Urban Neighborhoods

- Social and Spatial Organization of the Great Shang Settlement

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Abstract

This paper presents a brief discussion of the neighborhoods and urban organization at Yinxu (Great Shang Settlement), the "ruins of Yin" that was the capital of last nine Shang kings. Yinxu was a vast urban settlement, with a concentrated population, over area of about 25 square kilometers. With the palace-temple compounds and royal cemeteries of lineages of *zi*-princes at Xiaotun in the center and the cemetery of the kingly lineage in the northwest, the landscape is dotted with scores of lineage-based neighborhoods composed of residential buildings and associated cemeteries, and workshops for manufacturing bronzes, jades, bones, and ceramics. Many roads and moats (or canals) connect these neighborhoods as well as the palace-temple district. This paper also examines the archaeological and inscriptional evidence concerning the evolution of simplicity as part of material and social processes in the development of Great Shang Settlement. The early phases of the occupation at Yinxu show much more variability and diversity in forms and styles of artifacts and architectures than the later phases, possibly suggesting a high degree of heterogeneity of material culture and population in the beginning of urbanization at Yinxu, and a tendency of becoming more and more simplified, standardized, and legible toward the end of the dynasty. The process of simplification was the most striking in ceramics that were becoming less diverse in form, style, and manufacturing technology from the beginning to the end of the dynasty. The evolution of simplicity in material culture and social practice also has the support from some divinatory practices as recorded in oracle bone inscriptions. We argue that the Shang city at Yinxu was intentionally and actively created to serve the needs and interests of socially and culturally differentiated groups that may have originally come from local communities and/or distant territories and spoken different dialects or even languages, particularly during the beginning phase of urbanization, with a more standardized dialect and writing toward the end of the dynasty.

In the wake of ever increasing globalization coupled with the greatest migration in human history we are facing today, the study of cities and urban affairs has become increasingly important because urban spaces, newly created or revived, are widely recognized as key focal points of cultural, social, economic, and political life for human societies, both now and in the past. Indeed, ancient cities have long been an enduring topic in archaeology, urban history, and historical geography because they were typically the foci of central political, religious, and economic institutions and played a crucial role in the origin, operation, and collapse of ancient states and civilizations, and the investigation of ancient urbanism can contribute to a historically-informed understanding of urban processes and the roles of cities in modern life.

The second millennium BCE was a historical epoch of transformative significance, which witnessed epic cultural transmissions and social transformations involving the rise of the first cities, states, and civilizations in both the Yellow River and Yangzi River valleys. The study of these earliest cities and civilizations has been one of the dominant subjects of archaeological research in China. However, past studies on early urbanism have focused heavily on the origins and development of cities and associated state-societies, with an emphasis on the identification of so-called "traits" or "markers" or "criteria" of a civilization or a state society. The earliest cities of early Bronze Age China (the second millennium BCE) have often been treated or assumed to have formed as a result of the same or similar material and social processes of urbanization and being of the same nature, and differing only in settlement size and complexity, chronological position, and political domination over others. Relatively little discussion is focused on the actual meaning and dynamic nature of cities that may show substantial variation in their workings from place to place and over time.

This paper offers some empirical observations on the material and social processes involved in the development of late Shang urban settlement in

Anyang, China. It examines the social and spatial organization of major urban features, specifically spatially and socially segregated neighborhoods, followed by a brief discussion on the process of simplification and urbanization at Yinxu.

YINXU

Historically, the region surrounding Anyang was known to scholars as Yinxu, the "ruins of Yin," for many centuries. Yinxu was rediscovered through scientific excavations beginning in 1928 after a search of almost thirty years for the geographic source of inscribed oracle bones that were initially recognized in 1898. The oracle-bone inscriptions found at Yinxu document divinations performed on behalf of nine kings whose names match those of the last kings of the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 BC) as recorded in later transmitted texts like Grand Scribe's Records; therefore, Yinxu is identified as the last capital of the Shang dynasty. The period for the reigns of these nine kings from Wu Ding (the twenty-first king) to Di Xin (the twenty-ninth king) is referred to as the late Shang dynasty (ca. 1200/50–1046 BC).

From 1928 to 1937 fifteen seasons of excavation were conducted in Anyang under the auspices of Academia Sinica, unearthing impressive foundations of pounded earth, enormously richly furnished royal tombs, shocking human and animal sacrifices, copious inscribed bones and shell, and a splendid bronze casting industry. Since 1950 the Institute of Archaeology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has been mainly responsible for excavations at Yinxu, and numerous new discoveries have been made.

