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## Coffin Soul Portals of the Female Xunren in Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng

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COFFIN SOUL PORTALS OF THE FEMALE XUNREN  
IN TOMB OF MARQUIS YI OF ZENG

by

Mary E. Blum

A Thesis Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts  
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at

The University of Wisconsin Milwaukee

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## ABSTRACT

### COFFIN SOUL PORTALS OF THE FEMALE XUNREN IN TOMB OF MARQUIS YI OF ZENG

by

Mary E. Blum

The University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, 2020  
Under the Supervision of Professor Ying Wang

There is a significant void in scholarship concerning the Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng's (Zeng Hou Yi), Leigudun M1, Suizhou, Hubei Province, dated to 433 BCE during the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770-256 BCE) of Bronze Age China, specifically on the lacquer coffins of the female *xunren*. There is extensive research dedicated to its well-preserved ritual bronze vessels, lacquer wares, and musical instruments, but this tomb is not known for the lacquer designs of portals present on twelve of the twenty-one female companion's coffins. In this paper, I argue the *xunren* coffin designs in tomb Leigudun M1 of Zeng Hou Yi are fundamental to uncovering the tomb's social hierarchy and its function in the afterlife through the presence of portal designs. To begin, I consider archaeological data on the lacquer coffins of the *xunren*, such as placement and grave goods, and correlate this to lacquer design complexity and portal design on the women's coffins. I identified parallels between Leigudun M1 and comparable tombs containing burials for the *xunren* in large quantities that indicate an organized afterlife based on social status. Lastly, I address cosmology and contemporary literature on the afterlife because it illustrates the tradition of hierarchy, movement, and value of souls in the afterlife. By carefully examining the lacquer coffin designs, this study sheds new light on the meaning and value of these coffin soul portals and their relationship to the women and Marquis Yi in the afterlife.

Key Words: Marquis Yi of Zeng, lacquer coffins, human sacrifice, xunren, portals, hunpo,  
Leigudun M1.

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## **Introduction**

To date, no published study has explicitly focused on the twenty-one female sacrifices, *xunren*, of the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng during the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770-256 BCE) of Bronze Age China to ascertain their cultural and spiritual value in death through funerary practice. There was an elite trend of sacrificing males and females at the death of their lord as a human sacrifice, or *xunren*, which was still practiced in outlying areas during the Warring States period (475-221 BCE). The coffins of the *xunren* in tomb Leigudun M1 provide valuable data for ascertaining who these women were in relation to Marquis Yi. This can be inferred by the only consistent and identifiable portal window designs on the lacquer coffins, deposited individual grave goods, and coffin placement within the tomb. In this paper, I argue that the female *xunren* in tomb Leigudun M1 of Zeng Hou Yi are vital to the understanding of the tomb's social hierarchy and how it functions in the afterlife through the presence of coffin portal designs on twelve accompanying coffins. The *xunren* provide a broader cultural context of what kind of afterlife socially stratified relationships, if any exists at all, look like for women of the Zeng state during the Warring States period.

By definition, portals are a type of gateway allowing passage between or through a place. The places portals can let one pass through are not limited to the living realm, and can also be made for the dead's souls, as seen in tomb Leigudun M1. Portals in tomb Leigudun M1 exist three ways: constructed with timber carved into the inner walls (three examples of this exist), carved out of the coffin (in one example), and painted with lacquer as a window or door motif on the coffins as a flat, empty, and closed appearance. I will be using the term "portal" in my research concerning the carved and lacquer painted portals within the tomb and on the coffins, as I believe the term portal is a more appropriate grouping definition. Portals then can be further

specified into carved holes, painted windows, and painted doors. The painted windows and doors visually appear as a quartered square and a quarter lattice respectively. We do see evidence of physically hollowed window motifs on a much small scale on some bronze objects, but these kinds of portals are meant to emulate architecture and they do not function in the same capacity as the portals on coffins. The portals I study within Leigudun M1 function primarily as a form of communication throughout the tomb with the deceased souls allowing them to pass through, and why I will also refer to them as a kind of ‘soul portal’. Alain Thote suggest that on these coffins “The main subjects of the lacquer paintings seem to be the openings – whether doors or windows.”<sup>1</sup>

Lacquerware and silk textiles are significant for Zeng and Chu sites. The regions of the states of Zeng and Chu had reputations for lacquerware and silk products even in the Warring States period. Other states at this time also did produced lacquer and silk works, but states like Zeng and Chu were known for their unique craftsmanship, designs, and motifs. This is why lacquerware is frequently found in tombs from these regions, and the tomb of Marquis Yi is a striking example. Leigudun M1 has thousands of lacquerware objects, and the coffins of this tomb stand out as the largest lacquerware in size, but extraordinary in their unique portal window motifs.

Evidence of subsidiary sacrifices in tombs, primarily female, is readily available even before the Warring States period.<sup>2</sup> The trend of using subsidiary human sacrifices, or *xunren*, almost nearly dies out by the Han dynasty, aside from rare cases of wealthy men in power.<sup>3</sup> In western scholarship, the term *xunren* has been translated to be loosely defined as a “companion

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<sup>1</sup> Alain Thote, “Double Coffin of Leigudun Tomb No. 1,” ed. by Thomas Lawton, in *New Perspectives on Chu Culture During the Eastern Zhou Period*, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Gulong Lai, “Introduction,” in *Excavating the Afterlife*, University of Washington Press, 2015, 20.

<sup>3</sup> Lai, “Introduction,” 20.

in death” but this distorts the original nuances of the word into something more appealing. *Xunren* more closely translates to ‘human prepared for sacrifice,’ yet *xunren* is also distinct from other types of human sacrifice because of the way the *xunren* were treated.<sup>4</sup> *Xunren* can sometimes be considered to be consorts or elite members of society of either sex. Why does the scholarship concerning Bronze Age Chinese tombs fail to address subsidiary burials or why sacrificed women are present aside from the relatively ambiguous terms of ritual, sacrifice, victims, and companionship? Female sacrifices provide necessary and valuable context when considering both the narrative of the tomb and the afterlife as a not so solitary affair.

Social status of non-elite women in scholarship is a relatively unexplored aspect of the afterlife of the Warring States period that is predominantly present in tomb Leigudun M1. To demonstrate this, this research investigates the multiple “windows and doors” portal motif seen in the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng (fig. 1) as it concerns the emerging understanding of dual souls of the female sacrifices during the late Bronze Age in south China in 433 BCE.<sup>5</sup> A prominent distinction is present between the only male of the tomb, Marquis Yi, who has multiple painted lacquer portal decorations along with a carved portal, and the fact that twelve of the twenty-one accompanying women’s coffins having painted windows. The women’s coffins display examples of both empty windows and filled windows, which has unknown meaning, although these concepts can be explored using archaeological records, cosmology, spatial and spiritual orientation, and ritual texts such as the *Xunzi* 荀子 (The Writings of Master Xun) and

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<sup>4</sup> I would like to thank Professor Ying Wang for showing me the distinction between the translation for *xunren* in western scholarship.

<sup>5</sup> I will be using the term “portal” in relation to both the carved and painted portals within the tomb and on the coffins as I feel the term portal is a more appropriate grouping definition which then can be broken down into physical holes, painted windows and painted doors.

*Liji* 礼记 (Book of Rites)<sup>6</sup> By using this information, it aids in clarifying the portals

communicative functions in the afterlife in accordance with sex, rank, and status.<sup>7</sup>

Analysis of design data may also elucidate the treatment of tomb as an eternal home or palace. Subsequently, this research may also clarify the soul portal motif's arrival seen in this tomb and what it could implicate as to importance with the main tomb occupant. During the Warring States period, we see the hints of the existence of *hunpo* dual souls in tombs and the continuation of this funerary trend into the Western Han dynasty. Scholars theorize that these windows are early evidences of the tomb's circumambulation of ancient Chinese belief of dual souls found in every human. More specifically the *hun*, the spirit that goes on the afterlife journey, and *po*, which stays in the tomb. The *hunpo*'s existence has only been verified to exist by the Han dynasty from excavated text, coffins, and tomb design. Zenghouyi, or Marquis Yi of Zeng, is from the small central state of Zeng located in the middle Yangtze River region (fig. 2). His tomb, known as Leigudun M1, is heralded as one of the most significant finds in Chinese history with over 15,000 objects and is primarily known for its well-preserved musical instruments, especially the graduated set of 64 bronze bells.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The *Liji* has a range dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> through the second centuries B.C. and falls within the Marquis tomb date. Its range is due to the wide range of excavated texts and varying dating, which was compiled into the *Liji*, with separate texts becoming chapters such as the *Liyun*, *Jiyi*, *Jifa* and the *Ziyi*. The *Liji* in particular contains discussions of the concepts of *hun*, *po* (dual souls), and *qi* (energy/life force) within Confucian discussion as well as ritual importance of the direction and orientation of the dead.

<sup>7</sup> *Xunzi* emphasized the importance of clarity between social distinctions, including the divide of binary gender. Once society adheres to these social distinctions through such avenues as a ritual, it will provide stability and balance social order. Traditions such as performing rituals and music were strictly observed, dictating specific colors allowed to one's rank, property, and burial goods in the afterlife. If these are not precisely observed, Xunzi believes chaos will ensue, and society will revert to the turmoil of the early Warring States period.

<sup>8</sup> Robert L Thorpe. The Sui Xian Tomb: Re-Thinking the Fifth Century. 1/2 ed. Vol. 43. *Artibus Asiae*, 1981. 67. See also 湖北省博物馆编 = *Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng : Ritual-and-music Civilization in the Early Warring States Period / Hubei Provincial Museum*, and 湖北省博物馆. 曾侯乙墓: 战国早期的礼乐文明. Di 1 Ban ed. *Changjiang Zhong You Wen Ming Zhi Lü = a Journey to Mid-Yangtze River Civilization*. Beijing: Wen Wu Chu Ban She, 2007. 23.

To further the understanding of the *xunren* at Leigudun M1, the study is comprised of three main parts. The first section attempts a stylistic identification of the coffins, with window portal designs versus non-window designs, and variants seen within these to indicate any type of signifiers (like for instance the correlation of number of grave goods with complexity of coffin design) in relation to the main male tomb occupant. Following is a brief examination of the lacquer windows and carved doors that connect the tomb both physically and spiritually. I aim to address these portals, their presence, and what it means both for the tomb occupant, Marquis Yi, and the female sacrifices he brought with him to the afterlife. I use the Marquis Yi's portals as a base of comparison to build a visual typology dataset for the other coffins, due to the portals clear and distinct established motif. Here is where I also address the drastically different quality, especially in design, between Marquis Yi's coffins and the women's coffins, despite their shared portal window motif. For the *xunren*'s coffins, it is documented that twelve display a prominent window design as one of the only recognizable motifs. While there is no available record of what the other nine *xunren*'s coffins look like, it is possible they may not have as distinct of examples of window motifs as the other twelve, or no design at all.

Section two provides essential contextual information regarding the *xunren* of Leigudun M1 and looks broadly at the twenty-one women themselves. I analyze the women as a collective group, and then divide the group into two groups based on the area of entombment and job from the eastern chamber versus the western chamber. Of particular importance in this evaluation is table 1. *Table of the Sex, Age, and Height of the Xunren, and their Grave Goods*, providing information on coffin location (East versus West), estimated age of the women, and grave goods provided. Within this analysis, I use both textual and archaeological evidence to elucidate the social status and relationship of the female *xunren* with coffin design and presence of windows.

Lastly, in the third main section, I look at cosmology and literature on ritual as dictated by the society at the time. This is to help understand these unique instances of numerous female sacrifices provided with lacquered coffins and that twelve women had a portal design closely resembling the primary tomb occupant's inner coffin has more meaning than first believed.



## 1. Previous Scholarship

Generally, “ancient writings about women often seem perplexingly inconsistent,” especially in the case of ancient China, according to Brett Hinsch.<sup>9</sup> Women in ancient Chinese literature are essentially treated in one of three ways. They are either completely ignored, praised as a virtuous woman and wife (and thus object/property of a man to be traded as needed), or vilified as influencing evil in the hearts of men (especially in terms of governance of state or downfall of a dynasty).

There is a significant void in scholarship on the female sacrifices at the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng. Mark Edwards Lewis aptly emphasizes that scholarship on the women’s coffins of Leigudun M1 and their soul portal window motifs are consistently glossed over despite the historical and ritualistic importance.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to Marquis Yi, scholarship on the *xunren* within tomb Leigudun M1 since its excavation in 1978, emphasizes the glaring need for more in-depth research and clarification. The scholarship displays a lack of interest in the female sacrifices in the tomb of Marquis Yi in comparison to the well preserved and opulently designed bronze objects. This is prevalent in the inconsistent, unclarified, or even incorrect number count within western publications, including ranges of thirteen to twenty-three women. By carefully examining the lacquer coffin designs, this study sheds new light on the meaning and value of these coffin soul portals and their relationship to the women and Marquis Yi in the afterlife.

The primary issue found through collecting bibliographic material for this research is the lack of new scholarship for tomb Leigudun M1 in the last ten years. The majority of research during the thirty years after the tomb’s discovery fixates on the stunning musical instruments

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<sup>9</sup> Brett Hinsch, “Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era,” 99.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Edward Lewis. “Chapter 2 The Household: Household and Tomb.” In *The Construction of Space in Early China*, 119-33. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006. 129.

found within the tomb, such as the famous rack of sixty-five bronze bells and audio analysis.<sup>11</sup> Within the musical research on the tomb, there are glimpses of useful information on other aspects, including the reasonably impressive double coffin designs. A secondary issue with studying these coffins that restricts this research is only a select few coffins are visually documented and published in the available scholarship. Three identifiable coffins, West Coffin 10, East Coffin 3, and West Coffin 3, (fig. 8) are the most frequently cited, most likely due to their lacquer patterning. This is despite all others containing lacquer design and twelve coffins containing the unique portal designs.

The sources of scholarship used within the scope of this research paper are restricted to what information is available from adjacent sources. Scholars like Tan Weisi, Bonnie Cheng, Ying Yong, Gulong Lai, among many others work on funerary developments of Bronze Age China. Tan Weisi in particular is the main archaeologist of tomb Leigudun M1 and has conducted measurement, material analysis, and cataloging of the coffins and burial goods. Both Bonnie Cheng and Ying Yong perform critical analysis on funerary developments and distinctions in burial locations and burial goods within the general period of the Warring States. Gulong Lai on the other hand examines funerary practices related to the development of afterlife practice over time. But Lai favors highlighting famous or unique tombs, such as the tomb of Zeng Hou Yi, as a foil.

Furthermore, information on women's lives and their roles in the Warring States period are minimal. Female heroic behaviors and characters, elite members, and commoners were

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<sup>11</sup> Lothar von Falkenhausen. *Ritual Music in Bronze Age China: An Archaeological Perspective*. ProQuest Dissertation Publishing, Harvard University, 1988. See also 湖北省博物馆编 = Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng : Ritual-and-music Civilization in the Early Warring States Period / Hubei Provincial Museum, and 湖北省博物馆. 曾侯乙墓 : 战国早期的礼乐文明. Di 1 Ban ed. Changjiang Zhong You Wen Ming Zhi Lü = a Journey to Mid-Yangtze River Civilization. Beijing: Wen Wu Chu Ban She, 2007.

recorded and frequently used as an educational role model for women during the late Bronze Age to control of chaos (and thus women).<sup>12</sup> However, it has been established that men wrote most of these records. Lai even discusses the skewed viewpoint of the available texts since they were recorded by, “small, literate, almost exclusively male and certainly atypical professionalized subgroups.”<sup>13</sup>

Another problematic issue is that the majority of what we know of the state of Zeng comes from the southern bordering Chu Kingdom due to their political ties, despite the Zeng being culturally different and distinct from the Chu.<sup>14</sup> The lack of cultural context, indirect secondary sources plagues all research on the state of Zeng. Alain Thote, noted archaeologist and art historian of Bronze Age China, amplifies this explicit issue on the lack of available necessary contextual materials: “on the basis of the limited number of artifacts and texts presently available to us, we cannot be certain that the concepts described in early Chinese texts can be neatly linked to images such as those painted on the inner coffin from Leigudun.”<sup>15</sup> So even at best, relying on the limited archaeological and literary evidence leaves the majority of interpretation up to speculation. Nevertheless, these few artifacts and excavated texts that are available cannot be wholly ignored either and needs a constant reassessment moving forward with each new excavated discovery.

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<sup>12</sup> Fang Xiangshu, “Construction of Womanhood in Confucian Texts for Girls,” in *CS Canada Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2012, 78-82. One example from the Early Han dynasty (202 B.C.-9 A.D.) compiled by Liu Xiang (79-8B.C.) was *Lienü Zhuan – Biographies of Exemplary Women*. This is the earliest book devoted to providing examples of morality for young girls to follow. Some other examples of promoted Confucian material available for women ranging from the Eastern Han to the Ming dynasties were the *Four Books for Women: The Admonitions for Women*, the *Women’s Analects*, the *Domestic Lessons*, and the *Sketch of a Model for Women*. However, these come much later than the *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, but most likely used this earliest literature as a guide.

<sup>13</sup> Lai, “Introduction,” in *Excavating the Afterlife*, 12.

<sup>14</sup> For further discussion on the differentiation between Zeng and Chu, see Beichen Chen, “Chapter IV Marquis Yi’s Period. 4. How the Zeng Differ from Chu,” in *Cultural Interactions during the Zhou Period (c. 1000-350 BC). a Study of Networks from the Suizao Corridor*. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2019. 119-121.

<sup>15</sup> Alain Thote, “Double Coffin of Leigudun Tomb No. 1,” edited by Thomas Lawton in *New Perspectives on Chu Culture during the Eastern Zhou Period*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1991. 39.

Initial research also shows that when scholars (e.g. Alain Thote, Robert Thorp, Lothar Falkenhausen, Mark E. Lewis, and others) write about the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng's design program, they merely discuss the prominent window motif and the women with no more than a passing mention or short entry.<sup>16</sup> Lothar Falkenhausen, one of the top researchers for the tomb of Marquis Yi when it relates to the bronze musical instruments, appears to be one of the only scholars that write about the windows somewhat at length.<sup>17</sup> Thote tends to emphasize that the unique lacquer designs present throughout this tomb, especially on the coffins, are a reflection of the development of moving away from re-using bronze objects, but still is highly reflective of the commonality of ritual bronze designs during the Warring States period.<sup>18</sup> However, through small bits of commentary in *New Perspectives on Chu Culture during the Eastern Zhou Period*, it seems like both Falkenhausen and Thote repeatedly come back to the coffin and window motif and the important meaning behind the lacquerware objects, but skirt around seeking the answer to the portal's real existence within the tomb.<sup>19</sup>

Even Thote notes the importance of the sacrificial victims' coffins designs in his study on the Marquis Yi's double coffin. Thote states that, "twelve out of the twenty-one coffins of sacrificial victims excavated from Tomb No. 1 at Leigudun have a window as the only identifiable motif among very crude geometric decoration."<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Lai mentions the women's coffins were painted with, "doors or windows, indicating that the souls could move within the confines of the

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<sup>16</sup> Thote, "Chinese Coffins from the First Millennium B.C." 28. See also Thote, "Shang and Zhou Funeral Practices." 133, 135, 136. See also Thorpe. "The Sui Xian Tomb". See also Lai. "The Dead Who Would Not Be Ancestors." 25-53., See also Lewis, "Chapter 2 The Household: Household and Tomb." 119.

<sup>17</sup> Falkenhausen, *Ritual Music in Bronze Age China: An Archaeological Perspective*. 1988.

