

# Gender Structure in Pre-Qin China with Focus on Anyang Yinxu

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## ABSTRACT

*In China and other parts of Asia, the framework of patriarchy was firmly established against the backdrop of Confucianism. A patriarchal system similar to that of the present day was already established by the period of written and recorded history. It can be inferred that the major paradigm shift establishing gender disparity occurred in the prehistoric period and can only be known through archaeological research. If this is the case, then archaeology should play a significant role in the study of gender. My research leads me to believe that the gender structure of China changed significantly during the Shang dynasty and the subsequent Western Zhou period (Uchida 2020, 2021).*

*(1) The gender structure of Asia was created not only by the decline in women's status due to changes in agriculture, but the establishment of urban civilization urged the division of gender structure.*

*(2) During the transition from the Shang dynasty to the Western Zhou, there was a major paradigm shift in gender due to the emergence of clans with headquarters in various regions and the significant expansion of the regional scope of intermarriage.*

*(3) Many women gave birth to multiple children between the ages of 15 and 35, and many lost their lives, resulting in a shorter life expectancy than for men. This may have been another factor that prevented them from entering the upper echelons of society, and the "roles" of men and women and their "hierarchy" became fixed.*

*How that social system came into being is the clue to how the gender problems that pervade our time have arisen, and unless we reconsider where the errors lie, the gender problem will not be solved.*

**KEYWORDS:** Gender structure, Anyang Yinxu, Shang dynasty, subsistence activity, social activity, urbanization

## 1. Introduction

As Ueno Chizuko argues from the perspective of feminist sociology, it is widely recognized that the current status of women in society is a product of "patriarchy" (Ueno 1990, pp. 3–17). So when did the paradigm shift to patriarchy occur?

In China and other parts of Asia, the framework of patriarchy was firmly established against the backdrop of Confucianism. A patriarchal system similar to that of the present day was already established by the period of written and recorded history, as argued by the

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authors of *Chūgoku jendā-shi kenkyū nyūmon* (Gender History in China in 2018; Kohama *et al.* eds., 2021). On the other hand, in the early Neolithic period, which in human history is the preliminary stage of civilization, there was no disparity between men and women, so it can be inferred that the major paradigm shift establishing gender disparity occurred in the prehistoric period and can only be known through archaeological research. If this is the case, then archaeology should play a significant role in the study of gender. My research leads me to believe that the gender structure of China changed significantly during the Shang Dynasty and the subsequent Western Zhou period (Uchida 2020, 2021). Therefore, the discussion here focuses on the process of gender structural changes from the Late Shang period to the Western Zhou period presenting data based on archaeological and written sources.

Unravelling changes in gender structure requires investigating many factors and is not limited to patriarchy and gender inequality. This paper argues that in an large ancient city known as Yinxu (殷墟), the surplus of time and the abilities of the men were used to promote specialization. This led to women being relegated to subsistence activities, and it created the gender that became prevalent throughout Asia. Customs such as the burials of chiefs and attitudes towards the patriarchy and the meaning of marriage in the Shang Dynasty led to the belief that women were not important partners in marriage alliances. In the final section of this article argues that the roles of men and women became fixed because women spent most of their lives engaged in subsistence activities while raising their children, and could not make use of surplus power to earn a living.

## 2. Problems with Conventional Chinese Gender History

At the beginning of the Neolithic period, women appear to have played a major role in the process of gathering plants, selecting grains and the initial stages of their cultivation, and cooking. But later, men played a major role in the adoption of irrigation, which increased productivity. And the shift in those roles is said to have lowered the social status of women. Miyamoto Kazuo and Watanabe Yoshiro, who analysed grave goods from the early Neolithic period, speculate that there was a difference in the nature of labour, as farming tools such as ploughs and axes were concentrated in male graves, while cooking tools and spindles were deposited in female graves (Watanabe 1989; Miyamoto 2005) (Figure 4-a, b). With the development of agriculture came the concentration of wealth and with it the emergence of burials with many burial accessories. Burial practices have sometimes been linked to gender. Richard Pearson noted that female burials with fewer burial artefacts than male burials indicate the emergence of gender disparity in Neolithic times (Pearson 1981, p. 1086). Sarah M. Nelson notes that women were involved in the rituals at the Hongshan (紅山) cultural site in Liaoning Province (Nelson 2014, pp. 81–82). Anne B.

Kinney has also previously summarized gender arrangements in the Neolithic period, which in addition to these three characteristics as also included women's involvement in the occupation of spinning and weaving (Kinney 2018, p. 373).

Gender structure is discussed based on an analysis of oracle inscription. David Keightley observed that queens were the object of periodic rituals and were worshipped as ancestors. On the other hand, Keightley, Ying Wang, Kathryn M. Linduff, and others have pointed out that grave goods from the unclaimed tomb of Fu-hao (IA CASS 1980), the spouse of King Shang Wu-ding (武丁), are of a lower grade than those from the royal tombs in Xibeigang (西北岡; Keightley 1999, pp. 26–46) and that the owner of the Si-Mu-Wu (司母戊) *ding* (鼎) tripod, Fu-Jing (婦姁), was the first woman with a rank higher than Fu-hao, suggesting that disparities existed among women (Wang Y. 2006; Linduff 2006).

Research has been conducted to clarify the transition from a primitive “matriarchal society” characterized by equality between men and women to a “patriarchal society” displaying clear gender disparities during the Shang Dynasty by examining archaeological artefacts discovered in various regions. The changes in society as a whole that occurred during this period are thought to have extended to many fields, and changes in gender structure are thought to have occurred in conjunction with other changes. Unravelling the process of change in the gender structure requires investigating a number of factors that are not limited to patriarchy and gender inequality.

Furthermore, it is likely that changes in the gender structure will differ, or the degree will differ, even in the same period, depending on the circumstances of rural and urban areas, upper and lower social strata, grave goods and goods for daily use, events appearing in written materials and real life, and so on. In contrast to previous studies, which have made fragmentary use of documents and archaeological data to establish the existence of the patriarchal system, this paper discusses various phenomena that may have contributed to the establishment of the gender structure.

### **3. Gender-Division-of-Labour Stratification and Urban Society**

#### **3-1. Gender Division of Labour in a “Primitive” Society**

George P. Murdock compiled a table of the division of labour by gender for 224 tribes selected from all parts of the world at the beginning of the twentieth century, listing male-dominated labour, female-dominated labour, and labour performed by both sexes (Murdock 1965, p. 309) (Table 1).

Maria Mies distinguishes between “the production of human life and living-working capacity” from “subsistence production and reproduction” which maintain the capitalist system. She defines it as subsistence production involving a variety of human activities ranging from pregnancy and birth of children to the production, processing and preparation

Table 1. Murdock's table: "Divisions of Labor by sex" (Murdock 1965: p. 309)

Labours	M	F	Percent
Metal working	78	0	100.0
Weapon making	121	0	99.8
Pursuit of sea mammals	34	0	99.3
Hunting	166	0	98.2
Manufacture of musical instruments	45	1	96.9
Boatbuilding	91	1	96.0
Mining and quarrying	35	1	95.4
Work in wood and bark	113	1	95.0
Work in stone	68	2	95.0
Trapping or catching of small animals	128	2	94.9
Work in bone, horn and shall	67	3	93.0
Lumbering	104	6	92.2
Fishing	98	4	85.6
Manufacture of ceremonial objects	37	1	85.1
Herding	38	5	83.6
Housebuilding	86	14	77.0
Clearing of land for agriculture	73	13	76.3
Netmaking	44	11	74.1
Trade	51	7	73.7
Dairy operations	17	13	57.1
Manufacture of ornaments	24	18	52.5
Agriculture-soil preparation and planting	31	37	48.4
Manufacture of leather products	29	32	48.0
Body mutilation, e.g., tattooing	16	20	46.6
Erection and dismantling of shelter	14	22	39.8
Hide preparation	31	49	39.4
Hide Preparation	31	49	39.4
Tending of fowls and small animals	21	39	38.7
Agriculture-crop tending and harvesting	10	44	33.9
Gathering of shellfish	9	25	33.5
Manufacture of nontextile fabrics	14	32	33.3
Fire making and tending	18	62	30.5
Burden bearing	12	57	29.9
Preparation of drinks and narcotics	20	57	29.5
Manufacture of thread and cordage	23	9-73	27.3
Basketmaking	25	82	24.4
Matmaking	16	61	24.2
Weaving	19	67	23.9
Gathering of fruits, berries, and nuts	12	63	23.6
Fuel gathering	22	89	23.0
Pottery making	13	77	18.4
Preservation of meat and fish	8	74	16.7
Manufacture and repair of clothing	12	95	16.1
Gathering of herbs, roots, and seeds	8	74	15.8
Cooking	5	158	8.6
Water carrying	7	119	8.2
Grain grinding	2	114	7.8

of food, clothing, making of a home, cleaning, as well as the satisfaction of emotional and sexual needs. (Mies *et al.* 1988, pp. 27–28). On the other hand, secondary products are used to maintain the capitalist system, which Mies calls subsistence production. But in this article, “subsistence activity” refers to “activities necessary for human beings as organisms.” Most of the activities of the primitive societies listed by Murdock consist of essentially subsistence activities. Although men and women had their own dominant labour activities, in general it can be said that in primitive societies, subsistence activities were shared by men and women, and they provided for their own food and necessities.

