5.1).[46] While the Zeng state in the Western Zhou maintained the tradition of burying complete chariot wheels on secondary ledges, this practice largely disappeared in the Warring States period (Fig. 7.1).[47] In the tomb of Marquis Yi, for instance, no chariot wheels were discovered. Tombs of the Zeng and Chu states also partially continued the Western Zhou practice of burying select chariot components, such as axle pins (Appendix. 7.5). As scholars have acknowledged, this suggests that while the chariot components remained a key symbol of power, the traditional bronze versions were being decreased and simplified, with a single component now standing in for the whole.[48]

In sharp contrast, all 882 horse fittings, including metal horse bits and ornaments, were excavated next to the marquis's coffin in the eastern chamber (Fig. 7.2 and 7.3).[49] The proximity of these items to the owner suggests they were more personally significant than the conventional bronze chariot components, representing his individual command and equestrian prowess. Jessica Rawson has highlighted the importance of horses and bits, tracing their gradual transmission from Eurasia to the Central Plains.[50] The horse bits accompanying Marquis Yi indicate his continued reliance on prestigious artefacts. They were well-known symbols of status across Eurasia, to proclaim his identity. These items correspond with the descriptions of horse harnesses and armours, especially golden ones, recorded on Yi's inventory slips.[51] The term 'gold' (金) itself acquired more specific colour classifications, such as 'red gold' (赤金) for red

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46 Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1999), 24.
47 *Ibid.,* 24.
48 Wu (2013), 57-112. Chang, Huaiying (常怀颖) (2015), 'Zeng hou mu de zangche ji xiangguan wenti (曾侯墓的葬车及相关问题)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (5), 53-78.
49 Hubei Sheng bowuguan (1989), 64-75.
50 Rawson *et al.* (2021).
51 They were referred to as *huangjin le* (黄金勒 gold harness') and *huangjin zhou* (黄金胄 gold armour').

bronze and 'white gold' (白金) for silver inlays, as seen in the Baoshan inventory.[52] Furthermore, Marquis Yi's bronze horse ornaments were coated with gold foil.[53] This pronounced emphasis on the privileged status of the elite reflects a practice consistent throughout the Western Zhou, yet one that reached a new peak during this period.

While some of the highest-ranking nobles, such as Marquis Yi, continued to use bronze or gold horse bits as a link to the prestigious traditions of the Eurasian steppe, his collection also contains a great number of horse bits made of horn or wood. These were typically lacquered and painted brown, with black lacquer forming waves or bands around the sides. Some surfaces were intricately etched in black (Fig. 7.4).[54] As Appendix 7.5 shows, the elite increasingly favoured horse bits made from new materials such as horn and wood, leading to a great decrease in the number of bronze examples. This again shows a diminishing importance of traditional bronze parts in favour of new, lighter, and more craft-intensive materials.

In sum, the deposition of the traditional Zhou chariot parts shows a diminishing importance, reflected by the decreased number of types buried in tombs. The deposition of the horse fittings by the tomb owner's side indicates that horse riding was possibly greatly treasured. Some of the highest-ranking nobles opted for traditional Zhou horse bits of the bronze or the gold as a symbol of personal excellence. However, the bits were largely replaced by the lacquered and horn versions, which can be viewed as a sign of rising significance of the new materials.

7.2.3 The Ascendancy of Lacquered Components

In striking contrast to these traditional forms, a burgeoning variety of lacquered items related to horses and chariots appeared. These objects, often differing in colour from the traditional gold, are more indicative of the Chu elites forging a distinct identity. Chang Huaiying concludes that the carriages in Marquis Yi's burial were influenced more by Chu customs than by those

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[52] In the inventory list from Baoshan M2, *chijin* (赤金 red gold) was used to refer to red bronze, while *baijin* (白金 white gold) referred to silver. See Liu (2011), 45, footnotes 25 and 26. Liu, Xinfang (劉信芳) (2003), *Baoshan Chujian jiegu (包山楚簡解詁)* (Hong Kong: Yiwen yinshuguan), 298-9. An abundance of both gold and silver horse fittings was found at Jiuliandun. See Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 60-1.

[53] Hubei Sheng bowuguan (1989), 328-31.

[54] *Ibid.,* 326.

of the Western Zhou.[55] Umbrellas for chariots or carriages, as well as other wooden and leather components, began appearing in Zeng and Chu tombs. How should we interpret the proliferation of these lacquered types? What changes in funerary procedure and elite perception do these objects reveal when viewed as status symbols?

7.2.3.1 The Inward Gaze: Prestige and Privacy in the Chu Carriage

The emergence of wooden carriages in Chu tombs marks a significant shift towards new symbols of personal prestige and privacy, distinguishing these burials from their Western Zhou antecedents. The extreme rarity of this practice—found in only three of the high-status tombs catalogued in Appendix. 7.5—immediately establishes the carriage as a possession of exclusive prestige, reserved for the paramount elites. The carriage in Marquis Yi's tomb is spherical in shape and lacquered entirely in black but is equipped with a red canopy. It is substantially smaller than a typical war chariot, indicating its usage for hunting and transport (Fig. 7.6a). This personal function is underscored by its placement in the centre of the eastern chamber, alongside the marquis's coffin, signifying an intimate role. This association with personal, non-martial use is further corroborated by a similarly sized carriage from the Hougudui tomb, which belonged to a high-status woman (Fig. 7.6b).[56] These were personal vehicles, removed from the public sphere of warfare and deeply connected to the owner's private life and status.

The most striking expression of this new nexus of prestige and privacy is found on the lavishly painted carriage box side covers, known as *bi* (蔽). According to the bamboo inventories *qiance*, these decorative covers, which were fitted over the upper wooden skeleton of the chariot, are often mentioned after the wheels at the beginning of each entry, suggesting their importance.[57] As previously claimed, Chu did not continue the Zhou practise of burying wheels. It is likely that these decorated carriage boxes supplanted wheels as a sign of prestige, hence their

[55] This conclusion is based on a comparative study of chariot and horse parts from Zeng state tombs (early Western Zhou to Warring States) and those from other vassal states such as Jin, Wei, and Yan. Chang (2015), 53-78.
[56] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2004), 73-9.
[57] This appears to be a fixed format for describing chariots, as shown in the qiance of Marquis Yi. See Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 487-531.

prominent listing in the inventories. At Jiuliandun, for instance, a leather carriage box has been restored from the tomb of a local lord, second in rank only to the Chu king. The box comprises a longer front panel, two shorter side panels, and two square sections at the back, possibly serving as door flaps (Fig. 7.7a).[58] Each piece features a double-sided, black-lacquered background. One side is painted with profusion of broad, square-folded bands in red and yellow. A highly intricate yellow geometric and cloud motif is rendered against the black background. This fine design is only visible from a very close distance. Thus, the meticulous detail was manifestly not for public consumption; its visibility was restricted, accessible only to those granted intimate proximity. This points towards a logic of privacy and exclusive viewing.

This logic of restricted viewing directly challenges the excavators' outward-facing reconstruction. Stylistic inconsistencies and, more critically, the mechanics of the hinges suggest such a configuration would be impractical. To be more specific, there are significant variations in the thickness and design of the red stripes between the two square flaps and the other three sides. The flaps lack the red-striped frames, disconnecting them visually from the other panels and creating a relative inconsistency in the overall pattern. Furthermore, the direction of the drilled holes on the hinges and the animal-and-cloud patterns on their surfaces suggest an alternative to the excavators' outward-facing reconstruction. If the hinges were self-limiting, the decorated sides would need to be attached from the outside to allow the doors to swing open functionally. An alternative reconstruction is therefore possible (Fig. 7.7b). the main painted panels faced inwards, creating a lavish interior spectacle for the elite occupant. This was the ultimate expression of the inward gaze—a form of prestige designed not for the masses, but for the self or a select few within a private, mobile space.

This practice of crafting an interior world of prestige was likely more widespread than currently identified. In the Wangshan tomb of a lower *dafu* (下大夫), a number of hitherto unidentified leather fragments were found scattered among shields and armour.[59] Excavators identified one

[58] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 54-5.
[59] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 68-76.

fragment as part of a shield, but the function of the others remained unknown.[60] With the restoration of the Jiuliandun covers, a comparison of the ornamentation, size, and structure—including the perforations (double or quadruple drills) around the edges and in the centre for bronze hangers—suggests these fragments were also likely parts of a carriage cover (Fig. 7.8).[61] This type of cover also echoes the plain *mocheng* (墨乘), or 'black carriage', mentioned in the bamboo inventories as the most prestigious vehicle for the *dafu* elites.[62] Given the high standards of the Jiuliandun covers, it is plausible that the interior of such a carriage was finely lacquered and painted. The actual number of carriage coverings interred in tombs may be greater than recorded, owing to difficulties in identification. This shared aesthetic of the inward gaze helped to forge a cohesive Chu identity, fostering ties among an elite who recognised status not in public display, but in exclusive, internalised splendour.

7.2.3.2 Material Fusion: Leathered Porkets and Foils on Chariot Box Covers

The principle of material fusion is clearly demonstrated in the leathered pockets designed for attachment to chariot box covers that appeared in the late fourth century B.C. These leather bags were framed with wooden or bamboo linings, embossed or lacquered, and decorated with complex designs.[63] Typically, leather was stretched over a wooden or bamboo frame, and the surface was then lacquered, embossed, or carved (Fig. 7.9). Their function as adjuncts to the chariot box covers is often confirmed by perforations along their borders, which match the fittings on the larger panels, indicating they were part of an integrated decorative system.[64]

The application of decoration to these composite surfaces involved a further layer of material fusion, most notably the addition of metallic foils. In the Chu tomb at Zuozhong in Jingmen, a

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[60] *Ibid.,* 62-4.

[61] For example, the combined width of the fragments (20.6 cm) equals the longer chariot box cover (41 cm) in Wangshan M1.

[62] See footnote 41 above, 123.

[63] In the *qiance* of Marquis Yi, similar canopies (*zhang*) made of leather or fish skin were frequently recorded, emphasising the importance of these items and their associated bow and arrow bags. Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 502, footnote 14; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 55; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2006), 98-103; Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 231-4.

[64] Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 230.

series of wall pockets with wooden borders was found, painted black and carved with animals such as dragons, snakes, and toads.[65] The designs, particularly the dragons, reflect a tradition dating back to Zhou, as seen on various leather goods such as the armour (Fig. 7.10). A coherent decorative vocabulary is also evident across numerous sites. For instance, the lacquer-painted leather pouch from Baoshan M2 and the two sets of leather pouch attachments with lead roundels and dragon designs from Jiuliandun exhibit an iconographically comparable pattern. The circular pattern at the centre of these designs mirrors the typical gold-leafed bronze horse decoration (Figs. 7.9c, d, and Fig. 7.11). At Geling, numerous dragon- and phoenix-shaped tin foils were found with chariot parts, designed to create a striking visual contrast between the metallic sheen of the foil and the coloured leather or lacquer beneath (Fig. 7.12 c, d and e).[66] Evidence suggests that these foils echo earlier examples from the sixth century BC at the Caojiagang and Xiasi sites (Fig. 7.12a and b). Examples of similar foils found amongst pieces of leather armour confirm that this method of material fusion was widely applied.[67] It is plausible, therefore, that this technique of fusing metal foils with painted leather was not a new invention for chariot decoration but a long-standing Chu craft practice before the 6th century B.C. This tradition also spread to adjacent regions, as evidenced by similar foil pieces found in the Shuangdun tomb belonging to the lord of the Zhongli state.[68] As technology advanced, Chu elites found their own ways to display and transmit their ties to the distant Eurasian steppes. They incorporated their admiration for these remote cultures through the deliberate fusion of materials and patterns, particularly on chariot and carriage parts, showcasing a mastery of multiple materials within a single, integrated object.

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65 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2006), 98-103.

66 Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2003), 143-9. Both the foils and horse and chariot fittings were found in the western chamber of the lord's tomb. More hinges were also found at Tianxingguan, suggesting the burial of chariots or chariot box covers. See Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan, (湖北省荆州地区博物馆) (1982), 'Jiangling Tianxingguan yihao Chu mu (江陵天星观 1 号楚墓)', *Kaogu xuebao (考古学报)*, (1), 71-116.

67 Henan sheng bowuguan, (河南省博物馆) (1981), 'Henan Xichuanxian Xiasi yihaomu fajue jianbao (河南淅川县下寺一号墓发掘简报)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (2), 119-27; Hubei sheng Yichang diqu bowuguan, (1988a), 455-500; Wang *et al.* (2019). See gold foils in M12 Zhaoxiang, Dangyang in Yichang bowuguan, (宜昌博物馆) (2019), *Yichang bowuguan guancang wenwu tulu·Zaxiang juan (宜昌博物馆馆藏文物图录·杂项卷)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 12-18.

68 Kan (2013), 185-92; See 'Circling South', in Rawson (2023), 219-20.

7.2.3.3 The Detached Canopy: Symbol of a New Ritual Practice

Perhaps the most profound evidence for a changing ritual and political behaviour is the emergence of the detached canopy as a standard burial good. Umbrella covers are commonly plastered, and the wooden shaft is sometimes lacquered and linked with 20 or more ribs and a gilded metal hoop.[69] Umbrellas became a common feature in elite tombs from the time of Marquis Yi onwards—pervading all ranks except the lowest *shi* (士).[70] Their true significance lies not in their mere presence, but in their deliberate separation from the carriages they once adorned. This act of detachment marks them as the focus of a specific new practice.

The archaeological evidence for this deliberate separation is particularly clear in the tomb of Marquis Yi, where the canopy was deposited in the northern chamber, physically removed from the carriage in the eastern chamber.[71] In the tomb of the local lord at Jiuliandun, a canopy was found carefully wrapped in silk, indicating it was not simply dismantled but was ritually prepared for burial as a distinct object.[72] This careful, separate treatment suggests the canopy itself had become a focus of this new ceremonial practice.

This practice of separation finds no clear precedent in the Western Zhou archaeological record. According to *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli*, 周禮), this practice becomes a funeral ritual while the canopy or umbrella would be removed during the combat.[73] However, no chariot canopies have been discovered in elite tombs of the Western Zhou period (although this may have been due to the difficulty of preserving the material). Thus, the *Rites* may be recording this very new custom during the Warring States rather than describing an ancient Zhou tradition. A more compelling interpretation is that the physical act of detaching the canopy was itself a central part of a new funerary rite. By isolating the umbrella, Chu elites elevated a functional accessory into an object

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69 There are also double-layered canopies, such as the one found at Baoshan M2. Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 225-6.
70 Chang (2015), 53-78.
71 Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 306-11.
72 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2018).
73 The *Rites of Zhou* records that at funerals, mourners carry the canopy and follow the chariots: '及葬，执盖从车。'. See 'Chun guan: Jin che (春官·巾车 Spring Official: Chariot Master)' in *Zhouli* (2014), 573-4. Guo, Dewei (郭德维) (1993), 'Chu che kaosuo (楚车考索)', *Dongnan wenhua (东南文化)*, (5), 71-81.

of focused ritual significance. The practice demonstrates a clear departure from earlier Zhou conventions. It reveals how Chu elites were actively innovating within their funerary sphere, creating new, meaningful ceremonial acts that asserted their own distinct approach to ritual.

7.2.4 Conclusion

While some scholars, such as Wu Hsiao-yun, posit that the burial of chariot components in Chu served primarily to represent daily life with little ceremonial function, the evidence suggests a more multifaceted purpose.[74] The traditional bronze-based chariots and horse fittings of the Western Zhou were downgraded in favour of a wider variety of other materials, especially lacquer and leather. An analysis of Marquis Yi's inventory list reveals this shift in action: his self-prepared vehicles were war chariots, symbols of state power, while the gifts he received were lighter carriages for hunting and transport.[75] The old Zhou rituals were diminished; a new emphasis was placed on the procedures and objects of daily and political life as the primary arena for strengthening relationships and forming alliances.

Lacquered artefacts served as a vehicle through which the elites attempted to break away from the conventional exchange of bronze ritual vessels, seeking to establish a new, non-Zhou-based hierarchy. Weaponry of bronze and wood as well as portable carriages became the new norm in gift-giving, strengthening relationships and forming political alliances among the elites. Objects with both strong visual impact and symbolic status, such as the beautifully rendered chariot boxes, were accorded greater importance. Form and visual expression now took precedence over actual functionality. Through advanced techniques in lacquering, painting, and metal forging, a new equilibrium of colours, patterns, and 'stylised' symbolism was expressed. Ultimately, the Chu elites actively forged their own networks through these 'new' rituals and the symbolic objects, such as the ceremonial canopy, that defined them. They simultaneously asserted their connection to the vast 'Eurasian' cultural sphere while decisively

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[74] The practice of burying *luan* chariot fittings ceased after the middle Spring and Autumn period, signalling the end of the long-standing Western Zhou custom of chariot burial. Wu (2013). 81-2.
[75] Xiao Shengzhong has also made it clear that the majority of chariots listed could be converted into transport and hunting vehicles. See Xiao (2005), 248-50.

breaking from the traditions of the preceding Zhou dynasty, with lacquer serving as the ideal medium for this new performance of power.

7.3 Instruments of Power II: Weaponry and the Performance of Personal Prestige

Weapons, just as chariots, were intended to embody and symbolically represent one's status.[76] The tomb of Marquis Yi provides an excellent example of a shift in the type, material, and placement of bronze and lacquered weapons, reflecting a new understanding of how identity was performed.

7.3.1 The Two Arsenals: Location, Type, and Function

The placement of weapons in the Marquis's tomb reveals a deliberate, dual organisation that speaks to a duality in his identity: the tension between his public role and his personal status. The northern chamber contained seventy percent of the total number of weapons (3,304 out of 4,777 pieces), dominated by traditional, long-shafted bronze weaponry such as *ji* (戟) halberds, *shu* (殳) spears and *mao* (矛) spears.[77] These types were entirely absent from the eastern chamber. The craftsmanship of Marquis Yi's own weapons suggests their utilitarian nature. They were evenly cast in terms of the size, the shape and specifications, with identical inscriptions. Clearly, they were manufactured specifically for Marquis Yi. This northern chamber was the public-facing arsenal, a powerful statement of prestige and military might that represented the marquis's official role as a military leader in the Zhou tradition. However, their limited signs of use-wear indicate they were rarely, if ever, used in combat. Even though about forty of Marquis Yi's weapons were inscribed with his own name while twenty-eight from previous Zeng marquises, after the Warring States period, bronze weapons with precise inscriptions were scarcer with downgrading quality.[78] From the time it was first cast, the weapon gradually lost

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[76] Scull, Christopher (2011), 'Social Transactions, Gift Exchange, and Power in the Archaeology of the Fifth to Seventh Centuries', in Hamerow, Helena *et al.* (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*; (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 848–64.

[77] Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 252.

[78] Even though some bronze weapons include inscriptions, the text was in a different format. It was

its exclusivity, and its utility may have been also drastically diminished in favour of becoming a status symbol.

In stark contrast, the remaining thirty per cent of the weaponry was positioned in the eastern chamber, on either side of the marquis's coffin.[79] This was his personal armoury. This group was composed almost entirely of lacquered wooden weapons, primarily bows and shields. The cone-shaped arrowheads in the eastern chamber feature blunt tips, differing from the conventionally pointed arrowheads found in the northern chamber. Perhaps they imply a ritual significance at courtly game or ceremonies, as evidenced by the incised bronze vessels.[80] Additionally, the owner carried a personal bronze dagger, partially lacquered with a carved jade end bearing dragon motifs.[81] It is evident that the smaller, often lacquered, weaponry at the tomb owner's side was intended for personal defence and entertainment. This practice is consistent with later, more compact Chu tombs where such protective items were typically positioned near the main coffin, signifying a more intimate and individualised conception of power. The calculated placement of these two arsenals indicates a clear levelled significance. A particular favour was shown on the personal and protective weapons that were new to the collection, with a diminishing value of the traditional bronze weapons. They will be the subject of further discussion and can potentially indicate alterations in social and ritual practises.

7.3.2 The Prestige of Detail: Weapons for the Bearer's Eyes

The notable increase of lacquered wooden weaponry in Chu burials signals a fundamental shift in the nature of martial prestige. Status was no longer conveyed primarily through the sheer scale or public visibility of an arsenal, but through the prestige of detail: microscopic, intricate ornamentation that was practically invisible from a distance. This meticulous craftsmanship transformed weapons into objects of close connoisseurship, with designs intended primarily for

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consistent with lacquer and other inscriptions. The year, craftsman's name, and location were clearly indicated, such as on the sword inscription (M1S:23) from the Chu tomb at Zuozhong. See Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2006), 63-6.

79 Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 253

80 *Ibid.* 296-302. Yuan, Yanling (袁艳玲) (2008), 'Chu di chutu pingtouzu chutan (楚地出土平头镞初探)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (3), 48-53.

81 See E.C.11:98 in Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 252, Colour Plate 11:6.

the bearer's eyes and a restricted circle of allies, rather than for a battlefield audience. The lacquered shield and the decorated weapon pole serve as the principal exemplars of this new, inwardly focused ways of viewing.

7.3.2.1 Shields: A Turn Inward

The shield exemplifies this transition. In the early Western Zhou, as seen in Zeng tombs, shields served a clear protective function, arrayed on ledges to form a defensive barrier.[82] In the Chu cultural sphere, however, the shield was transformed into a canvas for expressing a new, inwardly focused conception of status as well as the elites' dedicated manifestation of their social networks. The key to understanding this shift lies in the decoration. Most Chu shields, often made of lacquered leather on a wooden frame, were plain black on the front, the side facing the enemy. In contrast, the back, the side facing the user, was meticulously painted with intricate motifs. This change of pattern can suggest a changing viewing direction and functions of the shields.

Marquis Yi's inventory lists categorised these as 'painted shields' or 'golden shields', and the finest surviving example from his tomb illustrates this principle (Fig. 7.13).[83] This shield was lacquered black, bordered in red, and divided into 64 squares on the backside by red lines, embellished in yellow with diverse themes. These squares are framed with rope designs, and within each square are deformed cloud motifs with hooked edges. In the spaces between the squares, distorted dragon and phoenix patterns were placed.[84] This piece is the most well-preserved and exquisite of the marquis' forty-nine lacquer shields. Even less ornate shields from his tomb featured gold or tin foil appliqués on their inner surfaces.[85] Both the northern and eastern chambers include at least eleven of these shields, all of which were attached gold leaves on one of the sides. Moreover, a grouping of thirty-five shield handles, each of which is carved with cloud motifs and lacquered in vermilion over a black background were also found, associated with the shields. Overall, the marquis' shields appear to feature greater emphasis on

[82] Hubei sheng bowuguan *et al.* (2013), 112.
[83] Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 487.
[84] *Ibid.,* 303.
[85] *Ibid.,* 306.

the inner sides, which are directed towards the user rather than outwardly towards the audience or rivals. Similar shields have been discovered in elites' tombs of both high and low status. (Fig. 7.14)[86] These shields, whose lengths all exceed 80 centimetres, are mostly utilitarian. In comparison, a painted lacquer shield discovered from the local lord's tomb at Jiuliandun (the early fourth century B.C.) is only approximately 40 centimetres, roughly half the size of the former shields (Fig. 7.14 IV-g). This shield's dwindling size suggests that it may no longer be of a utilitarian purpose. Instead, through the fine lacquered shield designs and decoration, the shields may serve to highlight his rank to others and become a symbolic tool in rituals instead of being used in real fights. The decorative focus is unambiguous: the most elaborate artistry was reserved for the user's gaze, not for outward display.

This user-facing orientation challenges the interpretation of these shields as props for public performances, such as ceremonial dances.[87] While some scholars propose this function, citing the light weight of certain examples, the visual logic still contradicts it. A dance shield would be decorated on the front to address a wider audience. However, shields that were double-sided were still rare by the end of the Warring States. On the other hand, the evidence strongly suggests, therefore, that these shields served a ritual function. For instance, compared to the other ten plain wooden lacquered shields in the same tomb, the only one piece of light weight and decorative form of the double-sided leather shield in Baoshan provides ample evidence that it may not have been functional than the wooden ones (Fig. 7.14 IV-c vs. g). Other shields, such as the one discovered in Lijiatai, feature geometric designs on the front and additional themes on the reverse, including six groups of dragons (ten in all), flocks of birds, primarily peacocks, trees, and human figures (Fig. 7.14III-e).[88] Considering the presence of a fine wooden sculpture of a phoenix on a tiger base in the same tomb, which is usually believed to have had a ritualistic

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[86] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 52; Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1982); Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 63.

[87] Huang, Kejia (黄可佳) (2022), 'Jiangxi Nanchang xihan Haihun hou Liu He mu chutu dan huadun yanjiu (江西南昌西汉海昏侯刘贺墓出土丹画盾研究)', *Wenwu (文物)*, 41-51.

[88] Jingzhou bowuguan, (荆州博物馆) (1985), 'Jiangling Lijiatai Chu mu qingli jianbao (江陵李家台楚墓清理简报)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (03), 20-1.

function, it seems plausible to assume that its owner was, for example, a ritual performer.[89] The consistent inward-facing decoration, even on the rare, exquisitely lacquered shield from the tomb of a low-status elite at Lijiatai, suggests a more private or specialised ritual function that could sometimes transcend the class. By the 3rd century B.C., this ritual association seems to have deepened. The decoration on a shield at Longwanggang is reminiscent of a particular kind of clothing called *pianyi* (偏衣) that ritualists frequently wore and may be seen on figurines (Fig. 7.15).[90] Consequently, it is likely that the lacquered shield served a ritual function rather than merely as the utilitarian weapon.

The traditional shield is outward-facing, projecting power, protection, and ostentation. The Chu lacquer shield, however, inverts this logic. Both its placement and its ornamentation place a profound emphasis on 'inwardness' and restraint, reflecting a new focus on inner qualities and a restricted sphere of appreciation. This principle resonates with the social dynamics observed in the gift-giving of chariots and horses, suggesting that elite concerns were shifting from purely external relationships towards the cultivation of complex, individual-centred hierarchies. A private space was thus established—whether for ritual, as a symbol of power, or for personal enjoyment—whose intricate designs were inaccessible to an enemy. Within this context, the user-facing decoration served to signify the noble's eminence to his most trusted followers, reinforcing the internal structure of this retinue.

This restrained mode of displaying status stands in stark contrast to the dazzling gold armours and helmets of Eurasian elites, which were symbols of public power. The Chu elites, while retaining their own 'golden weaponry', achieved a different effect. By combining lacquered leather with gold leaf, they created a form of internalised prestige, intended for a limited audience of the self and close allies. This subtlety may suggest that on a broader scale, the authority of high-ranking Chu elites was more constrained, compelling them to express their

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89 *Ibid.,* 20-5.

90 Dai, Ji (戴季) (2009), 'Luetan chu mu zhongde pianyi yong (略谈楚墓中的偏衣俑)', *Changjiang wenhua luncong (长江文化论丛)*, (1), 26-40; Wang, Fang (王方) (2021), '"Pianyi" de kaoguxue shidu ("偏衣"的考古学识读)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (3), 66-75.

status in a less overt and more modest fashion, within a carefully guarded private sphere.

7.3.2.2 Wooden Weapon Poles

This principle of user-focused detail is also evident on the poles of long-shafted weapons. In addition to the fine wrapping of silk threads and black lacquer throughout, some earlier lacquered wooden weapon handles were painted with red and black lacquer at irregular intervals, possibly for a striking effect. From the 4th century onwards, however, weapon handles just two centimetres in diameter were being painted with incredibly fine geometric patterns, in lines of red, yellow, and brown with cloud scrolls, triangles, rhombuses, and squares, and in some areas even dot carvings (Fig. 7.16). The microscopic scale of this decoration, on weapons that sometimes required multiple men to wield, meant it was practically invisible from any distance. Its intricacy could only be appreciated by the touch and close inspection of the user and his immediate attendants. When it comes to display, only limited audiences, in particular, the elite himself and his army subordinates would have had the access to the details and appreciate their lord's authority.

This meticulous, almost hidden, craftsmanship served as a subtle yet potent status indicator. In a period of constant warfare and perhaps resource constraints, overt displays of ostentation may have been curtailed. Elites therefore developed new means of 'interior enhancement', expressing their prestige not through sheer scale or brilliance, but through a mastery of details accessible only to a privileged few. This practice turned the weapon from a tool of public violence into an object of private connoisseurship, reinforcing the authority of a lord over his subordinates through a shared, restricted aesthetic experience.

7.4 Conclusion

With the decline of ritual bronze vessels, the expression of elite identity and authority shifted to lacquered versions of other categories, including chariot parts and weaponry. As demonstrated in Marquis Yi's *qiance* list, the proof of an internal network, centred on the marquis himself and constituted by his peers and subordinates, was more prized than ever before. Thus, the transformation and the substitution of bronze with lacquered objects thus contributed to the

complexity of this network. It did so by adding new activities from daily and political life to the traditional gift-giving system, forming new rituals that were more personal and performative. While some scholars attribute these transformations to the decline of the Western Zhou patriarchal system and the rise of a more 'human-oriented' philosophy, a more compelling explanation lies in the era's turbulent social context.[91] Intensifying political instability and near-constant warfare placed a new premium on the symbolic affirmation of identity and rank. Consequently, elites shifted their focus inward, attempting to forge tighter and more secure networks by reinforcing their hierarchical relationships with superiors, peers, and subordinates. The social structure and decorative changes of Chu all revolve around this core. The recurring patterns on chariot boxes, quivers, and lacquered shields reveal associations related to the growing need of the ruling class to connect with a broader array of allies (Fig. 7.17). The extremely fine, inward-facing details, on the other hand, illustrate a new way of viewing and appreciating the delicacy of these objects, a form of aesthetic enjoyment restricted to the owner and his inner circle. The authority of the individual elite grew subtly, knitting his own core network on a small scale. The variation of lacquered items, through its functions, categories, and socially embedded restrictions, drew more elites into the Chu network, while creating socially restricted objects through which identities were articulated.

This tradition is powerfully brought to its logical conclusion in the much later Han tomb of Liu He, Marquis of Haihun (92-59 B.C.). In his mausoleum, dozens of shields with painted images were discovered in the corridor surrounding the central chamber (Fig. 7.18).[92] The Han shields inherited the Chu's physical appearance but were substantially smaller, signifying they had entirely lost their practical purpose and acquired a purely symbolic and ritualistic connotation, possibly for dances. Noteworthy are that the double-sided patterns remain, with dragons, tigers, and Hercules, possibly suggesting religious and protective significance. On the reverse of each

[91] Lewis (1999). 632-8. A similar conclusion is repeatedly reached when discussing lacquered objects and images. See Yao, Erfeng (要二峰) (2022), 'Baoshan er hao caihui qilian tuxiang kao (包山二号墓彩绘漆奁图像考)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (2), 101-05.

[92] Jiangxi sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (江西省文物考古研究所) *et al.* (2016), 'Nanchang shi xihan Haihunhou mu (南昌市西汉海昏侯墓)', *Kaogu (考古)*, (7), 49-51.

shield is a lacquered inscription with 36 characters (Fig. 7.19).[93] This text includes the quantity of raw lacquer used, the cost, the production time, and batch numbers. The shield was now a mass-produced item with a consistent production standard. The private, inward-facing information of the Chu shield had transformed into a bureaucratic and economic record. The shield also acquired a portion of the Chu's ritual function and worked as a sign of elite's individual power and networks. The shield was further turned publicly into a symbolic weapon by the incorporation of the imagery fit with the Han philosophy regarding the afterlife full of immortals. Therefore, the painted shield also indicates that its role was ever-changing and added with more aspects through time, in particular, the economic connotations. The painted shield thus demonstrates the constant transformation of these lacquered woodwares, from personal symbols of a networked elite to mass-produced emblems of a centralised imperial power.

[93] The private workshop of the Marquis of Haihun produced a batch of red-lacquered shields, recorded as: '私府髹丹画盾一，用漆二升十籥，胶筋、丹臾、醜布、财用、工牢，并直五百五十三，昌邑九年造，廿。' ('The private workshop lacquered one red-painted shield, using two *sheng* and ten *yue* of lacquer, animal collagen, cinnabar, coarse cloth, and labour, for a total cost of 553 *wuzhu* coins. Made in the 9th year of Changyi, twenty in total.'). Huang (2022), 44.

8 The Sculpted World: Lacquer, Hybrids, and the Chu Ontology

The previous chapters have revealed significant changes in the ritual practices and social interactions of the Eastern Zhou period. These shifts are inherently connected to a more profound comprehension of the Chu worldview. This chapter, therefore, delves deeper into this subject, exploring the captivating, lacquered wood sculptures from Chu tombs not merely as art objects, but as distinct representations of Chu's unique ontology and philosophy.

While some researchers employ the term 'religion' to characterise these beliefs, this chapter argues that the concept is too limited. Lai Guolong observes that the Chu belief system was not stratified by social class; rather, it was practised by both the elite and the populace.[1] This inclusivity is evident in the widespread right of individuals to construct tombs for themselves and their families, a practice which expressed the prevailing beliefs and ritual customs of the era. This very pervasiveness, however, suggests that the conventional definition of 'religion' is too restrictive for the Chu context. A religion is typically defined as a structured system of beliefs and rituals centred on the worship of a higher power, often with an associated moral code.[2] In contrast, Chu beliefs appear less systematic, yet more encompassing. Therefore, this analysis will focus on the concepts of ontology and ideology to explore the significance of the various lacquered tomb creatures. By examining the underlying ontologies, we can move beyond simple assumptions based on legends and transmitted texts and instead seek to comprehend why these beings were created and the reasoning that led to their existence.

8.1 Ontology as a Framework: Zhou Precedent and Chu Divergence

8.1.1 Defining Ontology

To proceed, a conceptual discernment of ontology and ideology is necessary. Ideology expresses similarities and correlations between individuals, concerning identity, goals, values, and

[1] Lai (2015), 19.
[2] Durkheim, Emile (1915), *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin), 62.

resources.[3] It is, as Göran Therborn has argued, a dynamic process of formation that equips social actors to take deliberate action.[4] As established in the preceding chapter, the Chu aristocracy demonstrated, whether consciously or not, a significant uniformity through their material possessions. This consistency signals a deeply shared ideology. Such a framework is, at its core, both interpretive and relational.[5] Material culture and ideology are fundamentally inextricable. As the tangible expression of a belief system, material culture is inevitably shaped by ideology, a connection that becomes particularly pronounced in contexts governed by dominant political forces.

Ontology, by contrast, is a wider concept. As defined by Phillipe Descola, it is the study of 'being, becoming, and existence' through a variety of abilities, lifestyles, and ways of reasoning.[6] While political ideologies are susceptible to conflict and disintegration, ontology allows us to investigate such topics in a more universal approach. In addition, ontology is constantly changing and more flexible than merely a religion. Consequently, given the abundance of lacquered sculptures in a variety of versions and themes in Chu, ontology is more applicable here.

For this study, Descola's identification of 'analogism' as a key mode of identification in China is particularly relevant.[7] Analogism refers to a system where the continuity and order of the world are maintained by locating and comparing significant similarities across all elements in a worldwide network. Through the fundamental mechanism of analogy, any 'unusual and unprecedented' occurrence could thus be attributed to a known precedent. Descola made his point by illustrating the *yin-yang* ideas of the later Han dynasty, although he only briefly touched on Chinese thoughts without tracing it backward to earlier periods.[8] Caution must be exercised

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[3] Geertz, Clifford (2014), 'Ideology as a Cultural System', *Ideology* (London: Routledge), 279-94.

[4] Therborn, Göran (1980), *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (Trowbridge and Esher: Redwood Burn Ltd), vii-4.

[5] Some scholars, such as David Hawkes, view ideology as a distortion of ideas, matter, and representation. Hawkes, David (2004), *Ideology* (London and New York: Routledge), 7-15.

[6] Descola, Philippe (2013), *Beyond Nature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), xv.

[7] Modes of identification include animism, totemism, analogism, and naturalism. *Ibid.*

[8] Within an analogical ontology, distinctions are based on different proportions and combinations of elements rather than on a binary of intentionality and physicality. The cosmos is thus distributed into different microcosms at various scales. In sum, scale is the essence that allows everything to find its rightful place. This framework offers an insightful explanation for early Chinese rituals and tomb

when applying a single mode of identification to all of early China.[9] This perspective emphasises the fluidity of ideas and provides a powerful tool for interpretation. In the following, before exploring the Chu ontology through sculptures, we should firstly review and compare the modes of ontology between Zhou and Chu. The fundamental question is whether Zhou and Chu are ontologically separate.

8.1.2 The Zhou and Chu Ontologies: A World of Analogies

楚子问鼎之大小轻重焉。对曰："在德不在鼎。昔夏之方有德也，远方图物，贡金九牧，铸鼎象物，百物而为之备，使民知神、奸。故民入川泽山林，不逢不若。螭魅罔两，莫能逢之，用能协于上下以承天休……[10]

The Master of Chu asked about the size and weight of the nine ding tripods. Wangsun Man (Zhou official) replied, 'Size and weight depend on one's virtue, not on the tripods. In the past, just when Xia possessed virtue, men from afar depicted various creatures, and the nine superintendents (of the world) submitted metal, so that tripods were cast with images of various creatures. The hundred things were therewith completely set forth, and the people thus knew the spirits and the evil things. That was why when the people entered rivers, marshes, mountains, and forests, they would not meet what could harm them, and the spirits of the hills and waters could not get at them. Thus, they were able to harmonize with those above and below them and to receive Heaven's blessings……'.[11]

'The legend of the Nine Tripods', recorded in the *Zuo Tradition*, serves as a perfect illustration

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constructions. *Ibid.,* 206-207.