The combined efforts of several generations of archaeologists over past eighty years have unveiled Yinxu as a cult center of the last Shang dynasty kings; more importantly it was a vast urban settlement, with a concentrated population, over an area of about 10 square miles (25 sq km) (Figure 1). With the palace-temple compounds and royal cemeteries of lineages of *zi*-princes at Xiaotun in the center and the cemetery of the kingly lineage in the northwest, the landscape

is dotted with scores of lineage-based neighborhoods composed of residential buildings and associated cemeteries, and workshops for manufacturing bronzes, jades, bones, and ceramics. Recently, many roads and moats (or canals) that connect these neighborhoods as well as the palace-temple district have been detected. Excavations have revealed that late Shang society was a complex, full-fledged Bronze Age civilization, characterized by class stratification as materialized in the consumption of bronze and other art forms in life as well as the afterlife, a theocracy based on ancestor worship through sophisticated royal divination, centralized management of human and natural resources, and a deeply rooted tradition of cultural diversity.

NEIGHBORHOODS AND SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

The word *yi* appears frequently in oracle bone inscriptions. The description of *yi* includes its construction, location, size, as well as the reference of specific settlements and the number of settlements, which suggest that *yi* designates the local (residential) settlement of different sizes. Many of these *yi*-settlements, particularly those built inside the Great Settlement Shang (Da Yi Shang), the name for Yinxu as seen in oracle-bone inscriptions, are spatially segregated from and socially linked with their neighbors, and they perhaps correspond to what may be termed neighborhoods.

A neighborhood is defined as "a residential zone that has considerable face-to-face interaction and is distinctive on the basis of physical and/or social characteristics" (Smith 2010). Such definition emphasizes the social interaction in structuring and sustaining a neighborhood. A typical neighborhood or petty-settlement at Yinxu would be composed of one or more habitation sectors and one or more clusters of graves; and it often contained a relatively large courtyard-styled compound, or a group of such compounds that functioned as lineage temples or were used for the residence of lineage chiefs and their families.

Cemetery tracts are the most ubiquitous feature at Yinxu; at each (neighborhood), burials tend to be clustered in one or more large groups that are commonly interpreted as being sub-lineage or lineage-based. Each large group is usually composed of a number of smaller clusters each of which was likely related to a social unit of descent corresponding to an extended family. These grave groups vary in size and duration of use. The tombs in each group usually exhibit relatively consistent patterns in grave structure, orientation and burial goods. Within and between grave groups, status differentiation is signaled by the tomb size and structure, the absence or presence of human victims, bronze ritual vessels and weapons, jades, and other grave goods. Many grave groups include one or a few middle-sized tombs, some even with ramps, surrounded by more numerous, smaller graves. Within each group are some graves containing bronze vessels, many of which bear inscriptions that are commonly interpreted as the names of a *zu*-lineage, the so-called lineage insignia or emblem. When a common emblem inscription is found on bronzes from several graves within a grave group or multiple vessels in a single grave, the group may be identified as a cemetery for that particular lineage or sub-lineage. Such identification is sometimes complicated by the presence of several different emblem inscriptions in different burials of a cemetery or even in a single burial. Sometimes the same emblems occur on bronzes from both Yinxu and sites remote from the royal capital, thus distribution of lineages and their cultural connections may be inferred. Some of these lineage names cast on bronzes are found in oracle-bone inscriptions.

Since cemeteries associated with each neighborhood were sub-lineage or lineage based, it can be reasonably inferred that such a neighborhood would be organized similarly, if not exactly in the same way. In other words, neighborhoods were spatially segregated by lineage. The neighborhood was the place within which members of the lineage experienced most of their daily lives, and interacted with each other as well as the dead; and it was often occupied and

used for generations through the part or whole time period of the dynasty. It is also very likely that some spatially segregated neighborhoods were identified by occupation, particularly craft production. For example, Xiaomintun and Miaopu North were specialized neighborhoods for bronze casting, Beixinzhuang was one of neighborhoods for processing bone objects, and part of Lijiazhuang North was for making serving and storage pottery vessels.

Like many other ancient cities in the world, neighborhoods at Yinxu were largely created through bottom-up local processes (the actions of local residents). Neighborhoods that are spatially close to each other, and socially and economically connected comprise a larger residential zone, termed a district that is more often created by top-down processes (actions by administration authorities). A district could have either administrative or social identity. Neighborhoods at Yinxu may be classified into two categories in terms of general wealth and status: royal neighborhoods for the king and *zi*-prince lineages, and ordinary neighborhoods for non-royal lineages as well as some lineages that might be related to the main-line of royal lineage by worshiping remote common ancestors. Perhaps, a number of royal neighborhoods made up the palace-temple district centered at Xiaotun (Figure 2). But it remains elusive whether ordinary neighborhoods were organized into larger residential zones, and if so, how they were organized. Given the fact that the public buildings and spaces were not unusual in ordinary neighborhoods, and there was a presence of major chariot roads and the canals cutting through neighborhoods over a very large portion of the whole city (Figure 1), we can speculate that certain top-down processes indeed played a very important role in organizing the people's experience of daily life at Yinxu.

