

# Tomb No. 139 of the Shang Dynasty at Daxinzhuang, Jinan City

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## Abstract

From March through June 2010, new coring and excavations were conducted at the Daxinzhuang site in Jinan City, during which a new cemetery from the later stage of the early Shang Dynasty to the late Shang Dynasty was uncovered. Among the excavated tombs, Tomb No. 139 is the largest: it is an earthen shaft tomb with a ledge around the bottom on which human victims were found. The burial furniture included one inner coffin and one outer chamber, beneath which a waist pit was located. Numerous grave goods were unearthed from this tomb, including large-sized bronzes, jades and stone artifacts. The scale, burial furniture, human victims and grave goods of this tomb all reflect that Tomb No.139 was a rare high-ranking elite tomb of the Erligang Period.

**Keywords:** Bronzes; burials—Shang Dynasty; Daxinzhuang Site (Jinan City, Shandong)

## General introduction

The Daxinzhuang Site is located to the southeast of Daxinzhuang Village in Wangsheren Township, Licheng District, Jinan City, Shandong Province on a small alluvial fan of the Xiaoqing River and a flat plain in front of the nearby hills. Ever since the Daxinzhuang Site was first reported by the Englishman F. S. Drake in 1936, it has gradually received increasing amounts of attention. After 1949, various institutions, including museum and university departments, have conducted a series of fieldwork at the site. Among this work, the most important discoveries were made in the spring of 1984 and the spring of 2003.

From March to June 2010, corresponding to the development of the Daxinzhuang cultural park and the student fieldwork intern of the Department of Archaeology, Shandong University, the University and the Shandong Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology conducted coring and excavation at the site and discovered an important set of features and artifacts of the Shang Dynasty. Among the discoveries was a cemetery dating to the period between the late stage of the early Shang Dynasty and the late Shang Dynasty. This article primarily reports the results from excavation of

M139, a large tomb within this cemetery.

## The tomb structure

Tomb M139 is a rectangular shaft-pit tomb with relatively straight walls. The opening of the tomb was discovered 80cm below the present ground surface and the tomb was 3.22m long, 2.24m wide and 1.57m deep from this point, with an orientation of 220°. The fill of the tomb was lite yellow-brown mottled sediment. All four sides of the tomb included an *ercengtai* (second-level ledge) at a depth of 0.8-0.9m from the tomb opening and with an average width of 40cm. In the center of the tomb floor excavators discovered an oval waist pit 82cm long, 39cm wide, and 18cm deep.

The tomb was disturbed in antiquity, and looting tunnels on the east and north both broke into the tomb chamber. These activities disturbed the skeletons of sacrificial victims on the east and west ledges, and the southern part of the tomb bottom was damaged rather severely. The tomb was outfitted with an outer chamber (*guo*) and an inner coffin (*guan*). Scattered fragments of bones and cinnabar were found throughout the fill of the outer chamber, and in addition there were fragments of bronze and gold foil. The traces of the coffin boards on the north part of the tomb are rather clear. This chamber was constructed in the shape of a “井” and covered an area 2.8m long and 1.37m wide. The base was composed of four boards aligned in a north-south direction, each 5-8cm thick. The coffin is 2.54m long and 36-40cm wide. The base of the tomb contains bright remnants of cinnabar.

The skeleton of the principal occupant of the tomb was disturbed and not preserved in situ. Three sacrificial victims were interred on the ledges: one on the east and two on the west. Their heads all faced southwest. The waist pit contained only scattered fragments of bones (Figure 1).

## The grave goods

The grave goods in this tomb were largely looted and disturbed, but still a total of 18 items were recovered (not including bronze fragments and gold foil), including bronzes, jade and stone artifacts and circular potsherds. The artifacts were all placed on the *ercengtai*. One large *ding*-tripod was found on the *ercengtai* in the northeast corner stuck to the wall slightly higher than the position of the sacrificial human victims. The remainder of the objects were all concentrated in the southwest corner of the grave on the *ercengtai*. In the southwest corner, other



**Figure 1** Full-view of M139 (top is northeast).

than a jade handle-shaped object that was located below the position of a sacrificial victim, the rest of the objects were all above the sacrificial victim (some resting on top of the cranium of the individual). They were deliberately placed, with some bronze objects having clear impressions of textiles on their surfaces.

1. The fourteen bronze objects include two *ding*-tripods, a *lei* 罍-wine vessel, a *dou* 斗-ladle, a *you* 卣-wine vessel, two *he* 盃-pitchers, a *jue* 爵-cup, a *jia* 斝-tripod, a *zhi* 觶-cup, a *yue* 钺-battle ax, a *jue* 钁-pickax and two spearheads.

