Introduction

It is hardly revolutionary to suggest that, had the academic study of religions started quite literally on the ground, it would have been confronted with very different problems. . . . This Archaeology of Religions would have been primarily occupied with three broad subjects of study then: religious constructions and architectures, inscriptions, and art historical remains.

—GREGORY SCHOPEN

THIS BOOK EXPLORES changes in religious beliefs and ritual practices in early China by focusing on groups of well-preserved tombs excavated in southern China. Dating from the fifth to the first century BCE, these tombs are not only the place where the early Chinese buried their dead but also the space onto which they projected a range of imaginings, fears, and concerns that arose in connection with the life and death of their kin, friends, and foes, people known and unknown. As such, death is not the end of one's life but entering a new relationship with both the dead and the living. The tomb is a bridge, a way station on the journey to the afterlife, and a physical manifestation of established conceptions of the afterworld. Consequently, the tomb is both the physical space where religious ritual and sacrifice took place and the imagined space in which people's beliefs about the invisible spiritual world unfolded.

This book examines the dialectical relationship between sociopolitical change and mortuary religion from an archaeological perspective. It shows that new attitudes toward the dead, resulting from the social trauma of violent political struggle and warfare, changed the ways early Chinese dealt with their dead, promoted new methods of communicating with the dead and the gods, and engendered fresh conceptions of this world and the hereafter. Each chapter analyzes a different aspect of the burial practices of the Warring States (ca. 453–221 BCE),[1] Qin (221–206 BCE),

and early Han (206 BCE–9 CE) periods in relation to the historical contexts of religious transformations in early China. The rich archaeological discoveries made in recent decades, which include both artifacts and texts, enable us to develop more satisfactory and more nuanced interpretations of early Chinese religion than were possible when scholars depended heavily on the classical written sources that have been transmitted over the past two thousand years.

To survey the ground we will cover and the materials we will encounter, let us begin with two examples of recent archaeological excavations in China.

AT THE END OF DECEMBER 2002, after three months of intensive excavation at the Jiuliandun site in Zaoyang City, Hubei, Chinese archaeologists reached the bottom of two underground tombs (fig. I.1). Resembling inverted pyramids, these tombs were typical of the elite burials in the state of Chu (?–223 BCE) during the Warring States period. The pit in Tomb 1 measures 38.1 meters long, 34.8 meters wide, and 12.8 meters deep at the mouth; the pit in Tomb 2, 34.7 meters long, 32 meters wide, and 11.6 meters deep.[2] The four slopes of each pit were cut into fourteen steps, focusing movement downward to the bottom of the tomb, where rectangular wooden encasements (*guo*), enclosing the lacquered inner coffins (*guan*) and assorted grave goods, were buried (fig. I.2). Leading to the bottom of the pit, an access ramp (more than thirty meters long) cut through the eastern side. To the west of the inverted pyramidal pits were two rectangular horse-and-chariot burials respectively containing thirty-three chariots and seventy-two horses and seven chariots and sixteen horses. Originally, a hemispheric clay mound covered the top of each pyramidal pit, but this domelike layer had eroded over the last 2,300 years, leaving only a small hill several meters in height at the time of the excavation.[3]

These mounds formed the first in a series of nine tumuli extending over three kilometers in a south-north direction. The local name of the site, Jiuliandun, meaning "nine linked mounds," derived from this topography. Four kilometers east of the Jiuliandun cemetery, archaeologists discovered an Eastern Zhou period (771–249 BCE) urban settlement of about 90,000 square meters.[4] Although further archaeological work is needed to establish the exact relationship between the settlement and the cemetery, it is likely that the elite from that community were buried at Jiuliandun, as was the case with most early Chinese cemeteries set into hillocks on the outskirts of cities.

Legend has it that buried beneath one of these nine tumuli was the gold head of a local lord surnamed Zhao, who, during his lifetime, had served as a loyal, honest, and upright advisor to the king of Chu.[5] It is told that the Chu king fell under the influence of corrupt and jealous ministers who slandered Lord Zhao. The king then captured, tortured, and beheaded him. Soon after the execution, the king discovered the truth of the matter. Full of regret, he ordered a lavish burial for Lord Zhao. However, since his rivals had already destroyed Lord Zhao's head, the king

Fig. I.1. Aerial view of the two Warring States Chu elite tombs (Tomb 1, the husband's, on the right; Tomb 2, the wife's, on the left) at Jiuliandun, Zaoyang City, Hubei. Hubei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology.

Fig. I.2. Bottom of the burial pit of Tomb 2 at Jiuliandun, Zaoyang City, Hubei. Warring States period. Hubei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology.

commissioned a substitute head to be made of gold and buried it with the corpse. To deceive tomb robbers, the king decreed that nine similar tumuli were to be constructed; this is said to be the origin of the nine linked mounds. After surveying the area, modern archaeologists concluded that the nine linked mounds constituted a cemetery for the Chu elite. In 1992, the Hubei provincial government designated this area a protected, provincial-level historic site.[6] In September 2002, in a rescue operation prior to construction work, the Chinese State Administration for Cultural Heritage approved the local government's request that these two tombs be excavated, to avoid damage during the construction of a highway in the area.

With narratives mingling myth with fact, fantasy with reality, archaeological discoveries have become media spectacles in contemporary China. The Jiuliandun excavation was nationally televised, especially the moments when the encasements and coffins were opened. Tomb 1 had been looted long before the excavation. A tomb robber's tunnel penetrated the wooden encasement vertically, but, fortunately, most of the grave goods were undisturbed (Plate 1). Tomb 2, however, remained intact. When the wooden covers were removed, a pond of clear water appeared, as is often the case in well-preserved, waterlogged southern tombs. Lacquered vessels with carbonized chestnuts and jujubes (some of the foods buried in tombs) floated in the

Fig. I.3. The waterlogged wooden encasement with four side compartments and a central one (where the coffin is located) in Tomb 2 at Jiuliandun, Zaoyang City, Hubei. Warring States period. Hubei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology.

Fig. I.4. Lacquered wooden bird with deer antlers on top of tiger-shaped figure, excavated from Tomb 1 at Jiuliandun, Zaoyang City, Hubei (M1: W226). H. 109.6 cm, W. 47.6 cm. Warring States period. Hubei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology.

water (Plate 2). In both tombs, the wooden encasement was divided into five compartments: a center compartment flanked by four side compartments (fig. I.3). The coffins were located in the center compartment, while the four side compartments contained not only bronze ritual vessels (Plate 3), musical instruments, lacquerware (Plate 4), and other quotidian utensils such as a bronze lamp (fig. I.5) but also religious and ritual objects such as the magic wooden figurine wearing a black wig and red cinnabar lipstick (Plate 5), the so-called tomb guardian figure, and the wooden sculpture of a bird with outstretched wings and deer antlers standing on top of a tiger (fig. I.4). Altogether, 4,067 sets of burial goods were recovered in Tomb 1 and 1,066 in Tomb 2.[7] Although the aforementioned gold head was not found, both coffins contained skeletal remains of the tomb occupants: a male of fifty to sixty years (Tomb 1) and a female of forty-five to fifty-five years (Tomb 2). Based on this and other data, archaeologists have suggested that the tumuli covered the joint burial of a husband and wife of the Chu aristocracy, datable to ca. 300 BCE.

The Jiuliandun tombs, with their domed mounds, deep vertical pits, and well-preserved and abundant grave goods, are representative of Chu elite burials. We await the publication of the official archaeological report for a full analysis of the Jiuliandun finds, but similar examples of elite tombs have been excavated in the last four decades. An estimated ten thousand Chu tombs have been scientifically exca-

Fig. I.5. Bronze lamp excavated from Tomb 1 at Jiuliandun, Zaoyang City, Hubei (M1: W286). H. 24.85 cm. Warring States period. Hubei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology.

vated.[8] Among them are a great number of well-furnished Chu tombs in an unusually fine preservation condition for this period. These tombs were constructed and sealed using unusual methods as well as materials: a tightly constructed wooden encasement, made of huge logs of hard wood, buried deep and surrounded by a thick layer of black charcoal followed by several layers of refined viscous greenish-white clay (*baigaoni* or *qinggaoni*).[9] The clay layers functioned as a sealant and, after the disintegrating foodstuffs consumed the limited oxygen supply, created an oxygen-free, temperature-constant environment in which organic materials, such as wood, bamboo, silk,[10] and even human bodies, could be preserved. This is true in the cases of the ancient corpses from Tomb 1 at Guojiagang (the Warring States period) in Jingmen City, Hubei, Tomb 1 at Mawangdui (the second century BCE) in Changsha City, Hunan, and Tomb 168 at Fenghuangshan (the Western Han dynasty) in Jiangling County, Hubei (fig. I.6).[11]

In less than three hundred years, however, these vertical pit-style tombs were gradually supplanted by horizontal chamber-style burials. Popular first among the

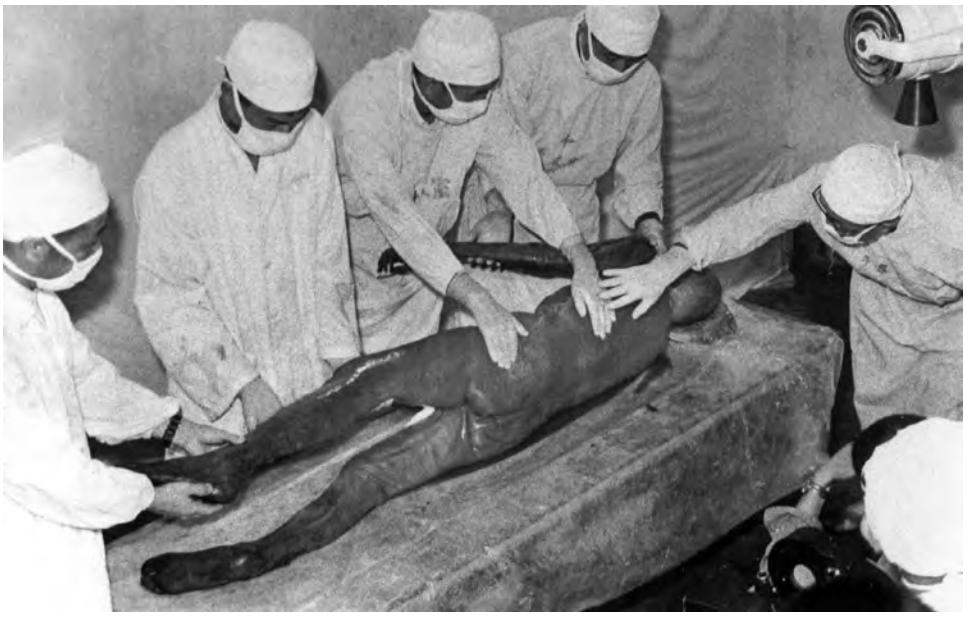


Fig. I.6. Doctors examining the well-preserved corpse excavated from Tomb 168 at Fenghuangshan in Jiangling County, Hubei. Western Han dynasty.

kings and marquises of the late Warring States period and the early empires, the horizontal chamber-style tombs were soon used by the lower social strata as well. By the late Western Han dynasty, the horizontal chamber-style tomb had become the dominant burial structure in early China. In different geographic locations in China, these burials took different material forms. Accordingly, different terms are used in archaeological literature—including wooden chambered coffin tombs, earthen cave tombs, hollow brick tombs, cliff tombs, brick chamber-style tombs, stone chamber-style tombs, rock-cut cave tombs, mural tombs, and relief tombs—but in this book, I refer to them collectively as "horizontal chamber-style tombs."[12] While the tombs varied in their use of the local features and materials—wood, stone, and brick—available in different regions of China, they all shared the same architectural design of horizontality and accessibility; that is, one could walk into the horizontal burial chamber through an access passage.

The second example of archaeological excavation, a rock-cut tomb at Beidongshan in Xuzhou City, Jiangsu, is among the earliest horizontal chamber-style tombs in early China. The tomb was discovered in 1954 when a local farmer, herding cattle, accidentally stepped into a tomb robber's tunnel that led to the elaborate, mazelike subterranean burial chambers (fig. I.7). Chinese archaeologists excavated this tomb in 1986, and the official excavation report was published in 2003.[13]

Cut out of the foothill, the tomb consisted of a long passage and a series of small niches and burial chambers arranged in an axial plan totaling 77.65 meters in length with an attached auxiliary section of eleven rooms on the east side (fig. I.8). The

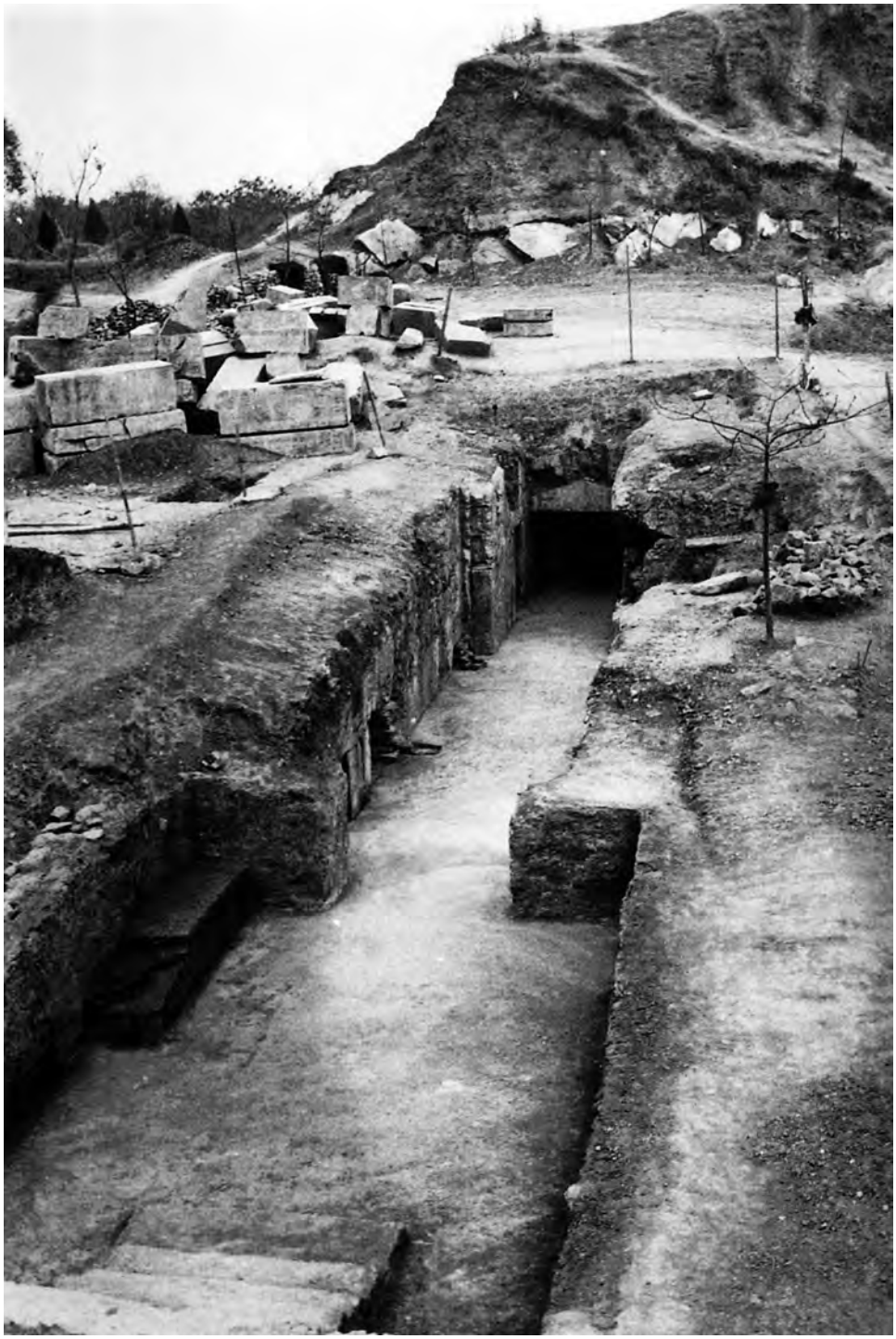


Fig. I.7. Entrance to the rock-cut tomb at Beidongshan in Xuzhou City, Jiangsu, one of the earliest horizontal chamber-style tombs in early China.