The Palace-Temple District

The political and religious core at Yinxu was the palace-temple district, centered on Xiaotun Locus North (Figure 2). It measures about 70 hectares,

commonly thought to be delimited by a large ditch that runs from the Huan river on the north about 1,100 m toward the south, and makes a right-angle turn southwest of Huayuanzhuang toward the east about 650 m before rejoining the river. Recent work and our re-analysis of previous data question the existence of such a ditch. It is likely that the palace-temple district extends west from Xiaotun Locus North to Sipanmo, in other words across the so-called "ditch"; and it could be twice as large as previously thought. An intensive coring program is being planned to clarify whether this ditch indeed exists and delimits the area we call the palace-temple district. Leaving aside the exact spatial extent of the palace-temple district to be determined, the area within this "ditch" is at least a core segment of the palace-temple district within which are many of the most important discoveries made at Yinxu.

In the east section of this "ditch"-bordered area, the excavations in the 1930s unearthed a total of fifty-three pounded-earth foundations that spatially constituted three clusters, Group A, Group B, and Group C, that were identified by excavators respectively as remains of palaces, temples, and altars because of their size, and the sacrificial burials and inscribed oracle bones associated with Group B and Group C.

Chariot burials with or without human victims and horses, and scores of sacrificial pits are found in the open space south of one of Group B foundations (B-7). Most sacrificial pits hold one or multiple decapitated skeletons, and animal victims, and they are strong evidence of sacrifice performed to make offerings to the High Powers and ancestors in the temple precinct. Sacrifice was one of the defining features of Shang ritual. Numerous charges in the oracle-bone inscriptions were about sacrifices offered to the ancestors.

From the 1970s onward, many excavations and surveys at Xiaotun North Locus have been conducted, disclosing at least 150 additional building foundations of different sizes. In 1989 the Anyang Work Station excavated a large complex consisting of three foundations some 80 m southeast of Group B;

and it was labeled Group D, covering an area of about 5,000 square meters. A group of over 50 foundations, majority of which are of small size, were located to the northwest of Xiaotun during the field seasons of 1976-77 and 1984-85. A major program of coring and trial excavation was undertaken in 2004 across a large area to the north and northwest of Xiaotun; more than 100 foundations of pounded-earth were detected, and among other important findings was a large artificial pond, about 560 m long North-South, at least 4.5 hectares in area and as deep as 12 meters, immediately west to the foundations of Group A and Group B.

On the basis of recent findings, Du Jinpeng re-analyzed three groups of foundations excavated in the 1930s and proposed a new interpretation that identifies Group A as residential compounds (royal residences), Group B as palaces (for administration), Group C as altars, and Group D as an ancestral temple. All four groups seem to have been in use continuously from the reign of Wu Ding to the end of the dynasty. However, our analysis suggests that the foundations of Group A and some of Group B (including bronze casting remains) are earlier than the reign of Wu Ding, perhaps dating to the Huanbei period.

More than 35,000 inscribed shells and bones have been excavated at Yinxu, almost exclusively from the palace-temple district except a dozen of fragmented pieces found in a number of other localities nearby. A large pit (YH127) was found on the west edge of the Group B foundations in 1936 to contain more than 17,000 inscribed turtle shells and 8 cattle bones from the reign of Wu Ding. In 1973, another major find south of Xiaotun village produced more than 4,800 inscribed bones and about 70 shells dated to the middle reigns of the late Shang dynasty. The 684 inscribed shells and 5 bones from Huayuanzhuang East, excavated in 1991, are also very important; more than 300 of them are complete. These inscriptions are dated to early phase of Wu Ding's reign, and they are records of divinations performed by *zi*-princes, instead of the king.

The divinations performed by the Shang kings refer to numerous lineages or lineage groups. Keightley argues that the *zu*-lineage functioned as a corporate descent group in social, ritual, and political activities of the Late Shang society, and the king exercised his authority over a confederation of patrilineal descent groups. Shang society was organized into socially stratified and culturally differentiated *zu*-lineages that were linked to the royal house by "a differential hierarchy of kinship ties, benefits, privileges, and obligations" (Keightley 1999). On the top of the dynastic hierarchy was the kingly lineage (*wang zu*) that included both the ruling king and his sons who often served as heads of their own minor lineages (*zi zu* - lineages of the *zi*-princes). The lineages of *zi*-princes were composed of all those royal descendants who had created their own collateral minor lineages (*duo zi zu* - many princely lineages). In addition, there were lineages with relatively remote kin relations with the royal, main-line lineage from which they had segmented at least two generations earlier. These lineages, such as *Bi*, *Bing*, *Cha*, *Gu*, *Que*, and *Yue*, offered cult to the more distant ancestors of the main-line of royal descent; and many of them are believed to be located in the places far away from Yinxu. All these lineages can be collectively called the royal lineage (or clan) that served as the central axis of the Late Shang state, a polity in which political, social, and religious institutions and practices were largely entangled and undifferentiated.

