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Death Ritual in the Tang Dynasty (618–907):
A Study of Cultural Standardization and Variation in Medieval China

By

Yi Yang

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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ABSTRACT

Death Ritual in the Tang Dynasty (618–907):
A Study of Cultural Standardization and Variation in Medieval China

by

Yi Yang

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Nicolas Tackett, Chair

By exploiting a vast trove of underutilized original sources, including thousands of epitaphs, archaeological reports, ritual manuals, and anecdotes, and by using digital humanities tools to analyze this large pool of data from a multiregional perspective, this dissertation reconstructs funerary practices in Tang-era China, and thereby explores cultural standardization and the effect of sociocultural changes on death rituals. My research demonstrates that certain death ritual practices prevailed among Tang elites of various regions and social strata and remained stable throughout the entire Tang dynasty, suggesting the existence of a standardized way of commemorating death in medieval China. Furthermore, my research reveals significant regional variations and temporal changes, which I use to examine the mechanisms behind uniformity and variety.

This dissertation also makes an original contribution to the understanding of actual mortuary practices among Tang elites of various strata and regional backgrounds. My core research material, the many thousands of Tang-era epitaphs, allows me to get closer to the actual practices of "ordinary" elites rather than rely on descriptions of rites by the ritual specialists in charge of compiling prescriptive ritual manuals. Moreover, as each tomb epitaph text usually provides a glimpse of a person's life, tomb epitaphs are often the most direct and personal accounts of individuals, and they offer a perspective on a greater range of elite society than do either dynastic-history biographies or the eulogies preserved in the literary collections of famous writers.

in memory of my grandma, Yang Wenyu

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Abbreviations

BLXC — Zhao Liguang 趙力光, ed. *Xi'an beilin bowuguan xincang muzhi huibian* 西安碑林博物館新藏墓誌彙編. Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2007.

DLXS — Wang Zhu 王洙, comp. *Dili xinshu jiaoli* 地理新書校理. Annotated by Bi Lüdao 畢履道 and Zhang Qian 張謙. Edited by Jin Shenjia 金身佳. Xiangtan: Xiangtan daxue chubanshe, 2012.

DTKYL — Xiao Song 蕭嵩. *Da Tang kaiyuan li: Fu Da Tang jiaosi lu* 大唐開元禮: 附大唐郊祀錄. Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2000.

DTXS — Hu Ji 胡戟 and Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, eds. *Da Tang xishi bowuguan cang muzhi* 大唐西市博物館藏墓誌. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2012.

FSWJJ — Feng Yan 封演. *Fengshi wenjian ji jiaozhu* 封氏聞見記校注. Annotated by Zhao Zhenxin 趙貞信. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005.

JTS — Liu Xu 劉昫 et al. *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975.

LJ — Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, annot. *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義. Commentary by Kong Yingda 孔穎達. Organized by Lü Youren 呂友仁. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008.

MZH — Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良 and Zhao Chao 趙超, eds. *Tang dai muzhi huibian* 唐代墓誌彙編. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992.

MZHX — Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良 and Zhao Chao 趙超, eds. *Tang dai muzhi huibian xuji* 唐代墓誌彙編續集. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001.

QTW — Dong Gao 董誥 et al., eds. *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983.

QTWBY — Wu Gang 吳鋼, Wang Jiangyang 王京陽, and Shaanxi sheng guji zhengli bangongshi 陝西省古籍整理辦公室, eds. *Quan Tang wen buyi* 全唐文補遺. Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 1994.

QTWXB — Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良 et al., eds. *Quan Tang wen xinbian* 全唐文新編. Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 2000.

SWJZ — Xu Shen 許慎. *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注. Annotated by Duan Yucai 段玉裁. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981.

TD — Du You 杜佑. *Tongdian* 通典. Annotated by Wang Wenjin 王文錦 et al. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988.

THY — Wang Pu 王溥. *Tang hui yao* 唐會要. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955 ed.; 1998 rpt.

TPGJ — Li Fang 李昉 et al., eds. *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記. In *Biji xiaoshuo daguan* 筆記小說大觀, vol. 2, collated by Zhou Guangpei 周光培 et al. Yangzhou: Jiangsu guangling guji keyinshe, 1983.

XTS — Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 and Song Qi 宋祁. *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975.

YYCMZ — Li Zuhao 厲祖浩. *Yueyao ci muzhi* 越窯瓷墓誌. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2013.

Introduction

This dissertation has two goals. First, it seeks to reconstruct death ritual practice among elites of the Tang dynasty (618–907) primarily based on excavated texts and other materials found in tombs of the period. Across all cultures, the commemoration of death is among the most fundamental shared experiences of a community. Hence, by focusing on death ritual, one can get a sense of how a core component of a society's culture evolved over time. Particularly for China, scholars agree that funerals and weddings lay at the core of traditional rites.[1]

Second, through a broad empirical study of thousands of excavated tomb epitaphs and other archaeological data, the dissertation explores the question of cultural standardization. As large as Europe yet unlike Europe, China is often imagined to have been held together by a single, common culture. Scholars have provided good explanations for why one might expect a high degree of cultural coherence by late imperial China. But were there also forces of cultural standardization in earlier times? Through this empirical study, I will be able to evaluate to what extent one can detect cultural standardization in the form of standardized practice of death ritual in different regions of Tang-era China. I will simultaneously explore tensions between the prescriptions of ritual texts and actually performed rituals, and between "belief" and "practice," with the goal of better understanding the cultural "glue" that helped to hold Chinese society together.

0.1. Tang Death Ritual

There is a rich English literature from various disciplines (e.g., history, art history, archaeology, and anthropology) exploring death and burial culture in premodern China, spanning topics—to cite just a few—from commemorative writing,[2] politics of mourning,[3] and interpretations of funerary space[4] to afterlife marriage,[5] iconographic programs of burial and worship,[6] and conceptions of the afterlife.[7] However, the focus of this dissertation is not on death rituals and mourning practices as a reflection of the sociopolitical order or of literary trends, nor is it on the beliefs underlying burial rituals. Instead, it emphasizes the death ritual program itself, which can be reconstructed to a certain degree on the basis of excavated material. This emphasis is partly due to practical considerations for ease of reconstructing what people did rather than what people thought they were doing, and partly for methodological reasons, as it is possible to quantify and map out excavated data. In any case, this particular focus stems from my understanding of practice as being as important as belief in defining a society's culture. As Nicolas Tackett has observed, "culture is considered to include both beliefs and practices," and

1 Watson, "The Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites," 3–4.
2 For example, see Brashier, *Public Memory in Early China*; Davis, *Entombed Epigraphy and Commemorative Culture*; Shi, "My Tomb Will Be Opened in Eight Hundred Years."
3 For example, see Brown, *The Politics of Mourning in Early China*; Choi, *Death Rituals and Politics in Northern Song China*.
4 For example, see Xu, "Gender and Burial in Imperial China"; Tseng, "Funerary Spatiality."
5 For example, see De Pee, "Till Death Do Us Unite"; Yao, "Until Death Do Us Unite."
6 For example, see Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine* and *Art of the Yellow Springs*; Lai, *Excavating the Afterlife*; Wang, "Why Pictures in Tombs?"
7 For example, see Loewe, *Ways to Paradise*; Poo, "Ideas Concerning Death and Burial in Pre-Han and Han China"; Yu, "'Rest, Rest, Perturbed Spirit!'"; Yu, "'O Soul, Come Back!'"

"even when it is not possible to reconstruct the precise beliefs and practices that account for particular tomb features —as is the case more often than not—these tomb features can serve as cultural markers, allowing one to discriminate between two or more cultures on the basis of the material record."[8]

Existing English literature on Chinese burial ritual itself is more limited. There are excellent studies on the ritual manuals prescribing particular burial practices,[9] but these do not deal per se with actual practice. After all, ritual texts are highly conceptualized and prescriptive, and may diverge considerably from actual practice. The discrepancies between ritual prescription and ritual practice can be rather revealing, as we will see in the first chapter of this dissertation. Besides studies of ritual manuals, there have been attempts to reconstruct the ritual program of the funerals of several monarchs.[10] These studies are particularly useful for my own project, especially because accounts of imperial ritual in historical sources tend to be rather detailed. But these are also the rituals that are most likely to have been choreographed by the same ritual specialists in charge of compiling prescriptive ritual manuals and are least likely to reflect the actual practices of "ordinary" elites.

In contrast, it is archaeologically excavated material that gets us closer to actual practice. As Christian de Pee has pointed out in his study of medieval Chinese wedding ritual, "the material remains of joint burial have preserved, if incomplete, what the printed texts of middle-period weddings have lost: a specific, historical configuration of ritualized bodies and objects in ritualized space and time."[11] Only by looking at how funerals are manifested in the excavated data from Tang burials can one access the material traces of actual death ritual practice. Nevertheless, it is certainly not easy to recover the past realities through archaeological data. Whereas archaeologists do excellent work identifying features of excavated remains and providing important insights into the classification of objects and the periodization of tombs, they tend to adhere to a fairly conventional way to fit the archaeological data into the historical narrative. For instance, scholars often attribute the decline of extravagant burials to the weakening of the Tang central government following the momentous An Lushan Rebellion (755–763), which the Tang only barely succeeded in suppressing. But mortuary culture does not reflect political events in such a direct and simplistic way. Fortunately, in recent years, a few scholars including Qi Dongfang and Ye Wa have corrected this tendency.[12] Both argue that the decrease of lavish burials around the mid-eighth century happened simultaneously with the rise of extravagant funerary display, which reflected a shift of emphasis in death ritual from underground burial to aboveground display.

Finally, it should be noted that much of what has been written in English about death ritual concerns either early China or the Song dynasty (960–1279) and later eras.[13] However, the

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8 Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, 285.
9 For example, see Ebrey, *Chu Hsi's 'Family Rituals'* and *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China*.
10 For example, see McMullen, "The Death Rites of Tang Daizong"; Loewe, "State Funerals of the Han Empire"; Habberstad, "Texts, Performance, and Spectacle."
11 De Pee, "Till Death Do Us Unite," 707.
12 Qi Dongfang, "Tang dai de sangzang guannian xisu yu liyi zhidu"; Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 2005.
13 Besides what has been already mentioned (mostly works on early China), for works on the Song dynasty, see Hong, "Changing Roles of the Tomb Portrait" and "Mechanism of Life for the Netherworld"; Ebrey, "Cremation in Sung China"; Kuhn, "Decoding Song Tombs"; De Pee, "Till Death Do Us Unite"; Xu, "Gender and Burial in Imperial China"; Choi, *Death Rituals and Politics in Northern Song China*. For works on late imperial China, see

Tang dynasty represents a significant moment in China's cultural history, especially given that it experienced two fundamental and relevant changes: the popularization throughout society of Buddhism and the "medieval economic revolution" starting in the eighth century. Buddhism transformed the Chinese worldview and conception of the afterlife, as Stephen Teiser's research has clearly revealed.[14] What is less clear is how Buddhism affected ritual practice as a consequence of the new conception of the afterlife. Part of the medieval economic revolution involved the emergence of a new commercial elite in the provinces (away from the aristocrats based in the capitals), an elite that thrived especially in the Lower Yangzi River region. How can an analysis of tombs and ritual practice allow one to identify this new elite with a new sense of identity? More broadly speaking, the mid-Tang also has generally been accepted as the moment marking the beginning of the "Tang-Song Transition."[15] Whereas scholarship on this transition has done much to clarify economic, social, and political changes, it has yet to integrate remarkable transformations in mortuary culture. I hope that this dissertation will inspire renewed interest in the cultural facets of the Tang-Song Transition.

0.2. Cultural Standardization

Scholars of China have often noted that despite sometimes rather long periods of political instability and disunity, China has maintained a remarkable cultural homogeneity across a vast geographic zone since the late imperial era. Many leading anthropologists and historians in two 1980s conference volumes claimed the existence of a "highly integrated" Chinese culture with clear regional diversity,[16] and they explored the underlying mechanisms from various angles. The first volume, titled *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*,[17] focuses on the nonelite world and discusses what accounted for the integration of the diversity in popular culture in late imperial China. The second volume, titled *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*,[18] pays special attention to the role of death ritual in maintaining a unified Chinese culture. The latter volume is more relevant to this dissertation, hence I will review some of its main points.

Evelyn Rawski and James Watson, the two coeditors of *Death Ritual*, both stress the central role of ritual in cultural standardization. Rawski argues: "Chineseness became defined by dietary habits (the Chinese did not eat dairy products), by clothing styles, and especially by traditions concerning marriage and death."[19] Watson claims: "What we accept today as 'Chinese' is in large part the product of a centuries-long process of ritual standardization."[20] Nevertheless,

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Watson and Rawski, *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*; Sutton, "Death Rites and Chinese Culture"; Kutcher, *Mourning in Late Imperial China*; Watson, "Standardizing the Gods"; Brook, "Funerary Ritual and the Building of Lineages in Late Imperial China."

14 Teiser, "'Having Once Died and Returned to Life'" and *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*.

15 During the period from the mid-eighth century to the eleventh century, China underwent one of the most fundamental transformations in its history. First described in the 1920s by Naitō Torajirō, the so-called Tang-Song Transition involved a dramatic set of political, social, economic, and cultural transformations beginning in the Tang dynasty and culminating during the subsequent Song dynasty. See Naitō, "A Comprehensive Look at the T'ang-Sung Period."

16 Johnson, Nathan, and Rawski, *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China,* xii-xiii.

17 Johnson, Nathan, and Rawski, *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China.*

18 Watson and Rawski, *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*.

19 Rawski, "A Historian's Approach to Chinese Death Rituals," 33.

20 Watson, "The Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites," 3.

despite their shared emphasis on ritual, Rawski and Watson have different perspectives on two critical questions: What was standardized, ritual or belief? And what mechanisms accounted for the standardization?

To answer the first question, Watson takes an anthropologist's perspective, arguing that it is the "performative domain" of death ritual (i.e., ritual practice), which he calls "orthopraxy" (correct practice), rather than the "ideological domain" (i.e., religious belief), which he calls "orthodoxy" (correct belief), that mattered and was the focus of the standardization process.[21] In another work of Watson's, he states even more explicitly: "practice rather than belief was what made one Chinese,"[22] and "one became Chinese, in essence, by acting Chinese, by behaving like Chinese; and perhaps the clearest indicator that this cultural transformation had been accomplished was the performance of key rituals in the accepted manner."[23] By contrast, Rawski, taking a historian's standpoint, disagrees with Watson, arguing: "Chinese culture in the late imperial period (the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries) had achieved important commonalities in belief that cut across the boundaries of regions and social strata."[24] She further argues that belief and practice are part of a duality, and that the state intended to promote orthodoxy through orthopraxy.[25] As for the second question regarding how the mechanism of uniformity worked, Watson thinks that the imperial state, through its officials and local elites, "enforced a kind of ritual orthopraxy in the communities under their control," and hence "unacceptable rites were gradually suppressed or modified to conform to centralized models."[26] Rawski also emphasizes the important role that the state played in the propagation of death ritual through Neo-Confucian texts such as Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) *Jiali* 家禮 (Family rituals), which helped to create and reinforce orthodoxy among the populace.[27] In short, despite their clear differences, both Watson and Rawski focus on what the state sought to standardize and how the state successfully achieved the intended standardization in a top-down model.

Patricia Ebrey, in her study of Song-era funeral practice, challenges Watson's argument about the state's considerable effect on shaping the uniformity of Chinese funeral ritual. She argues that Song official policies toward funerary practices were "contradictory" and showed "half-heartedness"; and instead of intentionally "standardizing" ritual practices or altering current popular practices, they "indirectly and unintentionally confirmed the validity and efficacy of the mixed set of practices that had become conventional." According to Ebrey, the state "did not effectively promote a single, coherent model of what people should do," but by imperial examples, the state showed its people "how to cope with inconsistency."[28] But in general, Watson's arguments were particularly influential and encountered very few objections until nearly twenty years later, when a special issue of *Modern China* published in 2007 titled "Ritual, Cultural Standardization, and Orthopraxy in China: Reconsidering James L. Watson's Ideas" reopened the debate on standardization. Four main points are raised by Donald S. Sutton and other scholars contributing to the *Modern China* issue. First, they propose the existence of "heteroprax standardization," that is, "the standardizing of practices largely or wholly beyond the

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21 Watson, "The Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites," 10–11.
22 Watson, "Rites or Beliefs?," 87.
23 Watson, "Rites or Beliefs?," 93.
24 Rawski, "A Historian's Approach to Chinese Death Rituals," 22.
25 Rawski, "A Historian's Approach to Chinese Death Rituals," 22–28.
26 Watson, "The Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites," 17–18.
27 Rawski, "A Historian's Approach to Chinese Death Rituals," 29–32.
28 Ebrey, "The Response of the Sung State to Popular Funeral Practices," 229–230.

control of the state and without regard to its intent."[29] In contrast to the top-down state-fostered standardization, they identify a bottom-up regional standardization, entailing, for example, certain funeral rituals that spread and persisted despite the state's disapproval. Ultimately, these scholars see standardization in late imperial China as "a kind of flexible standardization," consisting of "mingled heteroprax and orthoprax impulses,"[30] much looser than "we find in the narrow orthopraxy of Zhu Xi promoted by the state."[31] Second, they question the presupposed state–elite collaboration in promoting orthoprax standardization; instead, they point out that local elites "did not necessarily act in the state's interest," but rather those elites agreed on state-promoted rituals in writing on the one hand, while participating in and covering up local customs on the other hand, a phenomenon that Sutton calls "pseudo-orthopraxy."[32] Both this view and Ebrey's argument mentioned earlier can serve as possible models to explain how regional difference coexists with empire-wide standardization. Third, regarding the mechanisms of standardization, the *Modern China* scholars emphasize the "agency beyond the state," and Sutton's own research shows that standard rituals had broad psychological and social appeal to local people.[33] According to Sutton, locals found within the common structure of the ritual program what best fit their needs for emotional outlets and for the differentiation of the "we" group from its neighbors.[34] Lastly, they challenge the "ritual versus belief" duality (also called the "Watson/Rawski contradiction").[35] Sutton argues that the paired terms (i.e., "ritual" and "belief") have strong Western connotations and were not regarded as a dichotomy in late imperial China. He continues by arguing that if we have to use paired terms, the closest are *cheng* 誠 (sincerity) and *li* 禮 (ritual). Disagreeing on the sharp distinction that Watson proposes between ritual and belief, Sutton states that *cheng* and *li* have no conflict with each other; instead, they are "both terms in the middle, linking internal and outer states," and they both "look to the efficacy of the ritual result."[36] In sum, the critique of Watson in the *Modern China* issue provides a useful overview of the field and proposes other mechanisms to account for cultural standardization in the late imperial and modern periods.

All these three collective efforts (i.e., the *Popular Culture* and *Death Ritual* volumes, and the *Modern China* issue) discuss cultural and ritual standardization in late imperial and modern China from various perspectives, and one fundamental question that all the contributors aim to answer is: What held Chinese society together? With this dissertation I hope to contribute to this fundamental inquiry in three major ways. First, besides the two main questions raised in the *Death Ritual* volume (i.e., what was standardized, and how did the standardization happen?), I

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29 Sutton, "Introduction," 8.
30 Sutton, "Death Rites and Chinese Culture," 146.
31 Sutton, "Introduction," 13.
32 Sutton, "Introduction," 9–11.
33 Sutton, "Death Rites and Chinese Culture," 140. For a brief review of the other scholars' contributions to the *Modern China* issue, see Sutton, "Introduction," 6–9.
34 See Sutton, "Death Rites and Chinese Culture," 139–145. Sutton also cites both Timothy Brook and Patricia Ebrey's similar arguments that Neo-Confucian funerary rituals had "psychological limits," and noncanonical forms of funeral practice gave expression to "feelings given no legitimacy in Confucian doctrine—loathing for the decay of the corpse, fear of ghosts, relief that the burden of caring for a sick or unpleasant relative was over, ambivalent anticipation of taking on new authority, and the desire to reassert life, growth and fertility in the face of death and decay." See Brook, "Funerary Ritual and the Building of Lineages in Late Imperial China," 411–412; Ebrey, *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China*, 216.
35 Sutton, "Introduction," 13.
36 Sutton, "Introduction," 14.

would like to add my own: is there evidence of cultural standardization in earlier times? Scholars generally use materials collected from the late imperial and modern eras to discuss Chinese cultural identity and ritual uniformity, but as we shall see in this dissertation, a quantitative analysis of nearly five thousand burial dates reveals a highly conserved pattern of auspicious and inauspicious stem-branch (*ganzhi* 干支) days for burial that cut across regional and temporal boundaries and lasted until late imperial era. This is solid evidence for remarkable ritual standardization that happened by the latest in the seventh century and remained surprisingly stable for a millennium.

Second, I will explore the mechanisms for the standardization in earlier eras that existing scholarship does not fully discuss. Due to the significant impact on society of the emergence of Neo-Confucianism and gentry "localism" during the second half of the Song dynasty, these two developments have been particularly emphasized by scholars of late imperial China—despite various debates mentioned earlier—to account for ritual and cultural uniformity. However, given the evidence of standardization that this dissertation reveals, it is worth asking what other factors might have contributed to cultural integration prior to the popularization of Neo-Confucianism and the rise of localism in the twelfth century. It is particularly interesting to explore elements of uniformity in the Tang, as there is strong evidence that, as late as the Tang dynasty, the dominant sociopolitical elite was heavily concentrated in the capital region, leaving open the possibility of a sharp cultural divide between the center and the provinces.[37]

Third, besides the standardized rituals, my research also reveals abundant evidence of regional diversity and temporal change in Tang death ritual, such as the different ways of conceptualizing burial space and various choices of grave goods. Hence, this dissertation will also explore why some aspects of ritual were standardized and not others.

0.3. Sources and Methodology

This dissertation is based on a wide range of sources, including archaeological data, ritual texts, Dunhuang manuscripts, manuals of divination and geomancy from the Tang dynasty and other eras, standard histories, the state's regulations on death ritual, Buddhist documents, tales of the strange and the supernatural, and other relevant literature. But given the empirical focus of this dissertation, particularly important are excavated materials, including tomb epitaphs and grave goods in their burial settings.

Excavated materials are especially valuable in that they permit a refined reconstruction of regional variation. The sites of excavation are known for much of the material that I consulted, allowing me to use Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies to produce detailed maps. Indeed, my research takes a multiregional perspective. It surveys epitaphs found in five major regions and compares them with one another. These regions are: (1) Chang'an and (2) Luoyang (the two Tang capitals, as comparing the capital regions with other regions helps discern the "state versus province" distinction); (3) Hebei (site of origin of the An Lushan Rebellion, much of which, after the rebellion, remained wholly divorced from the Tang empire's administrative hierarchy, hence by studying this region I gain insight into an autonomous local elite society); (4)

37 For more on this point, see Tackett, *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy*, 82–125 (chap. 2, "Geography of Power").

the Lower Yangzi River region[38] (where, in contrast to traditional bureaucrats, common in northern China, a non-office-holding elite was prevalent during the late Tang, largely due to burgeoning commercial opportunities and urbanization, thus we may evaluate the cultural values of this new elite as well as regional and temporal variations in elite types); and (5) today's Shanxi Province (where a large number of tomb epitaphs with geomantic information were excavated in the vicinity of Taiyuan and Changzhi). Most Tang-era epitaphs were found in one of these five regions, which differed greatly geographically, politically, and economically. Thus, by studying these areas I can assess regional diversity and cross-regional connections.

Due to the importance of tomb epitaphs as a source (they provide most of the data used in chapters 1 through 3), discussing these important historical sources in a bit more detail is warranted.[39] More than twelve thousand tomb epitaphs dating to the Tang dynasty exist in the form of rubbings or published inscription transcriptions. Many of these involve stones that have been discovered only quite recently. A tomb epitaph, called *muzhiming* 墓誌銘 in Chinese, consists of two flat, square slabs of limestone. A biographical inscription of the deceased is carved into the bottom stone, while the upper one serves as a cover to protect the inscription from damage. The cover stone usually contains only the most basic information about the deceased, such as name and official title (if applicable). In contrast, the biographical inscription on the bottom stone can be detailed and lengthy; in fact, most Tang-era epitaphs have long records (often four hundred to one thousand words in length) of the lives of individuals.

In content, a *muzhiming* is a compound genre composed of, first, a narrative account of the deceased, which is typically more "prose" and personalized; and, next, a rhymed eulogy at the end called the *ming* 銘. The prose narrative is usually lengthy and starts with a brief introduction to the deceased's family lineage, including his or her origin; the names and occupations of his or her paternal grandfather, father, and the deceased himself or herself; and his or her seniority among siblings. It next turns to a personal biography of the deceased, which can vary greatly in length and detail. Following it are the cause, place, and time of death, and descriptions of the remorse of the family, the great effort that the filial children and virtuous spouse took to organize the ritual practice that would ensure a successful funeral, and the place and time of the burial. A formulaic line often appears near the end of the prose to explain its function, for example: "fearing that with changes over years and generations, the hills and valleys will transform and move, hence we carve this stone faithfully to make an eternal record" 恐年移代改，陵谷遷移，刊乎貞石，訴諸不朽.[40] An epitaph usually ends with a *ming*, which tends to be short and use more generic and lyrical language and a more "poetic" or conventional diction.

These inscriptions offer a perspective on a greater range of elite society than do either dynastic-history biographies or the eulogies preserved in the literary collections of famous writers. As each tomb epitaph text provides a glimpse of a person's life in an era from which neither gazetteers nor genealogies are available to researchers, tomb epitaphs are often the most direct and personal accounts of individuals remaining today. Moreover, as some explicitly

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38 More precisely, northern Zhejiang (e.g. Shaoxing through Ningbo) should also be included here.
39 For detailed discussions of epitaphs, see Zhao Chao, *Gudai muzhi tonglun*; Tackett, "The Transformation of Medieval Chinese Elites," 9–24; Davis, "Potent Stone" and *Entombed Epigraphy and Commemorative Culture in Early Medieval China*; Shi, "My Tomb Will Be Opened in Eight Hundred Years," 234–238.
40 MZH 1811.

announce themselves to be a “veritable record” (*shilu* 實錄) of the life of the deceased,[41] compared to steles standing aboveground, these epitaphs were buried inside tombs and probably less restricted by social norms. Hidden inside the main tomb chamber close to the tomb entrance, an epitaph was not meant to be seen unless the tomb was discovered years later by strangers (although we know that by the ninth century copies of the texts of inscriptions often did circulate in the author’s literary collection). But this prominent location also makes the epitaph among the first of the burial objects that would be encountered by whomever entered the tomb. As Jie Shi insightfully puts it, by means of an epitaph, “posthumous immortality could be achieved through words.”[42] Additionally, the intended audience of an epitaph, aside from the living, probably also included the spirits. Nicolas Tackett and Timothy Davis argue that the epitaph had a religious and ritualistic role to play “in transmitting a truthful account of the life of the deceased to the gods, ghosts, and ancestral spirits.”[43]

Scholars have pointed out that epitaph stones combine three artistic branches: literature (e.g., the elegantly rhymed eulogy), calligraphy, and stone carving.[44] The artistic complexity of this object meant that it was limited to relatively wealthy families who had the resources to fund an elaborate burial. In other words, we can regard epitaphs as identifying markers of elite families.[45] In recent years, tomb epitaphs as valuable historical sources have started to attract great scholarly attention and are being used to study various aspects of Tang society, exemplified by Tackett’s research on the transformation of medieval elites, Yao Ping’s work on Tang women and afterlife marriages, Jessey Choo and Shiying Pang’s studies of female Daoist and Buddhist renunciants and the roles of women in medieval Chinese religions, Choo’s work on burial divination, Ye Wa’s archaeological research of Tang tombs with broad reference to epitaph texts, and Zhao Zhenhua’s and Wang Huakun’s studies of epitaph workshops and the funerary industry.[46] However, as far as I am aware, there is no comprehensive research on death ritual using a large database of epitaph inscriptions, which contain much relevant information on death ritual, ranging from descriptions of recalling the soul, temporarily storing coffins, mourning, and offering sacrifices to accounts of divining auspicious burial dates, selecting favorable burial sites, and burying the dead. Even though many epitaph texts only briefly record seemingly random aspects of death ritual, by accumulating anecdotes from a large collection of epitaphs, one can reconstruct in the aggregate a broad overview of Tang death ritual practice, delving into details not usually recorded in either ritual texts or Tang literature.

Methodologically, I examine the big picture of Tang-era death ritual practice and look for general patterns rather than focusing on individual examples. Moreover, I collect and categorize my data according to different regions and time periods, employ quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze the data, and illustrate patterns or variations by Excel graphs and GIS

41 See Tackett, “The Transformation of Medieval Chinese Elites,” 13, n. 21.
42 Shi, “My Tomb Will Be Opened in Eight Hundred Years,” 237, 243.
43 For the quotation, see Tackett, “The Transformation of Medieval Chinese Elites,” 12; and for in-depth exploration of the religious role of tomb epitaphs, see Davis, “Potent Stone,” 68–75.
44 See Shi, “My Tomb Will Be Opened in Eight Hundred Years,” 234–235.
45 Nicolas Tackett has pointed this out in his 2006 dissertation; see “The Transformation of Medieval Chinese Elites,” 15–16.
46 See Tackett, “The Transformation of Medieval Chinese Elites”; Yao, “Until Death Do Us Unite”; Choo, “Historicized Ritual and Ritualized History” and “Shall We Profane the Service of the Dead?”; Pang, “Familial Identity and ‘Buddhist Nuns’ in Tang China”; Ye Wa, “Mortuary Practice in Medieval China”; Zhao Zhenhua, “Tang dai shigong muzhi he shigong shengya”; Wang Huakun, “Tang dai Luoyang de zhiye muzhi zhuangao ren.”

maps. Particularly worth noting is that for chapter 2 I have compiled a large database of nearly five thousand clearly recorded burial dates from epitaphs dating to the Tang dynasty, in addition to another database of over six hundred burial dates from epitaphs dating to the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1912) dynasties. For each of the epitaphs, my databases also capture other relevant information, such as the person's name and gender, date and place of death, and the type of burial (single or joint). Furthermore, I convert the burial dates into the corresponding stem-branch days in the sexagenary cycle. Additionally, chapters 3 and 4 also employ large databases culling relevant information from several thousand epitaphs and tomb excavation reports to examine patterns in grave siting and burial objects, respectively, and both observe geographic and temporal variations.

0.4. Outline of the Chapters

The dissertation is organized into four chapters, along with an introduction and a conclusion.

Chapter 1 consists of a composite reconstruction of Tang death ritual practice from the moment of death to the completion of a funerary ritual program. It begins with an overview of the comprehensive death ritual process as prescribed in official ritual texts. Next, it discusses in more detail certain specific steps, paying particular attention to how actual ritual practice as recorded in tomb epitaphs diverged from ritual prescriptions. This chapter allows us to gain a more refined understanding of the tension between ritual prescriptions and actual practice and also reveals some of the innovations in practice that accompanied the popularization of Buddhism in China. Ultimately, this chapter provides insights into what concerns and procedures actually existed with regard to death ritual.

Chapter 2 discusses burial date divination. Even though Tang ritual texts say little about how date divination was conducted, there are many references to efforts to determine ritually auspicious burial dates. For example, epitaphs often tell us that "a good time was obtained by divination" 卜擇良辰.[47] Many inscriptions also record that the deceased's family had to resort to a temporary burial while waiting for months or even years to attain a favorable date for permanent burial. The bulk of this chapter discusses patterns in burial dates. As it turns out, epitaphs almost without exception record precise dates of death and burial, thus providing a great opportunity for quantitative analysis. The primary sources for this chapter are nearly five thousand Tang epitaphs (as well as a good number of post-Tang epitaphs for comparison). As my research shows, out of the sixty stem-branch dates, a small number of them appear strikingly popular as burial dates, and a number of others were rarely, if ever, used. These patterns remained stable across the vast Tang empire and even lasted to a great degree into late imperial China. The chapter concludes by speculating on how we might account for this remarkable standardization of burial dates.

Chapter 3 also examines death ritual through the lens of several thousand epitaphs, but it shifts the focus from time (covered in chapter 2) to space. It discusses how individual tombs were deliberately positioned inside a cemetery (part I), and how burial space surrounding grave sites was described and conceptualized (part II). Once again, we can recognize certain features shared across the empire: first, family members of multiple generations were typically buried

47 MZH 2383.

together; second, within a family cemetery, tombs were organized in part according to generation and seniority; third, a geomantic "Five Surname" system played a role in the selection of specific locations and orientations of individual tombs; and fourth, when describing the space surrounding a burial site, it was not uncommon for epitaphs empire-wide to identify specific features in the four cardinal directions. The discussion in part II is the one section of the dissertation that goes beyond the issue of practice in order to broach the question of conceptualization; specifically, how people thought of or imagined the space surrounding a graveyard or tomb. What is striking is that despite similarities across multiple regions in the ritual facade (concerning how tombs were clustered together and organized within a cemetery), we can identify very different beliefs about how tombs properly fit into the surrounding landscape, beliefs that can be tied in part to aspects of the Tang-Song Transition.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus to the material remains discovered in tombs by archaeologists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It includes a comprehensive survey of tombs empire-wide containing nine distinctive types of burial objects. For each type of object, I discuss its characteristics, its hypothesized meaning and function, change in the frequency of its appearance in tombs over time, and most importantly its geographic distribution. Unlike the remarkable degree of death ritual standardization revealed in the previous two chapters, an analysis of grave goods shows much greater temporal and regional variation.

Finally, in the conclusion, I attempt to answer two important questions on the basis of my empirical study: First, what accounted for ritual standardization in Tang China? Second, why were some aspects of death ritual homogeneous and stable over time, whereas others were regionally diverse and experienced temporal change?

Chapter 1

A Reconstruction of Death Ritual Practice in the Tang

I. Introduction

This chapter asks two essential questions: How did a Tang-era elite family typically take care of a loved one after he or she passed away? And how were rituals outlined in prescriptive texts carried out in actual practice? In a step-by-step manner, it attempts to reconstruct the rituals that Tang elite families practiced for their deceased, which also provides context for subsequent chapters. Rather than focusing on temporal and regional variations, this chapter places more emphasis on synthesizing various scattered bits of information—culled from a wide variety of sources—to come up with a composite overview of the sequence of death rituals carried out by Tang-era elites, a sequence that I treat as a sort of "ideal type." In other words, even though my reconstructed death ritual program might have applied to Tang elites in general, no single family necessarily adhered rigorously to all elements of the program. Additionally, due to the sparse source material, I have inevitably missed minor components of death ritual practice that are not discussed in extant sources. Nevertheless, I hope that this reconstruction will shed some light on what really happened following a person's death, thereby setting the foundation for a much more detailed examination in later chapters of both regional and temporal commonalities and variations in death ritual practice.

The starting point of my reconstruction is the ritual program that is outlined in the *Da Tang kaiyuan li* 大唐開元禮 (Rites of the Kaiyuan era of the Great Tang; hereafter cited as the *Kaiyuan Rites*) of 741. This court-sponsored compilation is by its nature prescriptive, presenting an official, standard, or otherwise idealized vision of how people ought to practice mortuary rituals. In a lengthy volume of 150 chapters, it draws on a number of classical texts such as the *Yili* 儀禮 (Observances and rituals), *Zhouli* 周禮 (Rituals of Zhou), and *Liji* 禮記 (Records of rituals) to produce a synthesis of proper ritual practice, becoming in later dynasties a standard reference for officials.[1] The *Kaiyuan Rites* treats five types of rituals: *jili* 吉禮 (rites for propitious events), *binli* 賓禮 (guest rites), *junli* 軍禮 (military rites), *jiali* 嘉禮 (congratulatory rites), and *xiongli* 凶禮 (rites for inauspicious events).[2] The text in the "*xiongli*" section describes a total of sixty-six steps in the mortuary program, starting with the death of a loved one, and ending with postburial sacrifices. Besides the *Kaiyuan Rites*, I have consulted other prescriptive

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1 The *Kaiyuan Rites* was compiled under the supervision of Xiao Song 蕭嵩 (d. 749) between 726 and 732, submitted to the throne in 732, and made public in 741. Unfortunately, very few editions of the *Kaiyuan Rites* have survived, among which, the most widely used edition is the "gongshantang" 公善堂 edition (1886) inscribed by the late-Qing official and publisher Hong Rukui 洪汝奎 (1824–1886), which was republished in 2000. The "gongshantang" edition is what I have used. For a general introduction to the various editions of the *Kaiyuan Rites*, see Zhao Jin, "Tang ling fuyuan suoju shiliao yanzheng," 122–124. For a list of all the existing editions, see Zhang Wenchang, *Tang dai lidian de bianzuan yu chuancheng*, 103, 106. For research on the "gongshantang" edition, see Zhao Yonglei, "Hong Rukui gongshantang kanben *Da Tang kaiyuan li* biankan kao." For studies of the *Kaiyuan Rites*, see Moore, "The Ceremony of Gratitude," 199; Zhu Weizhen, *Zhu Weizhen shixue shi lunji*, 210–211; McMullen, "Bureaucrats and Cosmology"; Wu Liyu, "Yingzao shengshi"; Liu Anzhi, "Guanyu *Da Tang kaiyuan li* de xingzhi ji xingyong wenti."

2 The "Five Rites" (*wuli* 五禮) are first discussed in the *Zhouli*, and they were regarded as the essential components of a comprehensive ritual regulation system by the state throughout Chinese history. See Shih, "The New Idea of Ritual Vessels in the Early Ming Dynasty," 123; Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 827.

texts, including classical ritual texts of earlier times that established some of the basic principles of ritual practice in traditional China, such as the *Liji* and the *Zhouli*. In addition, to get a sense of ritual practice by court elites, I have turned to standard historical records and institutional histories such as the *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Old history of the Tang), *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (New history of the Tang), *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Essential documents of the Tang), and *Tongdian* 通典 (Comprehensive statutes of the Tang)— the last of which incorporates a major part of the *Kaiyuan Rites* with some variations.[3]

Whereas it is common among historians of ritual to limit themselves largely to ritual texts, the thrust of this chapter is to reconstruct actual practice and explore how it strayed from prescribed norms. Even among educated elites, mortuary culture did not accord with the prescriptions in ritual texts. But reconstructing actual practice is not easy. One approach is to make use of tomb epitaphs, which occasionally allude to one or more elements of the death ritual or burial. Certainly, epitaphs are rich in exaggerations and formulaic expressions, but it is safe to say that descriptions of rituals in epitaph texts get one closer to actual practice than do ritual texts. Most interesting for understanding discrepancies between prescribed rituals and practiced rituals are those mentioned in epitaphs that show up nowhere in ritual texts.

This chapter also gleans information from other source material, including imperial edicts and official memorials; ghost stories and other tales of the strange taken from the late-tenth-century collection *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive records of the Taiping [Xingguo] era); relevant accounts of death rituals in the eighth-century miscellany *Fengshi wenjian ji* 封氏聞見記 (Record of things seen and heard by Mr. Feng); and archaeological data culled from excavation reports of Tang-era tombs.[4] In order to contextualize Tang mortuary culture, I will begin with a brief introduction to beliefs regarding the nature of the afterlife, before turning to a step-by-step overview of the ritual program and a discussion of how prescribed rituals contrasted with actual practice. In addition, I will take into account what epitaphs focus on, that is, what practices are most talked about.

II. The Nature of the Afterlife

1. The Soul's Duality and Its Migration after Death

Chinese notions of the afterlife were intimately tied to ideas about the nature of the soul.[5] A soul was believed to be composed of two parts, called *hun* 魂 and *po* 魄, reflecting a

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3 The *Tongdian* was compiled by Du You 杜佑 (735–812) and completed in 801. According to Ye Wa's concise summary, "the section entitled 'Mortuary (or inauspicious) Rites, history' (*Xiongli* 兇禮, *yange* 沿革) comprises 27 *juan* 卷 (chapter) and includes 221 entries on mortuary practice from the Zhou through the Tang dynasties" ("Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 280). Since the *Tongdian* includes the *Kaiyuan Rites* (but with variations), some scholars use a *Tongdian* edition when discussing the *Kaiyuan Rites*.

4 The *Taiping guangji* was commissioned by the Northern Song (960–1127) court and completed in 978. The *Fengshi wenjian ji* was completed in 800 by Feng Yan 封演 (who obtained the *jinshi* 進士, the highest degree in the imperial examination, in 756).

5 Many scholars have expressed similar ideas. For instance, the preface to *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern* China, a collection of scholarship discussing Chinese death ritual and exploring Chinese cultural identity, as mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, argues that "an underlying structure is evident in Chinese funeral ritual; this structure is reflected in rites associated with settling the soul after death." See Watson and Rawski, *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern* China, x.

traditional Chinese dualistic conception that dates back at least to the mid-sixth century BCE.[6] According to the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (The traditions of Zuo),[7] "the initial form of a person is called *po*. Once the *po* is born, the *yang* [as opposed to *yin*] element is called *hun*" 人生始化曰魄，既生魄，陽曰魂.[8] The *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explaining depictions of reality and analyzing graphs of words; 121 CE), the earliest known comprehensive dictionary of Chinese characters, includes both *hun* and *po* in the category of "ghosts" (*gui* 鬼), but points out their fundamental difference: "*hun* is the *yang qi*" 魂，陽氣也 and "*po* is the *yin* spirit" 魄，陰神也.[9] The tenth-century text *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Perused by the emperor in the Taiping era; 976–984) restates this point: "the refined *qi* of a person is called *hun*, and the bodily form of a person is called *po*" 人之精氣曰魂，形體謂之魄.[10]

A survey of a large body of epitaphs confirms that the *po* was believed to emerge at the initial stage of development of the physical body and to be unable to exist without the physical body. Thus, *po* is sometimes used as a metonym for the physical body. For instance, a certain Ms. Wang's epitaph asserts: "Although the *po* has dissipated to the highest heaven, [the deceased's] name will be known through a myriad of ages" 雖九霄而魄散，終萬古而名顯.[11] By contrast, the *hun* soul was believed to remain intact when one died, as many epitaphs describe the *hun* as an entity that could "fly" (*fei* 飛), "rove about" (*you* 遊), or "return" (*gui* 歸). I will discuss a death ritual later, "calling back the *hun*," which sought to lure the *hun* soul to its proper tomb (most commonly in the family cemetery) and prevent it from wandering around. The prevalence of this ritual reflected the fundamental belief in the *hun*'s intact and free-floating nature.

Where ought the *hun* soul to go after a person died? Epitaphs suggest that the soul's destination was (ideally) a grave pit or a graveyard. Princess Li Hua's epitaph indicates that the *hun* stayed inside the grave pit: "The *hun* will return to the bottom of the tomb, and the *po* will gradually retract its form" 魂歸壟底，魄逐形收.[12] A Mr. Li's epitaph refers to the tomb as the "residence" for his *hun*: "The *hun* returns to the grave residence, and the *po* disperses to the azure sky" 魂歸壙宅，魄散青天.[13] And a lady Feng's epitaph suggests that the entire graveyard was where the *hun* dwelled: "In this graveyard overgrown with weeds, [surrounded by] dense

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6 For a detailed discussion of the origin and notions of the *hun* and *po* duality, see Yu, "'O Soul, Come Back!,'" 369–378.
7 The *Zuozhuan* can also be translated as "Zuo's commentary on the *Chunqiu* 春秋 [Spring and autumn annals]," as it first appears as *Zuoshi chunqiu* 左氏春秋 and became abbreviated to *Zuozhuan* later. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 402, 679–680. Endymion P. Wilkinson states: "Authorship of the *Zuozhuan* was attributed by Sima Qian 司馬遷 to a contemporary of Confucius, a blind scribe at the court of Lu named Zuo Qiuming 左丘明 (or Zuoqiu Ming). Modern scholarship generally dates its final compilation to the mid-to-late fourth century BCE and assumes (as did Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 and others) that it was not the work of Zuo Qiuming, but of several hands. In other words, the *Zuozhuan* is not a contemporary chronicle of the years 722–748 [BCE], but was composed at least a century later" (*Chinese History*, 679).
8 Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, 1292.
9 SWJZ 435.
10 Li Fang, *Taiping yulan* 3:2486.
11 MZH 721. Many epitaph texts express the same idea that one's *po* dissipates. For instance, see MZH 1427, 1630, 1922, 2040, 2297; MZHX 347, 399, 487, 834, 887; DTXS 696–698, 396–397.
12 DTXS 378–379.
13 MZH 2040.

clusters of pine and cypress trees, the lady having passed away, and her *hun* will seek refuge within" 蕪城之原，松柏叢叢, 夫人逝矣，魂藏其中.[14]

2. The Soul of the Deceased: Benevolent or Malicious?

Not only did one's *hun* soul remain intact after death, but apparently it was aware of and depended on the care that the family offered. When the deceased received care, the soul bestowed blessings on the family and offspring as a benevolent ancestor. It is for this reason that Mr. Li's epitaph draws a direct connection between the condition of the tomb and the prosperity of the descendants: "May the tomb lie in peace here for a myriad of ages; may the descendants find early honors and offices" 塋安此處，萬代千秋，後代子孫，早加榮禄.[15] Moreover, the *hun* soul still had needs similar to those of a living human being. The popularity of the ritual practice of afterlife marriage (*minghun* 冥婚) during the Tang can be seen as a manifestation of such a strong belief in the continuities between this world and the next.[16] As James L. Watson observes, "for most Chinese, it was patrilineal kinship that survived beyond death"; thus, "ancestor worship was the concrete expression of this preoccupation with the patriline."[17]

But the *hun* soul's long-term survival and its enduring consciousness acted as a double-edged sword. When a family failed to care for the *hun* and let it wander, it could turn into a haunting ghost and cause disaster not only to the family but also to the entire community. Terry Kleeman calls these troubled souls the "unquiet dead," and Paul Cohen calls them "vengeful souls."[18] What caused a soul to wander? Numerous examples from epitaphs point toward one main cause: the lack of a body often due to an unexpected death. When a person died due to sudden illness or drowning during a trip, or on the battlefield, or in the turmoil of warfare, the corpse was often missing and unavailable to the family. Hence the deceased's soul could not enjoy the food that the family otherwise would have provided it through the various sacrificial rituals. Additionally, because patrilineal kinship ties linked the deceased to his or her family, the continuity of the patriline after death necessitated that the deceased be buried within the family cemetery; otherwise the discontented (or lonely) soul of the dead could return to haunt the family. A Ms. Li died at an inn while traveling; her epitaph records that she was interred temporarily nearby while preparations were made for her to be moved to her family cemetery. The author of the epitaph recorded the family's concern about this nonideal burial away from home, and seemingly to justify this temporary burial, he wrote in the very end: "With tears I write this to pacify the *hun* in the netherworld. If the *hun* is sentient, it will witness my sincerity" 銜涕書此，用安幽魂，魂而有知，鑒我誠意.[19] Epitaphs also provide examples of hungry and lonely souls that started to wander and become malicious. The epitaph of Mr. Shi Yunkan describes the aftermath of his death from unexpected illness when he was away from home. His soul became a

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14 MZHX 1024–1025.
15 MZHX 1040–1041.
16 On afterlife marriage during the Tang, see de Pee, "Till Death Do Us Unite"; Yao, "Until Death Do Us Unite." Note that the practice of afterlife marriage was not a Tang-era invention, for it can be traced back to at least the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1050–235 BCE) (see Yao, "Until Death Do Us Unite," 208).
17 Watson, "The Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites," 8.
18 Kleeman, "Licentious Cults and Bloody Victuals," 195; Cohen, *Tales of Vengeful Souls*, vii. *Tales of Vengeful Souls* is a translation of the *Yuanhun zhi* 冤魂志, a collection of avenging ghost stories by Yan Zhitui (531–after 591).
19 MZH 1916.

wandering ghost because it was not looked after by the family: "His ghost still looks for food; communicating [with the family] via dreams, he asks that his *hun* soul be returned [to the family cemetery]. He has long sojourned [as a ghost] in a foreign place; he has left word of his wish to return [home] for burial" 鬼猶求食，託夢歸魂。久客異鄉，遺言返葬.[20] A poem from a Dunhuang scroll (P.3211)—in the context of a criticism of popular practices tied to the "seven-seven fasting" (which will be discussed later in the chapter)—reveals what must have been a commonly held belief: "the ghost [of the deceased] was temporarily permitted to come eat [food offerings], saying forever farewell to the plates once used in life by [consuming and] leaving no trace of the [sacrificial] food and wine" 暫施鬼來吃，永別生時盤，酒食無蹤跡.[21]

Not surprisingly given these beliefs, when a person died during a trip away from his or her family, the surviving family members typically made a great effort to transfer the dead back to the family cemetery. From a certain Mr. Yang's epitaph, we know that he passed away in Jun Zhou 均州 (in today's Hunan Province) during a trip in 785. His coffin was transferred back to his family cemetery in Luoyang eleven years later by means of what must have been a fairly elaborate funerary procession, with "cries of mourning that shook the carriage curtains for a thousand *li*" 哀號千里，來讙裳帷.[22] Once the deceased was at the family cemetery in Luoyang, the family's keen wish was carved into the epitaph stone: "*Hun* soul, *hun* soul, please stay in the hometown!" 魂兮魂兮留此鄉！[23]

III. The Death Ritual Program

This section explores in detail some of the most significant steps in the death ritual program. For a comprehensive (but idealized) overview of the complete death ritual program, one can turn to the "rites for inauspicious events" section in the *Kaiyuan Rites*.[24] This prescriptive text reflects the state's perspective, imagining different rituals to be performed according to the deceased's official bureaucratic rank.[25] The dead are classified into four groups: members of the imperial family (*juan* 卷 [chapter] 135–137), officials of "rank 3 and higher" (*juan* 138–141), officials of "ranks 4 and 5" (*juan* 142–145), and officials of "rank 6 and lower" (*juan* 146–149). People without rank (i.e., the vast majority of the population) are not addressed. If one compares the three sets of prescriptions for officials—that is, excluding members of the imperial family—one finds that they all have the same basic death ritual program, with only slight variations. The entire death ritual program can be divided into four series of steps. The first

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20 DTXS 14–15.
21 Chen Shangjun, *Quan Tang shi bubian*, 705.
22 The *li* 里 is a traditional Chinese measuring unit for distance and area. According to Endymion P. Wilkinson, "In British and American writing on China it has long been the custom to refer to the *li* as 1/3 of a mile (1/2 km)." See Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 612.
23 MZH 1887.
24 See *juan* 131–150 of the *Kaiyuan Rites* (DTKYL 131–150:615–724).
25 As Ye Wa aptly points out, regulating funerary rites based on one's status was not a Tang-era invention; it actually began in the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220). See Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 281–282, nn. 6–7. Additionally, the Tang-era ritual and legal text titled *Sangzang ling* 喪葬令 (Tang regulations on funeral and burial) also records regulations on death rituals based on official rank. For a study of the *Sangzang ling*, see Wu Liyu, "Guanyu Tang *Sangzang ling* fuyuan de zai jiantao."

series consists of rites dealing with the preparation of the body, divination of burial sites and dates, and various sacrificial offerings performed by the family and guests:[26]

1. *Chuzhong* 初終: death
2. *Fu* 復: recalling [the *hun* soul]
3. *Shechuang* 設牀: setting up the bed for the corpse
4. *Dian* 奠: offering sacrifice to the deceased [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]
5. *Muyu* 沐浴: bathing the deceased[27]
6. *Xi* 襲: dressing the deceased
7. *Han* 含: filling the mouth [i.e., placing valuables in the mouth of the deceased]
8. *Fuque* 赴闕: reporting to the court [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]
9. *Chi shi diao* 敕使吊: imperial envoy conveys condolences [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]

   Dian 奠: offering sacrifice to the deceased [rank 6 and lower only]
10. *Ming* 銘: writing the name of the deceased on a funerary banner
11. *Chong* 重: carving a piece of wood [to receive sacrifice on behalf of the deceased]
12. *Chen xiaolian yi* 陳小斂衣: setting out the deceased's funerary clothes [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]
13. *Dian* 奠: offering sacrifice to the deceased [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]
14. *Xiaolian* 小斂: "small enclosure" [i.e., dressing the deceased]
15. *Lianfa* 斂發: arranging the hair [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]
16. *Dian* 奠: offering sacrifice to the deceased
17. *Chen dalian yi* 陳大斂衣: setting out the deceased's funerary clothes [before encoffinment] [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]
18. *Dian* 奠: offering sacrifice to the deceased [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]
19. *Dalian* 大斂: "great enclosure" [i.e., encoffinment]
20. *Dian* 奠: offering sacrifice to the deceased [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]
21. *Luci* 廬次: chief mourners dwell at the mourning huts
22. *Chengfu* 成服: family members put on mourning clothing
23. *Zhaoxi ku dian* 朝夕哭奠: morning and evening wailing and offering sacrifice to the deceased
24. *Bindiao* 賓弔: guests express condolences
25. *Qin'gu ku* 親故哭: relatives and friends wail
26. *Cishi ku* 刺史哭: prefect wails [rank 3 and higher only]

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26 For rank 3 and higher, see DTKYL 138:654–662; for ranks 4 and 5, see DTKYL 142:677–686; and for rank 6 and lower, see DTKYL 146:700–707.

27 Next to "*muyu*" is a note stating that the following steps from "*muyu*" (step 5) to "*chong*" (step 11) as a set of rituals can "take place simultaneously" 同時而興. For rank 3 and higher, see DTKYL 138:655; for ranks 4 and 5, see DTKYL 142:678; and for rank 6 and lower, see DTKYL 146:701.

Zhouxian guanzhang diao 州縣官長弔: chief officials of the prefecture and county offer condolences [ranks 4 and 5 only]

Zhouxian diao 州縣弔: officials and clerks of the prefecture and county offer condolences [rank 6 and lower only]

27. *Cishi qianshi diao* 刺史遣使弔: prefect sends an envoy to offer condolences [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]

    Zhouxian shi diao 州縣使弔: offices of the prefecture and county send envoys to offer condolences [rank 6 and lower only]

28. *Qin'gu qianshi zhi fu* 親故遣使致賻: for the relatives and friends [of the imperial family], the court sends messengers to give money for the funeral [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]
29. *Yindian* 殷奠: great sacrifice to the deceased (twice monthly on the full and new moons) [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]
30. *Bu zhaizhao* 卜宅兆: divination of the burial site by plastromancy[28] [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]

    Shi zhaizhao 筮宅兆: divination of the burial site by achillomancy [rank 6 and lower only]

31. *Bu zangri* 卜葬日: divination of the burial date by plastromancy [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]

    Shi zangri 筮葬日: divination of the burial date by achillomancy [rank 6 and lower only]

32. *Qibin* 啟殯: getting the coffin ready [for the funerary procession]
33. *Zengshi* 贈謚: [the court] bestows the deceased with a posthumous name [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]
34. *Qinbin zhidian* 親賓致奠: relatives and guest offer sacrifice to the deceased [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]

The second series is titled "getting ready for the burial" (*jiangzang* 將葬) in the *Kaiyuan Rites*,[29] including seventeen ritual steps:

35. *Chen chewei* 陳車位: placing the chariots at their proper positions[30]

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28 As Christian de Pee and many other scholars have pointed out, divination by means of tortoise shells was called "plastromancy" (*bu* 卜), and the manipulation of milfoil stalks was called "achillomancy" (*shi* 筮). See de Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 145. The detailed explanation of this ritual step in the *Kaiyuan Rites* tells us that for elites of rank 3 and higher, both plastromantic masters (*bushi* 卜師) and achillomantic masters (*shishi* 筮師) were present to use both means to perform the divination (DTKYL 138:660–661), while for elites of ranks 4 and 5, only plastromancy was used (DTKYL 142:684–685).

29 For elites of rank 3 and higher, see DTKYL 139:663–666; for elites of ranks 4 and 5, see DTKYL 143:687–690; and for elites of rank 6 and lower, see DTKYL 147:707–710.

30 The elaborate explanation of this ritual step tells us that while the chariots are being placed, "the person in charge of the death ritual [also] in advance at the lodge [where people in the procession stay at night before reaching the grave site] sets up a propitious canopy and an inauspicious canopy. The inauspicious canopy is set up in the west, while the propitious canopy is set up in the east, and both canopies face south. [The person in charge of the death ritual] places the spirit seat [i.e., alter] inside the propitious canopy in a normal way" 掌事者預於宿所張吉凶帷幕。凶帷在西，吉帷在東，俱南向。設靈座於吉帷下如常式. DTKYL 139:664. For elites of rank 3 and higher, see DTKYL 139:664; for elites of ranks 4 and 5, see DTKYL 143:687; and for elites of rank 6 and lower, see DTKYL 147:708.

36. *Chen qiyong* 陳器用: setting out the funerary objects

37. *Jinyin* 進引: inviting in the people handling the funerary procession

38. *Yinchun* 引輴: guiding out the *chun* hearse that carries the coffin [rank 3 and higher only][31]

Jujiu 舉柩: lifting the coffin [ranks 4 and 5 and rank 6 and lower only]

39. *Chun zai tingwei* 輴在庭位: bringing the *chun* hearse [with the coffin] to the mourning hall [rank 3 and higher only]

Jiu zai tingwei 柩在庭位: bringing the coffin to the mourning hall [ranks 4 and 5 and rank 6 and lower only]

40. *Zudian* 祖奠: offering sacrifice to the ancestors

41. *Chun chu shengche* 輴出升車: taking the *chun* 輴 hearse out and moving [the coffin] from the *chun* onto the [*er* 轜] hearse [rank 3 and higher only]

Jiu chu shengche 柩出升車: taking the coffin out and moving it onto the [*er* 轜] hearse [ranks 4 and 5 and rank 6 and lower only]

42. *Qiandian* 遣奠: performing the departure sacrifice to the ancestors

43. *Qianche* 遣車: departure of the procession of chariots

44. *Qixing xu* 器行序: grouping burial objects into categories to be transported by different chariots

45. *Zhuxiao cong jiuche xu* 諸孝從柩車序: family members follow the hearse in proper order

46. *Guomen wai qinbin gui* 郭門外親賓歸: relatives and guests return [to their own homes] upon reaching the outer gate of the town [or city]

47. *Zhuxiao chengche* 諸孝乘車: family members get into the chariots

48. *Xiuzhi* 宿止: stopping at a lodge for the night[32]

49. *Xiuchu ku wei* 宿處哭位: family members wail at the lodge, with each in their proper position

50. *Xingci dian* 行次奠: offering sacrifice before departing for the tomb

51. *Qinbin zhifeng* 親賓致賵: relatives and guests offer gifts

The third series is titled "entering the graveyard and stopping" 墓上進止 in the *Kaiyuan Rites*,[33] covering rituals that took place at the grave site:

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31 According to the *Kaiyuan Rites*, a *chun* 輴 was a special type of hearse used only by elites ranking 3 or higher, for whom the coffin was moved to the *chun* hearse at steps 38 and 39, then to the *er* 轜 hearse at step 41, and finally back to the *chun* hearse that entered the tomb at step 56. In other words, the *chun* hearse was reserved as a privilege for high-ranking elites, while for the other elites the coffin was carried by an *er* hearse all the way. See DTKYL 139:664, 665, and 667 for the descriptions of *chun* for the various ritual steps. Besides the *chun* and *er* hearses, ritual texts also mention a *guanche* 棺車 (hearse for the inner coffin), *jiuche* 柩車 (hearse for the outer coffin), and *lingche* 靈車 (hearse for the [deceased's] spirit). For the convenience of writing, I translate all of them as "hearse." For details on various types of hearses, see Deng Weiguang, "Tang ren sangzang yongche xiaokao."

32 For this ritual step, the *Kaiyuan Rites* instructs that "the hearse arrives, and enters the inauspicious canopy" 柩車到，入凶帷. Additionally, we have learned earlier under the "*chen chewei*" (step 35) that there are two canopies at the lodge, namely, the propitious and inauspicious canopies, and the altar is set up inside the propitious one. Therefore, now we have a clearer picture of the usage of each canopy.

52. *Yingci* 塋次: [the person in charge of the death ritual first] arrives at the grave site [one night before the funerary procession does]

53. *Daomu* 到墓: [in the following day the funerary procession] arrives at the grave site

54. *Chen mingqi* 陳明器: displaying burial objects

55. *Xiajiu ku xu* 下柩哭序: laying down the coffin, with family members wailing in proper order

56. *Rumu* 入墓: entering the tomb

57. *Muzhong zhiqi xu* 墓中置器序: placing burial objects in proper positions inside the tomb

58. *Yankuang* 掩壙: sealing the tomb

59. *Ji houtu* 祭后土: offering sacrifice to the *houtu* (earth god)

60. *Fanku* 反哭: returning and wailing

61. *Yuji* 虞祭: performing the *yu* sacrifice

The fourth series spans the period from the postburial *yu* sacrifice to the rituals conducted at the ancestral temple.[34]

62. *Zuku ji* 卒哭祭: completion of the wailing sacrifice

63. *Xiaoxiang ji* 小祥祭: performing the sacrifice following one year of mourning

64. *Daxiang ji* 大祥祭: performing the sacrifice following two years of mourning

65. *Danji* 禫祭: performing the sacrifice at the completion of mourning [taking off the mourning clothes]

66. *Fumiao* 祔廟: performing a sacrifice at the ancestral hall [rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only]

Fuji 祔祭: performing a sacrifice before the ancestral altars at home[35] [rank 6 and lower]

In addition to this sequence of sixty-six death ritual steps,[36] the *Kaiyuan Rites* specifies an additional series of seventeen ritual steps for all elites to follow in case of a reburial (*gaizang* 改葬):[37]

1. *Buzhai* 卜宅: divining the burial site by plastromancy

2. *Qiqing* 啟請: requesting permission to open [the tomb]

3. *Kaifen* 開墳: opening the tomb

4. *Jujiu* 舉柩: lifting the coffin [out of the tomb]

5. *Dian* 奠: offering sacrifice to the deceased

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33 For elites of rank 3 and higher, see DTKYL 139:666–669; for elites of ranks 4 and 5, see DTKYL 143:690–692; and for elites of rank 6 and lower, see DTKYL 147:710–712.
34 For elites of rank 3 and higher, see DTKYL 140:669–673; for elites of ranks 4 and 5, see DTKYL 144:693–696; and for elites of rank 6 and lower, see DTKYL 148:713–716.
35 Ancestral altars were set in the bed chamber; see DTKYL 148:715.
36 Note that a total of sixty-six ritual steps are prescribed for elites of ranks 4 and 5 and higher. For elites of rank 6 and lower, 12 steps are omitted, hence the total number is 54.
37 For elites of rank 3 and higher, see DTKYL 141:674–677; for elites of ranks 4 and 5, see DTKYL 145:697–700; and for elites of rank 6 and lower, see DTKYL 149:717–720.

6. *Sheng jiuche* 升柩車: lifting the coffin onto the hearse

7. *Lian* 殮: dressing the deceased

8. *Dian* 奠: offering sacrifice to the deceased

9. *Sheling* 設靈筵: setting up an altar and offering sacrifices

10. *Jinyin* 進引: inviting in the people handling the funerary procession and having both hearses and funerary objects ready for the procession[38]

11. *Gaoqian* 告遷: announcing the move [at the altar]

12. *Ku jiuche wei* 哭柩車位: family members wail at their proper positions in relation to the hearse

13. *She qiandian* 設遣奠: performing the departure sacrifice to the ancestors

14. *Erche fa* 輀車發: departure of the *er* hearse

15. *Xiuzhi* 宿止: stopping at a lodge for the night

16. *Daomu* 到墓: arriving at the [new] tomb

17. *Yuji* 虞祭: performing the *yu* sacrifice

From this overview, one is struck by the sheer number of prescribed steps in the ritual process. In fact, the ritual program is even more complex than suggested by the enumerated list here because, for each step, the *Kaiyuan Rites* elaborates in some detail. For instance, under the heading for "death" (step 1), the *Kaiyuan Rites* provides details on initial actions around the moment of death, including various efforts to save the sick person's life, the filial behavior of children tasting bitter medicines before feeding the sick parent, cleaning the residence, the wails of family members, the appropriate positions of different relatives (in relation to the location of the deceased's body), family members changing into funerary clothes, the fasting, and so forth.[39] One is also struck by the careful separation of the populace by bureaucratic rank. Were these ritual prescriptions adhered to in any meaningful way? And to what extent was the social hierarchy based on official bureaucratic rank reflected in actual funerary practice? Ye Wa, in her detailed study of excavated Tang-era tombs from the Xingyuan cemetery, proposes that the Tang court was probably mostly concerned with enforcing sumptuary rules concerning public portions of the death ritual.[40] In other words, funerary procession and display might have been subject to state regulations, whereas other death ritual practices may have strayed significantly from court prescriptions. In order to examine the degree to which ritual prescriptions were actually followed, I turn now to what epitaphs have to say about the mortuary practices of individual families. I focus on those elements of the mortuary culture that garnered the most attention in the texts of the epitaphs.

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38 Even though this step is titled the same as step 37 (*jinyin*) in the *Kaiyuan Rite*'s regular funerary program, this one contains more activities, hence my different interpretation here. See DTKYL 149:718.

39 For elites of rank 3 and higher, see DTKYL 138:654; for elites of ranks 4 and 5, see DTKYL 142:677–678; and for elites of rank 6 and lower, see DTKYL 145:700–701.

40 Ye Wa argues: "The state was more concerned with items used in public ritual—those that would have a visual impact and convey meanings in public. These were the objects of regulation by the court. This is seen clearly in imperial edicts and official memorials." To support her argument, Ye Wa cites a memorial condemning extravagant funeral processions and excessive display of figurines during the procession by high-status elites; see "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 296–298.

1. Death

The *Kaiyuan Rites* calls death *chuzhong* 初終 (lit., initial ending), but there surely were many other ways to denote a person's death. In a hierarchical society, everything expresses status, even death. When death was discussed in ritual texts, different appellations and euphemisms were used in accordance with official ranking. According to the *Xin Tang shu*, when officials of rank 3 or higher died, the word *hong* 薨 was used. The next level was *zu* 卒, which applied to those ranking 5 or higher. For the remainder of the population, including non-office-holders, death was known as *si* 死.[41] In epitaphs, however, people followed this convention only to a limited extent. A broad survey of thousands of Tang-era epitaphs demonstrates that, although *hong* was mostly applied to high-ranking officials, not all high-ranking official deaths were labeled *hong*. The terms *zu* or *zhong* 終 were commonly used as well. In fact, *zhong* was the most popular word to denote death, followed by *mo* 歿. Moreover, some epitaphs use euphemisms for death, such as *qingbei* 傾背 (bending one's back), *buxing* 不幸 (experiencing misfortune), and *guiquan* 歸全 (returning to the whole). For Buddhists, *guihua* 歸化 (returning to primordial transformation) was the term used to describe death. *Si* does not appear in epitaph writings probably because it sounds too blunt and disrespectful.

Interestingly, a good number of epitaphs record that the deceased passed away in Buddhist monastery (i.e., *sengshe* 僧舍, *si* 寺, or *miao* 廟). Some people were intentionally moved to monasteries in times of illness. For instance, a certain Mr. Lu's epitaph records that his family moved him when he was seriously ill to the Longxing Buddhist temple (in today's Henan Province), where he passed away shortly thereafter.[42] Similarly, a Mr. Li died in the Qinglong Buddhist temple in Chang'an.[43] Some may have felt that temples provided a place of purity and peacefulness suitable for the departing soul. But Buddhist monasteries also seem to have served (formally or informally) as hospitals. Chancellor Li Deyu 李德裕 (787–850), in a mid-ninth-century memorial, proposed that the state should take charge of a type of institution called *bei tian* 悲田 (field of compassion) attached to Buddhist monasteries and rename it *yangbing fang* 養病坊 (house to treat the ill).[44]

2. Calling the Soul to Return

2.1 *Fu* (Recalling the *hun*)

Recalling the *hun* soul is the first step (after death itself) in the lengthy death ritual program described in the *Kaiyuan Rites*. According to that text, "*Fu* refers to recalling the *hun* and restoring the *po* right after death" 復謂始死招魂復魄也.[45] The Tang-era Buddhist monk and scholar Daoshi 道世 (ca. seventh century) commented: "The *hun* is the spirit, and the *po* is the body. Thus, ritual canon specifies that after one's death, [the family] covers the body with the clothes that the deceased used to wear to prevent the *hun* from escaping. One uses the clothes to

41 XTS 46:1194.
42 DTXS 654–655.
43 DTXS 640–641.
44 QTW 704:7225.
45 DTKYL 138:654, 142:678, 146:701.

summon the *hun* [because] the *hun* recognizes its own clothes, seeks the clothing, and returns" 魂是靈，魄是屍。故禮以初亡之時，以及己所著之衣，將向屍魄之上，以魂外出故。將衣喚魂。魂識己衣，尋衣歸魂.[46] The ritual *fu* 復 carried with it a sense of urgency, as according to the *Kaiyuan Rites* it was supposed to take place in the main bedchamber (*zhengqin* 正寢) immediately after the moment of death.[47] To perform this ritual, the summoner (*fuzhe* 復者) climbed to the top of the roof of the house holding the deceased's old clothes and called him or her by name aloud three times, before descending and spreading the clothes over the body of the deceased.[48] Ying-Shih Yu has hypothesized that, by calling back the soul immediately after death, family members hoped to bring the dead back to life.[49] Another possibility is that the *fu* was intended to ensure that the soul remained with the body, accompanying the body into the tomb, without wandering off. Epitaphs typically do not make reference to this ritual, though I have encountered one inscription that asserts that the funerary rites "start with the *fu* of the *po*" 自復魄.[50]

2.2. *Hun*-recalling burial

By contrast, what one does encounter in tomb epitaphs are references to *zhaohun zang* 招魂葬 (*hun*-recalling burial), which took place when the deceased's body could not be located. As mentioned previously, the concept of *zhaohun* 招魂 has a different meaning in the ritual canon than it does in the epitaph record: in the *Kaiyuan Rites* it is regarded as an essential part of the *fu* ritual, while in epitaph texts it refers to a *hun*-recalling burial. But in epitaphs we see that, when the *fu* ritual (which required the availability of the corpse) was not feasible, the *zhaohun zang* was practiced, reflecting an underlying sense that housing the *hun* soul was the primary function of a burial (and not necessarily housing the body per se).

Early archaeological evidence of a *zhaohun zang* was discovered in the Tang dynasty Xingyuan cemetery, involving a person named Li Yanzhen.[51] Li's epitaph states that he died in 685 at his official post in the county of Yanling (in today's Jiangsu Province), and his coffin was carried a long way to the family cemetery in the Mangshan area (north of Luoyang) in the same year. Twenty-four years later (709), the family built a new cemetery in the county of Yanshi, where they planned to transfer his coffin. Unfortunately, his original tomb could not be positively identified. As the epitaph explains, the family "lamented that woodcutters and shepherds had encroached [on the grave], and sighed over the disarray of the burial mounds and their [surrounding] trees" 恨樵牧之方侵，嘆封樹之無紀. As a result, with no body to reinter, the family "had his *hun* recalled to bury at…the family cemetery" 招魂葬於……大塋.[52] Li's tomb was elaborately furnished with ceramic tomb figurines of various kinds, and an empty coffin painted with black lacquer was placed atop a brick coffin bed. No trace of bone was found

46 Shi Daoshi, *Fayuan zhulin jiaozhu*, 2788.
47 For elites of rank 3 and higher, see DTKYL 138:654; for elites of ranks 4 and 5, see DTKYL 142:678; and for elites of rank 6 and lower, see DTKYL 146:701.
48 Ying-Shih Yu aptly discusses the ritual of *fu* in the Han dynasties. See Yu, "'O Soul, Come Back!,'" 365.
49 Yu, "'O Soul, Come Back!,'" 365.
50 QTW 609:6154.
51 Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 80.
52 Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yanshi Xingyuan Tang mu*, 270.

by archaeologists, further supporting the idea that this was indeed a *zhaohun zang*.[53] Besides the desecration of a graveyard (as in Li's case), there were many other reasons for a *zhaohun zang*. After drowning in a river or dying on a battlefield, the body of the deceased might not be retrievable.[54] In addition, a *zhaohun zang* was occasionally practiced when the family could locate the body, but feared that the soul had been disturbed and possibly had wandered off. In such a case, it was particularly critical to coax the *hun* to return to the body. For example, according to a Mr. Hao's epitaph, after his tomb collapsed, his family feared that his *hun* had been disturbed. To keep the *hun* together with the relics of the deceased, they performed a *zhaohun zang*.[55]

Numerous epitaph texts reflect the popularity of this practice. Epitaphs record three main ways to call back one's soul. The first was by means of the clothes of the deceased or the spouse, as in the case of the same Mr. Li buried in the Xingyuan cemetery. Similarly, Ms. Pei's husband died on a battlefield in 785, and, sadly, the family could not find his body. When Ms. Pei passed away nineteen years later, their filial children "used the lady's clothes to call back the gentleman's *hun* soul" 奉夫人裳帷，招府君之魂, in order to have a joint burial for the couple.[56] The second way to call back the soul was by making a paper or straw effigy of the deceased. For instance, when a certain Ms. Li died, she was buried temporarily while awaiting a joint burial with her husband. However, the trace of her tomb aboveground was lost amid the turbulence of war. To call her soul back, her children "shaped straw in the image of the deceased and cried out to her with their entreaties; they respectfully called on the spirit of their departed mother as per the ritual for joint burial and mourning" 束茅像形，號訴申論，僅招先妣之魂，合葬事終之禮.[57] Third, a soul could be called back by means of a *zhaohun fan/bo* 招魂幡/帛 (*hun*-recalling banner), often made of silk and with the deceased's name written on it, a ritual that is still practiced in parts of China today.[58] For example, Mr. Li, district defender of Songzhou, was killed in a rebellion in 819, and his body was thrown into the sea. His son and nephew performed sacrifices and held a silk banner inscribed with his name. They cried and called his name by the seashore for over ten days. After they sensed that the *hun* of Mr. Li had responded to their calls and had attached itself to the banner, they buried the banner in Mr. Li's grave in lieu of his physical body.[59] In all these cases, one recognizes a profound underlying concern for ensuring that the soul was safely secured in a tomb; even in the absence of a physical body, it was possible to call back the deceased's soul, which could then be buried while attached to some physical object, be it clothing, an effigy, or a banner.

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53 To answer whether a *zhaohun zang* was different from regular burials in terms of tomb layout and burial objects we need more archaeological discoveries and further research. The Xingyuan archaeological report makes some initial observations, such as the difference in Li's outer coffin, the orientation of his coffin, and the arrangement of the zodiac animal carvings on his epitaph. See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yanshi xingyuan Tang mu*, 19, 372.
54 For an example of death by drowning, see MZH 2061; for the case of a battlefield death, see MZH 1934–1935.
55 BLXC 651–653.
56 MZH 1934–1935.
57 MZH 1849.
58 Anthropological research shows that in the Suzhou region, when a fisherman dies at sea, his family uses a silk banner to call his soul back, even using it to trawl the ocean floor near where he died. In the end, whatever they caught from the ocean is put in the coffin with the banner to represent the deceased. See Cai Limin and Gao Fumin, *Suzhou chuantong liyi jieling*, 179.
59 MZH 2061–2062. The epitaph is titled "Mr. Li's epitaph for his *hun*-recalling burial," and the rhymed eulogy (*ming* 銘) section of the epitaph text states the belief that the *hun* returned to the empty tomb.

