

Han Dynasty (206BC–AD220) Stone Carved Tombs in Central and Eastern China

Chen Li

Access Archaeology





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Chapter One

Introduction

孝文皇帝居霸陵，北臨廁，意悽愴悲懷，顧謂羣臣曰：“嗟乎！以北山石為槨，用紵絮斷陳漆其間，豈可動哉！”

When the Emperor Xiaowen of Han (r. 180-157BC) was at the Baling Mausoleum, facing northwards by the Ba River, he had a bleak and mournful feeling, and thus turned around and looked at his ministers, saying ‘Alas! If I could use stone from the northern hill to build my outer coffin, with finely tailored cloths and lacquers inside, how could it be disturbed!’

(*Hanshu* 漢書: *biography of King Yuan of Chu* 楚元王傳)¹

Well before his death, The Xiaowen 孝文 Emperor² of Western Han 漢 (206BC-AD9) had decided to construct a safe and luxurious tomb for himself to enjoy in the afterlife. The historical text, the *Hanshu* 漢書, records that, later, he took one of his ministers’ advice, and built a relatively simple tomb instead. But his mausoleum, the Baling 灞陵, as can be seen today, is not by any means a simple one. Located near the Ba River in the southeast suburbs of the capital city of Chang’an 長安, the Baling Mausoleum was constructed in an existing mountain rather than an earthen mound, as was chosen for other Western Han imperial tombs. The Baling has not been excavated, so that exact details, especially the interiors, remain unknown, but its appearance is impressive enough, indicating how important it was to the Emperor.

The Xiaowen Emperor was not alone. In fact, tombs and burials have been essential to Chinese people of all social status, at all times. Since as early as the Shang 商 period (c.1500-c.1050BC), starting from when the Central Plains of modern China could first be understood as ‘China’, it had been very common for the elites to bury whatever they could afford in their tombs. One of the well-known examples is the tomb of Fuhao 婦好 (d. c.1200BC), who was one of the wives of King Wuding 武丁 (r. 1250-1192BC) of the Shang dynasty. This is one of the best preserved Shang royal tombs and was not disturbed before excavation. Large numbers of artefacts, including jades, bronzes, potteries and cowry shells, have been excavated. Remains of sacrificial dogs and even human sacrifices have also been found. Fuhao’s lacquered coffins, as well as numerous burial objects, were all buried within an earth pit, which is 5.6 metres long, 4 metres wide and 8 metres deep.³ Such tomb structures buried in vertical pits became standard, and was used by the elites through the Zhou 周 period (c.1050-221BC) to the Han Dynasty (206BC-AD220).

However, there was a major change in the Western Han period, when the Chinese people changed from one type of tomb, namely the vertical shaft tomb, to a variety of tomb types, including but not limited

¹ *Hanshu*, 1951. Translated by the author.

² Xiaowen is the emperor’s posthumous title, also translated as Emperor Wen or Wendi. In this book he will be referred to as Emperor Xiaowen.

³ For the excavation report see Anyang 1980.

to rock-cut tombs⁴, stone carved tombs and brick chamber tombs. How did this happen? Why were stone tombs built at all? What are the consequences? A key issue that will be examined to answer these questions is a brand new and extremely interesting tomb type: the stone carved tombs in Central and Eastern China, the subject matter of this book.

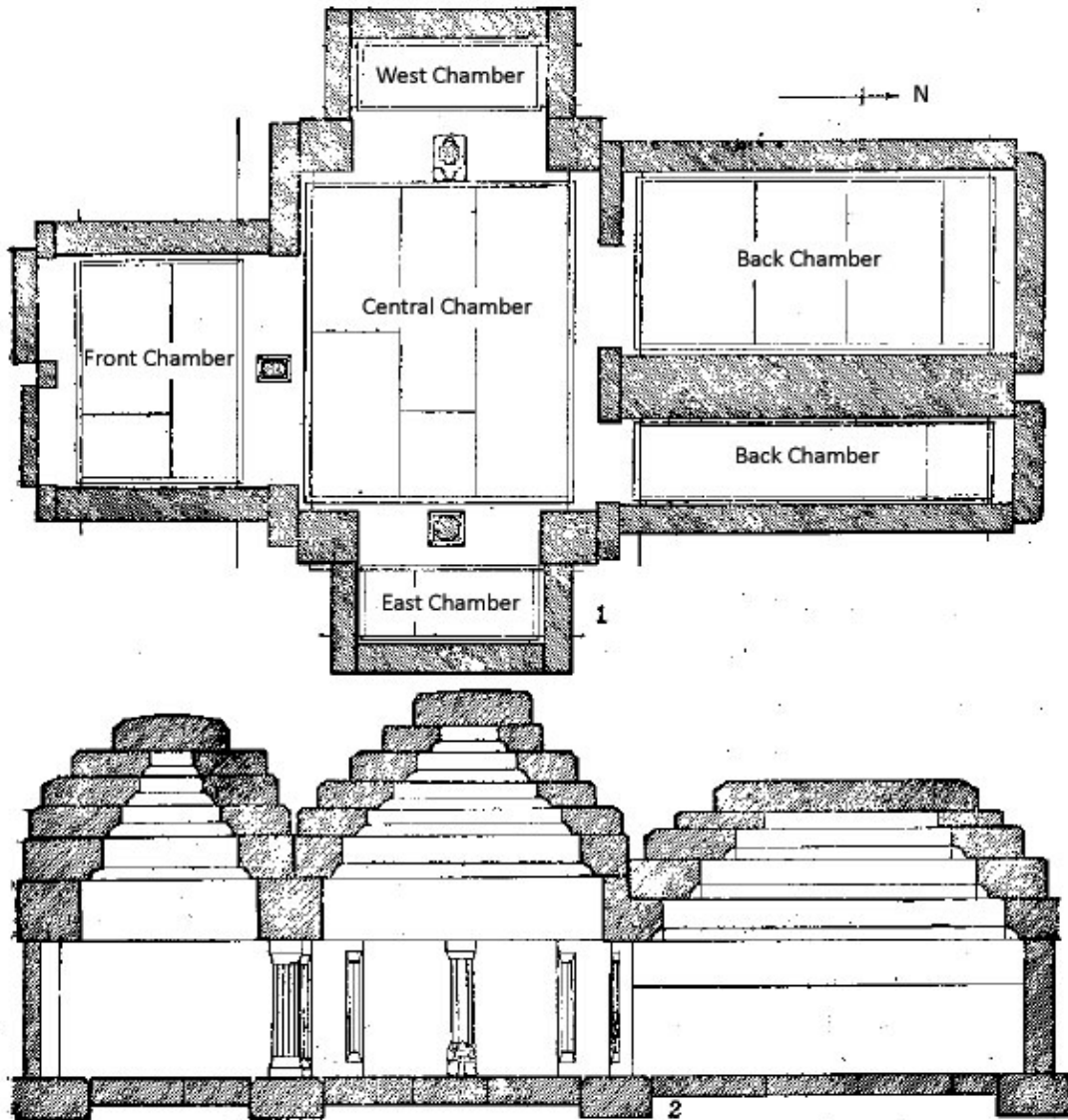


Figure 1-1a, plan and elevation of Baiji Tomb, after Kaogu 1981, Figure 2, with English notations.

1.1 Subject Matter and Question

In this book, the term 'stone carved tomb' includes multi-chambered tombs that were constructed from carved stone slabs or a combination of moulded bricks and carved stones. Most of such stone slabs are highly decorated with carved bas-relief images of banqueting, chariot excursions, music and dance,

⁴ In this book 'rock-cut tombs' include tombs that belonged to princes or kings of minor semi-autonomous kingdoms of the Han Empire. Such tombs were built by cutting several linked rooms on a horizontal axis into small rock mountains. Most of the tombs have long access passages with small chambers either side. For references see Mancheng 1980, Yongcheng 1996, 2001, Guangzhou 1991 and footnote 31 of this chapter.

exemplary portraits, buildings and deities.⁵ To build such tombs, first an earth pit was dug into the ground, and then prepared stone blocks were put together to form house-like chambers, in which the coffins and burial objects were placed. Finally, the entrance was sealed and earth was piled up over the tomb to form a mound. In some areas a stone or wood offering shrine was built in front of the tomb. Other above ground structures, such as stone animals, steles and pillars, were sometimes erected. But only a few of these have survived. Such stone tombs appeared in late Western Han, namely the second half of the first century BC, and gradually became popular, disappearing at the beginning of the third century AD, when the Han Empire collapsed.



Figure 1-1b, View of the interior of Baiji Tomb. Photograph by the author.

In 1965, an example of such a tomb was found in the village of Baiji 白集 near Xuzhou 徐州 in Jiangsu 江蘇 Province. The multi-chambered tomb is neatly constructed from stone slabs, and has an entrance hall, a main room, two rear rooms and two side chambers (Figure 1-1a). Many of the slabs carry carved images with multiple motifs, such as buildings and figures, music and dance, as well as supernatural animals. There are features suggesting a house, for instance, a window indicated by vertical slats in stone, and faceted columns (Figure 1-1b). Moreover, remains of a stone offering shrine have been found

⁵ In Chinese language archaeological reports and academic works, these stone tombs are usually referred to as *huaxiangshi mu* 畫像石墓, or literally pictorial stone tombs, simply because the stone slabs (*huaxiangshi*) are decorated with images. Also the slabs and their rubbings have been collected and studied as important works of Han dynasty art history, though they were not created for such connoisseurship.

Han Dynasty Stone Carved Tombs in Central and Eastern China

in front of the tomb. The gables of the shrine were also highly decorated with carved images of horses and chariots, exemplary portraits, auspicious animals and deities (Figure 1-1c). This tomb dates to the late second century AD, and is one of the most complete examples of Han stone carved tombs.⁶



Figure 1-1c, Front view of the Baiji Tomb and the shrine during the excavation, after *Kaogu* 1981, Plate 10, with English notations.

Such stone carved tombs were primarily distributed in the most densely populated areas of the Han Empire. However, many of their tomb occupants are not known, as most of the tombs were looted many times before archaeological excavation. Those occupants who have been identified were mainly landowners, official scholars, and occasionally nobles. The stone carved tombs can be divided into five groups according to their distribution and characteristics, such as carving techniques and construction types (Figure 1-2). The first group includes tombs from the Qi-Lu 齊魯 Region in present-day Shandong 山東, Northern Jiangsu, Northern Anhui 安徽 and Eastern Henan 河南 provinces.⁷ The second region is the Nanyang 南陽 Basin, including the area around the present-day Nanyang city in Henan Province

⁶ For the archaeological report and more pictures see *Kaogu* 1981.2, 137-150.

⁷ These tombs are distributed in a vast area that does not coincide with political boundaries, neither modern provincial borders nor Han period administrative boundaries. However, this region roughly covers the territories of Qi and Lu Kingdoms of the Warring States period (475-221BC). Therefore, it is referred to as 'the Qi-Lu Region' in this book.

