Newly Discovered Shang Tombs at the Shang City in Zhengzhou

Henan Provincial Institute of Antiquity and Archaeology

Keywords: Zhengzhou   Shang City   Shang tombs

Since the discovery of the Shang City in Zhengzhou 郑州 in the 1950s, Shang tombs have been found in recent years inside the city, the palace area, and along the western wall. Some of them are located in the intermediate area between the inner and outer walls. These tombs differ each other in terms of mortuary and funerary offerings. This paper reports the excavated materials from six tombs.

I. 97:ZSC8IIT143M1 (abbreviation: T143M1)

T143M1 is located inside No. 43 Huangweihui 黄委会, Middle Shunhe 顺河 Road, Zhengzhou, on the northern side of the palace area in the northeastern Shang City. It was discovered in 1997. The excavation indicated that there are dense distributions of rammed earth foundations of the Shang Dynasty in this area. This tomb (M1) is in the northwestern side of T143. It is superimposed by a layer of the Warring States Period, and it intrudes into the Shang rammed earth architectural foundations. The tomb pit is a rectangular shaft, about $0.8 \times 2$ m, and 0.6 m deep. The orientation of the tomb occupant is 8 degrees, but most of the skeletons are decomposed except parts of the two legs. Seven funerary objects were found (Fig. 1).

T143M1:1, bronze li-tripod. It has a flared mouth, a vertical neck, a round abdomen, a high crotch, and three baggy feet. It is 18.3 cm high and its mouth is 13.2 in diameter (Fig. 1:1).

T143M1:2, jade ornament, grayish, flat fan-shaped, curved sides on top and bottom, and oblique on right and left sides. There is one perforation on the upper side, one perforation on the left side and two perforations on the right side. An unfinished perforation is observed in the middle, 2.5 cm long (Fig. 1:3).

Other objects include two jade disks and three jade raw materials.

Fig. 1 Unearthed artifacts from burial T143M1
1. bronze li-tripod (T143M1:1)  2, 6, 7. jade raw materials (T143M1: 4, 7, 3)  3. jade ornament (T143M1:2)  4, 5. jade bi-disks (T143M1: 6, 5)  (Scales: 2, 3, 2/3; others 1/3)
**II. 97:ZSC8IIIT166M6 (abbreviation: T166M6)**

T166M6 is located inside the palace area of northeastern Zhengzhou Shang City, which is today’s East Shunhe Road in Zhengzhou. It was discovered during an excavation from September 1997 to May 1998. This tomb was superimposed under a ditch (G2) of the Lower Erligang 二里冈 Period of Shang, and it intrudes into a ditch of the Luodamiao 洛达庙 Period.

The tomb pit is a rectangular shaft, 1.1 × 2.4 m, and about 0.3 m deep. The orientation of the occupants is 110 degrees. It is a joint burial of three individuals with stretched prone positions (Fig. 2). They were labeled as No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 from the north to the south. No. 2 individual is in the middle and probably the master of this tomb. This individual was a male of 20–39 years old with strong complexion, and his body was smeared with plenty of vermilions. A necklace was found at his neck. No. 1 individual was a female of about 20 years old. Her hands were bent upward. No. 3 individual was a juvenile of unidentified sex, about 10 years old. This individual’s hands were bundled up on the head. There are 142 funerary objects inside this tomb (Fig. 3).

T166M6:1, bronze *li*-tripod. It has a bent rim, a relatively vertical abdomen, a high crotch, three conical feet, and two semi-circular loops. A band of convex lines was decorated on the abdomen, and the feet were decorated with V-shaped designs. It is 24.5 cm high and its mouth is 17.8 cm in diameter (Fig. 4).

T166M6:2, bronze *he*-tripod. It has a round top, an upward tuber-shaped spout, a restrained waist, a high crotch and three long baggy feet. A wide handle is attached between the shoulder and a foot. There is a nipple on each side of the spout mouth, and triangular designs were executed at the end of the spout. Three circumferential lines were decorated on the abdomen. It is 23 cm high (Fig. 5).

T166M6:3, bronze *ge*-halberd. It has straight blade with ridges in the middle. There is a hole at the end of the blade. The shape of the blade cross-section is lozenge. The tang is straight. It is 30.8 cm long (See Fig. 3:7).

Other offerings include one handle-shaped jade ornament, one necklace (consists of 93 cowrie shells and one turquoise), two shell arrowheads, 41 bone arrowheads, and one round ceramic shard.

