AT THE BEGINNING:
THE STATUS OF WOMEN
IN NEOLITHIC AND SHANG CHINA*

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Abstract

Despite the local and frequently disparate nature of the evidence, both archaeological and inscriptive, and despite the difficulties involved in interpreting that evidence, the study of particular topics—such as secondary burial, following-in-death, sex ratios, marriage patterns, childbearing, Shang royal consorts, Shang ancestresses, and lineage terminology—permits the general conclusion that from at least the Late Neolithic until the Late Shang the political and economic status of most women in China, as represented in burial practices and recorded religious beliefs, was, despite some significant exceptions, inferior to that of most men. The present article provides an initial exploration of how such status distinctions emerged and how they functioned.

The status of women in early China is a large and complex topic, the disparate evidence not always easy to assess. Many of the difficulties are historiographical. The archaeological evidence from the Neolithic presents its own problems of bias, both ancient and modern; and the developing Chinese tradition of historical times tended to preserve and exalt texts that stressed the political and social dominance of men, so that much that has been recorded for the earliest ages has been seen from a male vantage point. But that bias in the texts, is of course itself symptomatic; had the women been permitted

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1 The androcentrism of much recent archaeological interpretation (see, e.g., n. 60 below) is not, of course, limited to Chinese practice. For an introduction to the issues, see, e.g., the articles in Joan M. Gero and Margaret W. Conkey, Engendering Archaeology: Women and Prehistory (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).
to leave enduring records for themselves, they would have been recording a culture rather different from the one that appears in most of the texts. The textual evidence for the early period, moreover, is also frequently thin, idealizing, and restricted in scope, so that the record provides only an incomplete picture of social life as it was actually experienced by most members of the population. The texts of the oracle-bone and bronze inscriptions of the pre-Classical Bronze Age provide little of the depth and complexity available in the historical and literary texts of imperial times. There are no contemporary or near-contemporary accounts, comparable to those that Sima Qian 司馬遷 and Ban Gu 班固 were to provide for the Han 漢, that chronicle the life of the Shang 商 court and demonstrate the way that power actually worked.

The evolving condition of women, as it can be discerned in the early Chinese archaeological and inscriptional evidence, is, given these constraints, much as one would expect: (1) The condition of women varied immensely in particular cases and particular cultures; (2) it was like that of the men in the degree to which it was characterized by the kinship involvement and dependency that seems to have been the lot of most of China's population at this time; (3) the condition of most elite women seems to have been socially, politically, and ideologically inferior to that of their male counterparts.

In this article, which introduces the evidence from the Neolithic down to the Late Shang historical period (ca. 1200-1045 BCE) for which oracle-bone records exist, I do no more than provide a reconnaissance of this uneven terrain, exploring some of its historiographical pitfalls and its still poorly charted areas. I assess evidence that situates particular women or groups of women in their cultural context at certain moments and places, attempting to show how archaeological finds and inscriptions may throw light on the subject, and suggesting some areas for further exploration. It is, to echo the prayers of the Late Shang kings considered below, an essay that I hope will produce "many progeny." I do not, finally, deal in such sweeping categories as matriarchal and patriarchal societies, which, in my view, merely tend to confirm prior expectations without leading to a new anthropological understanding of how the cultures in

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2 For an introduction to the status of women in the Zhou 周, compared to what it had been in the Shang, see Du Fangqin 杜芳琴, "Shang Zhou xingbie zhidu yu guizu funu zhi bijiao 商周性別制度與貴族婦女地位之比較," Lishi yu wenhua 歷史與文化 1 (1998): 3-21.

3 I include fairly extensive bibliographic information partly in the hope that it will encourage others to pursue particular points of interest in more detail.
question actually worked; it is doubtful, indeed, that a true matriarchal society ever existed in early China or in any early cultures elsewhere. My preference, rather, is to examine particular historical situations in as much detail as the evidence allows. It should be noted, finally, that the cultures under consideration were not yet all "Chinese." I am prepared to speak of the Late Shang as Chinese, for many elite practices in the Anyang region were ancestral to characteristic features of later Chinese culture. For the Neolithic period and much of the Bronze Age, however, it is necessary to think in terms of regional, even local, ethnic groups and their cultures.

Written Characters

For the historical period, the logographic nature of the early Chinese script has encouraged a number of speculative and frequently questionable generalizations about the condition of contemporary women. R. H. Van Gulik, for example, concluded, on the basis of the oracle-bone graph 妇 for "woman" (modern nü 女) and “mother” (modern mu 母) that the Shang "considered woman chiefly as the nourishing mother," that "man was viewed primarily in his function of tiller of the land and provider of the family—a distinction which

4 Wang Ningsheng ("Yangshao Burial Customs and Social Organization: A Comment on the Theory of Yangshao Matrilineal Society and Its Methodology," Early China 11-12 [1985-87]: 6-32) provides a critical review of earlier, flawed attempts to use mortuary evidence to reconstruct Yangshao 仰韶 social organization. Among the well-documented points he makes: "Multi-person collective burials are not a reflection of the matrilineal family" (p. 7) and there is no reason to assume that such burials were carried out by kinship units (p. 11; but on this point now see the analysis of the Shijia skeletons proposed by Qiang Gao and Yun Kuen Lee on p. 16 below); “there was no burial system in which children had to be buried with a female” (p. 14). See, too, Lothar Von Falkenhausen ("Kōshī shunju: A Collection of Studies on Ancient China," Cahiers d'extreme Asie 3 [1987]: 175-76) on Ono Kazuko 小野和子's 1984 survey of Yangshao matriarchy, which he briefly criticizes for rehashing the Engelsian scheme of historical development and for ignoring recent sociological and ethnological research.

5 The case against the universality of prehistoric matriarchy seems quite clearly proven by the anthropological evidence.... I think one can truly speak of matriarchy only when women hold power over men, not alongside them, when that power includes the public domain and foreign relations and when women make essential decisions not only for their kinfolk but for the community.... Using that definition, I would conclude that no matriarchal society has ever existed" (Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy [New York: Oxford University Press, 1986], 31). See too Wang Ningsheng ("Yangshao Burial Customs," 19), who makes the critical point that “primitive societies are by no means simply divided into two stages or types—matrilineal and patrilineal; their circumstances are far more complex."
points in the matriarchal direction.” A related attempt to read the Shang characters as a key to female status that surfaces from time to time in both the scholarly and popular press involves the claim that the use of a kneeling figure in the oracle-bone graph for “woman” is further evidence of the depressed social status of Shang women in general, depicted as “squatting and at work.” This kind of wang wen sheng shehui yiyi “gazing at the graph and guessing at its social implications,” is problematic on a number of grounds. First, Shang oracle-bone graphs were used to record sounds; they were not necessarily snapshots of social practice. Second, and more importantly in this particular case, it is worth remembering that there were no chairs in Shang China. Down to the period when Buddhists introduced the chair to the Chinese as a form of monastic furniture, everybody, from king to commoner, knelt or sat on mats. This

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7 See, e.g., Ping-ti Ho, The Cradle of the East: An Inquiry into the Indigenous Origins of Techniques and Ideas of Neolithic and Early Historic China, 5000-1000 B.C. (Hong Kong and Chicago: Chinese University of Hong Kong and University of Chicago Press, 1975), 249: “In archaic Chinese [‘woman’] is represented by a simplified picture of a human figure [ ], which, because it is squatting and at work, means woman.... there are a number of archaic Chinese characters for woman of lowly status, which all contain the radical for woman.” See too Gail E. Henderson, “One Picture Tells It Like It Is: Sexism in the Chinese Language,” Understanding China Newsletter 11.6 (November-December 1975):1: “The female is represented by a picture of a person kneeling, hands outstretched, head often bowed: 女 in the drawing which defined her, the female was presented in terms of the control others exerted over her.”


is well reflected in Shang statuettes of kneeling jade figures, presumably representing persons of relatively high status;\textsuperscript{10} it is also reflected in Shang graphs for such words as \textit{yi}, "settlement," \textit{zhu}, "pray," \textit{ling}, "order," \textit{ruo}, "approve," \textit{xiang}, "feast," and so on, all of which contain a kneeling figure.\textsuperscript{11} It may indeed be the case that the highest status in Shang society, that of the king, was represented by the graph for \textit{wang} (oracle-bone forms 大, 天, 王, or) that presented the king frontally, and that all other figures, of inferior status, were presented in side view,\textsuperscript{12} but such a frontal/side view distinction had nothing to do with the status of women; the frontal majesty of the graph for \textit{wang} distinguished the king from the representation of all his dependents, both male and female, below him. The status and condition of women in early China—in both the logographs and in life—can not be considered apart from the status and condition of men.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} See, e.g., \textit{Yinxu Fu Hao mu} 芮墟婦好墓, ed. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo (Beijing: Wenwu, 1980), 152-53 (Figs. 79-80) and Pls. 22-24.


\textsuperscript{12} Qi Wenxin 齊文心, "Wang zi benyi shitan 王字本意試探," \textit{Lishi yanjiu 历史研究} 1991.4, 141-45. But see too p. 23 and nn. 70, 71 below.

\textsuperscript{13} It may be noted in this connection that Shang written characters formed with the \textit{ren} (oracle-bone form 大, the human figure in side view), "man," radical were more than twice as numerous as those formed with the \textit{mu} or \textit{niu} (oracle-bone form 牛) "woman," radical (I derive this from a count of the characters in the index of Yao Xiaosui 姚孝遂 and Xiao Ding 肖丁, eds., \textit{Yinxu jiuju keci leizuan 芮墟甲骨刻辞類纂} [Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989], Vol. 3, 1-2, 3-4). I doubt, however, that much social significance can be derived from this epigraphic fact, particularly because \textit{ren} may not have been gender specific.
Mortuary Evidence: Neolithic (ca. 5000-2000 BCE)

Given the attention that the early inhabitants of China devoted to the care of the dead, it can reasonably be assumed that their mortuary practices reflected fundamental patterns of social and mental organization, defined and clarified by the ultimate challenge to existence and meaning that death represents. The way that they treated women in death, accordingly, may reveal much about the way they treated women—or thought they should have treated women—when alive.14

Local practice, as I have suggested, varied considerably throughout China, and scholars are still, at present, working for the most part with a series of site-specific snapshots; the generalizations and trends that emerge must be treated with that caution in mind. In what follows, it is also well to bear in mind the observation that “the number of excavated skeletons represents only an infinitesimal fraction of any ancient population and can scarcely constitute a valid random sample upon which legitimate demographic interpretations can be based.”15 The Neolithic cemetery did not necessarily mirror the Neolithic society; a cemetery is not necessarily a census, particularly when so little information is available about who was buried in it, who was not, and why. Questions of motive and bias apply as much to the production and interpretation of bones as they do to the production and interpretation of texts.

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Paleodemography, Sex Ratios, and Female Infanticide

Neolithic and early Bronze Age China would appear to fit, entirely predictably, the general demographic pattern of premodern societies:

- Crude death rates of over thirty per thousand...
- An expectation of life at birth of between twenty-five and thirty-five years.
- Infant mortality rates... often... above two hundred per thousand, marriages... lasting an average of about ten years before being broken by death, most of a person's close relatives having died by the time he or she reaches the age of twenty.\(^\text{16}\)

By modern standards, life was short and death was commonplace. It has been estimated, for example, that the average age at death in the western sector of the Yangshao cemetery (ca. 3800-3500 BCE) in Yinwa 陰佐, Wangjia 王家, in the Wei River valley in eastern Gansu, was between 26.75 and 30.06 years.\(^\text{17}\) For the corpses buried in the early Bronze-Age site of Dadianzi 大甸子 in western Liaoning, the average life expectancy of men and women combined was only 28.28 years; a figure a little lower than that reported for most Neolithic sites (see p. 27 and n. 85 below). And the average age of death in the Late Shang burials at Xiaotun 小屯 is thought to have been 34.5 years.\(^\text{18}\) Of the 194 persons buried in the Neolithic cemetery from the first half of the fifth millennium BCE at Yuanjunmiao 元君廟 (near the eastern end of the Wei River valley), moreover, 54 percent of the women, as opposed to only 38 percent of the men, had died between the ages of 20 and 30. This suggests the dangers associated with childbearing and the harsher life that women led.\(^\text{19}\)

The sex ratios reported by Chinese archaeologists often reveal a

striking bias in favor of males over females. The degree to which that bias was present in Neolithic and Bronze-Age practice, and the degree to which it is present in modern, subjective analytical techniques, is not yet clear. (On the considerable methodological problems involved in sexing skeletons, see the Appendix at the end of this article). My own sense is that differential mortality—or, more accurately, differential mortuary treatment—even when the possibility of error in skeletal identification is considered, still appears to have been significant in the Neolithic.

My survey of the published reports (see Table)—which should be consulted with these cautions in mind—indicates that in Neolithic cemeteries containing twenty or more skeletons whose sex could be determined, significantly more males than females have been found. Among the possibilities raised by this Neolithic mortuary evidence are: (1) that female infanticide or differential treatment was being practiced extensively as early as the fifth millennium BCE; or (2) that the mortality rate for young women was higher than for men and that, dying young, they were not given formal burial; or (3) that women of any age were less likely to receive formal burial than men; or (4) that the sex ratios determined by archaeologists are inaccurate.


20 For evidence in Zhou and Han texts that indicates infanticide “was probably practiced from early times in China,” see Bernice J. Lee, “Female Infanticide in China,” in Women in China: Current Directions in Historical Scholarship, eds. Richard W. Guisso and Stanley Johansen (Youngstown, N.Y.: Philo Press, 1981), 164-65. She finds the earliest textual reference to the practice in Hanfeizi: “Moreover, parents’ attitude to children is such that when they bear a son they congratulate each other, but when they bear a daughter they kill her [產男則相賀, 產女則殺之]. Both come from the parents’ love, but they congratulate each other when it is a boy and kill it if it is a girl [然男子受賀, 女子殺之] because they are considering their later convenience and calculating their long-term interests” (Chen Qiyou 陈奇猷, Han Fei Zi jishi 韓非子集釋 [Taibei: Shijie, 1963], Vol. 2, 949 [j. 48, “Liu Fan 六反”]). W. K. Liao (The Complete Works of Han Fei-tzu [London: Arthur Probsthain, 1939, 1959], Vol. 2, 239) offers a different translation of the critical passage: “Besides, parents in relation to children, when males are born, congratulate each other, and, when females are born, lessen the care of them. Equally coming out from the bosom and lapels of the parents, why should boys receive congratulations while girls are ill-treated?” He notes (p. 239, n. 2), “With Hirazawa 車 here does not mean ‘kill’ but ‘lessen’ or ‘subtract’.” Even if that is true, the passage still stands as an explicit reference to the preferential treatment of baby boys.
These explanations are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive (see below).

Regional variations in sex ratios may also have been present. The sample is still too small for firm conclusions, but, by comparison with the situation in the Northwest (Table), the considerably higher ratio of males to females reported for cemeteries in the Wei River valley (with the exception of Hengzhen 横阵, with 0.70 males to every female) and in the region of the East Coast, such as the cemeteries at Qingdun 青墩 in central Jiangsu (2.2 males to every female), and Dawenkou 大汶口 (2.14 males) and Wangyin 王因 (2.3 males) in southwest Shandong, raises the possibility that the misprision of women—at least where burial was concerned—was more advanced in these areas than in the Northwest. The figures from the Machang 马厂 middle period burials at Liuwan 柳湾 (1.03 males) in eastern Qinghai, moreover, when compared to the subsequent Qijia 齐家 burials at the same site (2.36 males) suggest a shift in Northwest burial practice and, perhaps, social organization, between ca. 2400 and 1900 BCE. Any study of matriarchy and matriliney would do well to consider the gender differences in burial rates, for it seems unlikely that cultures that had given women significant power or status in the descent system would have discriminated against them at the time of burial. Comprehensive and reliable statistics about sex ratios, accordingly, if the conditions that produced them can be determined, will be vital to understanding Neolithic social structure.