The stratified royal lineage is manifested in spatial segregation of the cemetery of the kingly lineage from cemeteries for lineages of the *zi*-princes. The former is located at Xibeigang north of the Huan River, neighboring Huanbei to the east, a place ancestral to the late Shang kings, but isolated from the rest of the settlement at Yinxu. Such spatial segregation signaled the special status of the royal dead, the kings and their consorts. The latter are mostly placed in the royal neighborhoods of lineages of *zi*-princes around the ceremonial core, inside the palace-temple district, where the living kings performed rites of sacrifice and

divination and worshiped their ancestors; and they were also separated from those of non-royal lineages (Figure 2).

Cemetery of the Kingly Lineage

The cemetery of the kingly lineage, often less precisely called the royal cemetery, at Xibeigang is composed of two clusters of large shaft tombs that range from 10 to 13 m deep. The west sector includes 7 tombs with 4 sloping or stepped ramps opening into a nearly vertical shaft, and 1 incomplete tomb shaft without any ramp. The east sector contains 5 tombs, 1 with four ramps, 3 with two ramps, and 1 with a single ramp, accompanied by extensive tracts of sacrificial pits arranged in rows. Each row has multiple pits with hundreds of victims, mostly male with some females and some children, perhaps representing a single dedicatory sacrifice performed for the royal dead. Treatment of the dead in these sacrificial pits includes whole skeletons, decapitated skeletons, and skulls only. Some were bound and buried alive; and some were beheaded or dismembered. Many sacrificial pits contain animal remains: horses most commonly, but also dogs, pigs, sheep, dogs, birds, and even elephants. These large tombs have their longer ramps generally oriented about 13 degrees east of north, reflecting the Shang's general concern with orientation because most burials of lower classes, building foundations, and even the burials of sacrificial victims conform to this same orientation.

All royal tombs at Xibeigang were heavily looted in antiquity and in modern times, but their monumental size makes it plausible to tie them to the Shang royal house. Extrapolation from the much smaller tomb, but unlooted, of Fu Hao may suggest that the royal dead placed in these large shaft tombs would be provided with enormous amount of ritual bronze vessels and weapons, jades, and other ceremonial and personal objects in addition to a large number of human and animal sacrifices. The wealth and the victims accompanying the royal dead to the next world demonstrated that the king's superior status would

remain the same after death. Death was viewed as continuity of the life rather than a new beginning; it provided an effective opportunity for survivors to validate the central values of the elite culture.

Cemeteries of Lineages of *zi*-Princess

Under the kingly lineage were lineages of *zi*-princes that are also of royal descent. Archaeological and epigraphic data suggest that these *zi*-prince lineages resided within the palace-temple district and had their own neighborhoods where they lived their lives and buried their dead.

In 1976 an astonishing royal tomb, M5, which has been linked to Fu Hao (Lady Hao), a powerful consort or royal woman associated with Wu Ding, was discovered in the west part of the temple-palace district; it was the first royal tomb excavated at Yinxu that had not been looted by grave robbers. In spite of no trace of the principal dead, the tomb contained at least 16 human victims and 6 dog sacrifices. There were more than 1,900 grave goods (not even counting small objects such as bronze bosses and over 6,780 cowries), including 468 bronzes, 755 jade carvings, 110 lithic items (including rock sculptures and gemstones), 564 bone objects (not counting very fragmented hairpins), 3 ivory carvings, and 11 pottery vessels, indicating the immeasurable wealth that the living were willing to bury with the dead of royal status. Among 210 bronze ritual vessels unearthed from M5 are 109 inscribed with "Fu Hao", which allows scholars to identify this tomb as the final resting place of one of Wu Ding's many consorts. Fu Hao appears in oracle-bone inscriptions almost 200 times. She is documented for making sacrificial offerings and raising troops for battle, and leading campaigns against hostile polities of the north, and she was probably the mother of one of the next kings, Zu Geng or Zu Jia, who cast vessels offered to her. If the identification of Fu Hao is accepted, she would be the earliest historical grandee in Chinese history whose material legacy has been archaeologically documented.

Two other tombs (M17 and M18), only 22 meters east of M5, are also identified as royal burials dating to the reign of Wu Ding. Surrounding these three middle-sized and richly furnished tombs are many small graves, forming a cemetery of one of *zi*-princes of the Late Shang. Associated with the cemetery are many building foundations and other associated remains of residential activities. Altogether, they constitute a typical lineage-based neighborhood, perhaps a royal neighborhood for a *zi*-prince lineage.

An excavation in 2000-2001 near the southeast corner of the palace-temple district unearthed another richly furnished royal tomb, M54, which was not looted. The tomb, dated to Phase II of the Yinxu Period, is also a rectangular shaft pit aligned north to south; it measures 5.04 m long and 3.3 m wide at the opening, and 7.3 m deep. Unlike Fu Hao tomb and many burials of high status, the skeleton of the principal dead in M54 is partially preserved. It, identified as a male, faces north, and is prone with extended limbs and both hands beneath abdomen. Accompanying the principal dead were fifteen human victims and fifteen sacrificial dogs. M54 was supplied with more than 570 grave goods (not counting numerous bronze arrowheads (881) and bosses (149), gold foil fragments (125), and 1472 cowries); including 265 bronze weapons, ritual vessels, chariot fittings, and implements, 222 ceremonial and ornamental jades, 21 pottery vessels, 60 bone carvings and tools, 2 ivory carvings, and 1 bamboo basket (IA 2007). The rich selection of bronzes, jades, and other objects, some from considerable distances and some of them antiquities, suggest an important status or role he had in the network of social relations.