The *hun*-recalling burial is a particularly good example of a noncanonical practice that became popular at all levels of society. The *Kaiyuan Rites* does not include this practice in its repertoire of death ritual, as it does not comply with classical teachings. Indeed, the *Tongdian* cites a treatise written in 318, which lists various criticisms of this practice by scholars of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317–420). According to these scholars, the "ritual canon does not contain texts on *hun*-recalling burials" 按禮無招魂葬之文; thus, this practice is "not allowed by the ritual canon" 非禮所許.[60] Nevertheless, this practice was so popular during the Tang that even the imperial family practiced it. After the An Lushan 安祿山 Rebellion (755–763), when many members of the imperial family were unceremoniously killed, Emperor Suzong 肅宗 (r. 756–762) ordered that family members whose bodies could not be located be given a *hun*-recalling burial.[61] Earlier in the dynasty, when Emperor Zhongzong 中宗 (r. 684 and 705–710) was buried with his first wife, Princess Zhao, who had been posthumously honored as an empress, her body could no longer be located. Hence, once again, the court ordered a *hun*-recalling burial to summon her soul back to accompany Emperor Zhongzong in the afterlife.[62]

3. Preparing the Body

If the family was in possession of the deceased's body, the focus of the death ritual then switched to preparing the body for encoffinment and burial. Epitaphs do not offer much information about how the deceased's body was taken care of, but archaeological finds seem to confirm the actual practice of many rituals listed in the *Kaiyuan Rites*.[63]

The *Kaiyuan Rites* prescribes that a washing ritual (*muyu* 沐浴, step 5) be performed before the deceased is dressed and placed in the coffin. The text explains that the person in charge of the burial (*zhangshi zhe* 掌事者) should "boil and rinse a new *pen* 盆 (basin), *pan* 盤 (plate), *ping* 瓶 (bottle), and six *li* 鬲 (tripods), and place them next to the western stairway" 煮沐新盆盤瓶六鬲皆濯之陳於西階下, because "using new vessels shows that [the family] takes the burial ritual seriously" 新此器者，重死事.[64] Even though I have not encountered any epitaph record of a family washing the body of the deceased,[65] archaeologists have often found copper utensils including water ladles (*yi* 匜), water basins, water plates (*xi* 洗), and water bowls (*bo* 缽) in Tang-era tombs. Presumably, they were used to wash corpses and then left in the

60 See "The Treatise of the *Hun*-Recalling Burials" 招魂葬議 in TD 103:2704.
61 QTW 43:479.
62 JTS 38:1464.
63 The scarcity of epitaph writings on taking care of the deceased's body is not surprising. Depicting the beloved as a corpse may have been emotionally undesirable and not the type of information that a family would want recorded on stone forever. Additionally, such practices may have been regarded as being too intimate or even too common to address.
64 DTKYL 138:655, for elites of rank 3 and higher. For elites of ranks 4 and 5, four new tripods were used instead of six; see DTKYL 142:679. For elites of rank 6 and lower, two new tripods were used; see DTKYL 146:701. Part of the translation is adapted from Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 156, n. 6.
65 We do see records of bathing prior to death, however. A certain Ms. Zhao's epitaph says that on the verge of death, she decided to "bathe and burn incense, purifying herself while sitting solemnly" 盥沐焚香，齋容肅位. Perhaps by this means the woman's family did not need to cleanse the body again after her death. See MZHX 1047. Similar examples can be found on MZH 1804, 1275, and 1470.

tomb, probably because it would have been inauspicious to reuse them for other purposes.[66]

Next, the *Kaiyuan Rites* prescribes that the cleaned body should be dressed (*xi* 襲, step 6). Besides putting on clothing, this also means equipping the face with a *mianyi* 面衣 (face cover), *chong'er* 充耳 (earplugs), *woshou* 握手 (objects held in hands), and *xi* 舄 (shoes).[67] Subsequently, the mouth should be filled with an object of value (*han* 含) (step 7).[68] All these objects have been found by archaeologists in tombs dating roughly to the Tang and also make their appearance in anecdotal literature. In the 1950s and 1960s, when archaeologists excavated forty tombs in the Astana area dating to the fifth through seventh centuries, they found a total of thirty-two face covers.[69] In one of these tombs, dating to 619, a written tomb inventory of the clothing was found, which explicitly lists a *mianyi* and a silver *yanlong* 眼龍 (籠) (eye cover).[70] Most excavated face covers were made of cloth or silk, while eye covers were made of bronze or other metals.[71] In an interesting anecdote in the *Taiping guangji*, a Buddhist monk named Yiguang was invited to perform death ritual in a house. One night the deceased woman temporarily came back to life and brought Yiguang porridge: "she came up [to him] holding a plate in both hands, wearing (on her head) only a face cover, and walking barefoot" 捧盤来前，獨帶面衣，徒跣.[72] In another story, the soul of the deceased complained that he had been suffering from a lip injury, because, at the time of burial, a servant noticed that they "had forgotten to cut a hole at the mouth in his face cover" 面衣忘開口, so she quickly cut it with scissors, but accidently also cut the deceased's lower lip.[73] Besides face covers, archaeological reports of Tang tombs also reveal that the deceased's hands often held objects such as soapstone pigs, coins, jewelry, and personal sentimental objects, in apparent accordance with the *woshou* prescription in step 6 of the *Kaiyuan Rites*. Archaeologists have also found objects contained within the mouth of the deceased, including quartz stones, jade beads, and coins (even foreign coins), in accordance with step 7 of the *Kaiyuan Rites*. But there were also elements of corpse preparation not explicitly described in the *Kaiyuan Rites*. For example, archaeological excavations reveal that skulls were typically fastened by jaw-holders (*xiahe tuo* 下頷托 or *xia'e tuo* 下顎托), and knees were covered by kneecap covers. Jaw holders were probably intended to prevent the mouth from opening wide during rigor mortis, and in case of long-distance transportation of a corpse, both devices probably also helped to prevent the jaw and knee from

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66 Ye Wa regards these metal utensils as "artifacts associated with body treatment." She observes that they were found inside coffins and argues that they might have been used for washing the corpse. See Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 155.
67 For elites of rank 3 and higher, see DTKYL 138:656; for elites of ranks 4 and 5, see DTKYL 142:679; and for elites of rank 6 and lower, see DTKYL 146:702.
68 The Eastern Han scholar Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) in his commentary on the *Zhouli* says: "cooked rice was used to fill the mouth as it was unbearable to leave [the mouth] empty" 飯所以實口，不忍虛也. See Ruan Yuan, *Shisanjing zhushu* 16:749.
69 See Wu Yugui, *Zhongguo fengsu tongshi*, 489.
70 Lu Xixing, "Tulufan yanlong kao," 70.
71 An exception was found in Ningxia Province, where a face cover made of gold was excavated from a Tang-era tomb. See Ningxia huizu zizhiqu Guyuan bowuguan and Zhong Ri Yuanzhou lianhe gaogudui, *Yuanzhou gumu jicheng*, 24.
72 TPGJ 330:344.
73 Duan Chengshi, *Youyang zazu jiaojian* 3:1499.

being dislocated during transportation.[74]

An additional step associated with the preparation of the body is alluded to in the *Tongdian*, which prescribes that after the performance of canonical rites, a funerary ice plate (*yipan bing* 夷盤冰) was placed under the bed holding the corpse (*yichuang* 夷床), in order to "keep the corpse cold" 寒屍. Indeed, the court provided ice to high-ranking officials—including officials with regular posts (*zhishiguan* 職事官) of rank 3 and higher as well as elites with prestige offices (*sanguan* 散官) of rank 2 and higher—who died in the summer months.[75] Though ice plates are not mentioned in epitaphs, epitaph data on time of death and burial make this practice plausible. More precisely, epitaph inscriptions suggest that it was common for at least three months to pass between the death and the burial of an individual. For example, an epitaph for Mr. Zhang and his wife's joint burial records that both of them died in the summer of 806, but their coffins had to remain in the main hall (*tang* 堂) of the house for over half a year until the next spring, because a diviner had pronounced that an earlier burial was inauspicious.[76] Moreover, according to epitaph data, mortality was particularly high in the summer months.[77] Without some form of refrigeration, how were bodies to be preserved for several months, especially in the hot summer months?

After the body was prepared, it was then wrapped in many layers of cloth, called *xiaolian* 小斂 (small enclosure), and then enclosed in a coffin, called *dalian* 大斂 (great enclosure). Tang ritual texts differentiate the two types of enclosures thus: "once the corpse is dressed with clothes, the *xiaolian* is completed" 屍既襲既小斂; "*dalian* means to place [the corpse] inside the coffin" 大斂即內於棺中也.[78] Epitaph texts nearly never mention the enclosure of a corpse, though I have found one reference in an epitaph to *yulian* 寓殮 (enclosure where one was sojourning), which may have drawn the epitaph author's attention because it took place away from home.[79] Archaeological data is not much more helpful, as both the layers of cloth and the wooden coffin rarely survive. Nevertheless, Ye Wa has suggested the usefulness of distinguishing objects found immediately adjacent to a skeleton in an (undisturbed) tomb from objects found elsewhere in the tomb chamber. The former would have been objects contained within the coffin, and so would have been more closely tied to body preparation and the encoffinment ceremony.[80]

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74 Numerous archaeological reports and studies reveal that these objects were not restricted to one or two regions. For instance, jaw-holders were also found in Tang-era tombs in Shaanxi, Hubei, and Sichuan Provinces. See Zhang Zhengling, "Xi'an Hansengzhai Tang mu qingli ji," 60 (a gold jaw-holder found in a Tang-era tomb in Shaanxi Province); Hubei sheng bowuguan and Yun xian bowuguan, "Hubei Yun xian Tang Li Hui, Yan Wan mu fajue jianbao," 37 (a silver jaw-holder found in a Tang-era tomb in Hubei Province); Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 156–158 (both jaw-holders and kneecap covers found in the Tang-era Xingyuan cemeteries); Wu Xiaoping and Cui Benxin, "Sanxia diqu Tang Song mu chutu xiahe tuo kao" (a survey and study of the jaw-holders excavated from Tang and Song tombs in and outside the Three Gorges area); Wu Xiaoping, "Lun woguo jingnei chutu de xiahe tuo" (a comprehensive study of the jaw-holders excavated in China).
75 TD 84:2272–2273. This is not mentioned in the *Kaiyuan Rites*.
76 MZH 1954–1955. Chapters 2 and 3 will reveal the value of a long wait if auspicious burial dates or grave sites were not conveniently available.
77 In premodern eras, summer months were generally the most dangerous for one's health, due to the harsh weather and pest-borne illnesses. For more discussion on this, see chapter 2.
78 TD 84:2273, 2268.
79 DTXS 676–677.
80 The objects placed inside a coffin were often highly personal. According to Ye Wa's research, burial objects can be divided into two categories: one category is associated with corpse preparation, which was private and intimate,

4. Sacrifice and Mourning

Sacrifice and ritualized mourning were major components of death ritual. Here I focus on a few important sacrificial and mourning practices, in order to compare and contrast how they appear in ritual texts and in epitaphs.

The first practice consists of the offering of sacrifice to the deceased, to ancestors, and to deities. The sacrifices before burial were called *dian* 奠, and the postburial ones were called *ji* 祭. The *Kaiyuan Rites* prescribes eleven *dian* sacrifices for elites with rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5, and six *dian* sacrifices for elites with rank 6 and lower, and another three *dian* sacrifices for the situation of reburial. It also prescribes seven *ji* sacrifices for elites of all ranks, and an additional *ji* sacrifice in case of reburial.[81]

In the *Kaiyuan Rites*, for elites with rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5, the first offering of sacrifice involves a *dian* (step 4) performed after the *fu* ritual to call back the *hun* soul and the setting up of the bed for the corpse, but before the corpse was bathed. For elites with rank 6 and lower, the first sacrifice (step 9, *dian*) happened only slightly later, after the body was bathed and clothed and the mouth was filled, but before the deceased's name was written on a funerary banner. For elites of all ranks, the first *dian* sacrifice represented the initial transition of the deceased from a living family member to an ancestor. The last two offerings of sacrifice are *danji* 禫祭 (step 65; for elites of all ranks) and *fumiao* 祔廟 (step 66; for elites with rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5) or *fuji* 祔祭 (step 66; for elites with rank 6 and lower). *Danji* marked the end of the mourning period, and culminated with family members taking off once and for all their mourning clothes. It was also the second to last step of the sixty-six-step death ritual program outlined in the *Kaiyuan Rites*. Subsequently, family members began to worship the deceased in the ancestral hall (*fumiao*) or before the ancestral altars at home (*fuji*), thereby demonstrating the completion of the deceased's transition into an ancestor.

A general survey of thousands of epitaph texts reveals that *dian* and *ji* are mentioned on occasion, but certainly not as overwhelmingly frequently as in the ritual texts. In fact, *mengdian* (*liangying*) 夢奠(兩楹),"dreaming of sacrificing (at the two pillars),"[82] a euphemism for death, accounts for most uses of the term *dian* in epitaph texts. It appears far more in that phrase than in

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and the other with public funerary rites, which displayed proper filial piety and familial respect to the dead. Ye argues that the former category of burial objects was often found inside a coffin, and the latter outside it. For the former category of objects inside the coffin, she further divides them into three subtypes: first, objects used for corpse preparation such as water basins and ladles used to wash the corpse; second, personal belongings such as jewelry; and third, iron objects likely used for apotropaic purposes. See Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 153–219.

81 See the relevant death ritual steps in the *Kaiyuan Rites* listed earlier in the chapter.

82 When one dreamed of sacrificing at the two pillars, one anticipated one's own death in the near future. This interesting expression is derived from the *Liji*, which explains that the Yin 殷 people placed the coffins between two pillars, hence for Confucius, as a person from Yin, dreaming of two pillars was a metaphor or a sign for his own death. See LJ 9:278, and see also DTXS 352–354 for an epitaph example. This expression has many alternatives: *liangying e dian* 兩楹俄奠 (DTXS 276–277) and *liangying dian si* 两楹奠祀 (MZHX 303), both translated as "[dreaming of] presently sacrificing between two pillars," *meng dian fei she* 夢奠非賒 (dreaming of sacrificing without delaying) (MZHX 430), *dian ying rumeng* 奠楹入夢 (the scene of sacrificing at the pillars came to [my] dream) (MZHX 474), and *qinying zuo dian* 寝楹坐奠 (sitting between the pillars of one's bedroom to sacrifice) (MZHX 370).

the second most frequently used compound *zudian* 祖奠 (offering sacrifice to the ancestors; step 40, which will be discussed later in the chapter). The term *ji* appears less often in epitaphs (perhaps since most *ji* sacrifices would have occurred after the burial of the epitaph in the tomb); when it does appear in epitaphs, it is usually in the compound *jisi* 祭祀, a general term for sacrifice.

A second practice consisted of ritualized crying (*ku* 哭), formalized into no less than seven of the sixty-six steps in the *Kaiyuan Rites*'s ritual program. Clearly, when crying was prescribed as an important component of a required ritual procedure, it was not merely an outlet of private emotions; rather, it became a public display of filial piety and sorrow, as well as a performance of proper ritual. Nearly every epitaph was painstakingly carved with texts about how family members were heartbroken and cried piteously. For instance, Mr. Zhang's epitaph recounts that the deceased "had no daughters, but had a younger sister" 無女，有妹一人. This sister went above and beyond the call of duty in her expressions of sorrow: "Wearing the extreme-degree mourning clothes [that a filial son would customarily have worn], she cried blood and stopped eating. She went beyond ritual requirements and destroyed herself" 衣斬衰之服，并泣血絕浆，禮逾見毀.[83] Clearly exaggeration was at work; the sister is very unlikely to have really "cried blood." But describing the sorrow of the survivors as culminating in tears of blood is extremely common in epitaph texts, suggesting a likelihood that dramatic crying scenes were an expected part of the public display of mourning.

Another ritualized mourning practice involved fasting. The *Kaiyuan Rites* required that mourners start fasting on the day following the death of a family member, and that the fasting last for three days. After three days, mourners resumed food consumption, at which point they were often ill due to the fasting. Because it was recognized that "little children and women should not become ill" 童子、婦人不能病, it appears that the *Kaiyuan Rites* expects only adult males to fast.[84] Whereas epitaphs commonly refer to fasting, they show that women also fasted, as a Ms. Ru's epitaph says that her "older son cried blood and younger daughter ate not even porridge" 長男泣血，少女绝浆.[85] Moreover, the length of fasting was an individual choice, and was not in fact determined by ritual prescriptions. According to a Mr. Wang's epitaph, "Following the ritual, the family [fasted] for three days before eating again" 依禮三日而食.[86] Even though fasting for three days was most common and was prescribed in the *Kaiyuan Rites*,[87] some fasts went longer. The epitaph for a different Mr. Wang and his wife records that their filial

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83 MZHX 786.
84 See the *Kaiyuan Rites*, under the explanation of "*chengfu*" (step 22). See DTKYL 138:658 for elites of rank 3 and higher; 142:682 for elites of ranks 4 and 5; and 146:704 for elites of rank 6 and lower.
85 MZH 324.
86 MZHX 1029.
87 The *Kaiyuan Rites* prescribes that "filial sons… fast for three days" 孝子……三日而食 under the explanation of "*luci*" (step 21) for elites of rank 3 and higher (see DTKYL 138:659); it uses the same line under the explanation of "*chengfu*" for elites of ranks 4 and 5 (see DTKYL 142:682); and it prescribes "three days later, eat [again]" 三日而後食 for elites of rank 6 and lower (see DTKYL 146:703–704).

son Mingyan “ate not even porridge for five days” 絕漿五日,[88] and a Mr. Li’s son “ate not even porridge for seven days” 絕漿七日.[89]

A final component of ritualized mourning involved mourning huts. According to the *Kaiyuan Rites*, immediately after encoffinment (step 19) and a *dian* sacrifice (step 20) came the ritual of *luci* 廬次 (chief mourners dwell at the mourning huts; step 21). The *lu* 廬 (mourning huts) were simple structures, with floors made of straw mats (*shan* 苫). One was built for each filial son just east of the *bintang* 殯堂 (bier hall),[90] where the coffin lay—sometimes for months prior to burial. According to the *Kaiyuan Rites*, it was the filial sons’ duties to mourn at their own mourning huts, as “each of the sons has a *lu*” 諸子各一廬,[91] while women and small children were not to reside at the mourning huts.[92] However, tomb epitaphs and other historical sources suggest that, in actual practice, there were two variations from prescribed rules. First, mourning huts were often explicitly said to be next to the tomb, rather than next to the bier hall.[93] The *Jiu Tang shu* provides corroborating evidence of this practice, recording that Zhang Zhikuan, praised as a filial son, made the tomb mound for his mother himself, and then “built a *lu* next to his mother’s tomb and planted thousands of pine trees” 廬於墓側，手植松柏千餘株.[94] Second, it is clear from epitaphs texts that women did sometimes occupy mourning huts. For example, a certain Ms. Lu, after her son died, “rested in the *lu*, gazing in despair” 倚廬望絶;[95] and a Ms. Kang, as a widow, “resided in the *lu*, where she instructed [her son]” 倚廬垂訓.[96] Once again, the *Jiu Tang shu* provides corroborating anecdotes. We learn that a certain Ms. Xiahou, after her father passed away, “stayed in the *lu* next to his tomb, and ate only one meal a day; she did this for years” 廬於墓側，每日一食，如此者積年.[97]

The *Kaiyuan Rites* prescribed that the lengths of mourning vary between three months and three years, depending on the relationship between the mourner and the deceased person.[98] A number of epitaphs endorse this prescribed rite. For example, according to Mr. Yang’s epitaph, “[The deceased had] a daughter who, out of the purest filial piety, swore never to marry. She wore mourning clothing until the end of mourning rituals. For the allotted three years, her sorrow never ended” 女一人，純孝所至，誓不從人。身桂[挂]法衣，以終喪事。三年有期，此哀

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88 DTXS 478–479. The word *jiang* refers to thick liquid such as porridge. A reasonable guess is that the fasting probably means no food at all, but drinking might be allowed.
89 MZHX 430.
90 See the *Kaiyuan Rites*, under the explanation of “*luci*” (step 21). See DTKYL 138:658 for elites ranking 3 and higher; the ritual texts for all the other ranks are the same. The *Liji* also mentions the *lu*, but does not specify where it should be located.
91 See DTKYL 142:682, 146:703. The *Kaiyuan Rites* also tells us that “for all mourning huts, for elites ranking 5 and higher, the state builds them” 凡廬，五品以上官營之 (DTKYL 142:682).
92 See the *Kaiyuan Rites*, under the explanation of “*chengfu*” (step 22). See DTKYL 138:658 for elites ranking 3 and higher; the ritual texts are the same for all the other ranks.
93 Epitaphs often say: “built a *lu* next to the tomb” 結廬墓側 or “built a *lu* at the grave site” 結廬墓所. For example, see DTXS 696–697, 350–351, 350–351.
94 JTS188:4918–4919.
95 DTXS 202–203.
96 DTXS 262–263. This line can also mean that, by residing in the mourning hut, she provided a good moral example for her son.
97 JTS193:5143.
98 See DTKYL 132:620–627 (in the “*wufu zhidu*” 五服制度 section).

不絕.[99] Filial children were not the only ones to spend years in mourning; so too did virtuous wives and other family members. When a Mr. Zhang died in 803, his wife mourned him for three years.[100] When a certain Mr. Ren died in 831, he did not have any children to perform this mourning ritual, so his brother had his own son posthumously adopted by Ren, and the son then perform three years of mourning.[101] Besides the fact that the lengthy mourning for one's closest family members was promoted by the Tang court,[102] epitaphs also tell us that mourning was regarded as a way to bring blessings from the dead to the living, as a Mr. Liu's epitaph explains: "Three years [of mourning] later, the offspring will be more prosperous" 三年之後，子孫更昌.[103] When mourning, one wore coarse clothes and consumed only plain foods. A certain Mr. Wang's epitaph says that the filial son "did not wear black garments, but wore clothes made of hemp and a hempen band [on the head or waist]" 不服緇衣，服麻絰也.[104] The *Jiu Tang shu* records a filial son named Yuan Dexiu, who, after his mother passed away, "ate plain food without salt or milk, and sat on the floor without a mat" 食無鹽酪，籍無茵席.[105] Due to such difficult living conditions and a scarcity of supplies, mourners often became weary and had to "rely on canes to stand themselves up" 杖而後起, as written in both *Kaiyuan Rites* and epitaph texts.[106]

Nevertheless, epitaph texts and other historical records describe and speak highly of extreme measures and excessive hardships that the mourners took, far beyond what is prescribed in ritual texts. For example, Liang Wenzhen, mourning his deceased parents, "built a *lu* next to the tomb [of his deceased parents], and never left even temporarily.…[He] cried blood at the *lu* for over thirty years" 結廬墓側，未嘗暫離……泣血廬墓三十餘年.[107] By imposing excessive hardships on themselves, the mourners destroyed their health. Many epitaphs describe the haggard look of mourners by saying "the sorrow ruined [his health and he became] lean like a

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99 See Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo and Beijing shike yishu bowuguan, *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi: Beijing*, 2:15 for epitaph text, and 1:22 for rubbings.
100 MZHX 862.
101 DTXS 838–839.
102 See Zhao Lan, "Tang dai de sannian zhisang luelun."
103 DTXS 1014–1015.
104 DTXS 478–479.
105 JTS 190:5050. Research shows that "not consuming salt" 不食鹽 was a mourning ritual that first developed in the Six Dynasties period (222–589) among elites of the Lower Yangzi River region, and was carried on into the Tang dynasty. See Wu Feng, "Liuchao shiqi shiren shousang bushiyan xisu lunxi."
106 The *Kaiyuan Rites* explains under the "*chengfu*" (step 22) that "using canes and then being able to stand up, the filial sons all relied on canes, because of illness [due to the hardship of the mourning period]" 杖而後能起，眾子皆杖，以病故也 as a ritual prescription. See DTKYL 138:658 for elites of rank 3 and higher; 142:682 for elites of ranks 4 and 5; and 146:704 for elites of rank 6 and lower. A few epitaphs contain the phrase "using canes and then standing up" 杖而後起, including MZH 2251–2252, 2320–2321, and 1958–1959, and MZHX 543. Moreover, a similar phrase "using a cane so that one can stand up" 杖而能起 appears in both an epitaph inscription (BLXC 599) and a well-known Tang anecdote, "Li wa zhuan" 李娃傳 (TPGJ 484:326). Mentions of canes in the epitaphs and anecdotes in some cases might be part of a eulogistic description of what a particular filial descendant needed on a particular occasion, but in other contexts could be part of designated mourning regalia prescribed for (and specifically limited to) some decedent-survivor relations and not others (insight gained from conversation with Professor Robert Ashmore). But either way, mentioning canes seems to be a way to praise the filial children for their sorrow during the mourning period.
107 JTS 188:4934.

piece of firewood" 哀毀柴立.[108] In some extreme cases, the mourners even mourned themselves to death.[109] In short, of all the elements of death ritual, epitaphs pay perhaps the most attention to the mourning practice of the survivors.

The most glaring divergence between the *Kaiyuan Rites* and Tang mortuary culture concerns Buddhist rituals. Buddhism, unknown in China until Han times (and entirely ignored in the *Kaiyuan Rites*), had become widespread in Chinese society by the Tang dynasty, and had a particularly enduring effect on funerary rituals and conceptions of the afterlife. Stephen Teiser convincingly demonstrates that people in the Tang and early Song (960–1279) started to sacrifice to their ancestors by making offerings to the ten kings—"the ten judges of the underworld, each in charge of one court [of purgatory], constitute yet another way of defining the quality of life after death,"[110] as only by worshipping them could the sufferings of the soul after death be obviated and rebirth in the heavens be attained. One of the most influential Buddhist funerary practices dedicated to the worship of the first seven kings was the "seven-seven fasting" (*qiqi zhai* 七七齋), which referred to seven periods of seven days of fasting and sacrificial offerings conducted by the descendants (for a total of forty-nine consecutive days) beginning on the day a person died.[111] Not surprisingly, one encounters references to the seven-seven fasting in tomb epitaphs. For example, Mr. Tang's epitaph informs us that he mourned his wife for forty-nine days, before selecting some of his wife's favorite belongings to place in her grave.[112] A certain Mr. Zhang's epitaph explains that his son, Xinlang, mourned him for forty-nine days, after which he was inspired to shave his head to become a Buddhist monk.[113] This particular Buddhist mourning practice was sufficiently widespread to be recognized even by the Tang court. Thus, a certain Mr. Liang's epitaph records that the court "bestowed his family with clothing and silk, not to mention a million coins, as a preparation for the seven-seven fasting" 賚布帛之外，別賜錢一百萬，以備齋七之給.[114] For some, this "popular" practice could be even more critical than the rites prescribed by canonical texts. In the view of Yao Chong 姚崇 (650–721)—a famous Tang-dynasty chancellor not known for any particular commitment to Buddhist teachings—the seven-seven fasting offered a frugal alternative to extravagant funerals (common among the social elite that he harshly condemned). In terms of how to handle his own funeral, he explained to his sons: "If you cannot follow completely the correct way [of the canonical texts], and have to follow popular ritual practice, then from the first to the last set of seven days, you should perform seven[-seven] Buddhist fasting" 若未能全依正道，須順俗情，從初七至終七，任設七僧齋.[115]

It is certainly incorrect to assume that the incorporation of Buddhist elements in death ritual meant that one was Buddhist. Classical tradition (the so-called "Confucian" classics),

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108 For example, see MZHX 492, 1401, 1958.
109 For example, see MZH 1420, 1058; MZHX 1060.
110 Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*, 2.
111 Teiser points out that "descendants are instructed to conduct seven sacrifices during the first forty-nine days after death, with the offerings destined for the first seven kings of purgatory. These rituals should be followed by three more: one hundred days after death, offerings are sent to the eighth king; one year after death, offerings are sent to the ninth king; and three years after death, offerings are sent to the tenth king." See Teiser, "'Having Once Died and Returned to Life,'" 451.
112 MZHX 1042.
113 DTXS 798–799.
114 MZH 2104.
115 JTS 96:3028.

Daoism, and Buddhism were all nonexclusive teachings that one could practice simultaneously, just as a Mr. Guo's epitaph explicitly states: "[he] brightly excelled in classical tradition and taught the teachings of Confucius and Mencius; [he also] extensively read the original sources of Daoism and perceived the methods of Laozi, Zhuangzi, and other immortals. [He] respected and admired the Buddha, and loathed mundane matters and instead pursued emptiness and serenity" 明達儒教，傳丘雄軻孟之教。被覽道原，見莊老群仙之術。敬崇釋氏，厭生死而慕空寂.[116]

5. Paying for Funeral Expenses

One way in which the court sought to tie the extravagance of a funeral to bureaucratic rank (rather than to socioeconomic status) was by controlling the purse strings. According to the court-sponsored *Kaiyuan Rites*, if the deceased was a family member of (or related by marriage to) an official of rank 5 or higher, the court would bestow the deceased's family with gifts of money and other resources to cover some or all of the funerary expenses. For instance, the ritual step "*luci*" (step 21) tells us that the court helped build their mourning huts,[117] and the ritual step "*qin'gu qianshi zhi fu*" 親故遣使致賻 (step 28) prescribes that the court send messengers to give money to these elite groups.[118] The *Tang Liudian* 唐六典 (Compendium of administrative law of the six divisions of the Tang bureaucracy) also says that for officials of rank 5 and higher, the court "sent all [of them] workers specializing in building tombs" 皆給營墓夫.[119]

Epitaphs appear to confirm that the court adhered to this rule. When they record that the court bestowed gifts of money, silk, clothing, and grain to families, the deceased invariably held a prestigious title, such as "supreme pillar of state" (*shangzhuguo* 上柱國),[120] commander-in-chief (*da dudu* 大都督),[121] minister (*shangshu* 尚书),[122] or censor-in-chief (*yushi dafu* 御史大夫),[123] or the deceased was a princess,[124] consort of the emperor,[125] or an individual with some other high political profile.[126] The epitaph of Liang Shouqian, supreme pillar of state and commander-in-chief of Yangzhou, tells us that "imperial ceremonial flag bearers were fully provided by the related departments [of the state]" 鹵簿儀仗，所司備供.[127]

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116 BLXC 820.
117 See my earlier discussion of the mourning huts, as well as DTKYL 138:658, 142:682.
118 See DTKYL 138:660, 142:683. Note that the gifts from court are called *fu* 賻, in contrast to gifts from relatives and friends, which are called *feng* 賵. But, this distinction in ritual texts is not always strictly adhered to in texts. For instance, Mr. Zhen's epitaph (written by the famous Tang scholar Han Yu 韓愈) uses *fu* 賻 for gifts from friends. See QTW 564:5715–5716.
119 See Li Linfu, *Tang Liudian*, 18:508. For an introduction to the *Tang Liudian*, see Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 333. For further discussion of the funerary expenses covered by the imperial court, see Li Jinxiu, *Tang dai caizheng shigao*, 70–74; Wu Liyu, "Tang Song shidai de zhaozang yu chizang" and "Guanyu Tang *Sangzang li* fuyuan de zai jiantao."
120 There are many such examples; to cite just a few: MZHX 626; MZH 1509, 1538.
121 MZHX 778.
122 MZHX 791.
123 MZHX 696, 755.
124 MZHX 409.
125 MZHX 217.
126 MZHX 893.
127 MZH 2104.

Undoubtedly, the court was largely effective at limiting the most extravagant funerals to its own high bureaucrats. Without financial assistance from the court, the cost of a funeral was unimaginably high even for scions of the old aristocracy.[128] Many epitaphs claim that individuals "exhausted their family fortune to take care of the [various] matters of a funeral" 罄用家資，已修葬事.[129] But certainly, well-connected individuals could turn to friends to help defray the costs of an elaborate burial. The epitaph of a Mr. Meng explains that his friends helped with the cost of his funeral, including the great expense of transporting his coffin from Wenxiang (his place of death; in today's city of Lingbao, Henan Province) to the family cemetery in Luoyang, as well as the cost to his family of performing all prescribed sacrifices.[130] Another epitaph asserts that a certain Li Zhi exhausted his fortune to help the family of his late friend Li Xuan buy a coffin and commission the writing and carving of the epitaph itself.[131] Unquestionably still, the most prominent families benefited from their dense capital-based marriage network to pay for relatively elaborate burials.[132]

6. Divination of Proper Grave Sites and Burial Dates

Included in the funerary program of the *Kaiyuan Rites* are steps (30 and 31) that involve divining a grave site and a burial date by means of *bu* 卜 (plastromancy; by heating a tortoise shell and interpreting the cracks) or *shi* 筮 (achillomancy; by counting milfoil stalks). Interestingly, as Jessey Choo observes, there was a clear division between canonical divination and noncanonical divination in terms of how these procedures are justified. According to Choo, in the *Kaiyuan Rites* and other state-sponsored ritual texts, the divination of grave sites and burial dates are portrayed as demonstrating ritual propriety and filial piety. By contrast, divinations recorded in epitaphs were often noncanonical, portraying the identification of suitable locations and times for burial as necessary to ensure the good fortune of the family. In other words, for the canonical divination, it was irrelevant "whether the gravesite was secure or doomed and whether the timing was good or ill," whereas for the noncanonical one, such matters were vital.[133] Choo, in my opinion, correctly argues that "elites seemingly believed in noncanonical divination."[134] As will be discussed in chapters 2 and 3, respectively, burying the dead at the "right" time and "right" place was deemed so important that often a sealed coffin had to wait in a bier hall or was buried in a temporary grave for months before being placed permanently in a tomb. The fact that almost every single Tang epitaph identifies the exact burial date and addresses the grave site also indicates how crucial such information was deemed.

Numerous inscriptions painstakingly record how much money, time, and effort that the families spent in obtaining an auspicious date to bury the deceased and then in transporting the

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128 For more on the high cost of burials of Tang elites, see Tackett, *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy*, 17–25.
129 BLXC 802–803. Another interesting example is seen in a Ms. Zhang's epitaph text, which starts with an explicit lament on not having enough money to buy an epitaph text composed by a famous writer or an official as the reason that the epitaph text was written by her own sons (MZH 2211–2212).
130 QTW 564:5715–5716. The distance nowadays between Lingbao and Luoyang is about 188 km (117 miles).
131 DTXS 952–953.
132 See Tackett, *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy*, 20, 129–130, 131–132.
133 Choo, "Shall We Profane the Service of the Dead?," 12–13, 20, 23.
134 Choo, "Shall We Profane the Service of the Dead?," 17.

coffin to family cemeteries thousands of *li* away. The epitaph of a Ms. Zhang provides an interesting perspective on the arrangements made after her death in the year of 825:

> Alas! [The husband] withdrew from his military duties to grieve and mourn [his deceased wife], thereby honoring his loved one. Five days later, the *dian* offerings were made at home. An officiant was asked to oversee the sacrifice, and a scribe was ordered to write the eulogy.... The gentleman [i.e., the husband] then had [a diviner] consult tortoise shells and milfoil and examine the [*Yijing*] hexagrams to determine which [dates were] auspicious and which [dates were] inauspicious. He had [a geomancer] consider the layout of the mountains and rivers, so as to select this grave site. The state bestowed upon the family painted chariots and effigies, and, along the road, ritual sacrifices were performed.
>
> 嗚呼！停戎傷悼，重親親也。後五日，設奠於其第。俾掌要以臨祭，命司翰以寫懷……公乃命龜筮，審卦吉凶，相山川之形，得墳壠之地。官給塗芻之器，路陳奠祭之儀。[135]

Among the funerary practices noted in Ms. Zhang's epitaph, one recognizes several mentioned in the *Kaiyuan Rites*, including the *dian* sacrifice, state funding of an official's funeral, and the divining of the time and place of burial. But it is worth noting that, unlike the ritual texts, epitaphs pay disproportionate attention to the siting of the tomb and the timing of the burial. Taking this together with a number of other epitaphs, we can gain insight into what auspicious grave sites ideally looked like: the entire area was often shaped like a dragon's head (*longtou* 龍頭), an ox's stomach (*niufu* 牛腹), or a horse's mane (*malie* 馬鬣), all of which seem to be geomantic terms to describe natural topographical configurations; and it was surrounded by pine and cypress trees.[136] In such a favorable environment, it was hoped that "the site would have neither mole crickets nor ants" 地絕螻蚁,[137] and that "the site would stay peaceful forever" 地久天長.[138] As the epitaphs make abundantly clear, a well-sited burial was to the descendants' own eternal benefit. As one puts it succinctly, "the offspring planned for the future by means of a tomb that was established on [the terrain with an auspicious configuration of] a horse's mane" 宗子後圖，塋開馬鬣.[139] Or, as recounted in somewhat greater detail in the epitaph of a certain Mr. Liu: "[We, i.e., the deceased's family] hired a master in geomancy, and Master Qingwu [i.e., geomantic master] arrived from afar. He identified auspicious hills and rivers by divination, and we had the grave dug on a dragon ridge. [This will] bless the offspring, so that they can attain honor and a salary [i.e. official post], so that there is nothing they cannot achieve" 以蚨請師，青鳥遠屆，卜吉山澤，龍崗建墳，興於子孫，榮祿克就，事無不中.[140] It is worth mentioning that the word *qingniao* 青鳥 (lit., blue bird) is probably an error (either in the original inscription or in the transcription of the inscription) or a synonym for *qingwu* 青烏 (lit., blue crow), the latter of which is the typical term referring to geomancers.[141] Both *qingwu* and

135 QTWBY 7:410–411.
136 See MZHX 332, 789, 865; DTXS 432–433, 460–461.
137 MZHX 660.
138 MZHX 1006.
139 MZHX 541.
140 MZH 2064–2065.
141 Master Qingwu (*Qingwu zi* 青烏子) was a legendary geomancer active in early China. The bibliography chapter ("Jingji zhi" 經籍志) of the *Jiu Tang shu* lists three *juan* of his work called *Qingwu zi* 青烏子 (Master Qingwu). See JTS 47:2044. For a discussion of *qingwu*, see Lin Huiyin, *Fengsheng shuiqi*, 342–343. Additionally, as I have noticed in my broad survey of Tang-era epitaphs, *qingwu* and *baihe* 白鶴 (white crane) often appear in pairs. It is

qingniao appear in a good number of epitaph texts, such as "*qingwu* observing and appraising grave sites" 青烏相塚,[142] "*qingwu* selecting [grave sites based on] omens" 青烏兆擇,[143] "*qingwu* [selecting] the area [based on] omens" 青烏兆域,[144] "*qingwu* starting to [observe] omens, divine, [and select] the superb land [for burial] in beautiful hilly countryside 青烏啟兆，卜勝壤於佳墟,[145] and "*qingniao* [observing] omens and [selecting] the grave site" 青鳥兆地.[146]

In addition to grave sites, burial dates and even specific times of day were carefully selected. For example, an epitaph records that diviners "used tortoise and milfoil to determine the day and examined signs of the tomb to divine the hour" 使龜筮定日，宅兆卜時.[147] A certain Mr. Wang's epitaph tells us that a diviner "fixed the day and chose the hour" 克日擇時.[148] A Mr. Li's epitaph states that, prior to his burial alongside his wife, his filial sons "selected a good hour, and on an auspicious morning the joint burial took place" 選擇良時，吉晨祫祔.[149] And the epitaph of a certain Mr. Zhao describes: "[we] burned incense and began the divination with tortoise shells, learning the auspicious date after getting three [concurring] auspicious signs" 焚香啟龜，三兆習吉.[150]

Perhaps because of the enormous popularity of these practices, grave siting and date divination became targets of criticism, despite being explicitly prescribed in the *Kaiyuan Rites*. The Tang-era *yinyang* master Lü Cai (d. 665) criticized the ordinary people of his time, who, "vulgar and unrefined, with no proper knowledge, all believed in books of burial" 野俗無識，皆信葬書.[151] According to Lü, people liked to hold funerals at the *qian* 乾 or *gen* 艮 hours of the day (i.e., in the middle of the night), but classical ritual texts in fact did not specify the best time of day for a funeral.[152] He also complained that the "Five Surname" (*wuxing* 五姓) theory was widely applied to the selection of grave sites, once again despite no classical precedent.[153] In subsequent centuries, these practices became even more entrenched in society. Thus, Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086), the Northern Song (960–1127) scholar-official and historian, also criticized the delay in burying one's dead in order to accord with the recommendations of diviners and geomancers:

> Average people believe the recommendations of burial masters, who select not only the year, month, day, and hour [of burial], but also select [an appropriate] terrain of mountains and bodies of water. They think

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unclear what the *baihe* refers to exactly, but its appearance in texts is always associated with the geomantic auspiciousness of a grave site.
142 MZHX 648.
143 MZHX 954.
144 MZHX 1024.
145 MZHX 362.
146 MZHX 437.
147 DTXS 396–397.
148 MZHX 1029.
149 DTXS 1054–1055.
150 HZMX 1149.
151 JTS 79:2726. The "*zangshu*" 葬書 here could refer specifically to the *Book of Burial*, a text of geomancy and divination that was allegedly compiled by Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324), or it could mean (more likely) texts on burial in general. For more on the *Book of Burial*, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.
152 JTS 79:2725. Epitaph texts do not record the specific times of day for burials, hence it is impossible to test this criticism against evidence of people's practices, but it is not unlikely that a good number of burials took place in the dark, as night scenes are often depicted in epitaph eulogies.
153 Indeed, as we shall see in chapter 3, the "Five Surname" system was likely used to select grave sites.

that the descendants' future wealth, status, intelligence, and longevity are all determined by this. However, the texts those ritual masters use are different one from another; some take one thing as auspicious, while others take the same thing as inauspicious. Hence, arguments are numerous, and final decisions cannot be made within a reasonable time. The coffin is thus kept in a Buddhist monastery or somewhere far away, to the point that, in some cases, the dead do not get buried for a whole generation, or the descendants decline [in wealth and status] and forget [the coffin's] location, so that in the end, some do not get to be buried at all.

世俗信葬師之說，既擇年月日時，又擇山水形勢，以為子孫貧富貴賤，賢愚壽夭，盡繫於此。又葬師所有之書，人人異同，此以為吉，彼以為凶，爭論紛紜，無時可決。其屍柩或寄僧寺，或委遠方，至有終身不葬，或子孫衰替，忘失處所，遂弁捐不葬者。[154]

Lü Cai, too, seemed to recognize the proliferation of geomantic and divinatory techniques, noting that, "as for ways of [interpreting and] making use of books of burial (or the *Book of Burial*), there are 120 schools, each making different recommendations of what is auspicious and what is inauspicious" 遂使葬書一術，乃有百二十家，各說吉凶.[155] Given the existence of so many competing schools of divination and geomancy in the days of both Lü Cai (in the early Tang) and Sima Guang (in the middle of the Northern Song), one can imagine that an entire industry of divination and geomancy prospered throughout Tang times. It is no wonder, then, that these practices attracted such attention in the texts of epitaphs, which, after all, get us closer to actual ritual practice than do court-sponsored prescriptive ritual texts like the *Kaiyuan Rites*.

7. Temporary Housing of a Coffin Prior to Burial (*Bin*)

The *Shuowen jiezi* defines the word *bin* 殯 as follows: "The deceased in the inner coffin is transferred to the outer coffin to prepare for a burial, as if the deceased is treated as a guest" 死在棺，將遷葬柩，賓遇之.[156] The *Kaiyuan Rites* mentions *bin* many times, and besides its original meaning as given here, the term also often refers to the temporary housing of a sealed coffin before the final burial, usually at a *binsuo* 殯所 (bier place) or *bintang* 殯堂 (bier hall). Subsequently, *qibin* 启殯 (step 32) was the ritual when the coffin was prepared to be moved out for final burial. The term *bin* appears frequently in epitaphs, though it was used in a somewhat broader range of meanings than in ritual texts, including both temporary interment and temporary storage of a coffin. As mentioned earlier, during the Tang dynasty, it was common for a person to be finally buried several months (or even several years) after his or her death. Hence, *bin* was frequently practiced.[157]

To get a sense of the range of reasons to store a coffin prior to burial, one can certainly turn to epitaph texts.[158] First, families often waited a lengthy period for an auspicious burial date or grave site to be identified or available, which has been mentioned and will be further

154 Sima Guang, *Sima shi shu yi*, 75.
155 JTS 79:2723. Like earlier, the word *zangshu* here is also ambiguous, as it can refer to the specific text or it can speak of texts on burial in general, but either understanding does not affect the main point of this sentence.
156 SWJZ 163.
157 Other words in epitaphs such as *quanzang* 權葬 or *cuo* 厝 also refer to a temporary burial. *Cuo* literally means the storage of the coffin aboveground prior to burial, but it can also be used as a euphemism for a temporary burial.
158 Zhang Huixia studies 360 Tang-era epitaphs that record the deceased being temporarily buried, conducts statistical analysis of various factors, and discusses the causes of temporary burial in much greater detail and the different aftermaths of temporary burial (e.g., moving coffins or bones for a new burial, called *qianzang* 遷葬) in "Tang dai de quanzang yu qianzang yanjiu."

discussed in great detail in the next two chapters. Second, married couples were normally buried together, in what was termed a joint burial (*hezang* 合葬), which I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. The wait for a joint burial to happen could necessitate a temporary burial. It should be noted, however, that a joint burial itself did not necessarily require the ritual of *bin*. When the second spouse died, if the first one was already buried in the tomb, the tomb could be reopened for a joint burial. Third, when death occurred far from home, it was sometimes difficult or impossible to immediately transport the body of the deceased back to the family cemetery, due to various factors such as the consequences of an official career,[159] the turbulence of war,[160] or the lack of financial means.[161] For instance, among epitaph recipients, government officials were not uncommonly on official appointments far from home at the time of death. Official residences (i.e., *guanshe* 官舍, *guanshe* 館舍, *fushe* 府舍, *gongguan* 公館, *junshe* 郡舍, and *xiezhai* 廨宅) rank as the second-most-often-recorded places of death.[162] Then there were those who died at an inn (*chuanshe* 傳舍) unexpectedly while traveling, sometimes *en route* to an official appointment. Indeed, many epitaphs tell us that people died at inns while traveling.[163] Finally, the body of a deceased person was sometimes kept near the home for more sentimental reasons. In the words of one early Tang epitaph, "[We] want to keep the corpse [of our mother] in the house, but [if we do so], [we] are afraid of being different from others; but if [we] now bury her in the cemetery, [we] cannot stand parting from her. After debating the two [options], we turned to a *bin* as an appropriate solution" 即欲停屍在室，恐異於凡人；今若埋在墓田，不忍離別。兩儀憤問，取殯為宜.[164]

Where precisely was a sealed coffin kept while awaiting final burial? The *Kaiyuan Rites* does not provide an answer, but epitaph texts do offer many clues. A number of epitaph texts say that coffins were "temporarily placed in the main hall of the house" 權殯於堂.[165] Ms. Dugu's epitaph text says that her coffin was "temporarily placed in her bedroom" 權殯私寢.[166] Sometimes a coffin was buried near home. A Mr. Qiu's coffin was temporarily buried to the north of the family residence,[167] and a Ms. Cui's coffin was temporarily buried in the front garden of the house.[168] Or, it could be housed close to a grave site. A certain Mr. Guo's wife was temporarily buried 1 *li* [1/3 of a mile] northeast of his tomb while awaiting final burial.[169] A temporary burial might also take place at a Buddhist monastery. Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 (709–785), the famous Tang calligrapher, once accused a person of misconduct for having his

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159 For example, see MZH 761–762, 1784.
160 Examples can be found in MZH 1166, 1884–1885, 1769.
161 For example, see MZH 1985, 2423–2424.
162 The most often-recorded places of death are residences, including private homes (e.g., *sidi* 私第, *sishe* 私舍, and *sishi* 私室), vacation home (e.g., *bieshu* 別墅, *bieshe* 別舍, and *bieye* 別業), and residences in general (e.g., *dishe* 第舍 and *zhaishe* 宅舍). For more on places of death (including relevant statistics), see Tackett, *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy*, 72–82.
163 Nicolas Tackett aptly argues, with statistical evidence, that a significant percentage of "capital elites dying outside of the capital region died in temporary lodgings, such as government apartments, travel inns, or temples" (*The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy*, 77–79).
164 MZHX 207.
165 For example, see MZHX 361.
166 MZHX 410.
167 DTXS 322–323.
168 DTXS 422–423.
169 MZHX 601.

mother's coffin "temporarily buried in land behind a Buddhist monastery's walls" 殯僧舍垣地 for twenty-nine years.[170]

Temporary burials were consistently deemed to lack the finality of a proper burial. According to one epitaph, "we performed a temporary burial in accordance with [proper] ritual, [hence] we did not build a mound [over the tomb] nor plant trees [around the grave site]" 准禮權殯，不封樹也.[171] As will be discussed in chapter 3, epitaphs usually describe the ideal landscape of a graveyard as being surrounded by rivers, hills, and pine trees. Thus, depriving the deceased of this environment when in a temporary grave strongly suggests that it would have been problematic to allow the temporary resting place to become a permanent grave. One anecdote from the *Taiping guangji* is suggestive of the effect of leaving a coffin in storage long term. When a talented young man named Zhang Renbao died, his coffin was temporarily housed at a Buddhist monastery.[172] On the day of the *hanshi* 寒食 (lit., cold meal) festival,[173] his soul traveled a long way to knock at the door of his family home to ask for a proper burial; he kept returning until his family finally buried him.[174] Evidently, leaving a coffin in storage, even in a Buddhist monastery, did not completely settle the *hun* soul.

8. The Funerary Procession

The funerary procession was, of course, a key moment in the death ritual program. In the words of one epitaph, by means of the procession, one "transfers the spirit and moves the coffin, and the soul follows alongside" 遷神動柩，靈轉浮隨.[175] In essence, one was transferring the deceased's soul from the residence of the living to its everlasting home in the grave. The focus was on the spirit or soul of the deceased (and not on the body), which is evident from the fact that coffins were also called spirit coffins (*shenjiu* 神柩) or soul coffins (*lingjiu* 靈柩).[176] The rituals examined here are associated with funerary procession, and they once again highlight some of the ways in which actual practice diverged from the prescriptions of the *Kaiyuan Rites*.

8.1. Preparing for the procession

In the "getting ready for the burial" (*jiangzang* 將葬) series (covering steps 35–51), the *Kaiyuan Rites* lists a series of rituals of public display, including exhibiting the tomb epitaph and burial objects in front of the hearse. It also describes how to position the chariots and hearse

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170 JTS 128:3589. Tang-era anecdotes also record temporary burials at Buddhist monasteries; see, for example, the story of Zhang Renbao in TPGJ 354:34.

171 DTXS 584–585.

172 Buddhist monks and monasteries in the Northern Song played an even broader role in funerary activities. By then, members of the Buddhist clergy even led funeral processions, and Buddhist monasteries stored coffins until burial, promoted the practice of cremation, stored cremated remains, and so on. See Ebrey, "The Response of the Sung State to Popular Funeral Practices," 214.

173 The *hanshi* festival was a common postburial festival to offer sacrifices to the dead. It was on either the 105th day or 106th day after the *dongzhi* 冬至 (winter solstice) in the Tang. See Niu Dingping, "Tang dai de sangzang liyi," 284. The *hanshi* festival will be further discussed later in this chapter.

174 TPGJ 354:34.

175 MZHX 191.

176 In a strict sense, *jiu* 柩 means an outer coffin, in contrast to an inner coffin (*guan* 棺). But in these texts, *jiu* refers to coffins generally.

appropriately, and it records a number of meticulous requirements that the family members and guests had to follow to perform rituals properly, such as offering gifts and sacrifices, wailing, and getting on chariots and joining the funerary procession, all to be performed at appropriate moments. Clearly, the emphasis is on ritual regulations, with each step of the ritual program described in some detail. The implication is that ritualized mourning requires above all order and adherence to strict rules, a viewpoint reflecting the perspective of the bureaucratic state, chief sponsor of the *Kaiyuan Rites*. By contrast, when epitaphs do delve into some of the details of the funerary program, they have a very different focus. They provide little information about the preparation for the procession (though they do mention the *zudian* 祖奠 [offering sacrifice to the ancestors; step 40]); instead, as we shall see, they pay more attention to elaborate depictions of the funerary procession itself. A possible explanation is that epitaphs focused more on the efficacy of ritual (in leading the soul to the tomb and helping the deceased join the ancestors) and the impression that the funerary procession had on viewers; maintaining social order was far less important from this perspective.

The *zudian*, which epitaphs do mention, was an interesting ritual. It took place right before the coffin was lifted onto the hearse and the deceased started his or her journey from home to graveyard. Many epitaph texts record this ritual, providing some details on when, where, and how it took place. For instance, from Mr. Liu's epitaph, we know that the *zudian* took place in the evening after a feast, before the funerary procession left the next morning.[177] Both a Mr. Han's and a Mr. Bao's epitaphs tell us that the hearse for the spirit (*ling'er* 靈輀) waited outside for the completion of the *zudian*, suggesting that funerary processions could even happen on the same day, immediately after the feast, rather than the next morning.[178] Mr. Zhu's epitaph reveals that not only the family, but friends and guests as well, participated in the *zudian*, and "their plain white clothes [filled] the streets and lanes" 縞素街衢. We also learn from the epitaph that the court gave food and fabrics to the Zhu family, in addition to a group of musicians.[179] It is possible that these offerings from the court were all to be used for the *zudian*, which would imply that music played a role in this ritual as well. Additionally, a description (in a certain Mr. Fu's epitaph) of an "ancestral sacrifice" may offer hints at what the *zudian* entailed: effigies (*chuling* 芻灵) and fish and grain (*yugu* 魚穀) were presented, as were funerary dirges (*xielu* 薤露) and (wine of) pomegranate flowers (*liuhua* 榴花).[180] Why did the epitaphs pay so much attention to the *zudian*? The *zudian* was of course a particularly critical rite. Symbolically speaking, it was by means of this ritual that the deceased made his or her last offering to the ancestors at the home altar before departure for the burial site. As we shall see later, after the burial, the family would return to the ancestral hall for a sacrificial ritual called *yu* 虞, in which the soul of the deceased would join the family's ancestors; hence, a circle of life was completed.

177 DTXS 222–223.
178 DTXS 239–240, 1044–1045.
179 MZHX 608.
180 MZHX 1144. This epitaph uses the word *zuji* 祖祭 instead of *zudian*, but from the context it seems to mean either *zudian* or at least a sacrifice associated with the burial of Mr. Fu. *Zuji* was also a feature in the parting ceremony between living persons before a journey, so perhaps we can see an underlying homology and can regard the *zuji* here as a parallel ritual to that in the parting ceremony, as it was at this point that the *jiu* 柩 coffin left the home for the afterlife journey (insight gained from conversation with Professor Robert Ashmore).

8.2. The procession

Epitaph texts also often allude to the visual appearance of the funerary procession, sometimes vividly recording how marvelous the scene was, as in the following example:

> Sorrowfully, the feather canopy [above the hearse] advances, while, one after the other, the dirges are sung in unison.
>
> 惨惨而羽葆前迎，歷歷而薤歌齊唱。[181]

A certain number of Tang-era epitaphs allude to the procession by means of a similar set of images: white horses (*baima* 白馬) driving a (spirit) hearse (*er* 輀 or *lingche* 靈車), either minimally decorated as in the case of a "plain hearse" (*suche* 素車) or surmounted by a feather canopy (*yubao* 羽葆). Epitaphs also frequently mention red embroidered pennants (*danzhao* 丹旐), as well as pine trees (*song* 松) at grave sites. And they mention soul-banners, called *jingfan* 旌幡 or *lingfan* 靈幡, which were to lead the soul to the grave site, thus ensuring that the soul did not go astray.[182] In addition, numerous epitaph texts record that people in the procession wore plain white clothing (*gaosu* 縞素), held the ropes attached to the coffin (*zhifu* 執紼), and walked next to the coffin while wailing 隨柩而哭.[183] There was often a generic character to these expressions, many of which constituted part of a standard metaphorical language of funerals. For instance, the phrase "plain hearse and white horse" (*suche baima* 素車白馬) appears as an expression designating the funerary procession as early as in the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the scribe) by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–86 BCE), a text enormously influential on later literature.[184] Nevertheless, the relatively frequent descriptions of funerary procession in epitaphs and the uniform vocabularies to describe such scenes strongly suggest that there existed a broadly shared sense of how a funerary procession properly appeared and how it was (or ought to be) experienced by participants and by people lining the path of the cortège.

Music was also an essential element of a funerary procession.[185] As in the case of the first example cited in this subsection, numerous epitaph texts note that funerary bands played live music as the procession advanced toward the graveyard. One epitaph states: "the hearse rolls along the road, while the *xielu* [i.e., funerary dirges] contribute to the sadness. The family and guests are filled with sorrow, and the passersby with melancholy" 輀車軋道，薤露增悲，親賓愴然，行路淒感.[186] A certain Mr. Li's epitaph tells us that dirges were also played during the postburial procession returning home: "the [bearers of] insignia and the [musicians] of drums and wind instruments together accompanied [the mourners] to the grave site, and then also accompanied them back to the residence" 其儀仗鼓吹等送至墓所，並送還宅.[187] Tang court-issued regulations stated that only elites with official rank were allowed to play funerary dirges

181 QTWXB 15:10040.
182 The ritual of having a soul-leading banner for the funeral still exists in North China today. See Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 358.
183 A typical example is on MZH 1927.
184 Sima Qian, *Shiji* 6:276.
185 In fact, records of funerary dirges are already mentioned in the *Zuozhuan*, named *yubin* 虞殯. In rural China nowadays, music is still often played during the procession to a grave site. See Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, 1662.
186 MZH 2251. Among all funerary dirges, the *xielu* 薤露 and *yüge* 虞歌 were the most popular, so much so, in fact, that these terms were often used as generic names for funerary dirges.
187 MZHX 38.

(*wange* 挽歌),[188] but clearly this regulation was not followed, as many epitaphs for non-office-holders mention dirges. A famous Tang-era story titled "Li Wa zhuan" 李娃傳 (Biography of Li Wa) includes an account suggestive of the broad popularity of dirges. In this story, two shops specializing in funerary supplies held a public competition to see who could sing the most moving dirges. The audience was said to number in the tens of thousands, and came from all over the city, with no one left at home.[189] Funerary dirges were so popular in the Tang that their lyrics even appear carved on epitaph covers. Over twenty epitaphs of this sort have been found, each inscribed with a single dirge, and a dirge was usually composed of four lines, with five or seven characters per line.[190] In content, they often depicted the graveyard on a cold night, conveyed a sense of stillness and loneliness, and expressed the deep sorrow felt by the family. All used highly formulaic language, and many were near verbatim copies of one another. Some dirges also resemble a rhymed eulogy (*ming* 銘) at the end of an epitaph text, reminding us that the latter was also likely enunciated at some point in the funerary program.[191]

Additionally, when a dirge was carved into the center of an epitaph's stone cover, it was often surrounded by icons of time and space, such as the deities of four directions (*sishen* 四神), twelve zodiac animals (*shi'er shengxiao* 十二生肖), eight diagrams (*bagua* 八卦), and twenty-eight constellations (*ershiba xingxiu* 二十八星宿). Hypothetically, together with an upside down dipper-shaped (*fudou xing* 覆斗形) epitaph cover that itself resembles a divination board (*shi* 式), this design probably symbolizes a micro-universe, in which the central position of the dirge not only emphasizes the elevated status of the deceased and expresses the sorrow of the family, but also probably played an efficacious role in communicating with the underworld's spirits. If we may go a step further, when an epitaph was placed inside the tomb close to the main entrance and at the front of the main chamber, and when its cover stone was centrally engraved with a dirge, the underground grave might be efficaciously transformed, visually and vocally, into a memorial hall for the deceased, with songs forever being sung to praise and memorialize the dead while also expressing the sorrow of the living.

8.3. Road sacrifices and paper goods

In the context of evolving funerary processions, sources such as anecdotes, archaeological evidence, and epitaphs all suggest that noncanonical rituals became widely popular by the second half of the Tang dynasty, indicating one more way in which mortuary practice diverged from the *Kaiyuan Rites* and other canonical texts. One such new ritual was referred to by the Tang-era writer Feng Yan as the "road sacrifice" (*daoji* 道祭).[192] He describes

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188 See THY 38:691–692 for the specific rules regarding how funerary dirges were used among office-holders of different ranks. For thorough research, see Wang Qingwei and Wang Xuan, "Shengsi zhijian," 95–96.
189 TPGJ 484:326.
190 Interestingly, all of these epitaphs were buried in Luzhou Prefecture, which indicates that they probably belonged to a particular regional tradition. For detailed research on dirges on epitaph covers, see Liang Haiyan, "Tang ren muzhi gai tishi kaolun"; Hu Kexian, "Muzhi xinji Tang dai wange kaolun." Moreover, except the epitaphs with unknown dates, all were created after the mid-eighth century, and most are from the ninth century. This may reflect the shift in funerary practices in the late Tang, namely, from rituals that centered on burials to rituals that emphasized the funerary procession and display, as some scholars have argued and will be discussed next.
191 For example, see MZHX 460, 759, 789, 882.
192 Road sacrifice was also called *luji* 路祭. According to a Dunhuang manuscript numbered "017b" (dated to the periods of the late Tang, Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period [902–979], and early Song) in the collection of

it as follows:

> In Emperor Xuanzong's reign [r. 712–756], the country was abundantly wealthy. Participants in funerary processions sometimes set up sacrificial offerings along the road: they set up a canopy, inside which are items such as artificial flowers, artificial fruit, figurines made of flour, noodles, and cooked rice. [The canopy] was no larger than a square *zhang*, and no taller than a few *chi*; even so, some commentators still objected [to the extravagance and waste]. Since the [An Lushan] rebellion, this trend has greatly increased: the sacrificial canopies [now] reach 8 to 10 *chi*, and three to four hundred stands are set out [for sacrificial offerings]; the carvings and painted decorations are extremely elaborate and skillful. More food and sacrificial animals are found outside [the canopy].[193]
>
> 玄宗朝，海內殷贍，送葬者或當衢設祭，張施帷幙，有假花假果粉人麵粻之屬；然大不過方丈，室高不踰數尺，議者猶或非之。喪亂以來，此風大扇，祭盤帳幙，高至八九十尺，用牀三四百張。雕鐫飾畫，窮極技巧。饌具牲牢，復居其外。[194]

The epitaph of Ms. Zuo, a high-ranking elite woman, provides an interesting example of a road sacrifice:

> The spirit hearse sets off; the funerary procession is wrapped up in sorrow. Gauze screens stand high flying like clouds, and painted chariots and effigies are lined up for display.
>
> 靈�П發引，鹵簿纏哀，綃幕矗以雲浮，塗芻宛而成列。[195]

An epitaph cited earlier also appears to confirm this practice, and suggests that the state may have helped defray the costs of such a showy display:

> The state bestowed upon the family painted chariots and effigies, and, along the road, ritual sacrifices were performed.
>
> 官給塗芻之器，路陳奠祭之儀。[196]

As some scholars have convincingly argued, around the mid-eighth century, the quantity and quality of grave goods declined, whereas funerary display aboveground including road sacrifice and burning goods made of paper and wood as a means of transferring the goods to the afterlife for the use of the deceased became increasingly popular, which marked a fundamental change in burial practice.[197] Among the paper goods, most significant was "spirit money"—

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the Shanghai Library, the road sacrifice took place in a *tangzi* 堂子 (probably a temporary architectural structure built along the road). For the original text, see Shanghai tushuguan and Shanghai guji chubanshe, *Shanghai tushuguan cang dunhuang tulufan wenxian 1*, 127–128; for a study of it, see Zhao Chuan, "Shanghai tushuguan cang Dunhuang wenshu *017b Zangshi zachao* yanjiu," 186–188.

193 Both the *chi* 尺 and the *zhang* 丈 are traditional Chinese measuring units for length. I use the conversions 1 *chi* =30.6 cm (12 in), and 1 *zhang*=10 *chi*; see Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 612–613.

194 FSWJJ 55.

195 Xi'an shi wenwu baohu kaogu yanjiuyuan, "Tang Liang guo furen Wang shi mu fajue jianbao," 10.

196 QTWBY 7:410–411.

197 Both Qi Dongfang and Ye Wa discuss the rapid changes that tomb structure and burial objects underwent after the mid-eighth century: tomb size shrank, burial objects decreased in quantity, quality, and types, and tomb figurines nearly disappeared. They both point out that these changes do not suggest a major decline in resources spent on burials. Ye argues that the decline of ceramic figurines "was the result of the Tang government's unrelenting effort to control mortuary practice and its intensifying interference in funerary goods production" ("Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 306). Qi argues that the changes in grave goods reflected the new emphases in death ritual, which, around the mid-eighth century, switched from underground to aboveground. In other words, displaying funerary objects and burning goods made of paper and wood at grave sites became popular as a way to flaunt wealth, show filial piety, and mark one's status, hence the gradual deemphasis on extravagant burials (as opposed to extravagant funerary processions). See Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 304–308; Qi Dongfang, "Tang dai de sangzang guannian xisu yu liyi zhidu," 72–78.

replica money made of paper—which as a way to transfer money to the dead probably first appeared during the Wei-Jin period (220–420), before it flourished in the Tang.[198] The *Taiping guangji* provides some interesting anecdotes of burning spirit money for the deceased. In one story, a certain Wang Shou died due to an administrative error by an underworld official. Upon his return to life, the underworld officials first ordered him to pay a fee, noting explicitly: “We do not use bronze coins [Tang legal tender], preferring to obtain coins made of white paper” 吾不用銅錢，欲得白紙錢. Wang asked his family to burn a hundred white paper coins, but the underworld officials complained that “the money was no good” 錢不好. As a result, even though he returned to life, he soon fell sick again and did not recover until his family finally “bought another pack of white paper with which to make coins” 別買白紙作錢.[199] Just like real money, spirit money also had different values shown by different material composition. In another story, Mr. Pei Ling was ill and on the brink of death. While in a coma, he met an underworld deity who asked him for money and food in exchange for his life. The deity explained that “gold coins [in the underworld] are yellow paper coins in the human world, whereas silver coins are white paper coins” 金錢者，是世間黃紙錢；銀錢者，白紙錢耳. Given the popularity of the burning of paper coins, professionals came to specialize in its manufacture. Thus, there are accounts of families summoning manufacturers of spirit money (*zaoqian ren* 鑿錢人) to their home to make spirit money on behalf of a deceased loved one.[200] Besides at funerals, spirit money was also burned on the *hanshi* festival. In a poem by the Tang poet Zhang Ji 張籍 (ca. 766–830), we learn that “on the *hanshi* festival, every family offers paper coins [to the dead], while crows and hawks building nests [sometimes] carry the paper coins up into the trees” 寒食家家送紙錢，烏鳶作窠銜上樹.[201] For the birds to benefit from the spirit money, one assumes that it did not all burn to completion.

9. Death Ritual at the Grave Site

Between *daomu* 到墓 (arriving at the grave site; step 53) and *yankuang* 掩壙 (sealing the tomb; step 58), the *Kaiyuan Rites* lists four death ritual steps: displaying burial objects, laying down the coffin while family members wail in proper order, entering the tomb, and placing burial objects in proper positions inside the tomb. All these steps were essential components of a proper burial, but evidence from anecdotes and tomb epitaphs suggest that other noncanonical rites were practiced as well.

9.1. “Cutting grass” before burial

The *zhancao* 斬草 (cutting grass) ritual was one such noncanonical practice. One Tang-era epitaph records that the deceased was buried shortly after the *zhancao* ritual,[202] and another one notes that “the grass was cut in the old cemetery” 斬草舊域 right before “burying the bones

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198 See Zhang Chongyi, “Zhiqian xintan,” 188–189. See also Huang Qinglian, “Xianggu yu jishen,” for a study of spirit money in the Tang.
199 TPGJ 380:90–91.
200 TPGJ 381:94–95.
201 Huang Jun et al., *Quan Tang shi*, 4:628.
202 MZHX 298.

[of a couple] together in the former grave [i.e., the grave of the spouse who died first]" 合骨先墳.[203] A Song dynasty epitaph states more precisely that the *zhancao* ritual happened right before the ritual of *dingxue* 定穴 (determining the *xue*).[204] As we shall see in chapter 3, a *xue* refers to an area inside a cemetery where individual tombs are positioned. In other words, the epitaph records that the z*hancao* ceremony happened first, followed by a geomancer selecting the tomb's location. Possibly, this was also the sequence in the Tang dynasty.

Besides the scarce information culled from epitaphs, there are early accounts of the grass-cutting ritual in four fragmentary Dunhuang manuscripts, estimated to be from either the Tang or around the Tang era. Two of these manuscripts are very short and were probably originally part of the table of contents of a burial ritual manual.[205] A third one is also relatively short, recording miscellaneous funerary matters, including the ritual of cutting grass before burial.[206] The last one is long and much more thorough. It is titled *Yin yang shu: Zang shi* 陰陽書：葬事 (Book of yin and yang: matters of burial) and appears to have been an unofficial almanac of the Tang era. It identifies numerous stem-branch (*ganzhi* 干支) days as auspicious or inauspicious for a variety of funerary activities, including *qibin* 啟殯 (getting the coffin ready), *zhancao*, *binmai* 殯埋 (temporary and permanent burials), *qitu* 起土 (digging open the ground), *chufu* 除服 (removing mourning clothing), and so on.[207]

The earliest record of the *zhancao* ritual in a state-sponsored ritual text appears in the Northern Song *Dili xinshu* 地理新書 (New book of earth patterns),[208] which explains why "cutting grass" was necessary: "cutting grass is to break off evil spirits and to pacify the deceased's *hun* soul" 斬草者，斷惡魂，安亡魂也.[209] Hence, performing the ritual of cutting grass before burial was a way to erase the authority of other spirits and to claim territory for the deceased. The *Dili xinshu* lists a series of requirements for performing this ritual, including "not being allowed to speak of malicious deeds" 不可語惡事, "having to bathe and clean [oneself]" 必沐浴潔淨, and "not eating meat" 不食葷.[210] It also explains how this ritual was performed:

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203 QTW 210:221.
204 Yang Ying and Yang Yi, "Song Li Miaoxiang muzhi kaoshi," 101.
205 The two manuscripts are in the British Library collection and are often referred to as the *Yinyang shu* 陰陽書 (Book of yin and yang). They are identified as S.12456B and S.12456C. Jin Shenjia compares them with the Northern Song geomantic manual *Dili xinshu*, observes that they overlap greatly, and argues that the *Dili xinshu* was probably compiled based on the two Dunhuang manuscripts. See Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 209–210.
206 Dunhuang manuscript 017b in the collection of the Shanghai Library also records the ritual practice of cutting grass. For the original text, see Shanghai tushuguan and Shanghai guji chubanshe, *Shanghai tushuguan cang Dunhuang tulufan wenxian 1*, 127–128; for a study of it, see Zhao Chuan, "Shanghai tushuguan cang Dunhuang wenshu *017b Zangshi zachao* yanjiu," 184–186.
207 See Dunhuang P.2534. Images of this manuscript are searchable on the website of the International Dunhuang Project (http://idp.bl.uk). For rubbings, see Shanghai guji chubanshe and Faguo guojia tushuguan, *Faguo guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang xiyu wenxian*, 15:188. For transcriptions and analysis, see Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 301–318.
208 It is unclear when the *zhancao* ritual started, but it certainly existed before the Tang dynasty, as it is mentioned twice in the *Nan Qi shu* 南齊書 (*History of Southern Qi*) by Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯 (489–537), which covers the years from 479 to 502. See Xiao Zixian, *Nan Qi shu*, 10:170. But this practice is not mentioned in the *Kaiyuan Rites* or in any other canonical text dating to the Tang.
209 DLXS 426.
210 DLXS 14:427.

before the coffin is laid inside the tomb, the funerary chanter (*zhusheng* 祝生) proclaims that "today [we perform] the [ritual of] cutting grass, [hence] the misfortune will be gone and fortune will arrive" 今日斬草，殃去福至. Afterward, he hands a knife to the filial son (*xiaozi* 孝子) to cut nine reed stalks (*mao* 茅) or straw stalks (*gancao* 秆草) three times, while chanting: "The first cut is to cut heavenly calamity…the second cut is to cut earthly calamity…the third cut is to cut human calamity" 一斬斬天殃……二斬斬地殃……三斬斬人殃.[211] Following the ritual of cutting grass, as the *Dili xinshu* records, was the ritual of burying an iron contract. These two rituals must happen on the same day: "On the day of cutting grass, [the family] must write in red on an iron contract and bury it in the center of the burial land" 凡斬草日，必丹書鐵券，埋地心.[212] The text explains: "To bury [the deceased] without cutting grass and to purchase the [burial] land without establishing a [tomb] contract are called stealing [the land for] burial, which is extremely inauspicious" 葬不斬草，買地不立券者，名曰盜葬，大凶[213] Interestingly, epitaphs also record that prior to a burial, a ritual of burying land deeds to claim the ownership of the land took place. For instance, a certain Mr. Zhao's epitaph text explicitly states that the family "made manifest an iron contract so that they could start to dig the grave" 旌鐵券以啓墳.[214] Archaeologists have indeed excavated iron plates in Tang-era tombs, and some scholars have identified them as contracts, often based on the fact that in some of these tombs stone containers carved with the words *tiequan han* 鐵券函 (iron contract case) or *quanhan* 券函 (contract case) have also been excavated. But since most of the iron plates are either unmarked or carry short blurry inscriptions (too indistinct to be deciphered), their functions remain unclear.[215]

In sum, even though unmentioned in the *Kaiyuan Rites* (and other classical canonical texts of the Tang dynasty), both cutting grass and burying tomb contracts addressed to underworld deities were practiced—perhaps even commonly—in the Tang. Together, they helped to announce to the spirit world the arrival of the deceased and to secure the claim of ownership over the burial land, possibly playing a role similar to the "announcement to the underworld" (*gaodi ce* 告地策) of early China. More will be said in chapter 4 on tomb contracts.

9.2. Making a proper tomb

A certain Ms. Wang's epitaph recounts that her husband selected models of objects that she liked when she was alive, buried them, and believed that her soul would enjoy these objects in the afterlife as well:

> Today, those of us gathered in the tomb have all brought inside models of objects that the lady customarily used for adornment or for enjoyment; her spirit will certainly be pleased to use these.
>
> 今於兆中，皆取夫人平昔服玩之物樣製，致於其內，神道固當喜用之.[216]

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211 DLXS 14:427, 429. My translation is adapted from Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 325–326.
212 DLXS 14:427.
213 DLXS 14:426.
214 DTXS 455.
215 For thorough archaeological research on the iron plates found in Tang-era tombs, see He Yuexin, "Sui Tang muzang chutu tiequan kao," 2018.
216 QTWXB 14:9781. I adopt Nicolas Tackett's English translation of this epitaph inscription; see Tackett, *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy*, 18.