Determining those conditions, however—which may have varied greatly from locality to locality—requires much care. It is unclear, for example, whether the evident discrimination against the female was mainly practiced during infancy, leading to infanticide, or whether it was mainly practiced at the moment of death, leading to the skewed ratios reported for many Neolithic cemeteries. In this connection, a recent study of Yangshao burials by Gao Qiang and

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22 For a detailed and thoughtful analysis of how the Dawenkou graves may or may not be sexed, see Anne Underhill [Kingscott], “A Mortuary Analysis of the Dawenkou Cemetery Site, Shandong, China” (M.A. diss., University of British Columbia, 1983), 95-125.

23 The great majority of the bones at Xiawanggang 下王岗 (see Table, North China) have been dated to the Yangshao period (Zhang Zhenbiao 张振标 and Chen Dezhen 陈德珍, “Xiawanggang xinshiqi shidai de jumin de zhongzu leixing 下王岗新石器时代的居民的种族类型,” Shiqian yanjiu 史前研究 1984.1, 68, Table 1); the high male-to-female ratio (2.62 to 1) reported there, accordingly, suggests the possibility of Eastern practice diffusing at a fairly early date into southwestern Henan.

24 For the difficulties involved in assessing the extent of infanticide even in late traditional and modern China, see, e.g., Holmgren, “Myth, Fantasy or Scholarship,” 158-62.
Lee Yun Kuen, while noting that the sex ratios of individual graves were significantly biased in favor of males, concludes that the discrepancy is best explained by differential mortuary treatment based on sex. The authors reject the view that female infanticide can explain the skewed sex ratios at the Shijia cemetery (in eastern Shaanxi; fourth millennium BCE), arguing that their preliminary survey of other Yangshao burial sites indicates that this kind of biased sex ratio can be seen only in the burial sites dominated by secondary burials such as Jiangzhai [姜寨]... and Yuanjunmiao.... The sex ratios of Yangshao burial sites dominated by primary burials are practically equal. This observation undermines the selective infanticide hypothesis.25

I would suggest, however, that even if, in the early period, the skewed sex ratios that favored males over females appear primarily in secondary burials (see too n. 32 below), one could still conclude that females in these secondary burials were being denied access to what would appear to have been an important ritual treatment of the dead (page 11 below).

**Secondary Burial and Following-in-Death**

Secondary burial, both individual and collective, was widely practiced in the Chinese Neolithic; it may have been more widely practiced by the cultures of the Northwest and Central Plains than it was by those of the East Coast, but more research is needed.26 As of early 1981 some fourteen hundred collectively reburied skeletons had been identified in close to twenty Neolithic sites found mainly in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow river, but also in Gansu in the Northwest, in the Yangzi drainage to the south, and in Heilongjiang in the Northeast. The practice may have appeared by about 4000 BCE or a little later in Dawenkou sites such as Wangyin in southwest

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25 Qiang Gao and and Yun Kuen Lee, “A Biological Perspective on Yangshao Kinship,” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 12 (1993): 293. As they note, “Selective infanticide is a plausible explanation for the observed sex ratio at Shijia. However, it cannot explain the trend that the sex ratios change as the parameter of age changes.”

26 Xu Jijun and He Yun’ao (Zhongguo sangzhitg lisu, 216-19) provide a general summary of secondary burial practices in early China. Single secondary burial is said to have been common in Middle Yangtze Late Neolithic sites of Daiziping 代磁坪 style (ca. 2000 BCE) in central Hunan (He Jiejun, 何介钧, “Changjiang zhongyou yuanshi wenhua chulun 长江中游原始文化初论,” *Hunan kaogu 湖南考古* 1 [1982]: 66). For the practice of secondary burial in Qijia sites in the Northwest, see Debaine-Francfort, *Du Néolithique à lâge du bronze en Chine du nord-ouest*, 217-18.
Shandong. That collective secondary burial was well established in the Northwest as early as the first half of the fifth millennium is suggested by its popularity at Yuanjunmiao, where 92 percent of the dead were buried in joint burials, most of them secondary. It was also the preferred method of burial during the Banshan stage (mid-third millennium) at Liuwan.

Secondary burial had never, with certain local exceptions, been the dominant form of burial, and it became less prevalent with time as single, primary burial became the norm. Nevertheless, secondary burial provides an important indication that living survivors must have been attentive to the corpse after death, that they must have nurtured some memory of the deceased during the months or even years between the time of the first and second burials. Such a prolongation of mortuary concerns beyond the moments of death and initial interment is strong evidence, in fact, for the genesis of some kind of cult of the dead, more enduring in time than the initial burial rites. That women, as well as men, received secondary burial is important evidence, therefore, that their memory was preserved and that some kind of cult involving ancestresses, and not just ancestors, may already have been developing in the Chinese Neolithic. That men were twice as likely to be treated in this way as women, however, is a further indication of male dominance in the ritual, and presumably social, sphere.

30 Pu Muzhou, Muzang yu shengsi, 34.
32 For example, at Shijia, of the 209 adult secondary-burial skeletons that could be sexed, 141 (67 percent) were male, 68 (32 percent) were female (a ratio of 2.07); I
Gender differentiation in joint primary and secondary burials may also throw some light on the condition of Neolithic women. The early desire that a person not be buried alone is well demonstrated by early joint burials of men and women in which one of the corpses had received primary burial, the other secondary. In the eight graves at Yuanjunmiao, for example, in which primary and secondary burials were mixed, the females who had received primary burials were more numerous than the males (of which there were only three). The small number of such mixed primary and secondary burials at Yuanjunmiao, however, suggests that whatever religious and social practice they represented was not widespread. In joint burials at Tugutai in east-central Gansu (mid-third millennium), however, males were generally given primary burial, women were given secondary burial, or adults were given primary burial and children were given secondary.

One might discern in such cases—in which, so to speak, the dead followed the dead—some evidence for a decline in the status of females, for it was generally the woman whose skeleton was moved. But it is also possible to view the evidence not as an indication of status but as a reflection of the order in which people had died, a ritual response to Neolithic life expectancies. If a wife (or child) at Tugutai died before her husband (or father), and if her body was then moved to join him when he died, closeness and dependency, the desire that the conjugal group, as opposed to the natal group, be rejoined, would appear to have been part of the motive for such cases of following-in-death.

There is, however, some evidence that a suttee-like custom of following-in-death—in which the living woman followed the dead man—was appearing in various parts of China during the middle and late Neolithic. The richly furnished burial M139, at Fuquanshan, derive these figures from Wang Renxiang, “Wo guo xinshiqi shidai de erci hezang,” 47. Of the 155 adult skeletons, mainly found in secondary burials, that could be sexed at Yuanjunmiao, 90 were male (58 percent), 65 were female (42 percent; a ratio of 1.38); I derive these figures from Yuanjunmiao, 131, and Xin Yihua, “Yuanjunmiao mudi suofanying de renkou ziran jiegou zhi fenxi,” 439, Table 5. See too the conclusions of Qiang Gao and Yun Kuen Lee quoted on p. 9-10 above. 33 Yuanjunmiao, 20.

36 The likelihood that women would die at a younger age than men is suggested by the percentage figures given for age of death at Yuanjunmiao (see p. 7 above).
Shanghai, for example, which can be dated to ca. the mid-fourth millennium BCE, was that of a male, ca. 25 years old, who had been buried, supine-extended, with twelve stone and jade yue axes (on the symbolic significance of the axes, see p. 22 below) and a variety of jade ornaments. The mourners had placed another skeleton at the northeast corner of the coffin, that of a woman, also ca. 25 years old, in the flex position, her upper and lower limbs bent and spread, her posture as if bowing at the feet of the male. The conclusion that she had been buried, and perhaps sacrificed, after the burial of the grave lord, is plausible. It must be noted, however, that she herself had been buried with six jade ornaments; her status, accordingly, though dependent, would not have been of the lowest. She had evidently been attached to the grave lord in life, and that attachment had been continued in death. Significant numbers of followers-in-death or human sacrifices, in fact, have been found in a number of Liangzhu sites (ca. third millennium BCE) in the same region. A particularly impressive instance has been reported from Zhaolingshan 趙陵山, to the west of Fuquanshan, where the dismembered skeletons of adolescents were found in nineteen small burial pits, half with their legs amputated, some whose legs appear to have been bound, some skulls buried with no trunk, some trunks buried with no skull. The sex of the victims has not been reported, however, and there is at present no reason to think that Liangzhu women were being sacrificed in this way with significantly more frequency than men.

It has also been suggested that, by the last part of the third millennium, living women may have been compelled to follow their husbands in death in Gansu and Qinghai. The evidence, however—which may be associated with the intrusion of Indo-European influ-

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37 Shanghai shi wenwu baoguan weiyuanhui, “Fuquanshan yizhi di sanci fajue de zhongyao faxian 福泉山遗址第三次发掘的重要发现,” Dongnan wenhua 東南文化 1987.3, 51; Huang Xuanpei 黄宣佩, “Fuquanshan yizhi faxian de wenming jixiang Fu泉山遗址发掘的文明迹象” Kaogu 考古 1993.2, 145, Fig. 1. For a color photograph of the burial, showing the two skeletons and the axes, see Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, Shanghai shi wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, and Nanjing bowuyuan, Liangzhu wenhua yuqi 良渚文化玉器 (N.p.: Wenwu and Liangmu, 1989), Pl. 5.


ences—i.e., is subject to more than one interpretation. The most notable case is represented by M326, an early Machang burial (ca. 2500-2300 BCE) in the cemetery at Liuwan in eastern Qinghai. Three adults had been buried in the grave pit, their heads oriented to east-southeast: a male, aged 30-35, on one side; a female, ca. 40, in the middle; and another male, 30-35, on the other side. The mourners had placed the two males in the supine-extended position; they had placed the female on her side, facing one of the males, in the flex position. The preliminary report concluded that, in such a case, the woman, buried in a tightly flexed position (originally bound and, if so, no willing self-sacrifice?) and equipped with no grave goods or only a few everyday implements (a stone knife placed in a small bowl) had been a dependent—wife, concubine, servant—sent to her death with her masters. The final report, however, was more cautious, noting that (1) in such three-person burials, the corpse in the flex position was always placed in the center of the grave chamber, with the two supine-extended corpses on either side, to right and left; (2) in the case of M326, a good number of grave goods had been placed above the head of the flexed corpse and near its legs, indicating a not insignificant status; (3) flex posture was, in fact, an important Machang burial style in the Gansu region to the east. They conclude, accordingly, that it is far from certain that the dead woman had been a slave or a servant. And even if some form of following-in-death had been involved, it must be noted that the practice was not widespread in the Northwest, and that, as in the Liangzhu culture area, there is no clear evidence that women were being sacrificed more frequently than men.

The relatively small number of joint burials of adult men and women identified in Qijia cemeteries (ca. 2000 BCE) in Gansu and

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41 Qinghai sheng wenwu guanlichu kaogudui and Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, Qinghai Liuwan—Ledu Liuwan yuanshi shehui mudi 青海柳灣—樂都柳灣原始社會墓地 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1984), Vol. 1, 75, 78, Fig. 61, 331; Vol. 2, Pl. 18.4.

42 Qinghai sheng wenwu guanlichu kaogudui and Beijing daxue lishixi kaogu zhuanye, "Qinghai Liuwan yuanshi shehui muzang diyici fajue de chubu shouhuo 1976. 1, 72-75, for M326 and for M327 (discussed below).

43 Qinghai Liuwan, Vol. 1, 254. For the importance of flex burials in Machang cemeteries they cite the twenty-four such burials found at Lanzhou, Baidaooupingle 白道溝坪, some 140 km down stream from Liuwan on the Yellow River (see Gansu sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, “Lanzhou xinshi qidai de wenhua yicun 鄰州新石器時代的文化遺存,” Kaogu xuebao 考古學報 1957.1, 6.).
Qinghai are of a rather different sort. At Qinweijia in Gansu, near Lanzhou, for example, fifteen joint and presumably primary burials of adults have been found with, in each case, one of the deceased, placed on the right, in the supine-extended position, the other, placed on the left, in the lateral-flex position. Only seven of these burials have been sexed; they show that it was the woman who lay on her side, in a mildly flexed posture, to the left of the man. The archaeologists’ conclusion that, in the case of these joint, adult, male-female burials, the corpses in each grave were both buried at the same time, provide grounds for thinking that the women may have been sacrificed to follow their husbands in death. Some caution, however, may not be out of place. At the most, this situation was found in only 15 out of 138 graves in the cemetery. The custom was by no means dominant, therefore, and the possibility that an epidemic might have carried off 13 couples simultaneously, together with the occupants of the 8 joint adult-child or adult-infant burials in the same cemetery, cannot be excluded.

It is also worth noting that such joint primary burials have also been found, in small numbers, in Longshan sites to the east and as far south as Fujian, roughly contemporary with these Qijia burials in the Northwest. As Debaine-Francfort has noted, the burials at Caoxieshan and Zhanglingshan in Jiangsu are of the same type as those at Huangniangniangtai in Gansu, with the man supine-extended on the left, and the woman, lateral flexed, on the right; and the burials at Xitou in Fujian are of the same type as those at Qinweijia in Gansu, with the man on the right and the woman on the left. It is possible that the status of the women in

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44 Zhongguo kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Gansu gongzuodui, “Gansu Yongjing Qinweijia Qinjia wenhuamudi kaogu xuebao 靈山”, 1975.2, 63-64, 90; Debaine-Francfort, Du Néolithique à l’âge du bronze en Chine du nord-ouest, 221. The seven burials that have been sexed were M18, 50, 52, 95, 104, and 108. The excavators were presumably satisfied that none of the burials were secondary. Debaine-Francfort notes that the posture of the woman (lateral flexed, on the left) was the same, at this site, as that of a child buried with an adult (M6, 51, 65, 97).

45 Some cases of following-in-death may have involved the sacrifice of children, but the increasing prevalence in Qijia and Machang sites from the last part of the third millennium of joint adult-infant burials (Wang Kelin 王克林, “Shilun wo guo renji he renxun de qiyuan 試論我國人祭和人殉的起源”, Wenwu 文物 1982.2, 71) suggests that these burials, which reveal no signs of binding or struggle, should be regarded as preserving domestic units rather than as evidence of a forced following-in-death.

these joint male-female burials declined over time.\textsuperscript{47} General surveys of the custom of following in death, however, have not yet demonstrated that one sex rather than the other was more likely to be “sacrificed” in this way, or that less sinister explanations of these joint primary burials can be excluded; the evidence is so far largely anecdotal.\textsuperscript{48} It was only by the Late Shang that the custom of following in death had become so established that it was to serve as one of the defining features of the dynastic institution (see p. 28 below).

\textit{Marriage and Social Identity}

Mortuary evidence may also throw light on local marriage practices in the Neolithic. Gao and Lee further suggest, for example, on the basis of the burial patterns, that “the majority of Shijia women married [out] to other villages while the majority of Shijia men stayed in the Shijia community throughout their lives,” that “only clan members (membership could only [be] acquire[d] at birth) could be buried in the clan’s communal grave yard,” and that when Shijia women died they were less likely to be returned to their natal village for burial. At the same time, they also propose that in some Yangshao cemeteries of the fourth millennium BCE, like that at Shijia, brothers and sisters were, in fact, reburied together. This inference is based on craniometric data taken from secondary burials which indicates that “interments were homogeneous within graves and heterogeneous between graves in phenotypic characteristics.” If this suggestion is substantiated, it would appear that, in death, the primary allegiance of those women who had been buried with their brothers—at least as that allegiance was conceived by those who buried them—was to their natal kinship unit rather than to the kinship unit into which they had

\textsuperscript{47} See Shang Minjie 尚民杰 (“Dui shiqian shiqi chengnian nannu hezangmu de chubu tantao 對史前時期成年男女合葬墓的初步探討,” \textit{Zhongguo shi yanjiu 中國史研究} 1991.3, 52-53) who argues for two stages in the joint burials of male and female adults. In the stage represented by Dawenkou (3500-2400 BCE, in Shandong) and Majiayao 馬家窪 (2600-2000 BCE, in the Northwest) burials, the status of the men and women buried together was roughly equal. In the second stage, represented by the joint burials in Qiija culture, the grave goods and ritual attention were being focused on the man rather than the woman.