Two similar round *ding*-tripods were found; one small, one large. They have slightly inverted mouths, with slated bending lips, square rim, round bottom, and

conical hollow feet. Two symmetrical arched handles are standing on the rim. Artifact M139:1 has a register of animal mask design on the upper body portion, and relief animal masks on each of the three feet. The entire body is covered with soot. One foot is fragmentary, and the mouth area has a crack. The mouth of this vessels is 39-40.4cm wide, and it is 54.9cm tall (Figure 2). *Ding*-tripod M139:2 is decorated with three rings of relief bowstring pattern on the upper part of the body and has a mouth diameter of 18.2-18.6cm and a height of 21.6cm (Figure 3).

One *lei*-wine vessel (M139:3) has a slightly flaring mouth, a bending lip, long neck, bending shoulder, deep and curving belly, flat bottom and ring foot. The neck area is decorated with two rings of bowstring patterns, and the shoulder has a register of animal mask design, which contains three evenly-spaced sheep heads. The body has three sets of relief animal mask designs with two bulging eyes. Between the three sets of animal masks there are three smaller inverted animal mask designs with smaller eyes. Inside the vessel near the shoulder two bridge-shaped handles have been cast on. When excavated, this vessel had rather clear impressions from textile on the surface. Inside the vessel contained a bronze *dou*-ladle (M139:10). Because of the collapse of the tomb chamber, the handle of the *dou* was broken into three parts, and the pommel of the handle was on the outside of the vessel. The diameter at the mouth is 13.3cm, that at the shoulder is 19.5cm, and the vessel height is 24.7cm (Figure 4).

One *you*-wine vessel (M139:7) has a lid that bulges near the peak and has a bridge-shaped knob on top. There is a hoop-shaped handle on the shoulder, one end has a loop-shaped appendage, and this is connected to the bridge-shaped knob on the top of the lid by a chain. The vessel body and the lid are interlocked snugly together; it has a long neck, a round bottom and a ring foot. The top of the lid is decorated with *yunwen* (circular whorl) designs and a pair of bosses. The two ends of the hoop-shaped handle are decorated with animal mask designs, and the surface is covered with rhombus designs. The neck of the vessels is decorated with two rings of bowstring pattern, and the lower body with two sets of decoration. The upper of these two sets is relatively narrow and the connections create a set of two

animal mask designs. The lower covers a larger area and mostly consists of *yunwen* designs that are situated around two evenly spaced protruding knobs and bordered on the top and bottom by bowstring patterns. The ring foot of the vessel has a single row of *kui*-dragon design, on top of which are four open holes. The vessel mouth is 7.8cm in diameter, and the largest diameter of the vessel is 18.2cm. The base diameter is 11.9cm and the vessel is 19.6cm tall (Figure 5).

Two *he*-pitchers were discovered, both very similar in size and shape. Each has a bulging lid, and a boat-shaped mouth. Between the mouth and the spout there are two rather large protruding knobs. The spout is inclined and

extended and has an opening larger than the diameter where it meets the vessel. The top of the vessel has several sets of decorations; the spout is dominated by an animal mask design, part of which includes a pair of knobs. The vessel has a slightly constricted neck with a strip of animal mask decoration. There is a single handle in the shape of flat belt, the top of which is decorated with an animal mask and the bottom of the handle is attached with an eardrop-shaped protrusion. The sample M139:4 has a spout 10.9cm long, and is 37.6cm high; the sample M139:5 has a spout 11cm long and is 37.4cm high (Figure 6).

One *zhi*-cup was uncovered (M139:12). It has an flaring mouth, a long, constricted neck, a drum-shaped



Figure 2 Bronze *ding*-tripod (M139:1).



Figure 3 Bronze *ding*-tripod (M139:2).



Figure 4 Bronze *lei*-wine vessel (M139:3).



Figure 5 Bronze *you*-wine vessel (M139:7).

body, and a short ring foot. The body of the vessel is decorated with *yunlei* (circular and square spiral) designs. Its mouth is 7cm in diameter, the diameter at the widest place of the body is 8.3cm, and the diameter at the ring foot is 5.7cm. This vessel is 14.4cm tall (Figure 7).

One *jue*-cup was also uncovered (M139:14). It has a long, narrow spout, a short, pointed tail, a pair of pillars with mushroom-shaped tops, a constricted neck, drum-shaped body, round bottom, a belt-shaped semicircular handle, and three conical feet with triangular cross-sections. The mushroom-shaped tops of the two pillars are decorated with whorl designs, and the spout and neck have animal mask designs. The body of the vessel is

dominated by an animal mask design as well, above and below which are a string of bead motifs (Figure 8).

One *yue*-battle ax (M139:6) with an arched blade and a straight back, on which a narrow and short rectangular tang is cast. On the two shoulders of the back of the ax there are a pair of evenly-spaced slots, and there is a large circular hole in the center of the ax body. The body is thick and heavy, and it has an undecorated surface. The *yue*-battle ax is 29.5cm high, 24.1cm wide, and the blade is 30.6cm wide. The circular hole is 9.9cm in diameter (Figure 9).