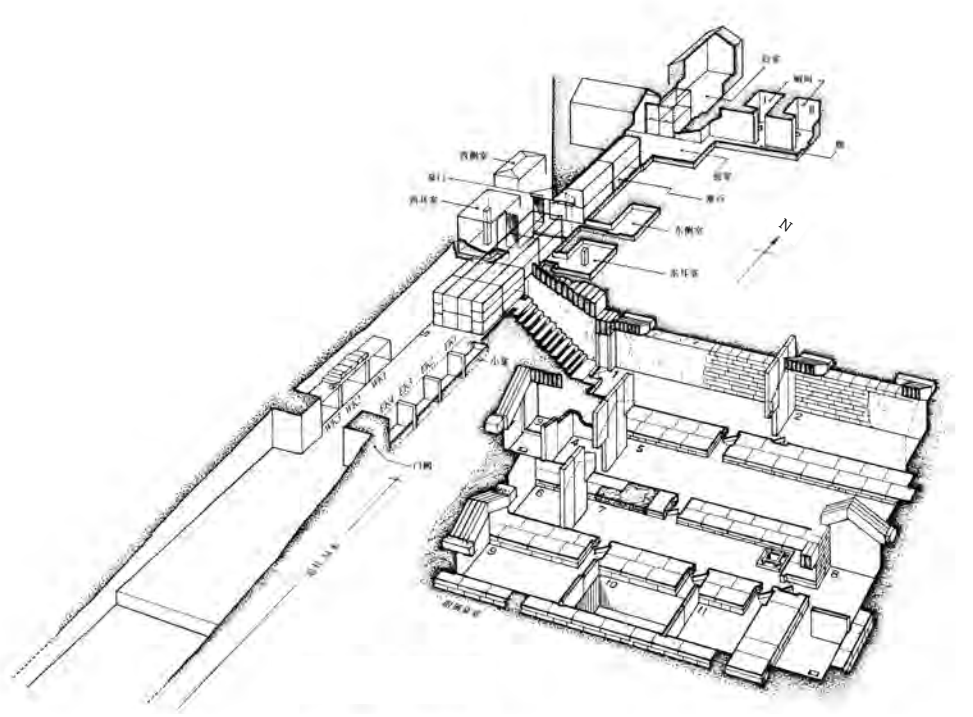


Fig. I.8. Rock-cut tomb at Beidongshan in Xuzhou City, Jiangsu, probably belonged to the first king of the Chu kingdom, Liu Jiao (r. 201–179 BCE), of the Western Han dynasty.

stone walls and the ceilings of the burial chambers were plastered and then painted with an undercoat of brown lacquer and an overcoat of red cinnabar lacquer. As a security measure, three rows of huge stopping stones, ranging from seven to three tons, blocked the passageway to the coffin chambers and the two privy chambers in the rear section of the tomb. Small niches cut into the passageway walls featured painted clay figurines and other grave goods (fig. I.9). A staircase in the middle section of the passage leads down to the auxiliary section, about 2.98 meters lower than the main part of the tomb. Its eleven rooms, constructed of dressed stones, include an armory, a privy, a performance hall for music and dance, kitchens, a courtyard with a water well in the northeast corner, and storage areas for vessels, firewood, and ice (see fig. I.8).[14] This tomb probably belonged to the first king of the Chu kingdom of the Western Han dynasty, Liu Jiao (r. 201–179 BCE).[15] During the Western Han period, there was a local kingdom also named Chu, which was mainly centered on its capital, Pengcheng, present-day Xuzhou City, Jiangsu, in the eastern part of the former Warring States Chu territory. Since 1972, sixteen such subterranean rock-cut princely tombs have been discovered or excavated, all located in the mountains near the modern city of Xuzhou. Along with the local kingdom of Changsha, the Chu kingdom represented the Han image of southern Chu culture.[16]

To date, more than twenty thousand Han tombs have been excavated.[17] Horizon-

Fig. I.9. Painted clay figurines in one of the niches on the long passageway in Beidongshan in Xuzhou City, Jiangsu. Western Han dynasty.

tally laid out, the Han tombs were in general more spacious and accessible than the vertical pit-style tombs. Han tomb construction featured new physical as well as religious and magical mechanisms, such as spirit seats, a formalized sacrificial space, tomb guardian figures, and charms, curses, stopping stones for securing and protecting the tomb.[18] The burial contents of horizontal Han tombs, however, were not as well preserved as those of the Chu tombs of the Warring States period. Still, over the last forty years, Chinese archaeologists have recovered a large quantity of grave goods from Han tombs, such as bronze vessels, jade ornaments, wooden sculptures, ceramic figurines, and lacquerware. Some are similar to those recovered from the Chu tombs; some are very different. These burial objects make up the majority of what we now call "early Chinese art," which is exhibited in museums all over the world.

The ancient Chu and Han tombs were in a way the "storage space" of modern museums before archaeologists excavated and brought these art objects into the museum collections. A curious modern museumgoer might wonder: Why were these art objects buried in tombs? Who made them and for what purposes? What can they tell us about the dead, who were provided with all of these objects, and about the bereaved, who provided them? How should we explain these archaeological data? Why did burial practices change over time? What do these changes tell us about the people and the periods in which they lived? These questions are particularly important because most surviving art objects from early China, as with other early

civilizations, come from graves, which are the sites of multifaceted religious activities. This book seeks to define the nature of these religious activities and provide a synthetic account of the changing religious beliefs and ritual practices beginning with the Warring States period and extending through to the Qin and Han periods.

A WATERSHED IN CHINESE HISTORY, the Warring States period was a time of political transformation. The old feudal structure of the Shang (ca. 1600–ca. 1046 BCE) and Western Zhou (ca. 1046–771 BCE) dynasties was giving way to the unified bureaucratic empires of the Qin and Han. As the name suggests, this was a time of unprecedented social upheaval and political chaos.[19] The ultimate contest for unification was fought between the states of Qin (ca. 800–221 BCE) and Chu, which originally were two peripheral states, considered in traditional Chinese historiography to be "uncivilized" and outside the "Chinese" (*huaxia*) cultural sphere. In reality, however, long before the Qin unification of China in 221 BCE, both Qin and Chu had already adopted many Chinese (that is, Zhou) social, political, and religious institutions, respectively unified the northwest and the south, and become multiethnic quasiempires.[20]

Religion, even mortuary religion—the religious beliefs and ritual practices associated with death and the dead—played an important role in the creation of these empires. The political changes began during the Spring and Autumn period (771–ca. 453 BCE), the heyday of aristocratic rule, when the heads of the major noble lineages throughout the Chinese world firmly appropriated power in all of its forms: economic, political, social, and religious. Intra- and interlineage struggles were dominant themes in the *Zuo Commentary* (Zuozhuan) and the *Narratives of the States* (Guoyu), two major historical sources for this period.[21] During the three turbulent centuries before the Qin unification, a few powerful states increasingly dominated the political stage. Consequently, smaller polities and weaker states had to rely on shrewd diplomacy to survive the military conflicts that characterized this era, a time in which, as Confucius (ca. 551–ca. 479 BCE) claimed, "the rites were in disarray, and music had collapsed." To strengthen their military, economic, and moral power, various states launched political and social reforms, established specialized industries, and made innovations in arts and crafts. By the fourth century BCE, aristocratic lineages in most states had declined, although those in Chu were arguably stronger than those in the other states.[22] Another extreme case of social restructuring was the western state of Qin, which abolished its hereditary aristocracy, restructured its society, ranked the entire populace according to a merit-based hierarchy of twenty ranks,[23] and established the rule of law with draconian punishments. The early empires of Qin and Han followed almost all of these practices.[24]

Accompanying the decline of the old aristocracy was the rise of the educated gentleman, knight, or scholar-official (*shi*) class that had once occupied the bottom rung of the ranked aristocracy but had now risen to become ministers, offi-

cials, political and military advisors, ritual specialists, and intellectuals.[25] At the same time, the commoner class—peasants, artisans, merchants, and conscripted soldiers—entered political life. Although local cultural differences remained, interstate communication—in the form of military conflicts or peaceful trade and political alliances—contributed to the emergence of common cultural traditions.[26] Drawing upon the institutional legacy of the Spring and Autumn period, this transitional Warring States period produced long-lasting social, political, military, economic, cultural, and religious traditions "without which no idea of a unified empire could have been implemented."[27]

In the realm of religious art, several notable and enduring innovations transpired: (1) new burial practices associated with the horizontal chamber-style tombs within which rituals associated with the cult of the dead took place; (2) new funerary customs, such as the pervasive use of spirit artifacts (*mingqi*) to mark the severance of ties between the dead and the living; (3) wider use of anthropomorphic and hybrid images and written texts to communicate with the spirit world; (4) formation of the underworld bureaucracy; and (5) newly evolved conceptions of cosmology, empire, and the afterlife, the last being defined as a journey to a cosmic destination.

FOLLOWING NEW TRENDS in the archaeology of religions,[28] the chapters herein make use of a combination of archaeological, paleographical, and art historical evidence. Earlier discussions of early Chinese religion often built their theoretical frameworks entirely on transmitted texts or simply took scattered bits and pieces of archaeological materials and inserted them into such frameworks. These transmitted texts, written by "small, literate, almost exclusively male and certainly atypical professionalized subgroups,"[29] had been selected, transmitted, and emended by different hands according to various agendas over the centuries. The French sinologists Marcel Granet (1884–1940) and Henri Maspero (1882–1945), for example, constructed a framework that viewed early Chinese religion in terms of social class and distinguished between the "peasant religion" of rural villagers and the "feudal religion" of urban nobles. Granet posited an imperial or "official religion" that grew out of the "Confucian religion" of the educated class of Warring States society and was later adopted by the empires.[30] Maspero also noted the close relationship between the rise of "the great writers and philosophers" and the establishment of the empires.[31] Granet and Maspero did not live to see the great archaeological discoveries in the second half of the twentieth century that challenged their theories, but much scholarship after them has continued their preoccupation with transmitted texts. These texts are often philosophical and political in content. They are seldom religious. In fact, before the great archaeological discoveries of the 1970s, our information about early Chinese mortuary religion in traditional sources consisted largely of piecemeal quotations and scattered references, the religious nature of which was often glossed over by layers of later commentary and rationalistic interpretation.

The nature of early Chinese religion before the rise of religious Daoism and the introduction of Buddhism during the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220 CE) is not clearly articulated in transmitted texts.[32] Although we know that religion played a vital role in forging large coalitions of states, in settling lineage vendettas, and in structuring the social and political order,[33] and although we understand that writing played an important role in early Chinese religious and ritual activities, very few specifically religious records have been preserved.

As Donald Harper has pointed out, the field of early Chinese religion was dominated by scholars trained and engaged in the study of the philosophical traditions,[34] the result being that this topic was often reduced to the discussion of Confucianism, so-called philosophical Daoism, and other philosophies.[35] In this scholarly tradition, the religious dimensions of the Warring States transition were largely overlooked. In their efforts to distill a worldview from a few selected passages, some scholars made much of anecdotal accounts in the *Analects* (Lunyu) that suggest Confucius eschewed any interest in the spiritual realm or "strange things."[36] This text-centered approach began with seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European missionaries, who saw Confucians as rationalists skeptical of the existence of supernatural religious beings, and lasted until the late 1960s and early 1970s, when newly discovered archaeological materials, such as the silk banner painting from Mawangdui, finally drew scholars' attention to the mortuary religion of ancient China.[37]

Consequently, the Warring States transition was treated as one of many stages in the linear development from a superstitious and rigid "dark age"—as exemplified by the "irrational" divination customs and shamanism of the Shang and Zhou dynasties—to the Weberian rational, humanistic, realistic, secular world of the early empires. This textual approach, together with the Western paradigm of philosophical development adopted by influential scholars including Hu Shi (1891–1962), Guo Moruo (1892–1978), Feng Youlan (1895–1990), Herrlee G. Creel (1905–94), and Frederick W. Mote (1922–2005),[38] downplayed the religious elements in early Chinese culture and perpetuated a centuries-old elite prejudice against popular religion.[39] Although some scholars later changed their positions, this general trend endures today.[40] The grand narrative of "humanistic enlightenment" in the Warring States transition is not limited to philosophy and religious studies; similar arguments also persist in the related fields of archaeology, history, literature, and art history.

In addition, Marxist analysis, especially in mainland China, has contributed to an inadequate understanding of the role of religion in the social transformations that took place during the Warring States period. The eminent Chinese historian Yang Kuan's (1914–2005) *History of the Warring States* (Zhanguo shi) paints a lively picture of agricultural, economic, social, political, and intellectual changes during the Warring States period[41] while adhering strictly to the Marxist framework of social structure and historical development. Yang proceeds systematically from economic foundations to political superstructure to cultural epiphenomena. Although his Marxist analyses are useful for relating social, political, and economic devel-

opments to religious transformation during the Warring States period, religion itself has no place in his discussion. This approach prevails in many recent Chinese publications. A recently published book, for example, contains only a brief section on "religion, ritual costumes, and social life" that features minimal, eclectic, and unsystematic discussions.[42]

Recent developments in religious studies and cognitive archaeology in the West, however, advocate taking a new archaeological approach to religious traditions. Through the study of religious beliefs and ritual practices as manifested in material culture, this approach emphasizes the need to go beyond canonical and sacred texts.[43] Scholars of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, in which scriptures and sacred texts dominated all else, were the first to use this approach, and more scholars have begun applying this new approach to other fields.[44] In theory, texts provide only one, albeit important, mode of expression for religious beliefs and practices, even in scripture-based traditions. Other nonlinguistic modes of reflection also serve as "symbolic vehicles for the full load of human experience."[45] Scholars have argued that the linear and logocentric structure of the literary text has failed to capture the wide range of human experience and distorted the historical picture. The textualization of all symbolic actions has reduced cognitive processes to linguistic prescriptions and created layers of bias associated with the agency and materiality of writing. With the development of sociocultural anthropology in the West, including Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology and the symbolic anthropology of the 1960s and 1970s, many scholars rejected cultural expression's dependence on language. For example, in many societies outside the Western cultural context, traditional crafts such as canoe building, pottery making, basket weaving, house construction, and musical performance were dominant forms of cultural and economic practice, creating meaning and becoming part of the cosmological processes thought to sustain the existence of the universe.[46]

Sympathetic to these theoretic perspectives, my approach is aligned most closely with that of Buddhologist Gregory Schopen, who criticizes the modern Western assumption that studying Indian Buddhism means to study its texts; he proposes instead that archaeological evidence should be granted priority. He prefers the "archaeology of religion" to the text-based "history of religion." Considering words and deeds as different modes of cultural expression possessing different values for the historical understanding of religions, Schopen suggests that religious structures, inscriptions, and artworks be considered the three main subjects of the archaeology of religion.[47] The bias of particular texts hinders the proper and full understanding of religion and its functions in society. Through his analysis of archaeological and epigraphic materials, Schopen has painted a picture of Indian monastic religion other than that prescribed in the Buddhist canon.[48] Scholars in other fields also distinguish between religious doctrine and religion-as-cultural-and-material-system. The historian Patrick J. Geary draws on archaeological sources for the religious and cultural history of the European Middle Ages,[49] and the archaeologist William G.