\textsuperscript{48} See, e.g., Huang Zhanyue 黃展岳, “Zhongguo gudai de rensheng renxun xin ziliao gaishi 中國古代的人牲人殉新資料概述,” \textit{Kaoji 考古} 1996.12, 53-61. Huang Zhanyue 黃展岳 (\textit{Zhongguo gudai de renxing renxun 中國古代的人牲人殉}) [Beijing: Wenwu, 1990], 37-38), in fact, concluded that the custom of a woman following a man in death had generally been limited to Qiija sites in Gansu and to the site of Zhukaigou 朱開溝 in Inner Mongolia.
married. Individual historical circumstances, however, rather than general social practice, may have determined why some women were returned to the settlement for burial, or had already returned prior to their deaths, in this way. It is plausible to suppose, in any event, that the women, as well as the men, buried in such common graves would have been regarded as descended from a common ancestor.

Analogous conclusions have also been proposed for the males who were buried in collective secondary burials in the Wangyin cemetery in Shandong (fourth millennium BCE). Some of these burials contained from ten-plus to twenty-plus skeletons, most of which were male. This led Han Kangxin and Pan Qifeng to deduce a marriage system in which the males, after death, were removed from the group into which they had married, and were returned to their natal group. Alternatively, of course, one could suppose that it was the females who had been returned to their natal group, leaving the males to be placed together in these predominantly same-sex burials. Once again, in any event, it appears that, at least in these particular cases, consanguinity took priority over affinity.

The relative scarcity of individual secondary burials in areas where collective secondary burial flourished, in fact, suggests that the primary purpose of secondary burial appears to have been to unite the individual dead in a common grave. The custom thus offers further testimony to the way in which mortuary practice expressed social concerns.

Wang Zhankui’s study of the Yangshao burials at Yinwa in Gansu (mid-fourth millennium BCE), has led him to propose other details about Neolithic marriage. That the dead who were fifteen or younger had been buried with no grave goods suggests to him that they were

\[49\] Gao Qiang and Lee Yun Kuen, “A Biological Perspective on Yangshao Kinship,” 266, 280-89, 293-95. Such attempts to establish biological relationship on the basis of cranial measurements will, however, need to be confirmed by other techniques such as DNA analysis.

\[50\] The supposition is proposed by Wang Renxiang, “Wo guo xinshiqi shidai de erci hezang,” 47.

\[51\] Han Kangxin 韓康信 and Pan Qifeng 潘其風, “Wo guo baya fengsu de yuanliu ji qi yiyi 我國拔牙風俗的源流及其意義,” Kaogu 考古 1981.1, 71. For the burial data, see Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Shandong gongzuodui and Qining diqu wenhuaju, “Shandong Yanzhou Wangyin xinshiqi shidai yizhi fajue jianbao 山東兗州王因新石器時代遺址發掘簡報,” Kaogu 考古 1979.1, 7.

\[52\] Han Kangxin 韓康信 and Pan Qifeng 潘其風, “Wo guo baya fengsu de yuanliu ji qi yiyi 我國拔牙風俗的源流及其意義,” Kaogu 考古 1981.1, 71. For the burial data, see Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Shandong gongzuodui and Qining diqu wenhuaju, “Shandong Yanzhou Wangyin xinshiqi shidai yizhi fajue jianbao 山東兗州王因新石器時代遺址發掘簡報,” Kaogu 考古 1979.1, 7.
not yet considered adults and were thus not yet eligible for marriage. And the division of the cemetery into two groups of tombs, east and west, with differing but complementary gender ratios and unequal distribution of women and children in the two groups, leads him to propose that the inhabitants had practiced polygamy and that the children had been living with their maternal uncles rather than with their mothers.\textsuperscript{53} The numbers involved are so small, however, and so open to other interpretations, that I cite it here only as an instance of the kind of evidence that needs to be collected and assessed in much greater quantity.

It may also be argued, based on a detailed study of the burials there, as well as of the contents of the houses, that the intrusion of eastern cultural elements into the Central Plains site of Dahe cun 大河村 (on the northeast outskirts of Zhengzhou), ca. 3000 BCE, may have been related to the arrival of women from the east. The spatial and temporal distribution in houses and burials (notably female) of the ding 鼎 cooking vessels and dou 叛 serving platters at the site raises the possibility “that some of the Eastern-style vessels... may have been imported as a dowry from the Eastern peoples who were marrying out some of their daughters in the Central Plains.”\textsuperscript{54}

Similarly, the striking fact that in the early Bronze-Age cemetery at Dadianzi 大甸子 in Western Liaoning, “Males face the site, while the females face away from the site,”\textsuperscript{55} would appear to have impor-

\textsuperscript{53} Wang Zhankui, “Wangjia Yinwa mudi hunyin xingtai chutan,” 31-39, 39, Table 1. For the skeletons that could be sexed, there were 5 men and 13 women buried in the eastern sector, with only 2 children; there were 12 men and 5 women in the western sector, with 8 children. It should be noted that these figures differ slightly from those provided in the original report, which identified only 3 females in the western sector and only 10 females in the eastern sector; see Gansu sheng bowuguan Dadiwan fajue xiaozu, “Gansu Qin’an Wangjiayinwa Yangshao wenhua yizhi de fajue 甘肅秦安王家窪仰韶文化遺址的發掘,” Kaogu yu wenwu 考古與文物 1984. 2, 17.

\textsuperscript{54} David N. Keightley, “Pot Makers and Users in the Central Plains: Cultural Interaction in the Chinese Neolithic,” paper prepared for the meeting of the American Historical Association, New York City (December 28, 1985), 81. The basic report upon which I based my conclusions was: Zhengzhou shi bowuguan, “Zhengzhou Dahe cun yizhi fajue baogao 鄭州大河村遺址發掘報告,” Kaogu xuebao 考古學報 1979.3, 301-75.

\textsuperscript{55} Guo Da-shun, “Lower Xiajiadian Culture,” in The Archaeology of Northeast China: Beyond the Great Wall, ed. Sarah Milledge Nelson (London: Routledge, 1994), 169. The cemetery lay to the northeast of the settlement; with only eleven exceptions, the men were buried with their faces facing southwest, i.e., towards the settlement, women were buried with their faces facing northeast, away from it. See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, Dadianzi: Xiajiadian xiaceng wenhua yizhi yu mudi fajue baogao 大甸子·夏家店下層文化遺址與墓地發掘報告 (Beijing: Kexue, 1996),
tant implications for marriage patterns and the transmission of cultural traits, reflecting a situation in which the women, in death, turned their back on their husband’s village and faced outward, perhaps whence they had come. This reminds one of the women buried at Dahe cun whose graves had been oriented to the east, the direction of their putative homeland (n.54). Once again one sees evidence for the strength of natal ties in establishing the social identity of Neolithic women.

One additional clue to social identity is also provided by the painful custom of tooth extraction, which was generally performed on adolescents after the permanent teeth had grown in. The practice flourished in the Neolithic cultures of the Lower Yellow River, Lower Yangzi, and the Han River valley, probably originating in Dawenkou sites in Shandong and northern Jiangsu, but also disappearing first in this region by the late Longshan period. The teeth that were knocked out were generally the center and side incisors and the canines of the upper jaw, extracted in matched pairs. Ethnographic analogy suggests that different teeth may have been removed for different reasons; it also suggests—though this can only be speculation—that, in the Chinese Neolithic the practice may have served to mark coming of age and marriageability. What is of interest for this discussion, however, is that the practice appears to have been applied equally to men and to women. In many of the sites surveyed, over 60 percent of both sexes had undergone the patterned loss of particular teeth. The signs of social status were imposed without distinction on both sexes.56

Grave Goods, Labor, and Status

The burial of tools in graves indicates that, in some areas, a division of labor was occurring along gender lines as early as the sixth millennium BCE. At Peiligang 裴李岡 (north central Henan), for example, none of the single graves excavated in 1979 which contained stone querns and rollers for crushing vegetation contained any stone axes, sickles, or spades, and vice versa; these two types of tools did coexist in the joint burials, but were again divided in the same way among

2, Fig. 2; 225, n. 1.
56 Han Kangxin and Pan Qifeng, "Wo guo baya fengsu de yuanliu ji qi yiyi," 65-73. At Dawenkou, moreover, the skulls of both men and women had been elongated, presumably by the pressure of boards applied during infancy (see Shandong sheng wenwu guanlichu and Jinan shi bowuguan, Dawenkou Xinxiaqi shidai muzang fazuo baogao [Beijing: Wenwu, 1974], 12 and Pl.2); once again, where these marks on the body were concerned, there was no distinction based on sex.
the two corpses (presumably female, with the querns and rollers, and male, with the axes, sickles, and spades). It is generally thought, in fact, that spindle whorls and axes were not generally placed together in the same grave and that they may serve as distinguishing sexual markers for female and male burials, respectively. The division of tools buried with the dead presumably reflected the division of tools used among the living, although the reasons for assigning particular tools to males or females often need to be based on more than subsequent traditional practice. Generally speaking, however, there is


58 Zhejiang sheng wenwu yanjiusuo, “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 1988.1, 50. By the Dawenkou stage spindle whorls and needles were mainly found in female burials, and, in joint burials, the grave goods had mostly been placed on the male’s side; see Shandong sheng bowuguan, “Tantan Dawenkou wenhua 談談大汶口文化,” Wenwu 文物 1978.4, 65; Dawenkou, 9. The grave goods found in the third dig at Weidun in Southern Jiangsu (Changzhou shi bowuguan, “Changzhou Weidun xinshi qidai yizhi di san cisi fajue jianbao,” Shiqian yanjiu 肆疆研究 1984.2, 78-79, Table) provides further confirmation of gender-based division of artifacts (fourth millennium BCE), which presumably symbolized a division of labor: stone adzes and axes were found exclusively in male burials (M28, 29, 30); stone and pottery spindle whorls were generally found in female burials (M43, 44, 50, 55), although they were also present in two male burials (M31).

59 Li Liu (“Development of Chiefdom Societies in the Middle and Lower Yellow River Valley in Neolithic China–A Study of the Longshan Culture from the Perspective of Settlement Patterns,” [Ph. D. diss., Harvard, May 1994], 95) describes the situation in one house, F11, at Huangjianshu 黄家树 in Henan (ca. 2700 BCE): “Female domestic activities, such as sewing and spinning, were carried out in the eastern room, while the placement of arrowheads and axe seems to suggest that the male(s) of this household was (were) likely to use the western room as working space. At least, the men’s tools were stored separately from women’s tools”; for the site report see Huaxia kaogu 华夏考古 1990.3, 1-69.

60 On this point, see Margaret W. Conkey and Janet D. Spector ("Archaeology and the Study of Gender," in Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory 7, ed. M. Schiffer [Orlando, Fl.: Academic Press, 1984]), 10) who cite, among “some general patterns of androcentrism,” “a persistent and consistent linkage of certain activities with each sex, combined with a failure on the part of the investigators to provide any supporting data to justify such associations. This problem is exacerbated by the presumption of linkages between artifact types and each sex; for example, projectile points are associated with men, pots with women. This kind of reasoning implies a rigid, cross-culturally similar system of sexual division of labor in the past. It also imposes rigidity in interpretations of archaeological assemblages that produces simplistic inferences about social life in prehistoric societies.”
little doubt that, as Pearson has documented, trends in the burial of grave goods in the East Coast cultures reflect “increasing wealth and social differentiation and decline in the status of women and children.... The society was gradually changing to one in which males appear to have had power and wealth, and craft specialization was beginning to emerge.”

Of particular significance in this regard is the appearance in graves of ritual objects, such as the jade cong 琺 tubes and bi 璧 disks of Liangzhu culture, and emblematic tools, such as perforated jade blades, hoes, or ax-heads whose edges showed little traces of wear. The function of the cong has been much discussed—some scholars, for example, have seen it as “a shamanistic symbol, its round shape the symbol of heaven, its square shape the symbol of earth, its tubular tunnel the axis mundi, and its animal and bird images the symbols of agents intercommunicating heaven and earth.”62 Others have proposed that the cong originally corresponded to the object known as a zhu 墓 (“ancestor tablet”) in the classical texts.63 Whatever its precise role, the cong was evidently an object of great value in the Liangzhu cultural area. It is of some importance, accordingly, that its distribution in burials has led scholars to conclude that the cong, like the ax, was generally found in male, not female, burials.64 Females might be buried with huang 璕 pendants or spindle whorls, but the jade cong, one of the most demanding and most symbolically charged products of Liangzhu craftsmanship, was generally placed in the graves of high-status males.

The finely made blades and axes, which were most commonly found in Liangzhu sites in the Lower Yangzi region and in Dawenkou and Longshan sites in the Shandong area, played a similar symbolic role, serving as symbols of male authority, and perhaps of mili-

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64 See, e.g., the discussion of the distribution of grave goods according to the sex of the grave occupant centered on the twelve Liangzhu burials placed in or near the altar at Yaoshan, in “Yuhang Yaoshan Liangzhu wenhua jitan yizhi fajue jianbao,” 50; Jean James, “Images of Power: Masks of the Liangzhu Culture,” Orientations 22.6 (1991): 46-55; Wu Hung, Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture, 30.
tary leadership, rather than as implements of practical use. In the Shandong area, the yue axes made of jade did not appear until the late Dawenkou stage, continuing in use through the Longshan and into the Xia-Shang period. Most of those axes have been found as grave goods, and not in large number. In the Longshan period, the general use of axes as grave goods was reduced, and jade axes were placed only in the larger and richer tombs, a trend that suggests that such axes were no longer generally available to the members of the community. These analyses assume that the axes had increasingly been placed in the graves of males rather than females, a practice for which there is considerable archaeological support (see n. 64); it should be noted, however, that many of the burials have not been sexed with assurance and that, as one might expect, the male-female distinction was not always observed in the distribution of the axes. Whatever cultural dispositions were developing in the various regional cultures, it is not necessary to assume that they were always rigidly observed. Nor is it necessary to assume that gender was the only, or even primary, factor involved in the distribution of grave

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65 On the prestige value of such “costly” ritual objects, see Wu Hung, Monumentality, 24-27. For stone or jade blades that showed little or no trace of edge-wear, see, e.g., Dawenkou, 35, 138, for M10:18 (burial of an adult female; p. 24 [Fig. 17], Pls. 12, 24); pp. 35, 152, for M117:8 (burial of an adolescent male; Pls. 23, 24); Zhejiang sheng wenwuguan kaogu yanjiusuo Fanshan kaogudui, “Zhejiang Yuhang Fanshan Liangzhu mudi fajie jianbao 浙江余杭反山良渚墓地发掘简报,” Wenwu 1988.1, 15 (M14:221); Liangzhu wenhua yuqi, 226-33, nos. 205, 223, 224, 230, 233, 236, 239; Huang Xuanpei 黄宣佩, Song Jian 宋健, and Sun Weichang 孙维昌, Liangzhu wenhua zhenpin zhan Shanghai bowuguan cang 良渚文化珍品展上海博物馆藏; Gems of Liangzhu Culture from the Shanghai Museum Exhibition (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Museum of History, 1992), 68, no. 11; Ren Shihan 任世楠, “Zhongguo shiqian yuqi leixing chuxi 中國史前玉器類型初析,” in Zhongguo kunwuguan luanchang 中國文化博物館開館, ed. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所 (Beijing: Kexue, 1993), 106.

66 Xu Qizhong 徐其忠 (“Shandong diqu shiqian wenhua zhong de ye yue,” Kaogu 考古 1995.7, 615) lists the yue axes found in Dawenkou sites in Shandong.