[9] Additionally, Descola acknowledges that changes and coexistence of these modes can occur in specific historical settings. *Ibid.,* 167.

[10] Lord Xuan, 606 B.C., in Durrant *et al.* (2016), 600-3.

[11] '……桀有昏德，鼎迁于商，载祀六百。商纣暴虐，鼎迁于周。德之休明，虽小，重也。其建回昏乱，虽大，轻也。天祚明德，有所底止。成王定鼎于郟鄏，卜世三十，卜年七百，天所命也。周德虽衰，天命未改，鼎之轻重，未可问也。' ('The last Xia king, Jie, possessed dimmed virtue, and the tripods were moved to the house of Shang, there to remain for six hundred years. The last Shang king, Zhou, was violent and tyrannical, and the tripods were moved to the house of Zhou. When virtue is bright and resplendent, the tripods, though small, are heavy. When it is distorted, dimmed, and confused, the tripods, though large, are light. Heaven blesses those of bright virtue... When King Cheng put the tripods in place at Jiaru, he divined about the number of generations and got thirty; he divined about the number of years and got seven hundred. This is what Heaven has commanded. Although Zhou virtue is in decline, the heavenly command has not yet changed. The question of whether the tripods are light or heavy may not yet be asked.') Lord Xuan, 606 B.C., *Ibid.,* 600-603.

of the Zhou ontology. In 606 B.C., the Master of Chu fought against the Luhun Rong, an outsider's clan, and the Chu troops approached the Zhou capital's outskirts near the Luo River. The incident that occurred between Chu and Zhou appears to be purposefully portrayed with irony and scathing criticism over the stupidity of the Master of Chu and his unreasonable demands. Academics, such as Wu Hung, adopt an art historical perspective and, as a result, emphasise the representation of artefacts to resemble living organisms.[12] This discussion is also significant because it reveals their shared ideology and ontology. Despite the arrogance and unequal position between the two sides, the Zhou official, Wangsun Man's statement reflected the underlying ontological thought, which was comprised of several essential ideas such as relationships, attributes, aspects of objects, and their position. This narrative reveals a worldview founded on analogy.

The tripods' positions and the relation with the world constitute the first analogy. The tripods in their right positions within the network indicated that order had been restored by the legitimate regimes of the reigning families. The concept corresponded to the recurring issue that the analogical ontology was reflected by the position in the network and the scales.[13] The tripods' components constitute a second analogy during their casting process. The metals were collected from *jiumu* 九牧 (the nine regions of the Ancient China). Despite possessing comparable chemical components, the metals from these different regions were qualitatively and intrinsically distinct and became representations of the vast territories of the realm. This representation now became an ontology issue rather than natural philosophy (science). The tripods were a balanced concentration of the world elements just as *jing* (精, essence) and *qi* (气, vital energy) constituting the humans.[14] Intrinsic properties mattered more in determining the characteristics and the position of the *ding* tripods in the network. The *ding*s were thus indeed

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12 Wu, Hung (巫鸿) (1995), *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 54.

13 Descola (2013), 212.

14 The concepts of *jing* (精, essence) and *qi* (气, vital energy) were regarded as the essential elements not only of humans but also of the cosmos. Thus, they are not only ontological but also cosmological. Liu, Chengji (刘成纪) (2017), *Xian qin liang han yishu guannian shi (先秦两汉艺术观念史)* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe), 181-2.

'persons' with differentiated fluids.

The second and more powerful analogy lies in the images. As Wu Hung has argued, the nine tripods became alive through the artistic transformation of copying the forms of various worldly beings (*zhu ding xiang wu* 铸鼎象物).[15] The images were not mere decoration; they were the externalisation of the inner qualities of the creatures they depicted.[16] This method of depiction is also regarded as the core and long-standing tradition in Chinese ritual art, which imbues imagined beings with life in tangible shapes and forms. As has been discussed in Chapter 3, Tim Ingold emphasizes the qualities of the objects rather than properties.[17] In this instance, the actual properties are derived from the ontological perspective in the minds and the cognition of the creators and users rather than the actual physical properties, which indicates a fluid properties under different ontologies. This set of nine tripods, imbued with mythical power, embodied the sensibility and essence of the world, a veritable world in miniature. In this analogical ontology, the world is made legible and controllable by creating a network of correspondences between things and their representations. This ordered, hierarchical worldview of the Zhou provides the essential benchmark against which the divergent ontology of Chu can be understood.

8.1.3 Shared Ontology, Divergent Narratives

'The legend of the nine tripods' was also a record of political and ideological discourse. Regardless of its authenticity, the narrative revealed the speaker's political stance, relationship with nature, and commitment to forging a unique identity. The positions and relationships embedded in the Analogism reflected an ideological emphasis on a symbolic order, *i.e.* an epic tale (a narrative whole) told by a larger group to forge a shared identity.[18] Paul Wohlheich argues that rising acts of violence against the same other group are a natural consequence of

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15 Wu (1995), 54.
16 Wu (2023), 28-32.
17 'The properties of materials are objective and measurable. They are "out there". The qualities, on the other hand, are subjective: they are "in here", in our heads. They are ideas of ours.' Ingold (2007a).
18 Verhaeghe, Paul (保罗·沃赫赫) (2018), *Shenfen (身份)* (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, translated from Verhaeghe, Paul (2012), *Identiteit* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij), 20.

deteriorating social bonding and blurred identity. Both the formations of identities in similar or different ways tend to result in difficulties and attacks: the uniform group is more likely to attack on the authority figure of the other group, whereas separation and individualism tend to lead to social isolation.[19] This viewpoint is consistent with and clearly stated in the *Zuo Tradition* that "Those not of the same kith and kin, their hearts and minds must be different. 非我族类，其心必异".[20] The distinction drawn between Zhou and Chu was based on their divergent perspectives and political positions, which led to a deliberate exclusion on Chu by Zhou's cohesive ideology. The phenomenon further demonstrates that there is a clear distinction between both people and objects in terms of identity and shared narrative.[21]

On the other hand, Zhou and Chu showed more homogeneity rather than difference ontologically. Both sides surprisingly agreed that certain things, namely tripods in our case, were imbued with a standpoint and perspective naturally. Their agreement reflected that Zhou and Chu share the same ontologies. The comparable ontologies placed Zhou in a difficult position, since it was unable to distinguish any difference if Chu cast an identical set of nine tripods from metals collected around the 'world' in a similar way. Thus, the Zhou official deliberately avoided the question of the tripod's weight and appealed to virtue and the heavenly command. He answered this ontological question with a utilitarian and political desire that was not yet devoid of superstitious religious thought.[22] The Chu group was similar to the Zhou entity with the same ontologies but a different narrative.

The above-mentioned analogism is only one of the ontologies shown in Chinese thoughts. Since

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19 Verhaeghe (2018), 30.

20 Lord Cheng, 587 B.C., Durrant *et al.* (2016), 746-747.

21 This view is consistent with Zhuangzi's *On the Equality of Things*, which recognises disparities in the natural perspectives of things and species. The Daoist philosophy is further developed through its advocacy of ontological equality and coexistence, which aligns with the perspective of finding a balance between similarities and differences. See Li, Wei (李巍) (2019a), 'Lichang wenti yu qiwu zhuzhi — zhuangzi de yinshi shuo (立场问题与齐物主旨——庄子的"因是"说)', *Cong yuyi fenxi dao daoli chonggou: zaoqi zhongguo zhexue de xin kehua (从语义分析到道理重构: 早期中国哲学的新刻画)*; (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan), 93.

22 Li, Wei (李巍) (2019b), '[Cong jingde dao renyi—Kongzi dui xizhou sixiang de zhuanhua (从敬德到仁义——孔子对西周思想的转化)', *Cong yuyi fenxi dao daoli chonggou: zaoqi zhongguo zhexue de xin kehua (从语义分析到道理重构: 早期中国哲学的新刻画)* (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan), 108.

these ideas are intertwined and largely shared among the Zhou cultural sphere, it is preferable to use the term ontologies instead of a single Chu ontology. Joseph Needham argues that the Chinese approach to correlation is by no means an archaic way of thinking.[23] Everything fits together in a nice and orderly fashion in their logic. It is feasible to analyse ontologies and arrive at a variety of compatible and incompatible interpretations.

Wu Hung has expressed the concern that there is a propensity for academics to match names and features depicted in transmitted texts with archaeological discoveries.[24] His argument is perceptive. By examining the underlying ontologies, we can arrive at a conclusion that is more rational than assumptions and fantasy based on legends and transmitted texts. Instead of seeking correlation, we should seek to comprehend why these beings were created and the ontological reasoning that led to their existence. Having now clarified the Chu ontologies as a local variant of the Zhou, we can now explore Chu's local adaptation, and the divergent route Chu took to expand its pantheon of so-called "mythical creatures" on lacquered sculptures.

8.2 Nature Reimagined: Animal Combat and the Tamed Wild

8.2.1 The Steppe and Northern Influence

The animal combat scene, a theme observed throughout the Zhou cultural sphere, has its origins in the art of the Eurasian steppe.[25] Since the Shang and Zhou dynasties, motifs featuring tigers, boars, and deer in violent conflict were representative of steppe species and aesthetics (Fig. 8.1). An early example of its adoption and adaptation appears on a bronze *yue* (钺) axe from a 10th-century B.C. Yu state tomb at Zhuyuangou (Fig. 8.2).[26] The axe is decorated with a human head and animals, a non-Chinese combination, but the exquisite design of a bird and a snake on the blade may be one of the earliest instances of the theme's localisation within the

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[23] Needham, Joseph (1974), *Science and Civilisation in China* (5; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 354.

[24] Wu (1995), 58.

[25] Wu, En (乌恩) (2002), 'Lun Zhongguo beifang zaoqi youmuren qingtong daishi de qiyuan (论中国北方早期游牧人青铜带饰的起源)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (06), 68-77+1; Rawson, Jessica (2013), 'Ordering the Exotic: Ritual Practices in the Late Western and Early Eastern Zhou', *Artibus Asiae*, 73 (1), 5-76; Rawson (2017).

[26] Lu *et al.* (1988), 73.

Zhou cultural sphere.

Chu elites readily adopted these combat scenes, particularly on their lacquerwares, but they did not simply copy them; they fundamentally transformed their meaning. We shall look further into the question such as how we should ontologically interpret Chu's perspective on nature and animal combats and how different they were from the Zhou version. The bird-and-snake fighting motif, for instance, became a prominent theme, as seen on incised bronzes from Chu-influenced northern sites such as Liulige (Fig. 8.3). Scholars offer varied interpretations of its significance. Liu Dunyuan, for instance, highlights its co-appearance with battle and hunt scenes. He suggests the scenes embed a wish for a triumphant combat over evil. This view is particularly resonant in the snake-infested southern marshlands.[27] His contribution is to highlight the influence of Chu on the north such as the Liulige site in today's Henan. This was also a region to the north of the Chu territory, closely linked to and influenced by Chu.[28] Liu's view is also reasonable because the climate in Chu was mild and humid during the Spring and Autumn Period and the early to middle Warring States Period, with temperatures approximately two degrees higher than they are today.[29] Consequently, in a warmer climate, a significant number of rhinos, elephants, and deer, as well as snakes, frogs, and other creatures, were present, as evidenced by the Chu sculptures.[30] These animals such as snakes could pose one of the greatest hazards to human beings in a humid environment characterized by tall vegetation and marshes.[31] Other scholars, such as Zheng Yan, read the scene through a

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[27] Liu, Dunyuan (刘敦愿) (1982), 'Shilun Zhanguo yishupin zhong de niaoshe xiangdou ticai (试论战国艺术品中的鸟蛇相斗题材)', *Hunan kaogu jikan (湖南考古辑刊)*, (1), 73-81.

[28] von Falkenhausen (2006), 351.

[29] Zhu, Kezhen (竺可桢) (1972), 'Zhongguo jin wuqian nian lai qihou bianqian (中国近五千年来气候变迁)', *Kaogu xuebao (考古学报)*, (1), 20-1; Man, Zhimin (满志敏) (2009), *Zhongguo lishi shiqi qihou bianhua yanjiu (中国历史时期气候变化研究)*, ed. Ge, Jianxiong (葛剑雄) (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe), 138-40.

[30] See the distribution of deer (*Elaphuru davidianus* Milne-Edwards) in Wen, Huanran (文焕然) (2019), *Lishi shiqi Zhongguo qihou bianhua (历史时期中国气候变化)* (Jinan: Shandong kexue jishu chubanshe), 182-5; rhinos (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis* and *Rhinoceros sondaicus*) in *ibid.,* 192-9; elephants (*Elephas maximus*) in *ibid.,* 214-8.

[31] Huang, Ying (黄莹) (2011a), 'Lun Chu wenhua shengcheng de ziran dili huanjing yinsu (论楚文化生成的自然地理环境因素)', *Sanxia daxue xuebao: renwen shehui kexue ban (三峡大学学报: 人文社会科学版)*, 33 (4), 107-8.

shamanistic lens, connecting it to northern traditions where shamans were depicted manipulating snakes or dragons (Fig. 8.4).[32] Zheng, in line with many of his contemporaries, places significant emphasis on shamanistic interpretations. He identifies the prevailing ontologies as animism and totemism. This framework, however, proves inconsistent across other examples. As these scenes are found predominantly in regions associated with the Chu state, they likely represent a distinct regional ritual practice. The precise nature of the scenes may now be lost to us. Overall, these interpretations highlight the theme's rich symbolic weight. The Chu treatment of the motif on lacquered sculptures shifted its visual focus.

8.2.2 The Chu Adaptation: From Combat to Entanglement

The scenes of animal combat depicted on Chu lacquered sculptures move away from the ferocious violence of the steppe style towards a more localised, gentle struggle. It is a vision of unstable balance and entanglement that resolves into a new equilibrium. This is powerfully demonstrated on the lacquered bird-and-tiger drum stands found in tombs of top elites, allowing us to better comprehend and compare their ontologies by incorporating the wild into their imagery. On the magnificent example from Jiuliandun M2, a pair of birds perches atop two tigers, their bodies, especially the natural curvature of the necks, forming the support for a drum (Fig. 8.5 and Fig. 8.6).[33] The composition is balanced and poised, a harmonious construction rather than a depiction of conflict. In addition, the crowns of the birds serve as hooks. There are two copper metal rings on each of the two long sides of the square base that was carved with snakes in black and red. The rings appear to be lifted for mobility. Therefore, the drums could be carried to various occasions and possibly were even carried during travels into the wild. Similarly, birds and snakes are depicted on the support for *se* instruments. For instance, the identical supports discovered at M1 Wangshan, Jingzhou and M2 Jiuliandun, Zaoyang alternate sculptures of a bird grasping a snake and a running plum deer (Fig. 8.7).[34] The

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[32] Zheng, Yan (郑岩) (1989), 'Cong Zhongguo gudai yishupin kan guanyu she de chongbai yu minsu (从中国古代艺术品看关于蛇的崇拜与民俗)', *Minsu yanjiu [Folklore Studies] (民俗研究)*, (3), 37-46; (4), 53-61.

[33] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2018), 20.

[34] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 95; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物

abundance of these scenes depicting birds and snakes fighting on a variety of carriers, such as drums and other instruments, suggests its prevalence and extensive use in Chu.

Although we term the animal scenes as ' combats or fights' for a comparison between the steppe and Chu, especially the bird-and-snake fighting scenes, we may be placing too much emphasis on the 'conflict' itself on the prior basis of the antagonism and instability of the images. The bird-and-snake fights have been turned into moved away from the typical scenes of ferocious animal combat and have become more of a localised, gentle struggle. An unstable balance and entanglements lead to a new balance. This subject is not limited to what we consider as ritual artefacts in fixed contexts. The previously mentioned metal rings on the base of the drum and its ease of mobility, for instance, suggest that it was not a display in a fixed place, allowing for a degree of transformation and contextual change.[35] Therefore, we cannot simply classify it as a funeral good. The universality and diverse carriers of the scenes indicate that its symbolism was extensively diffused and utilised in a variety of contexts.

8.2.3 The Tamed Wild: The Lacquered Deer Sculptures

Scenes of animal combats depict the equilibrium between wild and domesticated animals. Transmitted texts indicate that the conceptual separation between the 'tamed' domestic sphere and the 'wild' untamed sphere was increasingly emphasised during the Warring States period, a development concurrent with the expansion of geographical knowledge.[36] Clear boundaries were drawn to distinguish these realms, a distinction evidenced by the emergence of topographic maps and the inclusion of essential travel kits in elite tombs, designed to equip the deceased for journeys into the wilderness.[37] Thus, the growing awareness of the wild was also reflected on the material culture.

In the context of Chu, this 'taming of the wild' is best exemplified by the lacquered deer

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考古研究所) and Xiangyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (襄阳市文物考古研究所) (2018), 'Hubei Zaoyang Jiuliandun M2 yueqi qingli jianbao (湖北枣阳九连墩 M2 乐器清理简报)', *Zhongyuan wenwu (中原文物)*, (2), 24.

35 See M2: 351 from Jiuliandun M2. Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xiangyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2018), 20-3.

36 Lai (2015), 170-4.

37 *Ibid.*

sculptures. The deer was a universal visual symbol across Eurasia, embodying the very essence of wild nature. These images are, to some extent, associated with the hunting. After mastering cultivation, the Neolithic Europeans, for example, purposely preserved the wildness of some species. [38] The elite's control over this symbol was not, however, limited to artistic representation. It was physically enacted within exclusive royal parks, where animals were deliberately maintained in a state of wildness. This practice was not intended to foster a simple relationship with nature, but to preserve its wild character, thereby transforming the hunt into a potent ritual act—a demonstration of mastery in the arts of war, politics, and statecraft.[39] This tradition was established by the top tier of the elite as early as the Shang and Zhou periods. Kings, in particular, possessed private gardens and parks in scenic locations away from the central court, which served both ritual and recreational ends. In the *Ling Tai* (灵台), King Wen of Zhou's famed pavilion, for instance, deer were kept for the hunt, while the *Ling* pond was stocked with various fish for viewing.[40] By the Eastern Zhou period, these pavilions had evolved into comprehensive entertainment venues, equipped for hosting banquets and facilitating pursuits such as hunting, fishing, and archery.[41] The hunting grounds, in particular, served a dual function: they supplied game for the elite and confined these wild animals within a designated territory.[42] In this way, the hunt was systematically incorporated into the fabric of social ritual.[43] Fundamentally, this was a process of articulating an ontological view of nature

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[38] Descola (2013), 52.

[39] *Ibid.*

[40] The *Shijing* describes a peaceful scene in the king's park: '王在灵囿，麀鹿攸伏……王在灵沼，於牣鱼跃' ('The king is in the wondrous park, where the deer lie resting... The king is at the wondrous pond, oh! how the fish leap.') See the poem *'Ling Tai'* (灵台) in *Shijing* (2015), 612-5.

[41] For example, the construction of terraces and pavilions in parks was widespread among the lords of various states, including Qin, Qi, Song, and Chu. See Wu, Liping (吴莉萍) (2005), 'Xian Qin gudian yuanlin zhong de lanshang (先秦古典园林中的滥觞)', (Tianjin University). 16-22. The construction of the Zhanghua Terrace, commissioned by King Ling of Chu, took several years to complete: '灵王为章华之台，数年乃成。'. See Wu *et al.* (2018), 509-13.

[42] This tradition continued into the Han dynasty. For example, the Shanglin Park of the Han emperor was three hundred *li* in length and housed hundreds of animals: '上林苑中，广长三百里，养百兽。' Sun, Yirang (孙诒让) (1848-1908 A.D.) (1987), *Zhouli zhengyi [Sun's notes on the Rites of Zhou] (周礼正义)*, 14 vols., (3; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju). 680.

[43] There are a series of hunting rules for the county (*xiang*), as well as grander hunting rituals hosted by the lords. See chapters 5 and 7 in the *Yili* (the Warring States period; 2019), 117-183, 214-261.

while simultaneously politicising and socialising it.

This deliberate integration of 'wildness' into 'cultured' society also helps to explain how the process of localising steppe-derived imagery retained its inherent characteristics of conflict. A stand from the northern state of Zhongshan where tigers ferociously bite a deer can best present the scenes of violent predation (Fig. 8.8).[44] The ornamental methods employed on the reclining deer, adorned with water droplet motifs throughout its body, discovered in the burial of Duke Zhongshan, bear a striking resemblance to those employed on the wooden deer frequently encountered in Chu tombs, indicating a discernible steppe connection. The reclining deer sculptures from Chu tombs, by contrast, do not present the state of running or escaping ferociously as they do in conventional steppe imagery, and there are comparatively few battle scenes (Fig. 8.9). They are singular, gentle, and often depicted looking back peacefully.

The warm, humid climate of the middle Yangtze River region fostered an environment in which deer populations thrived. Their broad, widely splayed hooves made them particularly well-suited to the area's wetland and lake environments.[45] Consequently, deer became a vital source of both game and sustenance in the Chu state and its neighbouring territories. This elevated status is confirmed by compelling archaeological evidence. In the 4th-century B.C. tomb of another Zeng marquis at Leigudun, a figure closely related to the famed Marquis Yi, deer was the exclusive animal species found within the full set of bronze ritual containers.[46] Such a find strongly suggests that the deer was considered a sufficient sacrificial offering in its own right. The animal thus occupied a pre-eminent position for the elite, valued both as a primary offering in ritual and as prestigious game for the hunt.

Therefore, the deer in Chu is presented not as a victim, but as a symbol of a tamed, yet still potent, nature. This shift in imagery validates a distinct Chu ontology. Echoing Descola's framework, nature was not only conceived as merely gentle and beautiful, but also as a wild and

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[44] Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiusuo, (河北省文物研究所) (1996), *Cuo mu: Zhanguo Zhongshan guo guowang zhi mu (厝墓：战国中山国国王之墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 261-3.

[45] Wen (2019), 182-5

[46] Suizhou shi bowuguan, (随州市博物馆) (2008), *Suizhou Leigudun er hao mu (随州擂鼓墩二号墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), 156, Appendix. 1, Table 3.

majestic force imbued with moral and aesthetic dimensions.[47] This perspective is particularly evident among the 'Romantics' of the Chu elite, whose worldview is captured by the 'historical-romance-with-a-moral' quality of the poems in the *Songs of the South*.[48] At its heart, such romanticism is ontological. The imagery of animal combat, therefore, aligns with the diversifying ontologies within Chu society. In these depictions, the emphasis moves beyond mere violence to the diverse inner qualities of the creatures. The brutality of the scenes is thus pacified, contextualised as a metaphor for the era's conflicts, instabilities, and entanglements. It establishes a new, harmonious cohabitation between the wildness of nature and the order of culture, a world where conflict is resolved into a complex and beautiful entanglement.

8.3 The World Between: Tomb Guardian Figures and the Realm of Hybrids

With a foundational understanding of Chu's unique conception of nature, we can now turn to its most captivating and complex creations: the lacquered wooden sculptures traditionally termed *zhenmushou* (镇墓兽), or tomb guardian figures. Rather than focusing on their contested function, this analysis will examine them as a major category of Chu hybrids. Through them, we can further explore Chu's understanding of culture, nature, and the spaces that lie between.

8.3.1 A 'Typology' of Hybrids

Chu guardian figures manifest in three principal forms, which appear in a rough chronological succession: a. the *zu* (祖) phallus-shaped forms (Fig. 8.10); b. the beast form (Fig. 8.12); and c. the human form (Fig. 8.13). Scholarly inquiry has predominantly focused on the function of these figures. Yet, their precise role, especially in relation to specific rituals, remains the most complex and elusive aspect to reconstruct.

8.3.1.1 The *Zu* 祖 or Phallic forms

The earliest manifestation is the *zu* (祖), or phallic form, which comprises a square wooden base surmounted by a column (Fig. 8.10). Its form has led some scholars to label the figure a

[47] 'For being gentle and beautiful, nature now became wild and sublime.' See Descola (2013), 55.
[48] Hawkes, David (1985), *The Songs of the South* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books), 50-53.

'fecundity god' and associate it with male potency.[49] The first known example, discovered at Zhaoxiang, dates to the 7th–6th century B.C.[50] This type is exceptionally rare. However, bronze bases comparable to the wooden ones were unearthed in tombs of Lord Huang and in tomb M2 at Heshangling, Xichuan. These bases are not only well-crafted, but the latter is also etched with its owner's name, Zeng Zhong. A partially legible inscription on this base appears to name the object itself as '且 (祖)' (Fig. 8.11).[51]

Some experts, notably Gao Chongwen, have hypothesised that these bases were ritual objects known as *zuchong* (祖重).[52] This hypothesis rests on the resemblance between the character *qie* (且) on the bronze base and the ritual nature of *chong* (重) recorded in texts. The *chong* was a carved wooden effigy that represented the spirit of the deceased, enabling it to receive offerings from the living.[53] The tradition of the *chong* seems to have originated from the Shang people, who buried the object after death rituals, whereas the Zhou people interred them next to the temple.[54] As the deceased, sealed within the coffin, was not visible during these rituals, the *chong* served as their physical embodiment. This hypothesis appears plausible, as the use of *chong* was restricted to the elite, a pattern consistent with the archaeological context of the discovered figures.

Nevertheless, this hypothesis remains inconclusive. The bronze bases have never been found with any form of *zu* column on top, suggesting, at best, a tenuous link between the bronze and wooden versions. The function of these figures is further complicated by their number.

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49 Lai (2015). 122-9.

50 Yichang diqu bowuguan, (宜昌地区博物馆) (1990), 'Hubei Dangyang Zhaoxiang 4 hao Chunqiu mu fajue jianbao (湖北当阳赵巷 4 号春秋墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (10), 25-32.

51 Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2004), 109.

52 Gao, Chongwen (高崇文) (2008), 'Chu "zhenmushou" wei "zuchong" jie (楚"镇墓兽"为"祖重"解)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (9), 54-60.

53 According to the 'Tangong' chapter in the *Book of Rites*, the spirit of the deceased is transported by the *chong*, a wooden pole with ropes passed through it: '重，主道也' ('The *chong* is for the journey of the spirit'). See *Liji* (Han dynasty; 2019), 187-91. Gao (2008), 58.

54 The tradition of the *chong* seems to have started earlier. The Shang people buried the object after the death rituals, while the Zhou people kept it next to the temple: '殷主缀重焉，周主重彻焉。' ('The Yin dynasty spirit tablet was attached to the *chong*; the Zhou dynasty spirit tablet and the *chong* were kept separate.') See *Tangong, Liji* (Han dynasty; 2019), 187-91.

Occasionally, two similar figures have been found together in a single high-ranking tomb. The presence of multiple figures contradicts the supposition that a *zuchong* exclusively represented the singular spirit of the tomb owner.[55] Given their very limited appearance in the archaeological record, it is also doubtful that the *zu*-shaped forms were broadly representative of a common tradition.

8.3.1.2 Beast Forms

The most common type is the beast-form, typically an antler-bearing creature. The figure from a high-status *shi* tomb at Changtaiguan is an outstanding example (Fig. 8.12).[56] The tomb's size exceeds 180 square metres, making it one of the largest *shi* tombs ever discovered.[57] Standing 1.28 metres tall, the creature squats on its haunches. Its massive head features little ears possibly of tigers, oversized spherical eyes and a long tongue extending to its abdomen, biting a snake held in its front paws. Its rear bore two pairs of scroll pattern. Its entire body is covered in scales, resembling a snake or dragon. This had been one of the earliest depictions of such figures in great detail in the Chu state.

Academics have offered interpretations for this fearsome imagery. Huang Ying, for instance, suggests that to conquer evil, one must in part become evil oneself; the creature's extended tongue and scales mimic the characteristics of a snake, the primary threat it is meant to subdue.[58] This hypothesis is compelling, as the control of snakes appears to have been a significant concern for the Chu people.[59] When we examine comparable images from outside Chu, a broader regional tradition becomes apparent. Bronze creatures from the Sanxingdui culture (middle second millennium B.C.) and another from the tomb of the Duke of Zheng—a state

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55 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) *et al.* (2017), 'Hubei Laohekou Angang er hao Chu mu fajue jianbao (湖北老河口安岗二号楚墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (07), 53.
56 Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986). 14.
57 It was built with 539 square logs and was segregated into seven compartments, indicating the high status of the deceased. Tombs of later periods were of equal or even higher status. *Ibid.*, 3.
58 Huang, Ying (黄莹) (2011b), 'Chu shi zhenmushou yanjiu (楚式镇墓兽研究)', *Zhongyuan wenwu (中原文物)*, (4), 55-64+70.
59 Wu, Rongzeng (吴荣曾) (1989), 'Zhanguo, Han dai de "cao she shen guai" ji youguan shenhua mixin de bianyi (战国，汉代的"操蛇神怪"及有关神话迷信的变异)', *Wenwu (文物)*, (10), 46-52; Zheng (1989), 55-6.

geographically close to Chu and from the same era—exhibit remarkably similar motifs (Fig. 8.14).[60] Common stylistic traits, such as long tongues, large eyes, shortened claws, and the act of capturing snakes, unite both figurative and abstract depictions of these ferocious creatures. This suggests a shared iconography with deep roots and a lasting influence across the region. The principal distinction of the Chu figures, therefore, lies not in their form but in their material. The transition from bronze to lacquered wood was a deliberate choice, increasingly favoured by the Chu elites. This shift can be attributed not only to the widespread appeal of lacquerware itself but also, as discussed in the preceding chapter, to the heightened recognition of lacquer's material properties during this period. The extensive utilisation of these figures among the Chu elites is indicative of a more encompassing and widely acknowledged culture.

8.3.1.3 Human-faced form

The third type is found in significantly smaller numbers. In these later forms, the beast-like features progressively fade and are replaced by a human face (Fig. 8.13). Only about twenty pieces are known to have a human-like form, and there are overlaps with the earliest type that Gao Chongwen categorised.[61] Merely ten or so pieces feature distinctly human faces, implying that the single-headed beast was the dominant form. Both the first (*zu*) and third (human-faced) forms were thus extremely limited in their distribution. As Lai has pointed out, the use of anthropomorphic figures was never a mainstream tradition in ancient China.[62]

8.3.1.4 Problematising the Typology: Scarcity, Provenance, and Form

Archaeologists have traditionally viewed these three forms as a linear, typological evolution of the same 'thing'.[63] However, this approach can be critiqued. As Wu Hung argues, it is often

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[60] Hong Kong Palace Museum, (香港故宫文化博物馆) (2023), *Ningshi Sanxingdui: Sichuan kaogu xin faxian (凝视三星堆：四川考古新发现)* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe), 70-1, 117; Henan bowuyuan and National Museum of History (Taipei) (2001), fig. 142-5.

[61] Gao (2008), 54-5.

[62] Lai (2015), 99.

[63] Chaffin, Cortney E. (2021), 'From Zheng to Chu: Tracing the Stylistic Origins of Hanxi Style Antlered and Tongued Tomb Sculptures', in Xu, Shaohua (徐少华) *et al.* (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference on Chu Culture and Early Development (Chu wenhua yu Changjiang zhongyou zaoqi kaifa guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji [楚文化与长江中游早期开发国际学术研讨会论文集])*; (Wuhan: Wuhan

more fruitful to investigate the historical and conceptual links between things of varying materials and forms.[64] Despite their commonalities, these figures show significant differences in number, provenance, and ontology. Crucially, their rarity—only about four hundred pieces have been recovered from over ten thousand Chu tombs—contradicts the notion that they represent a universally prevalent belief in shamanism and animistic superstition.[65] The vast majority (over 90 per cent) have been found in the Chu core region of Hubei, particularly in Jiangling (modern Jingzhou), suggesting this was a custom exclusive to the elites in the heartland. The size is another valuable aspect to consider their significance. In contrast to Gao's discussion on the various height constraints, however, Huang's research indicates that the size and the status are not necessarily correlated.[66] With the rise in the popularity of figurines, there had been an increase in the average size of figures. Until the collapse of the Chu state, the size had also decreased rapidly, and the restricted custom had vanished.[67] It is surprising that the tomb owner at Changtaiguan who owned such a vast tomb and an exceptionally large guardian sculpture was merely a *shi*, a class that had gone through a great expansion during the early Warring States period.[68] In the early stages of Chu's formation and prosperity during the early period, there appeared to be less limits on sizes based on the wealth. Some elites may have possessed greater 'power' than that their status indicated. Notably, the reduction in size of the guardian figures, as well as the gradually uniform geometric shape, coincided with a drastic drop in the size of the tombs. Consequently, a trend towards smaller, more uniform figures appears in the later period, coinciding with the reduction in tomb size and suggesting a move towards a more strictly managed system. The later tomb guardians, just as the scale of the tombs based on the status, are subject to more rigorous size constraints. Together with the reduced tomb space for elites to work on freely, the figures also indicate that they have been integrated

daxue chubanshe), 97-115.

64 Wu (1995), 58.

65 Ding, Lan (丁兰) (2010), 'Chu shi Zhenmushou tezheng zonglun (楚式"镇墓兽"特征综论)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (1), 105.

66 Gao (2008), 54-5; Huang (2011b), 55-64+70.

67 Huang (2011b), 55-64+70.

68 See section 5.2 in Chapter 5, 67-73.

into a relatively strict management system in the later stage after the 4th century B.C.

8.3.2 The Ontology of the Hybrid: A World of 'Plug-ins'

In light of the quantitative and geographical constraints previously discussed, it is tempting to conclude, albeit unsatisfactorily, that the guardian figure functioned merely as a status symbol or an ideological product. A more profound inquiry, however, moves beyond what these figures do (their function) to what they fundamentally are (their ontology). Many existing explanations, while valuable, presuppose that these hybrids were consciously 'created' by the Chu people as assemblages of divine power. This assumption underpins various theories, from those that trace the figures' origins to the shamanistic traditions of the Shang dynasty, to the proposal by Alain Thote, who identifies the diverse ethnic populations within the Chu state as a primary source, drawing parallels with traditions in the Middle and Near East.[69] Each of these perspectives treats the hybrid figure as a deliberate construction, an answer to a specific cultural need.

A crucial shift in perspective comes from Mu-chou Poo, who suggests that these figures arose not from a specific creative act, but from a commonly shared mental background prevalent during the Warring States period.[70] This shared worldview was itself complex. As Lai Guolong has noted, attitudes towards the dead involved a dual impulse to both control and assist them, a tension which these potent hybrid images may well embody.[71] Indeed, the fact that similar figures are found at Sanxingdui and in the tomb of the Duke of Zheng confirms they were not an invention unique to Chu, but part of a much wider and older tradition. I am therefore inclined to move beyond the notion of 'creation' entirely and instead view these figures as ontologically objective entities. The key question, then, is not why they were made, but why

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69 Chang, Kwang-chih (1963), 'Changing Relationships of Man and Animal in Shang and Chou Myths and Art', *Early Chinese Civilization: Anthropological Perspectives*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series, 23; (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), 174-96; Keightley, David N (1998), 'Shamanism, Death, and the Ancestors: Religious Mediation in Neolithic and Shang China (ca. 5000-1000 BC)', *Asiatische Studien*, 52 (3), 763-833; Loewe, Michael (1978), 'Man and Beast: The Hybrid in Early Chinese Art and Literature', *Numen*, 25 (2), 97-117; Thote, Alain (2006), 'Au-delà du Monde Connu: Représenter les Dieux', *Arts Asiatiques*, 61 (1), 57-74.

70 Poo, Mu-chou (1998), *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 95.

71 Lai (2015), 99.

they exist and why they manifest in the tombs of elites in this specific form that is neither human nor animal.

8.3.2.1 The Nature of Hybrids as Ontological Prototypes

A useful analogy for this ontology can be found in a category we may term 'Dream-beings'. These beings function as prototypical hybrids, tangible manifestations of physical and moral traits. They transmit their essential attributes to countless corporeal variations, each of which, despite its unique form, is recognised as a genuine representative of the original prototype.[72] While this ontology may be classified as 'pre-modern', it reveals a worldview in which human society and the natural world are fundamentally intertwined, forming what some scholars term a 'constitutional hybridization'.[73] From this perspective, the principle embodied by the nine legendary tripods, namely that external form manifests internal qualities, can be extended to all things. Consequently, whether representational or abstract, single-headed or double-headed, all of Chu's guardian figures possess the same inner 'vital force' or quality. They are, in essence, limitless replicas of a prototype with a shared essence. Similarly, the stand with painted antlers that sometimes accompanies a guardian figure is itself an ontologically independent entity, capable of functioning in a similar capacity on its own (Fig. 8.15). To conclude, the hybrids of this period, exemplified by the Chu specimens, are ontologically grounded entities whose outward forms are direct manifestations of their inner being.