The underlying idea here is that the dead still enjoyed at least some of their former earthly pleasures in the afterlife. Epitaphs and ritual texts generally lack descriptions of what a grave looked like underground, but anecdotes and archaeological finds reveal that the depth, width, layout, and content of a grave mattered greatly. A telling anecdote from the "Jiyi" 記異 (Records of the unusual) chapter of the *Da Tang xinyu* 大唐新語 (New tales of the great Tang) describes in considerable detail how to ensure that the tomb is beneficial to both the dead and the living:

> In the first month of the fifteenth year of the Kaiyuan era [727], Jixian academician Xu Jian took a leave of absence to go to the capital [Chang'an] to bury his wife, Ms. Cen. He consulted Zhang Yue [preeminent court and literary arbiter of his age] about the construction of a tomb. Yue said: "To build a tomb without the tumulus [above it] is to return to the origin. Only after the fall of the Three Dynasties [Xia, Shang, and Zhou] did people begin to embellish [tombs] with tumuli, as a place where filial sons could forever long for [their parents]. Death rituals vary based on the rank and status of the deceased, so that the living and the dead each follow their appropriate paths. In the Chang'an [701–705] and Shenlong [705–707] eras, a monk named Hong from Huangzhou was capable of understanding the ghosts' and spirits' ideas, and he consulted with them about [various] affairs. I often listened to his words and still remember the main points: "The grave needs to be deep and narrow: being deep makes it secluded, and being narrow makes it solid. The territory of earth starts 1 *zhang* and 2 *chi* underground, and the territory of water starts another 1 *zhang* and 2 *chi* [further down]. Each [territory] has its dragon to defend it. The earth dragon rises to violence every six years, and the water dragon rises to violence every twelve years. When the souls of the deceased lie in the paths of these dragons, they will not be at ease. Thus the grave should be set at a depth of more than 2 *zhang* and 4 *chi*. The four sides of the grave are called 'arched walls,' and should be broad at the bottom and come together at the top. The top of its ceiling is called the "central watchtower," which needs to face downward and come together, while its sides need to slant downward. The grave should be decorated with [a layer of] powder in lieu of lime. One should not place ceramic or porcelain goods [inside the tomb], for they have been close to fire. One should not place gold [inside the tomb], for if [placed there] for long, it can turn into strange spirits. There should not be cinnabar, realgar, or alum, for their *qi* is dry and fiery, which will make the grass and trees above the tumulus wither and lose moisture. There should not be hair or feathers, for they have been close to corpses [of animals and birds]. Cast iron in the form of oxen and pigs can control the two dragons [of earth and water]. Jade is sleek and pure, and can accord with the gods and spirits, so it should be placed inside the tomb to help the deceased's spirit." Such were the words of Monk Hong, none of which had been understood by former worthies. The stone sarcophagus of Huan Tui and the naked burials of [some] royal princes were excessive in their extravagance and frugality [respectively], and neither attains the right balance. In recent years, Xu Yougong, chief minister of the Court of Judicial Review, applied laws appropriately and was reliable. When it came to his burial, it was frugal and did not exceed [ritual] prescriptions. The tomb workers were told: "There is bound to be an unusual resonance, which will commemorate this man." Indeed, they obtained a stone chamber, as large as a cauldron, spacious inside and solid outside, with four doors and eight windows. The diviner said: "This is a gift from Heaven to reward his virtue." The stone chamber was placed inside Xu's grave, which was auspicious as a result. Later Xu was praised in an imperial edict and bestowed with a posthumous title, with the imperial favor reaching his sons. [In contrast,] Wang Renjiao, commander unequaled in honor [rank 1b], because of his status as imperial in-law, had a tomb that exceeded the prescriptions, and [was buried] with clothing and burial objects numbering nearly a thousand. Before the earth of the tumulus had even settled, his family was destroyed and his sons died. The lessons of history are close at hand; choose your actions [with care].
>
> 開元十五年正月，集賢學士徐堅請假往京兆葬其妻岑氏，問兆域之制於張說。說曰："墓而不墳，所以反本也。三代以降，始有墳之飾，斯孝子永思之所也。禮有升降貴賤之度，俾存歿之道，各得其宜。長安、神龍之際，有黃州僧泓者，能通鬼神之意，而以事參之。僕常聞其言，猶記其要："墓欲深而狹，深者取其幽，狹者取其固。平地之下一丈二尺為土界，又一丈二尺為水界，各有龍守之。土龍六年而一暴，水龍十二年而一暴，當其壂［隧］者，神道不安，故深二丈四尺之下，可設窀穸。墓之四維，謂之折壁，欲下闊而上斂。其中頂謂之中樵［譙］，中樵［譙］欲俯斂而傍殺。墓中抹粉為飾，以代石堊。不置甄甎瓷瓦，以其近於火。不置黃金，以其久而為怪。不置朱丹、雄黃、礬石，以其氣燥而烈，使墳上草木枯而不潤。不置毛羽，以其近於屍也。鑄鐵為牛豕之狀像，

> 可以禦二龍。玉潤而潔，能和百神，寘之墓內，以助神道。” 僧泓之說如此，皆前賢所未達也。桓魋石槨，王孫倮葬，奢儉既過，各不得中。近大理卿徐有功，持法不濫，人用賴焉。及其葬也，儉不逾制，將穿墓者曰：“必有異應，以旌若人。”果獲石堂，其大如釜，中空外堅，四門八牖。占曰：“此天所以祚有德也。”置其墓中，其後終吉。後優詔褒贈，寵及其子。開府王仁皎以外戚之貴，墳墓逾制，禨服明器，羅列千裏。墳上未幹，家毀子死。殷鑒不遠，子其擇焉。[217]

This long story addresses five critical aspects of a grave. The first is the proper structure of the tomb, and, more specifically, the width, depth,[218] and shape of a grave. The second is the notion that two dragons dwelled underground, and that they should be prevented from disturbing the peace of the deceased. The third is that objects can be either harmful or beneficial as grave goods. The fourth is that burials should vary based on the deceased's rank and status. Lastly, an appropriate or inappropriate burial can affect the deceased's descendants. The passage also implies that, in the view of its author, many burials were inappropriate for being excessively lavish or frugal; apparently many people did not understand the essence of correct death ritual. Not surprisingly, then, many tombs did not adhere to all of Monk Hong's recommendations. But some of the concerns brought up by the anecdote are reflected in archaeological records. For instance, tomb depth did not change much over time, perhaps reflecting a belief in the two underground dragons, and iron oxen and pigs have been found in metropolitan tombs of the late Tang.[219]

9.3. Joint burials

When a person died unmarried, he or she was buried alone in a tomb in the family cemetery (except in the case of an afterlife marriage, when two originally unmarried people were buried together as a couple),[220] but when a person died married, he or she was typically buried together with the spouse, a practice called "joint burial" (*hezang* 合葬, *hefu* 合祔, *fu* 祔, or *tongxue* 同穴 in epitaph texts).[221] Joint burials were popular during the Tang, as attested in epitaphs and by archaeological excavations,[222] yet they are not prescribed in the *Kaiyuan Rites* and were explicitly recognized as a noncanonical practice, as will be shown below.

An important debate on the appropriateness of joint burials was spurred by a proposal, upon the death of Empress Wu Zetian 武則天 (624–705)—the only woman emperor (r. 690–705) in Chinese history—to bury her in the tomb of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649–683). One objection to this proposal was that "joint burials are not [a practice] from antiquity" 合葬非古.[223]

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217 Liu Su, *Da Tang xinyu* 13:195.

218 Some Dunhuang manuscripts also discuss the appropriate depth of a tomb based on the status of the deceased, such as Dunhuang P.2550B, P.3647, and 017B. See Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 240-243, 263; Zhao Chuan, "Shanghai tushuguan cang Dunhuang wenshu *017b Zangshi zachao* yanjiu," 183.

219 See Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 141–146, and Zhao Chuan, "Shanghai tushuguan cang Dunhuang wenshu *017b Zangshi zachao* yanjiu," 183, for discussions of tomb depth. As for figurines of iron oxen and pigs, see chapter 4 herein.

220 See Yao, "Until Death Do Us Unite," especially examples on 208, 212, 219.

221 Strictly speaking, only *hezang* and *tongxue* absolutely mean joint burials, that is, being buried in the same tomb (but in different coffins) with one aboveground grave mound, while *hefu* or *fu* can refer to either a joint burial inside the same tomb or two burials next to each other.

222 Based on statistical analysis, Ping Yao discusses the remarkably high rate of joint burial in the Tang; see "Until Death Do Us Unite," 213.

223 THY 20:396.

A number of epitaphs written for joint burials also explicitly recognized this problem, while seeking to justify the practice nonetheless. A certain Mr. Liu's epitaph states: "'Joint burials are not [a practice] from antiquity': this is merely a saying. In life, [a woman] shifts her 'sky' [from her father to her husband]; in death, she must be buried in the same tomb [as her husband]" 合葬非古，茲言徒設。生則移天，死惟同穴.[224] According to another epitaph, "once the tomb was sealed, the two coffins would forever remain [together]. Joint burials are not [a practice] from antiquity, but the Duke of Zhou followed it" 一槨既掩，雙棺永存，合葬非古，周公所從也.[225] Indeed, many epitaphs justify joint burials on the basis that they "implement the rites of the Duke of Zhou" 行周公之禮.[226]

A second major objection to burying Wu Zetian and Gaozong together was raised in a memorial by Yan Shansi 嚴善思 (644–728): "When the higher-status person [usually the husband] is buried first, it is improper to reopen the tomb to place the lower-status one" 尊者先葬，卑者不合於后開入.[227] Once again, this reasoning was not adhered to by Tang elites. Plenty of epitaph texts show that when a husband died before his wife, his tomb was reopened or his coffin was moved to another burial site for a joint burial. For instance, a Ms. Guo's husband passed away in 666, and he was temporarily buried. When she died in 702, the family "opened his old remains, and moved him into a new coffin 發彼故靈，遷諸新柩, burying the couple together."[228] Certainly, moving coffins or bones for a new burial (*qianzang* 遷葬) was rather common in the Tang, not only on the occasion of a joint burial, but also to relocate the deceased's remains to a more auspicious site.[229]

In a joint burial, the deceased couple usually shared a single epitaph, often with only the husband's name carved into the epitaph cover and with his biography dominating the text of the inscription. For instance, in a tomb dating to 673 and excavated in Chaoyang, Liaoning Province, two skeletons were found on the coffin bed, and the tomb showed traces of having been reopened. There was only one epitaph excavated within, with only the husband Zuo Cai's name in the title, but the epitaph text goes on to explain that Zuo died before his wife, and when she died, the family buried them together as a joint burial.[230] Another interesting case involves the epitaph of Mr. Wei and his wife, Ms. Lu. The epitaph was written for Mr. Wei, who was buried

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224 MZHX 379.
225 MZH 2015–2016. The practice of joint burial allegedly started with the Duke of Zhou, as the *Liji* explains: "Joint burial is not of antiquity. From the time of Duke of Zhou onward, [however,] no one has changed [back to the practice of antiquity]" 合葬，非古也。自周公以來，未之有改也. See LJ 8:227. The translation is adapted from Ing, *The Dysfunction of Ritual in Early Confucianism*, 156.
226 MZHX 446.
227 QTW 266:2704.
228 MZH 993.
229 Reburials are immediately recognizable in an archaeological context: the skeleton of a first burial is laid out flat (in what would have been a long rectangular coffin); in a reburial, the bones are neatly piled up and placed in a smaller square box. Examples of *qianzang* are many in archaeological excavations. For instance, two late-Tang tombs excavated in Yuzhou had clear traces of a second burial of the bones. See Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan and Xuchang shi wenwu gongzuodui, "Henan Yuzhou Xinfeng mudi Tang mu fajue jianbao," 21. In the Song and Yuan (1279–1368) dynasties, ritual texts list specific ways of collecting the bones from a temporary burial and moving them to a permanent burial. See Xu Pingfang, "Tang Song muzang zhong de 'mingqi shensha' yu 'muyi' zhidu," 100–101.
230 Liaoning sheng bowuguan wenwudui, "Liaoning Chaoyang Tang zuocai mu," 102, 107; Wang Jinlu, "Tang Zuo Cai muzhi xi," 45.

in 813. When his wife died in 829 and was buried that same year, her name, death date, and burial date were simply carved on the cover of the epitaph in two lines appearing just to the right of Mr. Wei's name.[231] Sometimes two epitaph texts were composed, with each being dedicated to one of the couple, as seen in the case of a tomb dating to 736 and found in Xi'an in Shaanxi Province. The wife was buried earlier, and when the husband was later buried alongside her, the family kept her epitaph, placing a new one for him inside the same grave, with his epitaph close to the tomb entrance and hers close to the coffin bed.[232] In rare cases, a joint burial could even contain three epitaphs: one each for the husband and wife, plus a third one for them both together. This is well illustrated in the case of Mr. Li and his wife, Ms. Lu, who were buried together in Li's ancestral cemetery in Yanshi County, near the eastern capital of the Tang dynasty, Luoyang. The couple shared a tomb, and three epitaphs were found right behind the tomb entrance. One epitaph belonged to Mr. Li, who was buried in 850 in the ancestral cemetery. A second brief epitaph belonged to his wife, Ms. Lu, with the explanation that, because she died away from home in the turbulence of the Huang Chao 黃巢 Rebellion (874–884), she was buried elsewhere temporarily in 881. The third epitaph, dedicated to the couple together, also records Ms. Lu's life in much more detail, and also tells the reader that, in 883, she was reburied together with her husband in his ancestral cemetery. At the time, Mr. Li was reinterred as well, as the children had "built a new tomb to practice a joint burial" 營新宅而合葬焉.[233]

Why was it so important for married couples to be buried together? One epitaph suggests an explanation in how it portrays the joint burial: "Two *hun* souls [dwell] in one tomb, forever [together] in the afterlife" 雙魂一穴，永在冥泉.[234] In other words, only by being buried together was it possible for the *hun* souls of a married couple to remain together after death. According to another epitaph, "How can it be said that heaven and earth lose one of the pair, and that [only] half of the form dies?" 豈謂乾坤失偶，半體云亡.[235] To understand this passage, one needs to recognize that "half of the form" is being implicitly contrasted with the "complete form" (*qiti* 齊體), a term referring to a marriage union. As Tang-era classicist Yuan Xingchong 元行沖 (653–729) wrote: "When alive, one should have one's complete form [i.e., be married]; when dead, one should be together in the same tomb" 生則齊體，死則同穴.[236] In other words, a joint burial was deemed to be as normal and natural as the institution of marriage itself, and as one of the many examples of the continuity between life and death (from the perspective of the *hun* soul). Moreover, as Christian de Pee aptly puts it, "Joint burial reunites the gendered, ritualized bodies of deceased spouses in the ritualized time and space of a tomb, with ceremonies that inscriptions, dirges, murals, and stone carvings at times represent in the literary and visual imagery of weddings," and "some believed the dead to retain their sexual desires and that joint burial may therefore have enshrined the living fecundity of an immortal marriage."[237]

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231 Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yanshi Xingyuan Tang mu*, 322.
232 Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo and Xi'an shi wenwu baohu kaogudui, "Tang Sun Chengsi fufu mu fajue jianbao," 25–26. For another example, see Sichuan sheng bowuguan, "Sichuan Wanxian Tang mu," 512–513.
233 See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yanshi Xingyuan Tang mu*, 361–369, for the epitaph rubbings and texts,183 for the locations of the three epitaphs, and 377 for the location of the tomb.
234 MZH 1896.
235 MZH 79.
236 QTW 272:2756.
237 De Pee, "Till Death Do Us Unite," 693, 706. In addition, de Pee argues that joint burials in medieval China appeared different than single burials, in both tomb structure and decorative imagery. He also demonstrates (through a quantitative analysis of 961 tombs from the Tang, Five Dynasties, Liao (907–1125), Song, Jin (1115–1234), and

Nevertheless, it was by no means true that all couples were buried together. A certain Ms. Zheng's case was not uncommon. According to her epitaph, "she was in the same cemetery but a different tomb from the gentleman [her husband]" 與府君同域異穴.[238] In the case of another Ms. Zheng, her epitaph asserts that she was "buried jointly" (*hefu*) with her husband, but in this case, as archaeologists have confirmed, the two were buried in separate tombs alongside each other.[239] There was a canonical justification for this type of "joint burial": "The people of Wei's way of *fu* [joint burial] was by means of separation [i.e., in separate tombs]; the people of Lu's way of *fu* was by being together [i.e., in the same tomb]. How wonderful!" 衛人之祔，離也；魯人之祔也，合之，善夫.[240] In addition, women who, after their husbands' death, became Buddhist or Daoist renunciants (for which they were highly praised for their virtuousness and chastity) sometimes sought to be buried at their monasteries rather than in their husbands' family cemeteries.[241] A Ms. Pei's epitaph explains that she did not want to be buried in her husband's family cemetery "because she had accepted the [Daoist] discipline" 以其受誡律也.[242] According to a Ms. Li's epitaph, she herself had once asserted, "a joint burial should not be applied, so that my [Buddhist] ascetic life can be completed" 不須祔葬，全吾平生戒行焉.[243] Both women were buried near their respective monasteries per their wishes. However, such wishes were not always realized. In fact, many female Buddhist renunciants did not have Buddhist burials, but were buried with or close to their husbands. For instance, an epitaph found in a joint burial from Zhengzhou in Henan Province reveals the identity of the wife as a Buddhist nun.[244]

Conceivably, the idea of a joint burial could create a conundrum in the case of remarriage. Elite men in the Tang commonly remarried; though much rarer, there are also cases of women remarrying. In the case of a woman, she was typically buried with her last husband.[245] But there are cases in which remarried women were buried alone. For instance, a Ms. Liu remarried after her first husband died, and in 844, when she passed away, the son that she had with her first husband "wailed and lamented that the lady could not be buried with the former gentleman [i.e., her first husband], on account of the constraints of ritual norms" 號慟不得以夫人合於先人者，拘其典禮之謂也. Ms. Liu was not buried with her second (and last) husband either; instead, she was buried alone.[246] Similarly, a certain Ms. Yang's two sons (from two different husbands) had their mother buried at a site different from either of their fathers' grave sites.[247]

Yuan periods) that correlations existed between joint burial and filial piety scenes in tomb murals, and between joint burial and the mimicry of timber-frame structures. See de Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 228, 231–233.

238 MZHX 1019.

239 See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yanshi Xingyuan Tang mu*, 292, for the epitaph text of Ms. Zheng, and 377 for the grave distribution map.

240 LJ 14:444. Many Tang epitaphs refer to this passage as a justification for joint burial, e.g., MZH 1510, 1397; DTXS 542–543.

241 For example, see MZHX 695, 700. For detailed research on this subject matter, see Chen Ruoshui, "Tang dai de yifu duoqi hezang yu fuqi guanxi."

242 MZH 1313.

243 MZH 1309.

244 Bao Yingjian and Liu Yanfeng, "Zhengzhou Gaoxing qu Jia zhuang Tang mu." For a detailed discussion of this subject, see Pang, "Familial Identity and 'Buddhist Nuns' in Tang China," 67–80.

245 For instance, see MZH 1583, 1186–1187.

246 MZH 2236.

247 MZH 1383.

By contrast, widowed men who remarried could be buried with multiple wives, as in the example of Cui Yuanlue and his two wives. The three were buried in the same grave, each in a separate coffin. In this case, Mr. Cui and his second wife, Ms. Li, each have their own epitaphs, while the first wife, Ms. Chang, was mentioned only briefly in Ms. Li's epitaph, as a way of praising Li for selflessly raising Chang's children as her own.[248] But there was also room for flexibility in the case of remarriage, with the last survivor often determining the burial arrangement. Apparently, not all second wives wanted their husbands to be buried with the first wives. According to Mr. Zhao's epitaph, he could not be buried with his first wife, Ms. Xin, because it violated canonical practice: "The gentleman [i.e., Mr. Zhao] once said, 'Joint burials are not [a practice] from antiquity.' Moreover, many years have passed and spirits like serenity, hence we should not open [Ms. Xin's tomb]" 公嘗曰：合葬非古也。況年代深遠，鬼神好靜，不須開發.[249] In fact, joint burials were common, as we have seen, and Ms. Xin had been buried only five years before, not such a long time. These were but excuses to justify the decision not to have Zhao buried with Xin. But other second wives did decide to bury their husbands with their first wives. For instance, Ms. Wei, the second wife of Mr. Yang, buried her husband together with his first wife, while choosing to be buried herself in her natal family cemetery close to her father's tomb.[250] Similarly, Ms. Lu, the second wife of Du Shenyan (and a grandmother of the famous Tang poet Du Fu 杜甫 [712–770]), had her late husband buried together with his first wife. When she passed away, her final wish was to be buried very close to her husband and his first wife's joint burial, but in a different tomb.[251] In this case, the epitaph was clear that her solution was not entirely ideal: "The lady commanded it, and the children accepted it, but prevalent custom disapproved of it" 太君令之，諸子受之，流俗難之. After all, given that canonical marriage involved one man and one woman in life and death alike, situations of remarriage clearly provided some room for individual agency and decision-making.

Finally, there are also cases of joint burials involving other combinations of family members. A young child might be buried with a parent, especially if both died at nearly the same time. A tomb excavated in Chaoyang, Liaoning Province, was found to contain a skull belonging to a woman and another skull belonging to a child.[252] There are also cases of multiple family members buried together in the same tomb chamber. For example, in a tomb excavated in Changzhi, Shanxi Province, the epitaph records that the tomb was a joint burial for a married couple, but a total of nine skulls were discovered by archaeologists. Presumably, the nine individuals included other family members.[253] Epitaphs also record such atypical burials. One Buddhist nun's epitaph explains that her final wish was to be buried together with another nun who had died earlier, so as "to give solace to lifelong yearning" 以慰平生 and "to thereupon give expression to long-lasting affinity" 爰申久契. In the end, however, she was buried in a different tomb, though near that of the other nun.[254]

9.4. Buddhist influence on death ritual and the matter of cremation

248 Luoyang shi di'er wenwu gongzuodui, "Tang Cui Yuanlue fufu hezang mu," 56, 61.
249 MZHX 963.
250 MZHX 445–446.
251 Du Fu, "Tang gu fanyang taijun Lu shi muzhi," 2232.
252 Zhang Hongbo and Jia Zongliang, "Liaoning Chaoyang wuzuo Tang mu," 43.
253 Wang Jinxian, "Shanxi Changzhi shi beijiao Tang Cui Na mu," 62.
254 MZHX 763.

During the Tang dynasty, Buddhism propagated widely, and Buddhist elements were broadly integrated into death ritual. As discussed earlier, Buddhist temples or monasteries were mentioned in epitaphs as places where the deceased spent their last moments in life and where coffins were temporarily stored before burial. Buddhist monks were also commonly invited to perform mourning rituals, notably rituals involving the seven-seven fasting, and widows who retreated to a Buddhist monastery were often highly praised. Meanwhile, Buddhist festivals were widely celebrated and assimilated into Chinese culture. For instance, the *yulanpen* 盂蘭盆 festival in the seventh month of a year, which was based on the famous story of Mulian rescuing his mother from the underworld, became part of state-sponsored ancestral sacrifices by the seventh century.[255] As Stephen Teiser has shown, the *yulanpen* festival encapsulated various Buddhist, Confucian, and popular Chinese ideas, notably karma, death and rebirth, filial piety, the dead as ancestors, the need for family members to display their achievements to the community at large, and the use of death ritual as a way to reaffirm the solidarity of kinship relations, including relations between the living and the dead.[256]

However, one should not overestimate Buddhism's role in Tang death ritual, especially concerning what would later be recognized as a distinctly Buddhist way of handling a corpse: cremation. Cremation was not widespread in the Tang, despite the popularity of Buddhism and the clear integration of Buddhist elements into death ritual.[257] Tang-era epitaphs provide ample evidence that cases of cremation were exclusively associated with Buddhist monks. But even the cremated remains of monks were "buried" in some sense: their bones and ashes were preserved in a pagoda sometimes referred to as an "ash pagoda" (*huishen ta* 灰身塔), and their remains were interred with an epitaph referred to as a "pagoda epitaph" (*taming* 塔銘).[258] Burying cremated remains was entirely a Chinese practice, as Indian Buddhist cremation entailed scattering the ashes and leaving no trace of a grave.[259] Moreover, not all Buddhist monks were cremated. For instance, the Chan Buddhist master Huizhao's epitaph records that his disciples buried him with his "whole body" (*quanshen* 全身) and built a pagoda atop his tomb to mark the site.[260] Not until the Song dynasty did cremation become a popular alternative. But even then, as Patricia Ebrey has shown, cremation was never a preferred way. Instead, it was a popular expedient in times of social turmoil marked by warfare, migration, and land shortage, and it also depended on the increasing involvement of Buddhist institutions in the funerary business.[261]

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255 Teiser, "Ghosts and Ancestors in Medieval Chinese Religion," 49.
256 Teiser, "Ghosts and Ancestors in Medieval Chinese Religion," 55–57.
257 Buddhist death ritual is centered upon relic worship, and there were four main ways to handle a dead body: cremation, exposure of the corpse, a combination of those two methods, and mummification, as Shiying Pang aptly summarizes; among them, cremation was the most popular. See Pang, "Familial Identity and 'Buddhist Nuns' in Tang China," 69.
258 For example, see MZH 17 and 89.
259 "Chinese" here means Han Chinese, the mainstream of Chinese culture. For ethnic minorities or the foreign tribes in the land that we call China today, rituals and practices surely differed. For instance, as Christina Han points out, evidence of cremation can be traced back to as early as the Neolithic period, and it enjoyed considerable popularity among northern tribes in the fourth century and continued throughout the following eras. In the Tang dynasty, Tibetans and Turks, and the Qiang 羌 people all performed cremation. See Han, "Cremation and Body Burning in Five Dynasties China," 2–3.
260 MZHX 1066.
261 Ebrey, "Cremation in Sung China," 419–425. Cf. Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, 231–235 and 244, regarding the geographic distribution of cremation burials, and his conclusion that during the eleventh century cremation burial was prevalent among Liao Chinese (partly due to the Liao state's patronage of Buddhism), but was

Ebrey stresses that the popularization of cremation burial took a long time: "customs did not change until new ideas had fostered new institutions and dislocations jarred people out of routines."[262] One of the earliest documented examples of elite cremation burial in the historical records concerned Empress Dowager Li of the Later Jin (936–947), who died as a hostage of the Khitans. Before she died, she announced her final wishes: "when I die, cremate my body and send my ashes to the Fanyang Buddhist temple; do not let me become a ghost in barbarian lands" 我死，焚其骨送范陽佛寺，無使我為虜地鬼也.[263]

9.5. Sacrifice to the deceased

Just prior to sealing the tomb, the deceased received additional sacrificial offerings at the grave site. The *Kaiyuan Rites* makes clear that these sacrifices were to occur *within* the tomb, as a detailed explanation applies to ritual step 52 (*yingci* 塋次) for elites of all ranks: "On the evening before [burial], in preparation, the person in charge of death ritual, inside the tomb and west of the entryway, sets up a canopy and places a spirit seat [i.e., altar] like how it was originally done" 前一日之夕，掌事者先於墓門內道西，張帷幕、設靈座如初.[264] Next, once the funerary procession arrived at the grave site, the family would enter the tomb to make offerings and would also lay out for display the set of burial objects (steps 53–57). There is an interesting object called *xiazhang* 下帳 (lower canopy) that is mentioned in "placing burial objects in proper positions inside the tomb" (*muzhong zhiqi xu* 墓中置器序; step 57), which says: "rice, alcohol, and dried meat are laid out northeast of the lower canopy, with plates of food in front of the canopy" 米、酒、脯陳於下帳東北，食盤設於下帳前.[265] There are debates on what *xiazhang* means,[266] but it seems clear that it is related to sacrificial activities inside a tomb. I think that *xiazhang* was probably an architectural structure with curtains hanging down, where an altar was set up for the deceased to receive sacrificial offerings inside a tomb. *Xiazhang* could also include the sacrificial offerings inside this canopy-like architectural structure.

Epitaphs record grave-site sacrifices but suggest that these sacrifices occurred in canopies (*zhang* 帳) that were set up aboveground, perhaps reflecting the fact that only the highest elites

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rare in the Song-controlled portion of the North China Plain.

262 Ebrey, "Cremation in Sung China," 428.

263 Ouyang Xiu, *Xin Wudai shi*, 17.207.

264 For rank 3 and higher, see DTKYL 139:666; for ranks 4 and 5, see DTKYL 143:690; and for rank 6 and lower, see DTKYL 147:710. Note that setting up a canopy and placing a spirit seat [i.e., altar] has been done multiple times previously, hence the phrase "like how it was originally done" (*ruchu* 如初). For elites of rank 3 and higher and ranks 4 and 5 only, setting up a canopy and placing a spirit seat [i.e., altar] first took place in the ritual step 20 (*dian* 奠; see DTKYL 138:658; DTKYL 142:681), and for elites of rank 6 and lower, it first took place in ritual step 35 (*chen chewei* 陳車位; see DTKYL 147:708).

265 See DTKYL 139:667 for elites of rank 3 and higher; the texts in the *Kaiyuan Rites* with regard to this step for elites of all the lower ranks are the same in content but slightly different in wording. The term *xiazhang* is recorded twice in the *Kaiyuan Rites*. The other time (also the first time) when it is mentioned is in the ritual step 44 (*qixing xu* 器行序), which lists *xiazhang* along with other burial objects to be transported by different chariots. See DTKYL 139:665 for elites of rank 3 and higher; the texts in the *Kaiyuan Rites* with regard to this step for elites of all the lower ranks are the same in content but slightly different in wording. Additionally, the *Tang huiyao* tells us that the height of a *xiazhang* varies based on one's official rank; see THY 38:695.

266 For research on the *xiazhang*, see Cheng Yi, "Tan Tang dai sangzang wenxian zhong de 'xiazhang'"; Zhang Yun and Qin Zaoyuan, "Qiantan 'xiazhang.'"

had tombs sufficiently large to be comfortably occupied by a group of ritual participants. According to a Mr. Ru's epitaph, "a new grave site was selected by divination, and a plain *zhang* [was erected] in the open fields" 卜兆新塋，郊原素帳.[267] Another epitaph makes clear that numerous people might aggregate in front of the *zhang*: "Eulogies were presented in front of the *zhang*, and family members and guests cried out in pain" 引哀詞於帳前，親賓痛發.[268] It is unlikely that a crowd of this sort could have fit into any tombs other than the large mausoleums built for emperors and imperial princesses. From the epitaph we know that the deceased was an elite woman without any particularly high status. Finally, we learn from yet another epitaph that "the grave was hastily sealed, and the *zhang* with tassels [hanging] stood empty" 黃腸遽掩，繐帳空陳.[269] That the *zhang* was apparently still visible even after the tomb was sealed makes clear that it was a structure erected aboveground, in contrast to the *xiazhang* inside the tomb, prescribed by the *Kaiyuan Rites*. In all likelihood, I think that the *zhang* described in epitaphs resembled the noncanonical canopies used for roadside sacrifices (mentioned earlier).[270] Additionally, some diagrams in Dunhuang scrolls also seem to demonstrate that canopies were set up aboveground.[271] Figure 1 depicts a soul canopy (*hunzhang* 魂帳) next to a hearse (*erche* 輀[轜]車). There is a line of text aligned with the hearse that gives a particular route that the hearse should take, going from the canopy to the tomb. Clearly, this diagram reveals that sacrifice accompanied burial. It is likely that certain sacrificial activities took place in the soul canopy first, and afterward the hearse carrying the coffin proceeded to enter the tomb site.

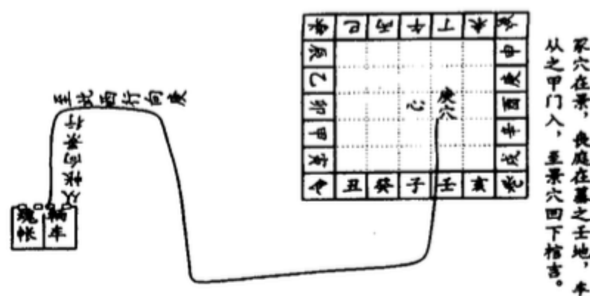

Figure 1. Dunhuang P.2550B

Source: Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 239.

10. Postburial Activities

The *Kaiyuan Rites* lists eight ritual steps after "sealing the grave" (*yankuang*; step 58), including one bout of ritualized wailing and seven types of sacrifice (*ji* 祭). Epitaphs, however, make note of only one of these steps, namely, the *yu* 虞 sacrifice (*yuji*; step 61). From the epitaph of a certain Mr. Li, we learn that the ritual program was thought to extend "from recalling the *po* soul to returning for the *yu*" 爰自復魄，至于反虞. In other epitaphs, we are told that "returning

267 MZHX 1140.
268 MZHX 1062.
269 MZHX 772.
270 FSWJJ 55.
271 Dunhuang scrolls P.2550B and P.2831, both dated to the Tang, contain several similar diagrams to the one discussed here (figure 1). See Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 239 and 249–253.

home for the *yu*, there will be sacrifices" 返虞有祭;[272] "[the family] will return for the *yu* ritual to benefit the spirits [of the ancestors]" 返虞致神;[273] and "[the family] will return wailing and will practice the *yu*" 返哭從虞.[274] Also, according to a Ms. Zong's epitaph, she completed the *yu* (referred to as *yudian* 虞奠 in the text), whereupon she returned to the mourning hut (*lu*).[275] What was the *yu* ritual? According to the *Kaiyuan Rites*, the *yu* entailed three rounds of sacrificing to the "spirit" (*ling* 靈)—meaning here the spirit tablet of the deceased—made first after the family returned home from the grave site, followed by the second *yu* (*zaiyu* 再虞) the next day, and finally the third *yu* (*sanyu* 三虞) the day after that.[276] Why did epitaphs pay such close attention to the *yu* sacrifice? The Eastern Han dictionary titled *Shiming* 釋名 (Explanation of names) tells the significance of the *yu* ritual in a section titled "Shi sangzhi" 釋喪制 (Explaining the ritual system): "Having completed the burial, the sacrifice made upon return to the [empty] bier hall is called *yu*, which is meant to please and calm the spirit and to make it return to this place" 既葬，還祭於殯宮曰虞， 謂虞樂安神，使還此也.[277] For one thing, the *yu* clearly represented one of the key moments drawing the funerary rites to a closure. For another, the *yu* marked the very moment when the soul of the deceased was introduced to the ancestral hall as an ancestor himself or herself, thereby completing its critical transition from the human realm to the spirit realm. Even though the soul of the deceased lived in the grave, the ancestral tablet provided a safe haven for the *hun* to dwell in when enjoying offerings from descendants during the soul's visits to the surviving family.[278]

After the completion of a funeral, the dead became an ancestor and continued to enjoy the care and sacrificial offerings from the living family. Among the various occasions for sacrifice, the *hanshi* 寒食 festival was the most popular. According to Patricia Ebrey's study, the *hanshi* festival, since the end of the Han, had been held at the solar period called *qingming* 清明; the *hanshi* festival initially involved extinguishing fires—hence it was a festival during which no one ate warm meals—and it only started to include visiting graves during the Tang dynasty. The association between *hanshi* (or *qingming*) and grave worship was established in the mid-Tang as an important addition to kin-group activities. Ebrey argues that the ritual of grave worship was not mentioned in ritual classics but originated among commoners and was influenced by Buddhism. However, since the *hanshi* was already widely practiced, and also given that commoners were not allowed to erect ancestral shrines and had otherwise no place to sacrifice to their ancestors and fulfill their filial piety, Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756) issued an edict in 732 to acknowledge the popularity of *hanshi* and to legalize it as an official festival.[279] As for

272 MZH 1037.
273 MZH 2124.
274 MZH 1294.
275 MZHX 826.
276 DTKYL 139:668–669 for elites of rank 3 and higher. The texts in the *Kaiyuan Rites* with regard to this step for elites of all the lower ranks are the same in content but slightly different in wording.
277 Liu Xi, *Shiming*, 8:135.
278 With regards to ancestral tablets as a place where the *hun* can dwell, see Wu Hung, "A Deity without Form"; Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead*, 375.
279 See Ebrey, "The Early Stages of Descent Group Organization," 20–21. For detailed discussions of *hanshi* and *qingming*, see also Niu Dingping, "Tang dai de sangzang liyi," 284; Zhao Heping and Du Youjin, "'*Jixiong shuyi* ji *Shuyi jing* chengshu niandai kao," 161; Zhang Bo, *Tang dai jieri yanjiu*, 136; Wu Yugui, *Zhongguo fengsu tongshi*, 468–470.

the significance of the collective worship at graves, Evelyn Rawski aptly summarizes Ebrey's points: "the practice of worshipping early ancestors together on one day helped foster kin-group consciousness among local agnates and may well have stimulated the formation of lineages."[280]

IV. Conclusion

This chapter has reconstructed key elements of the death ritual program while highlighting how ritual prescriptions were often at odds with actual practice. To reconstruct the dozens of steps of the death ritual program, I relied on the *Kaiyuan Rites*, the most comprehensive state-sponsored ritual text produced in the Tang dynasty. To gain an understanding of actual practice, I surveyed thousands of Tang epitaphs to look for references to elements of the burial program and also read anecdotal literature, memorials, and archaeological reports. Needless to say, state-sponsored ritual texts tended to stay relatively stable. Many rites recorded in the *Kaiyuan Rites* are reminiscent of or basically the same as those prescribed in classical canonical texts from early eras such as the *Liji* and *Yili*. Debates at court regarding correct ritual practice often sought authority directly from the rites of antiquity, as in the case of the appropriateness of a joint burial for Wu Zetian and her husband, Gaozong. By relying on older texts, classical scholars sought to homogenize ritual practice all across the empire. However, evidence from this chapter suggests that actual death ritual practices were not restricted by the state or by classical scholarship. In fact, many of the rituals that state-sponsored texts do not mention or deemed improper were actually practiced.

One distinction between ritual texts and how rituals appear in epitaphs reflects different focuses and interests. Ritual texts, not to mention state-established regulations, specify ritual practices according to bureaucratic ranks, and generally turn to standardized ritual to establish order in society in terms of how people should behave and how they ought to properly respect the authority of the state and the ranked bureaucrats that represented the state. They emphasize the proper display of funerary implements, the correct order of sacrificial offerings, and the appropriate grave goods for the tomb; both ritual performances and ritual objects were publicly visible, so they needed to accord with the deceased's rank. But gleaning information from thousands of tomb epitaphs, I have found little evidence that the rank of the deceased was respected, with the exception of references to the ways in which the court contributed financially to the funerals of very high-ranking officials. By contrast, those elements of the death ritual program that are recorded in tomb epitaph texts tend first and foremost to concern how properly to take care of the deceased's soul (both for the benefit of the dead loved one and for the benefit of the living descendants whose future fortunes could be affected by the ancestors). The steps in the *Kaiyuan Rites* that are mentioned in epitaphs usually constitute the critical steps marking the transition from the realm of the living to the realm of the ancestors. As Evelyn Rawski has argued, "from the Bronze Age, Chinese have asserted a continuity of ties between the living and their dead ancestors…; ancestor worship—the emphasis on the continuity of kinship links between the living and the dead, the belief that ancestors could intercede with deities on behalf of their living descendants—was an essential stimulus for the evolution of the elaborate death ritual practiced by the Chinese."[281] Similarly, James Watson states: "for most Chinese, it was

280 Ebrey, "The Early Stages of Descent Group Organization," 23–29; Rawski, "A Historian's Approach to Chinese Death Rituals," 32.
281 Rawski, "A Historian's Approach to Chinese Death Rituals," 23–24.

patrilineal kinship that survived beyond death.… Ancestor worship was the concrete expression of this preoccupation with the patriline."[282]

Moreover, epitaphs, anecdotal literature, and archaeological reports also provide evidence of the widespread practice of noncanonical rituals. Here, too, we see rituals that pertained to the tending of the soul of the deceased. For example, when the deceased's body was unavailable or missing, a special ritual not mentioned in the *Kaiyuan Rites* was performed to coax the soul into affixing itself to an object that could then be buried in the tomb. Joint burials were also broadly practiced, as it was believed that keeping the *hun* souls of a deceased married couple together in the same tomb would help assure their eternal happiness. Besides, epitaphs were also texts that, buried within the tomb, could be read by the deceased's spirit, efficaciously. Not surprisingly, then, almost all epitaphs record the extreme sorrow of the family, the great effort and the exhaustion of family fortunes to conduct a proper funeral, the virtuousness of the deceased's spouse, and the filiality of the children.

Additionally, it is clear that some noncanonical practices reflected the successful integration of Buddhism into Chinese society. The *Kaiyuan Rites* was derived from classical canonical texts predating the introduction of Buddhism into China in the first centuries of the Common Era. As such, the *Kaiyuan Rites* entirely disregarded Buddhist practice. Yet from epitaphs and anecdotal literature, we know that Chinese of the Tang dynasty commonly practiced the Buddhist mourning ritual called "seven-seven fasting" regardless of the deceased's and families' religious beliefs, that widows who became Buddhist renunciants were highly praised for their virtuousness and chastity, and that a Buddhist monastery was sometimes regarded as an ideal place for one's final days and for temporary burial. Evidence clearly shows that one did not need to be an exclusive devotee of Buddhism to incorporate Buddhist elements into death ritual;[283] instead, Buddhism was regarded as a nonconflicting alternative to the classical tradition (the so-called "Confucian" classics) and Daoism, and it provided additional opportunities for emotional outlets and practical solutions in the death ritual program.

If ritual practice diverged from state prescriptions to such a significant extent, can one conclude that there were no centripetal forces that served effectively to homogenize burial practice across the Tang empire? The next three chapters will explore this question by focusing on three specific elements of death ritual, all of which can be examined in rich empirical detail using thousands of excavated epitaphs in conjunction with large numbers of published excavation reports describing Tang-era tombs. The three elements in question are: burial date divination, the siting of graves, and the choice of grave goods. A standardization of ritual practice is most apparent in the strikingly identical patterns in which burial dates were selected, which will be discussed in the following chapter. To be sure, as will become evident, there were regional variations as well, and there were also changes over time.

282 Watson, "The Structure of Chinese Funerary Rites," 8.
283 Interestingly, Jie Shi's research shows that epitaphs from the Six Dynasties period rarely contained Buddhist terminologies or phrases. This clear contrast with the Tang case highlights the new development of Buddhism's integration into Chinese society. See Shi, "My Tomb Will Be Opened in Eight Hundred Years," 244.

Chapter 2

Selecting Dates for Burials

1. Introduction

In contrast to the previous chapter, which reconstructs the overall death ritual program step-by-step, this chapter will dig deeply into one dimension: time. Much textual evidence suggests that the auspiciousness of burial dates was of concern to the family of the deceased. As mentioned in chapter 1, the *Kaiyuan Rites* prescribes that people ought to "divine burial dates" 卜葬日; the fact that Lü Cai 呂才 (d. 665) critiqued the use of burial date divination certainly suggests its prevalence in actual practice. A good number of epitaphs also tell us that auspicious dates were selected by means of date divination. For instance, one epitaph reads: "merely because [we did not] encounter an auspicious day and could not hurry with a burial, thereupon [we] temporarily buried [the deceased]" 徒以不遇吉辰，未遑窀穸，遂權厝[1] Another epitaph explains: "the day and the month have proper times [for burial], and we have [the burial date selected] by divination through signs on tortoise shells" 日月有時，龜兆以貞.[2] But is it possible to know what dates were auspicious for burial? To answer the question, this chapter examines empirical evidence from a database of several thousand Tang-era epitaph texts and conducts quantitative and qualitative analyses. First, it demonstrates that elites were indeed concerned with the auspiciousness of burial dates. Next, this chapter tests what factors may have affected the selection of auspicious burial dates and the avoidance of inauspicious ones. We will find out that it is really the sexagenary cycle that seems to have been the dominant factor in determining the auspiciousness of a burial day. Additionally, this chapter explores to what extent one can identify burial date patterns that were practiced uniformly across the empire and that continued to be practiced into later centuries.

Most Tang-era epitaphs record dates of death and burial in a rather uniform way. For instance, a Mr. Zhang's epitaph says that he "died on the twenty-fifth day of the eleventh month in the fifteenth year of the Zhenyuan 貞元 reign [785–805]….on the twenty-second day of the second month in the next year" 以貞元十五年十一月二十五日……以明年二月二十二日, he was transferred back to the ancestral cemetery to be buried.[3] Such straightforward and precise information about dates can help researchers analyze possible patterns regarding the time lapse between death and burial, the preference for specific months, days, and/or stem-branch (*ganzhi* 干支) for burial, and relations between gender, age, and/or date of birth and date of burial. Since I gathered data from multiple regions and different time periods of the Tang dynasty, we can also examine geographical and temporal variations or commonalities. As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, I focus on five major regions and compare them with one another: Chang'an and Luoyang (the two capital regions); Hebei Province in North China, where the momentous An Lushan 安祿山 Rebellion (755–763) took place and which, after the rebellion, remained mostly divorced from the Tang empire's administrative hierarchy; the Lower Yangzi River region in the southeast, where, in contrast to traditional bureaucrats in northern China, a non-office-holding elite was prevalent due to burgeoning commercial opportunities and

1 MZH 389.
2 QTWXB 22:15496.
3 MZHX 773.

urbanization; and Shanxi Province just to the west of the North China Plain, where a large number of Tang-era epitaphs have been found. These five regions differed greatly geographically, politically, and economically, so treating them separately allows me to assess regional diversity and cross-regional connections. It is worth noting that these geographic categories adhere to modern Chinese provincial boundaries for the sake of convenience, as publications of tomb epitaphs are often compiled according to the modern provinces in which they were excavated; it should be understood that these geographic categories do not represent Tang-era administrative units.[4]

Much of the focus of this chapter is on the frequency of burials on each of the sixty stem-branch days. Indeed, the sexagenary stem-branch cycle is associated with traditional Chinese *wuxing* 五行 (Five Phases) and *yinyang* 陰陽 theories, and was widely used in divination going back to the oracle bone inscriptions of the late Shang period (ca. 1600–1045 BCE).[5] The cycle of stem-branch days is independent of the cycle of days in the year. Because epitaphs typically identify dates by year, month, and day, rather than by the sexagenary cycle, it was first necessary for me to convert all burial dates into their corresponding stem-branch days.[6] In many cases, I checked multiple transcriptions and rubbings (if available) to minimize the risk of minor errors in the dates. When it was difficult to discern a burial date on a rubbing, or when different transcriptions disagreed on one or more critical characters, I avoided using the data. In addition, some epitaphs do identify the day both by the year-month-day and by the stem-branch, but some stem-branches may have been miscalculated. For example, a certain Ms. Li's epitaph states that she was buried on the eighteenth day of the first month of the eighth year of the Dazhong 大中 reign [847–860], which the epitaph records was a "*guiyou* 癸酉 day."[7] However, my calculation shows that the corresponding stem-branch was actually *guimao* 癸卯. In cases like this, I chose not to use the data, because it was unclear whether it was better to use the correct stem-branch or the stem-branch that the family and/or the ritual specialists that the family consulted apparently believed to be correct. As a consequence, the number of epitaphs that I used for the quantitative analyses was often significantly smaller than the total number of epitaphs in my original data sets.[8] For instance, among the 3261 Luoyang epitaphs that I surveyed, I used only 2702 epitaphs

4 Using modern provincial boundaries is not always the best way to analyze the Tang. Nicolas Tackett aptly argues that we should consider the immediate vicinity of the capitals as similar to the capitals, but not regions further away. For example, Anyang belongs to Henan Province today, but it was part of Weibo (in modern Hebei) and was culturally quite similar to Hebei in the late Tang. Nevertheless, the use of modern provincial boundaries appears sufficient for my current research, as the patterns of the auspicious and inauspicious burial dates were the same across regional and temporal boundaries, which this chapter will demonstrate. For future research, I would like to look at regions that span modern provincial boundaries, treating, for example, northern Henan, southwest Hebei, and southeast Shanxi as a single cultural zone.

5 For a thorough introduction to the sexagenary system, see Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 548–550.

6 I converted the dates one by one by using the online tool called "conversion of Chinese and Western calendars of two thousand years" (*liangqian nian zhongxi li zhuanhuan* 兩千年中西曆轉換) at the Academia Sinica (Taiwan)'s website: http://sinocal.sinica.edu.tw.

7 Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo and Qiantangzhi zhai bowuguan, *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi*, 241.

8 I started my survey of epitaphs with three main sources. First is a series titled *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi*, which includes both pictures of the rubbings of epitaph texts and the transcriptions. I read through the following volumes to glean relevant information: Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo and Henan sheng wenwu yanjiusuo, *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi: Henan [1]*, *Henan (2)*; Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo and Qiantangzhi zhai bowuguan, *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi: Henan (3)*; Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo and Shaanxi sheng guji zhengli bangongshi, *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi: Shaanxi (1), (2)*; Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo and Changshu bowuguan, *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi: Jiangsu (1)—Changshu*; Gugong bowuyuan and Nanjing shi bowuguan, *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi: Jiangsu (2)—Nanjing*;

in my data analyses. Additionally, besides examining patterns in the stem-branch days for burial, I also looked for possible patterns in popular and unpopular months and days of the month for burial; from case to case, the data sets varied somewhat in size depending on how many epitaph inscriptions contained relevant information. For instance, among the same 3261 Luoyang epitaphs that I surveyed, 3119 epitaphs provide clear records of burial months, including 3043 regular months and 76 intercalary months (*runyue* 閏月), and 3060 epitaphs provide clear records of days on which the burials happened. Throughout, I will notify readers of the number of epitaphs used for each data analysis.

Moreover, this chapter pays attention to regional and temporal variety and takes a comparative approach; it examines patterns in each of the geographical regions and each of the three centuries that the Tang dynasty spanned, and it even conducts data analysis of late imperial China, as I hope to determine whether patterns of burial date divination extended beyond dynastic boundaries. In terms of methods, Microsoft Excel was my main analysis tool, as its various formulas helped me to analyze my data, and its charts help to illustrate the patterns that I discovered.

2. Auspicious and Inauspicious Stem-Branch Days for Burial

In Lü Cai's critique of his contemporaries' custom of selecting burial dates by divination, he points out that the stem-branch day *jihai* was regarded as the most inauspicious:

> When we now examine books of burial, [we see that] they claim that [holding funerals on] a *jihai* day brings the greatest misfortune. [However,] according to [what we know happened] in the Spring and Autumn period [770–476 BCE], over twenty funerals took place on that day. Thus, [we see that] we need not select [particular auspicious] days for burial.
>
> 今檢葬書，以己亥之日，用葬最凶。謹按春秋之際，此日葬者凡有二十餘件。此則葬不擇日。[9]

Interestingly, my data analysis suggests that the stem-branch day *jihai* was indeed considered a notoriously inauspicious day in the Tang, as hardly any burials took place on that day. Moreover, there is ample anecdotal evidence pointing to the continued importance of divination throughout the Tang dynasty. As mentioned earlier, a very large number of tomb epitaphs record divining dates for burial. For example, a certain Mr. Liu's epitaph tells us that his family "had an

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Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo and Beijing shike yishu bowuguan, *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi: Beijing*. My second source is a series titled *Sui Tang Wudai muzhi huibian*, which has pictures of the rubbings of epitaph texts and some brief information including the name of the deceased, the dates of death and burial, and the provenance of the epitaph. I surveyed the first twenty-eight volumes of this series, including vols. 1–15 (Luoyang juan), vol. 16 (Henan juan), vols. 17–20 (Shaanxi juan), vols. 21–23 (Beijing fu Liaoning juan), vols. 24–25 (Beijing daxue juan), vol. 26 (Hebei juan), vol. 27 (Shanxi juan), and vol. 28 (Jiangsu Shandong juan). The third source is a group of 2685 epitaphs dating to between 800 and 907, collected in version 1.0 of the "Prosopographical and Social Network Database of the Tang and Five Dynasties" database (唐五代人物傳記與社會網絡資料庫; compiled by Nicolas Tackett; available at https://history.berkeley.edu/nicolas-tackett). After surveying these three main sources, I compiled my own database of nearly five thousand Tang-era epitaphs originally buried in five [modern] provinces (i.e., Luoyang, the rest of Henan Province other than Luoyang, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Hebei, and Jiangsu) and containing the following details: name of the deceased, his/her age at the time of death, gender, dates of death and burial, type of burial (single versus joint burial), home prefecture, each epitaph's place of discovery, and other interesting information. I converted each burial date into its corresponding stem-branch day and also found out the surname category of each deceased person in the "Five Surname" system (to be discussed later).

9 JTS 79:2724.

auspicious day divined and a good time selected" 簡吉日，擇良時 to bury him.[10] If a proper day could not be obtained by divination, a family was willing to resort to temporary burial (*quancuo* 權厝), and to wait for months or even years for a permanent burial, as discussed in chapter 1. A certain Ms. Xin died in 717 and was quickly buried temporarily, as "the first choice of a [proper] burial date is too far off, while an auspicious date [at a closer distance] was not in harmony [with the divination]" 先遠尚遥，吉辰未叶. Eleven years later, the family had "changed the divination and found an auspicious day" 改卜惟吉, hence she was finally buried with her husband.[11] Similarly, a Ms. Liu's epitaph laments that "the year and month were not favorable [for a burial], as divinations by both tortoise shells and milfoil disagree [on burial dates]" 年月不利，龜筮共違, hence she was temporarily buried, awaiting the right time to be placed together with her late husband.[12] A certain Ms. Pang's epitaph also tells us that because "[the diviner] examined the time and thought it was not harmonious [for a burial]" 考時不協, she did not get to be buried in her husband's family cemetery, but had to be temporarily buried elsewhere.[13]

Drawing on data from several thousand epitaphs, it is possible to go well beyond anecdotal reference to divination, in order to get a better sense of the prevalence of the practice. In particular, by means of a large data set analysis, I was able to discover a stable set of auspicious stem-branch days for burial. The following section will guide readers through this process of data analysis step-by-step. Throughout the chapter, tables and figures will generally refer to the sixty stem-branch days by the corresponding Arabic numeral (see table 1).

1 *jiazi* 甲子	2 *yichou* 乙丑	3 *bingyin* 丙寅	4 *dingmao* 丁卯	5 *wuchen* 戊辰	6 *jisi* 己巳	7 *gengwu* 庚午	8 *xinwei* 辛未	9 *renshen* 壬申	10 *guiyou* 癸酉
11 *jiaxu* 甲戌	12 *yihai* 乙亥	13 *bingzi* 丙子	14 *dingchou* 丁丑	15 *wuyin* 戊寅	16 *jimao* 己卯	17 *gengchen* 庚辰	18 *xinsi* 辛巳	19 *renwu* 壬午	20 *guiwei* 癸未
21 *jiashen* 甲申	22 *yiyou* 乙酉	23 *bingxu* 丙戌	24 *dinghai* 丁亥	25 *wuzi* 戊子	26 *jichou* 己丑	27 *gengyin* 庚寅	28 *xinmao* 辛卯	29 *renchen* 壬辰	30 *guisi* 癸巳
31 *jiawu* 甲午	32 *yiwei* 乙未	33 *bingshen* 丙申	34 *dingyou* 丁酉	35 *wuxu* 戊戌	36 *jihai* 己亥	37 *gengzi* 庚子	38 *xinchou* 辛丑	39 *renyin* 壬寅	40 *guimao* 癸卯
41 *jiachen* 甲辰	42 *yisi* 乙巳	43 *bingwu* 丙午	44 *dingwei* 丁未	45 *wushen* 戊申	46 *jiyou* 己酉	47 *gengxu* 庚戌	48 *xinhai* 辛亥	49 *renzi* 壬子	50 *guichou* 癸丑

10 MZH 1209.
11 MZH 1350.
12 MZH 1884.
13 MZH 2067. As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, the rhymed eulogy (*ming* 銘) in the end of an epitaph inscription tends to use more generic and lyrical language and a more "poetic" or conventional diction; taking this into account, all the examples here are not from the *ming*. But it is worth noting that the expression of "selecting an auspicious day" certainly appear in the *ming* too, which does not necessarily makes it less valuable, though one should be careful about using it alone as evidence for burial date divination.

51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
jiayin 甲寅	*yimao* 乙卯	*bingchen* 丙辰	*dingsi* 丁巳	*wuwu* 戊午	*jiwei* 己未	*gengshen* 庚申	*xinyou* 辛酉	*renxu* 壬戌	*guihai* 癸亥

Table 1. The Sexagenary Stem-Branch Cycle

2.1. Tang-era Luoyang

I begin my analysis by focusing on Tang-era Luoyang epitaphs (fig. 1), because the very large number of extant Luoyang epitaphs (2702 in my data set) allowed me to discern preferred burial days with a great degree of statistical certainty. Figure 1 identifies the five most commonly used days (*renshen*, *jiashen*, *renyin*, *jiyou*, and *gengshen*) and the next most commonly used days, and it also marks the rarely (or never) used days. To facilitate comparison, subsequent figures presenting data from other times and places will mark in the same way the exact same days (i.e., based on Tang-era Luoyang data).

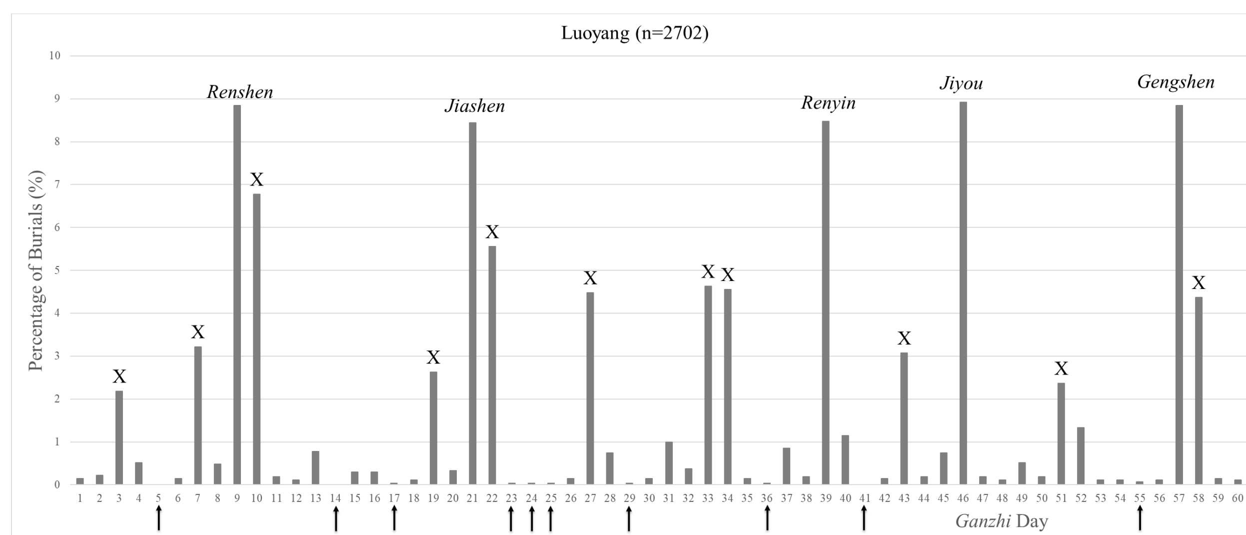


Figure 1. Tang-Era Burials in Luoyang: Percentage per Stem-Branch Day

Note: The five days most commonly used for burial are identified by name; "X" identifies the next most commonly used days; and arrows point to the days rarely (or never) used for burials.

Using figure 1, we can group the sixty stem-branch days into four types: the five most popular stem-branch days for burial, the next most popular ones (eleven in total), the least popular days (ten in total), and the remaining thirty-four days (table 2).

Types of stem-branch day	Number (n)	%	(% * 60)/n
Most popular	5	43.3%	5.2
Next most popular (X)	11	44%	2.4
Least popular (🡅)	10	0.31%	0.02
Other	34	12.39%	0.22

Table 2. Tang-Era Burials in Luoyang: Distribution of Stem-branch Days

Note: (%*60)/n is a measure of the discrepancy between the measured percentage and the expected percentage assuming a perfectly even distribution of days, where the frequency of each day is 1/60. Note that (%/n) / (1/60) = (%*60) / n.[14]

The most popular stem-branch days for burial (each representing over 8% of burials) include *renshen* 壬申 (8.8%), *jiashen* 甲申 (8.4%), *renyin* 壬寅 (8.5%), *jiyou* 己酉 (8.9%), and *gengshen* 庚申 (8.8%). Altogether, 43.3% of burials in Luoyang took place on one of these five stem-branch days. As the right-most column shows, these days occurred 5.2 times more frequently than they would have given an even distribution of burials (where 1/60 of burials occur on any one of the sixty days). This discrepancy is all the more significant given the very large size of the sample of Tang-era Luoyang epitaphs.

The next most popular stem-branch days for burial (each representing over 2% of burials) are as follows: *bingyin* 丙寅 (2.2%),[15] *gengwu* 庚午 (3.2%), *guiyou* 癸酉 (6.8%), *renwu* 壬午 (2.6%), *yiyou* 乙酉 (5.6%), *gengyin* 庚寅 (4.5%), *bingshen* 丙申 (4.6%), *dingyou* 丁酉 (4.6%), *bingwu* 丙午 (3.1%), *jiayin* 甲寅 (2.4%), and *xinyou* 辛酉 (4.4%). Altogether, 44% of burials in Luoyang took place on one of these eleven stem-branch days. As indicated by the right-most column, these days occurred 2.4 times more frequently than expected.

By contrast, ten stem-branch days were rarely or never used for burial, including *wuchen* 戊辰 (0%), *dingchou* 丁丑 (0%), *gengchen* 庚辰 (1 epitaph; 0.04%), *bingxu* 丙戌 (1 epitaph; 0.04%), *dinghai* 丁亥 (1 epitaph; 0.04%), *wuzi* 戊子 (1 epitaph; 0.04%), *renchen* 壬辰 (1 epitaph; 0.04%), *jihai* 己亥 (1 epitaph; 0.04%), *jiachen* 甲辰 (0%), and *wuwu* 戊午 (2 epitaphs; 0.07%). None of these ten days appear more than twice in the large pool of Luoyang data. As a group, they constitute less than a third of one percent of all Tang-era Luoyang epitaphs, a figure that (as the right-most column indicates) represents only one fiftieth (0.02) of the figure that one would expect given an even distribution of burials.

As mentioned earlier, most Tang-era epitaphs record burial dates as such: "the fifth day of the eleventh month in the tenth year of [an emperor's reign]," hence I converted these dates into their corresponding stem-branch days to look for possible patterns. However, some epitaph texts do explicitly note the stem-branches of the burial dates, and it is interesting to find out which stem-branch days were considered important and worthwhile to carve into the epitaph stones. In a sample of 837 epitaphs dating to the period between the year 505 and the year 996,

14 The sixty here is for the sixty stem-branch days. If the days appear purely at random, then each stem-branch day will appear 1/60 of the time. For instance, let us look at the first row of table 2. The five most popular stem-branch days appear 43.3% of the time. If it is purely random, then they would appear 5/60 of the time (i.e., 8.3% of the time). To measure how much 43.3% is bigger than 8.3%, one can do the math as 43.3%/8.3% = 5.2. That is, one can see that the five most popular days appear 5.2 times more frequently than they ought to were the days to be selected purely at random. Note that 43.3%/8.3% is in fact 43.3%/(5/60), which can also be written (43.3%*60)/5, hence the "(%*60)/n" column.

15 The heavenly stem *bing* 丙 is often written as *jing* 景 in Tang-era texts to avoid a name taboo (*bihui* 避諱) on Li Bing 李昞, the father of Tang Gaozu 高祖 (r. 618–626), the founder of the Tang dynasty. For more information, see Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 291.

all of which contain self-identified stem-branch days of burial,[16] I counted the frequency of different stem-branch days. The result was that, first, all of the five most popular stem-branch days discovered from my data analysis are also the top five identified in the sample (that is, the most frequently self-identified days); second, all the next most popular stem-branch days discovered from my data analysis are also frequently identified among the epitaphs in this sample; and lastly, only three rarely or never used stem-branch days (*wuchen* 戊辰, *gengchen* 庚辰, and *wuzi* 戊子) discovered from my data analysis are recorded—with one example of each.[17] This comparison convincingly demonstrates that the auspicious and inauspicious days discovered from my data analysis were also regarded auspicious and inauspicious by people of the Tang era and even beyond.

Next, to consider possible temporal change, I reanalyzed the data by century (fig. 2). Apparently, there was minimal change between the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries. In Luoyang, the pattern of popular and unpopular stem-branch days for burial remained largely consistent throughout the entire Tang dynasty.

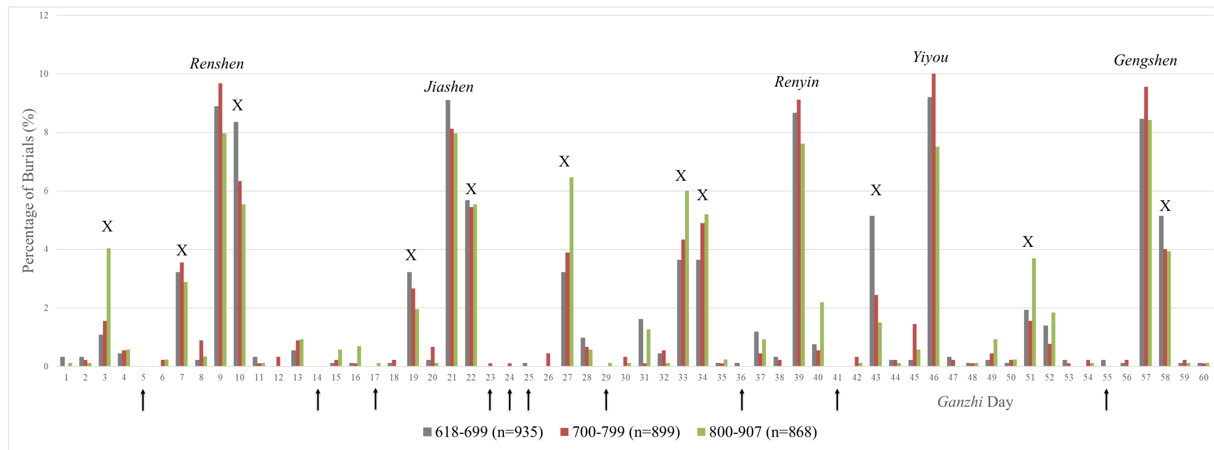


Figure 2. Tang-Era Burials in Luoyang by Century: Percentage per Stem-Branch Day

Note: To facilitate comparison, the stem-branch names, Xs, and arrows in each graph below are the same as those from figure 1 and represent the "most popular," "next most popular," and "least popular" days in the Luoyang data set.

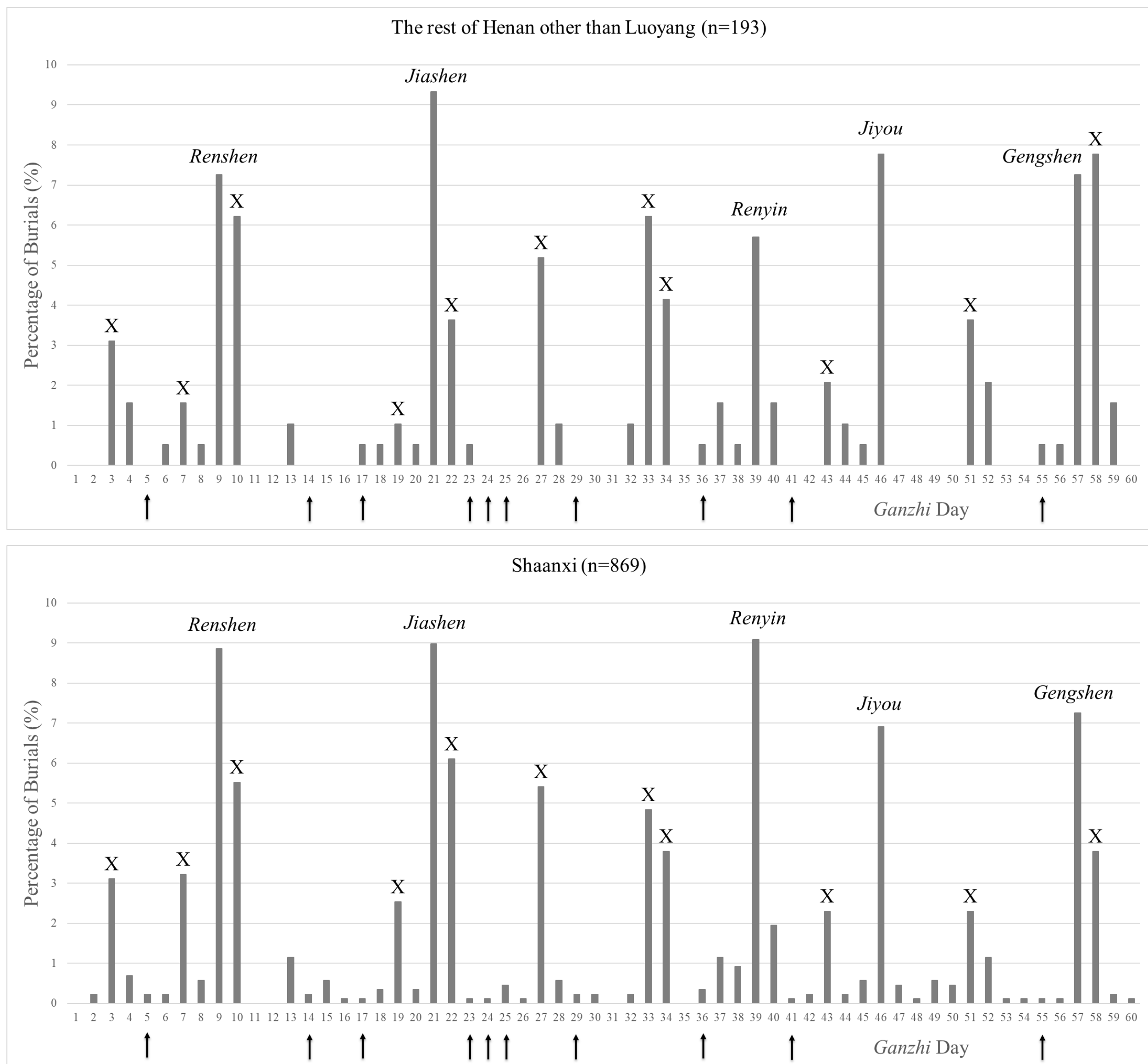
2.2. Preferred stem-branch days for burial from a multiregional perspective

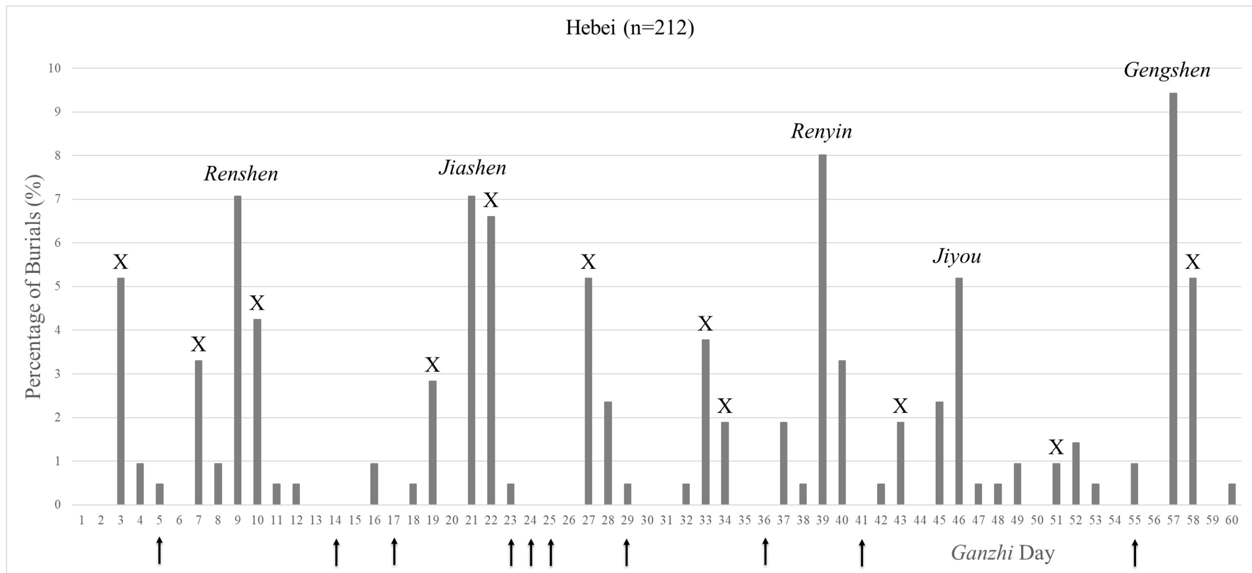
Having discerned the general pattern of preferred burial dates for Luoyang, the eastern capital of the Tang dynasty, I used the same approach to analyze data from the rest of Henan Province (excluding Luoyang), as well as from Shaanxi Province, Hebei Province, Shanxi Province, and Jiangsu Province. I compared the percentages of burials on each stem-branch day in each region (fig. 3), as well as in each century (data not shown), in order to discern both regional and temporal variations. To facilitate comparison, each graph in figure 3 indicates the

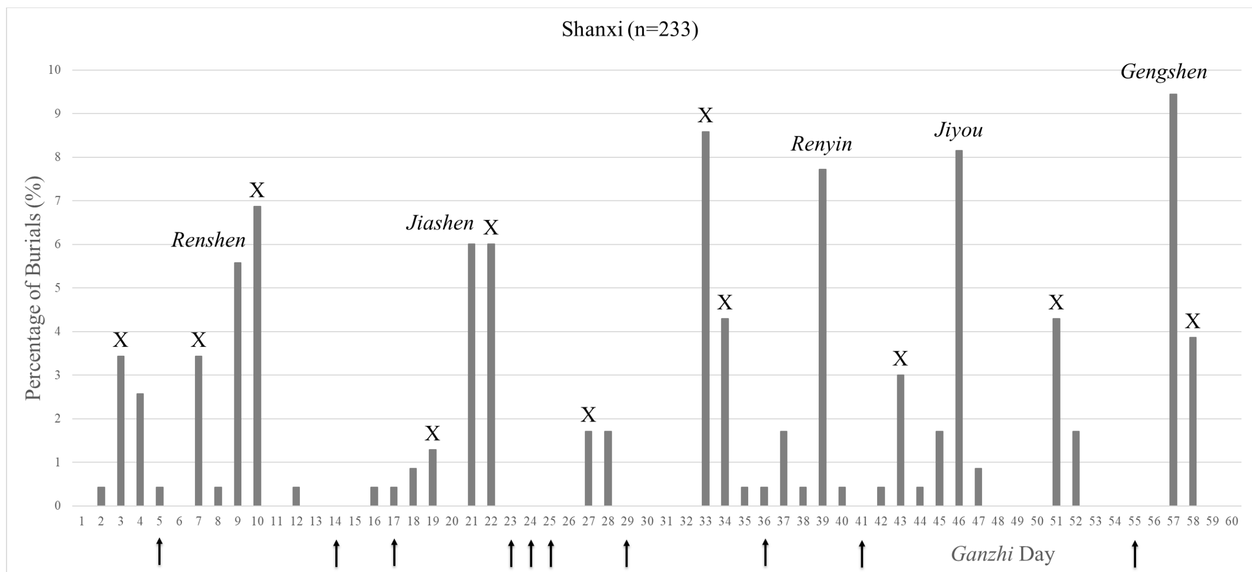
16 This sample of 837 epitaphs was provided to me by Nicolas Tackett, who also recorded the self-identified stem-branch days of burial.

17 The stem-branch day *wuchen* was used for a temporary burial (DTXS 410–411). The rubbing of *gengchen* was blurry (DTXS 138); it may involve a misreading. The rubbing of *wuzi* is clear (see Hengshui shi wenwuju, *Hengshui chutu muzhi*, 54–55), and I have no explanation for this exception.

"most popular," "next most popular," and "least popular" days according to figure 1 (i.e., based on the Luoyang data). The graphs suggest that regional variations were minor; discrepancies may be explained by the different sizes of the data samples.