68 The rich burial M10 at Dawenkou, for example, which contained a finely made, sharpe-edged stone blade, was the burial of an adult female. The report refers to the blade as a chan 銚 (“spade, shovel”; M10:8), but I follow Xu Qizhong (“Shandong diqu shiqian wenhua zhong de ye yue,” 615) in treating it as an ax; on this point, see too Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Shaxi gongzuodui and Linfen diqu wenhua yanjiusuo’s report on the excavation of 1978-1980 nian Shanxi Xiangfen Taosi mudi fajie jianbao 1978-1980年山西襄汾陶寺墓地发掘簡報,” Kaogu 考古 1983.1, 39. For the way in which such ax blades were hafted to a handle, see, e.g., Huang Xuanpei et al., Liangzhu wenhua zhenpin zhan, 150; Xu Qizhong “Shandong diqu shiqian wenhua zhong de ye yue,” 616, Fig. 2.
goods. It is, nevertheless, consistent with the view that axes symbolized male dominance that the male who had been followed in death by a female dependent in M139 in Fuquanshan (p.12 above) had been buried with twelve axes.

The assumption that axes—some provided with handles capped with and inlaid with jade—served as batons of authority may also be viewed in terms of the epigraphic claims that the oracle-bone and bronze-inscription graphs for 父, “father,” were drawn with a hand holding an ax,69 and that the oracle-bone and bronze-age graph for 王, “king,” depicted an ax.70 Such epigraphic speculations are hard to assess,71 but it is certainly the case that Zhou texts placed axes as symbols of authority in the hands of male rulers.72

Other grave goods besides axes suggest that dead men received more ritual attention at the time of burial than women did. In the two late-period burials, M10 and M25, at Dawenkou, for example, only two goblets lay next to the corpse in each case, whereas eight goblets (in M10) and twenty goblets (in M25) lay on the ledge or outside the coffin or burial chamber.73 If the goblets are associated with mourners, and if it is assumed, on the basis of their relatively small capacity, one goblet per mourner, then one may envision a group of eight mourners at the first grave (M10, that of a female), twenty at the second (M25, probably that of a male).74 In this case, at least, the dead male would appear to have drawn a larger crowd at his ritual interment. As already noted, moreover, the female buried in M10 had been provided with a jade ax, whereas the probable male in...
M25 had been buried with six stone or jade-like axes. Further analysis of such choices at the time of burial, differentiated by the sex of the deceased, may throw further light on the status of women, at least as it was reflected in Neolithic ritual.

In these matters, as in most that concern the Neolithic, our conclusions are nevertheless constrained by the lack of comprehensive data, by ignorance about the sex of many of the grave occupants, and by uncertainty about the accuracy of the sexing when it has been undertaken. Thus Debaine-Francfort is particularly instructive in demonstrating how gender distinctions were represented in different ways and to different degrees in various Qijia cemeteries—most notably those at Huangniangniangtai, Dahe zhuang 大河莊, and Qinweijia in Gansu, and Liuwan in Qinghai. She concludes, for example, that the strongest distinctions between objects associated with men or women appear at Liuwan; that at Dahe zhuang the average quantity of grave goods was greater in male than in female burials, that at Huangniangniangtai, there is no way to make that comparison, and that at Liuwan, in the early and middle periods, grave goods were more abundant in the female than in the male tombs but that in the late period the numbers of grave goods were about equally distributed between the sexes. She also notes that whereas, at Qinweijia, the male burials of the late period contained significantly more grave goods all told than the female burials did, men and women were treated equally if one considers only the artifacts—such as stone bi disks, oracle bones, metal and turquoise objects, painted pots, and cowries—that are thought to have signified wealth and authority.

Such a fine-grained, contextual, chronological, and local approach serves as a reminder of the kind of work that still needs to be done and about the difficulties involved in drawing larger conclusions about the status of women as a whole. Nevertheless, Debaine-Francfort herself concludes that sexual inequality was present in Qijia culture, with the mortuary evidence reflecting differences in the activities that men and women had performed in society. As in the rest of China at this time, the distribution of tools as grave goods seems to indicate an increase in the preeminence of men, which can be associated with the intensification of agriculture. She also notes that other

75 Daze?enkou, 35, 140.
76 Debaine-Francfort, Du Ngolithique à l’âge du bronze en Chine du nord-ouest, 192, 234, 252.
77 It is assumed that while women may have provided the main labor force in the stage of foraging and horticulture, men assumed a dominant position in agricultural labor as heavier stone blades were employed to break and turn the soil; see, e.g., You...
signs of inequality were present, which permit one to speak of Qijia society as hierarchical. The burials of couples, for instance, which suggest that the woman was put to death to follow the man in death, were themselves a sign of elevated social status. But she also concludes that the increase in social differentiation was not as marked in the Qijia culture as it was in the cultures further to the east. Global generalizations, in short, should be treated with caution; all burials in early China were local, and the treatment of women in mortuary ritual often varied by region.

"Venus" Figures

A word should be said, before the discussion moves on to the Bronze Age, about the “earth-mother,” “Venus-like” figures found in certain Hongshan sites in the Northeast (mid-fourth millennium BCE). In particular, the so-called “temple of the goddess,” located on a mountaintop some 900m south of the cemetery at Niuheliang, has excited attention. A series of clay fragments belonging to at least five or six life-size statues, has been found, some smaller, some larger, indicating differences in the ages of the figures represented. They were made of layers of unfired clay, with the skin layer polished and colored to approximate skin. All upper body parts were represented, with bits of heads, shoulders, arms, breasts, and hands being found. The most extraordinary find was the life-size head of a human being (J1B:1), which is thought to have been part of a life-size statue that had been built up on a wooden frame.

Xiu Liang, "Dui Hemudu yizhi disi wenhuaeng chutu daogu he gusi de jidian kanfa,” Wenwu 文物 1976. 8, 23. See too Lerner (The Creation of Patriarchy, 30): “It is in horticultural societies that we most frequently find women dominant or highly influential in the economic sphere.... yet historically such societies move in the direction of sedentary settlement and plow agriculture, in which men dominate economic and political life. In the horticultural societies studied, most are patrilineal, despite women’s decisive economic role.” The placement of the stone querns in the graves of Peiligang women (p. 19 above) would suggest the horticultural and food-processing role of women at that early stage.

78 Debaine-Francfort, Du Néolithique à l’âge du bronze en Chine du nord-ouest, 263-64, 267.

79 Debaine-Francfort (Du Néolithique à l’âge du bronze en Chine du nord-ouest) consistently calls attention to the gaps and bias in the data, the tendency to impose models too readily, and the difficulties of generalization (see, e.g., pp. 28, 212, 222, 234, 253).

80 Sun Shoudao 孫守道 and Guo Dashun 郭大鴻, "Niuheliang Hongshan wen-hua nüshen touxiang de faxian yu yanjiu 牛河梁紅山文化女神頭像的發現與研
those of a goddess or female deity, analogous in function to similar fertility images seen in Paleolithic sites around the world.81

It is hard to know what to make of this unexpected and virtually *sui generis* evidence, and I will, for two reasons, not dwell on it here. First, there is as yet no reason to think that these experiments in religious and artistic representation significantly influenced later developments in the Central Plains area of China.82 Second, although it is true that to date no comparable statue of a male has been found, there is no reason to think that the existence of a “goddess” always assuming that these were not representations of actual people—necessarily correlates with the social position of women in the society that worshiped her.83 One needs to know more about the identity of the “goddess” and the way in which her cult functioned.

**Bronze-Age Continuities**

The trends involving the differentiation of sex and status and the symbolization of authority by means of emblematic tools continued to develop in the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age. At Taosi 陶寺, for example, a late Neolithic site (ca. 2200-1700 BCE) in southern Shanxi, which some have sought to associate with the Xia 夏 dynas-
nasty, the occupants of the five large wooden-coffin tombs, together with the occupants of the eighty medium-size tombs, also equipped with wooden coffins, were exclusively male; women, presumably dependents, were buried at both sides of some of these large tombs. Each of the five tombs contained from one to two hundred objects, including finely made stone and jade axes showing no traces of use.\textsuperscript{84} Marked disparities in wealth and status were now emerging, and a small number of males, rather than females, was being buried with the highest status.

The early Bronze-Age evidence for sex ratios, however, is not always consistent, for males and females were buried in virtually equal numbers in the large cemetery (ca. 1600 BCE) from the Lower Xiajiadian 夏家店 site at Dadianzi in Western Liaoning. The life expectancy, 31.85 years, of the females buried at the site, in fact, is thought to have been slightly higher than the life expectancy, 30.68 years, of the males, with a slightly greater number of females than males reaching old age.\textsuperscript{85} Whether these atypical results reflect different, northern cultural practice in the early Bronze Age, or whether they reflect different archaeological practice in the present, remains to be seen.\textsuperscript{86}

The Late Shang burials at Xiaotun 小屯, in any event, are thought to reveal the same bias in favor of males that has been reported for many Neolithic cemeteries.\textsuperscript{87} And gender distinctions continued to play a role in the burial of petty elites, represented by the


\textsuperscript{85} The archaeologists identified 297 male and 286 female burials at the site (Dadianzi, 225). They defend the accuracy of their conclusions—whose precision would seem to exceed the limits imposed by our ability to analyze the evidence (see the Appendix below)—by noting (1) the large size of their sample (involving over 80 percent of the 652 burials at Dadianzi) and (2) their inclusion of infant deaths, which have usually been excluded in the reports from other Neolithic sites. In calculating the male and female life expectancy figures given on p. 7 above, however, they excluded infant deaths; for that reason their life expectancy figures for males and females are slightly higher than the combined figure of 28.28 years given earlier (Dadianzi, 226, 227; see too p. 262).

\textsuperscript{86} Pan Qifeng 潘其風, in his appendix on the skeletons excavated at the Dadianzi cemetery, gives only a brief and nonspecific account of the methods used to sex them (Dadianzi, 224, 225, n. 1).

\textsuperscript{87} Song Zhenhao 宋鎮豪 (“Xia Shang renkou chutan,” 105-106) notes that in the Late Shang burials at Xiaotun the men exceeded the women by a ratio of two to one.
939 tombs in the Late Shang cemetery at Yinxu West (late second millennium BCE). Dagger-axes, spears, and other weapons made of bronze (or, in some cases, mingqi 精器, “spirit objects,” made of lead) were found in 160 burials, all identified as male. Fifty-six of the smaller graves were equipped with craft or agricultural tools such as adzes, chisels, awls, stone axes, and spinning whorls. The service and work that men and women had performed in life, and that had, presumably, served to mark their social identity, was, as it had been in the Neolithic, still symbolized in death.

Gender distinctions may also be discerned in the Shang custom of human sacrifice, with prisoners taken in war being the main victims. A sacrificial pit excavated at Dasikong 杜司空村 (across the Huan 漢 river from the Xiaotun site) in 1971, for example, contained twenty-six decapitated bodies, some with their hands behind their backs, and thirty-one skulls. That all the adults were male suggests either that only males engaged in warfare, or that a different fate, one presumably involving servitude, may have been reserved for any women who had been captured. The sacrificial victims found in the royal tombs at Xibeigang 西北岡 also consisted mainly of males in the fifteen to thirty-five age range. Generally decapitated or dismembered, they were frequently buried in the fill, in the ramps, or in rows of sacrificial pits in the vicinity of the tomb. Women were generally not sacrificed in this way.

The followers-in-death who were placed in the tombs of Late Shang elites also throw light on gender roles. Those victims buried whole, with their own coffins, grave goods, and bronzes, and even with their own followers-in-death or an attendant dog, were generally placed on the ledge or on the roof of the coffin chamber, and showed

88 Yang Baocheng 楊寶成 and Yang Xizhang 杨錫璋, “Cong Yinxu xiaoxing muzang kan Yindai shehui de pingmin 從殷墟小型墓葬看殷代社會的平民,” Zhongguo wenwu 中國文物, 1983.1, 30-34.
90 Huang Zhanyue 黃展岳, “Wo guo gudai de renxun he rensheng - Cong renxun rensheng kan Kong Qiu ‘keji fuli’ de fandongxing 我國古代的人殉和人性-從人殉人牲看孔丘‘克己復禮’的反動性,” Kaogu 考古 1974.3, 159-160; Yu Weichao 俞偉超, “Gushi fenqi wenti de kaoguxue guancha (yi) 古史分期問題的考古學觀察(一),” Wenwu 文物 1981.5, 50-51. Huang Zhanyue (‘Yin Shang muzang zhong renxun rensheng de zaikaocha - Fulin xunsheng jisheng 銅器墓葬中人殉人性的再考察 - 斐論殉牲祭牲,” Kaogu 考古 1983.10, 937-38, 941) provides an excellent account of both M1001 at Xibeigang (where Huang identifies the remains of ninety companions-in-death, seventy-four human sacrifices, twelve horses, and eleven dogs; more must originally have been present) and M1 at Wuguan cun 武官村 (see below).
no evidence of binding or struggle. These presumably were relatives, close dependents, or personal attendants of the deceased. Their gradations of status are revealed by the situation in M1, a nonroyal burial at Wuguan cun. In addition to the numerous human victims, many decapitated, who had been buried in the tomb ramps or in nearby pits, seventeen men—eight with wooden coffins, five with bronze vessels and ornaments of jade, stone, and bone—had been buried on the eastern ledge within the main tomb; twenty-four women—six with wooden coffins and eight with grave goods—lay on the western ledge. The male and female skeletons occupying the center of each ledge were furnished with the largest coffins and the most numerous grave goods; they appear to have been the leaders of the high-status dependents, male and female, buried with the grave lord. More evidence will be needed before one can tell if the preponderance of female victims in the tomb, twenty-four women to seventeen men, has general significance, but this one instance does suggest that the grave lord had been attended in his daily life by significant numbers of women, and that he—or his survivors on his behalf—felt that they should continue to attend him in death.

Inscriptional Evidence: Late Shang (ca. 1200-1045 BCE)

The oracle-bone inscriptions reveal that a number of the Late Shang kings were polygamous, being linked to several “legal” or formally recognized consorts. The exact nature of the consort relationship, however, is not always easy to discern in each case. Over sixty people graced with the title of Fu 娘, “Lady,” appear in the bone inscriptions. It has even been proposed that Wu Ding had up to ninety consorts, but this assumes that every woman accorded the title

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93 For an introduction to the issues and an account of the activities of the Fu, see Chou Hung-hsiang, “Fu-X Ladies of the Shang Dynasty,” *Monumenta Serica* 29 (1970-72): 346-390. Some of his arguments, however, depend upon questionable translations and upon periodizations that are no longer tenable.

