

藝術、死亡 與關於墓葬遺存之詮釋*

Art, Death and the Interpretation of Mortuary Remains

Katheryn M. Linduff **

摘要

就其內在本質而言，無論宗教性或世俗性的禮儀都異常令人嚮往。禮儀作為一種社會活動，一旦被隔離於社會情境之外便不可能被充分理解。它被執行它的社會所界定，也因而必須被置於適合它的社會和物質情境中進行研究。但是當禮儀主要是透過古代社會的墓葬遺存來進行研究時，我們又該如何回復前述各種情境呢？以中國為例，葬儀中的各種陳設便是史前時代晚期到歷史時代早期物質遺存的主要內容。

由於墓葬的禮儀化情境可以（也一直被）視為形塑信仰、意識型態與身份認同的重要機制，或者被視為相關禮儀活動參與者及其操控或創造者社會力的主要根源，因此可以相當程度地反映一個特定的社會及其內在動能。此外，它們也可以被視為社會網絡的核心，或是呈現一個特定社會之希望和慾求的手段。

這篇論文將思考墓葬中（尤其是位於中國者）的物質內容，並且為這些被置於禮儀化情境的遺存提出數種理解和闡釋方式。有些學者雖然也曾對這些遺物在墓葬中的擺放位置、佈局以及它們的視覺表現進行研究，卻又同時徵引非考古性證據（如民族史材料和歷史文獻），即使它們在被當作和歷史事件或信仰連結的直接依據時往往缺乏足夠的信度。

此外，有關「延續性」（例如一個母題）的觀點經常被使用到相當誇張的境地，以致於任何在新石器時代文化層中觀察所得的圖案即使與王朝時期所見的某個母題僅有極其微小的類似性，依舊會被認為不足以論證它在後一時期存在某種相異的禮儀或意義。我們在此呼籲應針對迄今討論古代社會遺存的方式重新進行評估，並希望藉此認清並提出可以比較完整理解死者被安置時所牽涉之複雜性的種種方法。

關鍵詞：禮儀藝術、喪葬研究、商代中國、安陽

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** Katheryn M. Linduff, UCIS Research Professor, Joint appointment in the Department of Art and Architecture & Department of Anthropology, University of Pittsburgh, U.S.A.



Abstract

Whether religious or secular, ritual is intrinsically fascinating. Ritual is an activity which when isolated from its context cannot be studied fully. It is defined by the society that practices it, and as such, needs to be studied in its proper social and material contexts.¹ But how does one do so when the rituals being studied are known primarily in burial remains of ancient societies? In China, for example, mortuary settings are the primary locus of findings for remains from the late prehistoric and early dynastic periods.

The ritualized context of burial can and has been seen as a mechanism for the shaping of beliefs, ideologies, and identities; or as a source of social power for those who participate in, control, or create them, thus revealing of a great deal about the given society and its dynamics.² They can also be seen as a focal node of social networks, or as a means of illuminating the hopes and desires of a given society. Ritual and the materialization of belief has more recently been seen as an important and informative class of social action, or even as a social construction of the sacred.³

This paper will consider the material contents of tombs, especially in China, and propose ways to understand and explain them within this sort of ritualized context. Others have studied their placement and distribution in tombs as well as their visual countenance, and also have brought to bear non-archaeological evidence such as ethno-historical accounts and historical texts, although they are not straightforward accounts of historical events or beliefs. Moreover, the notion of continuity (of a motif, for instance) which has often been used to such an exaggerated extent that any pattern observed in the Neolithic layers that has even the slightest similarity to a motif from the dynastic periods will be questioned as insufficient to argue for the existence of a certain ritual or meaning in a later period.⁴ With this appeal for the assessment of how we have dealt with the remains of ancient societies, I hope to recognize and propose ways to understand more fully the complexity of the treatment of the dead.

Key Words: ritual art, mortuary analysis, Shang China, Anyang

¹ Evangelos Kyriakidis, *The Archaeology of Ritual* (Los Angeles: Cotson Institute of Archaeology, University of California-Los Angeles, 2007), 1.

² Evangelos Kyriakidis, *Ritual in the Aegean: the Minoan Peak Sanctuaries* (London: Duckworth, 2005), 69-75.

³ David Morgan, ed., *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁴ Lane Anderson Beck, ed., *Regional Approached to the Mortuary Analysis* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1995), viii.



Introduction

By its nature ritual, whether religious or secular, is intrinsically repetitive and embedded into people's lives. It is an activity which when isolated from its context cannot be studied fully. It is defined by the society that practices it, and as such, needs to be studied in its proper social and material contexts.⁵ But how does one do so when the rituals being studied are known primarily in burial remains of ancient societies? In China, for example, mortuary settings are the primary locus of findings for remains from the late prehistoric and early dynastic periods. And these rituals were dynamic processes that took place before, during, and after burial, at a remote time in the past, and some evidence of this process was usually deposited as static matter in tombs.

The ritualized context of burial can and has been seen as a mechanism for the shaping of beliefs, ideologies, and identities. It has also been seen as a source of social power for those who participate in, control, or create them, thus revealing of a great deal about the given society and its dynamics.⁶ In addition, rituals can also be seen as a focal node of social networks, or as a means of illuminating the hopes and desires of a given society. More recently, ritual has been seen as an important and informative class of social action, and a social construction of the sacred.⁷

This paper will consider the material contents of tombs, especially in China, and explore ways to understand and explain them within a ritualized context. Art historians and archaeologists have already provided studies that order the objects by style and type across time and space, and historians often use objects selectively as handmaidens of social and cultural history, but not as a primary focus and not necessarily as essential ingredients of ritual or belief systems. Others have studied placement and distribution of objects in tombs as well as their visual countenance, and also have brought to bear non-archaeological evidence such as ethno-historical accounts and historical texts, although they often are not credible, straightforward accounts of historical events or beliefs. Moreover, the notion of

⁵ Evangelos Kyriakidis, *The Archaeology of Ritual*, 1.