In addition to subsistence activities, human beings communicate with each other using complex languages, maintain mutual, coexistent relationships, form groups, and expand the scope of their activities. As a result, they have come to adapt to various environments around the world and live in a variety of places. The web of relationships among them is defined as “society” and their activities to maintain those relationships while complementing each other are “social activities.” Added to these are the “labour force production” of Marxist sociology and the subsistence reproduction of Mies’s definition.<sup>1</sup> Both of these systems diverge from subsistence activity, in which people make available their surplus time, energy, and abilities in exchange for compensation. If we lump all these activities together as “social reproductive activity,” we can see that in modern urban society there is a dichotomy between personal subsistence activity and social reproductive activity. The balance between the two is closely related to the gender structure. In the next section, I would like to consider how the two sides diverged and came to be in conflict by comparing the case of YinXu with the previous stage of development.

### **3-2. Farming and Gender**

As mentioned above, in early agriculture, women are said to have played the primary role in the process of gathering plants, selecting grains, and the initial stages of cultivation, but later, with the development of irrigation practices, productivity increased and stable settlements were established. It is believed that the role of men became more important in this process. The “primitive society” referred to by Murdock in the previous section seems to include ethnographic examples up to this stage. Looking at the data, we can see that the work of preparing the fields, cultivating, harvesting, etc. is not so unevenly distributed among men and women; they appear to have worked together.

Surveys of contemporary ethnographic societies indicate that while the spread of plantation farming and the payment for labour created a situation in which men were exclusively engaged in plantation farming, gender collaboration was universal in farming societies that were not embedded in colonial-rule or capitalist systems (Tanaka and Nakatani, eds., 2005, pp. 126–129). In China, men and women have collaborated in agriculture, including heavy-labour tasks, in rural areas up to the present day, as

is confirmed by Murdock's findings. I believe that men and women have basically collaborated not only in small-scale agricultural production as a subsistence activity to produce their own food but also in situations where intensive agriculture progressed to the point of exceeding their own life support requirements.

The stage at which intensive agriculture progressed, including the Liangzhu (良渚) culture where agricultural dams had already been constructed, probably corresponds to the late Neolithic period. A male grave with rich burials was found at the late Neolithic Taosi (陶寺) site in Shanxi province. In this period, it is inevitable that the social configuration changed from tribal to the more complex chiefdom society. Hence, it is understandable that the status of men, who can be presumed to be mainly concerned with the control of society, increased relatively. It is also true that there was a bias toward wealth among those who successfully managed agriculture. However, the conclusion that women's status declined and society shifted to a male-dominated patriarchal system mainly because male strength was essential for agricultural development may be considered short-sighted.

Murdock's table shows a clear gender difference in spinning and weaving, which is mainly performed by women. This difference is consistent with archaeological data from the late Neolithic period in China, where spindles were found only in female graves. This will be discussed again in a later chapter.

### **3-3. Cities, Politics, and Gendered Division of Labour in the Shang Dynasty**

Broadly speaking, complex and hierarchical settlement systems increased throughout the Neolithic period in China, and late in the period central place-type settlements appeared. At the Erlitou (二里头) site, which is presumed to be the historical capital of the Xia (夏) Dynasty, large-scale architectural remains have been found that are believed to be palace ruins. The appearance of such buildings is said to indicate the establishment of an early state where power was concentrated in a ruling class. In the first half of the Shang Dynasty, the capital was located in Zhengzhou and is said to have been encircled by double city walls. In the middle stage of the dynasty, the capital is believed to have been Huanbei (洹北), and it had square city walls with sides 2-kilometers long. In the latter half of the dynasty, the capital was located on the south bank of the Huan River (Anyang River). Today it is called Anyang Yinxu (殷墟), but then was called Dayishang (大邑商). Dayishang developed into a huge city of about four to five square kilometers (Figure 1). The residential patterns of urban people, clans, lineages,<sup>2</sup> etc. in cities up to the advent of Huanbei are largely unknown. In other words, it is still unclear which settlement/city in the Xia-Shang period can be considered a turning point in social systems, from the aforementioned farming villages with intensive agriculture to the conglomeration of settlements that can be defined as a "city." This article takes Yinxu as representative of the early cities of ancient society from the perspective of gender. The social systems of Yinxu



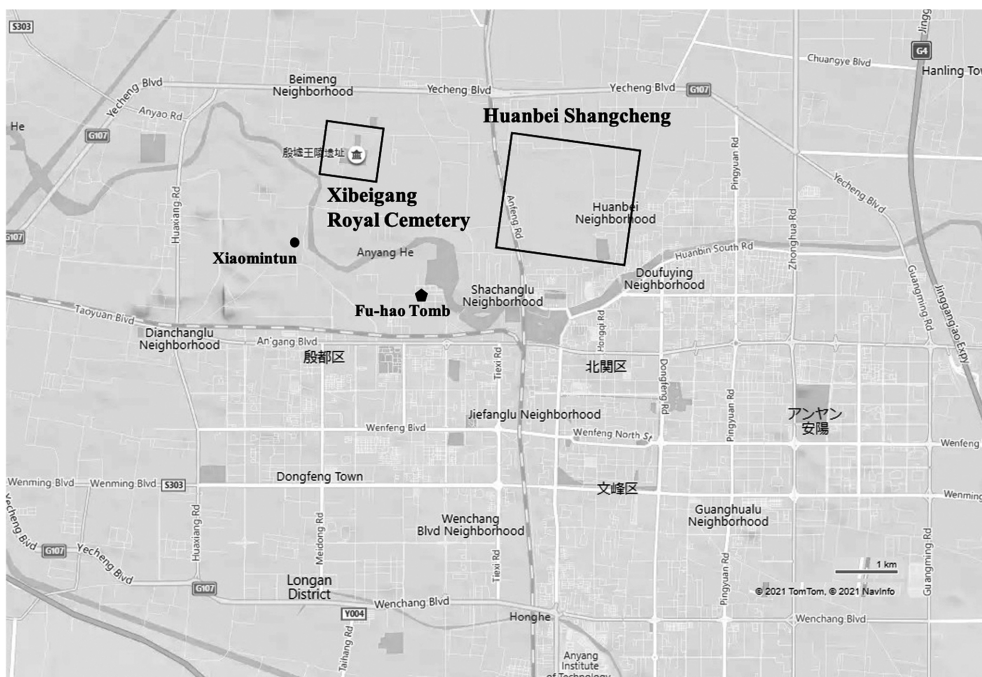


Figure 1. The map of Anyang Yinxu (Dayishang).

are quite clear due to the existence of primary sources such as artefacts inscribed with ancient bone regions and seaside villages had been engaged in subsistence activities, while large cities such as Yinxu, did not have farmland and urban residents could only consume surplus harvests from rural areas. The differences between urban and rural areas suggest that the social systems were very different. In contrast to large rural settlements, in cities in the late Shang period, society was supported by interdependent labour, and society shifted dramatically into a new phase. From that time onward, the social stratification of urban and rural areas seems to have progressed.

Drawing on the abundant artefacts that have been excavated, the following provides an overview of the society of Yinxu and examines its gender structure.