Dever uses excavated materials as primary sources for his study of folk religion in ancient Israel.[50] Similarly, archaeologists and art historians advocate the use of material culture to study the changing worldview and religious rituals of early China.[51] From these models, it is clear that, in many fields, evidence for the study of religion is increasingly drawn from a broad and promising collection of archaeological sources.

Reading works of art or objects, however, is as challenging as reading texts, and perhaps more so. On the one hand, works of art serve as an independent source of cultural and religious meaning. In their spatial and iconographic contexts, artworks are neither "illustration nor evidence that validates a particular interpretation of a theological or cultural argument. Rather, works of art are in their own right a mode of human expression that generates theological interpretation and reflection, and that reveals its cultural and theological milieu."[52] On the other hand, mining works of art for cultural and religious meaning is risky. As Robert Bagley has warned, "the statement that objects are material manifestations of belief systems implausibly makes visual forms wholly dependent on beliefs without suggesting any mechanism for translating beliefs into visual form."[53] Besides the mechanical device of translation, two other devices are essential for the productive interpretation of works of art. The first is the intermediate cultural conceptions, which connect these works of art to a belief system. The second is the cultural context in which the works of art were created and used.[54] Drawing on the discussions of Jacques Maquet, who distinguishes objects as instruments from objects as signs,[55] I emphasize the importance of cultural context in interpreting the meaning and function of works of art. Maquet argues that the meanings of objects he calls instruments are obvious because their functions transcend culture. But the meanings of objects that Maquet calls signs are culturally determined and therefore more difficult to ascertain. The meaning of a sign is not inherent in the object itself but resides in the object's relationships as assigned by cultural consensus. Maquet further distinguishes five ways to read objects: "as instruments, as symbols, as images, as indictors, and as referents (they are ranked here from the less culture-specific interpretation to the one entirely dependent on a particular culture). In other words, written sources for historians and interviews for anthropologists become increasingly significant when we move from instruments to referents."[56] Here, texts, especially contemporaneous texts, are employed to investigate the cultural consensus about the meaning and function of a sign. In Bagley's terms, this is iconology with the benefit of texts.[57]

Consequently, texts and inscriptions must be utilized in the archaeology of early Chinese religion. Religious texts excavated from early Chinese burials include inventory lists of grave goods buried in the tombs, records of divination, sacrifice, exorcisms conducted on behalf of the tomb occupants, and official memorials addressed to the bureaucracy of the underworld.[58] Only through careful analysis of the available textual and archaeological data can we begin to understand the religious

beliefs and practices of the past.[59] Therefore, this book approaches early Chinese religion from a more inclusive perspective, examining burial architecture, religious texts, and art historical remains excavated from early Chinese tombs.

Burial Archaeology and Archaeological Interpretation

Throughout Chinese history, ancient tombs have been opened for various reasons. For some, the purpose was political revenge, and for others, it was personal enrichment through the acquisition of valuable burial goods. An example of the former is found in the story of Wu Zixu (?–484 BCE), a young nobleman who fled the state of Chu to avoid political persecution and eventually returned as a general of the neighboring state of Wu, leading his army to conquer the Chu capital. In a final act of revenge, he opened the Chu king's tomb and lashed the king's corpse three hundred times.[60] In early Chinese debates over frugal versus lavish burials, those supporting frugal burials warned that elaborate burials would only become the targets of tomb robbers and thereby disturb the peaceful afterlife of the departed ancestors. As Sima Qian (ca. 145–ca. 85 BCE) reports, tomb robbery was a profitable business during the Han dynasty.[61] Looters often targeted ancient Chinese burials marked by prominent tumuli or other structures.

Although Chu ritual bronzes were discovered accidentally as early as the Song dynasty (960–1279), our earliest knowledge of Chu burials came from tomb robberies that took place during the first half of the twentieth century.[62] In 1923, a group of bronze artifacts was unearthed in Shou County, Anhui, where the last Chu capital (known as Shouchun in Warring States records) was established in 241 BCE after Qin military pressure forced the Chu court to relocate several times. Between 1933 and 1938, at Lisangudui near Shou County, local warlords opened a royal Chu tomb and discovered more than one thousand bronze objects, including seventy inscribed pieces, now scattered in various public and private collections in and outside of China. In the 1930s and 1940s, tomb robbers looted many Chu burials near Changsha City, Hunan,[63] another geographic locus of the state of Chu in southern China, including the renowned Chu silk manuscript (Plate 6) from a Warring States–period tomb at Zidanku (formerly Tomb 1, now Tomb 365) near Changsha, now housed in the Sackler Gallery of Art in Washington, DC,[64] and the famous silk paintings at Chenjiadashan (also in Changsha City).[65]

Although modern scientific archaeology was introduced in China in the 1920s, the 1950s marked the beginning of extensive excavations that now include tens of thousands of ancient Chinese tombs.[66] Owing to variations in burial customs and geographic conditions, the state of preservation of ancient tombs is uneven. In general, in northern and central China, conditions for preservation are not as good as in the south and northwest. In the northwest, the dry desert climate is beneficial for the conservation of organic materials. In southern China, many burial sites from the Warring States and early Han are well preserved because of the regional geog-

raphy and burial customs as described in the Jiuliandun tombs above. As a result, evidence from a substantial number of well-preserved Warring States and early Han tombs located in southern China has greatly enhanced the archaeological records of these important periods.

The term *Chu* in this study refers to the territory historically occupied by the state of Chu during the Warring States period and the Chu kingdom in the Western Han dynasty, in present-day Hubei, Hunan, Henan, Anhui, Jiangsu, and adjacent areas (Map 1).[67] Between these two periods, the Qin Empire reigned over this region for another fifteen years (221–207 BCE). However, before the Qin unification of China in 221 BCE, the major parts of the Chu territory had been under Qin control for over a half century. We include Qin tombs of these periods in our discussion.[68] In addition, it is important to consider early Chinese tombs at all levels of society when archaeological materials are available, as changes in burial customs and religious beliefs were not limited to a particular social group. Current archaeological reports and scholarly literature divide Chu tombs into five or more ranks ranging from high aristocracy to commoners and the poor[69] and Han tombs into four ranks: imperial tombs, the tombs of local kings and marquises, officials' tombs, and tombs of commoners and convicts.[70] Of the Han tombs, we discuss not only the princely tombs of the kingdoms of Changsha and Chu but also tombs from other regions, such as the Mancheng tombs and the commoners' burials at Shaogou in Luoyang City, Henan. In the unified and bureaucratic Han Empire, differences in mortuary practice are mostly class-based rather than regional.[71]

The Jiuliandun and Beidongshan tombs described above provide only two examples of the spectacular archaeological discoveries of the last forty years. In southern China, the hot and humid climate and vertical pit-style tomb, with its enveloping sticky clay layers, effectively preserved many deeply buried tombs. Archaeologists estimate that more than 70 percent of the ten thousand tombs excavated in China are located in this region. Many archaeological reports and studies feature Chu region tombs.[72] A few studies focus on individual Chu and Han tombs or different categories of tomb objects.[73] In a recent synthesis, while discussing selected Chu and Han tombs, Wu Hung intended to "[make] interpretation methods the direct subject of consideration."[74] His book covers three conceptual aspects—spatiality, materiality, and temporality—of Chinese funerary art from the Neolithic period down to the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties, even to the modern era. In his own words, Wu's study focuses on the "art and architectural tradition we call Chinese tombs" and aims "to uncover some basic creative impulses underlying the development of an art and architectural tradition over several thousand years."[75] In so doing, he essentially homogenized the complexity of historical changes and flattened the regional diversity of Chinese funerary beliefs and ritual practices, thus rendering funerary art and ritual not as people's responses to ever-changing historical conditions but as conceptual expressions of the "fundamental logic of traditional Chinese tombs." However, a regional study that places this well-defined

Map 1. Major archaeological sites discussed

group of archaeological data in its historical context is still lacking. I hope this book will fill the gap.

The study of artifacts and burial customs in the former Chu territory has a history of dramatically changing interpretations. In the first half of the twentieth century, when tomb robbers initially unearthed Chu tombs, bronzes, and manuscripts, scholars were not yet able to date the artifacts correctly or decipher their inscriptions. Since that time, the discovery of numerous Chu tombs and manuscripts and the unprecedented speed with which these materials have been published have spurred new studies that focus on establishing chronologies, deciphering graphs, and understanding the philosophical ideas of the Warring States period.[76]

Any assertion about changes in early Chinese religion must, however, be tempered by an awareness of the limitations of our extant archaeological and textual sources. Given the nature of archaeological preservation, which in most cases is accidental, and excavation, any interpretation of archaeological data always must be tentative and cautious. There are two basic questions to ask at the outset.

First, can we make generalizations about Chu mortuary religion based on well-preserved, richly furnished Chu tombs? These tombs, which are exceptional in their state of preservation rather than in their contents, certainly provide insight into Chu mortuary religion. Archaeologists build interpretations largely based on patterns they recognize in archaeological data, and we find similar or recurrent patterns in these tombs. Although the size of the tomb and the quantity of grave goods varied according to the tomb occupant's social rank, the tombs shared a basic burial structure, similar categories of grave goods, and similar individual objects.[77] In addition, not all the well-preserved tombs are elite burials. Archaeologists found a variety of burials in southern China, ranging from richly furnished ones, such as Tomb 1 at Leigudun, the burial of Marquis Yi of the state of Zeng, to relatively small tombs, such as Tomb 56 at Jiudian or Tomb 11 at Shuihudi, each belonging to a ritual specialist or a local official. As a sociological study of the archaeological data shows, during this period the separation between the higher and lower elites became more distinct, and the latter merged with the commoner class.[78] Thus, a relatively large body of the lower elite and commoners shared similar social and political positions as well as religious beliefs. During this period, however, a clear dichotomy between the religious system of the higher elite and that of the rest of the population had yet to develop, contrary to what Granet has argued. The differences in their treatments of death and burials were mainly matters of scale and the quantity and quality of grave goods. Thus, Chu mortuary religion was not a class-based religion, but a religion largely shared by the elite and commoners: all those who could afford to and were entitled to build a tomb for themselves and their relatives to express and follow the religious beliefs and ritual practices of their times.

Second, is the Chu mortuary religion discussed in this book representative of early Chinese religion?[79] I must answer this question with a tentative yes. I hesitate because archaeological data on early Chinese mortuary practices are unevenly dis-

tributed. We know less about the details of the religious beliefs and mortuary practices in other regions. To balance the random character of the evidence, this study not only takes a comparative approach, depending on the availability of the archaeological data, but also considers mortuary practices of the Qin and other parts of early China.[80] Several studies of the archaeological data have outlined the different contours of the eastern (including Qi, Chu, Yan, Zhao, Han, and Wei) and western (including Qin) states in the Warring States period.[81] Radical changes took place in the western state of Qin, probably through the agency of the centralized government, while in the eastern states change happened gradually and frequently through struggles among the social forces within each state.[82] For example, the mortuary practice of human sacrifice accompanying burial was widespread in Qin throughout the Spring and Autumn and early Warring States periods but became rare after the middle Warring States period. Scholars have suggested that the sociopolitical reforms initiated by Shang Yang (d. 338 BCE) may have ended this cruel practice. In the eastern states, the changes were slower and more gradual. There were sporadic cases of human sacrifice in Chu, Zeng, and Jin tombs during the Spring and Autumn and early Warring States periods. After the middle of the Warring States period, human sacrifice continued in Jin burials, but in Chu burials, wooden human figurines began to replace actual human sacrifice. The state of Qi in eastern China practiced human sacrifice throughout the Warring States period and sometimes combined it with burying wooden or ceramic figurines.[83] Therefore, we can study not only the similarities and differences among the practices of the eastern states but also the commonalities and distinctions between Chu practices and those of other regions. With more regional studies, such as this book offers, our picture of the changes and continuities in the cultural development of early China should become clearer. In addition, "Chu" in the phrase "Chu mortuary religion" is used as a spatial and temporal designation for the region in southern China of the Warring States, Qin, and early Han periods, not as an adjective to characterize the ethnic group or the contents of the religious beliefs and mortuary practices.[84]

Although transmitted texts and modern scholarly assumptions tell us that regional cultural variations must have existed in early China, there is a growing consensus that in the Warring States period many regional cultural features, previously considered unique to a particular region, were in fact local manifestations of wider trends of social, political, and religious development.

Of course, as in modern China, regional cultural differences existed in early China, such as those between the Qin in the northwest and the Chu in the south,[85] but the Warring States period is famous for the emergence of common cultural traditions through various types of cultural contact.[86] For example, as Liu Lexian shows, a comparison of the almanacs excavated from Chu and Qin burials indicates that while their techniques for determining lucky and unlucky times differed, the underlying principles were similar.[87] Studies have shown that what were once considered regional differences in early Chinese ritual music appear to be only vari-

ations on a single music system based on that of the royal Zhou court during the Eastern Zhou period (771–249 BCE).[88] Different languages and writing styles of the Warring States period more clearly manifest this theme.[89] Although different dialects or local languages undoubtedly existed in early China, the paleographic data clearly demonstrate that the vast majority of written materials, even those from the state of Chu, are in the "elegant standard speech" (*yayan*) of Old Chinese.[90] The same is true of weights and measures and many other cultural institutions of the time. In all of these cases, it is obvious that local lords, ritual specialists, and intellectuals promoted and emphasized regional differences rhetorically to fulfill their own political, religious, or other purposes. As Gideon Shelach and Yuri Pines show, the Warring States rulers used local cultural traits to forge ethnic identity among the mass conscripted peasant-soldiers in order to mobilize, manipulate, and control their military forces. [91] Some of these perceived differences were not real cultural divergences, in nature or in origin. Certainly we cannot assume that this commonality of nature and origin was the case in mortuary religion, and we still need to study different approaches to and treatments of the dead in regions other than Chu. Current evidence, however, suggests that Chu and its adjacent areas in southern China—at times viewed as barbaric, exotic, decadent, and peripheral—were in fact quite influential and important in the formation of mainstream early Chinese conceptions of religion, cosmology, and the afterlife.