The three different shapes of the guardian figures can thus be regarded as distinct hybrids. This ontological framework renders the hypothesis that the guardian figure represents the tomb owner even more problematic. Firstly, the earliest forms are few, and the numerous beast-shaped versions cannot be plausibly correlated with the image of a specific tomb owner. Secondly, the figures were not unique or irreplaceable; they could be substituted by other hybrids, such as the *bixie* (辟邪, which warded off malevolent spirits), were reproducible, and

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[72] Descola (2013), 164

[73] In her synthetic study of the Aranda materials, Marika Moisseeff confirms this. Stressing the "constitutional hybridization" of Dream- beings, she reminds us that this is in fact intrinsic to all existing entities—at least it is if one is to believe the myths of ontogenesis. *Ibid.,* 165

were only occasionally included in tomb inventories (Fig. 8.16).[74] Furthermore, a cursory review of early Chinese beliefs reveals few instances of totemism in the strict sense. Although certain clans, such as those of Shang, claimed descent from a bird, the descendants never considered themselves to be the actual creature, a belief central to classical totemism.[75] The identities and ontologies of the Chu people, the animals, and the hybrids were therefore distinct; their respective spirits and inner beings shared no essential connection within their society or worldview.

8.3.2.2 Hybrids as Assemblies of 'Plug-ins'

Another perspective on these hybrids may be gained by borrowing a concept from Bruno Latour, who repurposed the term 'plug-ins' from the digital world to describe the formation of subjectivity. On a webpage, for instance, specific plug-ins are required to execute certain functions.[76] Latour argues that humans must similarly 'download' plug-ins to acquire subjectivity. The Cocid-19 pandemic in China offered a stark example: only individuals with a negative PCR test and a green health code could participate in social life, thereby becoming eligible subjects of society. Therefore, individuals may only acquire subjectivity if they "identify with certain mobile plug-ins and then download them in order to earn instant, temporary power."[77] Subjectivity in this model is therefore not an inherent 'inner property' but is rather a quality gained or lost through specific practices and assemblages, one that circulates among a collective of organisms and objects.

When this logic is applied to the guardian figures, compelling parallels emerge. The tomb guardian is an independent entity, being neither human, animal, nor plant. It acquires its distinctive features from 'plug-ins', such as antlers, a tiger's head, or a snake's body. These components, already possessing the partial attributes of an 'object' or an 'animal', are assembled

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74 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2018), 42.

75 The term 'totemism' refers to ontological modes that integrate humans and animals. The totem embodies characteristics of behaviour, humour, and appearance that are acknowledged as defining the humans they represent. The purpose of totemism is to alleviate or disseminate human suffering. See Descola (2013), 150-8.

76 Latour, Bruno (2007), *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 204-13.

77 *Ibid.,* 204-13.

to constitute the guardian figure's unique subjectivity. A variation of the bird-and-tiger drum stand provides a vivid illustration of this principle (Fig. 8.17). In these instances, the drum is replaced by a pair of antlers that function as the bird's new 'wings', effectively creating a new hybrid by attaching a different plug-in to the original animal-conflict motif.

However, to see the Chu guardian figure simply as an autonomous, assembled hybrid is not enough. The history of mythical creatures, such as the *taotie* (饕餮), dates back to the Neolithic period.[78] On ancient bronzes, motifs associated with natural elements appear to function as 'plug-ins', granting the vessel a degree of agentive power.[79] Yet the significance of the Chu hybrids extends much further. The *taotie* motifs are typically found in relief, serving as ornamentation on a carrier such as a bronze vessel, and rarely exist independently. The Chu hybrids, including the guardian figures, represent a radical departure. They cease to be the 'plug-in' decorating a larger object and instead begin to have their own 'plug-ins', thereby becoming independent of any carrier. This transformation demonstrates that the guardian figure not only exists independently in an ontological sense but also achieves its material form through this expressive assembly of 'plug-ins'.

8.3.3 Staging the 'Middle Kingdom': The Transactional Space

8.3.3.1 The Ontological and Cognitive Basis

The question therefore arises: why did Chu hybrids detach from their carriers to become independent sculptures? The answer lies in their function not merely as symbols, but as material anchors for what Bruno Latour termed the 'Middle Kingdom'—a transactional space situated between nature and society.[80] People and things do not exist independently, and their current being is the result of various forces coagulating and solidifying in another invisible space-time.[81] If people and things, nature and society can be integrated on a greater scale, then developments

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[78] Hayashi, Minao 林已奈夫 (2016), *Shen yu shou de wenyangxue: Zhongguo gudai zhushen (神与兽的纹样学: 中国古代诸神)*, trans. Chang, Yaohua (常耀华) *et al.* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian), 7-52.
[79] Lai (2015), 129.
[80] Latour, Bruno (2012), *We have never been modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard university press), 103-6.
[81] *Ibid.,* 103-6.

will always occur.[82] In this non-modern framework, where the rigid separation between nature and culture is suspended, hybrids proliferate. To function effectively within this interconnected world—operating 'between' rather than 'beyond' nature and culture—the Chu hybrids required tangible form. While the precise contours of this "Middle Kingdom" are difficult to define abstractly, within the Chu context, it resonates with the realms described in texts such as the *Book of Mountains and Seas* (山海经, *Shanhaijing*).[83] It is the conceptual space inhabited by tomb-guardians, birdmen, and other entities operating independently of conventional biological categories.

The cognitive archaeologist Lambros Malafouris provides a powerful framework for understanding why this materiality is essential. Malafouris posits that cognition is not confined to the brain but emerges from the interplay between brain, body, and environment.[84] In his words, cognition is 'thing-ing': a process of thinking with and through material objects. Meaning and memory are forged within this 'transactional space'.[85] From this perspective, the fully three-dimensional form of the Chu hybrid was a necessity. It had to be a tangible 'thing' to act and generate meaning, connecting the inner world of the mind to the outer world of nature and society. It became the physical exterior of a mental template, gaining agency through its materialization.

This seemingly modern idea finds a profound philosophical precedent in the thought of Zhuangzi. For Zhuangzi, the body and its physical form (*xing* 形) are the essential mediators between the mind (*xin* 心) and the external world.[86] Even for the most enlightened individual

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[82] Liu, Peng (2010) *Translator's Introduction* in Latour, 'Women congwei xiandai guo: duichengxing renleixue lunji (我们从未现代过: 对称性人类学论集)', iiv.

[83] *Shanhaijing yizhu* (*Translation and Annotation of the Classic of Mountains and Seas* 山海经译注) (2016), translated and annotated by Chen, Cheng (陈成), (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe [Shanghai Classics Publishing House]), 432-5.

[84] Malafouris, Lambros (2014), 'Creative thinging: The feeling of and for clay', *Pragmatics & Cognition*, 22 (1), 140-58; Malafouris, Lambros (2019), 'Mind and Material Engagement', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 18 (1), 1–17; Malafouris, Lambros (2020), 'Thinking as "Thinging": Psychology with Things', *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 29 (1), 3-8; Alessandroni and Malafouris (2022).

[85] Alessandroni and Malafouris (2022), 3.

[86] Yang (2020), 50.

(*Zhide zhe* 至德者), the physical form remains the bearer of existence. Thus, the concept of an intermediary zone between mind and nature, activated through material form, has deep roots in ancient Chinese thought.

8.3.3.2 The Reconstruction of a World

If such an intermediary world is central to a worldview, it requires a physical stage upon which it can be reconstructed. The Chu tomb became this stage. It was not a mere burial site but a deliberate reconstruction, a materialisation of the 'in-between' world where hybrids could gain agency. Behaviours traditionally interpreted as mere shamanism or animism were, in fact, complex practices that used these hybrids to balance relationships between nature, society, and people, making the Middle Kingdom accessible.

The placement of the guardian figure at Changtaiguan provides a clear example of this reconstruction. It was in a separate southern compartment, attended by four human figurines believed to be its servants (Fig. 8.18).[87] Here, the tomb space makes the transactional world tangible, and the hybrid becomes a true agent within it, blurring the boundaries between humanity, nature, and society.

Perhaps the most spectacular enactment of this principle is found in the Tianxingguan tomb, with its mythical tree and bird-man figure.[88] A two-metre-tall tree, carved from natural timber but decorated with artificial stripes of red and black lacquer, stood in the burial chamber (Fig. 8.19).[89] It was itself a hybrid, reflecting a transformation of nature. Adorning its branches were twenty-eight creatures from sea, land, and sky. This assemblage was not a random collection of auspicious symbols. It was the deliberate construction of a symbolic middle world—a new, harmonious transactional space materialised through the potent coexistence of animals and manufactured hybrids such as the tree itself and a nearby bird-man figure. Like the tree, the bird-man was landing on a bird upon a toad with a tenon. This construction shared the same

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87 Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 60-1.

88 Huang, Shangming (黄尚明) (2009), 'Ren mian niao hui diaoxiang yiyi de tansuo (人面鸟喙雕像意义的探索)', *Jianghan kaogu (江汉考古)*, (1), 88-91.

89 Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan (2003), 187.

design, forming a harmonious hybrid.[90] In this reconstructed world, the hybrid did not just exist; it acted, and it played its part.

8.4 Conclusion

From the ancient principle of 'casting vessels to represent worldly forms' (铸鼎象物) to the assembled hybrids of Chu, this chapter has traced the emergence of a unique ontology.[91] The physical form (象) ceased to be a mere representation and became the medium through which a complex worldview was enacted. In their relentless exploration of ambiguous, in-between realms, the Chu people did not just create symbols; they gave material form to a 'middle kingdom'. This conceptual space, populated by multi-attribute hybrids, became an answer to the fundamental questions of existence, a tangible conduit between presence and absence. Critically, the realisation of this vision was made possible by a specific material technology: lacquered wood. This inexpensive, expressive medium, combined with crafts such as mortise-and-tenon joinery, provided the technical and logistical means for the 'plug-in' system to flourish, allowing the 'middle kingdom' and its strange inhabitants to achieve physical independence.

The profound originality of this Chu worldview is best understood when contrasted with that of the Qin. The famed mausoleum of the First Emperor, for instance, represents a hermetically sealed cosmos. It was an eternal palace insulated from the outside world of nature and human society.[92] The Chu tomb, by contrast, functioned as a porous membrane. The existence of the 'middle world' and its hybrid agents demonstrate a worldview where the boundaries between nature, culture, and society were intentionally blurred, facilitating a constant flow of interaction between the human, spiritual, and physical realms.

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[90] Huang (2009).

[91] In Daoist thought, this is referred to as 'nothingness' (*wu*). Only form that goes beyond concrete shape can approach the boundless breadth of the world. This is especially evident in later Chinese art, such as landscape painting and calligraphy, where 'going beyond shape and imagery' is the method to explore the transcendence of 'nothingness'. See Liu (2017), 180-185.

[92] Rawson, Jessica (2002), 'The Power of Images: The Model Universe of the First Emperor and Its Legacy', *Historial Research*, 75 (188), 123-54.

This ontological framework, in turn, invites a re-examination of phenomena not covered in detail here. The recurrent motifs on lacquer shields mentioned in the previous chapter, such as the one from Lijiatai, can now be seen not as mere decoration, but as portable, user-centric interfaces to this 'middle world', imbuing the object with its own agency. Similarly, the thousands of wooden figurines found in Chu tombs, rather than being simple replacements for human servants, can be understood as autonomous beings. They are inhabitants of this transactional space, equipped with their own attributes to fulfil missions in a world they shared with the divine and ancestors. The precise ritual functions of these objects present a vast field for future inquiry, one that can now be approached with a new set of ontological questions.

Ultimately, the consistency of this worldview, permeating everything from a grand mythical tree to a humble shield, reveals an 'ontological uniformity'. It was the bedrock of Chu culture. This shared understanding of the interconnectedness of all things, materialised through the magic of lacquered wood, arguably fostered a uniquely harmonious and romantic cultural identity. While it may be too bold to link this directly to political success, this ontology certainly accounts for the formidable and long-lasting influence of Chu's artistic and spiritual imagination on the subsequent Han dynasty. The Chu people did not just leave behind beautiful objects; they left a blueprint for a world where humanity, nature, and the cosmos could transact and transform one another.

9 The Lacquered Synthesis

This thesis has systematically addressed the historical and philosophical contexts, alterations in traditional rites, the inception of new daily rituals, and the political and ideological dynamics that defined the state of Chu. At its core, this inquiry has been directed by the questions posed at its outset: *why and how* did lacquerware come to shape the lives of the Chu elites, and how did the social, political, and ideological synthesis we call 'Chu culture' emerge from this process? The conclusion is that the transition from a bronze-dominated ritual landscape to one defined by lacquer was no simple substitution. Rather, it was a reciprocal process, a comprehensive reordering of society that this thesis terms the 'Lacquered Synthesis'. Lacquerware did not merely reflect a new Chu identity; it was an active agent, the very material through which that identity was crafted, performed, and perpetuated.

The defining characteristic of this synthesis is a profound **fluidity**. As Bruno Latour contends, entities lack intrinsic definitions and must be delineated in relation to others.[1] The enduring influence of Chu culture, which surpassed that of the ephemeral Qin, stems from its embrace of this principle. This fluidity manifested across every facet of Chu society, and lacquerware was its quintessential material expression.

9.1 The Fluidity of Material and Ideology: From Eternity to Flux

Our investigation began by establishing the dual heritage of lacquer, which proved crucial to its success in Chu (Chapter 2). This dual legacy endowed it with a unique versatility. During the Eastern Zhou, an era of intellectual and sensory awakening, this potential was fully realised (Chapter 3). The shift from bronze to lacquer was a fundamental reorientation of the elite sensorium. The value of bronze was ontological. It was rooted in its intrinsic rarity and ancestral authority. In contrast, the value of lacquer was created, a testament to human ingenuity, patience, and labour. This shift provided the intellectual groundwork for a new social order, one that could value achieved status over simple inherited right. Where the preceding age

[1] Latour (2007).

sought the 'immortality'[2] of materials to mitigate the anxiety of change, the Chu culture, epitomised by lacquer, embraced the more ephemeral but adaptable nature of flux.

9.2 The Fluidity of Order and Power: New Stages and New Networks

This ideological fluidity required a new stage, which was found in the transformation of the tomb itself (Chapter 4). The Chu elite constructed a horizontal, compartmentalised space. It was an imagined dwelling for the afterlife, creating a performative space for displaying the paraphernalia of elite life, rather than just the apparatus of ancestral worship. Upon this stage, a profound social change unfolded, driven by the explosive growth of the *shi* class (Chapter 5). The ritual vacuum left by the declining bronze tradition was filled by more accessible materials. These include simpler bronzes, ceramics, and, crucially, lacquerware, whose production was becoming increasingly scaled-up. This development granted elites of all levels differentiated access to products of varying quality, fostering a cohesive and acknowledged cultural identity that permeated society from the highest to the lowest strata.[3] Lacquer thus became the medium to provide the expanding *shi* class with an avenue to participate in a ritual and social life, binding them into this shared identity through a material culture that was both adaptable and distinct from the old Zhou order.

The primary arena for this performance was the feast (Chapter 6), where concrete ritual practices were made through lacquer. The lacquered 'set', with its emphasis on a lighter diet and refined sensory experience, became an instrument of self-cultivation and a theatre for political negotiation. This new mode of performing power extended other aspects (Chapter 7). Power was no longer projected through the grand, public display of elites' arsenal containing bronze weapons but cultivated through internal networks of loyalty. This pivot found its perfect material expression in the 'inward gaze' of Chu lacquerware, where lavish decoration was reserved for the interior surfaces of shields and carriages, visible only to the owner and his most trusted circle.

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[2] Zheng, Kai (郑开) (2016), *Zhuangzi zhexue jiangji (庄子哲学讲记)* (Nanning: Guangxi minzu chubanshe), 298.

[3] As is quoted in Chapter 3, footnote 77, 48: 一杯棬用百人之力,一屏风就万人之功.

9.3 The Fluidity of Worldview: An Ontology Made of Lacquer

Ultimately, this entire socio-political transformation was anchored in a unique and coherent Chu worldview (Chapter 8). The fantastical lacquered sculptures were material manifestations of a distinct ontology. In contrast to the rigid, hierarchical analogism of the Zhou, the Chu worldview was fluid and syncretic. It perceived a 'Middle Kingdom', a transactional space where nature, culture, and the supernatural constantly interpenetrated. The hybrid creature, assembled from the potent attributes, the 'plug-ins', of various beings, was the archetypal inhabitant of this world. Lacquer, as a composite material itself, was the ideal medium for this ontology. The technical possibilities of lacquered wood allowed these hybrid beings to detach from vessels and become independent, three-dimensional agents, constructing and activating this worldview within the performative space of the tomb.

9.4 Conclusion: A Synthesis Forged in Material

Returning to our central questions, we can see that lacquerware shaped Chu elite life by operating on four interconnected levels: intellectually, socially, politically, and ritually. It provided a new philosophical paradigm, a new material basis for social integration, a new medium for the performance of power, and a new apparatus for the ritualisation of daily life. The synthesis of Chu culture came into being through the brilliant elevation of this humble, local material into a sophisticated political tool. It unified a vast territory not by imposing a rigid system from the top down, but by standardising and amplifying a material culture that already resonated with its populace. This coherent yet dynamic fluidity finds a remarkable parallel in sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's concept of 'liquid identity', suggesting that the Chu elite were grappling with a mode of being that was not fixed but in a state of perpetual formation.

The resulting 'Lacquered Synthesis' was a uniquely Chu achievement: a coherent worldview, social structure, and political ideology, all expressed and enacted through the unifying medium of lacquer. The culture it embodied was a paradox: at once unrestrained, romantic, and harmoniously intertwined with nature, while also being meticulous, systematically organised,

and pragmatic. It is this coherent yet dynamic fluidity—this ability to contain multitudes—that constitutes the profound and enduring legacy of Chu lacquerware and of the Chu culture itself.

List of Figures

Chapter 1



Fig. 1.1 Major domains of the Spring and Autumn period[1]



Fig. 1.2 The Study Area[2]

[1] After Durrant *et al.* (2016), Map. 1
[2] Lai (2015), Map. 1.



Fig. 2.1a. Cuttings on the lacquer tree trunks; b. collecting the lacquer sap with leaves; c. collecting the lacquer sap with clam shells[1]

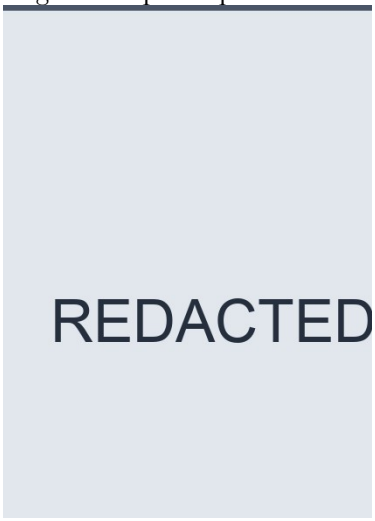


Fig. 2.2a The wooden pin (T509-18) at Jingtoushan site[2]

[1] A. Zhao, Ye (赵晔) (2024), *Zhipu yu yanli: Liangzhu qimu qi [Simplicity and Splendor: Liangzhu Lacquer and Wooden Wares] (质朴与艳丽：良渚漆木器)* (Hangzhou quanshu. Liangzhu congshu [Complete Books of Hangzhou. Liangzhu Series]; Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe [Zhejiang Classics Publishing House]). Fig. 4-11-2; b. Guo (2020). 22; c. Zhou, Jianshi (周剑石) (2015b), 'Cong Kuahuqiao chufa: Zhongguo yiqi 8000 nian (xia) [Starting from Kuahuqiao: 8000 Years of Chinese Lacquer Art (Part 2)] (从跨湖桥出发:中国漆艺 8000 年(下))', *Zhongguo shengqi* [China Raw Lacquer] *(中国生漆)*, 34 (4), 7-17, fig. 3.

[2] Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2021), 16, fig. 29.

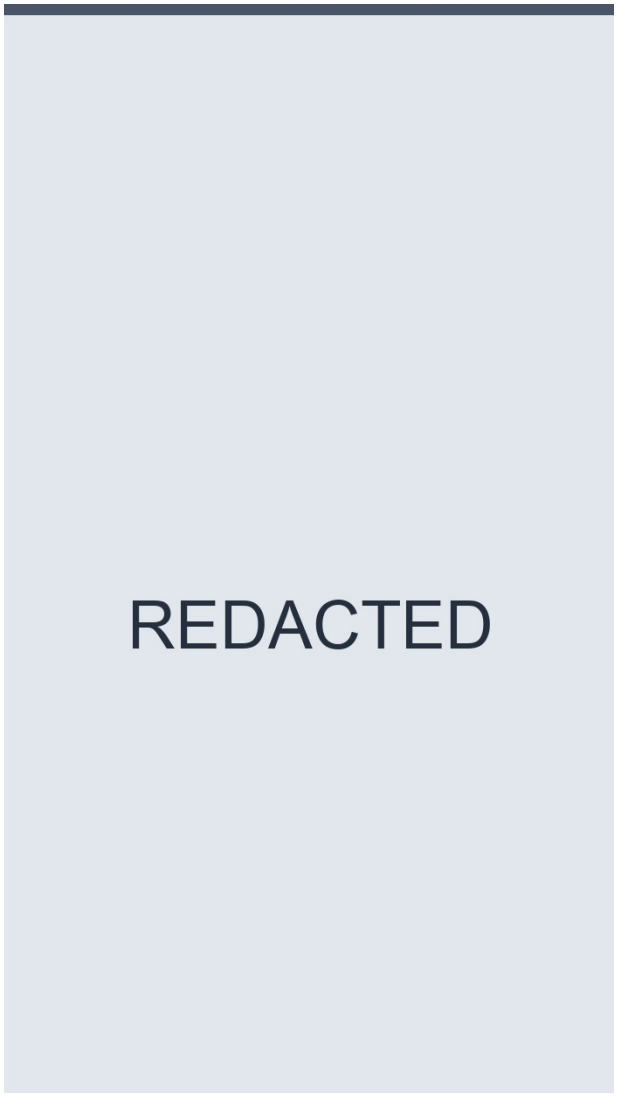


Fig. 2.2b The Kuahuqiao bow with details of bark wrappings[3]



Fig. 2.3 A celebrated lacquered wooden bowl from Hemudu (ca. 5,000–3,300 B.C.)[4]

[3] Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xiaoshan bowuguan (2004), 202, fig. 152, Colour Plate 40.

[4] Xiaoshan shi Kuahuqiao yizhi bowuguan, (杭州市萧山跨湖桥遗址博物馆) (2023), *Shanhai zhi jian: Kuahuqiao·Hemudu wenwu xuancui* [Between the Mountains and the Sea: Selected Cultural Relics of Kuahuqiao and Hemudu] *(山海之间：跨湖桥·河姆渡文物选粹)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]), 137.



Fig. 2.4 A reconstruction of the jade-inlaid lacquered jar (M12:1), Fanshan, Liangzhu[5]

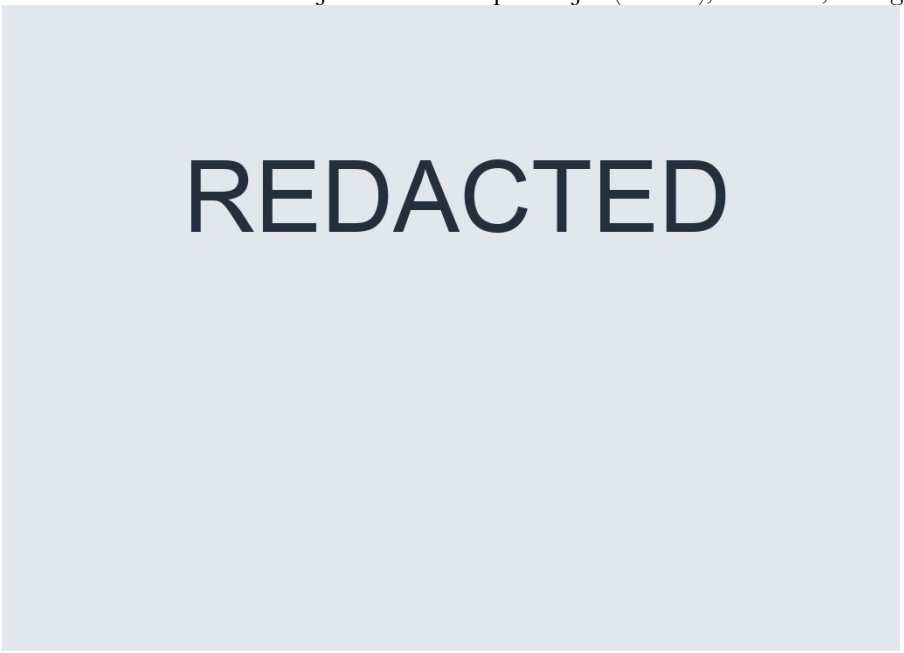


Fig. 2.5 A set of *zu* chopping board, stone knife and pork bones *in situ.* (M2168:12) at Taosi [6]

[5] Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (浙江省文物考古研究所) (2022), *Fanshan (反山)*, 2 vols. (2; Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]), Colout Plate 411.

[6] He, Nu (何努) (2022b), *Taosi wuhua: Taosi yizhi chutu wenwu lei quan gailan* [The Material Culture of Taosi: A Comprehensive Overview of Artifacts Unearthed from the Taosi Site] *(陶寺物华：陶寺遗址出土文物类全概览)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe [Science Press]), 111.

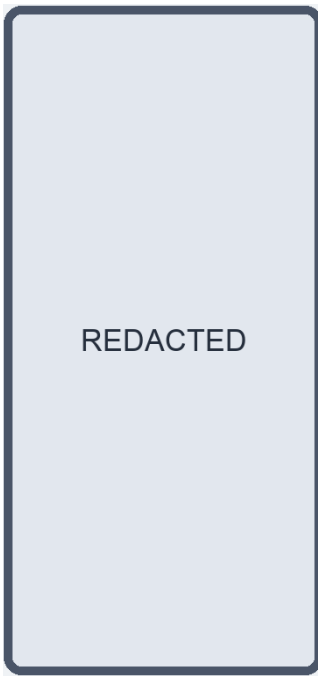
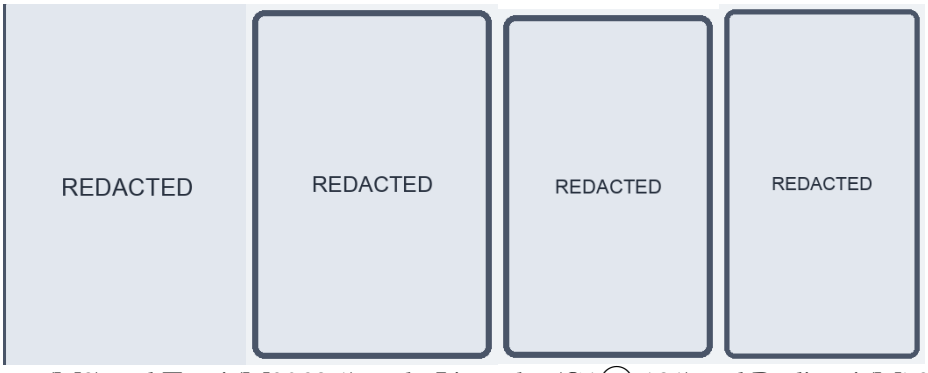


Fig. 2.6 A candlestick-shaped *dou* (M2001:75) at Taosi[7]



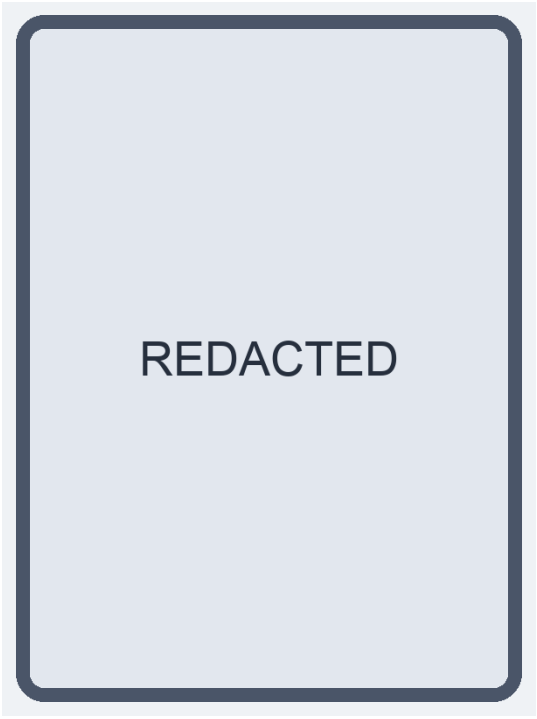
a. Erlitou (M8) and Taosi (M2063:1) [8] b. Liangzhu (G1②:131) and Dadianzi (M726:7) [9]

Fig. 2.7 *gu* 觚 goblets

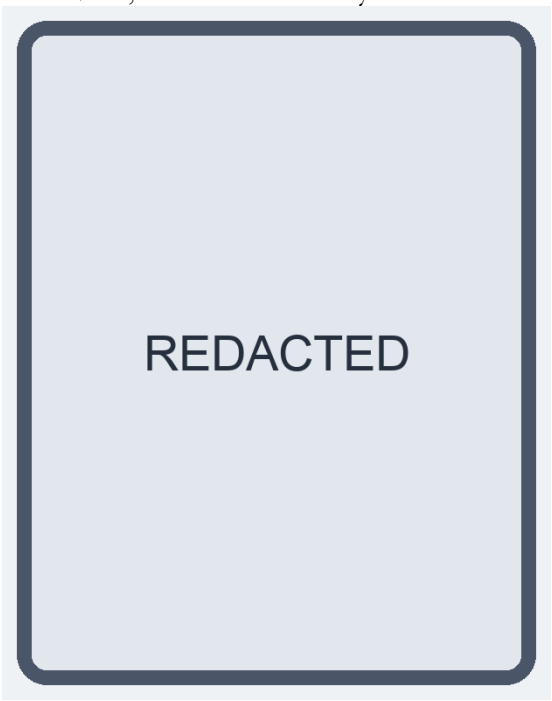
[7] He, Nu (何努) (2022b), 106.

[8] Group A: Xu, Hong (许宏) (2009), *Zui zao de Zhongguo* [Earliest China] *(最早的中国)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe [Science Press]). 224; He (2022b). 55.

[9] Group B. Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2014), Colour Plate 263; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), Colour Plate 20-1.



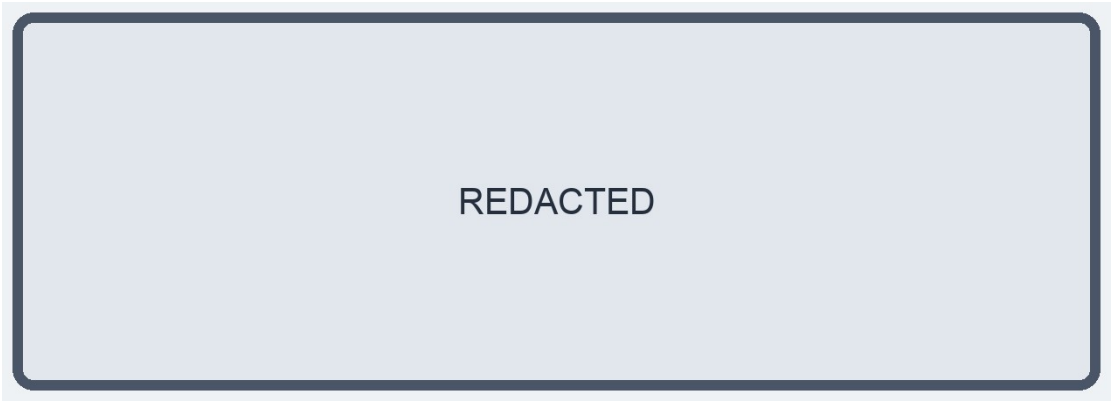
a. M2001, Guo state cemetery in Sanmenxia



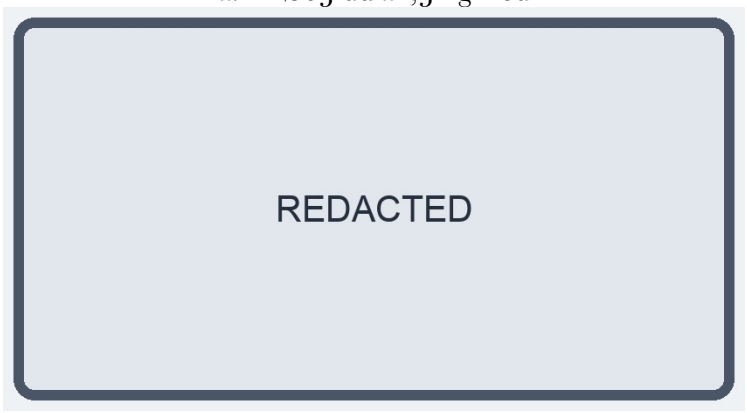
b. M502, Liangdaicun

Fig. 3.1 The Spread of Cinnabars over the Main Coffins of Zhou elites[1]

[1] A. Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (河南省文物考古研究所) (1999b), *Sanmenxia Guo guo mu* [The Guo State Tombs at Sanmenxia] *(三门峡虢国墓)*, 2 vols. (2; Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]), Colour Plate 2; b. Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2010), Colour Plate 21.



a. M256 Jiudian, Jingzhou



b. No.1 Wangshan, Jingzhou

Fig. 3.2 Examples of *ling* beds[2]

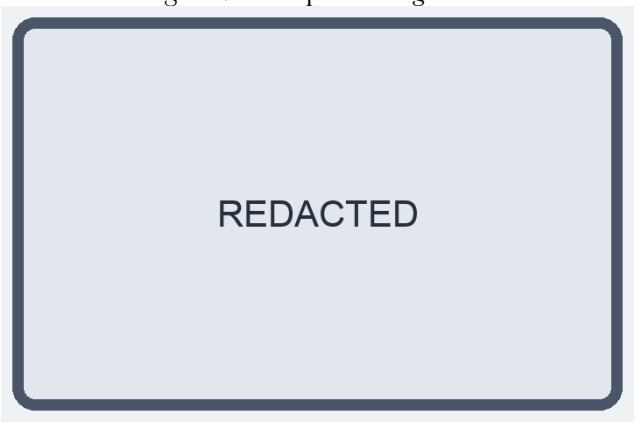
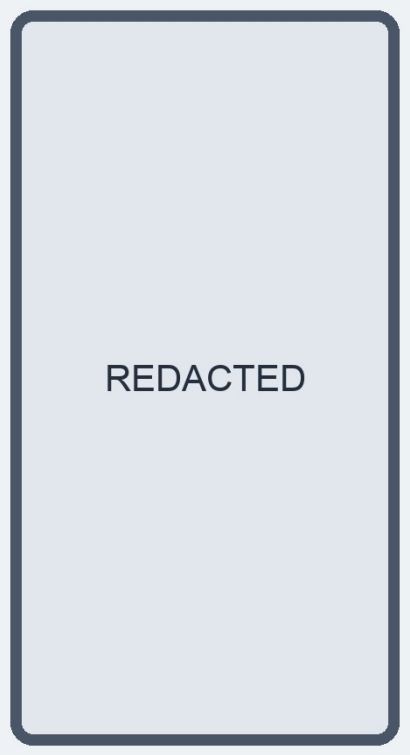


Fig. 3.3 The Lacquered Wooden Bowl (M12:34) at Luoshan Tianhu[3]

[2] A: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1995), 47, fig. 22.; b: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 18, fig. 14.

[3] Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui and Henan sheng Luoshan xian wenhuaguan (1986), fig. 3.



a. Line drawing of the bronze *gu* with wooden cavity inside (M1:268)



b. Pictures of the bronze *gu* and the wooden cavity (M1:268)



c. Details of the plug at the bottom of the wooden *gu* (G2②B:70) at Bianjiashan, Liangzhu

Fig. 3.4 Comparison of *gu* goblets in bronze and lacquered wood[4]

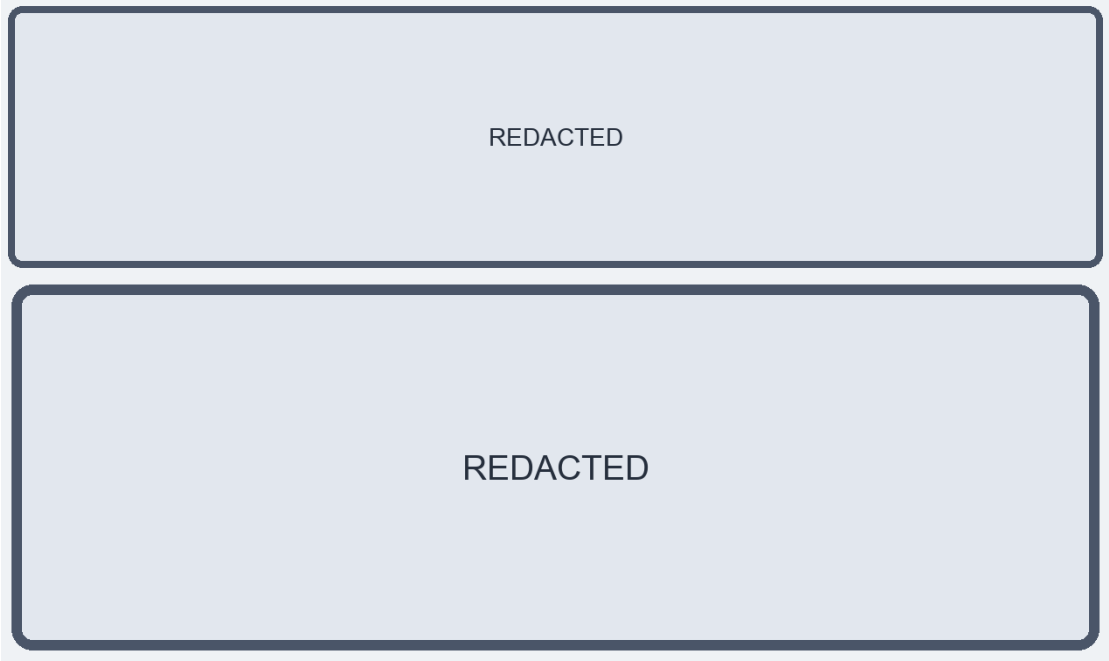


Fig. 3.5 Reconstruction of painted inner coffin (M1:857), Changtaiguan, Xinyang, Henan[5]

[4] A and b: Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2021), 128-32. 128, 131; c. Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2014), Colour Plate 261:1.