### 3-3-1. Specialized Craft Industries

It is natural to assume that in a primitive, rural, and self-sufficient society, people would make the tools necessary for their own work. Women naturally collected plants and game that needed to be cooked and made earthenware to prepare them, and men would have made the stone and bone tools needed for hunting. Later, roughly in the late Neolithic period, as agriculture and animal husbandry developed and there was a surplus in food



Figure 2. Bronze vessels in HPKM1400, Xibeigang (Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica).

production, it is believed that specialized artisans emerged to make the vessels necessary for daily life and the maintenance of society. From the Neolithic period to the Shang Dynasty, the original specialized handicraft production included pottery making (especially refined earthenware such as coloured pottery, black pottery, and specially moulded vessels), jade ware, and bronze ware.<sup>3</sup>

Nishiaki Yoshihiro's paper on craft specialization and social complexity (Nishiaki 2000) citing analyses by Vere G. Childe (Childe 1951), John E. Clark (Clark & Patty 1990), and Cathy L. Costin (Costin 1991), concludes that in a simple chiefdom-type society, the ruling class began "attached specialization" to gain control of authority and the economy and that "independent specialization" developed in more complex, highly stratified societies. In Mesopotamia, potters had been producing pottery even before the emergence of cities, according to Uruk-period archaeological records, and production corresponding to independent specialization or attached specialization<sup>4</sup> may have been carried out by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC (Nishiaki 2000, pp. 5–6). Nishiaki cites events that do not necessarily evolve from attached specialization to independent specialization, but in any case, craft specialization was established in social systems mediated by fairly high levels of mutual-supply relationships, as specialized craftspeople provided labour through organizations in the societies and earned compensation in return. The author believes that this surplus of labour greatly influenced the activities of men and women.

Let us apply this hypothesis to the situation of socioeconomic development in China. From the late Neolithic period onward, surpluses arose in rural economies and ruling





Figure 3. The tomb of oracle diviner, Wangyukou M103 (photo by He Yuling).

classes that could collectively absorb these surpluses emerged. As societies became more complex the economies began to revolve around these surpluses. Jade ware, in particular, developed in the late Neolithic period, and bronze ware, probably introduced from the northern steppes region, developed in the (Xia) Shang period. Notably, a highly skilled and specialized production system that used raw materials from distant regions to produce bronze and jade ware emerged in the (Xia) Shang period, from the Erlitou period to the late Shang period. However, the production of jade and bronze wares from the late Neolithic period to the Erlitou period was only for chiefs and a very limited number of members of the higherranks of society. Considering that jade and bronze were not continuously produced in large quantities throughout the period, production was probably at the attached specialization stage under the chiefs. On the other hand, the discovery of bronze workshops in the latter half of the Shang Dynasty at the Xiaomintun (孝民屯) site, the Tiesanlu (鉄三路) bone tool workshop group, the Tiesanlu earthenware kiln group, etc. suggest, based on their large-scale production and stable transmission of techniques, that they were in the independent specialization stage (Figure 2). In the clan cemetery next to these workshops, graves of artisans with tools and raw materials buried beside them have been discovered. Graves of jade-ware artisans at the Tiesanlu site 2006 ATSM89 (He 2017), graves of presumed bronze-ware artisans at Renjiashuang (任家庄) M168 (Institute of Relics in Anyang City 2018), Xiaomintun SM952, and SM918 (Anyang Archaeological Team 2018) are examples, and all the deceased are male. In order to develop and pass on advanced technology, it was necessary to set aside time from subsistence activities to accumulate experience and to receive compensation for performing activities that are not

related to one's own life, such as mould making, melting copper, and casting. Therefore, it is natural to think that the emergence of professional artisans was a system formed by men who were freed from subsistence activities to work as professional artisans for the chiefs and other higher-ranked individuals, or to engage in trade with them. As for pottery makers, there is no evidence of gender differences, but the pottery workers of Dayishang (Yinxu) constructed a number of kilns with advanced techniques to mass produce pottery (Anyang Archaeological Team 2012b). This is comparable to the situation of independent professional production, so it is assumed that, as in the case of bronze ware, pottery was mainly produced by male professional artisans.

### 3-3-2. Specialized Arts for the Ruling Elite (Centre of Authority)

Religious leaders, kings (chiefs), and other powerful people, as well as professional artisan with special skills, rely on specific large-scale settlements to establish themselves. Dayishang was the royal capital of the late Shang Dynasty (1300 BC to 1050 BC), and it was a large city.

The kings of the Shang Dynasty also played important roles as religious figures worshipping ancestral deities known as *di* (帝) (divine). In the Xiaotun (小屯) Palace area, the oracle bones and tortoise plastrons with script used for divination have survived and been excavated. The inscriptions show that divination was carried out by specialists called *zhenren* (真人), who named the kings. There is a possibility that important matters were already being recorded and preserved in writing at that time. In addition, historical books and classics such as *Shiji* (史記), *Shangshu* (尚書), and *Zhushujinian* (竹書紀年), which are believed to have been written in later times, contain detailed records of the same kings and their respective achievements. In Chinese society since the beginning of history, it is well known that the bureaucracy plays a central role in government. This is presumed to be the case with civil officials such as *shi* (史) and *Zuoce* (作冊). What was the gender of the users of writing, i.e., civil servants, during the period when writing became established?

M103 and M94 in the clan cemetery in Wangyukou (王裕口) village contained luxurious burial goods including bronze and jade vessels (Anyang Archaeological Team 2012a); M103 contained bronze vessels with identical inscriptions, seals, engraved swords, and crowns with numerous hairpins inserted, and He Yuling has speculated that it was the grave of a *zhenren* diviner (He 2017, Figure 3). The deceased was a man in his thirties. The *zhenren* inscribed on the oracle bones are also presumed to be all males. Therefore, it is assumed that already male diviners monopolized knowledge of writing and control of written information. From the time of the Western Zhou Dynasty, it is also likely that men completely monopolized writing and control of written information. The exclusion of women from the world of politics and learning is thought to have occurred through this process, and the invention of writing, the development of information control, and

the monopolization of these tasks by men are thought to be factors that led to the rapid expansion of the gap between men and women. On the other hand, it is well known that women taught their children writing and learning at home in later periods, and it is clear from various episodes in later documents that a considerable number of women acquired knowledge of writing. They were restrained, however, from using their knowledge of writing to take an active part in society.

The side of the abdomen of tortoise plastrons is called the “shell joint,” and the back of the shell joint is sometimes inscribed with numbers and a person’s name, for example “Fu-someone,” or “a certain woman.” Miao Lijuan hypothesizes that this is the name of the person who filed the inscriptions and that normally it was a man but that some women were also involved in inscribing prastrons (Miao 2013, pp. 21–25). This article takes the position that these names were of those who were involved in the processing of the inscriptions and the names on the tortoise plastrons were of women. Wang Zhenzhong, on the other hand, thinks that the name on the bridge of the tortoise plastron is the name of the person who contributed the plastron, and that “a certain woman” could be a female lord (Wang 2013, pp. 489–491). In addition, Ochiai Atsushi affirms the existence of female domain overseers, and states that “a certain woman” includes women who were relatives of the king who married a lord (Ochiai 2015, pp. 141–143). There is also an oracle inscription stating that one of those women, Fu-Jing, should go to patrol the millet fields (Jiaguwen heji [Oracle Bone Collection] 9598). So presumably there were times when women of the royal family went to oversee the fields (Lin 2018, p. 134). Evidence for the existence of female lords, however, as noted by Wang and Ochiai, is insufficient and needs to be examined further.

There is no established theory as to what the status of the woman was during the late Shang period. According to inscriptions on bronze ware and the oracle bone script, the Fu (婦) character is composed of a pictograph of a woman and a broom, and the author assumes it to have been a symbol of a noble woman who served the king. Fu is also said to have been one of the king’s multiple spouses.