**III. 2001:ZSC8IIIT61M1 (abbreviation: T61M1)**

T61M1 is located inside the southwestern Shang City at Zhengzhou, which is the current eastern Xidajie 西大街.
in Zhengzhou. It was discovered in 2001. The tomb pit was under a cultural layer of Tang Dynasty, and it intruded into the rammed earth of Shang Dynasty. It is 2.1 m long, 0.75–0.765 m wide, and the orientation is 10 degrees. Most of the skeletons have been decomposed except few teeth and parts of the legs. On the basis of the teeth features, this was a middle-aged individual with unclear gender. An irregular waist-pit of about 0.68 m in diameter and 0.1 m deep, was found in the southern part of the pit bottom. There are 11 funerary objects in the tomb (Fig. 6).

T61M1:1, bronze jia-tripod. It has a flared mouth with inverted thick rim. There are two mushroom-shaped posts on top of the mouth. The vessel body has an oblique abdomen, a restrained waist and a round bottom. The hollow feet are triangular in cross-section. A loop handle was attached on the body. A band of taotie was decorated on top of the abdomen. It is 22 cm high and the mouth is 15 cm in diameter (Fig. 7).

T61M1:2, bronze ge-halberd. The blade is straight with ridges in the middle, triangular cross-section. The tang is straight with upper and lower flanks. It is 26.8 cm long (Fig. 6:3).
Fig. 6 Unearthed bronze objects from burial T61M1
1. jia-tripod (T61M1:1)  2. jue-cup (T61M1:3)  3. hoe (T61M1:10)  4. saw (T61M1:7  5. ge-halberd(T61M1:2)

T61M1:7, bronze saw, only one end survived, flat. There are shafting traces on the upper side. One end has a hole. The extant length is 9.1 cm (Fig. 6:4).

T61M1:10, bronze hoe. Quadrangular body with curved cutting edge. There is a circle of appliqué on the trapezoidal socket. Carbonized handle is found inside...
the socket, 16.9 cm long (Fig. 6:1).

Other offerings include one jade cicada, one jade huang-pendant, two round ceramic shards, and two oracle bones.

**IV. 99ZSCWT17M2 and 99ZSCWT22M4 (abbreviation: T17M2 and T22M4)**

These two tombs were found at the construction ground of the Henan Provincial Xinhua Bookstore on the Renmin Road, Zhengzhou in 1999.

1. **T17M2.** This tomb intruded into the eastern section of the western wall of the Shang City. The tomb pit is a rectangular shaft, partly destroyed by a modern pit and a Shang pit. It is 0.56 m by 1.85 m, and 0.42 m deep. The orientation is 17 degrees. The pit walls are vertical, and the bottom is flat, covered with vermilion. The skeleton was poorly preserved. The head points to the north, and the body is in a supine position. The age and gender are not clear. There are five funerary objects in this tomb (Fig. 9).

   **T17M2:1, bronze jia-tripod.** There are two mushroom-shaped posts on top of the flared mouth. The neck is long, the abdomen has a ridge, and the waist is restrained. The bottom is flat, and the feet are hollow. A loop handle is attached on one side. Three circles of convex lines are decorated on the body. It is 20.6 cm high (Fig. 10).

   **T17M2:2, bronze jue-cup.** Oval mouth, narrow and long spout, pointed tail, hat-shaped short posts, flat bottom, pointed feet, and a handle on one side. Taotie is decorated on the body. It is 18.2 cm high (Fig. 11).

   **T17M2:3, bronze gu-goblet.** Flared mouth, restrained body, flat bottom, trumpet-shaped ring foot. Two circumference of convex lines and one circumference of interconnected curves are decorated on the body. Two holes are on the ring foot. It is 16 cm high (Fig. 9:4).

   Other offerings include one bronze hairpin and one jade ornament.

2. **T22M4.** The tomb pit intruded into the Shang rammed earth and the eastern section of the west city wall. The pit is a rectangular shaft, 0.9 m by 2.3 m, and 0.8 m deep. The orientation is 13 degrees. Traces of wooden coffin are still visible inside the tomb. Only part of the legs were preserved. There are seven funerary objects, and most of them are pottery.

   **T22M4:4, ceramic jia-tripod.** It is 20.8 cm high, and the mouth is 12 cm in diameter. **T22M4:5, ceramic jue-cup.** About 13 cm high. **T22M4:3, ceramic stemmed-plate.** About 11.8 cm high. **T22M4:1, ceramic basin.** 14.2 high, and the mouth is 34.8 cm in diameter. Other objects include one jade handle-shaped ornament and one jade huang-pendant (Fig. 12).