<sup>18</sup> Elsley Zeitlyn Lecture on Chinese Archaeology and Culture, Artists and Craftsmen in the Late Bronze Age of China (Eighth to Third Centuries BC): Art in Transition, Alain Thote, British Academy. *2007 Lectures. Proceedings of the British Academy*; 154. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 220.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Lawton, and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. "Discussions," in *New Perspectives on Chu Culture during the Eastern Zhou Period*. Washington, D.C.: Princeton, N.J.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; Princeton University Press, 1991. 173-175.

<sup>20</sup> Thote, "The Double Coffin of Leigudun Tomb No. 1," 36.

tomb space.”<sup>21</sup> Here is where Lai notes that other elite Chu tombs also have a similar structural/architectural detail, “either actual or painted on the panels that divided the interior. These real and imagined passageways suggest the autonomous existence of the soul in the tomb.”<sup>22</sup> So far, this is a brief acknowledgment of the significance of the female sacrifices and any correlation to design, but inquiry tends to stop there. Thote’s statement that twelve of the *xunren*’s coffins display a particular window design as the only clearly identifiable and consistent design with many objects throughout the tomb should signify there is more considerable significance at work.

Falkenhausen and Thote stop short of claiming that the windows and doors possibly represent a house for the afterlife, due to a perceived lack of context. This claim has been proven not to be the case as there are multiple examples from the late Warring States to the Han Dynasty of the evolution of the tomb as a representation of a house, representational portals, and eventually, even the coffins developing low relief carved half-open doors.<sup>23</sup> There is even evidence of a model house roofed structure made of bronze with inlaid gold cloud scroll patterns, three walls, windows (that look very similar in style to Marquis Yi’s windows), and a colonnaded side that show nude female performers inside a barren room from 500 B.C excavated

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<sup>21</sup> Lai, “The Transformation of Burial Space,” 74. See also, Wu Hung, “The Art and Architecture of the Warring States Period,” 721-723; Huang Xiaofen, *Han mu de kaoguxue yanjiu*, 65-69.

<sup>22</sup> Lai, “The Transformation of Burial Space,” 74. See also; Wang Lihua, “Shilun Chu mu muguo zhong de menchuangjiegou.”306-17; Wu, “The Art and Architecture of the Warring States Period,” 723.

<sup>23</sup> See also, Lan Yiu, “Ch 1: Introduction,” in *Archaeological Manifestations of Rank and Status, The Wooden Chamber Tombs in the Mid Yangzi Region (206 B.C. – A.D. 25)*, ProQuest Dissertation and Thesis, 2015. 23. There are claims that the motif of the tomb as a representation of a house originated from the Chu culture, of which the Zeng frequently dealt with. These tombs are located at Jiangling, Xinyang, and Changsha. We also see examples of carved funerary portals as seen on the jade burial suit of the Han dynasty Prince Liu Sheng of Zongshan. There is a hole at the top of the jade helmet mask surmised for the soul to pass through.

at Potang, Shaoxing, in Zhejiang.<sup>24</sup> However, scholars are still reluctant to declare what the real purpose of the windows/portals are in this tomb, only their assumed nature and purpose.<sup>25</sup>

Mark Lewis describes the assumption that the tomb is like a house with an emphasis on the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng, using the portals, which he argues illustrates this by the, “iconographic program on the inner coffin of the tomb’s occupant, on which are painted windows, doors, and armed hybrid creatures as gatekeepers. The coffins of some sacrificial victims also have windows painted on them.”<sup>26</sup> But other than this, it seems to be only surmised that the windows are possibly for the occupant’s soul, acting as a form of communication and movement in the afterlife, and within a few sentences and then further inquiry stops there. Falkenhausen and Thote’s hesitation is justified, but the possibility of the concept of “house” for afterlife eternity should be expanded as yet another type of aid or guide for the souls of not only the intended tomb occupant, but also perhaps for the accompanying sacrifices as well, which is where this research fills in this noted gap.

Tan Weisi excavated Leigudun M1 and has produced multiple publications on the tomb of the Marquis Yi of Zeng. Weisi published *Zeng Hou Yi mu* (曾侯乙墓 / 谭维四著) in 2001 and made available data on the twenty-one women and their coffins of Leigudun M1.<sup>27</sup> Both Tan Weisi, the archaeologist and curator, and Wang Yeqiu, then director of the State Administration

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<sup>24</sup> Lothar von Falkenhausen, “The Waning of the Bronze Age,” in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 454-456.

<sup>25</sup> Lawton, “Discussions,” in *New Perspectives on Chu Culture*. 173.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis, “Chapter 2 The Household: Household and Tomb.” 119.

<sup>27</sup> Weisi. *Zeng Hou Yi Mu*, 2001. See Also; 谭维四著, and 谭维四. 战国王陵 : 曾侯乙墓. Qin Li Kao Gu. Hangzhou: Zhejiang wen yi chu ban she, 2012. See Also; Tan, Weisi. *Zeng Houyi Mu*. Zhongguo Zhongda Kaogu Faju eji. Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi Sanlian shudian, 2004. See Also; 谭维四著, and 谭维四. 乐宫之王 : 曾侯乙墓考古大发现. Di 1 baned. Gu Dai Wen Ming Tan Suo Zhi Lü Cong Shu. Hangzhou Shi: Zhejiang wen yi chu ban she, 2002. See Also; Chen, Cheng-Yih., Tan, Weisi, and Shu, Zhimei. *Two-tone Set-bells of Marquis Yi*. Wéi-K ūng Books on the History of Science and Technology in East Asia. Singapore ; River Edge, NJ: World Scientific, 1994.

of Cultural Heritage, expressed hope through this volume that more in depth research would be conducted on the deceased in the tomb.<sup>28</sup> Archaeological data such as the women's estimated ages, height, and interior and exterior coffin wall thickness is presented through illustrations and tables and historical analysis, along with a wealth of additional data from the tomb excavation.<sup>29</sup> One figure of note (fig. 6) depicted examples of three of the best examples of women's coffins, a selection of coffins from east and west, all with portal designs. This image proves both head, foot and one side view of the coffin designs, providing invaluable visual data for art historical analysis. The data and figures from this work provide a foundation to the data in my research.

Bonnie Cheng highlights in *Fabricating Life out of Death: Sixth-century Funerary monuments and the negotiation of cultural traditions*, published in 2003, parallels in multiple cultural funerary developments in the sixth century BCE. She highlights the case of Leigudun M1 and Marquis Yi in that there is a difference between, "the bodies of eight female entertainers in the eastern (burial) chamber," and the, "thirteen female attendants (in eleven coffins) in the western chamber of his tomb by virtue of their context within the burial."<sup>30</sup> Cheng theorizes a differentiation of the women's role based on their lacquer objects, specifically the presence or absence of musical instruments, rather than their coffins. She states that "all were buried in painted lacquer coffins, but only the eastern chamber contained lacquered instruments. Bodies in the western chamber were buried en masse without instruments and thought to be female attendants or the Marquis' concubines."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Weisi, "Chapter 3.3.1. Research on the detection and burial of Tartar skeletons," 80.

<sup>29</sup> Weisi, "Chapter 1.3.1. Basic Information of tombs., Figure 20. Funeral coffin line drawing of the tomb of Zenghou Yi," 34.

<sup>30</sup> Bonnie Cheng, *Fabricating life out of death: Sixth century funerary monuments and the negotiation of cultural traditions*, The university of Chicago, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2003. 35. One issue here is the inconsistency of her count of the coffins in the western chamber, which should have numbered to thirteen coffins.

<sup>31</sup> Cheng, *Fabricating Life out of Death*, 35-36.

Ying Yong compares a 600-year time span of elite female burials in combination with their spouses from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C in *Ancient Chinese marriage and statecraft in a Zhou vassal state: Elite female burials of the Jin State* in 2004.<sup>32</sup> The Jin state possesses a unique quality as a buffer state, being considered by other states as an outlier or “barbarian” culture similar to the Zeng (Jin also shared a boarder with Zeng). Yong’s study of the Jin culture argued that the burial placement of wives/women and their social status changing through time in the Jin culture can be studied through burial goods such as jade. The majority of burials showed the wives to be buried either to the left of their husbands in a joint burial or to the east, west, or north, never south. Jades for both sexes indicated status, the more they had and the more refined they were, the higher status they claim to be.

One of Guolong Lai’s most recently published works in 2015, *Excavating the Afterlife: the Archaeology of Early Chinese Religion* is a crucial volume. Lai analyzes theories and discussions on sacrifice, human sacrifice, and the *xunren*. He frequently brings into discussions the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng and its unique status as a well-preserved tomb with multiple *xunren* to illustrate early theories on ancient Chinese beliefs in the afterlife before currently available excavated literature. Lai uses the theoretical framework of Jaques Maquet (1919-2013), a noted Belgian anthropologist, to apply to his work on funerary changes over time. Maquet developed a theory on distinguishing what can be considered “signs” of objects to aid in interpreting the functions that, “transcends culture.”<sup>33</sup> Lai outlines Maquet’s ways of reading in 5 parts: “1. As instruments, 2. As symbols, 3. As images, 4. As indicators. 5. As referents.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ying Yong. "Ancient Chinese Marriage and Statecraft in a Zhou Vassal State: Elite Female Burials of the Jin State." Order No. 3150477, University of Pittsburgh, 2004.

<sup>33</sup> Lai, "Introduction," *Excavating the Afterlife*, 15.

<sup>34</sup> Lai, "Introduction," *Excavating the Afterlife*, 15. See also, Jaques Maquet, "Objects as Instruments, Objects as Signs," in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, ed. Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993. 39.



Maquet's semiotic approach seeks to fill the gaps caused by the available scholarship on texts in that written sources (or cultural context) become more significant, "when moving from instrument to referent," or simplified from general object to specific meaning of a symbol or sign.<sup>35</sup> Applying this theory to the scope of this paper, then the generalized object is the sacrifices coffins, and the meaning of the design on the coffins helps inform the purpose of the coffins.

Surprisingly, no further inquiry or in-depth study has yet been conducted, especially with a large number of women in the tomb, each with a coffin, and twelve with distinct window designs. Previous studies disregard the apparent connection between the women, the designs on their coffins, their grave goods, and their locations within the tomb in correlation with important proximity to the main tomb occupant. This study attempts to establish a basis of knowledge for further research and inquiry into the women of Leigudun M1.

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<sup>35</sup> Lai, "Introduction," *Excavating the Afterlife*, 15.

## **2. Complications in the Warring States Period, Zeng State, and the Tomb of Marquis Yi**

Before moving forward, I would like to address and define human sacrifice in ancient China, typically called a *renxing*, versus a different kind of sacrifice, which can sometimes be seen as voluntary or willing, known as *xunren/renxun*.<sup>36</sup> Traditionally what is known as *renxing* is when the victims were forcefully killed, were commonly slaves or prisoners of war (but was not limited to these), and were buried in mass pits or sacrificial refuse pits. This form of sacrifice is typically seen in earlier tombs, especially in the Shang dynasty (1600-1046 BCE). *Renxing* sacrifice is rarely recorded during the Warring States period and this practice does not seem to be present in the tomb of Marquis Yi, at least by definition. In the case of *xunren*, while some scholars tend to identify that these people are willing and call them “companions in death”, it is more probable that the act represents submitting to the choice made by someone else, usually a head family male. The females interred in the tomb of Marquis Yi are considered *xunren* or “followers/companions” in death. While *xunren* are not exclusively identified as females, we see an overwhelming ratio of females to males. Regardless of the terminology employed, it is clear that the *xunren* are sacrificial victims.

The main issue in researching the tomb of Marquis Yi is that it was excavated in a flooded state, however, since the tomb is divided into rooms with small doors, objects presumably stayed relatively close to their relative original areas of placement. All coffins aside from Marquis Yi’s coffin floated (his outer coffin has a superstructure of bronze, weighing his coffins down). The flooding was an unavoidable effect of the rising water table in the area. Due to wood’s buoyancy, all female coffins floated in the chamber, their lids were separated from

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<sup>36</sup> To see a further discussion on the concepts on *rensheng* (*renxing*) and *renxun*, see Yong. “III. 4.1. *Rensheng* and *Renxun*,” in *Ancient Chinese Marriage and Statecraft in a Zhou Vassal State: Elite Female Burials of the Jin State*. 53.

their bases, and four of the corpses of the *xunren* were also displaced out of their coffins (fig. 4., 5.).<sup>37</sup>

The accurate identification of the main tomb occupant of Leigudun M1 is due to an inscription on the only non-matching bronze cast *bo* bell out of sixty-five *bianzong* bells.<sup>38</sup> This *bo* bell is a sacrificial vessel gifted by King Hui of Chu 楚惠王 (488-432 BCE) in the 56<sup>th</sup> year of his reign in 433 BCE to the recently deceased feudal King of the state of Zeng. The inscription is as follows, “Zeng Hou Yi zuo chi yong Zhong” or, “Made for the eternal use of the Marquis Yi of Zeng.”<sup>39</sup> Beichen Chen emphasizes that with the discovery of the tomb of Marquis Yi and the remarkably well-preserved unique and lavish artifacts found within, reassessment of the Zeng state and its political relationships with the Chu was necessary.<sup>40</sup>

An added layer of confusion is the ongoing debate on the morphing identity of the Zeng state over time. To complicate matters, the Zeng state has its roots in the Zhou’s royal lineage.<sup>41</sup> It has been suggested that the Zeng state was either originally known as the Sui state or possibly known by both names of Sui and Zeng.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the Zeng state has a close relationship with the Chu kingdom for several centuries. What makes up the Zeng state, Sui, Chu, Zhou, is

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<sup>37</sup> Robert L. Thorpe, Brief Excavation Report of the Tomb of the Marquis Yi of Zeng at Sui Xian, Hubei,” in *Chinese Studies in Archaeology* 1, no.3, 1979. 9.

<sup>38</sup> Lothar von Falkenhausen, “The Origins and Spread of Bo,” in *Suspended Music: Chime-Bells in the Culture of Bronze Age China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 168-170. *Bo* style bells are classified as a simplistic oval-shaped bell hung from suspension loops. *Bianzhong* bells are a graduated set of suspended bells with an elongated handle, and a widened concave rim, when struck with a mallet in specific areas, creates two separate tones. In Marquis Yi’s case, his set of bells can range five octaves and is still playable today.

<sup>39</sup> Thorpe, “Brief Excavation Report of the Tomb of the Marquis Yi of Zeng at Sui Xian, Hubei,” 26. See also Thorpe, *The Sui Xian Tomb*, 68. The full text on the Bo bell inscription is: “In the year of the King’s fifty-sixth sacrificial cycle, (he) returned from Xiyang. King Xiongzhang of Chu made ritual vessels for the ancestral temple of Marquis Yi of Zeng and placed them at Xiyang to be kept for his eternal use.”

<sup>40</sup> Chen, “Chapter IV Marquis Yi’s Period,” 96.

<sup>41</sup> Li Min, “Rise of the Guanzhong Basin,” in *Social memory and State Formation in Early China*, 368. And “Central Domain Under Siege: Challenging the Zhou,” in *Social memory and State Formation in Early China*, 389. This was most likely a group of defected Shang dynasty elite after its collapse, specifically through Lord Nangong and Zhou conquest.

<sup>42</sup> Thorp, “The Sui Xian Tomb: Rethinking the Fifth Century”, 71.

multilayered and what Li Min would call a, “plurality of cultural traditions,” which creates shared, “social memories.”<sup>43</sup> The Zeng state was never a large nor extremely powerful polity despite the lavish wealth of their tombs. Concerning the cemeteries of their lords, they are noted to be, “found within an area of approximately 10 kilometers of Sui-zhou,” and strategically placed amongst several profitable resources such as copper.<sup>44</sup> Min highlights the overarching trend of Zeng cemeteries and tombs and their choice of blending cultures in that, “mixed mortuary context of the Zeng lords deviates from classical Zhou traditions, which highlights the flexibility in the social construction of elite persona during the period of dramatic political change.”<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, by the fifth century BCE, funerary rules and regulations are consistently violated throughout multiple states due to the lack of regulation and enforcement by local government. This decentralization allowed for variances in sumptuary grave goods, including human sacrifice, or *xunren*, to occur.<sup>46</sup>

South of the small feudal state of Zeng, the vast Chu State stretched from the Yangtze River region to the Huai River. The state of Chu was considered one of the five most significant hegemonies of the Warring States period with a history that spans back to the Shang and Western Zhou dynasties.<sup>47</sup> The Zeng State was allowed to exist as a pseudo-independent state due to its complicated historical relationship with Chu royalty. During the Wu invasion of 506 BCE King Zhao of Chu, King Hui’s father, fled to the Zeng State for refuge and safety.<sup>48</sup> Ever since, the Chu would honor the Zeng State and its ruler until the later Warring States period when the Chu

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<sup>43</sup> Min, “Frames of Reference: Classifications of Space,” in *Social memory and State Formation in Early China*, 29.

<sup>44</sup> Min, “Rise of the Guanzhong Basin,” 368.

<sup>45</sup> Min, “Rise of the Guanzhong Basin,” 368.

<sup>46</sup> Yong. “V.2. Temporal Changes in Tomb Appointment,” in *Ancient Chinese Marriage and Statecraft in a Zhou Vassal State: Elite Female Burials of the Jin State*. 117.

<sup>47</sup> Chen, “Chapter IV Marquis Yi’s Period, 2. The State of Chu,” in *Cultural Interactions during the Zhou Period (c. 1000-350 BC). a Study of Networks from the Suizao Corridor*. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2019.

<sup>48</sup> Min. *Social Memory and State Formation in Early China*. 390.

annexed the Zeng, most likely after these ties waned due to warfare. In these circumstances, it allowed Marquis Yi of Zeng to continue with the same level of social rank he had before the bond. It also allowed his sumptuous burial for a marquis to reflect the status of a feudal king. Li Feng supports this theory in *Early China, a Social and Cultural History*. In the chapter “The Age of Territorial States: Warring States Politics and Institutions” he states:

In general, the Warring States kings were more powerful than the rulers of the Spring and Autumn period, not measured by their title “King” (*Wang*) in contrast to the early “Duke” (*Gong*) as a ruler of the state, and not measured by the size of armies that they could command, but by the degree of their grasp on the power within the power structure of the state.<sup>49</sup>

Using the term marquis for Zeng Hou Yi is an interesting choice of translation as marquis in terms of rank is low. He has also been occasionally referred to as Duke Yi, though both Duke and Marquis seem inconsistent with Zeng Hou Yi’s image of himself in the afterlife. Zeng Hou Yi was more on the rank of a small state King or monarch, as many state leaders viewed themselves at the time, showing this through the abundant wealth of the tomb.<sup>50</sup>

War and violence severely changed funerary practices and attitudes towards death during the Warring States period, especially concerning the emerging belief that two souls that leave the body after death, the *hun* and *po*.<sup>51</sup> The *hun* soul is destined to make a journey in the afterlife, whereas the *po* soul is destined to live out eternity within the tomb, as long as the tomb goes undisturbed. The two souls together (known as *hunpo*) must have boundaries, a form of directions, and a nonviolent death; otherwise, danger befalls them in their afterlife journey and

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<sup>49</sup> Li Feng, “9: The age of territorial states: Warring States Politics and Institutions (480-221 BC),” in *Early China: A Social and Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 195.

<sup>50</sup> Tan Weisi, “Discovery of Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng,” in *Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng: ritual-and-music Civilization in the Early Warring States Period*, 17.

<sup>51</sup> Ying-Shih Yü, ““O Soul, Come Back!” A Study in The Changing Conceptions of The Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China.” in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47, no. 2 (1987): 363-95. See also, Qinghua Guo, “Tomb Architecture of Dynastic China: Old and New Questions.” in *Architectural History* 47 (2004): 21.

eternal repose, and the spirits can become vengeful ghosts (*gui*).<sup>52</sup> Any person that died a violent death could not become a venerated ancestor and had to be dealt with or exorcised. Along with wandering and vengeful souls, it has been recorded that spirits would appear in the human earthly realm when things would go wrong and when they needed assistance. One such example could be when their tomb or coffin was flooded due to incorrect divination of burial placement.<sup>53</sup> Tomb Leigudun M1, is one of, if not the first, tombs where the evidence suggests that the belief in soul dualism originates much further back than previously recorded through ancient texts.