### **3-3-3. Soldiers and Gender**

Fu-hao (婦好), the woman’s name that appears most frequently in the ancient [oracle bone] script, is said to be one of King Wu-ding’s spouses. In the historical records on Fu-hao, there are divination records on military prowess, good luck in childbirth, and toothache. While there is a sense of her life as a woman, R044577 oracle plastron (in the collection of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica) predicts the success or failure of Fu-hao’s military campaign. The fact that Fuhao, the wife of a king, was also involved in military affairs has attracted considerable attention. To further support this record, there were a total of 134 bronze weapons and items of armour buried in her tomb. It is

noteworthy that the tomb has a large number of symbolic and practical weapons, such as two large broad axes (*yue* 鉞), which were considered symbols of power at that time, with the Fu-hao inscription; two small broad axes, 91 (*ge* 戈), and six bow-shaped instruments (*Gongxingqi* 弓形器). However, no other example of a woman carrying multiple weapons and participating in warfare as a soldier has been found.

In the Xiaomintun clan cemetery excavated in 2003–2004, 133 graves were identified as female based on the human remains excavated (Anyang Archaeological Team 2018). According to the results, female graves rarely have *jue* (爵) and *gu* (觚) as the ritual drinking sets and almost never have weapons and tools. On the other hand, of the 121 tombs that it is certain are male tombs, 33 had bronze ritual vessels and armour, and 46 had pottery. In the sacrificial pits in the southern part of the architectural altar of B7 at the Xiaotun Palace site, there are rows of armour-clad sacrificial burials, including chariots and horses, suggesting that a coherent military unit had been formed. The burial of weapons by men in the general clan cemetery may indicate that some of the city dwellers in the city of Yinxu served as soldiers. While those without weapons but with bronze ware related to rituals may not have been soldiers but rather had a political role. These phenomena in the Xiaomintun cemetery indicate that some kinds of social roles in civil and military affairs were reserved for men.

### 3-4. “Men Till the Land and Women Weave Cloth”: Elevated as a Symbol of Women

The old saying in China “Men till the land and women weave cloth” evokes an image that spinning and weaving were a woman’s occupation. Spinning and weaving were the only industries left for women in handicraft production. The author believes that there were some changes in the way spinning and weaving was done before and after the Shang Dynasty.

From the Neolithic period plant fibres were used, and by the Shang Dynasty silk was definitely used. Sato Taketoshi has suggested that silk textiles made from wild and domestic silkworms were developed, based on the fact that there are oracle inscriptions that suggest the worship of silkworm gods (Sato 1977, pp. 90–95). From the expression of clothing on jade figures and the traces of woven cloth remaining on artefacts, it is likely that various kinds of costumes and cloth products with rich ornamentation and quality in terms of coloration, weaving, and embroidery were already being produced in Shang. In many places in the late Neolithic period, spindle whorls were found in women’s tombs (Figure 4-a, b), and it is believed that women were probably engaged in textile weaving (Watanabe 1989; Namba 2005). Also women may have continued spinning and weaving after the Neolithic period, as jade spindle whorls have been found in the Fu-hao tomb.

However, only a few spindle whorls have been found in women’s tombs in the

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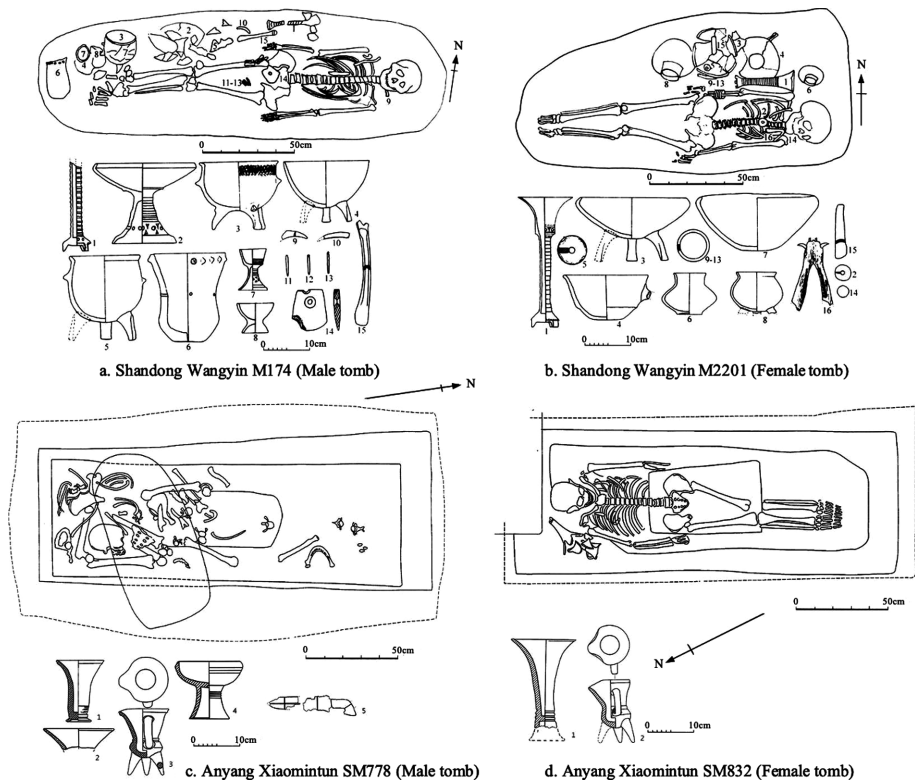


Figure 4. Gender division of the objects in tombs.

a, b: Neolithic tombs in Wangyin, Shangdong (IA CASS 2000, pp. 177, 188); c, d: Late Shang tombs in Xiaomintun, Anyang (Anyang Archaeological Team 2018, pp. 157, 178).

Xiaomintun south-eastern area of Yinxu (Anyang Archaeological Team 2018) (Figure 4-c, d). In other words, it can be assumed that women of the residential areas of the clans that mainly operated bronze workshops did not do spinning and weaving work on a daily basis.<sup>5</sup> Spindle whorls have rarely been found in clan tombs in other areas of Yinxu. An integral part of spinning and weaving is the gathering of plants as the raw materials for fibre and mulberry leaves as food for raising silkworms, and it involves agricultural work. For this reason, spinning and weaving must have been basically done in rural areas. In other words, at least the production of thread may no longer have been self-sufficient in the late Shang period.<sup>6</sup> As specialization of handicrafts increased, urban and rural areas became more socially stratified, indicating that spinning and weaving were no longer the universal handicraft of all women in the same period.

In the following Western Zhou Dynasty period, spindle whorls were also found in several female tombs at the Tianma Qucun site in Shanxi province. For example, stone



and clay spindle whorls have been found in the medium-sized tomb M6080 (Faculty of Archaeology, Beijing University, etc. 2000, pp. 395–404). However only in some of the small tombs was a single earthen spindle whorl found with two or three earthenware items and a jade ball, suggesting that urban spinning had ceased. The inscriptions on bronze ware in the Zhou period often include the phrase “thread will be given to you as a reward,” suggesting that at least some thread was being brought into the cities at that time.

The Fu-hao tomb in Yinxu was found to contain a flat jade silkworm. In the Western Zhou period, there were a number of silkworm-shaped jade items that were combined with agate tubes to form necklaces. As these were worn by both men and women, Chen Chaojung points out that the silkworm had already come to symbolize reincarnation, rather than being a symbol of weaving (C. Chen 2009, pp. 30–38).

However, the pattern on a bronze vase from the Warring States period shows women picking mulberry trees, symbolically indicating that sericulture was a female occupation. In the *Lushi Chunqiu* (呂氏春秋), which is said to have been established in the Warring States period, there are descriptions of “men till land and women weave cloth,” and it is thought that the concept of spinning and weaving as an occupation specific to women was generally established during that period. However, as mentioned earlier, weaving had already become an occupation unique to women in rural areas, and in the *Shi Jing* (詩經), a collection of songs mainly from the Western Zhou period, there are descriptions of men also picking mulberry leaves.<sup>7</sup> Sato speculates that after the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, spinning and weaving were carried out by several classes including at the court, private production by urban scholar-official families, as a rural sub-industry, and by independent artisans (Sato 1977, pp. 132–133). Although it is certain that women were heavily involved in spinning and weaving for the handicraft industry, it is probably more likely that independent specialization progressed in response to the multi-layered social structure of rural and urban areas and the differences in the classes within cities.

### 3-5. Urban Civilization and the Gendered Structure

The city is a highly complex form of living that emerged as a result of the pursuit of efficiency in human social activities. Goods and services were exchanged, and governance, religious activities, and various kinds of interaction were carried out to strengthen human relationships.