⁶ Evangelos Kyriakidis, *Ritual in the Aegean: the Minoan Peak Sanctuaries* (London: Duckworth, 2005), 69-75.

⁷ David Morgan, ed., *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).



continuity (of a motif, for instance), which has often been used to such an exaggerated extent that any pattern observed in the Neolithic layers that has even the slightest similarity to a motif from the dynastic periods has been seen as sufficient to argue for the existence of continuity of a certain ritual or meaning in a later period. Many, perhaps most, have abandoned and/or disregarded this approach.⁸

With this in mind, I will assess how we have dealt with the remains of ancient societies, and hope to recognize and propose ways to better understand more fully the complexity of the treatment of the dead including the essential nature of objects used during this process. That is, I will inquire what can we learn from material evidence and how to determine the limits of the evidence when attempting to reconstruct funerary practice and ritual at Anyang (c.1250 – 1050 BCE). What they signify about ancient societies will follow.

Mortuary Analysis in Archaeology: Direct and Indirect Approaches

Mortuary analysis is the study of how people are buried—and has incorporated both direct and indirect interpretations of how the rituals and material culture were used in relation to their social, political and economic significance. In his overview on mortuary analysis Rowan Flad suggests that we must recognize that investigations of objects from archaeological contexts are inseparable from investigations of people and distinguishes what he calls a ‘direct interpretive’ from a ‘ritual’ approach.⁹ The direct interpretative approaches were launched with process-oriented studies of Arthur Saxe, and were ethnographic studies of living groups where ritual behavior was observable. He suggested that mortuary patterning reflected a consciously selected set of distinctions that would be congruent with social positions held by the deceased in life.¹⁰ Saxe tested eight hypotheses and found a direct association between principles that structured the society in question and those that ordered their burial practices. In this study of funerary practice, differential expenditure of energy, the use of symbols of authority or wealth within certain tombs, and

⁸ Lane Anderson Beck, ed., *Regional Approached to the Mortuary Analysis*, viii.

⁹ Rowan Flad, “Ritual or Structure? Analysis of Burial Elaboration at Dadianzi, Inner Mongolia,” *Journal of East Asian Archaeology*, vol. 3, 3-4(2002): 23-51.

¹⁰ Arthur A Saxe, *Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1970).



of distinctive patterns when compared to others in the same cemetery, for instance, were all thought to point to the existence of differential social roles, in particular, ranked social positions.¹¹ Following this, various scholars have proposed, for instance, a direct correlation between the amount of energy expended on construction of the tomb and rank of the interred.¹² Thus, a formal link was suggested between symbols of wealth in burial—for instance, rare items—and high rank of the deceased.¹³ In other words, the largest tombs and their contents were assumed to be those of the wealthiest and highest ranking individuals in the society. Although this could be so, many examples show that rank and wealth do not always correspond and that those persons seeking recognition or status might also construct large tombs or even cities in a manner that copied those of the most powerful. A good example of this is the construction of elaborate capitals and burials by the pre- and early dynastic Zhou leadership that were modeled on those of the Xia/Shang. These surely were constructed both to emulate as well as usurp the power and authority of the Shang during the waning days of the supremacy of Anyang.¹⁴

Some other and more subtle direct interpretive approaches were founded on the idea that a relationship exists between energy expenditure and the demographic profile of a cemetery. Thus, if symbols of authority were included in the graves of juveniles, this suggested that high status was *ascribed* to members of a predetermined group, perhaps a lineage, or alternatively that the youth had an association with high-ranking individuals that allowed for special treatment at death.¹⁵ Alternately, when only adult graves contained status markers, some suggest that successful individuals had achieved their high ranking

¹¹ James A Brown, “The search for rank in prehistoric burials,” in Robert Chapman, Ian Kinnes, and Klavs Randsborg, eds., *The Archaeology of Death* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 25-37.

¹² Joseph Tainter, “Mortuary Practices and the study of prehistoric social systems,” in Michael B. Schiffer, ed., *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, vol. 1: 105-141. (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 125.

¹³ Binford, Lewis R, “Mortuary Practices: their study and potential.” in James A. Brown ed., *Approaches to the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices, Memoirs of the Society for American Archaeology* 25: 6-29. (Washington, D.C.: Society for American Archaeology, 1971), 23; Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (New York: Aldine Publishing Co, 1972), 307; A. Appadurai, “Introduction: commodities and the politics of value.” in Arjun Appadurai ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspectives* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3-68; Elizabeth Brumfiel, “Factional competition and political development in the new World: an introduction.” in Elizabeth Brumfiel and John Fox eds., *Factional Competition and Political Development in the New World*, 3-14. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Kathryn M. Linduff, “Duke Tan Fu Came in the Morning,” *Oriental Art*, Summer (1988), 169-176.

¹⁵ John O’Shea, *Villagers of the Maros: A Portrait of an Early Bronze Age Society*. (New York: Plenum Press, 1996), 20.

in society, perhaps due to prowess in battle, or some other highly valued service. Wu Xiaolong, for example, has proposed further that both of these types of status were displayed, based on gender (males achieved and females ascribed) and natal background, in the cemetery at Maoqinggou.¹⁶ In addition, at the cemetery at Daodunzi, Linduff has shown that the funerary displays, tomb sizes, orientations, and location as well as the content of the tombs follow gendered patterns as well as ones based on an agricultural or herding lifestyle.¹⁷ Social ordering respects gender, age and family affiliation at Daodunzi, but it is not clear how social ranking is exhibited in burial at that site. Were those other features more important in the Daodunzi community?

