

Yangshe Cemetery of the Jin Marquis in Quwo, Shanxi

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*Key words: Shanxi Quwo Western Zhou Cemetery of the Marquises of Jin Stacked
Rocks and Charcoal Sacrificial Pits*

From August 2005 to October 2006, in a hilly area south of Yangshe Village, Shicun Township and about 15km northeast of the Quwo County seat, the Shanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology again discovered and excavated a cemetery belonging to the Jin State and dating to the Western and Eastern Zhou Periods. The excavation uncovered a pair of side-by-side burials belonging to a Marquis of Jin and his wife (M1 and M2), as well as more than ten tombs, small- to medium-sized, dating to the same time period and to the Han Dynasty. This article will focus on the tombs of the Jin ruler and his wife.

The cemetery of the Jin Marquis is located in the mountains to the south of the Fu 滏 River. The famous Tianma-Qucun Site lies to the northeast, on the north side of the Fu River, with the broad expanse of the Fu River Valley and terraces separating them from the cemetery. The Yangshe Jin Marquis Cemetery and the Beizhao Jin Marquis Cemetery at Tianma-Qucun overlook each other across the river valley, lying 4.5km apart as the crow flies.

The cemetery runs 300m from east to west and 400m from north to south, covering a total area of 12 ha, and



Figure 1. Plan of the Yangshe Cemetery

contains both large and small tombs. The large tombs are in the northern area of the cemetery, distributed from east to west along the margin of the hills. Five large, Φ -shaped tombs, as well as one chariot and horse pit, have already been discovered. Of these, tombs M1 and M2 lie in the east; the circumstances of deposition of the three westernmost tombs are still unclear. 60m separate these two eastern and western groups of tombs, all of which are large and Φ -shaped, with tomb ramps running to the north and south. To the south of the large tombs extends a district of small- and medium-sized tombs. Many of the medium-sized tombs are accompanied by chariot and horse pits; the exact details are pending further investigation (Figure 1).

I. Tombs of a Jin Marquis and His Wife (M1 and M2)

M1 and M2 are a pair of large, Φ -shaped tombs, located side by side, consisting of vertical pits with tomb ramps on the north and south ends. Both have been severely disturbed. Stratigraphic evidence shows that the two tombs were looted no later than the Han Dynasty. The looters dug extensively from the mouth of the tomb to the floor, but did not damage the tomb walls (Figure 2).

1. Tomb M1 is oriented to 344° and measures 48.3m in total length. The mouth of the tomb is slightly smaller than the bottom, and the walls are relatively straight. The tomb mouth is nearly square, measuring 6.7m long (north-south) and 6.5–6.7m wide (east-west). The northern tomb ramp is 15.1m long, while the southern is 26.5m long. The northern ramp forms a flight of 20 steps, each level of which is about 0.75m wide and 0.3m high; the bottom of the steps meet the chamber at a vertical distance of 7.2m from the mouth of the tomb. The southern tomb ramp is an irregular slope containing a total of four horizontal depressions running across its breadth; it meets the burial chamber at a distance of 7.55m from the tomb mouth, slightly above the top of the outer coffin, which was on the same level of the second-tier terrace surrounding the burial chamber.

The outer burial chamber con-

tained stacks of rocks and charcoal. The rocks were found on the floor and to the four sides of the outer coffin chamber and stacked into beams and buttresses. The stone beams, three in total, were positioned along the center of the tomb floor, separated from each other by approximately 0.8m; each beam was about 1.2m wide and 0.80m tall. The four stone buttresses were about 2m in height, with some variation, and were attached to the tomb wall at the spots where the ramps meet with the burial chamber, directly atop charcoal (Figure 3). The masses of charcoal were stacked on all four sides of the outer coffin, as well as above and below it; they measured about 1.2m thick.

The burial furniture included one outer and two inner coffins. The outer coffin measured 5.28m long (north-south), 3.6m wide, and approximately 1.8m deep. The outermost of the inner coffins was 3.2m long and 1.4m wide, while the innermost coffin was 2.33m long and 1.1m wide. The tomb occupant was interred in an extended supine position heading north (Figure 4).

Significant grave goods included bronze ritual vessels, musical instruments, potteries, jade items, gold items, etc.