No matter how much social activities flourish, there are some subsistence activities that human beings cannot survive without (Figure 5-1). In other words, we need to secure and cook food, procure housing and clothing to maintain our body temperature, and give birth to and raise children. After the early Neolithic period, among the subsistence activities that men and women originally performed together, the supply of food in particular became more stable with the development of agriculture in rural areas, and systems of socially



GENDER STRUCTURE IN PRE-QIN CHINA WITH FOCUS ON ANYANG YINXU

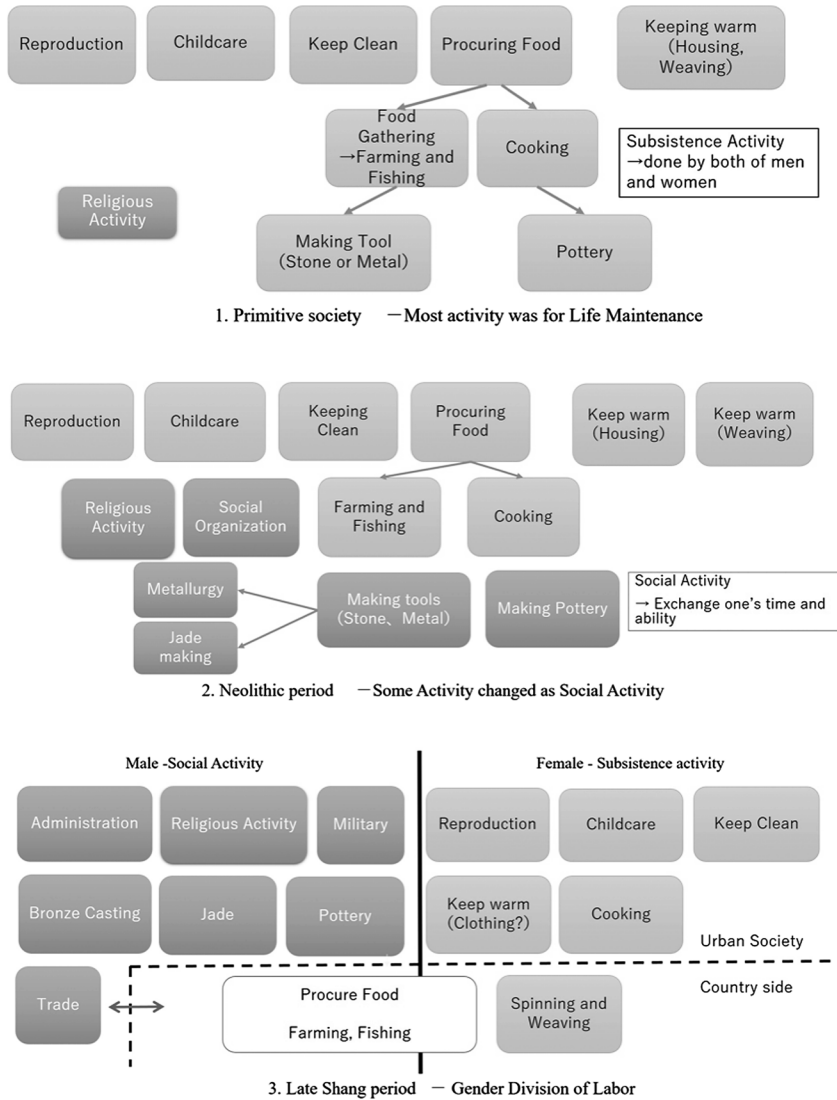


Figure 5. Modeling of the gender division of labors.

concentrated supply were gradually established (Figure 5-2). Meanwhile, few urban dwellers were likely involved in agricultural and pastoral food production (Nishiaki 2000, pp. 1–9).

The procurement of food and goods, which had been subsistence activities in rural areas, was intensified to support urban life. As a result, individuals or single families no longer had to perform subsistence activities such as hunting and making tools, which

Murdock listed as examples of subsistence activities that were carried out mainly by men in primitive societies (Murdock 1965, p. 309). This freed up time and energy for leisure or other activities. It can be said that the surplus created by urban social activities was invested in further social activities, making the activities more complex and requiring more time to maintain the system. On the other hand, some subsistence activities of individuals that were not part of the aggregate system were activities that individuals could not afford to neglect. For example, preparing food, maintaining cleanliness, and other so-called “household chores.” And especially childbirth and infant care cannot be separated from the home, which is biologically the place of women and daily life. Thus, these subsistence activities in individual households continued to be assigned to women. It can be said that the surplus was generated exclusively by men, and the need for men to go out of the home and devote more energy to social activities also increased greatly. In other words, men who sought compensation for their labour removed themselves from subsistence activities. Those who stood at the top of society as chiefs, rulers, religious leaders, and military leaders, and who were in charge of organizing and maintaining the social structure, were also expected to be men whose households had surplus capacity. According to the evidence found in graves in archaeological sites in the city of Yinxu, such status holders were mostly men (Figure 5-3).

Therefore, after the Neolithic period, as society became more complex and urban civilization more established, the surplus of time and the abilities of the people living there were used to promote specialization. As this process progressed, there was gender stratification, with women made responsible for subsistence activities and men responsible for specialized social activities. It may be speculated that the gender structure of Asia was created not only by the decline in women’s status due to changes in agriculture but also changed significantly with the establishment of urban civilization.

## 4. Patriarchy and Marriage

### 4-1. Patriarchy and the Burial of Chiefs

Next, I would like to examine the form of marriage in the city of Yinxu.

Friedrich Engels’s *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, based on Morgan’s theory, describes the process of change from primitive society, which originally developed from matriarchal societies, to a male-dominated patriarchy. “The overthrowing of mother’s rights was the world historical defeat of the female sex” that led to the shift to a fixed patriarchal society (Engels 1972, pp. 120, 138). As Engels mentioned, in the patriarchy, the principal forms of marriage in civilizations is “monogamy supplemented by adultery and prostitution,” which is radically interpreted as a fixed, male-centred form of marriage in which women fell into slavery and at the same time became the objects of

sexual exploitation. The change in the family form from the perspective of the property system led to women falling into the status of slaves.

Looking back to the middle Neolithic period in China, an analysis of the cemetery at the Jiangsai (姜寨) site, Lindong, Shanxi province, shows that it was in fact two family cemeteries, which has been interpreted as indicating a dual organization. In addition, Imamura Yoshiko considers that at the Shijia (史家) site, males were often placed in reburial graves (of blood relatives), so the basic unit of society was males of the same bloodline in which only males remained with their original group (Imamura 1996, pp. 15–30). Many scholars have observed that in the late Neolithic period wealth gradually became unevenly distributed and hierarchies emerged as wealth and poverty became clearly visible in grave goods. The Liangzhu, Dawenkou (大汶口), and Taosi cultures, as well as other large settlement sites of the late Neolithic period all have a large number of extravagant burials in specific tombs, with grave goods such as jade, lacquer ware, coloured earthenware, and bronze ware (Wang 2013, pp. 218–237). In the wealthy tombs of the Dawenkou and Liangzhu cultures, there are coffin tombs for both men and women, multiple burials with both sexes, and in some cases tombs for females that are also rich in grave goods. On the other hand, the large tombs of the Taosi culture are considered to be male tombs. How the gender bias in wealth emerged in the late Neolithic period, both chronologically and regionally, is also an indicator of the status of women, so it is important to pay attention to this issue in the future.<sup>8</sup>

It is clear that the lineage of kings in the Xia and Shang Dynasties that are recorded in the classics followed the father-to-son and brother inheritance, indicating that they were already completely patrilineal. In other words, from the archaeological point of view, the central urban sites of the Shang Dynasty, preceding periods such as Erlitou, the Zhengzhou Shang capital, and the city of Dayishang (Yinxu) are considered to be sites where the patrilineal system was firmly established. The Xibeigang site at AnyangYinxu is considered to be the origin of the patrilineal system. In the Xibeigang royal cemetery at Anyang, a large tomb with eight cross-shaped tomb ramps, two large tombs with two north-south tomb ramps, and two large tombs with a south tomb ramp have been discovered and are presumed to be royal tombs. However, no tombs believed to be tombs of chiefs have been discovered at the Erlitou site and the Zhengzhou capital sites.