Currently, *hunpo* soul dualism is recognized to have at least existed by the Han dynasty based on literary sources. In the sixth or fifth century BCE, in *Zuo's Narratives*, Aristocrat Zichan of Zheng (580-522 BCE) made an entry about ghosts or souls of man and how they come to be:<sup>54</sup>

Man at his birth undergoes a transformation, and this is called 'po'. As soon as the *po* has taken form, it also contains a yang part which is called the 'hun'. If he can consume a great amount of the vigorous essence (*jing*) of things, then his *hun* and *po* will be strong. Thus, his essence will become supple, and his spirit (*shen*) luminous.<sup>55</sup>

In life, the dual souls (*hunpo*) someone carried with them were bound to their waking life, but while asleep, the physical ties would loosen, and the *hun* soul could wander in an astral projection type manner. After death, the souls (*hunpo*) were freed from their physical bindings

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<sup>52</sup> See Ying-Shih Yü "'O Soul, Come Back!'" 363-95. See Also: Guolong Lai, "The Dead Who Would Not Be Ancestors," in *Excavating the Afterlife: The Archaeology of Early Chinese Religion*. University of Washington Press, 2015. 28, 44. Hun can translate to "Cloud soul" and can refer to the ethereal soul. Po translates to "White soul" or "bright light" and can also refer to as the corporeal soul. The concept of the hun soul is believed to possibly originate in the south, possibly in the Chu kingdom region.

<sup>53</sup> Lewis, "Chapter 2 The Household: Household and Tomb," in *The Construction of Space in Early China* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 124.

<sup>54</sup> Many translated texts seem to not make a clear distinction at times between the usage of the words "ghost" and the word "souls". I am unsure if they are interchangeable or if certain actions make a "soul" into a "ghost" or possible translation confusion.

<sup>55</sup> Shiyuan Chen, "Introduction," introduction to *Wandering Spirits: Chen Shiyuan's Encyclopedia of Dreams* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2008), 7.

and were not limited by solid walls but had to be guided safely due to a whole realm of spiritual dangers.<sup>56</sup> Later on *yin yang* principles were included in the conceptualization of *hunpo*. In the majority of literature on *hunpo*, it focuses on the male's souls, and there is no available evidence that *hunpo* is limited to just males.

The distinctive soul portals or windows featured in tomb Leigudun M1 is unseen in other tombs until the middle Warring States period (fig. 3). Interpreted as access points from chamber to chamber, the portals only to allow the *po* soul to wander the tomb in the afterlife. The Marquis Yi's nested double coffin has a carved exterior portal on the outer coffin and a painted window and doors on the inner coffin, and significantly, at least twelve female *xunren*'s coffins also have a similar painted empty window motif.<sup>57</sup> Four carved portals, three in the timber walls and one on the outer coffin, connect the tomb entirely, similar to the function of a standard passageway creating freedom of movement possibly reflective of a home in life.<sup>58</sup>

The advent and advancement of written language and philosophical thought and discussion during the deadly Warring States period brought about essential discussions of the concept of self, of *qi*, and what happens after death.<sup>59</sup> Burials were often one of the easiest ways to display elite power and wealth. For the elite of the time, an ideal death was when they lived a full long life and died of old age in the comfort of their own home.<sup>60</sup> By providing sumptuous

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<sup>56</sup> Lai, *Excavating the Afterlife*, 28. The concept of the wandering or vengeful souls evolved over the Eastern Zhou period and can consist of different types of deaths to cause an unrestful afterlife. Several types of this are spirits who died without posterity (*juewuhouzhe* 絕無後者), died a violent death (*quangsi* 強死), and died by a weapon or in battle (*bingsi* 兵死).

<sup>57</sup> Thorpe, "Brief Excavation Report," 7. See also Alain Thote, "Double Coffin of Leigudun Tomb No. 1: Iconographic Sources and Related Problems," ed Thomas Lawton, in *New Perspectives on Chu Culture during the Eastern Zhou Period*, Princeton NJ, 1991, 36.

<sup>58</sup> Alain Thote, *Shang And Zhou Funeral Practices: Interpretation Of Material Vestiges*, 135. See also Thote, "Chinese Coffins from the First Millenium B.C. and Early Images of the Afterworld." in *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 61-62, 2012, 28.

<sup>59</sup> *Qi* is roughly translated into life essence, or life energy and has in some instances been translated into "vapors". *Qi* can also be related to spirit concepts.

<sup>60</sup> Lai, *Excavating the Afterlife*, 36.

burials and tombs reminiscent of a home or palace, they were able to avoid the superstition of the soul of the dead coming back to haunt the living because of an improper death or burial.

## 2.1 Tomb Leigudun M1 Layout and Materials

Lai notably refer to the tomb of Marquis Yi's as a palace for the afterlife, more so than an eternal home.<sup>61</sup> This is suggested by the particular layout of the tomb having the central chamber primarily for ceremonies and musical performance. Whether the tomb is considered a home or a palace, these are emulations of dwellings, redesigned for a different afterlife realm. Elements of a palace-like dwelling in life required divisions of space in accordance with propriety and purpose concerning sex. For example, "a rulers dwelling was subdivided into a warren of discrete spaces, segregating his women from one another."<sup>62</sup>

Commonly for Chu tombs, regardless of biological sex of the tomb occupant, it was divided into either unequal or symmetrical room compartments of five. The center chamber of Chu tombs usually contains the main tomb occupants coffin, usually nested, such as the tomb of Shao Tuo (death ca. 316 BCE) at Baoshan, Jingmen city, Hubei province.<sup>63</sup> Tomb layout and coffin layering directly correlates to rank, as Shao Tuo was a Chu official in the rank similar to the title of Minister or *zuoyin*.<sup>64</sup> Chu tombs and their compartments tended to be much smaller than Marquis Yi's and would all be considered rooms rather than houses. In earlier Chu tombs, due to the scale of these rooms not being life size, the tomb was, "conceived as a way station, a liminal place from which the soul would journey to a cosmic destination."<sup>65</sup> In the case of the polity of Zeng, the most consistent tomb structure is a cruciform-shape surrounding a centralized

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<sup>61</sup> Lai, "The Transformation of Burial Space," 74.

<sup>62</sup> Brett Hinsch, "Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era," 84.

<sup>63</sup> Lai, "The Transformation of Burial Space," 74. 76.

<sup>64</sup> Susan Weld, "6: Chu Law in Action: Legal Documents from Tomb 2 at Baoshan," ed by Constance A. Cook, John S. Major, in *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China*, 2004. 77-78

<sup>65</sup> Lai, "The Transformation of Burial Space," 76.



chamber, which would consist of the deceased and his primary coffin. This is very similar to the design of the Chu tombs and was most likely a borrowed or shared element of their connective cultures.

Marquis Yi's tomb chamber diverges from tradition and is divided into four chambers irregularly placed and sized with three portals connecting it entirely together (fig. 3).<sup>66</sup> This tomb, because of its vertical style pit construction, was intended to be circulated by the dead in the afterlife and not to be accessed by the living once the deceased was entombed. Later, we see evidence of the development of the horizontal chamber style tomb beginning to become popular, where it was intended to be entered for sacrificial purposes even after the dead were entombed.<sup>67</sup> The central chamber is named the ceremonial hall and contains no human remains. It is primarily for musical performance and ritual with the intent that the female *xunren* would perform that function and exist within that space in the afterlife. The smallest northern chamber is known as the armory chamber, containing evidence of thirteen suits of armor, weaponry, and chariot fittings. The east chamber was Marquis Yi's private chamber, where eight of the female *xunren* were interred along with lacquered musical instruments, toiletry chests with personal belongings, objects for daily use, and a dog. The west chamber historically has no name but has been referred to as his "harem" chamber and contains 13 female sacrifices, their coffins, and one prominent beautifully lacquered black and red mandarin duck vessel with musical performance imagery (drummers, bells, and dancers) are painted on the sides. Note that the use of the term "harem" is a western orientalist concept that does not accurately portray the relationships these women may have had with Marquis Yi.

## 2.2 Monetary Value of Tomb Objects

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<sup>66</sup> Thorpe, Brief Excavation Report, 4.

<sup>67</sup> Lai, "The Transformation of Burial Space," 80-89.

The construction of tombs and burial objects was a costly and timely endeavor, and with the costly addition of *xunren*, providing them lacquered goods like coffins should be considered. For example, lacquer during the Warring States period was significantly more time consuming and sometimes considered more expensive than bronze, though bronze objects continued to be symbols of rank. Though to counter this point, Wu Hung discusses debates and doubt about the increase in the presence of lacquered objects and high value particularly in Warring States tombs due to their frequent presence and increase in availability in both high- and middle-status tombs.<sup>68</sup> The process of making lacquered objects was also hazardous and painstaking to complete. Each layer of lacquer was applied and then dried and usually took more than 100 layers, and sometimes 300 layers or more, to complete a design or color to a shining luster. The large number of lacquered objects found in the tomb of Marquis Yi and the fact that his *xunren* were given fully lacquered and designed coffins speaks to several issues. Levels of design refinement on each of the *xunren*'s coffin could also hint at the possible costliness. One example of a refined coffin crafted with care and cherished is the Marquis Yi's inner coffin, made and purchased well before the Marquis death.

Materials such as lacquered wood, jade, gold, stone, and bronze display the Marquis wealth of the Zeng State, which he wanted to take with him to his afterlife as a miniaturized example of his domain. A few of these objects are most likely a product of his relationship and trade with the Chu state. Having a type of microcosm is not unique or unusual as we see this type of trend grow throughout the Warring States period to its end in the theorized example of the tomb Qin Si Huang Di of the Qin Empire in 221 B.C (due to its unexcavated status).<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Hung, "Art and architecture of the Warring States period." In *Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 681.

Then again, why bother providing female *xunren* with coffins and grave goods at all? Does having a coffin aid in the Warring States' afterlife and the experience undertaken in the afterlife? This may explain the reasoning behind providing coffins for the female *xunren* rather than leaving them out in the tomb on mats or burying them in shallow pits as was more common previously. The existence coffins and their portal designs are for the mobility of the soul in the afterlife.

### **3. The Soul Portals: Windows on the Women’s Coffins of Leigudun M1**

How one designs their tomb and coffin in life was vital to how they hope funerary practice would reflect continuity of life after death. In the ritual literature of the *Liji* (Book of Rites), size and quantity dictated who the person was in life: “greatness of size formed the mark [of distinction and rank]. The dimensions of palaces and apartments; the measurements of dishes and (other) articles; the thickness of the inner and outer coffins; the greatness of eminences and mounds;- these were cases in which the greatness of size was the mark.”<sup>70</sup>

My research is focused on the differentiation between the female coffins that have an empty portal window design versus the females that have a filled window design and the possible implications this may have for these souls in the afterlife. Through research, I have identified so far two portal base design types with at least five variants, as well as one possibly identified door type design with two additional door design variants in tomb Leigudun M1 so far (fig. 6-7.) Analyzing the different window types in this section will also involve examining the differentiation between coffins and their visual identifiers of window design, for example, the double coffin of Marquis Yi and the combination carved portal on the outer coffin and painted windows and doors on the inner coffin. For Marquis Yi, the portal motif is found on the south (feet), east, and west side of the inner coffin. In contrast, the north (head) has a tight pattern of interlacing creatures. An interesting distinction is that the majority of these windows are void of design, aside from several of the accompanying females’ coffins that, in some instances, are filled with design, or lack the designs entirely. It is important to note that coffins during the Warring States period especially of high society are all individualized and, “no two Warring

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<sup>70</sup> “Book VII. The Li Yun- Ceremonial Usages; Their Origin, Development, and Intention [1]:Section I,” in *The Li Ki*, Translated by James Legge, 319.

States coffins found in archeological excavations share the same decoration.”<sup>71</sup>We see this instance of individualization present in Marquis Yi’s companions coffins because, “they bear painted patterns in different configurations; even the windows painted on twelve of the coffins show varying lattice design.”<sup>72</sup>

When looking at the unique case of the tomb of Marquis Yi, the portal motif surrounds the interred dead. What is typically not discussed in the majority of literature is the variation of these portals, how they exist within the tomb, and what kinds of alternative designs exist within these forms. For instance, the majority of the painted window motifs within the tomb are all window-like, but each design is individual. They all share the same characteristics of the quartered lattice design to some degree, but aside from simple division of surface and motif repetition, the similarities diverge there. Examples of windows outside of this tomb before 433 BCE are primarily found on bronze objects. The portals in tomb Leigudun M1 are always present on the coffins themselves, in addition to the three carved portals on the timber walls.

Marquis Yi’s two coffins are most notably the finest and the most expensive of the lacquer objects within the tomb, as well as one of the most well-preserved lacquered finds of the Eastern Zhou to date. The coffins’ designs are also noted by scholars such as Thote as unique and singular within the Warring States period and, “cannot be compared with any other known example.”<sup>73</sup> Thote further emphasizes that the designs present on the inner coffin of the Marquis are entirely independent of the shape of the coffin itself, suggesting the coffin’s construction is not necessary or vital for the portal motif to exist.<sup>74</sup> Alain Thote hypothesized based on the choice of design for the inner versus the outer coffin of the Marquis that the inner coffin was

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<sup>71</sup> Wu Hung, “Art and architecture of the Warring States period.” In *Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 741.

<sup>72</sup> Hung, “Art and architecture of the Warring States period.” 741.

<sup>73</sup> Thote, “The Double Coffin of Leigudun Tomb No. 1: Iconographic Sources and Related Problems,” 23.

<sup>74</sup> Thote, “The Double Coffin of Leigudun Tomb No. 1,” 23.

painted first versus the outer coffin, which could most likely be painted afterward.<sup>75</sup> In terms of the iconographic program on the inner coffin, Thote identified over twenty patterns alone that have no precedent.<sup>76</sup> These patterns are seen throughout the tomb on all lacquer objects, with some patterns repeating on the lacquer coated armor and the female's coffins.<sup>77</sup>

The designs present on the Leigudun M1 coffins intended to function and be seen by the dead in the afterlife exclusively and demonstrate their connection to contemporary literature.<sup>78</sup> It is necessary to mention that the decoration on coffins in Leigudun M1, especially around the fifth century BCE, was highly uncommon even for high ranking and wealthy patrons.<sup>79</sup> Marquis Yi's lacquer decoration is also noted for its unique design, as Thote suggests these varied painted iconographic representations are, "not completely fixed and was still subject to change."<sup>80</sup> Thote emphasizes that representing deity like creatures, possibly represented on the sides of Marquis Yi's inner coffin, is relatively new within the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C as what is conceivably identified on multiple objects at tomb Leigudun M1.<sup>81</sup> The designs were entirely a choice for the patron to decide how their afterlife would be set up and what tools they would provide for the afterlife.

### 3.1 Female *Xunren*'s Coffins Windows Patterns and Grave Goods

For the female *xunren*, their coffins are in varying degrees of refinement of lacquer motif design. The exterior measurements of the female *xunren*'s coffins are similar in ranges of 1.90-2.0 meters in length, 0.66-0.80 meters in width, and 0.63-0.80 meters in height. Almost every

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<sup>75</sup> Thote, "The Double Coffin of Leigudun Tomb No. 1," 32.

<sup>76</sup> Thote, "The Double Coffin of Leigudun Tomb No. 1," 23.

<sup>77</sup> Whether or not any correlation study has been done with the pattern repetition throughout the tomb in these instances and if there was any relation to the purpose of the objects and the interred dead with correlating design has yet to occur to my knowledge.

<sup>78</sup> Thote, "Chinese coffins from the First millennium B.C.," 26. See also Wu Hung, "Art in Ritual Context: Rethinking Mawangdui," in *Early China* 17: 1992. 111-144.

<sup>79</sup> Thote, "Chinese coffins from the First Millennium B.C.," 32-33.

<sup>80</sup> Thote, "Chinese coffins from the First Millennium B.C.," 33.

<sup>81</sup> Thote, "Chinese coffins from the First Millennium B.C.," 33. See also: Thote, "Au-delà du monde connu: représenter les dieux.," in *Arts Asiatiques* 61, 2006. 57- 44.

exterior surface aside from the top of the lid, the bottom of the coffin, and the interior, is covered in design (fig. 8-11). While the coffins are not as refined as the work done on the inner coffin of the Marquis Yi, they all share similar visual qualities in patterns. The *xunren*'s coffins have an overall emphasis on interlacing/interlocking, geometric patterns. The line quality of the lacquer brushwork all seems consistent and uniform in its thickness. Twisting and interlacing patterns are reminiscent of writhing snakes or animals at odds. The women's coffins, on the other hand, do not show any designs of apotropaic and zoomorphic beasts consisting of phoenixes, snakes, and dragons, as well as wings, scales, and horns that appear on Marquis Yi's coffin.

Complementary design elements are present in the stark contrast of linear versus curvilinear patterns design on almost all of the women's coffins. In terms of the curvilinear design, swirls and S shapes, similar to a scrolling thunder pattern or a simplified interlaced dragon pattern seen on bronze vessels from the Shang period onward, are the primary design feature. These swirling, rolling patterns are usually crafted in vertical and horizontal variations to emphasize movement and depth. The portal windows themselves do not have much in the way of design, as stated before, some are completely devoid of it. But complex patterns, twisting and interlacing, surrounding every window. This kind of choice of design is intentional, and purposeful. Whether it involved elements of spiritual or religious belief put into a kind of artistic design canon related to the afterlife of the Warring States period has not been fully explored.

Through visual analysis of the few *xunren*'s coffins documented and published, I constructed a design typology using Marquis Yi's inner coffin as the base type (fig. 6) for comparison. There are two distinct base portal design types available, square quartered and square lattice. These two designs serve as design bases- starting points for classifying all the other similar portal designs present on the female *xunren*'s coffins. With this point established, I

was then able to study and identify visually similar types and type variants of design from available photographs and illustrations of the three most documented female coffins with portals, W.C.3, W.C. 10 and E.C.2, eastern coffin (marked as E.C.#) and west (marked as W.C.#), as seen in Figure 8. Base Type 1 appears to have more design variants than Type 2, which seems to be less frequently used throughout the tomb as well. For Type 2, it seems to be used more often for door and door like portals than an indicator of a type of window, if the Marquis Yi's inner coffin design assumptions are correct that the east and west side designs are the doors and the south design is the window. This Type 2, Variant 2 is seen on E.C.2, and found in the same chamber as Marquis Yi. This same coffin also seems to be one of the only coffins with two open portal designs on each end with a Type 1 and Type 2 variant of coffin design. The design that appears more commonly on coffins throughout the tomb are Type 1 variants of a smaller stacked square quarter portal, with the portal most commonly appearing at the top of the design. This intentional design allows for the portal "window" design to still exist while providing the craftsmen more space to fill in with decoration.

Some of the coffins like W.C.10 and E.C.3, have fully opened designed windows on one end with a lattice window, whereas others within the tomb, which seems to be more common, have one square devoid of design acting in the role of the portal (fig. 9-11). In some cases where the portal "window" design would have been, windows are filled with an interlaced motif, as shown on W.C.3(fig. 10-11). In particular, W.C.3 contains a much more crowded pictorial plane of crude geometric motifs. Though when looking closer, there are still alternating squares within the panels present divided into a quartered "window-like" design, albeit with more elaboration (like an elaborate paneled frame or screen). This lack of stylistic consistency in lacquer applique, when portraying a portal for souls to pass through as an afterlife design, leads to more questions.