Lars Jørgenson, on the other hand, has quantified burial elaboration and given a *grave value* for each burial in order to measure the relative wealth or rank of each grave occupant in an Iron Age cemetery in Denmark (1988, 1992). Grave value is defined as the sum of the type values for all items in a tomb, calculated from the frequency of use of a type of object across the entire cemetery. According to Jørgenson, it measures the rarity of items and high grave values and should express a corresponding high degree of wealth/social status.¹⁸

From ethnographic studies it is clear, though, that funerals of high status individuals where the most energy was expended as witnessed among living groups might leave behind very little archaeologically detectable material. As was the case of the funeral and burial of John F. Kennedy, the assassinated president of the USA in 1963, for instance, the burial in Washington D. C. was modestly marked and few tomb furnishings were used although a huge amount of energy was spent on the public funeral. Or alternately, the elaborate funeral in 1975 and construction of above ground memorials of Chiang Kai-shek in 1987 show another approach where both status and wealth were exhibited concurrently in Taipei.

¹⁶ Xiaolong Wu, "Female and Male Status Displayed at the Maoqinggou Cemetery," in Kathryn M. Linduff and Yan Sun, *Gender and Chinese Archaeology* (Walnut Creek, Lanham, New York, Toronto, Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2004), 203-235.

¹⁷ Kathryn M. Linduff, "The Gender of Luxury and Power among the Xiongnu in Eastern Eurasia," in Kathryn M. Linduff and Karen S. Rubinson, eds., *Are All Warriors Male: Gender Roles on the Ancient Eurasian Steppe* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2008), 175-212.

¹⁸ Lars Jørgenson, "Family burial practice and inheritance systems: the development of Iron Age society from 500BC-AD 1000 on Bornholm, Denmark," *Acta Archaeologica* 58 (1988): 22.



Ethnographic studies confirm therefore, that the earlier use of the direct interpretive approach was over simplistic.¹⁹ Beck has argued, for instance, that the range of study must be extended to include an entire region in order to see adequately patterns of social order expressed in burial.²⁰ Overall, many now argue that burial is a systematic application of a series of narrow prescriptive and parochial proscriptive directives relevant to the individual.²¹ and must be tested over a wider geographic area in order to discern community or group patterns of behavior.

Others have adopted what Flad calls a ‘ritual’ approach.²² These authors consider death as a rite of passage, or a ritual process that must be understood in a cultural context over time.²³ These interpretations benefit from a concentration on those aspects of burial remains that illuminate the interactions between living individuals and the dead. Morris, for instance, focuses on the activity of burial as a ritual experience that primarily involves symbolic action, rather than directly reflecting everyday social behavior.²⁴ Kuijt argues that “mortuary practice [is] a form of human behavior that is actively chosen by actors in relation to specific beliefs and a broader worldview and symbolic themes rather than a direct reflection of social organization.”²⁵ The significance of these non-direct ritual interpretations of burial rites is their recognition of the funeral as something more than an opportunity for a faithful reproduction of social structure. Mortuary ritual, in this scheme therefore, can be thought of as providing a setting in which individuals can recreate, manipulate, negotiate and use existing schemes of funeral practice for different ends²⁶ such as social action, shaping of beliefs or as a source of social and/or economic power as mentioned above.

¹⁹ John O’Shea *Mortuary Variability: An Archaeological Investigation*. (New York: Academic Press, 1984).

²⁰ Anderson Beck, *Regional Approached to the Mortuary Analysis* , 1995.

²¹ O’Shea, *An Archaeological Investigation*, 39.

²² Flad, “Ritual or Structure,” 29.

²³ Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1991); Ian Morris, *Death Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

²⁴ Morris, *Death Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity*, 1992.

²⁵ Ian Kuijt, “Negotiating equality through ritual: a consideration of Late Natufian and Pre-pottery Neolithic period mortuary practices.” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 15(1996): 315.

²⁶ Flad, “Ritual or Structure,” 30.

Adherents to both the direct interpretative approach and the ritually oriented perspective identify aspects of burial practice that are related to real social phenomenon, but often to other activities as well. In some cases burial attributes may be closely related to the ranking and demographic characteristics of the deceased, but may simultaneously be the result of socio-religious activity that is only loosely associated with deceased but is the result of occasions used for negotiating power relationships among the living. So, our question is, how can our analyses address both the social identity of the deceased as well as the social actions of the living?

It is also useful to think of things and special settings in which things are used as mediated by human practice, often motivated by ritual or custom.²⁷ As is best stated recently by Morgan, “One of the things that cultures do is seek to discern and produce relative stabilities for the sake of constructing and maintaining life-worlds. Things are manufactured as sensory objects, socially shared and circulating, and apprehended through the lens or grip or scent of culturally defined practices or templates. A person’s sense of something, in other words, is biologically, socially, and culturally constructed. Things circulate through a variety of protocols of exchange. They are displayed, hidden, disguised, forgotten, destroyed, re-created. They exhibit biographies and are often best studied over time.”²⁸ He goes on to suggest that the lives of images are restless as they migrate from one setting to another, showing how meaning is inconsistent and best understood within the itinerary of an object’s travel. This throws light on the importance that people bring to images, on the agency that the images can exhibit, on the transience of meaning, on the way in which images become ‘sites of contestation’ between rival parties, and on the interdependence of images, narratives, and the physical and social contexts.²⁹

²⁷ David Morgan., *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief*, 14.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.