[5] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), Colour Plate 1.



a. Red on the interior



b. Black on the exterior

Fig. 3.6 The nested coffins at Mawangdui (No. 3)[6]

[6] Hunan sheng bowuguan and Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2004), Colour Plate 6.



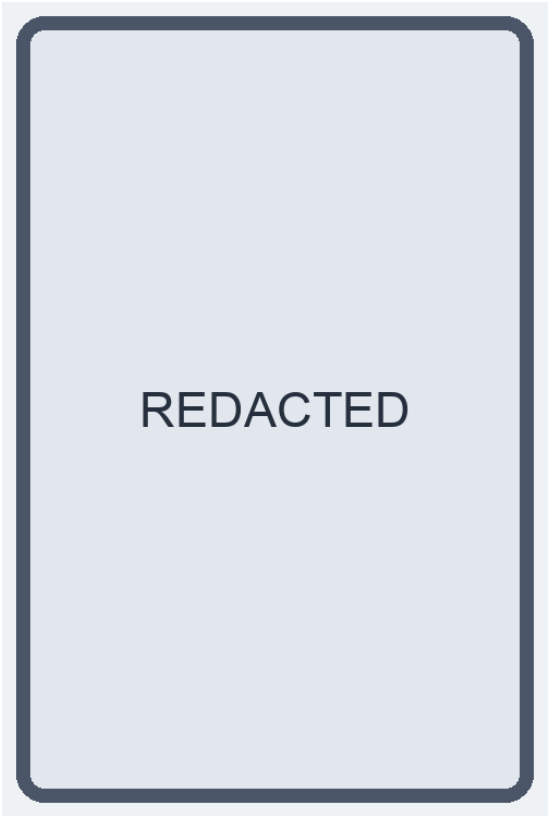
a. M294, Jiudian, Jiangling



b. Maotingzi,Changsha

Fig. 3.7 Doors and windows on the coffins[7]

[7] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1995). 122, fig. 81; Changsha shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, 长沙市文物考古研究所 (2003), Changsha shi Maotingzi Chu mu de fajue 长沙市茅亭子楚墓的发掘. *Kaogu* 考古, (4): 35, fig. 3.



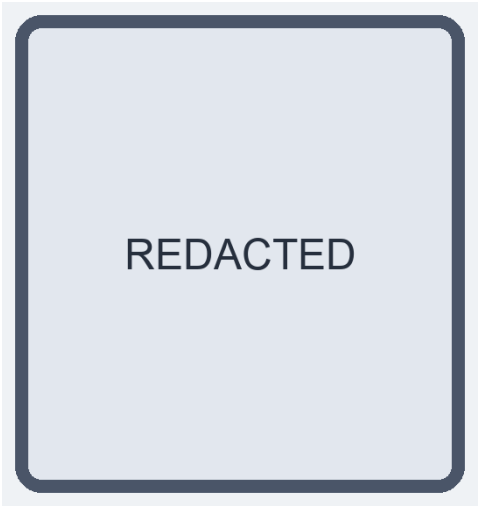
a. One of the rooms showing red painted walls



b. Details of walls

Fig. 3.8 The Han-dynasty tomb of King Chu at Beidong Mountain[8]

[8] Xuzhou bowuguan and Nanjing daxue lishixue xi kaogu zhuanye (2003), Colour Plate 9.



a. A lidded *dou* from the Jin state (M251:576)



b. A bronze *ding* at Wangpo, Xiangyang (M1:1)



c. A bronze *ding* at Xichuan (M1:9)

Fig. 3.9 Lacquered bronze vessels in Jin and Chu states[9]

[9] A. Taiyuan shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (太原市文物考古研究所) (2004), *Jin guo Zhao qing mu* [The Tomb of Minister Zhao of the Jin State] *(晋国赵卿墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]). 16, fig. 16; b. Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2005), Colour Plate 1:1; c. Xichuan xian bowuguan (2013), 30.



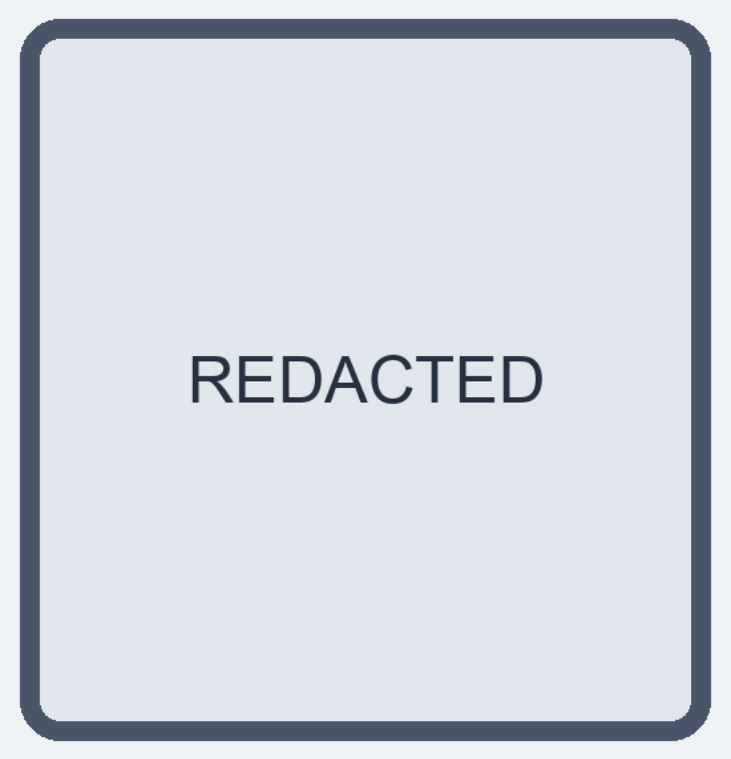
Fig. 3.10 Lacquered bronze figurine on the bell stand in Marquis Yi's tomb[10]



Fig. 3.11 The comparison between the bronze and ceramic versions of *ding* tripods at Mayishunxiang (Left: bronze M1:25; right: M1:50)[11]

[10] Hubei sheng bowuguan, (湖北省博物馆) (2023), *Zeng Hou Yi* [Marquis Yi of Zeng] *(曾侯乙)* (Beijing Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]), 141.

[11] Changsha shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2003), fig. 9:1 and fig. 13:1.



a. Bronze tools at Zhangjiapo cemetery, Late Western Zhou (8th century B.C.)



b. Bronze tools at Changtaiguan, Xinyang (4th century B.C.)

Fig. 3.12 Comparison of the bronze tools[12]

[12] A. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo (1999), 183-4, figs. 136-7; b. Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 65, 67, figs. 44 and 47.



Fig. 3.13 A lacquer artist workstation with various tools for lacquer making[13]

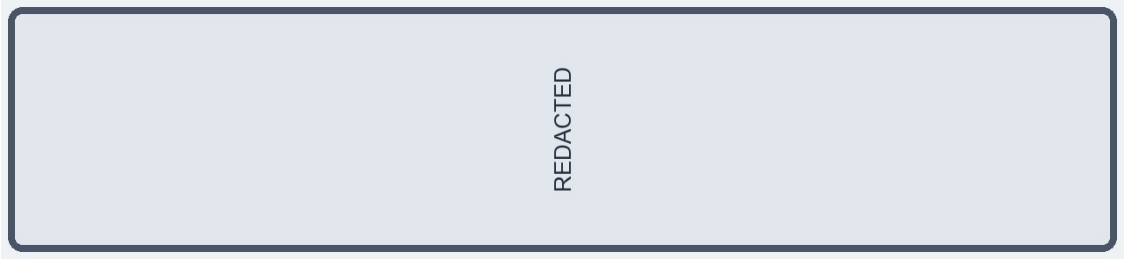


Fig. 3.14 Layers of lacquering (left to right)[14]

[13] Author's photo.

[14] Guo (2020), 46.

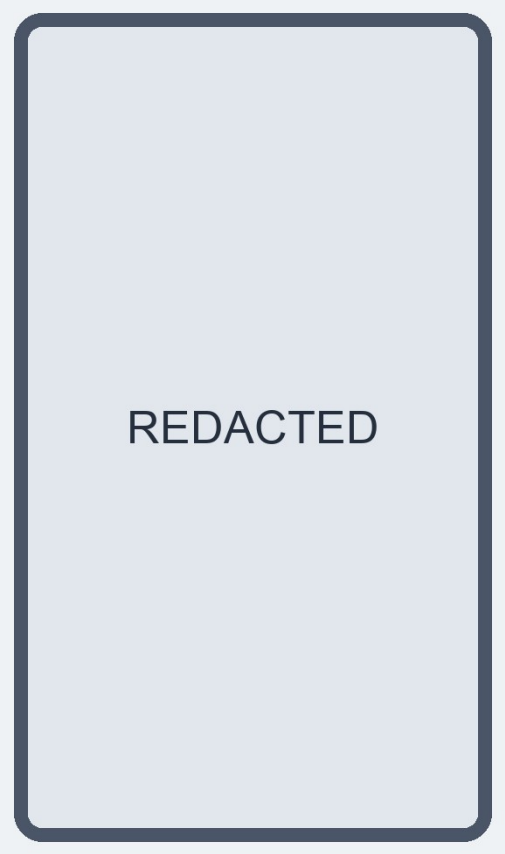


Fig. 1 Example of a Zhou royal tomb: Guo state tomb M2001[1]

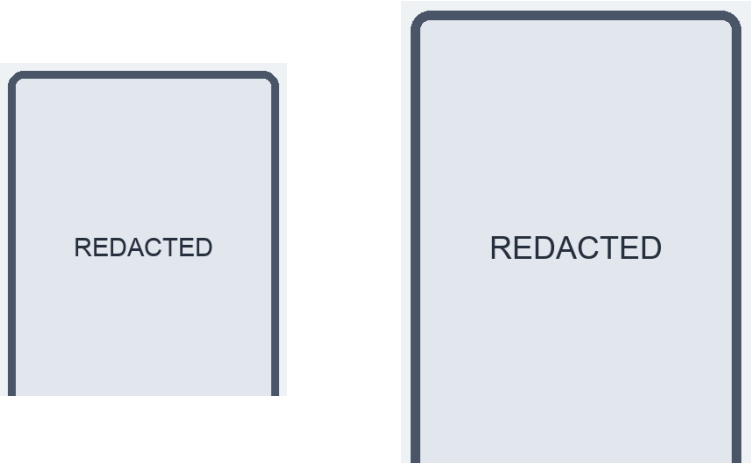


Fig. 1 Tombs at Xichuan (left: M8) and Yunxian (right: M4)[2]

[1] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1999), 19-23, figs 9, 12

[2] Left: Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (河南省文物考古研究所) and Xichuan xian bowuguan, (淅川县博物馆) (1991), *Xichuan Xiasi Chunqiu Chu mu* [The Spring and Autumn Chu Tombs at Xiasi, Xichuan] *(淅川下寺春秋楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]), 5, fig 3; Right: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) and Hubei sheng wenwuju nanshui beidiao bangongshi, (湖北省文物局南水北调办公室) (2008), 'Hubei Yun xian Qiaojiayuan Chunqiu xunren mu [The Spring and Autumn Period Tomb with Human Sacrifices at Qiaojiayuan, Yun County, Hubei] (湖北郧县乔家院春秋殉人墓)', *Kaogu* [Archaeology] *(考古),* 30, fig. 4.



Fig. 4.3a Paralleled coffins at Qiaojiayuan tombs M5 (Left) and M6 (Right) with deer antlers[3]



Fig. 4.3b Deer antlers at Qiaojiayuan[4]

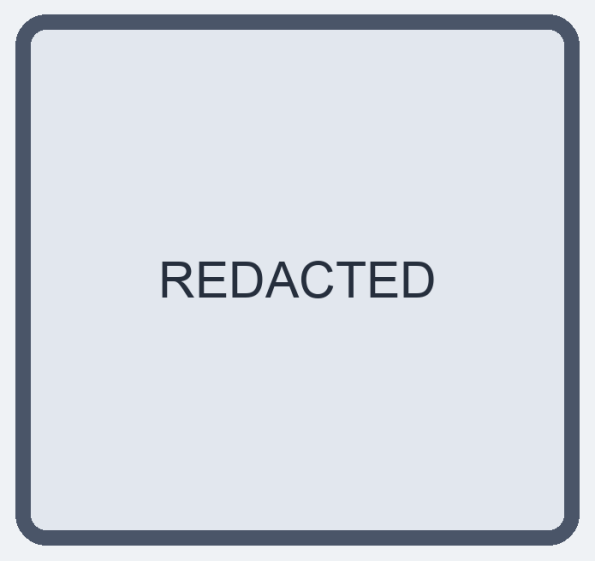


Fig. 4.4 Liujiadianzi, Yishui, Shandong[5]

[3] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Hubei sheng wenwuju nanshui beidiao bangongshi (2008), 32-3, figs. 6, 7.
[4] *Ibid.,* 48, fig. 28.
[5] Shandong sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Yishui xian wenwu guanlizhan (1984), fig. 3.



Fig. 4.5 Hougudui M1, Gushi, Xinyang, Henan[6]

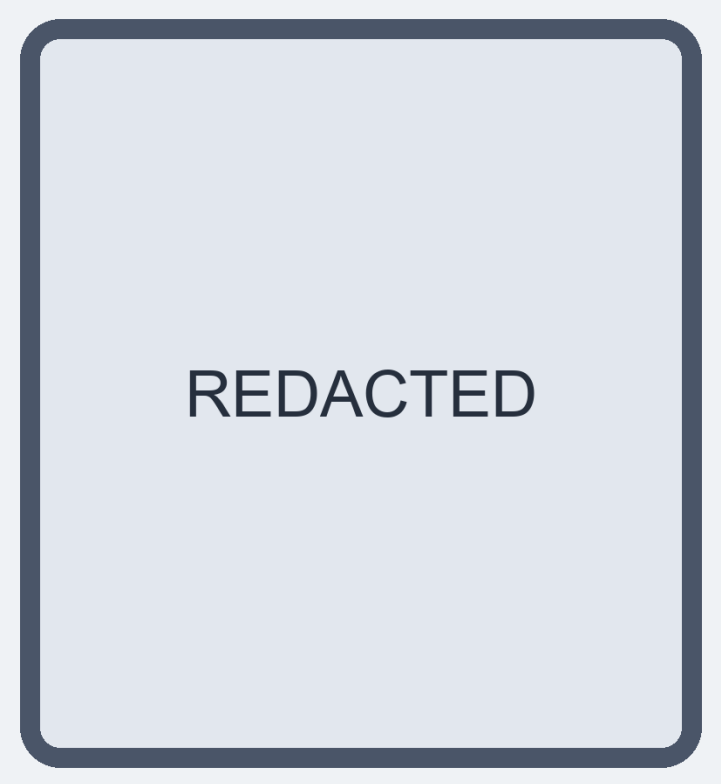


Fig. 4.6 Baishizidi M1, Gushi, Xinyang, Henan[7]

[6] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2004), 14, fig 4. Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui (1981), fig. 2.

[7] Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui, (河南省信阳地区文管会) (1981), 'Gushi Baishizidi yihao he erhao mu qingli jianbao [A Brief Report on the Clearing of Tombs No. 1 and 2 at Baishizidi, Gushi] (固始白狮子地一号和二号墓清理简报)', *Zhongyuan wenwu* [Central Plains Cultural Relics] *(中原文物)*, (4), 22.

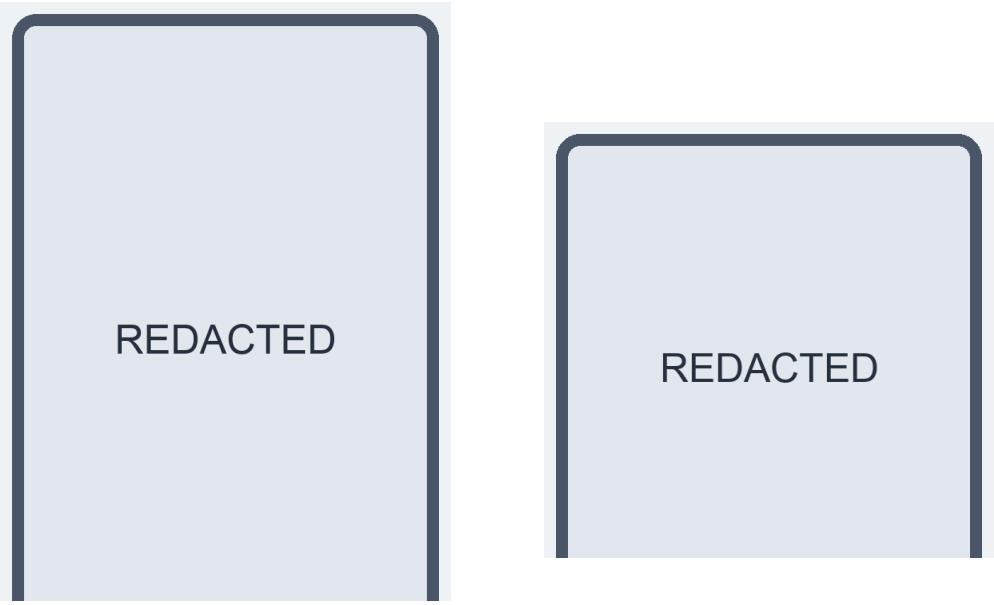


Fig. 4.7 Ju state tombs M1 (left) and M2 (right) in Shandong[8]

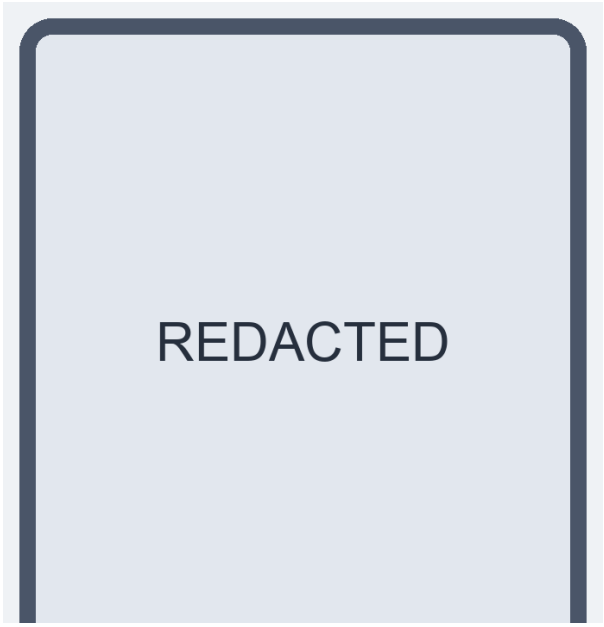
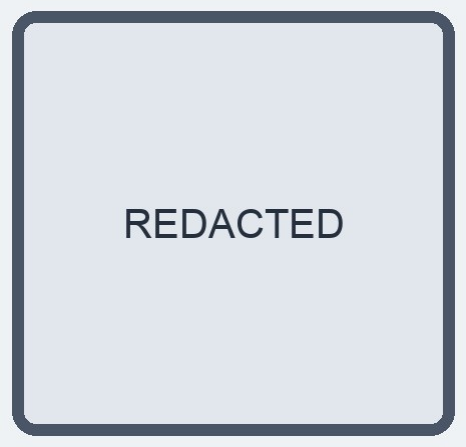


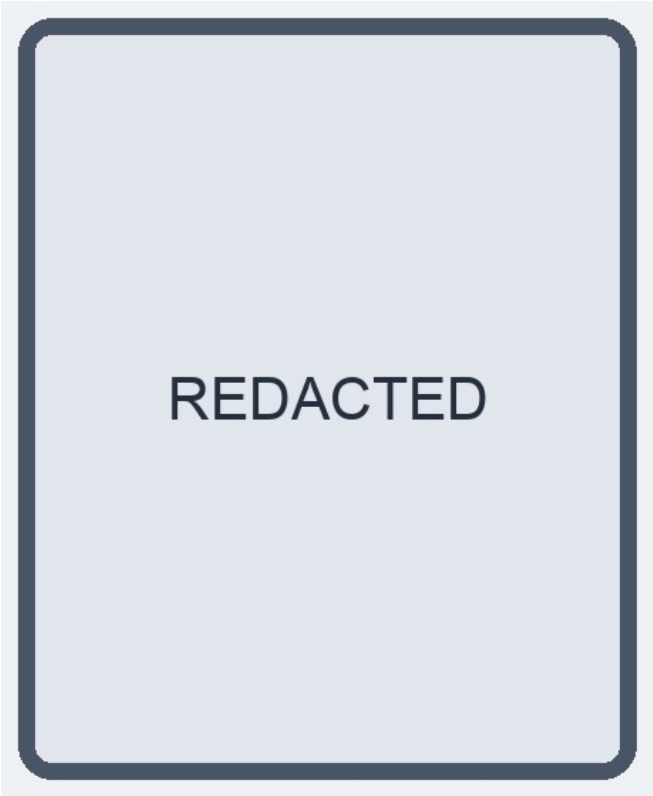
Fig. 4.8 Plan of Marquis Yi of Zeng's tomb, Suizhou, Hubei[9]

[8] Shandong sheng bowuguan (山东省博物馆), Linyi diqu wenwuzu (临沂地区文物组), and Junan xian wenhuaguan (莒南县文化馆) (1978), 'Junan dadian Chunqiu shiqi Juguo xunrenmu [The Spring and Autumn Period Tomb with Human Sacrifices of the Ju State at Dadian, Junan] (莒南大店春秋时期莒国殉人墓)', *Kaogu xuebao* [Acta Archaeologica Sinica] *(考古学报)*, (3), 317, 328, figs 2, 14.

[9] Hubei sheng bowuguan, (湖北省博物馆) (1989), *Zeng Hou Yi mu* [The Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng] *(曾侯乙墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]), 9, fig. 5.



a. Plan view



b. Structure of the outer and inner coffins

Fig. 4.9 Tomb plan of M1 Jiuliandun, Zaoyang[10]

[10] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 23, figs. 5 and 6.



Fig. 4.10 Plan of tomb M1 with figurines and the hybrid in the western chamber, Changtaiguan[11]

[11] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 18, fig. 15.

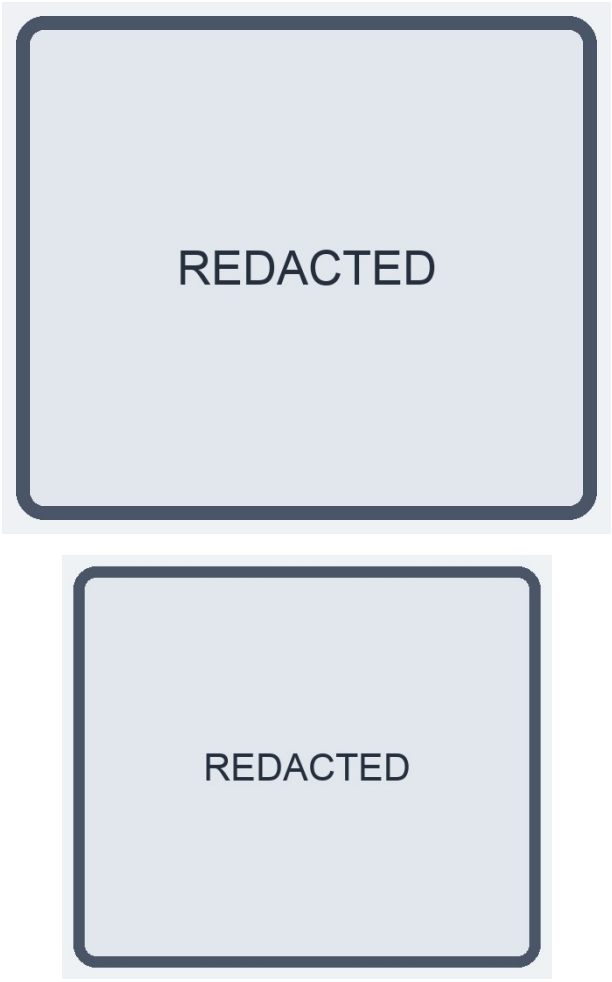


Fig. 4.11 Plan of tomb M502 with figurines at the four corners of the secondary ledge, Liangdaicun, Shaanxi[12]

[12] Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2010), Colour Plate 17:1.



a. Plan and Sectional Drawing of the Tomb Pit and the Inner and Outer Coffins (Left: M566; right: M585)



b. Distribution Map of Burial Goods (Left: M566; right: M585)

Fig. 4.12 Plans and distribution map of M566 and M585, Lu'an, Anhui[13]

[13] Left: Anhui sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Lu'an shi wenwu guanliju (2012a), 30-1, figs. 2 and 3; right: Anhui sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Lu'an shi wenwu guanliju (2012b), 24-5, figs. 2 and 4.

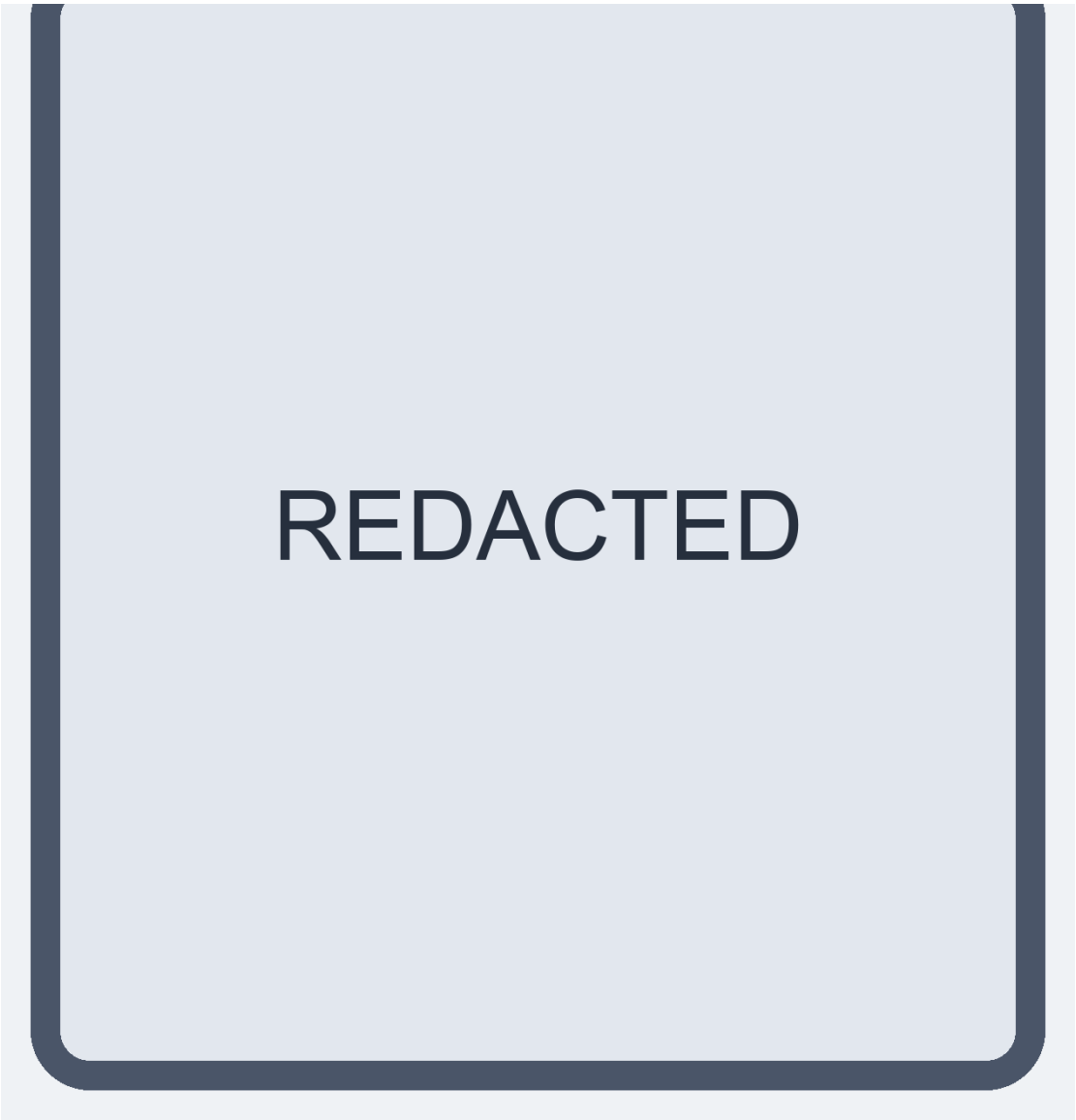


Fig. 5.1 Distribution of funeral goods in Ji's tomb (M2001)[1]

[1] The figure is modified after Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1999), 22-3, fig. 12.



Fig. 5.2 The ritual vessels (functional) in Ji's tomb[2]

[2] The figure is modified after *ibid.*, 33-78, figs. 22-28, 30, 33, 34, 43-46, 48-50, 52, 54, 56, 60, 65-72.

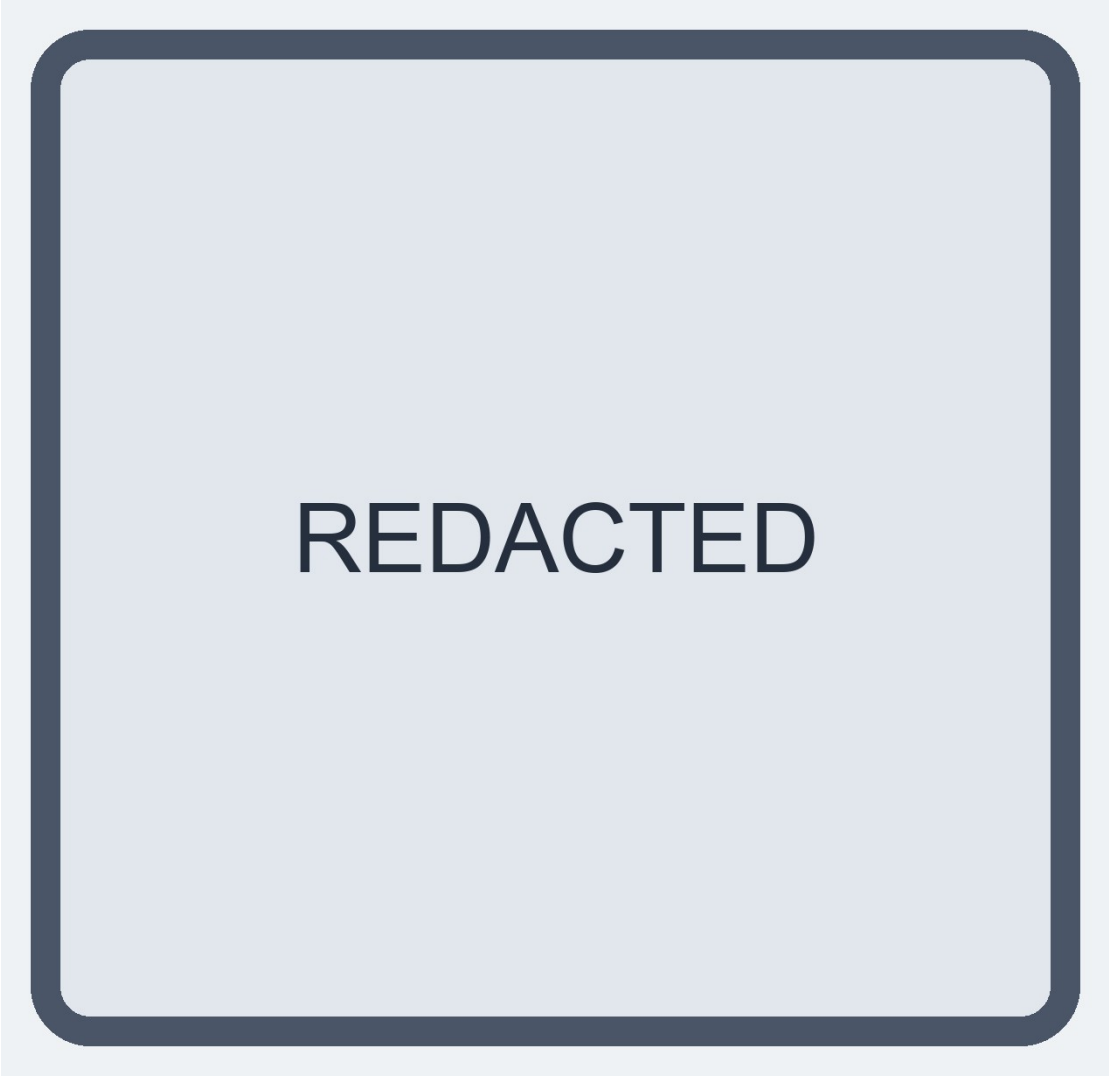


Fig. 5.3 Distribution of funeral goods in Peng's tomb (M2)[3]

[3] The figure is modified after Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xichuan xian bowuguan (1991), 103, fig. 84.



Fig. 5.4a The ritual sets in tomb M1 (Peng's wife) Xichuan, Xiasi, Henan[4]

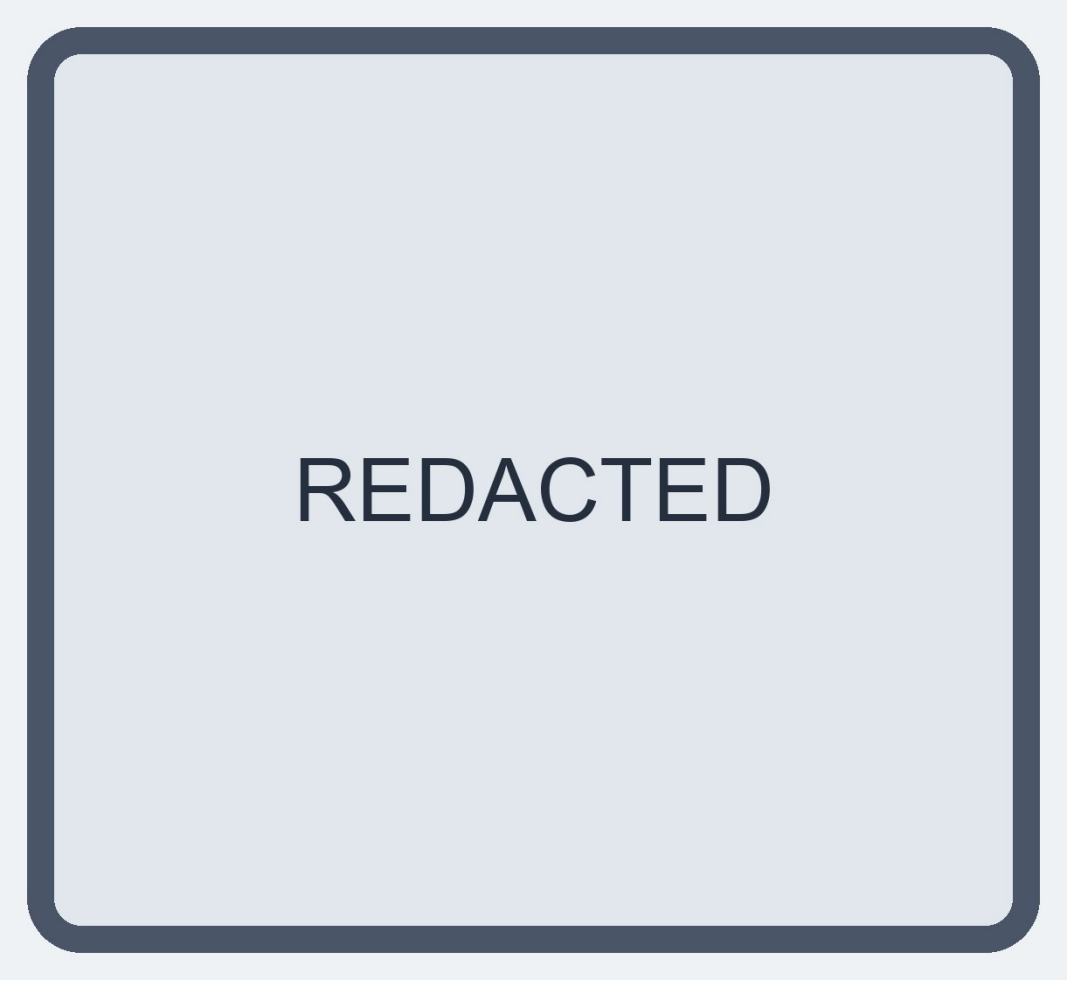


Fig. 5.4b The ritual sets in Peng's tomb (M2) Xichuan, Xiasi, Henan[5]

[4] The figure is modified after *ibid.* 52-94, figs. 43-78.
[5] The figure is modified after *ibid.* 104-79, figs. 85-135.