Religion, Cosmology, the Afterlife, and the Early Empire

Religion, a complex social phenomenon, is difficult to subsume under a single definition.[92] Here, the term is understood in the sense Peter L. Berger delineates: "Religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established."[93] In this functional view, religion is a system of cultural symbols created and manipulated by humankind (often through rituals) to construct and maintain social reality. In other words, religion and its associated rituals make an invisible world visible, tangible, and thinkable, thereby serving as an instrument for dealing with extrahuman powers in response to the social reality.

The period of the late Warring States and early empires was a time of intense speculation in cosmology and of great advances in both geographic knowledge of China and the surrounding world and religious imagination of the afterworld. Anecdotes in the *Zuo Commentary* and other excavated manuscripts indicate that the imagination about the world of the dead inspired various numinous experiences, both dreadful and fascinating. In the binary constructions to which Warring States ritualists were prone, the world of the dead was set both opposite and parallel to the world of the living, as was the case in many other ancient civilizations.[94] In maintaining the ritual order of this world, as I argue in this book, the purpose of burying "spirit artifacts" in Warring States tombs was to demarcate the boundary between this world and the next.

On the other hand, in the early Chinese context, the constructed cosmos and the associated rituals for maintaining this cosmos were not always as opposed to the secular world, as we might expect. This led some early scholars to characterize Chinese religion as essentially "secular" or as having a this-world orientation.[95] This attitude originates at least in part in the abovementioned bias of text-centered scholarship on Chinese religion, which substitutes later Confucian rationalistic interpretations for the whole range of early Chinese religious beliefs and practices. But partly this is because the religious nature of these creations is socially and culturally determined.[96] Although religion concerns relationships and communications between human and extrahuman beings, in the final analysis religion centers on relationships among human beings. This is true of the creation of the underworld bureaucracy, a unique feature of Chinese religion. Not only does it mirror the development of the Chinese imperial bureaucracy in its early stages, but it also serves as a metaphor projecting a conscious, deliberate construction of religious imagination based on ideas, symbols, values, or structures of the time.

This view of religion as a cultural system enables us to include in our analysis of early Chinese beliefs a broad range of religious experiences that are outside of organized religion, systematic theology, dogma, or canonical scripture. In addition, religion permits us to perceive the mechanism of world building through symbolic means. Religion and cosmology were inextricably intertwined before the development of the specialized academic disciplines of religious studies and cosmology. By drawing upon previous scholarship,[97] my study proposes to restore the connection between religion and cosmology. Here, cosmology is understood according to the anthropologist Stanley Tambiah's definition: "frameworks of concepts and relations which treat the universe or cosmos as an ordered system, describing it in terms of space, time, matter, and motion, and peopling it with gods, humans, animals, spirits, demons and the like."[98] Cosmology had an intricate relationship with social, political, and ritual order in early China. Between the Shang dynasty and the Han dynasty, there was a shift from four quarters (*sifang*) cosmology to five agents (*wuxing*) cosmology, and this cosmological transformation was closely associated with the unification of the early Chinese empire.[99] And as scholars have pointed out, as in other early cosmologies, the early Chinese conceptions of the universe centered on the question of abodes of the dead.[100] More specifically, this cosmological transformation had a direct impact on physical and mental constructions of the postmortem environment: the tomb and the religious conception of the afterlife as a journey. As a funerary monument, the early Chinese tomb is not only the repository for the body of the deceased but also a site of funerary rituals, the cult of the dead, and an expression of individual and collective concerns about death and the afterlife.

Among the previous studies on early China is the extreme position held by Frederick W. Mote, whose *Intellectual Foundations of China* was once influential and is still used as a textbook in U.S. and Chinese college introductory courses on China.[101] He wrongly claimed that, before the introduction of Buddhism, there was "no such

thing as an 'other world' in ancient Chinese thought at all. . . . There was no heaven or hell, no creator God, and no expected end of the universe once it had emerged from primeval chaos. All was natural, and within Nature."[102] Using this problematic hypothesis as his starting point, Mote explained that because the Chinese people had no creation myth, no god, and no ultimate cause, life and death were integral parts of a natural process.[103] Mote recognized the existence of religious deities in Chinese society but thought that they were just "the vulgarized versions of this rather philosophical conception."[104]

Archaeological discoveries over the past four decades, however, have rendered such preconceptions untenable, and many scholars have already argued convincingly against this position.[105] It is now clear that indigenous Chinese conceptions of the afterlife and other religious beliefs, as well as the related institutions that grew around them, existed long before the introduction of Buddhism to China. Scholars have used various archaeological materials to demonstrate the existence of pre-Buddhist religious concepts and to reassess the nature and functions of religion in ancient China. These materials include funerary texts that feature land contracts and grave-securing writs,[106] art historical remains such as the Mawangdui silk banner paintings,[107] and tomb structure and furnishings.[108] Using both archaeological and paleographical data excavated in Chu, Qin, and early Han tombs, this book marks a further step in the archaeological studies on early Chinese religion.

1

The Dead Who Would Not Be Ancestors

Their bodies may have died, but their souls are living:
Heroes among the shades their valiant souls will be.

—ATTRIBUTED TO QU YUAN, "HYMN TO THE FALLEN"

IN RECENT DECADES, large caches of bamboo manuscripts dating to the Warring States period have been excavated from Chu elite tombs in southern China. A subset of these texts records divinations, sacrifices, and exorcisms performed on behalf of the tomb occupants (figs. 1.1a and 1.1b). This subset is particularly important for the archaeology of early Chinese religion, as it constitutes a category of text, firsthand religious documents, that scholars had not encountered before. Buried with the dead, such documents left virtually no trace in the vast corpus of classical texts from antiquity that, through repeated copying, has been transmitted to us. The excavation and deciphering of these religious texts, which "have been actually known or read at a given place at a given time, or have governed or shaped the kind of religious behavior that had left traces on the ground,"[1] open a new window on the religious pantheon of the Warring States period.[2]

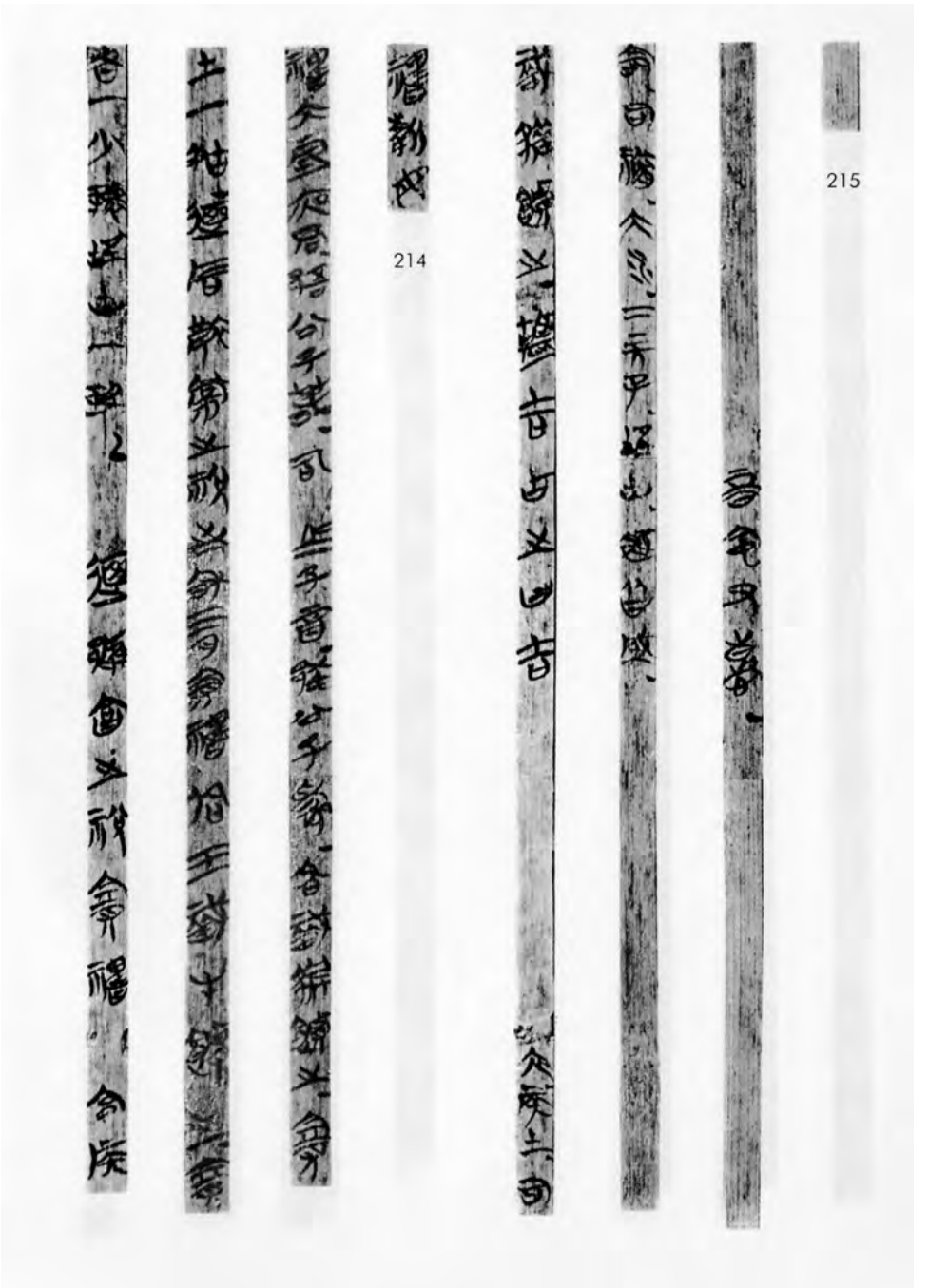
Scattered references to spirits and mythical figures appear in other types of texts, but their religious nature was glossed over by later textual systematization and layers of traditional commentary.[3] These newly excavated manuscripts, however, reference a spectrum of deities that were consulted regarding the tomb occupant's ultimate fate. The religious connotations of these statements are unambiguous. The language is formulaic, recording the type and quantity of the offerings and the specific gods or spirits to whom these sacrifices and exorcisms were made. After a divination had identified the cause of the calamity, sacrifices and exorcisms were offered to a pantheon of spirits in hopes that the illness would be cured or the misfortune averted.

At first glance, these divination records appear similar to the oracle-bone in-

(a)

Figs. 1.1a and b. Divinatory and sacrificial records excavated from Tomb 2 at Baoshan, Jingmen City, Hubei; Strips 212–215. Ca. 316 BCE. Warring States period. Hubei Provincial Museum.

(b)



scriptions of the late Shang dynasty (ca. 1200 BCE) carved onto turtle shells and animal bones about a millennium earlier. In fact, scholars have noted that the language, structure, formats, and ritual actions are similar to those of the older records.[4] A closer look reveals, however, that the type of religious agents has shifted from ancestors to a group of spirits that did not appear in previous enumerations of the Shang and Western Zhou pantheons. This new group of spirits, which evolved over the Eastern Zhou period, consists of individuals who died without posterity (*juewuhouzhe* 絕無後者), who perished violently (*qiangsi* 強死), and who were slain with weapons (*bingsi* 兵死). This class of spirits, who could not become part of the ancestral lineage because of their violent death or lack of progeny, challenged the religious system passed down from the Shang and Western Zhou dynasties.

This account of the decline in the religious potency of ancestors coincides with the collapse of the Zhou ritual system and the diminishing importance of ancestors in general, which is apparent from inscriptions cast on ritual bronze vessels of the Spring and Autumn period.[5] These inscriptions note that many more bronze vessels were made for the owner's use than for sacrifice to one's ancestors, as was the case with earlier vessels. Moreover, the earlier Shang and Western Zhou religious systems were centered on ancestor cults.[6] The dead were often depersonalized and collectively regarded as primarily benevolent ancestors.[7] Eastern Zhou accounts, however, often describe the dead as having strong personalities and suffering premature deaths, which prevent them from becoming benevolent ancestors. While ancestral sacrifices continued, the ritual propitiation of this new category of the dead—unquiet ghosts or victims of violent death who were regarded individually rather than collectively—took center stage in Warring States religious life.

Starting in the Spring and Autumn period, the various lineages gradually became embroiled in political struggles. These struggles would provide the context for the need to pacify the vengeful ghosts. The victors in these political battles attempted to erase their enemies from social memory by excluding them from their ancestor cults, confiscating their sacrificial bronze vessels, denying them proper burial rites, and expelling them from lineage cemeteries.[8]

To counter these actions, the conquered parties or their sympathizers engaged with emerging historical accounts of conflict, crime, and revenge to articulate a vision of the afterlife in which the spirits of the deceased could become ghosts and wander among the living. The circumstances surrounding these individuals' deaths prevented them from becoming venerable ancestors; instead, these dead were believed to haunt and threaten the living. The new religious system provided ritual methods for placating these unquiet spirits, who sought revenge on the victors.

The increasing size of armies and the scale of combat during the Warring States period yielded an attendant increase in atrocities in military conflicts and violence in Chinese society, both of which triggered a dramatic change in attitudes toward death and the dead.[9] While anecdotal accounts from earlier periods refer to the elite's fear of those who died violent deaths in political struggles, such fear soon

expanded to include the war dead, such as the battlefield heroes described in the "Hymn to the Fallen" (Guoshang) in the epigraph to this chapter. During the subsequent Warring States, Qin, and Han periods, the ancestral dead were considered frightening and ambivalent, especially during the liminal stage before they transformed completely into ancestors.

Research on attitudes toward death and the dead holds an important place in anthropological and Western historical studies.[10] The French historians Philippe Ariès (1914–84) and Michel Vovelle (b. 1933), considered the leading scholars in this field,[11] along with various historians of the ancient, medieval, early modern, and modern periods,[12] have generally agreed not only that conceptions of death have changed over time but also that changes in attitudes toward death reflect social and political changes. The modern scholarly consensus holds that if an objective picture of a society's attitudes toward death is to be reached, subjective individual testimonies in art, literature, diaries, wills, personal memoirs, and other writings must be balanced by available demographic data on mortality and birth rates. Such statistics are rarely available for ancient civilizations; as a result, scholars examining this topic need to be creative and balanced in their use of evidence.[13]

The evidence on changes in conceptions of death in early China is strong. A comparison of the religious practices of the Shang period with those of the Warring States period reveals a significant, qualitative change in attitudes toward the dead: a new, previously undocumented category of unquiet ghosts appears in the religious pantheon.[14] These vengeful ghosts became a dominant spiritual force in Eastern Zhou and later religious life. This novel category of the dead initially included only aristocrats who suffered violent deaths during political struggles but subsequently grew to encompass conscripted commoners who died in war and other members of the general population. The emergence of this new category of the dead, along with religious practices for dealing with it, had an enormous impact on early Chinese mortuary religion and funerary practice.[15]

Religious Texts from Chu Tombs

To glimpse how early Chinese conceptions of the dead changed, we turn to a cache of bamboo manuscripts recovered from a tomb in southern China. These manuscripts reveal that the religious pantheon of the Warring States period differed significantly from that of the earlier Shang and Western Zhou dynasties. In this later era, the most efficacious members of the pantheon were individuals who had died violent deaths. Fear and anxiety among the living about the harm such spirits could bring led these figures to be incorporated into the Warring States ritual system.