Synthetic Approaches

In his study of the cemetery and the burials at Dadianzi, Flad has suggested a synthetic approach where both the social structure and social action that occurred in the funeral ritual could be discerned.³⁰ He analyzed spatial relationships, orientation of the body, use of space in the graves, and depositional sequences, for instance, to reconstruct a multi-dimensional interpretation of grave display. He argued that even where burial customs vary considerably, a burial process tends to begin with the initial preparation and treatment of the body and may include the construction of the burial chamber. Stratigraphic relationships within the burial itself, he suggested, may record the sequence of events. He concluded that the changes in burial patterns at Dadianzi reflected modifications from one time in which individuals used the burial ritual as a political arena for negotiating social relationships and power to one in which the funeral process acted as a mechanism by which those with institutionalized power and prestige could reify the existing social structure.³¹ He attempts, therefore, to include a diachronic dimension into this analysis of this single, well-reported cemetery in order to reconstruct social order and action across time. Using the same data from the cemetery at Dadianzi, Jui-man Wu went one step further and studied the impact of gender and age on burial display to discern a more nuanced view of societal order of the community displayed there.³²

Still, however, these discussions have the goal of modeling funerary behavior as reflective of principles of social organization, and several methods have been tested: quantitative; chronological; regional; ethnographic and ethno-archaeological—in order to locate the social dimensions of death.³³ More recently, the impact of multi-disciplinary or synthetic approaches that include bioarchaeological and forensic anthropological methods into the

³⁰ Flad, "Ritual or Structure," 23-51.

³¹ Flad, "Ritual or Structure," 23.

³² Jui-man Wu "The Late Neolithic Cemetery at Dadianzi, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region," in Kathryn M. Linduff and Yan Sun, *Gender and Chinese Archaeology* (Walnut Creek, Lanham, New York, Toronto, Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2004), 47-91.

³³ For e.g., R. Chapman and K. Randsborg, "Approaches to the Archaeology of Death," in R. Chapman and K. Randsborg, eds., *The Archaeology of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); H. Harke "The nature of burial data," in C. Nielson and K. Nielson, eds., *Burial and Society* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1997), 19-27; M. Parker Pearson, "Economic and ideological change: cyclical growth in the pre-state societies of Jutland," in D. Miller and C. Tilley. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Lane Anderson Beck, ed., *Regional Approached to the Mortuary Analysis*, 1995.

study and analyses of death and burial practices cannot be underemphasized. Such methods have been used for investigating paleopathologies of disease and trauma³⁴ such as war and violence, and physical activity markers³⁵ such as of horse back riding or farming. In addition, isotope and trace element research as marked by dietary patterns,³⁶ for instance, and their possible bearing on class and privilege have been developed. Biomolecular examinations of human and animal remains such as DNA have emerged in an attempt to determine sex and genetic variation, or to study migratory (or movement) patterns, as well as to determine age and gendered patterns among ancient populations.³⁷ These research programs will lead to more finely distinguished analyses as well.

Nevertheless, two issues have yet to be discussed—the impact of ritual theory and the focus on material culture in the study of mortuary practices. Such studies want to know how to discern the very complex dimensions of human behavior at death such as attitudes toward mortality, bereavement and memory before and after death, how to reconstruct group patterns of life cycles of the living, the dead and the ancestors. One way to cross these time divisions is to look at the ‘biographies of objects’ as they pass through and participate in each period of the life cycle or how they travel to lands and across times distant from their date and place of inception.³⁸ In this sense, the biography of such objects as Chinese ritual materials that were canonized over time, were copied for local as well as even foreign markets over a very long time.

³⁴ B. Glencross and P. Stuart-Macadam, “Childhood trauma in the archaeological record.” *International Journal of Osteology* 10 (2000): 198-209.

³⁵ D. E. Hawkey, and C. F. Merbs, “Activity-induced musculoskeletal stress markers (MSM) and subsistence strategy changes among ancient Hudson Bay Eskimos,” *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 5 (1995): 324-338.

³⁶ J. P. Gerry, “Bone Isotope Ratios and Their Bearing on Elite Privilege among the Classic Maya,” *Geoarchaeology* 122, 1 (1997): 41-69.

³⁷ T. Brown. and K. Brown, “Ancient DNA and the Archaeologist,” *Antiquity*, 66 (1992): 10-23.; M. Mirza, and D. Dungworth, “The potential misuse of genetic analyses and the social construction of ‘race’ and ethnicity, ’ *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 14, 3 (1995): 345-54; A. C. Stone, G. R. Milner, S. Paabo, M. Stoneking, “Sex determination of ancient human skeletons using DNA,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 99 (1996): 231-238 ; J. P. Mallory and V. H. Mair, *The Tarim Mummies: Ancient China and the Mystery of the Earliest Peoples from the West* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000). (Especially Ch. 7: “Skulls, Genes and the Knights with Long Swords”).

³⁸ Appadurai, “Introduction: commodities and the politics of value,” 3-68; C. Gosden and Y. Marshall, “The Cultural Biography of Objects,” *World Archaeology*, October (1999): 169-178; Sheri Lullo, *Everlasting Beauty: Constructions of Beauty in Life and Death during the Han Dynasty in China (202 BCE-220 CE)* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2009).



Mortuary Analysis in Archaeology: How to Construe Material Culture?