Seven bronze *yue* - large flat axes, were found in M54, which is rare among the burial finds at Yinxu; one of them is as large as those found in the Fu Hao tomb. Furthermore, there are many bronze weapons such as large *dao*-knives with curved point, *ge*-dagger axes, *mao*-spear points etc, possibly indicating that the deceased was a military officer with high rank. This inference is supported by inscriptions, mostly "*Ya Chang*", cast on nearly two-thirds of the

bronze vessels and weapons. "Ya" is generally interpreted as a military title (such as Marshall) of the late Shang period, while "Chang" is a royal lineage name recorded in oracle-bone inscriptions. It may be inferred that the occupant of M54 was a chief of the *zu*-lineage called "Chang". Tomb Chang Zi Kou found at Taiqinggong in Luyi county, Henan province, is a large grave dating to the end of the Shang and the beginning of the Zhou period; it yielded bronze vessels inscribed mostly "Chang Zi Kou" of which the character "Chang" is basically identical to that cast on the M54 bronzes. We may speculate that the occupants of both M54 and the royal burial at Chang Zi Kou were from the same lineage group. The "Chang" lineage group lasted from early Yinxu period through the beginning of the Western Zhou period, and it was highly regarded by the Shang royal house according to oracle-bone inscriptions. The occupant of M54 was likely an aristocrat with military power. Our isotope analysis suggests that this principal occupant was not born in Anyang, but was most likely from the south where diet was primarily based on rice instead of millet.

Like M5 and M54 that are located inside the palace-temple district, most other richly furnished tombs in other localities at Yinxu display a similar predominance of bronze weapons and chariot-related pieces such as bow-shaped objects in grave goods; among them are M160 at Guojiazhuang, M1046 at Liujiazhuang North, M303 and M539 at Dasikongcun, and M269 at Qijiazhuang East. From their paraphernalia, these tombs were most likely for military figures, suggesting the prominence of a warrior class in Late Shang society.

M54 is surrounded by many lower-class graves of lower, and residential foundations, they likely form another royal lineage-based neighborhood located in the southeast corner of the palace-temple district. The *zi*-princes of this royal lineage perhaps performed divination on their own at least during the early phase of Wu Ding's reign, as documented in the oracle-bone inscriptions found at Huayuanzhuang East.

A relatively large tomb with two ramps was found inside the Anyang Work Station immediately west of the "ditch" in Xiaotun Locus West. It had been extensively looted, but its presence, along with many small graves and residential foundations nearby, suggest a neighborhood of possibly royal (*zi*-prince) status.

In short, recent discoveries have revealed new insights into the settlement patterns of the palace-temple district and its functions. Situated in the northeast are the foundations of Group B, Group C, and Group D and associated sacrificial burials and oracle-bone deposits in Xiaotun North and Northeast, and in the center is Xiaotun South where large deposits of inscribed bones are found. They constitute the core of the palace-temple district where the primary activities were divination, sacrifice, and rituals performed by or on behalf of the kings. The core of the palace-temple district is bordered by a large water feature in the northwest, and surrounded in the south and west by royal neighborhoods where members of *zi*-prince lineages, as well as their servants, lived and were buried together (Figure 2).

SIMPLIFICATION AND URBANIZATION

Before discussing the process of urbanization at Yinxu, it is essential to briefly mention Huanbei, a slightly earlier urban settlement discovered in Anyang in the fall of 1999 (Figure 1). It is the largest walled city of the early Bronze Age, with a walled area measuring about 470 hectares, 2,150 m east-west by 2,200 m north-south. A walled inner city of 41 hectares is most likely of royal nature, given the quality, size, and density of buildings and other associated remains insider the inner city, as well as its central location within the larger city. Huanbei probably arose in the middle or end of the fourteenth century BC, and lasted for less than a century.

In terms of general processes and changes in material culture, some fundamental changes occurred from Huanbei to Yinxu. On the one hand, there

were new elements in the development of material culture, particularly the invention of systematic writing primarily used by the kings and their diviners to keep records of divination, and the sudden appearance of "foreign styles" or - "foreign objects" such as horse-driven chariots, bronze mirrors, and others. On the other hand, some traditional social practices continued but were conducted in fundamentally different ways; they were either in a much larger scale or in a much greater intensity, and endowed with different meanings. These social practices include intensified divination and human sacrifice, the construction of royal tombs of monumental scale, and intensified craft production, particularly bronze casting that involved unprecedentedly high integration of techniques, decorative styles, and functions. In terms of the processes of urban planning and development, Huanbei was created through a high degree of top-down processes, while Yinxu was seemingly much more self-organized (bottom-up local processes). All these changes strongly suggest that Huanbei and Yinxu were not just two sequential "Shang" cities but were perhaps different in their very nature, in terms of who created them, and how they were created and sustained.