One question is whether or not this design inconsistency between all of the women's twenty-one coffins was the result of local craftsmen urged into finishing designs on time for the burial. Keep in mind that the lacquer process as mentioned before is time consuming and can take several hundred layers and sometimes years to finish.<sup>82</sup> This could also explain the variances in the design motif and execution that could attribute to multiple lacquer craftsmen at different levels of training or mastery. Especially with the tomb of Marquis Yi, its contents display the wealth of his domain, having a large number of lacquer objects in itself showed his value and worth as a lord. Having lacquer objects in the tomb did not necessarily always equate to a need for finished refinement, as it most likely correlates with designing for the dead and the afterlife. This is seen in later tombs where *mingqi*, or spirit objects, were specifically designed for the afterlife. *Mingqi* were usually not as refined or intentionally not functional objects, unlike what we see in Leigudun M1. The cost of the lacquer coffins was also most likely affected by Marquis Yi's living relatives or descendants that would take over once he passes away. They could question whether or not they considered the lacquer objects such as the coffins of the women, worth time and money to finish and refine like the Marquis Yi's inner coffin. Most likely the expenditure was justified for sumptuary reasons as a symbolic display of wealth and control of his domain in life and death.

As noted, several documented examples of window-like motifs are available to study at length, W.C. 3 (age 15), W.C.10 (age 13), E.C.2. (age 26). The estimated ages of the tomb occupants were determined through archaeological analysis by examining their skeletons.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> For a further discussion on the process of lacquerware, please read Shi Xiang Wang, and Cheng Huang, *Set: Painted Ornaments Recorded Commentary (Chinese Edition)*, Life Reading Joint Publishing, 2013. (王世襄, ed., 王世襄, 1914-2009, and 黄成 of Ming Dynasty. 髹饰录解说. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998)

<sup>83</sup> The skeletal remains in the coffins were examined by Mr. Li Tianyuan of the Hubei Provincial Museum after the excavation. Interview with Mr. Hao Qin Jian on June 11th, 2020.

Notably, E.C.2. and W.C.10 have a comparatively high number of grave goods as seen in table 1, whereas W.C.3 has only one grave good recorded. Though if we compare E.C.2. and W.C. 10 with W.C.3, their designs and correlating grave goods appear to align in terms of coffin design refinement and complexity. When looking at the coffins, W.C.3 has densely packed geometric designs set up in a grid-like pattern both on the length of the coffin and the ends of the coffin. This coffin is where we see the window like formation but filled with more geometric decorative designs.

In comparison, E.C.2. (age 26) the oldest female in the tomb was found in the eastern chamber (out of eight women present in the eastern chamber) and was found with the largest amount of grave goods. Most notably, E.C.2 has evidence of two refined clear portal designs on the head and foot of the coffin, respectively. I would like to propose that one is representative of a window (the quartered lattice design), and the other is representative of a door.<sup>84</sup> The possible door is indicated with the diagonal lines from each corner of the rectangle and an arch of interlace that does not completely surround the window. The reasoning behind this proposal is the design of the portal motif, and the semi-lattice design is comparable to the window and door motif found on the inner coffin for Marquis Yi.

Furthermore, based on the evidence of the eastern placement of E.C.2, assumed to be as a personal attendant to Marquis Yi, a relatively high number of recorded grave goods, presence of careful lacquer design, and evidence of multiple portals, not just one, could indicate that E.C.2. had a possible close relationship with Marquis Yi or was of higher rank. Unfortunately, without more direct evidence, it is not possible to determine her exact role (e.g., favored attendant, concubine, entertainer, or other etc.). Traditions of joint spousal burial, having two tombs next to

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<sup>84</sup> With coffins like E.C.2, there was no indication as to the placement of the head and feet in the coffin, and if it correlates to what I assume is the window (to the head) and the door on the opposite end of the coffin.

each other, and then eventually two coffins in the same tomb, became more common during the Warring States period and there is currently no evidence of Marquis Yi having a wife. Unless any evidence of a joint spousal burial is found next to or nearby Marquis Yi, we cannot accurately determine the exact relationship of the *xunren* women to the Marquis.

### 3.2 Marquis Yi's Coffins: Portals, Windows, Doors

The Marquis outer coffin measures 3.2 meters in length by 2.1 meters in width with a height of 2.19 meters and weighed around 7,000 kg. The outer coffin is traditionally known as the *guo*. The outer coffins' designs are less intricate than the interior coffins designs, containing whorls, cloud scrolls, and braided interlace painted lacquer designs.<sup>85</sup> The outer coffin is the only coffin found within the tomb to have what appears to be an intentionally carved portal or window for the soul to travel freely as it is too small for a living being to pass through (fig. 12). What is of principal significance is the size of the carved portal on the outer coffin is about the same size of the three portals connecting each chamber, both suggesting uniformity and the possibility that the outer coffin's interior space was to be considered as a representation of a separate chamber. The side of the outer coffin containing the carved portal faced north in situ. This coffin has an interior substructure frame of bronze construction that was painted over with lacquer.

The Marquis inner coffin was much smaller in construction at 2.49 meters length, 1.27 meters width, 1.32 meters in height, to fit within the larger outer coffin and is traditionally called the *guan*. When Leigudun M1 was initially excavated, this inner coffin had a layer of decayed material on the lid of the coffin that was destroyed due to water damage.<sup>86</sup> The inner coffin contained much more elaborate and intricate decoration than the outer coffin. The majority of

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<sup>85</sup> Thorpe, Brief Excavation Report, 8.

<sup>86</sup> Lewis, "Chapter 2 The Household: Household and Tomb, 125. There is the possibility that Marquis Yi, similar to his contemporaries of the time, could have had a soul banner similar to the ones found at Mawangdui, creating a complete cosmos within his coffin space preventing a restless soul from haunting the living.

these densely packed designs consisted of dragons and phoenixes, animals, birds, curves, and S-shape forms.<sup>87</sup> There are also two different types of two-dimensional portals represented on the inner coffin (fig. 6-7, 13). One has more elaboration as to frame partition than the other. However, they both keep the basic shape of a grid square with diagonal cut frame evenly quartered, and this particular design has been suggested by many scholars to be a representation to be a door though with the appearance of being closed. The window at the foot of the Marquis Yi's coffin has the portion of the window frame filled in with animal and zoomorphic interlace while the center divided square is evenly quartered and unfilled. Perhaps the unfilled portion was specifically designed like an empty window to give the *hunpo* souls the illusion of reality to be able to pass through that spot explicitly.

This inner coffin did not have an open physical portal window like the outer coffin did, but it did have a flat window painted on the southern end of the coffin and two doors represented on the east and west sides of the coffin (fig. 13). One unique feature of the head panel of the inner coffin is the decorative motif designs. The designs present on the head of the inner coffin are not repeated elsewhere and are reserved specifically for this panel (fig. 16). There must have been some special representative or ritualistic meaning for the primary tomb occupant. Apotropaic zoomorphic designs feature prominently around the windows and doors on Marquis Yi's coffins support the magical protective function of these portals in the afterlife.<sup>88</sup>

The Marquis body was orientated with the head pointed to the south.<sup>89</sup> There is also no window representation in the northern panel where the feet of the deceased would have been placed facing north. Michael Puett examines the translations of the *Liji* in his article "Combining

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<sup>87</sup> Thorpe, Brief Excavation Report, 8.

<sup>88</sup> Lai, "The Dead Who Would Not Be Ancestors," 32. There are gods of the door (*hu*) within the Warring States pantheon, which may lead to a visual comparison of door representational imagery.

<sup>89</sup> Thorpe, Brief Excavation Report, 8.

the Ghosts and Spirits, Centering the Realm: Mortuary Ritual and Political Organization in the Ritual Compendia of Early China” and goes on to the *Liji* chapter *Tangong* that it discusses mortuary ritual very similar to the rituals found in the *Yili*. One particular section of *Tangong* discusses the summoning of the soul and the importance of north orientation when calling for the soul to return, “The reason that one faces north is that one is seeking for him [the soul] in the darkness.” Later on, within the same chapter, they discuss burial orientation of the body, “He is buried to the north, with the head facing north. This was a prominent ritual from the three dynasties, because [the souls of the deceased] go to the darkness.”<sup>90</sup> The comparison between the summoning and burial of the deceased in the *Liji* deviates from what was excavated and recorded in the Marquis tomb. It can be debated that it was unintentional the placement of the main tomb occupants coffin, either due to weight and a crash (though unlikely) or that was how it was intended to be placed in the tomb. There is evidences of tombs with coffins facing north to south instead of east to west during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, so orientation may not always play into ritual importance. Interpretation and adoption could be region by region to suit local funerary beliefs.

With respect to the presence of the door representation on the inner coffin of the Marquis (fig. 14-15), there are a multitude of possibilities as to its meaning. Typically, Heaven in the ancient Chinese sense was depicted to be accessed through a guarded gate or door like passage.<sup>91</sup> Does this make the inner coffin of Marquis Yi twofold in purpose as both representatives of the

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<sup>90</sup> Translated and quoted in Michael Puett, "Combining The Ghosts And Spirits, Centering The Realm: Mortuary Ritual And Political Organization In The Ritual Compendia Of Early China," *Early Chinese Religion: Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC-220 AD)*, Early Chinese Religion, 1 (2009), 707,709. Also see *Liji*, Chinese University of Hongkong, Institute of Chinese Studies, Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series. Also see James Legge, *Li Ki: Book of Rites* (Oxford, 1885).

<sup>91</sup> Constance Cook, “Chapter 5: The Topography of the Afterlife,” in *Death in Ancient China: The Tale of One Man’s Journey*. Boston: Brill, 2006. 132.

netherworld and the gate of heaven itself and access to heaven?<sup>92</sup> Is it reserved for the Marquis Yi alone? In terms of an underworld or netherworld, it does not seem to have a clearly defined example of an entrance other than under the ground, most likely a kind of submergence like into the earth in a tomb, or under water. The inconsistency in images of being such as, “ghosts and demons,” became, “products of the imagination...” as no person has ever seen these things and lived.<sup>93</sup> But even the *Zhao Hun* (Summons of the Soul) in the *Chu Chi* (Songs of the South) tell the deceased not to go to the underworld, “O soul, come back! Go not down to the Land of Darkness, Where the Earth God Lies, nine-coiled, with dreadful horns on his forehead...” and suggest to not go to the heavens above as their nine gates are guarded with fearsome creatures.<sup>94</sup> Instead of the Land of Darkness or the Heavens, the *Zhao Hun* tempts the soul to travel and stay in a designed safe space, the tomb.

The creatures known as *zhenmou* (tomb guardians) on the inner coffin flanking the doors have been described by Thote as “guardians from the underworld, holding halberds...” which would explain their fearsome hybrid appearance next to a portal/gate/door like structure coming from the darkness of the underworld.<sup>95</sup> Examples of standalone *zhenmou* figurines can be found in the area of the Chu kingdom as well and have been found in the Early Western Han dynasty which are intended to keep spirits both from entering and leaving the tomb.

Representations of fantastical creatures in the underworld were not common in the Middle Warring States period. There is one example from the Early Western Han dynasty that illustrates

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<sup>92</sup> The underworld has also been referenced to in the *Zuo* as the Yellow Spring (*huangquan*) or a kind of metaphor for the netherworld under water. There is the other related term, Dark City (or *youdu*) to the netherworld ruled by Lord Earth Tu Bo found in the *Chu Chi*, in the *Zhao Hun*. See Hawkes, “ZhaoHun ‘Summons of the Soul,’” *The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology*, 225. The underworld eventually evolves in the Han dynasty to be called *dixia* or “underground” and emerges as a kind of governmental bureaucracy.

<sup>93</sup> Lai, “The Presence of the Invisible,” 105.

<sup>94</sup> Hawkes, “ZhaoHun ‘Summons of the Soul,’” 225.

<sup>95</sup> Thote, “Chinese coffins from the first millennium B.C. and early images of the afterworld,” 28.

what these creatures could look like on the bottom register of the spirit banner from tomb 1 Mawangdui, showing the afterlife spirit journey of the deceased starting from the funeral and the spirits of darkness below to the gates of the afterlife at the top.

There are examples of tombs containing fully functional doors extending into the Han dynasty. One such example is at the Art Institute of Chicago labeled, “Doors, Pillars, and Lintel of Tomb Chamber, Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE- CE 9), 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. Probably Zhengzhou, Henan Province, China.”<sup>96</sup> On the door, there are shaped *taotie* handles, the museum labels these “monster masks,” and displays a vibrant array of apotropaic and zoomorphic images, in addition to images of human guardians with halberd like weaponry. The imagery of the human guards is reminiscent of the heraldic tomb door guardians present flanking Marquis Yi’s door on his inner coffin. Most likely, placement of this door was at the entrance of the burial chamber and is intended for functional use. The door itself seems to be tall enough for a living person, crouched to walk through to perform sacrificial rites in the Han dynasty sacrificial tomb chamber, as was the custom at the time. Thus, the need for full functionality for the living that is not necessarily needed for the dead as they wanted to keep the dead permanently the tomb.

Similarly, this layered functionality is also be emphasized by the dual coffin nesting, comparable to one Early Western Han example, Tomb 1 at Mawangdui, Changsha, Hunan province, of a three-layered nested coffin structure.<sup>97</sup> The ritual function of the three-layered nested coffin, as is the case of tomb 1 at Mawangdui, occurs in multiple parts. The outermost coffin from Mawangdui represents the clear divide of the living and the dead, the inner coffin

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<sup>96</sup> *Doors, Pillars, and Lintel of Tomb Chamber*, Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 9), 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Probably Zhengzhou, Henan Province, China, A (left door): 92.6 × 52.0 × 7.2 cm (36 7/16 × 20 1/2 × 2 13/16 in.); b (right door): 91.4 × 49.9 × 7.2 cm (36 × 19 5/8 × 2 13/16 in.), Art Institute of Chicago, Lucy Maud Buckingham Collection, 1924.447a-b, 1924.448-449, and 1935.359. <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/12786/pair-of-tomb-chamber-doors>. This door was created with an earthenware technique and was impressed and incised with decorations on its surface.

<sup>97</sup> Lai, “The Transformation of Burial Space,” 83.

represents the underworld as shown through the fantastical creatures, and the innermost coffin is an immortal realm, or microcosmos essentially.<sup>98</sup> In some cases, the outer coffin is occasionally considered to be the tomb chamber itself, while in others, it is an actual coffin placed within the tomb proper.

So, when we look to the tomb of Marquis Yi, there are still elements of layering that creates a microcosmos like space, that clearly divides the living from the dead. The dead in the tomb are intended to communicate with one another and exclusively with the dead, shown through the portals present on coffins in Leigudun M1. These portals are not something a normal living human could pass through, but for the *hunpo*, this solidity no longer factors into its functionality. The coffins, and the designs present on the coffins like the windows, intend to both allow movement but also contained. As in, the designs are crafted in such a way for the deceased to have an anchor in the afterlife. The fact that some but not all of the coffins have these portal designs present indicate importance and that the functions go beyond artistic flair. The designs are purposefully unique, and what many scholars ascertain are apotropaic, or magically protective in nature. To keep the selected dead in, and the living and everything else, out.

To summarize, no lacquer designs are exactly the same throughout the entirety of the tomb. The portal motif is not present on all of the coffins but a large majority of them. Moreover, there is an emphasis on interlacing and geometric design in terms of overall motifs. To illustrate this, I compared coffins W.C.3, W.C.10, and E.C.2 against each other and then against Marquis Yi's inner coffin. This comparison was aided with the study of grave goods, design, age, and proximity of the women to Marquis Yi. Discussion and comparison reveal that the portal motif of windows and doors appear even more significant than individual studies on Marquis Yi's

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<sup>98</sup> Cook, "Chapter 5: The Topography of the Afterlife," 131. See Also, Wu, 1992, 128-34. From "Tangong, xia" (Liji Zhengzhu, sect. 4, 3.17a).



coffin have shown previously. Further information will be assessed when we consider the women's societal importance, cosmological, and textual analysis against the coffin comparisons.

#### 4. The Female *Xunren* of Leigudun M1 and Burial Comparisons

Twice eight handmaids to serve your bed, each night alternating in duty,  
The lovely daughters of noble families, far excelling common maidens.  
Women with hair dressed finely in many fashions fill your apartments,  
in looks and bearing sweetly complaint, of gentleness beyond compare,  
with melting looks but virtuous nature and truly noble minds.  
Dainty features, elegant bearing grace all the marriage chamber:  
Mothlike eyebrows and lustrous eyes that dart out gleams of brightness  
Delicate coloring, soft round flesh, flashing seductive glances.<sup>99</sup>

The above is from “O’ Soul, Come Back!” that comes from the *Zhaohun* ‘*Summons of the Soul*,’ which David Hawkes believes was estimated to be written around the middle to late Warring States period for a Chu king.<sup>100</sup> This quote is intended to ritually lure the deceased’s spirit, by the spirit summoner, to the tomb permanently by what seems any means necessary, even appealing to sexual interests. This ritual summoning invoking (sometimes) both fear and temptation would have been an established commonality in rituals involving the dead and the tomb in the Chu regions and their controlled outlier states at least by Marquis Yi’s period. This is also where the connection between the Zeng and Chu become even more intertwined in their rituals of death, and where we gain insight into how these women were viewed in the afterlife.

Using Leigudun M1 as a case study, this section explores females in Warring States burial practices and the afterlife and uses other tombs containing *xunren* to compare against. Marquis Yi’s female sacrifices were provided coffins, some with painted windows, and segregated into specific areas of the tomb.<sup>101</sup> Eight of the *xunren*’s coffins are entombed in the eastern chamber with the Marquis himself, and thirteen remaining women are placed in the furthest west chamber

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<sup>99</sup>Hawkes, “ZhaoHun ‘Summons of the Soul’,” *The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology*, 225.

<sup>100</sup> David Hawkes, “Zhao Hun ‘Summons of the Soul’,” *The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology*, 222.

<sup>101</sup> Thorpe. *The Sui Xian Tomb*. 76.

of the tomb. Their age ranges from the oldest, at an estimated twenty-six years old to thirteen.<sup>102</sup> There is also the intriguing factor of the presence of one female coffin painted in a simple red lacquer without any further adornment, a case for further inquiry.<sup>103</sup> The women have all been presumed to be attendants, consorts, concubines, or musicians. They are assumed to be a type of human sacrifice known as *xunren*. Currently, there is no known evidence that Marquis Yi ever took an official wife, and there is no evidence nearby for a companion or spousal burial as was common burial practice at the time.

#### 4.1 The Leigudun Women: Studied as a collective group through coffins and grave goods

Collectively, many names and roles are used for the *xunren* within the tomb of Marquis Yi. Most notably, names used commonly by researchers discussing the tomb of Marquis Yi include various titles such as his “harem”, attendants, servants, concubines, entertainers, musicians, court ladies, companions in death, sacrifices, victims, and *xunren*. There has been no attempt at any differentiation about these women’s roles, and whether or not they all held the same position or varying roles within his afterlife palace household. Concubines in Bronze Age Chinese scholarship tend to be indistinguishable from entertainer or performer in many cases. This research attempts to question the notion of whether or not these women were, in essence, a collective group of women performing the same duties, or conversely if they all had separate duties and roles assigned to them that could be indicated by tomb location, grave goods, and coffin design.

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<sup>102</sup> 湖北省博物馆编 = *Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng: Ritual-and-music Civilization in the Early Warring States Period / Hubei Provincial Museum*, and 湖北省博物馆. 曾侯乙墓 : 战国早期的礼乐文明. Di 1 Ban ed. Changjiang Zhong You Wen Ming Zhi Lü = a Journey to Mid-Yangtze River Civilization. Beijing: Wen Wu Chu Ban She, 2007. 16-17. There is a debate on the accurate age range of women, Thorpe has cited that the age range may begin as early as 13 years of age. See Thorpe, Brief Excavation Report, 31.