For those who primarily concentrate on interpretation of objects or types of objects or iconography perhaps, another look at the way we think about mortuary practices could bring us even closer to reasonable interpretations of the material evidence that is part of these burials and the rituals that incorporate them.³⁹ Such an inquiry might be most useful for art historians who have not always considered the extrinsic conditions that determine the preparation and use objects and how that is manifest in the local archaeological context. It might also disclose ways to explain change in intrinsic features of the artifacts themselves such as in type and style. The availability and limits of the evidence will determine the type of study that can be done. Flad's review of methods currently used by archaeologists applies largely to prehistoric practices where primary documents include the cemeteries with their burials and contents in the absence written records. Many of us who work on China, of course, think about historic settings where there is frequently both contemporary inscriptional as well as received textual evidence available that adds to the corpus of relevant data.

A very productive manner for interpreting the many levels of significance attached to the ritualized materials in burial comes from yet another source—from Robert Hertz's classic study for understanding societal responses to death, an approach that has been recognized since the 1970s as a valuable framework for cross-cultural comparison as well.⁴⁰ As interpreted by Metcalf and Huntington,⁴¹ Hertz portrayed death as a transition rather than simply as an abrupt biological reality. He focused on the Dayak peoples of Indonesia and described how these transitions were performed through specific mortuary rituals that initiated and realized the safe transformation of the deceased from a lifeless body to an eternal ancestor. This process was structured, he thought, around three actors—the corpse, the soul, and the ancestor—each of whom was transformed through the rituals.

³⁹ Lullo, *Everlasting Beauty*, ch. 1, 7-8, especially inspired this section.

⁴⁰ R. Hertz, "Contribution à une étude sur la représentation collective de la mort," *Année sociologique* 10 (1907): 48-137.

⁴¹ Metcalf and Huntington, *Celebrations of Death*, [1979]1991.

As Metcalf and Huntington explain, these three actors were intimately interconnected: the living prepare the corpse for burial and in doing so, enable its transformation into an ancestor; the deceased progresses from the world of the living to that of the dead, and the living reposition themselves socially in the absence of the departed.⁴²

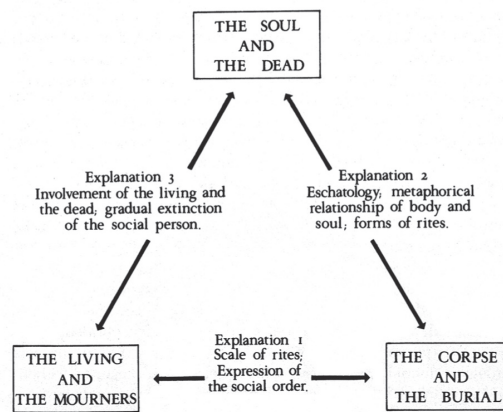


Chart I: Schematic diagram of Hertz's arguments⁴³

Archaeologists have recognized the centrality of material culture to these ritual enactments. Williams, for instance, views the material dimensions of the rites as a crucial means by which death transitions were made real and potentially individualized.⁴⁴ The portable use of objects, the treatment of the corpse, organization of the grave, erection of monuments as well as the choice of the landscape and location of the grave all as interconnected strategies for effecting the transitions and articulating identities.⁴⁵ As Lullo remarks in re. Williams,⁴⁶ “material culture therefore figured as a context, a medium, and a mes-

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Metcalf and Huntington, *Celebrations of Death*, 83.

⁴⁴ H. Williams, *Archaeologies of Remembrance: Death and Memory in Past Societies* (New York: Kluwer Academic Press, 2003).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Williams, *Archaeologies of Remembrance*, 20.



sage by which...memories could be produced and reproduced within individual funerary sequences and between funerals.”⁴⁷ These suggestions allow for multiple meanings and uses for most objects that accumulate in burial contexts and suggest how they may relate to the living, the corpse and the ancestors. Lullo has proposed a type of analysis, which has been called study of the ‘biography of an object,’⁴⁸ or as Appadurai might say, “the social life of things.”⁴⁹ Lullo looked at the use of the lacquered *lian* cosmetic boxes, and connected the box and its contents with its practical uses and symbolic functions in life, at burial and in the afterlife of the deceased during the late Zhou through the Han periods⁵⁰ This tells us that the box was a participant in the rituals before during and after burial and that its uses were applicable in this world, in preparation of the deceased for display and burial, and finally in the afterlife. In this case beautification was understood as a process that reflected a highly valued aspect of one’s appearance and upper class rank, as well as signaled the continued countenance in the afterlife and created thereby a memorialization for the living.⁵¹

Williams outlined many ways in which artifacts can and have been interpreted, but especially useful is his proposal that we move beyond narrow interpretation of objects as simply reflective of social identity and instead consider how such notions were implicated in larger ideologies⁵² or beliefs⁵³ as Lullo has for the lacquer boxes. Many archaeological and art historical studies for early China have stopped short with interpretations about how objects from burials express or assert an individual’s social or political rank. The ordering of goods by number and type as discussed in the direct interpretive approach, as well as recognition of the preoccupation with material expressions of rank in ritual texts underscore their importance in the past. But as Rawson has pointed out, integrated investigation of the material culture of death in early China with cosmologies that stressed a dialogue

⁴⁷ Sheri Lullo, *Everlasting Beauty*, ch. 1, pp. 8.

⁴⁸ Gosden and Marshall, “The Cultural Biography of Objects,” 169-178; Lullo, *Everlasting Beauty*, ch. 2.

⁴⁹ Appadurai, “Introduction: commodities and the politics of value,” 3-68.

⁵⁰ Lullo, *Everlasting Beauty*, ch. 2, 3, and 4.

⁵¹ Lullo, *Everlasting Beauty*, ch. 4.