**V. 87:ZSC5M1 (abbreviation: 87M1)**

87M1 was found at the middle section of Longhai North II Street, Zhengzhou in 1987 when a gas pipe was laid out. The tomb pit and human skeletons were disturbed before the archaeologists of Henan Pro-
The tomb pit is a rectangular shaft dug into the sterile soil. It is $1.2 \times 2$ m, and 0.25 m deep. The orientation is 210 degrees. The western part of the pit was cut by a modern sewage pipe. The human skeletons were poorly preserved. The occupant, probably a middle-to-old aged male, was in a stretched supine position, head orientated towards northeast. Four funerary objects were found in the tomb (Fig. 13).

87M1:4, bronze ding-tripod. Bent rim, restrained neck, deep round abdomen, and round bottom. There are two semi-circular handles on top of the rim. The conical feet are hollow. A register of taotie is executed on the body. It is 20.5 cm high, and the mouth is 16.5 cm in diameter (Fig. 14).
Fig. 12 Artifacts from burial T22M4
1. ceramic jia-tripod (T22M4:4)  2. ceramic jue-cup (T22M4:5)  3. ceramic basin (T22M4:2)  4. ceramic dou-stemmed plate (T22M4:3)  5. jade huang- pendant (T22M4:7)  6. handle-shaped jade object (T22M4:1)  7. jade disk-shaped ornament (T22M4:6) (Scales: 5, 6. 2/5; others 1/5)

Fig. 13 Artifacts from burial 87M1
1. bronze jue-cup (87M1:1)  2. bronze ding-tripod (87M1:4)  3. ceramic zun-pot (87M1:2)  4. ceramic li-tripod (87M1:3) (Scales: 3. 1/6; others 1/4)

87M1:1, bronze jue-cup. Elliptical mouth, narrow long spout with two flat posts on top, pointed tail, flat bottom and triangular cross-sectioned pointed feet. Flat handle. Three circumferences of convex lines are decorated on the waist. It is 14.5 cm high (Fig. 15).

87M1:3, ceramic li-tripod. Grayish brown, sand tempered, bent rim, relatively smooth crotch, conical feet. Medium cord-marks are decorated on the body. It is 18.3 cm high, and the mouth is 16.5 cm in diameter (Fig. 13:4).

87M1:2, ceramic zun-pot. Flared mouth, long neck, wide shoulder, round bottom and ring foot. It is decorated with concave lines and medium cord-marks. It is 25.1 cm high, and the mouth is 21.2 cm in diameter (Fig. 13:3).

VI. Conclusion
To date, more than 50 Shang tombs with funerary objects have been excavated within the area of the Shang City in Zhengzhou. These tombs can be divided into two major kinds: the first one is interred mainly with bronzes and the second one is interred mainly with pottery. Among
the six tombs reported in this paper, five were interred mainly with bronzes, and one was interred mainly with pottery. On the basis of the scale, two tombs are middle sized tombs, and four are small tombs.

The styles of the bronze and ceramic vessels suggest that these six tombs belong to four different periods. T166M6 was in the late fourth period of Erlitou 二里头 (or late Luodamiao). 87M1 was in the first period of Lower Erligang. T17M2 and T143M1 were in the first period of Upper Erligang. T22M4 and T61M1 were in the early second period or the late first period of Upper Erligang.

T166M6 was probably an aristocratic tomb. This joint tomb with three individuals represents a mortuary practice that has never been discovered before in Zhengzhou Shang tombs. The male in the middle was smeared fully with vermilions and wore a necklace, indicating he was the primary occupant of this tomb. The female in the northern side had her hands up and was interred with a bronze li-tripod besides her head, suggesting she was in a secondary position. The juvenile in the southern side occupied a very narrow space, with two arms being tied up on top of the head and a pile of bone arrowheads and a bronze ge-halberd on the waist, suggesting this individual was probably a sacrificial victim. The bronze he-vessel has clear characteristics of the Erlitou Culture, and the bronze li-tripod is similar with the pottery li-tripod of the Lower Xiajiadian 夏家店 Culture in northern China. This is the earliest tomb so far known in Zhengzhou Shang City.

The discovery of T61M1 merits further discussion. This tomb is in the southwestern section of the Zhengzhou Shang City, an area with rich Shang remains that have not been well investigated by archaeologists yet. Despite its small size, T61M1 was interred with bronzes, jades, oracle bones, and bronze tools, a phenomenon rarely seen in the Shang tombs so far known.

References


Note: The original report was published in Wenwu 2003.4: 4–20 with 42 figures, written by Zeng Xiaomin 曾晓敏, Song Guoding 宋国定 and Han Chaohui 韩朝会. The present version, an abridgment from the original, is prepared by the first two authors themselves and English-translated by Jiao Tianlong 焦天龙.