<sup>103</sup> Thorpe, Brief Excavation Report, 8.

Women show their devotion to virtue by, “remaining within feminized spaces, conducting activities appropriate to that realm, and avoiding casual interaction with men.”<sup>104</sup> This division is clearly emphasized both in life and in death as a balancing of society and keeping chaos at bay. Brett Hinsch makes the distinction that emphasized the explicit segregation of the sexes in that men, “devalued women by seeing them primarily in physical terms as a body inhabiting gendered space.”<sup>105</sup> Women increasingly from the Spring and Autumn period onward were emphasized to belong to the realm of the home exclusively and could not participate in the outer realm of men and tumultuous Warring States period politics.

The women in the tomb collectively were found to be placed in coffins, some with handles, and had bamboo mats in addition to some simple grave goods.<sup>106</sup> As discussed previously, the age range for these women has been estimated to be between early teens and mid to late twenties. It is estimated that the oldest woman in the tomb is in the eastern chamber at about twenty-six years old and was buried with a significant number of simple grave goods. Due to the flooded state of the tomb upon excavation (fig. 4, 5), organic materials such as textiles have rotted away. All of the coffins contain evidence of decayed organic material, suggesting that the women were wrapped in textiles at the time of burial.

Information provided on the women’s ages and recorded grave goods is available from the Hubei Provincial Museum’s exhibition on the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng. When examining table 1: *Table of the Sex, Age, and Height of the Xunren, and their Grave Goods*, we can begin to consider tells us a lot about the societal ranking and importance of the individual women to the

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<sup>104</sup> Hinsch, “Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era,” 95.

<sup>105</sup> Hinsch, “Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era,” 95.

<sup>106</sup> Throughout my studies I have found no information as to any visual record of the contents of the simple grave goods and which grave goods belong to which body, and what they looked like. Despite their simplicity in comparison to the rest of the tomb objects, this is yet again another issue in regard to the lack of thorough scholarship and a focus on detailing the major finds first.

primary tomb occupant. It elucidates the division of the count of coffins from the east to the west, their biological sex, age, height, and burial goods such as jade objects, stringed ornaments, beads, combs, and bronze belt hooks. Simple burial goods assist in the identification of important persons either within the tomb or to the Marquis. For example, based on the number of grave goods alone, E.C.2 (age 26 ±), W.C.2 (age 23 ±) both contained thirteen grave goods, the majority of which were jade objects such as *bi*, *huan*, *huang*, and *jue*. Second-ranked in the quantity of grave goods would be W.C.12 (age 24 ±) and W.C.10 (age 13 ±), the youngest female in the tomb, each containing eight burial objects that mainly consist of *jue* and *huang* objects. What is interesting is most women in the western chamber were provided with wooden combs.

Northern sites in the Henan and Shaanxi regions characteristically contained large amounts of jade objects, which we do not see the same frequent trend in the southern Chu regions like the Zeng State. Jade in general was seen as an extremely valuable object, akin to the value of faceted gems.<sup>107</sup> The presence of jade in the tomb was a symbol of status, as it was difficult to carve (rated 6.0-7 on the current Mohs hardness scale, below diamonds) and was prized for its variety of colors. Jade was usually carved into *bi* discs representing heaven, and the square rod *cong* representing earth, but could come in a multitude of other shapes and meanings. Ying Yong, in her discussion of the northern Jin state elite female burials, expands on the interest in burial jade objects and their meanings. Regarding *jue* jade objects, Yong discusses research by Sun Ji in the article “Zhou dia de zu yupeì” who emphasizes their dual usage as both ear ornaments and sometimes placed in the mouth of the deceased. Sun Ji suggests that the majority of jade ornaments were meant to be worn as an indicator of status in life and in death for the Zhou

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<sup>107</sup> Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Jade from the Neolithic to the Qing*, London: British Museum Press, 1995, 14.

nobility, “the higher their status, the longer their body ornament sets were.”<sup>108</sup> Yong used this information to suggest that, “certain kinds of elaborate ear ornaments and body ornaments appeared only in the burials of the wives of the Marquises of Jin.”<sup>109</sup> These body ornaments were typically articles of jade tied together to make a lengthy wearable ornament for the woman to provide an indicator of status within the household collection of women. Though in the case of Marquis Yi, interestingly, the jade objects found in association with the women have been described as ‘simple’ and non-elaborate, most likely because of their subservient afterlife role in his post-mortem palace. It is important to note the regional differences in jade design can vary, between Jin, Zeng, and even Chu state jades. Chu jades in particular are not as well studied and it is possible Marquis Yi had access to Chu jades, further underscoring the Zeng and Chu’s shared culture. The extent to which Marquis Yi’s jade objects from the State of Zeng were influenced by other surrounding states is unknown.

A tomb excavated in 2007 located at Lizhou’ao in Jing’an county Jiangxi province, is possibly the tomb of Xu Wang Zhangyu during that of the Eastern Zhou Spring and Autumn period (~500 BCE) in Jing’an. This tomb is a shaft pit style, multi-pit casket tomb with forty-six sacrifices with one primary male tomb occupant and has garnered recent attention in the last several years.<sup>110</sup> It is located around 600 kilometers south of our site of study in Leigudun, Suizhou which effectively places it within the later Chu kingdom’s domain. It is comparable to

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<sup>108</sup> Yong. “IV. 2.1. Jade Objects Owned by Both Sexes.” In *Ancient Chinese Marriage and Statecraft in a Zhou Vassal State: Elite Female Burials of the Jin State*. 96. See also, Sun Ji, “Zhou dai de zu yupei,” *Wenwu*, no.4. 1998, 4-14.

<sup>109</sup> Yong. “IV.2.2. Jade Objects Related Solely to Women,” 103.

<sup>110</sup> “Ancient Tomb Contains Rare Skeletons” 01/20/20. [www.english.china.org.cn/english/culture/215729.htm#](http://www.english.china.org.cn/english/culture/215729.htm#). See also “Eastern Zhou Tomb and Lizhou’ao in Jing’an County, Jiangxi” in *Jiangxi Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology*, Vol 9, 107. New information about this tomb has now been published in late 2019 after a period of excavation and recovery. One main difference seen so far is that there were minor divisions in terms of the tomb chamber, as it seems they buried the dead in three portions, ending lastly with the primary tomb occupant. The coffins were all found to be wrapped in bamboo mats and tied with three rows of bamboo ropes.

Leigudun M1 in respect to the number of *xunren* that were provided lacquer coffins and the fact that “some wore small jade ornaments or jade sets of exquisite quality.”<sup>111</sup> Twenty-two of the forty-seven tomb occupants has been identified (as of 2008) as females aged between fifteen and twenty-five years old. Of the females, there were some noted to be, “wrapped in textile or bamboo mats.”<sup>112</sup> The *xunren*’s coffins were all lacquered a plain black with no additional decoration. The main coffin, most likely of the primary male tomb occupant was placed last and towards the front, weighed about two tons, and was surrounded with the only timber chamber encasing the main coffin.<sup>113</sup>

The similarities between Lizhou’ao tomb and tomb Leigudun M1, for example are the large quantity of *xunren* present, especially female, being provided a lacquer coffin with some grave goods, as well as the large primary tomb occupant coffin should be analyzed and compared in future research. Based on the preliminary assessment of the Lizhou’ao tomb, researchers believe that due to the comparable similarity of large quantity of coffins and grave goods in the Lizhou’ao tomb, the majority of *xunren*’s tomb occupants are of similar social status.<sup>114</sup> This inference is of critical importance concerning the scope of this research paper, emphasizing social status plays a vital role in both the afterlife and *xunren* burials of the elite continuing up until the Warring States period. Social status can additionally be inferred from coffin similarity and grave goods, amongst comparable identifying factors. If this is to be the case, and a preliminary comparison can be made between the two tombs and the subsidiary burials and could provide clarity to afterlife tradition in a broader sense during the Warring States period.

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<sup>111</sup> “Eastern Zhou Tomb and Lizhou’ao in Jing’an County, Jiangxi” in *Chinese Archaeology*,” in *Jiangxi Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology*, Vol 9, 109.

<sup>112</sup> “Eastern Zhou Tomb and Lizhou’ao in Jing’an County, Jiangxi” in *Chinese Archaeology*,” in *Jiangxi Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology*, Vol 9, 109.

<sup>113</sup> “Ancient Tomb Contains Rare Skeletons”

<sup>114</sup> “Eastern Zhou Tomb and Lizhou’ao in Jing’an County, Jiangxi, 112.

Considering the Lizhou'ao tomb is inferred to precede the tomb of Marquis Yi, it should be used as a future point of reference for comparison, especially considering subsidiary burials and their social status. Furthermore, since they were able to confirm the sex of twenty-two of the forty-seven subsidiary burials to be female, it is a very close comparison to the twenty-one females entombed at Leigudun M1. The refinement of the tomb structures as a comparison aside, the coffins show an evolution from providing subsidiary burials, all with relatively similar coffin construction as well as grave goods. In the case of Leigudun M1, the point of development and evolution from the older comparative tomb structure is the coffin's decorative designs and additional evidence of simple grave goods accompanying the *xunren*. However, the women in Leigudun M1 were not violently killed collectively. Through examination, there was no sign of struggle or violent death due to blunt force trauma to the skull or neck.<sup>115</sup> It is most likely that these women of Leigudun M1 were somehow intentionally killed to preserve their beauty and prevent violent ghosts from haunting the living.

There is another comparative tomb containing a significant number of *xunren* organized in a specific way around the deceased that bears mentioning. This tomb is from the Spring and Autumn period, Tomb 1, Hougudui, Gushi County, in Henan Province. This was a single female occupant burial, placed at the center in a wooden coffin.<sup>116</sup> She was around the age of thirty and was surrounded by six *xunren* within the central encasement with her.<sup>117</sup> An additional eleven *xunren* were surrounding the encasement.<sup>118</sup> Most notable and similar to the tomb of Marquis Yi, all the *xunren* were provided coffins in addition to simple burial goods. Out of the seventeen

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<sup>115</sup> Thorpe, Brief Excavation Report. 40.

<sup>116</sup> Lai, "The Transformation of Burial Space," *Excavating the Afterlife*, 66.

<sup>117</sup> Lai, "The Transformation of Burial Space," 66.

<sup>118</sup> Lai, "The Transformation of Burial Space," 66.



*xunren*, twelve of them were women the same age or younger as the tomb occupant.<sup>119</sup> Additionally, there were only five adult male *xunren*.<sup>120</sup> There is no clear available record as to the exact placement of the *xunren* and their sex in relation to the primary female tomb occupant. What can be surmised is that it was the female sacrifices that were buried in the central compartment with the primary female tomb occupant. Possibly the closer they were to the primary tomb occupant, the closer the relationship, or the more valuable. This tomb is also an earlier example that *xunren* were an available “grave good” to both sexes that more likely correlated with the societal rank of the tomb occupant.

#### 4.2 The Leigudun Women: Separated Architecturally by Job

Throughout the entirety of the Eastern Zhou period (770-221 BCE) women were increasingly separated from both the public and political spheres of their world. Emphasis on advancing separation as a form of control changed what women could be and what kind of spaces they could inhabit: “While the gendering of social space and physical separation of the sexes affected men, it had a far greater impact on women.”<sup>121</sup> Reinforcement of the division of space based on sex is in works by *Lao zi*, *Xunzi*, and in the *Liji* (Book of Rites) concerning directional placement of man and woman to defer rank of importance by sex and in accordance with yin yang principles.<sup>122</sup> For instance, the left (or east) is understood to be superior and auspicious over

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<sup>119</sup> Lai, “The Transformation of Burial Space,” 66.

<sup>120</sup> Lai, “The Transformation of Burial Space,” 67. The addition of male *xunren* is unclear what their purpose in the afterlife is. It is possible that they could be considered a type of protective function for the primary female tomb occupant, not necessarily for terms of pleasure or ritual in the afterlife.

<sup>121</sup> Hinsch, “Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era,” 95.

<sup>122</sup> Yong. *Ancient Chinese Marriage and Statecraft*. 41.

the right (west) because the left was associated with yang male energy.<sup>123</sup> On the other hand, the right, or the west, indicated the inauspicious yin, female, west, and inferiority.<sup>124</sup>

The separation of women within the tomb compartments is identified in the difference of what jobs the women attended. For example, the women in the eastern chamber are most likely taking care of Marquis Yi in his personal chambers as well as privately playing music for entertainment. This arrangement is contrasted with the women in the western chamber whose bodies were placed in a room lacking any daily comforts or additives aside from their coffins and one lacquer duck vessel with images alluding to music and dance performance. The women in the western chamber function throughout the central chamber to aid with ritual, ritual music, and protection. In the continuation of the *Zhao hun*'s poem "O' Soul, Come Back!" written by Qu Yuan, the either real or afterlife fictional female musicians are introduced enticing the dead to stay within the tomb and be safe,

Before the dainties have left the table, girl musicians take up their places.

They set up the bells and fasten the drums, and sing the latest songs: 'Grossing the River,'  
'Gathering Caltrops,' and 'The Sunny Bank'

The lovely girls are drunk with wine, their faces flushed and red. With amorous glances and  
flirting looks, their eyes like wavelets sparkle;

Dressed in embroideries, clad in finest silks, splendid but not showy; their long hair, falling from  
high chignons, hangs low in lovely tresses

Two rows of eight, in perfect time, perform a dance of Cheng;<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Yong. *Ancient Chinese Marriage and Statecraft*. 41. See Also, Long Futing, "Gudai zangsu de 'zuo, you' fangwei lizhi wenhua (The ritual system of the 'Left and right' locations among ancient burial customs)," *Nanfang Wenwu*, no. 3 (2000), 63-68.

<sup>124</sup> Yong. *Ancient Chinese Marriage and Statecraft*. 41. See Also, Long Futing, "Gudai zangsu de 'zuo, you' fangwei lizhi wenhua (The Ritual system of the 'Left and right' locations among ancient burial customs)," *Nanfang Wenwu*, no. 3 (2000), 63-68.

<sup>125</sup> Hawkes, "ZhaoHun 'Summons of the Soul'," 225.

This provides us with a better impression of what all of these women could be doing in this tomb in the afterlife, especially since they were provided with a variety of instruments. Music and dance had dual purpose in ritual, and in pleasure. In the tomb of Marquis Yi, there is examples of places for performances in the eastern chamber and the central chamber, whether they be ritual, music, singing, or dancing.

One vital distinction to emphasize here is that Marquis Yi, as their lord, gave them an activity/ service/ task to perform forever. These *xunren* are allowed a stationary afterlife within his tomb with their *po* souls to eternally serve Marquis Yi. It was believed to bring some type of assistance into the afterlife, whether that be cosmological maps, servants, or others, and that the “privileged dead needed and demanded the same or better service from their underlings.”<sup>126</sup> We have no record of what afterlife, if any, the companions held at this time. We do know that eventually the human sacrifice developed into substitute figurines for practicality purposes and to, “...serve a purpose...” and, “...fulfill certain demands [of the afterlife]” of their lord.<sup>127</sup>

A comparative analysis could be made between the change in China from human sacrifice to substitute human figurines and the similar usage of substitute human figurines, known as *ushabtis*, in Ancient Egypt.<sup>128</sup> Ushabtis, known as “the answerer”, were explicitly created with magic to do the tomb occupant’s job, every day, eternally in the afterlife and only work when one is deceased. This allowed the primary tomb occupant to enjoy more pleasurable pursuits. It is possible that to compare *xunren*, or even substitute sacrifice *mingqi* spirit figurines, are similar in performing rituals and tasks alongside taking care of the main tomb occupant. They

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<sup>126</sup> Lai, “The Presence of the Invisible,” 105.

<sup>127</sup> Lai, “The Presence of the Invisible,” 105. Added Brackets with words for emphasis.

<sup>128</sup> I would like to thank Professor Jocelyn Boor for her invaluable knowledge on *Ushabtis* and teaching me about the similar practices of afterlife and subsidiary burials in Egypt. Their correlative factors make them a point of comparison that broadens the concept of what Warring States afterlife could have been for contemporary peoples.

may have either more important afterlife activities of relaxing or performing an intense and dangerous afterlife journey.

Regardless of elite or low status, women in this period and for many centuries after were treated as secondary objects to be placed within male spaces, used as leverage, currency, or status indicators. In some instances, “rulers kept large numbers of performers, and they exchanged these women with other aristocrats alongside other gifts.”<sup>129</sup> Hinsch goes on to discuss that those female entertainers varied according to region and state, and typically overall beauty and charm were held in high esteem.<sup>130</sup> In the case of Marquis Yi, it is proposed that a large number of these females were a type of performer or entertainer as one of their many jobs in the afterlife. Any other women brought into the household that was not a wife (e.g., consorts, entertainers, etc.) held no power or jurisdiction over house or family matters.

Aside from concubinage, high ranking lords could acquire women, especially for the afterlife from men in the service of their lord, often for kings especially, promising loyalty as a form of eternal thanks that saw this sacrifice as an honor. Usually from men at all levels of society, but mostly upper levels, it is common to offer up their daughters to be *xunren*. One such example is provided in the *Zuo Commentary* of the King Ling of Chu, who committed suicide at the home of man loyal to the Chu, Shen Hai. Shen Hai then offered his two daughters as *xunren* as an expression of his loyalty to King Ling of Chu.<sup>131</sup> Lai states that these *xunren* are usually varied. *Xunren* can be, “relatives, consorts, officials, retainers, and servants – people who had close relationships with the dead and higher status than the slaves and prisoners... often they received a full funerary ritual with their own coffin and grave goods.”<sup>132</sup> If this is to be believed to be

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<sup>129</sup> Hinsch, “Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era,” 87.

<sup>130</sup> Hinsch, “Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era,” 87.

<sup>131</sup> Lai, “The Presence of the Invisible,” 107. See also: Huang Zhanyue, *Gudai rensheng renxun tonglun*, 204-7.

<sup>132</sup> Lai, “The Presence of the Invisible,” 105-107.

accurate, then the women present in Leigudun M1 held a special and specific kind of relationship to the Marquis of Zeng.

## **5. Controlling Afterlife Chaos: Spirits, Sacrifice, and Literature of Eastern Zhou**

In terms of Warring States ideology in both life and death, control over the energies of chaos, typically represented within the female sex at the time, was highly emphasized. Image-making was a sure way to establish through status and wealth, their control of society and chaos, “just as assigning a name has magical significance.”<sup>133</sup> There is no way to know for sure if philosophical ideologies and ritual texts and beliefs were concretely formulated ideas followed with regularity. Eventually the integration of ideas into regular observance by the Warring States period develop into a more metaphysical abstract state.<sup>134</sup>

Tomb Leigudun M1 in this paper is used as a foil for tombs concerning afterlife belief of women and men against the history of Chinese cosmology and ritual literature. In order to expand ideas on sexed afterlife, discussions on theoretical, ritual, and cultural context analysis about the dead and the afterlife journey that all souls intend to complete is necessary. Comparative texts used are the *Zhao Hun* (Summons of the Soul) from the *Chu Chi* (the Songs of the South) as discussed previously, the *Yili* 儀禮 (Rites and Ceremonies), the *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites), and the *Xunzi* 荀子 (The Writings of Master Xun).<sup>135</sup>

The time of the Warring States period is considered to occur during the “Period of 100 wandering Philosophers,” or “Age of Philosophers” where there is a collective rise in philosophical and analytical thought, which then formed groups of beliefs.<sup>136</sup> There was a

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<sup>133</sup> Lai, “The Presence of the Invisible,” *Excavating the Afterlife*, 103.

<sup>134</sup> “Elite Thought and General Knowledge during the Warring States Period,” *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, 79-80.