Seven Warring States–period Chu tombs have yielded divination records; the best preserved are those from Tomb 2 at Baoshan. Excavated in 1986, this tomb is located in Jingmen City, Hubei, sixteen kilometers north of the fourth-century BCE Chu capital in present-day Ji'nancheng in Jiangling County, Hubei.[16] It is one of numer-

ous elite cemeteries scattered throughout the area surrounding the ancient capital. Altogether, five Chu tombs have been excavated (Tombs 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6). With the exception of Tomb 2, the burials had all been looted long ago. Even in Tomb 2, grave robbers had managed to dig a tunnel as far as a point directly above the wooden encasement, fortunately stopping just before and leaving the tomb undisturbed. Archaeologists unearthed a total of 448 thin, long, and narrow bamboo pieces (used for writing, see figs. 1.1a and 1.1b), of which 278 were inscribed. Of these, 196 strips are legal documents, 28 strips are burial-goods inventories, and 54 strips (Strips 197–250) concern divinations, sacrifices, or exorcisms. In addition, 1 bamboo rod and 1 strip are funeral-gift lists.

According to these manuscripts, the tomb occupant, Shao Tuo, Chief Minister of the Left (Zuoyin) at the Chu court, divined for three years about his official activities and personal health, until his death in the spring of 316 BCE.[17] The records of his divinations, which indicate that he died of a heart-related illness, contain twenty-six reports dating from 318 to 316 BCE. Each report opens with a date, the diviner's name, the method of divination (by turtle shell or yarrow stalk), the concern or "charge," the prognostication, and the ritual proposals (sacrifice or exorcism) directed to specific superhuman powers. Often Shao called upon multiple diviners to divine for the same concern. Each divination concludes with the same stock phrase: "For this reason a prayer is directed to the spirit [who is the cause of the calamity]" (*Yi qi gu shui zhi* 以其故說之).[18] Prescribed ritual actions, including exorcism (*gongjie* 攻解, *gongchu* 攻除), sacrifices, and the promise of sacrificial offerings, follow this declaration.[19]

Chu sacrificial records note three basic types of sacrifices (*dao* 禱). The first, initial sacrifice (*yidao* 弋禱), is directed toward Shao Tuo's direct ancestors (a total of five generations) and his mother.[20] The second, promissory sacrifice (*yudao* 與禱), is a pledge to make offerings to specific superhuman powers if the participant's prayers are answered. The third, requital sacrifice (*saidao* 賽禱), is the sacrifice of thanksgiving, the delivery of the offerings promised to the specific superhuman power when the participant's prayers have been answered.[21]

In Shao Tuo's three years of divinations, sacrifices, and exorcisms, the early offerings usually went to his direct ancestors—King Zhao of Chu (r. 515–489 BCE), the Lord of Pingye (named Ziliang, Shao Tuo's great-great-grandfather),[22] the Lord of Wu (named Zichun, Shao Tuo's great grandfather), Marshal Ziyin (Shao Tuo's grandfather), the Lord of Cai (named Zijia, Shao Tuo's father), and Shao Tuo's mother—and to the three mythic royal ancestors of the state of Chu (*san Chuxian*, i.e., Laotong, Zhurong, and Yuxiong).[23] Also included was a group of nature deities, such as the Grand One (Taiyi, also named Tai or Shi Tai),[24] the Lord of Earth (Houtu), the Controller of Lifespan (Siming), the Controller of Misfortune (Sihuo), the Grand Water (Dashui), the Two Children of Heaven (Ertianzi),[25] the Five Mountains (Wushan),[26] and sacred Mount Wei (Weishan).[27]

Despite continuous pledges, sacrifices, and prayers, Shao Tuo's illness appar-

ently took an unexpected turn for the worse. The records reveal that sacrifices were made at this point to members of the pantheon that cannot be traced back to earlier Shang or Western Zhou sources. The record for the first month (*xingyi*) of 316 BCE can serve as a case in point. Five diviners were called, and each of them, using either the turtle-shell or yarrow-stick method, conducted divinations concerning two sets of charges. The first was the yearly consultation for Shao Tuo's official business: "In his coming and going in the service of the king, from this first month till first month of the next year, may it be that all through this period he not undergo any harm" (Strips 226–35). The initial predictions were auspicious, noting only "some small worries." But the ritual proposals for sacrifice and exorcism on this occasion were unusual, to say the least. Instead of the usual recipients of Shao's sacrifices, such as his ancestors, the royal ancestors, and the nature deities, other individuals were named: his deceased brothers Shao Liang, Shao Cheng, and the Lord of Xianluo. The records tell us nothing about these relatives, only that each of them died without posterity.

The second charge, concerning Shao Tuo's failing health, continues this shift in attention toward these ghosts. One record reads, "Heart and abdomen are affected, he is unable to breathe and has no appetite for food, there has been no improvement for a long time, may it be that his health improves rapidly and there be no calamity" (Strips 236–48). The initial predictions state that, though the oracle indicated auspicious signs for the long term, the illness was difficult and recovery would be slow. The recipients of the proposed sacrifices include almost all the spirits of the Chu religious pantheon: the nature deities; the royal ancestors, including the three royal ancestors of the Chu and the Chu kings (Jingwang) from Xiongli to King Wu (r. 740–690 BCE); Shao Tuo's direct ancestors; his uncle Dongling Lianxiao (named Zifa),[28] who, the records indicate, had died violently (*shang*); the earth god (*she*); the shaman (*wu*?); and the high hill and the low hill at Zhu.[29]

The exorcism that followed also targeted some of the new spirits, who had rarely appeared in earlier enumerations of the religious pantheon: the celestial deity Sui, the fecundity god (*zu* or *mingzu*),[30] those who were slain with weapons, the spirit of At-the-Water (Shuishang),[31] those who drowned (*niren*), the sun and the moon, and the blameless dead (*bugu*).[32] The noteworthy additions to these lists are those who died unusual or violent deaths. Note also that while nature deities were to receive sacrifices, vengeful ghosts were exorcized.

The last record of divination, conducted twenty days later, reflects changes that occurred in the religious pantheon during the Warring States period. Despite all of these efforts, Shao Tuo was evidently dying, and in a last act of desperation, the charge pleaded for him to be spared: "The illness presents intumescences, he cannot breathe; may it still be possible that he not die." The initial prognostication indicated, "He will not die, but there are calamities stemming from those who died without posterity and signs of calamities appearing on the wooden stand for the fecundity god (*jian mu wei* 漸木位)."[33] The suggested ritual remedies were a pledge

sacrifice directed toward those who died without posterity and an exorcism directed toward the fecundity god. Here again, in a final effort to rescue the dying Shao Tuo, the sacrifices and exorcisms were directed *not* to ancestral spirits or nature deities but to those who had died without posterity and to the fecundity god. These divinations indicate not only that the Chu people believed each deity had different powers and jurisdictions but also that religious efficacy had shifted to a group of unquiet ghosts and the fecundity god. According to a burial-goods inventory excavated from his tomb, Shao Tuo died shortly thereafter, and his funeral took place forty-eight days after the last divination.

Changes in the Warring States Pantheon

Taken together, the Baoshan divinations and the sacrifices and exorcisms they prescribed shed light on the composition of the religious pantheon of the Warring States Chu elite. In Shao Tuo's case, the divination records suggest that the pantheon included the following members (the designations 1 through 5 are for purposes of categorization only and are not hierarchical; categories for the Warring States pantheon are subsequently referred to as W1, W2, etc.):

W1. His direct ancestors: King Zhao (r. 515–489 BCE), the Lord of Pingye (Ziliang), the Lord of Wu (Zichun), Marshal Ziyin, the Lord of Cai (Zijia), and Shao Tuo's mother; these are the five generations of Shao Tuo's recent ancestors;

W2. Royal ancestors of the Chu state: the three royal ancestors (Laotong, Zhurong, and Yuxiong) and the Chu kings from Xiongli to King Wu;

W3. Nature deities: such as the Grand One, the Lord of Earth, the Controller of Lifespan, the Controller of Misfortune, the Grand Water, the Two Children of Heaven, the Five Mountains, Mount Wei; the sun and the moon; the five household deities (*wusi*), including the gods of the door (*hu*), the stove (*zao*), the chamber (*shi*), the gate (*men*), and travel (*xing*); and the four directional deities, such as the south (*nanfang*);

W4. Individuals who died violent deaths or without posterity: Shao Tuo's uncle Dongling Lianxiao (Zifa) and his brothers Shao Liang, Shao Cheng, and the Lord of Xianluo; and

W5. Those slain with weapons, the spirit of At-the-Water, those who drowned, the blameless dead, and others.

From other Chu divinatory and sacrificial records from the Warring States period, we learn that the new religious pantheon was not only individualized but also hierarchical: people of different social ranks sacrificed to pantheons of different scales. The pantheons differ mainly in terms of the lineage ancestors, royal ancestors, and terrestrial deities addressed. For example, the occupant of Tomb 1 at Wangshan, Dao Gu (d. ca. 331 BCE), a descendant of King Dao of Chu, held the same

rank as Shao Tuo and also sacrificed only to his direct lineage ancestors. In contrast, the occupant of Tomb 1001 at Geling, the Lord of Pingye (Cheng, d. ca. 377 BCE) and the son of Ziliang (Shao Tuo's great-great-grandfather), was able to sacrifice to many more ancestors and Chu kings and with greater frequency than was Shao Tuo.[34] This is probably because the Lord of Pingye (Cheng) was of a higher social rank than was Shao Tuo. In addition, he was the head of the Zhao (trunk) lineage, whereas Shao Tuo belonged to a branch of that lineage. Moreover, not all members of the Chu elite sacrificed to royal ancestors. For example, Tomb 1 at Tianxingguan, in Jiangling County, Hubei, the burial place of Pan Sheng (d. ca. 350 BCE), the Lord of Diyang, contains no records of sacrifices to royal Chu ancestors. He offered sacrifices to Pan clan's ancestors (Panxian) rather than to the ancestors of the Chu royal lineage.[35]

In their entirety, and despite important structural continuities with the Shang period, the Chu religious records reveal stunning changes in the composition of the religious pantheon. For example, scholars have divided the Shang religious pantheon into the following categories according to the ritual treatments they received (again, the designations 1 to 6 are for purposes of categorization only and are not hierarchical; categories for this Shang pantheon are subsequently referred to as S1, S2, etc.):[36]

S1. Pre-dynasty kings of the Shang people;
S2. Shang dynastic ancestors, starting with Da Yi (also called Tang, the founder of the Shang dynasty);
S3. Heir-producing ancestral consorts;
S4. Former lords: human spirits outside the Shang lineage core, such as Yi Yin;
S5. Nature deities, such as river gods, mountain gods, the sun, and the earth; and
S6. Di, the supreme god and the highest celestial power.[37]

Scholars have stressed the distinction between core lineage ancestors (S1, S2, and S3), on the one hand, and other spiritual powers (S4, S5, and S6), on the other. The latter had no direct kinship relationship with the Shang core lineage.[38] The core lineage ancestors, the direct ancestors of the Shang rulers, were their closest allies in the spiritual world; they were seen as immediate supporters and protectors of the Shang kings and their people. In contrast, the supreme god was an abstract figure to the people of the Shang and Western Zhou dynasties. Although this deity received basic, regular sacrifices, its interaction with the living was often mediated through the royal ancestors.

The spirits outside the core lineage in the Shang pantheon include the ancestors of others (S4), nature deities (S5), and the supreme god (S6). The latter two, categories S5 and S6, represent a universal set of celestial and terrestrial deities to which the Shang royal lineage sacrificed to expand their social and territorial bases and enhance their claims to political legitimacy. As far as category S4 is concerned, opin-

ions differ as to whether the Shang actually sacrificed to the ancestors of others.[39] Although scholars agree that the Shang and Western Zhou kings generally restricted their sacrifices to their own ancestors, this restriction was intended to maintain the Shang king's monopoly on political power. The political and religious functions of the ancestor cults rest in the claim that one's ancestors are stronger, smarter, and more powerful than the ancestors of others, and enjoy a special audience with the supreme god in the spiritual realm. It also insists that only the ruling king, "I, the one person" (*Yu yi ren* 余一人), as the direct descendant, can communicate with his ancestors, who will intercede for him in front of the supreme god in Heaven and protect him on earth. As an important literary and historical source for the Spring and Autumn period, the *Zuo Commentary*, for example, includes statements such as "The spirits of the dead do not enjoy the sacrifices of those who are not of their kindred, and . . . people only sacrifice to those who were of the same ancestry as themselves."[40] The *Analects* features a similar comment: "To offer sacrifice to the spirit of an ancestor that is not one's own is obsequious."[41] In other words, ancestor cults in the Shang and Western Zhou dynasties were exclusive. While instances of extralineal sacrifice can be found in Shang and Western Zhou oracle-bone inscriptions, as a rule, the main objects of the ancestral cult were direct ancestors.[42] This exclusivity was a way for the ruling class to maintain its political power and legitimacy. At the same time, however, the Shang royal house did sacrifice to human spirits outside the Shang lineage core, such as Yi Yin, to widen its political authority over its ethnically diverse state.[43] Although the Shang rulers prohibited others from accessing their sources of religious and political power, they did sacrifice to other people's ancestors in a bid to gain wider political support.[44] In other words, for the purpose of religious and political control, the Shang ruling house could sacrifice to other people's ancestors, but other people could not sacrifice to the Shang royal ancestors.[45]

This important distinction between the core lineage ancestors and the other spirits survived into the Warring States period. In the Warring States pantheon the core lineage ancestors are the W1 group, which in Shao Tuo's case are his five generations of direct ancestors and his mother; the special ritual treatment that they received is the initial sacrifice. The other spirits outside the core lineage, although differing in content and scale from the Shang categories, include the royal ancestors of Chu (W2; the Shang equivalent is S4) and the nature deities (W3; the Shang equivalents are S5 and S6). Because the Zhao lineage to which Shao Tuo belonged was not the Chu royal lineage, the only royal ancestor to whom Shao Tuo could sacrifice was King Zhao, the founding ancestor of the Zhao lineage of the early Chu kings. Other royal ancestors included the heads of the other elite Chu lineages. Their relations with Shao Tuo resemble those between Shang kings and the former lords in the Shang pantheon.

While the Chu religious pantheon may have inherited the structure of the Shang pantheon, the contents of these categories are somewhat different. For example, scholars generally agree that in the oracle-bone inscriptions of the Shang pantheon

Di or Shangdi (High God) was the supreme god,[46] whereas in the Chu and Western Han pantheon the Grand One was the supreme god.[47] But the relationship between the two supreme gods is not one of complete substitution; instead, these parallel deities existed simultaneously in different religious frameworks for a long period.[48] Religious efficacy, however, shifted from Di to the Grand One because the latter became the focus of intensive religious cults in the Warring States and Western Han periods. The origin of the supreme Grand One remains a mystery. The cosmogonic text known as "The Grand One Generates Water" (Taiyi sheng shui), excavated from Tomb 1 at Guodian in Jingmen City, Hubei (dated ca. 300 BCE), mentions a numinous entity named Taiyi, but the relationship between this Grand One (also called Dao in late Warring States philosophical texts) and the Grand One that appears in the divinatory and sacrificial records is still unclear.[49] Unlike monotheistic religions, where there is only one supreme god, the early Chinese religion has multiple high gods, each functioning in its own sphere of influence. The religious rituals and sacrificial offerings that these spiritual entities received from human beings express their power.