94 Cao Dingyun 曹定云, “‘Fu Hao’ nai ‘Zi Fang’ zhi nü ‘娍好’ 乃 ‘子方’ 之女,” in *Qingzhu Su Bingqi kaogu wushiwu nian lunwenji 慶祝蘇秉琦考古五十年論文集*, ed. Qingzhu Su Bingqi kaogu wushiwu nian lunwenji bianjizu (Beijing: Wenwu, 1989), 381.
of Fu in the bone inscriptions was indeed sexually tied to the ruler in some way. Since some of the Fu may simply have been royal attendants, it is hard to draw firm conclusions on this point.95

The worship of royal consorts after death, however, indicates the existence of a limited royal polygamy. Kings Zhong Ding 丁, Zu Yi 祖乙, and Zu Ding 祖丁, for example, had at least two consorts each who received cult after death; King Wu Ding 武丁 had three consorts, known as Bi Xin 妃辛, Bi Gui 妃癸, and Bi Wu 妃戊 (see Figure).96 The title of Bi 妃 probably had the sense of “Ancestress”; it

95 Cao Dingyun ('Fu Hao' nai 'Zi Fang,' 381), basing himself on the work of Zhang Zhenglang, notes the parallel between the Duo Fu 多婦 (“Many Ladies”) and the Duo Chen 多臣 (“Many Servitors”, presumably a “bureaucratic” title) on Yibian 8816 (= Heji 22258). (Heji is an abbreviation for the corpus inscriptionum of Shang oracle-bone rubbings, Guo Moruo 郭沫若, ed., Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, ed.-in-chief, Jiaoguwen heji 壹古文合集, 13 vols. [N.p.: Zhonghua shuju, 1978-82]. For the abbreviations, like Yibian, here converted from Wade-Giles into pinyin, by which I refer to the original publications of oracle-bone rubbings, see David N. Keightley, Sources of Shang History: The Oracle-Bone Inscriptions of Bronze Age China [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978], “Bibliography A,” 229-31.) Cao suggests that the Fu were serving-women, occupying a condition between that of primitive slavery and primitive bureaucracy, in the service, both public and private, of the king. In another study (“‘Tu Mu’ kao—Yinxu ‘Fu Hao’ mu qiwu mingwen tantao zhi qi” Jiaxia 1993.2, 80-89), Cao argues that the Si Tu Mu 司母戊’s name was cast into twenty-six bronze vessels buried in the Fu Hao tomb, was not the same person as Fu Hao, and that her status was a little lower than that of Fu Hao. She may have been a consort of Wu Ding, but whether or not she was the legal consort Bi Wu 妃戊 there is at present no way to tell. On the identity of Si Tu Mu, see too Cheng Chen-hsiang, “A Study of the Bronzes with the ‘Ssu T’u Mu’ Inscriptions Excavated from the Fu Hao Tomb,” in Studies of Shang Archaeology: Selected Papers from the International Conference on Shang Civilization, ed. K. C. Chang (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 81-102.96 I base the listing of the consorts upon Chang Yuzhi 常玉芝, Shangdai zhouji zhidu 商代周祭制度 (N.p.: Zhongguo shehui kezuoyuan, 1987), 103-04, 112. For other reconstructions of the consort list, which vary in detail, see, e.g., Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 Yinxiu buci zongshu 艋舺卜辭綜述 (Beijing: Kexue, 1956), 383-84; Kwang-chih Chang, Shang Civilization [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980], 167-68. There are some grounds for thinking that variations in the cultic treatment of the dead consorts of the kings on the main-line of descent (on these main-line kings see n. 119 below) can be classified into three stages: (1) From Shi Ren 衍壬 (the fifth predynastic lord) to Da Wu 大戊 (the seventh king), there was one consort per king; (2) from Zhong Ding (the ninth king) to Wu Ding (the twenty-first king), there were several consorts per king (except in the case of Xiao Yi 小乙 [the twentieth king], who had only a single consort who was the subsequent recipient of cult); (3) from Zu Jia 祖甲 (the twenty-third king) on, the system reverted to one consort per main-line king. See Ge Yinghui 葛英惠, “Zhou ji buci zhong de zhixi xianqi ji xieyuan jie,” Beijing daixue xuexiao: Qiyue ban 北京大學學報: 哲社版 1990.1, 121-28. Ge cannot provide a satisfactory explanation for these apparent shifts, and he notes that the evidence is sometimes sketchy.
was used to refer to female ascendants of the mother's or more distant generations.97

No doubt the Shang kings took a number of consorts both for political reasons and to ensure the production of male heirs (see inscriptions [6AC], [7] below) who could continue the royal sacrifices and maintain the dynasty. One may suppose, furthermore, that such polygamy encouraged the development of values that stressed the husband’s authority and conferred sufficient authority on the royal patriarch for the maintenance of family order. And one may also suppose that, given the emphasis that Shang elites placed on senior-junior relationships,98 elder women would have exercised considerable influence, and that the generational status and power of the widowed mother might well have been strong.

The Role of the Royal Consorts, Alive and Dead

Some of the royal consorts or Ladies, in fact, had considerable power and status in the ritual system. And that power and status presumably derived both from the political interests of their kin and from the role that they had played as consorts when alive. The inscriptions reveal that the royal Ladies consecrated shells and bones prior to divination.99 The king divined about the health of the royal Ladies, as in:

[1] 貞 婦好生病疾有凶害
Divined: “Fu Hao is sick; it means there is (ancestral)100 harm.” (Heji

99 On the ritual preparation of the shells and bones by the royal women, see Keightley, Sources of Shang History, 16-17. For a particularly instructive case, see Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Lun Bin zhi jiagu de jizhong jishi keci 論賓組甲骨的幾種記事刻辭; On some Bin Diviner Group Inscriptions Engraved on Ox Scapulae,” in Yingguo suocang jiagou ji 英國所藏甲骨集, Oracle Bone Collections in Great Britain, eds. Li Xueqin 李學勤, Qi Wenxin 齊文心, Ai Lan 艾蘭 (Sarah Allan) (Beijing and London: Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan lishi yanjiusuo and School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London), Vol. 2, Pt. 1, 161-76.
100 In my translations of oracle-bone inscriptions, parentheses indicate that meaning is supplied; square brackets, in both the Chinese and the English text, indicate that a graph, thought to have been present in the original inscription, has been supplied.
Wu Ding, indeed, had performed exorcisms and offered sacrifices to protect Fu Hao while she was alive:

And Wu Ding had also divined about the childbearing of Fu Hao (see [6AC], [7] below) and other consorts.

In her life, furthermore, Fu Hao had evidently had some control, ritual or actual, over the mobilization of laborers or soldiers:

And she had also been involved in Wu Ding’s military activities and campaigns:

One may imagine, as I have indicated, that the status of elite women,

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101 The letters “f” and “b” added to a Heji rubbing number refer to the “front” and “back” of the bone or shell.


103 Jimaq was the sixteenth day in the sixty-day cycle that the Shang formed by combining the ten “heavenly branches” (tiangan 天干, a later term) with the twelve “earthly stems” (dizhi 地支, also a later term). Jiazi 甲子 was thus day 1, yichou 乙丑 was day 2, bingyun 丙寅 was day 3, and so on.

104 The notation “K20” indicates the twentieth king; see Figure.

105 For the campaigns in which Fu Hao is thought to have participated (though some of the evidence is circumstantial), see Wang Yuxin 王宇信, “Wuding qi zhanzheng bu ci fenqi de changshi,” in Jiaguwen yu Yin Shang shi, di san ji 甲骨文與殷商史, 第三輯, ed. Wang Yuxin (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1991), 149-52.
while alive, derived in part from political considerations and the formation of alliances through marriage. It seems likely, moreover, that some of the royal women, coming to the Shang court from outlying dependencies, would have been accompanied by their own entourage of servitors, whose primary allegiance, of course, might have been to her patrilineage rather than to her. A person named Xi 喜, for example, was the diviner of record on over seventy oracle bones that date to the generation after Wu Ding; his name would appear to link him, socially and politically, to Fu Xi 婦喜 (Lady Xi), one of the Fu who had prepared scapulas and plastrons for divination in the reign of Wu Ding. Both the diviner Xi and the Lady Xi presumably came from the region of Xi, which on one occasion sent in five turtle shells for divination, presumably as a form of tribute.106

For all the significance of the roles that Fu Hao and other consorts played, in both their premortem and postmortem existences, the inscriptions do reveal that, dead or alive, such elite females were not as highly valued as elite males. This is evident, first of all, in the way that the Shang kings often appear to have wished for male progeny.

[6A] 庚子卜殺 貞: 婦好: 卜子. 三月
Crack-making on gengzi (day 37), Que divined: “Fu Hao will have a son.” Third moon.

[6B] 辛丑卜殺 貞: 祈于母庚
Crack-making on xinchou (day 38), Que divined: “(We) pray to Mother Geng.” (Heji 13926f)

[6C] 王曰: 其□佳丙不吉其佳甲戍亦不吉其佳甲申吉
The king read the cracks and said: “Should...; should it be on a bing day (that she have a son), it will not be auspicious; should it be on jiaxu (day 11), it will also not be auspicious; should it be on jiaxun (day 21), it will be auspicious.” (I. Bin) (“Sanken” 388 = [a nonexistent] Heji 13926b).107

106 See the inscriptions listed at Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, eds., Yinxu jiagu leizuan, 1073.2, 1494. For scapulas prepared by Lady Xi, see, e.g., Heji 390, 527, 6040, 17517; for the turtle shell, one of five, sent in by Xi, see Heji 900b.
107 “Sanken” is an abbreviation for Matsumaru Michio 松丸道雄, “Nihon sanken kōkotsu moji shū” 日本散見甲骨文字蒐集 (四), “Kōkotsu gaku” 甲骨學 10 (1964): 213-30 (nos. 352-446). Inscription [6C] should have been reproduced as Heji 13926b, but the Heji editors overlooked the prognostication on the scapula back, presumably because it was not recorded when the front of the bone, Tiejun 127.1, was first published. See Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, “Ji Riben Jingdu daxue kaogu yanjiu-
In this case, Wu Ding’s prayer in [6B] to Mother Geng—his own mother, also known as Bi Geng (see Table)—was presumably a prayer for the son divined about in [6A] (cf. [15AB]).\(^{108}\)

Wu Ding’s diviners recorded the birth of a daughter as “not good,” an indication that the Zhou preference for boys was already present in Shang elite culture:\(^{109}\)

引吉。三旬又一日甲寅姚不婦佳女

(Preface:) Crack-making on jiashen. (day 21), Que divined: (Charge:) “Fu Hao’s childbearing will be good.” (Prognostication:) The king read the cracks and said: “If it be a ding-day childbearing, it will be good; if it be a geng-(day) childbearing, there will be prolonged luck.” (Verification.) (After) thirty-one days, on jiayin (day 51), she gave birth; it was not good; it was a girl. (Heji 14002f)

The Shang evidently made a distinction, in prognostications of this sort, between births that were “good” (jia 嘉) and those that were “lucky” or “auspicious” (ji 吉). The limited evidence available suggests that “good” or “not good” referred to the sex of the baby, male or female respectively; “lucky” or “unlucky” may have referred to whether the baby lived or died (the prognostication [6C] supports such an interpretation).\(^{10}\) It is worth noting that the number of full

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\(^{108}\) Two other interpretations of [6A] are possible. (1) Zi 子 in childbearing contexts could have meant a “child” of either sex, so that [6A] would have meant, “Fu Hao will have a child.” That Zi was a Shang title of status (“Prince”), reserved so far as one can tell for males, and that it appeared in the title of the Duo Zi 多子 (“Many Sons, Princes”), strongly suggests, however, that the reference here was to male progeny and not to progeny in general, for which the term sheng 生 was used; see n.153 below. (2) Wen Shaofeng and Yuan Tingdong 袁庭棟 (Tianxu bici anjiu: Kexue jishu pian [Chengdu: Sichuan shenhui kexueyuan, 1983], 343) would take [6A] to mean “Is Fu Hao pregnant?” The presence of [6C] on the back of the same scapula, however, effectively excludes such an interpretation; it is clear from that prognostication that the diviner already knew Fu Hao was pregnant. Wen and Yuan (pp. 342-47) discuss other aspects of the childbearing inscriptions, but they overstate in my view the Shang medical ability to forecast birth days with accuracy; the issue being divined was not primarily medical but hemerological.

\(^{109}\) The Shijing, as is well known, indicates that baby girls were less valued than boys. See, e.g., Shijing, “Si gan 斯干” (Mao 189), stanzas 8 and 9; cited by Van Gulik, Sexual Life in Ancient China, 15-16.

\(^{110}\) See too the prognostication for Heji 14001 (which was probably divined for the same pregnancy recorded in [7]): 君曰其隹 [戊] 申血吉嘉其隹甲寅姚不吉, “The
birth scenarios—involving a charge, prognostication, and verification—recorded by the extant bone inscriptions is not large;\textsuperscript{111} this suggests that such divinations were primarily reserved for a limited class of births, presumably those involving Wu Ding’s consorts. It is also worth noting that no verification ever records, “It was good; it was a boy.” For some reason—perhaps in the hopes of deceiving malevolent spirits by not advertising the nature of the good fortune—the diviners did not record the birth of sons as explicitly as they did the birth of daughters.

Not all the royal Ladies, of course, were of equal status, and the distinctions that had separated them in life were symbolized by their treatment when dead. Some of the royal Ladies—those who had been the consorts of the kings on the main-line of descent (that is, those kings who were both the sons of kings and the fathers of kings)—received cult on a regular basis, on the day of their own temple name (see below). The order in which they received cult, however, was determined by the succession order of the kings they had served as consorts,\textsuperscript{112} as in the following examples:

\begin{quote}
[8A] 庚申卜贞：王賜示壬爽 妇庚 罡亡尤

Crack-making on geng*shen* (day 57), divined: “The king hosts Shi Ren (P5)’s consort,\textsuperscript{113} Ancestress Geng... and performs the zai ritual; there will be no fault.”
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
[8B] 甲子卜贞：王賜示癸爽丂[妣甲] 罡亡尤

king read the cracks and said: ‘If it be on jiu*shen* (day 45) that she give birth, it will be lucky and good; if it be on jia*yin* (day 51) that she give birth, it will not be lucky.” And the prognostication recorded on the left side of the shell was, in part:... 不嘉其不言, “...it will not be good; if it is good, it will not be lucky.” In the result (see [7]) the baby was a girl (and thus “not good”). And, if I read the verification to Heji 14001 correctly—...若茾道死, “...it was like this and then (the baby?) died”—the baby girl appears to have died, so that the birth had also been “not lucky,” precisely as the king had forecast in his prognostication.

I count five birth verifications that record “it was good” or “it really was good” (yun jia 允嘉), presumably referring to the birth of a son. (Heji 454f, 14003f, 14009f, 14017f, 14021f). I count four verifications that record “it was not good” or “it was a girl” (Heji 717f, 6948f, 14001f, 14002f; see the transcriptions at Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, eds., Yinxiu jiagu keci leizuan, 783.2-84.1).

\textsuperscript{111} The notation “P5” indicates the fifth pre-dynastic ancestor; see Figure. The oracle-bone graph 爽 was used by the ritualists of Periods II and V to identify the consorts of the main-line kings. There is general agreement that the word had the meaning of royal spouse or queen, but the graph seems to have left no identifiable descendant. See Keightley, “Kingship and Kinship,” 19; see too the various entries at Matsumaru and Takashima, Kôkotsu monji jishaku soran, no. 1242.
Crack-making on jiuzi (day 1), divined: “The king hosts Shi Gui (P6)’s consort [Ancestress Jia] and performs the zai ritual; there will be no fault.” (Heji 36184)

[9A] 丙申卜貞: 王賓大乙爽妣丙犰亡尤

Crack-making on bingshen (day 33), divined: “The king hosts Da Yi (K1)’s consort Ancestress Bing and performs the zai ritual; there will be no fault.”

[9B] 戊戌卜貞: 王賓大丁爽妣戊犰亡尤

Crack-making on wuxu (day 35), divined: The king hosts Da Ding (K2)’s consort Ancestress Wu and performs the zai ritual; there will be no fault.” (Heji 36198)

In the case of [8AB], Shi Ren was the fifth predynastic ancestor, Shi Gui was the sixth (see Figure). Shi Ren’s consort, Ancestress Geng, received cult on the geng day of one ten-day week; Shi Gui’s consort, Ancestress Jia, received cult on the jia day that started the next ten-day week. Similarly, in [9AB], Da Yi was the first Shang king, Da Ding was the second. Da Yi’s consort, Ancestress Bing, received cult on the bing day; Da Ding’s consort, Ancestress Wu, received cult on the wu day, two days later. In every case it was the accession order of the kings that determined the ritual sequence of their consorts.

It is also plausible to conclude that consorts of the same king were worshipped according to the order of their deaths. This is indicated, first, by the distribution of the Chu diviner-group divinations about Wu Ding’s three consorts:114 there are a fair number for Mu Xin 母辛 (“Mother Xin”), there is only one for Mu Gui 母癸 (“Mother Gui”), and none for Mu Wu 母戊 (“Mother Wu”); these figures suggest that Mu Xin—thought to be the temple name of Fu Hao—had died first.115 That consorts were worshipped in the order in which they had died is also indicated by inscriptions like:

[10A] 辛己卜貞: 王賓武丁爽妣辛犰亡尤

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114 The Chu-group diviners were generally active in Period II, the generation of Wu Ding’s sons, Zu Geng and Zu Jia (see Figure). 115 That Fu Hao received cult on a xin day (see Heji 32757) makes it likely that her temple name, whether Mu Xin or Bi Xin, was Xin; see Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Lun ‘Fu Hao’ mu de niandai ji youguan wenti 論‘婦好’墓的年代及有關問題,” Wenwu 文物 1977.11, 35. For the order in which the consorts died, see Chang Yuzhi, Shang-dai zhongji zhidu, 105, n. 2; she also cites Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Zhong Ri Ou Mei Ao Niu suo jian suo tuo suo mo jinwen huibian’ xuanshi ‘中日歐美博物所見所拓所摹金文彙編’ 選釋,” Guwenzi yanjiu lunwenji 古文字研究論文集, 10 (1982): 41.
Crack-making on xinsi (day 18), divined: “The king hosts Wu Ding (K21)’s consort, Ancestress Xin, and performs the zai ritual; there will be no fault.”