<sup>135</sup> Michael Puett, “Combining The Ghosts And Spirits, Centering The Realm: Mortuary Ritual And Political Organization In The Ritual Compendia Of Early China.” *Early Chinese Religion: Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC-220 AD)*, *Early Chinese Religion*, 1 (2009): 695-720.

<sup>136</sup> “Li Feng, “10: Philosophers as statesmen: in the light of recently discovered text,” in *Early China, A Social and Cultural history*, 206. During this period of “100 Wandering Philosophers” we also see at the same time philosophy and analytical thought appear in other areas of the world such as Greece and India.

multitude of contradictory philosophical beliefs and followings to make sense of the constant redefining of society during the Warring States period. These newly reforming and morphing governments gave room to alternative possibilities to be openly discussed and considered.<sup>137</sup> The main three scholarly focuses developed during this period are Confucianism (*The Analects*), Daoism (*Daodejing*), and Mohism (*Mohzi*). Philosophies and ways of life, as well as religious in nature, all of these ways of thinking permeated culture and can be at play in terms of how the living treated their dead, and also depends on what a state ruler believed applied to him. Philosophically what was developed during this particular intellectual period Feng says, “became the defining features of Chinese civilization over the next two millennia.”<sup>138</sup>

Confucianism, sometimes known as the way of the sages, emphasized filial piety, virtue, and peace through moral order controlled by rank and sex. It began as one of the rising philosophical beliefs adhered to in several societies as a form of interpretation of the classics of scholarly officials. Confucius (551-479 BCE), along with many other scholars of the time, believed that ideal social order only existed in the past, in parallel to the constant state of conflict of the Warring States period of which they were born into.<sup>139</sup> Confucianism, due to the belief in order and filial piety did have concepts of the afterlife that were structured. Confucianism was a rising philosophical thought by the time of Marquis Yi of Zeng. Because of this, it is used as a way to examine funerary rites, even concerning the treatment of women. But it is noted that Confucius opposed such things as human sacrifice, even with substitute human figurines.<sup>140</sup>

On the other hand, there is the opposite of Confucianism, Daoism, which arose in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The Dao is all-encompassing and emphasized the preservation and maintenance of

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<sup>137</sup> Hinsch, “Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era,” 75.

<sup>138</sup> Feng, “10: Philosophers as statesmen,” 206.

<sup>139</sup> Feng, “10: Philosophers as statesmen,” 212.

<sup>140</sup> Lai, “The Presence of the Invisible,” 105.

life and the natural order. Feng addresses the nebulous concept of the Dao as something essentially much older than Confucian concepts and is most likely, “the cosmological way that existed long before the sage. Dao is the unseen, unspoken true “way” of the universe.”<sup>141</sup> Followers are expected to uphold good morals. Daoism, in terms of afterlife belief are quite different than the standard. Daoism believes that everyone is already eternal, and there is no fear of death nor focus on it. One particular goal of following Dao is to achieve immortality through development of techniques, some sexual, to create an elixir of immortality. The dead are essentially to the Daoist’s, a part of life.

Due to the Warring States period being one of immense overall change and violence, burial customs were bound to evolve and further develop as well, even with sex based relations. For example, Hinsch discusses that, “changing burial customs reveal how the intensifying marital bond affected female identity. Although some noblewomen were laid to rest in individual graves, the joint burial of spouses became common.”<sup>142</sup> Increasingly, tombs became more sex-specific, especially in the case of burial items. Hinsch makes this distinction as men’s tombs had objects related to “ritual and war,” whereas women had “stone and jade ornaments” unrelated to ritual and war-making.<sup>143</sup> However, for instance, in the tomb of Marquis Yi we see a room reserved for ritual, a room reserved for war, and a room reserved exclusively for women. The heavy presence of jade, in terms of funerary goods both for the *xunren* and the very finely crafted jade items in the marquis inner coffin speak additionally to the period the tomb was built in. While funerary rituals and beliefs were established prior, in times of cultural turmoil, ideas change, adapt, and become blurred, especially if the tomb occupant is a wealthy male in control of his domain.

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<sup>141</sup> Feng, “Philosophers as Statesmen,” 206.

<sup>142</sup> Hinsch, “Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era,” 79-80.

<sup>143</sup> Hinsch, “Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era,” 80.



## 5.1 Cosmology in Eastern Zhou Afterlife

Cosmology and cosmological principles surely predate the available texts. Throughout the Eastern Zhou, “intangible cosmological concepts justified the separation and inequality of male and female in highly abstract terms.”<sup>144</sup> Societies used the complex system of the cosmos to integrate hierarchical concepts sex-based segregation and male dominance, for example, yin and yang, heaven (male), and earth (female) within cosmology itself.<sup>145</sup> Though it is noted that the ancient Chinese, “regarded the cosmos as an undivided whole, overarching everything, when they thought about the issues of “heaven,” “earth,” “man,” and ghosts, producing a deep rooted sense of order.”<sup>146</sup>

There is the development of the Book of Changes 易經 (*Yi Jing*) from a divination text to a cosmological text occurring between the Western Zhou period and the Warring States period that discusses *Yin Yang* principles. Yin symbolizes all that is dark and negative, “secret, hidden, cold, weak, and passive.”<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, the phrasing for the world of the dead is *Yin Jiang* (representative of the gross yin energy, women, inauspiciousness (*xing*), and chaos).<sup>148</sup> In contrast, the world of the living is *Yang Jie* (representative of the gross yang energy, the realm of man, auspiciousness (*de*), and order).<sup>149</sup>

*Yin, yang*, and the myriad creatures all have their principles: Sun, moon, stars, constellations, *xing* and *de* change either as misfortune or fortune, metal, wood, water, fire, earth overwhelm each other in turn, the moon wanes and then waxes again. No one takes charge of their constancy; those who follow them are rewarded, those who do not meet with disaster.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Hinsch, “Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era,” 96.

<sup>145</sup> Hinsch, “Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era,” 96.

<sup>146</sup> “Elite Thought and General Knowledge During the Warring States Period.,” 73.

<sup>147</sup> Xiongya Gao, “Women Existing for Men: Confucianism and Social Injustice against Women in China,” in *Race, Gender & Class*; New Orleans Vol. 10, 3, (2003) 114.

<sup>148</sup> Gao, “Women Existing for Men” 114.

<sup>149</sup> Gao, “Women Existing for Men,” 114.

<sup>150</sup> “Elite Thought and General Knowledge During the Warring States Period.,” 79.

What links the heavens, the earth, men and ghosts together is the permeating and intermixed balance of the intangible: *yin*, *yang*, the five elements, the eight corners, creating “a large interconnected web,” or harmony of all things.<sup>151</sup> The Warring States text *Xing qi ming* (Inscription of Moving Vapor) says, “as for heaven, its origin is above, as for earth, its origin is below. Complying with them, one lives; opposing them, one dies.”<sup>152</sup> We see this reiteration in the *Zuangzi*, “The life of man is the gathering of vapor. When it gathers, there is life; when it disperses, there is death.”<sup>153</sup> Supporting continuous movement of the cosmos, it is clear the male is above and the female is below, “the yang vapor is clear and rises up to be heaven, the yin vapor is turbid and descends to be earth.”<sup>154</sup> By following the flow of energy that rules the world, this entrusts that man’s lifespan is extended.

The ancient Chinese conceptions of the energy transitions of life and death appear more cyclical and continuous in comparison to western concepts.<sup>155</sup> Guo has noted that as the development of the ideas of *Yin* and *Yang* and *hun* and *po* continued to evolve, this changed death into something completely different, “Death marked the beginning of a continuous existence in the other world.”<sup>156</sup> Men of society looked to aspects of Confucianism, Mohism, and Daoism for guidance of how they control every aspect of their world, waking and otherwise. For example, there is duality in the conflicting beliefs in both bodily perfection and individual immortality as we see in Daoism, and the opposite belief that man’s lifespan was finite and to

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<sup>151</sup> "Elite Thought and General Knowledge During the Warring States Period.," 74.

<sup>152</sup> "Elite Thought and General Knowledge During the Warring States Period.," 75.

<sup>153</sup> "Elite Thought and General Knowledge During the Warring States Period.," 75.

<sup>154</sup> "Elite Thought and General Knowledge During the Warring States Period.," 75.

<sup>155</sup> Guo, "Tomb Architecture of Dynastic China," 21.

<sup>156</sup> Guo, "Tomb Architecture of Dynastic China," 21.

cherish life's imperfections.<sup>157</sup> There is a noted type of swirling similarity between philosophical lifestyles of controlling and manipulating energies through breathing to, "exchange the source of life with the cosmos."<sup>158</sup> Ideas of vapors, *qi*, *hun* and *po* all seem to coalesce and show the same iterative idea. That energy lasts, even if the body does not.

## 5.2 Literature on Ritual, Status, and Sacrifice

In the *Liji*, in the chapter *Jitong*, it is expressed the rites and sacrifice is the overarching control of society. If sacrifice and ritual is completed in accordance with propriety and performed properly, this creates a unified society.

Of all the ways of ordering humans, none are more urgent than the rites. The rites have five constants; none are more important than sacrifice. Sacrifice is not something that comes from outside; it emerges from the inside, and is born in the heart. The heart is moved, and one expresses it with rites. Therefore, only the worthy is able to exhaust the meaning of sacrifice. The sacrifices of the worthy necessarily receive blessings.....only after one is able to be complete is one able to sacrifice. Therefore, the sacrifices of the worthy bring about his sincere good faith and his loyal reverence. He expresses these with offerings, puts them in practice with the rites, settles them with music, arranges them at the right time, and brightly offers them. And that is all. <sup>159</sup>

The *Liji* (Book of Rites) emphasizes two significant points: first, that divisions of societal rank are essential, and second, sacrifice is the most important ritual.<sup>160</sup> So, in essence, the Marquis is still adhering to contemporary conventions for his burial, but to what extent concerning the female *xunren* is still unclear. Hinsch goes on to discuss that even ritual texts such as the *Liji*

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<sup>157</sup> "Elite Thought and General Knowledge During the Warring States Period.," *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, 33, no. 3 (2002): 71.

<sup>158</sup> "Elite Thought and General Knowledge During the Warring States Period.," 71.

<sup>159</sup> Puett, "Combining the Ghosts and Spirits, Centering the Realm: Mortuary Ritual and Political Organization in the Ritual Compendia of Early China" 712. See Also, *Liji*, "Jitong," ICS, 129/26.1/25-130/26.2/1.

<sup>160</sup> David L McMullen, "Death Rites of Tang Daizong," in *State and Court Ritual in China*. Ed. by Joseph P. McDermott, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications; 54. Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 164. See also Thomas A. Wilson, "Sacrifice and the Imperial Cult of Confucius." In *History of Religions* 41, no. 3 (2002): 254.

outline explicit separation, especially in terms of spouses while living, necessarily treating each other as strangers and only making contact under the strictest of circumstances.<sup>161</sup>

It is of unique interest that the Marquis provided coffins for every accompanying companion. Coffins for human sacrifices differ from tradition, as seen within this same period. Instead of human sacrifice or *xunren*, clay or wooden figurines, known as *mingqi*, replace sacrificing significant numbers of the humans. Leigudun M1 does not exemplify this concept of *mingqi*, sometimes defined as spirit object, present.<sup>162</sup> The reason for this is that the majority of the items present in the tomb were most likely used in life and are still functional and usable, not a facsimile of real objects as what develops to be the norm. Most likely, making these women *xunren* is a display of wealth, power, and status, rather than an act of benevolence to let the women accompany him in the afterlife. The *xunren* are mostly just another type of human sacrifice, and to what extent all parties were willing we may never know. To other states, this use of human sacrifice could be viewed as barbaric, backward, and even seen as an already outdated funerary belief.

Debates on funerary sumptuary restrictions, and whether the dead in the afterlife were cognizant of these debates in the living realm, raged during this time. Discussions primarily occurred between Confucians and Mohists demonstrating that, “Confucian [are] advocates of lavish mortuary rites and Mohist [are] advocates of frugality.”<sup>163</sup> Some later traditional funerary sumptuary laws and guidelines were in accordance with rank and biological sex that the tomb of Marquis Yi appears to correlate.<sup>164</sup> For instance, the number of chambers and number of coffins

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<sup>161</sup> Hinsch, “Chapter 5: Eastern Zhou Era,” 95.

<sup>162</sup> Hung, “Art and Architecture of the Warring States Period,” in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, 728-729.

<sup>163</sup> Lai, “The Dead Who Would Not Be Ancestors,” 52. My addition for emphasis.

<sup>164</sup> Guo, “Tomb Architecture of Dynastic China,” 47 (2004), 6.

in funerary burial practices is indicative of rank explained by Xun Kuang (also known as *Xunzi* or Master Xun) (298-238 BCE) in the book attributed to him, *Xunzi*, written during the Warring States period.

Hence the inner and outer coffins of the Son of Heaven consist of seven layers; those of the feudal lords consist of five layers; those of the high ministers, three layers; those of the officials, two layers. In addition, there are various rules governing the amount and quality of grave clothes and food offerings for each rank, and the type of coffin decorations and ornaments appropriate for each station, whereby reverence is expressed in outward form.<sup>165</sup>

It is important to note that the *Xunzi* occurs reportedly several hundred years later after the Marquis Yi's lifetime. Nevertheless, many scholars use the *Xunzi* as well as the *Liji* to help inform our understanding of how funerary social ranking occurred. Additionally, it is a major debate as to when Master Xun was alive, active, and writing since the majority of his text was recorded by future scholars like Sima Qian (145?-86? BCE) in the *Records of the Grand Historian*. Information provided in the *Xunzi* is expected to be believed up to a point as retelling it through the ages and different people has distorted the original contents to reflect different views than originally intended. However, funerary sumptuary indicators of rank do not tend to change greatly throughout the Warring States period up until its end with the Qin empire, so this information is a basis of knowledge to build upon.

Master Xun and the *Xunzi* follows and addresses Confucianism as they relate to the afterlife and sumptuary restrictions following rank and status to prevent societal chaos. The *Xunzi* is also explicit on aspects of the double soul *hunpo*, Qi (vapor/energy/life force), and, most importantly, spatial orientation and how this links to the afterlife of the soul. The *Xunzi*'s critical component is that the place where the deceased body goes, such as the tomb or the coffin, is

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<sup>165</sup> Burton Watson, trans., *Hsun Tzu: Basic Writings*, New York: Columbia Univ. Press (1963), 97.

supposed to closely represent home to entice the earthly soul to stay there, just like the Zhao Hun. There is also a chapter in the *Xunzi* by Master Xun, that imparts ritual funerary rights discussing the replication of a house in the tomb and coffin.

In the funeral rites one adorns the dead with the trappings of the living. On a grand scale one imitates [*xiang*] what he had in life to send him off to the dead.

They gather the utensils from his life in order to send them to the tomb. This provides the image [*xiang*] of his moving [to a new residence]

Thus the forms of the grave and grave mound imitates [*xiang*] the house. The form of the inner and outer coffins imitates the side, top, front and back boards of a carriage. The cover over the coffin with its decorations imitates the screens, curtains and hangings of a room. The wooden lining and frame of the tomb imitates the rafters and beams of a roof and a fence.<sup>166</sup>

In Marquis Yi's case, the recreation of his palace tempts his, and his companions' souls not to wander and prevents the souls from becoming a vengeful spirit and attacking the living descendants. To expand on the *Xunzi's* basis for these funerary rights Mark Edward Lewis argued the *Xunzi* emphasized, "the objects buried with the dead, while imitating those of the living, had to be clearly distinct."<sup>167</sup> This development is several hundred years after the Marquis tomb, which then stands to reason that the clear line between what is for the living and what is for the dead during the middle Warring States period must have been obscure. Lewis continues in stating that both the *Liji* and *Xunzi* agree for the correlation of, "the treatment of the dead had to be patterned on that of the living," but both texts had to be clear that the realm of the dead, "had to be distinct."<sup>168</sup> Thus when considering the addition to the window designs, they were not true windows, but distinctly specific to be unusable for the living.

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<sup>166</sup> *Xunzi ji shi*, ch 13 "Li Lun", 243-246. Quoted in Lewis, Chapter 2 The Household: Household and Tomb, 120.

<sup>167</sup> Lewis, "The Household," 122.

<sup>168</sup> Lewis, "The Household," 123.

In terms of mourning these *xunren* due to their assumed status, it is stated in the *Liji* (Book of Rites) as an ancient rule there is no mourning for these types of women.<sup>169</sup> These “types of women” are known interchangeably as attendants, concubines, or a harem, and even ‘nurses’ or ‘foster-mothers’ can be ladies of the harem.<sup>170</sup> Later on in the *Liji*, there are discussions on the usages of rank for propriety in instances of sacrifice. For instance, a large victim or a large number of victims is only appropriate in cases of marked rank and propriety (of a male). In contrast, if one was of lower rank and performed a larger sacrifice in number or size, this is an act of usurpation of rank and disrupts the balance of harmony.<sup>171</sup> So where does this leave Marquis Yi and his twenty-one female *xunren*? Is the women’s sacrifice as a *xunren* appropriate for his case of rank and propriety because of his wealth and status?

Even in death, when calling back the soul, any woman is called back to their body by their designation, not their name, as is appropriate for a man.<sup>172</sup> Lewis remarks in the early Chinese household, when women married into the households they even lost their names, emphasizing their role as the property of their husbands. In terms of lineage and households, women were always considered outsiders and their position was always considered temporary.<sup>173</sup> So it is probable in this sense that the *xunren*, who were both women and most likely non-kin or non-lineage, reinforced both their positions in society and within the household, and was reinforced doubly so in death.<sup>174</sup> This sexed condition of death in the Warring States period reemphasizes

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<sup>169</sup> “Book V. The Questions of Zang-Dze[1]:Section II,” in *The Li Ki*, Translated by James Legge, 266.

<sup>170</sup> “Book V. Section II,” *Li Ki*, 266.

<sup>171</sup> “Book VII. The Li Khi or Rites in the Formation of Character [1]: Section I,” 321.

<sup>172</sup> “Book XIX. Sang Ta Ki, Or the Greater Record of Mourning Rites [1]: Section I,” 510.

<sup>173</sup> Lewis, “The Household: The Household Divided,” 105. The source paragraph does not clearly state what they define as early Chinese for households. Due to the references to the *Liji* and the Han Dynasty, inference is made to be a date range of possibly Shang to Han. So this would place it within the context of the date range of this study.

<sup>174</sup> Lewis, “The Household,” 131.

the importance of the male role in all spheres and firmly positions the women of society as lesser in life and death.

Sacrificing humans for the afterlife seems to be a trend only with the high-status men in control of their domain, and a handful of instances of high-status women. It also looks to be a common tradition for an unmarried male to bring multiple female *xunren* with him to the afterlife. There is even a legend about the “death” of the Yellow Emperor that, “flew to heaven on a dragon’s back together with his court assistants and palace ladies,” and he left the earthly realm, “not only with his whole family but also his house and domestic animals.”<sup>175</sup> Lai discusses the development of human sacrifice “substitute” figurines take the place of the real human sacrifices. He notes that the development and addition of the human sacrifice figurines into the afterlife process occurs in conjunction with human sacrifice.<sup>176</sup> Lai, along with other scholars, hypothesize that it is possible that the human figurines may not have been a substitute, but rather an addition to the afterlife with a separate function aside from the real human sacrifices.

Why cultures later abandon human sacrifice all together and ultimately adopt the figurines as a substitute most likely is a direct result of advancing society, philosophy, and cultural belief in the value (whether monetarily or otherwise) of the existing human workforce over the sumptuary laws for the dead. Lai provides an applicable example in his first chapter, “The Dead Who Would not be Ancestors,” that historians estimate, “between the middle Warring States period and the early Han dynasty the population decreased by almost half.” Thus, justifying the radical shift in overall afterlife practices of the use of human sacrifice <sup>177</sup> However,

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<sup>175</sup> Yü, ““O Soul, Come Back!” A Study in The Changing Conceptions of The Soul and Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* vol. 47, 2, 1987, 388.