Hebei (n=212)
Percentage of Burials (%)
Renshen
Jiashen
Renyin
Jiyou
Gengshen
Ganzhi Day


Shanxi (n=233)
Percentage of Burials (%)
Renshen
Jiashen
Renyin
Jiyou
Gengshen
Ganzhi Day

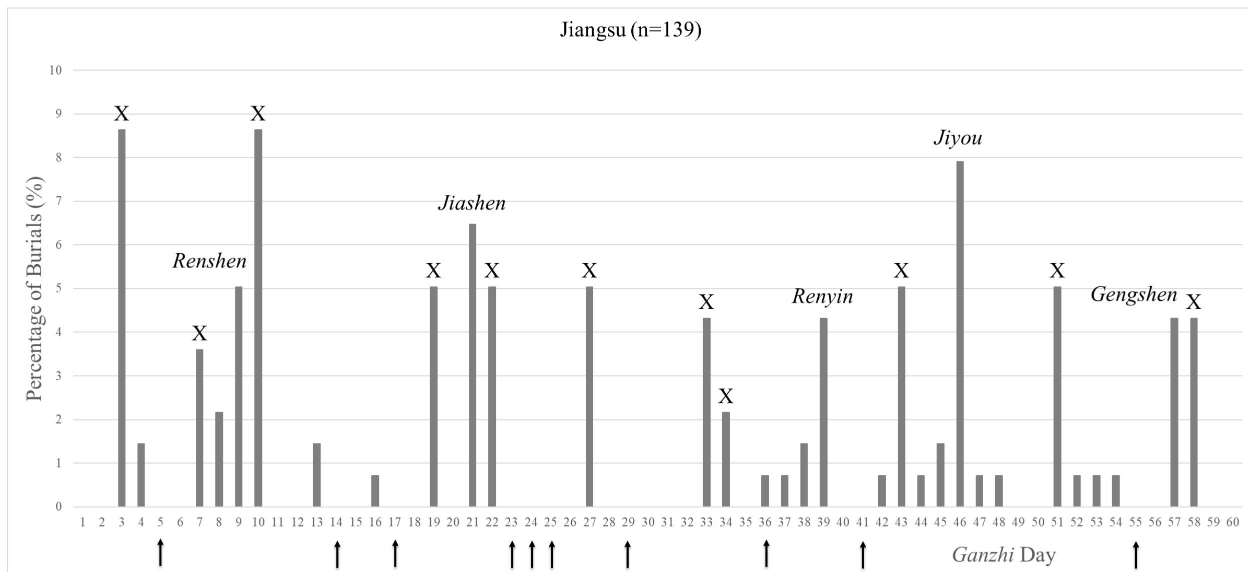


Figure 3. Tang-Era Burials in Other Geographical Regions: Percentage per Stem-Branch Day

One finds that this pattern also holds for imperial burials. Excluding the last emperor, Aidi 哀帝 (r. 904–907), whose burial date is unknown, the twenty other Tang emperors were mostly buried on popular stem-branch days; none of them were buried on the least favored burial days (see table 3). In addition, it is interesting that many non-Han people living in Tang China apparently also adhered to this pattern of burial days. For example, according to Jonathan Skaff, in a Sogdian family cemetery in today's Ningxia Province, five people of Sogdian ancestry and one of indeterminate foreign origins had clearly dated burials that took place on one of the popular stem-branch days.[18]

Burial day (in stem-branch system)	Number	Popularity among Tang Luoyang burials	% of Luoyang burials
Gengshen 庚申	4	Most popular	8.8%
Jiyou 己酉	4	Most popular	8.9%
Gengyin 庚寅	3	Next most popular	4.5%
Gengwu 庚午	2	Next most popular	3.2%
Renyin 壬寅	1	Most popular	8.5%
Renshen 壬申	1	Most popular	8.8%
Guiyou 癸酉	1	Next most popular	6.8%
Xinyou 辛酉	1	Next most popular	4.4%
Bingshen 丙申	1	Next most popular	4.6%
Jiawu 甲午	1	Other	1%
Xinmao 辛卯	1	Other	0.74%

18 See Skaff, *Silk Roads and Steppe Roads of Medieval China*, table 3.4.

Table 3. Burial Days (Stem-Branch) of Tang Emperors

Source of the stem-branch days of imperial burials: Wu Liyu, *Zhongji zhidian*, 188–193.

Finally, I tested two other sets of factors: male versus female burials, and single versus joint burials. Using the same approach, first, I divided my data by the gender of the deceased and compared the patterns of auspicious and inauspicious stem-branch days for male versus female tomb occupants. The result was that the gender of the deceased did not affect these patterns. Second, I identified the single burials in contrast to joint burials, and conducted the same test, and the result showed no difference either.

2.3. The "Five Surname" system

To test what factors affected burial date divination, I also paid attention to the "Five Surname" (*wuxing* 五姓) system, as textual evidence shows that it played a role in divination and geomancy during the Tang. Also called the "Five Notes" (*wuyin* 五音) system or the system of "advantage [and disadvantage] based on the Five Note and surname [correlation]" (*wuyin xingli* 五音姓利),[19] this system classifies Chinese surnames according to their pronunciations into five categories, each named after one of the musical notes of the ancient Chinese five-tone scale: *shang* 商, *jue* 角, *zhi* 徵, *gong* 宫, and *yu* 羽. The Northern Song (960–1127) ritual text *Dili xinshu* 地理新書 (New book of earth patterns) preserves the first comprehensive discussion of this system, listing which surname falls into which category. Four Tang-era Dunhuang manuscripts—P.2615a, P.2632v, P.3647, and IIx.01396+01404+01407V— also contain partial surname lists. Minor variations exist among these five texts, but, in general, most surnames can be indisputably put into one surname category or another. The minor discrepancies may have reflected the variety of schools and ideas on geomancy that existed in the Tang dynasty, or they could be the result of copyist errors.[20] Table 4 lists some common surnames by surname category.

Surname category	Surnames
Shang 商	Miao 苗, Sun 孫, Chai 柴, Wen 溫, Han 韓, Pan 潘, He 何, Luo 羅, Yang 楊, Zhang 章, An 安, Wang 王, Cheng 程, Shan 單, Jia 賈, Xia 夏, Jiang 蔣, Cai 蔡, Sheng 盛, Hang 杭, Dongfang 東方, Shangguan 上官, Linghu 令狐.
Jue 角	Jiang 江, Gong 龔, Pang 龐, Cui 崔, Xiao 蕭, Jiao 焦, Yao 姚, Qiao 喬, Bao 包, Gao 高, Cao 曹, Tao 陶, Mao 毛, Hou 侯, Tan 譚, Zhao 趙, Geng 耿, Lai 賴, He 賀, Gu 谷, Mo 莫, Bo 薄, Guo 郭, Hao 郝, Huo 霍, Gaoling 高陵.
Zhi 徵	Shi 施, Shi 師, Pi 皮, Zhen 甄, Xin 辛, Qin 秦, Chen 陳, Tian 田, Qian 錢, Ding 丁, Zeng 曾, You 尤, Li 李, Yin 尹, Shi 史, Li 厲, Jin 晉, Zheng 鄭, Duan 段, Xue 薛, Deng 鄧, Sima 司馬, Zhuge 諸葛.

19 Both *wuxing* and *wuyin* are mentioned in Tang-era texts, while *wuyin xingli* is first recorded in the preface to the Jin dynasty (1115–1234) edition of the *Dili xinshu*, and it is most commonly used to refer to the Five Surname system in current Chinese scholarship. See DLXS 2.

20 Zeng Bo compares two Dunhuang manuscripts—P. 2615a and P. 2632v—on the Five Surname principle and identifies the discrepancies; see "Dunhuang xiejuan."

Gong 宮	Liu 劉, Liu 柳, Feng 馮, Yan 嚴, Yan 閻, Ren 任, Ye 葉, Qiu 仇, Niu 牛, Bao 鮑, Xiong 熊, Lu 陸, Zhou 周, Lin 林, Jin 金, Dong 董, Fan 范, Lu 陸, Nie 聶, Situ 司徒, Ouyang 歐陽.
Yu 羽	Tong 童, Weng 翁, Wei 韋, Zhu 朱, Xu 徐, Yu 虞, Yu 俞, Fu 符, Pu 蒲, Hu 胡, Tu 屠, Wu 吳, Yuan 袁, Lü 呂, Xu 許, Chu 楚, Lu 魯, Zu 祖, Du 杜, Gu 顧, Xiahou 夏侯, Dongguo 東郭.

Table 4. Common Surnames by Surname Category

Source of the surnames in each surname category: DLXS 1:39–43.

Carole Morgan argues that the Five Surname classification was probably at the core of the earliest geomantic system.[21] As early as in the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220), the famous scholar Wang Chong 王充 (27– ca. 100), in the "Jieshu" 詰術 (Criticisms on certain methods) chapter of the *Lunheng* 論衡 (Discourses weighed in the balance), criticized its use in determining the auspiciousness of a residence.[22] Morgan argues that between the seventh and ninth centuries, the Five Surname system "became the dominant geomantic system of its time."[23] Indeed, the Tang-era scholar Lü Cai ridiculed the prevalence of this system in both his *Xu zhaijing* 敘宅經 (Discussion on the Canon of residences) and *Xu Zangshu* 敘葬書 (Discussion on the Book of burial). He writes in the *Xu zhaijing*:

> As for in recent times, masters of the occult follow the Five Surname theory more than ever… If one examines the Classics, one cannot find [any reference to] this theory, nor is it mentioned in the various books of yin and yang. It is indeed an uncouth tradition transmitted orally, with unknown origins… It is not the way of the ancients, [but rather] something that is eccentric and odd.
>
> 至於近代，師巫更加五姓之説……驗於經典，本無斯說；諸陰陽書，亦無此語。直是野俗口傳，竟無所出之處……此則事不稽古，義理乖僻者也。[24]

Additionally, the "Jingji zhi" 經籍志 (Treatise on bibliography) chapter of the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Old history of the Tang) records a few Tang-era works that mention the Five Surnames in their titles, such as the *Wuxing zhaijing* 五姓宅經 (Five Surname canon of residences), *Wuxing mu tu yaojue* 五姓墓圖要訣 (Key techniques of the Five Surname tomb diagrams), and *Xuannü tan wuyinfa xiangzhong jing* 玄女彈五音法相冢經 (Canon of Xuannü appraising grave sites by means of plucking the Five Notes).[25] The "Yiwen zhi" 藝文志 (Treatise on bibliography) chapter of the *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (New history of the Tang) also lists these three works, in addition to another work, titled *Wuyin dili jing* 五音地理經 (Canon of the Five Notes and earth patterns).[26]

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21 Morgan, "T'ang geomancy," 45–46. Some other scholars trace the "Five Surname" system back even earlier. For instance, Shen Ruiwen argues that it appeared in the Western Han dynasty (202 BCE–23 CE), and regards the Western Han mausoleums as a demonstration of this system in practice. Qiu Boshun and Cai Mingzhi argue that the Five Surname system appeared as early as in the Warring States period (475–221), as the archaeologically excavated fourth- to first-century BCE manuscripts known as *Rishu* 日書 (Day books) contain discussions of it. See Shen Ruiwen, "XiHan diling lingdi zhixu"; Qiu Boshun and Cai Mingzhi, "Dunhuang yangzhai fengshui wenxian chutan," 113.
22 Beijing daxue lishixi *Lunheng* zhushi xiaozu, *Lunheng zhushi*, 4:1424–1430.
23 Morgan, "T'ang geomancy," 46.
24 JTS 79:2720–2721.
25 JTS 47:2044.
26 XTS 59:1556–1558.

Tang-era epitaphs occasionally mention or indicate that the surname category of a deceased person affected the burial. For instance, a certain Ms. Wang's epitaph tells us that prior to burial, her body was "encoffined and left in the main hall [of the house]" 斂殯於堂 for eight months. The long delay into the new year was because of the need to "wait for a beneficial and convenient [time] due to a taboo on [her] surname" 以本姓搆忌俟利便.[27]

A good number of Dunhuang manuscripts dating to or around the Tang era also discuss the Five Surnames,[28] including even a manuscript in Tibetan script.[29] Among them, a particularly interesting manuscript titled *Yinyang shu: Zang shi* 陰陽書: 葬事 (Book of yin and yang: Matters of burial; P.2534) records that the determination of auspicious and inauspicious burial days was affected by the deceased's surname category.[30] This manuscript is unfortunately fragmentary but appears to be an almanac covering the period between the ninth and twelfth months of a particular year, and describing whether a day was auspicious or inauspicious for various burial activities. Of particular significance is that some days that were deemed auspicious for funerary matters were nevertheless identified as taboo days for deceased individuals of certain surname categories. For example, in the discussion of the *bingwu* 丙午 day of the ninth month, we learn:

> On this day, if one has a [permanent] burial or a temporary one, the soul [of the deceased] will be at peace and free from worry, and the descendants will be wealthy and attain high status. It is very auspicious [on this day] to hold a funeral, reopen an old tomb, cut grass [to prepare for burial], or dig a grave. [However,] it is inauspicious to use this day for those with the surname categories *gong* and *zhi*.
>
> 此日葬及殯埋，神靈安寧，子孫富貴，啟殯、發故、斬草、起土大吉。宮徵二姓用之凶。[31]

A Dunhuang scroll dating to 877 and used as an almanac (Or.8210/P.6) also reveals an interest in the Five Surname system in funerary practice. Figure 4 includes two sections of this almanac.[32] On the left, it prescribes auspicious stem-branch days for a variety of construction activities under the title "Days for Constructions for the Five Surnames" (*Wuxing xiuzao ri* 五姓修造日). On the right, the "Diagram of Constructing [Tombs] for the Five Surnames

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27 MZH 2494.
28 According to Morgan, these Dunhuang manuscripts include P.2962, P.3492, P.2615, P.2632V, P.3865, P.3594, P.4522V, P.4667 V (now P.Tibetan 2207V), S.P.6, and S.612. See Morgan, "T'ang Geomancy," 50–51. Additionally, several scholars have discussed other Dunhuang manuscripts that also record the Five Surname system and its application to either date divination or geomantic practice (for both residence and burial), including P.3507, IIX00476+05937+06058, IIX01396+01404+01407V, IIX05448V, P.3281VB, S.4534V, P.2550B, P.2831, P.3647, P.4930, S.2263, P.2534, S.5645, S.0621V, and 017B. See Chen Yuzhu, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing jiaolu yanjiu*, 371–374, 386–400; Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 42, 138–149, 165–169, 238–299, 301–318, 320–324; Huang Zhengjian, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenshu*, 215; Guan Changlong, *Dunhuang ben kanyu wenshu yanjiu*, 208–358, 412–500; Qiu Boshun and Cai Mingzhi, "Dunhuang yangzhai fengshui wenxian chutan," 112–147; Zhao Chuan, "Shanghai tushuguan cang Dunhuang wenshu *017b Zangshi zachao* yanjiu," 182–183.
29 I think that Tibetans living at Dunhuang were likely influenced by Chinese burial practice, but there is no evidence that the Five Surname system was applied to burials on the Tibetan Plateau. For discussion of this manuscript, see Takata Tokio, "Wuxing shuo zai Dunhuang zangzu"; Takata Tokio, "Wuxing shuo zhi Dunhuang ziliao," 338–348.
30 There are debates on the dating of this manuscript. Most scholars think that it was composed either in the Tang or in the pre-Tang era. Images of this manuscript are searchable on the website of the International Dunhuang Project (http://idp.bl.uk). For rubbings, see also Shanghai guji chubanshe and Faguo guojia tushuguan, *Faguo guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang xiyu wenxian*, 15:188. For transcriptions and research, see Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 301–318; Guan Changlong, *Dunhuang ben kanyu wenshu yanjiu*, 489–500.
31 See Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 303.
32 Images of this manuscript are searchable on the website of the International Dunhuang Project (http://idp.bl.uk).

Extrapolated for the Year of *Dingyou*" (*Tui dingyou nian wuxing qizao tu* 推丁酉年五姓起造圖) prescribes auspicious and inauspicious months for digging tombs based on one's surname category. For instance, "[for the surname categories of] *gong*, *zhi*, and *yu*, the third and ninth months are inauspicious for digging tombs" 宮徵羽三月九月墓凶.

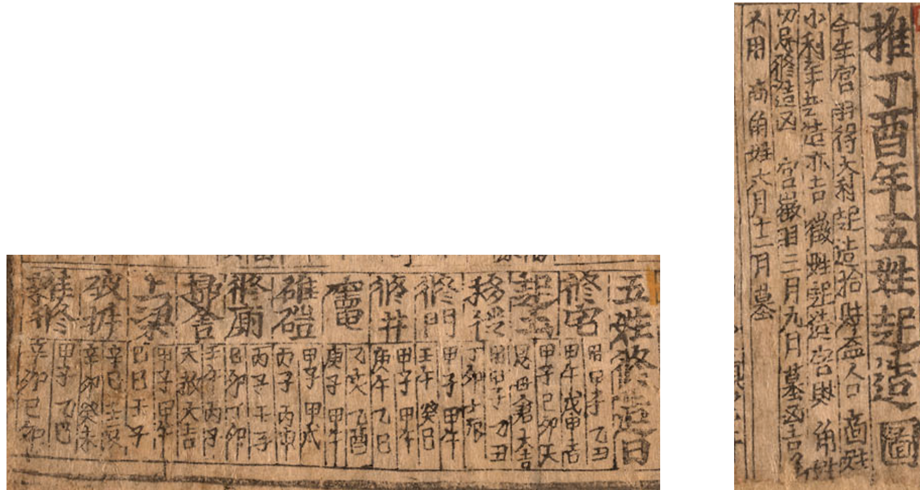
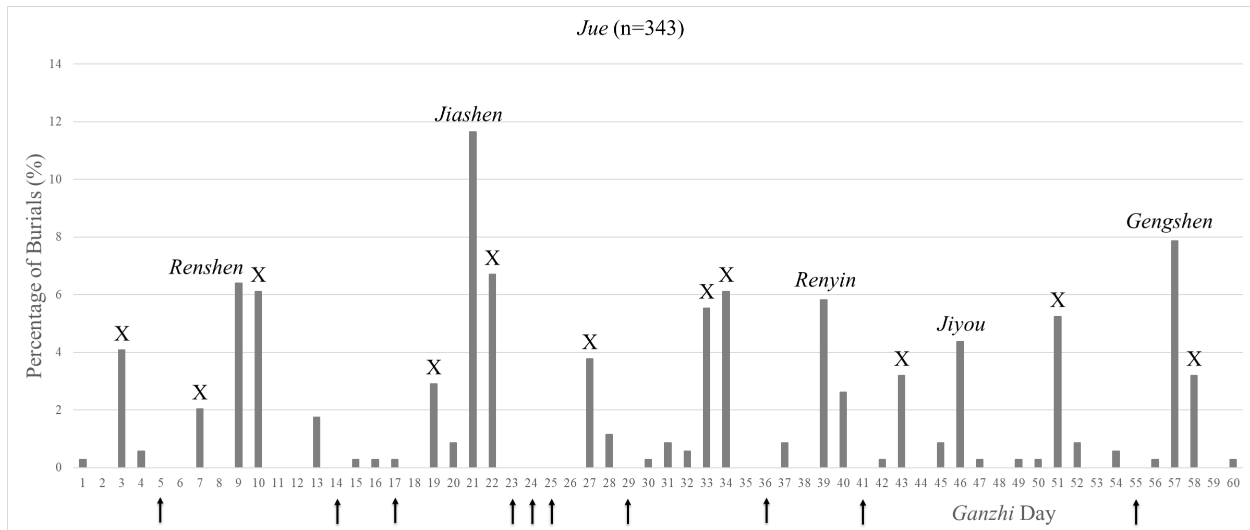
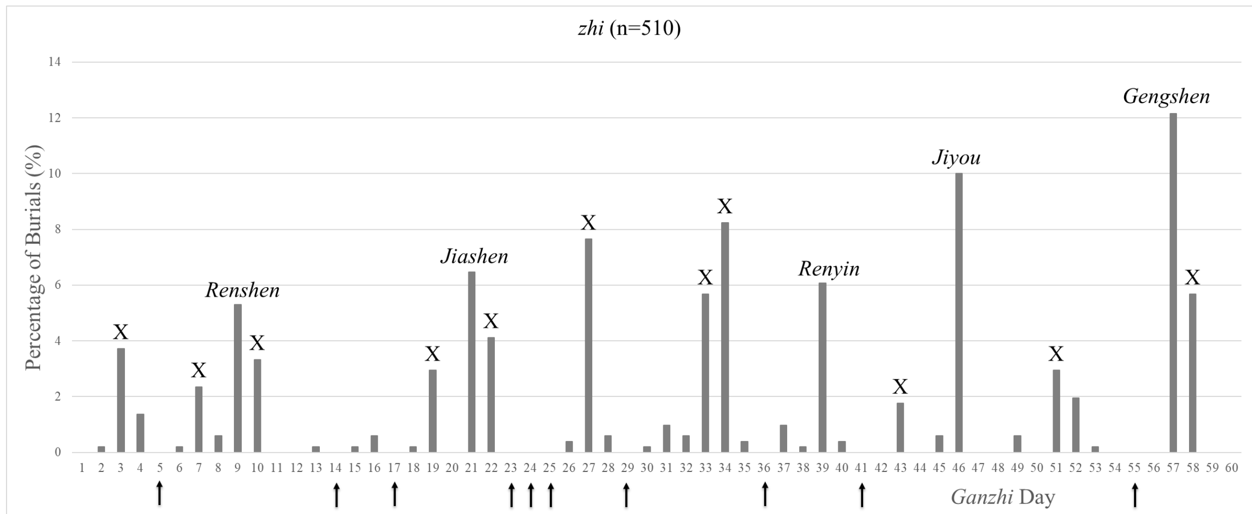


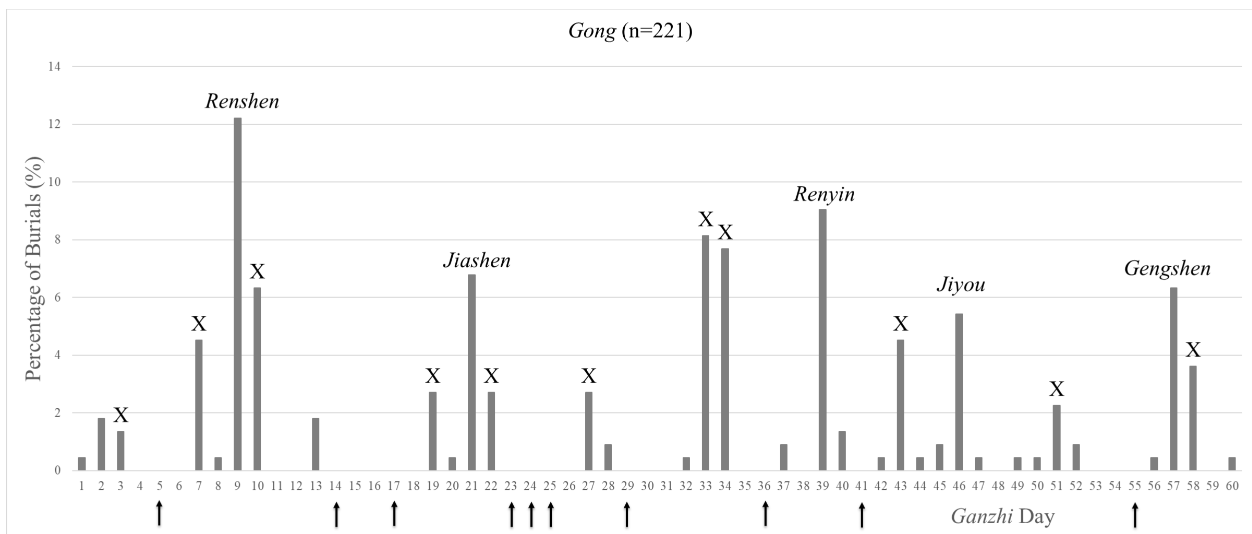
Figure 4. Parts of Dunhuang Or.8210/P.6 (an almanac)

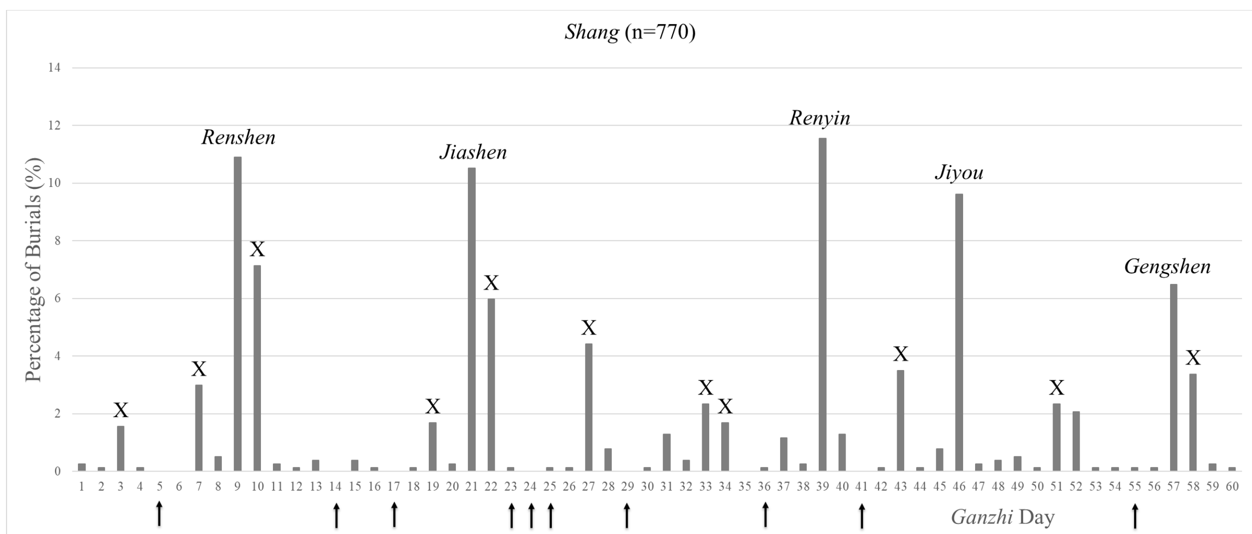
Source: The International Dunhuang Project website: http://idp.bl.uk.

The textual evidence mentioned here all seems to suggest that the Five Surname system had a significant effect on various aspects of death ritual, including burial date divination. For an experiment, I divided the epitaphs in the Luoyang database into the Five Surname categories and compared the percentages of burials on each stem-branch day in each surname category (fig. 5).




zhi (n=510)
Percentage of Burials (%)
Ganzhi Day
Renshen
Jiashen
Renyin
Jiyou
Gengshen


Gong (n=221)
Percentage of Burials (%)
Ganzhi Day
Renshen
Jiashen
Renyin
Jiyou
Gengshen


Shang (n=770)
Percentage of Burials (%)
Ganzhi Day
Renshen
Jiashen
Renyin
Jiyou
Gengshen

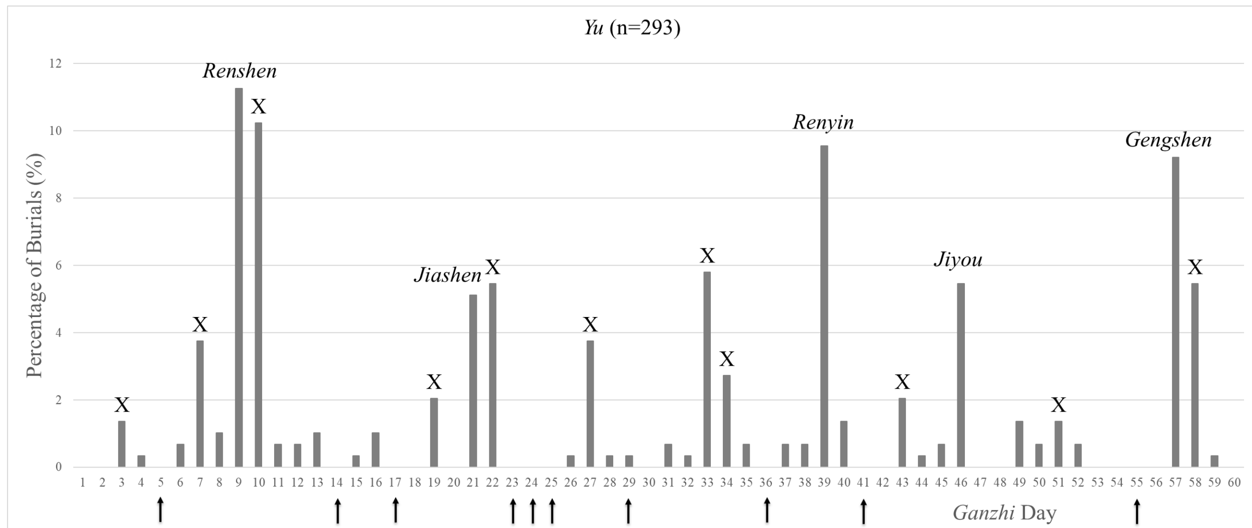


Figure 5. Percentage of Burials per Stem-Date and Per Surname

Despite the inevitable effect of different sample sizes and the random odds involved, figure 5 reveals more or less the same patterns for stem-branch burial days that we discovered earlier (table 2). Hence, we may tentatively conclude that, at least in a long run, a person's surname category did not affect the choice of stem-branch dates for burials, even though it may have affected individual cases as Ms. Wang's epitaph and the 877 almanac have suggested (as mentioned previously), and it may also have affected the selection of burial month or other elements of burial date selection.

3. Burial Patterns According to Month and Day of the Month

The focus of this chapter so far has been on an analysis of the timing of burials according to the sexagenary system. To complete my study of temporal dimension of Tang burials, I also examined the frequency of burials by month and by day of the month. Once again, I begin by analyzing the Luoyang data before moving to a study of other regions, and further to a breakdown of the data by century.

3.1. Burial frequency by month

Figure 6 shows the distribution of Luoyang burials by month. Clearly, there were more burials in the cold months, that is, the tenth through the second months, but with a drop in the twelfth and first months. If we average out the tenth to the second months, we see that 11% of burials took place in each of these months. But actually, there were only 6.9% of burials in the first month and 5.6% of burials in the twelfth month. I hypothesize that the drop in the twelfth and first months may have been to avoid the period around the Lunar New Year. Thus, I examined the distribution of burials by day of the first and twelfth months. Figure 7 confirms my hypothesis, as apparently at the end of the twelfth month and beginning of the first month—that is, around the Lunar New Year—there were sharp drops in burials, whereas the beginning of the twelfth month and the end of the first month generally had more burials in comparison.

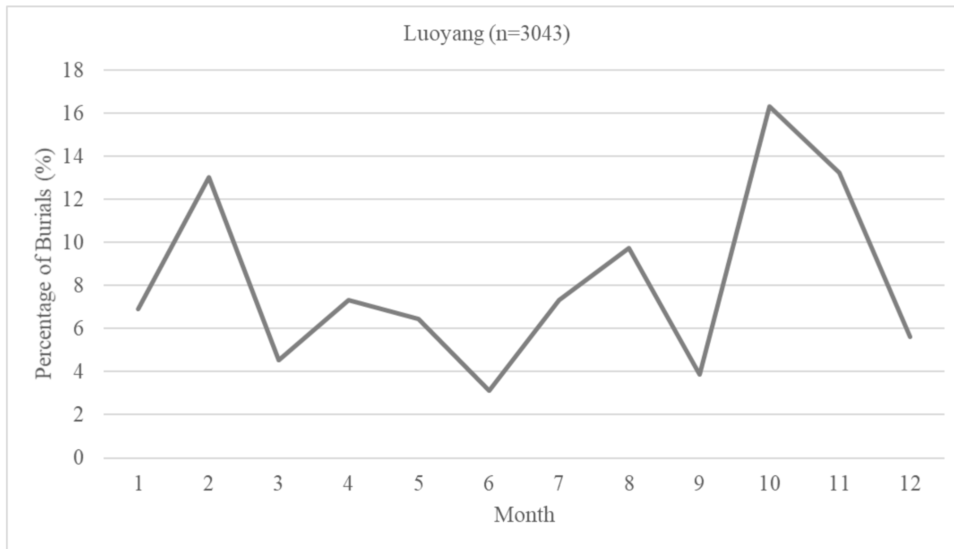


Figure 6. Burials in Tang Luoyang: Frequency by Month

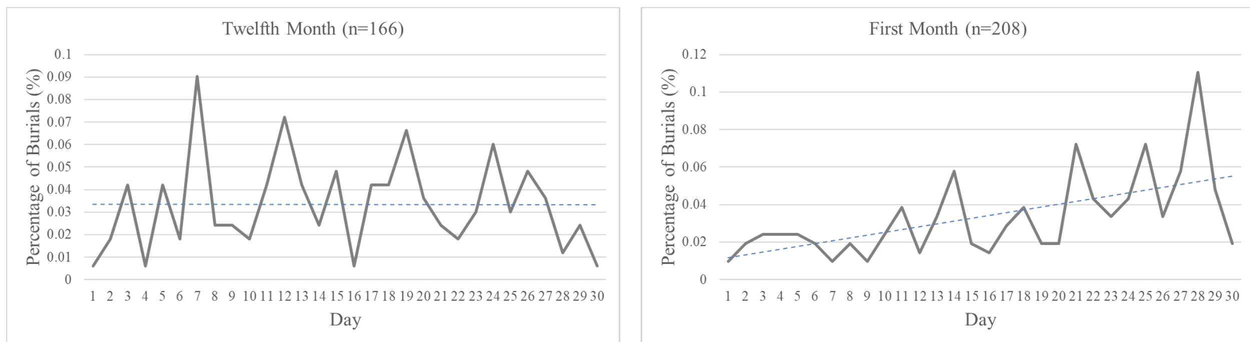


Figure 7. Burials in Tang Luoyang: Frequency by Day of the First and Twelfth Months

I also took into consideration the problem of intercalary or "leap" (*run* 閏) months. There was a total of 107 intercalary months in the Tang dynasty, but I could not detect any noticeable pattern (of more or fewer burials) during those months (data not shown). I also investigated the possibility of transcription errors made by (transcribers) omitting the word *run* when identifying burial dates in epitaph inscriptions. But, as table 5 shows, intercalary months were interspersed relatively evenly, hence it is not likely that transcription errors have skewed the data in favor of any particular month.

Intercalary Month	Total number in Tang
1	9
2	7
3	11
4	9
5	10
6	8
7	10
8	7
9	8
10	11
11	6
12	11

Table 5. Number of Intercalary Months in the Tang Dynasty

(by month immediately preceding the intercalary month)

I also considered variations by century and by region. As suggested in figure 8 (which breaks down the Luoyang data by century), the frequency of burials by month did not change significantly over the course of the Tang dynasty.

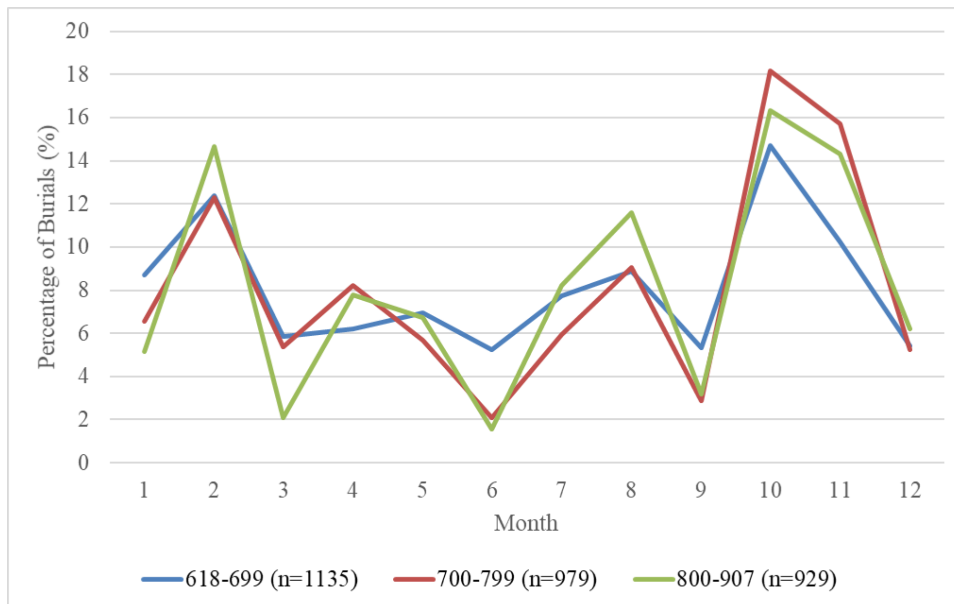
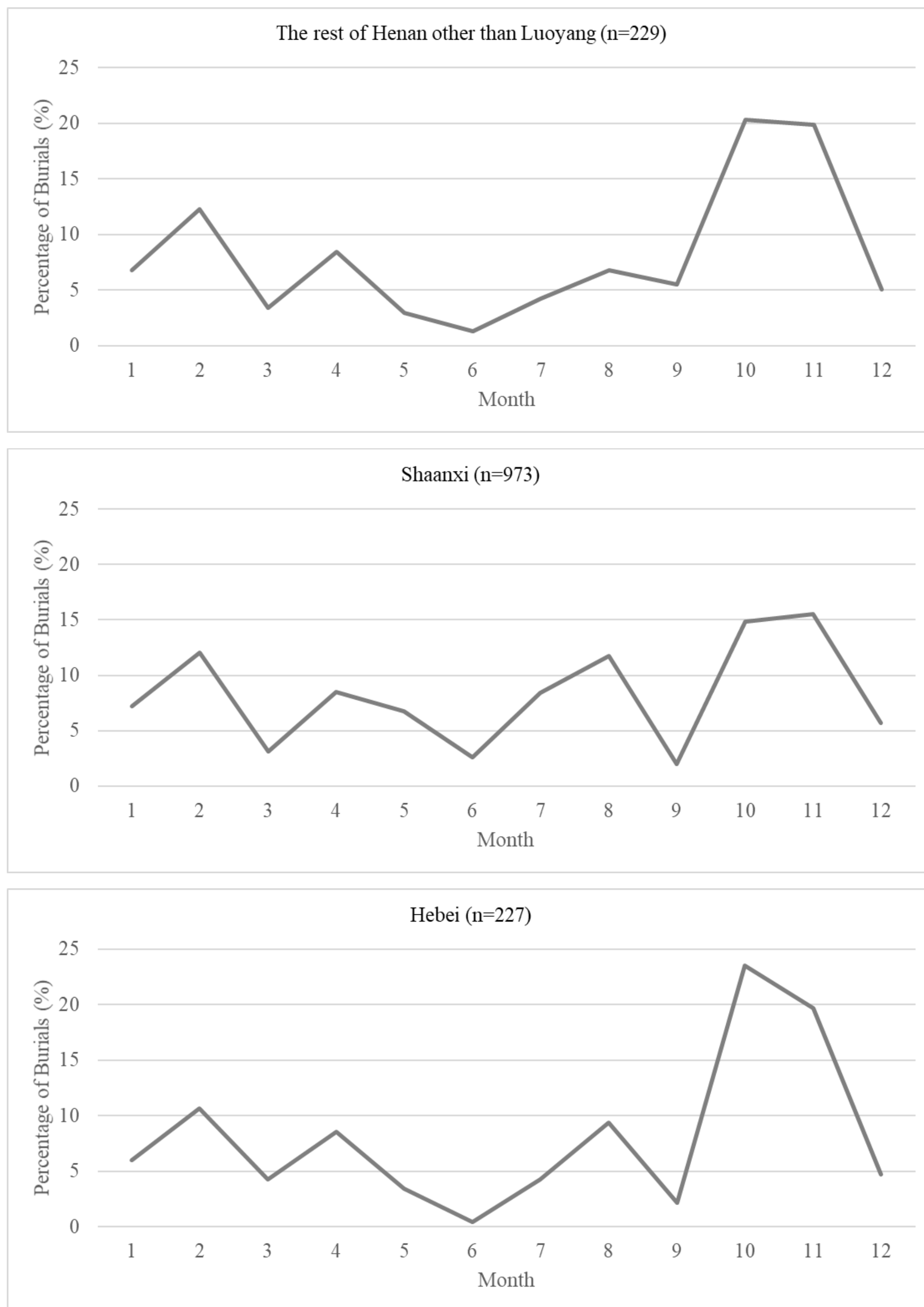


Figure 8. Burials in Tang Luoyang: Frequency by Month and Century

Likewise, I analyzed the data from other regions, and found the patterns to be more or less the same with minor variations (fig. 9), which may have been affected by the different data sample sizes.



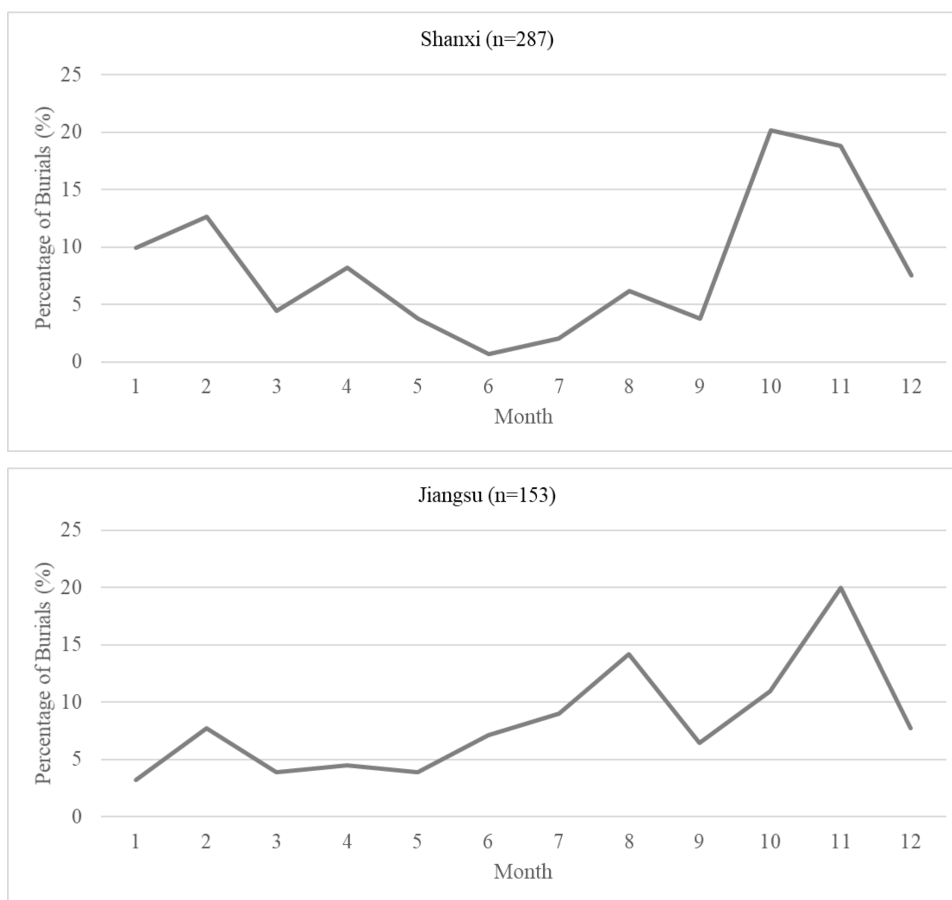


Figure 9. Tang-Era Burials in Other Geographic Regions: Frequency by Month

To summarize, winter months clearly were popular for burials, except for the twelfth and first months, particularly the days around the Lunar New Year. Without sufficient textual records, it is difficult to know why. One possible explanation is that this general pattern of burials in winter reflects the fact that more deaths occurred in summer, as empirical evidence suggests,[33] so that after a typical delay between death and burial, there would have been more burials in winter. Generally speaking, summer and winter, due to their harsh weather conditions, were dangerous months for the sick and weak. Elites were probably less likely than the poor to die of exposure or starvation in winter, but were probably just as likely as the poor to succumb to insect-borne and communicable diseases in summer.[34] For example, Mr. Wu Ziying's epitaph tells us that in the

33 This is from my personal conversation with Nicolas Tackett, who tested a sample of several hundred Tang-era epitaphs and found that a higher ratio of deaths occurred in summer and early fall.

34 One interesting example is that the fifth month was often called the "malicious month" (*eyue* 惡月) or "poisonous month" (*duyue* 毒月). One of the rituals of the "*duanwu* festival" (*duanwu jie* 端午節), held on the fifth day in the fifth month, is to hang mugwort leaves (*aiye* 艾葉) and acorus calamus—also called sweet flag (*changpu* 菖浦)—on doors to repel harmful pests and animals—often identified as the "five poisons" (*wudu* 五毒), including snakes, scorpions, centipedes, house lizards, and toads—and to ward off diseases. The concept of five poisons is described in the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) text *Yanqing* 言鯖 (Speaking of mackerel). See Siku quanshu cunmu congshu bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu*, 89:322–323. For more information on the fifth month and the *duanwu* festival, see Qin Yongzhou, *Zhongguo shehui fengsu shi*, 243–246.

scorching hot summer, he "was infected with malarial diseases" (爲瘴癘所侵) and died on the third day of the seventh month in the ninth year of the Kaiyuan 開元 reign (713–741).[35] Another possibility is that the higher ratio of burials in winter months in part reflected the labor market, as more laborers were available in winter when they were not attending their fields, except around the Lunar New Year, as they too wanted to celebrate the holiday with time off from work.[36]

3.2. Frequency of burials by day of the month

Did people in the Tang select certain days of the month more frequently than others for burial? For the convenience of calculation, I assumed every month had thirty days—while knowing that some did not—and counted the frequency of burial on each day of the month. Once again, I began with the Luoyang data. In figure 10 one can identify a general yet subtle trend of increasing numbers of burials toward the end of the month. It should be noted that some months had only twenty-nine days, which explains why the thirtieth day of the month featured a sharp drop in frequency.

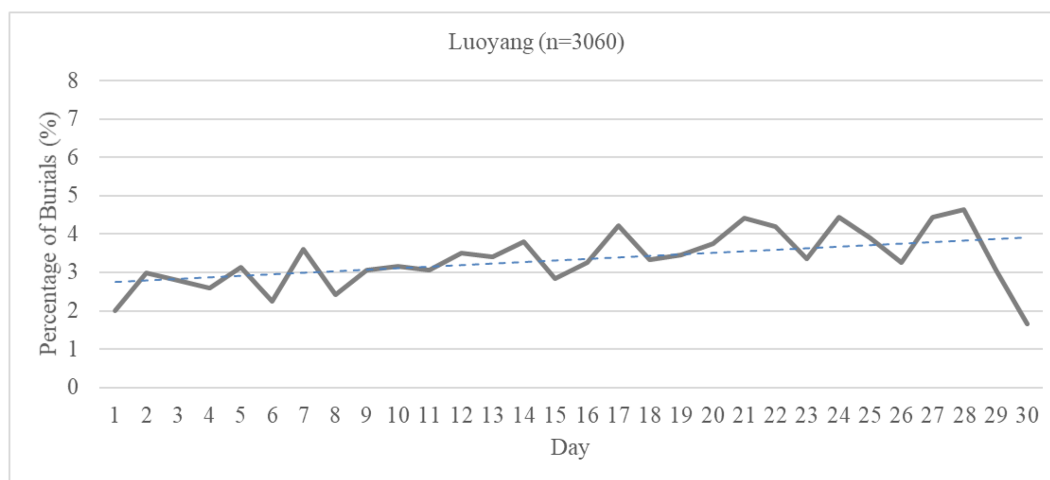


Figure 10. Tang Luoyang: Percentage of Burials in Each Day of a Month

This upward trend of burial toward the end of the month was consistent throughout the Tang dynasty (see fig. 11).[37]

35 DTXS 411.
36 In today's rural China, many marriages occur in winter because this is when people have less work to do in the fields. Tang-era elites certainly did not have to work in the fields themselves, but it is reasonable to assume that they had to hire many laborers to participate in funerals, and these people were more available in winter.
37 Note that even though 3060 epitaphs provide clear records of days when burials happened (see fig. 10), six of them have blurry rubbings for the years of burial, hence the total number in figure 11 is (1167+1000+887=) 3054.

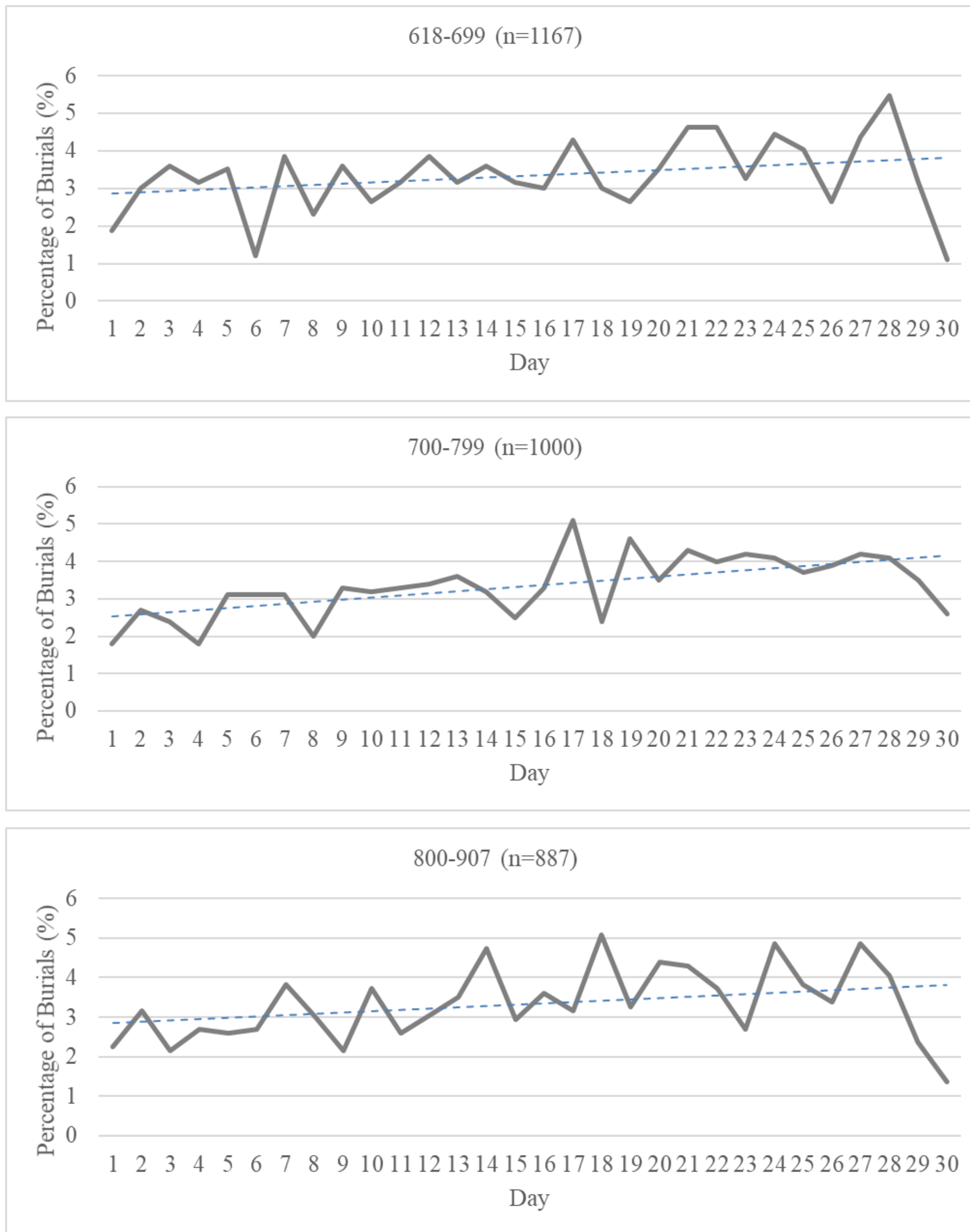
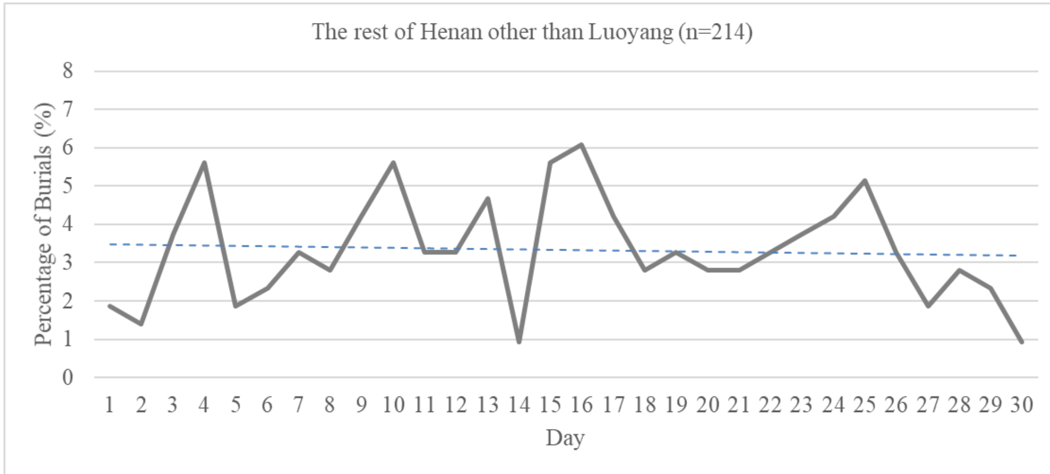
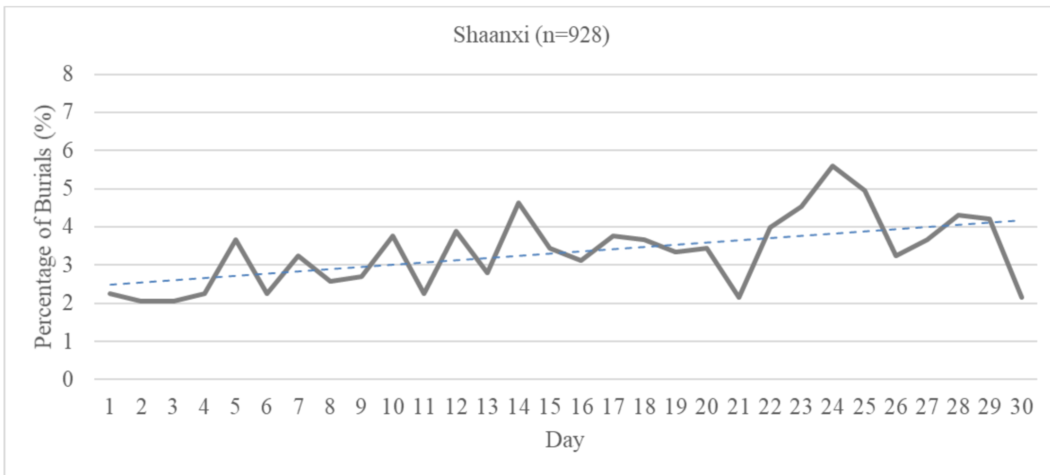
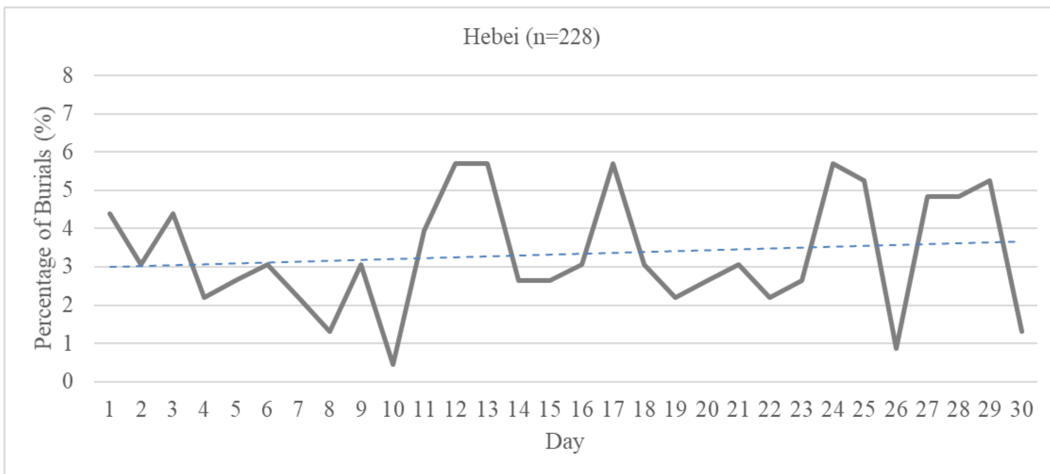


Figure 11. Tang Luoyang: Percentages of Burials in Each Day of a Month in Three Different Centuries

Using the same method, I examined the data sets from other regions.


The rest of Henan other than Luoyang (n=214)
Percentage of Burials (%)
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
Day


Shaanxi (n=928)
Percentage of Burials (%)
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
Day


Hebei (n=228)
Percentage of Burials (%)
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
Day

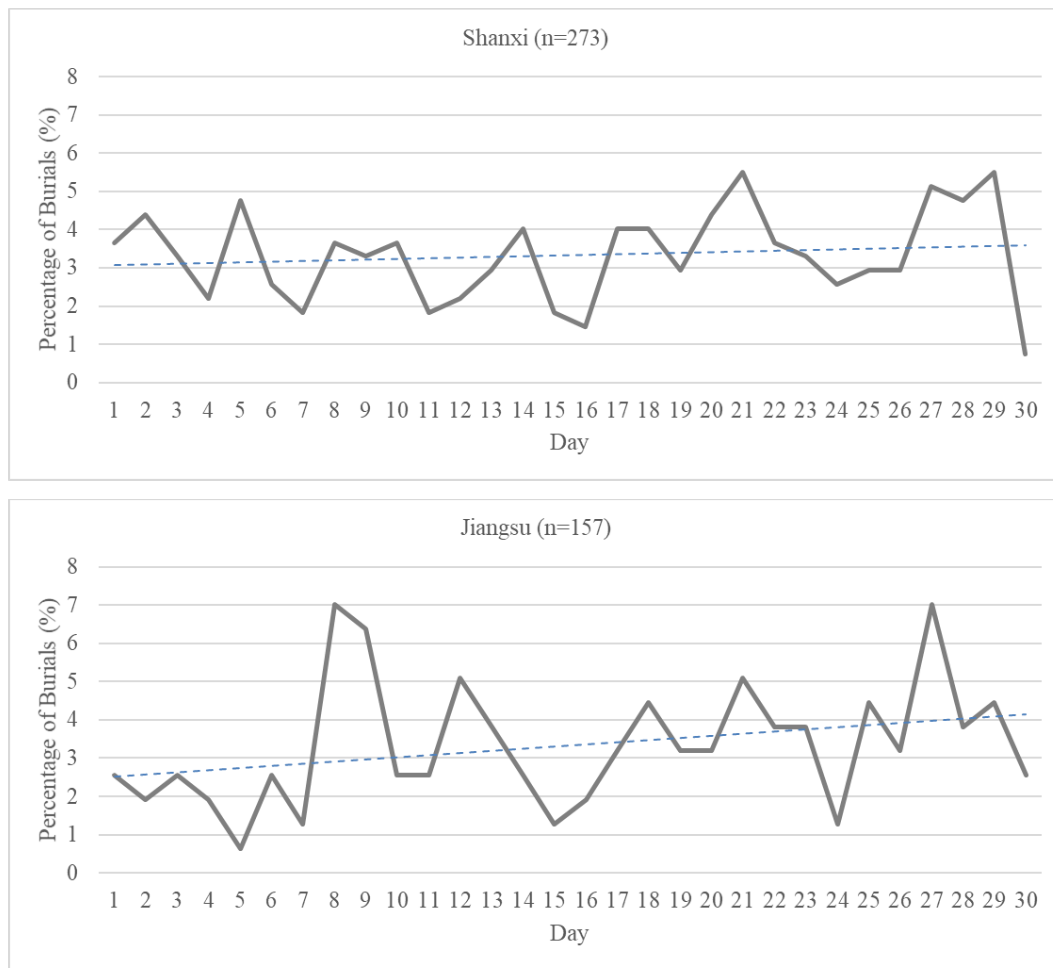


Figure 12. Tang: Percentages of Burials in Each Day of a Month in Other Geographical Regions

Likewise, all the graphs above in figure 12, except the first one ("the rest of Henan except Luoyang"), show a slightly upward trend toward the end of a month for burial, but evidence is not overwhelming.

The preference for burials on later days of a month might have reflected the ritual practice described in the *Liji* and restated by Lü Cai, who wrote:

> The *Liji* says: "To divine a date for burial, we should first consider a distant day." Because if we choose a distant day, we can avoid [the possibility of] of inadequate mourning for the deceased.
>
> 《禮記》云：卜葬先遠日者。蓋選月終之日，所以避不懷也。[38]

Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) commentated that the word "*yuanri*" 遠日 (distant day) referred to the days in the lower *xun* 旬 of a month.[39] Many epitaph texts record this preference. For example, a certain Mr. Wang's epitaph tells us that the diviner "divines and searches for a distant

38 JTS 79:2724.
39 *Xun* refers to a period of ten days, and a month consists of three *xun*, namely, the upper *xun* (*shangxun* 上旬), second *xun* (*cixun* 次旬), and lower *xun* (*xiaxun* 下旬). See Zuo Qiuming, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi*, 22:713.

day" 卜稽遠日 and buried him on the twenty-seventh of the third month in 781.[40] In another example, a grandson diligently wrote in an epitaph inscription for his grandparent explaining the previous (temporary) burial and the later transfer of the coffin to the current (permanent) burial, saying: "Cunfu [I myself] and others took the order from the will of the deceased and reverently have chosen a distant period" 存夫等號奉遺旨，恭擇遠期. The burial date in this case was the twenty-sixth of the tenth month in 832.[41] The epitaph of a high-ranking official Mr. Li, as supreme pillar of the state (*shangzhuguo*上柱國), tells us that "since ancient times for matters of burial, [people] preferred distant days" 古来凶事先遠日, and he was buried on the twenty-third of the tenth month in 724.[42]

Nevertheless, many days other than those at the ends of months still received burials. For instance, a Mr. Li's daughter died at a young age, and even though her epitaph says that the family "obtained this distant day" 得兹遠日,[43] her burial date was actually the fourth day of the seventh month in 742, five years after she died. Ms. Zhangsun's epitaph records that she died in 636 and was buried on the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 658 together with her husband. The epitaph also says: "a distant day has been obtained by consulting both tortoise and milfoil divinations" 遠日既臻，龜筮云襲.[44] Hence in actual practice, people probably did not necessarily restrict the choice of burial dates within the last ten days of a month, as long as sufficient time for mourning was guaranteed.

3.3. Holidays

I also examined fifteen Tang-era holidays, both secular and religious. I used the Luoyang data set (n=2702) as my sample, and I counted 365 days as the total number of days in a year; thus, in the Luoyang sample, there is an expected frequency of seven burials for each day, assuming a perfect even distribution of days.[45] According to a recent study by Zhang Bo, there were about thirty different holidays in the Tang dynasty.[46] Among them, for the convenience of my analysis, I chose to examine fifteen holidays with fixed dates (table 6) and excluded those with fluctuating dates, such as the *dongzhi* 冬至 (winter solstice), *lichun* 立春 (beginning of spring), and *hanshi* 寒食 (cold meal) festivals.

Holidays	Date	Number
Nonreligious		
Yuanri 元日 (also known as *yuandan* 元旦, *zhengyuan* 正元, and *yuanzheng* 元正)	1.1(a)	1
Renri 人日	1.7	2
Shangyuan 上元 (also known as *yuanye* 元夜, *yuewang* 月望, and *dengjie* 燈節)	1.15	4

40 MZH 1829.
41 MZHX 909.
42 MZHX 500.
43 MZH 1537.
44 MZHX 102.
45 The math here is 2702/365=7.4. If the days appear purely at random, then each day of a year has a frequency of about seven burials happening on that day.
46 See Zhang Bo, *Tang dai jieri yanjiu*, 28–37, 55–61, for further reading on Tang-era holidays.

Zhonghe jie 中和	2.1	8
Shangsi 上巳	3.3	4
Duanwu 端午	5.5	3
Qixi 七夕	7.7	6
Zhongqiu 中秋	8.15	7
Chongyang 重陽 (also known as *chongjiu* 重九, *juhua jie* 菊花節, or *zhuyu jie* 茱萸節)	9.9	3
Religious (Buddhist or Daoist or both)		
Fori 佛日 (Buddhist)	2.8	7
Daodan 道誕 (also known as *daori* 道日; Daoist)	2.15	14
Fori 佛日 (Buddhist)	4.8	8
Zhongyuan 中元 (Daoist), also known as *yülanpen* 盂蘭盆 (Buddhist) (b)	7.15	11
Xiayuan 下元 (Daoist)	10.15	10
Fori 佛日 (Buddhist) (c)	12.8	4

Table 6. Fifteen Tang-Era Holidays

Source of the Tang Holidays: Zhang Bo, *Tang dai jieri yanjiu*, 28–37, 55–61.

Note: (a) “1.1” refers to the first day of the first month (of the lunar calendar), rather than January 1st (Western calendar). The same format applies to all the other dates in this column.

(b) The fifteenth day of the seventh month was celebrated as a holiday by a mix of religions and had plural functions. Daoists had it as their *zhongyuan* festival, when the Officer of Earth (*diguan* 地官)—who presides over the vital force of the earth—descended to judge people’s actions, and participants performed repentance rituals and made sacrifices to ancestors. Buddhists had it as the *yulanpen* festival, which was based on the story of Mulian rescuing his mother. Moreover, this day was also known as the ghost festival (*guijie* 鬼節) as an integral part of the seasonal festivals and had long been associated with sacrifice to the *diguan*, who also controls the ripening of crops. On this day, both ancestors and ghosts were provided offerings. For a thorough discussion of this multireligious festival, see Teiser, “Ghosts and Ancestors in Medieval Chinese Religion,” particularly 47–48, 50, 58–62.

(c) As for why there were three holidays all called *Fori* 佛日 (with different meanings), see Zhang Bo, *Tang dai jieri yanjiu*, 29, n.1.

A basic conclusion that one can draw from the tables is that except for the first and twelfth months, which were generally avoided for burials (due to their closeness to the Lunar New Year as mentioned earlier), holidays, whether secular or religious, in the other months were not particularly preferred or avoided. Additionally, as the data show, many of the secular holidays have well under seven burials (i.e., the average chance that a day is a burial day in my database), whereas most of the religious holidays had seven or more. This is not overwhelmingly evident, but it seems to point to the possibility that, comparatively speaking, people preferred using religious holidays rather than secular holidays for burials.

3.4. Summary

To recapitulate, my data analysis of burial dates from the Tang dynasty indicates that

certain aspects of death ritual were stable across the empire over three centuries. The most striking pattern involves the choice of burial days using the sexagenary cycle, but there was also a notably increased likelihood of burial in winter months. And, there may have been a slight tendency to prefer burials at the end of the month. Overall, the month and year when a burial took place was probably far less important than the stem-branch burial day, as Lü Cai explained that "there are various ominous factors. For people who hope to have a formal burial, do not be concerned about whether it is an inauspicious year or month, but only select an auspicious day and time" 諸因凶，欲大葬者，不問忌凶年惡月，但擇吉日時.[47]

How should we understand these discovered patterns? As discussed earlier, the pattern of burials by month of the year could have a variety of practical explanations (relating to the greater prevalence of death in summer, or perhaps to rhythms of the agricultural cycle). By contrast, the pattern of burial frequencies by stem-branch days is both striking and most likely explained not on the basis of practicality but rather specifically on the belief that some days were more auspicious for burial than others.

4. Burial Patterns in Post-Tang Periods

In this section I examine to what extent the patterns in Tang burial dates can be recognized in burials of later periods. In my preliminary approach to this question, I gathered a relatively small but sufficient number of tomb epitaphs from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), with the assumption that if the Tang-era patterns of burial dates were conserved in the Ming, they were probably in place in the intervening centuries as well. Having discerned similar patterns in the Ming, I expanded the analysis to the subsequent Qing dynasty (1644–1912).

4.1. Preferred stem-branch days for burial in the Ming and Qing

I took all the epitaphs dating to the Ming and Qing dynasties from several volumes of the *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi* 新中國出土墓誌 series as my sample.[48] I analyzed the data as with the Tang-era data. The results, as illustrated by figures 13 and 14, are striking.

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47 DLXS 10:287, which identifies this quote as coming from Lü Cai.

48 My Ming epitaph data set includes all the Ming-era epitaphs in five volumes of the *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi* series: *Shaanxi (1)* and *(2)*, and *Henan [1]*, *(2)*, and *(3)*. My Qing epitaph data set includes all the Qing-era epitaphs in three volumes of the *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi series*: *Shaanxi (1)*, and *Henan [1]* and *(2)*.

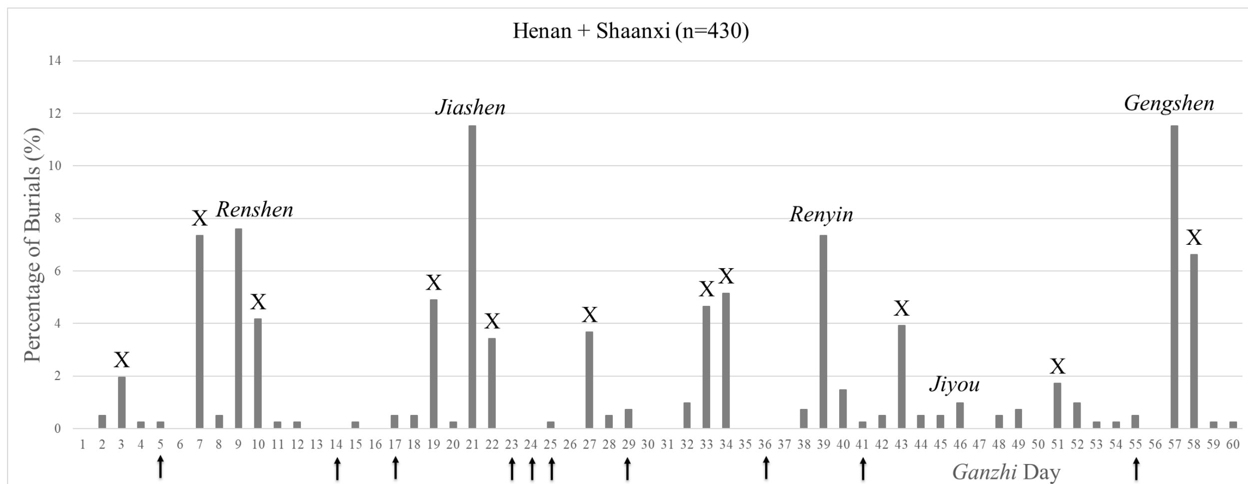

Figure 13. Percentage of Burials per Stem-Branch Day in the Ming

Note: This data set includes 266 epitaphs from Henan and 164 epitaphs from Shaanxi, all of which contain clear burial dates that I could convert to corresponding stem-branch days.

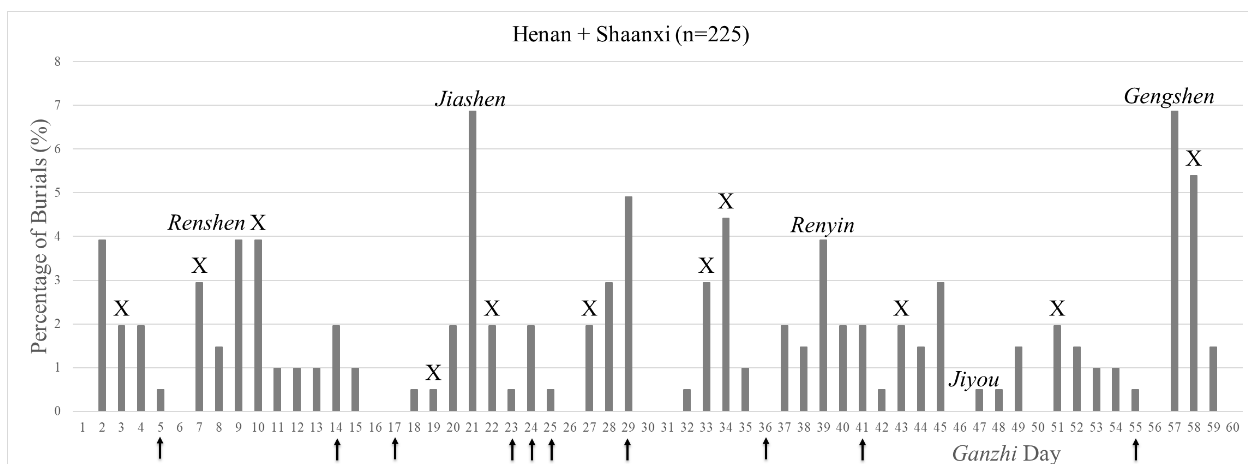

Figure 14. Percentage of Burials per Stem-Branch Day in the Qing

Note: This data set includes 118 epitaphs from Henan and 107 epitaphs from Shaanxi, all of which contain clear burial dates that I could convert to corresponding stem-branch days.

The sets of auspicious and inauspicious stem-branch days for burial in the Ming overlap with those in the Tang to such a degree that it could not have been a coincidence. The five most popular stem-branch days in the Tang dynasty—*renshen*, *jiashen*, *renyin*, *jiyou*, and *gengshen*—were still popular in the Ming dynasty, and, except for *jiyou*, the four others still rank among the most popular burial days in the Ming. Moreover, the next most popular stem-branch days in the Tang remained the next most popular in the Ming, and most of the unpopular days in the Tang were still rarely used in the Ming. For instance, the taboo day *jihai* that Lü Cai mentioned does not appear even once in the Ming database of burial days.

For the Qing-era data set, the auspicious and inauspicious dates overlap with those from the Tang to a certain degree, but differences are noticeable. The five most popular stem-branch

days in the Tang—*renshen*, *jiashen*, *renyin*, *jiyou*, and *gengshen*—remained popular in the Qing dynasty, but they were no longer dominant to the same degree. The next most popular days in the Tang were also often used for burial in the Qing, but so were some other *ganzhi* days. Moreover, many of the unpopular stem-branch days in the Tang were used as burial days in the Qing. Assuming that the results are not significantly affected by the relatively small sample size of Qing burials, one can tentatively conclude that a highly conserved element of burial ritual survived at least a millennium, from the early Tang to the late Ming, and finally declined in use only in the Qing.[49] Textual sources suggest that the Qing state tried to crack down on delayed burials:

> All families that hold burials must adhere to ritual when burying the deceased. As for those who are misled by *fengshui* and who come up with an excuse to keep the coffin at home for years without a burial, they are to be flogged eighty strokes.
>
> 凡有葬之家必須依禮定限安葬，若惑於風水及托故停柩在家，經年暴露不葬者，杖八十。[50]

Whether the enforcement of laws against *fengshui* and delayed burials indeed constituted the key factor accounting for the change in Qing times requires further research.

4.2. Popular months and days for burial in the Ming and Qing

As with the Tang-era epitaphs, in addition to analyzing the data with regard to stem-branch days, I also sorted out the frequency of burial by month and by day of the month in the Ming and Qing data, looking for patterns and comparing them with the patterns that I discerned in the Tang-era data. The following graphs show the Ming and Qing burial month distributions (figs. 15, 16, 17, and 18).