With this important observation in mind, we move to the discussion of what can be seen regarding the process of urbanization from the beginning to the end at Yinxu. There has been a tendency to compress the two centuries of urban development at Yinxu into a single historical event, i.e. to view Late Shang society as if it were monolithic, thus ignoring the processes through which it was created, developed, and collapsed. However, increasing data clearly suggest that the early phases (particularly during the reign of King Wu Ding) of the occupation at Yinxu show much more variability and diversity in forms and styles of artifacts (pottery, bronzes, even jades) and architectures than the later phases, possibly suggesting high heterogeneities of material culture and population in the beginning of urbanization at Yinxu, and a process of simplification toward the end of the dynasty. Similarly, following the conception,

developed by Scott (1998), of "legibility"effected by modern states, Yoffee (2005) argues that the evolution of the earliest states was often complicated by the simplicity created by states. What occurred in many earliest cities in the world was a tendency toward simplification, standardization, and legibility.

"Foreign" or "non-local" objects ("imports" or "copies") and styles are not unusual among the findings from Yinxu, particularly during the reign of King Wu Ding. They are totally different from those typical "Shang" traditions as represented by the findings of the early Shang at Zhengzhou and the middle Shang at Huanbei. Many "foreign" objects, such as some jades, proto-porcelain, stoneware, horse-driven chariots, animal-headed bronze knives and the like,, are indicative of interaction with distant territories, either through direct trade and exchange, or emulation of forms and styles from other cultures. Some domestic pottery wares and buildings, while stylistically anomalous, might represent the presence of the nonlocal people resident at Yinxu. For example, enormous new findings from the 2003-2004 excavation at Locus Xiaomintun, particularly buildings and pottery vessels of "non-local" style, are unanticipated as well as intriguing. Among them are 86 subterranean houses or house complexes, technologically and stylistically contrasted with those houses of so-called typical "Shang" style, usually built upon raised foundation made of pounded earth. A large number of pottery vessels found within those subterranean houses are of "exotic" styles, suggesting connections with neighboring or even distant cultures in Henan, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Shandong, and Inner Mongolia. We are currently involved in analyzing the material composition of these ceramics (by employing petrography and scanning electron microscopy) to evaluate their local vs. nonlocal status by comparison with established baseline compositional data for local pottery wares. The subterranean houses and associated non-local pottery wares are all dated to the earliest phase at Yinxu. Who were these people who inhabited this specific community, and consumed those pottery wares of "non-local" styles? Were these pottery vessels locally manufactured or simply

imported? What do these new findings inform us of the nature of the neighborhoods at Xiaomintun and its relations with other neighborhoods?

The process of simplification (and standardization) was the most striking in ceramics that were becoming less diverse in form, style, and manufacturing technology from the beginning to the end of the dynasty. During the late phases, more and more crude facsimiles, known in later historical texts as "spirit objects" (*mingqi*), were mass-produced for the use in small graves.

Divination was one of the most important institutions of the Shang royal house. The most dominant divinatory subject was systematic offerings made to dead kings and their consorts, indicating the importance of ancestor worship in Shang society. Ancestor worship was directly tied to the exercise of political and religious power. By presiding over the divination with associated ritual sacrifice, the king, known as “I, the one man,” could legitimate his unique position to communicate with his ancestors who were able to intercede with Di (the high god) who presided over a hierarchy of the High Powers and dynastic ancestors, and had the ability to inflict good or bad fortune on the dynasty as a whole. By performing divinations and making offerings to satisfy the needs of his ancestors, the king was able to influence the will of the ancestral spirits and the religious power that they possessed, to “appeal for the ancestral blessings, or dissipate the ancestral curses, which affected the commonality” (Keightley 1978), and to implement new ideology of social order and hierarchy. In other words, the king depended upon his ancestors for his religious dominance and political power, and institutionalized divination and sacrifice were the most effective means to sustain his unique relationship with the ancestors and the High Powers.

The evolution of simplicity in material culture and social practice also has the support from divinatory practices. After the reign of Wu Ding, divination became more systematic, more formalized, and less comprehensive, in association with a more routinized administration and regularized cultic and

political practice. There was an increasing impersonalization of the dead in ancestor worship, evidenced by the highly formalized and rigid five-ritual cycle of sacrifices, the generic temple names for the royal dead, the ranking of ancestors according to generational seniority, and more sacrificial wealth offered to more remote ancestors. By the last two reigns of the dynasty, divination became highly structured, and there was an absence of individual preference for specific rituals and offerings.