⁵² H. Williams, *Archaeologies of Remembrance: Death and Memory in Past Societies* (New York: Kluwer Academic Press, 2003).

⁵³ Morgan, *Religion and Material Culture*, 2010.

between images and ideas in the development and modification of worldviews would produce a more complete account of the objects.⁵⁴ Morgan reminds us to add to this account discussion of the materiality of the sacred,⁵⁵ which would seem to be essential especially in the solemn ritual of burial. Reconstruction of the context in which one can discern such a world view requires the compilation of evidence from many sources, but what has been missing from art historical interpretations is appropriate understanding of use of archaeological (or anthropological) theory and contextual data. The following case study of the burial of females at Anyang will demonstrate the use of some of these principles in interpretation.

Case Study

The Royal Cemetery at Anyang (Xibeigang)

I see the cemetery at Anyang and the remains of the tombs as an informative class of evidence of social action; as a mechanism for shaping beliefs, ideologies and identities; and as a source of social power for the late Shang social elite. The remains of Anyang document features such as bronze casting, lithic production, a temple/shrine complex, and burials of several classes of people that were all dedicated to the glorification of the state and the kings. The cemetery areas, for instance, at Anyang can be divided into a royal district, lineage burial grounds, and burials with animal and human offerings. The burials are overwhelmingly those of males—royalty, nobility, and commoners, or anonymous individuals in mass graves. Females buried at the site were all buried for special purposes—as queen, consorts, servants, or mothers—in relation to their male associates.⁵⁶ All burials and their contents at Anyang, whether in male or female tombs, were associated with the exaltation of the state in relation to the royal family.

⁵⁴ Jessica Rawson, “Cosmological Systems as Sources of Art, Ornament and Design,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 72 (2000): 133-189.

⁵⁵ Morgan, *Religion and Material Culture*, 2010.

⁵⁶ Linduff, Katheryn M., “Women’s Lives Memorialized in Ancient China at Anyang,” in Sarah M. Nelson, ed., *In Pursuit of Gender, Worldwide Archaeological Perspectives*. (Scarecrow Press, 2002), Fig. 15.5.



Burials of Royal Women

Identification of burials of royal spouses is still in an exploratory phase,⁵⁷ but in the eastern section of the Xibeigang cemetery, there are three large tombs and one with a single ramp.⁵⁸ The latter, Tomb M260, is the tomb from which came the largest ritual bronze vessel ever recovered at Anyang known as the Simuwu fangding cauldron.⁵⁹ Its style of decoration and inscription date it to the reign of King Wu Ding, and its ownership to the person named Lady Jing,⁶⁰ designated as the first wife of Wu Ding (c.1250 - c.1200 BCE). The identity of the deceased in the grave is not absolutely certain, but she is thought to be either the legal wife or consort of King Wu Ding or King Zujia, a later king at Anyang. For the purpose of this discussion, I will consider her as a partner of Wu Ding and assume that chronology is debatable.⁶¹ Oracle records show that only one Shang spouse was regarded as Queen, and that she was usually the mother of the crown prince. Lady Jing, therefore, would have been Wu Ding's Queen.

In 1976, when Tomb # 5 was excavated and it was identified by inscription as that of another royal spouse named Fu Hao.⁶² Although the identity of Lady Hao is still debated, most, however, argue that she was the third wife of King Wu Ding.⁶³ According to the *Shiji*,

⁵⁷ Lien-sheng Yang, "Female Rulers in Imperial China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, vol. 23 (1960-1): 47-61; Houxuan Hu 胡厚宣, "Yinren jibing kao 殷人疾病考(Research on Illness among the Yin People)," in *Jiaguxue Shangshi luncong chujì* 甲骨學商史論叢初集(Preliminary Study of Bone Inscriptions on Shang History) (Hong Kong 香港: Wenyou tang Bookstore 文友堂書店, 1970), Vol. 2; "Yindai fengjian zhidu kao 殷代封建制度考 (Research on the Feudal System of the Yin Dynasty)", Vol. 1, "Yindai hunyin jiazou zongfa shengyu zhidukao 殷代婚姻家族宗法生育制度考 (Research on Marriage, Clans and zongfa systems of the Yin Dynasty)"; Hung-hsiang Chou, "Fu-X Ladies of the Shang Dynasty," *Monumenta Serica* 29 (1970-1): 346-390; D. Keightley, "Women in the late Neolithic and Shang Period in China," *Nan nü* 1/1 (1999): 1-63; Linduff, "Women's Lives Memorialized in Ancient China at Anyang," 267-288.

⁵⁸ Linduff, "Women's Lives Memorialized in Ancient China at Anyang," Fig. 15.13.

⁵⁹ Linduff, "Women's Lives Memorialized in Ancient China at Anyang," Fig. 15.6.

⁶⁰ Anyang Work Team, Institute of Archaeology 中國社會科學院考古研究所安陽工作隊, "Yinxu 259, 260 hao mu fajue baogao 殷墟259、260號墓發掘報告(The Excavated Report on the Tombs of Number 259, 260 (M259 M260) at Yinxu," *Kaogu Xuebao* 考古學報 1 (1987): 99-118.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Institute of Archaeology, CASS 中國社會科學院考古研究所, *Yinxu Fuhaomu 殷墟婦好墓(Tomb of Lady Hao at Yinxu in Anyang)*, (Beijing 北京: Wenwu chubanshe 文物出版社, 1980); Linduff, "Women's Lives Memorialized in Ancient China at Anyang," Fig. 15.8.