Fig. 5.5 *Kehuang* (克黄) *ding* tripod (M1:3)[6]

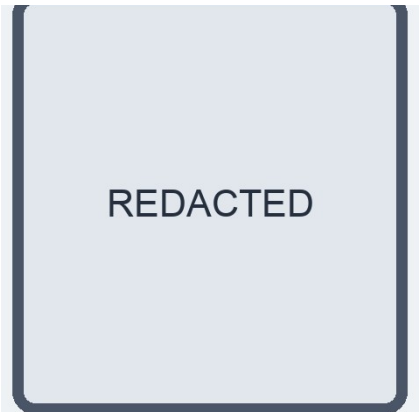


Fig. 5.6 Tripod of Fan Duke's wife (M1:5)[7]



Fig. 5.7 Typology of flat-bottomed *ding* tripods[8]



Fig. 5.8a A set of five *sheng* tripods (M2:1-5)[9]

[6] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2004), 8, fig. 6.
[7] Xinyang bowuguan, (信阳博物馆) (2018), *Xinyang bowuguan cang qingtongqi* [Bronze Collections of Xinyang Museum] *(信阳博物馆藏青铜器)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]), fig. 6. Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1981), 9, pl. 5:6.
[8] Zhang (2009), 210, fig. 4.1-7.
[9] Henan bowuyuan and National Museum of History (Taipei) (2003), 64-5.

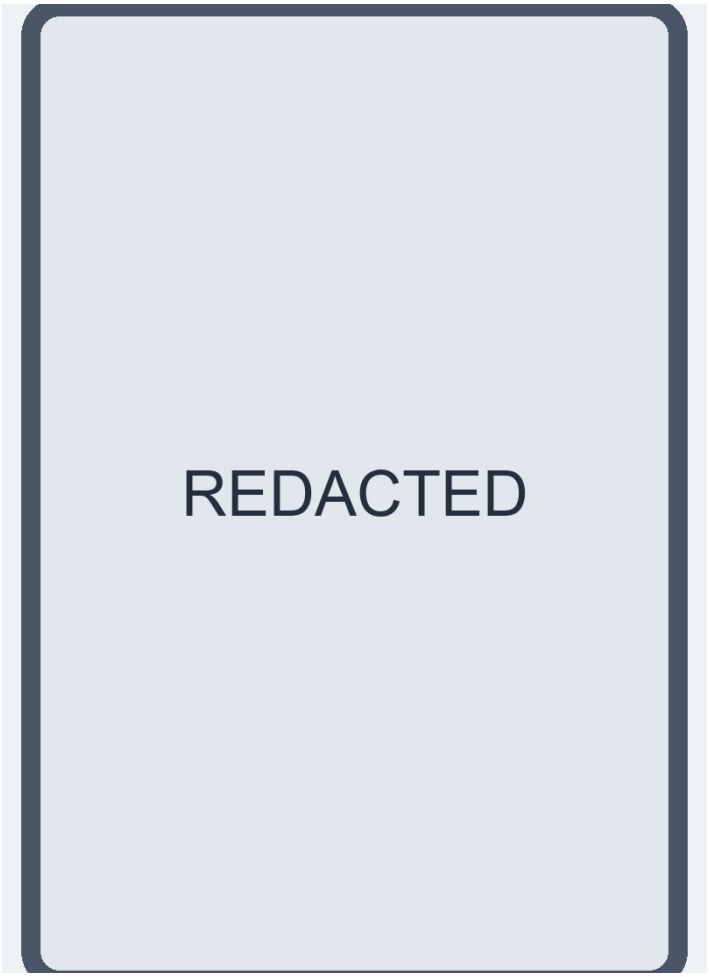


Fig. 5.8b *Ding* tripods with extended handles and vertical ridges in the Zheng state[10]



Fig. 5.9 *Sheng* tripod of the Xǔ (許) state (M4:0182)[11]

[10] Henan bowuyuan and National Museum of History (Taipei) (2001), 71-4, 174.
[11] Pingdingshan shi wenwu guanli weiyuanhui and Ye xian wenhuaguan (2007), 8, fig. 5.

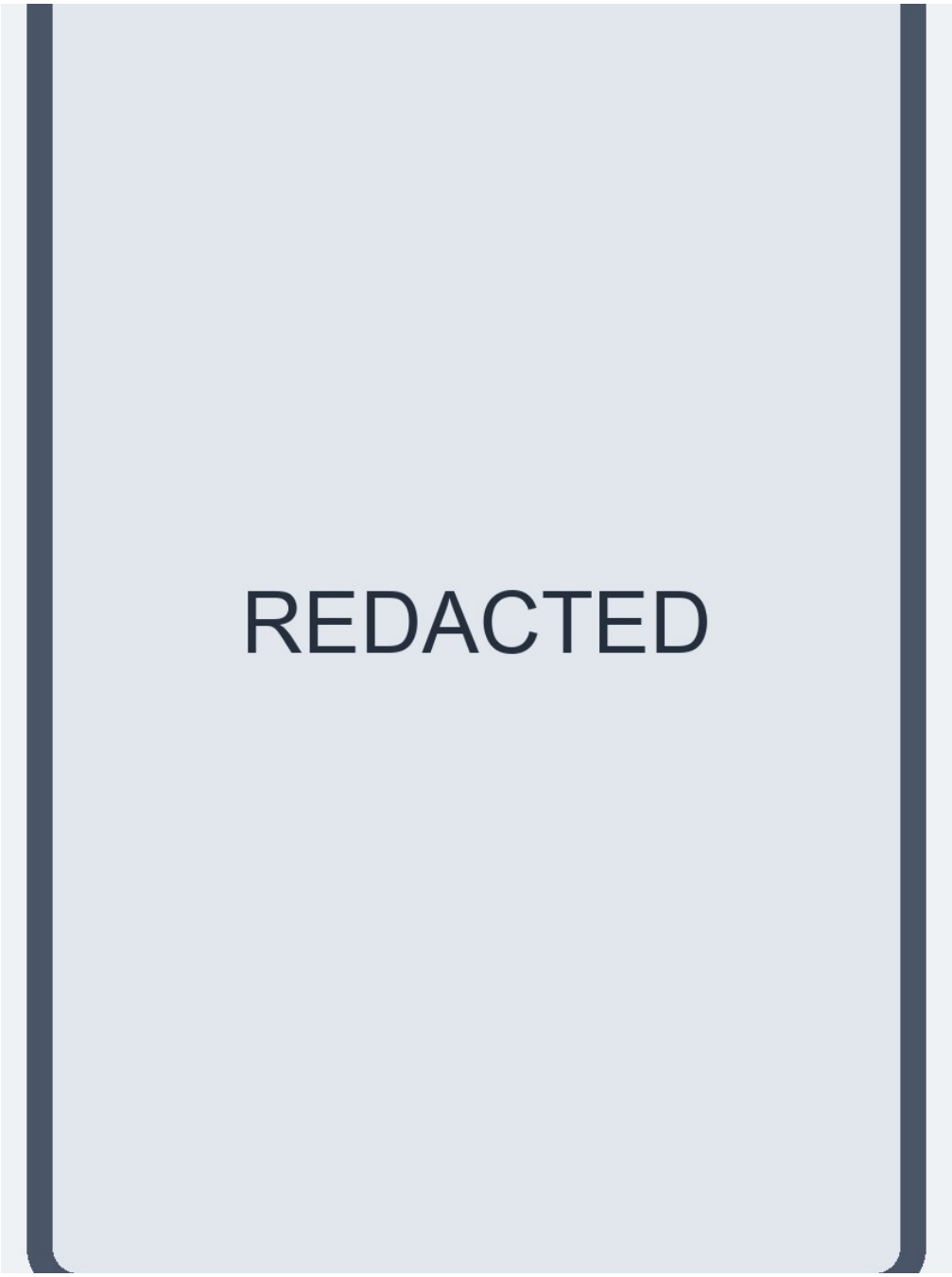


Fig. 5.10 *Sheng* tripods at Tianxingguan[12]

[12] Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan (2003), Colour Plates 10-1.



a. A set of polished black pottery in M9



b. Details of the polished *guan* jar (M249)

Fig. 5.11 Polished black pottery at Jinjiashan, Dangyang[13]

[13] Xiang, Guanghua (向光华) (2019), *Yichang bowuguan guancang wenwu tulu. Taoci juan* [Cultural Relics Collection of Yichang Museum. Ceramics Volume] *(宜昌博物馆馆藏文物图录. 陶瓷卷)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]), 54-4, 56, 64.

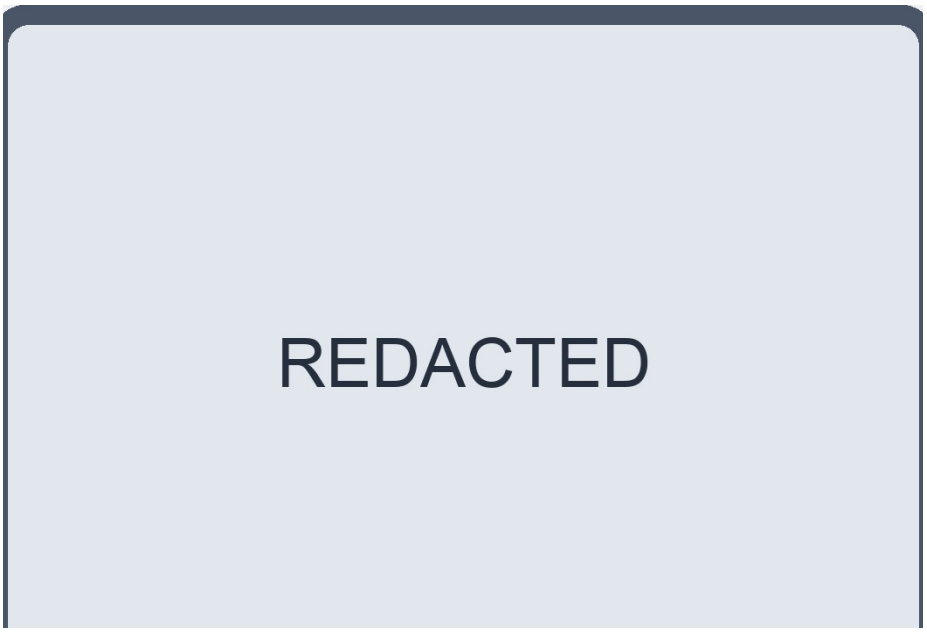


Fig. 5.12 Images of tomb M6131 at Tianma-Qucun and the details of lacquerwares including the *dou* (M6131:33)[14]



Fig. 5.13 Objects at Liujiadianzi and comparison of *pen* basins with other regions[15]

[14] The figure is modified after Beijing daxue kaoguxue xi Shang Zhou zu and Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo (2000b), 313, Colour Plate 25, fig. 660-1.
[15] A and b: Shandong sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Yishui xian wenwu guanlizhan (1984); c: Xinyang bowuguan (2018), 158, fig. 52; 163, fig. 55.



Fig. 5.14 Comparisons between bronze and lacquered *sheng* tripods at Jiuliandun, Jingzhou[16]

[16] The figures are modified after Shao, Xuehai (邵学海) and Zhu, Da (朱达) (2023), *Chu yishu quanji. Qingtongqi juan* [The Complete Collection of Chu Art. Bronze Vessels Volume] *(楚艺术全集. 青铜器卷)* (Wuhan: Hubei meishu chubanshe [Hubei Fine Arts Publishing House]), 70-1; Shao, Xuehai (邵学海) *et al.* (2023), *Chu yishu quanji. Qiqi juan* [The Complete Collection of Chu Art. Lacquerware Volume] *(楚艺术全集. 漆器卷)* (Wuhan: Hubei meishu chubanshe [Hubei Fine Arts Publishing House]); Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所), *et al.* (2019), 'Hubei Zaoyang Jiuliandun M1 fajue jianbao [Excavation Report of M1 at Jiuliandun Site of Zaoyang, Hubei Province] (湖北枣阳九连墩 M1 发掘简报)', *Jianghan kaogu* [Jianghan Archaeology] *(江汉考古)*, (162), 22; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所), *et al.* (2018), 'Hubei Zaoyang Jiuliandun M2 fajue jianbao [Excavation Report of M2 at Jiuliandun Site of Zaoyang, Hubei Province] (湖北枣阳九连墩 M2 发掘简报)', *Jianghan kaogu* [Jianghan Archaeology] *(江汉考古)*, (159), 5-6.



Fig. 6.1a Examples of scenes on incised bronze plates[1]

[1] The figures (left to right) are modified after Zhenjiang bowuguan (1987), 29, fig. 7; Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, (山西省考古研究所) *et al.* (2010), *Changzhi Fenshuiling Dongzhou mudi* [Tombs of the Eastern Zhou Period at Fenshuiling, Changzhi] *(长治分水岭东周墓地)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]), 288, fig. 101C; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, (中国社会科学院考古研究所) (1956), *Huixian fajue baogao* [Excavation Report of Huixian] *(辉县发掘报告)* (Beijing: Kexue



Fig. 6.1b Examples of scenes on bronze *yi*[2]

chubanshe [Science Press]), 110-120.

[2] The figures (left to right) are modified after Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (1996). 70, fig. 31; Teng (2020), 100, fig. 7-2; Xiangyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (襄阳市文物考古研究所) (2011), *Yugang Chu mu* [The Chu Tombs at Yugang] *(余岗楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]), 59, fig. 34-3.



Fig. 6.2 Images collected from the incised bronze showing the combined usage of vessels[3]

[3] The figures a to f are modified respectively after Zhenjiang bowuguan (1987). 26-8, fig. 8; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, (中国社会科学院考古研究所) (1994), *Shanxian dongzhou qinhan mu* [The Eastern Zhou, Qin and Han Tombs at Shanxian] *(陕县东周秦汉墓)* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe [Science Press]), 62, fig. 49:1; Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiusuo, (河北省文物研究所) (2005), *Zhanguo Zhongshan Lingshoucheng: 1975-1993 nian kaogu fajue baogao* [The Lingshou City of the Zhongshan State in the Warring States Period: An Archaeological Excavation Report from 1975-1993] *(战国中山国灵寿城: 1975 ~ 1993 年考古发掘报告)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]); Zhenjiang bowuguan (1987), 28, fig. 6:5; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo (1994), 65-6, fig. 52; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo (1956), 110-120.



Fig. 6.3 Quartz inlaid tables[4]

[4] Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991). 130, fig. 80; Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 102, fig. 7:4, Colour Plate 15:2.



Fig. 6.4a Two types of incense burners. In Marquis Yi's tomb of the Zeng state (5th century B.C.)[5]



Fig. 6.4b The combination of incense burner with a round wooden container[6]

[5] The figure is modified after Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989a), 247-50, fig. 145; Hubei sheng bowuguan (2023), 236-7, 328.

[6] Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui (1981), 23-4, pl. 7:6.



Fig. 6.4c Examples of openwork incense burners[7]

[7] The figures are modified after a: Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 51, fig. 35; b: Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 192, fig. 121; Shanxi Bowuguan, (山西博物院) (2018), *Zhengfeng: Jin Chu wenming* [Contention: The Civilizations of Jin and Chu] *(争锋：晋楚文明)* (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe [Shanxi People's Publishing House]), 91; c: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 78, 80, fig. 54, Shao and Zhu (2023), 269; d: *ibid.*; e: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2018), pl. 40; f: Jingzhou bowuguan (2017), 11, 12, 14, fig. 17.

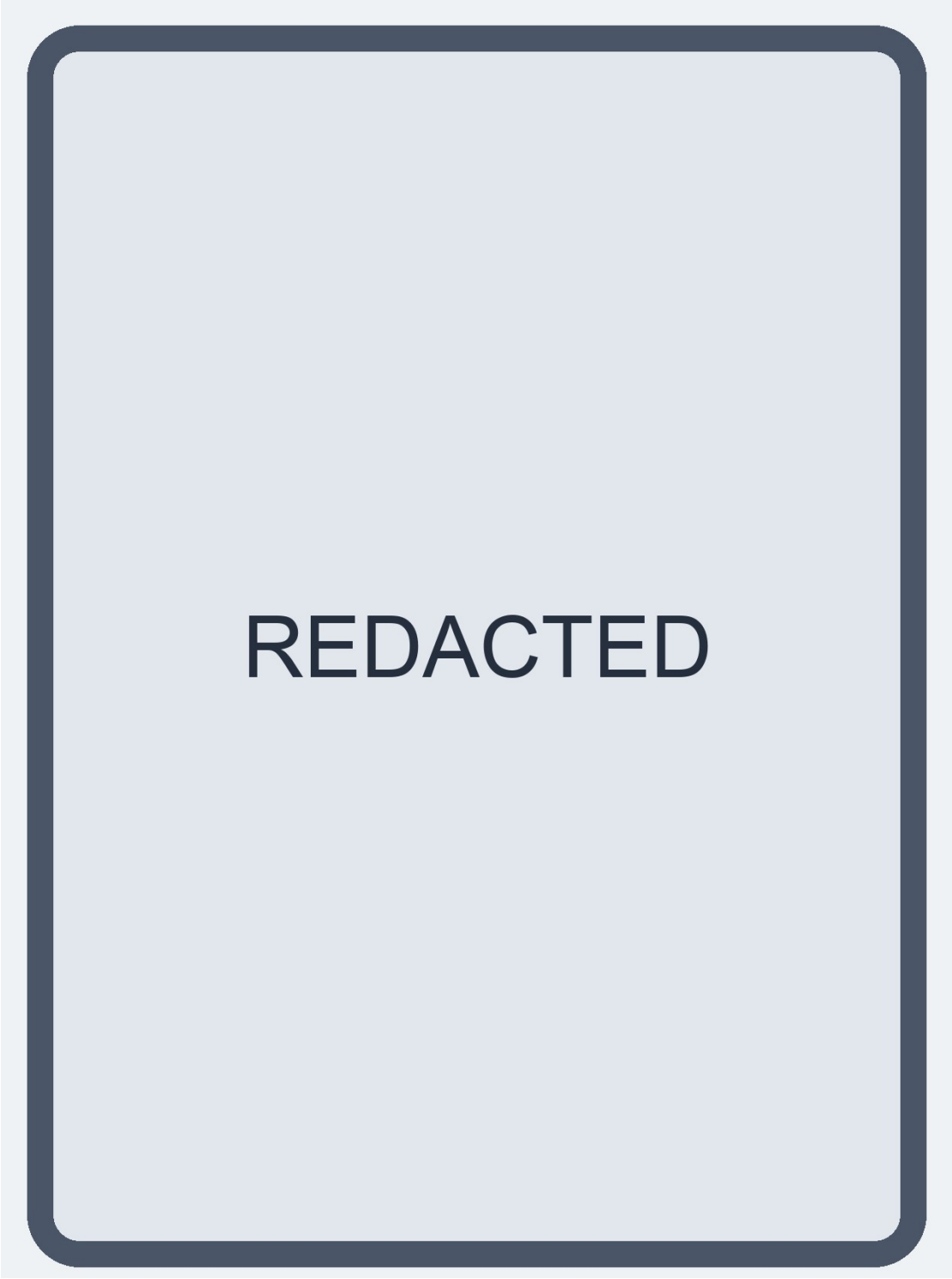


Fig. 6.5 The *ding* tripods containing fish bones in Lord Bai's tomb of the Zhongli state[8]

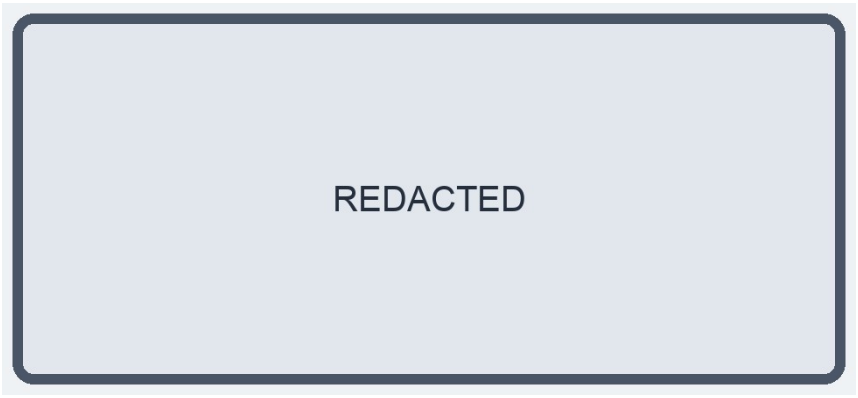
[8] Kan (2013), 50-2, figs. 17. 18-2, 1802, pls. 46,47.



a. Bronze *dou* in Marquis Yi's tomb



b. Bronze *dou* in Jin official's tomb



c. Bronze *dou* in Chu tombs



d. A set of bronze *dou* in Jiuliandun M1 (late 4th to early 3rd century B.C.)

Fig. 6.6 Comparison of bronze *dou* in Zeng, Jin, and Chu[9]

[9] The figures are modified after a. Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989a), 211-3, fig. 111; Hubei sheng bowuguan (2023), 211, fig. 111-1; b: Taiyuan shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2004), 15-8; c: Shao *et al.* (2023), 76, 78, 82, 116; d: *ibid.,* 114-5.



Fig. 6.7 A brief typology of *dou*[10]

[10] The figure is modified according to major excavation reports that have been mentioned in the thesis.



Fig. 6.8 Eared cups of early and middle periods (470-278 B.C.)[11]

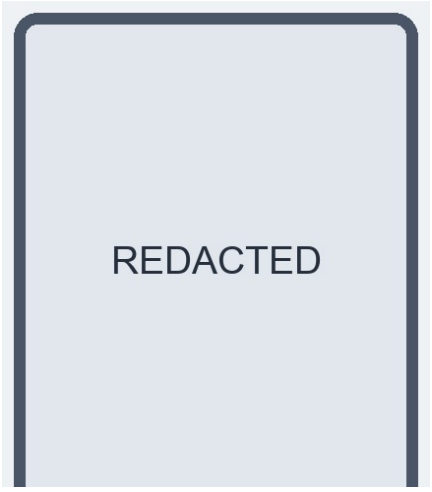


Fig. 6.9 Exquisite *dou* plate with lotus, dragon, and snake carvings, Jiuliandun, Zaoyang[12]

[11] The figure is modified according to major excavation reports that have been mentioned in the thesis.
[12] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 33, pl. 16.



Fig. 6.10 Lacquered boxes of the Warring States period[13]



Fig. 11 Inscription at the bottom of the eared cups, Wangshanqiao, Jingzhou[14]

[13] The figure is modified according to major excavation reports that have been mentioned in the thesis.
[14] Jingzhou bowuguan (2017), 24, figs. 36, 37, 70:2, 70:3.



Fig. 6.12a *An* and *ji* tables of the Early Warring States period (470-370 B.C.)[15]

[15] The figures in the first row are modified after Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 377, fig. 235:3; Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 101, fig. 70:5; Hunan sheng bowuguan, (湖南省博物馆) (1972), 'Changsha Liuchengqiao yihao mu [Tomb No. 1 at Liuchengqiao, Changsha] (长沙浏城桥一号墓)', *Kaogu xuebao* [Acta Archaeologica Sinica] *(考古学报)*, (1), 63, fig. 4; Xiangyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2011), 73, fig. 45:1; Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 101, fig. 70:4. The figures in the second row are modified after Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 376, fig. 234; Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 104, fig. 72:1, 2.



Fig. 6.12b *An* and *ji* tables of the early phase of the Middle Warring States period (370-330 B.C.)[16]

[16] The figures are modified after Jiangling xian bowuguan, (江陵县博物馆) (1995), 'Jiangling Zaolinpu Chu mu fajue jianbao [A Brief Report on the Excavation of the Chu Tomb at Zaolinpu, Jiangling] (江陵枣林铺楚墓发掘简报)', *Jianghan kaogu* [Jianghan Archaeology] *(江汉考古)*, (1), 19-24. 22, fig. 7; Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1982), 101-3, figs. 25, 26.



Fig. 6.12c *Ji* tables of the second phase of the Middle Warring States period (330-278 B.C.) [17]

[17] The figures are modified after Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 32-3, 131, figs. 19, 81; Xiangyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (襄阳市文物考古研究所) (2016), 'Hubei Xiangyang shi Aozhangang Zhanguo Chu mu de fajue [The Excavation of the Warring States Chu Tombs at Aozhangang, Xiangyang, Hubei] (湖北襄阳市鏖战岗战国楚墓的发掘)', *Kaogu* [Archaeology] *(考古)*, (11), 27-43. 32, fig. 7:10; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 43-4, figs. 28:1-3; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2018), 32, figs. 27: 204; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 92, fig. 61:5.

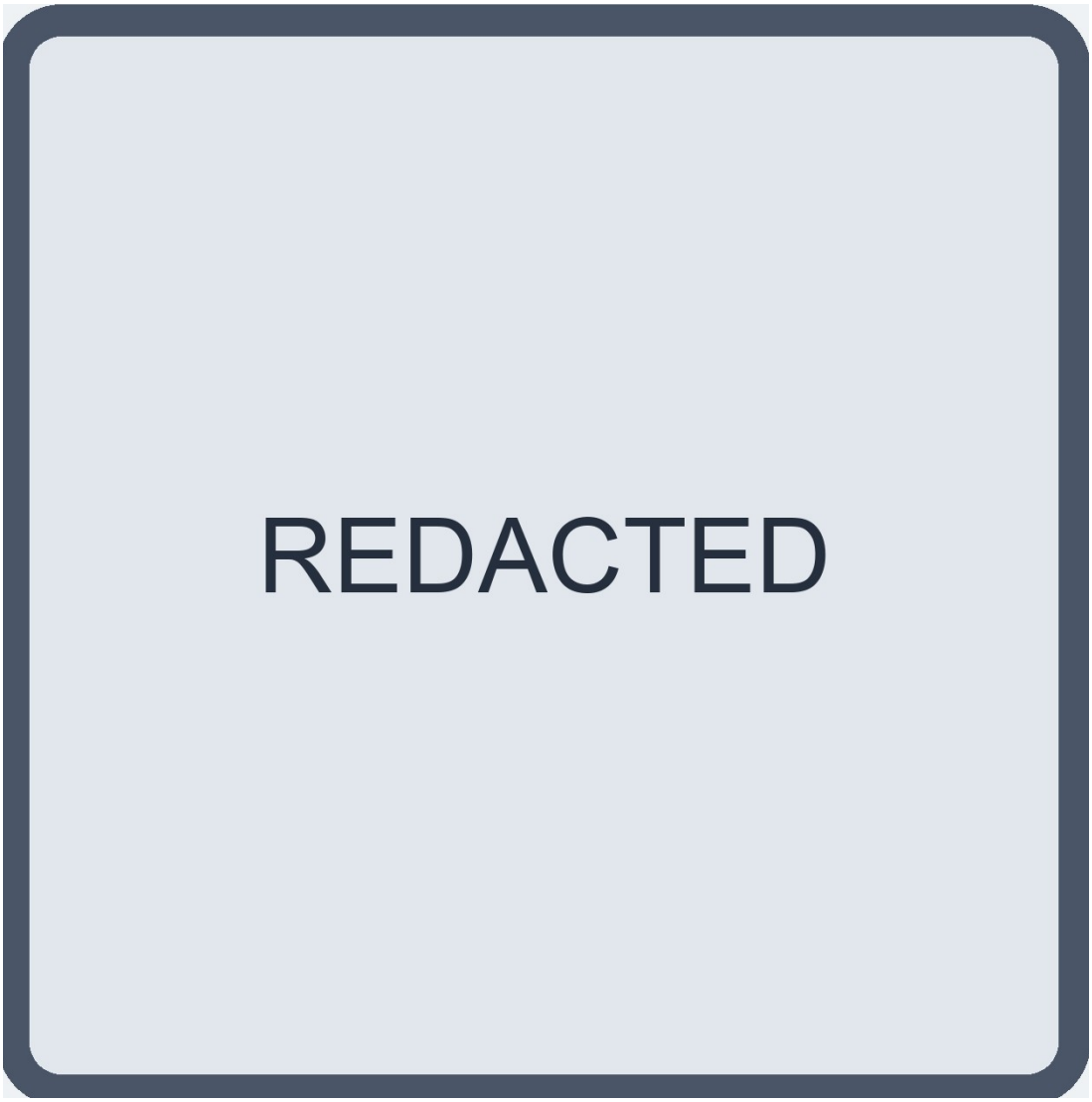


Fig. 6.12d *An* tables of the second phase of the Middle Warring States period (330-278 B.C.)[18]

[18] The figures are modified after Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) *et al.* (2001), 'Hubei Huangzhou Chu mu [The Chu Tombs at Huangzhou, Hubei] (湖北黄州楚墓)', *Kaogu xuebao* [Acta Archaeologica Sinica] *(考古学报)*, (02), 227-98. 261, fig. 44:1; Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 126-7, figs. 76, 77:1; Changsha shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2003). 63, fig. 20; Huanggang shi bowuguan and Huangzhou qu bowuguan (2000), 279, fig. 28; Zhumadian shi wenwu gongzuodui and Xincai xian wenwu baohu guanlisuo (2002), 28, fig. 25:1; Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991). 127, fig. 77; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 147, fig. 98:2.



Fig. 6.12e Swirl patterns on table tops[19]

[19] The figures are modified after Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 42, Colour Plate 6:1; Hunan sheng bowuguan, (湖南省博物馆) (1980), 'Hunan Xiangxiang Niuxingshan yi erhao daxing Zhanguo muguomu [Large Warring States Wooden-Chambered Tombs No. 1 and 2 at Niuxingshan, Xiangxiang, Hunan] (湖南湘乡牛形山一、二号大型战国木椁墓)', in Wenwu Weiyuanhui, (文物委员会) (ed.), *Wenwu ziliao congkan 3* [Collection of Cultural Relics Materials 3] *(文物资料丛刊 3)*; (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]), 109, fig. 24; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 146, fig. 97; Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (河南省文物考古研究所) and Xinyang shi wenwu gongzuodui, (信阳市文物工作队) (2004), 'Henan Xinyang Changtaiguan qi hao Chu mu fajue jianbao [A Brief Report on the Excavation of Chu Tomb No. 7 at Changtaiguan, Xinyang, Henan] (河南信阳长台关七号楚墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu* [Cultural Relics] *(文物)*, (03), 35, fig. 7; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996a), 90, fig. 60; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 38, fig. 19:7; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2018), 36, fig. 27:1; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2006), 76, fig. 49.



Fig. 6.13 Comparison between the *ji*, *an*, and *jin*[20]

[20] The figures are chosen from figure 6.12 in this list.



Fig. 6.14 A lacquered *jin* in Marquis Yi's tomb[21]

[21] After Hubei sheng bowuguan (2023), 170-1.



Fig. 6.14 A lacquered *jin* in Marquis Yi's tomb[21]



Fig. 6.15 Comparison between the Mawangdui vessel sets and the mural of the Eastern Han[22]

[21] *Ibid.*, 170-1.
[22] Hunan sheng bowuguan (2014), 130-1.

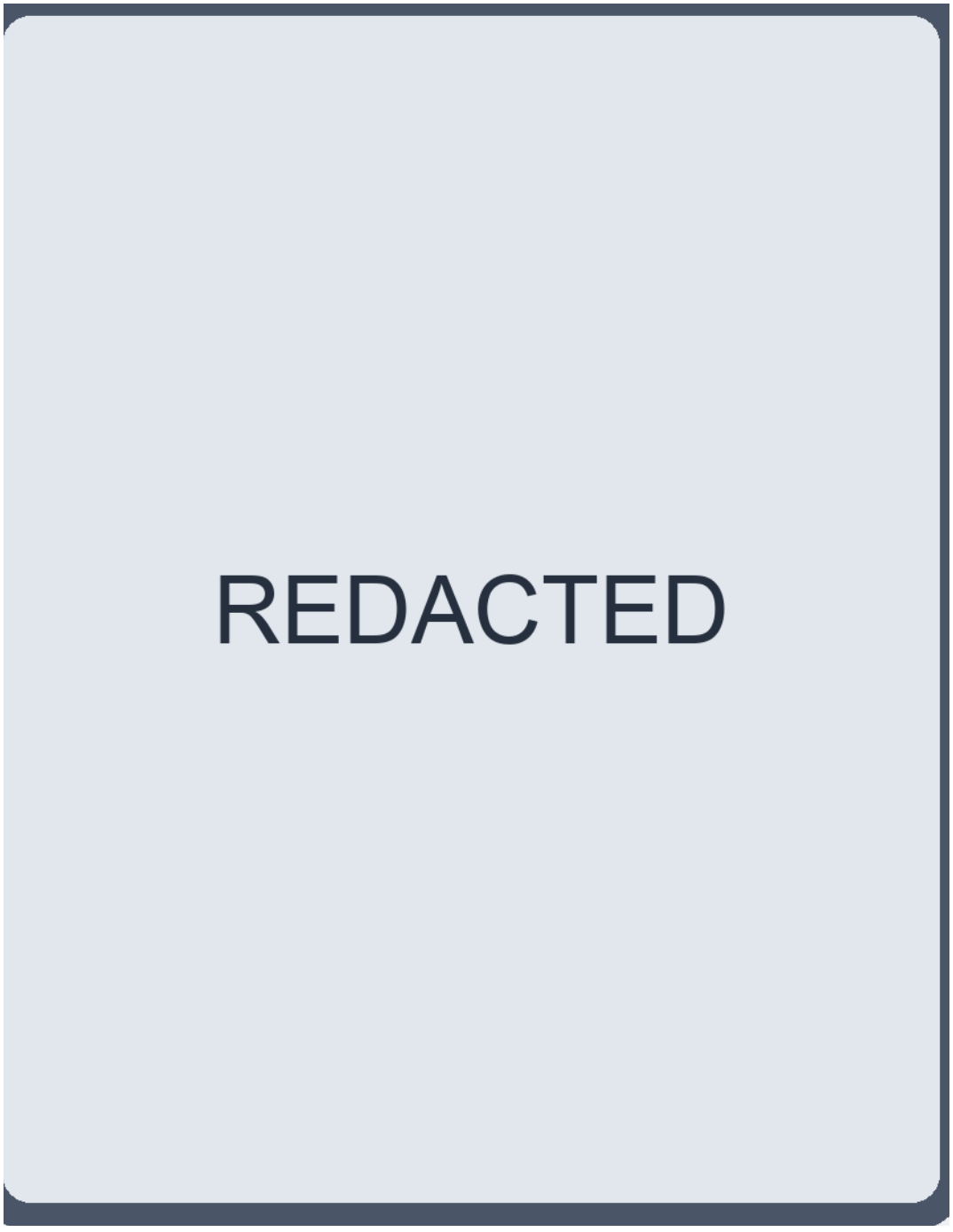


Fig. 7.1 Distribution map of M28 at Yejiashan[1]

[1] The figure is adapted after Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) and Suizhou xian bowuguan, (随州市博物馆) (2013), 'Hubei Suizhou Yejiashan M28 fajue baogao [An Excavation Report on Tomb M28 of the Yejiashan Site in Suizhou] (湖北随州叶家山 M28 发掘报告)', *Jianghan kaogu* [Jianghan Archaeology] *(江汉考古)*, (04), 3-57+2, fig. 2.



Fig. 7.2 Distribution map of the northern chamber in Marquis Yi's tomb[2]

[2] The figures are adapted from Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 70-3, fig. 36.



Fig. 7.3 Distribution map of the eastern chamber in Marquis Yi's tomb[3]

[3] The figures are adapted from *ibid.,* 61-3, fig. 32.

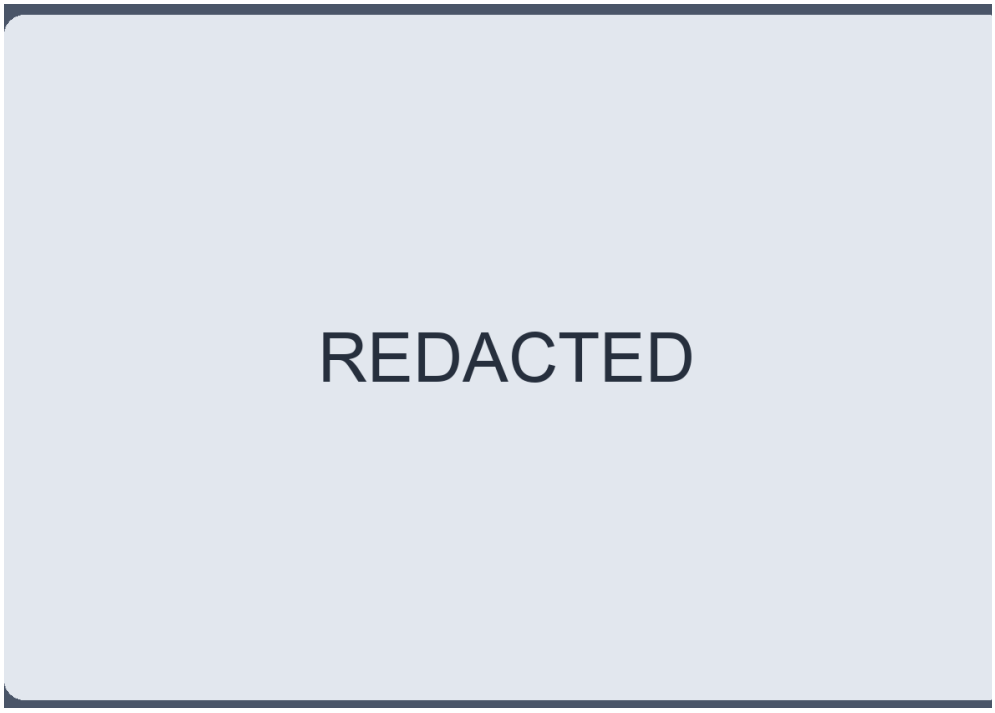


Fig. 7.4 Horse fittings of *biao* 镳 in different materials: wood, horn and bronze[4]

[4] Hubei sheng Yichang diqu bowuguan (1988a), 485, fig. 33; Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 327, fig. 21; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), 75, 142, fig. 5, 6, 95; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2006), 106, fig. 73; Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 245, fig. 162; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 61, fig. 39:9, 10; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2018), 46, fig. 35:1, 2.