During the reign of Wu Ding, the diviners used complementary, positive and negative charges, and the charges the king made addressed a wide range of topics such as the will of Di, the high god, the blessings of the High Powers, weather, harvests, sacrifices, warfare, the king's health, the meaning of the king's dreams, childbearing of royal consorts, hunting, the mobilization of conscripts, relations with other polities, the outlook for the coming day or night and the next ten-day week, the arrival of tribute payments, the building of settlements, divine assistance or approval and more. By the last two reigns of the dynasty, many of these topics disappeared from divination with the focus now limited to the performance of ancestral cult following a rigid schedule, the uniformly auspicious forecast for the next ten-day week or coming night, and queries about the royal hunts. Balanced, positive-negative charge pairs were no longer used. Even the script style of inscriptions became minuscule and more standardized.

Keightley (1999) argues that all these changes in form and content of divination reflected a ritual reform launched by Zu Jia, the 23rd king, that made ancestors endowed with more power but less important, and gave the kings more control over the negotiation and communication with their ancestors. Such ritual reform would simplify the means the Shang kings legitimized and sustained their unchallengeable authority to rule the world.

Diviners who served at the royal house or elite groups derived their names primarily from the places of their origins or the names of their lineages. There were some 120 diviners with known names through the late Shang

dynasty. During the reign of King Wu Ding, there were more than 70 diviners with known names; while there were no more than a few diviners and scribes during the reign of the last king, quite often the king alone acted as diviner, suggesting that these functionaries (and the people they represented or were related by kinship, trade, or the places of their origins) in the beginning of the urban center at Yinxu might have come from many previously separate local communities and/or distant territories.

Linguistic and cultural diversities have been identified in some recent studies of oracle-bone inscriptions and bronze inscriptions. The work order (syntax) involving the double-object construction, the modification structure, and the use of demonstratives, particles, and vocabularies are much richer and more complex in the early phases than the later ones, strongly suggested the presence of different dialects, particularly during the early reigns of the late Shang dynasty. The identification of different dialects is based on the variation in syntactic structure correlated with different diviners. The language of certain diviner groups shows unmistakable features of dialect mixture. In other words, late Shang was a society that incorporated varieties of speech different from the court diviners of King Wu Ding, breaking the myth so far held that the oracle-bone inscriptions reflect a homogeneous standard language.

In short, more and more archaeological and epigraphic data, together with isotope analyses of human remains, suggest that that the Shang city at Yinxu was intentionally and actively created to serve the needs and interests of socially and culturally differentiated groups. Yinxu was most likely the meeting ground of previously separate peoples who may have come from local communities and/or distant territories and spoken different dialects or even languages, particularly during the initial phase of urbanization, with a more standardized dialect and writing toward the end of the dynasty. Here, ethnogenesis - the formation of new group identities - may have been a critical process through which different social and cultural groups interacted with each other but more importantly were

recombined under new kinds of leadership, probably by means of the development of a new ideology of social order and hierarchy. Intensified human sacrifice and divination, the construction of monumental royal tombs, increasingly specialized production and consumption of crafts were materialization of such an ideology that embodied a new order of social relations among the living, the dead and gods.

Figure 1. Map showing major archaeological features at Yinxu and Huanbei

NW04xx NW03xx NW02xx NW01xx NE01xx NE02xx NE03xx NE04xx

NWxx04 NWxx03 NWxx02 NWxx01 NExx04 NExx03 NExx02 NExx01 SWxx01 SWxx02 SWxx03 SExx01 SExx02 SExx03