The expansion of the pledge ritual in the Warring States period also distinguishes Chu from Shang treatment of individual members of the religious pantheon.[50] The pledge ritual was a type of bargaining typical in Chinese religious practice: a certain number of offerings were pledged to the spirits and later, when the prayers were answered and the wishes granted, the requital (i.e., thanksgiving) sacrifice would be made to those spirits who had been efficacious in granting the requests.[51] Based on extant evidence, while in the late Shang period such pledges were apparently directed primarily at the core lineage ancestors, in the Warring States period they were made to almost all members of the religious pantheon.[52] This expansion corroborates Gilbert L. Mattos's observation that the bronze inscriptions of the Spring and Autumn period reflect a decline in belief in the religious efficacy of ancestors.[53] It further demonstrates the elite's belief in the Warring States period that religious efficacy of other spirits exceeded that of the core lineage ancestors.

In divination records of the Warring States period, we also find new spirits (W4 and W5) who did not appear in the Shang religious pantheon. Newcomers include those who died violent deaths, drowned, died without posterity, or were slain with weapons, and the blameless dead. There are also significant differences between groups W4 and W5. In Shao Tuo's case, the former (W4) are his relatives: his uncle and his brothers who died without posterity. Other Chu records suggest that three generations of victims of violent death received sacrifices.[54] The relatives who died violently were not members of the core lineage so they did not receive the regular ancestral sacrifice. Instead, both promissory and requital sacrifices were offered to these spirits. The latter group (W5) included individuals slain with weapons, the spirit of At-the-Water, the drowned, and the blameless dead. These individuals were not relatives, and in most cases they were grouped with nature spirits as targets of exorcism rather than sacrifice. We can regard this group of the dead (W5) who would

not become ancestors as complete "strangers," or, to use Arthur P. Wolf's famous classification of the pantheon in late imperial China, "ghosts."[55]

Why were those who died violently or without posterity incapable of becoming ancestors? Why did the people of the Warring States treat members of this group of the dead so differently from other deceased individuals? In the case of those who died young or without posterity, the answer is clear enough: they had no descendants to offer sacrifices to them. In early China, as in many other ancient civilizations, ancestors and descendants represented two sides of the same coin; the existence of each depended on the other. The continued life and well-being of ancestors relied on regular sacrifice by descendants. If there were no descendants, there were certainly no ancestors. The reason for excluding from the ancestral order those who died violent deaths but did have descendants is less obvious. How did the early Chinese conceive of violent death? To answer this question, we must trace the emergence of new notions of violent death in the Spring and Autumn period.

Violent Deaths and Ghost Narratives

One of the earliest textual references to "violent death" is found in the *Zuo Commentary*, in an entry under 617 BCE in the *Annals*: "The Chu polity put to death its minister Yishen." The *Zuo Commentary* provides more details about this story. Yishen, also known as Zixi, once the marshal (Sima) of the Chu army, was from the Dou lineage in the state of Chu. In earlier years, a shaman predicted that King Cheng of Chu (r. 671–626 BCE), Chief Minister Ziyu, and Marshal Zixi would all "die violent deaths." Indeed, as the story unfolded, King Cheng was forced to hang himself when the palace was under siege by his own son, the future King Mu.[56] Ziyu, also known as Dechen, from the Cheng lineage of the state of Chu, was forced to commit suicide after his defeat by the northern alliance led by Jin in a famous battle at Chengpu in 632 BCE.[57] Zixi, who narrowly escaped suicide after the battle of Chengpu, was executed after his attempt to assassinate King Mu.[58] As is often the case in the *Zuo Commentary*, the prophecy turned out to be correct.

Stories such as these abound in the *Zuo Commentary*. Scholars have noted more than thirty-six instances of subordinate officials assassinating their rulers.[59] These stories reflect the reality of internal and external conflicts between both states and lineages during the Spring and Autumn period. In the 259-year interval it covers, the *Zuo Commentary* records more than five hundred military conflicts among states and more than one hundred civil wars within states. Indeed, the roots of many transformations of Chinese society during the Warring States period can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn period, when the concept of violent death as bad death was first articulated over and against preexisting ideals of good death, which found expression in commemorative bronze inscriptions. To the elite, a good death meant that one lived out his or her allocated lifespan and died at an old age in the comfort of one's home. This notion of a good death is certainly a cultural ideal rather than

a reality, but the ideal became particularly appealing in this period of social and political turmoil.

Although fear of the dead is arguably instinctual, the dread of individuals who died a violent death reflected an early Chinese cultural predisposition. Linguistically, one of the Chinese words for fear (*wei* 畏) was a cognate of the word for ghost (*gui* 鬼).[60] In Spring-and-Autumn-period literature, the graph *gui* specifically connoted "ghost."[61] In the matrix of intralineal struggles in the Spring and Autumn period, personal fears and expectations concerning death were encoded as ghost narratives. In general, ghost stories address unfinished business between the dead and the living. The dissatisfied departed return to haunt the living, and in this regard, ghost stories of the Spring and Autumn period are not exceptional. Ghost narratives in the *Zuo Commentary* and other early texts probably originated in diverse contexts and had various political implications. Japanese scholar Ogata Nobuo's study of the forty cases of violent death in the *Zuo Commentary* reveals that these cases occurred in the context of intense conflicts between polities or political struggles between lineages.[62]

Early Chinese ghost narratives did not emerge from a vacuum but drew on prior religious notions of justice, good or evil spirits, and good or bad omens. For example, in Shang oracle-bone inscriptions, the graph *gui*, when used as an adjective, often denoted inauspicious subjects such as bad dreams (*guimeng* 鬼夢), inauspicious days (*guiri* 鬼日), and neighboring polities that took an adversarial stance toward the Shang (*guifang* 鬼方).[63] Despite this term's long history, only in the Spring and Autumn period did it come to encompass the fear of unquiet ghosts. This ghost story from the *Zuo Commentary* provides a representative example:[64]

> The Lord of Jin dreamed of a huge vengeful ghost (*li* 厲), with disheveled hair hanging to the ground. It beat its chest, leapt up and down, and said, "For you to slay my descendants was unjust. I have already obtained the approval of the God (Di) for my request." It smashed the main gate of the palace, advanced to the gate of the Lord's chamber, and entered. Terrified, the Lord withdrew into the inner chamber, but the ghost smashed that door too. The Lord then awoke and summoned the shaman of Mulberry Fields, who described a situation that corresponded exactly to the content of the Lord's dream. "What is it about?" asked the Lord. "You will not live to taste the grain of the new harvest," the shaman replied.

Like *gui*, the term *li* denotes "vengeful ghost," "evil spirit," or "baleful demon" in early Chinese texts, denotations probably derived from its meaning "cruel," "ugly," or "wicked."[65] As the story continued, the Lord of Jin became seriously ill, so ill that the doctor sent by the Lord of Qin could not save him. Before the Lord of Jin's death, he had the shaman who predicted his demise executed, but still he could not escape his fate. He "accidentally" fell into the privy and died.[66]

This short story embodies the basic structure and characteristics of ghost narratives in the *Zuo Commentary*. First, such ghost stories often start with one protago-

nist doing something to cause another's sudden death. The ghost of the deceased or of his or her ancestors then returns to take revenge. In the above story, the Lord of Jin was haunted because two years earlier, in 583 BCE, he killed two of his ministers, Zhao Kuo and Zhao Tong.[67] The vengeful ghost that the Lord of Jin dreamed about was an ancestral spirit of the Zhao lineage, who returned to take revenge. Second, as in this case, the evil spirit in ghost narratives often appears in dreams or possesses human beings or animals. Here the interaction between the avenging ghost and the Lord of Jin in the dream is vividly described. Third, there is a higher level of authority at play in ghost narratives. The supreme god, it is often proclaimed, approves the ghost's action. In other words, the supreme god has jurisdiction over both protagonists, the living and the dead, and eventually the wrongdoer is rightfully punished for his unjust act. The ghost of the Zhao ancestor spoke of the supreme god's approval of his avenging the unjust treatment of his lineage. Another ghost story in the *Zuo Commentary* uses the same phrase, "I have already obtained the approval of the God for my request," to justify Qin's attack on the Jin polity.[68]

In political struggles, the victors often denied the losers the proper rites of burial as a form of punishment. This tactic is apparent in the *Zuo Commentary* and other early literature. For example, in 573 BCE, Lord Li of Jin was assassinated by his ministers and buried outside the eastern gate of the city of Yi, as opposed to being interred appropriately in the royal cemetery of Jiang.[69] The *Zuo Commentary* entry for 544 BCE similarly states, "In the second month on the *guimao* day, the Qi people buried Lord Zhuang in the northern suburbs." By way of explanation, the later commentator Du Yu (222–85) noted, "Those slain with weapons cannot be buried in the lineage cemetery." Elsewhere the *Zuo Commentary* notes that, when the minister Cui Zhu assassinated Lord Zhuang, the scribe and his brother insisted on recording, "Cui Zhu assassinated his lord." After winning the political struggle, Cui Zhu set up Lord Zhuang's half-brother as a puppet ruler. "Cui Zhu placed the coffin of Lord Zhuang in the northern suburbs," the scribe wrote, "and on the *dinghai* day he buried it in the village of Shisun." The village of Shisun is not the location of the royal cemetery. The scribe added a description of the funeral that clearly did not befit the exalted rank of the deceased: "There were [only] four plumes to the carriage; travelers were not warned to stay out of the way, and there were [but] seven inferior carriages in the funeral procession, without any men at arms."[70] In both cases, Lord Li of Jin and Lord Zhuang of Qi were punished after their deaths by being buried outside the lineage cemetery and without the funerary rites befitting their status.

A set of recently published Chu manuscripts in the Shanghai Museum provides additional evidence of the practice of denying the dead proper rites of burial as a punishment. The manuscript collection contains two texts, virtually identical to each other, titled "The Burial of Zijia of Zheng" (Zheng Zijia sang) by the modern editor.[71] The manuscripts relate the death of Zijia, minister of the state of Zheng. When Zijia's death was reported to King Zhuang (?–591 BCE) of Chu, King Zhuang told his ministers that since Zijia had previously murdered his own lord, he should

not "now preserve his [i.e., Zijia's] grace and honor and take those with him to the underworld." "If the supreme god and the spirits become angry about this," King Zhuang asks, "what could I do in response?" Using this event as an excuse, the Chu king decides to besiege the Zheng capital for three months. The people of Zheng finally proposed to "bury Zijia in a wooden coffin three inches thick, bundled in coarse ropes, and, without carrying it [the coffin] through the middle gate, bury him at the foot of the city wall." The Chu king is satisfied with the proposal of a meager funeral for Zijia as a posthumous punishment.[72]

The *Zuo Commentary* also relates that those who died violent deaths could likewise, as a punishment, not be buried in the lineage cemeteries.[73] A regulation in the *Rites of Zhou* (Zhouli) states, "Those who were slain with weapons should not be buried in the lineage cemetery."[74] Although later commentators proposed various interpretations of this instruction, modern scholars have pointed out that the connotations of the phrase "those who were slain with weapons" are different in the Eastern Zhou period.[75] In the Spring and Autumn period, the phrase refers specifically to those who died violently in lineage struggles and were punished by burial outside the lineage cemetery. In the Warring States period, however, the phrase refers to the war dead in general. Utilizing archaeological materials, Japanese scholar Suetsugu Nobuyuki has suggested, in contrast, that this practice did not begin until the Spring and Autumn period. In Shang and Western Zhou dynasties, the war dead, some of whose heads were severed by their enemies in combat following the custom of cutting off heads (*guo*) seen in oracle-bone inscriptions, were in fact buried within lineage cemeteries.[76] Starting in the Spring and Autumn period, however, victors of lineage struggles tried to eliminate the social memory of their opponents. As a result, those killed violently were excluded from the lineage cemetery, on the assumption that this would prevent them from reuniting with their ancestors in the afterlife. Because they had suffered a bad death and were buried outside the lineage cemetery, they would be left alone, hungry, and forgotten. Because the victors wished to erase the victims of violent deaths from social memory for political reasons, these dead could not be permitted to become ancestors.

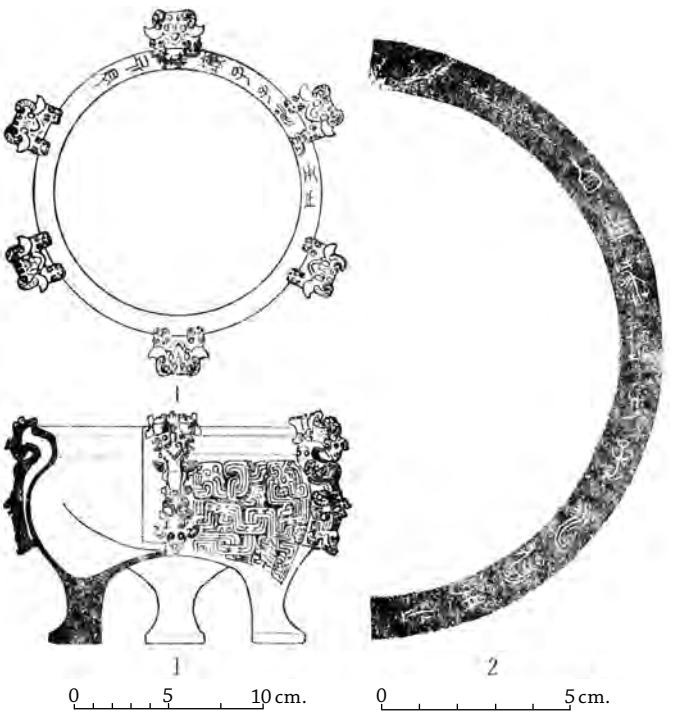
Spring-and-Autumn-period bronze inscriptions also reflect this practice of erasing one's enemies from social memory. A number of ritual bronzes dated to the late Western Zhou and the Spring and Autumn periods had their cast bronze inscriptions, especially the owner's names, excised. For example, among the three tombs of the late Spring and Autumn period at the Yuan (also Wei) lineage cemetery at Xiasi in Xichuan County, Henan, Tomb 1 contains a set of nine bells and two *sheng*-tripods, on which the name of the original owner was intentionally chiseled out. The same tomb contains six bronze vessels bearing the original owner's name, Peng, two dowry vessels bearing the name Meng Teng Ji (elder daughter of the Ji clan from the polity of Teng), and one *li*-tripod bearing the name Jiang Shu X (X, the junior [daughter] of the polity of Jiang).[77] Tomb 2 has two *li*-tripods (figs. 1.2a and 1.2b) and one *jian*-basin with the original owner's name removed, a set of seven *sheng*-tripods

with long, ornate inscriptions naming Prince Wu (Wangzi Wu) on the bodies and Peng on the lids (figs. 1.3a and 1.3b), two dagger-axes of Prince Wu, twenty-six bells and two dagger-axes made for Wangsun Gao, and an additional seventeen bronze vessels bearing the name Peng.[78] Tomb 3 contains four bronze vessels with the original owner's name removed, six inscribed with the name Peng, and two dowry vessels bearing the name Wei Zhong Ji Dan (the second-born Dan from the Ji clan [married into] the Yuan [i.e., Wei] lineage).[79] Bronze inscriptions bearing the owner's name are important evidence of the identity of the tomb occupant. But how can we determine the identity of the occupant when multiple identities are inscribed on objects in a tomb? Why did those bronze vessels have their owners' names removed?