A group of jade ornaments located on the upper body of the occupant had been disturbed, but those positioned below the chest were preserved intact. Damaged items including a large jade *ge*-dagger ax, a jade *huang*-pendant, a set of jade costume ornaments, and parts of a face cover were seen at several points in between the

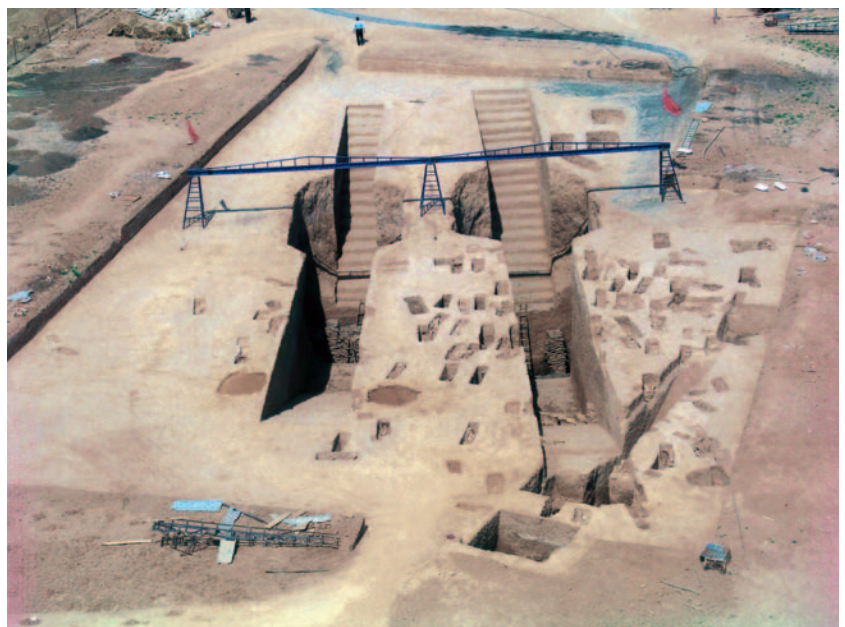


Figure 2. The Excavation of Tombs M1 and M2 (S-N)



Figure 3. Stacks of Rocks in M1 (Top is East)



Figure 4. Full-view of the Outer Coffin Chamber of M1 (Top is East)



Figure 5. The Jade Items in the Inner Coffin of M1 upon Excavation

inner and outer coffins (Figure 5). Stone chimes and a pottery *li*-cauldron also survived in the same location. Bronze ritual vessels were almost completely absent, however; only one small section of the foot of a bronze *ding*-tripod was found in the area between the first inner coffin and the south wall of the outer coffin chamber.

By way of musical instruments, only one set of five badly corroded stone chimes was discovered.

Pottery vessels discovered included specimens of *li*-cauldrons and *guan*-jars. One *li*-cauldron (M1:75) was found, which is of sandy grey pottery, with a flat rim with slightly concave top, a contracted neck, a low belly, linked crotches, and conical feet with flat toes. Three cock's-comb-shaped flanges are attached to the belly. The entire body of the vessel bears cord patterns. Those on the neck area have been wiped flat; the cord patterning on the area below the vessel shoulders is partitioned off by three rings of bow-string patterns, while the area below the feet has also been wiped flat. The external diameter of the vessel lip is 15.5cm, and the vessel is 11.6cm tall (Figure 6).

Jade items were relatively numerous; they can be divided between ritual jades, body or costume ornaments and burial jades.

Ritual jades included a large jade *ge*-dagger ax, a large *bi*-disk, rings, etc. Ornaments included a set of costume ornaments, thumb rings, and other decorative items.

One set of ornaments with *huang*-semicircular pendants (M1:1) was found, of which only the lower portion survives; it was found in the area extending from the chest and abdomen to the leg bones of the tomb

occupant, probably, it was originally hung around the occupant's neck and over the chest. The set was made up of *huang*-semicircular pendants, jade tigers, *xi*-bodkins, turtles, jade tubes, agate tubes, glass tubes and other items. The main portion included no less than four *huang*-pendants accompanied by a pair of jade tigers and a pair of *xi*-bodkins. The dragon-shaped *huang*-pendant at the bottom of the whole set is the largest, at a length of 15.5cm and a breadth of 4.1cm. The facing has undergone some erosion. Openwork carving puts the shape of the dragon into relief (Figure 7).



Figure 6. Pottery Li-cauldron (M1:75)



Figure 8. Dragon-shaped Jade Jue-pendant (M1:3)

One dragon-shaped *jue*-pendant (M1:3) was uncovered near the occupant's head. It is finely crafted, decorated with *hui*-dragon patterns formed from paired lines. It measures 5cm long (Figure 8).

One jade *huang*-pendant (M1:74) was found between the eastern sides of the outer and first inner coffins; it may possibly have been displaced to this position (Figure 9).

One jade tiger (M1:9) was found that was likely a relic of the Shang Dynasty; it was made from a remnant of a broken jade *ge*-dagger ax (Figure 10).