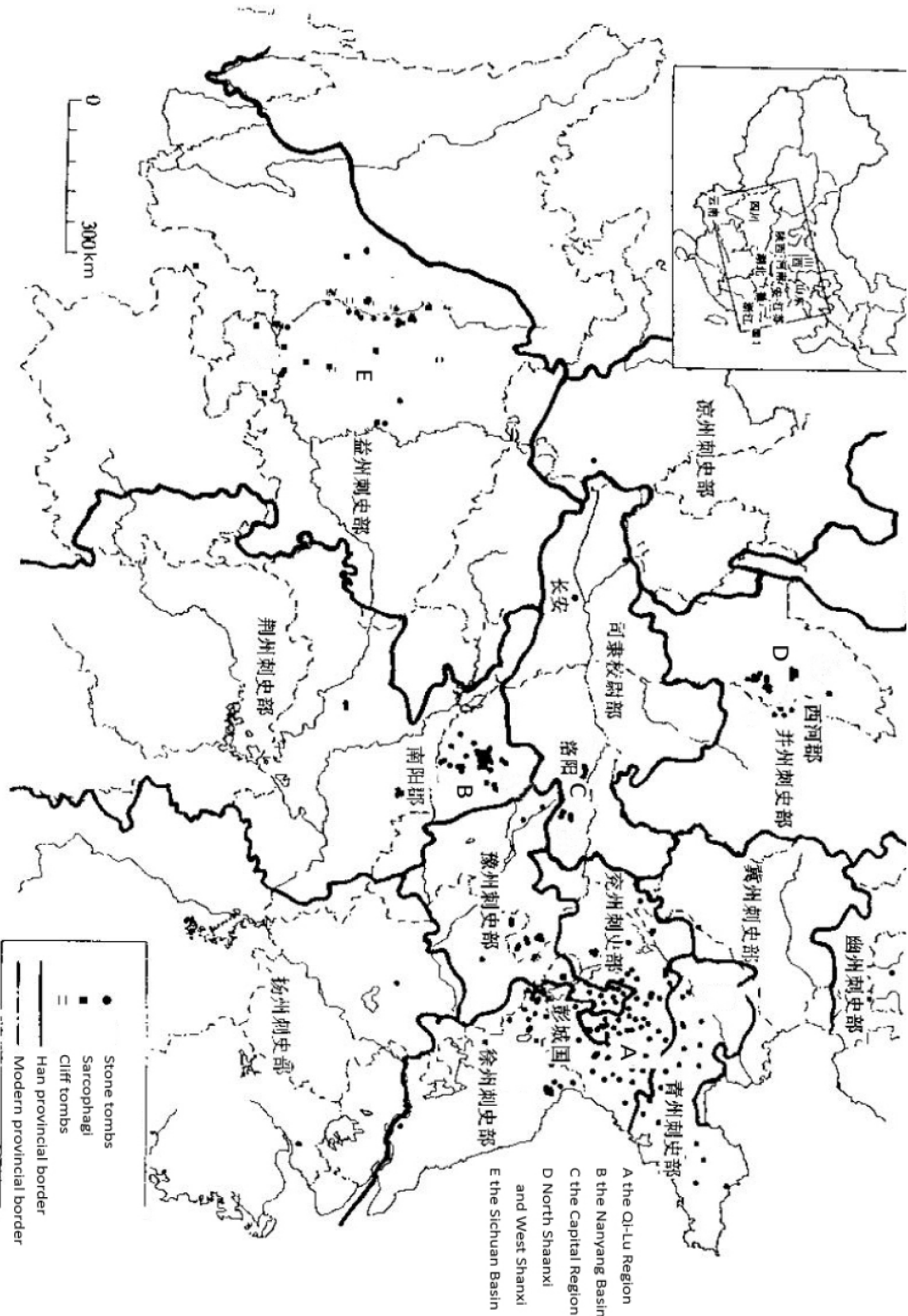


Figure 1-2, distribution map of Han stone tombs, after Xin Lixiang 2000, Figure 1, with English notations.

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and a small part of Northern Hubei 湖北 Province. The third region is the Capital Region around Luoyang 雒陽,⁸ capital of the Eastern Han (AD25-220), and is surrounded by the other four regions. The fourth group includes tombs of Northern Shaanxi 陝西 and Western Shanxi 山西 provinces, while the fifth region is the Sichuan 四川 Basin.⁹ This book deals with the first three regions which are referred to as ‘Central and Eastern China’ in the book title.¹⁰ Such masonry tombs in different regions of China were built in various ways and thus had diverse local structures.



Figure 1-1d, Stepped caisson roof of the main chamber in the Baiji Tomb. Photograph by the author.

The first area, the Qi-Lu Region, has the largest number of excavated stone tombs of the three regions (Figure 1-2). The most elaborate stone carved tombs were mainly found in this region, and many of them were carved with the most advanced techniques of the three regions. Such multi-chambered

⁸ The Chinese characters for the modern city of Luoyang are 洛陽, but in the Eastern Han period Luoyang was written as 雒陽.

⁹ Stone tombs from the fourth and fifth regions are very different from the central and eastern ones in terms of tomb construction and imagery motifs. They were developed later than, and may have been influenced by the central and eastern ones, which will be discussed in Chapter Five. Stone tombs in the fourth and fifth region appeared in early or middle Eastern Han, and disappeared even earlier. For instance, in North Shaanxi Province, the Han people retreated from this area around AD140, consequently Han tombs ceased to be constructed in this region. Han stone tombs of this area were located in the Wuding 無定 River and the Tuwei 秃尾 River valleys, which were the borders and trade routes between the Han and their neighbours, the Xiongnu 匈奴. Thus they contain an array of special decorative motifs associated with, or influenced by the Xiongnu peoples. For a discussion of stone carved tombs in this region see Wallace 2010. Moreover, in some cases, several family members might have been buried in the same multi-chambered tomb, which may also occur in the Nanyang Basin but was otherwise rare in Eastern China.

In the Sichuan Basin, the Han stone tombs are mainly cliff tombs, namely rock-cut tombs, which are located in the Jialingjiang 嘉陵江 and Minjiang 岷江 River Valleys. Such tombs were constructed by cutting into mountains to form a corridor, then cutting sideways to create tomb chambers. Normally, they have structures that imitate above-ground buildings, while in Central and Eastern China the Han stone tombs are only partially like buildings. In Sichuan sarcophagi were also used within these cliff tombs. For an intensive study of tomb structure, pictorial carvings and burial objects on stone tombs in Sichuan, See Chen Xuan 2015.

¹⁰ Martin Powers called a similar region ‘Northeastern China’ in his *Art and Political Expression in Early China*, see Powers 1992. It is true that geographically this area is in the northeast part of the Han Empire, but generally it has never been referred to as ‘Northeastern China’ in any academic work. More commonly it is called *Zhongyuan* 中原 in Chinese, literally the Central Plains. As one of the most populated areas in the Han, it is fair to call this region ‘Central and Eastern China’ though it is not geographically central.

tombs were constructed from stone slabs and sometimes stone columns, with varieties of carving techniques and roof types. However, not all masonry tombs in the Qi-Lu region were made from stone alone. Small moulded bricks of different shapes were also used, especially for the building of roofs, most of which were supported by stone walls. In many cases, a stone offering shrine was built in front of the tomb mound. Other above ground structures, such as stone animals, steles, and pillar gates, were sometimes also erected. Chronology and typology of tombs in this area is very complicated, and one of the most elaborate examples is the Baiji tomb described above. This late Eastern Han tomb has almost all the principal features of tombs in this region: it is a multi-chambered pure stone tomb; most of the stone slabs are highly decorated with carved bas-relief images, using a wide range of carving techniques (Figures 1-1a, b).¹¹ In some major chambers, there are stepped caisson roofs (Figure 1-1d). Moreover, it has several faceted columns, one of which stands on the back of an animal, placed between chambers. These features were popular and can be found in many tombs of this area. Such tombs differ from each other in terms of size, number of chambers, number of columns, and carving techniques.

The Yinan 沂南 tomb No. 1 in Yinan county of Shandong is one of the biggest and most complex stone carved tombs of the Eastern Han period.¹² It has nine chambers covering an area of 88 square metres (Figure 5-19). There are many elements, for instance stone doors, columns, lintels and even a lavatory, suggesting a house. Two roof types have been used for the chambers, stepped roof and caisson roof, which were also used in many other tombs in the Shandong area.¹³ It dates to the late second century AD. Another elaborate example has been found at Mengzhuang 孟莊 near Ji'nan 濟南, capital of Shandong Province.¹⁴ The tomb was built from 161 stone slabs and was accessed by a passage way (See Appendix I for the plan). It has a rectangular rear chamber, and a square front chamber divided into six parts by a series of columns. Each of the seven rooms is paved with polished stone slabs, and each has a sloping roof, made by four trapezoidal stone slabs to form a vault, with a rectangular slab as the key stone. All the stone slabs were put together with a structure similar to that of mortise and tenon joints of woodwork, and the junctures of the stone sections were mortared. This form of construction suggests that the artisans were not very familiar with using stone, but had some sort of timber box construction in mind. All columns and lintels are decorated with relief images. It is dated to the second half of 2nd century AD by the excavators, according to its planning, structure, carving techniques used and coins unearthed.

Some of the earliest Han stone tombs were found in the second region, the Nanyang Basin. Most Han tombs in this region were constructed from a combination of carved stones and moulded bricks, mostly for vaulted roofs. The stone slabs formed the chamber walls or tomb doors, while the bricks formed the vaulted roofs, sometimes decorated with images of celestial bodies. Such stone-brick combinations were common in the Nanyang Basin and in the Capital Region, and were occasionally found in the Qi-Lu region. Two types of construction have been applied in Nanyang. The first type of tombs were multi-chambered, but their plans are slightly different from those in the Qi-Lu Region, where normally the

¹¹ The carving techniques of the pictorial stones are very diverse. In addition to some strongly cut low relief, high relief and sculpture, which were used on columns and architectural structures, most of the stone slabs were carved with bas-relief. On the surface of the smoothed stone, the design might be executed in line engraving only; the background might be cut away to a slight depth, leaving the figures in flat relief; sometimes the designs were engraved and the background might be textured with vertical striations to create a stronger contrast; the figures might be cut in intaglio with slightly bevelled edges against a plain background or on a striated background; and again the background might be cut away to the depth with the contours of the figures slightly rounded. For details of the chronology and typology of carving techniques see Xin Lixiang 1982.

¹² For the archaeological report, see Yinan 1956. For an intensive study on the Yinan tomb, see Thompson 1998.

¹³ Details of such stone roofs will be discussed in Chapter Two.

¹⁴ For the report see *Wenwu* 2002.2, 38-52.

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whole plan of a tomb looks like a cross (Figure 1-3). In the Nanyang Basin, the tombs normally have a front chamber and two or three back chambers in parallel. Sometimes they also have a back chamber or a corridor. Altogether the tomb plan forms a shape of a rectangle (Figures 1-4 and 1-5). So far there is no archaeological evidence indicating that there used to be shrines erected in front of such tombs.

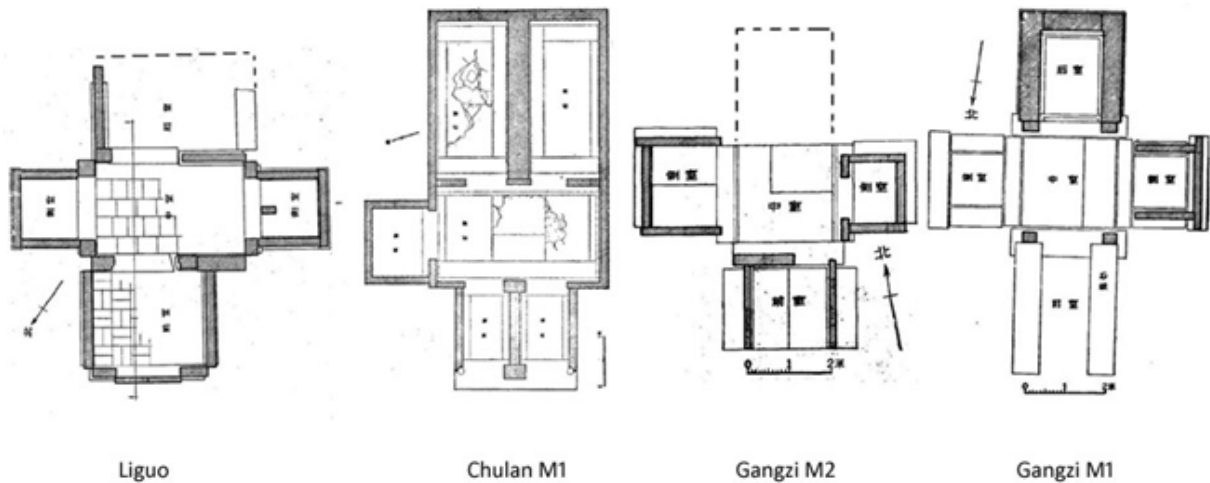


Figure 1-3, typical stone tomb planning in the Qi-Lu region.