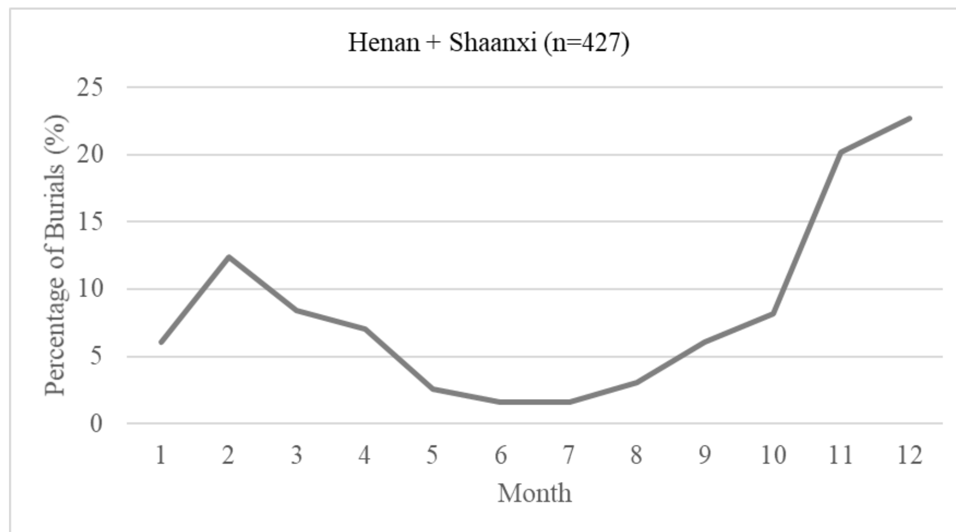

Figure 15. Percentage of Burials by Month during the Ming

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49 Xu Xinyu has conducted a case study of about three hundred tomb epitaphs from Southern Song (1127–1279) Fujian. Even though the author used a different framework from mine to calculate the popular burial days in the sexagenary system, the stem-branch days identified as auspicious demonstrate great similarity to what I have found. See Xu Xinyu, "Nan Song Fujian jiusang buzang yanjiu," 55–56.

50 See item 181 under the "ritual codes" (*lilü* 禮律) section in the *Da Qing lü li* 大清律例 (Great Qing code); Shanghai daxue faxueyuan et al., *Da Qing lü li*, 296.

Note: This data set includes 260 epitaphs from Henan and 167 epitaphs from Shaanxi, all of which contain clear burial months.

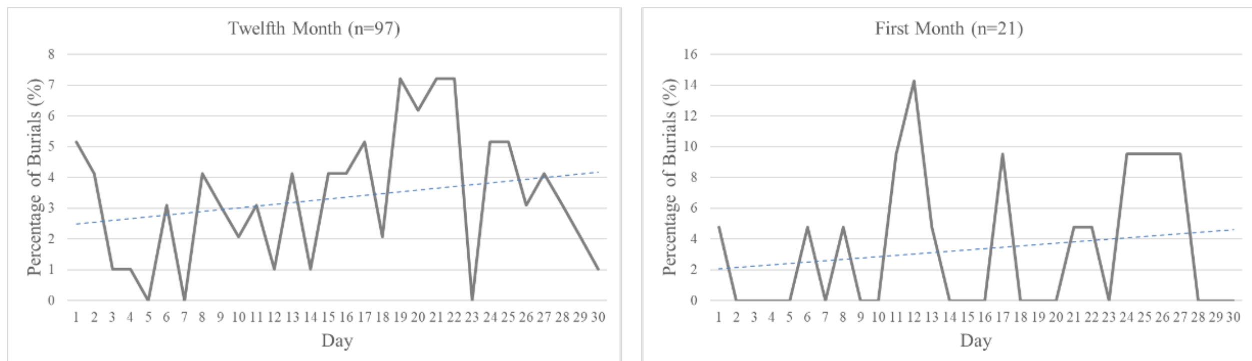

Figure 16. Burials in Ming Henan and Shaanxi: Frequency by Day of the First and Twelfth Months

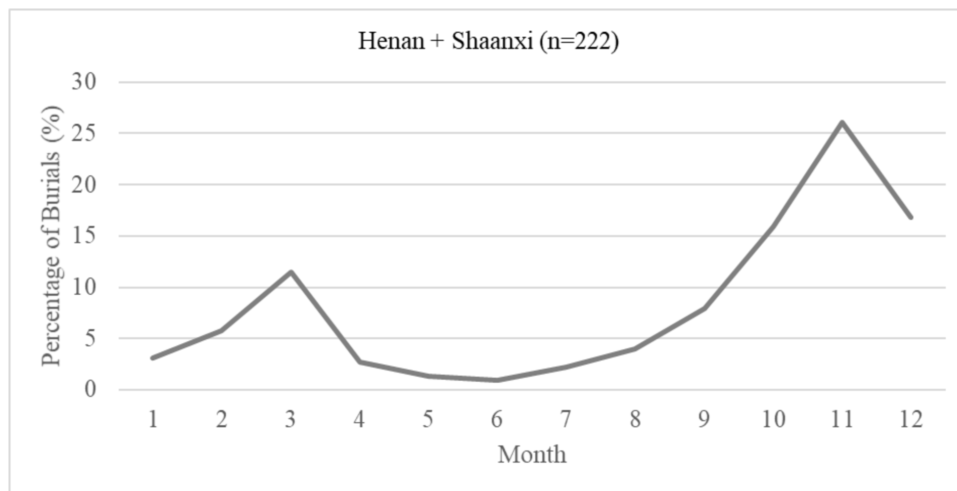

Figure 17. Percentage of Burials by Month during the Qing

Note: This data set includes 117 epitaphs from Henan and 105 epitaphs from Shaanxi, all of which contain clear burial months.

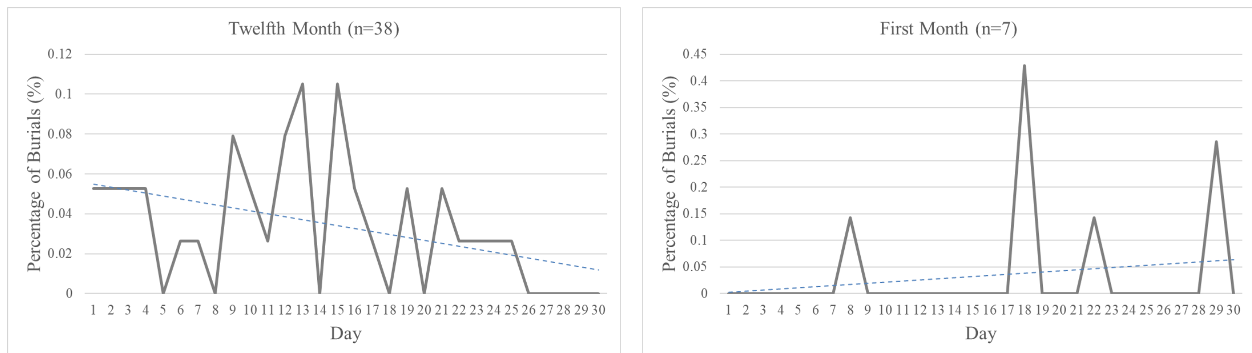

Figure 18. Burials in Qing Henan and Shaanxi: Frequency by Day of the First and Twelfth Months

The analyses show that the most popular months for burial during the Ming (fig. 15) were the eleventh and twelfth months, as 20% and 23% of all the burials in the Ming data set took place in these two months. The next most popular ones were the second, third, and tenth months, each of which had a percentage between 8% and 12% of all the burials. There was a deep drop during the period from the fifth to eighth months; on average, 2.2% of burials took place in each of these four months. The first month was not popular either; it had about 6% of all the burials.

From the Qing graph (fig. 17), we can tell that the eleventh month was the most popular, with a ratio of burials (26%) significantly higher than the next most popular burial months, that is, the tenth and twelfth months (about 16.4% on average for each month). Similarly, a deep drop in burials appeared from the fifth to eighth months; on average, 2.1% of burials took place in each of these four months. The first month was low in burials as well, taking only 3.1%.

Both figure 16 and figure 18 examine the distributions of burials by day of the first and twelfth months. It seems that, similar to the Tang-era Luoyang case, the days around the Lunar New Year were usually avoided, as the end of the twelfth month and beginning of the first month had sharp drops in burials, and the beginning of the twelfth month and the end of the first month generally had more burials in comparison. Therefore, as with the Tang, during the Ming and Qing the cold months—including late fall, winter, and early spring—were also popular for burial.

Additionally, my analyses of the burial days (from the first to the thirtieth of a month) during the Ming and Qing result in graphs with only a slightly upward trend of increasing numbers of burials toward the end of the month (figs. 19 and 20). This subtle trend aligned with that of the Tang era. It should also be noted that some months had only twenty-nine days, which explains why the thirtieth day of the month featured a sharp drop in frequency.

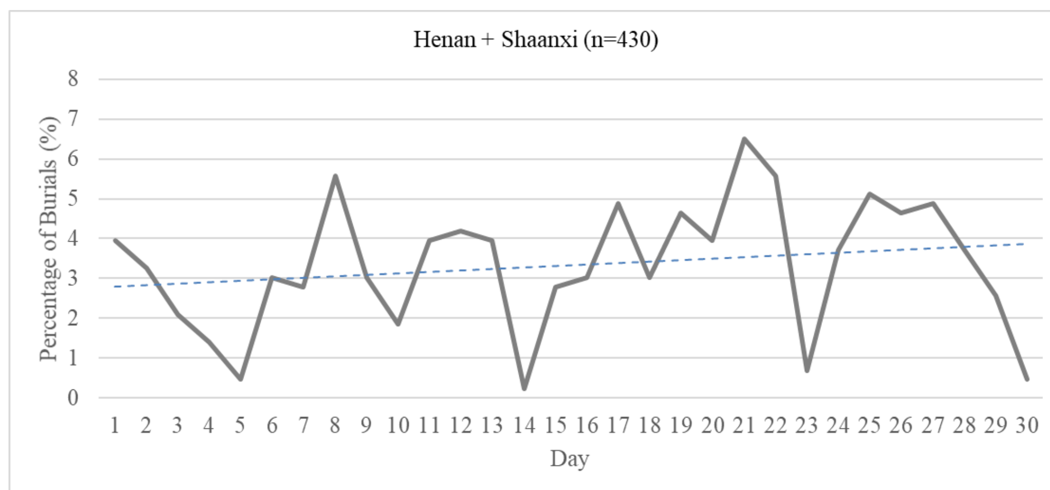

Figure 19. Frequency of Burials by Day of the Month during the Ming

Note: This data set includes 266 epitaphs from Henan and 164 epitaphs from Shaanxi, all of which contain clear burial days.

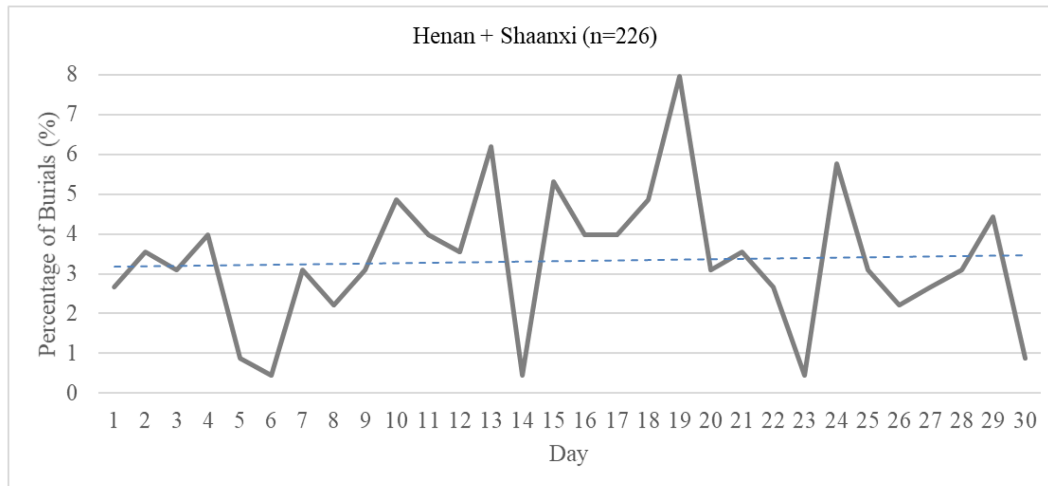

Figure 20. Frequency of Burials by Day of the Month during the Qing

Note: This data set includes 118 epitaphs from Henan and 108 epitaphs from Shaanxi, all of which contain clear burial days.

In brief, the patterns of popular months and days for burial during the Ming and Qing dynasties appeared similar to those in the Tang dynasty, despite some variations, probably due to different sample sizes, inevitable change over time, or both. In other words, considerable consistency existed from the Tang to the Qing regarding people's preference for the time of year and month to bury their deceased.

5. Divination Texts and the Standardization of Ritual Practice

Some of the inauspicious or "taboo days" for Tang burials may have had ancient roots. Oracle bones are full of records of date divination. Archaeologically excavated fourth- to first-century BCE manuscripts known as *Rishu* 日書 (Day books) also reveal a series of days regarded as auspicious or inauspicious for particular activities in daily life. It seems that many of the inauspicious stem-branch days in my Tang-era database were also deemed inauspicious for burial in the *Rishu*. For instance, *chen* 辰 (one of the twelve earthly branches) days—including five different *ganzhi* days in the sexagenary cycle—were regarded as ominous days for burial in the *Rishu*. Apparently, if a deceased person is buried on a *chen* day, the family "certainly will face another death again [soon]" 必復有喪.[51] It turns out that, according to my Tang-era burial date database, most *chen* days were rarely used for burials.

Belief in the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness of specific days continued into the Western Han (202 BCE–23 CE) and Eastern Han dynasties. Wang Chong, in his famous essay "Jiri" 譏日 (Criticism of date divination), argued that belief in auspicious and inauspicious days

51 Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Suizhou shi kaogudui, *Suizhou kongjiapo Han mu jiandu*, 178, bamboo strip no. 393. Similar examples can be found in Wuhan daxue jianbo yanjiu zhongxin, Hubei sheng bowuguan, and Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Qin jiandu heji*, 53 (bamboo strip no. B 108–109), 377 (bamboo strip no. A 30–31), 404 (bamboo strip no. A105-2). The insightful observation about the *chen* day being inauspicious recorded in the *Rishu* is from Trenton Wilson, a Ph.D. candidate completing his dissertation in the Department of History at UC Berkeley at the time of our conversation (fall 2018).

for different activities rested on logical inconsistencies. Of greater pertinence here, he also mentions a burial manual called *Zangli* 葬歷 (Calendar of burial), which might have been one of the earliest almanacs. According to Wang Chong:

> The *Calendar of Burial* says: "Burials [should] avoid the nine emptinesses and earth pits, and [should] take into account the toughness and gentleness of the day, as well as the odd and even numbers of the month. If the day is auspicious, then there will be no harm done. When the toughness and gentleness of the day are in harmony, and the odd and even numbers of the month correspond to each other, only then is it auspicious and beneficial. If one does not follow the principles described in this calendar, then [the burial] will bring misfortune."
>
> 《葬歷》曰："葬避九空、地臽，及日之剛柔，月之奇耦。日吉無害。剛柔相得，奇耦相應，乃為吉良。不合此歷，轉為凶惡。"[52]

By the Tang dynasty, works of burial ritual, divination, and geomancy were broadly available. The *Jiu Tang shu* lists many such works, including the *Zangjing* 葬經 (Burial canon), the *Zangshu dimai jing* 葬書地脈經 (Book of burial and canon of the veins of the earth), the *Yinyang shu* 陰陽書 (Book of yin and yang) by Lü Cai, the *Qingwu zi* 青烏子 (Master Qingwu),[53] and *Zamu tu* 雜墓圖 (Diagrams of miscellaneous tombs).[54] Moreover, the discovery amid the Dunhuang manuscripts of books dealing with burial date divination suggests that such knowledge even reached the Tang empire's Far West.[55] Tang epitaphs also mention that texts were consulted to determine burial dates. For example, a certain Mr. Fu's epitaph states: "It is auspicious according to the diagram and text. When a day and a month are selected, one should follow ritual texts" 圖書就吉。日月取時，須准禮文.[56] Interestingly, this epitaph does not mention the act of divination (*bu* 卜 or *shi* 筮), which makes one wonder whether an almanac was used in lieu of hiring a diviner, or perhaps a diviner consulted the text. In either case, a text of some sort was consulted to determine the burial date.[57]

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52 For the original text, see Beijing daxue lishixi *Lunheng zhushi* xiaozu, *Lunheng zhushi*, 4:1354 (in the "Jiri" chapter).

53 As mentioned in the previous chapter, *Qingwu zi* was a legendary geomancer active in early China. Before the Song dynasty, the word *qingwu* referred to geomancers, and "the methods of *Qingwu*" (*qingwu zhishu* 青烏之術) means geomancy. Only starting from the Song dynasty, *qingnang* 青囊 and *fengshui* 風水 became synonyms for geomancy. For more information, see Yu Gege, "Guo Pu *Zangshu* weishu kao," 76–77; Guan Changlong, *Dunhuang ben kanyu wenshu yanjiu*, 291.

54 The *Jiu Tang shu* lists 113 books of divination of all sorts. See JTS 47:2041–2044.

55 According to Huang Zhengjian and Jin Shenjia, a total of thirteen Dunhuang manuscripts dated to the Tang and the Five Dynasties (907–960) periods discuss various matters of burial, including date divination, geomancy of grave sites, the use of the Five Surname system, the use of the right routes to approach a grave site, and so on. See Huang Zhengjian, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenshu*, 82–88, for a good summary of these thirteen manuscripts; see Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 207–328, for a thorough transcription of each one. All these manuscripts are searchable on the website of the International Dunhuang Project (http://idp.bl.uk) as well. Also according to Huang Zhengjian's research, found in Dunhuang thus far are a total of thirty-eight calendars and twenty-five manuscripts that discuss methods and approaches regarding what to do and what to avoid on certain months and days. All these manuscripts are also dated to the Tang and the Five Dynasties periods. See Huang Zhengjian, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenshu*, 89–106, 189, 213–214.

56 MZHX 1144.

57 If the "diagram and text" (*tushu* 圖書) included an almanac in this case, we can imagine that the auspicious and inauspicious dates were listed rather explicitly (like the Dunhuang almanacs discussed earlier), hence the family may not have needed to hire a diviner.

Two Tang-era scholars, Lü Cai and Sun Jiyong 孫季邕 (n.d.), note that there were 120 *yinyang* schools and each school claimed different rules and produced its own books and manuals, including works for date divination such as the *Zeri pian jing* 擇日篇經 (Canon for the section of selecting days) and the *Zangsi li* 葬死曆 (Calendar of burial and death) and calendars such as the *Sishi zhancao li* 四時斬草曆 (Calendar for the [ritual of] cutting grass in the four seasons) and the *Zhigan li* 支干曆 (Branch-stem calendar).[58] Since the 120 different schools had a wide variety of rules that did not necessarily accord with one another, the result was, as Lü Cai pointed out, a great confusion in burial practice. This was particularly problematic given that the imperial court sought to maintain a monopoly on time through the issuance of official calendars.[59] It was for this reason that Sun listed these 120 "false and rotten" (*weilian* 偽爛) texts of burial and presented a memorial to the court to obliterate them,[60] and that, in 641, Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626–649) ordered Lü Cai to compile a *Yinyang shu* 陰陽書 (Book of yin and yang) that would abolish illicit practices and standardize the divinatory arts.[61] Two centuries later, in 805, the court issued the first printed calendar, so that "every year thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of uniform calendars spread across the empire."[62] This state policy was certainly meant to intervene with burial practice.

But state efforts to control and standardize divination were apparently not very successful. According to a memorial dating to 835, before the Bureau of Astronomy even began to hand out the new calendar each year, many printed calendars and almanacs were already available on the market.[63] Indeed, as Huang Zhengjian has noted, in the late Tang, the state could no longer control divination activities, which prospered empire-wide; it even became common for local governors to have their own diviners, who were not affiliated with the court.[64] But despite this proliferation of a "confusion" of different divinatory approaches, there was sufficient homogeneity in technical knowledge that people from all over the empire and from different social strata nevertheless were buried according to a similar pattern of dates, as my research has discovered. What accounts for this standardization? Could the *Yinyang shu* compiled by Lü Cai in the early Tang have played a role? Moreover, how were the "vulgar" texts of the "120 schools" related to the *Yinyang shu*, or, for that matter, to the other texts mentioned in the sources? Unfortunately, none of these texts are extant, though some might have survived in fragments in Dunhuang scrolls. Simply judging from the titles of these texts,[65] one can tell that many were calendars (*li* 歷) and must have provided guidance regarding when and how to bury the dead.

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58 For Lü, see JTS 79:2723; for Sun, see DLXS 15:464. For a full list of these works, see DLXS 15:464–465. For relevant discussions, see Pan Cheng, "Han Tang dili shushu zhishi de yanbian," 180–181; Guan Changlong, *Dunhuang ben kanyu wenshu yanjiu*, 140–149.

59 JTS 79:2723.

60 DLXS 15:464.

61 JTS 79:2720. Lü Cai completed the *Yinyang shu* in 656, but unfortunately, this book was not well preserved or transmitted. It had originally a hundred *juan* 卷 (chapter), but only one *juan* survived in the Northern Song and now we hardly know anything about the book. Japan seems to preserve a small part of a Tang edition of the *Yinyang shu*. See Huang Zhengjian, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenshu*, 242–246.

62 De Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 140.

63 See de Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 137–138. The memorial is in Wang Qinruo, *Cefu yuangui* 160:9ab; cited also in Chia, "The Development of the Jianyang Book Trade," 16.

64 Huang Zhengjian, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenshu*, 225–227.

65 DLXS 15:464–465.

The earliest ritual manual comprehensively recording date divination that has survived is the *Dili xinshu*, compiled by Wang Zhu 王洙 (997–1057) in the early Northern Song. This state-commissioned text records auspicious burial dates, and it turns out that these dates overlap nearly perfectly with the ones that my epitaph data analyses have revealed.[66] Table 7 lists the *Dili xinshu*'s two categories of auspicious stem-branch days for burial, days referred to as "crow and bark days" (*ming fei* 鳴吠日), and "counterparts of crow and bark days" (*ming fei dui* 鳴吠對日).[67] The former includes fourteen stem-branch days that were considered "most auspicious" (*daji* 大吉), and the latter includes ten stem-branch days that were also proper (see table 7).

Category	Stem-branch days
Crow and bark days	*jiashen* 甲申, *yiyou* 乙酉, *bingshen* 丙申, *bingwu* 丙午, *dingyou* 丁酉, *jiyou* 己酉, *gengshen* 庚申, *xinyou* 辛酉, *renshen* 壬申, *renwu* 壬午, *renyin* 壬寅, *guiyou* 癸酉, *gengwu* 庚午, *gengyin* 庚寅
Counterparts of crow and bark days	*jiayin* 甲寅, *jiawu* 甲午, *xinmao* 辛卯, *bingyin* 丙寅, *bingzi* 丙子, *dingmao* 丁卯, *gengzi* 庚子, *guimao* 癸卯, *renzi* 壬子, *yimao* 乙卯

Table 7. Auspicious Stem-Branch Days for Burial as Listed in the *Dili xinshu*

Note: The table uses information recorded in DLXS 11:296–298.

If we compare these twenty-four auspicious burial days with what I have discovered from the Tang-era database, we can see that they overlap greatly. Figure 21 shows the percentage of burials per stem-branch day in my Tang Luoyang database (which includes a total of 2702 epitaphs spanning the entire dynasty), with the "crow and bark days" and "counterparts of the crow and bark days," highlighted in orange and blue, respectively.

66 The text's original title was *Qinkun baodian* 乾坤寶典 (Treasured canon of earth and heaven). It was completed in 1005. The court ordered the book to be further edited and revised; it was issued in its new name *Dili xinshu* sometime between 1040 and 1051, and the final version was completed no later than 1071. The *Dili xinshu* is usually considered to have been issued in 1071, but Pan Cheng in his recent research argues that the Jin dynasty (1115–1234) edition of this book made a mistake about the date, and that the book was actually issued in 1056. See Pan Cheng, "*Dili xinshu* de bianzuan jiqi wenben yanbian yu liuchuan," 130–131.

67 The earliest text (that I am aware of) that mentions auspicious burial days in the sexagenary cycle as the days when "the gold rooster crows and the jade dog barks" 金雞鳴, 玉犬吠 is Dunhuang manuscript P.2534 titled *Yinyang shu: Zangshi*, which was a Tang or pre-Tang era almanac, as discussed earlier. For pictures and a transcription of this manuscript, see Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 301–317. For the possible meanings of the jade dog and golden rooster, see Zhang Xunliao and Bai Bin, *Zhongguo Daojiao kaogu*, 1669–1677.

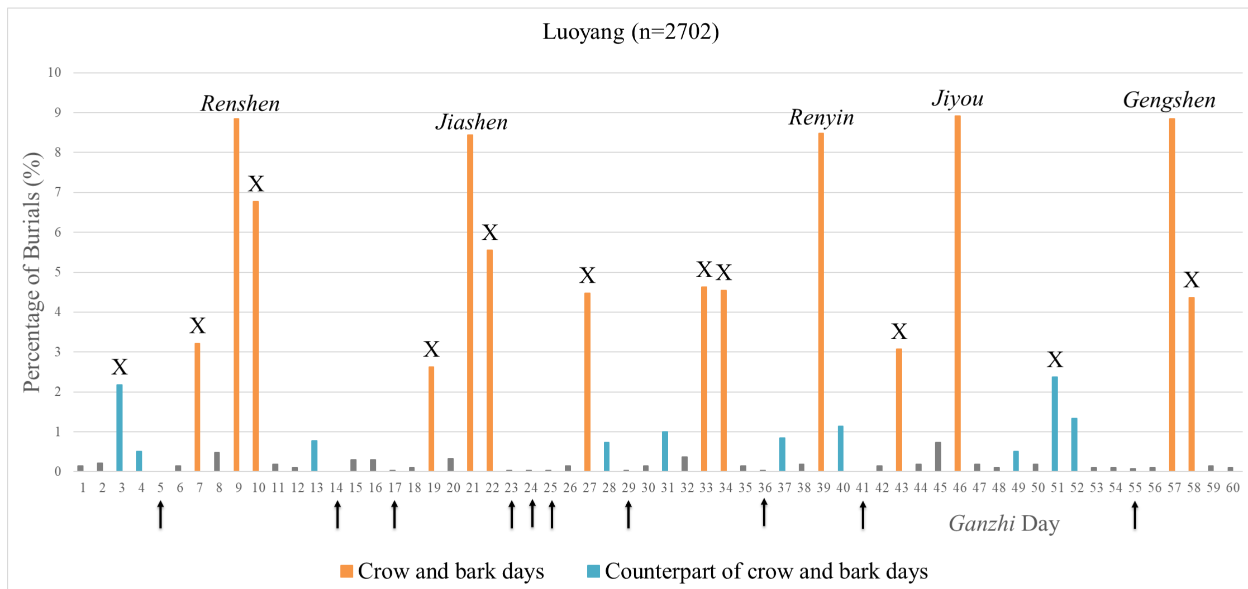

Figure 21. Use of "Crow and Bark Days" and Their "Counterparts" in Tang-Era Luoyang Burials

From this figure, it is strikingly clear that all of the twenty-four auspicious burial days listed in the *Dili xinshu* correspond to the popularly used stem-branch days for burial in the Tang dynasty Luoyang database.[68] Moreover, given that the *Dili xinshu* was compiled shortly after the Tang dynasty ended, and it was said to be based on the practices in the previous periods, crow and bark days and their counterparts were likely categories known and followed in the Tang. Indeed, Tang-era epitaph texts occasionally allude to these categories. For instance, one epitaph mentions that the family "obtained the [auspicious] day of the rooster's crow and dog's bark" 得雞犬鳴吠之辰.[69] Another epitaph says: "The jade dog and golden rooster have crowed and barked together" 玉犬金雞，已同鳴吠.[70]

Many scholars think that the *Dili xinshu* adopted the content of Lü Cai's *Yinyang shu* by and large.[71] Just like the *Dili xinshu*, Lü Cai's book was commissioned by the state. Hence it is plausible that the state's involvement helped to drive empire-wide standardization in burial date divination. Meanwhile, evidence also suggests that popular practice might have been adopted by the state, as early Tang data analysis shows that burial date patterns had already existed before

68 All of the most popular and the second most popular burial days drawn from the Tang Luoyang data set appear in the category of crow and bark days in the *Dili xinshu*, except for the *bingyin* 丙寅 (no. 3) and *jiayin* 甲寅 (no. 51) days, both of which appear as counterparts of crow and bark days.
69 MZH 1839.
70 MZHX 1091. Also see MZHZ 1116 for a similar example: "the gold rooster and jade dog heard each other's crows and barks" 金雞玉犬，鳴吠相聞.
71 Pan Cheng, "*Dili xinshu* de bianzuan jiqi wenben yanbian yu liuchuan," 129; Yu Gege, "Guo Pu *Zangshu* weishu kao," 67; Shen Ruiwen's 2016 lecture at the Shanghai Museum (available at http://www.nlc.cn/sjwhbb/sjjcjz/201601/t20160122_113493.htm; accessed June 17, 2016). Moreover, interestingly, the same auspicious burial days listed in the *Dili xinshu* appeared in many other divination texts, including the Qing state-commissioned divination manual *Xieji bianfang shu* 協記辨方書 (Treatise on harmonizing times and distinguishing directions) and many modern *fengshui* manuals. For the *Xieji bianfang shu*, see Xie Lujun, *Qinding xieji bianfang shu*, 121 (in volume 5 of the original text). Contemporary Chinese *fengshui* manuals are usually not academic, hence often have no citations of sources.

the compilation of Lü Cai's text, and "vulgar" texts never ceased to circulate alongside official texts throughout the Tang era. Moreover, Lü Cai states that his book includes "old texts of forty-seven volumes" 並舊書四十七卷.[72] Even for the fifty-three newly added volumes, it is likely that Lü Cai adopted the popular practice to a certain degree. In short, there is no conclusive evidence to reveal why the burial date divination was standardized and remained stable, but it is probably reasonable to say that the state played a role in influencing the development of an ecosystem of ritual texts that included both state-sanctioned and "vulgar" texts.

6. Conclusion

Medieval Chinese writings in the divinatory arts, as Christian de Pee insightfully points out, generally did not survive the ravages of time due to their specialized and exclusive nature. Calendars lost their usefulness after a year; moreover, almanacs and manuscript divination texts garnered little interest among literati, who did not deem the subject of divinatory practice serious enough to preserve. Even today few scholars show interest in cosmological texts.[73] Therefore, it is particularly significant that some Tang and Song (960–1279) calendars, almanacs, and texts on divination have survived in Dunhuang. But as extremely valuable as they are, these texts are mostly prescriptive and fragmentary and contain omissions and errors of copyists, and hence should not be regarded as accurate or comprehensive reflections of actual practices of the time.[74] Moreover, the Dunhuang divinatory texts may have reflected only local traditions; other places in the Tang empire may have had distinct local divinatory traditions.[75] Finally, the Dunhuang texts are filled with esoteric pronouncements that scholars today have not fully elucidated.

How can one get a better sense of the temporal facets of death ritual, notably the use of date divination? Tomb epitaphs are a unique source from which one can draw information on numerous aspects of death ritual in actual practice. Indeed, quantitative analyses of thousands of burial dates recorded in Tang epitaphs has allowed me to identify highly conserved patterns of auspicious and inauspicious stem-branch days, as well as preferred calendar months and days for burial. These patterns prevailed among Tang elites of various social strata and regions, and remained stable throughout the dynasty. In other words, the Tang empire, though divided by ethnic, linguistic, and regional differences as great as those prevailing in modern Europe, enjoyed a remarkable transregional homogeneity in at least one element of death ritual practice: time. The political fragmentation that occurred after the An Lushan Rebellion in the mid-eighth century apparently had little or no impact on burial date divination. Moreover, the set of auspicious burial days in the Tang are similar to those recorded in the *Dili xinshu*, a Northern Song text. Even more strikingly, the patterns of auspicious and inauspicious burial dates appear nearly unchanged in the Ming dynasty, and were still preserved to a certain degree in the Qing.

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72 JTS 79:2720.

73 De Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 144–146.

74 Christian de Pee analyzes the problems of Dunhuang texts; *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 147–148.

75 Huang Zhengjian also discusses Dunhuang manuscripts' disagreement with other divinatory texts, their errors, incompleteness, and locality. He compares the rituals recorded in Dunhuang manuscripts with those in history texts, and aptly points out that the two kinds do not necessarily concur in content, and that the Dunhuang texts fall into the category of "humble and vulgar texts" (*xiali doushu* 下俚斗書), not officially published by the state yet followed by commoners. See Huang Zhengjian, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenshu*, 203.

In other words, these patterns probably remained stable for over a millennium, transcending dynastic, political, social, ethnic, and cultural changes.

How does one account for this shared pattern in burial date divination? I will return to the question of what explains cultural standardization or variation in the conclusion of this dissertation. Here, I simply offer the possibility that ritual specialists practicing at all levels of society and the circulation of their vulgar texts (e.g., their printed almanacs and diviner's manuals) may very well account for this remarkable example of standardization. The ninth-century Dunhuang texts discovered at the turn of the twentieth century may exemplify just such mechanisms of standardization.[76] The state may have played a role in orchestrating the standardization process, but it should be noted that the Tang state actually sought to abolish illicit calendars and to suppress numerous schools of *yinyang* practice. The homogenization of date divination patterns empire-wide in the Tang was, thus, more likely the consequence of the actions of unidentified diviners, in conjunction with the widespread use by the ninth century of printing technology for the reproduction of such popular texts.[77] In the Song and later, the state and highly literate elites incorporated date divinatory practices into state-sponsored canons, such as the *Dili xinshu*.

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76 According to de Pee, there used to be "tens of thousands of calendars, manuals, tracts, and pamphlets that competitive printers once offered for sale on the bustling markets of the Tang and Song empires" (*The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 175).

77 As mentioned earlier, printed calendars were first issued in 805. See de Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 140. It is worth noting that standardized patterns of burial dates had already existed before the first issuance of printed calendars, as my data analysis shows; printing technology certainly was only a contributing yet not crucial factor for this standardization. It is beyond the scope of my research, but it would be helpful to analyze some burial-date data from pre-Tang eras by the same methods used in this chapter, in order to know whether this standardization of burial date divination existed even before the Tang dynasty.

Chapter 3

Positioning Tombs and Conceptualizing Burial Space

> [The grave site is located on] the *yin* side of the Yellow River and the *yang* side of the Mang hills. [It is at] the phoenix *xue* on the unicorn ridge, which stretches without interruption from east to west for a thousand *li*. On an auspicious day, [we] bury the virtuous and able [i.e., the deceased].
>
> 黄河之陰，邙山之陽，鳳凰穴，麒麟崗，東西不絕千里長，時吉日，葬賢良。[1]

This passage was carved into a certain Mr. Li's epitaph to describe where his grave site was located and what it looked like. A good number of epitaphs provide such detailed descriptions, and even more epitaph texts explain that auspicious grave sites brought glory and fortune to the deceased's family. For example, a Mr. Meng's epitaph comments: "the plain is a good place [for burial], and it will help the offspring prosper forever" 平原好處所，永與子孫昌.[2] A certain Mr. Niu's epitaph promises: "after [the deceased] is buried in this land, wealth and honor [will follow], and the offspring will serve emperors and kings for a long time" 此地葬後富貴，子孫長事帝王.[3]

Almost all epitaph texts record the locations of the grave sites, but most do so in a straightforward and brief manner, much like an address: at village X, in county Y of prefecture Z. Nevertheless, from the thousands of tomb epitaphs in my survey, I have identified a good number of inscriptions that describe grave sites in more elaborate ways, including information such as the tomb's location in relation to others in a cemetery, its orientation, its surroundings, its size and configuration, its geomantic features, and the family's legitimate right to use the land for burial whether through ownership or otherwise. Piecing together seemingly sporadic and miscellaneous information of this sort allows us to examine another dimension of burial culture: the space of burial (in contrast to the temporal aspect of burial discussed in the previous chapter). More specifically, I am able to examine two related subjects: first, how individual tombs were positioned inside a cemetery (part I); and second, how burial space was conceptualized in geographic context (part II).

As with the previous chapters, epitaph texts are my primary source. For part I, I examine the epitaph texts collected in the *Tang dai muzhi huibian* 唐代墓誌彙編 (MZH), *Tang dai muzhi huibian xuji* 唐代墓誌彙編續集 (MZHX), and *Da Tang xishi bowuguan cang muzhi* 大唐西市博物館藏墓誌 (DTXS), which altogether include a total of 5612 epitaphs covering the entire Tang dynasty and multiple geographic regions.[4] For part II, my focus is on a survey of 2685 epitaphs dating to between 800 and 907, collected in version 1.0 of the "Prosopographical and

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1 MZH 1612. The *li* 里 is a traditional Chinese measuring unit for distance and area. According to Endymion Wilkinson, "In British and American writing on China it has long been the custom to refer to the *li* as 1/3 of a mile (1/2 km)." See Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 612. The expression "a thousand *li*" is a way to express that the distance was great; it is not intended to be an accurate measure.
2 MZHX 994.
3 MHZX 1045.
4 The numbers of epitaphs collected in MZH, MZHX, and DTXS are 3600, 1577, and 457, respectively. There are twenty-two epitaphs appearing in both MZH and MZHX, hence the total number of epitaphs is (3600+1577+457–22=) 5612.

Social Network Database of the Tang and Five Dynasties" database.[5] My other sources include dynastic histories and ritual texts, particularly the Northern Song (960–1127) *Dili xinshu* 地理新書 (New book of earth patterns) and a number of extant Tang-era Dunhuang manuscripts concerning geomancy. I employ quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze my data, and Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies to map the distributions of certain specific features about grave sites mentioned in epitaphs.

I. Positioning Tombs in a Family Cemetery

An essential death ritual practice in the Tang was to bury the family together. Numerous epitaphs record that it is "[following] the ritual" (*liye* 禮也) to bury the deceased in the family cemetery, a place referred to variously as the "old cemetery" (*jiuying* 舊塋 or *guying* 故塋), "original cemetery" (*yuanying* 原塋), "ancestral cemetery" (*xianying* 先塋 or *zuying* 祖塋), "great cemetery" (*daying* 大塋), or "generational cemetery" (*shiying* 世塋). Unmarried girls were buried in their natal family cemeteries, while married women were buried in their husbands' family cemeteries[6] Many epitaphs contain lengthy records of filial sons and virtuous wives taking extreme measures to transport the deceased back to the family cemetery, a process often referred to in epitaph texts as simply "returning for burial" (*guizang* 歸葬 or *fanzang* 返葬). For instance, Li Ying's father passed away in Luoyang during the turbulent period of the An Lushan 安祿山 Rebellion (755–763). Ying, as a filial son, "walked for thousands of *li*" 徒步者千里[7] to transport his father's coffin back to the family cemetery in Chang'an. The long journey and hardship exhausted him; as an unfortunate result, he died shortly after he finally buried his father in the family cemetery. Ying's epitaph recognized the misfortune of his death, while also singing high praise for his filial piety.[8]

But sometimes it was simply impossible to bury the deceased in the family cemetery. In such cases, epitaphs usually take the trouble to offer a legitimate reason, such as warfare, the great danger and difficulty of the long journey to the family cemetery, or the lack of financial resources, and often this type of burial was explicitly described as a "temporary burial" (*quanzang* 權葬 or *cuo* 厝) to indicate the hope of returning the deceased to the family cemetery in the future.[9] But sometimes it was undesirable to bury the deceased in the old family cemetery and necessary to establish a new family cemetery. The epitaph of Cui Kerang justifies not moving him back to his ancestral cemetery faraway: "His ancestors were residents of Luoyang… His great grandfather Fan… moved the family as the result of office-holding. Hence, [family members] are now residents of Yangzhou" 其先洛陽人也……曾祖范……因宦遷家，今遂揚

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5 Compiled by Nicolas Tackett, the database, "Prosopographical and Social Network Database of the Tang and Five Dynasties" 唐五代人物傳記與社會網絡資料庫, is available at https://history.berkeley.edu/nicolas-tackett. It has a total of 3329 epitaphs, of which 5 epitaphs are of unknown date, 124 date to the seventh century, 471 date to the eighth century, 2685 date to between 800 and 907, and 44 date to rest of the tenth century after 907.

6 Exceptions certainly existed. See chapter 1 for some of the complex decision-making process involved in the burials of remarried women (9.3. "joint burials").

7 The distance between Xi'an (Chang'an) and Luoyang nowadays is 376 km (234 miles) by road and takes about 4.5 hours to travel by car on a freeway.

8 MZHX 685–686.

9 See chapter 1 for more discussion on temporary burials.

州人矣.[10] Geomancy (also known as *fengshui* 風水, *dili* 地理, and *kanyu* 堪輿)[11] could also be a reason to establish a new family cemetery. Mr. Zuo Zheng's epitaph tells us that the family "followed a geomancer to look for signs of a residence [for the deceased], who examined [Zuo's] family cemetery and [saw] the confinement of the land, and [said that] there was no space for [Zuo's] burial, [hence] the geomancer consulted the milfoil and [had the family] change the burial site" 從師宅兆，瞻先塋地隘，無歸附之處，蓍筮改葬.[12] However, a fundamental principle for burial remained the same, that is, family members of multiple generations ought to be buried together. When an old family cemetery stopped serving a branch of the family, descendants purchased new land for burial, which then became the new family cemetery for generations to come.

Moreover, various types of evidence suggest that inside a family cemetery individual tombs were placed deliberately in an arrangement that adhered to specific rules. For example, the epitaph of a Meng Sui tells us that Sui died in Chang'an in 860 and was buried in his ancestral cemetery in Luoyang two months later. The cemetery was established for the burial of Sui's great grandfather, the former magistrate of Longqiu County. At the very end of Sui's epitaph, a thorough description of the location of Sui's tomb is provided:

> From the deceased's tomb, if one goes due north for 60 paces (*bu*), then turns and goes due east for 4 paces, one reaches the grave of Mr. [former prefect of] Longqiu [i.e., the deceased's great grandfather]. From the deceased's tomb, if one goes due south for 64 paces, then turns and goes due west for 69 paces, one reaches the grave of Mr. [former] minister (*shangshu*) [i.e., the deceased's father]. From the deceased's tomb, if one goes due north for 60 paces, then turns and goes due west for 36 paces, one reaches the grave of Mr. [former Prefect of] Suizhou [i.e., the deceased's elder brother].
>
> 自此塋中正北六十步曲，正東四步，至龍丘府君墓中。自塋中正南六十四步曲，正西六十九步，至尚書府君墓。自塋中正北六十步曲，正西三十六步，至隨州府君墓。[13]

The passage describes Sui's great grandfather's, father's, and elder brother's tombs in relation to Sui's. The distance between each of their tombs and Sui's tomb is so precisely recorded that if we knew the location of one tomb, it would be easy to locate the others. The details provided in Meng Sui's epitaph are unusual but by no means unique; other epitaphs describe the locations of individual tombs inside a cemetery in similar fashion.[14] Even though these details are insufficient to reveal what rules that grave-siters might have followed, they give the strong impression that the locations of individual tombs were carefully calculated rather than randomly selected. Based

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10 MZH 1716. For similar examples, see MZHX 481, MZH 1604.

11 For the definition of and an introduction to Chinese geomancy, see Brown, "The Veins of the Earth," 16–19.

12 See Feng Gang and Zhang Ling, "Taiyuan shi Jinyuan qu luanshi tian Tang Zuo Zheng mu fajue jianbao," 41. Similarly, Mr. Wang Xiting's epitaph says that he "was not buried in his ancestral cemetery, because [the divination using] the tortoise [shells] did not approve that" 不祔先塋，龜未從也; see Yan Jin'an, "Xiangyang muzhi buyi," 87.

13 QTWBY 8:198. The epitaph tells us that the deceased's great grandfather was a magistrate of Longqiu County (Longqiu *xianling* 龍丘縣令) and his father was a minister in the Department of Rituals (Libu *shangshu* 禮部尚書). Also, according to the "Prosopographical and Social Network Database of the Tang and Five Dynasties" database, we know that the "[former] Prefect of Suizhou" (Suizhou *fujun* 隨州府君) was Sui's elder brother Meng Guan (PersonID 154545). The *bu* 步 (pace [i.e., double step]) was used as a land area measure in China until it was abolished in 1929. One can use the conversions 1 *bu* = 6 *chi* 尺 (the Qin–early Tang measure), and 1 *bu* = 5 *chi* (the measure from 624 to the Qing). One *chi* 尺 = 30.6 cm or 12 in. One *li* 里 = 360 *bu*. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 612–613.

14 For example, see QTWBY 8:204; QTW 679:6942; QTWXB 14:9547; Du Fu, "Tang gu fanyang taijun Lu shi muzhi," 2232.

on the currently available evidence, this chapter will discuss two major systems regarding the spatial configuration of a cemetery, namely, the system of generational hierarchy and sibling order and the “Five Surname” system.

1. Generational Hierarchy and Sibling Order

Evidence shows that the spatial configuration of a family cemetery could reflect generational hierarchy and sibling order, as suggested in the diagram depicted in figure 1.

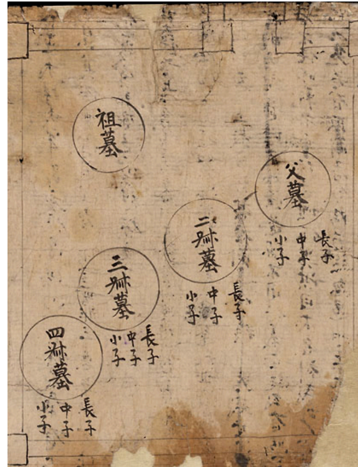

Figure 1. A Diagram of Ancestral Tombs (Part of Or.8210/S.2263)

Source: The International Dunhuang Project website (http://idp.bl.uk).

Note: We do not know the orientation of this diagram. In other words, whether the “ancestral tomb” was to the south (or north) of the other tombs is unclear.

Known as a “diagram of ancestral tombs” (*zumu tu* 祖墓圖), a name given by Chinese scholars, figure 1—taken from a Tang-era Dunhuang scroll—depicts a rectangular cemetery containing a cluster of family tombs.[15] It places the “ancestral tomb” (*zumu* 祖墓)—which can also be translated as the “tomb of the grandfather”—near the upper left corner, set apart from all the other tombs. The ancestral tomb marks the first generation in the diagram (and may also represent the first family member to be buried in a newly established family cemetery). Below it are four tombs of the second generation: in sequence, the tombs of the father (*fu* 父), second uncle (*ershu* 二叔), third uncle (*sanshu* 三叔), and fourth uncle (*sishu* 四叔). The four tombs are all below the ancestral tomb, revealing a generational hierarchy. Moreover, the tombs of the second generation follow a sibling order, with the tomb for the eldest sibling (i.e., the father) in the upper right corner of the burial cluster and the youngest in the lower left corner. Below each tomb of the second generation are three tombs of the third generation, namely that of the “eldest son” (*zhangzi* 長子) to the right, the “middle son” (*zhongzi* 中子) in the middle, and the “youngest son” (*xiaozi* 小子) to the left. The three tombs in the third generation also reflect the generational hierarchy and follow the sibling order (eldest to the right).

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15 Or.8210/S.2263 is searchable on the International Dunhuang Project website (http://idp.bl.uk). See also Jin Shenjia, “Dunhuang xieben P.2831 *Buzang Shu*,” 295–299, for the texts, a line drawing of the diagram, and research.

A similar but less well-preserved diagram appears on another Tang-era Dunhuang scroll (fig. 2a).[16]

Figure 2a. A Diagram of Ancestral Tombs (Part of Or.8210/S.3877)

Source: Mélodie Doumy, "A Guide to Orientating Your Tomb."

Additionally, this scroll carries some interesting sketches of landforms accompanied by captions that seem to describe geomantic features of the land (fig. 2b), making it one of a kind among the Dunhuang scrolls found so far. One caption asserts, "If one is buried at this site, wealth and honor will never end" 葬得此地，富貴不絕.

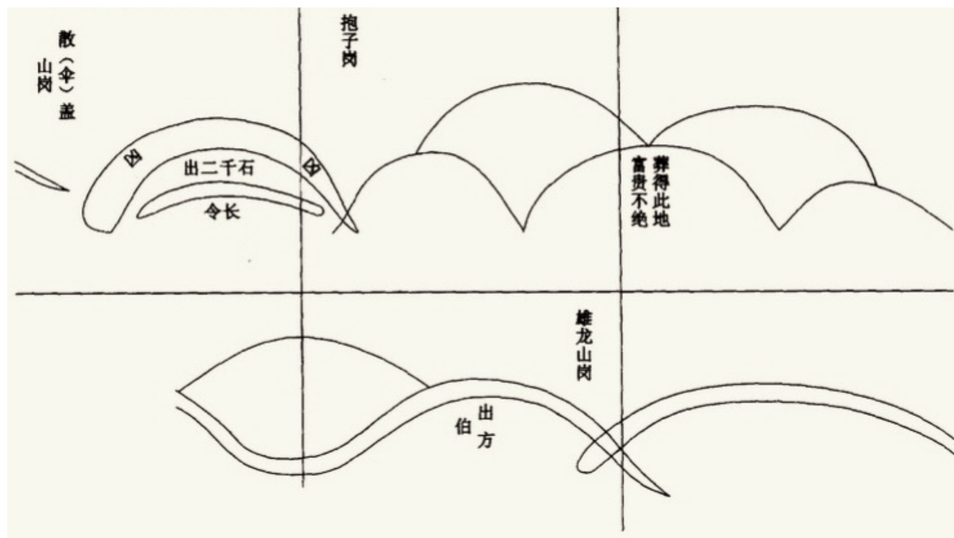

Figure 2b. An Incomplete Sketch of Or.8210/S.3877

Source: Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 325.

16 Dunhuang manuscript Or.8210/S.3877 is searchable on the International Dunhuang Project website (http://idp.bl.uk). For illustrations, texts, and research, see Doumy, "A Guide to Orientating Your Tomb"; Jin Shenjia, "Dunhuang xieben P.2831 *Buzang Shu* zhong," 299–300, 324–325; Guan Changlong, *Dunhuang ben kanyu wenshu yanjiu*, 486–488.

Even more intriguing is the depiction of two mysterious human figures elsewhere on the scroll. One figure is labeled with characters that appear to be "*qingwu*" 青烏 (i.e., geomancer), and the other—who seems to be holding something—is labeled with "*chu fangbo*" 出方伯 (outward regional inspector)[17] above his head (fig. 2c). There are other words surrounding these two figures, but they are too indistinct to be legible. Might these two figures represent a geomancer and a regional inspector, or might they both be geomancers? And might the figure appearing below the phrase *chu fangbo* be holding a *fengshui* compass (*luopan* 羅盤), which looks similar to the porcelain figurine of a geomancer holding a *fengshui* compass found in a Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279) tomb (fig. 3)?[18] I hope that future discoveries and further research will help to clarify the meanings of these figures on the scroll.

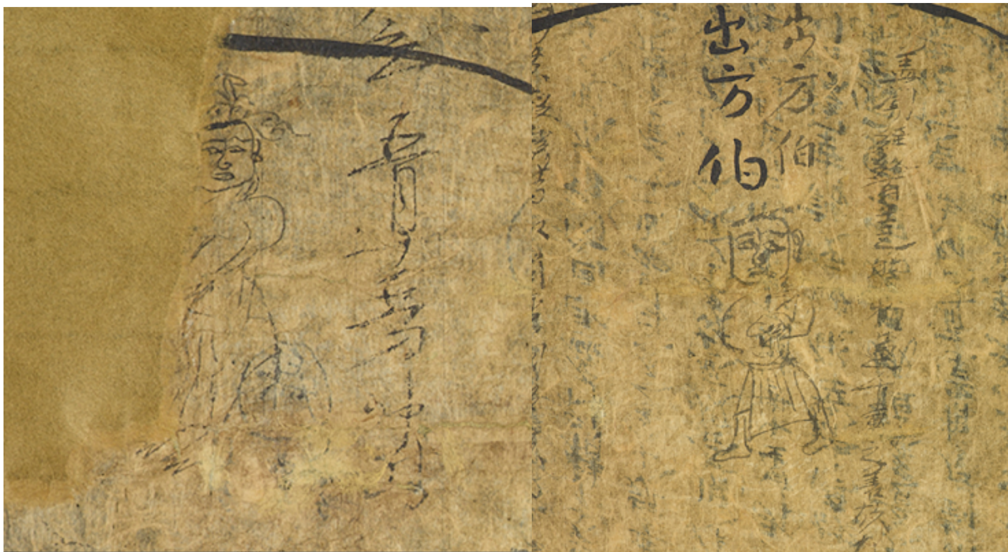

Figure 2c. Images of Two Human Figures on Dunhuang Scroll Or.8210/S.3877

Source: Mélodie Doumy, "A Guide to Orientating Your Tomb."

17 As mentioned in chapters 1 and 2, the term *qingwu* refers to geomancers. *Fangbo* 方伯 is defined as an "unofficial reference to a regional inspector" in the Tang era. See Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, 209, no. 1911.

18 In a tomb dating to 1198, archaeologists found a porcelain figurine holding a *fengshui* compass against the chest and concluded that the figurine was made to represent a geomancer using the compass to select an auspicious grave site. See Chen Dingrong and Xu Jianchang, "Jiangxi Linchuan xian songmu," 334.

Figure 3. Tomb Figurine Identified as a Geomancer from a Southern Song Tomb

Source: Chen Dingrong and Xu Jianchang, "Jiangxi Linchuan xian Song mu," 387.

Studies of Tang-era family cemeteries seem to corroborate the pattern of grave-siting illustrated by the Dunhuang diagrams. A total of sixty-nine undisturbed Tang tombs and forty-six epitaphs were excavated in the Xingyuan cemeteries at Yanshi in Henan Province, providing an excellent data set to study Tang death ritual and cemetery configuration. Ye Wa, in her Ph.D. dissertation on the Xingyuan cemeteries, arrives at two important conclusions. First, she confirms that the tombs were arranged in clusters, and that each cluster of tombs contained closely related members of individual families.[19] Second, she points out that within each cluster (i.e., each family cemetery), the ordering of generations strictly adhered to a specific pattern: the older generations were positioned in the geomantically prestigious south, and they had the longest entryways with the largest tomb mounds and the largest burial chambers. One interesting example that she cites involves a Mr. Song Zhen. Song Zhen had a higher official rank than his father, yet his tomb was located north of his father's and was smaller in size. To conclude, Ye Wa argues that burial was a family-oriented activity and did not necessarily comply with government regulations based on official rank.[20] In two separate studies, Liu Kewei and Cheng Yi also demonstrate that generational hierarchy and sibling order were both applied to Tang-era cemetery configuration.[21] But it is worth noting that the south cannot be generalized as the universally most auspicious direction beyond this case study. Cheng Yi points out that even though a father-son hierarchy was clearly visible, the most honored position (usually occupied by the eldest generation's tomb) in a family cemetery varied greatly from cemetery to cemetery.[22]

2. The "Five Surname" System

19 Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 70.
20 Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 78–79.
21 Liu Kewei, "Yanshi Xingyuan Tang mu," 289–290; Cheng Yi, "Tang dai jiazu mudi de paiwei yanjiu," 207–213.
22 Cheng Yi, "Tang dai jiazu mudi de paiwei yanjiu," 211–212.

But grave-siting seems to have entailed much more than reflecting generational hierarchy and sibling order. In recent years, scholars have paid increasing attention to the "Five Surname" (*wuxing* 五姓) system and its application to burial geomancy and cemetery configuration, particularly in the Song (960–1279) and later periods. This chapter will examine this system in the context of Tang-era tombs.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Five Surname system assigns all surnames to one of the following five categories: *shang* 商, *jue* 角, *zhi* 徵, *gong* 宫, and *yu* 羽. As discussed in the previous chapter, some medieval almanacs found in Dunhuang suggest that a deceased person's surname category may have affected his or her burial date. Hence, it is reasonable to ponder the likelihood of this system's application to grave-siting as well. So far, I have found four epitaph texts that explicitly mention the surname categories of the deceased. In the first case, a certain Mr. Zhan's epitaph explains when recording the genealogy of the deceased that "the star of [surname] Zhang belongs to metal (*jin* 金) [of the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行)], and metal is associated with [the surname category] *shang*" 張星屬金，金者商也.[23]

In the second case, the epitaph of a certain Mr. Cui tells a story filled with sorrow and regret regarding how a grave site inharmonious with the deceased's surname category led to disasters afflicting the family. Cui had two daughters and three sons, but only the middle son survived to tell the family tragedy and to have it carved into Cui's epitaph stone. All the others died within a decade or so. Cui's two daughters died a number of years before his wife, who died in 870. A year later, in 871, his eldest son died too; then in 875, Cui died himself. But the tragedy did not end there, as Cui's youngest son died only two years after Cui. Some relatives started to suspect that the series of deaths had something to do with the grave site. As one relative explained to the middle son: "Your mother and father were both lost, and your elder and younger brothers both died. Was it because [the grave site] did not contain pine trees and cypresses, and was trapped in the [geomantically] malevolent terrain?" 子之恃怙並失，昆弟俱喪。得非松柏陷於不善之地乎? Hence, this son sought a highly recommended geomancer named Yang Jun. Yang examined the grave site and determined that it was indeed not a proper place for the Cui family. As he explained, "Your [surname category] is *jue*.… This [current burial] land violates the canon. You should change [the grave site] by means of divination, and you may then hope for peace" 子角姓耳……斯地也，皆反於經。須求改卜，或冀安寧. Yang went on to help identify a new grave site for the family. The son then reburied his deceased family members at the new site and placed a record of the circumstances at the end of his father's original epitaph (perhaps to explain to the deceased spirit why his remains were relocated).[24]

In the third example, we have two epitaphs (for close family members) with the same line verbatim: "This [grave site] is a pure land under divine light. [The surname categories of] *shang* and *jue* can both use it, and honors are added to the *yi* and *geng*" 此乃神光淨土。商角同用，榮加乙庚.[25] It is unclear what the *yi* 乙 and *geng* 庚 refer to, but what is clear from this line is that this land was a good choice for the surname categories *shang* and *jue*. From the *Dili xinshu*,

23 MZH 2519.

24 MZH 2474–2475.

25 Zhangjiakou Xuanhua qu wenwu baoguansuo, "Hebei Xuanhua jinian Tang mu fajue jianbao," 29, 32. The archaeological report points out that the two deceased individuals, Yang Ren and Yang Shaoyi, likely belonged to the same family.

we know that the surname of the deceased individuals in question, which was Yang 楊, indeed falls into the category of *shang*.[26]

Additionally, Tang-era scholar Lü Cai's 呂才 (d. 665) criticized the application of the Five Surname system in both his *Xu Zhaijing* 敘宅經 (Discussion on the Canon of residences) and *Xu Zangshu* 敘葬書 (Discussion on the Book of burial), as mentioned in the previous chapter. He states in the *Xu Zangshu*:

> Nowadays, the auspiciousness and ominousness of a burial depends on the convenience of the "Five Surname" [system].… To do this is not to follow the ancients. Where did the reasoning of auspiciousness and ominousness come from?
>
> 今之喪葬吉凶，皆依五姓便利….大無稽古。吉凶之理，何從而生？[27]

Lü's words are often cited by scholars as evidence for the condemnation of the Five Surname system during the Tang. However, Lü's criticisms may just reveal the actual application or even popularity of this system, so that it warranted his disapproval.

2.1. Scholarship review of the Five Surname system

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Northern Song ritual text *Dili xinshu* preserves the first comprehensive discussion of the Five Surname system. For grave sites in particular, it lists all the rules that should be considered based on one's surname category, particularly certain features of mountains and rivers surrounding a grave site, the location and orientation of each tomb inside a family cemetery, and the spatial arrangements of the tombs.[28] Accordingly, the current scholarship also focuses mainly on these three aspects of this system's application to grave sites: first, the geomantic features of the sites, including mountains and rivers surrounding the sites; second, the surname-and-*xue* 穴 correlation rules regarding specific positions of individual tombs within the cemetery; and third, the surname-and-*xiang* correlation rules regarding the orientation (*xiang* 向) of tombs.

Su Bai was the first to discuss the Five Surname system's application to cemetery configuration in his study of the three Northern Song tombs in the Zhao family cemetery located in the town of Baisha (in today's Henan Province). He briefly argues that the three tombs followed the surname and *xue* correlation in grave-siting, one of the many rules prescribed by the Five Surname system. Su also hypothesizes without further discussion that Northern Song imperial mausoleums adopted this system.[29]

Following Su's lead, in an article published in 1994, Feng Jiren argues that the Northern Song imperial mausoleums by and large adopted the Five Surname system. Feng's research was the first in-depth study of this system's application to actual burial practice, and his views are generally accepted and broadly cited. The Northern Song imperial mausoleums are regarded by consensus as exemplary applications of the Five Surname system, setting the model for cemetery configuration of later eras, including the imperial mausoleums of the Southern Song, Ming

26 DLXS 1:40.
27 JTS 79:2725.
28 See DLXS 7–8, 213–255.
29 See Su Bai, *Baisha Song mu*, 81–83, 86–87.

(1368–1644), and Qing (1644–1912).[30] Feng states that according to the *Dili xinshu*, the Northern Song imperial surname Zhao 趙 belongs to the *jue* category. He analyzes the three sets of rules that the Five Surname system prescribes (and the *Dili xinshu* records) for the *jue* surname category—involving the characteristics of the burial land, the surname and *xiang* correlation, and the surname and *xue* correlation—and makes the case that the Northern Song mausoleums fit them all. First, Feng points out that the *Dili xinshu* records that a tomb in the *jue* category should be positioned at "the western side of the eastern mountain" (東山之西),[31] its terrain should be "higher on the eastern side and lower on the western side" (東高西下),[32] and "to the west [in the front] there should be a river running from north to south" (西有江河水，北來南去).[33] Feng argues that the characteristics of the terrain of the mausoleums are just like what is prescribed in the *Dili xinshu*, as there are mountains at the east and south sides, but no mountains at the west or north sides; the terrain is higher in the southeast and lower in the northwest; and a branch of the Yellow River called the Yiluo River runs from the north toward the southwest in front of the mausoleums.[34] Second, Feng mentions that, as archaeological data show, the mausoleums of the emperors and empresses are oriented toward either the northwest or southeast, corresponding to the *ren* 壬 and *bing* 丙 directions, respectively. Feng asserts that because, according to the surname-and-*xiang* correlation rules, the *ren* and *bing* are two favorable orientations for the tombs of the deceased whose surname category is *jue*, this also demonstrates the application of the Five Surname system. Third, Feng argues that the surname-and-*xue* correlation rules were also applied in the case of the Northern Song mausoleums. I will discuss later, at length, the surname and *xue* correlation and the meaning of the term *xue*, but, to be brief here, a *xue* refers to a parcel of land inside a cemetery, which consists of a total of 24 *xue*. According to the Five Surname system, the surname category of the deceased determines in which *xue* the tomb should be located. In the case of the Northern Song mausoleums, Feng believes that each cemetery (which he calls *yingyu* 塋域) consists of three immediate generations (i.e., three mausoleums), and that within each cemetery the oldest generation (grandfather) took the most auspicious *bing xue*, followed by the father's tomb in the *ren xue* and the grandson's tomb in the *jia* 甲 *xue*, representing the most auspicious, the next most auspicious, and the tertiary *xue*, respectively, for the surname category *jue*. Moreover, according to Feng, inside each mausoleum, the surname-and-*xue* correlation rules are manifested once again, but in this case by having the emperor's tomb in the *bing xue* and all the empresses' tombs in the *ren xue.*[35]

Liu Wei, in a recent study, has challenged Feng's understanding of where each *xue* was located. Liu argues that each mausoleum constitutes a separate cemetery, and within each cemetery (i.e., mausoleum), the emperor, empress, and consorts' tombs took the most auspicious, the next most auspicious, and the tertiary *xue* (*bing, ren,* and *jia xue*, respectively), thus

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30 For example, Shen Ruiwen, Liu Yi, Qin Dashu, and authors of some archaeological reports, all have cited Feng's point of view and agree with it. See Shen Ruiwen, "Xi Han diling lingdi zhixu," 22; Liu Yi, "Song dai huangling zhidu yanjiu," 76–78; Qin Dashu, "Song dai sangzang xisu de biange jiqi tixian de shehui yiyi," 323; Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Bei Song huangling*, 449. In addition, using the same approach as Feng's, Shen argues that the configuration of Western Han mausoleums followed the Five Surname system. See Shen Ruiwen, *Tang ling de buju*, 85–127.
31 See DLXS 7:214.
32 See DLXS 1:38.
33 See DLXS 7:214.
34 Feng Jiren, "Lun yinyang kanyu dui Bei Song huangling de quanmian yingxiang," 57–60.
35 Feng Jiren, "Lun yinyang kanyu dui Bei Song huangling de quanmian yingxiang," 60–62.

reflecting the status hierarchy. Furthermore, Liu argues that each mausoleum is to the northwest of the mausoleum of the previous generation, which, according to Liu, exactly follows a rule for the *jue* surname category recorded in the *Dili xinshu* but neglected by other scholars.[36] In short, both Feng and Liu believed that the Northern Song mausoleums followed the Five Surname system in cemetery configuration, but they have different views regarding how each individual tomb was arranged in relation to others (i.e., the surname-and-*xue* correlation). Both of their arguments are reasonable speculations, but there is no textual evidence to confirm conclusively which of these two possibilities is correct.

In fact, most studies of the Five Surname system have been conducted by Chinese archaeologists, mainly using excavation reports of imperial mausoleums and of large family cemeteries with little textual support except for the ritual text *Dili xinshu*; hence, they are inevitably speculative. The fundamental challenge here is that without written evidence, we cannot know for certain where each *xue* was originally planned to be. By contrast, only if we are clear about both the surname category of the deceased and in which *xue* some of their tombs were located, can we know whether the surname and *xue* correlation was indeed applied. Fortunately, such clear records exist for the Northern Song Han family cemetery at Xin'an Village in Henan Province. More than thirty epitaphs were found in the excavations, which explicitly record the *xue* of each tomb: most tombs were placed in the three auspicious *xue* (*ren*, *bing*, and *geng*) for the surname category *shang*, which corresponds to the family surname Han. Studying the epigraphic records together with the excavation reports, Jin Lianyu convincingly demonstrates that the Five Surname system was applied to the configuration of the Han family cemetery. Moreover, epigraphic evidence reveals that one *xue* hosted multiple tombs, but, inside the same *xue*, the arrangement of tombs manifested a sibling order.[37]

Can we use Jin's model elsewhere, particularly to find out whether the Five Surname system was also applied to cemetery configuration in the Tang? It highly depends on the existing sources. The best excavated and reported family cemeteries are the ones found at Xingyuan, thoroughly studied by Ye Wa, as mentioned earlier. But the epitaphs found in the tombs, unfortunately, do not provide sufficient information about which *xue* each tomb was located in or how the cemeteries were originally planned. Hence, determining whether the Five Surname system might have been an influential factor for Tang-era cemetery configuration requires further archaeological excavations.

Fortunately, there are rare references in epitaph texts, besides the ones mentioned previously, that appear to record the use of the Five Surname system; these references have not yet attracted scholarly attention and are the subject of the following sections.

2.2. The surname category and *xue* correlation

A passage from a Tang-era Dunhuang scroll explains how the surname-and-*xue* correlation rules work:

> For all burials, [one needs to] select and obtain auspicious land, and then to divine and determine the *xue*. Next, on the basis of calculations, one should pace out the size [of the cemetery], and divide [it] into seven parts [on each of the four sides], so as to set the entrance, [obtain] the cross-paths and [a grid of] forty-nine,

36 Liu Wei, "Song dai huangling buju yu wuyin xingli shuo," 166–168, 178–180.
37 Jin Lianyu, "Bei Song Han shi jiazu mudi," 105–107, 114–115.

and establish the *xue.* All of the divined *xue* should be under the four characters [i.e., heavenly stems] *jia*, *geng*, *jing* [*bing*], or *ren*. [Then, also] according to [the divination of] a suitable year and month can one establish a burial.

凡葬，擇得吉地，又卜穴定，然后依算，須取步數長短，七分之, 立門陌卌九，穴之，合所卜穴當甲庚景壬四字之下，逐年月所宜安塚。[38]

This passage outlines how individual tombs were established. First, a piece of land was selected for burial. Next, the burial land was measured and divided into a seven-by-seven grid. As a result, the entire burial land contained a total of forty-nine squares, with twenty-four of them along the four edges. These twenty-four squares along the edges were called twenty-four *xue*. Among these *xue*, only four *xue* (*jia*, *geng*, *bing*, and *ren*) are regarded suitable to host tombs (fig. 4). This correlation is well illustrated by a diagram—identifying auspicious *xue* for the surname category *shang*—which was carved into a brick excavated from a Jin dynasty (1115–1234) tomb. The tomb is in a Wang family cemetery, and the Wang's surname category is *shang*.[39]

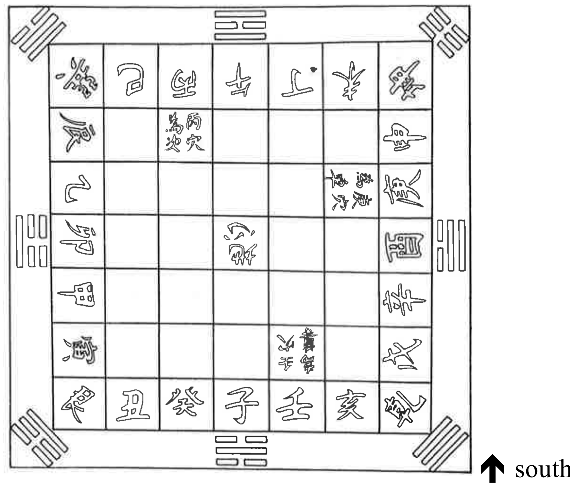

Figure 4. Diagram Identifying Auspicious *Xue* for the Surname Category *Shang*

Source: Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo et al., *Fenyang Donglongguan Song Jin bihua mu*, 234.

Clearly illustrated in this diagram is an idealized cemetery that is square-shaped, with seven *xue* along each side for a total of twenty-four *xue*. This design is reminiscent of a Chinese *fengshui*

38 This passage is from Dunhuang scroll P.2831, which is searchable at the International Dunhuang Project website (http://idp.bl.uk); for the transcription, see Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 249. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the heavenly stem *bing* 丙 is often written as *jing* 景 in Tang-era texts to avoid a name taboo (*bihui* 避諱) on Li Bing 李昞, the father of Tang Gaozu 高祖 (r. 618–626), the founder of the Tang dynasty. For more information, see Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 291.

39 For the archaeological report, see Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo et. al., *Fenyang donglongguan Song Jin bihua mu.* Similar diagrams also appear in Tang and Northern Song texts, including the Tang-era Dunhuang scrolls P.2250B and P.2831, and the Northern Song *Dili xinshu*. For the diagrams in the Dunhuang scroll P.2250B, see Shanghai guji chubanshe and Faguo guojia tushuguan, *Faguo guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang xiyu wenxian*, 15:305; for research, see Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 238–239. For the diagrams in the Dunhuang scroll P.2831, see Shanghai guji chubanshe and Faguo guojia tushuguan, *Faguo guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang xiyu wenxian*, 19:18; for research, see Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 246–258. Both Dunhuang scrolls are also searchable at the International Dunhuang Project website (http://idp.bl.uk). For the diagrams in the *Dili xinshu*, see DLXS 13:370–371.

compass (*luopan*), with a division of “twenty-four directions” (*ershisi xiang* 二十四向), together adding up to a total of 360 degrees on the compass (fig. 5).

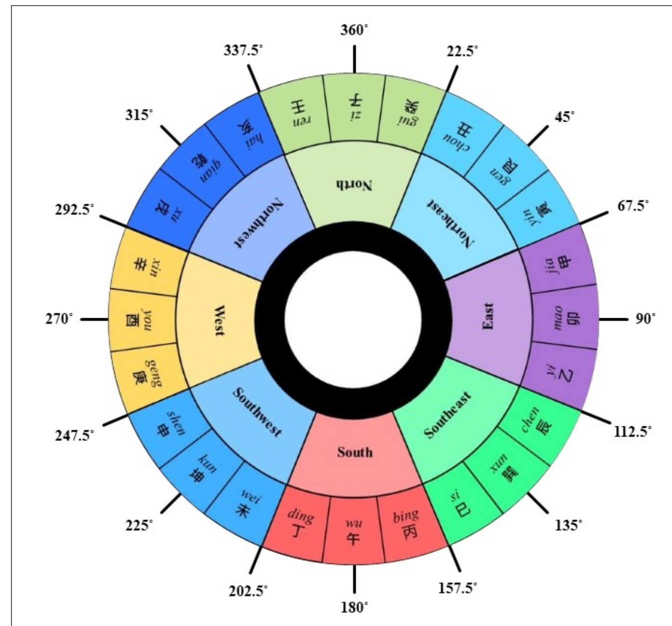

Figure 5. The Compartments of Degrees in a *Luopan*

As figure 5 shows, the twenty-four directions are named after the twelve earthly branches (*dizhi* 地支), namely, *zi* 子, *chou* 丑, *yin* 寅, *mao* 卯, *chen* 辰, *si* 巳, *wu* 午, *wei* 未, *shen* 申, *you* 酉, *xu* 戌, *hai* 亥; eight out of a total of ten heavenly stems (*tiangan* 天干), namely, *jia* 甲, *yi* 乙, *bing* 丙, *ding* 丁, *geng* 庚, *xin* 辛, *ren* 壬, *gui* 癸; and four out of eight trigrams (*bagua* 八卦), namely, *qian* 乾, *gen* 艮, *xun* 巽, and *kun* 坤. Each of the twenty-four *xue* corresponds to one of the twenty-four directions, as follows:

South: *bing* 丙 (157.5°–172.5°), *wu* 午 (172.5°–187.5°), *ding* 丁 (187.5°–202.5°).

Southwest: *wei* 未 (202.5°–217.5°), *kun* 坤 (217.5°–232.5°), *shen* 申 (232.5°–247.5°).

West: *geng* 庚 (247.5°–262.5°), *you* 酉 (262.5°–277.5°), *xin* 辛 (277.5°–292.5°).

Northwest: *xu* 戌 (292.5°–307.5°), *qian* 乾 (307.5°–322.5°), *hai* 亥 (322.5°–337.5°).

North: *ren* 壬 (337.5°–352.5°), *zi* 子 (352.5°–7.5°), *gui* 癸 (7.5°–22.5°).

Northeast: *chou* 丑 (22.5°–37.5°), *gen* 艮 (37.5°–52.5°), *yin* 寅 (52.5°–67.5°).

East: *jia* 甲 (67.5°–82.5°), *mao* 卯 (82.5°–97.5°), *yi* 乙 (97.5°–112.5°).

Southeast: *chen* 辰 (112.5°–127.5°), *xun* 巽 (127.5°–142.5°), *si* 巳 (142.5°–157.5°).

The same passage from the Dunhuang scroll (P.2831) continues to explain that, depending on the deceased’s surname category, three out of the four auspicious *xue* (i.e., *jia*, *geng*, *bing*, and *ren*) should be chosen to host tombs. As each *xue* refers to a parcel of land

defined by a specific range of directions within a cemetery (not unlike vector coordinates), it is possible to assign corresponding degrees to the four *xue* to show how surname category correlates to direction in terms of degrees (table 1). Table 1 draws information from the *Dili xinshu*, but I suspect that the same principles were already at work in Tang times (as we shall see later).