Figure 7. Jade Set Ornaments with Huang-semicircular Pendants (M1:1)



Figure 9. Jade Huang-semicircular Pendant (M1:74)



Figure 10. Jade Tiger (M1:9)



Figure 11. Jade Semi-human Image (M1:88)



Figure 12. Jade Stopper (M1:5)

One image of a semi-human face (M1:88), carved on a piece of pure white jade; the obverse was carved in relief and the reverse contains intaglio designs. It bears eyes in the shape of the character *chen* 臣 and large fangs, both were embossed designs. It is 6.75cm tall and 0.6cm thick (Figure 11).

A jade stopper (M1:5), meant as the endpoint of a set of costume ornaments or a string of ornaments (Figure 12).

Two jade thumb rings, worn separately on the occupant's hands. M1:11 bears decoration (Figure 13).



Figure 13. Jade Thumb Ring (M1:11)



Figure 14. Gold Belt Ornament (M1:30)

Funerary jades included a set of face cover, hand-pieces, a foot-piece, etc., all fragmentary. Both of the hands bore jade hand-pieces consisting of rectangular plates of jade and decorated with *hui* dragons. A foot-piece was positioned below the occupant's two feet, which was substituted by a handle-shaped object.

Gold items included a triangular belt ornament, a door-knocker with ring, gold foil, etc:

One triangular belt ornament (M1:30) was recovered from the area of the occupant's waist; it was a decorative item for a waist sash. When excavated, it was as shiny as though it were new. The center portion bears dragon motifs, and the casting of the item shows great craftsmanship. It is 15cm tall (Figure 14).

2. Tomb M2. Its shape and construction methods were for the most part identical to those of tomb M1, except

that it was of slightly smaller size, measuring 39.9m long. The outer coffin chamber had been plundered quite severely. Only a few scattered jade items, including examples of dragons, *hui*-tigers, owls, stoppers in the shape of coiled-dragon, rabbits, etc., remained, some of which were relics of the Shang Dynasty (Figures 15–18).

3. Chariot and horse pit. A large accompanying chariot and horse pit was found 15m to the east of tombs M1 and M2. Exploratory digging revealed its shape to be an east-west rectangle measuring 23.3m long and 11.5m wide. Its size was thus slightly smaller than that of pit K1, a chariot and horse pit found in association with Group M8 in the Beizhao Jin Marquis Cemetery.

4. Sacrificial Remains. A large area of sacrificial remains was found to the south of the burial chambers of



Figure 15. Jade Dragon (M2:19)



Figure 17. Jade Coiled-dragon-shaped Stopper (M2:15)



Figure 16. Jade Tiger (M2:38)



Figure 18. Jade Rabbits (M2:39)



Figure 19. Human Victim in Sacrificial Pit K37



Figure 20. Human Victim in Sacrificial Pit K47



Figure 21. Human Victims in Sacrificial Pits K204-K206

M1 and M2 and above their southern tomb ramps. 227 sacrificial pits have already been discovered and cleared, ranging in depth from tens of centimeters to as much as 2m. Complex relations of stratigraphic encroachment pertain between many of the pits, making it likely that they are the results of several distinct incidences of sacrifice. With respect to the types of sacrifice conducted, examination of teeth reveals that the victims included humans, oxen, horses, sheep, dogs, etc. Ten human victims can be identified; among the rest, horses are the most numerous. The human sacrifices are the most striking; the varying positions of the victims, including squatting, bent over, and leaning to the side, show that they were either executed or thrown into the pits, allowing one to imagine how desperate the contemporary situation must have been (Figures 19–21).

II. Other Tombs

Along with the discovery of the large tombs, we also excavated a certain number of small- to medium-sized

tombs. Fifteen burials of accompaniment of various sizes were excavated around the southern and southwestern parts of tombs M1 and M2. In tomb M4, large numbers of bronze fishes and pottery beads were scattered about the west, north, and east walls of the outer coffin chamber; probably, these items were originally inlaid in or hung from the inner walls of the outer coffin chamber, or perhaps used as adornments for the inner coffin (Figure 22). Most of the burials of accompaniment included pottery *li*-cauldrons, bronze ritual vessels, jade face covers, and/or small-scale assemblages or strings of jade ornaments. Most of the bronze vessels were funerary replicas; this may reflect the era of the burials.

In the area of small- to medium-sized tombs to the south, we conducted a rescue excavation of a group of medium-sized tombs (M11 and M12). Bronze *ding*-tripods and jade and stone items were recovered; this tomb group also had an accompanying chariot and horse pit. The grouping was probably contemporary with the larger



Figure 22. Full-view of Tomb M4 (Top is East)

tombs. Further, in a highway construction area on the southwest fringes of the cemetery, we conducted rescue excavations of four small tombs, from which pottery *li*-cauldrons were recovered; these tombs were of similar date to those described above.