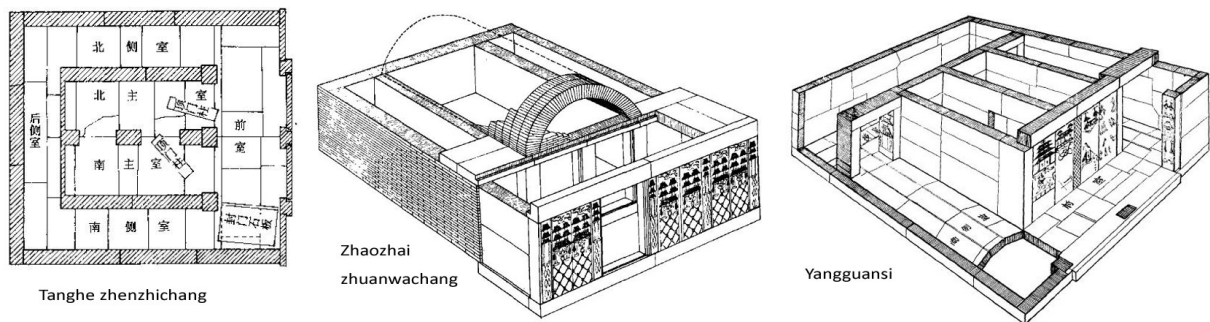


Figure 1-4, typical stone tomb planning in the Nanyang Basin.

The Chenpeng 陳棚 tomb in Nanyang is one of the best examples among Nanyang tombs.¹⁵ This tomb dates to the Xin 新 period (AD9-23),¹⁶ and has most of the features described above (Figure 1-5). Colour painting remains are found on the surface of the carved stones. Moreover, just like many other stone tombs in this area, though it has been robbed, many burial objects still survived. They have supplied extra information for the dating of the tomb, and for the function of the tomb as a whole.

¹⁵ For the excavation report with coloured photographs see *Kaogu xuebao* 2007.2, 233-266, plates 5-16.

¹⁶ The Xin period, also known as the Xin Dynasty, lasted from AD 9 to 23. Its only Emperor, Wang Mang 王莽 (c.45BC-AD23), rose to power as the nephew of an Empress Dowager of the Western Han Dynasty. Wang finally proclaimed himself emperor in AD9. The usurper was however an incompetent ruler and died during peasant rebels in AD23. The Han dynasty was restored, known as the Eastern Han, after the overthrow of Wang Mang.



Figure 1-5, front view of the Nanyang Chenpeng Tomb during excavation, after *Kaogu xuebao* 2007.2, Plate 5.

The Qilingang 麒麟崗 tomb at Nanyang is another good example.¹⁷ Like most typical tombs in this area, this tomb had a square plan (See Appendix I) and was constructed from a combination of bricks and stone slabs. Altogether 111 stones were used for its construction. It had one front chamber facing west, and three parallel rear chambers. Each chamber had a flat roof, which was made from a row of stone slabs laid upon the stone walls. Above each flat roof, a brick barrel vault was also constructed. The barrel vault bricks were laid in separate rows with mortar between them. The whole structure was constructed in an earth pit dug into the ground, with the roof slightly lower than the ground level. The floors of the tomb chambers were paved with small bricks. In the front chamber and the south rear chamber, a brick-lined drain was also built. When the tomb was excavated, the central parts of its foundation had sunken slightly beneath its original level, disturbing the tomb structure. As a result, several lintels and slabs were cracked (Figure 2-8). It is dated to early Eastern Han, according to excavators' analysis based on carving techniques used and burial objects unearthed from the tomb.¹⁸

Apart from the square ones mentioned above, tombs in the Nanyang Basin were also built according to other plans, with different types of roofs. One of the examples is the tomb belonging to Feng Rujiu 馮孺久 in Tanghe 唐河 County of Nanyang.¹⁹ Accessed by a passage way, it had a front chamber, two side chambers, and two rear chambers surrounded by a tunnel (See Appendix I for the plan). The side chambers had brick barrel vaults, and main chamber's roof was a domed brick vault. The tunnel had a flat stone roof (Figure 2-15a), and was merely 1.34 metres high, which means that people could not

¹⁷ For the archaeological report, see Nanyang 2008.

¹⁸ Nanyang 2008, 32-33.

¹⁹ For the report, see *Kaogu xuebao* 1980.2, 239-262.

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stand or walk easily through it. It used 154 stone slabs, 22 for the flat roof, 34 for flooring, 26 for door posts, 10 for doors and 62 for walls. Its date is AD17 according to inscriptions on the middle door post of the main chambers.²⁰

In the Capital Region around Luoyang, large numbers of Han tombs have been excavated, most of which were constructed from moulded bricks or decorated with murals. However, a few stone chamber tombs have also been found. Among the stone tombs, the Dahuting 打虎亭 tombs in Xinmi of Henan Province are the best examples (Figure 1-6).²¹ Dahuting tomb No. 1 has a relatively unusual plan compared to the ones in Nanyang and Qi-Lu. It is accessed by a twenty-metre long passage way, and has a main chamber with five side chambers surrounding it (See Appendix I for the plan). Each side chamber is linked to the main chamber with short passageways. Big stone blocks, rather than stone slabs, were used to construct the tomb walls and barrel arches. Small bricks were used to line the outer side of the tomb structure and to construct the facade of the tomb. All the stone blocks were very carefully carved and dressed, and were put together with white clay mortar. Roofs of all the chambers were barrel vaults, which were constructed from carefully cut voussoirs. Most chamber walls were decorated with relief carvings, except the central chamber. Surfaces of its walls were polished, but not carved. Instead, slots were carved into the cornerstones on the floor. In the slots, remains of decayed timber have been found, indicating that wooden boards were probably fixed in the slots. It is very likely that murals were painted on the wooden surfaces. Tomb No. 2 is similar to No. 1 in terms of planning, structure and carving techniques. The interiors of Tomb No. 2 were decorated with both stone carvings and murals. The excavators believe that both Dahuting tombs date to late Eastern Han.²²

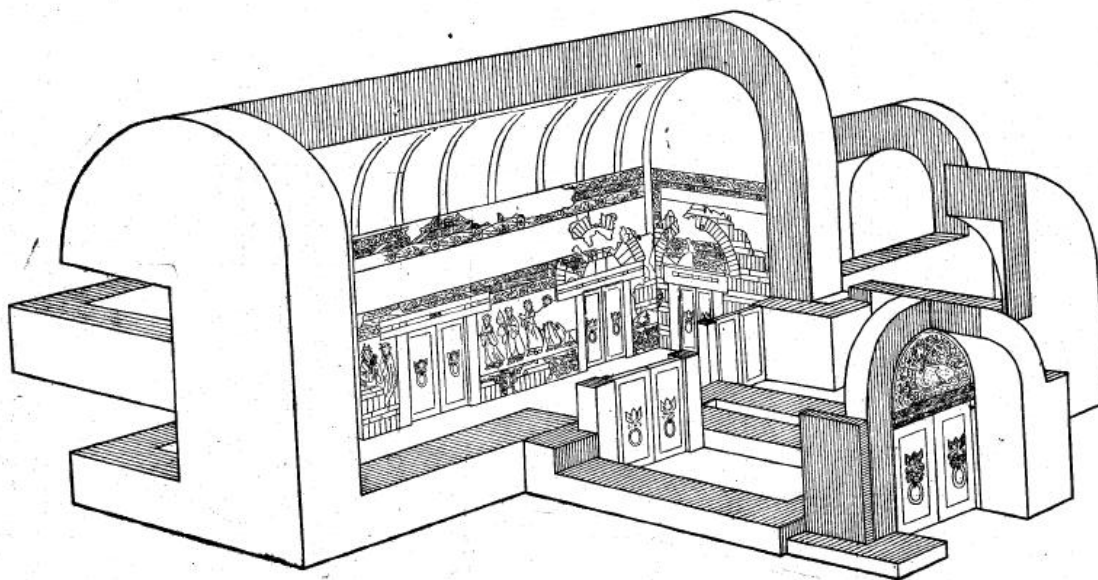


Figure 1-6, drawing of Dahuting Tomb M2 at Mixian in Henan, after Mixian 1993, Figure 161.

²⁰ The inscription carved on the central column of the main chamber reads: ‘鬱平大尹馮君孺久始建國天鳳五年十月十七日癸巳葬千歲不發 Prefect of the Yuping Commandery, Mister Feng Rujiu, buried on the seventeenth day of the tenth month, fifth year of the Shijianguo Tianfeng era (AD17). This tomb will not be opened in a thousand years.’ For a rubbing of the inscription see *Kaogu xuebao* 1980.2, p. 248, Figure 14.

²¹ For the report see Mixian 1993. Mixian 密縣 (Mi County) was name of Xinmi shi 新密市 (county-level city of Xinmi) before 1994.

²² Mixian 1993, 349-357.

Although the Dahuting tombs and the Qilingang tomb all had barrel vault roofs, they are of very different types. In the Dahuting tombs, barrel vaults were built right above the chambers, creating high-ceiling spaces, while in the Qilingang tomb and many others in the Nanyang basin, such spaces were separated off by stone slab roofs. The functions of Nanyang brick barrel vaults above flat stone roofs are not clear, but one of the key reasons is probably mechanical. Flat roofs were not strong enough to endure the weight of the rammed earth mound burying the tomb, and vaulted roofs were obviously more stable. Indeed, many flat tombs were found cracked while excavated, while those covered by barrel vaults were more likely to have survived.

Apart from the Dahuting tombs, most other Eastern Han masonry tombs in the Capital Region, especially the ones around Luoyang, were generally constructed from small moulded bricks. Many of them had stone doors, and sometimes stone posts and lintels. However, it seems that stone carving techniques in this tomb and even in this third region have no special local style; instead most of them have many features that can be found in other regions. Located on the crossroads of Han Empire's most developed areas and surrounded by the other four stone tomb distribution regions, stone tombs in the Capital Region showed features of other regions, and were probably influenced by works in other regions at different periods. Such local variations are thus essential to the study of chronological and typological differences of Han stone tombs.

This book covers a broad area of Han stone tombs rather than concentrating on a few tombs for the following reasons. First of all, Western scholars started looking at such stone tombs and shrines in the 1880s,²³ but most of their works were limited to a few specific examples. There has not been a comprehensive discussion of Han funerary monuments in Western languages.²⁴ Secondly, most of the extensive works in Chinese or Japanese have their own constraints. For instance, they tend to look at the individual stones separately. Little attention has been paid to the tomb as a whole, or to the people who were engaged with the tombs. Examples of these approaches are discussed in the literature review. Moreover, most of the works are now more than a decade out of date; thus they have not benefited from the most recent archaeological discoveries of stone tombs and relevant Han materials.

So far hundreds of major Han stone tombs and countless individual stone slabs have been excavated, and these tombs are distributed in most of the densely populated areas of the Han Empire, thus demonstrating that they were widely accepted and used by Han people. However, such masonry structures were entirely new in the Han period, as was their figural decoration. Many scholars have written on stone tombs, but few of them have paid attention to this issue. Why and how did stone tombs appear and become popular in the Han?

Therefore, a major topic of this book is the source of this new trend. Chinese scholars have generally set all tomb structures into a single developmental series within the area of China. Such arguments are obviously unsatisfactory and are discussed in the literature review. However, Chinese scholars have supplied illuminating ideas about the emergence of stone carved tombs. They argue that the rise of economy and prosperity of both Western and Eastern Han made the construction of stone tombs

²³ In 1881, Stephen Bushell for the first time brought several rubbings of Han pictorial stones to Europe. See Bushell 1910 (vol. 1), 26.

²⁴ Martin Powers asserts that the distinctions between Han stone tombs from different regions are 'commonly known to undergraduates in Chinese art survey courses' (Powers 1992, 113). But I do not think this is the case, as there is no book from which Westerners could easily get the background knowledge of Han stone carvings. Thus there is a gap between textbooks and specialised academic works, such as the one by Powers himself.