In addition, the tomb contained one *jue*-pickax and two spearheads.



Figure 6 Bronze *he*-pitcher (M139:5).



Figure 7 Bronze *zhi*-cup (M139:12).



Figure 8 Bronze *jue*-cup (M139:14).

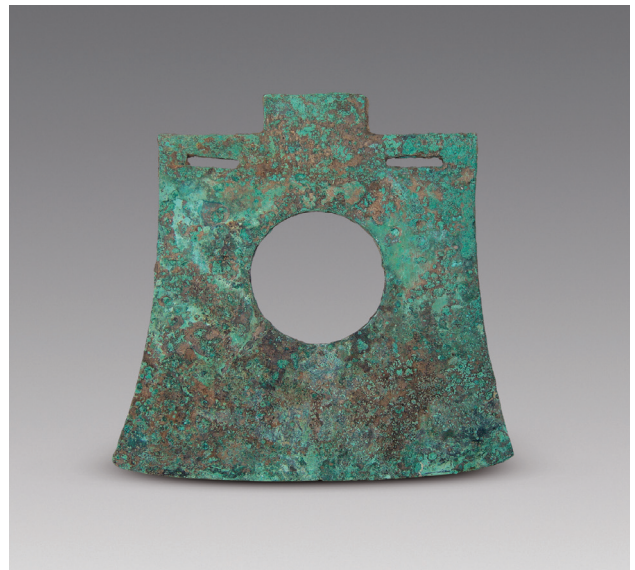


Figure 9 Bronze *yue*-battle ax (M139:6).

2. Three jade and stone implements were unearthed. These include one music stone (M139:8) with a flat body in an irregular pentagonal shape with two holes. The stone is grayish-white, and the back surface has the remains of an animal mask design in red. The adhering sediment had a color animal mask design that was incomplete, perhaps being the remnants of a design on a support for the music stone that collapsed and decomposed. The music stone is 52.6cm long, 23.8cm high, and 3.3cm thick. The two holes are 2.3 and 2.4cm in diameter respectively. In addition, one jade hairpin and one jade handle-shaped object were discovered.

Furthermore, fragments of gold foil and one round potsherd painted with cinnabar were also recovered.

### The conclusion

The chronology of the artifacts recovered from M139 covers a certain span, but it is possible to establish a rough correspondence to the Erligang Period. The earlier material can be dated to Phase I of Upper Erligang, such as the large round *ding*-tripod, the form of which is very similar to the XSH1:1 *ding* discovered in the cache at the Xiangyang Muslim Food Factory Locus of the Shang city site at Zhengzhou. The *lei*-wine vessel likewise is similar to the vessel XSH1:5 at that same locus. More of the vessels are similar to ones dating to Upper Erligang Phase II, such as the small *ding*-tripod M139:2, which is similar to the vessel of this type recovered from Bajiazhuang. The two bronze *he*-pitchers are similar in form to vessel C8YJM:1 uncovered in the palace precinct at Zhengzhou Shang city site, and C8:0042 (gathered by Zhengzhou Museum), also from Zhengzhou, but the style of the lid is more complicated and the decoration is more elaborate, suggesting that it is slightly later in date. Some of the artifacts, such as the bronze *you*-wine vessel, are similar to objects like the bronze *you* from the Shang tombs at Liujahe in Pinggu County, Beijing, or can be dated to phase II of Upper Erligang or the early Yinxu Period. Furthermore, there are several rarely seen or new types of artifacts such as the rounded bottom *jue*-wine cup and the *zhi*-cup. The date of these should still be within the Erligang Period, or the transition between Erligang and Yinxu. This burial and M106 discovered during the 2003 excavations should be approximately contemporaneous.

Even though M139 was looted, based on the scale of the tomb, its burial furniture, the human sacrifices and the grave goods, it is nevertheless not difficult to tell that

this tomb fits what is thus far known about the rarely seen high-ranking elite tombs of the Erligang Period. The large round *ding*-tripod unearthed from the tomb is nearly the scale of the example XSH1:1 discovered at the Xiangyang Muslim Food Factory Locus of the Shang city site at Zhengzhou (Henan Provincial Institute 2001: 799 and color plate XVII) and is larger than PLZM2:36 from Panlongcheng. The *yue*-battle ax is massive, thick and heavy, comparable to M2:15 from Panlongcheng, and among the largest bronze *yue*-battle axes known from the Erligang period. Grave goods such as ritual paraphernalia, musical instruments, weapons and agricultural implements reflect the primary burial occupant was involved in military affairs, and in terms of political authority was a member of the high-ranking elite.

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### Postscript

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