[10B] 禧乙卜貞:王賓武丁爽 兌癸 繇亡尤

Crack-making on guiwei (day 20), divined: “The king hosts Wu Ding’s consort, Ancestress Gui, and performs the zai ritual; there will be no fault.”

[10C] 戌子卜貞:王賓武丁爽 戌 繇亡尤

Crack-making on wuzi (day 25), divined: “The king hosts Wu Ding’s consort, Ancestress Wu, and performs the zai ritual; there will be no fault.” (Heji 36268)

These three charges, on the same plastron fragment, reveal that Ancestress Xin received cult two days earlier than Ancestress Gui, and that Ancestress Xin and Ancestress Gui received cult in the same ten-day week (the one that would have started on jiaxu [day 11] and ended on guiwei [day 20]), with Ancestress Wu receiving cult in the week that followed (the one that would have started on jiashen [day 21]). The sequence may plausibly be linked to the sequence in which the three consorts had first entered the ritual cycle.\textsuperscript{116}

Finally, the importance of Ancestress Xin (i.e., Fu Hao) is suggested by the following two charges on a plastron fragment:

[11A] 戊午卜貞:王賓小乙爽妣庚 齁日亡尤

Crack-making on gengwu (day 7), divined: “The king hosts Xiao Yi (K20)’s consort, Ancestress Geng, and performs the xie-day ritual; there will be no fault.”

[11B] 進未卜貞:王 旱武丁爽 己辛 齁日亡尤

[Crack-making on] xinwei (day 8), [divined: “The king] hosts [Wu Ding (K21)’s consort,] Ancestress Xin, [and performs the xie-day ritual; there will be no fault.” (Heji 36264)]

\textsuperscript{116} Cao Dingyun 鮑定雲, “‘Fu Hao’, ‘Xiao Ji’ guanxi kaozheng – cong Fu Hao mu ‘Simu Xin’ mingwen tanqi ‘婦好’, ‘小己’ 關係考證 - 從婦好墓‘司母辛’銘文談起,” Zhongwai wenwu 中原文物 1993.3, 72-73; he cites Qianbian1.17.4 (=Heji 36269) as further confirmation. See too Chang Yuzhi, Shangdai zhouji zhidu, 97-98. For a handcopy of Heji 36268, whose rubbing I find largely illegible, see Ikeda Susumu池田秀利, Inkyo shoki kōhen shakubun kō, 殿墟書契後編撰文稿 (Hiroshima: Hiroshima daigaku bungakubu Chūgoku tetsugaku kenkyūshitsu, 1964), Pt. 1, 11-13 (Houbian 1.4.7).
That cult offered to Ancestress Geng, who was Wu Ding’s mother, was followed, a day later, by what must have been cult offered to Wu Ding’s consort, Ancestress Xin, indicates her importance in the Late Shang sacrificial system, following directly after her consort’s mother in the sequence.17

When dead, only the consorts of the main-line kings received cult on a regular basis. Whether these consorts were honored because they were the mothers of kings (in later texts, “the mother ennobled because of the status of her son”), or whether the sons became kings because their mothers were the official consorts (“the son ennobled because of the status of his mother”), cannot be determined from the oracle-bone record, which mainly focuses on the postmortem, ritual treatment of these figures.118 The privileging of the main-line kings’ consorts, however, makes it possible to discern the origins of the later zongfa 宗法, “patricrathic clan system,” in these ritual arrangements.119

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117 Cao Dingyun, “‘Fu Hao’, ‘Xiao Ji’ guanxi kaozheng,” 73. For the reconstruction of the missing characters, see too Ikeda Suotoshi, Inkyo shokei kōhen shakubun kō, pt.1, 11 (Houbian 1.4.6).

118 On the relation between a mother’s status and a son’s succession, see Yang Shengnan 楊升南, “Cong Yinxu buci zhong de ‘shi’, ‘zong’ shuo dao Shangdai de zongfa zhida 從殷墟卜辭中的‘示’，‘宗’就到商代的宗法制度,” Zhongguo shi yanjiu 中國史研究 1985.3, 12-13; Chang Yuzhi, Shangdai zongzhi zhida, 112. Chang cites the suggestive account from Shiji 史記, “Yin benji 殷本紀” about Di Yi’s eldest son, Qi 奚, “Qi’s mother was lowly, so he was not able to become Heir.” Di Yi’s 帝乙 youngest son was Xin 辛, and “Xin’s mother was the ruler’s primary consort (zheng hou 正后), so Xin became the Heir” (as Di Xin 帝辛, the last Shang king) (tr. based on Nienhauser, ed., The Grand Scribe’s Records. Volume I, 49). In Sima Qian’s view at least, it would have been the status of the mother that determined the elevation of the son. According to the Suoyin 索隲 commentary to this passage, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, basing himself upon the Lushi chunqiu 呂氏春秋, had noted that it had been the same mother who had given birth to Qi and Xin; in this account, she had not yet achieved the status of primary consort when Qi was born, but she had achieved that status before Xin was born; hence Xin was the son who inherited (Takigawa Kametaro 猪川太郎, Shiki kaichō kōshō 史記會注考証 [Tokyo: Tōhōbunka gakuten, 1934], Vol. 1, j. 3, 27; Xu Weiyu 許維通, Lu shi chunqiu jishi 吕氏春秋集釋 [Taipei: Shijie, 1966], j. 11,12b-13a (“Dang wu 當務”).

119 See, e.g., Qiu Xigui 邱錫圭, “Guanyu Shangdai de zongzu zuzhi yu guizu he pingmin liangge jieji de chubu yanjiu 關於商代的宗族組織與貴族和平民兩個階級的初步研究,” Wenshi 文史 17 (1982): 4-5, 24; Yang Shengnan, “Cong Yinxu buci zhong de ‘shi’, ‘zong’ shuo dao Shangdai de zongfa zhida,” 3-16. As Yang explains (p. 15), the kings who had sons who became kings in turn were the kings on the main-line of descent; they were known in the inscriptions as the dashi 大示, “the great ancestors.” The kings whose sons did not become kings were the collateral kings. The temples of the dashi kings were not dismantled in subsequent generations, and their formal consorts received special cult. The xiaoshi 小示 temples of the col-
By the reign of the last two kings, known to history as Di Yi 帝乙 and Di Xin 帝辛, a shorter cycle of four of the five rituals (excluding the ji 祭) that formed the five-ritual cycle offered to the kings was being offered to the consorts of the main-line kings, but only in association with the bin 賓, "hosting," ritual, as in [10A]: "Crack-making on xinsi (day 18): "The king hosts Wu Ding's consort, Ancestress Xin and performs the zal ritual, there will be no fault." As in the case of the kings, the rituals were offered to the consorts on the gan-days of their temple names (thus [10A], about the offering of cult to Ancestress Xin, had been divined on xinsi 辛已; see too [8AB], [9AB]).

Three distinctions, however, suggest the secondary status of these ancestral consorts. First, their ritual cycle lagged behind that of the kings by one week, as indicated by the following group of Period II charges on the same scapula fragment:

[12A] 己丑卜行貞: 王賓吕己形亡尤

Crack-making on jichou (day 26), Xing divined: "The king hosts Lü Ji (K8) and performs the yong ritual; there will be no fault."

[12B] 甲辰卜行貞: 王賓蔑甲形亡尤

Crack-making on jiachen (day 41), Xing divined: The king hosts Jian Jia (K11) and performs the yong ritual; there will be no fault."

[12C] 甲寅卜行貞: 王賓祖辛㝫妣甲形亡尤

Crack-making on jiayin (day 51), Xing divined: "The king hosts Zu Xin (K13)'s consort, Ancestress Jia, and performs the yong ritual; there will
A reconstruction of the ritual cycle indicates that king Lù Jì ([12A]) received cult in the fourth ten-day week, and that kings Jian Jia (as in [12B]) and Zu Xin received cult in the sixth ten-day week. Zu Xin’s consort Ancestress Jia (as in [12C]), however, received cult in the seventh ten-day week, showing that the consorts’ cycle started one week later than the kings.123

Second, the consorts’ subordinate status is indicated by the fact that, as already noted, they received only four of the five rituals that the kings did. The cycle of the consorts, accordingly, differed in length from that of the kings. Third, as explained below, the consorts’ cult days, by male standards, were less auspicious.

It is, nevertheless, a matter of no little social and political significance that, for the Shang elites, dead consorts, in the role of ancestresses, were thought to play a role after death. A dead woman presumably became an ancestress in the same way that a dead man became an ancestor: by undergoing the proper burial rites, by being awarded a gan temple name (such as the Ancestress Xin 姑幸 of [10A]), and by being offered cult according to the ancestral schedule. After Fu Hao’s death, Wu Ding divined about the ritual hosting of her spirit [10A].124 And he buried Fu Hao with great wealth in the vicinity of the temple-palace complex at Xiaotun. Her tomb, a relatively modest rectangular pit which is now labelled M5, was crammed with over 1,900 objects, including 468 bronzes, weighing over one-and-a-half metric tons, and 755 jades; in addition, over 6,880 cowrie shells had been placed in the tomb.125 Fu Hao’s status was sufficiently high that at least sixteen victims or dependents were buried to follow her in death.126 Wu Ding’s ritualists evidently gave her the temple name of Mu Xin 母幸 (Mother Xin) (see n. 115 above) or Ancestress Xin 姑幸 (Ancestress Xin). The location of M5, incidentally, near the southwest corner of a group of small building

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122 The rubbing is hard to read; I follow the transcription of Chang Yuzhi, Shang-dai zongji zhidu, 108.
123 The rubbing is hard to read; I follow the transcription of Chang Yuzhi, Shang-dai zongji zhidu, 108.
124 See too the inscriptions listed at Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, eds., Yinxu jiagu kexi leizuan, 182.1-83.2.
125 Yinxu Fu Hao mu, 15, 114, 220. The pit measured 5.6 x 4 x 7.5 m. The extent to which this wealth was actually the property of Fu Hao, as opposed to being the property of those who mourned her, would require more study, as would the question of whether or not such a query makes sense in the Late Shang context.
126 Yinxu Fu Hao mu, 8.
foundations that may have served a ritual function,127 may also bear on the order (discussed above) in which Wu Ding's consorts died. That Fu Hao was buried near the temple-palace complex at Xiaotun, rather than across the Huan River in Xibeigang, where other consorts, including perhaps Wu Ding's consort Ancestress Wu, were eventually buried,128 at least raises the possibility that Wu Ding wished to keep her body, and the site for his offerings to her, close to his residential quarters, a further indication that she died while Wu Ding was still alive. Once Wu Ding had died, and was buried in the royal cemetery at Xibeigang, by contrast, one can well imagine that the consorts who died after him would have been buried in the same cemetery, near him rather than at Xiaotun. That the king dreamed of Fu Hao, presumably after her death,129 further suggests the importance she had played, and continued to play, in Wu Ding's life:

[13] 貞：王夢婦好不往敗
Divined: “That the king dreamed of Fu Hao does not mean that there will be harm.”130 (Heji 17380)

The considerable ritual attention that the dead consorts of the mainline kings received, as they became ancestresses, was nevertheless limited. The reigning king did not, for example, offer to the royal ancestresses the prayers for rain and harvest that he offered to the Predynastic Kings or Nature Powers. There was, in short, no explicit jurisdictional link between the ancestresses and agriculture, which appears, instead, to have been the preserve of the ancestors.131 The

130 Unfortunately for our understanding of Fu Hao's theological role, the precise meaning of nie 毁, which I have loosely translated as “harm,” is not well understood. Stanley L. Mickel (“A Semantic Analysis of the Disaster Graphs of Period One Shang Dynasty Oracle Bones” [Ph. D. diss., Indiana University, 1976], 199-209) provides a summary of the scholarship on this word; he offers only “災 - disaster” as a translation.
ancestresses’ jurisdiction, by contrast, was human reproduction. It was to them that the king offered his prayers for progeny (sheng 生), whose good fortune was vital to the success of the dynasty, as on the following scapula fragment:

[14A] 卜辰贞: 其婦生壬庚癸丙, 在祖乙宗卜

Divined on gengchen (day 17): “(We) will pray for progeny to Ancestress Geng and Ancestress Bing.” (Postface:) Crack-making in the temple of Zu Yi.

[14B] 辛巳贞: 其婦生壬庚癸丙牡牡白報

Divined on xinsi (day 18): “(We) will pray for progeny to Ancestress Geng and Ancestress Bing (and) offer a bull, a ram, and a white boar (?)” (Heji 34082)

That at least two of the three victims offered in [14B] were male—a bull and a ram, and possibly a boar—might encourage the supposition that they had been selected for their sex to encourage the birth of a male child (see [7] above). But this is not confirmed by the evidence. On another scapula fragment, for example, clearly divined at the same time as [14B], the Shang diviners proposed both male and female victims in a two-charge sequence:

[15A] 辛巳贞: 其婦生壬庚癸丙牡牡白豕

Divined on xinsi (day 18): “In praying for progeny to Ancestress Geng and Ancestress Bing, (we offer) a bull, a ram, and a white pig.”


... divined: “[In] praying for progeny to [Ancestress] Geng and Ancestress Bing, (we offer)... a ewe and a sow.” (Heji 34081)


132 The geng of the gengchen date is unclear in the rubbing. Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding (eds., Yinxi jiagu keci leizuan, 501.2), misread the date as wuchen (day 5). For a clearer (and more complete) rubbing and transcription that gives the date correctly, see Hebian 56 and Zhuxia 436.

133 I follow the suggestion of Peng Yushang 彭裕商 (personal communication, February 1993) in reading the last character of [14B] as jia 獾, “boar.” The rubbing is hard to decipher, the graph crudely drawn; but it is possible to see a third line, depicting the penis, between the two legs. Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding (eds., Yinxi jiagu keci leizuan, 501.2), however, read it as quan 犬, “dog.” For the graphs in question, see Matsumaru and Takashima, Kôkotsunouji jishaku sôran, nos. 1139, 1182.
Where prayers for progeny were concerned, in fact, no clear preference for sacrificial victims of one sex or the other emerges. This suggests, to the extent that one may link the sex of the animal victim to the sex of the baby desired, that the Shang diviners, despite the evidence of [7], did not always hope for male progeny. Indeed, a moment’s reflection will suggest that a dynastic state like the Shang, whose security depended upon a series of lineage alliances across the North China plain, would have had need of daughters as well as sons, as the Shang kings sought to establish alliances by marrying their daughters to the male rulers of neighboring states.

It is also worth noting, however, that [14A] (and presumably [14B]) was divined in the temple of Zu Yi, the twelfth Shang king; Ancestress Geng to whom this prayer was offered was presumably Zu Yi’s consort, and Ancestress Bing was presumably the consort of Da Yi 大乙, the first Shang king and dynasty founder (Figure), whose temple name was also Yi. If so, this provides evidence that, although the prayer for progeny was directed to the female ascendants, the divination about that prayer was performed in the temple of a royal husband. Once again, the authority of the male appears to have been dominant; the ancestresses, essential though their role may have been, operated within the larger context established by and for the ancestors.

The value of the royal women is further indicated by the names they were assigned after death. Their temple names clustered in the second half of the Shang ten-day week, so that they generally received cult on the days that the Shang diviners tended to regard as inauspicious (i.e., geng, wu, xin, ji). In the system of temple names, in other words, the Shang kings were generally awarded the auspicious name-days at the start of the week (i.e., jia, ding, yi, geng); the temple names awarded to the royal women tended to link them to the inauspicious name-days at the end of the week. Conceivably, the women had their own system of lucky and unlucky days, but the fact remains that it differed from, and appears to have been the inverse of, the system used for the male ascendants.