Surname category	Most auspicious *xue* (the "ancestral *xue*")	Next most auspicious *xue*	Tertiary *xue*
shang	337.5º–352.5º (*ren*)	157.5º–172.5º (*bing*)	247.5º–262.5º (*geng*)
jue	157.5º–172.5º (*bing*)	337.5º–352.5º (*ren*)	67.5º–82.5º (*jia*)
zhi	247.5º–262.5º (*geng*)	67.5º–82.5º (*jia*)	157.5º–172.5º (*bing*)
gong and *yu*	67.5º–82.5º (*jia*)	247.5º–262.5º (*geng*)	337.5º–352.5º (*ren*)

Table 1. Five Surname Category and *Xue* Correlation

Note: The table uses information recorded in DLXS 13:370–371.

For each surname category, the three auspicious *xue* are not equally favored; rather, the *Dili xinshu* explicitly prescribes different degrees of prestige. For instance, it explains: "the people with the surname category of *shang* differentiate the following: *ren xue* as [the most] respectable, *bing xue* as the second [most respectable], and *geng xue* as humble 商音人分壬穴為尊，丙穴為次，庚穴為卑.[40] This principle was also carved into the brick excavated from the Jin tomb discussed earlier (see fig. 4). Moreover, it is worth noting that this principle, simply based on the text itself, does not necessarily comply with the siting principle based on the generational hierarchy and sibling order.

As for why among the total of twenty-four *xue* in a cemetery, only the *xue* named after the four heavenly stems—*jia*, *geng*, *jing*, and *ren*—were regarded as auspicious, so far I have not seen any discussion. However, I believe that two passages shed some light. One passage is from the aforementioned Dunhuang scroll and equates these four *xue* with four deities:

> *Jia* is *qinlin*, *jing* [*bing*] is *fenghuang*, *geng* is *zhangguang*, and *ren* is *yutang*.
>
> 甲為麒麟，景為鳳凰，庚為章光，壬為玉堂。[41]

The other passage is from the *Dili xinshu* and explains the meanings and significance of the four deities:

> The *Records of Graves* says: the *qilin* is a guardian dog, informing me of who is coming. The *fenghuang* is a crowing rooster, informing me of the time. The *zhangguang* is a servant, providing me money to spend. And the *yutang* is a hut, a granary, and a tall hall. [When these] four deities are all present, the *hun* and *po* [of the deceased] will rest in peace.
>
> 塚記云：麒鱗為守狗，使我知人來。鳳凰為鳴雞，使我知天時。章光為奴婢，給使我錢財。玉堂為盧宅，倉廩及高堂。四神皆備，魂魄寧。[42]

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40 See Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, *Fenyang Donglongguan Song Jin bihua mu*, 234.

41 This passage is from Dunhuang scroll P.2831.

42 DLXS 11:372–373. I translate the term *sishen* 四神 as "four deities" in this text in order to differentiate it from the "Deities of the Four Directions" (also called *sishen* 四神, including the azure dragon, white tiger, vermillion sparrow, and black warrior). The former, in the *Dili xinshu*, is interchangeable with *sishou* 四獸 (four beasts) and

Interestingly, two epitaphs corroborate this particular correspondence between the four *xue* and the four deities. A Mr. Li's epitaph refers to the *bing xue* as the "*fenghuang xue*" 鳳凰穴,[43] and a Ms. Gao's epitaph describes her grave site by saying that "the graves are sparsely scattered in the the *jing* [*bing*] *xue*, allowing the four *qin* [i.e., four deities] to roam and to converge" 墳疏景穴，遊四禽而共交.[44]

2.2.1 Evidence from epitaphs

Even though no Tang-era family cemetery has been found with sufficient epigraphic evidence to examine the application of the Five Surname system, a number of epitaphs do suggest that this system could have played a role in Tang burial practice. So far I have identified twelve Tang epitaphs that pinpoint the placement of individual grave sites by means of their *xue*. To test whether each *xue* was appropriate to the surname category of the deceased, I first identified the surname category for each of the deceased individuals using the lists of surnames and their corresponding surname categories recorded in the *Dili xinshu*.[45] Next, I checked whether the *xue* recorded in each epitaph text belonged to one of the three auspicious *xue* for the surname category. Table 2 lists the results of this examination.

No.	Burial year	Place of burial	Surname	Surname category	*Xue* as recorded in epitaph	Type of *xue* acc. to DLXS	Relevant passage from epitaph
1	680	Shanxi	Gao 高	*jue*	*jing* (*bing*)	most auspicious	墳疏景穴，游四禽而共交 (MZHX 246)
2	703	Henan	Wang 王	*shang*	*ren*	most auspicious	丙門壬穴，克順商音 (MZH 1015)
3	732	Henan	Ms. Zheng 郑 (Shi 史) (a)	*zhi*	*geng, ren*	most auspicious (*geng* only)	(husband and wife) 同窆一塋，為庚壬兩穴 (MZH 1397)
4	744	Henan	Ms. Lu 盧 (Du 杜)	*yu*	*jia*	most auspicious	我太君用甲之穴 (b)
5	747	Henan	Li 李	*zhi*	*fenghuang* (*bing*)	tertiary	鳳凰穴 (MZH 1612)
6	796	Jiangsu	Tian 田	*zhi*	*jia*, *gui*	not applicable (c)	有亡妹附於墓之甲，異塋也；二新

siqin 四禽 (four birds); see DLXS 13:372. The latter will be discussed in part II of this chapter.
43 MZH 1612.
44 MZHX 246.
45 DLXS 1:39–50.

							婦穴於墓之癸，同塋也 (MZH 1886)
7	803	Henan	Ms. Zhang 張 (Tao 陶) (d)	*jue*	*ren*	next most auspicious	步穴居壬 (MZH 1930–1931)
8	812	Shaanxi	Ms. Li 李 (Fu 符)	*yu*	*jia*	most auspicious	己方甲穴掩玄堂 (MZH1985–1986)
9	815	Shaanxi	Ms. Tian 田 (Wang 王)	*shang*	*ding*	not mentioned	用丁穴於同塋 (MZHX 843)
10	835	Jiangsu	Xu 徐	*yu*	*ren*	tertiary	丙首壬穴 (MZH 2164)
11	837	Shaanxi	Ms. Lan 蘭 (He 何)	*shang*	*ren*	most auspicious	吉用壬穴 (MZHX 931)
12	852	Jiangsu	Ms. Houluo 侯羅 (Wang 王)	*shang*	*jing* (*bing*)	next most auspicious	景穴安神 (QTWBY 8:186–187)

Table 2. Surname and *Xue* Correlation in 12 Epitaphs that Refer Explicitly to *Xue*

Note: (a) For the married women's epitaphs, I use their husbands' surnames (in parentheses) to look for the corresponding surname categories, as they were buried in their husbands' family cemeteries.

(b) See Du Fu, "Tang gu fanyang taijun Lu shi muzhi," 2232.

(c) It is "not applicable" because this passage cannot be evaluated by the surname and *xue* correlation.

(d) The transcription on MZH 1930–1931 does not record the husband's surname, but the rubbing published in another book does; on this, see Chen Chang'an, *Sui Tang Wudai muzhi huibian*, 183.

As we can see from table 2, the surname and *xue* correlation works for most of the cases except three. In the first exception, Ms. Zheng's epitaph (no. 3) records two *xue*, with one for herself and the other for her husband (Mr. Shi), explaining: "[The deceased] were buried together in one cemetery, in the *geng* and *ren* two *xue*. This is called the people of Wei's way of *fu* [joint burial]" 同窆一塋，為庚壬兩穴。斯亦衛人之附焉.[46] In the discussion of joint burials in chapter 1, we learn that "the people of Wei's way of *fu* [joint burial] was by means of separation [i.e., in separate tombs]" 衛人之祔，離也.[47] This passage from Ms. Zheng's epitaph indeed demonstrates that for a Wei-style joint burial, the husband and wife were not buried inside the same tomb, but were in two separate tombs with some distance in between them. In terms of the surname and *xue* correlation, the surname Shi belongs to the surname category of *zhi*, for which the *geng xue* is regarded as the most auspicious *xue*. But it is unclear why the spouse's tomb was

46 MZH 1397.
47 LJ 14: 444.

located in the *ren xue*, which is not one of the three auspicious *xue* for the surname category *zhi*.[48]

In the second exception, Mr. Tian's epitaph (no. 6) says: "[Mr. Tian] has a deceased sister buried to the *jia* of his tomb chamber, which was in a different tomb; his two late wives were entombed at the *gui* of his tomb chamber, both inside the same tomb" 有亡妹附於墓之甲，異塋也；二新婦穴於墓之癸，同塋也.[49] The surname of Tian falls into the surname category *zhi*, for which the *geng*, *jia*, and *bing* are three auspicious *xue*. But I think that the *jia* and *gui* in this passage refer to the locations of Tian's sister's and wives' tombs in relation to Tian's tomb. In other words, the *jia* and *gui* are not *xue*, but rather simply two of the twenty-four cardinal directions (*xiang*). Hence, we cannot evaluate this passage by the surname and *xue* correlation. It is possible that the word *mu* 墓 in this passage refers to Mr. Tian' tomb chamber, the word *ying* 塋 refers to Tian's tomb, and the word *xue* means being entombed. Thus, this passage may simply describe the spatial relations among the four tombs: Mr. Tian's sister was buried in a different tomb from Mr. Tian, and her tomb was to the east (*jia*) of his tomb chamber, while Mr. Tian's two wives were buried inside the same tomb with him but in different tomb chambers, and their tomb chamber(s) was/were to the north (*gui*) of his tomb chamber.

The third exception is the case of Ms. Tian's epitaph (no. 9). The transcription says that Ms. Tian and her husband (Mr. Wang) "were buried together (*fu*), using the *ding xue* for their joint tomb" 合祔，用丁穴於同塋. Unfortunately, in this case, the word *ding* as it appears in the published rubbing of the epitaph is indistinct and difficult to read, so it is conceivable that the transcription is incorrect.[50] Additionally, even though only the *jia*, *geng*, *jing* [*bing*], and *ren xue* are considered auspicious according to the surname-and-*xue* correlation rules, the *Dili xinshu* in fact permits the use of another four *xue* (i.e., *yi* 乙, *ding* 丁, *xin* 辛, and *gui* 癸) under certain circumstances.[51] Hence it is also possible that the *ding xue* was indeed selected as a proper area to host Ms. Tian and Mr. Wang's joint burial.

Moreover, there is the additional case of a certain Ms. Wang's epitaph (not listed in table 2), which explains that her grave was "in the *geng* land inside the ancestral cemetery" 祖塋之內庚地.[52] Can we regard the word *di* 地 (translated here as "land") as a synonym for *xue*? Let us first assume that it is. Wang's husband's surname is Li, which falls into the surname category of *shang*, for which *geng* is indeed the most favorable *xue*. Next, let us assume that the word *di* is different from the word *xue*. In fact, the Five Surname system recorded in the *Dili xinshu* differentiates between the words *di* and *xue*, with the former referring to a much larger parcel of

48 The wife's surname Zheng also belongs to the surname category of *zhi*, for which the three *xue* of *geng, jia,* and *bing* are considered auspicious; hence, we can eliminate the possibility that the *ren xue* was chosen based on the wife's surname category.
49 MZH 1886.
50 For the transcription, see MZHX 843; and for the rubbing, see Wang Renbo, *Sui Tang Wudai muzhi huibian: Shaanxi juan*, 2:45.
51 DLXS 14:416–417. The text clearly discusses the application of some other *xue* for the Five Surname categories in various circumstances, but the complexity of the text prevents me from fully understanding it.
52 BLXC 872–873.

land.[53] Since there is no other example like this one, the meaning of the word *di* in this case remains unclear.

In sum, these epitaphs as a corpus make clear that, during the Tang dynasty, some tombs were carefully sited on the basis of the surname-and-*xue* correlation rules. But certainly, given that there were many schools and geomantic rules coexisting (as Lü Cai mentioned), geomancers probably modified their practice case by case, hence it would be no surprise to find discrepancies between actual practice and the prescribed rules for the surname categories in the Five Surname system.

2.3. The surname category and *xiang* correlation

The *Dili xinshu* records the auspicious and inauspicious directions (*xiang* 向) of a tomb, based on the surname category of the deceased. Gleaning the relevant information from the *Dili xinshu*, I made table 3 to illustrate the surname-and-*xiang* correlation.

Surname category	Greatly beneficial direction (*dali xiang* 大利向)	Minorly beneficial direction (*xiaoli xiang* 小利向)	Unobstructed direction (*ziru xiang* 自如向)	Somewhat obstructed direction (*cutong xiang* 粗通向)	Inauspicious direction (*xiongbai xiang* 凶敗向)
shang	157.5°–172.5° (*bing*)	337.5°–352.5° (*ren*)	67.5°–82.5° (*jia*)	277.5°–292.5° (*xin*)	247.5°–262.5° (*geng*)
jue	337.5°–352.5° (*ren*)	157.5°–172.5° (*bing*)	247.5°–262.5° (*geng*)	97.5°–112.5° (*yi*)	67.5°–82.5° (*jia*)
zhi	67.5°–82.5° (*jia*)	247.5°–262.5° (*geng*)	337.5°–352.5° (*ren*)	187.5°–202.5° (*ding*)	157.5°–172.5° (*bing*)
gong and *yu*	247.5°–262.5° (*geng*)	67.5°–82.5° (*jia*)	157.5°–172.5° (*bing*)	7.5°–22.5° (*gui*)	337.5°–352.5° (*ren*)

Table 3. Five Surname Category ad *Xiang* Correlation

Note: The table uses information recorded in DLXS 7:216–218.

2.3.1 Epitaphs referring to *xiang*

In my broad survey of Tang epitaphs, I found a total of twenty-one epitaphs containing the word *xiang* likely referring to the direction of a tomb. Since these epitaphs record both the surnames of the deceased and the orientations of the tombs, we can determine each deceased's surname category and examine whether his or her tomb orientation complies with the surname-and-*xiang* correlation as listed in table 3. Table 4 shows the results of this examination.

No.	Burial year	Surname	Surname category	*Xiang* as recorded in epitaph	Type of *xiang* acc. to DLXS	Relevant passage from epitaph
1	710	Yu 虞	*yu*	*jia*	minorly beneficial	墓甲向 (YYCMZ 48)

53 DLXS 13: 370–371. Liu Wei also calls attention to this difference; see Liu Wei, "Song dai huangling buju yu wuyin xingli shuo," 168.

2	832	Ms. Wang 王 (Tao 陶) (a)	*jue*	*jing* [*bing*]	minorly beneficial	景向塚 (YYCMZ 60)
3	843	Ms. Fan 范 (Luo 羅)	*shang*	*jing* [*bing*]	greatly beneficial	景向首 (YYCMZ 74)
4	848	Yuan 袁	*yu*	*jia*	minorly beneficial	墳首甲向 (YYCMZ 78)
5	849	Liu 劉	*gong*	*ren*	inauspicious	北面壬向為墳 (YYCMZ 82)
6	850	Qin 秦	*zhi*	*jing* [*bing*]	inauspicious	塚景向 (YYCMZ 86)
7	850	Teng 藤	unknown (b)	*jing* [*bing*]	unknown	景向為墳 (YYCMZ 88)
8	853	Ms. Luo 羅 (Qi 戚)	*zhi*	*jia*	greatly beneficial	塚甲向 (YYCMZ 90)
9	858	Tang 湯	*shang*	*geng*	inauspicious	庚向之原 (MZH 2365)
10	861	Liu 劉	*gong*	*bing*	unobstructed	墳之丙向 (YYCMZ 104)
11	865	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	X [Illegible] 向塚 (YYCMZ 111)
12	865	Ms. He 何 (Liu 劉)	*gong*	*jia*	minorly beneficial	墳首甲向 (YYCMZ 108)
13	868	Zhang 張	*shang*	*ren*	minorly beneficial	壬向之禮也, 翁婆等並同墓所 (YYCMZ 116)
14	869	Ms. Huang 黃 (Jiang 蔣)	*shang*	*yi*	not mentioned	墳首乙向 (YYCMZ 118)
15	870	Zhong 鍾	unknown	*ding*	unknown	祖墓中，丁向, 壬子之山也 (YYCMZ 120)
16	873	Zhang 張	*shang*	*yi*	not mentioned	其墳乙向 (YYCMZ 122)
17	874	Ms. Wang 王 (Chen 陳)	*zhi*	*jia*	greatly beneficial	其墳甲向 (YYCMZ 126)
18	882	Ms. Wu 吳 (unknown)	unknown	*bing*	unknown	墳首丙向之原 (YYCMZ 132)
19	887	Ling 凌	*yu*	*bing*	unobstructed	其墳丙向 (YYCMZ 136)
20	900	Ms. Ma 馬 (Wang 王)	*shang*	*jia*	unobstructed	其墳甲向 (YYCMZ 142)
21	902	Qi 戚	*zhi*	*bing*	inauspicious	塚曰丙向

						(YYCMZ 144)

Table 4. Surname and *Xiang* Correlation in 21 Epitaphs that Refer Explicitly to *Xiang*

Note: (a) For the married women's epitaphs, I use their husbands' surnames (in parentheses) to look for the corresponding surname categories, as they were buried in the husbands' family cemeteries.

(b) Some surnames do not appear in any of the five surname categories in the *Dili xinshu*, in which case the surname category is "unknown."

This table reveals that the surname-and-*xiang* correlation rules work for most cases. For example, a Mr. Ling's epitaph (no. 19) says that "his grave was oriented toward *bing*" 其墳丙向, and the epitaph of Ms. Wang (no. 2)—wife of Mr. Tao—says that she had "a tomb oriented toward *jing* [*bing*]" 景向塚.

It is interesting that all of the epitaphs containing the word *xiang* were found in Zhejiang Province, with most of them involving burials near Lake Shanglin in Cixi County. Even more exceptional is that all of these epitaphs except one (no. 9) consist of texts penned on the sides of porcelain jars, rather than inscribed on limestone or brick.[54] Recording *xiang* in epitaph texts might have been a regional tradition, but one should not conclude that the lack of reference to *xiang* necessarily means that the direction toward which a tomb faced was not deemed significant in other parts of the Tang empire. Moreover, as for why some tombs were oriented toward inauspicious directions or directions not mentioned in the *Dili xinshu*, there are several possibilities. First, some geomancers in the Tang might have adhered to earlier sets of rules that were similar to but not exactly the same as what is prescribed in the *Dili xinshu*. Second, some unknown regional traditions might have led to this discrepancy. Third, the same surnames could have been attributed to different surname categories, depending on the geomancers and the manuals or schools that they followed. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some slight differences do exist among the various relevant Dunhuang manuscripts and the *Dili xinshu* regarding which surname belongs to which surname category. Fourth, as Pan Sheng has argued, one should not single out the Five Surname system from other geomantic factors that may have also played a role in grave-siting, and even for the Five Surname system itself, different schools had different interpretations of how it should be applied in actual practice.[55] Despite all these possible explanations, recording the orientation of a tomb in an epitaph suggests that such information was considered significant, and it also constitutes good evidence pointing to the deliberate siting of tombs in accordance with geomantic principles.

2.3.2. Epitaphs referring to *shou*

Nineteen epitaphs use the word *shou* 首 when recording grave sites. I think the word *shou* here can be translated as "face" or "head toward," that is, it can replace the word *xiang* to denote the direction of a tomb. To test this hypothesis, I examined each of the nineteen epitaphs to find out whether the surname-and-*xiang* correlation rules apply (table 5).

54 Cixi is today a second-tier city under Ningbo in Zhejiang Province. The only stone epitaph (no. 9) in this table is from Mao County in Mingzhou Prefecture, which is close to Cixi.
55 Pan Cheng, "Bei Song huangwei jicheng de dili shushu 'guancha' yu 'yuyan'," 7.

No.	Burial year	Place of burial	Surname	Surname category	*Shou* as recorded in epitaph	Type of *xiang* acc. to DLXS	Relevant passage from epitaph
1	778	Henan	unknown	unknown	*qian*	not mentioned	乾首既趾 (MZHX 7171)
2	823	Zhejiang	Ms. Yao姚 (Qian 錢) (a)	*zhi*	*jia*	greatly beneficial	其墳甲首 (YYCMZ 52)
3	827	Jiangsu	Ms. Xue 薛 (unknown)	unknown (b)	*geng*	unknown	庚首之墳 (MZH 2096)
4	835	Jiangs	Xu 徐	*yu*	*bing*	unobstructed	丙首壬穴 (MZH 2164)
5	837	Zhejiang	Ms. Shen 沈 (Luo 羅)	*shang*	*ren*	minorly beneficial	其墳壬首 (YYCMZ 66)
6	839	Zhejiang	Ms. Wang 王 (Luo 羅)	*shang*	*yi*	not mentioned	墳乃乙首 (YYCMZ 70)
7	841	Jiangsu	Zhang 張	*shang*	*geng*	inauspicious	卜其宅兆庚首而安厝之 (MZH 2211)
8	843	Zhejiang	Ms. Fan 范 (Luo 羅)	*shang*	*jing* (*bing*)	greatly beneficial	景向首 (YYCMZ 74)
9	848	Zhejiang	Yuan 袁	*yu*	*jia*	minorly beneficial	墳首甲向 (YYCMZ 78)
10	860	Jiangsu	Yan 晏	*gong*	*ren*	inauspicious	世祖之塋內壬首 (c)
11	865	Zhejiang	Ms. He 何 (Liu 劉)	*gong*	*jia*	minorly beneficial	墳首甲向 (YYCMZ 108)
12	869	Zhejiang	Ms. Huang 黃 (Jiang 蔣)	*shang*	*yi*	not mentioned	墳首乙向 (YYCMZ 118)
13	870	Jiangsu	Ms. Liu 劉 (Rong 戎)	*yu*	*geng*	greatly beneficial	祔于先塋庚首 (MZH 2442)
14	879	Jiangsu	Huang 黃	*shang*	*geng*	inauspicious	枕夫人塋之北庚首 (MZH 2497)
15	882	Jiangsu	Ms.Xu 徐 (Gong 龔)	*jue*	*ren*	greatly beneficial	壬首塚 (d)
16	883	Jiangsu	Fan 范	*gong*	*geng*	greatly	先祖塋兆庚

						beneficial	首 (MZH 2507–2508)
17	882	Zhejiang	Ms. Wu 吳 (unknown)	unknown	*bing*	unknown	墳首丙向之原 (YYCMZ 132)
18	882	Zhejiang	unknown	unknown	*gui*	unknown	癸首 (YYCMZ 134)
19	883	Zhejiang	Qi 戚	*zhi*	*ren*	unobstructed	壬首之墳原 (MZH 2512)

Table 5. Surname and *Xiang* Correlation in 19 Epitaphs that Refer Explicitly to *Shou*

Note: (a) For the married women's epitaphs, I use their husbands' surnames (in parentheses) to look for the corresponding surname categories, as they were buried in the husbands' family cemeteries.

(b) Some surnames do not appear in any of the five surname categories in the *Dili xinshu*, in which case the surname category is "unknown."

(c) See Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo and Changshu bowuguan, *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi: Jiangsu (1)—Changshu*, a16, b8.

(d) See Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo and Changshu bowuguan, *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi: Jiangsu (1)—Changshu*, a27, b13.

Interestingly, several epitaphs (nos. 8, 9, 11, 12, and 17) contain both the words *shou* and *xiang*. For example, Mr. Yuan's epitaph (no. 9) says: "the tomb faces the *jia* direction" 墳首甲向, which seems to support my understanding of the word *shou* as a synonym for *xiang*. Additionally, a certain Mr. Xu's epitaph (no. 4) says that his grave was "oriented toward the *bing* and positioned at the *ren xue*" (丙首壬穴),[56] and the word *shou* here can be easily replaced by *xiang*. The surname Xu falls into the surname category of *yu*, for which the *ren xue* is indeed auspicious and the direction of *bing* is regarded as an unobstructed direction (*ziru xiang*).[57]

Among the nineteen epitaphs, sixteen have surnames clear enough that we can examine surname and *xiang* correlation. Ten of the sixteen epitaph texts (63%) demonstrate that this correlation works, assuming the word *shou* equals the word *xiang*. Three epitaph texts (nos. 1, 6, and 12) each record a direction that does not appear auspicious for the corresponding surname category, and three epitaphs (nos. 7, 10, and 14) record inauspicious directions for their surname categories. As for why the surname and *xiang* correlation does not apply in these six cases, all four possibilities discussed at the end of the previous section also apply here. Moreover, reading tables 4 and 5 together, we may even observe a regional pattern. There are three cases in these two tables where the deceased's surname falls into the surname category *shang* and his or her tomb faces the direction of *yi*.[58] All of them were originally buried near Shanglin Lake in Cixi

56 MZH 2164.
57 DLXS 7: 217.
58 They are nos. 14 and 16 in table 4 and nos. 6 and 12 in table 5. No. 14 in table 4 and no. 12 in table 5 are the same epitaph, and the relevant passage reads: "the grave faces the direction of *yi*" 墳首乙向.

County in today's Zhejiang Province. This is certainly a very small sample, but one may wonder whether there existed a surname Shang and *yi* correlation that might have reflected a regional tradition or represented some geomantic rules that was not recorded in the *Dili xinshu*.

2.3.3. Epitaphs referring to *men*

According to a certain Mr. Wang's epitaph, "[his grave] has *bing* as the *men* and *ren* as the *xue*, which follows the [rules] for the *shang* note [i.e., surname category]" 丙門壬穴，克順商音.[59] I have two speculations for what the word *men* 門 means here. First, we might regard *men* as interchangeable with *xiang* (orientation). The deceased's surname Wang indeed falls into the surname category of *shang*, and the direction of *bing* is the "greatly beneficial direction" (*dali xiang*) for *shang*. Second, we might regard the *men* as the entrance to a burial area, which was divided into a seven-by-seven grid and contained twenty-four *xue* along the four edges. In a diagram depicted on a Dunhuang scroll, the hearse is instructed to enter the burial area by a specific route (fig. 6).

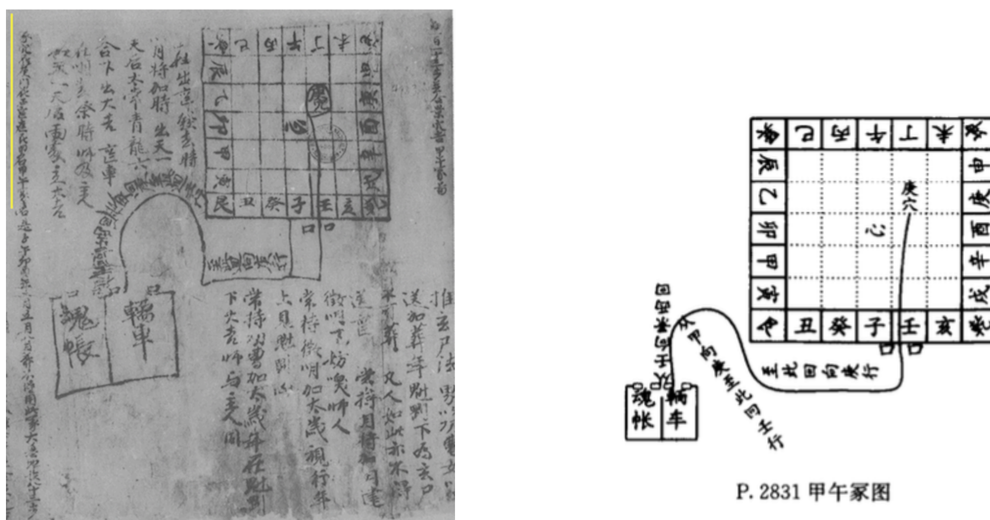

Figure 6. "*Jiawu* Tomb Diagram" (Jiawu zhong tu 甲午冢圖) on Dunhuang P.2831

Left: rubbing; right: a line drawing of part of the rubbing.

Source: For the rubbing, Shanghai guji chubanshe and Faguo guojia tushuguan, *Faguo guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang xiyu wenxian*, 19:20; for the line drawing, Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 251.

The route shown in figure 6 involves three turns that the hearse should take before finally arriving at the tomb. The text accompanying this illustration, indicated by the yellow line that I drew on the left margin of the image of the rubbing, explains: "[If] the tomb's *xue* is at *geng*, the *men* is at *ren*, and the mourning hall is at *jia*, it is called a *jiawu* grave" 冢穴在庚，門在壬，喪庭在甲，名甲午冢.[60] Similarly, it is possible that the words *bing men* in Mr. Wang's epitaph

59 MZH 1015.

60 Depending on the deceased's surname category and some other considerations, the *xue*, *men*, and *sangting* were placed differently. There are a total of six diagrams on Dunhuang scroll P.2831 (which is dated to the Tang era), each illustrating a different route that a hearse takes to enter the cemetery. The "*jiawu* tomb diagram" is one of them.

actually mean that the *men* was at the *bing xue*, through which the hearse should enter the burial area.

3. Conclusion to Part I

By examining archaeological data, Dunhuang manuscripts, the *Dili xinshu*, and epitaph texts, this chapter so far has demonstrated, first, that family members of multiple generations were usually buried together, and second, that in a family cemetery, individual tombs were placed according to certain rules. Illustrated in Dunhuang scrolls and corroborated by archaeological finds, the layout of tombs inside a family cemetery followed generational hierarchy and sibling order. In addition, by means of a broad survey of Tang-era tomb epitaphs, I found a number of epitaph texts making reference to the Five Surname system, suggesting that the deceased's surname category probably influenced the decision on where to site and how to orient the tomb. The stray references to tomb siting and orientation are particularly valuable, as there is little archaeological data and no textual sources to study cemetery configuration during the Tang. Unfortunately, the available data is still insufficient to know how geomancers resolved any conflicts between siting principles based on generational hierarchy and sibling order and those based on the Five Surname system, nor is it possible to determine how widely these sorts of grave-siting rules were used or what other geomantic rules might have also played a role.

II. Conceptualizing Burial Space in Geographic Context

Having discussed how individual tombs were positioned inside a family cemetery (or part thereof), I now examine how space surrounding grave sites was described in tomb epitaphs. As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, most epitaphs simply point out the "address" of a grave site (i.e., village X in county Y of prefecture Z), but when they do describe the sites more elaborately, four ways of talking about space usually appear: (1) a description of the geographic features situated in each of the four cardinal directions; (2) an explicit reference to the *sishen* 四神 (deities of the four directions), which are both mythological animals and geomantically significant concepts; (3) a description of the *shi* 勢 (configuration of the terrain); and (4) evidence to support the family's claim to the burial land. Table 6 records the number of epitaphs containing one or more of these four geographic discourses and tabulates the percentages of known instances in a database of 2685 epitaphs dating to between 800 and 907.

	Scenes in four directions	Claim to the burial land	*Sishen*	*Shi*
Total number (n)	183	44	42	23
Percentage in my 800–907 epitaph data set (n=2685)	6.8%	1.6%	1.6%	0.9%

Table 6. Four Geographic Discourses Describing Burial Sites

For the original text, see Shanghai guji chubanshe and Faguo guojia tushuguan, *Faguo guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang xiyu wenxian*, 19:20; for research, see Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 246–258. Another Tang-era Dunhuang scroll (P.2250B) contains two similar diagrams. For the diagrams, see Shanghai guji chubanshe and Faguo guojia tushuguan, *Faguo guojia tushuguan cang Dunhuang xiyu wenxian*, 15:305; for research, see Jin Shenjia, *Dunhuang xieben zhaijing zangshu jiaozhu*, 238–239. Both Dunhuang scrolls are also searchable at the International Dunhuang Project website (http://idp.bl.uk). Moreover, the *Dili xinshu* contains similar texts but different diagrams; see DLXS 14:406–410.

Note: I include only the relevant epitaphs with clear dates and places of origin.

1. Scenes in the Four Cardinal Directions

Among the descriptions of burial sites, the most common "geographic discourse" consists of identifying what lay in the four cardinal directions—that is, to the east, south, west, and north of the tomb (or alternatively to the front, back, left, and right of the tomb). This particular discourse can be further divided into two subtypes, which I will call *sigu* 四顧 (four views) and *sizhi* 四至 (four boundaries).[61] A typical *sigu* description reads:

> In the back [the grave site] faces Mount Huanggang; in the front it looks upon the Jiang River; to the left are luxuriant green woods; and to the right is the majestic cliff of Chibi. The four directional deities are all present, hence ten thousand generations will prosper.
>
> 後背黄崗，前臨絳水，左帶青林之鬱鬱，右挾赤壁之巍巍。四神俱備，萬代興焉。[62]

And a typical *sizhi* description reads:

> To the south, [the tomb land] reaches the state road; to the north, it reaches the property of Xu Lun, who sold the land [for the burial]; to the east, it reaches Xu's property [as well]; and to the west, it reaches Wang Zhen's property.
>
> 南至官路，北至賣地主許倫界，東至許界，西至王珍界。[63]

Though similar in format, the *sigu* and *sizhi* are rather different in what they describe and how they describe it. The *sigu* describes large landmarks, usually mountains and rivers, generally some distance from the perspective of the grave site, while the *sizhi* records the immediate boundaries of a grave site, being often a road, a lake, or a neighbor's property. Figure 7 shows the geographical distributions of *sigu* and *sizhi* among the 2685 epitaphs that I surveyed. Among 183 epitaphs that describe the scenes in the four cardinal directions, 156 are *sigu* descriptions and 27 are *sizhi*.[64] In terms of geographical distributions, both were widespread, but there was a distinct concentration of *sigu* in the north and of *sizhi* in the south.[65]

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61 Most epitaph texts simply describe the surroundings of a grave site in terms of its four cardinal directions without explicitly using the terms *sigu* or *sizhi*. But a few epitaphs do use these terms. For examples of epitaphs explicitly using the expression *sigu*, see BLXC 369, MZHX 1029. For epitaphs explicitly referring to *sizhi*, see MZHX 1166, YYCMZ 142.
62 BLXC 700–701.
63 MZH 2164.
64 Since most epitaphs do not use the words *sigu* and *sizhi*, I divided these records based on my own understanding of the *sigu* and *sizhi* and their different characteristics.
65 The "north" in this chapter refers to the regions north of the Huai River, mostly including today's Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan, and Hebei Provinces, while the "south" refers to the Lower Yangzi River region and northern Zhejiang Province (e.g. Shaoxing through Ningbo). Most of the Tang-era epitaphs were found in these regions.

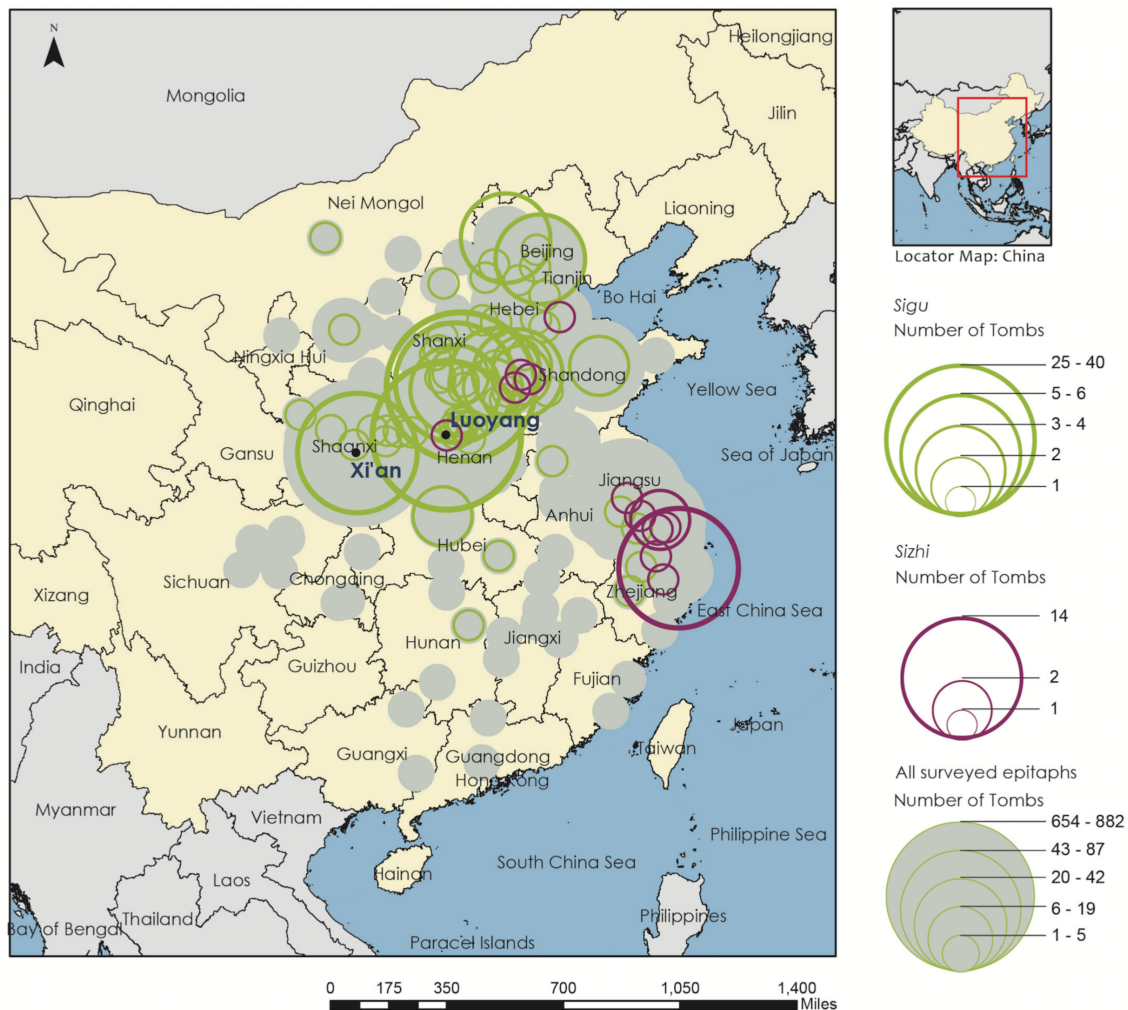

Figure 7. Distributions of *Sigu* and *Sizhi* in the 2685 Surveyed Epitaphs Dating to between 800 and 907

Note: Base map is from GADM database of Global Administrative Areas Projection: Asia South Lambert Conformal Conic. This source was used for all the GIS maps in this chapter except figure 8.

1.1. *Sigu* (four views)

Tang-era Luzhou Prefecture in Hedong Circuit (Hedong dao 河東道; roughly present-day Shanxi Province)[66] has a particularly high concentration of epitaphs with *sigu* descriptions, which makes it a good focus for a case study. Among the one hundred and fifty-six epitaphs containing *sigu* dating to between 800 and 907, fifty-seven were found in Luzhou (i.e., over one third of the total epitaphs containing *sigu* descriptions). For this case study, I also include epitaphs dating to the period before 800, because a temporal distribution allows for the possibility of observing change over time. My data set consists of a total of sixty-two epitaphs,

66 It is also interesting to note that Luzhou received major migrations in various time periods. It has a hilly terrain and was relatively peaceful, and it, along with other parts of Hedong Circuit, became an ideal place for migrants, particularly during and after the An Lushan Rebellion. For discussions of migrations in Tang-era Luzhou, see Zhang Wei, “Yin huan xiju”; Wu Songdi, *Zhongguo yimin shi*, 3:438–445.

with twenty-five epitaphs dating to the seventh and eighth centuries and thirty-seven dating to the period between 800 and 907.[67]

A typical Luzhou *sigu* description reads:

> On the day of *jingshen* [*bingshen*], [the deceased and his wife] were jointly buried on the plain 15 *li* [7.5 km or 5 miles] southeast of the prefectural seat, in accordance with [proper] ritual. Divination and omens [determined] the grave site, and this tomb was constructed. To the left, [the grave] looks toward [Mount] Hukou; to the right, one is led to the banks of the Zhang [River]; in the front, it faces [Mount] Yangtou; and in the back, it looks upon [Mount] Wangwu.
>
> 景申合葬於州城東南十五里之原，禮也。卜兆墳塋，建茲窀穸。左瞰壺口，右帶彰濱，前望羊頭，卻瞻王屋。[68]

Such descriptions are not difficult to be visualized, as the "address" of a grave site can be pinpointed on a map based on the epigraphic record with a considerable degree of accuracy, and the large landmarks— such as the rivers and mountains—can be localized using historical (or in some cases even present-day) maps.[69] Among the sixty-two epitaphs, forty-four are from tombs in the immediate vicinity of the Luzhou prefectural seat (often referred to as Lufucheng 潞府城, Luzhou cheng 潞州城, Shangdang juncheng 上黨郡城, *fucheng* 府城, or *zhoucheng* 州城 in epitaph texts).[70] Figure 8 shows the forty-four grave sites and some of the rivers and mountains frequently mentioned in the *sigu* descriptions. By illustrating them on a map, I hope to convey more accurately which rivers and mountains were commonly mentioned in "four views" (*sigu*) descriptions, how far they were situated from the grave sites, and any other patterns that one can possibly discern from these *sigu* descriptions.

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67 I did a comprehensive survey of the three-volume publication titled *Xi'an beilin bowuguan xincang muzhi huibian* (BLXC) and obtained a data set of sixty-two epitaphs that were originally buried in Tang-era Luzhou.
68 BLXC 149. I use the conversion 1 *li* = 1/3 mile = 1/2 km; see Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 612.
69 All the grave sites are addressed in epitaph texts as n (number) *li* from the prefectural seat, hence their position can be estimated on a map. My main references for the major landmarks were maps from the following publications: (1) Yao Xuejia, *Lu'an fu zhi*; (2) Tan Qixiang, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji*; (3) Shanxi sheng ditu ji bianzuan weiyuanhui, *Shanxi sheng ditu ji*.
70 In 618, the Tang court replaced the name of the Sui dynasty (581–618) prefecture Shangdang jun 上黨郡 with a new name, Luzhou 潞州, but in 742 the name was changed back to Shangdang jun, which had only a short life span until the name was changed again to Luzhou in 758. See JTS 39:1476. Hence, these various names in epitaph texts all refer to the same prefectural seat, which corresponds to today's Changzhi City in Shanxi Province.

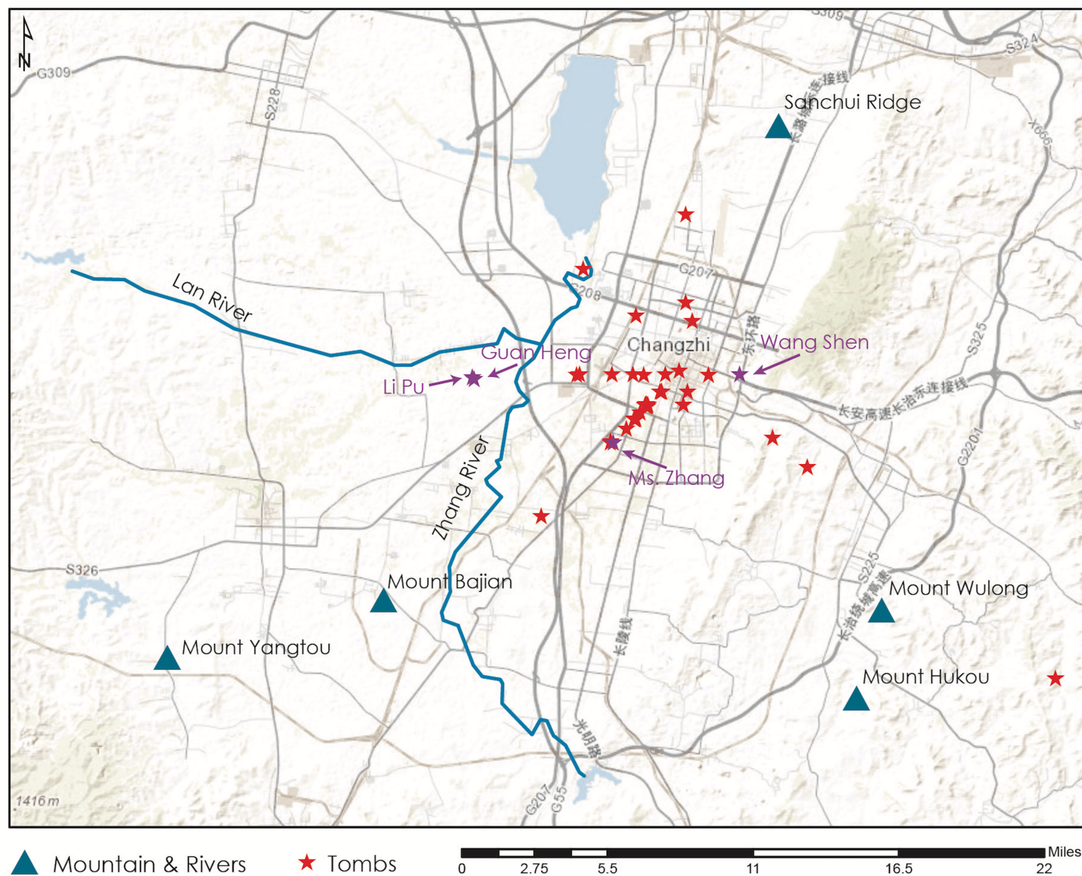

Figure 8. Forty-Four Tomb Sites in the Immediate Vicinity of the Luzhou Prefectural Seat and Some Frequently Mentioned *Sigu* Landmarks

Note: Base map is from the World Topographic Map service. See https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=4a8fac16cdc140c9bde0c08a1eb60d9b.

The location of each tomb is determined based on the "address" given in the epitaph, and not on archaeological records of place of excavation (as such records rarely exist for Luzhou epitaphs).

Marked on the map, the most frequently mentioned landmarks include the Zhang River (Zhang he/shui/chuan 漳河/水/川; mentioned in twenty-five of the forty-four Luzhou epitaphs) to the west, Mount Hukou (Hukou shan 壺口山; mentioned in seventeen of the forty-four epitaph texts) to the east, Mount Yangtou (Yangtou shan 羊頭山; mentioned in fifteen of the forty-four epitaph texts) to the south, and the Sanchui Ridge (Sanchui gang 三垂崗; mentioned in five of the forty-four epitaph texts) to the north. In addition, Mount Wulong (*Wulong shan* 五龍山), Mount Bajian (Bajian shan 八諫山), and the Lan River (Lan he/shui/chuan 藍河/水/川) also show up relatively often in the *sigu* descriptions. These mountains and rivers all constitute large landmarks, usually far from the grave sites. In other words, the "four views" depicted by the epitaph texts make reference to distant geographic features, and not to a tomb's immediate surroundings. To make this point more clear, we can look at a few examples in figure 8. The epitaph of Mr. Guan Heng and his wife tells us that their grave site was "20 *li* [10 km or 6.7

miles] west of the seat of Luzhou Prefecture" 潞州城西廿里, and Mount Hukou was to the east of the grave site.[71] A Ms. Zhang's epitaph records that her grave site was "10 *li* [5 km or 3.3 miles] southwest of the prefectural city" 府城西南十里, and Sanchui Ridge was to the north of the grave site.[72] Both Mr. Li Pu's and Mr. Wang Shen's epitaphs list Mount Yangtou to the south of their grave sites, and Li Pu's grave site was said to be "20 *li* [10 km or 6.7 miles] west of the seat of Luzhou Prefecture" 潞州城西廿里, while Wang Shen's was 5 *li* [2.5 km or 1.7 miles] east of the prefectural city" 州城東五里.[73] These grave sites are marked on the map (fig. 8), and it is clear that the three landmarks listed in the *sigu* descriptions are a couple dozen or more kilometers away; to the extent that they were visible from the grave sites, they would have appeared on the distant horizon.

Why were some mountains and rivers preferentially mentioned over other geographical features in descriptions of the *sigu* in Luzhou epitaphs? Two possible explanations need to be addressed. First, these landmarks are among the most visible and striking geographical features of the area, hence they are too obvious to miss. In fact, centuries later, they still featured prominently on maps in officially produced local gazetteers.[74] Second, some of these mountains and rivers also carry culturally significant meanings. For example, Mount Yangtou was believed to be where Shennong 神農 (Divine Farmer)—also known as the legendary ruler Yandi 炎帝 (Emperor Yan)—invented grain agriculture.[75] Mount Wulong was believed to be where Murong Yong (d. 394)—the last emperor of the Xianbei kingdom of Western Yan (384–394) during the Sixteen Kingdoms period (304–439)—saw five dragons (*wulong* 五龍) and built the Wulong Shrine to pay tribute to the five directional deities (*wufang shen* 五方神).[76] In fact, the names "Shennong," "Yandi," and "Murong" all appear in *sigu* descriptions. Guo Qian and his wife's epitaph records that "in the front [of the grave site] flies the vermillion sparrow, and Shennong stands watch on Mount Yangtou" 前翔朱雀，神農占顧於羊頭.[77] Hao Zhang's epitaph explains that "to the east, [the grave site] looks upon high cliffs, where the Shrine of Murong Yong still exists;…in front, [it] gazes at Mount Yangtou, where Emperor Yan once rescued [people from] disasters" 東瞻崇嶺，慕容之祠司存……前觀羊首，炎帝之跡拯危.[78]

Not only the epitaphs from the prefectural seat (i.e., those depicted in fig. 8), but also epitaphs excavated in other counties of Luzhou Prefecture identify large and far-off landmarks in their *sigu* descriptions. Moreover, the data reveals no clear change in choice of landmarks over time. It is worth mentioning that epitaphs from other counties seem to mention different repertoires of rivers and mountains in their *sigu* descriptions. Even though tombs in different counties were certainly surrounded by different landscapes, there may also have been an element of regional cultural identity at work. Nicolas Tackett has argued: "Because localizing the tomb

71 BLXC 297.
72 BLXC 637.
73 For Li Pu's epitaph, see BLXC 131; for Wang Shen's epitaph, see Shanxi sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, "Shanxi Changzhi Tang mu qingli jianbao," 57.
74 For instance, a map of Luzhou dating to 1770, with the prefectural seat Lu'an *fu* 潞安府 marked almost in the center, is filled with vivid illustrations of rivers and mountains, most of which were mentioned in the *sigu* descriptions in Luzhou epitaphs. See Yao Xuejia, *Lu'an fu zhi*, 1:3.
75 Yue Shi, *Taiping huanyu ji*, 45:938.
76 Li Jifu, *Yuanhe jun xian zhi*, 19:343.
77 BLXC 820–821.
78 BLXC 284.

also situated the deceased individual within the landscape, these types of provincial epitaphs simultaneously reveal a sensitivity to a particular notion of community, a notion of community where membership implies knowing not only who else is included, but also where each person resides in relation to the others.… In this type of community, one's social ties were mapped onto the landscape; one's place in the landscape defined one's identity."[79] In the Luzhou case, the landmarks visible to residents of a particular county probably held some cultural and social significance.[80] Moreover, one intriguing observation is that the most oft-mentioned mountains and rivers are usually assigned the same cardinal directions in the epitaph texts that mention them. Besides reflecting their physical locations relative to the grave sites, these geographic features may have also acquired the status of cultural symbols at the regional level and sometimes represented the deities of four directions (*sishen*; to be discussed later). In addition, the features mentioned recurrently in *sigu* descriptions might have also reflected the dynamics of the local funerary industry. It is conceivable that epitaphs from a given county were all produced in a small number of county workshops, which used a fixed group of landmarks as part of a formulaic epitaph language.

Although we probably can regard the explicit and elaborate records of the *sigu* presented in the Luzhou epitaphs as a local tradition, one does find epitaphs elsewhere that refer to the "four views" in a very similar way. In fact, the *sigu* descriptions from other regions look just like those from Luzhou epitaphs in terms of their structure and language. For example, Mr. Zhang Ze's epitaph from Xiangzhou Prefecture (in today's Hebei Province) says that "in the east, [his grave site] looks upon the five lakes; in the west, it connects to Mount Taihang; to the south, there is Mengjing County; and to the north, it reaches toward Wangmang Ridge" 東望五湖，西接太行，南有孟津，北至王莽.[81] Mr. Zhi Zhijian's epitaph from Luoyang (in today's Henan Province) tells us that "his soul peacefully settled on a path in the Mang [hills], with the clouds around Mount Song to the east, and waves from the Luo [River] standing in front" 安靈邙阡，嵩雲自東，洛波居前.[82] Mr. Wang Qing's epitaph from Tanzhou Prefecture (in today's Hunan Province) explains that his tomb was "at the south of Lake Dongting and east of the Xiang River" 洞庭之南，湘水之東.[83] Mr. Yang Zhun's epitaph from the capital of Chang'an (in today's Shaanxi Province) observes: "As for the [burial] land, to the east, it watches over the capital city [Chang'an]; to the west, it overlooks Xianyang. It has winding ridges and mounds, [such that] the positions of the [azure] dragon and [white] tiger are complete, shielding and reflecting each other to the front and rear. Truly one has obtained an [auspicious] topographic configuration" 其地乃東瞻京闕，西眺咸陽，宛然崗阜，龍虎位全，前後掩映，甚得形勢.[84]

1.2. *Sizhi* (four boundaries)

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79 Tackett, "Harvesting and Interpreting Biographic, Epigraphic, and Genealogic Data," 23.
80 In the Tang era, any social or geographical unit larger than a county was probably too large to be regarded as a distinctive community for its residents. Smaller units such as a subcounty (*xiang* 鄉) or a village (*cun* 村) might have produced an even stronger sense of community, but our limited data does not allow a thorough examination of this hypothesis.
81 MZHX 945–946.
82 MZH 2393.
83 QTWBY 7:107–108.
84 QTWBY 7:106–107.

In contrast to Luzhou, which has more epitaphs containing *sigu* descriptions than anywhere else, the Shanglin Lake area in Cixi, Zhejiang Province, has the highest percentage of *sizhi* found in epitaph texts. Among the total of twenty-seven epitaphs containing *sizhi* descriptions dating to between 800 and 907, fourteen are from Cixi; that is, about half of the *sizhi* descriptions were for Cixi residents. Moreover, these epitaphs found in Cixi are rather distinctive; instead of the usual limestone or bricks with carved epitaph inscriptions, they are porcelain jars with written epitaph texts on the outer surface. Probably this concentration of *sizhi* in Cixi reflects both a local tradition and the existence of local epitaph workshops. But that being said, it is important to note that the "four boundaries" (*sizhi*) discourse was not unique to Cixi. As in the case of *sigu*, all examples of *sizhi* descriptions contain more or less the same elements. Most *sizhi* are short and concise, like most *sigu*. The most elaborate example of *sizhi* that I have found reads as follows:

> [Mr.] Wang Hongda, the owner of the burial land, bought this deserted and uncultivated and deserted mulberry yard in the village north of the lake and hill on the thirteenth day of the tenth month in the fifth year of the Zhonghe reign [881–885] from [Mr.] Ma Moubian, Ms. Ma's [the deceased's] younger cousin, and it will serve as an eternal burial land [for the Wang family]. To the east, it reaches the [Shanglin] Lake; to the south, it reaches the remaining foundation of the old house; to the west it reaches the Henggu Road and the muddy path in front of Ma Jia's tomb. Both toward the east and the west one can go straight and reach the lake. To the north, it reaches the lake, as well as the grave of Ma Sanshu. [The land within] the aforementioned four boundaries (*sizhi*) was bought by [Wang] himself, and is of no concern to the affairs of the various neighbors and relatives.
>
> 其墓地夫主王弘達去中和五年十月十三日於馬氏堂弟馬牟邊買得當湖山北保內荒廢桑園，永為墓田。東至湖，南至舊屋基墈，西至橫古路及馬甲冡科泥塗，東西直出至湖，北至湖及馬三叔冡。右四至內王自買得，並不關上下門戶六親之事。[85]

As mentioned earlier, similar to the description of the "four views," the description of the "four boundaries" also lists landmarks in the four cardinal directions, but instead of mountains and rivers seen (or imagined) in the distance, it identifies the mundane surroundings immediately adjacent to the piece of land in question. In this specific example, one finds mentioned a lake (apparently directly abutting the grave land), the remnants of an old house, two roads (including a muddy one), and a relative's tomb. As most of these features mentioned in the *sizhi* bordered Wang's graveyard, they also define the location and size of the parcel of land. One could imagine using this description to pinpoint the exact location and area of the burial land.

Indeed, one might go a step further and point out that the *sizhi* description resembles the language of a standard medieval Chinese land contract used for the mortgaging or purchase of land. Consider the following model contract (with blanks left deliberately in the text):

> The abovementioned…has purchased or inherited so many parcels of fertile land, totaling so many *mu* and so many paces (*bu*).… [T]he first parcel is located in the…district. The name of the land is…place. To the east, it reaches ; to the west, it reaches ; to the south, it reaches ; and to the north, it reaches .
>
> 右麼有梯已承分晚田若干段，總計幾畝零幾步，產錢若干貫文。一段座落麼都，土名麼處。東至 ，西至 ，南至 ，北至 。[86]

85 This epitaph text is on a porcelain jar excavated from the Shanglin Lake area and is now in the collection of the Cixi Museum in Zhejiang Province. For the text, see MZHX 1166; for both the text and a photograph of the porcelain jar with the epitaph, see YYCMZ 142–143.
86 See Han Sen, *Chuantong Zhongguo richang shenghuo zhong de xieshang*, 118, for the Chinese text, which is from a Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) collection of legal documents. The English translation is by Valerie Hansen with only my own modification in the land measurements *bu* 步 and *mu* 畝. Hansen discusses different types of middle-

Clearly, a medieval Chinese land contract contains three main elements: first, the proper ownership of the land; second, its size; and third, its well-defined borders. Strikingly, the *sizhi* passage has all of these three features. Like the contract, the example of *sizhi* here identifies landmarks immediately bordering the parcel of land on all four sides. Its size would have been clear at the time when all the landmarks were present. It also emphasizes that the parcel of land was "bought by [Wang] himself" 自買得, no longer is of concern (i.e., the property of) to neighbors and relatives, and thus would be the Wang family's land for all eternity.

Moreover, passages defining the boundary of a piece of land from two land contracts dating to 477 and 507, respectively, provide an even better sense of how a land contract adheres to the *sizhi* by describing the immediate borders of the land, as follows:

> Guo Mengji of Chungu has purchased 35 *mu* of land from his older brother, Yizong, to be his family's land forever…. To the south of the land is the big road, south of which is Guo Qi's land. To the west is Guo Fengqi's land. To the east is Luo Hou's and Guo Qin's land. The north faces the Baonan mountains.
>
> 鶉觚民郭孟[給]，從從兄儀宗，買地卅五畝，要永為家業……地南有大道，道南郭寄地；西有郭鳳起地，東右洛侯郭秦地，北臨堡南領。[87]
>
> Zhang Shenluo of the northern quarter buys 3 *mu* of burial land from his fellow county-dweller Lu Adou. To the south is the tomb of Qi Wang, and the northern border is 53 paces (*bu*) long. To the east is the tomb of Qi Tu, and the western border is 12 *bu* long.
>
> 北坊民張神洛，從縣民路阿兜買墓田三畝。南齊王墓，北弘五十三步；東齊　墓，西弘十二步。[88]

In short, in a *sizhi* description, the land of the graveyard is treated like a commodity; there is little doubt that the *sizhi* was deliberately inspired by land contracts and sought to lay claim to the land in much the same way as a contract would. In fact, as we shall see later, other epitaphs (mostly from the same regions where epitaphs with *sizhi* have been found) often make note that land was "purchased" (*mai* 買). These epitaphs appear also to seek to establish the legitimate claim of ownership of the burial land.

1.3. Summary

In short, although both the *sizhi* and the *sigu* describe the surroundings of a burial site in the four cardinal directions, they are in fact different in three principal ways. First, unlike a *sigu* description that lists major landmarks in the distance (including mountains and rivers), a *sizhi* describes features in the immediate proximity of the burial land. Second, as seen in the Luzhou examples, grave sites in the same county shared a repertoire of landmarks used for the *sigu*,

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period Chinese contracts (e.g., private contract, tomb contract), which have many common features. See Hansen, *Negotiating Daily Life in Traditional China*, 125–126. Both *bu* and *mu* are land area measurements. As mentioned earlier, 1 *bu* in the Tang equals 1yd 2 ft 2.5 in. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 612. The *mu* (Chinese acre) was the official or standard land measurement from ancient China to the end of the twentieth century; for English translations of Chinese texts, if needed, 1 *mu* is defined as 8 acres during the Tang. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 614.

87 For the Chinese text, see Han Sen, *Chuantong Zhongguo richang shenghuo zhong de xieshang*, 24–25; the English translation is by Valerie Hansen (*Negotiating Daily Life in Traditional China*, 26) with my own modification in the land measurements *bu* and *mu*.

88 For the Chinese text, see Han Sen, *Chuantong Zhongguo richang shenghuo zhong de xieshang*, 25; the English translation is by Valerie Hansen (*Negotiating Daily Life in Traditional China*, 27) with my own modification in the land measurements *bu* and *mu*.

whereas, in contrast, the features mentioned in a *sizhi* are unique to the grave site in question. In other words, one might conclude that a *sigu* defines the boundaries of a large community, whereas the *sizhi* defines the boundaries of an individual family's property. Third, in contrast to a *sigu*, which carries a strong geomantic significance (by focusing on propitious mountains and rivers), a *sizhi* replicates almost verbatim the language of a land contract. It constitutes a claim of ownership in the context of a flourishing market in land.

2. Ownership Claims to Burial Land

A total of forty-four epitaphs from the period 800–907 make explicit ownership claims to burial land. Writers of Tang-era epitaphs employed various ways to legitimize a family's ownership of a burial site. Mostly they used the word *mai* 買 to mark a record of purchase, but some also directly wrote that the land was family property (e.g., "the tomb was built on his own family land" 自家宅地建塋),[89] or said that the land was rented (e.g., "here [we] rented the land" 於此租地).[90] Some epitaphs even record the seller (*maidiren* 賣地人), the guarantor (*baoren* 保人), and the landowner (*dizhu* 地主).[91]

Epitaphs claiming ownership of burial land have been found in various regions around China but are more common in the south (table 7).

Place	Shaanxi	Hebei	Henan	Hubei	Hunan	Shanxi	Zhejing	Shanghai	Jiangsu
Number	3	3	2	1	1	5	15	2	12

Table 7. Number of Epitaphs Containing Burial-Land Ownership Claims (by Modern Province)

When an epitaph contains both an ownership claim to the burial land and a *sizhi* description, as discussed previously, it often resembles a land contract. Here is an epitaph example that explains the location of the graveyard and the family's legitimate ownership as a consequence of the purchase of the land, as well as the parcel's size, shape, and the immediate surroundings in the four directions (*sizhi*):

> [The deceased was] buried northeast of Wu County [seat], at the border of Hehe Ward in Ganjiang Canton, on one parcel of residential land purchased from Chen Zhao. On both the east and west, it measures 4.5 *bu* in length; on both the south and north, it [also] measures 4.5 *bu*. To the east is [the property of] Chen Zhao, to the west is [the property of] the Zhangs, to the south is [the property of] the Lus, and to the north is [again the property of] Chen Zhao.
>
> 葬於吳城東北干將鄉和合坊界，買陳昭宅地壹所，東西各長四步半，南北各長四步半，東陳昭，西張，南陸，北陳昭。[92]

89 Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo and Changshu bowuguan, *Xin Zhongguo chutu muzhi*, 1a:8.
90 MZH 2277.
91 For example, see MZH 2164, MZHX 996.
92 MZH 1934. Note that the epitaph makes reference to "residential land" (*zhaidi* 宅地), which is interesting because as the epitaph tells us, Ms. Pang was buried in 804. So, it may suggest that even after the breakdown in the equal-field system (to be discussed later), there was still the sense that only certain types of land should be used for burials.

Interestingly, both *sizhi* and claims to ownership are mostly found in epitaphs from the south (especially if one considers that far more epitaphs in total numbers have been excavated in the north), and the geographic ranges of epitaphs with these two features overlap greatly (fig. 9).

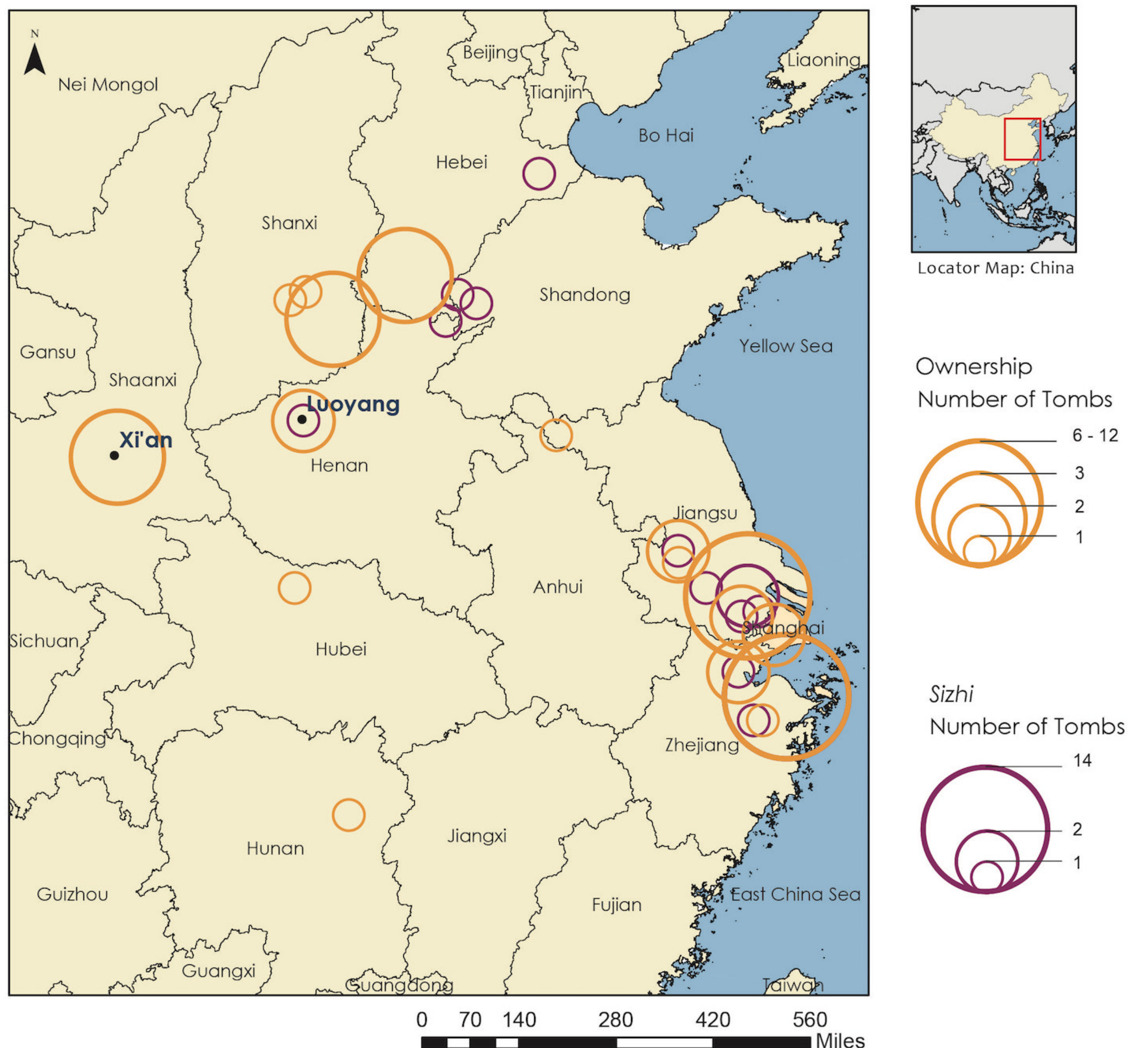

Figure 9. Distribution of Tang Epitaphs (Dating to between 800 and 907) with *Sizhi* and Claims to Ownership

However, it is worth noting that not all epitaph texts containing graveyard ownership claims resemble land contracts. For instance, the epitaph text of a Mr. Shen, who was buried in Mingzhou (today's Hebei Province), explains the situation as follows:

> [The family of the deceased] purchased a piece of land 5 *li* [2.5 km or 1.7 miles] from Linming County [seat] in Mingzhou Prefecture in order to settle the grave and complete the burial. The land looks over three towns: to the west, it looks over Mashan; to the south, it looks over the *yin* city; and to the north, it looks over the *yang* city. This purchased land is 2 *li* [1 km or 0.7 miles] west of Ji Village, and 40 *li* [20 km or 13.3 miles] away from the prefectural seat.… To the east, it reaches the blue dragon; to the west the white tiger; to the south the vermillion sparrow; and to the north the black warrior.

洺州臨洺縣西去城五里買地安墳塋葬。其地有三城之望：西望馬山，南望陰城，北望陽城。買得此基村西二里，去州卌里……東至青龍，西白虎，南朱雀，北玄武。[93]

By integrating the *sigu* and deities of the four directions (*sishen*; to be discussed later), the passage focuses on auspicious topography and highlights the geomantic significance of the terrain.

Some historical context may explain the tendency to treat burial land as a traded commodity in the south rather than in the north. As economic historians have shown, the momentous An Lushan Rebellion dealt a death blow to the equal-field system (*juntian zhi* 均田制),[94] in which land was redistributed by the state after one died, except for mulberry land (*sangtian* 桑田).[95] After the rebellion, the state ceased to impose rigid supervision of local affairs or to attempt to register and redistribute the land. The shift allowed for the development of a land market. Meanwhile, the late Tang experienced a series of great social and economic transformations, including the enormous expansion of trade, increasing complexity of commercial organization, progressive urbanization, the emergence of a solid money economy, and the rise of an urban class with its own subculture, as Denis Twitchett has argued.[96] With more commercial activity in general, the market in land was further spurred. Scholars have often noted that commerce flourished far more in the south than in the north. Richard von Glahn argues that between the years of 750 and 1250 (i.e., the Tang-Song transition), "the rice economy of the Yangzi River valley supplanted the traditional heart-land of the Central Plain as the Chinese economy's center of gravity."[97] The Lower Yangzi and northern Zhejiang areas constituted the epicenter of the medieval commercial revolution. Evidence discussed previously from epitaphs excavated in those regions indeed suggests that a land market (at least for burial land) flourished.[98] Moreover, the rebellion also marked the beginning of a great population shift from the north to the south. According to von Glahn, "Before the An Lushan rebellion approximately two-thirds of the population lived in the dryland farming regions of North China, with the densest concentration in the Central Plain heartland. By 1100 that ratio had reversed: two-thirds of the population inhabited the rice-growing regions of South China, and only one-third lived in the north, a distribution that has remained roughly constant down to the present."[99] Besides the impact of warfare in the north, the flourishing of commerce in the south was certainly an attractive force that brought migrants who then needed to purchase land, including burial land to establish family cemeteries that were supposed to stay in the family undisturbed eternally. Hence, it was probably necessary to claim a family's ownership of the land when a

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93 MZH 2519.

94 For a thorough discussion of the equal-field system, see Twitchett, *Land Tenure and the Social Order in T'ang and Sung China*, 16–24; for a discussion of its dismantling and changes in the land distribution system after the An Lushan Rebellion, see Twitchett, *Land Tenure and the Social Order in T'ang and Sung China*, 25–32.

95 Thus, many parcels of mulberry land were used for burial, and we can see that numerous epitaph texts mention using mulberry land as burial land. For instance, as cited earlier, Ms. Ma's epitaph says that her cousin bought "an uncultivated and deserted mulberry yard" (*huangfei sangtian* 荒廢桑園) as her "eternal burial land" 永為墓田. See MZHX 1166.

96 Twitchett, "Merchant, Trade and Government in Late T'ang," 63.

97 See von Glahn, "Economic Transformation in the Tang-Song Transition," 208.

98 Epitaphs from Yangzhou Prefecture, perhaps the greatest commercial center in the late Tang, particularly demonstrate a robust market in burial land. See Tackett, "The Transformation of Medieval Chinese Elites," 52–53.

99 See von Glahn, "Economic Transformation in the Tang-Song Transition," 210. For research on migration in the Tang, see also Wu Songdi, *Zhongguo yimin shi*; Ebrey, *The Aristocratic Families of Early Imperial China*.

cemetery was newly established, and carving such records into epitaph stones to be preserved forever appears to have been a practical choice.[100]

3. *Sishen* (Deities of the Four Directions)

The term *sishen* refers to four mythical animals representing the four cardinal directions: *qinglong* 青龍 (azure dragon) to the east, *baihu* 白虎 (white tiger) to the west, *zhuque* 朱雀 (vermillion sparrow) to the south, and *xuanwu* 玄武 (black warrior, shaped like a tortoise intertwined with a snake) to the north. Each of these animals represents a guardian deity of a cardinal direction. The concept of *sishen* can be found as early as in oracle bone inscriptions, though they were not represented by animals initially. It was in the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE) that the *sishen*, as a whole set and illustrated in animal forms, flourished in literature and in various art media, particularly on the decorative images on *wangdang* 瓦當 (roof-tile ends), tomb murals, and bronze mirrors.[101]

The concept of *sishen* is fundamentally associated with geomancy. The *Zangshu* 葬書 (Book of burial)—allegedly compiled by Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324) but most likely compiled in the Southern Song[102]—is usually regarded as the first work to lay out the theory of geomancy (called *fengshui* in the *Zangshu*). The *Zhangshu* explains key *fengshui* terms, including the *sishen*:

> It is auspicious to bury the dead in a place with the azure dragon on the left, the white tiger on the right, the vermillion sparrow in the front, and the black warrior at the back.
>
> 夫葬以左為青龍，右為白虎，前為朱雀，後為玄武。[103]

Besides addressing which direction each of the *sishen* represents, the *Zangshu* also associates the *sishen* with different shapes of mountains and ridges. According to the *Zangshu*, to have an auspicious grave site, the landscape in its four directions ought to adhere to the following principles: "the black warrior lowers its head" 玄武垂頭, "the vermillion sparrow dances with open wings" 朱雀翔舞, "the azure dragon is undulating" 青龍蜿蜒, and "the white tiger is tamely obedient" 白虎馴頫.[104] Further explanations clarify what these mean regarding mountain forms. For instance, the black warrior with a lowered head signifies that the mountain in the north should have "a sinking pulse and descending aspect configuration" 自主峰漸漸而下.[105]

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100 It is worth mentioning that the state punished those who illegally used land for burial, which certainly enhanced the value of keeping one's land purchase record. For instance, the *Tang lü shuyi* 唐律疏議 (Tang code with commentary and explanations) says: "Illegal burial in another person's land is punished by fifty blows with the light stick. If the illegal burial is in another person's grave plot, the punishment is increased one degree. The body must be removed" 即盜葬他人田者，笞五十. 墓田，加一等. 仍令移葬. See article 168 in the Tang Code, titled "illegal cultivation of other persons' grave plots" 盜耕人墓田. For the original text, see Yue Chunzhi, *Tanglü shuyi*, 206. For the English translation, see Wallace, *The T'ang Code*, 142–143.
101 For studies of the *sishen*, see Juliano, "Teng-hsien," 35–47; Feng Shi, *Zhongguo gudai wuzhi wenhua shi*, 3–17, 41–163; Rawson, *Chinese Ornament*, 90–93.
102 See Yu Gege, "Guo Pu *Zangshu* weishu kao."
103 For the original text, see Guo Pu, *Zangshu*, 808:29. I adopt Juwen Zhang's English translation with slight modification; see *A Translation of the Ancient Chinese*, 121.
104 Zhang, *A Translation of the Ancient Chinese*, 123–125. For the original text, see Guo Pu, *Zangshu*, 808:29.
105 For the original text, see Guo Pu, *Zangshu*, 808:29. For the English translation, see Zhang, *A Translation of the Ancient Chinese*, 123.