When we think about child rearing, it is unnatural for a mother to raise her child together with the mother of the child's father (mother-in-law), who is a stranger (patriarchy), and it is more natural for the mother to raise the child together with her own relatives (matriarchy). This is probably why the matriarchal system was the first to appear in practice. In order to maintain the unnatural patrilineal system of later generations, spiritual strictures and props must have been necessary, and one of them is ancestor worship. A clan is a group of blood relatives who have the same ancestors, and in a patrilineal system,

worshipping the same patrilineal ancestor helps maintain the unity of the clan. In Yinxu, there is vivid evidence of various kinds that the royal family practiced ancestor worship. In particular, there are records of periodic rituals to past kings (father gods) and repeated divination of their male ancestors in the oracle inscriptions. On the other hand, as described by Keightley, there are also records of rituals for queens and mother goddesses (Bi 妣), who are also included among the ancestors, but the number of rituals is small (Keightley 1999, pp. 31–46). The large number of rituals in the oracle inscriptions indicates that the patrilineal ancestral deity rituals were overwhelmingly important, suggesting that the patrilineal system was strengthened through rituals. In addition, if the hypothesis that Wu-ding and other Shang kings had more than one spouse is true, as has been assumed based on the contents of the oracle inscriptions, it may resemble the system of concubines of later times, where high status men married multiple women to have more than one male heir in order to maintain the patrilineal system. It is necessary to examine archaeologically how these mothers were ranked.

#### 4-2. The Position of “Husband and Wife” in Dynastic Burials

Tomb No. 5 at Yinxu, located on the west side of the Xiaotun Palace Area, is believed to be the tomb of Fu-hao, one of the spouses of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Shang King Wu-ding. Among the bronze artefacts deposited in the Fu-hao tomb is a large *ding* vessel with the inscription “Si-mu-xin,” suggesting that Fu-hao was officially known as “母辛” (Mu-Xin, “Mother Xin”) or “妣辛” (Bi-Xin, “Consort Xin”). In the Xibeigang royal cemetery area, eight large tombs with cross-shaped grave ramps, an abandoned and unfinished tomb, three medium-

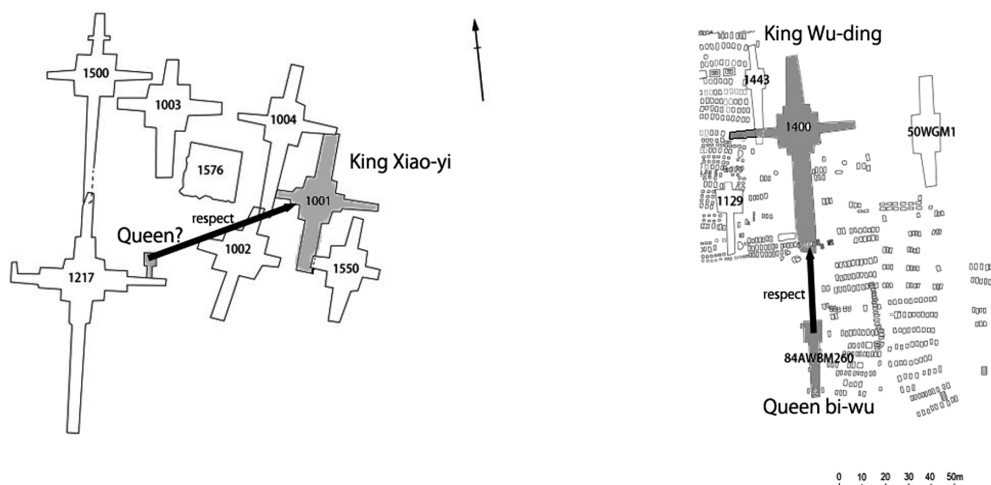


Figure 6. Location of the tombs of kings and queens in Xibeigang royal cemetery.



Figure 7. Comparison of Wu-ding, Bi-wu, Bi-xin (Fuhao)'s tombs: 1, 2: HPKM1400 (chamber size: 18.3 × 15.7 × 10.6m); 3, 4, 5: 84AWBN260 and Si-mu-wu ding (chamber size: 9.6 × 8.1 × 8.1m); 6, 7, 8: Fu-hao's tomb (chamber size: 5.6 × 4.0 × 7.5m).

(Photos of tombs: IHP collection and by J. Uchida, source of photos of bronzes: Zhongguo Qingtongqi Quanji Bianji Weiyuanhui 1997: Figure 47, 39, IA CASS 1980: Figure 25-2.)

sized tombs, and two large tombs with only one ramp were found (Figure 6, Figure 7-1, 3, 5). The large cross-shaped tomb is interpreted to be the tomb of successive kings of the Shang Dynasty. Tomb No. 1400 Great Tomb may be considered the tomb of King Wu-ding and the 84AWBN260 tomb located on the extension of the southern tomb road ramp, and from which the “Si-mu-wu Ding” (Figure 7-4, 5) was found, is the tomb of Queen Bi-wu



(Mizoguchi and Uchida 2018). The tomb of Fu-hao, in which “Si-mu-xin *Ding*” (Figure 7-7, 8) was unearthed, is less than one-third the size of Tomb No. 1400, and the presence and number of tomb roads ramps may have indicated a difference in status. It is speculated that a shrine was built on the tomb of Fu-hao and that a shrine was also built on the king’s tombs. Tombs Nos. 1400 and 260 are aligned north to south, while the tomb of Fu-hao was built in a different area from Tomb No. 1400. Tomb No. 1400 was severely looted and the number of artifacts excavated is limited. If we compare the grave goods of Fu-hao tomb to those of Tomb 1001, which is chronologically close to Tomb No. 1400, the latter surpasses the former both in the number and quality. This clearly shows the disparity in wealth and power between the king and his wife (concubine).

In addition to the combination of Tomb Nos. 1400 and 260, there is a possibility that Tomb Nos. 1001 and 70AHBM1, which has only one tomb ramp and is built to the southeast of No. 1001, are husband and wife tombs. There are no examples of couples building shrines side by side or artefacts showing the name of the wife’s lineage. No other examples highlight the pairing of the king and queen.

In contrast to these royal and ruling elites’ tombs of YinXu, the “husband and wife” arrangements of later aristocratic burial tombs of the Western Zhou Dynasty changed dramatically.

Many middle-size tombs from the beginning to the middle Western Zhou period have been found at Baoji (宝鸡) in Sha’anxi and are thought to belong to a powerful family from the Yu (虢) area, which was a major transportation hub to Sichuan. Zhuyuangou (竹園溝) M13 is the tomb of an aristocratic couple of the early Western Zhou period, where the wife was buried in an adjacent tomb of the same size (Lu and Hu 1988).

At the cemetery in Jin-hou (晋侯), Tianma Qucun (天馬曲村), Quyu County, Shanxi Province, there are groups of two or three large tombs with parallel grave ramps (Figure 8). The cemetery is thought to be the tomb of a couple (plus the second wife) of successive Jin marquesses (Faculty of Archaeology, Beijing University 2000). From the middle of the Western Zhou Dynasty onwards, the number of bronze *ding* (鼎) and *gui* (簋) offering vessels owned by a person indicated his or her rank. Tomb M64 of the male Jin-hou Bangfu contains five *ding* and four *gui*, weapons, and a bell, while tomb M62 of the second wife contains no weapons, but three *ding* and four *gui*. The second wife’s tomb, M63, also has no weapons but three *ding* and two *gui*. “The general rule thus seems to have been that females were given the number of *ding* due to a male ranked one sumptuary step below their husbands; wives, in other words, systematically ranked one notch lower than their husbands” (von Falkenhausen 2006, p. 122). The lords and ladies of Qucun, like their counterparts in other regions, wore ornaments made of agate beads (Huang 2013, pp. 559–600). However, the shape of the ornaments of the couples is different, and Huang Tsui Mei shows that the tombs of the lords and ladies have unique female hair ornaments.