<sup>176</sup> Lai, “The Presence of the Invisible,” *Excavating the Afterlife*. 2015, 109.

<sup>177</sup> Lai, “The Dead Who Would Not Be Ancestors,” 48.



it seems that real human sacrifice, like the *xunren*, versus the *mingqi* figurines had additional benefits in the afterlife. As Lai states, “the figurines had forms but no souls. They were representations without presence.”<sup>178</sup> So Marquis Yi was making a statement of his high elite status with the multiple female sacrifices and their windowed coffins. The women also had specific value to Marquis Yi in the afterlife because they had the added benefit of having dual souls, in comparison to the soulless *mingqi* substitutes which quickly replace the *xunren*. This is why they were a more desirable option as both *xunren* with souls and a display of his wealth and control as the monarch of his domain. The lacquer coffins of the *xunren* with the portal window designs help emphasize that these coffins were a statement, meant to function in the afterlife exclusively for both the tomb occupant and his companions.

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<sup>178</sup> Lai, “The Presence of the Invisible,” 109.

## **Conclusions and Remaining Questions.**

My desired results for this research I believe was inconclusive and that more research is needed. It is clear though through this research, there is a correlative distinction between coffins, their lacquer designs especially with portals, and the number of grave goods. Based off similar tombs with companions in death in large quantities, I believe that social status played a part both in the coffin placement, and coffin design of these women. The portals are a clear indication of communication throughout the tomb.

One suggestion for further research into clarifying the role of these female sacrifices within tomb Leigudun M1, as well as similar tombs of the period, is possible through skeletal analysis. In particular, studying the presence of any cranial lesions, which present themselves as signs of possible malnourishment also to help establish a basis for which sacrifices were most likely financially poor and lower in status than others. This analysis could then lead to further studies into which of the sacrifices show signs of wealth or preferential treatment in terms of bone growth and nourishment levels, primarily evident in the cranial region of the body. Studies of women's skeletons ranging in date from the Neolithic to the Eastern Zhou periods around the Yellow River basin have occurred with paleontologist Ekaterina Pechenkina from Queens College around 2017.<sup>179</sup> Pechenkina was able to determine heavily male-biased inequality prevalent in female skeletons based on signs of malnourishment and stunting of heights. Especially considering the Warring States, most likely preference was towards males in all aspects, especially in elements of strength and sustenance. The males determined the entirety of any female's existence, and this spread across all levels of society, from high to low.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Ilaria Maria Sala, "Girls have had it tough in China for nearly 3,000 years, paleontologists have found" in *Quartz*, May 2nd, 2017. <https://qz.com/973463/girls-have-had-it-tough-in-china-for-nearly-3000-years/>

<sup>180</sup> Sala, "Girls have had it tough in China for nearly 3,000 years, paleontologists have found" in *Quartz*, May 2nd, 2017. <https://qz.com/973463/girls-have-had-it-tough-in-china-for-nearly-3000-years/>

Ideally, upon attaining more photographs of all the lacquer designs on the twenty-one coffins, one can build a catalog of all portal designs present within the tomb.<sup>181</sup> Once access is available, a record should be created of the coffins estimated orientation and placement within the tomb, such as the eight women's coffins in the east chamber and the thirteen women's coffins in the far western chamber and what designs were present on each. The orientation and the placement of the *xunren*'s coffins is partly based in assumptions due to the tomb being flooded upon excavation, which does decrease the accuracy and value of this data. But one guarantee as to their locations in the tomb is the timber walls of the tomb chambers keeping objects within their rooms they were originally interred in. Recording this information could provide a better idea of which women could have preferential treatment in the afterlife.

In terms of sacrificial women and their presence in the afterlife, there is significant promise for future research in this field. This is especially true if nearby cultures are studied in connection to how they connect to the State of Zeng, which better informs where the influences of these coffins and their unique design come from during the Warring States period. Developing and established traditions can be seen through objects in the tomb, hinting at these subtleties. This research sought to explore the relationship of the female *xunren* of Leigudun M1 as a collective group, divided by task and space, and what the importance of lacquer design means for their afterlife relationship to Marquis Yi. To further emphasize their places in the world and the dead, both concubinage and marriage were discussed as an intertwining concept that is not exactly the same as known through a western lens. Objects, such as jade items, also inform us about the women, whether they were a concubine, or a type of wife and we saw examples of this

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<sup>181</sup> Currently (Spring 2020), in the midst of conducting research for this thesis, it became extremely difficult to gain access to direct information from the Hubei Provincial museum and the surrounding area of Wuhan because of the centralized outbreak of the coronavirus or COVID-19 supposedly originating from the area of Wuhan. My hope is that I will eventually be able to see these objects in person to conduct a more in-depth study of the coffins.

in the bordering Jin state. The benefit of tomb Leigudun M1 is that the majority of women were provided with simple grave goods of jade, glass beads, bronze buckles, and wood combs, so it provided valuable context to be able to infer who was most likely important in rank and status, even amongst *xunren*. If there is a hierarchy affected by biological sex or rank in the afterlife in the fifth century BCE, it would be interesting to study the correlation between this postmortem hierarchy and the reflection of the layout of the tomb as a reflection of a home or palace compound.

The lacquer portal window motifs on the coffins have proven to be the most remarkable and informative designs, helping our understanding of their variety of purposes in the afterlife. Despite not much documented visual information about the twenty-one coffins as a collective group being published at current, this opens the door to further inquiry and expands the ideas of what is possible to provide context for Warring States period graves with the presence of *xunren* available. Studies focusing on women, especially overlooked minorities are becoming increasingly common in the twenty-first century art historical scholarship. Research such as this shows that there is always exciting new information to be gleaned from studying the unassuming items, the seemingly simple designs when looking carefully enough. Something such as a painted lacquer window provided information on the order of the cosmos, the household, and the balance of man and woman. The presence of these portal motifs implies the journey of the soul and thus offers vital clues to the role of women in death – whether labeled a concubine, entertainer, or sacrifice – and their spiritual value.

TABLE

Table of the Sex, Age, and Height of the Xunren, and their Grave Goods.													
Coffin Number	Sex	Age	Height	Bi	Huan	Jue	Huang	Stringed ornament	Bead	Broken Jade	Wooden Comb	Bronze Belt hook	Total Grave Goods
E.C.1	Female	20±	149.1						1			1	2
E.C.2	Female	26±	143.8	2	2		2		2	3	1	1	13
E.C.3	Female	24±	154.8		1		1						2
E.C.4	Female	19±	140.7										0
E.C.5	Female	25±	141.8	2	1		1	1				1	6
E.C.6	Female	22±	155.7										0
E.C.7	Female	23±	149.9										0
E.C.8	Female	21±	150.3				1	1		1	1		4
W.C.1	Female	24±	148.6	2				2			1		5
W.C.2	Female	23±	149.5	5		2	2	1	1	1	1		13
W.C.3	Female	15±	146.5								1		1
W.C.4	Female	14±	N/A	2		1					1		4
W.C.5	Female	16±	N/A								1		1
W.C.6	Female	15±	N/A	1							1		2
W.C.7	Female	24±	155.3	1							1		2
W.C.8	Female	20±	149.3								1	1	2
W.C.9	Female	21±	N/A										0
W.C.10	Female	13±	N/A	1		3	3					1	8
W.C.11	Female	18±	143.6								1		1
W.C.12	Female	24±	141.8	2			3			1	1	1	8
W.C.13	Female	23±	161	2							1		3

Table 1. *Table of the Sex, Age, and Height of the Xunren, and their Grave Goods.* (Note. Adapted from Tomb of Zeng Hou Yi Exhibit. Hubei Provincial Museum, Wuhan, China. Author has highlighted coffins to indicate high count of grave goods and these coffins have available images for study.)

## FIGURES

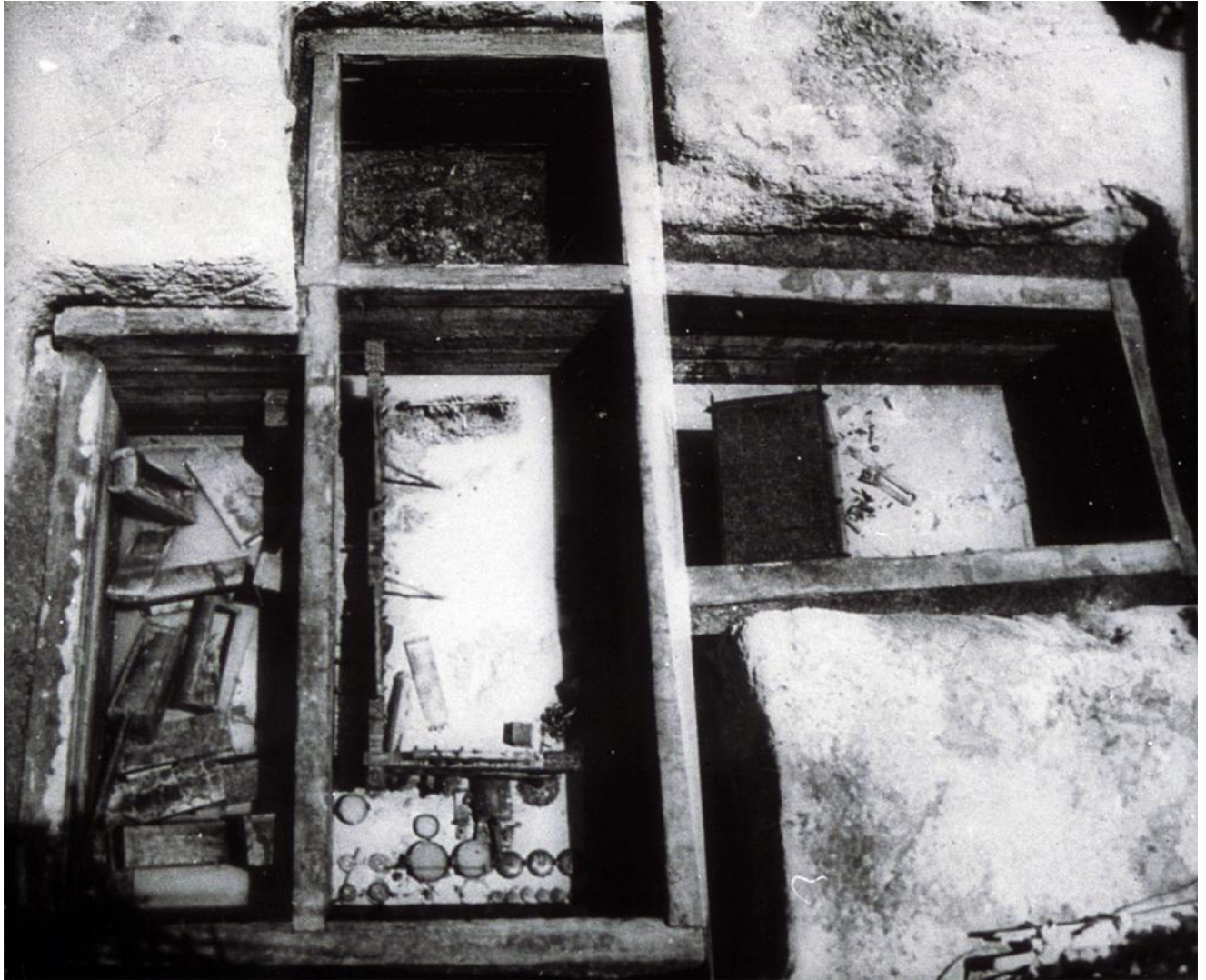


Figure 1. *Tomb of the Marquis Yi: excavation of tomb: overview of interior, Zeng ho yi mu: mu shi wa jue: mu keng qun jing.* [https://library-artstor-org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/asset/ARTSTOR\\_103\\_41822003259064.v](https://library-artstor-org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822003259064.v)



Figure 2. Hubei Provincial Map & The Location of the Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng., Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng, Ritual and Music Civilization in the Early Warring States Period, Hubei Provincial Museum, Wuhan, China. 2007.

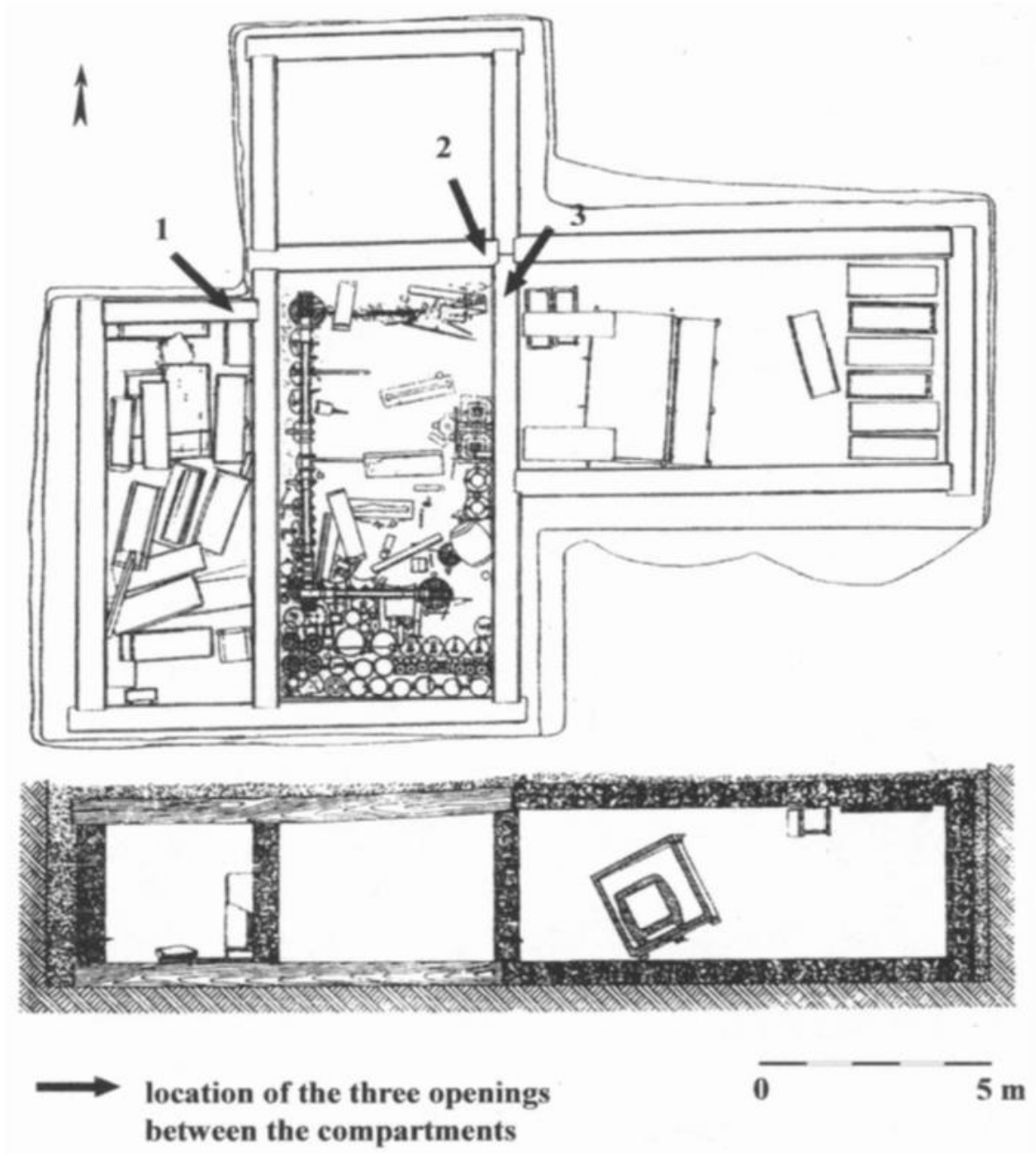


Figure 3. *Plan and section of Tomb 1 at Suizhou Leigudun, Hubei, ca. 433 BCE or Slightly Later.*  
 (After Hubei Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1989:9, fig. 5.)



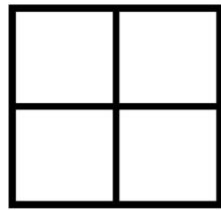


Figure 4. *Tomb of the Marquis Yi: Excavation of Tomb. Western Chamber: Small Coffins (female).* Photographed by Hao Qin Jian. Reproduced with permission of Hao Qin Jian.

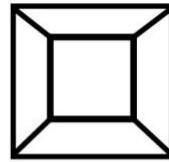


Figure 5. *Tomb of the Marquis Yi: Excavation of Tomb. Eastern Chamber.* Photographed by Hao Qin Jian. Reproduced with permission of Hao Qin Jian

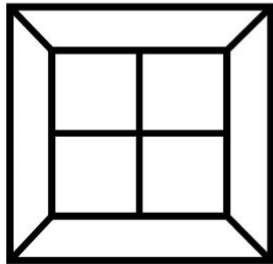
PORTAL TYPES AND VARIANTS



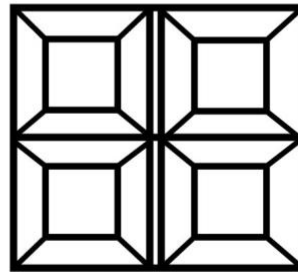
Base Type 1



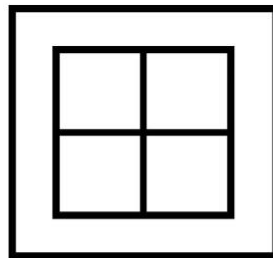
Base Type 2



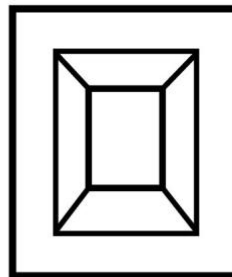
Type 1. Marquis Yi, Inner Coffin, South.



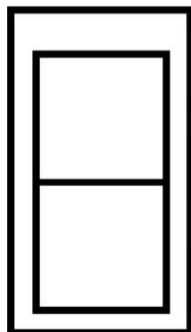
Type 2. Marquis Yi, Inner Coffin Door, East & West.



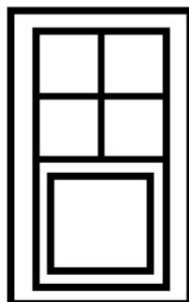
Type 1. Variant 1. Women's Coffins.



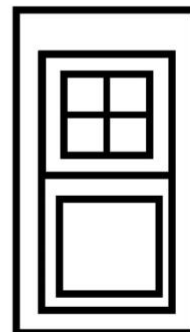
Type 2. Variant 2. Women's Coffins.



Type 1. variant 3. Women's Coffins.