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possible and popular.²⁵ It is true that dates of the major stone carved tombs are mainly Eastern Han, when the number of landowners and the size of their wealth had increased. However, these can not explain why stone tombs appeared during the Han, as carving techniques and mass production for hard materials, such as jade, had been used since a very early period, when stone tombs were not built. It is more likely that the wide expansion of stone funerary monuments was not due to technical but religious reasons.²⁶ On the other hand, the decline of the Eastern Han may have also stimulated the further development of stone tombs. The collapse of the imperial economy, plagues and uprising in the second century AD may have significantly affected the beliefs that pressured people to seek for eternity.²⁷

Many scholars working in English have suggested outside stimuli for the origin of stone funerary monuments. Ann Paludan and Wu Hung have argued that stone structures were introduced to China during 2nd century BC, when rock-cut tombs appeared in China, firstly as princely tombs.²⁸ Following this development, brick tombs and later stone carved tombs became popular lower down the social scale. Jessica Rawson has suggested that the workers who created the rock-cut tombs and smaller stone built tombs may have borrowed features from Western Asia by way Central Asia or Siberia.²⁹ More importantly, she has pointed out that scholars have overlooked the role of rock-cut tombs as providing an impetus for an entirely new tomb structure at all levels of Han society.³⁰

This book will assess how the use of stone spread from the imperial family down to the commoners, by examining the relationship between smaller stone tombs and princely tombs. The Xuzhou region will be explored as a case study. In this region there are several princely rock-cut tombs³¹ and many stone carved tombs, among which there are two unusual examples, the Lalishan 拉犁山 tomb M1³² and the Jiunüdu 九女墩 tomb³³. They are similar to other stone carved tombs in terms of structure and decoration, but remains of jade suits have been found in these tombs, which shows that the tomb occupants were probably princes or at least nobles of high social status. Thus these may illustrate the possible link between royal tombs and commoners' stone tombs. Another related question concerns the routes by which the structures and motifs of stone carved tombs were influenced by foreign examples. Specific characteristics of stone tombs will be considered.

A further aspect of developments in China is the regional diversity. Stone carved tombs in the separate regions are very different from each other in terms of carving techniques, construction methods, and sets of images, as is mentioned above. Thus another group of major questions include what and why are there these regional differences? Many Chinese scholars have distinguished regional and chronological

²⁵ For such discussions see Xin Lixiang 2000, 15-19.

²⁶ Paludan 1991, 15-16.

²⁷ See Twitchett and Fairbank 1987, Chapter 5 for details of the fall of the Han dynasty, details include court disorder, uprisings and rebellions; see Chapter 11 for Han economics, such as the increase of landowners' wealth, as well as elite officials and eunuchs.

²⁸ See Paludan 1991 and Wu Hung 1995.

²⁹ This is reflected in a series of papers. See Rawson 1999a, 24-25, footnote 71; Rawson 2010a, 79-88; and Rawson 2012.

³⁰ Rawson 1999a, footnote 8.

³¹ Xuzhou was the seat of the Chu 楚 Kingdom during the Western Han and was ruled by relatives of the royal family. So far at least sixteen rock-cut tombs at eight sites have been found in the hills around the city and have been identified as tombs that belong to the Chu kings. Major tombs have been excavated and published, for the Guishan 龜山 tombs, see *Kaogu xuebao* 1985.1, 119-137, and *Kaogu* 1997.2, 36-46; for the Beidongshan 北洞山 tomb, see *Wenwu* 1988.2, 2-18, 68, and Xuzhou 2003; for the Shizishan 獅子山 tomb, see *Kaogu* 1998.8, 1-20, *Wenwu* 1998.8, 4-33 and Xuzhou 2012.

³² Two stone carved tombs have been excavated at Lalishan in Xuzhou. For short excavation reports see Xuzhou 1986, 123-124 and Xuzhou 1990, 208-209. Jade suit remains have been found in M1.

³³ For the archaeological report and pictures see *Kaogu tongxun* 1955.2, 31-33, plates 8-12. Jade plaques that are believed to be jade suit remains have been excavated. See *Kaogu tongxun* 1958, 57-59 for discussions of the jade plaques.

varieties of carving techniques, but the differences in tomb structures and image sets have been overlooked. Thus this book will divide excavated stone tombs into groups according to their distribution and look at their regional variations, focusing on types of construction and sets of images. Other relevant issues will also be discussed, such as the construction process for a tomb, considering how the patrons may have ordered them and masons built them. Lastly, the relationship between stone tombs and other kinds of tombs will be discussed, including brick tombs and tombs decorated with murals. The reason for considering these is that, the distinction between stone tombs, brick tombs and mural tombs is not clear cut.³⁴ From such comparisons it is possible to get a better idea of the characteristics of stone tombs, and the reason why people chose certain types of tombs.



Figure 1-7, coloured mural painting from the Dongping Tomb in Shandong. Photograph by the author.

Having considered the regional varieties of stone tombs, some other questions arise: Do the different types of tombs (and their decorations) function in the same way? What are the tombs for? Such questions are important because, by focusing on them, it is possible to consider the objectives of a tomb. One of the striking features of the stone tombs is their highly decorated stone reliefs. Although there are regional differences between the stone tombs, the range of motifs of images is limited, including the tomb occupants' activities, exemplary portraits, supernatural deities and architectural decorations. These suggest that the tombs were decorated for certain purposes within a given functional template. Thus this book will examine how such templates were achieved by using pictorial programmes together with the house-like structure of the tombs, and the objects buried with the dead. On the other hand, in Han stone tombs, a variety of images are arranged within different pictorial programmes, and sometimes a higher percentage of certain motifs can be seen in tombs from certain regions. For

³⁴ First of all, Han tombs constructed from a combination of stones and bricks are very common. Secondly, examples of combinations of stone carvings and murals within one tomb can also be seen, for instance the Dahuting tombs, see Mixian 1993. A recent archaeological find, the Han Dynasty stone tomb in Dongping County of Shandong, even shows us examples of tomb murals painted on the surface of smoothed stones (Figure 1-7), for the report see Dongping 2010.

instance, in the Nanyang Basin and the Capital Region, motifs of celestial bodies or supernatural forces were often arranged on the ceilings of stone tombs. This phenomenon is rare in other regions. Consequently, this book will also look at how the tomb functions were achieved diversely in different regions.

After their heyday in the Eastern Han, stone carved tombs ceased being constructed in Central China as the Han Empire collapsed. It seems obvious that, as some scholars have observed, the stone tombs disappeared simply because of the times of turbulence at the end of the Han, when people could no more afford expensive and labour intensive stone tombs.³⁵ Yet the question is, did such stone tombs really disappear? Archaeological evidence shows that similar structures have been found in tombs of borderlands of the Han Empire, in tombs of the following Chinese dynasties, as well as in tombs of the Koguryo 高句麗 Kingdom (traditional dates 37BC-AD668) of the Korean Peninsula. Thus this book will also examine the legacy and spread of this masonry tradition, to see how and why people from later Chinese periods and other areas of Asia chose a similar structure. As a result, the significance of Han stone tombs in relation to the broader concerns of Chinese funerary practice will be discussed, as well as the tombs' influence on other regions of the world.

1.2 Literature Review: Primary Sources

1.2.1 Archaeological reports

To date, around 200 Han stone tombs have been excavated in central and eastern China, and large numbers of archaeological reports have been published.³⁶ Most of the reports are in short articles. These reports are written by local archaeological teams who conducted the excavation, and normally consist of the following parts: an account of tomb structure and plan, a list of burial objects, long paragraphs of detailed description of pictorial stones and illustrations of stone rubbings, and a short conclusion with a basic discussion on tomb dating, stylistic analysis and tomb occupants if applicable. Sometimes they also have charts or photographs. The report of the previously discussed Chenpeng tomb in Nanyang is a typical one. This report consists of four main parts: 1, an account of tomb structure, with drawings of tomb plan, side view, front view and descriptions. 2, a list of burial objects, with photos, line drawings, and descriptions of their distributions within the tomb. 3, detailed descriptions of positions and contents of the pictorial stones, with a chart and many rubbings as well as coloured photographs of stones. 4, a short conclusion about the tomb's date and occupants.³⁷ For some well-preserved big tombs or closely related tomb groups, monographs are compiled and published in addition to the short report, most of which are of high quality.³⁸

Such reports supply the most important and direct resource for the study of Han stone tombs, but the weaknesses of most of the archaeological reports are obvious. First of all, too much attention is usually

³⁵ For such discussions see Xin Lixiang 2000, 19-20; Li Falin 1982, 50.

³⁶ For a full list of tombs and their archaeological reports, see Part I of Bibliography and Appendix 1.

³⁷ For more details, see *Kaogu xuebao* 2007.2, 233-266, plates 5-16.

³⁸ For instance, after the archaeological excavation of the Dahuting tombs at Xinmi, the team published a short report in *Wenwu* 1972.10, 49-62. But after that they gradually put together more information, made rubbings of all the stone carvings, drew all the murals, and arrived at some new conclusions on major issues like tomb occupant and dating. Consequently, in 1993 they published a new monograph with maps, line drawings, coloured photographs and an English abstract (see Mixian 1993). Another example is the Yinan tomb report monograph, though it was published in the 1950s, its quality is still better than some recent ones (see Yinan 1956).

Also in Xiaoxian 蕭縣, Anhui Province, the local museum excavated hundreds of Han tombs of different sizes and types from several highway construction sites. Then they published a monograph of a group of tombs, several of which are stone tombs (see Xiaoxian 2008).

paid to the carved decoration on the stones,³⁹ and the illustrations are mainly low quality rubbings. Where line drawings of the stones are provided, it is difficult to recognise the carving techniques or even the content of images. Often one has to rely on the descriptions, since there are no photographs. Of course, images in reports of later dates are normally of better quality (Figure 1-5). But because of the limit of publication formats, rubbings are always unsatisfactory in almost all the article reports.

Secondly, the reports on tombs from different regions have different problems. In the Capital Region near Luoyang, as discussed above, large numbers of many kinds of tombs from all periods of Chinese history have been excavated. However, it seems that the local archaeological team pays more attention to bigger and more luxurious ones, such as imperial tombs. Ordinary Han stone carved tombs have long been ignored. Thus their reports are relatively short and simple, if there are any.

In the Qi-Lu region, which includes present-day Shandong, Northern Jiangsu, Northern Anhui and Eastern Henan provinces, the reports bring another problem, which is that most of the tombs were excavated by local provincial archaeological teams. Thus the excavators tend to emphasise local features of the tombs to distinguish them from those in neighbouring areas. However, such descriptions sometimes cause confusion. For instance, there are large numbers of Han stone tombs in the area around modern city of Xuzhou. But today the tombs are separated by provincial borders, consequently they are excavated and published by different archaeologists from Jiangsu, Shandong, Henan and Anhui Provinces, each stressing local features, while the links between the tombs are rarely mentioned.⁴⁰ But in fact, it is clear that the tombs are not far from each other and most of them can be put into the same group in terms of features such as tomb structure and carving techniques.

Relevant tombs will be divided into groups according to their geographical distributions, so as to carry out further studies. However, the groups do not have to coincide with political boundaries, neither modern provincial borders nor Han period boundaries. Therefore, it is essential to avoid this modern-day regional bias. The idea of 'economic macro-regions' will be adopted. This idea is developed by G. William Skinner, who divided late imperial China into nine units of economic analysis he calls macro-regions.⁴¹ Likewise, the Han Empire can also be divided into several different economic macro-regions, based on watersheds, population densities, natural resources, extent of rural peripheries, and trading patterns. The regions often cross both Han period and modern political boundaries, as they follow their geographic and economic determinants. This approach is very helpful to underpin the groups of stone carved tombs, for their distribution often coincides with the economic macro-regions.

1.2.2 Catalogues

Scholarship on Han funerary stones started in the Song 宋 dynasty (AD960-1279) and was revived during the Qing 清 period (AD1644-1911). The main interest of these antiquarians was to collect rubbings of pictorial stones or inscriptions. Due to the long history of studies on the stone tombs, there is a tradition

³⁹ The main reason is the tradition of cataloguing stone carvings. These will be discussed in sections below. Another reason is probably that most of the tombs have been robbed many times before scientific excavation, thus there is not too much to say except to list the pictorial stones. However, the archaeologists usually fail to discuss the construction of the tombs.

⁴⁰ In fact, such regionalism is a general trend in all aspects of Chinese archaeology. Lothar von Falkenhausen discusses the 'regionalist paradigm' in Chinese archaeology. He argues that as a result of administrative reorganizations, many articles published in the regional journals concentrate on cultural phenomena within their provinces, stressing those features that distinguish them from neighbouring provinces. He concludes that regionalist supremacism is merely because Chinese archaeologists have had to adapt to gain official support and legitimation. See von Falkenhausen 1995, 198-217.

⁴¹ Skinner 1977, 211-252, 275-352.