⁶³ K. C. Chang, ed., *Studies in Shang Archaeology: Selected Papers from the International Conference on Shang Civilization*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

like the Sage King Shun before them, these kings were polygynous, and indeed, Shang documents report that King Wu Ding reigned for 59 years and had 64 named consorts. Shang royal marriages, according to K. C. Chang,⁶⁴ were characterized by patrisib endogamy after the manner of patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, and the throne passed from maternal uncles to sororal nephews in two generations, or from grandfathers to grandsons in three generations.⁶⁵ And although the details of how that system worked are still debated,⁶⁶ archaeological and inscriptional evidence indicate that Shang kings had one official Queen, but also make certain that, at least in the case of Wu Ding, there were co-wives. The tombs of Lady Jing and Lady Hao testify to the practice and their tomb assemblages display the intricacies of social positioning of these women in this polygynous marriage as they do in other cultures.⁶⁷

Both of the tombs are outfitted with royal style ritual bronzes, jades and auxiliary materials such as pottery vessels, and stone, bone, ivory, shell and wooden items. Each tomb held sacrificial victims, as did the tombs of the kings. Altogether there are 38 victims in Lady Jing's tomb: four on the upper level and one male with a dog on the lower level in a special pit beneath the coffin called a "waist-pit." In addition, there are eleven more skulls in the grave and 22 on the ramp leading into the tomb. According to oracle records, three of Wu Ding's wives were given the name mu, or mother, and were thereby entitled to be recorded in the ritual worship calendar and to appeal to the ancestors themselves. Both Lady's Jing and Hao were given this prestigious title,⁶⁸ were highly ranked, and were treated as royalty, presumably in life and death.

Social inequality among the wives, as well as by comparison with Wu Ding, however, is played out as well in the shape, size, and location of these two tombs. Only the first wife of Wu Ding is buried with royalty and has a long ramp at the southern entrance of her tomb in royal fashion. Lady Hao was buried in a large (5.6 by 4 meters), rectangular tomb

⁶⁴ K. C. Chang, *Shang Civilization* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980).

⁶⁵ Chang, *Shang Civilization*, 158-194.

⁶⁶ Hung-hsiang Chou, "Fu-X Ladies of the Shang Dynasty," *Monumenta Serica* 29 (1970-1): 346-390.

⁶⁷ Remi Clignet, *Many Wives, Many Powers: Authority and Power in Polygynous Families* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

⁶⁸ Cheng-lang Chang, "A Brief Discussion of Fu Tzu," in K. C. Chang, ed., *Studies of Shang Archaeology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 103-119.



without ramps, positioned across the river from the royal cemetery. Ramps were certainly the place of elaborate spectacles at funerals, so the lack of this appendage in the Fu Hao tomb suggests that her funerary pageant was more limited at the grave than that of the Queen.

When Shang kings asked questions of the spirit world and recorded responses on bones and tortoise shells in ceremonies, most were about weather, harvest, health, hunting and military success.⁶⁹ From inscriptions dating from Wu Ding's reign, we know that three of his consorts, Lady Jing, Hao and Zi, themselves also performed rituals that requested information on the growth of grain and/or on the harvest on royal lands that they managed.⁷⁰ Both Lady Jing and Hao were discussed as military leaders.⁷¹ The inscriptions say that Lady Hao, for instance, was often sent by Wu Ding to conquer peoples hostile to the Shang⁷² living on the borders of their domain, and with whom they vied for control. Her special role in battle is underscored by the abundance of weapons in her tomb,⁷³ as it was in the Tomb of Lady Jing, which included a bronze general's helmet and several bronze halberds, or *ge*.⁷⁴

Although the family background of these women is not completely known, biographical information given about Lady Hao in inscriptions, the structure of her tomb, and certain burial goods suggest that she was married in, and perhaps from one of the peoples whom she was "commanded" by Wu Ding to conquer.⁷⁵ Included in layers with personal items next to her body were quite distinctive non-Shang objects—bronze mirrors,

⁶⁹ D. Keightley, *Sources of Shang History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

⁷⁰ K. C. Chang, ed., *Studies in Shang Archaeology*, 1986; Houxuan Hu, "Yinren jibing kao," in *Jiaguxue Shangshi luncong chuj*, 1970.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² ShengnaYang 楊升南, "Puci suojian zhuhoudui Shang wangshi de chengshu guanxi 卜辭所見諸侯對商王室的臣屬關係 (Chengshu Relations between the Shang Royal House and the Vassals as Revealed in the Oracle Bone Inscriptions)" in: *Jiaguwen yu Yinshangshi* 甲骨學與殷商史, Hu Houxuan, ed. 胡厚宣編, (Shanghai上海: Shanghai Guji Press上海古籍出版社, 1983), 128-173.

⁷³ Institute of Archaeology, *Yinxu Fuhaomu*, 1980; Kathryn M. Linduff, "Art and Identity: The Chinese and Their 'Significant Others' in the Shang," in Michael Gervers and Wayne Schlepp eds., *Cultural Contact, History, and Ethnicity in Inner Asia*, (Toronto: Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia, Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 1996), 12-48.

⁷⁴ Linduff, "Women's Lives Memorialized in Ancient China at Anyang," Fig. 15.7.; Kathryn M. Linduff, "Many Wives, One Queen in Shang China," in Sarah Milledge Nelson, ed., *Ancient Queens: Archaeological Explorations* (2003), Fig. 4.5.