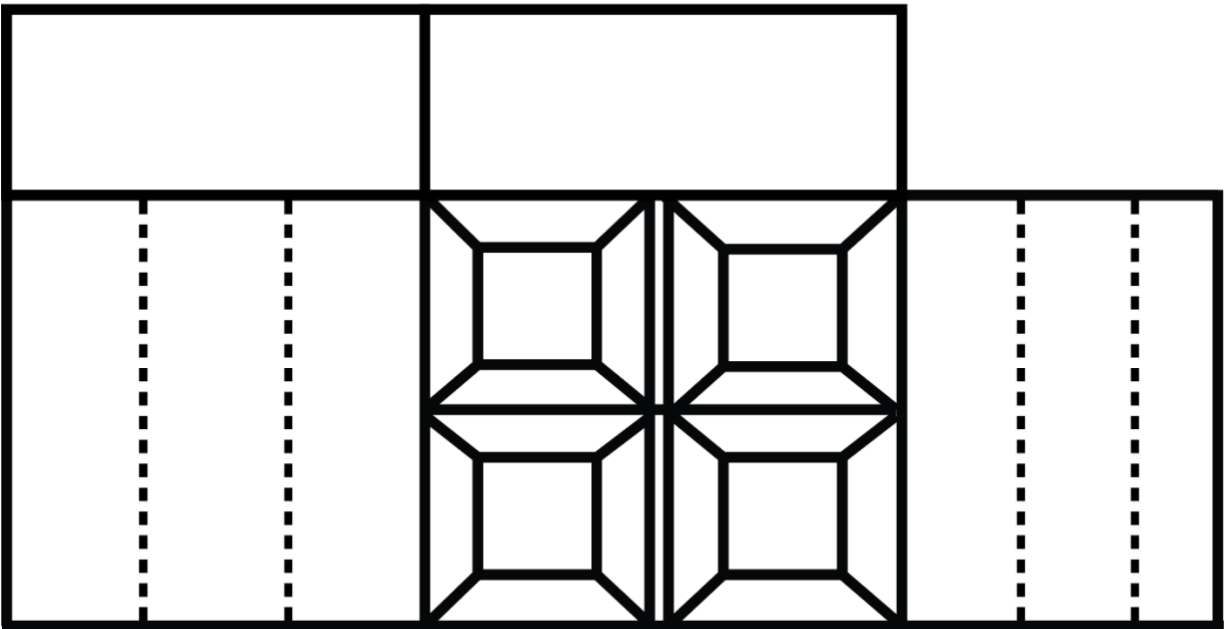
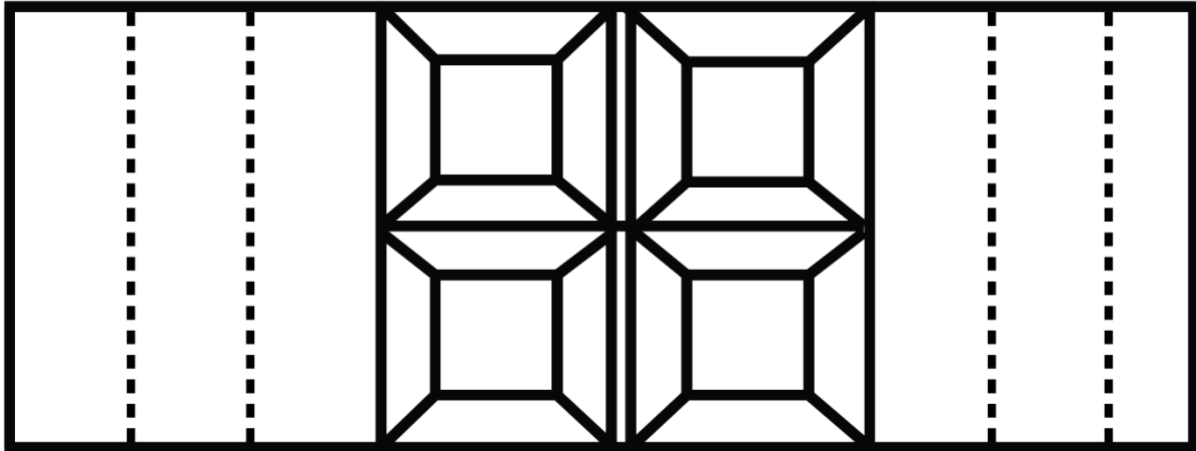
Type 1. variant 4. Women's Coffins.



Type 1. variant 5. Women's Coffins.

Figure 6. *Simplified Line Drawing of Portal Types and Variants, on Coffins of Tomb of Zeng Hou Yi., ca. 433 BCE or slightly later, Leigudun Tomb (No. 1), Suizhou, Hubei. (Art by Author)*

Possible Door, Eastern Side of Inner Coffin



Possible Door, Western Side of Inner Coffin

Figure 7. *Simplified Line drawing of Possible Eastern and Western Door Design on Inner Coffin of Zeng Hou Yi, Leigudun M1, ca. 433 BCE or slightly later, Leigudun Tomb (No. 1), Suizhou, Hubei. (Art by Author)*

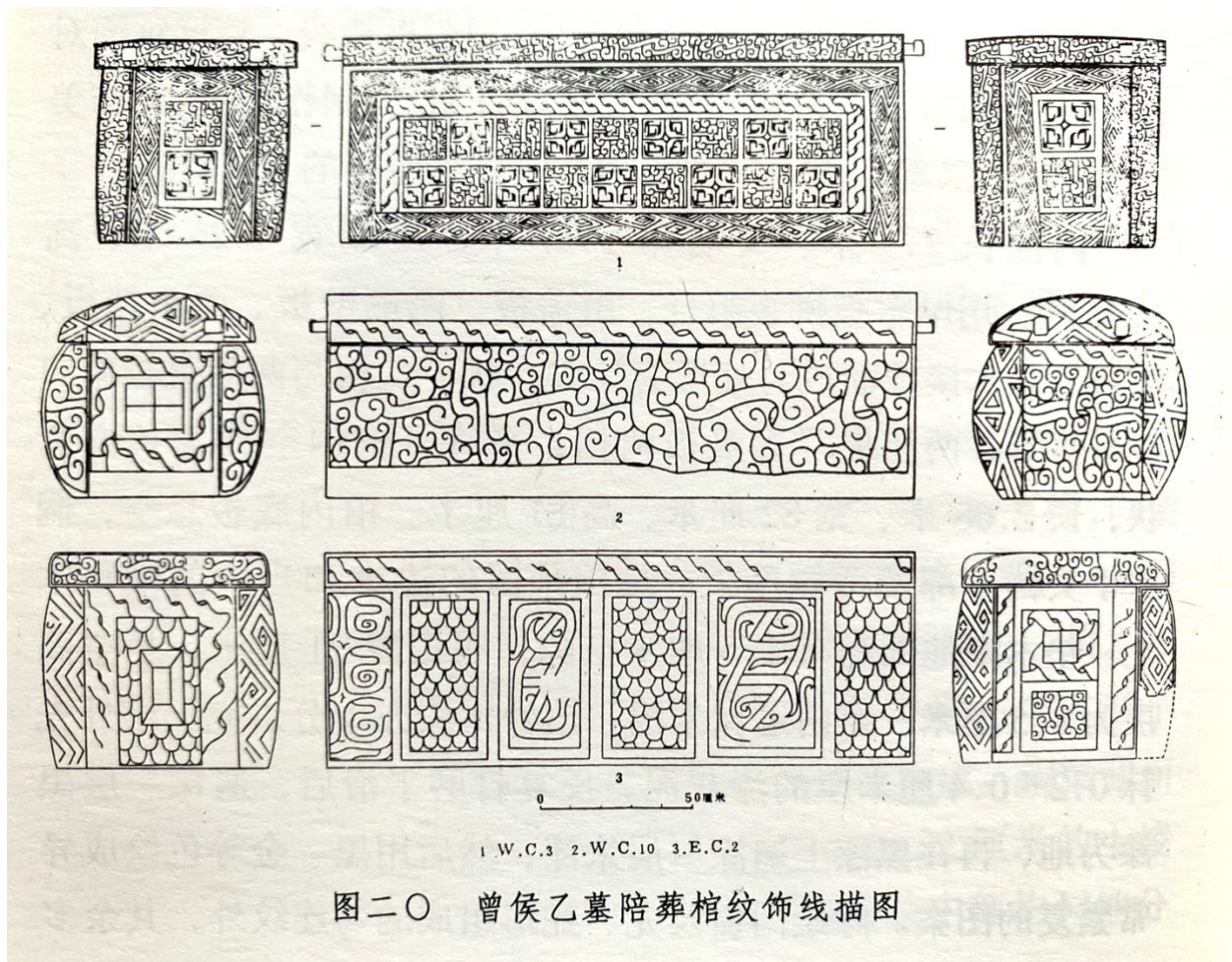


Figure 8. Line drawing of the funeral coffin pattern at the tomb of Zenghou Yi, 谭维四 Tan, Weisi, 曾侯乙墓 (Zeng Hou Yi Mu), 世纪中国文物考古发现与研究丛书 (20th century Chinese Cultural Relics Archaeological Discovery and Research Series), Beijing : Wen wu chu ban she; 北京 : 文物出版社 (Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House), 2001.



Figure 9. Tomb of the Marquis Yi: lacquer interior and exterior coffins. ca. 433 BCE or slightly later, Leigudun Tomb (No. 1), Suizhou, Hubei. [https://library-artstor-org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/asset/ARTSTOR\\_103\\_41822003259148](https://library-artstor-org.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822003259148).



Figure 10. Tomb of the Marquis Yi, *Female's West Coffin #3, endcap "window"*. Lacquered wood, ca. 433 BCE or slightly later, Leigudun Tomb (No. 1), Suizhou, Hubei, Photographed by Hao Qin Jian. Reproduced with permission of Hao Qin Jian



Figure 11. Tomb of the Marquis Yi, *Female's West Coffin #3, end and side view*. Lacquered wood, ca. 433 BCE or slightly later, Leigudun Tomb (No. 1), Suizhou, Hubei, Photographed by Hao Qin Jian. Reproduced with permission of Hao Qin Jian



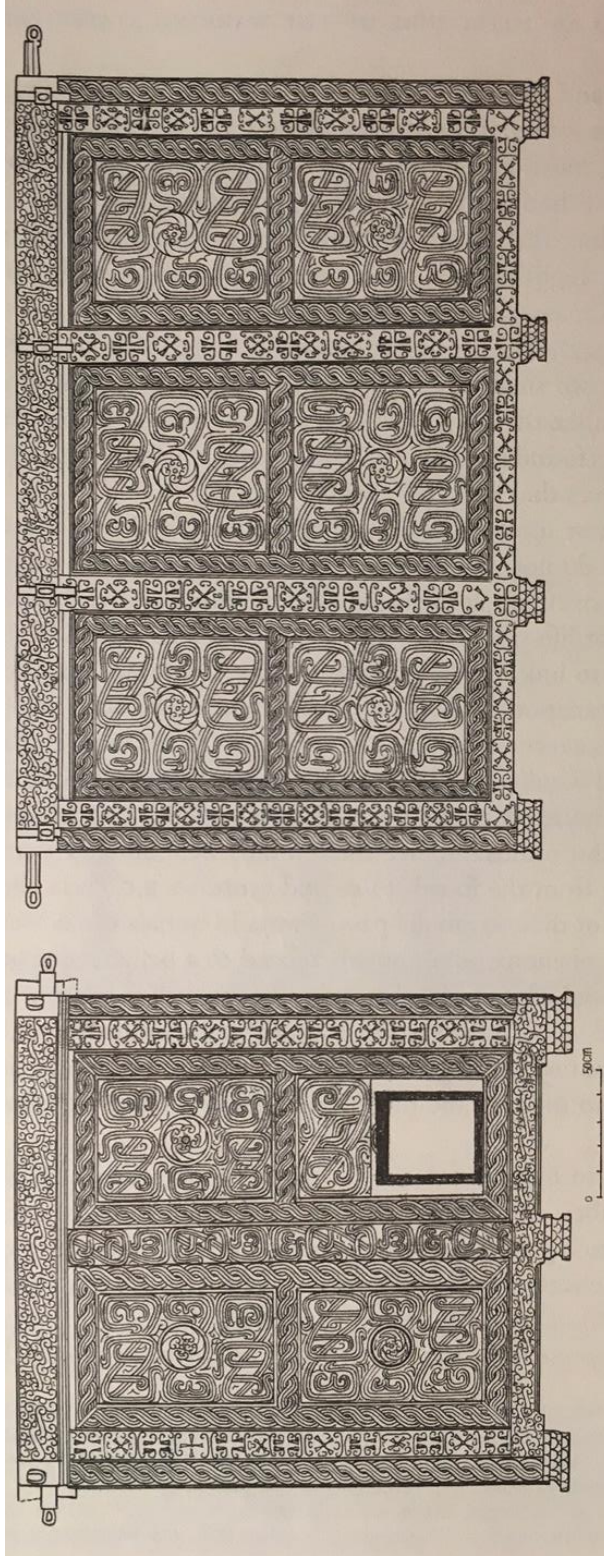


Figure 12. *Outer Coffin of Zeng Hou Yi*, Tomb 1 at Suizhou, Leigudun, Hubei, ca. 433 BCE Or slightly later. Lacquered wood on bronze structure, line drawing (After Hubei Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1989. 26. Drawings of outer coffin by Li Xiating)

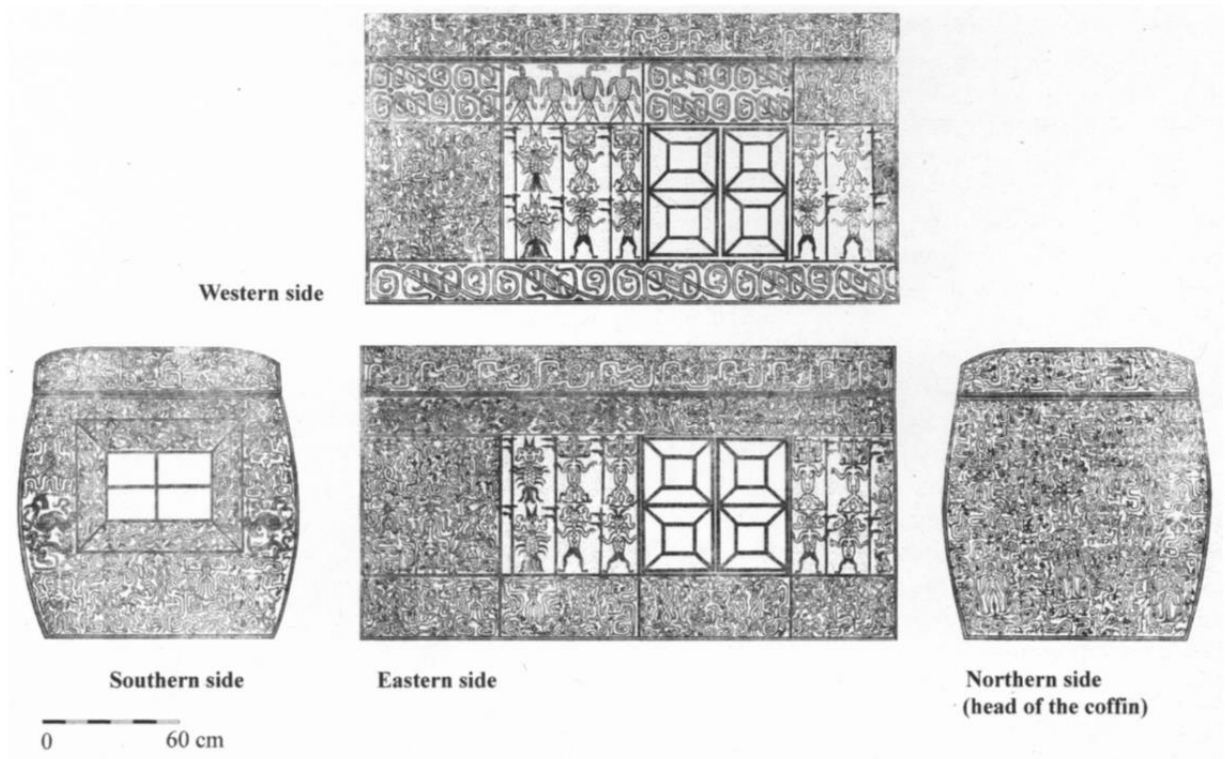


Figure 13. *Inner coffin of Zeng Hou Yi*, ca. 433 BCE or slightly later. Line drawing (After Hubei Sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1989:27.)



Figure 14. *The Inner Coffin of Zeng Hou Yi (East and South view)*, ca. 433 BCE or slightly later, Lacquer ware, Leigudun Tomb (No. 1), Suizhou, Hubei, Length: 250 cm; width 125-127 cm; height 132 cm. Hubei Provincial Museum, Wuhan, China.

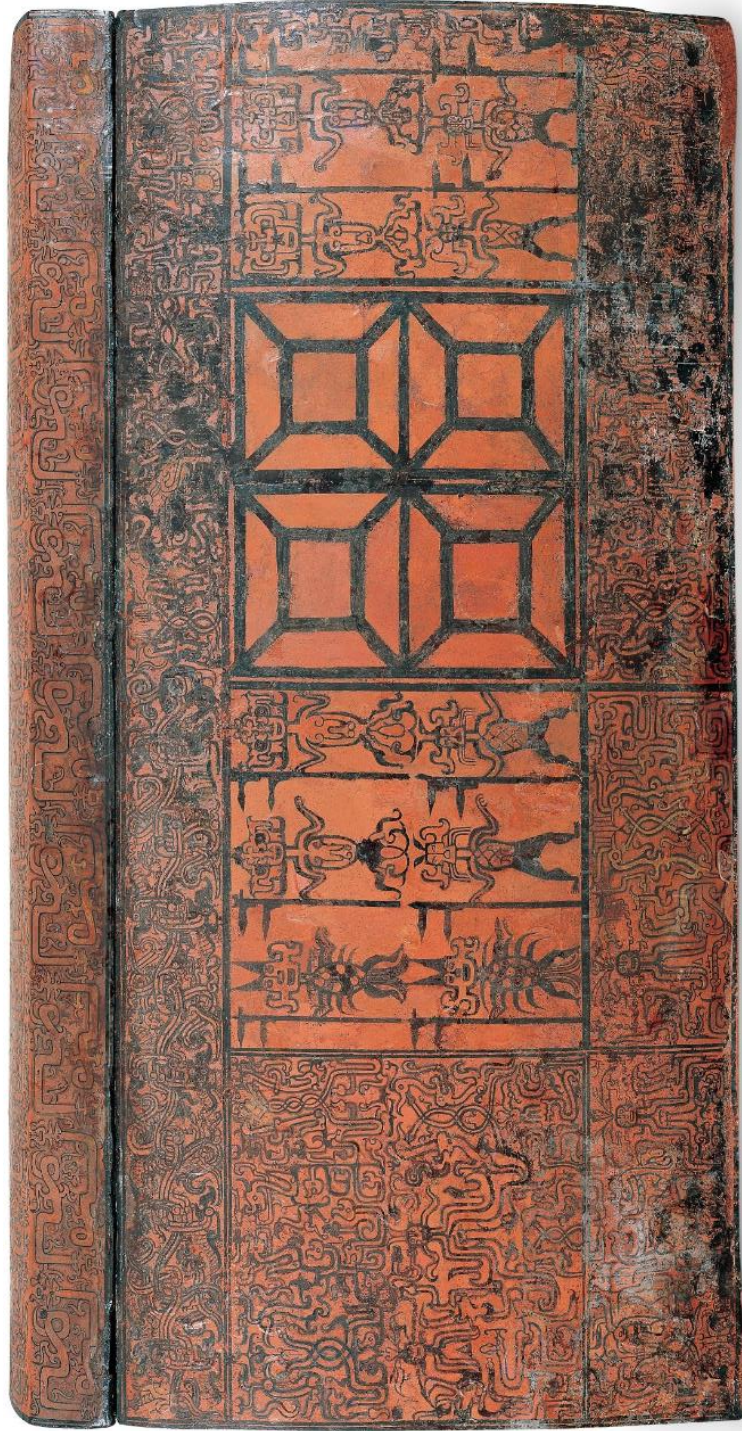


Figure .15 *The Inner Coffin of Zeng Hou Yi- Part (East)*, ca. 433 BCE or slightly later, Lacquer ware, Leigudun Tomb (No. 1), Suizhou, Hubei, Length: 250 cm; width 125-127 cm; height 132 cm. Hubei Provincial Museum, Wuhan, China.



Figure 16. *The Inner Coffin of Zeng Hou Yi – Part (South)*, ca. 433 BCE or slightly later. Lacquer ware, Leigudun Tomb (No. 1), Suizhou, Hubei, Length: 250 cm; width 125-127 cm; height 132 cm. Hubei Provincial Museum, Wuhan, China.

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