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of scholars making rubbings of the funerary stones, both for scholarship and for connoisseurship.⁴² It is possible that the famous Northern Song (AD960-1126) scholars, Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (AD1007-1072) and Zhao Mingcheng 趙明誠 (AD1081-1129), compiled rubbings of Han stone carvings in their works *Jigu lu* 集古錄 and *Jinshi lu* 金石錄, according to the records in the books, but unfortunately just the texts have survived. A Southern Song (AD1127-1279) scholar, Hong Kuo 洪适 (AD1117-1184), compiled inscriptions on Han stone carvings in his book *Li shi* 隸釋 and woodcut illustrations of relevant stone images in *Li xu* 隸續, where he made commentaries, which can be regarded as the earliest research on Han stone carvings.⁴³ Such collections provided the only way for such scholars to ‘possess’ this material. The process incidentally proved a good way to preserve and circulate images of stone carvings, which were difficult to move. Qing scholars published many compilations of Han stone carvings,⁴⁴ but most of them are simple records without illustrations. In 1821 Feng Yunpeng 馮雲鵬 and Feng Yunyuan 馮雲鶴 published their index to antique bronzes and stone carvings, *Jinshi suo* 金石索, in which they illustrated many individual images drawn after Han stone carvings.⁴⁵ The commentaries concentrated on analysing them based on received early texts (Figure 1-8).⁴⁶ Unfortunately, as this work was published before the invention of photography, illustrations in the catalogue are woodcut prints, not rubbings. Thus, they do not show the original appearance of the stones accurately. However, some of the illustrations are now the only available resource of specific pieces of stone, as the original stones are lost or weathered beyond recognition.

The Song and Qing cataloguing tradition has influenced the interests of modern Chinese scholarship. In the past decades, many catalogues of the funerary stones have been published. Most of such catalogues are compilations of rubbings of stones, with a general introduction and description of contents of images. These hardly differ from the traditional cataloguing approach.

Among the most typical ones is the eight volumes of *Zhongguo huaxiangshi quanji* 中國畫像石全集.⁴⁷ This work compiles rubbings of stones from important tombs and individual stones that have survived. Sometimes the editors provide photographs for high reliefs and sculptured stones. Unsurprisingly, the tomb stones are compiled and divided into groups in different volumes according to regional distributions based on current provincial boundaries. Moreover, there are also rubbing catalogues of stones from particular regions published by local institutions.⁴⁸ The contents of these books are generally organised according to themes of images, as they are mainly compiled for connoisseurship.

⁴² In China there is a long history of making rubbings of inscriptions and carvings, which is to lay a piece of paper over a carved object, for instance a carved stone slab, and to apply ink using small silk wads to the paper to register the entire surface of the object, then the image shows up on the paper for connoisseurship or antiquarian studies.

⁴³ All of the mentioned works have been compiled and photocopies of early editions have been published in *Shike shiliao xinbian* 石刻史料新編, see Lin Ronghua 1957, 1979, 1982 and 1986. Modern printed and edited versions with punctuation of some of the above books have also been published.

⁴⁴ In 1789, Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (AD1733-1818) published his *Liang Han jinshi ji* 兩漢金石記 on bronzes and stone carvings of the Han. In 1797, an even more detailed book *Shanzuo jinshi ji* 山左金石記 was compiled by Bi Yuan 畢沅 (AD1730-1797) and Ruan Yuan 阮元 (AD1764-1849), concentrating on antiques from Shandong. For compiled early editions in *Shike shiliao xinbian* 石刻史料新編 see Lin Ronghua 1957, 1979, 1982 and 1986.

⁴⁵ The first editions of this book are now very rare. Photocopies of late Qing editions have been published. For an 1821 edition, see Beijing 1996.

⁴⁶ On two pages of this Qing dynasty work, the authors wrote their commentary on the three edges of the images, the right one tells the images' position in the shrine; the bottom captions describe figures in the images; while the left one is an explanation based on received texts.

⁴⁷ Shandong and Henan 2000.

⁴⁸ In the Qi-Lu Region, many such catalogues have been published, see Shandong 1982, Xuzhou 1959, 1985 and 1995, Shangqiu

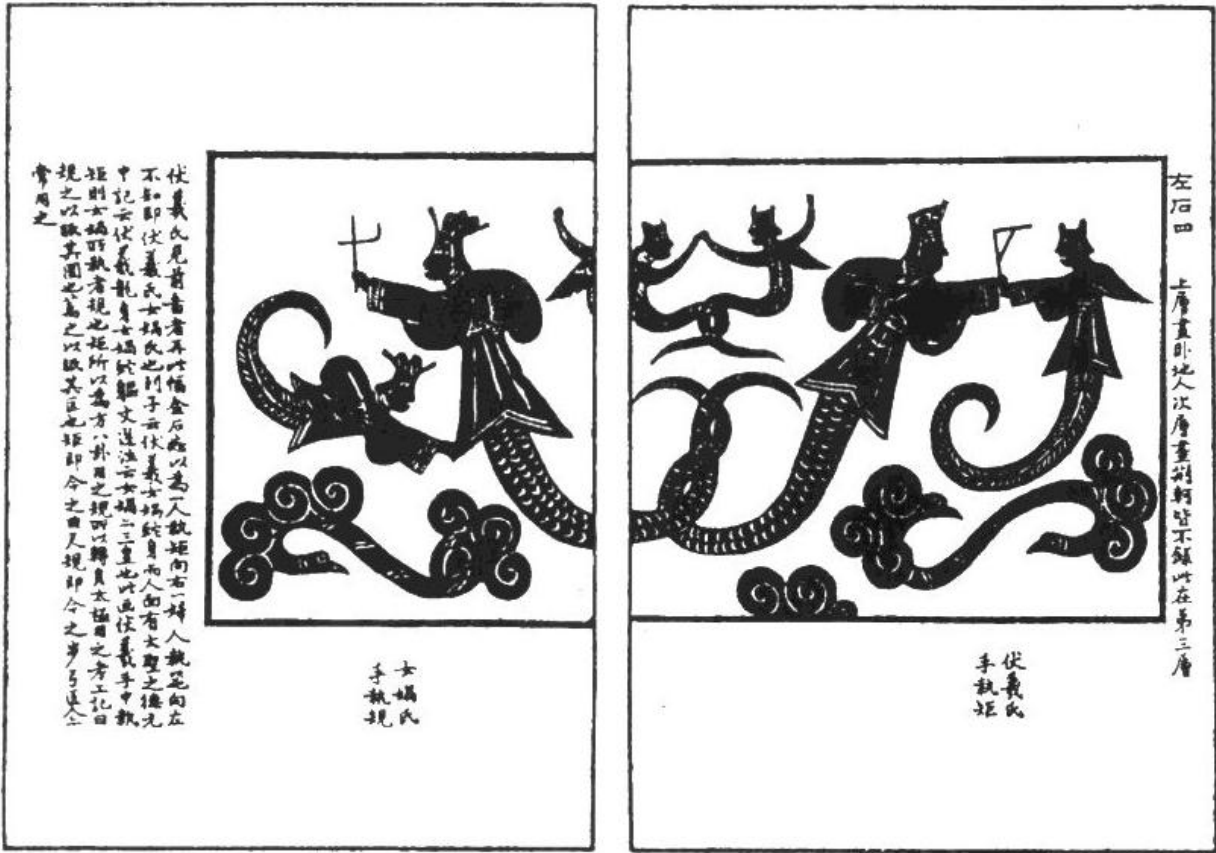


Figure 1-8, two pages of *Jinshi Suo*.

The collection of rubbings as seen in most of the above catalogues is a traditional Chinese approach to gathering information. This interest derives from the importance of cast bronzes and carved bone and stone inscriptions. It was early found to be possible to do rubbings of these inscriptions and thus make them available to scholars. Such catalogues provide a good resource of images of stone tomb decorations, as the rubbings are of relatively better quality than the ones from archaeological reports. But the problems of such catalogues are as obvious. Firstly, in almost all the catalogues, stones from tombs are separated and put together in a new order. Thus the purposes arising from the positions of stones are lost. The stones are considered as individual items rather than as sets of stones, therefore their pictorial programmes are ignored. Secondly, the catalogues also have the same kind of regional bias as the archaeological reports, stressing local features and ignoring links between the tombs from neighbouring areas. Moreover, the regional catalogues are normally edited by local scholars, archaeologists or museum curators, so that they are likely to overvalue local material and thus it is difficult to gain a balanced view from the catalogues.⁴⁹

1991, Huaibei 2002. Catalogues of stone tombs of the Nanyang Basin include Nanyang 1981, 1985, 1988 and 1990. In the Capital Region, as discussed above, stone tombs have received little attention, thus there is no regional catalogue. For a full list of catalogues, see Part I of Bibliography.

⁴⁹ In one of the regional small catalogues of stone carvings found around Shangqiu 商丘, a city of Eastern Henan, the editors are aware that this area borders Northern Jiangsu and Northern Anhui, but still emphasise that stone carvings in this area have many differences from the ones in Xuzhou (Northern Jiangsu) and have an obvious local style for which they give superficial reasons. (Shangqiu 1991, 1 and 11) In fact these tomb stones can be seen as part of a big group with the ones of the neighbouring areas though they are separated by modern provincial boundaries. Moreover, the editors have praised the

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Catalogues of the pictorial stones have also been compiled by Japanese and Western scholars. Because of a long-standing Japanese interest in Chinese artefacts and the influence of traditional Chinese scholarship on Japanese academics, there is rarely any deviation in Japanese catalogues from the Chinese model. One of the benefits of works in Japan is that some museums and universities generously publish their collection of photographs or rubbings online, which are of high quality and very convenient for scholars around the world.⁵⁰

Käte Finsterbusch's immensely useful catalogues are some of the few Western compilations of Han funerary stones.⁵¹ Her earlier volumes in 1966 and 1971 include a volume of texts and a volume of pictures and rubbings of tomb murals, pictorial stones and moulded bricks. The text volume includes and classifies excavated artefacts according to their regional distribution. Again she relies on modern provincial boundaries. One of the main advantages of this compilation is that each stone is discussed with references to archaeological reports, which enables the readers to trace its origin. The volumes also have well organised appendixes, including a collection of inscriptions from stone tombs and stone offering shrines, and a clear map of archaeological sites' distributions. In 2000 and 2004 Finsterbusch published similar new volumes, which include new archaeological finds made since the 1970s. The new text volume has even better appendixes than the old one, including a list of stone carvings with dated inscriptions. The purposes of these catalogues are no more than to supply visual information for further studies. They made no attempt at analysis or synthesis of the materials.

1.2.3 Textual materials

A wide range of primary textual materials is relevant. Such texts may be in many different forms: texts inscribed in tombs, the standard histories and other ancient texts that may have been relevant to customs, beliefs and activities of Han people.

Although the reliability and authenticity of historical texts have always been questioned,⁵² one can not avoid making judicious use of such texts in archaeological research. Many standard texts written during the Han or about the Han contribute to the study of beliefs and images relevant to stone tombs.

Several early texts, the *san Li* 三禮 (The Three Rites Canons) are anthologies of ancient rituals.⁵³ It is probable that they were used during the Eastern Han as sources for the principles of mortuary ritual practice.⁵⁴ According to the Eastern Han dynastic history, in AD79 Emperor Zhang 章 (r. AD75-88) convened and took part in a conference, after which scholars' attention was directed to the Classical Texts.⁵⁵ The *Baihu tongyi* 白虎通義 (General Significance of the White Tiger Discussions), the proceedings of this conference, were obviously influential, as they cited many classical texts. The text also offers a rich collection of Eastern Han beliefs and practices. For instance, it has a whole chapter discussing funerary rituals and practices. A similar work, the *Lunheng* 論衡 (Disquisitions) by Wang Chong 王充 (AD27-97), offers a collection on Han religion, thought and folklore. Another work, the

'artistic representation' of Shangqiu stone carvings after a comparison between the ones from Shandong, Nanyang, Northern Shaanxi and Northern Jiangsu (Shangqiu 1991, 1), which is disingenuous, as they have obviously excessively praised everything.

⁵⁰ For example, collections of rubbings of Kyoto University are available at its official website: <http://kanji.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/db-machine/imgsrv/takuhon/> (Retrieved 17 October 2018). However, just like the Chinese models, these Japanese collections are compiled and divided into groups according to regional distributions based on current provincial boundaries.

⁵¹ Finsterbusch 1966, 1971, 2000 and 2004.

⁵² For one of the examples see von Falkenhausen 1993, 839-849.

⁵³ The Three Rites Canons include *Liji* 禮記, *Yili* 儀禮 and *Zhouli* 周禮.