III. Conclusions

1. Features, characteristics, and dating of the cemetery. M1 and M2 are Φ -shaped vertical pit burials with stone and charcoal stacks; they were accompanied by a chariot and horse pit and large-scale sacrificial activities. These are the largest tombs of the Zhou Dynasty provenance discovered in Shanxi to date.

The shape of tombs M1 and M2 shows clear relations of inheritance and development with tombs M63 and M93 from the tomb groupings M64 and M93 of the Beizhao Jin Marquis Cemetery, respectively. The pottery *li*-cauldrons recovered are quite close to the *li*-cauldrons of Type B found in the individual tombs M5002, M5117, M5140, M5155, and M5075 at Tianma-Qucun. The report from that site dates most of those tombs to the late Western Zhou Dynasty; we hold that they may be a bit later in date. Accordingly, we believe that the M1 tomb group dates approximately to the Western-Eastern Zhou transition or the early Spring-and-Autumn Period.

Based on the distinctive shape of the tombs, we hold that the M1 grouping represents the tombs of one of the Jin Marquises and his wife. For the same reason, the three ramp-bearing tombs to the west of the M1 grouping probably also belong to rulers of Jin. Thus, the Yangshe Cemetery was probably a later, large-scale continuation of the state cemetery to the north of Qucun and the royal cemetery of the Jin Marquises to the south of Beizhao village. One distinction, however, is that the royal tomb precinct and the cemeteries of the aristocrats at Yangshe were placed in the same cemetery, with only slight distinction made between them.

2. Relations between the cemeteries of the Jin Marquises at Yangshe and Beizhao. The cemetery of the Jin Marquises at Beizhao is located to the northwest of that at Yangshe, in the center of the Tianma-Qucun ruins. 9 clusters of tombs of Jin rulers and their wives, comprising 19 tombs in all, have been discovered there. Each tomb is oriented from north to south with a slight eastward inclination. Most of the tombs are either T-shaped or Φ -shaped, with tomb ramps stretching out of the burial chamber either to the south or to both south and

north. Various numbers of accompaniment burials and sacrificial pits were found near the tomb groupings; a number of accompaniment burials and a single chariot and horse pit were found near each pairing of a Jin Marquis' and his wife's tombs.

It is worth noting that the tombs of the Beizhao Jin Marquis Cemetery were oriented northwards with an eastern inclination, while those of the Yangshe Cemetery were oriented northwards with a western inclination. That the tombs of these cemeteries were placed facing each other explains the relationship between them. Not only are the shapes of the M1-group tombs at Yangshe and tombs M63 and M93 from the last two groups at Beizhao quite similar; their dates are also contiguous or at least close. The cemetery of the Jin Marquises at Yangshe can thus be considered a continuation of that at Beizhao.

3. The status of the tomb occupants. Yangshe tombs M1 and M2 underwent severe looting, such that not a single ritual bronze vessel remained in either of the tombs, leaving no means to deduce the status of the occupants on that basis. Some scholars have already noticed this problem, conducted preliminary research, put forth various opinions, and spurred discussion of the topic.

We hold that the dating of the Yangshe Jin Marquis Cemetery follows directly on that of the Beizhao Jin Marquis Cemetery, placing it at the Western-Eastern Zhou transition or slightly later. Scholars have generally postulated that the nine tomb groupings of the latter are the burials of nine generations of Jin Marquises and their wives, i.e., the tombs of Xiefu and the Marquises Wu, Cheng, Li, Jing, Xi, Xian, Mu, and Wen (or Shang Shu). Scholars are generally in agreement about the identities of the occupants of the earliest eight tomb groups, differing substantially only in their assessments of the occupants of the latest grouping; one strain of thought holds that the latest tombs are those of Marquis Wen, while another assigns them to Shang Shu.

If the last group of tombs in the Beizhao Jin Marquis Cemetery (the M93 group) was those of Shang Shu, then the occupant of tomb M1 at Yangshe Jin Marquis Cemetery might be Marquis Wen, a famous ruler of the Jin State at Western-Eastern Zhou transition. Marquis Wen was one of the most renowned and able strategists in the history of the Jin State; he was on the throne for 35 years (780–746 BCE), when the Jin State was rich and powerful, and assisted King Ping of Zhou in the restoration of the Zhou royal court.

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Postscript: The original report was published in *Wenwu* 文物 (Cultural Relics) 2009. 1: 4–14, with 29 illustrations (including 1 line drawing). The authors are Ji Kunzhang 吉琨璋, Sun Yonghe 孙永和, Lü Xiaoming 吕小明 and Tao Xiangming 陶向明; the article is revised by Ji Kunzhang and translated into English by Nicolas Vogt 侯昱文.