SW04xx SW03xx SW02xx SW01xx SE01xx SE02xx SE03xx SE04xx

N

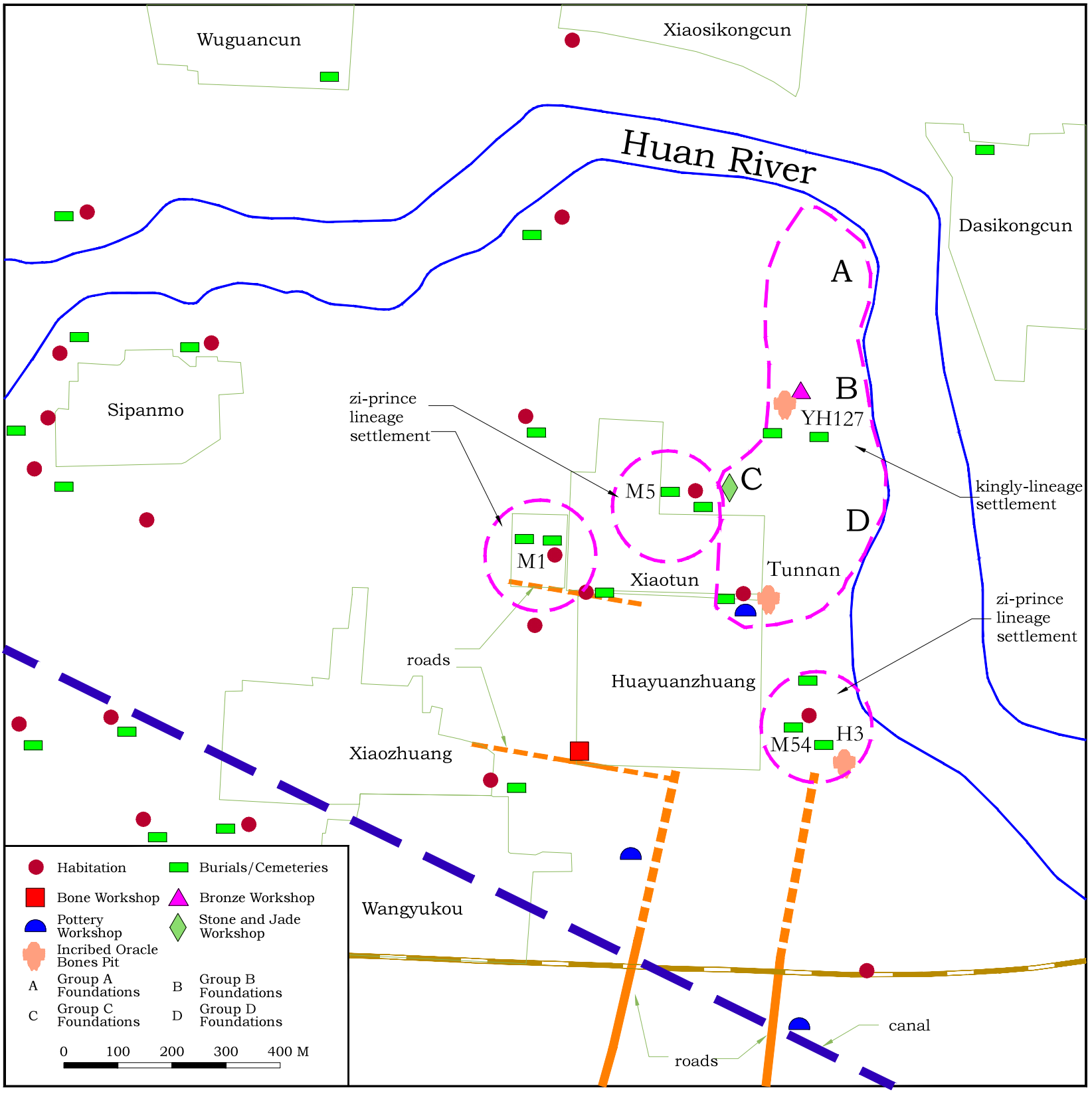
Qianhuangpu
Kuhe
Shuangta
Guowangdu
Litaocun
Nongjizhan
Fengan
Beishiwang
Tuwangdu
Zhoujiaying
Songwangdu
Quwangdu
Qiukou
Dongwangdu
Shilipu
Fengjiamiao
Houying
Sanjiazhuang
Cemetery of the Kingly Lineage
Qianying
Huanbei
Huayuanzhuang
Hanwangdu
Songjiamiao
Fanjiazhuang
F2
F1
Houjiazhuang
Palace-temple District
airport
Caiku
Xiaosikongcun
Sanfuzhuang
Wuguancun
Beixinzhuang
Xiaomintun
Huan River
Dasikongcun
A
Water Feature
Sipanmo
B
Palace-Temple District
M5 X
C
D
Linfuzhuang
Anyang Steel
West Zone
Yubeishachang
Xiaotun
Yinxu
Huayuan-zhuang
Caixiao
M54 X
Xiaozhuang
Baijiafen
Hougang
Guojiawan
Wangyukou
Xuejiazhuang
Gaolou-zhuang
Haojiadian
Meiyuanzhuang
Jiaoshaocun
Haojiaqiao
Dazhuang
Guojiazhuang
Guozhuang
Renjiazhuang
Qijiazhuang
Liujiazhuang
Xujiaqiao
Nanxinzhuang
Liujiazhuang
Dapo
Sanjiazhuang
Tujiazhuang
Tijiakou
Xibalizhuang
Dongbalizhuang

Major Archaeological Features of Yinxu and Huanbei in Anyang

- Residential Settlement
- Cemetery / Burial area
- Major Pit of Inscribed Oracle bones
- Bronze Foundry
- Jade / Stone Workshop
- Bone Workshop
- Pottery Workshop
- Major Road
- Canal (Moat?)

0 1000 m

Figure 2. Kingly-lineage and *zi*-prince lineage neighborhoods in the Palace-Temple district at Yinxu


Wuguancun
Xiaosikongcun
Huan River
Dasikongcun
Sipanmo
A
B
YH127
zi-prince
lineage
settlement
kingly-lineage
settlement
M5
C
D
M1
Xiaotun
Tunnan
zi-prince
lineage
settlement
roads
Huayuanzhuang
M54
H3
Xiaozhuang
Wangyukou
roads
canal
Habitation
Burials/Cemeteries
Bone Workshop
Bronze Workshop
Pottery
Workshop
Stone and Jade
Workshop
Incribed Oracle
Bones Pit
A
Group A
Foundations
B
Group B
Foundations
C
Group C
Foundations
D
Group D
Foundations
0
100
200
300
400 M