⁵⁴ However, the date, origin and authenticity of each book are still subjects of dispute, see Nylan 2001, 168-201.

⁵⁵ *Hou Hanshu*, 137-139.

Fengsu tongyi 風俗通義 (General Significance of Customs), which was completed during late Eastern Han, also describes contemporary beliefs and cults. Moreover, several books of southern China origin should not be neglected, such as *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (Classic of the Mountains and Seas) and *Huainan zi* 淮南子 (The Masters of Huainan), as they addressed beliefs about the living and the dead as well. Their contents also may have contributed certain motifs found on stone carvings. The standard dynastic histories such as the *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Former Han) and the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (History of the Later Han) do not have much information that is directly relevant to Han funerary customs and beliefs, but are still useful because detailed records in the works supply abundant resource on funerary practices.⁵⁶ Some texts compiled later than the Han period are also useful sources as they record Han sites that could no longer be seen today.⁵⁷

Indeed, the problems of texts should not be ignored. Textual evidence contributes to the archaeological evidence available. But ancient texts often do not fully reflect the situation in burials. First of all, texts were written for different reasons and often have particular biases. Moreover, the authors were clearly not involved in the masonry work, nor do such texts give detailed information on actual burial rituals. It is unlikely that texts match up well with Han tombs. Thus texts must be examined very carefully. Lothar von Falkenhausen has pointed out that, archaeology is enmeshed in an old and continuous tradition of national history and historical texts in China. He argues that archaeology should be liberated from its present narrowly historiographical agenda.⁵⁸

In the case of activities of patrons and artisans of stone tombs, even standard texts are not available, as the relatively lower ranked patrons and masons are not normally recorded in standard histories, nor were scholars interested in recording their activities. Thus surviving inscriptions on stone carvings are essential for dating tombs and for learning about their patrons, whether they are texts about the contents of images, or inscriptions relevant to tomb construction, or an epitaph of the tomb occupant.⁵⁹ These texts appear on stones in tombs, on offering shrines, or on *Que* 闕 pillar gates⁶⁰. Such inscriptions are immensely helpful for research on the contents of images, pictorial programmes and activities of patrons and artisans associated with stone tombs.

For instance, there is a famous stone slab carrying more than 300 engraved characters in the Cangshan 蒼山 tomb in Shandong Province.⁶¹ The text describes in general terms all the images inside the tomb and their positions, which is very helpful in studying the pictorial programme of this tomb and other similar tombs. Among the texts on shrines, inscriptions on the doorpost of the Xiangtajun 鄉他君 Shrine from Shandong are the best preserved ones and can be easily identified (Figures 1-9a, b).⁶² They

⁵⁶ For one of the most typical academic works, see Yang Shuda 1933. Yang's book discusses wedding and funerary customs in the Han, which is mainly a compilation of records on wedding and funerary activities from all kinds of Han texts including the dynastic histories.

⁵⁷ One of the most useful later texts is the *Shujing zhu* 水經注 by a Northern Wei (AD386-534) scholar Li Daoyuan 酈道元 (AD466-527). This work is mainly about major rivers and their tributaries, but many ancient monuments near such rivers have also been referred to. Some of the mentioned monuments are Han funerary sites.

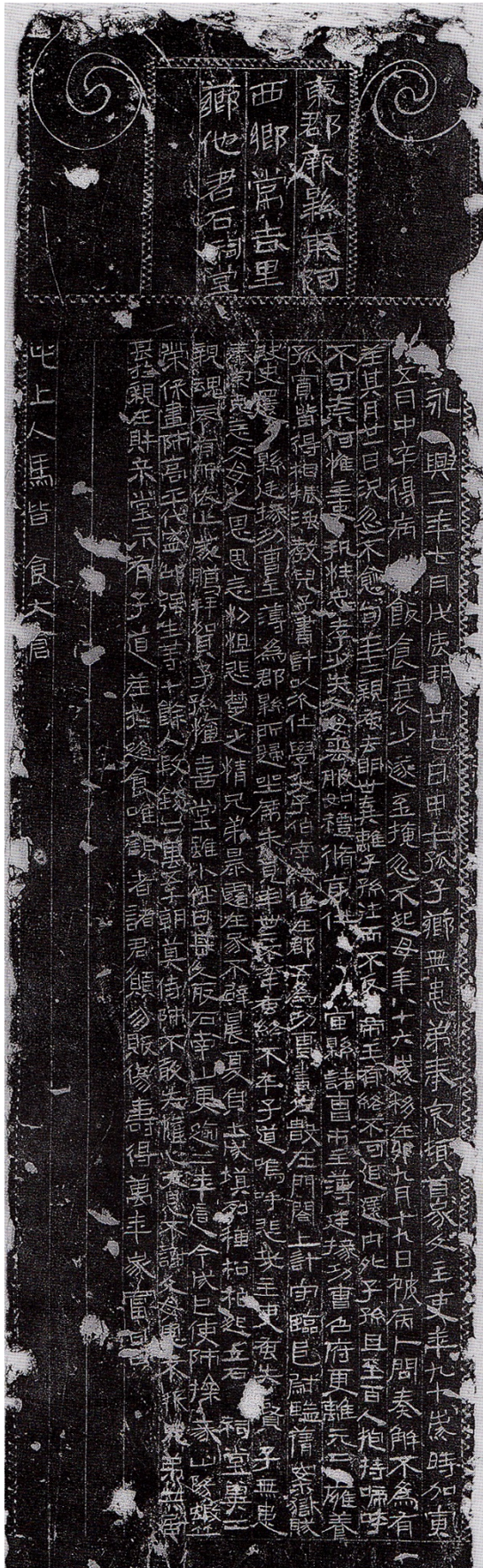
⁵⁸ von Falkenhausen 1993, 839-849.

⁵⁹ Such inscriptions have been found in all the five distribution areas of stone carved tombs. Some texts are dated some are not, but most of them are believed to be inscribed during the Eastern Han.

⁶⁰ *Que* pillar gates are the two tower-shaped pillars that were set up to mark the entry to the burial ground and to memorialise deceased family members.

⁶¹ For the archaeological report of the Cangshan tomb, see *Kaogu* 1975.2, 124-134. For relevant discussions see Wu Hung 1995, 240-250 and Wu Hung 1994b, 81-104.

⁶² Punctuation and explanations of the inscriptions have been published in Chinese, see Luo Fuyi 1960, Chen Zhi 1988 and Sun



Left: Figure 1-9a, Inscription on the doorpost of Xiangtaju Offering Shrine in Shandong, AD154 (Eastern Han). Ink-on-paper rubbing.

Photo Courtesy of Palace Museum, Beijing.

Bottom right: Figure 1-9b, Doorpost of Xiangtaju Offering Shrine, H. 119.2cm W. 33.5cm.

Photo Courtesy of Palace Museum, Beijing.



record issues relevant to the deceased. Most importantly, they also describe the general process of how the patrons and masons built the tomb and shrine. Thus the inscriptions have supplied information about Han stone tomb construction. Moreover, among all the surviving inscriptions, there are many dated texts: either long ones like the Cangshan tomb inscription, or short ones, such as captions of images.⁶³ These dated stones are extremely helpful for chronological studies of carving techniques and tomb structures. However, stone inscriptions, just like other historical texts, can be corrupted over time, with interpolations or loss of characters. Thus texts on stone carvings should also be treated with care.

1.3 Literature Review: Secondary Sources

Han dynasty stone tombs have always attracted academic interests. In China relevant research goes back to the antiquarians of the Song dynasty, while Western scholars started to pay attention to such materials from the 1880s. Thus secondary discussions on the stone tombs are abundant in various languages including Chinese, Japanese, English and other Western languages. In this section secondary works are divided up according to different categories, in terms of their interests and their relevance to questions raised in this book.

1.3.1 Regional and chronological studies

Modern comprehensive studies on Han stone carved tombs are mainly undertaken by Chinese archaeologists. Most of their studies concentrate on typological and chronological studies following the mainstream Chinese tradition of archaeology. The most typical and also the best ones are works by academics such as Xin Lixiang 信立祥 and Li Falin 李發林. Xin, based on his master thesis, has built up a typological series in terms of carving techniques, image motifs and image compositions.⁶⁴ Such work supplies a good basis for the study of Han stone tombs, and Xin's typological distinctions have been widely cited by other Chinese scholars. In his 2000 book he examines the ways in which images are arranged within a tomb,⁶⁵ which is rare among Chinese scholars. However, in this book, little attention has been paid to the regional differences in the ways images were put together. On the other hand, Xin divides Han stone tombs into five groups according to their geographical distribution and builds up a chronological series within each group.⁶⁶ His division of the stone tombs is based on their distribution and characteristics rather than ancient or modern political boundaries (Figure 1-2). Such a division is an improvement on other Chinese archaeologists' works, in which it is common to see regional bias.

Li Falin has also worked on the typology and chronology of Han funerary stone carvings. His typological study is based on carving techniques, while his chronological part examines nineteen funerary stones with inscriptions of precise dates from Shandong province.⁶⁷ His results are satisfactory although they refer only to tombs in Shandong and neighbouring regions. Such discussions supply good summaries of excavated materials down to the 1980s. The problem, of course, is that these works are now thirty years old and much new material has been excavated since then.

Moreover, scholars from different regions have also published a series of articles discussing chronology and typology within their regions. For instance, Jiang Yingju 蔣英矩 and Wu Wenqi 吳文祺 have

⁶³ Sometimes carved images have identifying captions supplying names of figures or objects. See Figure 1-8 for such an example.

⁶⁴ Xin Lixiang 1982, 234-306.

⁶⁵ Xin Lixiang 2000, 235-271.

⁶⁶ See Xin Lixiang 1982 and 2000. In the 2000 book he includes new materials excavated since 1982, and then modifies typological and chronological discussions to make them more abundant and accurate.

⁶⁷ Li Falin 1982, 42-51.

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worked on Shandong stone carvings,⁶⁸ Henan Museum has published pictorial stones from Nanyang;⁶⁹ Xuzhou Museum has published an article analysing funerary stones in their area;⁷⁰ and Guo Xiaochuan 郭小川 has rebuilt the chronology of the Qi-Lu Region stone carvings.⁷¹ Most of such discussions are based on carving techniques.

Some Chinese archaeologists have also written on the development of Han stone tombs. At the end of his book *Xin Lixiang* talks about the communication and influential relationship between different regions, establishing how such tombs appeared and spread across the Han Empire.⁷² However, this chapter is rather short and unsatisfactory, and Xin ignores all outside influence on the Han stone tombs in this part. Instead he simply assumes that everything was developed within the territory of Han China.

This trend is quite common among Chinese scholars. Most of them have simply conceptualised all tomb structures as arising in a linear development within the area of China. For instance, Huang Xiaofen 黃曉芬 analyses Han tombs, including stone carved tombs, based on intensive archaeological data. She examines almost all known tombs dated from as early as the Qin 秦 Dynasty (221-207 BC) to the end of the Han period, to establish an evolution of tomb types over this period.⁷³ She argues that Han multi-chambered tombs were developed from *guomu* 槨墓 (casket graves), which were tombs with a box-like timber structure buried at the bottom of a vertical pit. Other scholars have even traced the origin of casket graves to the single coffin tombs of the Neolithic Yangshao 仰韶 Culture.⁷⁴ These arguments are obviously too narrow in approach, as they treat China as a region whose culture had no contact with wider activities in Eurasia. Firstly, the Han multi-chambered tombs may have been influenced by multiple sources including stimuli from Inner Asia. Secondly, varieties of tombs observed may not belong to a single line of development. These may be different regional types rather than different developmental stages. Indeed, casket graves and multi-chambered tombs have been used by both upper class and commoners through much of later Chinese history.

Scholars working in English have also interpreted the Han reliefs in their chronological and geographical aspects based on stylistic analysis. Hsio-yen Shih in her PhD thesis attempts to illustrate 'early Chinese pictorial style', including Han arts through examining the funerary stones on a stylistic basis.⁷⁵ By investigating various issues such as carving techniques, her conclusions on regional chronologies differ from those of Chinese scholars. As an art historian, Shih concentrates on the carved stones. She argues that all stones from different regions and periods can be put into a single developmental series. She takes the Shandong ones as the earliest development, which subsequently influenced Henan. Then, in her view, the Henan masons gradually generated a new style. Similarly, she suggests that early Shaanxi and Sichuan styles were based on those from Shandong and Henan. By contrast, Chinese archaeologists such as Xin Lixiang argue that from the late Western Han to the middle Eastern Han, stone carvings of Nanyang were the most developed among all the regions. He suggests that Nanyang's carving techniques and styles then influenced the Luoyang area, going also as far as

⁶⁸ Jiang Yingju and Wu Wenqi 1980.