Although scholarly debates surround these questions, contextual evidence weighs in to help us determine the identity of the tomb occupants.[80] Scholars generally agree that the cemetery at Xiasi in Xichuan belongs to the Yuan lineage of the Chu aristocracy. As Li Ling has convincingly argued, the occupant of Tomb 2 is Peng, and the other two tombs belong to his two wives.[81] All three tombs contain bronzes made for him; it was a common practice to bury a husband's ritual bronze vessels in his wife's tomb as her social standing directly correlated with his. The two wives' tombs contain dowry vessels made by their own natal families. All three tombs contain bronzes with the original owner's name removed, and Peng's tomb contains ritual vessels made for Prince Wu and Wangsun Gao. Both Prince Wu and Peng appear in the *Zuo Commentary*. Prince Wu (d. 552 BCE) was the Chief Minister (Lingyin) of Chu, while Peng was the Grand Marshal (Da Sima).[82] The *Zuo Commentary* does not specify how Prince Wu died, but records indicate that after the death of Wu, King Kang of Chu (r. 559–545 BCE) wanted Peng to be the Chief Minister. Peng was advised against taking that position because of fierce internal conflicts, and so declined it. King Kang, in conflict with the next chief minister, killed him at court. The king then offered the position to Peng again, and Peng accepted. Peng died in 548 BCE. Although we do not know the details of Chu court politics, from the archaeological evidence we can infer that Peng had received bronzes from the estate of the previous chief minister, whose family had probably fallen out of favor in the course of factional strife at court.[83]

In the tombs of Peng's wives, the original owner's name was scraped off, while in Peng's tomb the set of bronze tripods bore Prince Wu's name on the bodies with Peng's name added on the lids. The erasure of the original owner's name was a traditional practice directed to eliminating the memory of the disgraced opponent, whereas Peng's retention of his defeated enemy's name while claiming ownership of the objects ostentatiously displays his victory.[84] Such display amounts to a punishment more severe than forgetting because punishing the memory, *damnatio memoriae* in Latin, prolongs the disgrace.[85] Similar to the regulation that "those who were slain with weapons should not be buried in the lineage cemetery," the victor's display proclaims the losers' elimination and punishment.

Yet the victors do not always write the historical accounts. In Chinese tradition,



Figs. 1.2a and b. Bronze *li*-tripod and inscription on the rim, excavated from Tomb 2 at Xiasi, Xichuan County, Henan (M2: 59). H. 12.6 cm. Late Spring and Autumn period. The name of the original vessel owner at the beginning of the inscription was intentionally erased. Henan Provincial Museum.

Fig. 1.3a. (*top*) Bronze tripod with lid, excavated from Tomb 2 at Xiasi, Xichuan County, Henan. H. 34 cm. Henan Provincial Museum.

Fig. 1.3b. (*bottom*) Inscriptions on the bronze tripod (left, modern transcription above) and on lid (right), attributed respectively to the Chu Prince and Prime Minster Wu (aka Zi Geng, fl. mid-sixth century BCE) and his successor Peng (d. 548 BCE), excavated from Tomb 2 at Xiasi, Xichuan County, Henan. Henan Provincial Museum.

in fact, history has had an integral relationship to ghost stories.[86] Episodes of unquiet ghosts were inserted into serious historical accounts, such as dynastic histories, to show that evil deeds were punished and that justice eventually prevailed. This moralizing function of history can be traced back to the *Zuo Commentary* and the *Narratives of the States*.[87]

Furthermore, ghost stories as "paradigm[s] of a forgotten and potentially disruptive past" retrieve repressed memory.[88] Using both anthropological field investigation and psychoanalysis, anthropologist Stephan Feuchtwang argues that ghost stories are "stories of unbidden retrieval of memory, covering loss that is taboo, too shameful, and too repressed to be told."[89] This insightful analysis applies to ghost stories in the *Zuo Commentary* and in many other Chinese texts. Although the ghost stories in the *Zuo Commentary* had probably been told and retold, and thus were several degrees removed from their original context of political struggle, the narratives retained their basic structure as repressed memories of the defeated.

To the victors of political struggles and to society at large, vengeful ghosts are "hostile," "evil," and "fearful." Yet to their kin, sympathizers, and believers, such ghosts possessed spiritual and religious power. Studies on deity cults in imperial China also show that the traditional demarcation of boundaries between "evil" and "good" and among gods, ghosts, and ancestors were fluid and indeterminate.[90] Such fluidity and indeterminacy begin in the Spring and Autumn period and appear in classical literature such as the *Zuo Commentary*.

The ghost narratives of the Spring and Autumn period are largely political tools that defeated noblemen and their sympathizers used to fight back and to demand reconciliation with the dominant political powers of the day. The stories promoted the belief that the slain would return as vengeful ghosts to haunt their enemies by telling their side of the story. The slain also became powerful spirits and later were often venerated in local and popular Chinese religious cults.

Concepts of the Soul and the Rise of the Afterlife

Although earlier ideas about life after death likely abounded, a clearly articulated, written, and collective version of the afterlife emerged against the background of the lineage struggles in the Spring and Autumn period. This version appears in a ghost tale from the *Zuo Commentary* that had a tremendous impact on subsequent ideas about the afterlife in early China.

According to the ghost story, the nobleman Boyou, also known as Liang Xiao (from the Liang lineage) of the state of Zheng, was murdered by his rivals in an internal political struggle.[91] The murdered nobleman then returned as a vengeful ghost (*li*) to kill his surviving opponents on appointed days:[92]

> The people of Zheng frightened one another about Boyou, saying, "Boyou is here!" at which they would all run off, without knowing where they were going. In the second

month of the year [536 BCE] when the punishment documents were cast, one man dreamt that Boyou walked by him in armor and said, "On the *renzi* day I will kill Dai, and next year, on the *renyin* day, I will kill Duan." When Zidai died on a *renzi* day, the terror of the people increased. That year [535 BCE] during the month that the states of Qi and Yan made peace, Gongsun Duan died on a *renyin* day, and the people became still more frightened, until in the following month Zichan appointed Gongsun Xie [Gongsun Duan's son] and Liangzhi [Boyou's son] as successors to their fathers to soothe the people, after which their terrors ceased. When Zidashu asked his reason for making these arrangements, Zichan replied, "When a ghost has a place to return, it does not become an evil spirit. I have made such a place for the ghost."[93]

The terror that Boyou's ghost engendered and the events that followed prompted the eminent statesman Zichan to make a famous speech in which he explained the existence of ghosts in terms of *hun* and *po* dualism. According to the story, when Zichan went to Jin, someone asked him why it was possible for Boyou to become a ghost (*gui*). Zichan replied:

In the transformation of human life the first stage is called *po* 魄. After this has been produced, its *yang* is called *hun* 魂. Through the use of material substances the quintessential essence is multiplied, and the *hunpo* become strong, and thus the quintessential vigor grows and reaches the level of spirit illumination. When an ordinary man or woman dies a violent death, his or her *hunpo* are still able to possess (*pingyi* 憑依) someone in the form of a malevolent ghost (*yinli* 淫厲). This is all the more so in the case of Liangxiao [i.e., Boyou], a descendant of our former ruler Mu Gong, the grandson of Ziliang, and the son of Zi'er, who were ministers of our state and belonged to a family that had held the handle of government for three generations![94]

Here Zichan articulates an elite view of the afterlife: if someone, especially a member of the nobility, suffers a violent death, then his or her *hunpo* could become an avenging ghost. Zichan applies the contemporary understanding of the concepts of the *hun* and *po* to the discourse on the emergence of the vengeful ghosts.

Much ink has been spilled over this passage and the concepts of *hun* and *po* in early China. These concepts evolved over time, but scholars have often tried to infer their essential meanings by mixing different layers of later commentaries and abstracting nuanced interpretations from divergent textual contexts. To avoid these pitfalls, I focus on the early meanings of the terms in this passage.

In the passage above, Zichan refers to the transformation (*hua*) of a human being: A person starts with *po*, and after this has been produced, *hun* comes. Through the consumption of material substances, the *hunpo* become an entity with quintessential vigor that can grow and reach the point of spiritual illumination. This description of the formation of human beings resembles the narrative of the stages of formation of the human fetus found in a medical text, "The Treatise on Generation

of the Fetus" (Taichanshu), excavated from Tomb 3 at Mawangdui (before 168 BCE): "Thus when human beings are engendered . . . in the first month it [the fetus] is called 'flowing into the form.' Food and drink must be the finest. . . . In the second month it first becomes lard (*gao* 膏). . . . In the third month it first becomes suet (*zhi* 脂), and has the appearance of a gourd."[95] Similarly, in the "Quintessential Spirit" chapter of the *Master of Huainan* (Huainanzi), we find a passage that refers to the first stages of the gestation as lard and suet, which usually are white substances. According to these records, the early phases are characterized by a white embryonic substance.

Edward Schafer, on the other hand, translates this passage as follows: "At birth a man begins to form a *po*, and after birth of the *po* his *yang* is called *hun*."[96] Yang Bojun and other scholars, based on later Han literature, locate this transformation of the *hun* and the *po* at the point of a person's death rather than his or her birth.[97] In light of the descriptions in "The Treatise on Generation of the Fetus" and the *Master of Huainan*, however, human transformation probably more rightly begins with the fetus, rather than with, as Schafer asserts, birth, or as Yang and others assert, at death. It is possible that the white substance (*po*) in Zichan's speech refers to these early stages of the human fetus, rather than, as scholars have suggested, the abstract brightness of the waxing moon.[98] *Po* is the material base or the starting point of human beings. The translation of *po* as "soul" or even "bodily soul" misses the point. Admittedly, Zichan's stages of development are simpler and rougher than those found in the Mawangdui medical texts, the *Master of Huainan*, and other early Chinese medical texts. But the power of his argument lies in its synthesis of the discourse on avenging ghosts and the newly emerging theories of *hun* and *po*.[99]

With these concepts of *po* and *hun*, Zichan articulated a version of the afterlife in which the ghosts of those who died violent deaths did not become ancestors but instead haunted the living. As a result, these ghosts needed to be fed, sacrificed to, pacified, and remembered. In addition, a wandering ghost could imperil the living, and so it was necessary to give it a place, separate from the living: "When a ghost has a place to return, it does not become an evil spirit."[100] In addition to the vivid description of the terror in the *Zuo Commentary* episode, the text suggests that one could pacify an unquiet ghost by securing a "place" for it. Here the "place" is provided through the transmission of the father's official position to the son, thus enabling him to offer sacrifices to his deceased father. Similar stories of vengeful ghosts in the *Zuo Commentary* and other early texts likewise point to the belief that the living could pacify and segregate the avenging dead through sacrifices intended to secure a place (such as a tomb) for them.[101]

Most students of early Chinese religion have argued, following Anna Seidel, that the Chinese cult of the dead and the conception of the afterlife did not fully evolve until the Han dynasty.[102] Chu mortuary data from the Warring States period, however, shows that the popular conception of the afterlife was fully developed

by this time. In the Boyou story, we see this development beginning in the Spring and Autumn period. To be sure, conceptions of the afterlife underwent significant changes during the Han. The idea of a "transcendent paradise," such as the realm of the Queen Mother of the West, likely dates to the mid–Western Han, but this transcendent paradise should not be confused with conceptions of the afterlife or a destination for the spirit's journey.[103] In fact, one destination for departed souls in the Warring States period was Mount Buzhou, thought to be located in a northwestern section of the universe.[104] The descriptions in various texts of the different destinations for departed souls testify to the cultural diversity of early China. The transition from the Warring States period to that of the early empires united these competing conceptions of the afterlife and their associated religious practices.

Shifts in Attitudes toward the Dead

The foregoing discussion focuses on avenging ghosts in the context of political struggles and on the rise of the afterlife during the Spring and Autumn and early Warring States periods. The need to pacify baleful ghosts and victims of violent death during this period of political disruption transformed the traditional ritual structure of ancestor cults and introduced new perspectives on the dead in the Warring States period and that of the early empires.

The religious notions of violent death, the fear of unquiet ghosts, and the cult of the dead persisted through the Eastern Zhou period, but their connotations and applications changed along with social developments. For example, the concept of the dead slain with weapons, which had previously referred only to those elite killed by their opponents in intralineal struggle or warfare, came in the Warring States period to include conscripted commoners, soldiers, and generals—war dead, such as those described in the "Hymn to the Fallen," who sacrificed their lives for the state. Chinese archaeologists have discovered at least two sites that testify to the increased intensity and atrocity of war during the Warring States period.

Discovered at Xishuipo, Puyang County, Henan, the first site houses the mass graves of the dead from a brutal battle.[105] Archaeologists found more than thirty orderly burial pits arrayed in twelve rows, four of which have an east-west orientation and eight of which have a north-south orientation. Each pit contains at least eighteen male skeletons, aged twenty to twenty-five, and varying numbers of severed heads (fig. 1.4). Many of the human bones bear cuts by knives or arrowheads. It is evident that all had been slain with weapons and had suffered violent deaths. Altogether, more than five hundred individuals were buried in these pits. This site is near the famous battlefield of Chengpu, where the northern alliance led by Jin defeated the Chu army led by Chief Minister Ziyu and Marshal Zixi in 632 BCE. In the absence of chronologically specific grave goods, archaeologists are not able to make a definitive identification of this site. Just two and a half kilometers from this site is another famous battlefield by the name of Tie, where in 493 BCE the Jin army

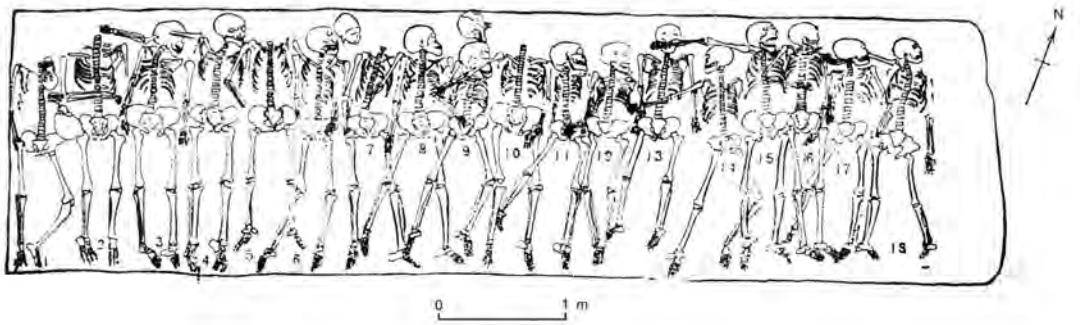


Fig. 1.4. Burial Pit 175 at Xishuipo, Puyang County, Henan. Mass grave, possibly for war dead from the Battle of Chengpu in 632 BCE.

defeated the Zheng army.[106] The mass graves probably contain the war dead from one of these famous battles.