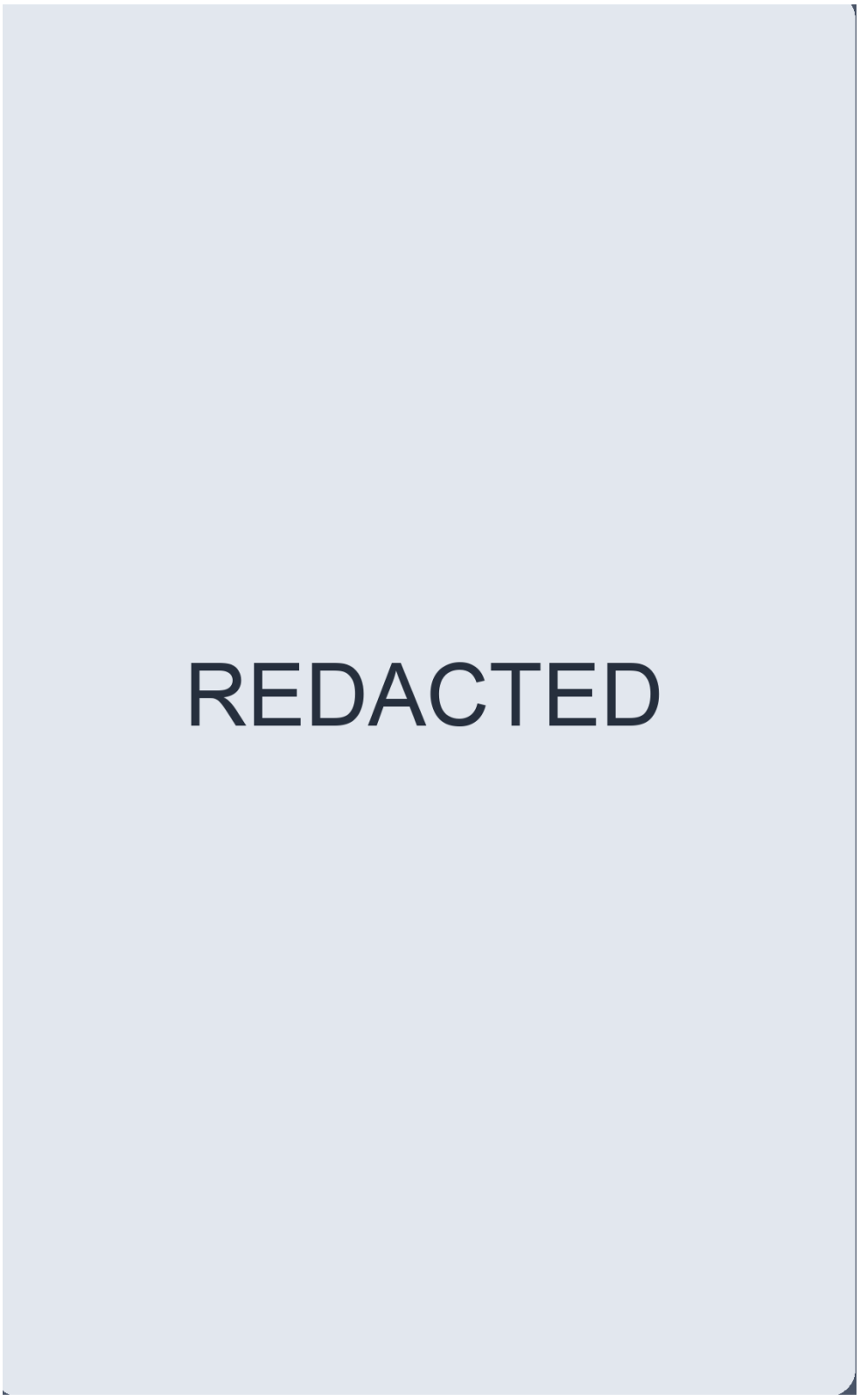


Fig. 7.5 Chariots/carriages in tombs of top elites[5]

[5] The figure is modified after a (E.155): Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 306-10, fig. 188; b (M1P:116): Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2004), 73-9, Colour Plate 32; c (M2: 349): Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2018), 43, fig. 32.



Fig. 7.6a Adapted illustration of the chariot box cover at M1 Jiuliandun, Zaoyang[6]



Fig. 7.6b A reconstructed version of the chariot box cover based on excavator's illustration[7]

[6] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 54, fig. 35, pl. 30.
[7] *Ibid.,* 54, fig. 35.

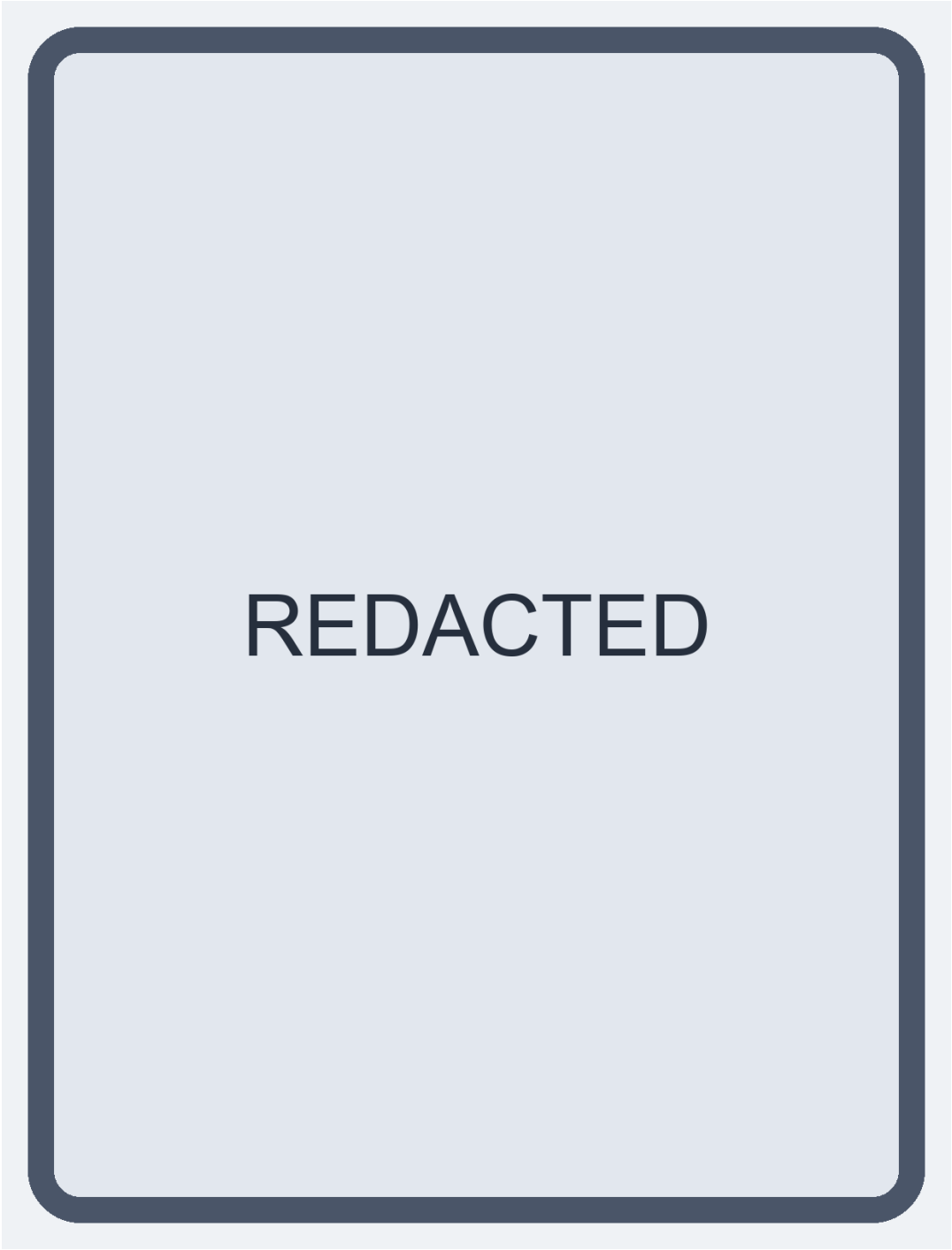


Fig. 7.7 Chariot box covers and potential fragments as covers[8]

[8] A: Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 230, fig. 151:2-5; b: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996a), 68, fig. 47; c: Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2003), 155, fig. 91; Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1982).



Fig. 7.8 Leather wall pockets on chariot box covers[9]

[9] The figure is modified after a: Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2003), 148, pl. 57:3; b: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 56, pl. 31; c and d: Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 232-3, figs. 152, 153; e: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2006), 101, Colour Plate 26:3, 4.

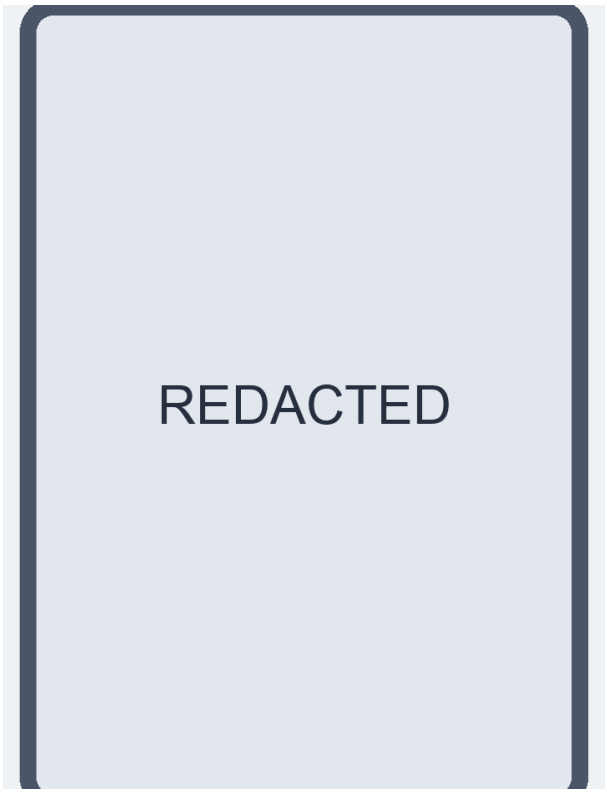


Fig. 7.9 Dragons drawn on the horse armours in Marquis Yi's tomb[10]



Fig. 7.10 Roundels for decorating the straps and other horse fittings[11]

[10] Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 350, fig. 214.

[11] The figures a to d are modified after Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1982), 93, fig. 18:3; Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 253, fig. 167:7; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 59, fig. 38:7; Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2003), 80-4, Colour Plates 8, 15, 16.

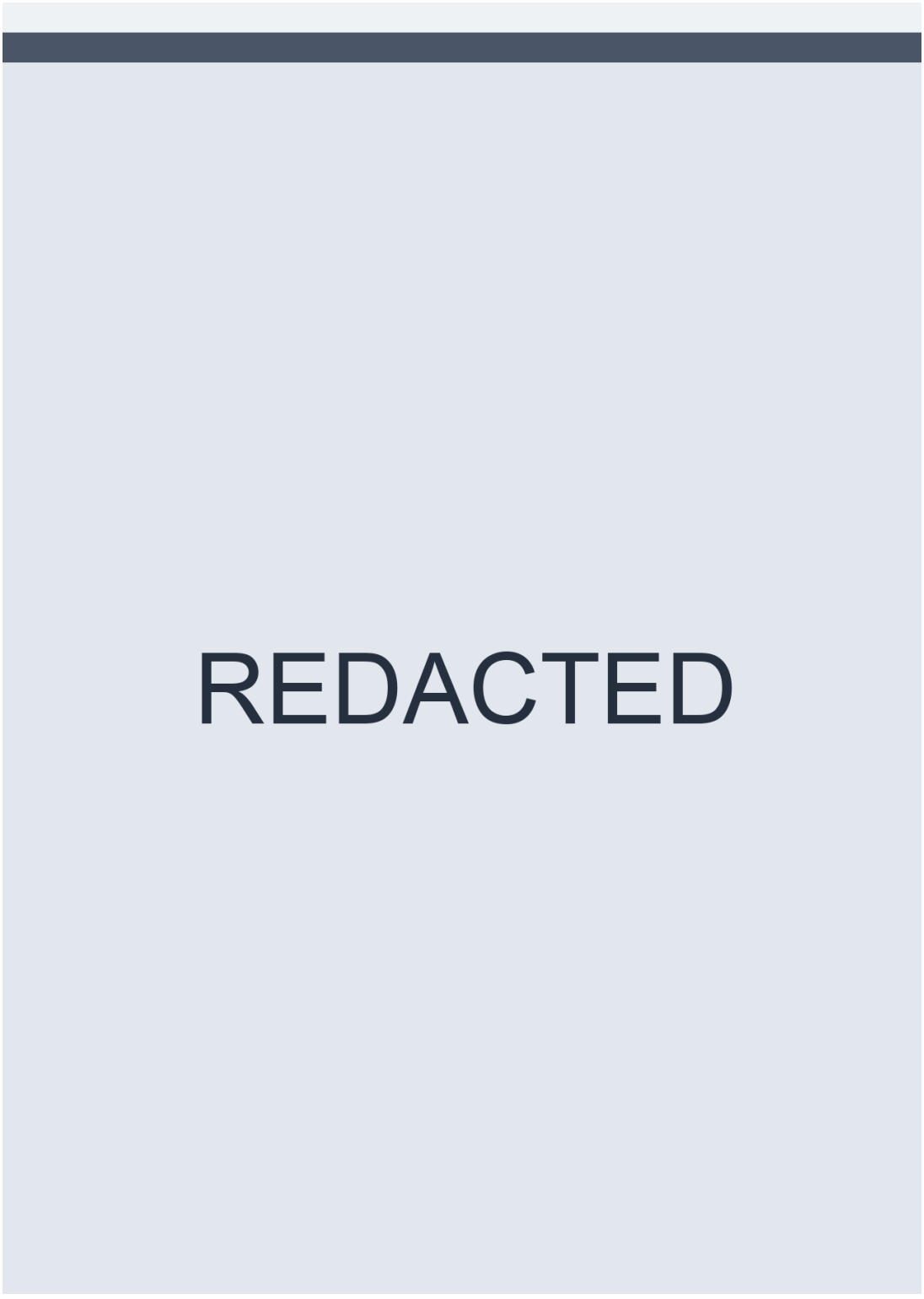


Fig. 7.11 Foils of tin/lead or gold seen in between armours/chariot box covers[12]

[12] The figure is adapted from a: Hubei sheng Yichang diqu bowuguan (1988), 167-74, figs. 14:1, 6, 7, 17:11; b: Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xichuan xian bowuguan (1991), 205-7, figs. 152, 153; c: Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2003), Colour Plate 16:2, pls. 55, 56; d: Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1982), pls. 55-7; e (M1:269): Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), pl. 36.



Fig. 7.12 A painted shield and its details in Marquis Yi's tomb[13]

[13] The figure is adapted from Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 304-5, figs. 183, 184.

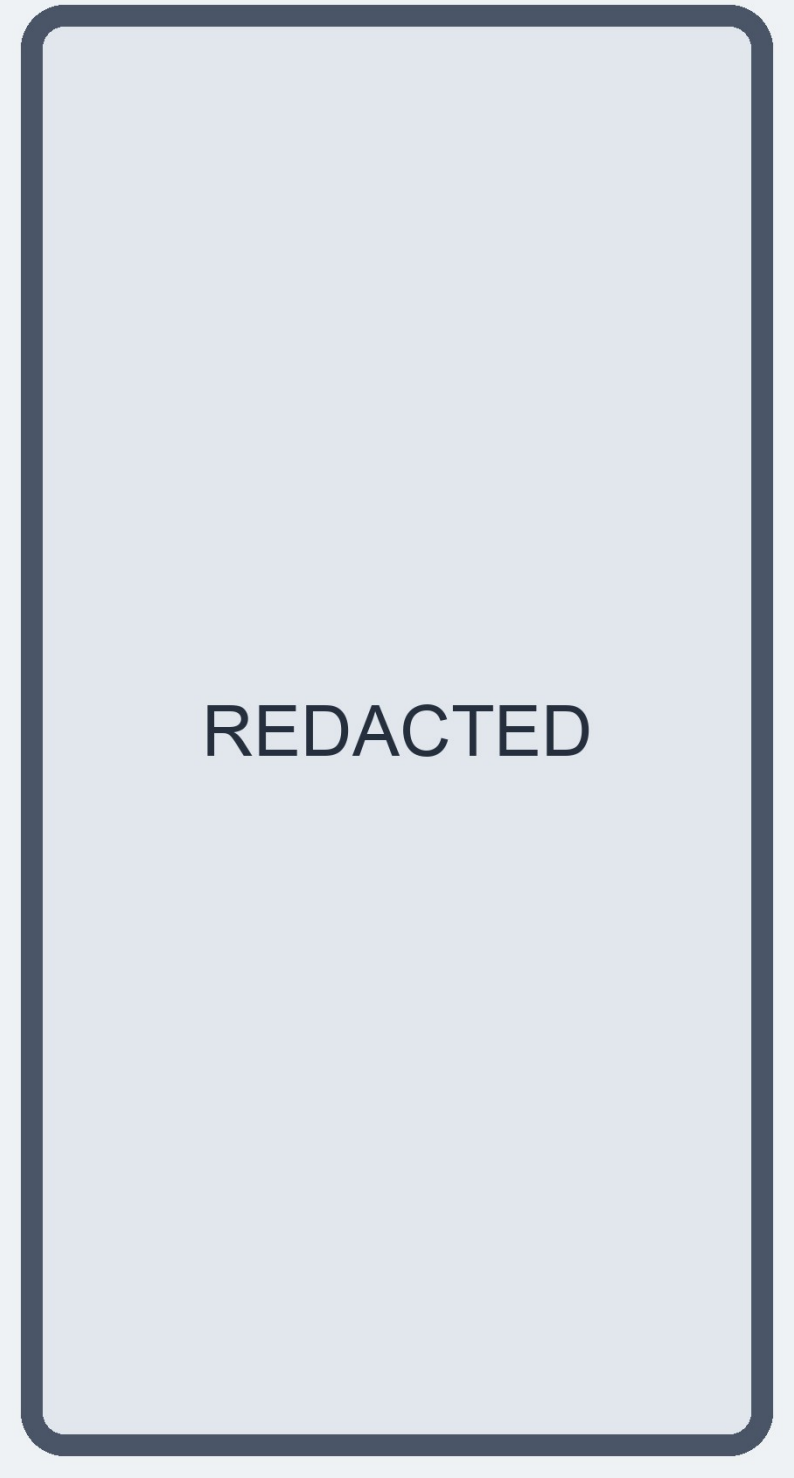


Fig. 7.13 A collection of shields in elites' tombs of both high and lower status[14]

[14] The figure is adapted from a. *Ibid.,* 306, fig. 185; b: Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1982), 85, fig. 13:12; c: Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 214, fig. 137:2; d: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996a). 65, fig. 45;e: Jingzhou bowuguan (1985), pl. 2; f: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 52, fig. 33:4, 5; g: Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 215, fig. 138; h: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) (1993), 'Huangzhou Longwangshan zhuanchang 5 hao mu fajue jianbao [A Brief Report on the Excavation of Tomb No. 5 at the Longwangshan Brick Factory, Huangzhou] (黄州龙王山砖厂 5 号墓发掘简报)', *Jianghan kaogu* [Jianghan Archaeology] *(江汉考古)*, (01), 39, fig. 8.

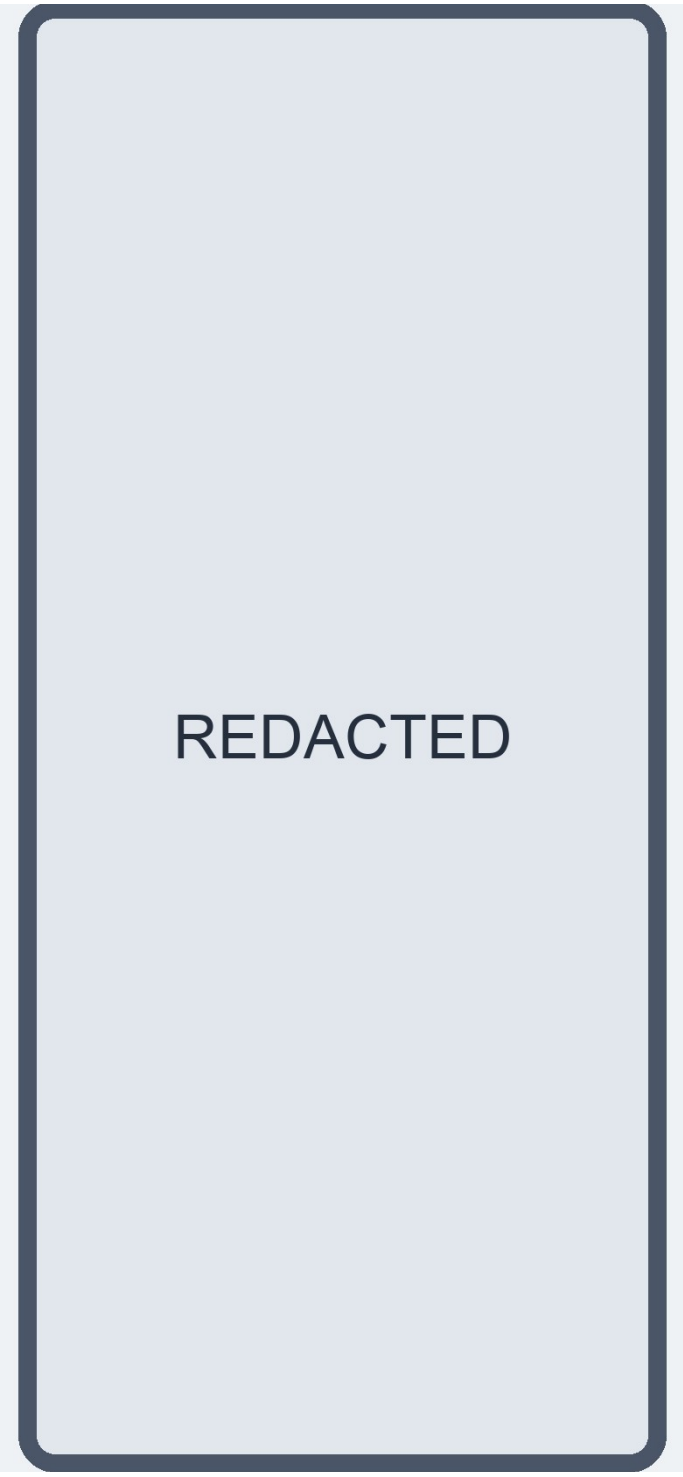
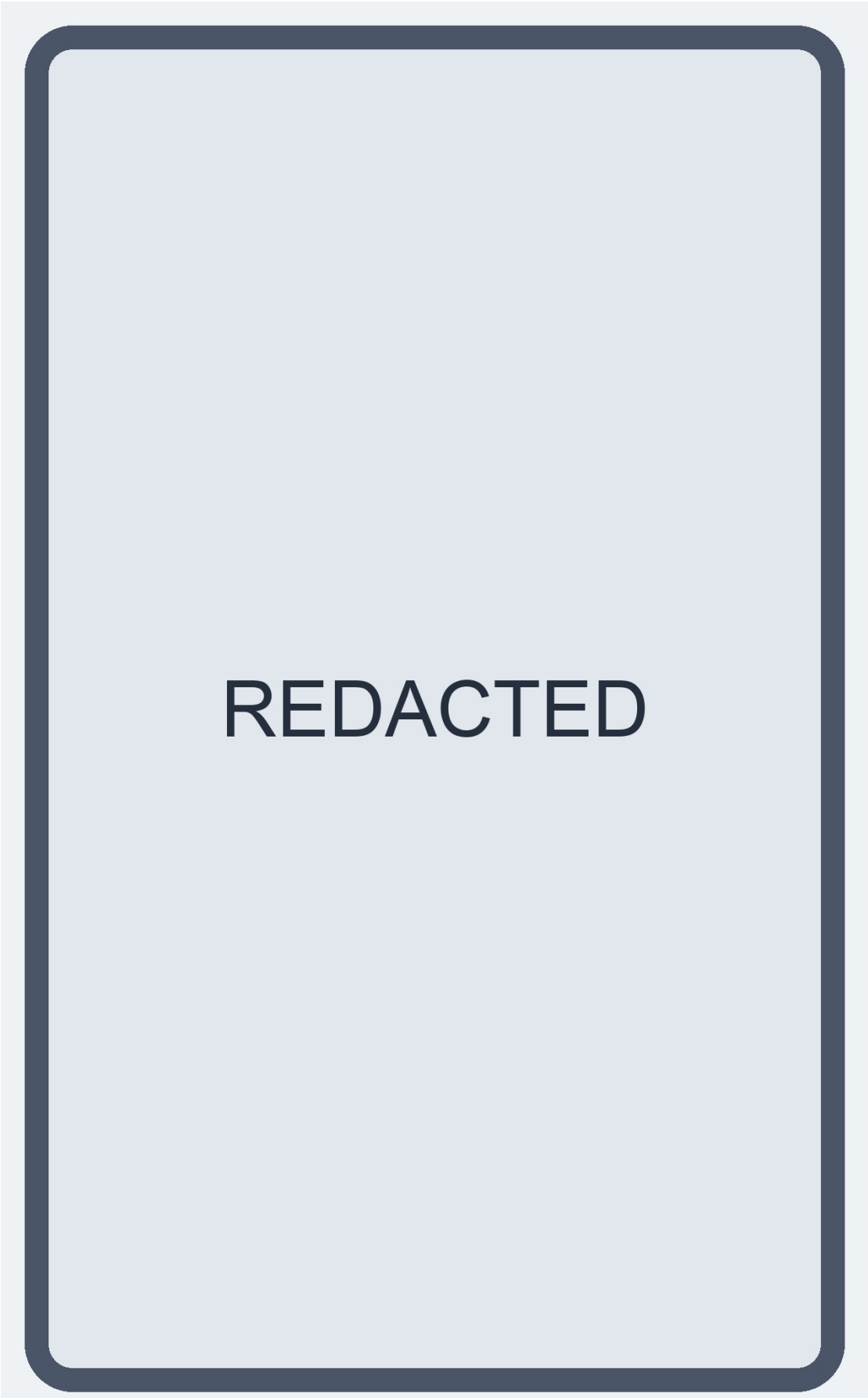


Fig. 7.14 A comparison between figurines and the shield bearing similar patterns[15]

[15] The figure is adapted from a: Jiangling xian wenwuju, (江陵县文物局) (1989), 'Hubei Jiangling Wuchang yidi Chu mu [The Chu Tomb at Wuchang Yidi, Jiangling, Hubei] (湖北江陵武昌义地楚墓)', *Wenwu* [Cultural Relics] *(文物)*, (03), 48, fig. 35; b: Jiangling xian bowuguan (1995), 23-4, fig. 10; c: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖北省文物考古研究所) (1999), 'Hubei Jingzhou Jicheng yi hao er hao Chu mu fajue jianbao [A Brief Report on the Excavation of Chu Tombs No. 1 and 2 at Jicheng, Jingzhou, Hubei] (湖北荆州纪城一、二号楚墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu* [Cultural Relics] *(文物)*, (04), 11, fig. 16; d: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1993), 39, fig. 8.


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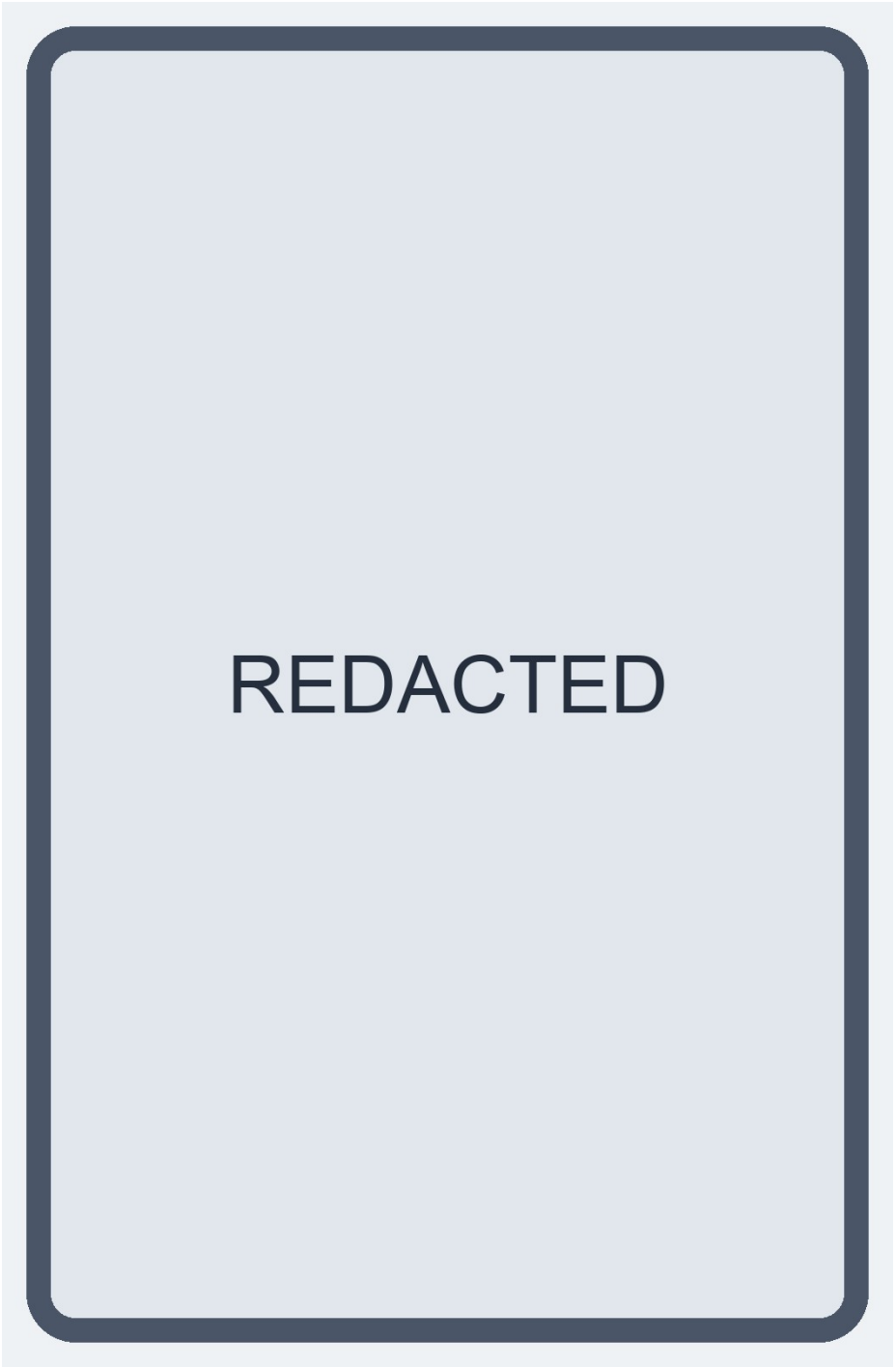


Fig. 7.15 Weapon shafts illustrating finer details[16]

[16] The figures are adapted from **I**: a. Hubei sheng Yichang diqu bowuguan (1988), 183, fig. 30:5; b. Hunan sheng bowuguan (1972), 65, fig. 6; c. Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (湖南省文物考古研究所) and Cili xian wenwu baohu guanli yanjiusuo, (慈利县文物保护管理研究所) (1990), 'Hunan Cili Shiban cun 36 hao Zhanguo mu fajue jianbao [A Brief Report on the Excavation of the Warring States Tomb No. 36 at Shiban Village, Cili, Hunan] (湖南慈利石板村 36 号战国墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu* [Cultural Relics] *(文物)*, (10), 42, fig. 16; **II**: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2006), 68, 70, figs. 40:1, fig. 40:2, fig. 41; **III**: Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 204, 206-7, figs. 132:2, 131:1, 130:2, 130:3; **IV**: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 50, fig. 31:2, fig. 31:4, fig. 31:9.



Fig. 7.16 A comparison of shared decorations among the chariot boxes, the quivers, and the lacquered shield[17]

[17] The figure is adapted from a. Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 52, fig. 33:4, 5; b. Xiangyang shi bowuguan, (襄阳市博物馆) and Laohekou shi bowuguan, (老河口市博物馆) (2017), 'Hubei Laohekou Angang yi hao Chu mu fajue jianbao [A Brief Report on the Excavation of Chu Tomb No. 1 at Angang, Laohekou, Hubei] (湖北老河口安岗一号楚墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu* [Cultural Relics] *(文物)*, (07), 27, fig. 65; c. Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2019), 52, fig. 33:4, 5.

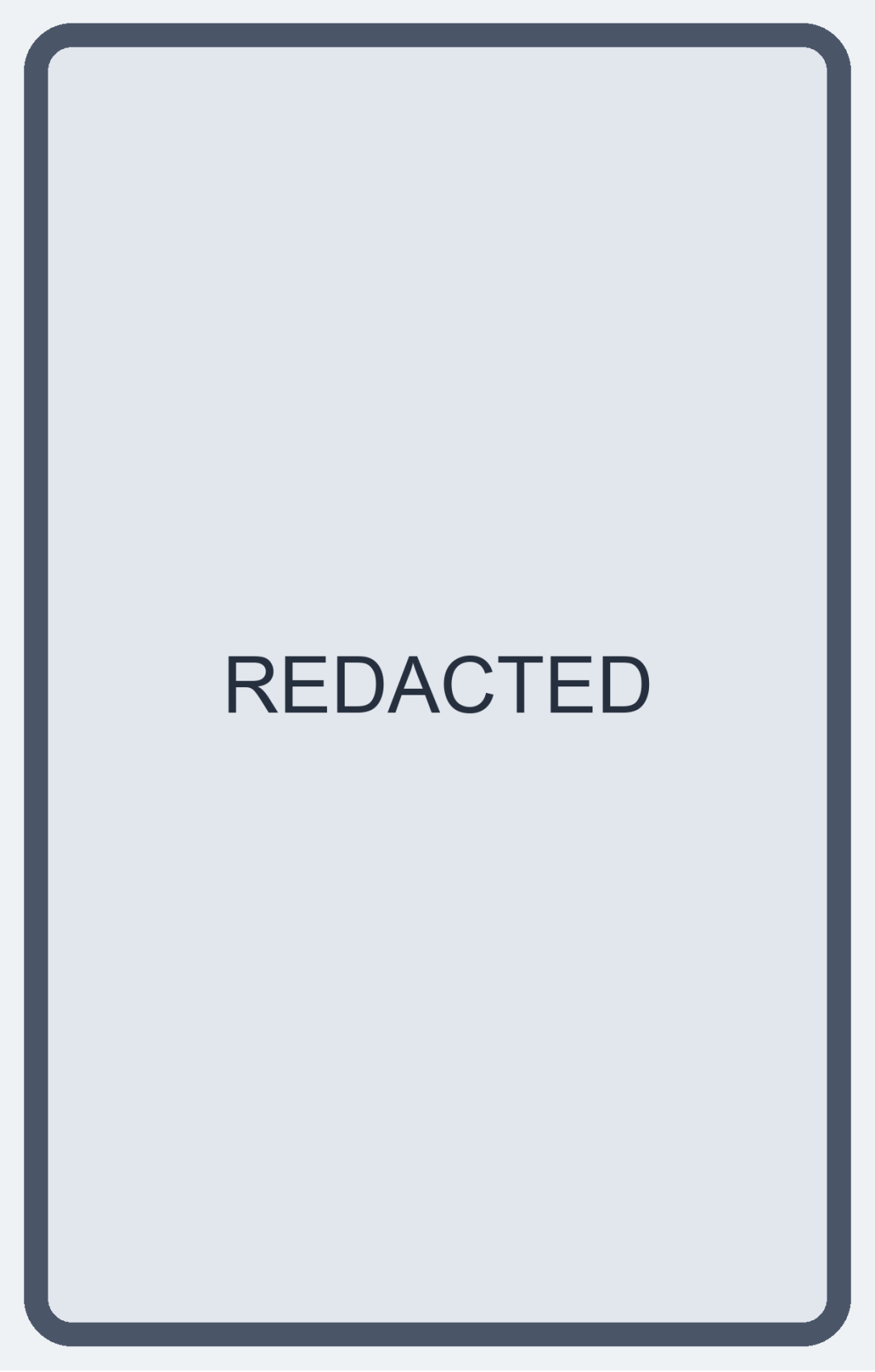


Fig. 7.17 The adapted plan of Marquis Haihun's tomb, indicating the placement of shields[18]

[18] After Huang (2022), 42, fig. 1.