⁷⁵ Shengna Yang, "Puci suojian zhuhoudui Shang wangshi de chengshu guanxi," 128-173; Linduff, "Art and Identity," 12-48.

bow-shaped objects, cheek pieces, bits, and bronze ornaments for horse gear associated with chariots and horse management, and many curved knives of the frontier type.⁷⁶

These items might very well identify her with peoples who lived outside of the Shang political realm, but inside the sphere of contact. These groups raised horses, probably controlled routes of trade for strategic metal ores and other goods, were aligned frequently with other powerful clans in north Asia, and were therefore quite important for the stability of the Shang kingdom. They posed a particular threat during the reign of Wu Ding, a situation that could have readily encouraged a marriage alliance.⁷⁷ In the case of Lady Hao, she may not have been born as a Shang elite, but she was afforded all the luxury of a royal Shang burial as a high ranked wife of the king, while still maintaining her identity as an outsider as marked by artifacts of frontier manufacture and style. Polygyny in this case must have afforded greater political status for the Shang, since this marriage, probably secured through bride price, apparently provided a means to increased alliances and hence power over a strategic area.

Additional roles were ascribed to these women as they were to their legendary forebears—in their tombs were found musical instruments of the sort associated with the inventions of their legendary royal founder, Nu Wa. Sericulture, ascribed only to upper class women, was symbolized by placing replicas of silk worms and spindle whorls carved out of valuable jade in Jing and Hao's tombs.⁷⁸ And, the stone and bone agricultural tools found in these tombs may symbolically connote the value of their role, and that of their legendary ancestors, as farm managers or workers. Bone hairpins, known to designate social rank among women at Anyang,⁷⁹ are found in abundance in these tombs as well. In Tomb 1550: 49 at Anyang⁸⁰ there 130 were clustered around the head of the deceased, and 499 hairpins were recovered in the tomb of Lady Hao.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Linduff, "Duke Tan Fu Came in the Morning," Fig. 10.

⁷⁷ Linduff, "Art and Identity," 12-48.

⁷⁸ Linduff, "Many Wives, One Queen in Shang China," Fig. 4.8.

⁷⁹ Wang, Ying, "Rank and Gender in Bronze Art at the Late Shang Center at Anyang," (University of Pittsburgh, Unpublished Dissertation, 1999), 60-61.

⁸⁰ Ji Li, editor-in-chief, Liang Siyong, Kao Ch'ü-hsün, eds 李濟主編, 梁思永、高去尋編, *Houjiazhuang de baben 1550 hao da mu* 侯家莊第八本·1550號大墓 (The Yin Cemetery at Anyang, Honan, Vol. VIII: HPKM 1550), (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 歷史語言研究所出版, 1976).

⁸¹ Wang, "Rank and Gender in Bronze Art at the Late Shang Center at Anyang," 1999.



Conclusion

Archaeological data from the Shang period has explained that many of the strengths of mythological Queens recorded in early Chinese literature, and especially in the *Lie Nu Zhuan* were exhibited by actual Shang women. In her role as first spouse of the reigning King Wu Ding, for instance, Lady Jing's high rank and perhaps her fortune, could represent a cross-cousin marriage allowing a concentration of power from within the King's kin group. In this case, the location and the huge bronze ritual vessel and other exclusively local, royal style materials found in her tomb could be explained. Her ability to bear male descendants would also have increased the value placed on Lady Jing's life. Her position as first wife, or Queen, suggests that she had produced the prince chosen by the reigning King to succeed him. Shang kings reserved the right to recognize their male offspring and choose their heir by some sort of selection through oracle divination, making the position and status of co-wives unstable. Until the child was 10, for example, it was known as "son of Lady X", and only after that could he be chosen as Shang Prince X.⁸¹

Through exogamous marriage to Lady Hao, a political advantage was gained, and to memorialize her important role in foreign affairs, Lady Hao's grave assemblage included many items of foreign manufacture. She was not as highly ranked as Lady Jing was, and they lived in a society that ranked men above women, as well as women among women. While both were buried in Shang royal style there is considerable difference in how their tombs expressed principles of social order: tomb location, size, shape, numbers and types of items. In addition, these burials were found in the royal center at Anyang and not elsewhere in the Shang domain as far as we currently know. There is an additional message given by the differentiation of object and placement of culturally branded items: the mirror, curved knife, jingles, and perhaps even the iconography of the horse in the Fu Hao tomb adding yet another layer of identity to her grave as reflected in her life. Here her own ancestry was ritualized and its significance was indicated by the proximate position of the goods to the body, that is, it occupied personal space. The process of burial memorialized many aspects of each individual and gave agency to each as witnessed in the collection of materials and their placement in the grave in

⁸¹ Chang, *Shang Civilization*, 189-201.

preparation for after life.

This example has given some idea of the potential of thinking of the mortuary setting as a place where: 1.) rituals were carried out prior to interment when the living could actually be called to the location and see the selection of artifacts; 2.) where the living placed the materials into their prescribed place in the burial pit whether outside of the coffin where official Shang style materials were located or inside where the personal items including those signifying outsider identity and even the process of beautification (cosmetic box) before and after death were positioned; and, 3.) the creation of the ancestral tomb including its memorialization both underground after interment and with the erection of an above ground shrine following.

With Hertz's three-part manner of thinking about the ritualization of burials and Williams' reminder to connect the objects to human behavior, the study of material culture takes on a much richer and less rarified countenance. Ritualization surrounding the burial of women, especially Lady Hao, included items from her life and even family—such as mirrors, jingle-headed pins, jades and weapons, while others suggest membership within the royal community—especially bronze ritual vessels. Some items have several roles to play—in life, and at the funeral and even in the afterlife—the cosmetic box, perhaps the mirrors, the bronze vessels that marked her as an ancestor, and perhaps others. None of the materials were meant to be static in meaning or use before, during or after death. The objects and spaces were activated through ritual for purposes sacred, social and surely political.