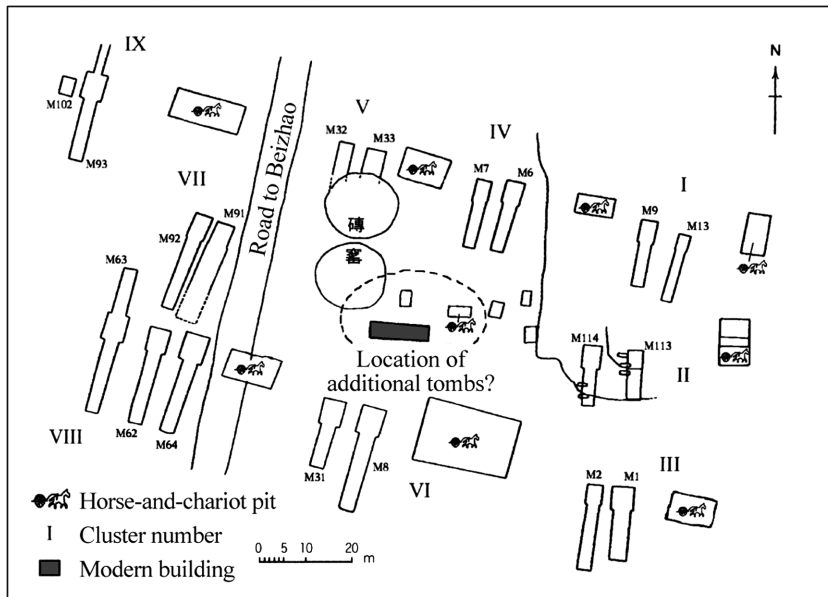


Figure 8. The Jin rulers' burial compound at Beizhao (*Qucun Locus III*), *Quwo* (Source: Von Falkenhausen 2006: Map 4).

(Huang 2013, pp. 559–600). At the time, the red agate jade ornaments, a luxury item imported from the West, were worn by the couple to show off their high status and to emphasize their appearance as a couple by showing a marked difference between the man and the woman.

### 4-3. The Rise of the Clans and the Paradigm Shift in the Meaning of Marriage

Bronze vessels from the late Shang period are sometimes cast with tribal inscriptions, which are interpreted to indicate the broad affiliation of the vessel, such as the ancestral deity to which it is dedicated, the position of the bearer, or the mark of the clan. In the late Shang Dynasty, many bronze artefacts excavated from small and medium-sized tombs were cast with clan inscriptions. However, the inscriptions did not display the symbols of the wife's clan to indicate marriage. While families had been marrying off women to each other since the Neolithic period, even if the patrilineal system was observed, marriage did not have a strategic element to increase the power and wealth of the clans, because the clans did not attach importance to the marriage bond.

Lin Yun has discussed the family structure of the Shang Dynasty based on the study of oracle inscriptions (Lin 2007, pp. 15–19). The inscription *Zi* (子), which is often found in the first half of the YinXu period when bronze inscriptions first appear, is thought to refer

to a male member of the royal family. Many inscriptions related to Zi have been found in the later YinXu periods, suggesting that the Zi family were divined with oracle bones, and became a somewhat distant branch of the royal family and even a semi-independent clan with a new residential area (Lin 2018, pp. 52–94). Lin speculates, based on Zi-related oracle inscriptions, that husband and wife, underage brothers and sisters, child couples, and male and female grandchildren lived together. Lin points out that there is an article in the inscription about a betrothal between the Ni (逆) family and the He (何) family. This suggests that clans with relations of equal status set up the arrangement ceremony between the families at each residence.

In the late Shang Dynasty, the clans rose to prominence, and the residential areas of each clan spread outside the palace area. When not only the Zi clan but also outer clans emerged, the clans must have become rivals of each other. And when the survival of the family became unstable, they would enter into strategic marriages. Generally speaking, by marrying a woman in a patrilineal society, the husband will gain the right to inherit the father-in-law's property, consolidate the revenue organization, or gain power. Thus we may speculate that women's role in the marriage strategies became stronger in that period.

Let us compare the above situation to that in the following Western Zhou period. Lothar V. Falkenhausen points out that: "In China during the 'Age of Confucius', patrilineal kin groups constituted the basic units of social, political, and military organizations. These groups, which I shall hereafter refer to as lineages, held land and other property in common." Falkenhausen also notes that the cult of deceased lineage ancestors constituted the major form of religious activity (von Falkenhausen 2006, p. 28). During this period, bronze vessels used in ancestral rituals were often inscribed, and there were many inscriptions with long sentences and clear contents, such as identifying the specific rituals, the person who made the vessel, and the reason for making the vessel. Some of them indicate that bronze was made for women and were called "bridal bronzes."

Falkenhausen remarks: "unlike the names of males, in which the name of the lineage was the principal identifying element, names of Zhou-period elite women always comprise that of their natal clan, to which the name of a lineage, an indicator of seniority, and a personal name could be joined"<sup>9</sup> (von Falkenhausen 2006, p. 118).

Chen Chaojung analysed the circumstances under which such bridal bronzes *Yingqi* 媵器 (Figure 9) were made through the inscriptions and observed the following types: "presented by a woman to her daughter at her marriage," "presented by a husband to his wife," "presented by a woman to her mother-in-law," "presented by a woman to her husband's ancestors," "presented by a wife to her husband," "presented by the head of the family to her husband," and "presented by a wife to her husband when he sets out on an expedition" (Chen 2009, pp. 66–85). Chen and Falkenhausen show how these bronzes very clearly identify the giver and receiver and that the reason for giving and receiving bronzes



Figure 9. Guo Meng Ji vessel (yi 匜) (Source: Chen 2004: 559; Yan 1983, Vol. 9: 6866).  
號孟姬匜「齊侯作號孟姬良母寶匜、其万年無疆、子子孫孫永寶用」 A vessel made for a daughter of the Ji family of Guo (merely called a liag-mu) by the Meng family of Qi into which she was to marry.

is often related to marriage, and they observed that: “Those bronzes show that the system of marital alliances based on clan exogamy was firmly in place” (von Falkenhausen 2006, p. 121). In other words, one gets the impression that the significance of women’s existence was concentrated in marriage. The significance of women’s presence in marriage seems to have been concentrated in the upper classes at the beginning of the Western Zhou when feudalism began.

This emphasis on the role of women as marriage partners is probably embodied in the display of marital status in upper-class tombs, as mentioned in the previous section. In other words, during the Shang Dynasty, when such events were not observed, women were not considered important as marriage partners, and the idea of marriage alliances may not have existed. Therefore, we can assume that during the transition from the Shang Dynasty to the Western Zhou, there was a major paradigm shift in gender structure due to the emergence of clans with headquarters in various regions and the significant expansion of the regional scope of intermarriage.

## 5. Sexual Exploitation and Lifespans

### 5-1. Sexual Exploitation

One subsistence activity is sex. It can be called one of the most important activities for maintaining the continuation of human life. The idea of sexual access to women as “property” was a more radicalized idea in Marxism, which relied on the thinking of

modern society. Ueno Chizuko states in the Marxist concept of patriarchy, female sexuality is provided as a form of “labour” (Ueno 1990, pp. 89–93). Were women, as Engels says, already the object of sexual exploitation with the start of primitive opposite-sex marriage and civilized patriarchal monogamy in the late Neolithic?

Many women appear in the oracle inscriptions of the Shang Dynasty. Some, but probably not all, of them are considered to be spouses who were not the regular wives of the king. If this was the case, we can say that this is a form of polygamy with a concubine system and a typical form of marriage for a high-ranked person in a patrilineal system. It is also possible that polygamy existed in the case of the tomb of the Marquess of Jin in Qucun during the Western Zhou Dynasty (von Falkenhausen 2006), and it can be confirmed that polygamy existed universally in later historical records. In other words, women valued for their sexuality were placed under the control of their husbands, which is a kind of sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the wife was recognized as belonging to a higher class even though she might be from one level lower.

One of the most egregious examples of sexual exploitation is prostitution. Women who work in these positions today are isolated from their families, and they are paid for providing their sexuality as a form of labour. It is not common for a woman who has a family to fall into such a position. But the situation of a woman who is isolated from her family for some reason falling into such a status has often occurred in modern society, and we have witnessed it in the recent pandemic. How long have there been women who do not belong to a family?