Finally, there is no doubt that, by a ratio of approximately 5 to 1, the bulk of Late Shang cultic attention was addressed to male ances-

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\[134\] The number of “pray for progeny” charges is not large. Three stipulate the offering of male victims (Heji 34080, 34081, 34082), two stipulate the offering of female victims (Heji 34081, 34084).

\[135\] Ji Dewei 吉德煒, “Zhongguo gudai de jiri yu miáohào 中國古代的吉日與廟號,” Yinzu bówuguàn yuàankan (chuàngkǎn hào) 殷墟博物苑苑刊 (創刊號) 1989, 20-32. The geng-day, the seventh day in the ten-day week, appears to have been equally available to both kings and queens.
tors rather than to ancestresses. Furthermore, although the inscriptions of the Li group diviners on occasion record that they performed their divinations in the temples of the dead kings (as in the case of [14A]), most dead consorts do not appear to have been honored with temples in the first place, and there is no record that divinations were ever performed in their temples’ precincts. This suggests that it may have been the ancestors rather than the ancestresses who were thought to be responding, through the pyromantic cracks, to the diviners’ charges. It is entirely natural, accordingly, that, although the Shang king made frequent ritual reports to his ancestors about a large number of topics—such as the rituals he offered, locusts, floods, enemy attacks, and illness—there are few divinations about his making such reports to an ancestress; evidently the authority of the ancestresses did not extend to such matters. And, finally, it should be noted that it was only the male kings who received burial in the large, four-ramp tombs at Xibeigang; the contents of Fu Hao’s pit burial were opulent, but the size of the pit (see n. 125) was not. This distinction was presumably not just symbolic but was also functional. The large southern ramp of a king’s tomb,

136 A crude count of the inscriptions recorded in Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, eds., *Yinxu Jiagu Kezi Leizuan*, that involved divinations about male and female ascendants reveals ca. 89 pages of inscriptions devoted to ancestors (pp. 1361.1-1434.1; 1448.2-64.2) and only 17 pages devoted to ancestresses (pp. 1434.1-48.2; 1463.1-68.2). Of the 60 charges that involved burnt offerings (*liao*), only 7 (11.7 percent) were addressed to consorts rather than kings (pp. 555.2-56.2).

137 For the argument that it was the ancestors who were communicating with their descendants through the divinatory cracks, see David N. Keightley, “In the Bone: Divination, Theology, and Political Culture in Late Shang China” (Pre-Modern China Seminar, Fairbank Center, Harvard University, October 17, 1994), 18-22. Consort temples did exist, but are recorded on only two oracle-bones (both from Period II): *Heji* 23372 (temple of Ancestress Geng [Bi Geng], presumably the title of Zu Yi’s consort; see the discussion of [14A] above) and *Heji* 23520 (temple of Mother Xin [Mu Xin], presumably the title of Fu Hao; see n. 115 above.

138 I estimate that in the corpus of *gao* charges transcribed at Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, eds., *Yinxu Jiagu Kezi Leizuan*, 247.1-55.1, some 230 ritual reports were made to ancestors; I have found, by contrast, only five charges about such reports to four different ancestresses: Bi Ji and Bi Geng (*Heji* 12486), Mu Bing (*Heji* 2525b), Mu Xin (*Heji* 23419), and Bi Xin (*Heji* 27557, 27558); the Xin ancestress references were probably all to Fu Hao, an indicator, perhaps, of her dominance while alive. Unfortunately, the context of these charges is not informative; they are generally of the form, “If (we) make ritual report to Ancestress Xin, it should be a deer (we offer)” (*Heji* 27557).

open to the midday sun, would have permitted access to the burial chamber at the time of his interment, and would have permitted a significant number of mourners to participate in the mortuary rituals and the offering of the human victims whose corpses were then buried in the ramps. Consorts, by contrast, do not appear to have received such treatment; whoever participated in their mortuary rituals would have had to do so on the surface.

All this evidence confirms the general conclusion that Late Shang society was fundamentally patriarchal and that elite women played a major but subordinate role in many aspects of the ritual system, at least as it was divined by the Shang kings. The exceptions that can be identified at the elite level are paradigmatic; a few elite women have often managed to wield great power or achieve considerable intellectual status throughout Chinese history. In the oracle-bone inscriptions, as in the *Zuo zhuan* 藤傳 and later histories, some women, such as Fu Hao, are indeed shown to have exerted considerable political and social influence, but religion, politics, and philosophical ideology evidently lent no support to widespread female dominance or equality. Elite women had their spheres—particularly where childbearing and prayers for progeny ([14AB]) were concerned. But even in those cases, as has been seen, the king’s recorded preference, in the cases which he divined, was for male children ([6A] [7]). The degree to which such cultural expectations—recorded in a ritual context embedded in dynastic politics—should be extended to elite female experience as a whole in Late Shang, however, is far from certain.

The status of women in early Chinese culture is a complex topic, and the details of many more particular cases still need to be worked out as more evidence becomes available. One topic, for example, that may be fruitful involves the hypothesis that—on the basis of their divinatory topics, which frequently concerned ancestresses, and also on the basis of the fineness of their calligraphy—certain Shang diviners or diviner groups were women or were focused on women’s concerns. It is doubtful that the writing style of the inscriptions can

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10 Chou Hung-hsiang’s view (“Fu-X Ladies,” 374) that the Shang evidence reveals “substantial social equality between the sexes.”

141 For the important political and social role played by a number of women during the Western Zhou dynasty (ca. 1045-771 BCE), see Herrlee G. Creel, *The Origins of Statecraft in China, Volume I: The Western Chou Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 129-31, 394-95.

142 The diviners involved are the so-called 王 group diviners, 升 group diviners, and the Nameless (nonroyal) diviners. See Kaizuka Shigeki 観塚成樹 and Itô Michiharu 伊藤道治, “Kōkotsubun dandai kenkyūhō no saikōto—Dōshi no Bunbutei jidai bokuji o chushin toshite 甲骨文斷代研究法の再検討—董氏の文武丁時代卜
reveal the sex of the diviners. It is hard to detect a feminine hand in characters carved into bone or shell some three thousand years ago; but even if the handwriting could be identified as that of a woman, it is evident that the inscriptions were not usually carved by the diviners themselves but by a separate group of engravers. That certain diviner groups did pay particular attention to the service of the ancestresses is undeniable, but it is far from certain that the concerns were those of women as opposed to those of particular lineage groups at the Shang court. The social and political significance of evidence of this sort remains to be explored more fully.

The Significance of the Xing 姓

I cannot close this article without making a brief reference to the significance of the character for xing 姓, the lineage designation that, in later times, came to denote a family surname. Since the word does not appear in any useful context in the Shang bones, it falls, strictly speaking, outside the purview of this article. But because...
important conclusions about the status of women in early China have been drawn from its later appearance, a word or two may not be out of place.

Of the twenty-four xing, clan names, recorded in the Zuozhuan, sixteen contained the nü 女 (woman) element in their written graphs, as in Ji 姬, Jiang 姜, Ying 盈, Si 寺, and so on. The presence of the “woman” element in names that are thought to be “very ancient” has led scholars to argue that such names “testify to the general ignorance of paternity which must have prevailed during the earliest stage” and demonstrate “the prevalence of matrilineal groups in remote antiquity.” Many scholars have found confirming evidence of early matriliny or matriarchy and of the practice of men marrying-out in the legendary accounts of miraculous pregnancies, the result of an encounter with some natural phenomenon, that identify only the mothers and not the fathers of culture heroes; thus Nü Jie 女節, after the fall of a great star, had a dream and gave birth to Shao Hao 少昊, the Qin 秦 progenitor (Diwang shiji 帝王世紀); Jian Di 简狄 swallowed an egg dropped by the dark bird and gave birth to Xie 奚, the Shang progenitor (Shiji, “Yin benji 殷本紀”); Jiang Yuan 姜嫄 stepped in the footprint of a giant and gave birth to Qi 祁, the Zhou progenitor (Shijing, “Sheng min 生民” [Mao no. 245]; Shiji, “Zhou benji 周本紀”), and so on. And in many of these cases, it has been argued that the son took his mother’s clan name as his own; according to the Suoyin 索隂 commentary to the Shiji, for example, Yao 尧 “took his xing from where his mother dwelled” (從母所居為姓).

The conclusion that such evidence implies the existence of early matriliny can certainly be challenged. With regard to the legendary inseminations, it has been suggested, for example, that the swallowing of the dark bird’s egg by Jian Di represented not matrilineal descent but an act of ritual intercourse in which women, once a year,

And with regard to the character xing, it has been pointed out that the graphs of only five of twenty-six early xing names include the "woman" element, with five others having the woman element as a graphic variant. None of the xing with the woman element is known in pre-Zhou times, and those xing which have graphic variants including the "woman" radical emerged at a relatively late date. Usage in the Western Zhou bronze inscriptions raises the possibility, in fact, that the ancient form of xing was written with the "man" rather than the "woman" radical (see n. 158 below).\footnote{M. V. Kryukov, "Hsing and Shih: On the Problem of Clan Name and Patronymic in Ancient China," Archiv Orientální 34 (1966): 538-40. He relies in part on the analysis of O. Wojtasiewicz, "The Origins of Chinese Clan Names," Rocznik Orientalistyczny 19 (1954): 28. Kryukov also refers (p. 543) to the point made in an early article by Li Xueqin 李學勤 ("Lun Yindai qinzu zhيدn 論殷代親族制度," Wen Shi Zhe 文史哲 1957.11, 34), that when, in the oracle-bone inscriptions, a Shang woman was the referent, a "woman" radical was, on occasion, added to the graph for her name (which Li Xueqin treats not as a xing, clan name, but as a shi 氏, lineage name).}

It is worth noting, in fact, that most of the accounts that fully develop the matrilineal implications of the origins legends are relatively late in date. It is not, accordingly, out of the question that these accounts were produced by a strongly patrilineal culture that found it useful, in generating its miraculous charter myths, to invoke matrilineality as one further sign of the extraordinary nature of the claims being made.\footnote{An analogous situation may have existed in Classical Greece where, as Simon Pembroke has shown, "there is no evidence whatever for the existence of matrarchal societies in the ancient world, and the myths about Amazon societies that have come down to us were originally designed only to indicate how bad things could be when women got the upper hand" (Mary R. Lefkowitz, "Influential Women," in Images of Women in Antiquity, eds. Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt [London: Croom Helm, 1983], 49; she is citing, among other works, Simon Pembroke, "The Last of the Matriarchs: A Study in the Inscriptions of Lycia," Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, 8 [1965]: 217-47). See too Wm. Blake Tyrrell, Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), espec. Chapter 13, "The Meaning of the Amazon Myth," 113-28.}

The Shang evidence, sparse though it is, suggests, in fact, that, in its origins, xing did not have the sense of "clan" or "clan name" at all,
but meant something quite different. The Shang king, as in [14AB], used the term *dao sheng* 柙生, “pray for progeny.” And the term *duo sheng* 多生, “the many progeny,” appears to have been ancestral to the term *bai xing* 百姓, literally, “the hundred xing” and, in later usage, “the hundred surnames,” i.e., the common people. In all probability, however, the Shang title, Duo Sheng, did not mean “the many clan names” at all; it seems, rather, to have been the term by which the Shang king referred to his “many progeny” by various consorts, the many descendants of the royal clan.\(^{133}\) It may even be speculated that the *sheng* of the Duo Sheng should be read as *sheng* 孫, which, at least by Zhou times, meant a sister’s child. According to the *Erya 鄭訥*, a collection of Middle and Late Zhou glosses, 調我舅者吾謂之甥, “One who calls me maternal uncle, I call *sheng.*” And in traditional times, *sheng* was a term for a sister’s son, indicating descent from female collaterals.\(^{134}\) If *sheng* had such a meaning in the Late Shang, then the Duo Zi (n.153) might have referred to the king’s own sons, and the Duo Sheng might have referred to the king’s nephews or cousins. And the prayers for “progeny” (*dao* *sheng*), as in

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\(^{133}\) Qiu Xigui, “Guanyu Shangdai de zongzu zuzhi,” 13. Unfortunately, *duo sheng* appears on only five or six oracle-bones (Yao Xiaosui and Xiao Ding, eds., *Yinxu* jiagu kesi leizuan, 502.1; cf. Shima Kunio, *Inkyo bokuji sorui*, 163.3), usually in contexts that are not informative, such as, 多生之頌, “It should be the Duo Sheng who offer the feast,” and 多子之頌, “It should be the Duo Zi (who offer the feast)” (*Heji* 27650). Qiu Xigui (loc. cit.) has proposed that the Duo Zi were the lineage heads (*zongzi* 宗子) of the ruling class, who lived in their own settlements; Zhu Fenghan by contrast (*Shang Zhoujiazu xingtai yanjiu*, 60) has proposed that the Duo Zi did not refer to lineage heads but to the kings’ “many sons,” not simply those of the reigning king. Zhu (pp. 19, 68), citing Qiu Xigui’s study, views the Duo Sheng as the kings’ kindred, and, more specifically, as the heads of *zu* 族 descent groups; he argues (pp. 37-43) that the Late Shang *zu* would have been complex organizations with varying grades and hierarchies, but is forced to admit that he can find no group in the oracle-bone inscriptions that is directly called a *zu*.


\(^{153}\) Han-yi Feng (“The Chinese Kinship System,” 177) concludes that “In the ancient system of the *Erya* and the *Yiti*, father’s sister’s sons and mother’s brother’s sons were merged in the term *sheng* [孫], through cross-cousin marriage” (romanization converted to pinyin). For the view that “a patrilateral cross-cousin marriage model could fit the facts,” see Kwang-chih Chang, *Shang Civilization*, 182. Chang’s interpretation depends, however, upon treating the ten *gan* units whose names provided the dead kings and consorts with their temple names as living social groups “engaged
might have been prayers for the birth of nephews and cousins.

In the bronze inscriptions of the Western Zhou and Chunqiu period, in any event, bai xing simply referred to clan members among the elite; it still had no connection to the xingshi 姓氏 (surname) of later times but meant “the hundred (i.e., many) descendants.” In the Shiji, “Lin zhi zhi 麟之趾” (Mao 11), the parallel use of the terms gongzi 公子 (“the noble sons of our prince”), gong xing 公姓 (“the noble grandsons of our prince”), and gong zu 公族 (“the noble kindred of our prince”), all the members of the lord’s clan, supports the view that xing in this context did not refer to “surname” but to the direct descendants of the duke, more distant than the son.

More support for this view may be found in the term zixing 子姓, seen on a significant number of Eastern Zhou bronzes, which is thought to have been a general term, “sons and progeny,” for the family members of later generations, with xing (or sheng) thus referring to the members of the generations after the sons. In the Zuozhuan, xing was still being used in a similar way. In a story dated to 538 BCE, Shusun Muzu 叔弥穆子 of the state of Lu 鲁 encountered a woman with whom, years earlier, he had passed the night. He was now a minister, and the woman came to present him with a pheasant. The text then continues: 問其姓. 對曰子姓長矣..., which

in an endogamous network of some order.” In my view, however, the gan represented only postmortem ritual classifications; they did not name living groups with a social reality of their own (Ji Dewei, “Zhongguo gudai de jiri yu miaohao”). As a result, the information available in the oracle-bone inscriptions does not, I believe, permit us to confirm or deny the practice of cross-cousin marriage in the Late Shang.


158 Qiu Xigui, “Guanyu Shangdai de zongzu zuzhi,” 11. See too Yang Ximei 楊希枚, “Guoyu Huangdi ershi wu zhe de shi shuo de xiangxi,” Zhongguo yanjiuyuan jikan 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊 (Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taibei) 34.2 (1963): 635, 646; Kryukov, “Hsing and Shih,” 539. Qiu notes that on one bell from the state of Qi 齊, the xing of zixing 子姓 was written with a man rather than a woman radical; for further discussion of the inscription, see Zhou Fagao 周法高, ed., with Zhang Risheng 張日昇 (Cheung Yat-shing), Xu Zhiyi 許芝儀 (Tsui Chee-yee), and Lin Jiemin 林潔明 (Lam Kit-ming), Jinwen gudin 全文古鼎 (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1974-75), Vol. 13, 6675, 6676c.
Legge—following Du Yu 杜預 (222-284 CE), who glossed the first three words as 間有子否—translates as, "when he asked her whether she had a son, she replied, ‘My son is a big boy.... ” Legge suggests that the passage might better be translated as, "when he asked her if she had any progeny," though Legge is undoubtedly right in thinking that Shusun Muzi’s interest would have been in a male child. The Shuowen jiezi 読文解字 definition, xing ren suo sheng ye 姓人所生也, “Xing are what are given birth to by people,” indicates that the sense of xing as "progeny, offspring," was still present in the second century CE.