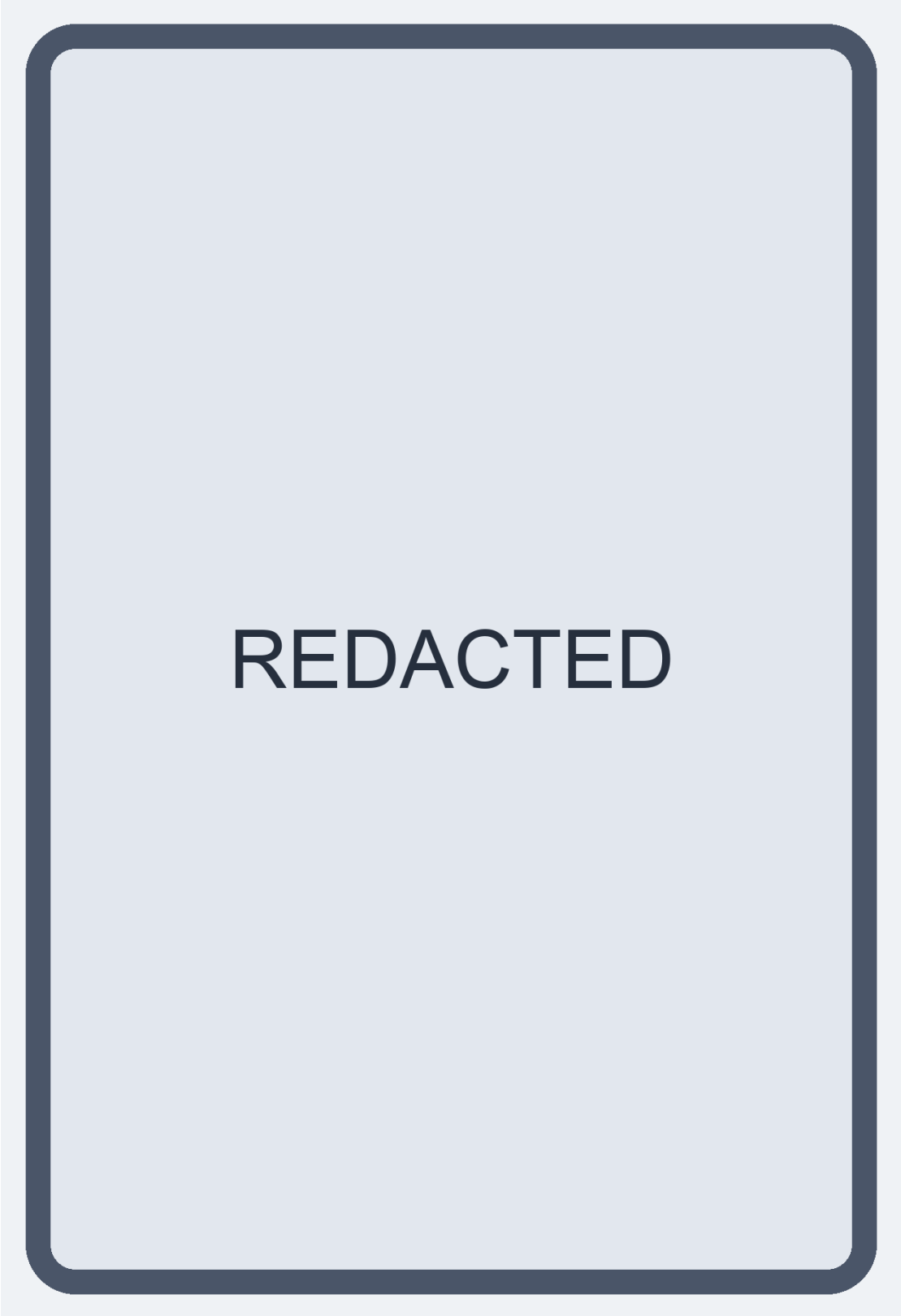


Fig. 7.18 The lacquered shields with inscriptions in Marquis Haihun's tomb[19]

[19] *Ibid.,* 46, figs. 11, 12, 13.



Fig. 8.1 Bronze plaques of the steppe showing animal combats[1]



Fig. 8.2 *yue* axe at M13 Zhuyuangou, Baoji (M13:169)[2]

[1] Salmony, Alfred (1933), *Sino-Siberian Art in the Collection of C.T. Loo* (Paris: C. T. Loo). Andersson, Johan Gunnar (1932), *Hunting Magic in the Animal Style* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities).
[2] Lu *et al.* (1988), 72, fig. 60.

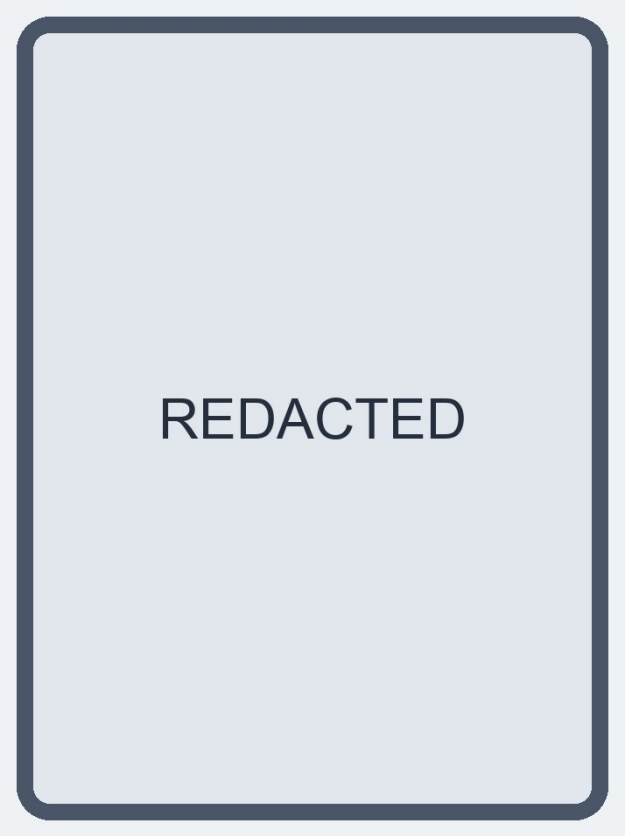


Fig. 8.3 Bird and snake fighting scenes on incised bronze from Liulige, Henan[3]



Fig. 8.4 Images of the man and the snakes[4]

[3] Liu (1982), 76, fig. 2.
[4] Zheng (1989), figs. 6-8.



Fig. 8.5 Bird-and-tiger drums[5]



Fig. 8.6 The bird-and-tiger drum at M2 Jiuliandun, Zaoyang (M2:351)[6]

[5] The figure is adapted from a: Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 95, fig. 67; b: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2001), 262, fig. 45:1; c: Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 31, fig. 17; d: Xiangyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2011), 69, fig. 41:2; e: *ibid*,. 70, fig. 42; f: Changsha shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2003), 64, fig. 22.

[6] Adapted from Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xiangyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2018), 20-3, figs. 12, 13.

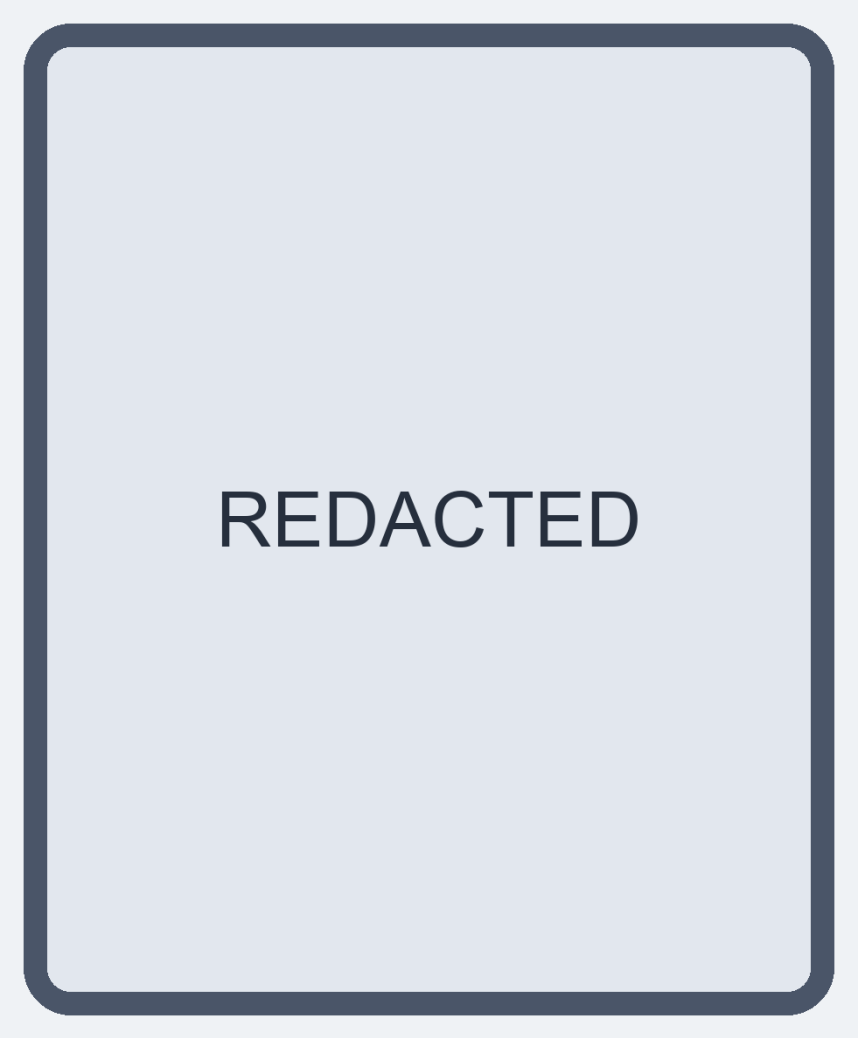


Fig. 8.7 Supporters of *se* instruments[7]

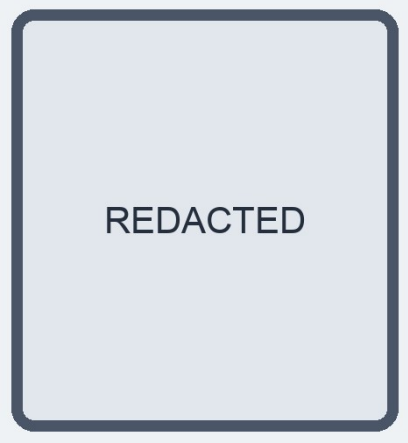


Fig. 8.8 The image of a tiger from the Zhongshan state[8]

[7] Adapted from a: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1996), Cover; b: M2:172-2 in Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xiangyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2018), cover 2; c: *ibid.,* 24, fig. 16.
[8] Adapted from Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiusuo (1996), fig. 112.

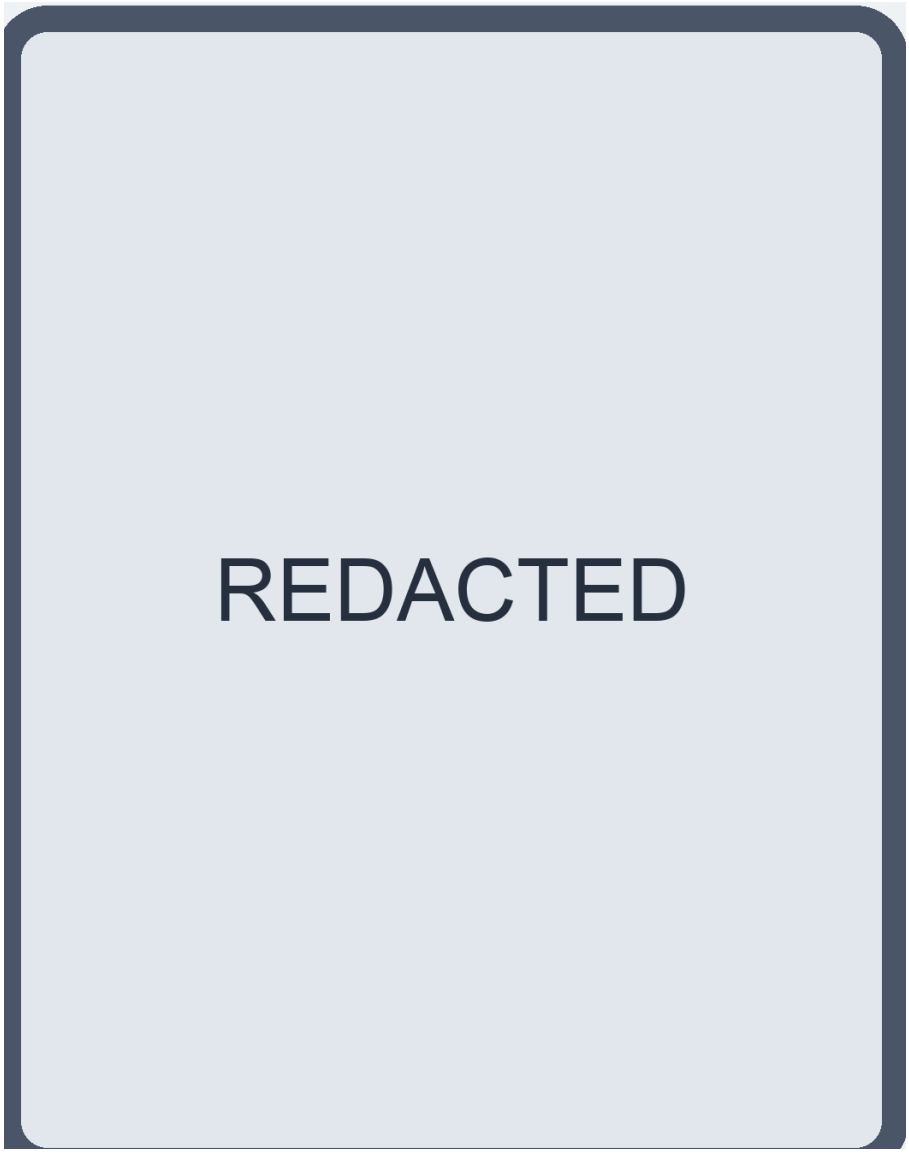


Fig. 8.9 Deer sculptures in the Warring States period[9]

[9] The figure is adapted from Hubei sheng bowuguan (1989), 380-1, fig. 238; Henan sheng wenwu yanjiusuo *et al.* (1988), 15, fig. 16; Hunan sheng bowuguan (1972), 69, fig. 10; Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan, (湖北省荆州地区博物馆) (1973), 'Hubei Jiangling Tengdian yihao mu fajue jianbao [A Brief Report on the Excavation of Tomb No. 1 at Tengdian, Jiangling, Hubei] (湖北江陵藤店一号墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu* [Cultural Relics] *(文物)*, (9), 7-17. 12, pl. 4; Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1982), 105-6, fig. 29:4; Hubei sheng bowuguan *et al.* (1973). 157-8, fig. 12, pl. 9:1; Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xiangyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2018), 44-5, fig. 36:3, pl. 69; Laohekou M2:25: Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2017), 47, fig. 21; Xiangyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2016), 35, 41, fig. 21, fig. 32:3.



Fig. 8.10 The *zu* form[10]



Fig. 8.11a Bronze base with inscriptions in Huang Junmeng's tomb[11]



Fig. 8.11b Bronze base (M2:66) with inscriptions in Zeng Zhong's name[12]

[10] Left: Yichang diqu bowuguan (1990), 29, fig. 8; right: Hubei sheng Yichang diqu bowuguan (1988a), 489, M5:38.
[11] The figure is adapted from Xinyang bowuguan (2018), 165, fig. 57; Henan sheng Xinyang diqu wenguanhui (1984).
[12] The figure is adapted from Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* (2004), 110, fig. 105, Colour Plate 15:3.

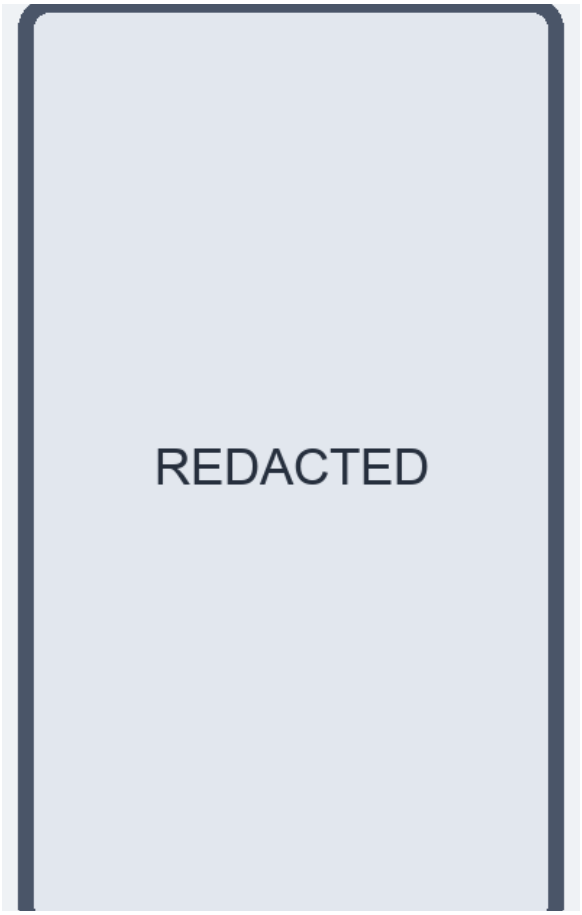


Fig. 8.12 The tomb guardian figure at Changtaiguan, Xinyang (470-370 B.C)[13]

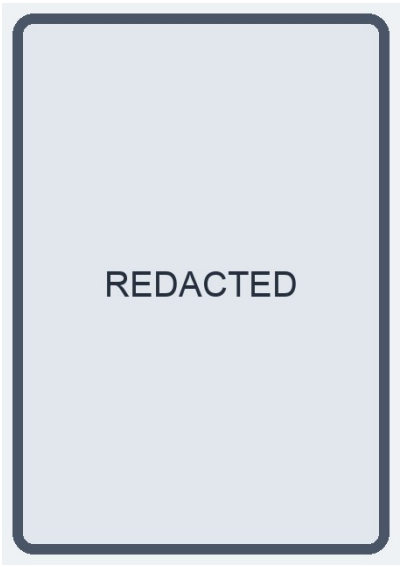
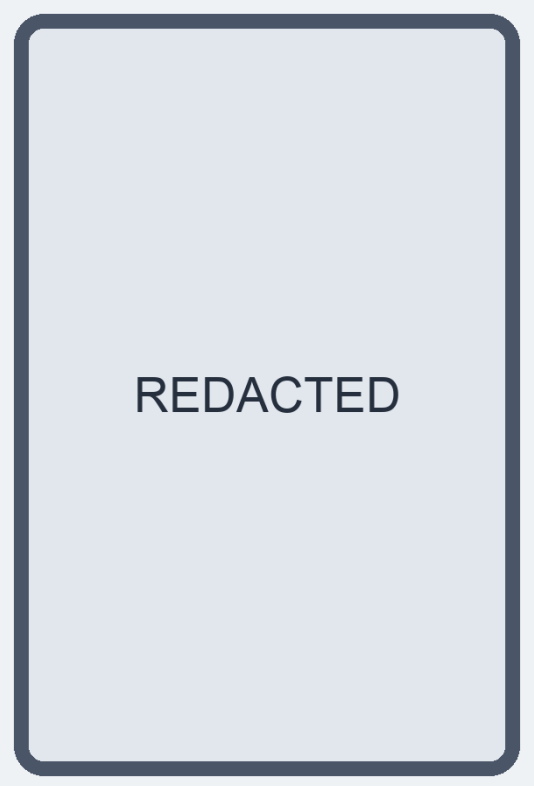
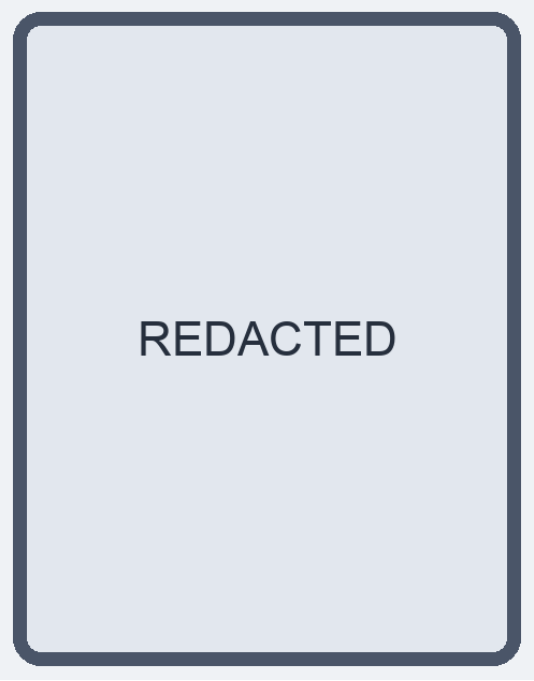


Fig. 8.13 The guardian figure of human-faced (M555:7), Yutaishan, Jingzhou (5th century B.C)[14]

[13] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 61, fig. 41.
[14] Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1984), 110, fig. 88:4.



a. Sanxingdui



b. Prince Zheng's tomb

Fig. 8.14 Bronze creatures from other regions[15]

[15] A: Hong Kong Palace Museum (2023), 70; b: Henan bowuyuan and National Museum of History (Taipei) (2001), 142.



Fig. 8.15 The square base with double antlers from M2 Changtaiguan, Xinyang[16]

[16] Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 114-8, figs. 80, 81.



Fig. 8.16a The *bixie* 辟邪 hybrid (M2:184), Jiuliandun, Zaoyang[17]



Fig. 8.16b The *bixie* 辟邪 hybrid (M1:1)[18]

[17] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xiangyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2018), 44, pl. 68.
[18] The figure is adapted from Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1985), 82-3, fig. 68, pl. 43:1.

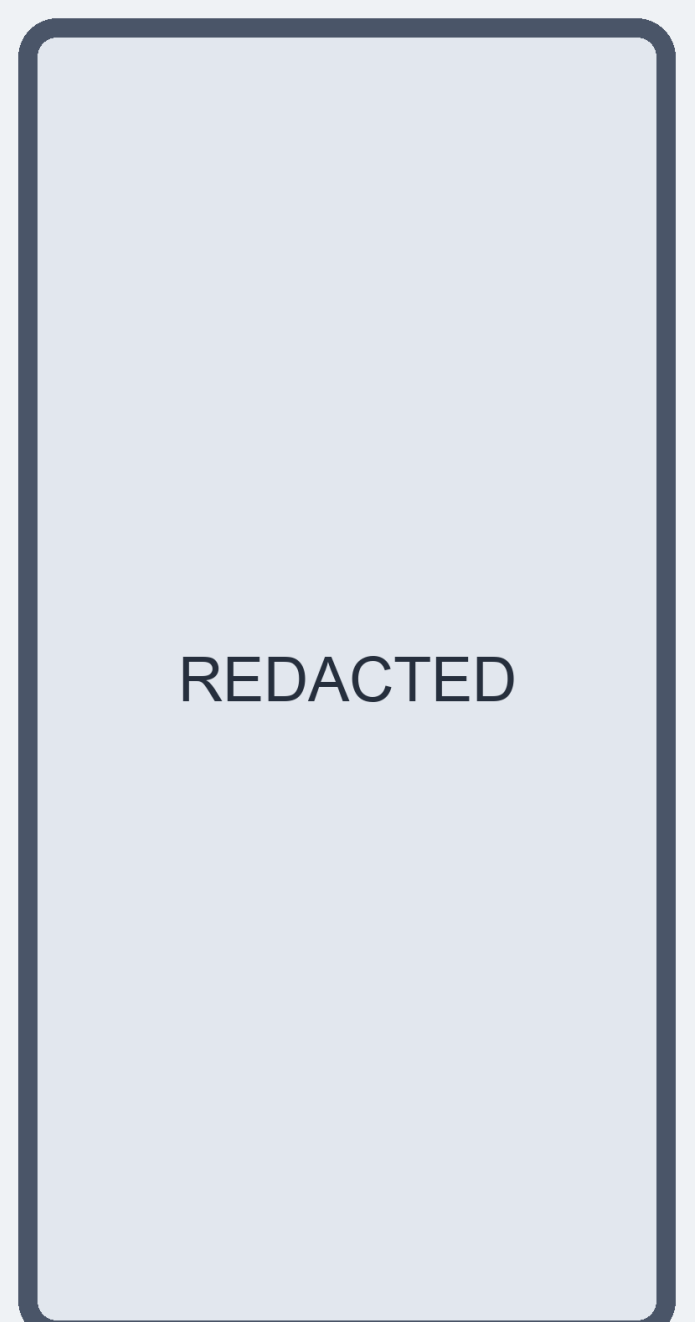


Fig. 8.17 Bird-and-tiger sculptures[19]

[19] The figure in the first row (left to right) is adapted from a. (M1:32): Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1982), 103, fig. 27; b. (M1:3, 4): Changsha shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, (长沙市文物考古研究所) (2007), 'Hunan Changsha Sangongli Chu mu fajue jianbao [A Brief Report on the Excavation of the Chu Tomb at Sangongli, Changsha, Hunan] (湖南长沙三公里楚墓发掘简报)', *Wenwu* [Cultural Relics] *(文物)*, (12), 4-20.19, fig. 28; c: Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Xinyang shi wenwu gongzuodui (2004), 35, fig. 8. The figure in the second row is adapted from Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan (1982), 64, fig. 42:1; Jingzhou bowuguan (1985). 21, fig. 9; Hubei sheng Jingsha tielu kaogudui (1991), 39-41, fig. 25; Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (2003), 28, fig. 25:5. The third row (M2:5, 9, 15-17, 19, 24, 34, 38) is adapted from Yiyang shi wenwu guanlichu, (益阳市文物管理处) and Yiyang shi bowuguan, (益阳市博物馆) (2008), *Yiyang Chu mu* [The Chu Tombs of Yiyang] *(益阳楚墓)* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe [Cultural Relics Press]), 204, fig. 192:4.



Fig. 8.18 The plan of M1 Changtaiguan, Xinyang[20]

[20] The figure is adapted from Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1986), 18, fig. 15.



Fig. 8.19 The tree and the bird-man sculpture at M2 Tianxingguan, Jingzhou[21]

[21] The figure is adapted from a (M2:109): Hubei sheng Jingzhou bowuguan (2003), 186, fig. 156; b (M2:60): *ibid.,* 181, Colour Plate 42.

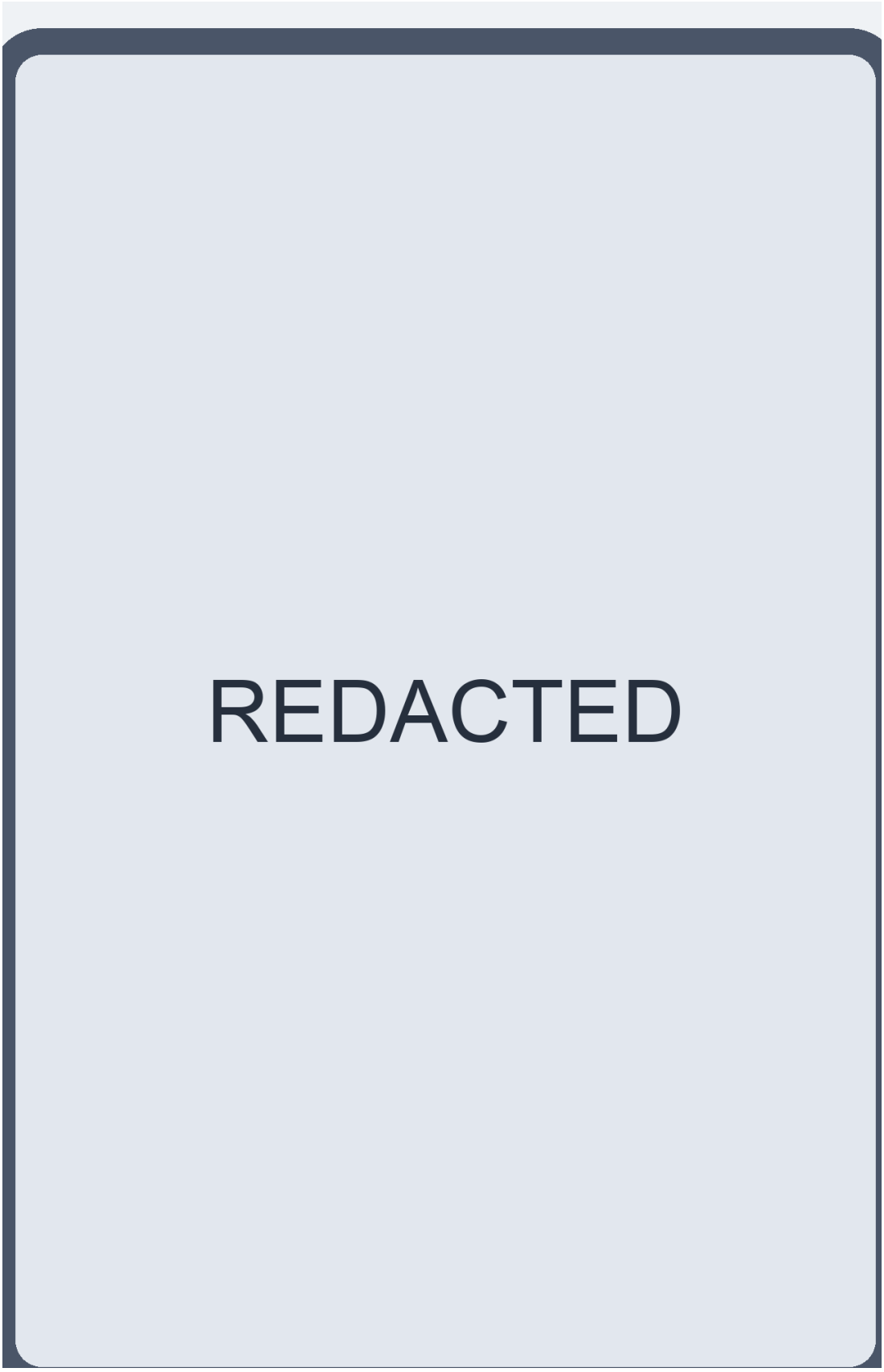


Fig. 20 The collection of figurines in Chu[22]

[22] The figure is adapted from major excavation report listed in this thesis.

Appendices

Appendix. 6.1a Food Contents in Major Chu Tombs

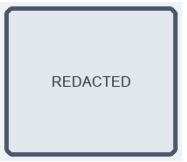
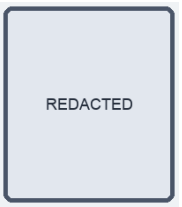
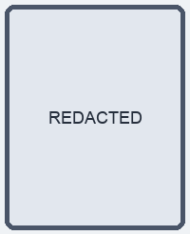
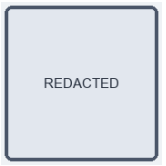
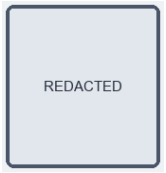
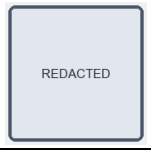
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late 6th century BC – early 5th century BC	Qiaojiayuan	M3-6	carbonized grains
570-470 B.C	Caojiagang	M5	1 kernel
early 5th century BC	Hougudui	M1	peppercorns
470-370 B.C	Ye county	No. 1	41 walnuts
4th century BC	Niuxingshan	M2	maize
370-330 B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	319 plum kernels, 16 persimmon kernel, 26 chestnuts, leaves, pinecorn, peppercorn
	Changtaiguan	M2	80 chestnuts, 100 plum kernel, millets, peppercorn, gourd seeds, jujube seeds
	Geling	M1001	107 plum and apricot kernels, melon seeds, fish, ox, goat, deer, pig, dog, and chicken bones
	Mashan	M1	lamb spines, sparrow, chicken and unidentified animal bones, peppercorns, thatch grass
	Tianxingguan	M1	charcoals
	Tianxingguan	M2	plum and fish bones
316 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	chestnuts, plums, jujubes, pears, persimmons, lotus roots, water chestnuts, gingers, chicken, young pigs
330-278 B.C.	Zuozhong	M1	corn, ox, peppercorn
	Zuozhong	M3	walnuts
	Wangshan	M1	citrus, plum, fennels, wild peaches, peppercorns, chestnuts, chicken
	Wangshan	M2	38 gingers, 367 chestnuts, 81 kdney beans, 91 plum kernels, apricots, 28 jujubes, 3 pumpkin seeds, fennel, cherries
	Shazhong	M1	fennel

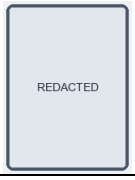
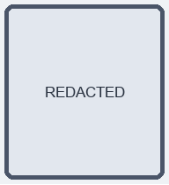
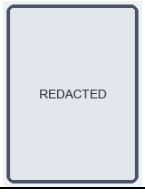
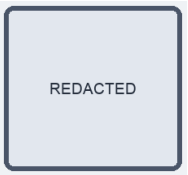
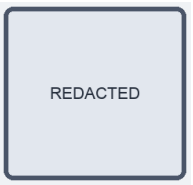
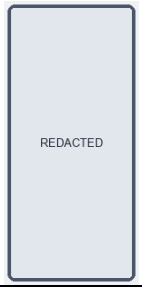
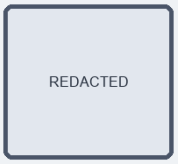
Appendix. 6.1b Food Contents in Xiasi Tombs and Marquis Yi's

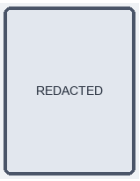
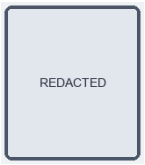
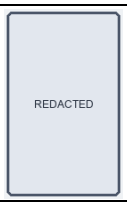
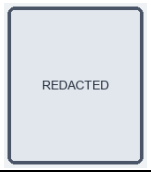
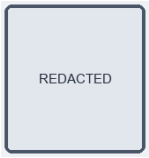
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M8	610-600 BC	*si* 飤	1	beef
M1	6th century BC	*fan* 繁	1	beef
		si 飤	1	stew
		yu 盂	2	lamb
		sheng 升	1	pork
M2	548 BC-	*fan* 繁	1	lamb
		yu 盂	3	pork
		sheng 升	5	beef
M3		*fan* 繁	2	beef
		si 飤	1	stew
		yu 盂	2	beef

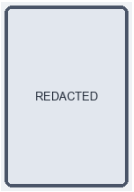
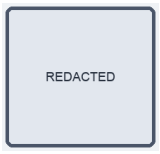
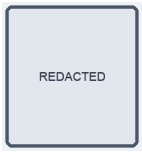
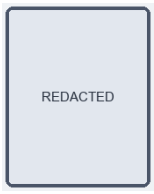
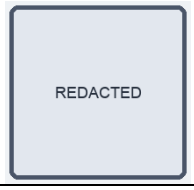
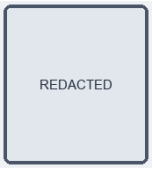
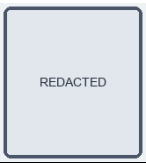
vessels	no.	Contents
huo 镬	2	half cattle
sheng 升	1	pig and chicken
	3	pig and goat
	1	cattle and chicken
	1	crucian carp
	1	pig and lamb
ding with ox-shaped lid knobs	2	cattle
	2	pig
	1	crucian carp
ding with four ring lid knobs	C.103	goose
ding with beast-shaped lid knobs	1	young pig
	1	goose
stove-plate	1	4 bighead carp
food vessel box	1	fruit skin
drinking vessel container	1	2 crucian carp and chicken

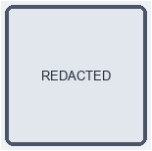
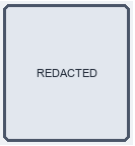
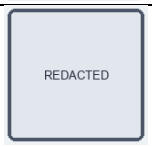
Appendix. 6.2 *Dou* Plate (round)

Original number	Period	Site	Tomb	Height	Diameter (plate)	H/ D	
G2:D4	660-650 B.C.	Guangshan	G2	16	17.6	0.91	
M4:39	early 5th century B.C.	Zhaoxiang	No. 4	14.5	13.4	1.08	
M2:5	early 5th century B.C.	Zhaoxiang	No. 2	20	16	1.25	
M1P:33	after 473 B.C.	Hougudui	No. 1	19.4	22.6	0.86	
C.72	433-400 B.C.	Leigudun	No. 1	11.9	12.3	0.97	
C.145	433-400 B.C.	Leigudun	No. 1	11.3	11.4	0.99	
C.198	433-400 B.C.	Leigudun	No. 1	11	12.2	0.90	
E.115	433-400 B.C.	Leigudun	No. 1	17	19.6	0.87	

Original number	Period	Site	Tomb	Height	Diameter (plate)	H/ D	
M1:38	370-330 B.C.	Jicheng	M1	23	15.8	1.46	
	370-330 B.C.	Niuxing shan	M1	15.4	13.3	1.16	
M1:48	370-330 B.C.	Tianxing guan	M1	21.2	15.7	1.35	
M2:111	370-330 B.C.	Tianxing guan	M2	24.4	25	0.98	
M2:166	370-330 B.C.	Tianxing guan	M2	23	25	0.92	
M2:80	370-330 B.C.	Tianxing guan	M2	23.6	17.8	1.33	
M2:106 /110	370-330 B.C.	Tianxing guan	M2	24.4	18.4	1.33	
M2:238	370-330 B.C.	Tianxing guan	M2	25.9	24.8	1.04	
M2:113	370-330 B.C.	Tianxing guan	M2	17.8	14	1.27	