Reading through the Tang epitaphs containing *sishen*, we can tell that in some cases, the *sishen* may have been imagined as abstract representations of the four directions; but in other cases, there were efforts to equate them with specific physical features of the landscape, demonstrating the role that they played in the geomantic siting of burial sites. For instance, according to one epitaph dating to 862:

> The azure dragon wraps around on the left side, watching over the Jin River flowing deeply; the white tiger charges ahead on the right side, guarding the Huyin Ridge; in its front flies the vermillion sparrow, with Shennong occupying and looking over Mount Yangtou; and the black warrior lurks in the back, standing firm as it leans on the Sanchui [Ridge].
>
> 青龍左擁，望金河以濬流；白虎右馳，狐隱崗之作鎮；前翔朱雀，神農占顧於羊頭；玄武後遮，倚三垂而鼎峙。[106]

Presumably, what we have here is a geomantic analysis of the terrain that seeks to identify which natural features embody the deities of the four cardinal directions. Thus, an unnamed mountain or ridge facing a winding river apparently embodies a dragon that is imagined to be embracing the space of the grave site. Similarly, the Huyin Ridge embodies the white tiger, Mount Yangtou embodies the vermillion sparrow, and Sanchui Ridge embodies the black warrior. Likewise, a passage from a certain Mr. Lü's epitaph includes much the same sort of analysis of the surrounding terrain, in this case associating Mount Ziyan to the north with the black warrior, Mount Yangtou to the south with the vermillion sparrow, and the Hu[yin] Ridge to the east with the azure dragon.[107] Quite plausibly, for each of the four directional deities, geomancers sought out mountains and ridges of particular forms amid the surrounding landscape as a means of providing a burial site with a particularly auspicious geomantic significance. In any given county, the same specific landmarks may have recurrently served to embody the directional deities, helping us to understand the likely link between *sishen* and geomantic practice. Indeed, abundant traditional Chinese *fengshui* manuals contain some sort of "map legend" indicating how different mountain and ridge shapes should be interpreted. For instance, figure 10 is a traditional Chinese geomantic diagram (dating to a much later period), which, on the left, includes various mountain and ridge shapes related to the Five Phases (*mu* 木 or wood, *huo* 火 or fire, *tu* 土 or earth, *jin* 金 or metal, and *shui* 水 or water), and, on the right, depicts an auspicious landscape containing different mountain and ridge shapes, a stream (indicated by the dotted line), rocks, and plum blossoms for the grave site of the principal graduate (*zhuangyuan* 狀元), a certain Mr. Liu.

106 BLXC 819–821.
107 BLXC 732–733.

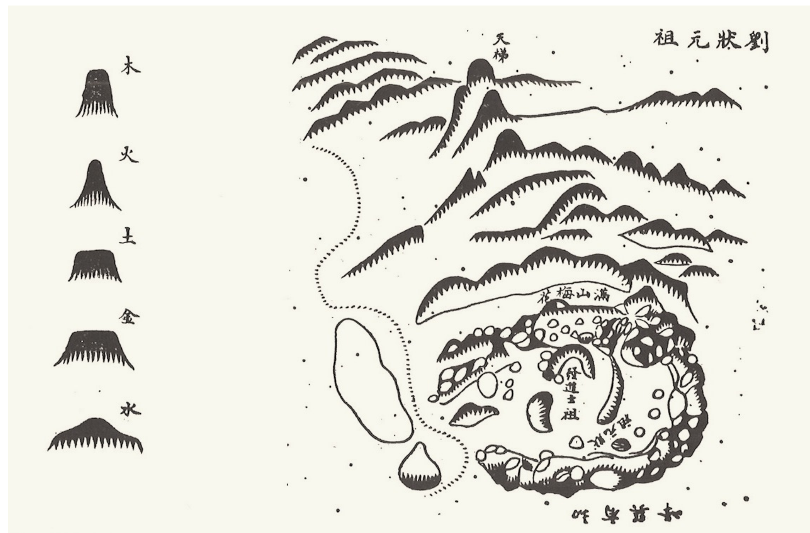

Figure 10. A Geomantic Diagram of the Grave Site of Principal Graduate Liu

Source: Knapp, *China's Traditional Rural Architecture*, 111.

In figure 11, we see another geomantic diagram (probably dated to the late imperial era or later) pointing out the terrain shapes surrounding a family cemetery as the "small lion shape" (*xiaoshi xing* 小獅形), "large lion shape" (*dashi xing* 大獅形), "tiger shape" (*huxing* 虎形), and "elephant shape" (*xiangxing* 象形).[108]

108 This interesting diagram is from an old Chinese woodblock used for printing such maps, now in the possession of Kazumasa Yamashita, who has collected fifty such woodblocks and a hundred such examples (as each block contains two diagram, with one on each side). Kazumasa suspects that these woodblocks were originally from Huangshan City in Anhui Province, and points out that "Professor Kunio Miura of Daito Bunka University in Tokyo believed that the maps were originally drawn to illustrate a type of printed album, with each recording a *zupu* [族譜], or family genealogy (with several maps per album)." See Kazumasa Yamashita, *Chūgoku mokuhan fūsui chizushū*, 4.

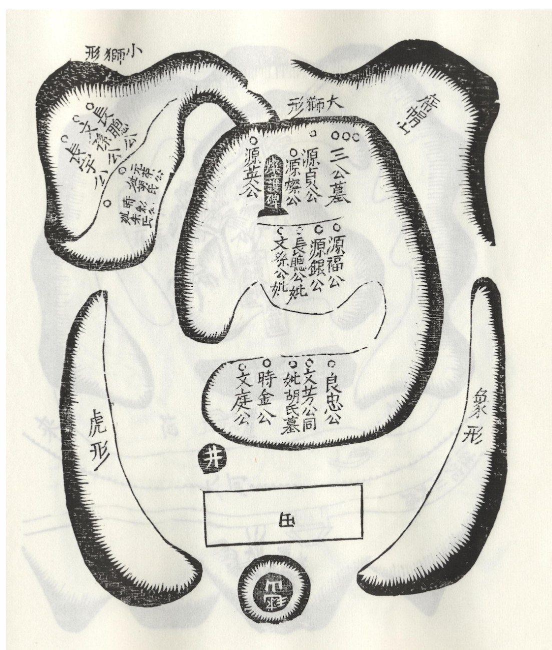

Figure 11. A Geomantic Diagram of the Yuan Family Cemetery

Source: Kazumasa Yamashita, *Chūgoku mokuhan fūsui chizushū*, 41.

It should be noted, however, that most *sishen* references in epitaphs are terse, for example, "To the east, west, front, and back, the *sishen* are present" 東西前後, 四神備焉.[109] So far, I have found forty-two epitaph texts (dating to between 800 and 907) that record *sishen*. These epitaphs are found in seven provinces, with a particular concentration in Shanxi (table 8).

Place	Shaanxi	Hebei	Henan	Shanxi	Jiangsu	Shandong	Inner Mongolia
Number	4	2	5	27	1	2	1

Table 8. Number of Epitaphs Containing *Sishen* (by Modern Province)

Not only are most of the epitaphs containing *sishen* descriptions from the north,[110] their regions of the greatest prevalence also overlap to a considerable degree with where one finds epitaphs containing *sigu* (fig. 12). This of course makes perfect sense if we consider the close link between geomantic practice and both *sigu* and *sishen.*

109 This is a common line, used in multiple epitaphs, e.g., BLXC 874–875, 882–884; DTXS 1022–1023.
110 Among all forty-two epitaphs that mention *sishen*, only one was found in the south (Jiangsu Province).

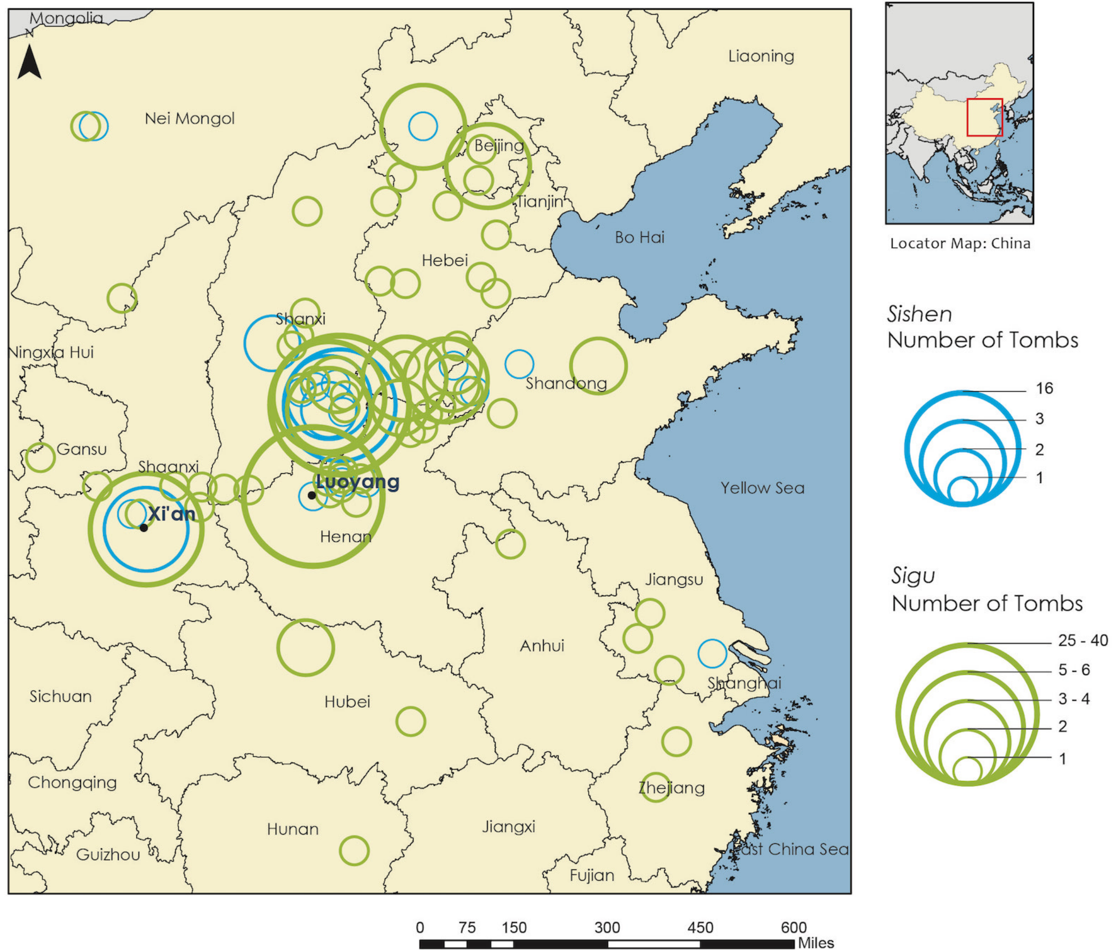

Figure 12. Distribution of Tang Epitaphs (Dating to between 800 and 907) with *Sishen* and *Sigu*

4. *Shi* (Configuration of the Terrain)

In Tang-era epitaphs, describing the *shi*—that is, the overall configuration of the terrain—of a grave site is another way to conceptualize burial space. Thus, for example, one epitaph describes the surrounding terrain as follows:

> Having identified this auspicious place by geomancy, [we] bury the deceased couple together on the long plain. To the left it whirls, and to the right it is covered [with trees and woods]. Truly it has [an appropriate] topographical configuration. …[111] The rhymed eulogy says: The dragon that is Mount Xiuleng is to the west of the big river [i.e., the Yellow River].
>
> 卜兹勝地，合祔長原。左旋右奄，甚有形勢……其詞曰：綉稜山龙，大河之西。[112]

In some cases, the descriptions of the terrain can be more elaborate, and occasionally they work hand in hand with a *sigu* description:

111 I translate *xingshi* 形勢 here as "[an appropriate] topographical configuration" for the sake of simplicity, but *xing* and *shi* are in fact two distinct aspects of a land's features, as will be discussed later.
112 QTWBY 8:420.

> As for the *shi* of the land, to the east, it looks toward [Mount] Hukou; to the west, it overlooks the Zhang River. If we gaze into the distance, [we see] horses and chariots running on the broad road; if we look nearby, [we see] mist and rosy clouds rise before our eyes. The *qi* of the topography links together the patterns of the heavenly bodies, and its favorable location links together the *shi* of mountains and rivers. How joyful we are to have found such extraordinary topography, better even than the tomb of Master Wen [a disciple of Laozi]!
>
> 爾其地勢，東瞻壺口，西眺衡漳，遠而觀之，車馬輪於廣陌；近而望也，煙霞起於目前。狀氣貫星斗之文，地利接山河之勢。樂哉刑勝，豈唯文子之丘！[113]

Shi 勢 (overall configuration of the terrain) and *xing* 形 (details of the topography) are often addressed as a pair.[114] An anecdote from the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive records of the Taiping [Xingguo] era) conveys a clear message that the *xing* and *shi* of a land played a crucial role in the fortune of the deceased's surviving family. The story starts in the reign of Shenlong 神龍 (705–707) with Monk Hong, who had a good command of geomancy.[115] Hong informed his friend Wei Anshi 韋安石 (651–714), grand councilor at the time, of an auspicious land that he had recently discovered. It was a large area of over 20 *mu* (160 acres), and "the terrain was shaped like a dragon in both its *xing* and *shi*, rising and falling" 有龍起伏形勢. According to Hong, if Wei bought this land for burial, Wei's offspring would also be grand councilors generation after generation. Convinced of the land's auspiciousness, Wei was about to purchase it as a graveyard. However, Wei's wife warned him of the risk of offending the emperor by being friends with a *yinyang* master and taking his advice to purchase a graveyard to gain fortune. Certainly, Wei agreed that the warning was reasonable, but the land was too auspicious not to pursue. Hong offered a way to compromise: Wei did not need to purchase this land directly, but still could acquire it as his family property. This wise advice reminded Wei that his younger brother, Tao, had a son who had died but had not been buried, hence, the solution was to let Tao buy the land. Hong said: "If your brother obtains this land, he would at least rise to the office of minister if not to that of general or chancellor" 如賢弟得此地，即不得將相，位止列卿.[116] In the end of the story, this prophecy came true. The clear message of this anecdote is that auspicious burial land would bless the family of the deceased.

Both *shi* and *xing* are important geomantic concepts, and the distinction between the two is not easy to grasp. Lin Huiyin has offered a useful contrast of the two: "*shi* refers to free sketches of the overall landscape, while *xing* refers to realistic snapshots of the forms of individual features" 勢指一種總體景觀的寫意鏡頭，而形則指個體形狀的寫實鏡頭.[117] There is some sense that *shi* is ultimately more critical for determining the right *fengshui* of a terrain, hence the greater focus in epitaphs on *shi* rather than on *xing*. According to the *Zangshu*: "As for the methods of divining mountains, most difficult is [distinguishing] the *shi*; next [in difficulty] is [distinguishing] the *xing*; and next to that is [distinguishing the cardinal] directions" 占山之法，以勢為難，而形次之，方又次之.[118]

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113 BLXC 654–655.

114 This chapter focuses on the records of *shi* in Tang-era epitaphs, but certainly a good number of epitaphs also record the terrain's *xing*, e.g., MZHX 330, 415, 246.

115 The same monk Hong is also recorded in the *Da Tang xinyu*, cited in chapter 1 herein.

116 See the anecdote of "Wei Anshi" in TPGJ 389:114.

117 Lin Huiyin, *Fengsheng shuiqi*, 24.

118 For the original text, see Guo Pu, *Zangshu*, 808:29. I adopt Juwen Zhang's English translation with some modification; see *A Translation of the Ancient Chinese*, 139.

Like records of *sigu* and *sishen*, describing the *shi* of a grave site also appears to be more common among northern epitaphs, with Shanxi Province having the highest number overall (table 9).

Place	Shaanxi	Hebei	Beijing	Henan	Shanxi	Gansu	Shandong	Inner Mongolia
Number	2	3	1	3	10	1	2	1

Table 9. Number of Epitaphs Containing Descriptions of *Shi* (by Modern Province)

Additionally, epitaphs containing *shi*, *sishen*, and *sigu* overlap to a considerable degree in terms of their geographic range (fig. 13).

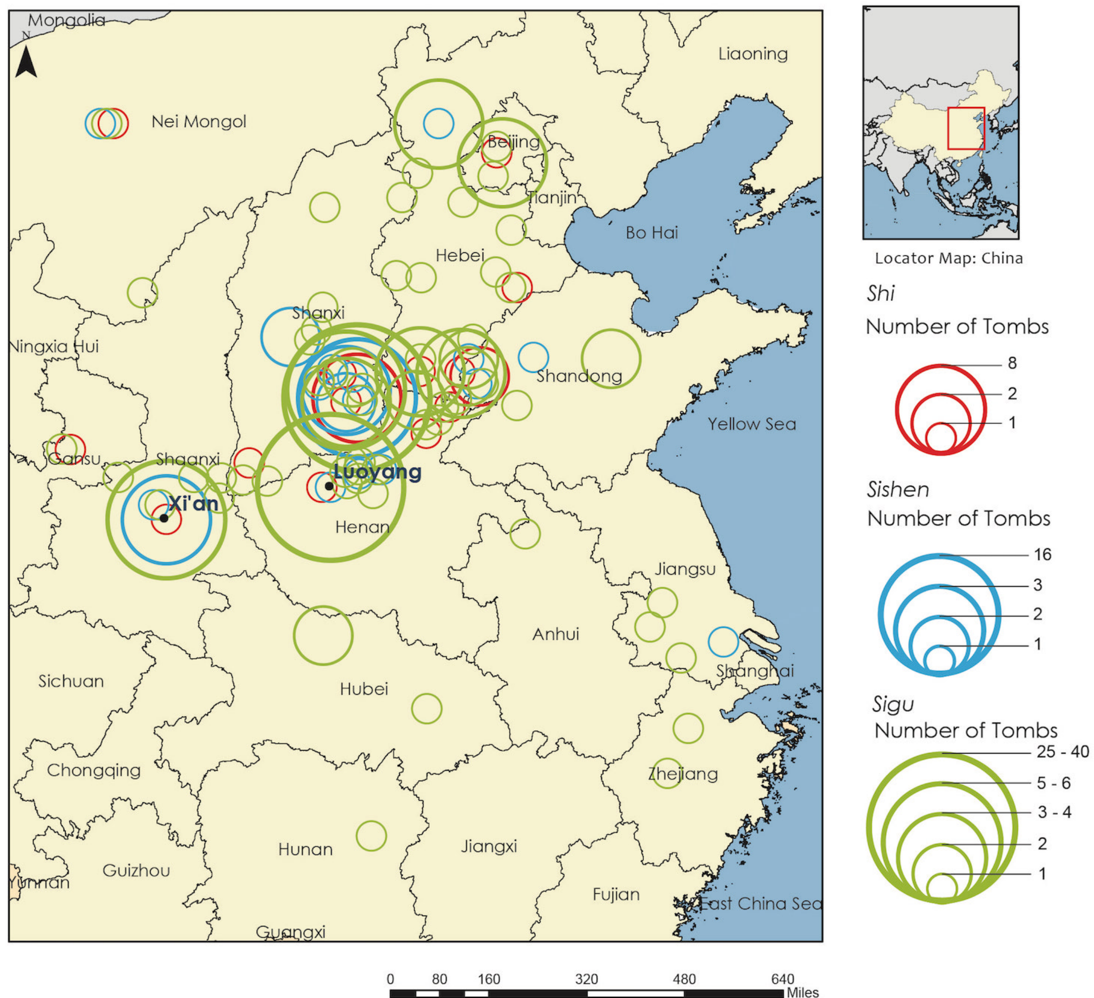

Figure 13. Distribution of Tang Epitaphs (Dating to between 800 and 907) with *Shi*, *Sigu*, and *Sishen*

5. Conclusion to Part II: Regional Variations and Their Implications

On the basis of a survey of nearly 3000 epitaphs dating to the period between 800 and 907, part II of this chapter has examined some major means by which people conceptualized the

space surrounding grave sites. I have classified these descriptions of space into five types, namely *sigu* (four views), *sizhi* (four boundaries), ownership claims to burial land, *sishen* (deities of the four directions), and *shi* (configuration of the terrain). By mapping the geographic distributions of epitaphs making use of these different geographic discourses, we can observe a clear difference between the north and the south. More specifically, it turns out that one finds records of *sigu*, *sishen*, and *shi* in roughly speaking the same regions of northern China, with a particular concentration in southeastern Shanxi and southern Hebei. By contrast, epitaphs that record *sizhi* and ownership claims to burial land are typically found in the same general region of southern China, with a particular concentration in the Lower Yangzi and northern Zhejiang areas.[119]

How does one explain these geographic differences? In northern epitaphs, the three dominant features—that is, *sigu*, *sishen*, and *shi*—largely overlap and are all tied to an interest in the geomantic properties of a burial land. Specifically, *sigu* describes prominent landmarks of a land, usually mountains and rivers far away from the grave sites; these landmarks are sometimes interchangeable with *sishen*, the latter of which is a distinctive *fengshui* concept and specifically refers to auspicious terrain forms. The *shi* even more explicitly sings praise of geomantic significance of the terrain. By contrast, southern epitaphs meticulously mark the four borders of a graveyard, record its precise size, and claim the family's ownership, all of which appear to treat burial land more like commercialized goods. What we see in the south is a commercial mentality being integrated into burial ritual. As historians of Tang-Song China have often noted, the medieval economic revolution produced a new commercial elite, which had its epicenter precisely in the Lower Yangzi and northern Zhejiang.[120] Funerals could have functioned as the ritual occasions for the new elite to mark their social place and establish their social identity in the public eye.

There is another important regional difference worth discussing here: that between the capital region and the provinces. We should note that even though the vast majority of Tang-era epitaphs found to date come from the vicinities of the two capital cities (i.e., Chang'an and Luoyang), most epitaphs that contain detailed descriptions of grave sites (of either the northern or the southern style) were found outside the two capital regions. Why are detailed descriptions of a grave site and its surrounding space so much more common in provincial epitaphs?[121] I think that one major cause for this difference is related to the different types of elites found in the

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119 As mentioned earlier, the north refers to the various regions north of the Huai River, and the south refers to the Lower Yangzi River region and northern Zhejiang Province. As most Tang-era epitaphs found so far are from these regions, we cannot yet say much about other regions by means of the methodological approach used here.
120 It is worth mentioning that this commercial elite did not gain political power (as a new class of civil-bureaucratic scholar elites) until after the fall of the Tang; the aristocracy ("great clans") remained in control. Many scholars have contributed to our understanding of the nature and transformation of the Tang and Song elites, including David Johnson, Patricia Ebrey, Mao Hanguang, Chen Yinke, Sun Guodong, Robert Hartwell, Robert Hymes, Peter Bol, Beverly Bossler, Nicolas Tackett, and others. For a brief review of the scholarship, see Tackett, *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy*, 14–16.
121 As Tackett puts it, "Provincial epitaphs frequently reveal an interest in land and the mapping of space. Some epitaphs describe the landholdings of the deceased in enormous detail or reproduce in verbatim a purchase contract for the burial land. In addition, whereas nearly all epitaphs in both the provinces and the capital include the tomb's 'address'—the name of the county and subcounty administrative units in which the tomb was situated—a certain number of provincial epitaphs go into much more detail, describing the precise location of the tomb relative to other features of the landscape." See Tackett, "Harvesting and Interpreting Biographic, Epigraphic, and Genealogic Data," 22.

provinces versus the capital cities. Nicolas Tackett argues that Tang-era epitaphs represent different pools of elites. He states: “provincial epitaphs were sometimes composed for individuals with no political connections, including large landowners and merchants…. [E]pitaphs excavated in the vicinities of the Tang capital cities of Chang’an and Luoyang were composed predominantly for elites with close ties to the state.”[122] Presumably, capital elites had their identities defined mostly by their office titles and status, as well as by their connections to other prominent families, and perhaps to their great clan choronyms (i.e., places of ancestral origin). Additionally, they traveled more frequently due to bureaucratic appointments all over the empire, and so spent less time residing near the place of family burial. In this context, the surroundings of their grave sites probably did not play much of a role in defining who they were in life. By contrast, provincial elites, particularly non-office-holding elites (who nevertheless had sufficient resources for the more elaborate burials that included tomb epitaphs), more likely lived their entire lives in the same place and traveled much less frequently. Their land and property, and the village and county that they and their families regarded as home, unquestionably had more meaning and played more of a role in expressing their identity and a sense of belonging. Moreover, as many non-office-holding elites in the provinces were landlords and merchants,[123] the vocabularies and concepts in their epitaphs certainly manifest the rising status of merchants and their conceptions of the world, and reveal a vibrant market economy. Unlike for bureaucrats, land was certainly a great source of prestige for landholders and merchants.

122 Tackett, “Harvesting and Interpreting Biographic, Epigraphic, and Genealogic Data,” 15.
123 According to Tackett, non-office-holding elites took a much higher percentage of epitaphs in the south than in the north, as “72% of epitaphs in the south were for men (or their spouses) who held neither military nor civil bureaucratic offices.” See Tackett, “The Transformation of Medieval Chinese Elites,” 45, 57.

Chapter 4
Variations in Grave Goods

I. Introduction

The previous chapters have sought insight from epitaphs and other textual sources in order to reconstruct elements of death ritual occurring mostly aboveground and prior to the burial itself. This chapter, by contrast, looks at the material culture of tombs, thereby focusing on the burial rather than on earlier aspects of the ritual program. Moreover, it draws data mainly from archaeological reports rather than from contemporaneous textual sources. More specifically, it traces temporal change and regional variation in the distribution of grave goods found in some (but not all) Tang-era tombs.

In terms of methodology, nine specific types of grave goods were selected for analysis: tomb contracts, iron oxen and pigs, scissors, prostrating figurines, "ritual fish," "tomb dragons," "wind-watching birds," figurines of zodiac animals, and "dish-mouthed" vessels. A practical reason for my selection of these nine types of objects is that they are all somewhat unusual and distinctive. Consequently, they are less likely to be dismissed in more succinct archaeological reports (which typically identify only the features of the tomb deemed by the excavators to be the most interesting and important). Moreover, there are more or less standardized terms to describe these objects in reports, which makes it possible for me to rapidly identify published references to each of these objects by means of keyword searches in full-text online databases.

For each type of object, I began by identifying relevant archaeological reports and publications through full-text searches of two major online databases.[1] I then read each archaeological report and added all relevant information to my database, including the various names by which the object is referred to in the report, the number of objects of the type in each tomb, the material that the object was made of, its position in the tomb, other burial objects found in the same tomb, the date and location of the tomb, and the occupation and status of the deceased when known (i.e., non-office-holder or official; for the latter, the official title and rank). I was thus able to produce a comprehensive list of each type of object, as well as lists of tombs containing more than one of the nine types. I also looked for scholarly studies focusing on these burial objects, comparing the lists of tombs that these scholars had identified to the list I had compiled through my own full-text searches, with the goal of making sure that my list of tombs containing each type of object was as comprehensive as possible.[2] In introducing each of the nine

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1 The two databases are the China Academic Journals Full-Text Database (*Zhongguo qikan quanwen shujuku* 中國期刊全文數據庫 in *Zhongguo zhiwang* 中國知網 CNKI; hereafter, CNKI; oversea.cnki.net) and the Duxiu Knowledge Search Database (*duxiu* 讀秀; hereafter, Duxiu; www.duxiu.com). These databases are both in Mainland China, hence my searches by keyword were conducted in simplified Chinese (but to be consistent throughout the dissertation, I will list the keywords in traditional Chinese). In my search I included publications dating to the period of 1949 through August 2018. I included only objects found in tombs and excluded those found in other archaeological contexts (kilns, residences, etc.).

2 Indeed, scholarly studies focusing on individual objects occasionally mention tombs with no published excavation report. For instance, the tomb contracts of Wei Xiaojian 韋孝謇 and Pei Rong 裴戎 are mentioned in studies of tomb contracts but not (to my knowledge) in any archaeological report. Hence by reading scholarly studies (besides archaeological reports) I was able to find such information and include these two objects in my database for Tang-era tomb contracts. See Shang Leiming, "Tang dai Wei Xiaojian muzhi ji muquan shibu," 75–78; Zhang Sijie, *Gannan kejia yishu*, 112.

types of objects in the following discussion, I review the most common hypotheses regarding each type's function(s) in Tang-era mortuary culture. Certainly, many of these hypotheses lack solid textual evidence and so inevitably involve a considerable degree of speculation. The primary contribution of my research, however, lies not in my discussion of their functions, but rather in my identification of temporal change in the popularity of these objects, as well as in my reconstruction using GIS technology of their geographical distribution. Though it is not necessarily possible to determine underlying beliefs regarding what specific objects represented on the basis of material culture alone, with the help of a large database of thousands of tombs, one can still identify the development and spread of particular "cultural repertoires." As Nicolas Tackett convincingly argues, "the material culture of tombs can be seen as the material embodiment of a society's mortuary culture," and, with regard to burial objects, "even when the meaning of objects is unclear, these objects can be thought of as cultural markers."[3]

II. Nine Types of Grave Goods

1. Tomb Contracts

Tomb contracts were texts, often carved into stone, that record the purchase of burial land from the spirit world. They are known by many names, including *maidiquan* 買地券 (land-purchase contract), *diquan* 地券 (land contract), *yinzhai quan* 陰宅券 (*yin*-residence contract), *muquan* 墓券 (tomb contract), *muzhai quan* 墓宅券 (tomb-residence contract), *mudi quan* 墓地券 (tomb-land contract), *mingqi* 冥契 (underworld deed), and *youqi* 幽契 (netherworld deed).[4] Most of these names are modern terms chosen by scholars, as only a small number of tomb contracts identify themselves as such explicitly.[5] One tomb contract that does identify itself is that of a Mr. Yao Zhongran, which describes itself as a "*mudi quan*" 墓地券 in its title and a *diquan* 地券 in the first line of the text. This tomb contract, from a tomb dated around 837 and excavated in today's Jiangxi Province,[6] starts briefly with the deceased's name, origin, official title, age, date of death, and cause of death, before moving to a passage fairly typical (in its basic structure) for a tomb contract:

> Now [the family] has bought a piece of land in this canton. To the east, it extends to *jiayi* and the azure dragon; to the south, it extends to *bingding* and the five mountains;[7] to the west, it extends to *gengxin* and

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3 Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, 285, 213. For a thorough discussion of how to discern cultural difference by tomb analysis and the many pitfalls ("interpretive errors") to avoid, see Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, 213–214, 285–290.

4 To build a database of all Tang tombs containing tomb contracts, I searched both CNKI and Duxiu. In CNKI, under the "Basic Search," I did a "full-text" search for the keywords 買地券, 墓券, 地券, 陰宅券, 墓宅券, 墓地券, 冥契, and 幽契 in articles containing the "title" keyword 唐 or 唐墓. I chose "precise" for both "full-text" and "title" searches. In Duxiu, I used the keywords 買地券, 墓券, 地券, 陰宅券, 墓宅券, 墓地券, 冥契, and 幽契 and searched in the categories *tushu* 圖書, *baozhi* 報紙, *xuewei lunwen* 學位論文, and *huiyi lunwen* 會議論文.

5 Most Tang-era tomb contracts do not contain titles, but they all focus on the purchase of land (*maidi* 買地) on behalf of the deceased and take the format of a regular land sale contract, albeit a contract arranged with a deity rather than with a human. From the Northern Song (960–1127) onward, more and more contracts had titles, particularly those found in Jiangxi Province and nearby regions; most contracts from other regions remained without titles explicitly identifying their genre.

6 The tomb contract records the date of death as 837. See Chen Boquan, *Jiangxi chutu muzhi xuanbian*, 549.

7 The five mountains (*wuyue* 五嶽) refer to Mount Tai (Tai shan 泰山) in Shandong Province, Mount Hua (Hua shan 華山) in Shaanxi Province, Mount Song (Song shan 嵩山) in Henan Province, Mount Heng (Heng shan 恆山)

the white tiger; to the north, it extends to *rengui* and the galloping ox. The price of this land was 99,999 gold and silver coins. The landowner was Zhang Jiangu, the guarantor was Li Dingduo, and the witnesses were the Divine Father of the East and the Divine Mother of the West.… Hurry! [Do] according to this ordinance.

今買當鄉地作墓，東至甲乙青龍，南至丙丁五嶽，西至庚辛白虎，北至壬癸奔牛，當地價金銀錢九萬九千九百九十九文。地主張堅固，保人李定度，見人東皇公、西皇母……急如律令！[8]

Tomb contracts use a standard format and vocabulary. As is typical of this genre, Yao's contract gives the location of the parcel of land in the "four views" (*sigu* 四顧) format (described in the previous chapter), more specifically listing the sacred mountains and deities in the four cardinal directions. The cash value was typically 99,999 coins, or alternatively 99,999 strings of cash. Presumably, the cash used to buy the land involved "spirit money"—that is, money printed on gold- or silver-colored paper.[9] Like a real land contract, a tomb contract also identifies the landowner, guarantor, and witnesses, albeit all imaginary. The number nine, as a *yang* number, "could counteract the *yin* forces of the underworld," and it was "also a pun on 'long-lasting' 久 (*jiu*)," as Valerie Hansen has argued.[10] Yao's tomb contract ends with a common phrase shared by most tomb contracts: "Hurry! [Do] according to this ordinance" 急如律令. In many tomb contracts, the two names "Zhang Jiangu" and "Li Dingduo" appear as a pair, as generic names for landowners, guarantors, or witnesses.[11] These names may have come to be used in this way because Zhang and Li are both common surnames, while "jiangu" 堅固 literally means "solid and stable," and "dingduo" 定奪 can be translated as "to decide and take control." These names seemed to give a sense of determination and firm authority to the contract.

A tomb can contain both a tomb epitaph and a tomb contract (e.g., the tomb dating to 630 of a person named Wei Xiaojian),[12] in which case, one can consult the epitaph for a detailed record of relevant biographical and genealogical information concerning the deceased. But in cases when an epitaph does not exist (e.g., the tomb contract of Yao Zhongran), the tomb contract usually lists more basic information about the deceased, such as his or her name, family origin, date of birth (or age at death), date of death, burial date, and the size and boundary of the tomb land. Tomb contracts sometimes also mention the deities of the four directions (*sishen* 四神; see chapter 3) as auspicious guardians of the burial space.

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in Shanxi Province, and Mount Heng (Heng shan 衡山) in Hunan Province. These mountains were considered sacred in traditional China and were the destinations of pilgrimage by emperors throughout the ages.

8 Chen Boquan, *Jiangxi chutu muzhi xuanbian*, 549.

9 See chapter 1 of this dissertation for discussion of spirit money.

10 Hansen, *Negotiating Daily Life in Traditional China*, 151. See also Huang Jingchun, "Zuowei maidiquan dijia de jiujiu zhi shu," 119–127.

11 In my database of Tang-era tomb contracts, there are four containing "Zhang Jiangu" and "Li Dingduo." The four deceased people are Wu Songchao 伍松超, Wang Chuzhong 王楚中, Yao Zhongran 姚仲然, and Ms. Chen 陳氏 (Fujian). For the archaeological reports of these four tomb contracts, see Liu Xing, "Wu Zhou yanzai Wu Songchao diquan"; Guo Fengcheng, "Tang dai Zhangzhou maidiquan kaobian"; Chen Boquan, *Jiangxi chutu muzhi xuanbian*, 549; Zhangpu xian bowuguan, "Zhangpu Tang Wudai mu," 40, 45. Moreover, these two names also appeared in tombs of other eras; in post-Tang tombs, they were mainly seen in the south, particularly in Jiangxi and Sichuan Provinces, and they not only appeared in tomb contracts, but also in stone carvings and tomb figurines. For more information, see Zhang Xunliao and Bai Bin 2006, 1692–1696.

12 See Shang Leiming, "Tang dai Wei Xiaojian muzhi ji muquan shibu," 75–78.

In total, I have identified fourteen tomb contracts excavated from fourteen different Tang-era tombs.[13] These tomb contracts were made of various materials, mostly brick and stone, but also paper and wood.[14] Since the ones made of perishable material had less chance of surviving, it is difficult to know what materials were most commonly used for tomb contracts.[15] Additionally, there are five iron plates identified by some archaeologists as iron tomb contracts (*tiequan* 鐵券, *tie diquan* 鐵地券, or *tie maidiquan* 鐵買地券), but these objects either do not carry inscriptions or have short inscriptions that are too indistinct to be deciphered, as mentioned in chapter 1.[16] Because there remains significant disagreement on what these objects were, I have not included them in the total count of Tang-era tomb contracts.[17]

It should be noted that burying tomb contracts is not a practice recorded in the state-sponsored ritual texts of the Tang dynasty. Scholars usually trace the origin of tomb contracts to the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220) and believe that only beginning in the tenth century did tomb contracts increase rapidly in number, reaching a height of popularity in the Song (960–1279), Jin (1115–1234), and Yuan (1279–1368) dynasties.[18] Even though tomb contracts started to decline after the Yuan, they never disappeared completely. They are still used in burials today, especially in northern Shaanxi, northwestern Shanxi, western Zhejiang, and Fujian.[19]

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13 Huang Jingchun and Lu Xiqi have both published monographic studies of tomb contracts and counted eleven tomb contracts dating to the Tang dynasty. Their lists are nearly the same, with two exceptions, involving the stone tomb contract of Ms. Shi 史氏 (wife of Zhang Feng 張鋒), found in Hebei and dating to 847, and the ceramic tomb contract of Mr. Chen Congmin 陳聰慜, found in Guangdong and dating to 747. Huang counts Shi's tomb contract, while Lu omits it. By contrast, Huang purposely excludes the 747 contract, which he thinks is a forgery, while Lu includes it. To be cautious, I do not include the 747 contract either, but in my most recent survey, I found three additional Tang-era tomb contracts that neither scholars included: that of Wei Xiaojian 韋孝謇, dating to 630 and found in Henan; that of Pei Rong 裴戎, dating to 864 and found in Jiangxi; and a brick tomb contract without a clear date or name of the deceased, though the tomb is dated to the Tang. See Huang Jingchun, *Zhongguo zongjiaoxing suizang wenshu yanjiu*, 415, and Lu Xiqi, *Zhongguo gudai maidiquan yanjiu*, 183–210 for their complete lists of tomb contracts. For Ms. Shi's tomb contract, see Huang Jingchun, *Zhongguo zongjiaoxing suizang wenshu yanjiu*, 421–422; for Mr. Chen Congmin's tomb contract, see Lu Xiqi, *Zhongguo gudai maidiquan yanjiu*, 185–188. For the three additional tomb contracts in my database, see Shang Leiming, "Tang dai Wei Xiaojian muzhi ji muquan shibu," 79–80; Zhang Sijie, *Gannan kejia yishu*, 112; Xia Jinrui, "Ganzhou shi Tianzhu shan qingli Tang mu yizuo," 2.

14 Of the fourteen tomb contracts, six were made of brick, five of stone, two of paper, and one of wood.

15 Valerie Hansen points out that Sichuan archaeologists in informal conversations said that "every grave excavated from the Song [960–1279], Yuan [1279–1368], or Ming [1368–1644] dynasties contained a [land] deed. But only those which are fairly undamaged and have legible inscriptions are registered and archived. The others were thrown away." See Hansen, *Negotiating Daily Life in Traditional China*, 150. Additionally, given the likelihood that tomb contracts were written on paper (like their real world equivalents), it is entirely plausible that many more were produced in Tang times, but did not survive.

16 In fact, many similar iron plates found in Tang-era tombs are called iron plates (*tiepian* 鐵片), iron blocks (*tiekuai* 鐵塊), iron pieces (*tiepian* 鐵片), or iron tablets (*tiepai* 鐵牌), and are not identified as tomb contracts in archaeological reports.

17 For example, He Yuexin provides an overview of iron contracts found in Sui (581–618) and Tang tombs, region by region, and Ye Wa discusses the iron plates found in the Tang-era Xingyuan cemeteries. Both regard the iron plates as tomb contracts. By contrast, Shen Ruiwen argues that iron plates, iron blocks, and iron pieces all represent "raw iron" (*shentie* 生鐵), used as protective talismans. See He Yuexin, "Sui Tang muzang chutu tiequan kao," 107–110; Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 324; Shen Ruiwen, *Zhongguo gudai wuzhi wenhua shi*, 263.

18 Huang Jingchun, *Zhongguo zongjiaoxing suizang wenshu yanjiu*, 415. For a comprehensive study of tomb contracts from the Northern Song, see also Gao Peng, *Ren shen zhi qi*.

19 Huang Jingchun, "Maidiquan, zhenmuwen yanjiu," 111.

Due to the small number of Tang-era tomb contracts that have been found, it is difficult to identify definite trends. Nevertheless, it is possible to make some preliminary observations. First, among the fourteen tomb contracts, five document the tomb occupant's social status. One was a non-office-holder, two were high-ranking officials (both prefects; *zhou cishi* 州刺史), one was a mid-ranking official (mobile corps commander; *youji jiangjun* 游擊將軍), and one was a low-ranking official (county vice magistrate; *xiancheng* 縣丞). Second, most tomb contracts were found in late Tang tombs (table 1).[20] Third, when we examine the geographical distribution of Tang-era tomb contracts, we can see that tomb contracts were relatively widespread in the Tang, with examples found in the south, northeast, and far west (fig. 1).[21] Given that many more Tang-era tombs were excavated in the north than in the south, it is probably fair to speculate that burials with tomb contracts were more popular in the south. The greater prevalence of tomb contracts in the south became a more marked trend after the Tang fell. Most tomb contracts found in post-Tang centuries come from southern regions, particularly Jiangxi and Sichuan Provinces.

Century	7th	8th	9th	10th	unknown
Number	2	2	7	1	2

Table 1. Temporal Distribution of 14 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Tomb Contracts

20 As most tombs do not contain objects with clear dates (such as an epitaph or tomb contract), archaeologists estimate a tomb's date based on their own intuition gained through experience, often focusing on the tomb's structure and burial objects, all in comparison to tombs with similar features and/or objects. They have various ways to periodize a tomb, such as "mid-Tang" or "late Tang," the "seventh century," the "first half of the eight century," "around the eight or ninth century," etc. I recorded these estimated dates in my database, but in order to observe temporal patterns, I use the following periodization correspondence table to convert the estimated periodization into centuries.

Period	Early Tang	High Tang	Mid Tang	Late Tang
Year	618–712	713–766	766–835	836–907
Century	7–8th	8th	8–9th	9–10th

21 Among the fourteen tombs containing tomb contracts, four were found in Jiangxi, three in Hebei, two in Xinjiang, two in Fujian, one in Sichuan, one in Jiangsu, and one in Henan.

Figure 1. Geographical Distribution of 14 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Tomb Contracts

Note: Base map is from GADM database of Global Administrative Areas Projection: Asia South Lambert Conformal Conic. This applies to all the GIS maps in this chapter.

2. Iron Oxen and Pigs

Iron oxen (*tieniu* 鐵牛) and iron pigs (*tiezhu* 鐵豬) are names given by modern archaeologists to animal-shaped lumps of iron found in some Tang-era tombs (fig. 2).[22] These objects are often found together in a single tomb, albeit located at different corners of the main tomb chamber. Even though the practice of entombing iron oxen and pigs is not prescribed in any Tang-era state-sponsored ritual text, these objects have been found in tombs of officials of various ranks. They have also been found in non-office-holders' tombs, although these tombs were usually elaborately furnished, suggesting a considerable level of wealth.[23]

22 To build a database of all Tang tombs containing iron oxen and pigs, I searched both CNKI and Duxiu. In CNKI, under the "Basic Search," I did a "full-text" search for the keywords 鐵牛, 鐵豬, 銅牛, and 金牛 in articles containing the "title" keyword 唐 or 唐墓. I chose "precise" for both "full-text" and "title" searches. In Duxiu, I used the keywords 鐵牛, 鐵豬, 銅牛, and 金牛 and searched in the categories *tushu* 圖書, *baozhi* 報紙, *xuewei lunwen* 學位論文, and *huiyi lunwen* 會議論文.

23 Unless the tomb occupant is clearly identified (usually by means of an epitaph), his or her social status can only be hypothesized, often based on the degree of complexity of the tomb and the lavishness of the burial objects. This methodology is highly problematic. As Ye Wa has explained, "since the 1980s, Chinese scholarship on Tang tombs has largely focused on the correlation between tomb attributes and the official ranking system.…The primary problem lies in the fact that the majority of Tang tombs—those with single earthen burial chambers—reflect no clear pattern indicating the social status or official rank of the occupant. Thus, either the classification is not valid for

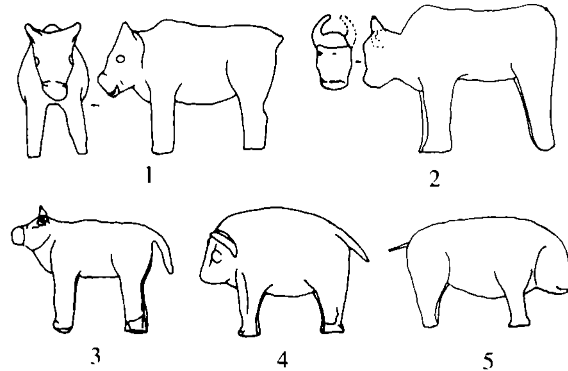

Figure 2. Line Drawings of Tang-Era Iron Oxen and Pigs

Source: Meng Yuanzhao, "Tang zhi Yuan dai muzang zhong chutu de tieniu tiezhu," 75.

What was the function of these objects? Iron, due to its weight, was often thought of as an ideal material for making a protective talisman.[24] An anecdote from the *Da Tang xinyu* 大唐新語 (New tales of the great Tang) claims that "casting iron in the form of oxen and pigs can ward off the two dragons [of earth and water]" 鑄鐵為牛豕之狀像，可以禦二龍.[25] From this anecdote, Su Bai first raised the idea of regarding iron objects as "suppressing talismans" (*yasheng* 壓勝) in the context of a tomb, and argued that lumps of raw iron of uncertain shape constitute prototypes of iron oxen and pigs.[26] Scholars have generally adopted this point of view. For instance, Ye Wa proposed that "cast iron oxen and pigs [were] used to prevent the tomb from being flooded," and further attributed apotropaic functions not only to iron oxen and pigs, but also to other iron objects, such as plates, plowshares, sickles, swords, and scissors, all of which have been found in the Tang-era Xingyuan cemeteries.[27] Shen Ruiwen argued that iron objects—including plates and blocks, as well as oxen and pigs—represent the "raw iron" (*shentie* 生鐵) recorded in the *Dili xinshu* 地理新書 (New book of earth patterns) in the following passage: "to suppress the wailing dragon, have 5 *jin* of raw iron placed inside the grave" 壓呼龍，以生鐵五斤安墓內.[28] Moreover, Shen cited an anecdote from the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive records of the Taiping [Xingguo] era) attributing the nature of dragons to wood (*mu* 木) and iron to metal (*jin* 金). In the system of the Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行), as Shen argued, metal

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anyone other than the highest ranked officials whose tomb construction was the responsibility of the government, or mortuary practice is far more complex human behavior than can be measured by just one criterion (official rank)" (Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 34–35). For this reason, I will not go into detailed discussion of the social status of the tomb occupants in this chapter.

24 It is worth noting that ceramic figurines of oxen and pigs are rather different from the iron ones. Such ceramic figurines were more commonly found in Tang tombs and were usually either miniature figurines of livestock or of the animals of the Chinese zodiac.

25 Liu Su, *Da Tang xinyu* 13:195. See chapter 1 of this dissertation for a translation and fuller discussion of this anecdote.

26 Su Bai, *Baisha Songmu*, 62, n. 96.

27 See Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 311.

28 Shen Ruiwen, *Zhongguo gudai wuzhi wenhua shi*, 263. For the *Dili xinshu* passage, see DLXS 15: 459. The *jin* 斤 is a traditional Chinese measuring unit for weight. During the Tang dynasty, 1 *jin* equaled 23.3–23.7 oz. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 613.

overpowers wood, so one would expect dragons to be afraid of iron, and hence iron plates played the same role as miniature iron oxen and pigs as "suppressing talismans."[29]

Xu Pingfang has identified one additional useful reference to these burial objects. She points out that according to the geomantic manual of tombs titled *Da Han yuanling mizang jing* 大漢原陵秘葬經 (Secret burial canon of the great Han mausoleums; hereafter, *Mizang jing*), iron oxen and pigs should be buried at a tomb's northeast and northwest corners, respectively.[30] The *Mizang jing* is usually regarded as a non-state-sponsored death ritual manual, probably compiled in the Jin dynasty or Yuan dynasty.[31] In actual practice, during the Tang dynasty, iron oxen and pigs were indeed often found at different corners of a burial chamber. In some cases, iron oxen and pigs were placed precisely at the northeast corner and northwest corner of the main tomb chamber.[32] In other cases, they were placed in the opposite positions, that is, with the iron pig in the northeast corner and the iron ox in the northwest corner.[33] One possible explanation for this highly conserved placement pattern, I believe, lies in their correspondences to two different cardinal directions. In the system of the Chinese zodiac, the ox corresponds to the earthly branch of *chou* 丑, and the pig to *hai* 亥. These two earthly branches, when used to denote directions, point to the northeast (ranging from 22.5^{o} to 37.5^{o}) and northwest (ranging from 322.5^{o} to 337.5^{o}), respectively. Presumably, one could help the animals to function to their fullest potential by placing each in its corresponding direction within the tomb.

Nearly a decade ago, Meng Yuanzhao conducted a comprehensive study of iron oxen and pigs, identifying ten late Tang tombs containing these objects. Based on my own recent survey, nineteen Tang-era tombs contained iron oxen and pigs according to their excavation reports. Most of these tombs date to the ninth century, and more particularly to the second half of the ninth century—that is, to the final decades of the Tang (table 2).

Century	8th	9th	9th–10th	unknown
Number	1	15	1	2

Table 2. Temporal Distribution of 19 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Iron Oxen and Pigs

Note: The ninth-century tombs in the table range from 823 to 882, including five tombs pre-850 and nine tombs post-850.

As for the locations of tombs containing these objects, most were found in the capital regions, as eleven tombs were found in Henan Province, seven in Shaanxi, and one in Hunan (fig.

29 Shen Ruiwen, *Zhongguo gudai wuzhi wenhua shi*, 263. For the *Taiping guangji* anecdote, see TPGJ 311:303–304 (anecdote titled "Xiao Kuang" 蕭曠).

30 Xu Pingfang, "Tang Song muzang zhong de 'mingqi shensha' yu 'muyi' zhidu," 93.

31 Xu Pingfang, "Tang Song muzang zhong de 'mingqi shensha' yu 'muyi' zhidu," 87–88.

32 For instance, in Mr. Li Cun's tomb (M2954; Henan; dating to 845), an iron ox and an iron pig were placed in the northeast and northwest corners of the burial chamber, respectively; and in Mr. Li Zhuo's tomb (M4537; Henan; dating to 869), an iron ox was found in the northeast corner of the burial chamber, and an iron pig was found in the northwest corner, with an additional iron pig in the middle of the tomb chamber. See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yanshi Xingyuan Tang mu*, 181, 172.

33 For instance, in Mr. Li He's tomb (M2443; Henan; dated 843), an iron ox was found in the northwest corner of the burial chamber; in both Mr. Li Yu's tomb (M1921; Henan; dating to 843) and another Tang-era tomb not containing an epitaph (M1814; Henan) found nearby, an iron ox and an iron pig were placed in the northwest and northeast corners of the burial chamber, respectively. See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yanshi Xingyuan Tang mu*, 171, 173, 176.

3). According to Meng Yuanzhao's research, burying iron oxen and pigs was more common in the post-Tang era, particularly in the Song and Yuan dynasties, and they were also found in tombs of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (902–979) and of the Jin dynasty. Unlike the situation in the Tang dynasty (when they were nearly exclusively found in the capital regions), after the Tang they were found in both the north (including Henan, Shaanxi, and Shanxi) and the south (including Sichuan, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Fujian).[34] Since no iron oxen or pigs have been found in the pre-Tang period, pending further discoveries, I would propose that iron oxen and pigs probably originated in the late Tang as a tradition of the metropolitan elite tombs, and then gradually spread southward and to other parts of China.

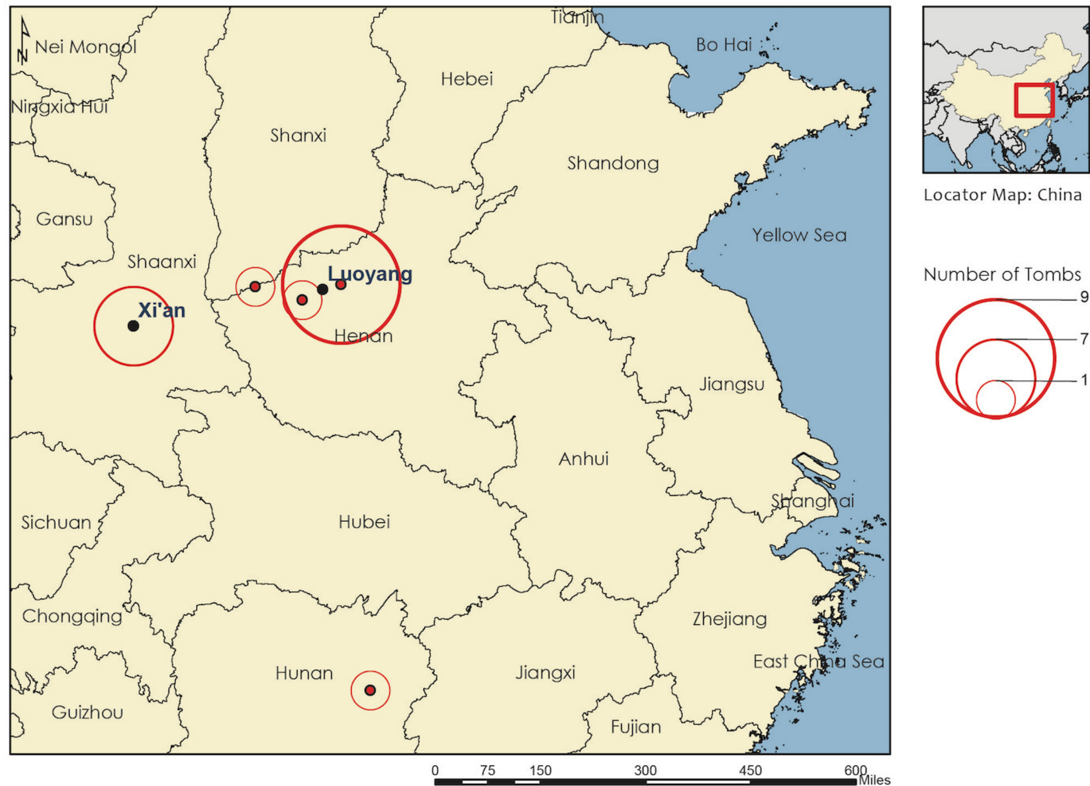

Figure 3. Geographical Distribution of the 19 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Iron Oxen and Pigs

3. Scissors

Scissors have also been found in Tang-era tombs.[35] Most were made of iron, some of bronze or ceramic (fig. 4). In one rare case, involving the tomb of an empress, a pair of gilded iron scissors was found together with a pair of silver scissors.[36] Inside the tomb, scissors were

34 Meng Yuanzhao, "Tang zhi Yuan dai muzang zhong chutu de tieniu tiezhu," 74–75.
35 To build a database of all Tang tombs containing scissors, I searched both CNKI and Duxiu. In CNKI, under the "Basic Search," I did a "full-text" search for the keywords 剪 and 剪刀 in articles containing the "title" keyword 唐 or 唐墓. I chose "precise" for both "full-text" and "title" searches. In Duxiu, I used the keywords 剪 and 剪刀 and searched in the categories *tushu* 圖書, *baozhi* 報紙, *xuewei lunwen* 學位論文, and *huiyi lunwen* 會議論文.
36 Xiaogan diqu bowuguan and Anlu xian bowuguan, "Anlu Wangzi shan Tang Wu wangfei Yang shi mu," 88, 90–92.

usually close to the corpse, particularly near the head or the shoulder blade, meaning that they were likely inside or atop the coffin, or directly next to it. No state-sponsored ritual text prescribes entombing scissors as a burial practice, but burying scissors appears nevertheless to have been common in Tang tombs. A total of 213 Tang-era tombs containing metal scissors (usually with one pair per tomb) have been reported. These tombs range from elaborate to extremely simple (with hardly any other burial object). The highest-status tomb with scissors found so far is that of Princess Li Chui 李倕 (711–736), and the lowest-status one found so far involved a human sacrifice.[37]

Figure 4. Line Drawings of Tang-Era Scissors

Source: Wan Xin, "Chaoyang faxian Tang dai tieqi de chubu kaocha," 172.

The function of scissors in tombs is uncertain. Cheng Yi thinks that scissors, as a sharp-edged tool, could frighten evil spirits and hence guard the tomb and protect the soul.[38] Ye Wa argues that scissors, along with other sharp-edged tools such as plowshares and sickles, were "used to symbolize separation"—that is, to help separate the deceased from the world of the living.[39] Fan Shuying and Deng Fei regard scissors as a marker for female tombs and study them in combination with other objects that were commonly used by and hence associated with female tomb occupants.[40] Archaeologists also use mirrors, scissors, and hairpins as criteria to

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37 The pair of iron scissors in Princess Li Chui's burial was nothing special, hence the archaeological report only briefly alludes to it. See Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, "Tang Li Chui mu fajue jianbao," 10. For the burial of a human sacrifice (M63), see Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo and Xibei daxue wenbo xueyuan, *Shaanxi fengxiang Sui Tang mu*, 139, 232. Fan Shuying, in her research, argues that burying scissors was much more popular in mid- to small-sized tombs and hence among mid- to low-ranking elites and non-office-holders. See Fan Shuying, "Tongjing yu tiejian," 76–77. However, based on my own survey, it is difficult to identify any unambiguous relationship between the tomb occupant's status and the burial of scissors, given that the status of most tomb occupants cannot be determined.

38 Cheng Yi, *Guanzhong diqu Tang dai muzang yanjiu*, 309.

39 Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 311.

40 Fan Shuying has argued that both mirrors and scissors announced the status and merit of the female deceased to the underworld authorities. Deng Fei has argued that the images of scissors in conjunction with a clothes iron (*yundou* 熨斗) in brick relief and tomb murals in Song tombs symbolize the important role of females in the household and help create a dedicated female space in a home atmosphere. See Fan Shuying, "Tongjing yu tiejian,"

hypothesize the gender of a tomb occupant when no skeleton survives.[41] But it is also possible that scissors could have served multiple functions at the same time. One possible function of scissors found in tombs, I think, is that they were used in funerary preparations, perhaps to prepare the body for entombment. Once "polluted" through contact with the deceased's body, they could not be used anymore, so they were simply "discarded" in the coffin or tomb.

Burying scissors began no later than the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE) and was widely practiced thereafter.[42] My data analyses of tombs show that, during the Tang, metal scissors were distributed relatively evenly both temporally (table 3) and geographically. Figure 5 shows that more scissors have been excavated in the north than in the south.[43] However, since many more Tang-era tombs have been found in northern regions than in southern regions, the map likely suggests a relatively even distribution of scissors in both the north and south.

Century	7th	7th–8th	8th	8th–9th	8th–10th	9th	9th–10th	unknown
Number	19	19	21	23	8	12	16	95

Table 3. Temporal Distribution of 213 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Scissors

83–87; Deng Fei, "Qi yu tu," 177–178, 187–192. For research on scissors and mirrors in combination, see also Wang Fengjun and Yang Hongyi, "Tongjing chutu zhuangtai yanjiu," 22–30.

41 For instance, an archaeological report of five Tang-era tombs excavated in Chaoyang (Liaoning Province) notes that two tombs had scissors and one had a hairpin, and speculates that the occupants were females. See Zhang Hongbo and Jia Zongliang, "Liaoning Chaoyang wuzuo Tang mu," 46.

42 For early examples of scissors found in Western Han tombs, see Liu Chuncui, "Changsha chutu tiejian de Han mu," 182; Wan Xin, "Chaoyang faxian Tang dai tieqi de chubu kaocha," 173. That scissors have been excavated in tombs of post-Han eras is based on my own general survey of archaeological reports. It is beyond the scope of my research to discuss how long the practice of burying scissors lasted, but, according to Deng Fei, scissors were still regarded as an important burial object as late as in the early Ming. See Deng Fei, "Qi yu tu," 193. Additionally, burying scissors also appeared in ethnically non-Han tombs. Nicolas Tackett, through statistic analysis, has argued that the Khitan tombs of the Northern Zone in the Liao dynasty (916–1125) often contained real metal scissors, in contrast to the ceramic or porcelain scissors in Chinese tombs in the Liao region and images of scissors in brick relief and murals in Song tombs. See Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, 229–230, 235.

43 Among the 213 tombs containing scissors, 70 were found in Hunan, 49 in Henan, 25 in Shaanxi, 21 in Ningxia, 15 in Hebei, 13 in Liaoning, 5 in Shanxi, 3 in Beijing, 3 in Hubei, 2 in Anhui, 2 in Guangdong, 2 in Jiangxi, 1 in Zhejiang, 1 in Jiangsu, and 1 in Inner Mongolia (Nei Menggu).

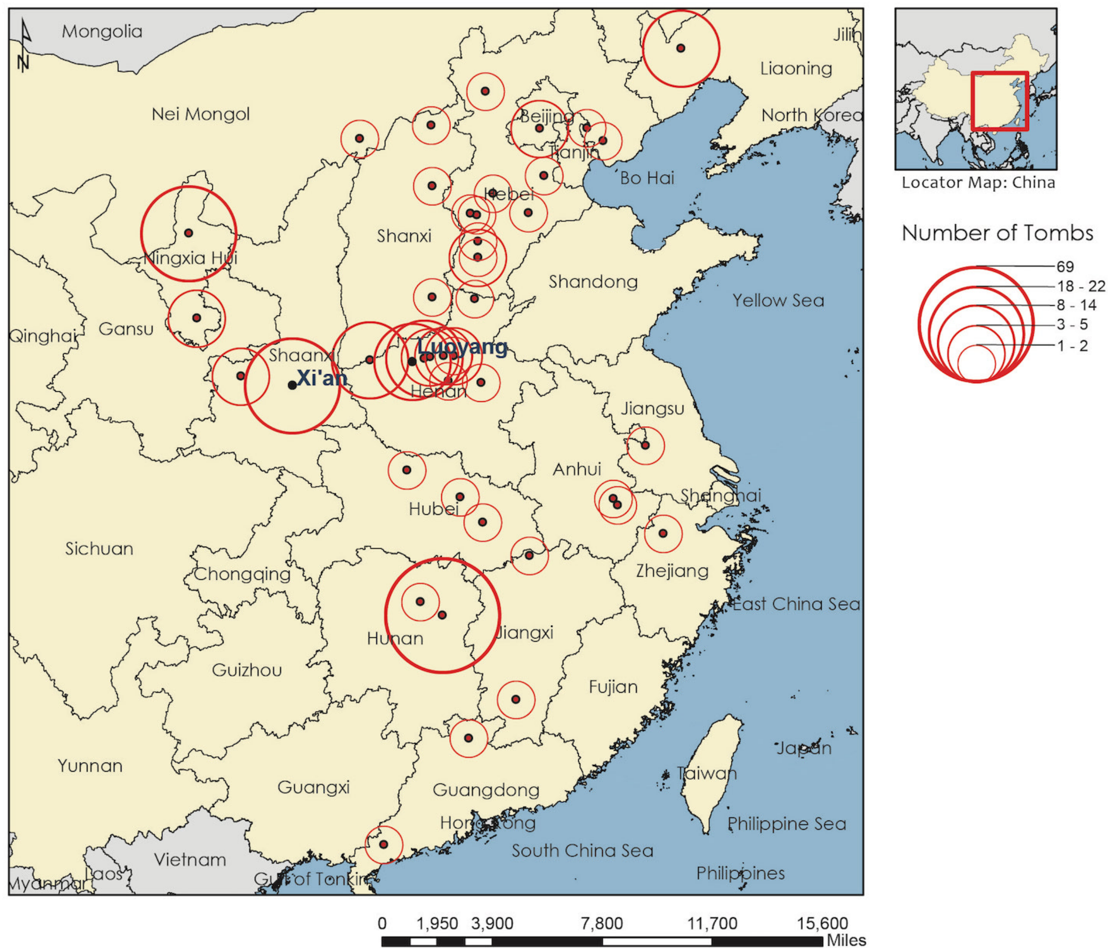

Figure 5. Geographical Distribution of 213 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Scissors

4. Prostrating Figurines

As with the other objects described so far, prostrating figurines are not documented in Tang-era ritual texts.[44] Xu Pingfang has identified them as figurines which are "prostrating and listening" (*futing* 伏聽), pointing as reference to objects with this name mentioned in the *Mizang jing*, as well as in a list of burial objects for the Northern Song (960–1127) emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997–1022) preserved in the *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 (Draft recovered edition of the Essential documents and regulations of the Song).[45] In fact, not all Tang-era prostrating figurines appear to be listening. Instead, many of them appear only to be kneeling down, prostrating, or

44 To build a database of all Tang tombs containing prostrating figurines, I searched both CNKI and Duxiu. In CNKI, under the "Basic Search," I did a "full-text" search for the keywords 伏聽俑, 跪拜俑, 仰觀俑, 俯聽俑, 稽首俑, 跪伏俑, 伏臥俑, 匍匐俑, 匍伏俑, and 蹲伏俑 in articles containing the "title" keyword 唐 or 唐墓. I chose "precise" for both "full-text" and "title" searches. In Duxiu, I used the keywords 伏聽俑, 跪拜俑, 仰觀俑, 俯聽俑, 稽首俑, 跪伏俑, 伏臥俑, 匍匐俑, 匍伏俑, and 蹲伏俑, and searched in the categories *tushu* 圖書, *baozhi* 報紙, *xuewei lunwen* 學位論文, and *huiyi lunwen* 會議論文.

45 Xu Pingfang, "Tang Song muzang zhong de 'mingqi shensha' yu 'muyi' zhidu," 91.

bowing, perhaps simply in a submissive gesture (fig. 6). Hence it is debatable whether they should all be regarded as *futing*. Therefore, even though most scholars adopt Xu's identification, referring to such figurines using Xu's term *futing yong* 伏聽俑, some also use other names, such as kneeling and bowing figurines (*guibai yong* 跪拜俑), prostrating and crouching figurines (*fuwo yong* 伏卧俑), crawling figurines (*pufu yong* 匍匐俑), kowtowing figurines (*jishou yong* 稽首俑), kneeling and prostrating figurines (*guifu yong* 跪伏俑), or squatting and prostrating figurines (*dunfu yong* 蹲伏俑).

Figure 6. Tang-Era Prostrating Figurines

Source: Left: Wu Yanliang, "Shixi Liaoning Chaoyang diqu Sui Tang muzang de wenhua yinsu," 53; Right: Saito Ryuichi, *Daitō ōchō josei no bi*, 91.

Prostrating figurines in the Tang dynasty were mostly made of ceramic and usually appear to represent males, but female figurines have also been found. Most reports do not record the location of prostrating figurines in the tomb, but reports that do record their locations suggest that they were typically found in the main chamber. The tomb occupants came from various socioeconomic strata, including imperial clansmen, such as Prince Li Xian 李憲 (674–742) and Prince Jiemin 節愍 (d. 707), as well as non-office-holders.[46] In general, tombs containing prostrating figurines were elaborately decorated and lavishly equipped with grave goods, suggesting that the deceased had a considerable level of wealth.

The origin of prostrating figurines is unclear. Hao Hongxing and Wang Ming both think that these figurines first began to appear in the Sui dynasty (581–618).[47] Li Yizhou traces their origin to the Northern Wei (386–534), and Zhang Weishen argues that prostrating figurines appeared as early as in the Eastern Han dynasty.[48] Interestingly, the pre-Tang figurines mentioned by these scholars appear to be either sitting or prostrating their entire bodies forward; none of them shows any sign of listening to the ground. In other words, none is strictly a *futing* figurine; hence, we may tentatively say (until further discovery) that the Tang era witnessed the

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46 For the prostrating figurines excavated in the two princes' tombs, see Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, *Tang Li Xian mu fajue baogao*, 19–20; Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo and Fuping xian wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, *Tang Jiemin taizi mu fajue baogao*, 99–100.

47 Interestingly, Hao and Wang regard different figurines from two different Sui dynasty tombs as the prototypes of the *futing* figurines. Hao refers to two seated figurines with their faces buried in their knees found in two sixth-century tombs (dating to 528 and 595, both from Henan), while Wang points out that the first pair of *futing* and *yangguan* figurines were found in a Sui dynasty tomb dating to 586 and excavated in present-day Anhui Province. See Hao Hongxing et al., "Zhongyuan Tang mu zhong de mingqi shensha zhidu," 105; Wang Ming, "Tang Song muzang zhong de yangguan futing yong yu shengren xiangzheng," 82.

48 See Li Yizhou, "Tang dai guibai yong yu futing yong kaobian," 15; Zhang Weishen, "Guibai yong suyuan," 10.

first appearance of figurines appearing both to prostrate and listen. Another interesting fact is that no *yangguan* 仰觀 (raising the head and watching) figurine —which, according to Song sources, is supposed to be the counterpart to the prostrating figurine—has been found dating to the Tang.[49] However, according to Wang Ming's research, already by the Five Dynasties period (907–960) burying a pair of *futing* and *yangguan* figurines was common in elite tombs.[50]

As for the function of prostrating figurines, Li Yizhou proposes that we should differentiate prostrating figurines (*futing yong*) from kneeling and bowing figurines (*guibai yong*). According to Li, the former were a type of guardian figurine and protected the soul of the deceased, while the latter were modeled on attendants in the world of the living and showed submissiveness to the deceased.[51] Zhang Yun argues that prostrating figurines represented low-ranking officials kowtowing to the deceased and suggests that the higher the status of the deceased in real life, the larger in size were his prostrating figurines.[52] Zhang Xunliao and Bai Bin think that *futing* and *yangguan* figurines were diviners and geomancers in the afterlife, and that their appearance in tombs reflects the popularity of geomantic practice.[53] Wang Ming also speculates that prostrating figurines represented geomancers but thinks that the *yangguan* figurines represented astronomers. He argues that, as a pair, the two types of figurines observed and examined the patterns of the sky and the earth—that is, the entire cosmos of the afterlife.[54]

Despite relatively rich scholarship theorizing the function of prostrating figurines, there have been few comprehensive surveys of such objects dating to the Tang specifically. The most recent and comprehensive survey is by Li Yizhou, published in 2017. Li provides a typological study of Tang-era prostrating figurines and discusses their possible functions.[55] As extremely valuable as his research is, however, he identifies only twenty-six such figurines.[56] In my research, I have identified a total of sixty prostrating figurines found in excavated tombs from the Tang era. Most of these tombs are dated from the late seventh century to the mid-eighth century (table 4).

Century	7th	7th–8th	8th	8th–9th	9th	unknown
Number	25	5	19	2	1	8

Table 4. Temporal Distribution of 60 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Prostrating Figurines

In terms of geographic dispersal, out of a total of sixty prostrating figurines, only two were from the south (one from Jiangxi and one from Hunan), with the remainder mainly from the

49 Xu Pingfang points out that both the *Mizang jing* and *Song huiyao jigao* refer to *yangguan* figurines as the counterparts of *futing* figurines. See Xu Pingfang, "Tang Song muzang zhong de 'mingqi shensha' yu 'muyi' zhidu," 91. Li Yizhou has identified two *yangguan* figurines from Tang tombs, but both look to me more like different variations of prostrating figurines. See Li Yizhou, "Tang dai guibai yong yu futing yong kaobian," 17–18.
50 Wang Ming, "Tang Song muzang zhong de yangguan futing yong yu shengren xiangzheng," 81–84.
51 Li Yizhou, "Tang dai guibai yong yu futing yong kaobian," 20.
52 Zhang Yun, "'Rang huangdi' de guibai yong," 59.
53 Zhang Xunliao and Bai Bin, *Zhongguo Daojiao kaogu*, 1683.
54 Wang Ming, "Tang Song muzang zhong de yangguan futing yong yu shengren xiangzheng," 92–93.
55 Li Yizhou, "Tang dai guibai yong yu futing yong kaobian."
56 Li Yizhou, "Tang dai guibai yong yu futing yong kaobian," 16.

north (Shanxi, Shaanxi, Henan, Hebei, and Liaoning)[57] with a concentration in the capital regions, as shown in figure 7. By contrast, as studies show, in the post-Tang era, particularly in the Song dynasty, prostrating figurines often appear in tombs in Shanxi, Hebei, Jiangxi, Sichuan, and Hubei Provinces, and more were found in the south than in the north.[58] Therefore, it is reasonable to speculate that burying prostrating figurines was a northern tradition in the Tang that gradually spread to the south.

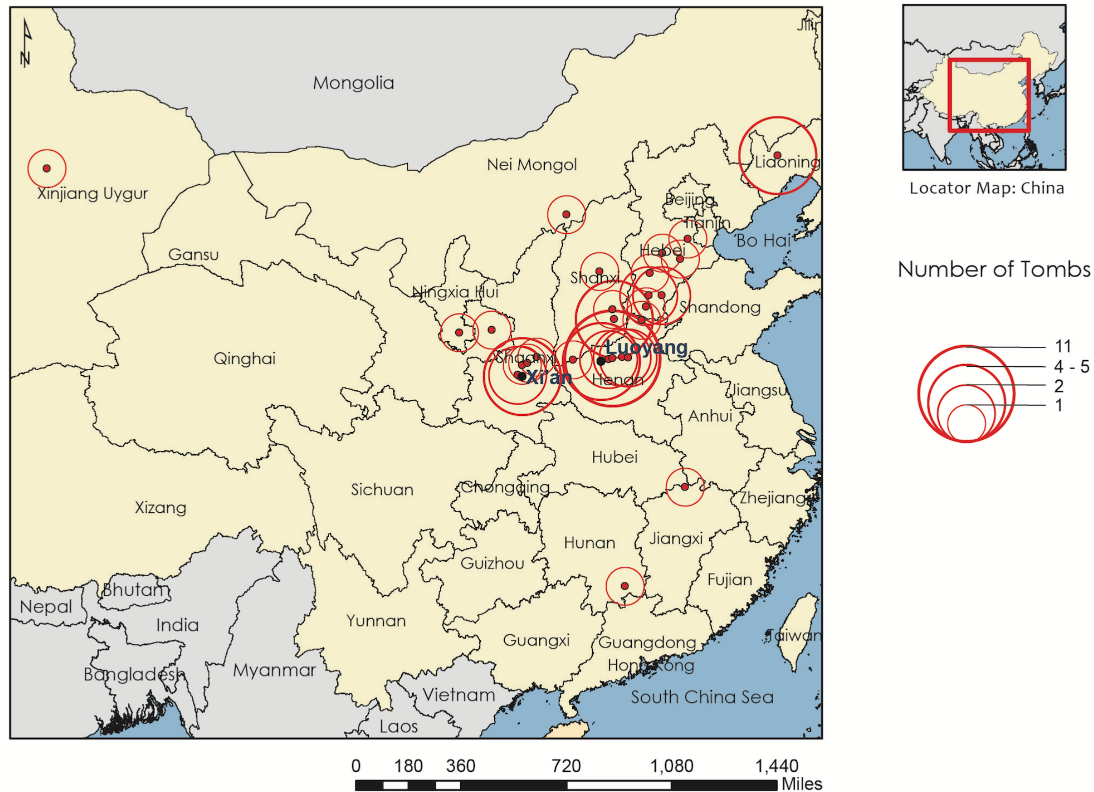

Figure 7. Geographical Distribution of 60 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Prostrating Figurines

5. "Ritual Fish"

The next type of object to consider is a type of figurine with a human head and a fish body (fig. 8), often referred to in archaeological reports as "ritual fish" (*yiyu* 儀魚),[59] "salamander" (*niyu* 鯢魚), "human-headed-and-fish-bodied figurine" (*renshou yushen yong* 人首魚身俑), or "human-faced fish" (*renmian yushen yong* 人面魚).[60] The first two terms were

57 Among the sixty tombs containing prostrating figurines, twenty-three were found in Henan, ten in Shaanxi, nine in Hebei, seven in Shanxi, five in Liaoning, one in Inner Mongolia (Nei Menggu), one in Ningxia, one in Xinjiang, one in Jiangxi, one in Hunan, and one in Gansu.