⁶⁹ *Wenwu* 1973.6, 16-25.

⁷⁰ *Wenwu* 1980.2, 44-55.

⁷¹ Guo Xiaochuan 1997, 171-195.

⁷² *Xin Lixiang* 2000, 353-358.

⁷³ Huang Xiaofen 2003.

⁷⁴ For discussions on the development of casket graves, see Huang Xiaofen 2003, 26-93 and *Wenwu* 2006.6, 49-55.

⁷⁵ Shih Hsio-yen 1961.

Sichuan and even Beijing. In the late Eastern Han, the Qi-Lu region took Nanyang's place, becoming the most advanced and influential region in terms of carving techniques and styles.⁷⁶

Although Shih and Xin end up with different conclusions as art historians and archaeologists respectively, the discussions about carving techniques are informative. Such works supply a reasonable basis for later studies on Han stone tombs. However, regional varieties and chronological developments are not just about stylistic elements such as carving techniques. In this book, in addition to carving techniques, more attention will be given to tomb structures, tomb plans and pictorial programmes.

1.3.2 Studies on artisans and workshops

Carving techniques and tomb construction need to be examined in terms of regional and chronological differences. Thus it is also essential to examine the activities of Han dynasty masons and the operation of their workshops, as after all the tombs were carved and built by them.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, as is discussed in section 1.2.3 of this chapter, textual resources on Han masons and their workshops are very limited, thus such studies have to depend on texts surviving in tombs as well as traces of working practice left in tombs by the masons.

Several views about construction have also been suggested in previous scholarship. Xin Lixiang, whose work is widely accepted and cited within Chinese scholarship, mainly concentrates on the carving of stones that were used to build tombs. Xin summarises the carving of pictorial stones in six steps based on inscriptions on stones from tombs or shrines. According to him the steps are: 1, patrons seek out artisans; 2, masons quarry raw stones from hills; 3, masons smooth and polish stones; 4, draftsmen make sketches for carving; 5, masons carve the stone according to original drafts; 6, artisans finish the project by adding colours to the carvings.⁷⁸ As Xin has worked in the Chinese tradition, focussing on the subject matter of the images, he only discusses the carving of pictorial stones, without saying anything about how they were used as materials to construct a tomb. He also points out that few academic works have been undertaken on the fifth and sixth steps. Hsing I-Tien 邢義田 approaches the topic in a similar way, with more comments on the social status of Han masons and the use of stencils and patterns to maintain their level of quality,⁷⁹ but again he makes no comment on tomb construction. Xin and Hsing merely concentrate on carving techniques of tomb stones, with limited comments on the activities of masons and workshops.

Based on previous scholars' work, Lillian Tseng greatly improves the study of Han stone tomb construction.⁸⁰ She focuses on artisans' workshops, repertoires and the regional visual traditions of the manufacture of Han funerary stones by analysing traces found in the Anqiu 安丘 tomb in Shandong.⁸¹ The importance of her work is that firstly, she develops the discussion on the use of 'patterns' using a new term *getao* 格套 (repertoires)⁸². Secondly, she discusses the construction of tomb chambers, which

⁷⁶ Xin Lixiang 2000, 353-358.

⁷⁷ It is true that the tombs were directly built by stone artisans, but sometimes they have to work according to patrons' requirements, the deceased people's descendants or even the deceased himself could have engaged in the designing and construction of his tomb before his death. Consequently, to some extent the patrons might also be regarded as tomb builders. See Section 2.2.2 of Chapter Two for more discussion.

⁷⁸ Xin Lixiang 2000, 22-26.

⁷⁹ Hsing I-Tien 1996, 44-59.

⁸⁰ Tseng 2000, 33-86.

⁸¹ For the archaeological report see *Wenwu* 1960.5, 55-59, *Wenwu* 1964.4, 30-40 and Anqiu 1992.

⁸² *Getao* means stone carvings presented by artisans from specified repertoires, usually in alternation. Hsing's approach is similar to that of Lothar Ledderose, as is proposed in *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art*. In Chapter Three of this book both approaches will be incorporated to the study of the imagery of stone carved tombs.

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is rare among other scholars. Moreover, her analysis on regional visual differences is persuasive. Although she just concentrates on tombs of the Qi-Lu area, such methods can be extended in further studies of examples from other regions.

Martin Powers in his book *Art and Political Expression in Early China* mainly discusses the interaction of Han art and politics, but he also works on the operation of mason workshops by looking at the engraving industry in the area of present-day Shandong. He examines the size of the market, the consistency of market preferences, and the competition between workshops.⁸³ Wu Hung in a chapter of his book *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture* discusses the construction of funerary monuments.⁸⁴ Apart from his discussion on different kinds of patrons, Wu Hung worked on the Cangshan tomb inscription, establishing a relationship between the inscription which described the images in the tomb and the images themselves. He also points out that the images are viewed by the artisans and the patrons in very different ways.⁸⁵

Anthony Barbieri-Low has done intensive works on Han masons in his book *Artisans in Early Imperial China*,⁸⁶ although he does not consider the ways in which a whole tomb was built. Barbieri-Low has paid detailed attention to reconstructing the process by which the stones were carved, and he raises several new points, including the use of 'customisable prefabrications', a system used by masons and workshops that allowed most elements of a monument to be constructed off-site using standardised modules.⁸⁷ Barbieri-Low also examines the activities of the stone carving artisans, such as their marketing techniques. His most significant point is the idea of 'economic macro-regions' as discussed above. Although this concept was not developed by Barbieri-Low, he applies this division to the study of Han stone carvings for the first time. Compared with other provincial divisions mentioned above, this approach is much more helpful for the study of Han stone tombs. Barbieri-Low divides the Western Han Empire into six macro-regions. Then he concentrates on activities of masons within the Qi-Lu region, by looking at their work for both royal and private funerary monuments. He concludes that normally the masons travelled no more than 500 kilometres, and operated within one macro-regional area.⁸⁸ He mentions that this factor probably explains the clear boundaries between regional styles of Han stone carvings, though it seems that such regional boundaries are not clear cut.

Lukas Nickel has worked on Han period brick tombs around Luoyang. He reviews the development of bricks as building materials in early China, and also discusses brick technologies of the Han. Nickel argues that large hollow bricks have been used since the Western Zhou (1046-771BC), and became the preferred building material for tombs in the Yellow River basin. Hollow bricks were no longer used for building tombs from the Xin period, when small bricks became popular. He believes that small bricks were used in China only at the end of the third century BC. They were probably introduced to China rather than an independent invention. The reason is that, at the beginning, small bricks were employed on a large scale, but full knowledge of brick technology remained unknown to builders.⁸⁹

Nickel has also discussed the development of domed and vaulted roofs of tombs around Luoyang. The earliest type, according to him, includes simple barrel vaults that consist of bricks laid out in rows,

⁸³ Powers 1992, 110-128.

⁸⁴ Wu Hung 1995, 238-250.

⁸⁵ Wu Hung 1995, 249-250.

⁸⁶ Barbieri-Low 2007, 67-152.

⁸⁷ Barbieri-Low 2007, 93-96.

⁸⁸ Barbieri-Low 2007, 131-142.

⁸⁹ Nickel 2010, 184-191.

which were used throughout the Western Han. Then in the first century AD, four-sided domes were developed. During the late first century AD, artisans learned to build barrel vaults with bonded bricks that formed an interlocking pattern. Finally in the late second century AD, alternating rows of voussoir-shaped bricks were lined up to form a more stable type of barrel vault.⁹⁰ Such studies on the development of brick roofs are important to the understanding of stone carved tombs, as in many cases such stone tombs were built from a combination of stone slabs and moulded bricks, and it is very likely that their roofs borrowed features from brick tombs in Luoyang.

However, none of the above authors have really examined the actual building process of stone tombs. Recent archaeological finds and some re-examination of old data will make a study of the construction of stone tombs possible. For instance, a Han dynasty quarry has been discovered in the city of Xuzhou,⁹¹ though it is the only excavated Han quarry. Thus it is now more feasible to reconstruct the actual building process of Han stone tombs.⁹²

1.3.3 Studies on functions of tombs

From as early as the Song and Qing dynasties, Chinese scholars have focused on identifying and explaining the themes represented by the images in the tombs.⁹³ They treated the stone carvings as individual items, rather than as elements of a complex tomb, but their works are to some extent helpful to the understanding of tomb functions. Even today, the majority of Chinese scholars working on Han stone tombs still concentrate on the interpretation of specific subjects. Among the large numbers of works, Li Falin's book is the most typical one.⁹⁴ Almost all the book is devoted to classifying images on stones into many groups. Then based on a wide range of ancient texts, he analyses different stones carrying similar images. Li provides a good summary of motifs, which is helpful for further research, as his work covers almost all known themes on Han pictorial stones. But surprisingly not a single illustration is offered in this book of pictorial analysis, and again the role of sets of stones and their joint significances are ignored. Moreover, even the explanations of the images are controversial, as his studies are highly dependent on ancient texts, some of which even postdate the Han period.⁹⁵ As discussed above, it is unlikely that texts match up well with Han tombs. Many other issues, such as artisans' activities, should be examined to analyse meanings of images. For instance, the artisans are more likely to be influenced by conventions and patron requirements rather than texts which they are unlikely to have read.

Studies on specific types of images have also been undertaken by Chinese scholars. Most of these works explore meanings and functions of certain motifs of images on the funerary stones. For instance, a collection of essays called *Research of Nanyang Astronomic Pictorial Stones* has been published to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Nanyang Museum of Han Stone Carvings⁹⁶. Most articles in the compilation have investigated funerary stones with motifs of celestial bodies or supernatural forces.⁹⁷ Other authors

⁹⁰ Nickel 2010, 189-191.

⁹¹ For the archaeological report see *Kaogu* 2010.11, 28-39. Traces of masonry workshops, iron tools and abandoned quarry pits have been found. It is very likely that this quarry is relevant to several nearby Han stone tomb sites.

⁹² Such studies will be carried out in Chapter Two.

⁹³ For an early example see Figure 1-8 and footnote 46.

⁹⁴ Li Falin 2000.

⁹⁵ For instance, he used the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 to explain images of Queen Mother of the West on Han carved stones, while it is obvious that the *Taiping yulan* was compiled in the tenth century AD, which was hundreds of years later than the Han.

⁹⁶ Located in Nanyang, central city of the Nanyang Basin, this museum is one of the largest museums for collections of Han stone carvings. Its display of stone slabs is, however, deeply influenced by the Chinese tradition. Individual stones are divided according to their motifs of image. Very few of them are put together in their original sequence in a whole tomb.

⁹⁷ See Han Yuxiang 1995.

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use the stone carved images as illustrations of their texts, to demonstrate other interests such as agriculture, handicraft, and astronomy. For example, stone carvings of scenes of weaving and farming have been widely used to demonstrate developments in Han society. Both types of research are of course limited, and too many assumptions have been made.

Japanese scholars have also written many articles and books on comprehensive studies of Han stone tombs or relevant topics, most of which discuss meanings or understandings of images. Doi Yoshiko 土居淑子 in her book briefly considers the contents of reliefs and the interpretation of images through representation of the dead and the world of the dead, during which she raises the idea of 'time in the images' for interpreting images. By investigating seasonal time and linear time, she concludes that such funerary reliefs testify to the existence of both views of time in the Han.⁹⁸ Hayashi Minao 林巳奈夫 has discussed Han pictorial stones in his book *Ishi ni kizamareta sekai* 石に刻まれた世界 (The World Carved on Stone).⁹⁹ Just as the book title shows, Hayashi's approach consists in classifying and arranging excavated stones according to the categories of their themes. In many articles Hayashi has also discussed Han funerary arts,¹⁰⁰ but he is more interested in the life and thought of the Han period reflected on the stones rather than in the tombs as a whole.