The battles of the Warring States period were far more intense than those of the Spring and Autumn period. During the two and a half centuries of the Warring States period, wars, as the period's name suggests, were the norm rather than the exception, and the scale of warfare drastically increased.[107] The "Annals of the Six States" (Liuguo nianbiao), a chapter in the *Records of the Grand Historian*, chronicles 186 large-scale wars among the states during this period. Compared to the previous Spring and Autumn period, the scale and intensity of wars were significantly greater, while their frequency was reduced (the *Zuo Commentary* records 483 military conflicts of the Spring and Autumn period, an average of two wars per year).

The second archaeological battlefield, discovered at Gaoping in Shanxi, testifies to the intensity of war in the Warring States period. There, in 260 BCE, the Qin army led by General Bai Qi (d. 257 BCE) killed or buried alive 400,000 soldiers of the state of Zhao. This military campaign proved a turning point in the Warring States period; from this time onward, the state of Qin was destined to conquer all other states and thereby unify China. Starting in 262 BCE, the campaign lasted for more than two years. According to the *Records of the Grand Historian* account, the Qin besieged the Zhao army at Changping (present-day Gaoping County in Shanxi), and 400,000 Zhao soldiers surrendered. Fearing that the Zhao troops might revolt, General Bai Qi ordered that the Zhao soldiers be massacred: "Counting earlier and later actions, he took prisoner or cut off the heads of 450,000 men, leaving the people of Zhao trembling with fear."[108] Although these numbers may not be exact, the extreme cruelty of wars during the Warring States period is beyond doubt.

Scholars and local people alike have recognized this famous battlefield throughout Chinese history.[109] Mass graves lie scattered all over the valley of the Dan River, a small tributary of the Yellow River. In 1995, archaeologists excavated a pit about 9.4 meters long, 2.7 meters wide, and 0.7–0.9 meters deep at Yonglu in Gaoping County, Shanxi. They unearthed the skeletal remains of more than 130 soldiers, at least one-

third of which had been approximately thirty years old at the time of death. The piled bones, severed heads, and fractured skulls confirmed that the soldiers buried there had suffered violent deaths (figs. 1.5a and 1.5b).[110]

The large numbers of war dead from the increasing intensity of war became a social and religious problem during the Warring States period. The famous "Hymn to the Fallen" from the south is considered "one of the most beautiful laments for fallen soldiers in any language."[111] This poem offers a poetic eulogy to warriors who died on a battlefield after fierce fighting. The title of the poem refers to those who died prematurely, cut down in their prime in service to the state. Scholars generally agree that this poem is a liturgical hymn used in state sacrifices to the war dead.[112] The nameless war dead, often buried in mass graves, make up a special category of the dead. The state assumed responsibility for conducting proper rituals to pacify their unquiet ghosts. This contributed to the development of public sacrifice, especially sacrifices to evil ghosts and the nameless war dead, as part of the state religion in the imperial era.[113]

The high mortality rate during the Warring States period reflected increasing violence in society and the dramatic changes in warfare that took place between the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. Chariot warfare led by aristocrats was replaced by battles between large-scale infantry armies. Peasants and other commoners were conscripted to serve in the military.[114] Advanced weaponry and other military technology produced more casualties and higher mortality rates on the battlegrounds. These mortality rates gradually altered people's general attitudes toward death and the dead.

Scholars agree that dramatic changes in demography and mortality rates are among the most important factors throughout human history in people's perspectives on death and the dead. The transition from the Warring States period to that of the early empires is a case in point. Based on anecdotal accounts in historical sources, historians estimate that between the middle Warring States period and the early Han dynasty the population decreased by almost half.[115] This extraordinary demographic shift coupled with the high mortality rate dramatically affected people's perspectives on death and the dead during the Warring States, Qin, and Han periods.

Perceptions among the living of ghosts and calamities are symptoms of the troubled age. Anthropologists and ethnographers have studied the universality of the fear of death and the dead across societies, as well as forms of death pollution—the social disorder, ritual unclearness, physical decay, and psychological chaos caused by the death of a member of the community—and the varieties of funerary rites meant to avoid or overcome such fear and contagion.[116] Attitudes toward death and the dead are not individual but part of the collective mentality of an age, conditioned by the social and political reality of the times, which includes individuals' perspectives not only on their own deaths but also on the deaths of others.[117]

Additionally, death rituals allow the bereaved to celebrate the life of the departed

Figs. 1.5a and b. Mass graves at Yonglu, Gaoping County, Shanxi, where the army of the state of Zhou was besieged and massacred by the Qin, 262–260 BCE.

and to negotiate power and prestige among the living. As a rite of passage, death entails a ritual process that is best understood in a particular cultural context.[118] It is not just the end of an individual's life but the beginning of a new relationship between the living and the dead. Moreover, the mourners, through their symbolic actions, can control and create the death status of the departed individual.[119]

Tomb 2 at Baoshan provides a useful illustration of the change in perspective on death at the individual level. As Chief Minister of the Left of the state of Chu, Shao Tuo (d. 316 BCE) was anxious about his official activities and his interaction with the Chu king. He divined about his "coming and going in the service of the king," and once, when he was ill, he asked almost all the celestial, terrestrial, and human spirits in the Chu religious pantheon, including his recent ancestors and the unquiet ghosts both inside and outside his family, for their help. Of them, the most efficacious spirits were the vengeful ghosts, whether Shao Tuo's relatives or not. In the last divination before his death, he asked, "May it still be possible that [I] not die," and the divinations indicated that the calamities were coming from those who had died without posterity and from the fecundity god who managed life and death.

The documents excavated from Shao Tuo's tomb do not specify whether he had any descendants, but his death arguably was a bad one: he died in agony and in fear of mortality, pleading with the avenging spirits to prevent his death. We know few details about the funerary rites used in Shao Tuo's case, but from the funerary documents and grave goods buried in his tomb, we can surmise that he was well equipped to start his next stage of existence in the afterlife.[120]

Shao Tuo's tomb was structured like the Jiuliandun tombs: fourteen step-ledges descend on all four sides and a sloping ramp on the east side leads to the burial encasement at the bottom of the pit. The encasement is divided into four side compartments surrounding a central compartment where the three nested coffins are located. Underneath the wooden encasement is a small "waist pit" (*yaokeng*), in which a goat (as was the case in Tomb 2 at Jiuliandun) was buried. The waist pit is a standard feature of earlier Shang and Zhou burial customs. Archaeologists have so named it because it is located in the middle of the pit, just under the waist of the tomb occupant. There is no consensus regarding its meaning, but it is likely an expression of religious beliefs.[121] Some speculate that dogs or goats in the waist pit functioned as guides, leading the deceased to the land of the dead.[122] Only a few elite Chu tombs have this feature, and its disappearance in the transition from the Warring States period to the early Han probably marked changes in related religious ideas.[123]

The four compartments of Shao Tuo's tomb contained 1,935 artifacts and 448 bamboo strips, 278 of which are inscribed. The artifacts include a large number of bronze, lacquer, and ceramic sacrificial vessels, weapons, chariot fittings, and personal belongings. The texts include legal and administrative documents and lists of grave goods. Like the religious pantheon discussed above, grave goods in Warring States elite tombs are categorically similar to those in Shang and Western Zhou elite burials, but the prevalence of spirit artifacts and luxury objects among the personal

belongings in Warring States elite tombs distinguish this later burial tradition from earlier ones. The changes in grave furnishings of Warring States tombs reflect new attitudes toward the dead. The religious significance of other grave goods will be discussed in chapter 5; below, we focus on the purpose and meaning in Warring States burials of burying spirit artifacts as a tie-breaking ritual.

Redefining the Relations between the Dead and the Living

As its name suggests, a tie-breaking ritual severs the bond, or tie, between the living and the deceased and is performed to break the old life pattern.[124] According to French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep, death is but one of a series of ritual passages through the life cycle.[125] The tie-breaking ritual simultaneously emphasizes the mourner's separation from the dead and integration with the living. The purpose of this ritual is twofold: it facilitates the psychological transition of the bereaved and ensures that the soul of the deceased makes its proper transition from earthly life to its new life in the land of the dead. Tie-breaking acts include the ceremonial "killing" of objects at funerals, the disposal of the belongings of the dead, the placement of a taboo on the name of the deceased, and the bereaved's temporary or permanent changing of residence.[126] But in Warring States China, providing proper grave furnishing became an important part of the tie-breaking ritual.

Earlier Shang and Western Zhou aristocratic traditions continued, as the preoccupation with burying symbols of social status such as chariots and sets of bronze vessels makes clear. However, new categories of grave goods and new compositions of artifacts belonging to the old categories constantly emerged. An examination of the medium-size tombs excavated at Zhaojiahu in Dangyang County and at Jiudian and Yutaishan in Jiangling County, all in Hubei, reveals that new categories of grave goods, in particular personal belongings, household utensils, and food provisions, came to accompany the traditional sets of ritual vessels.[127] These new artifacts include weapons, utensils for dress (combs, mirrors, and belt hooks), musical instruments for personal entertainment (*se* zithers), utensils for eating and drinking, bamboo mats, pillows, and fans. It is not coincidental that most of the new categories of personal belongings and household utensils are listed under the heading "travel paraphernalia" (*xingqi*) in the grave-goods inventories buried in Tomb 2 at Baoshan.

Although low-quality or miniature imitations of ritual vessels made of clay, lead, and other materials appeared in Shang and Western Zhou, and even Neolithic, tombs, the self-conscious systematic use of spirit artifacts in funerary rites was characteristic of Warring States religious phenomena.[128] The use of the spirit artifacts may have inspired Warring States philosophers to discuss their religious significance. The term *spirit artifact* is loaded with various meanings in contemporary scholarly literature.[129] When modern scholars began to use this term in the early twentieth century, it referred only to ceramic sculptures of human figures (*yong*),

animals, and daily utensils employed in mortuary settings after the Warring States period. The term later was extended to cover all funerary objects made for tomb furnishing.[130] Extensive Warring States philosophical reflections on the religious phenomenon of burying spirit artifacts in tombs afford a rare case wherein archaeological and transmitted textual materials corroborate each other.

Compared to its modern usage, in Warring States ritual and philosophical texts the term refers to a broader range of materials but defines more narrowly their intended functions. Spirit artifacts marked the difference between this world and the other world, between life and death, and between the material and the spiritual. These artifacts were made "unfinished," or "secondary" and "inferior" to everyday utensils in terms of their materiality, size, and craftsmanship. The concept of a spirit artifact was "not determined by medium or form, but was based on ritual function and symbolism."[131] This concept apparently was widespread among intellectuals of the Warring States period. For example, the Confucian philosopher Xunzi, in his "Discourse on Ritual" (Lilun), defines a spirit artifact as something that "resembles real objects but cannot be used."[132] Here, the quality of the spirit artifacts, like the attitude toward the dead, is a paradox: the objects are familiar but different. Objects of this sort belong to what anthropologists identify as a "tie-breaking ritual."[133]

All over the world, from prehistoric times onward, when there is less status competition, we find cheap and miniature objects manufactured in clay used as offerings to gods and the dead.[134] But there are other religious or moral reasons for gods and spirits to accept humble substitutes for expensive gifts. It is said that the recipients cared only about the intention, or the "heart," of the givers, not the cost of the gifts.[135] This type of morality is discussed in the historical and philosophical literature of the Warring States period.[136] Archaeological evidence indicates that spirit artifacts were first widely used in Qin tombs early in the Spring and Autumn period but became more prevalent in the late Spring and Autumn and early Warring States periods.[137] At almost the same time, a lively debate regarding whether "the dead have knowledge" began in some philosophical circles.[138] The debates transpired primarily between Confucian advocates of lavish mortuary rites and Mohist advocates of frugality.[139]

Archaeological records also show that in burial practice bronze and ceramic vessels were mixed together to form a set of grave objects.[140] Not only spirit and ritual vessels but also luxury nonritual objects, such as lacquered vessels, exotic jewelry, and personal ornaments, were buried in tombs. These objects form a sharp contrast to the spirit artifacts in terms of artistic quality. In the Baoshan tomb, besides the bronze ritual vessels, the music instruments, the ceramic storage jars, and other daily utensils, the most exquisite and valuable objects are lacquered vessels such as a set of lacquered cups with a leather bag (item 4), a double bird-shaped drinking cup (item 189), a pair of spouted cups with dragon and phoenix motifs (items 25 and 31), and a painted lacquered box with a pictorial decoration (item 432).

As Paul Rosenblatt and others have pointed out, tie-breaking rituals, which are

a common response to death in many cultures, take many different forms.[141] In the Chinese context, the tie-breaking ritual included the burial of spirit artifacts and the interment of new and old personal belongings. One entry (Strip 15) in a grave-goods inventory excavated at Yangtianhu in Changsha City, Hunan, describes "one new shoe, one old shoe."[142] In the inventory from Tomb 3 at Mawangdui, old personal belongings are listed as being buried in the tomb.[143] This tradition of burying new and old personal belongings survived in later mortuary practice.

Burying spirit artifacts and personal belongings helped the bereaved reduce and eventually sever their ties with the dead while maintaining the connection between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The rituals were also designed to help both the bereaved and the deceased negotiate the gradual transition from life to death.

THIS CHAPTER SETS THE STAGE for subsequent arguments by documenting changes in conceptions of death and the dead during the Warring States period. Why did the early Chinese come to perceive the dead primarily as a threat?[144] Early Chinese texts such as the *Zuo Commentary* and the *Narratives of the States* record a political culture of violent death and an emerging literary genre of ghost narratives as well as new concepts of the afterlife. Within the context of political struggle among the lineages and states, the winners tried to eliminate the social memory of their opponents by denying them a ritually appropriate burial in the lineage cemetery and by engaging in other associated forms of ancestor cults. These dead—who suffered violent deaths, died young, or died without posterity—belonged to the cultural category of "bad death" and would not become ancestors. Instead, because they could not receive sacrifices from their descendants, they turned into hungry ghosts. The ghost narratives of the Eastern Zhou period, circulated among conservative educated elites, articulated new concepts of the afterlife and of the soul.

During the Warring States period, mass conscription brought a large number of the war dead into the religious realm. The view of the dead as a threat spread and eventually fostered an ambivalent attitude toward ancestors. As the Warring States pantheon in the Baoshan records shows, previously undocumented vengeful ghosts came to be regarded as more potent than other spirits. The material and textual remains recovered from Chu tombs disclose profound, but often overlooked, changes in cultural perspectives on the dead that evolved during the Eastern Zhou period. Finally, the prevalent ritual of burying spirit artifacts in tombs suggests that these changing perspectives, which earlier concerned only those who had died violent deaths, now encompassed almost all the dead, including ancestors. This conception of the dead as threatening prompted significant changes in the funerary rituals and burial practices in the Warring States period and that of the early empires.

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