Original number	Period	Site	Tomb	Height	Diameter (plate)	H/ D	
M2:97	4th century B.C.	Yaojiagang	M2	18.6	14	1.33	
1:766	370-330 B.C.	Changtai guan	M1	19.4	16.4	1.18	
2:3	370-330 B.C.	Changtai guan	M2	24	20	1.20	
2:342	370-330 B.C.	Changtai guan	M2	21.5	15.5	1.39	
	330-278 B.C.	Guoer chong	M1	19.5	15	1.30	
M1:11	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M1	16	14.2	1.13	
M2:115	316 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	27.2	20	1.36	
WM1:T 174	4th century B.C.	Wangshan	M1	18	17.5	1.03	
WM1:B 122	330-278 B.C.	Wangshan	M1	16.7	14	1.19	
WM2:T 36	330-278 B.C.	Wangshan	M2	20	18.8	1.06	

Original number	Period	Site	Tomb	Height	Diameter (plate)	H/ D	
SM1:33	330-278 B.C.	Shazhong	M1	18	14	1.29	
M1:D38	330-278 B.C.	Wangshan qiao	M1	24.4	23.8	1.03	
M1:D82	330-278 B.C.	Wangshan qiao	M1	24.9	23	1.08	
	330-278 B.C.	Lijiatai	M4	17.4	15	1.16	
E:13	330-278 B.C.	Zuozhong	M1	22.5	23		
M1:26	330-278 B.C.	Angang	M1	16.5	14.9	1.11	
M1:24	330-278 B.C.	Jiuliandun	M1	19.7	15.4	1.28	
M1:38	330-278 B.C.	Jiuliandun	M1	22.5	22.4	1.00	
M1:90	330-278 B.C.	Jiuliandun	M1	17.4	14.4	1.21	
M2:11	330-278 B.C.	Jiuliandun	M2	23.5	13.6		

Original number	Period	Site	Tomb	Height	Diameter (plate)	H/D	
M2:27	330-278 B.C.	Jiuliandun	M2	28.2	23		
M2:153	330-278 B.C.	Jiuliandun	M2	19.6	16.2	1.21	
M2:154	330-278 B.C.	Jiuliandun	M2	28.4	18.6	1.53	
WM18:35	330-278 B.C.	Wangjiachong	WM18	15.6	14.8	1.05	
LM6:3	330-278 B.C.	Longwangshan	LM3	15.6	13.2	1.18	
M1:10 (f)	330-278 B.C.	Luchong	M1	15.6	13.2		
M69:1 (f)	330-278 B.C.	Aozhangang	M69		13.6	0.00	
M69:9	330-278 B.C.	Aozhangang	M69	17.8	13.6	1.31	
M2:18	330-278 B.C.	Laohekou	M2	25.6	15.8	1.62	
M2:65	330-278 B.C.	Geling	M2002	25.6	18.8	1.36	
M5:49	278-221 B.C.	Caojiagang	M5	14.6	12.8	1.14	

Appendix. 6.3 Eared Cups in Major Tombs

Original number	Period	Location	Tomb	Length	Width	Height
C.208-223	433-400 B.C.	Leigudun	Marquis Yi's	15.8	11.4	4.7
79M1:8	4th century B.C.	Linli	79M1	18.4	16	5
M1:04	4th century B.C.	Jicheng	M1	17.6	12.1	5
M1:05	4th century B.C.	Jicheng	M1	17.5	16.4	4.2
M1:13	4th century B.C.	Jicheng	M1	12.6	11.4	3.4
	4th century B.C.	Niuxingshan	M1	19	11	6.5
M1:8	4th century B.C.	Tianxingguan	M1	15.6	11.3	4.4
M1:26	4th century B.C.	Maotingzi	M1	17.4	13.8	6.3
M1:31	4th century B.C.	Maotingzi	M1	17.3	13.8	6.2
M1:65	4th century B.C.	Mayishunxiang	M1	17	15.6	6.1
M1:519	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	18	11.5	5.3
M1:522	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17.2	11.5	5
M1:527	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17	9.7	5.9
M1:528	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17.7	11.8	4.8
M1:529	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	15.6	10.5	5.3
M1:531	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17.5	11.2	5
M1:534	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17.3	11.9	5.3
M1:536	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	14	9.4	5.1
M1:538	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	18.3	12	5.7
M1:542	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17.8	11.6	4.8
M1:554	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17.6	11.4	5.5
M1:555	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	18.2	11.8	5.8
M1:557	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	18	12.5	5.1
M1:593	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17.9	13.5	6
M1:602	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17.7	11.5	5.1
M1:605	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17.6	11.5	4.8
M1:608	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17.7	11.9	5.9
M1:609	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17.8	10	5.7
M1:610	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	18.4	12	4.1
M1:611	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	18.3	11.6	5.6
M1:623	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	18.6	12.9	6
M1:628	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	14.5	10.2	5.9
M1:629	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	11.3	9.7	4.7
M1:632	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	18.6	12.9	4
M1:633	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	18	10.9	5.8
M1:635	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	18.6	11.9	5.4
M1:638	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	17.8	10.2	4.9
M1:640	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	18.6	11.5	5.2
M1:645	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M1	11.3	10.3	5.2

Original number	Period	Location	Tomb	Length	Width	Height
M2:349	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M2		13	5.5
M2:24	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M2	17	11.3	6
M2:77	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M2	16.8	14	6
M2:307	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M2	16.2	13.7	5.2
M2:21	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M2		15.1	6.8
M2:81	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M2	18.5	12	6.6
M2:287	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M2	16.2		5.5
M2:297	4th century B.C.	Changtaiguan	M2	16.5	14.5	6
M1:17-1	4th century B.C.	Mashan	M1	16.7	10	3.3
M1:17-3	4th century B.C.	Mashan	M1	14.3	9.4	4.1
M1:17-5	4th century B.C.	Mashan	M1	12.2	7.9	3.3
M1:17-10	4th century B.C.	Mashan	M1	17	10.8	3.7
M1:17-2	4th century B.C.	Mashan	M1	18.1	10.8	4
M1:17-12	4th century B.C.	Mashan	M1	11.5	7.3	3.2
M1:17-8	4th century B.C.	Mashan	M1	11.5	7.2	3.5
M2:83	4th century B.C.	Tianxingguan	M2	17.8	11	6
M2:154	4th century B.C.	Tianxingguan	M2	17.5	10	6.1
M2:156	4th century B.C.	Tianxingguan	M2	17	9	6
M2:157	4th century B.C.	Tianxingguan	M2	17.5	14	4.8
M2:158	4th century B.C.	Tianxingguan	M2	17.8	9.2	5
M2:257	4th century B.C.	Tianxingguan	M2	16.4	10	4.5
M2:95	4th century B.C.	Tianxingguan	M2	18.6	10.8	5.9
M2:96	4th century B.C.	Tianxingguan	M2	18.6	10.1	5.9
M2:105	4th century B.C.	Tianxingguan	M2	19	10.1	5.9
M2:117	4th century B.C.	Tianxingguan	M2	18.3	9	4.9
M2:155	4th century B.C.	Tianxingguan	M2	13	9.8	5.7
M1:B8	4th century B.C.	Guodian	M1	18.5	12	
M1E:18	4th century B.C.	Zuozhong	M1	15	10.2	5
M1E:11	4th century B.C.	Zuozhong	M1	15	9	5.2
M1E:35	4th century B.C.	Zuozhong	M1	19	10.7	5.2
WM1:B13-6-14	4th century B.C.	Wangshan	M1	13.3	11	3.8
SM1:37	4th century B.C.	Shazhong	M1	15.2		4.7
SM1:37-2	4th century B.C.	Shazhong	M1	15.2		4.7
M1:D2	4th century B.C.	Wangshanqiao	M1	18.2	12	
M1:D11	4th century B.C.	Wangshanqiao	M1	18.4	12	
M1:B22	4th century B.C.	Wangshanqiao	M1	15.2	10.6	
M1:14	4th century B.C.	Baoshan	M1	18.2	10.9	5.2
M1:18	4th century B.C.	Baoshan	M1	18.6	11.2	5.4
M2:4-4	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	14.7	8.8	4.8
M2:4-5	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	14.5	8.8	4.8

Original number	Period	Location	Tomb	Length	Width	Height
M2:4-6	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	14.4	8.8	4.8
M2:4-7	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	14.5	8.8	4.8
M2:4-8	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	14.3	8.8	4.8
M2:4-9	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	14.5	8.8	4.8
M2:4-10	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	14.5	8.7	4.8
M2:4-11	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	14.4	8.7	4.9
M2:18	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.3	10.6	5.6
M2:19	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.1	10.4	5.4
M2:20	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.4	10.6	5.5
M2:21	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.1	10.4	5.1
M2:22	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.1	10.5	5.3
M2:24	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.2	10.3	5
M2:26	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.2	10.3	5.4
M2:27	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.3	10.4	5
M2:28	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.3	10.4	5.2
M2:29	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.3	10.3	5.4
M2:32	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.4	10.6	5.5
M2:33	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.2	10.4	5.3
M2:39	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.2	10.4	5.4
M2:40	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.5	10.4	5.7
M2:42	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.1	10.4	5.3
M2:78	330-278 B.C	Baoshan	M2	17.3	10.4	5.3
M2:79	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.2	10.4	5.5
M2:84	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.2	10.4	5.1
M2:86	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17	10.4	5.9
M2:133	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.1	10.6	5.3
M2:208	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.3	10.6	5
M2:209	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17	10.3	5.1
M2:210	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.2	10.3	5.2
M2:211	330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	17.3	10.4	5.4
M1:15	330-278 B.C.	Sanyuancun	M1	16	10	5.2
M566:100	330-278 B.C.	Bailuzhou	M566	16.4	12.7	
M585:45	330-278 B.C.	Bailuzhou	M585	24	19.2	
M1:15	330-278 B.C.	Laohekou	M1	16.9	11.5	
M2:332 bronze	330-278 B.C.	Jiuliandun	M2	10.8	7.7	
M2:236	330-278 B.C.	Jiuliandun	M2	12.7	7.5	
M2:237	330-278 B.C.	Jiuliandun	M2	20.1	10.6	
M2:161-3	330-278 B.C.	Jiuliandun	M2	18.6	11	

Appendix. 6.4 Number of Lacquered Vessels and Tables in Comparison

Period	Site	Tomb	Status	*dou*	Eared cups	an/ji	*zu*
470-370 B.C.	Leigudun	No. 1	Marquis Yi of Zeng	23	16	4	10
4th century B.C.	Changtai guan	M1	Chu elite	42	30	13	25
	Changtai guan	M2	Chu elite	28	13	4	28
	Tianxing guan	M1	Local lord	9	4	10	/
	Tianxing guan	M2	Local lord	49	19	11	21
	Niuxingshan	M1	Chu elite	16	33+	1	/
	Zuozhong	M1	Chu elite	6	5	21	5
	Wangshan	M1	Chu elite	10	17	2	20
	Wangshan	M2	Chu elite	4	36	7	19
330-278 B.C.	Baoshan	M2	Chu elite	8	32	7	7
	Jiuliandun	M1	Local lord	39	41	6	36
	Jiuliandun	M2	Local lord	60	16	7	40

Appendix. 7.1 *Qiance* Inventory Lists

No.	Date	Tomb	Site	Location of slips	Number of slips	Length	Width/ slip
a	470-370 B.C.	Marquis Yi	Leigudun	Northern chamber	240	70-75 cm	1 cm
b	370-330 B.C.	M1	Changtai guan	Southwestern chamber	29	68.5-68.9 cm	0.5-0.9 cm
c	330-278 B.C.	M2	Baoshan	Eastern/Western/Southern chambers	31	(68) 72.3-72.6 cm	0.75-1 cm
d	330-278 B.C.	M2 (female)	Wangshan	Eastern part of side chamber	66	64 cm	0.65 cm
e	278-221 B.C.	M569	Yangjiawan	A lacquered box (l:34cm)	72	13.5-13.7	0.6
f	278-221 B.C.	M167	Yangtianhu	Northern part of the side chamber	42	20.2-21.6	0.9-1.1
g	278-221 B.C.	M5 (female)	Caojiagang	Southern side	7	12.8-12.9	0.7-0.75

Appendix 7.2 The Gift Givers and Gifted Chariots in Marquis Yi's *qiance*

No.	Giver	Status	Provenance	Name	Type	Number	Total
1	鬲阝君	Local lord	Chu	*yi* 俏	Travel	1	5
				chengyi/guang 乘俏（广）	War	1	
				lu 路车	Travel	3	
2	集阝君	Local lord	Chu	*yuanxuan* 圆轩	Travel	1	1
3	君	Local lord	Chu	*tian* 田车	Hunt	1	1
4	Lord Pingye 坪夜君	Local lord	Runan, Henan*	*tian* 田车	Hunt	1	3
				lu 路车	Travel	2	
5	奄阝尹 *yin*	official(lord?)	Lu state, Shandong*	*tian* 田车	Hunt	1	1
6	王	King of Chu	Chu	*yuxuan* 鱼轩	Travel	1	4
				lu 路车	Travel	3	
7	 君	Local lord	Henan (near Anhui)	*lu* 路车	Travel	1	1
8	陽城君	Local lord	Chu	*lu* 路车	Travel	3	3
9	鲁（陽）公	Chu official	Chu	*lu* 路车	Travel	3	4
				yi 俏	Travel	1	
10	太子	Crown prince	Chu	*lu* 路车	Travel	3	3
11	左尹	Left *yin*	Chu	*yi* 俏	Travel	1	1
12	卿士	*Qingshi*		*yi* 俏	Travel	1	1
13	令尹	*Lingyin*	Chu	*qing* 轻车	Travel	1	1

* refers to places that are not Zeng

Appendix 7.3a Chariots and the Matched Horses in Marquis Yi's *qiance*

No	Chariot	Giver	Status	Provenance	Position	Colour
1	*Dapei* 大旆	Pu 莆			1	/
2		*qingshi* 卿士	high official		2	red with black tail 騮
3		蔡齿奇		Cai, Anhui	3	yellow with black beak 騍
4		隹阝 君 *jun*	local lord		4	dark blue spotted 騏
5	*Zuopei* 左旆	馬夭			1	/
6		鬲阝 君	local lord		2	/
7		北坪			3	red with black tail 騮
8		right *yin* 右尹	high official	Chu	4	red with black tail 騮
9	*Zuopei 2* 左旆	right *yin* 右尹	high official	Chu	1	white
10		大迅尹 *yin*	official		2	yellow
11		大工尹 *yin*	official (craftsmen /chariots)	Zeng/Chu	3	red with black tail 騮
12		奢阝 牧			4	dark blue spotted 騏
13	*Youpei* 右旆	某 [redacted]			1	young gelding 少 [redacted]
14		*laoling* 牢令	official (sacfrices/ horses)		2	yellow
15		某 [redacted]			3	old gelding 大 [redacted]
16		依			4	dark blue spotted 騏
17	*Youpei* 2 右旆	奢阝 牧			1	white fur arround eyes 马见
18		高奢阝			2	female 牸
19		大首			3	red with black tail 騮
20		奢阝 牧			4	white fur arround eyes 马见
21	*Yi* 1 佾 *	*Zhuoyi* 獟耳			1	yellow
22		莆			2	yellow
23		某 [redacted]			3	yellow
24		王 [redacted]			4	yellow

No	Chariot	Giver	Status	Provenance	Position	Colour
25	*Dadian* 大殿	鬲阝 尹 *yin*	official		1	red with black tail 騮
26		REDACTED			2	red with black tail 騮
27		REDACTED			3	red with black tail 騮
28		鬲阝 君	local lord		4	yellow
29	*Zuodian* 左殿	right *dengtu* 右登徒	official	Chu	1	dark blue spotted 騏
30		鬲阝 君	local lord		2	red with black tail 騮
31		right *sima* 右司马	official (war)	Western Zhou	3	red with black tail 騮
32		新造尹	official		4	white fur arround eyes 马见
33	*Zuodian* 2 左殿	司马上子			1	
34		某 REDACTED			2	black
35		畋尹 *yin*	official (chariots)		3	red with black tail 騮
36		郑成			4	red with black tail 騮
37	*Zuodian* 3 左殿	大工尹 *yin*	official (craftsmen /chariots)		1	red with black tail 騮
38		中 x 尹 *yin*	official		2	yellow
39		left *dengtu* 左登徒	official	Chu	3	yellow
40		缄尹 *yin*	official		4	red with black tail 騮
41	*Youdian* 右殿	郳马尹 *yin*	official	Shandong	1	red with black tail 騮
42		鬲阝 君	local lord		2	red with black tail 騮
43		鬲阝 君	local lord		3	red with black tail 騮
44		REDACTED			4	dark blue spotted 騏
45	*Xing Guang 1* 行广	right *yin* 右尹	high official	Chu	1	white
46		right *yin* 右尹	high official	Chu	2	dark blue spotted 騏
47		宰尹臣			3	dark blue spotted 騏

No	Chariot	Giver	Status	Provenance	Position	Colour
48		right *yin* 右尹	high official	Chu	4	red with black tail 騮
49	*Xing guang* 2 行广	芒斩			1	black
50		讯史啟			2	black
51		宰尹臣			3	yellow
52		怠			4	red with black tail 騮
53	*Xing guang* 3 行广	王孙生			1	dark blue spotted 騏
54		中城子		Lu state	2	red with black tail 騮
55		讯史伐			3	dark blue spotted 騏
56		[redacted]牙尹 *yin*			4	yellow
57	*Xing guang* 4 行广	嬴尹易阝			1	black
58		[redacted]	local lord	Henan (near Anhui)	2	red with black tail 騮
59		嬴尹易阝			3	yellow
60		濬			4	red with black tail 騮
61	*Xing guang* 5 行广	赵定			1	dark blue spotted 騏
62		鬲阝君	local lord		2	red with black tail 騮
63		*zhuiyin* 赘尹	official (spirits)		3	dark blue spotted 騏
64		*zhuiyin* 赘尹	official (spirits)	Chu	4	red with black tail 騮
65	*Tian* 1 田车*	Lord Pingye 坪夜君	local lord	Runan, Henan	1	red with black tail 騮
66					2	red with black tail 騮
67	*Tian* 2 田车*	Lord Pingye 坪夜君	local lord	Runan, Henan	1	red with black tail 騮
68					2	red with black tail 騮
69	*Yi* 2 佾	复尹 *yin*	official		1	dark blue spotted 騏
70					2	yellow
71	*Yi* 3 佾*	Lord Yangcheng 阳城君	local lord		1	red with black tail 騮

No	Chariot	Giver	Status	Provenance	Position	Colour
72		集阝君	local lord		2	red with black tail 騮
73	Old *An* 旧安车	都牧			1	untamed pinto 生驳
74		黑敢夫		Shandong	2	
75		长场人	official (gardens)		3	black
76		木戈人	official (ritual shooting)		4	
77	New *An* 安车	牙坪			1	[redacted]
78		晋阳			2	pinto 驳
79		*zhuiyin* 赘尹	official (spirits)		3	[redacted]
80		郑			4	[redacted]
81	*Zheng* 政车	高短之			1	yellow and white 騜
82		阳城君	local lord		2	马孚
83		般水			3	red with black tail 騮
84		[redacted]			4	a fine horse 骏马
85	*Cheng guang* 乘广	[redacted]			1	red with black tail 騮
86					2	Leopard 豹袭
87		高			3	马匕
88		高奢阝			4	red with black tail 騮
89	*Shao guang* 少广	县子			1	red with black tail 騮
90		司马 *sima*	official		2	
91		黑敢夫		Shandong	3	white fur arround eyes 马见
92		左司马 left *Sima*	official		4	red with black tail 騮
93	*Chengyi* 乘佾*	高奢阝			1	black
94		黑敢夫		Shandong	2	black
95		刑田君			3	black
96		[redacted]甫子			4	black
97	*Yi* 4 佾	[redacted]深			1	
98		[redacted] 甫			2	red with black tail 騮

No	Chariot	Giver	Status	Provenance	Position	Colour
99		[redacted]			3	red with black tail 騮
100		[redacted]			4	red with black tail 騮
101		[redacted]			5	pinto 马班
102		宋客			6	red with black tail 騮
103	*Yixuan* 佾轩*	歹陽禐			1	black
104		[redacted]			2	black
105		卿士 *qingshi*	high official		3	black
106		集阝君	local lord		4	black
107		建巨			5	
108		[redacted]			6	black
109	*Mocheng* 墨乘* (lacquered)	方阝鬲阝			1	马孚
110		公	duke?		2	马孚
111		集阝君	local lord		3	马孚
112		[redacted]			4	马孚
113		宋司城	official	Song	5	马孚
114		大首			6	马孚
115	*Yuxuan* 鱼轩	茫			1	[redacted]
116		嬛			2	[redacted]
117		黑敢夫		Shandong	3	black
118		禾工			4	black
119		难			5	pinto 驳
120		*sima* 司马			6	white
121	*Tian* 3 田车	宫殿尹 *yin*	official (palace)		1	red with black tail 騮
122		*taizai* 太宰	official		2	red with black tail 騮
123			[redacted]		3	female 牸
124		大首			4	female 牸
125		某 [redacted]			5	red with black tail 騮
126		[redacted]			6	female 牸
127	Carved chariot	郑重			1	white
128		宋司城	official	Song	2	white with mixed colour 马古
129	[redacted]	哀臣			3	white with mixed colour 马古

No	Chariot	Giver	Status	Provenance	Position	Colour
130		乐君			4	white with mixed colour 马古
131		left *yin* 左尹	official	Chu	5	white with mixed colour 马古
132		西方阝			6	white with mixed colour 马古
133	*Heng* 王衡车				1	dark blue spotted 騏
134		*shaoshi* 少师		Zeng/Chu	2	[redacted]
135		*sima* 司马			3	black
136		*shaoshi* 少师			4	red with black tail 騮
137	*Dalu* 大路	黑敢夫		Shandong	1	[redacted]
138		目心辛			2	[redacted]
139		贝兮公			3	black
140	*Zhulu* 1 朱路	奢阝牧			1	red with black tail 騮
141		贝兮公			2	yellow
142	*Zhulu* 2 朱路	*muren* 牧人	official (animals)		1	dark blue spotted 騏
143		*muren* 牧人	official (animals)		2	red with black tail 騮
144	*Zhulu* 3 朱路	贝兮公			1	[redacted]
145		奢阝牧			2	yellow
146	*Shaolu* 1 輔路	贝兮公			1	马单
147		贝兮公			2	yellow
148	*Shaolu* 2 輔路	*muren* 牧人	official (animals)		1	yellow
149					2	yellow
150	*Lu* 路	集阝君	local lord		1	马单
151		*gongyin* 工尹	Official carftsmen	Chu	2	red with black tail 騮
152	*Lu* 1 路	King		Chu	3	red with black tail 騮
153	*Lu* 2 路				2	black
154	*Lu* 3 路				2	red with black tail 騮
155	*Lu* 1 路	Crown prince		Chu	4	/
156	*Lu* 2 路				2	/
157	*Lu* 3 路				2	/
158	*Lu* 1 路	坪夜君	local lord		2	/

No	Chariot	Giver	Status	Provenance	Position	Colour
159	*Lu* 2 路			Runan, Henan	2	/
160	*Lu* 1 路	[redacted] 君	local lord	Henan (near Anhui)	2	/
161	*Lu* 1 路	陽城君			2	/
162	*Lu* 2 路				2	/
163	*Lu* 3 路				2	/
164	*Lu* 1 路	鬲阝君			2	/
165	*Lu* 2 路				2	/
166	*Lu* 3 路				2	/
167	*Lu* 1 路	魯（陽）公			2	/
168	*Lu* 2 路				2	/
169	*Lu* 3 路				2	/
170	*Guang* 广	鬲阝君			2	1 yellow and 1 black female horses
171	*yi* 佾车	赘阳公			2	/
172	*yi* 佾车	卿士			2	1 (?) and 1 yellow female horses
173	*yi* 佾车	??			2	red with black tail 騮
174	*Tian* 田车	巨木阝君			2	yellow
175	*Tian* 田车	令尹			2	red with black tail 騮
176	*Tian* 田车	集阝君			2	1 female and 1 yellow and white horses

Appendix 7.3b The Gifted Horses and Their Colours in Marquis Yi's *qiance*

No.	Owner	Status	Provenance	Number of horses	Colour	Chariot
1	鬲邝君	local lord		10	/	*Zuopei* 左旆
					yellow	*Dadian* 大殿
					red with black tail 騮	*Zuodian* 左殿
					red with black tail 騮	*Youdian* 右殿
					red with black tail 騮	
					red with black tail 騮	*Xingguang* 5 行广
					yellow	*Guang* 广
					black female 牝	
					/	*Lu* 1 路
					/	
2	集邝君 *jun*	local lord		7	dark blue spotted 騏	*Dapei* 大旆
					red with black tail 騮	*Yi* 3 佾*
					black	*Yixuan* 佾轩*
					马孚	*Mocheng* 墨乘 (lacquered) *
					马单	*Lu* 路
					female 牝	*Tian* 田车
					yellow and white	
3	坪夜君	local lord	Runan, Henan	6	red with black tail 騮	*tian* 1 田车*
					red with black tail 騮	
					red with black tail 騮	*tian* 2 田车*
					red with black tail 騮	
					/	*Lu* 1 路
					/	
4	贝兮公 *gong*	duke		5	black	*Dalu* 大路
					yellow	*Zhulu* 1 朱路
					[redacted]	*Zhulu* 3 朱路
					马单	

No.	Owner	Status	Provenance	Number of horses	Colour	Chariot
					yellow	*Shaolu* 1 輔路
5	阳城君	local lord		2	red with black tail 騮	*Yi* 3 佾*
					马孚	*Zheng* 政车
6	*qingshi* 卿士	high official		4	red with black tail 騮	*Dapei* 大旆
					black	*Yixuan* 佾軒*
					(?)	*yi* 佾车
					yellow female	
7	right *yin* 右尹	high official	Chu	5	red with black tail 騮	*Zuopei* 左旆
					white	*Zuopei 2* 左旆
					white	*Xingguang* 1 行广
					dark blue spotted 騏	
					red with black tail 騮	
8	大工尹 *yin*	official (craftsmen/chariots)	Zeng/Chu	3	red with black tail 騮	*Zuopei 2* 左旆
					red with black tail 騮	*Zuodian* 3 左殿
					red with black tail 騮	*Lu* 路
9	*shaoshi* 少师		Zeng/Chu	2	[redacted]	*Heng* 王衡车
					red with black tail 騮	
10	*muren* 牧人	official (animals)		3	dark blue spotted 騏	*Zhulu* 2 朱路
					red with black tail 騮	
					yellow	*Shaolu* 2 輔路
11	*zhuiyin* 赘尹	official (spirits)	Chu	3	dark blue spotted 騏	*Xingguang* 5 行广
					red with black tail 騮	
					[redacted]	New *An* 安车
12	宋司城	official	Song	2	马孚	*Mocheng* 墨乘 (lacquered) *

No.	Owner	Status	Provenance	Number of horses	Colour	Chariot
					white with mixed colour 马古	[redacted]
13	黑敢夫		Shandong	5	white fur arround eyes 马见	*Shanguang* 少广
						Old *An* 旧安车
					black	*Chengyi* 乘佾*
					black	*Yuxuan* 鱼轩
					[redacted]	*Dalu* 大路
14	奢阝牧			5	dark blue spotted 騏	*Zuopei* 2 左旆
					white fur arround eyes 马见	*Youpei* 2 右旆
					white fur arround eyes 马见	
					red with black tail 騮	*Zhulu* 1 朱路
					yellow	*Zhulu* 3 朱路
15	某[redacted]			5	young gelding 少[redacted]	*Youpei* 右旆
					old gelding 大[redacted]	
					yellow	*Yi* 1 佾*
					black	*Zuodian* 2 左殿
					red with black tail 騮	*tian* 3 田车
16	高奢阝			3	female 牸	*Youpei* 2 右旆
					red with black tail 騮	*Chengguang* 乘广
					black	*Chengyi* 乘佾*
17	大首			3	red with black tail 騮	*Youpei* 2 右旆
					马孚	*Mocheng* 墨乘 (lacquered) *

No.	Owner	Status	Provenance	Number of horses	Colour	Chariot
					female 牸	*tian* 3 田车
18	宰尹臣			2	dark blue spotted 騏	*Xingguang* 1 行广
					yellow	*Xingguang* 2 行广
19	[redacted]			2	black	*Yixuan* 俏轩*

* refers to chariots that are driven by horses of the same colour

Appendix 7.3c Chariots and Drivers in Marquis Yi's *qiance*

No.	Chariot	Driver's position	Name	Owner of the chariot	Corresponding No. in Appendices 7.3a&b
1	*Dapei* 大旆	right *ling* 右令	Jian 建		7.3a-1
2	*Chengyi* 乘俏	*gongdian Iing* 宫殿令	Lige 利戈		
3	*Chengche* 乘车	left *ling* 左令	弓口		
4	*Zhengche* 政车	*lianao* 连敖 (chariots)	Dongchen 东臣		7.3a-81
5	*Shaoguang* 少广	中 [redacted] 令 *ling*	[redacted]		
6	Old *An* 安车	Gongdian *yin* 宫殿尹 (palace)			7.3a-73
7	xx?	Ma *yin* 马尹 (horse)			
8	*Zuoxuan* 左轩	Xiguan *ling* 新官令	Qi [redacted]	公 gong	
9	*Tian* 田车	Xiguan 新官		Pingye *jun* 坪夜君 (Henan)	7.2-4
10	*Tian* 田车	[redacted] 尹	[redacted]		
11	Carved chariot	Nanling *lianao* 南陵连敖 (Chariots)			
12	*Dadian* 大殿		Huang ? wang 黄[redacted]王		7.3a-25
13	*Zuopei* 左旆		[redacted]		
14	*Zuodian* 左殿		Qiu Ding 裘定		
15	*Zuotongpei* 左 [redacted] 旆		[redacted]		
16	*Yixuan* 俏轩		Huang Ta[redacted]黄		
17	*Yixuan* 俏轩		Huang Mian 黄免		
18	*Zuotongdian* 左彤殿		REDACTED		
19	*Youpei* 右旆		Huang Xia 黄夏		

No.	Chariot	Driver's position	Name	Owner of the chariot	Corresponding No. in Appendices 7.3a&b
20	*Youtongpei* 右彤旆		Huang Fu 黄㦸		
21	*Youtongdian* [redacted] 殿		黄[redacted]		
22	*Chengguang* 乘广		[redacted]吉		
23	*Zhuiche* 椎车		Huang Ke 黄克		
24	*Mocheng* 墨乘		Huang Jian 黄建		
25	New *An* 新安车				7.3a-77
26	x 车		黄 [redacted]		
27	*Heng* 王衡车		Huang Huang 黄皇		
28	*Youdian* 右殿		黄 [redacted]		
29	集阝			集阝 君 *jun*	7.2-2
30	*Yuxuan* 鱼轩			King of Chu	7.2-6
31	*Yi* 佾		[redacted] 还	鬲阝 君 *jun*	7.2-1
32	*Yi* 佾车		黄 x	*Qingshi* 卿士	7.2-12
33	*Qing* 轻车		Ai Huan 哀还	*Lingyin* 令尹	7.2-13
34	*Tian* 田车		Huang An 黄豻	[redacted] 君 *jun*	7.2-3
35	*Tian* 田车		哀	奄阝 尹 *yin* (Shandong)	7.2-5
36	*Yi* 佾车		Ai Li 哀立	left *yin* 左尹	7.2-11

Appendix. 7.4a Weapons in Marquis Yi's tomb

Name	Total	Northern room	Percentage	Eastern room	Perentage
ge blade	66	59	89.39%	7	10.61%
ge with bi	34	31	91.18%	3	8.82%
ji shaft	30	30	100.00%	0	0.00%
mao spear	49	48	97.96%	1	2.04%
shu shaft	7	7	100.00%	0	0.00%
jin shu	14	14	100.00%	0	0.00%
arrow	4507	3089	68.54%	1418	31.46%
	4318	3055	70.75%	1263	29.25%
	167	34	20.36%	133	79.64%
	2	0	0.00%	2	100.00%
	20	0	0.00%	20	100.00%
	690	307	44.49%	283	41.01%
bow	55	30	54.55%	25	45.45%
shield	49	26	53.06%	23	46.94%
	35	16	45.71%	19	54.29%
	14	10	71.43%	4	28.57%
armours	13	13		0	0.00%
horse armours	2	2		0	0.00%

Appendix. 7.4b Chariot Parts in Marquis Yi's Tomb

Name	Total	Northern room	Percentage	Eastern room	Perentage
chariot box	1	0	100%	1	
canopies	2	2	100%	0	
axle-pin sets	76	76	100%	0	
xian (mouth)	40	0		40	100%
biao (cheek)	38	0		38	100%
Horse decorations	882	0		882	100%

Appendix 7.5 Chariot Parts in Major Chu Tombs

				Chariot parts (bronze)	Chariot parts (wooden)			Cheek pieces and bits				Other horse fittings
Date	No.	Tomb	Preservation	軎(辖) Axle-pins	Chariot	Umbrella	leather pocket (pair)	*xian* (mouth)	bronze *biao* (cheek)	horn *biao*	wooden (lacquered) *biao*	*mei* 鋂 or beads (bits for bridles)
670-620 B.C.	1	M1022 Shengang	complete	4				4	8			557
570-470 B.C.	2	M301 Pingdingshan	complete	6				6	8			6
	3	M38 Peng She Nanyang	complete	4				15	22			202
	4	M5 Caojiagang Dangyang	robbed	4				11	2	7	1	1
548 B.C.	5	M2 Xiasi Xichuan	complete	22				28	82			105
552 B.C.	6	Marquis Yi Suizhou	complete	76	1	1+1 *huagai*		40		74 (27)	2 (1)	882
470-370 B.C.	7	M1 Liuchengqiao Changsha, Hunan	complete	4		1 *huagai*		6				
	8	M2 Lu'an Anhui	complete	5		1		14	4	10		3

				Chariot parts (bronze)	Chariot parts (wooden)			Cheek pieces and bits				Other horse fittings
Date	No.	Tomb	Preservation	害(辖) Axle-pins	Chariot	Umbrella	leather pocket (pair)	*xian* (mouth)	bronze *biao* (cheek)	horn *biao*	wooden (lacquered) *biao*	*mei* 鋂 or beads (bits for bridles)
370-330 B.C.	9	M1 Changtaiguan Xinyang, Henan	robbed	16 (10)		1 *huagai*		2				4
	10	M2 Changtaiguan Xinyang, Henan	distrubed	7		1						
	11	Geling Xincai, Henan	robbed	16 (3)				28		35		792
	12	Tengdian Jingzhou, Hubei	distrubed	4		1		4				143
	13	M1 Jicheng Jingzhou, Hubei	robbed	1		1		2				
	14	M1 Tianxingguan Jingzhou, Hubei	robbed	45		3		87		50		551
	15	*M2 Tianxingguan Jingzhou, Hubei	robbed	14	1	1		4		8		

				Chariot parts (bronze)	Chariot parts (wooden)			Cheek pieces and bits				Other horse fittings
Date	No.	Tomb	Preservation	軎(辖) Axle-pins	Chariot	Umbrella	leather pocket (pair)	*xian* (mouth)	bronze *biao* (cheek)	horn *biao*	wooden (lacquered) *biao*	*mei* 鋂 or beads (bits for bridles)
	16	Maotingzi Changsha, Hunan	complete	2								
	17	Hehuachi Changsha, Hunan	complete	2		1						
330-278 B.C.	18	M1 Wangshan Jingzhou, Hubei	complete	5				5		1	8	
	19	*M2 Wangshan Jingzhou, Hubei	complete	8		1		4	8			78
	20	M2 Baoshan Jingzhou, Hubei	complete	22		5	4	24	4 (2 pairs)	32 (16 pairs)	16 (8 pairs)	807
	21	M1 Shazhong Jingzhou, Hubei	robbed			1	2	2				
	22	M1 Wangshanqiao Jingzhou, Hubei	robbed	2		1						
	23	Guodian Jingmen, Hubei	robbed	2				2		4		

				Chariot parts (bronze)	Chariot parts (wooden)			Cheek pieces and bits				Other horse fittings
Date	No.	Tomb	Preservation	軎(辖) Axle-pins	Chariot	Umbrella	leather pocket (pair)	*xian* (mouth)	bronze *biao* (cheek)	horn *biao*	wooden (lacquered) *biao*	*mei* 鋂 or beads (bits for bridles)
	24	M1 Zuozhong Jingmen, Hubei	robbed	9		1		12			14	26
	25	M1 Jiuliandun Zaoyang, Hubei	complete	53		3	14 (7)	72 sets (173 piences including *biao*)		26 (13 pairs)	75 (35 pairs)	327 (bronze) 143 (lead) 72 (gold) 381 (silver)
	26	*M2 Jiuliandun Zaoyang, Hubei	complete		1	4		8 sets (24 pieces including *biao*)			24	273
	27	M1 Luchong Huangzhou, Hubei	complete						1			13
	28	M178 Aozhangang Xiangyang, Hubei	complete	1		1		2			4	
	29	M12 Caipo Xiangyang, Hubei	robbed	3				10	2			
	30	M1 Laohekou Xiangyang, Hubei	distrubed	6 (3pairs)				8				67

Abbreviations

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