Scholars working in Western languages have made many proposals about the styles and functions of Han stone tombs. Martin Powers' work *Art and Political Expression in Early China* has combined and balanced previous studies on styles and functions of Han stone carvings. Powers discusses the literary, intellectual and social implications of the Han tombs.¹⁰¹ He argues that Han art and politics were both shaped by the rise of the Confucian literati. By considering the construction of funerary monuments, he distinguishes three major traditions of taste and places each of them within a narrative of political conflict. For instance, the Wu Family shrines¹⁰² reflect tastes and ideology of scholar-officials, while the Zhu Wei 朱鮪 shrine¹⁰³ and the Dahuting tomb murals are the artistic expression of luxurious trends among land owners or eunuchs. Then he concludes that the contrast between different traditions of art can be characterised in terms of taste of political and social expression. Thus his work bridges the gap between visual form and social meaning, and finds a balance between artistic analysis and exploration of meaning.

Kim Dramer in her PhD thesis studies the functions of images on Han dynasty stone carved tomb doors and the functions of the doors themselves.¹⁰⁴ She argues that, as a result of mortuary innovations during the Eastern Han period, tomb doors and the neighbouring area in a tomb were organisational keys to the tomb structure and pictorial programme, as well as to the performance of ritual necessary to link and transform between the worlds of the living and the dead. Dramer carries out case studies of three tombs from Shandong and Henan. Focusing on tomb doors, she argues that all these structures ensured the link and the transformation through the ritual procession where the doors are integrated into their original architectural setting. In chapters two and three she investigates the structure of a tomb and concludes that the function of a tomb is to act both a space of transition, and a point of transformation

⁹⁸ See Doi Yoshiko 1986. She also in her appendix lists relevant tombs with concentration on numbers of carved and raw stones, which is rare among other scholars. She collects a larger number of dated stone pieces than Li Falin does, which is valuable for chronological studies though she does not do so.

⁹⁹ Hayashi Minao 1992.

¹⁰⁰ For one of the examples see Hayashi Minao 1974, 223-306.

¹⁰¹ Powers 1992.

¹⁰² Details of these shrines are discussed in section 1.3.4 of this chapter.

¹⁰³ See Fairbank 1942, 52-88 and Figure 15 for relevant information.

¹⁰⁴ Dramer 2002.

in terms of social contexts. Dramer indeed looks at the pictorial programme of a tomb to analyse its functions. Dramer also bridges Han religious contexts and this specific tomb. In her detailed discussions in chapters four and five, she argues that the imagery arrangements within the Yinan tomb¹⁰⁵ resonate with the Han views of cosmology, and images in different chambers have different meanings and functions.¹⁰⁶ She also considers the dead, the mourners and the public as observers or viewers, to examine their reception of the monument's images.

To get a better understanding of images' functions within tombs, Western scholars such as Jean James explore the study of iconographic programmes of Han stone tombs and offering shrines in a series of works, which supply possible new trends. In her PhD thesis her most important point is that similar motifs of images are given different meanings in different complexes, and thus have different functions.¹⁰⁷ In the 1985 article on Han funerary art, she has once again raised the importance of 'context'.¹⁰⁸ In the 1988 article James focuses on what she calls the 'iconographic program' of the Wu Family offering shrines; her arguments are about finding the pictorial programmes and functions of the shrines.¹⁰⁹

In fact, the study of pictorial programmes of stone tombs had been started much earlier than James' work. Wilma Fairbank in her 1941 article attempts to reconstruct the famous Wu Family Shrines in southwest Shandong Province. She points out that the structural meanings of funerary monuments have been neglected. Then she argues that 'positional significance' rather than individual stones or rubbings should be considered in order to understand tombs or shrines. The importance is two-fold:

'First, the interrelationships and positional significance of the engraved stones is lost when they are studied as scattered slabs or rubbings. A grasp of this positional significance will be shown to illuminate subject matter at present obscure. Second, the ritual purpose of the buildings as a whole, and the architectural form which expresses it, must continually be kept in mind in any study of the individual parts.'¹¹⁰

Though these comments are made to support her reconstruction of the offering shrine, such methods remain essential for the study of funerary monuments whether they are tombs or shrines or both.

Until now, however, while certain tombs have been examined and many subjects have been discussed, it is rare for any major academic work to consider the pictorial programme in a tomb as a whole. There is such a study for a Han stone tomb by Lydia Thompson. In her PhD thesis she focuses on the Yinan tomb in Shandong, but raises also a wide range of topics. First of all, she comments on Fairbank's admonition as regards the positional significance of Han pictorial stones in an architectural structure. Then her arguments are directed to investigating the narrative structure of the pictorial stones and reconstructing the pictorial programme in conjunction with the tomb's structural components. Firstly, the architectural structure of this tomb is demonstrated to have cosmological significance, which is to place the dead in an auspicious position.¹¹¹ Secondly, the horizontal structure of the tomb is presented

¹⁰⁵ For the archaeological report see Yinan 1956.

¹⁰⁶ She argues that within the Yinan tomb, the *mingtang* 明堂 bright hall, Kunlun 崑崙 mountain and the pillar form the symbolism of the centre; the funerary rites in the front chamber provide for the occupant; and funerary rites of the central chamber representing the journey of the soul.

¹⁰⁷ James 1983.

¹⁰⁸ James 1985, 283-292.

¹⁰⁹ James 1988, 39-72.

¹¹⁰ Fairbank 1941, 3.

¹¹¹ Thompson 1998, 152-184.

as a journey, incorporating participants including the mourners and the deceased.¹¹² Moreover, she also explored questions in a broader sense about the functions of imagery in Han stone carved tombs and in ritual performances.¹¹³

1.3.4 *The case of Wu Liang Shrine*

Among all the Han dynasty funerary monuments, the Wu Liang Shrine 武梁祠 is probably the most frequently described and published. Thus relevant scholarship will be reviewed so as to show the general situation of studies on specific Han funerary monuments. The Wu Liang Shrine was erected in AD151 in front of Wu Liang's tomb near the Wuzhaishan 武翟山 hill in present-day Jiexiang 嘉祥, Shandong Province. The interior of the walls, gables and ceiling of the shrine are vividly decorated with stone carvings, which makes it famous.¹¹⁴ In the Song period, antiquarians recorded images of the site. For a long time, it was almost the only group of available images of Han funerary monument. In 1786, Huang Yi 黄易 (AD1744-1802) led probably the earliest archaeological excavation of the collapsed stones, after which it has been well preserved down to today and has always attracted academic interest.¹¹⁵

Edouard Chavannes was perhaps the first Western scholar who visited the Wu Family Shrines and published relevant academic studies.¹¹⁶ In these, he reviewed previous studies on the shrines, and carefully recorded relevant information. He even reviewed previous scholarship on Han funerary art. After that nothing special appears in the list of academic works on the Wu Liang Shrine until 1941, when Fairbank visited the site and afterwards reconstructed all the shrines in her article.¹¹⁷ As mentioned above, she drew people's attention to the 'positional significance' of the stones.

Wu Hung in his PhD thesis goes further, as he compiles and reviews all the available academic works on the Wu Liang Shrine, and then, not only discusses the pictorial programme of the shrine, but also explores the ideology of the shrine, to show how the images of heavenly omens, immortality and human history created a 'pictorial universe'.¹¹⁸

According to Wu Hung, past studies on stone tombs are either broad studies, to examine the general development of pictorial styles and their relationship with social and religious contexts, or detailed studies, to examine styles or meanings of particular images.¹¹⁹ As an alternative, he concentrates on typical tombs, shrines or other sites to analyse relationships between motifs and meanings. In this way he sets out a balance between general social trends, hierarchy, and the ideology of specific tomb occupants. Wu Hung in his PhD thesis launches this 'balance' and works on a single stone monument,

¹¹² Thompson 1998, 185-247.

¹¹³ Thompson 1998, 303-353.

¹¹⁴ In fact, the Wu Liang Shrine is just one of the shrines that belong to members of the Wu family, and is a part of the buildings of the Wu Family Cemetery, which has stone lions, pillar gates and steles. But because the Wu Liang Shrine is the most famous one, for a long time this term was also used to refer to the whole cemetery. Wu Hung in his PhD thesis supplies a detailed historiography of the study of the Wu Family Shrines, see Wu Hung 1992a, 38-70.

¹¹⁵ Descriptions and drawings of stone reliefs from the shrines can be found in most of the early publishing mentioned in footnote 43 of this chapter.

¹¹⁶ The French scholar visited China including the Wu Family Cemetery twice in 1891 and 1907, and published two books talking about Han stone carvings, *La Sculpture sur pierre en Chine au temps des deux dynasties Han* in 1893 and *Mission archeologique dans la Chine septentrionale* in 1913.

¹¹⁷ See Fairbank 1941. Although she made some mistakes during the reconstruction, her ground breaking work and her method are still useful today.

¹¹⁸ Wu Hung 1992a.

¹¹⁹ Wu Hung 1992a, 70 and Wu Hung 1994a, 48.

the Wu Liang Shrine, linking images with the occupant and his social status and ideology. He concludes that the Wu Liang Shrine reflects an early stage of scholar-officials' participation in the creation of artefacts. They regarded, he argues, choosing and arranging images as a means of self-expression.

In 2005, an exhibition of the rubbings of Wu Family Shrines was held in Princeton University Art Museum, after which two catalogues *Recarving China's Past* and *Rethinking Recarving* were published.¹²⁰ The books are collections of images and essays by relevant scholars, with the purpose of examining the traditional views of the Wu Family Shrines. They reveal certain problems that have been neglected by previous studies, not only in the aspect of Wu Family Shrines studies, but also in the broader field of Han funerary practice and architecture. These problems are following: First, because of the restricted access to the site, scholars have been over-dependent on transmitted texts or rubbings. The lack of fieldwork and close investigation is criticised. Secondly, questions about the textual bias have been raised. Most importantly, funerary practice and architecture have been analysed. For instance, Michael Nylan discusses the above-ground worship halls (offering shrines), as well as their literature and archaeological evidence.¹²¹ She has raised questions regarding the lack of understanding of the worship halls erected by wealthy commoners, which are also important factors to understand the Wu Family Shrine as a whole. Beyond the Han period and the Wu Family Shrines themselves, their meanings in later periods, for instance their representation in the Qing dynasty, have also been discussed.



Figure 1-10, stone tomb ruins in the courtyard of Wu Family Shrines Museum in Jiaxiang, Shandong. Photograph by the author.

Such academic debates are very beneficial to the promotion of this field. However, there are still several points that have long been neglected. Firstly, two multi-chambered stone tombs associated with the Wu

¹²⁰ Richard 2005 and 2008.

¹²¹ Richard 2008, 196-231.

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Family shrines were excavated in 1981. But these tombs have never been mentioned in any academic work, though an archaeological report was published in 1995.¹²² Wu Hung was aware of this, but in his book developed from his thesis, he just mentioned the excavation without any discussion, concentrating on the shrine, ignoring the tombs, probably because at that time relevant materials were not available. But today the tombs are still ignored, both academically and materially. The Wu Family Shrines became very famous and a museum was built in as early as 1961 to protect the stone pieces. But it seems that the curators did not pay any attention to the tombs. After the excavation in 1981, everything was just left in situ without any shelter. Now they are filled with sewage and garbage (Figure 1-10). The tombs have been overlooked by many scholars, probably because of the unusual fact that, by comparison with the elaborately designed and constructed shrines, the associated tombs were barely decorated. However, this is also the reason why they should not be neglected. This material is essential to the study of the Wu Family Shrines, and to explore meanings and functions of this cemetery as a whole. The Wu family spent much money on above ground buildings of their family cemetery, leaving the tombs with only basic decoration. Apparently, functions of these tombs and associated funerary buildings need re-examination.

Another issue is the study of Han stone offering shrines in a broader sense. Previous Western studies on Han offering shrines are abundant, but most of them are limited to several specific shrines, including the Wu Family Shrines. Jean James in her general study on functions of Eastern Han shrines argues that such shrines are symbolic structures expressing the need to mourn and to memorialise the dead.¹²³ However, the Wu Family Shrines show that, they were primarily built for the living, and only secondarily for the dead. Analysis in later chapters will be based on surviving inscriptions on stone offering shrines, as well as the contrast between tomb chambers and shrine image sets.

¹²² See Jiang Yingju and Wu Wenqi 1995, 119-127.

¹²³ James 1998, 16-29.