In Yinxu, many sacrificial pits have been found around the base of the palace area and in the Xibeigang royal cemetery area, including many containing the remains of men, children, and a few women. In the oracle inscriptions, there are also records of many people being killed for sacrifices, and many of these people are called “Qiang” (羌), and are considered to have been prisoners of war from the Qiang tribe. The sacrificial pits appear to contain men who were labourers but were no longer needed, but very few women are seen, probably because they did not come from other regions in the first place or they had other uses. Women who lost their economic base in their hometowns and moved to cities, whose families had been killed, or who were separated from the family unit lost their safe haven and had no choice but to live by subsistence activities. In other words, they would have to take on household chores as slaves or servants, and eventually, they might have to provide sexual services and give themselves up to prostitution. On the other hand, in the oracle inscriptions, there are the characters “妾于婦好” (e.g., Hua-yuan-zhuang No. 265: IA CASS 2003, 2, p. 565), where *qie* (妾) is presumed to be a female slave (Lin 2018, p. 68). It is possible that there were isolated women with the status of slaves in the city of Yinxu, which needs to be archaeologically verified.

## 5-2. Life Expectancy and the Status of Buried Persons in Small and Medium-Sized Graves

In terms of female childbirth mortality rates, the World Health Organization (WHO) report (WHO 2015) on the situation in modern low-income countries shows that in Africa and low-income countries with the highest mortality figures, the rate was 900–960 deaths per 100000 people in 1990 (in Japan in 1899 it was 409.8). The death rate during childbirth in unsanitary conditions today is about 1 in 100 (NIPSSR 2020a). The fertility rate was 4.72 in 1930, which means that a child was born every five years (NIPSSR 2020b). Repeated births every few years would have increased the probability of death. It is assumed that the reason for this is due to infections during pregnancy and childbirth. The mortality rate would have been even higher in ancient China, because medical care was still undeveloped.

Studies of excavated human remains in large-scale grave sites from the Neolithic to the Spring and Autumn period provide statistics on the average age of death by gender in several cases in China. In the 659 tombs at the Daidianzi (大甸子) site in Inner Mongolia, the average life expectancy of women was in the low 30s, with 61 per cent dying between the ages of 15–35 and 26 per cent between 36–55 years. In contrast, 55 per cent of males die between the ages of 15–35 and 35 per cent between the ages of 36–55, so the survival rate to age 36 or older is higher for males (Wu 2004, pp. 52–55).

One-hundred and one small and medium-sized tombs have been excavated in the South Zone of the Qianzhangda (前掌大) site, Tengzhou City, Shandong Province, from the late Shang period to the Early Western Zhou period. The average age of males and females in the late Shang period was 40 years and 32.5 years, respectively, and the average age of males and females in the Early Western Zhou period was 34.25 years and 30.25 years, respectively (Wang and Cao 2014, pp. 530–532).

von Falkenhausen discusses gender in terms of human remains excavated from the Shangma (上馬) Cemetery in Houma, Shanxi Province. The Shangma Cemetery dates from the Early to Middle Spring and Autumn period (1994, Shanxi Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics). Of the 1059 tombs with human remains, 486 were for females. It is interpreted as a cemetery that was maintained by the clans based in this area and included both common people and the slightly higher classes. Estimates of age at death indicate that about 60 per cent of males buried died in middle age (35–54 years), while nearly half of females buried died at a young age (15–34 years) (von Falkenhausen 2006, pp. 134–136). Falkenhausen also notes that the proportion of adult women is small.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, although there is some variation among the sites, it can be said that more than half of the women died while still young at ages between 15 and 35, while the age of death for men was generally higher, and the number of deaths in middle age (35–55) increased during the Spring and Autumn period. The lower age of death for women is thought to be

due to the fact that many women gave birth to multiple children between the ages of 15 and 35. Many women lost their lives, resulting in a shorter life expectancy than men whose average life expectancy was in the 40s. This may have been another factor that prevented them from entering the upper echelons of society.

In other words, the life cycle of women, which was short because of their role in childbearing, has remained almost unchanged since the Neolithic period. They would have spent most of their lives engaged in subsistence activities while raising young children under the age of five. Moreover, urban women as well as some men, did not have time to improve their abilities or engage in social activities without having to worry about subsistence activities and could not be said to be in a position to make use of surplus power and earn a living. In this way, the roles of men and women and their hierarchy became fixed.

## **6. The Role of Archaeologists in Gender Studies**

In archaeology, research seems to have focused on the changes in the forms of social integration that were mainly assumed by men. In Chinese archaeology, the process of transformation of social forms has been studied up to the Shang Dynasty, and the forms of social control have been classified based on the perspective of social activities that are mainly carried out by men. In the background of the transformation of forms of social control, which became more complex, women were isolated from the social system and the state built by men, and were relegated to a different substratum of society, and little attention has been paid to their lives. Emphasis has been placed on the fact that the establishment of the patriarchal system directly led to the decline of women's status. Because the gender structure has been viewed on this basis, individual events have not been examined in detail.

Even in the early historical period, research on women, who appear in written sources in only the most cursory ways, has been insufficient, and gender studies has been further delayed. However, many clues on the history of gender can be found in archaeological materials. In this paper, I have tried to present a number of viewpoints, albeit without sufficient and systematic support. In the Shang and Zhou dynasties, where there is a wealth of material, we can see that the patriarchal situation that exists today was nearly established, although it was in a transitional stage. The events leading to the establishment of a patriarchy and the patriarchy in the prehistoric and historical periods before and after the Shang and Zhou dynasties should be carefully studied from the archaeological materials and details of that process should be clarified.

Although the situation is slowly easing, there are still cases in Japanese society where women are encouraged to return to subsistence activities and leave their jobs to care



for and raise children. Meanwhile, subsistence activities are marginalized by society as “anti-social behaviour” and treated as a nuisance to social activities. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, women who were unable to cut free from their subsistence activities were the first to be forced out of their jobs. Many suffer from poverty and are pushed into the lower strata of society. Yet subsistence activity is the most necessary activity for all human beings regardless of gender. We should not forget that human beings need more than the social systems that allow them to donate their time and abilities for the benefit of other people in return for compensation. How that social system came into being is the clue to how the gender problems that pervade our time have arisen, and unless we reconsider where the errors lie, the gender problem will not be solved. We believe that the advancement of gender studies from the perspective of archaeology is required to provide clues for solving these problems.

## Notes

- 1 Murdoch’s table includes the male-dominated “metalworking” and “weapon making,” which would originally have been tool-making associated with subsistence activities. We believe that metalworking was already a specialized form of labour production requiring specialized knowledge which became a male occupation.
- 2 A group of people who are descended from a common ancestor is called a clan, and a lineage is distinguished as a group belonging to a clan (Keesing 1976, p. 251).
- 3 Originally, the tools necessary for subsistence activities were produced at home, but the techniques and materials were refined and specialized to produce these implements.
- 4 Costin remarks that the work of attached specialists was upon “command” (sponsored and managed by an elite or government). In contrast, independent specialists produced for a general market of potential customers (Costin 1991, p. 11).
- 5 It is possible that they were working on bronze ware, but no evidence of tools has been found.
- 6 There is a record in the inscriptions on bronze ware that thread was presented as a gift from the king, so from that point of view, it is possible that only thread was treated as a circulating commodity.
- 7 The idea that “men till the land and women weave cloth” was handed down to the Han Dynasty, and in the Nara period (710–794), it was copied by Japanese emperors as part of their rituals.
- 8 A comparison of the distribution of wealth between males and females in the urban lower classes after the Shang Dynasty can be made in the Shang Dynasty, Western Zhou (e.g., Curved Village), and the Shangma Village cemetery in the early to mid-Spring and Autumn period. In the small tombs of the urban lower classes, the number of grave

goods is small in all cases, but women are especially likely to have only one burial object. There are also few burials of bronze or imitation bronze pottery.

- 9 In addition to Figure 8, other notable examples of *yingqi*(媵器) include the Xing-Ji *ding* Xing Princess *ding* (excavated from Rujiazhuang Bojiazhuang Tomb No. 2, Baoji, Sha'anxi). The Xing-Ji *ding* was presented to a woman from Xing with the clan surname.
- 10 The small number of females may indicate that they were killed or left the clan as soon as they were born as a way of reducing their number.

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