The Zuo zhuan account of the fate of the conquered Shang also bears on the early use of xing:

昔武王克商, 成王定之，選建明德，以蕃屏周... 殷民六族, 梓氏, 徐氏, 蕭氏, 索氏, 長勺氏, 尾勺氏, 使帥其宗氏, 輯其分族, 將其類馥, 以法則周公, 用即命于周... 分康叔以... 殷民七族, 陶氏, 施氏, 繆氏, 鍾氏, 樊氏, 鳥氏, 終葵氏,...

When king Wu had subdued Shang, king Cheng completed the establishment of the new dynasty, and chose and appointed [the princes of] intelligent virtue, to act as bulwarks and screens to Zhou... [The Heads of] six descent groups (zu 族) of the people of Yin—the Tiao, Xu, Xiao, Suo, Changshuo, and Weishuo lineages (shi 氏)—were ordered to lead the families of their patrilineages (zongshi 分族), to collect their branch lineages (jenzu 分族), to conduct their distantly related dependents (leichou 類薦), and to repair with them to Zhou, to receive the instructions and laws of the duke of Zhou... To Kang Shu (the first marquis of Wei 鬱) there were given... seven descent groups (zu) of the people of Yin—the Tao, Shi, Po, Yi, Fan, Ji, and Zhongkui lineages (shi)...

It is hard to explain with certainty the difference in usage between zu and shi as used above, but the point worth noting is that this ac-

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159 Legge, The Ch’üan Tē’sêw with the Tso Chuen, 594, 599 (Zhao 4). Zhu Fenghan (Shang Zhou jiazu xingtai yanjiu, 19) also cites this story to support the understanding of xing being advanced here. Legge, The Ch’üan Tē’sêw with the Tso Chuen, 594, 599 (Zhao 4). Zhu Fenghan (Shang Zhou jiazu xingtai yanjiu, 19) also cites this story to support the understanding of xing being advanced here.


161 Translation, adjusted, based upon Legge, The Ch’üan Tē’sêw with the Tso Chuen, 750, 754; Ding 4.

162 The explanation of Du Yu that zu was simply a collective term for shi (Zuo zhuan zhushu ji buzheng 左傳注疏及補正 [Taipei, Shijie: 1963], Vol. 3, 32) at least fits the facts of the case. Kwang-chih Chang (The Archaeology of Ancient China [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963], 170) simply translates both terms as “lineage.” Qiu Xigui, “Guanyu Shangdai de zongzu zuzhi,” 9, notes that the Zuo zhuan passage...
count, which purports to have been spoken in 506 BCE, indicates that xing—a term that appears nowhere in the passage—was not thought to have been a unit of kinship or social organization among the Shang.163

The basic unit of Shang social organization, in fact, as indicated in both the oracle-bone inscriptions and the *Zuozhuan* passage, appears to have been the zu 族, not the xing.164 There seems little reason, accordingly, to accord the term xing itself, and the principles of kinship and descent that it came to embody, any great antiquity.165 Xing, in its origins, referred to "progeny," and continued to do so in certain

reveals the way in which viewpoint determined lineage categories; what would have been a small patrilineage (zong 宗) to its big patrilineage, would have been a big patrilineage to its own smaller, constituent patrilineages. In my translation, I treat zu as "descent group," and shi as "lineage," both being localized patrilineages of demonstrable common descent, with the shi being the smallest of the units.

163 Sima Qian, to be sure, records at the start of the "Yin benji 古本紀" that Shun 舜 conferred on Xie 楚, the Shang progenitor, the Zi 子 xing, but the wording, 賜姓子氏 (Takigawa, *Shīkī kaichū kōshō*, Vol. 1, j. 3, 3), is hard to translate with certainty since Sima Qian appears to be mixing two different styles of appellation; e.g., Nienhauser (ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records. Volume I*, 41) translates, "gave him the *cognomen* Zi 子," but adds (n. 13), "Actually this was his *nomen* 氏, but Sima Qian (and most Han scholars) often assumed ancient *nomen* were *cognomina*." (For Nienhauser's use of these two Latin terms, see p.xxiii.) Sima Qian is perhaps more helpful in his *emote* to the same chapter where he notes: "Xie was of the Zi xing. His descendants were separately established and took the names of their states as their xing. There were the Yin shi, the Lai shi,..." (Takigawa, *Shīkī kaichū kōshō*, Vol. 1, j. 3, 35). The idea that Zi was the xing of the Shang royal house, in any event, may have been a relatively late invention; see Léon Vandermeersch, *Wangdao ou la voie royale: Recherches sur l'esprit des institutions de la Chine archaïque. Tome I: Structures culturelles et structures familiales* (Paris: École Francaise d'Extrême-Orient, 1977), 301-02. For oracle-bone Zi as a status term rather than a xing, see Lin Yun 林沄, "Cong Wu Ding shidai de jizhong 'Zi buci' shihun Shangdai de jiazu xingtai" 從武丁時代的幾種 '子不臣' 試論商代的家族形態," *Guwenzi yanjiu 1* (1979): 320-24; Chang Cheng-lang, "A Brief Discussion of Fu Tzu," in *Studies of Shang Archaeology: Selected Papers from the International Conference on Shang Civilization*, ed. K. C. Chang (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 107-08; Zhu Fenghan, *Shang Zhou jiazu xingtai yanjiu*, 49-50, 60.


165 See too Li Xueqin, "Kaogu faxian yu gudai xingshi zhidu 考古發現與古代姓氏制度," *Kaogu 學考古* 1987.3, 253-57, 241. He concludes (p. 255), after analyzing the names that appear in Shang oracle-bone inscriptions and Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, that few if any xing were recorded in these texts. Most of the names were given names, some of which were preceded by lineage names (shi).
Eastern Zhou and Han texts. The progeny, as we have seen in the Shang title, Duo Sheng 多生, were those of the elites; in the Zhou, accordingly, the title of Bai Xing 百姓, literally “the hundred progeny” (and thus “the many progeny” or “all the progeny”) was used to refer to elites in general. Xing in such usages functioned primarily as a status term (“the well-born”?), and only by extension as a term of kinship and descent; and, in its original meaning, it had no evident bearing on the role of women in the kinship system.166 This is not to deny that the use of xing “surnames”—more frequently by women than by men167—in the Zhou can throw considerable light on contemporary social organization.168 It throws no light, however, on the existence of matriline or matriarchy in the Neolithic and the Shang.

Conclusions

From at least the Late Neolithic until the Late Shang, the political and economic status of most women in China, as represented in burial practices and recorded religious beliefs, was inferior to that of most men. The influence and authority of particular women would, of course, have depended on their social status and upon their individual character and situation. Certain women, such as Fu Hao, wielded considerable power, but religious values and social practice did not, in the evidence available to us, support independent roles for women as a whole; they served as essential adjuncts in a culture that was basically patriarchal. Fewer women appear to have been buried, fewer women received secondary burial, fewer women became ancestral figures; the tombs of queens were smaller than the tombs of kings; and their authority as ancestresses was more limited than that of the ancestors, who were accorded ritual priority. Shang consorts only received regular cult when they were linked to their husband’s name and only when they had produced royal sons. Girl babies were not, in these ritual contexts at least, as good as boy babies.

In pursuing the status of women in early China, however, one needs to know much more, about such questions as: Are the sex-ratios reported in Neolithic and Shang burials reliable? (see the Ap-
pendix). How much access to property, and the power to control and transmit it, did women enjoy? Who brought Shang children up? What was the nature of the mother-daughter and mother-son bond? How did the raising of sons differ from the raising of daughters? Were elite Shang women literate?\footnote{For my initial discussion of Shang literacy, see David N. Keightley, “Were the Shang Kings Literate? Who Read the Shang Texts and Why?: Reflections on Early Chinese Literacy and Scribal Practice,” paper prepared for the panel, “Literacy in Ancient China,” Center for Chinese Studies, Berkeley (February 14, 1997). I concluded that the oracle-bone inscriptions were intended for a limited audience of elites clustered at the royal court who would have possessed varying degrees of functional literacy. I did not, however, address gender distinctions.} How representative is the elite, normative evidence that is available to us? Above all, one eventually needs to consider how a particular cluster or clusters of ecological factors and cultural responses, emerging out of the Neolithic, produced a Shang elite that structured its hierarchical and patriarchal political and social arrangements around a cult of the ancestors, and only secondarily around a cult of the ancestresses. It is to be hoped that archaeology and the inscriptions will, as our knowledge and analytical skills improve, throw more light on these and related questions. We are indeed still at the beginning!
Appendix: On the Sexing and Aging of Skeletons

Numerous studies have documented the archaeological difficulties involved in sexing and aging skeletons. Donald Engels, for example, has noted that “the nature of osteological material itself offers formidable obstacles to correctly determining the age and sex of a skeleton. Unless the entire skeleton is available for analysis, the probability of correct sex classification may fall as low as twenty percent.” He concludes that “determinations of sex ratios and age structures of ancient populations derived from osteological evidence are unreliable, no matter how many skeletons one unearths.” Kenneth M. Weiss introduces the possibility that archaeologists tend to assume that older skeletons are male. Weiss has also argued that traditional sexing methods tend “to produce a systematic bias in favor of males; a large survey of published data produced about 12% too many males.... The adult sex ratio of most primitive populations [surveyed]... was very close to 50% male”; he urges the application of multivariate methods. Weiss’s survey also indicates that studies which show males increasing with age are “directly contrary to modern experience” and that “there would seem to be about 20% too great a probability that an older skeleton is called male.”

In his earlier survey, Weiss noted that “the general nature of sex characteristics on bone” produces “an irresistible temptation in many cases to call doubtful specimens male. A great many of these characteristics are of what could be called a “larger-smaller” nature: the larger, or more marked trait is called male. There is no doubt that, as at Yuanjunmiao (page 7 above), Chinese archaeologists have employed larger-smaller distinctions. Furthermore, the possibility must be considered that the evidence itself is skewed, given the tendency of less robust female skeletons to deteriorate more rapidly than male skeletons.

170 For the criteria involved in determining the sex and age of skeletons, see Timothy D. White (text) and Pieter Arend Folkens (illustrations), Human Osteology (San Diego: Academic Press, 1991), 320-30.
175 Morris, Death-ritual and Social Structure, 83; see too Weiss, “On the Systematic
Weiss concludes that "in the absence of clear cultural information indicating otherwise, one should expect about an equal number of adult males and females." The supposedly significant role of female infanticide in traditional China may provide such cultural information; it at least permits one to consider that female infanticide might have had Neolithic roots. And at Wangyin (southwestern Shandong) and Xia-wanggang (southwestern Honan), for example, even if one corrects by subtracting 12 percent of the males, the males would still represent 62 and 63 percent, respectively, of the sexed skeletons (see Table).

Similar problems are involved in the aging of skeletons, where paleoanthropologists have had a tendency to apply "a few criteria to individuals instead of a multivariate approach to populations." Moreover,

Traditional aging criteria have one apparently chronic problem in that they seem systematically to under-age adults. In many skeletal studies there are no individuals at older ages, and everyone is reported to have died before age 45 or 50. The fertility requirements on such populations would be too great for human populations; in such cases either the sample is not representative or the aging criteria are incorrect.

To a nonexpert, the Yuanjunmiaoh determinations, which were based upon the evaluation of up to thirty criteria, seem to have been carefully done, though, as Weiss demonstrates, even the most careful testing procedures can produce contradictory results. Weiss himself is generally pessimistic. "It is necessary to conclude that due to small samples and questionable reliability of control data the age-specific mortality for males and females in pre-industrial societies cannot be determined." Improved techniques of analysis will, it may be hoped, inspire greater confidence in, or require the revision of, the paleodemographic figures provided in this article. At present, how-
ever, they are the best figures available and I have proceeded on the provisional assumption that they are, in the large, correct.\textsuperscript{181}

\textsuperscript{181} Xin Yihua ("Yuanjunmiao mudi suofanying de renkou ziran jiegou zhi fenxi," 440-41) concludes that the high sex ratios reported from Neolithic cemeteries (see his Table 5, 439) were indeed an objective fact. Xin's attempt to explain these figures in terms of modern Chinese sex ratios at birth or the way in which sex ratios in modern China vary with the age of the mother at birth, however, is not convincing.
FIGURE: THE ROYAL GENEALOGY RECORDED IN LATE SHANG SACRIFICE INSCRIPTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temple Name</th>
<th>Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1 Shang Jia 上甲</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2 Bao Yi 報乙</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3 Bao Bing 報丙</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4 Bao Ding 報丁</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5 Shi Ren 示壬 = Bi Geng 呋庚</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6 Shi Gui 示癸 = Bi Jia 呋甲</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K1 Da Yi 大乙 = Bi Bing 呋丙</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K2 Da Ding 大丁 = Bi Wu 呋戊</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K3 Da Jia 大甲 = Bi Xin 呋辛</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K4 Bu Bing 卜丙</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K5 Da Geng 大庚 = Bi Ren 呋壬</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K6 Xiao Jia 小甲</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K7 Da Wu 大戊 = Bi Ren 呋壬</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K8 Lü Ji 吕己</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
K9 Zhong Ding 中丁  K10 Bu Ren 卜壬  12
  = Bi Ji 婢己
  = Bi Gui 嬢癸

K12 Zu Yi 祖乙  K11 Jian Jia 聳甲  13
  = Bi Ji 婢己
  = Bi Geng 嬢庚

K13 Zu Xin 祖辛  K14 Qiang Jia 萬甲  14
  = Bi Geng 嬢庚
  = Bi Jia 嬨甲

K15 Zu Ding 祖丁  K16 Nan Geng 南庚  15
  = Bi Ji 婢己
  = Bi Geng 嬢庚

K20 Xiao Yi 小乙  K19 Xiao Xin 小辛  K18 Pan Geng 盘庚  K17 Xiang Jia 象甲  16
  = Bi Geng 嬢庚

K21 Wu Ding 武丁  17
  = Bi Xin 嬨辛
  = Bi Gui 嬨癸
  = Bi Wu 嬨戊

K23 Zu Jia 祖甲  K22 Zu Geng 祖庚  Zu Ji 祖己  18
  = Bi Wu 嬨戊
P = predynastic ancestor; K = king. The \( \rightarrow \) indicates the main line of father-to-son descent known traditionally as the *dazong* 大宗 (see n. 119 above).

Sources: For the Shang kings, see Keightley (*Sources of Shang History*, 185-87, 204-09), whose notes should be consulted for particular problems involving the reconstruction of the list. For the consorts, see Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai zhouji zhidu*, 103-04, who limits her consorts to those who received cult as part of the regular five-ritual cycle. Occasional references, in either oracle-bone or bronze inscriptions, to consorts who were not included in the cycle, do indicate, e.g., that the consort of Qiang Jia (K14) was Bi Geng (*Heji* 23325; Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai zhouji zhidu*, 94; see too, Keightley, *Sources of Shang History*, 187, n. f) and that the consort of Wu Yi was Bi Wu (Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci zongshu*, 384; Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai zhouji zhidu*, 100, n. 1). No evidence, however, indicates that these royal women received regular cult in association with their royal husbands. Chang Yuzhi (p. 118) provides a useful tabulation of the king and consort numbers proposed by various scholars: she herself identifies 31 kings.
(including Shang Jia) and 20 consorts; Dong Zuobin, by contrast had identified 33 kings and 24 consorts, Chen Mengjia had identified 34 kings and 22 consorts, etc.
### TABLE: SEX RATIOS IN LARGE NEOLITHIC CEMETERIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>location</th>
<th>male skeletons</th>
<th>female skeletons</th>
<th>male/female ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northwest China</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liuwan 柳湾</td>
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