58 See Zhang Xunliao and Bai Bin, *Zhongguo Daojiao kaogu*, 1667–1683; Cheng Yi and Cheng Huijun, "Hanzhong Song dai zhenmu shenwu shizheng," 44.

59 I call this type of figurine "ritual fish" (*yiyu*) simply because it is the most commonly used name for such figurines. My use of this term does not indicate the figurine's meaning or function.

60 To build a database of all Tang tombs containing ritual fish, I searched both CNKI and Duxiu. In CNKI, under the "Basic Search," I did a "full-text" search for the keywords 人首魚身俑, 儀魚, 人面魚, 人面魚身俑, 倪魚, 鯢魚,

initially proposed by Xu Pingfang, once again in an attempt to equate excavated objects with grave goods described in the *Mizang jing* and *Song huiyao jigao*.[61] Though scholars have mostly adopted Xu's terminology, referring to these figurines as ritual fish, different theories have been proposed to explain what they actually were. In associating the figurines with burial goods mentioned in the *Mizang jing* and *Song huiyao jigao*, Xu argues that ritual fish, together with many other burial objects, belong to a category of grave goods called *mingqi shensha* 明器神煞—that is, "spirit objects for burial and objects related to *yinyang* superstition" 隨葬明器和與陰陽迷信有關的遺物.[62] But she does not elucidate the exact role played by the fish figurine in a burial setting. Some scholars argue that the ritual fish was probably a representation of the "god of thunder" (*leishen* 雷神), a Daoist deity.[63] Others regard it as a type of suppressing talisman.[64] Unfortunately, without sufficient textual sources or further excavations, we may never know the intended function of this figurine.

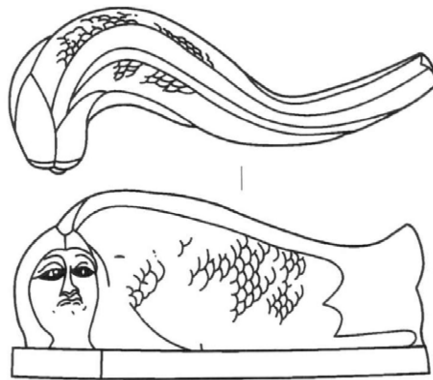

Figure 8. Line Drawings of a Ritual Fish

Source: Liaoning sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Chaoyang shi bowuguan, "Liaoning Chaoyang shi Huanghelu Tang mu de qingli," 66.

So far, the most comprehensive study of ritual fish was published in 2013 by Cui Shiping, who lists a total of thirty-four tombs containing ritual fish, including twenty-three Tang-era tombs.[65] In my own survey of published reports, I have identified a total of thirty-one ritual fish found in Tang-era tombs, with no more than one fish per tomb. Among these figurines,

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人面陶魚, and 魚身獸 in articles containing the "title" keyword 唐 or 唐墓. I chose "precise" for both "full-text" and "title" searches. In Duxiu, I used the keywords 人首魚身俑, 儀魚, 人面魚, 人面魚身俑, 俔魚, 鯢魚, 人面陶魚, and 魚身獸, and searched in the categories *tushu* 圖書, *baozhi* 報紙, *xuewei lunwen* 學位論文, and *huiyi lunwen* 會議論文.

61 Xu Pingfang, "Tang Song muzang zhong de 'mingqi shensha' yu 'muyi' zhidu," 87, 93.

62 Xu Pingfang, "Tang Song muzang zhong de 'mingqi shensha' yu 'muyi' zhidu," 87. For a brief introduction to the *sha* 煞 spirits ("demonic spiritual forces brought into action by a death"), see Ebrey, "The Response of the Sung State to Popular Funeral Practices," 211–212.

63 See Cui Shiping, "Tang Song muzang suojian 'yiyu' yu zangsu chuanbo," 85; Bai Bing, "Leishen yong kao," 67; Zhang Xunliao and Bai Bin, *Zhongguo Daojiao kaogu*, 1733–1738.

64 See Zhang Wenxia and Liao Yongmin, "Sui Tang shiqi de zhenmu shenwu," 67–68.

65 Cui Shiping, "Tang Song muzang suojian 'yiyu' yu zangsu chuanbo," 82–83.

except for one made of wood, all were made of ceramic.[66] The identifiable tomb occupants included both office-holders and non-office-holders.

Ritual fish appear to have been a relatively late addition to the repertoire of burial goods. Only one such object has been found in a tomb dating to before the Tang dynasty, a Sui tomb excavated in Beijing. This particular example was made of ceramic and has a date on each fin of the fish: "made in the first year of the *daye* reign" 大業元年造 (i.e., 605).[67] Among the Tang-era tombs containing ritual fish, except for one dating to the ninth century, all the others are from tombs dating to no later than the mid-Tang period (table 5). According to Cui Shiping's study, ritual fish were also found in the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period and the Song dynasty, but completely disappeared after the Song.[68]

Century	7th	7th–8th	8th	8th–9th	9th	unknown
Number	20	1	4	2	1	3

Table 5. Temporal Distribution of 31 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Ritual Fish

A map (fig. 9) of the geographical distribution of ritual fish reveals that most were found in northern China (including Liaoning, Hebei, Shanxi, and Henan), with a particular concentration in today's Shanxi and Hebei Provinces (i.e., twelve from Shanxi and eleven from Hebei).[69] Only two were found in the south (Fujian and Jiangsu), both of which are dated to the mid-to-late Tang.[70]

66 The tomb found with a wooden ritual fish figurine is in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province. See Wuxi shi bowuguan, "Jiangsu Wuxi faxian Tang mu," 123, 125.
67 Gao Guiyun, "Beijing chutu qingyou hongtao renshou sizu yushen yong," 19.
68 According to Cui, a total of ten tombs containing ritual fish were found in post-Tang eras, with the latest being a Southern Song (960–1279) tomb. See Cui Shiping, "Tang Song muzang suojian 'yiyu' yu zangsu chuanbo," 83.
69 Among the thirty-one tombs containing ritual fish, twelve were found in Shanxi, eleven in Hebei, four in Liaoning, one in Tianjing, one in Jiangsu, one in Henan, and one in Fujian.
70 For the Fujian tomb, see Fujian sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, "Fujian Zhangpu xian Liuban xiang Tang mu qingli jianbao," 608–609. For the Jiangsu tomb, see Wuxi shi bowuguan, "Jiangsu Wuxi faxian Tang mu," 123. The ritual fish found in Jiangsu is very intriguing. Thanks to the discovery of an epitaph in the Jiangsu tomb, we know that the deceased was a low-ranking official (*xianwei* 縣尉, or district defender) and was buried in 867. It is so far the latest dated Tang tomb containing a ritual fish. Unfortunately, the archaeological report does not reproduce the text of the epitaph, so we do not know whether the deceased had any connection with the north. Moreover, this ritual fish is a human-faced-and-fish-bodied wooden figurine that is so flat as to suggest that it may be a wooden carving rather than a figurine.

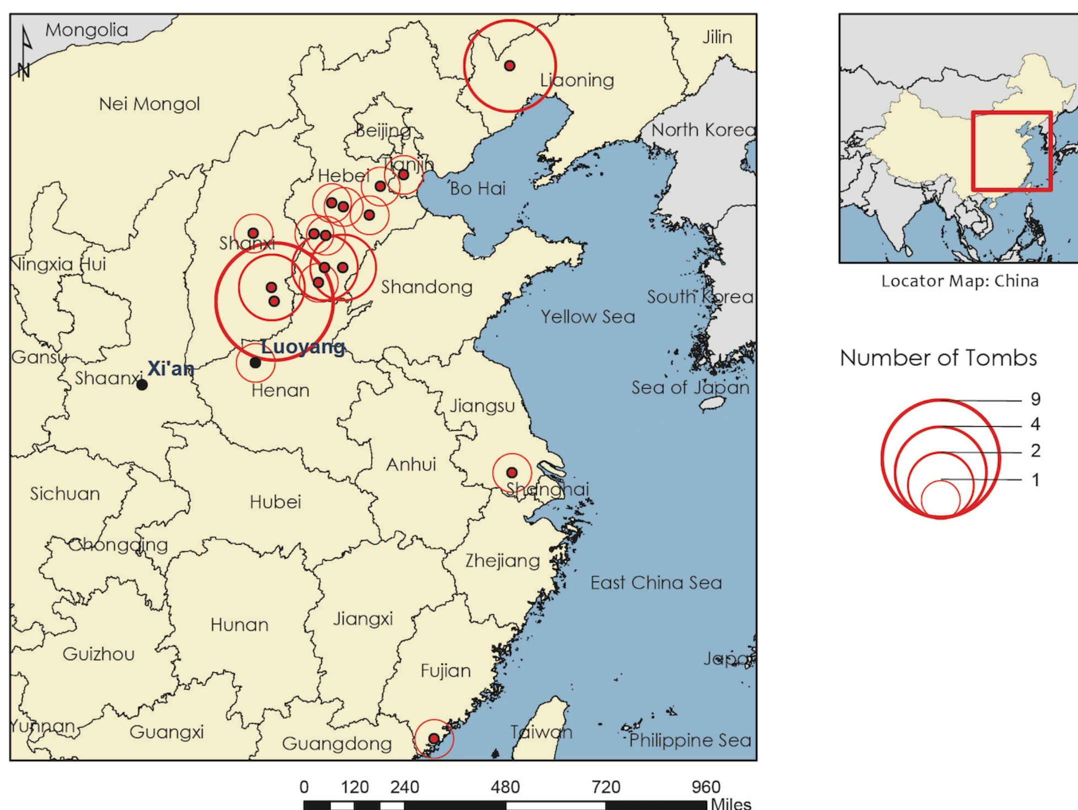

Figure 9. Geographical Distribution of 31 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Ritual Fish

Taking into consideration both temporal and regional distribution patterns, we can see that, following the pre-Tang Beijing example, the next earliest tombs containing ritual fish are in Shanxi and date to 653 and 660, respectively, followed by two tombs both dating to 673, found in Hebei and Liaoning, respectively. It is only in the post-Tang era that one finds these objects in the south (Jiangsu, Fujian, Jiangxi, Hubei, and Sichuan). Therefore, it is reasonable to speculate that burying ritual fish began as a northern tradition in the early Tang, with a regional concentration in present-day Hebei and Shanxi Provinces, and only gradually spread south over the subsequent centuries.

6. "Tomb Dragons"

The term *mulong* 墓龍 (tomb dragons)[71] also comes from the *Mizang jing*. Xu Pingfang has proposed this term to identify figurines with two human heads on each side of a long dragon or snake body (fig. 10).[72] This name has been widely adopted by scholars, but other descriptive names are used as well, such as "human-headed-and-dragon-bodied figurine" (*renshou longshen*

71 I call this type of figurine "tomb dragon (*mulong*) simply because it is the most commonly used name for such figurines. My use of this term does not indicate the figurine's meaning or function.
72 Xu Pingfang, "Tang Song muzang zhong de 'mingqi shensha' yu 'muyi' zhidu," 94.

yong 人首龍身俑), "human-headed-and-snake-bodied figurine" (*renshou sheshen yong* 人首蛇身俑), "double-human-headed-and-snake-bodied figurine" (*shuang renshou sheshen yong* 雙人首蛇身俑), and "double-headed beast" (*shuangtou shou* 雙頭獸).[73] As for the function of this figurine, some regard it as a tomb guardian beast (*zhenmu shou* 鎮墓獸), some think that it was a type of suppressing talisman (*yasheng*), and some argue that it represented the Daoist "god of thunder."[74]

Figure 10. A Tomb Dragon

Source: Changzhi shi bowuguan, "Shanxi Changzhi Tang dai Wang Hui mu," 51.

Many studies mention this type of figurine, but no one has conducted comprehensive research. Xu Diankui has pointed out that the earliest known example of a tomb dragon is from a tomb dating to 573 and located in present-day Shandong Province.[75] This Northern Qi (550–577) tomb contained both a human-headed-snake-bodied figurine and a double-human-headed-and-snake-bodied figurine.[76] As for the Tang dynasty, my survey has identified forty tombs

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73 Many more names are used to refer to this type of figurine. To build a database of all Tang tombs containing tomb dragons, I searched both CNKI and Duxiu. In CNKI, under the "Basic Search," I did a "full-text" search for the keywords 墓龍, 人首龍身俑, 人首蛇身俑, 怪獸俑, 人首獸身俑, 人面蛇身俑, 人首蛇, 雙頭獸, 兩人首龍身俑, 兩人首蛇身俑, 兩獸首龍身俑, 兩獸首蛇身俑, 雙首獸, 雙頭俑, 人首獸身俑, 雙人首蛇身俑, 雙首人面蛇, 雙首人面蛇身俑, 雙人首獸身俑, 獸面獸身, 獸面獸身怪獸俑, and 連體俑 in articles containing the "title" keyword 唐 or 唐墓. I chose "precise" for both "full-text" and "title" searches. In Duxiu, I used the keywords 墓龍, 人首龍身俑, 人首蛇身俑, 怪獸俑, 人首獸身俑, 人面蛇身俑, 人首蛇, 雙頭獸, 兩人首龍身俑, 兩人首蛇身俑, 兩獸首龍身俑, 兩獸首蛇身俑, 雙首獸, 雙頭俑, 人首獸身俑, 雙人首蛇身俑, 雙首人面蛇, 雙首人面蛇身俑, 雙人首獸身俑, 獸面獸身, 獸面獸身怪獸俑, and 連體俑, and searched in the categories *tushu* 圖書, *baozhi* 報紙, *xuewei lunwen* 學位論文, and *huiyi lunwen* 會議論文.

74 On tomb dragons being regarded as tomb guardian beasts, see Shanxi sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui "Taiyuan nanjiao Jinsheng cun sanhao Tang mu," 38; Zhang Wenxia and Liao Yongmin, "Sui Tang shiqi de zhenmu shenwu," 67–68. On tomb dragons representing suppressing talismans, see Hao Hongxing et al., "Zhongyuan Tang mu zhong de mingqi shensha zhidu," 106–107; Hua Yang, "Qianyi Shanxi Tang mu de zangsu," 18. On tomb dragons representing the god of thunder, see Bai Bing, "Leishen yong kao," 68–69; Zhang Xunliao and Bai Bin, *Zhongguo Daojiao kaogu*, 1737–1738.

75 Xu Diankui, "Luoyang diqu Sui Tang mu de fenqi," 280.

76 The report calls these two figurines *renshou sheshen yong* 人首蛇身俑 and *lianti yong* 連體俑 (figurine with connected bodies), respectively. See Shandong sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, "Linzi Beichao Cui shi mu," 236.

containing tomb dragons, the majority of which contained only one per tomb. The Tang-era tomb dragons are all ceramic, including one made of porcelain.[77] These figurines were mostly found in tombs of the seventh century—that is, the early Tang tombs (table 6). Xu Pingfang states that burying tomb dragons was practiced for officials and non-office-holders alike, a point confirmed by my own survey.[78]

Century	7th	7th–8th	8th	8th–9th	8th–10th	unknown
Number	22	6	7	2	1	3

Table 6. Temporal Distribution of 40 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Tomb Dragons

Geographically speaking, tombs containing tomb dragons have been found mostly in northern China, including Shanxi, Hebei, and Liaoning Provinces (fig. 11).[79] Among these tombs, only four are in the middle Yangzi River region (including Hunan and Hubei Provinces), all dated to the seventh and eighth centuries.

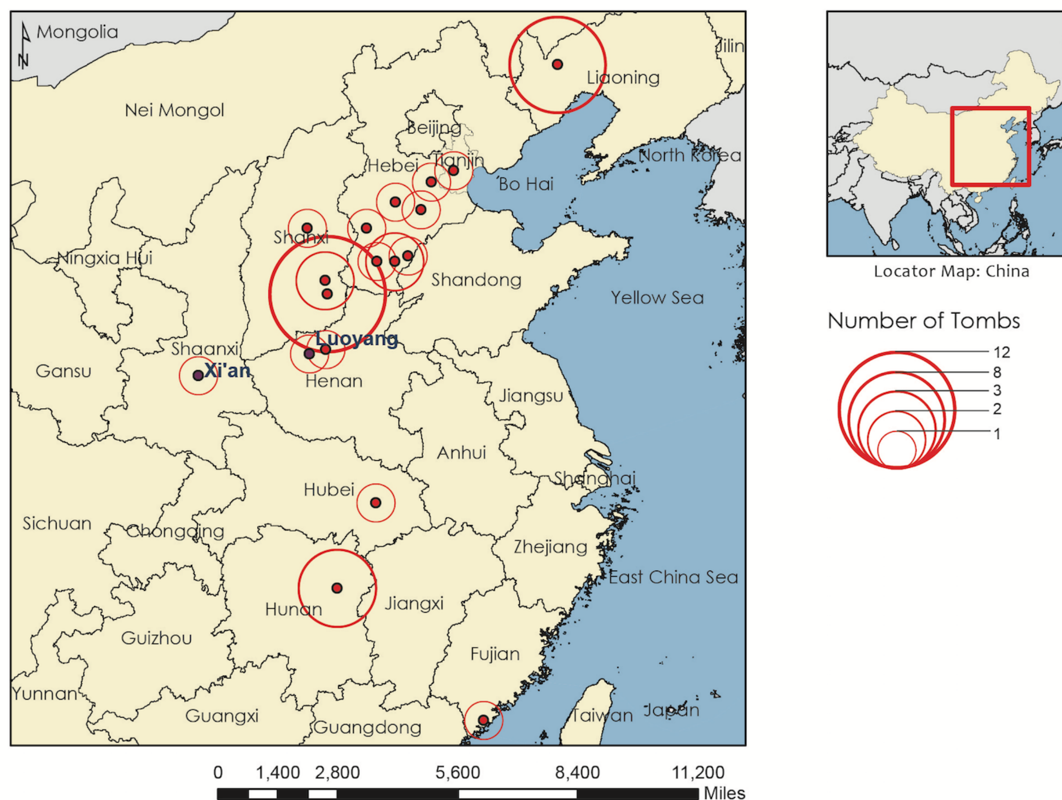

Figure 11. Geographical Distribution of 40 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Tomb Dragons

77 Chaoyang shi bowuguan, “Chaoyang fangzhi chang Tang mu fajue jianbao,” 368, 378–379.
78 Xu Pingfang, “Tang Song muzang zhong de ‘mingqi shensha’ yu ‘muyi’ zhidu,” 94.
79 Among the forty tombs containing tomb dragons, fifteen were found in Shanxi, eight in Hebei, eight in Liaoning, three in Hunan, two in Henan, one in Tianjin, one in Hubei, one in Fujian, and one in Shaanxi.

Considering temporal and spatial patterns together, it seems that burying tomb dragons began in the early Tang as a northern practice. Since there have been no comprehensive studies of tomb dragons that address the post-Tang period, it is beyond the scope of my study to determine when they declined or disappeared. However, I have been able to ascertain that they continued to be used in burials in the immediate post-Tang era. Two wooden tomb dragons were found in Jiangsu in an imperial burial dated to the Five Dynasties period, a tomb that also contained a wooden ritual fish and wooden figurines of the animals of the Chinese zodiac.[80] In addition, three ceramic tomb dragons were found in two Southern Tang (937–975) tombs in Jiangsu.[81]

7. "Wind-Watching Birds"

Another interesting human-headed figurine is the "wind-watching bird" (*guanfeng niao* 觀風鳥),[82] a term mentioned in the *Mizang jing* and proposed by Xu Pingfang as the name for such figurines.[83] The figurine in question has a human head and a bird's body. In tombs, they are often found as a pair, with one female and one male figurine (fig. 12). All the Tang-era wind-watching birds ever found are ceramic, including three made of porcelain.[84] Other terms used by scholars to refer to these figurines include "human-headed bird" (*renshou niao* 人首鳥), "bird-shaped beast" (*niaoxing shou* 鳥形兽), and "human-headed-and-bird-bodied" figurine (*renshou niaoshen yong* 人首鳥身俑).

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80 See Yangzhou bowuguan, "Jiangsu Hanjiang Cai zhuang Wudai mu qingli jianbao," 43, 46; for photos of these figurines, see 48–50.

81 See Nanjing bowuyuan, *Nantang erling fajue baogao*, 74, and plate no. 109. Xu Pingfang also describes a ceramic figurine found in a Yuan tomb in Xi'an as a tomb dragon, but the relevant archaeological report has no indication of the figurine appearing as a human-headed-and-dragon-bodied figurine. Rather, it is listed together with other animal figurines, such as a pig, chicken, ox, and dog. More likely, the figurine (of which there is unfortunately no photograph) is a ceramic model of a dragon. See Xu Pingfang, "Tang Song muzang zhong de 'mingqi shensha' yu 'muyi' zhidu," 94. For the original report, see Shaanxi sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, "Xi'an yuxiangmen wai Yuan dai zhuanmu qingli jianbao," 34.

82 To build a database of all Tang tombs containing wind-watching birds, I searched both CNKI and Duxiu. In CNKI, under the "Basic Search," I did a "full-text" search for the keywords 觀風鳥, 觀鳳鳥, 人首鳥身俑, 人首禽身俑, 鳥形獸, 人頭雞身俑, 人首鳥, 人首獸身雙翼俑, 人面鳥身俑, 人面禽身俑, and 人面禽身怪獸俑 in articles containing the "title" keyword 唐 or 唐墓. I chose "precise" for both "full-text" and "title" searches. In Duxiu, I used the keywords 觀風鳥, 觀鳳鳥, 人首鳥身俑, 人首禽身俑, 鳥形獸, 人頭雞身俑, 人首鳥, 人首獸身雙翼俑, 人面鳥身俑, 人面禽身俑, and 人面禽身怪獸俑, and searched in the categories *tushu* 圖書, *baozhi* 報紙, *xuewei lunwen* 學位論文, and *huiyi lunwen* 會議論文.

83 Xu Pingfang, "Tang Song muzang zhong de 'mingqi shensha' yu 'muyi' zhidu," 91. Note that Xu herself points out that such figurines may or may not be "wind-watching birds," but after Xu published her article, other scholars began to use the term *guanfeng niao* to refer to this type of figurine. I also call this type of figurine "wind-watching bird" (*guanfeng niao*) simply because it is the most commonly used name for such figurines. My use of this term does not indicate the figurine's meaning or function.

84 The three tombs containing porcelain wind-watching birds are in Sichuan and Hunan Provinces. For the relevant archaeological reports, see Sichuan sheng bowuguan, "Sichuan Wanxian Tang mu"; Hunan sheng bowuguan, "Hunan Changsha Xianjiahu Tang mu fajue jianbao"; Yueyang shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, "Hunan Yueyang Taohua shan Tang mu."

Figure 12. A Pair of Wind-Watching Birds

Source: Inside back cover of *Wenwu* 2013.6.

There are no Tang-era texts describing these figurines. Though the *Mizang jing* does mention "wind-watching birds," it does not discuss the meaning or function of such objects. Scholars have offered various speculations, including that they served as a type of suppressing talisman, that they represented the "god of thunder," or that they represented the *fangxiang* 方相—a ritual exorcist who chased out evil spirits and demons to protect the deceased from harm.[85] Among all the hypotheses, I think that Wang Ming's is perhaps the most convincing. He argues that the human-headed-and-bird-bodied figurines should be called "birds of a thousand autumns and ten thousand years" (*qianqiu wansui niao* 千秋萬歲鳥), a term originated from the *Baopuzi* 抱樸子 (The master who embraces simplicity) by Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343). According to Wang, the imagery of such birds first appeared on pictorial bricks in the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–589) and developed into figurines during the Sui and Tang dynasties. Such figurines, as Wang argues, always have human heads, and they were used to help protect the soul of the deceased and bless the offspring with long and happy lives. By contrast, he points out that "wind-watching birds" actually refer to figurines of birds (without human heads) standing on a base that connected to a long stick for a person to hold during funerary procession, and they were used to observe the wind and climate, a correspondence to masters who observe the patterns of the sky or heaven (*tiandao* 天道).[86]

The most comprehensive study of such figurines so far is by Geng Chao. Published in 2010, it discusses these figurines found in both Tang- and Song-era tombs. Geng argues that such figurines originated in the Sui dynasty, pointing to three specific Sui-era tombs.[87] Two of these tombs are in present-day Anhui Province, and one is in Jiangsu Province. One of the Anhui tombs dates to 586 and contained a pair of wind-watching birds found on either side of the tomb epitaph. The tomb was looted; thus, we do not know whether ritual fish or tomb dragons were

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85 For the argument in favor of suppressing talismans, see Zhang Wenxia and Liao Yongmin, "Sui Tang shiqi de zhenmu shenwu," 67–68. On the god of thunder, see Zhang Xunliao and Bai Bin, *Zhongguo Daojiao kaogu*, 1737–1738. On the *fangxiang*, see Geng Chao, "Tang Song muzang zhong de guanfeng niao yanjiu," 118–119.

86 Wang Ming, "Tang Song muzang zhong de qianqiu wansui niao yu guangfeng niao," 94–99. For a brief introduction to Ge Hong and his work *Baopuzi*, see Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 819.

87 Geng Chao, "Tang Song muzang zhong de guanfeng niao yanjiu," 114–116.

also originally present in the tomb, as is often the case, and which will be discussed later.[88] The other Anhui tomb dates to 607; in the main chamber of this tomb, close to and facing the tomb entrance, a single wind-watching bird was found. Unfortunately, its excavation report is extremely brief and does not provide a detailed description or image, but since it does not say that the tomb was looted, there is no reason to think that the figurine originally came in a pair.[89] The Jiangsu tomb was looted, but still contained a good number of burial objects, including two wind-watching birds as a pair.[90] Additionally, there is another Sui tomb containing a single wind-watching bird; it is located in Jiangsu as well. This tomb is very close in distance to the aforementioned Sui-era tomb, but it was looted and severely damaged, so it may have originally contained two wind-watching birds.[91]

In terms of Tang-era tombs containing wind-watching birds, Geng has identified fifteen tombs. My own survey has found four additional ones, for a total of nineteen. Among these tombs, the tomb occupants are identifiable in only nine cases and include office-holders and non-office-holders. Most of the nineteen tombs date to before the eighth century (table 7), thus wind-watching birds seem to have declined in popularity after the High Tang period (713–766).[92] Wind-watching birds seem to have further declined in popularity after the Tang. According to Geng Chao's research, no wind-watching birds were found in tombs dating to the Northern Song, but five Southern Song (1127–1279) tombs have been found containing these objects, though all with only one bird instead of a pair of birds.[93]

Century	6th–7th	7th	7th–8th	8th	8th–9th	unknown
Number	1	6	7	3	1	1

Table 7. Temporal Distribution of 19 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Wind-Watching Birds

Note: All the tombs of the seventh century are dated to later than 670.

In terms of geographic distribution, eleven out of nineteen tombs containing wind-watching birds were found in the north (including eight tombs in Hebei, one in Liaoning, one in Henan, and one in Shanxi), and the remaining eight tombs were found in the south (including six tombs in Hunan, one in Sichuan, and one in Jiangsu), as shown in figure 13. Considering both temporal and spatial distributions together, since there are four pre-Tang tombs (Sui dynasty; two in Anhui and two in Jiangsu) and five post-Tang tombs (Southern Song; four in Sichuan and one in Shanxi) containing wind-watching birds, it is fair to speculate that these objects originated in the Lower Yangzi River region, before spreading across both the north and south. They subsequently flourished during the Tang both in China's northeast and in the middle of the Yangzi River region, before they gradually declined in the post-Tang period. Given that most wind-watching birds were excavated in Hebei and Hunan, these two regions might have played a role in the transmission of this practice.

88 Hu Yueqian, "Hefei xijiao Sui mu.".
89 Bo xian bowuguan, "Anhui Bo xian Sui mu."
90 Xuzhou bowuguan, "Jiangsu Tongshan xian Mao cun Sui mu," 149.
91 Xuzhou bowuguan, "Jiangsu Tongshan xian Mao cun Sui mu," 151.
92 For the periodization of the Tang, see n. 20 in this chapter.
93 Geng Chao, "Tang Song muzang zhong de guanfeng niao yanjiu," 114–117.

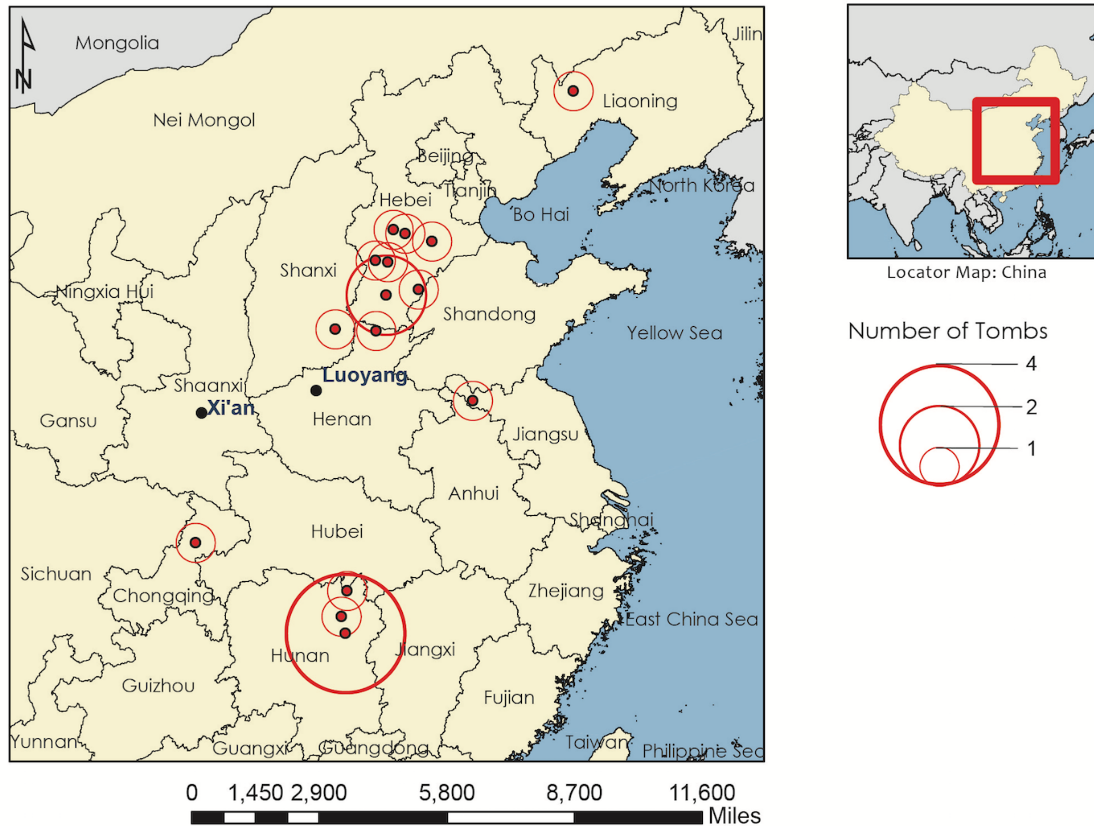

Figure 13. Geographical Distribution of 19 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Wind-Watching Birds

8. Figurines of Zodiac Animals

In contrast to all the other burial objects examined in this chapter, zodiac figurines were mentioned in Tang-era ritual texts. An ordinance (*ling* 令) issued in 811 allowed elites of all ranks to bury figurines of the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac, but the height and material composition of the figurines was to vary according to official rank. As for people without official rank, in an unforceful tone the ordinance says: "please do not place [such figurines in the tomb]" 請不置.[94] Archaeological finds reveal that Tang-era tombs containing figurines of zodiac animals range broadly in scale and lavishness, and include imperial burials such as those of Emperor Suzong 肅宗 (r. 756–762) and a daughter of the Prince of Shou 壽 (the eighteenth son of Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗, r. 713–756), as well as those of non-office-holders.[95]

Usually called figurines of zodiac animals (*shengxiao yong* 生肖俑) or figurines of the twelve double-hour system (*shi'er shi yong* 十二时俑, *shi'er chen yong* 十二辰俑, or *shi'er*

94 THY 38:696. For discussion of the ordinance and other relevant information, see Cheng Yi and Zheng Hongli, "*Tang ling sangzang ling* zhu mingqi tiao fuyuan de zai tantao."
95 For archaeological reports of the two imperial burials, see Li Langtao, "Tang Suzong jianling chutu shi shengxiao yong"; Shaanxi sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, "Xi'an nanjiao Pangliu cun de Tang mu."

shichen yong 十二时辰俑)[96] in archaeological reports,[97] they were typically buried as a set of twelve (fig. 14) in Tang-era tombs, albeit when excavated these sets were often found to be incomplete. The figurines are mostly made of ceramic (including porcelain sometimes), but iron, stone, and jade figurines have also been found.

Figure 14. Figurines of Zodiac Animals

Source: Yang, *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology*, 498–499.

Figurines of zodiac animals were usually placed evenly along the four walls of a main chamber. In some tombs, small niches along the walls circling the entire main chamber were

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96 The twelve double-hour system was officially adopted during the Western Han, and by that time it had already been correlated with a host of other measures and phenomena, including the twelve branches (*zhi* 支) of the sexagenary cycle, the twelve animals of zodiac, and the twelve directions. See Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 592.

97 To build a database of all Tang tombs containing figurines of animals of the Chinese zodiac, I searched both CNKI and Duxiu. In CNKI, under the "Basic Search," I did a "full-text" search for the keywords 生肖俑, 十二時俑, 十二辰俑, 十二時辰俑, and 十二辰相 in articles containing the "title" keyword 唐 or 唐墓. I chose "precise" for both "full-text" and "title" searches. In Duxiu, I used the keywords 生肖俑, 十二時俑, 十二辰俑, 十二時辰俑, and 十二辰相, and searched in the categories *tushu* 圖書, *baozhi* 報紙, *xuewei lunwen* 學位論文, and *huiyi lunwen* 會議論文. Note that zodiac animals also appear as imagery on epitaph stones, murals, and burial objects such as mirrors, but my survey includes only tomb figurines.

made exclusively to place them.[98] Scholars generally think that figurines of zodiac animals symbolize the ceaseless continuity of time. Ye Wa argues that zodiac animals expressed time and were related to the deities of the four directions (*sishen*), which represented the four cardinal directions, no matter what form they took (i.e., as figurines or as images on bronze mirrors, in tomb murals, or on epitaph covers).[99] Jiao Lin has analyzed the deliberate spatial arrangement of the figurines of zodiac animals and argues that these figurines not only symbolized the continuity of life after death, but also played a protective role by guarding the deceased at every moment and in all directions.[100]

Many scholars trace the origin of zodiac figurines to the Northern Wei. In the tomb that they reference, found in Shandong Province, five animal figurines were discovered—a tiger, snake, horse, monkey, and dog—each sitting inside a niche.[101] But unlike the figurines found in the late Tang, these were ceramic models of animals, rather than human figurines with animal heads. The first datable figurines of zodiac animals in the form of animal-headed humans were found in a Sui tomb dating to 610 excavated in Hunan Province. The tomb contained two sets of zodiac figurines. One set included twelve seated human figurines wearing Buddhist robes, with a zodiac animal climbing on top of each figurine's shoulder. The other set included twelve standing human figurines with zodiac animal heads.[102] Indeed, scholars often argue that it was during the Sui dynasty that burying figurines of zodiac animals became popular, initially in the region of what is now Hunan and Hubei.[103]

According to my own survey, a total of fifty-four Tang-era tombs have been found containing zodiac figurines, most of which were found in tombs dated to the High Tang and mid-Tang periods; the earliest examples are mainly from the southern tombs, particularly along the middle and upper reaches of the Yangzi River. The tradition of burying the dead with such figurines appears to have declined in the late Tang (table 8). In terms of the post-Tang era, scholars generally agree that the use of zodiac figurines was in decline, especially after the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period. By the Northern Song, such figurines rarely made their way into tombs. Zhang Lihua speculates that this decline was due to the rising fashion during the Northern Song of burning paper objects in lieu of burying ceramic figurines, which also explains

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98 For instance, the tomb of Li Jingyou (M2603; Henan; 738) contained twelve iron figurines of zodiac animals, each of which was placed in a small niche exclusively made for figurines of zodiac animals. There are a total of twelve niches, with three on each side of the four walls of the tomb chamber. See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Yanshi Xingyuan Tang mu*, 103. In another tomb dated to the early Tang and found in Hunan, inside the (unknown number of) niches cut into two opposite sides of the tomb chamber were found twelve ceramic figurines. See He Jiejun and Wen Daoyi, "Hunan Changsha Niujiaotang Tang mu," 634.

99 Ye Wa, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China," 273.

100 For a detailed discussion of how the twelve animals were arranged in a specific order, see Jiao Lin, "Tang dai guanzhong shi'er shengxiao yanjiu," 19–21. For a general study of zodiac animals as Tang tomb art in various forms (e.g., ceramic figurines, stone reliefs, decorative images on bronze mirrors, etc.), see Ho, "The Twelve Calendrical Animals in Tang Tombs."

101 For the original report, see Shandong sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, "Linzi Beichao Cui shi mu," 239. For scholars' arguments about this set as the earliest excavated example of figurines of zodiac animals, see Xu Diankui, "Luoyang diqu Sui Tang mu de fenqi," 285; Zhang Lihua, "Shi'er shengxiao de qiyuan ji muzang zhong de shi'er shengxiao yong," 64; Zhang Xunliao and Bai Bin, *Zhongguo Daojiao kaogu*, 1720.

102 Xiong Chuanxin, "Hunan Xiangyin xian Sui daye liunian mu," 40, 42.

103 See Zhang Lihua, "Shi'er shengxiao de qiyuan ji muzang zhong de shi'er shengxiao yong," 64; Chen Anli, "Gu wenwu zhong de shi'er shengxiao," 44.

why Northern Song zodiac figurines were mainly found in present-day Sichuan and Fujian Provinces, where the older burial tradition with ceramic figurines remained dominant.[104]

Century	7th	7th–8th	8th	8th–9th	9th	9th–10th	unknown
Number	4	4	27	10	1	3	5

Table 8. Temporal Distribution of 54 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Figurines of Zodiac Animals

Tombs containing zodiac figurines were widespread geographically (fig. 15), yet with a concentration in the Tang capital regions (modern Shaanxi and Henan Provinces).[105] Considering both temporal and spatial distributions of the zodiac figurines in pre-Tang and Tang times, we may reasonably speculate that burying zodiac figurines originated as a southern tradition (particularly in the regions now known as Hunan and Hubei) and spread northward, and they prospered especially in the capital regions in the High Tang and mid-Tang times and declined in the late Tang.

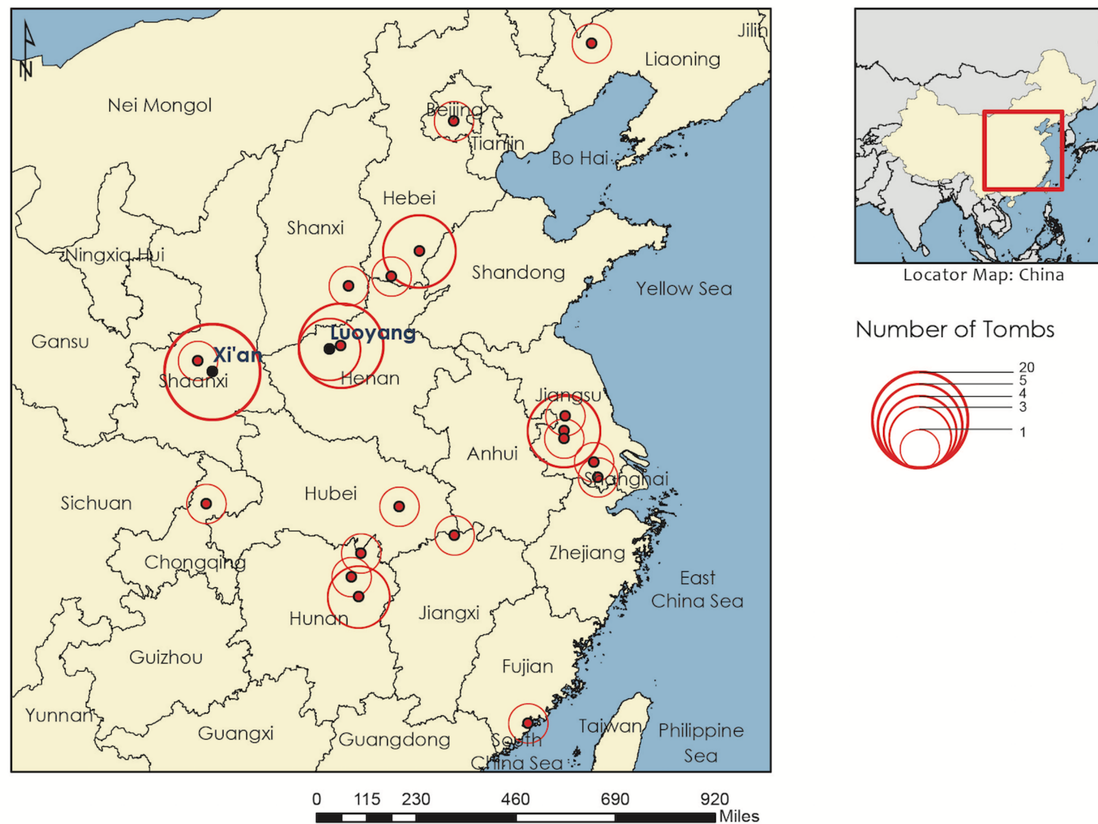

Figure 15. Geographical Distribution of 54 Tang-Era Tombs Containing Figurines of Zodiac Animals

104 Zhang, Lihua, "Shi'er shengxiao de qiyuan ji muzang zhong de shi'er shengxiao yong," 64–65. See also Chen Anli, "Gu wenwu zhong de shi'er shengxiao," 49–50.
105 Among the fifty-four tombs containing figurines of zodiac animals, twenty-one were found in Shaanxi, eight in Jiangsu, eight in Henan, five in Hebei, five in Hunan, one in Beijing, one in Sichuan, one in Shanxi, one in Jiangxi, one in Hubei, one in Fujian, and one in Liaoning.

9. “Dish-Mouthed” Vessels

Many serving vessels and kitchenware were placed in tombs, presumably to provide, symbolically, an endless supply of food and water to the deceased. Among the vast range of different sorts of bottles and jars, one type possessed a unique appearance, namely, a *pankou* 盤口 (dish-[shaped] mouth).[106] Such vessels are often called “dish-mouthed” bottles, ewers, or jars (*pankou ping* 盤口瓶, *pankou hu* 盤口壺, or *pankou guan* 盤口罐, respectively). Typically, they have a long neck, a lean body, and a bulging middle section (fig. 16a). The most outstanding and splendid dish-mouthed vessel is referred to in archaeological reports as a “dish-mouthed ewer with double dragon handles” (*shuang longbing pankou hu* 雙龍柄盤口壺; fig. 16b), a type of vessel that appears to have prevailed in the Tang for only a short time at the turn of the eighth century and in the capital regions.[107]

Figure 16. Left (a): A Dish-Mouthed Ewer; Right (b): A Dish-Mouthed Ewer with Double Dragon Handles

Source: Zhang Bo. *Zhongguo chutu ciqi quanji*, 68, 69.

Scholars generally agree that dish-mouthed vessels were containers for solid food or liquid, and that they were used both in life and in burials. Wang Ming argues that dish-mouthed

106 To build a database of all Tang tombs containing dish-mouthed vessels, I searched both CNKI and Duxiu. In CNKI, under the “Basic Search,” I did a “full-text” search for the keyword 盤口 in articles containing the “title” keyword 唐 or 唐墓. I chose “precise” for both “full-text” and “title” searches. In Duxiu, I used the keyword 盤口, and searched in the categories *tushu* 圖書, *baozhi* 報紙, *xuewei lunwen* 學位論文, and *huiyi lunwen* 會議論文. It is not easy to define unambiguously what should or should not be categorized as a “dish-mouthed” vessel, as Chinese archaeologists do not regard just any vessel with a dish-shaped mouth as a “dish-mouthed” vessel. For instance, spittoons (*tuoyu* 唾盂), pitchers (*zhuhu* 注壺), ewers with a spout in the shape of a chicken head (*jishou hu* 雞首壺), waste jars (*zhadou* 渣斗), and ewers with a spout and handle like a teapot (*zhihu* 執壺) may have dish-shaped mouths, but when they do, archaeological reports do not usually categorize them as “dish-mouthed” vessels. Moreover, in many reports, an ordinary-looking vase, kettle, or jar with a dish-shaped mouth is not consistently categorized as such by archaeologists. Therefore, I limited my survey to vessels identified as “dish-mouthed” (*pankou* 盤口) vessels by archaeologists and also attempted to find images of each to confirm that it was correctly labeled in the excavation reports.

107 According to the studies by Wang Guangyao and Xue Yun, the earliest dish-mouthed ewer with double dragon handles dates to 675 and the latest dates to 706. See Wang Guangyao, “Tang dai shuanglong bing pankou hu yanjiu,” 101; Xue Yun, “Pankou hu zi Liuchao zhi Tang Song de zaoxing,” 148.

vessels, together with pagoda-shaped jars (*tashi guan* 塔式罐), jars with sculptured decoration (*duisu guan* 堆塑罐), five-tubed vases (*wuguan ping* 五管瓶), and five-linked jars (*wulian guan* 五聯罐) were varieties of "soul jars" (*hunping* 魂瓶), all of which helped to serve the essential needs of the soul living inside the grave. According to him, they fed the soul to prevent it from diminishing out of starvation and from haunting the living out of dissatisfaction.[108] As evidence, Wang and other scholars bring up the examples of two dish-mouthed jars dating to 819 and 850, which were both found with inscriptions identifying them as *ying* 罌—a type of jar known to have been used to contain food—as well as the example of another vessel dating to 900 inscribed with the two characters "*shiping*" 食瓶 (food jar).[109]

According to my survey, there are at least 111 Tang-era tombs unquestionably containing dish-mouthed vessels.[110] The tomb occupants ranged broadly in terms of their socioeconomic strata, and included members of the imperial family, officials of various ranks, and non-office-holders. Several scholars point out that dish-mouthed vessels started to take on new shapes and decoration motifs around the late Tang and Five Dynasty periods (with the time of the transformation varying by region).[111] As sometimes the new developments overshadow the dish-shaped mouth as a main feature, some vessels with dished-shaped mouths are not necessarily categorized or named as such.[112] Nearly half of the dish-mouthed vessels in my survey were found in early Tang tombs (table 9), which may reflect this change.

Century	7th	7th–8th	8th	8th–9th	9th	unknown
Number	44	5	19	15	18	10

Table 9. Temporal Distribution of 111 Tang-Era Tombs Containing "Dish-Mouthed" Vessels

108 Wang thinks that pagoda-shaped jars were models of "five-grain granaries" (*wugu cang* 五穀倉), and the pagoda shape was a feature influenced by Buddhism. He also argues that it was not until the Northern Song that dish-mouthed vessels and pagoda-shaped jars began to differ in terms of what they contained, and that the former started to contain only liquids, and the latter only solid food. See Wang Ming, "Tang Song shiqi de mingqi wugucang he liangying," 90–94. Moreover, in contrast to dish-mouthed vessels, which represented more of a southern tradition, pagoda-shaped jars were found mainly in the north. Scholars generally think that these two objects shared the same symbolic meanings and functions, but reflected southern and northern styles, respectively. For in-depth studies of pagoda-shaped jars, see Yuan Shengwen, "Tashi guan yanjiu"; Cheng Ting, "Tang mu chutu tashiguan yanjiu." For studies of soul jars, see Tong Tao, "Wulian guan he hunping de xingtai xue fenxi"; Tao Siyan, "Hunping, qianshu yu shidao ronghe."

109 Wang Ming, "Tang Song shiqi de mingqi wugucang he liangying," 90–92. All the three vessels were found in Zhejiang Province. For the original report on the jars with the inscription *ying*, see Zhongguo guisuanyan xiehui, *Zhongguo taoci shi*, 194; for the vessel with the inscription "*shiping*," see Wang Lianying, "Jieshao yijian ziming 'shiping' de Tang yueyao qingci," 94.

110 As explained earlier, all the reports of these tombs not only mention dish-mouthed vessels, but also contain clear images of them. Undoubtedly, the actual number of published Tang-era tombs containing dish-mouthed vessels must be significantly larger, but identifying all such tombs is unfeasible.

111 See Huang Yijun, *Song dai qingbaici de lishi dili yanjiu*, 250; Xue Yun, "Pankou hu zi Liuchao zhi Tang Song de zaoxing," 147; Wuhan shi wenwu guanli chu, "Wuchang Shipailing Tang mu qingli jianbao," 38.

112 For instance, according to Huang Yijun, the use of the dragon motif and sculptured decoration (*duisu* 堆塑) can be regarded as the most significant changes to *dish*-mouthed vessels starting in the late Tang. A type of *dish*-mouthed vessel that appeared in the Northern Song in today's Jiangxi Province is often named "a vase with a long neck and sculptured decoration" (*duisu changjing ping* 堆塑長頸瓶) without mentioning its dish-shaped mouth. See Huang Yijun, *Song dai qingbaici de lishi dili yanjiu*, 250.

As suggested by a number of published studies of dish-mouthed vessels from various regions and time periods, it is clear that this type of vessel was found mainly in the south. A thorough study by Wang Rui exploring the early origins of these vessels argues that the dish-shaped mouth was a feature starting as early as the Warring States period (475–221 BCE), and that it then flourished in the Western Han and Eastern Han dynasties. Wang speculates that the dish-shaped mouth was probably invented to help prevent liquid from dripping from the outer wall of a vessel when it was being poured out. But gradually, the dish-shaped mouth lost its functional purpose and became rather an iconic cultural form.[113] In a different study, Wang discusses the stylistic development of dish-mouthed vessels during the Three Kingdoms (220–280), Western Jin and Eastern Jin periods (265–420), and Northern and Southern Dynasties period (420–589) and maps their geographic distribution—mainly in the south and along the Yangzi River.[114] Nicolas Tackett points out that dish-mouthed ewers (*pankou hu*) and dish-mouthed bottles (*pankou ping*) were popular in Khitan-type tombs in the Liao dynasty (916–1125).[115] Huang Yijun, in her comprehensive research on dish-mouthed vessels found in Northern and Southern Song tombs, reveals that they were mainly found in tombs in Hunan, Jiangxi, and Zhejiang Provinces.[116]

Figure 17 confirms the consensus that burying dish-mouthed vessels was more a southern tradition. As the GIS map shows, two-thirds of the 111 Tang-era tombs containing dish-mouthed vessels were found in the south, and the rest were mostly in the Tang capital regions in present-day Shaanxi and Henan Provinces.[117]

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113 Wang Rui, "Liang Han shiqi taozhi pankou hu chutan," 441–442.

114 Wang Rui, "Sanguo Liang Jin Nanbeichao shiqi pankou hu de xingzhi yu gongneng," 80–81.

115 Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, 215 and 217.

116 Huang Yijun, *Song dai qingbaici de lishi dili yanjiu*, 242–243.

117 Among the 111 tombs containing "dish-mouthed" vessels, 31 were found in Henan, 19 in Fujian, 14 in Hubei, 11 in Shaanxi, 9 in Hunan, 8 in Jiangsu, 5 in Sichuan, 3 in Anhui, 3 in Jiangxi, 2 in Guangxi, 2 in Zhejiang, 1 in Shandong, 1 in Shanxi, 1 in Guangdong, and 1 in Liaoning.

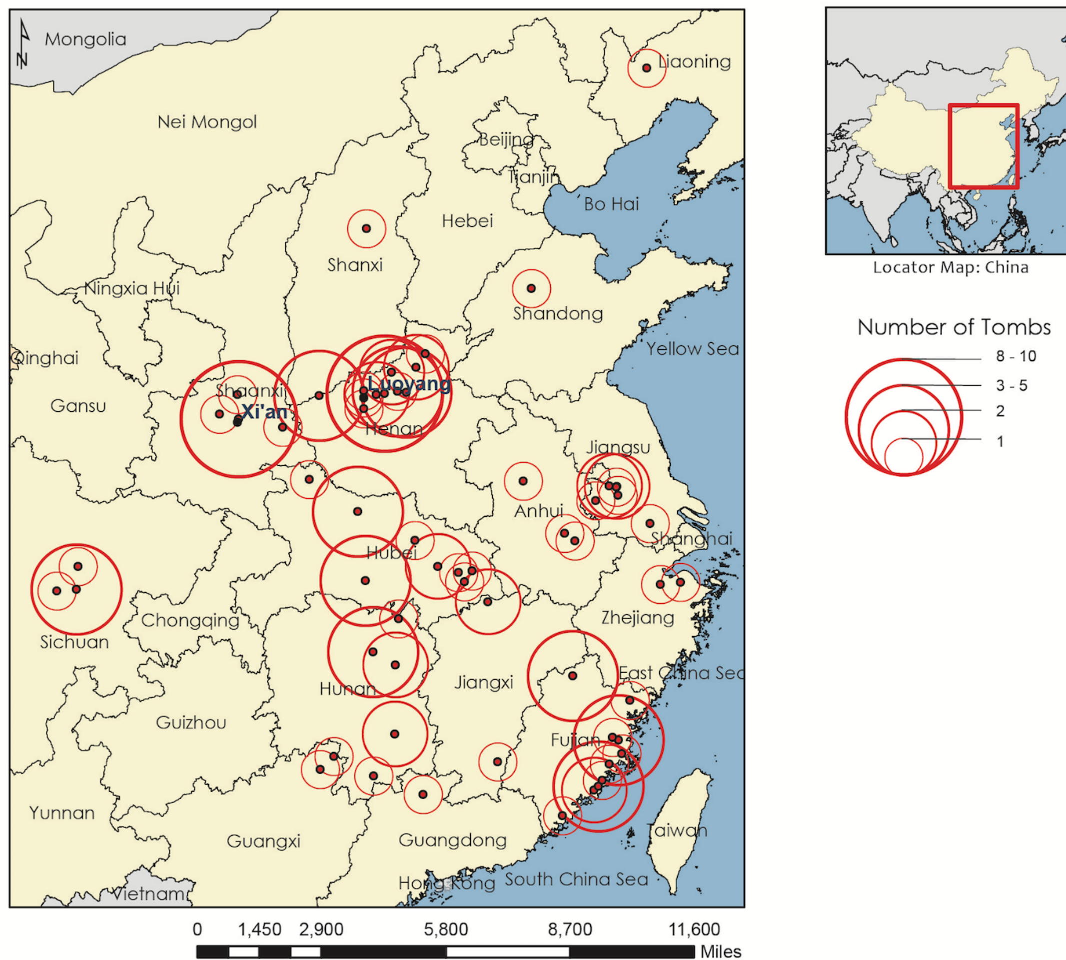

Figure 17. Geographical Distribution of 111 Tang-Era Tombs Containing "Dish-Mouthed" Vessels

III. Objects Usually Found Together in Tombs

Prostrating figurines, ritual fish, tomb dragons, and wind-watching birds often appear together in tombs. When this is the case, they are usually found in the main chamber of the tomb close to one another, as though they are part of a set. Tombs containing these objects often also contain tomb guardian beasts alongside them.[118] For this reason, many scholars have studied these figurines as a set and sometimes categorized them together as *mingqi shensha* 明器神煞 or *shenguai* 神怪. As mentioned earlier, Xu Pingfang calls them *mingqi shensha*, which she defines

118 This observation has been made by many scholars. For example, Cui Shiping points out that tombs containing ritual fish often also contained tomb dragons, prostrating figurines, and wind-watching birds, and that they were close to each other in location within the tomb. He cites the example of the Hebei tomb dating to 688 and belonging to Guo Xian and points out that all these figurines were put neatly together right behind two tomb guardian beasts. He speculates that these figurines were similar in nature and probably played the same role as tomb guardian beasts, that is, "to guard the tomb and repel evil" 鎮墓驅邪. See Cui Shiping, "Tang Song muzang suojian 'yiyu' yu zangsu chuanbo," 85. For the original archaeological report of the tomb in question, see Xin Mingwei and Li Zhenqi, "Hebei Nanhe Tang dai Guo Xiang mu," 20–21.

as “spirit objects for burial and objects related to *yinyang* superstition.”[119] As for the “*shenguai*,” Zhang Xunliao and Bai Bin explain that “they are relevant to the guarding of the tomb” 與鎮墓有關 and think that they can be classified as Daoist elements. But, they aptly point out that Daoism and indigenous Chinese beliefs were too intertwined to be clearly differentiated.[120] However, it should be noted that the very concept of *shensha* or *shenguai* reflect scholars' attempts at understanding these unusual-looking figurines; there is no particular reason to believe that people in Tang times used these terms, and one cannot prove that their function was tied either to *yinyang* beliefs or to Daoist principles. What we nevertheless can still explore is the degree to which these objects were part of a common repertoire or regional tradition, as reflected by similar temporal and geographical distributions.

Table 10 clearly demonstrates that the three types of human-headed animal-bodied figurines and prostrating figurines appear often in the same tombs. Given that many of the tombs in question had been looted before their archaeological excavation, it is certainly possible that the correlations would be even stronger in pristine tombs.

	Tomb dragons (40)	Ritual fish (31)	Wind-watching birds (19)	Prostrating figurines (60)
Tomb dragons	–	77% (24)	53% (10)	30% (18)
Ritual fish	60% (24)	–	47% (9)	27% (16)
Wind-watching birds	25% (10)	29% (9)	–	12% (7)
Prostrating figurines	45% (18)	52% (16)	37% (7)	–

Table 10. Correlations among Four Types of Figurines

Note: Numbers reflect percentages of tombs containing objects in the left column that also contain objects in the top row.

Moreover, tombs containing these four types of figurines shared some common traits and also had variations in their temporal and geographic distributions. Most are dated to the early or High Tang periods and were found in the north, particularly in present-day Liaoning, Hebei, and Shanxi Provinces. Tomb dragons, ritual fish, and wind-watching birds were all relatively rare in tombs from Tang capital regions, while more than half of the prostrating figurines are from tombs in Shaanxi and Henan. Furthermore, except for the wind-watching birds, all the other three types of objects were uncommon in tombs of the south, except for some Hunan tombs. In addition, these figurines were rarely found in pre-Sui tombs, and post-Tang examples have mainly been found in the south. The pre-Tang examples of tomb dragons, ritual fish, and prostrating figurines are from northern tombs, while those of wind-watching birds are from tombs in the Lower Yangzi River region. Considering all of these patterns, it is likely that the set of objects (including tomb dragons, ritual fish, and prostrating figurines) constituted a cultural repertoire of northern origin and that wind-watching birds originated in the Lower Yangzi River

119 Xu Pingfang, “Tang Song muzang zhong de ‘mingqi shensha’ yu ‘muyi’ zhidu,” 87.
120 Zhang and Bai consider all these human-headed-and-animal-bodied figurines as various representations of the Daoist thunder god, and prostrating figurines as geomancers and diviners in the afterlife. See Zhang Xunliao and Bai Bin, *Zhongguo Daojiao kaogu*, 1611–1750.

region, and both possibly emerged around the middle of the sixth century. Subsequently, these regional mortuary cultures were transmitted to other parts of China.[121]

IV. Conclusion

In contrast to the ritual uniformity that we see in the pattern of burial dates and some geomantic features of grave sites—as discussed in the previous two chapters—the nine types of grave goods studied in this chapter clearly reveal regional variation and temporal change. For instance, iron oxen and pigs were almost exclusively found in Tang capital regions; prostrating figurines, ritual fish, and tomb dragons seem to have originated in the north but gradually became popular in the south, particularly in post-Tang eras. Figurines of zodiac animals and dish-mouthed jars, by contrast, probably originated in the south but quickly made their way to the north. Additionally, burying tomb contracts seem to have always been more a southern tradition in both Tang and post-Tang eras, while placing scissors inside or close to coffins was more or less a widespread practice across regions.

How does one account for the fact that some elements of mortuary culture—notably the selection of auspicious burial dates—seem to follow uniform patterns across China and over a very long period of time, while other elements of mortuary culture display clear regional variations? In the following chapter—the conclusion of this dissertation—I will explore possible answers to this question.

121 Some scholars argue that these objects might have originated in the northeast, and specifically, the Chaoyang area in today's Liaoning Province, and gradually moved southward through Hebei and Shanxi. For example, see Wu Yanliang, "Shixi Liaoning Chaoyang diqu Sui Tang muzang de wenhua yinsu." However, based on my current study, it is difficult to reach such a conclusion.

Conclusion

What did people of the Tang *actually* do to take care of their dead? How did their treatment of the dead follow or differ from what state-sponsored ritual texts prescribed that they *should* do? To answer these central questions, I have examined Tang-era death ritual practice through a large corpus of empirical data, including thousands of epitaphs in the form of rubbings and transcriptions and other grave goods within their original archaeological contexts. I will conclude this study with a brief overview of the discoveries and arguments presented in each chapter before addressing some broader questions related to the larger issue of cultural standardization.

This dissertation starts with a composite reconstruction of the death ritual program, culling information mainly from Tang-era epitaphs but also from other archaeological finds, histories, and anecdotes, and it compares this reconstructed ritual practice with the prescribed ritual "ideals," exemplified in the *Kaiyuan Rites*. As chapter 1 has revealed, ritual practice significantly diverged from ritual prescription in some key elements. For example, there existed widespread practice of noncanonical rituals to attend to the soul of the deceased, such as the *hun*-recalling burial and joint burials for married couples, which were either missing from or condemned by state ritual texts. Also noncanonical were Buddhist rituals, which were broadly integrated into Chinese society by Tang times. Among the most popular Buddhist death rituals was the "seven-seven fasting," performed by elites of all types with or without formal affiliation to the Buddhist clergy. The discrepancy between actual practice and ritual prescription, I suggest, lies in their different focuses: actual practices were governed by a concern for taking care of the soul of the dead, whereas ritual prescriptions sought to maintain social order by regulating practice based on official rank.

The divergence between practice and prescription might lead one to imagine a situation of ritual chaos, as the state-sponsored ritual texts failed to standardize ritual practice. However, the next three chapters—each of which focuses on one aspect of the ritual program—demonstrate the existence of both uniformity and diversity. Particularly striking is that patterns of auspicious and inauspicious burial dates remained uniform and stable throughout the Tang dynasty across regional boundaries and even lasted into the late imperial period (chapter 2). This significant discovery calls on us to revise the conventional view that cultural standardization emerged in late imperial China largely due to Neo-Confucianism and gentry "localism," neither of which existed in the Tang; it suggests that we reconsider the mechanisms accounting for the ritual uniformity that existed as early as the Tang dynasty. Chapter 3 discusses how tombs were positioned and how burial space was conceptualized. Similarly, we see some universal practices, such as burying the dead of multiple generations of the same family together, as well as defining burial space by a grave site's surroundings in the four cardinal directions. Geomantic rules were commonly used to select grave sites and to determine the location and orientation of a tomb inside a cemetery. But at the same time, regional differences are evident as well, especially with regard to two geographic distinctions: the capital versus provincial regions, and the north versus the south.[1] A much higher percentage of epitaphs from the provinces describe the scenes in the

1 As mentioned in chapter 3, the "north" refers to the regions north of the Huai River, mostly including today's Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan, and Hebei Provinces, while the "south" refers to the Lower Yangzi River region and

four cardinal directions of grave sites than those from the capital regions, which, I argue, was largely a result of different senses of identity held by bureaucratic elites (concentrated in the capital regions) and by non-office-holding elites (concentrated in the provinces). In terms of the north versus south distinction, northern epitaphs that do describe the surroundings in the four cardinal directions are much more likely to emphasize a land's geomantic auspiciousness, whereas southern epitaphs tend to talk about land using the language of commercial land contracts. A plausible explanation for the southern style is the combination of the vibrant market economy flourishing in the Lower Yangzi River region in the late Tang and the emergence of a new commercial elite at this time. Chapter 4 switches the focus from the death ritual program that took place above ground mostly prior to burial to the underground contents of tombs. By means of a comprehensive survey of thousands of archaeological reports of Tang tombs and quantitative analysis of nine somewhat unusual types of grave goods, it identifies both regional variation and temporal change, and traces possible cultural interactions between regions.

To summarize, my study of Tang death ritual has revealed remarkable degrees of standardization as well as regional and temporal variations. This conclusion leads to two critical questions: why were some burial rituals uniform across China, while others were not? Furthermore, what accounts for the standardization and what accounts for the diversity? As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, most studies of cultural standardization deal with late imperial and modern China, and despite the different views of scholars (e.g., the orthodoxy versus orthopraxy—or "ritual versus belief"—debate between James Watson and Evelyn Rawski; Donald Sutton's concept of pseudo-orthopraxy and his reexamination of the "ritual versus belief" duality; and Patricia Ebrey's, Sutton's, and many other scholars' disagreements on Watson's top-down state-fostered model, etc.), Neo-Confucianism and gentry localism are often regarded as two essential reasons for the standardization of culture across a vast geographic region. Thus, it is particularly interesting to explore mechanisms of integration and diversity in an era before either Neo-Confucianism or gentry localism existed.

I propose four important factors that likely contributed to standardization in one way or another. First, there was a wide circulation of ritual texts during the Tang. In a memorial presented in 835, Feng Su 馮宿 (who obtained the *jinshi* 進士, the highest degree in the imperial examination, in 792) pled to the state for an imperial edict prohibiting the publication of illicit calendars. The edict was granted but the prohibition failed to stop commercialized calendars from being printed and flooding the empire even before the state issued its official calendar each year—as demonstrated by many such texts found among the Dunhuang manuscripts.[2] The state certainly tried to hold a monopoly on time and divination through its official or state-sponsored texts including calendars, almanacs, ritual texts (such as the *Kaiyuan Rites*), divination texts (such as the *Yinyang shu*), and so forth. But the state did not seem to succeed in securing such a monopoly. With the help of printing technology, ritual texts on divination and geomancy (official or not) circulated widely. As shown in chapters 2 and 3, evidence from epitaphs and anecdotes suggests that these texts were consulted when people sought auspicious burial dates and well-positioned grave sites. For example, an anecdote records that Monk Hong, a famous Tang-era geomancer, spotted an auspicious grave site and sought to recommend the site to a low-

northern Zhejiang Province (e.g. Shaoxing through Ningbo). Most of the Tang-era epitaphs were found in these regions.

2 The edict is cited and translated in de Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 137–138; for further discussion of the illicit nature of the Dunhuang calendars, see 147.

ranking official named Yuan Qianyao.[3] Yuan gracefully declined Hong's offer because he lacked the means to pay him. Later, however, Hong found out that Yuan not only had bought the same piece of land (which Hong had not at the time revealed to Yuan) but even had it fixed to incorporate all the proper auspicious features. Hong was too curious not to ask who had helped Yuan, and learned that "the diviner was a mere villager" 卜葬者，村夫耳, whose "methods" (*shu* 術) were "based on humble and vulgar texts" 憑下俚斗書耳.[4] Clearly, despite the rustic nature of these "vulgar" texts, the principles used to identify auspicious grave sites were the same or at least very similar to those employed by a famous geomancer. This is suggestive of how widespread texts of divination and geomancy were and how uniform they might have been. We may reasonably speculate that it was at least in part by means of the circulation of texts that certain aspects of death ritual (such as burial date divination and some elements of grave siting) were standardized empire-wide.

Second, there seems to have been a good supply of ritual specialists at all levels of society, individuals who probably traveled far and wide. Ritual specialists often appear in Tang anecdotes, such as the anecdote mentioned previously, which records both a famous ritual specialist and one at a much lower level, the latter of whom probably did not charge much so as to be more commonly hired by villagers. Also interesting is that this anecdote mentions that Hong had just returned (to the western capital, Chang'an) from the eastern capital, Luoyang.[5] Such famous specialists traveled frequently, at least between the two capital regions. In the provinces, certainly by the late Tang, powerful governors commonly had their own ritual specialists.[6] Additionally, a good number of epitaphs from various regions also directly record the involvement of ritual specialists, referred to as *qingwu* 青烏, a point made in chapters 1 and 3. Even more epitaphs record diviners using two methods for divination: one by means of the tortoise shell, called *bu* 卜 (plastromancy), and the other by the manipulation of milfoil stalks, called *shi* 筮 (achillomancy). The existence of a class of ritual specialists circulating either locally or empire-wide could help explain the spread of common divination and geomantic techniques across the empire.

Third, as discussed in chapter 3, due to both social and political turmoil and new economic opportunities particularly in the south, the late Tang witnessed great migrations of people from the capital regions to the provinces and from the north to the south. Accompanying the migrants were inevitably customs and texts of all sorts, certainly including ritual texts and divination manuals.

Fourth, one should consider the state's involvement in the standardization process. As mentioned earlier, the state issued printed calendars and ritual texts to circulate throughout the empire to establish unified and centralized ritual practice. Even though the state failed in monopolizing these sorts of texts, the influence of the state—which remained highly centralized until the Huang Chao 黃巢 Rebellion (874–884)—should not be overlooked.[7] For example,

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3 The same Monk Hong is also recorded in the *Da Tang xinyu* and in the anecdote of Grand Councilor Wei Anshi, cited in chapter 1 and chapter 3 herein.
4 See the anecdote of "Yuan Qianyao" 源乾曜 in TPGJ 389:114.
5 See TPGJ 389:114.
6 For instance, see XTS 214:6019–6020. For further discussion of and sources on this topic, see Huang Zhengjian, *Dunhuang zhanbu wenshu*, 225–227.
7 Nicolas Tackett has argued: "It is now clear that the second half of the [Tang] dynasty was not as decentralized as has often been argued….Until the Huang Chao Rebellion, the Tang remained a strongly centralized empire; the late

chapter 2 reveals that the patterns of auspicious burial dates in the Tang correspond significantly to what was prescribed in the Northern Song (960–1127) state-commissioned ritual text *Dili xinshu*, which may have adopted content from the *Yinyang shu*, a Tang-era state-commissioned ritual text, as some scholars have hypothesized. Nevertheless, as the *Yinyang shu* likely recorded some popular practices, the Tang state's role was probably similar to what Patricia Ebrey argues about the Northern Song state's role in shaping the uniformity of funeral ritual, that is, rather than effectively promoting "a single, coherent model," it confirmed "the validity and efficacy of the mixed set of practices that had become conventional."[8] This point can also be demonstrated by the prevalence of noncanonical practice such as the Buddhist "seven-seven" fasting ritual and joint burials, both discussed in chapter 1.

Additionally, it is worth considering Huang Yijun's interpretation of the state's role in standardization in the pre-Song era and whether it might also work for the Tang. Huang argues that a "core Han burial culture" existed as early as the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE). Taking an archaeologist's perspective, she argues that a distinctive Han burial culture emerged in the capital of Chang'an and quickly and thoroughly penetrated the rest of the empire, particularly over the course of the first century BCE.[9] According to her, the development of this uniformity depended on two key factors: one, in order to unify the empire, the Western Han court standardized burial customs and other ritual practices by frequently and repeatedly appointing its officials—who were well trained in classical tradition—to localities empire-wide; two, state officials returning to their home villages upon retirement, where they later died and were buried, inevitably brought back elements of the dominant Chang'an style and incorporated them into their burial and other cultural practices. Moreover, the prestige that such families of retired officials enjoyed at the local level, as well as the pull of the court fashions helped spread capital culture and change local burial customs.[10] In short, Huang's hypothesis is also a top-down model, not unlike James Watson's model described in the introduction of this dissertation. However, as Nicolas Tackett convincingly argues, Chang'an and Luoyang—the two imperial capitals in the Tang dynasty—both possessed high concentrations of upper-class families serving in nationally prominent offices generation after generation;[11] with a lower prevalence of prominent officials returning to the provinces during retirement, Huang's mechanism may not have been as effective in Tang times. Therefore, we may conclude that the state undoubtedly played some role in cultural standardization, but its role should not be exaggerated.

Looking at the question of cultural standardization from the opposite perspective, how might one account for diversity? Three factors should be considered here.

First, compared to burial date divination and geomantic rules inside a family cemetery, which were relatively quick to spread and remained stable (via circulation of almanacs and other relevant texts and the movement of people who carried the knowledge), the way that people conceptualized burial space must have depended highly on the specific geographic features of a place, its cultural tradition, and the local funerary workshops. Indeed, the study of the Luzhou epitaphs in chapter 3 reveals that epitaphs from the same county (in contrast to other counties)

Tang provincial system did not preordain the collapse of the dynasty in the year 880." See Tackett, *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy*, 185.

8 Ebrey, "The Response of the Sung State to Popular Funeral Practices," 229–230.

9 Huang Yijun, "Chang'an's Funerary Culture and the Core Han Culture," 153–154, 169–170.

10 Huang Yijun, "Chang'an's Funerary Culture and the Core Han Culture," 165–166, 169–170.

11 Tackett, *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy*, 139.

tend to describe a burial site and its surroundings similarly and mention many shared landmarks (i.e., rivers and mountains).

Second, as chapter 3 has also discussed, due to the medieval economic revolution and as part of it, a new commercial elite emerged particularly in the south. Within this new group of elites, a commercial mentality may have developed, one manifestation of which was that burial land came to be conceptualized in a new way that emphasized grave sites as family property. Additionally, the different ties of capital elites (mainly bureaucrats) and provincial elites (mainly non-office-holding elites, particularly large landholders and merchants) to land and their localities also resulted in different views of grave sites. In short, the emergence of new elites in Tang times may have spurred a breakdown in cultural homogeneity.

Third, local fashion and the availability of certain objects locally might help us understand why grave goods could be so variable. Understandably, what was to be buried inside a grave was certainly a choice by the family, reflecting both individual preference and the influence of local fashion. Meanwhile, we should also be careful not to overemphasize family choice, as perhaps often a deciding factor for what was placed inside a tomb was the availability of certain objects on the local market. In other words, we should be aware that grave goods may have been supply—rather than demand—driven. If a kiln in one place produced certain sorts of figurines and vessels, people burying their dead in that region naturally made use of those particular objects, especially given that, first, transportation was expensive and slow, and, second, according to Huang Yijun's research, ceramic objects made specifically for burial—in contrast to those used in life—were usually made not long before the burial and were likely made locally.[12] For instance, the dish-mouthed shape of a jar (discussed in chapter 4) might have made little difference to a family. But because vessels with such mouths populated local funerary markets, families simply bought them out of convenience. Although modern archaeologists pay careful attention to stylistic variations in vessel forms, it is not clear that such distinctive features were considered important by the people of the time. In short, what was sold at local funerary shops was most likely what people chose to buy.

To conclude, there was certainly some degree of uniformity in medieval Chinese death ritual, but it is impossible to attribute this uniformity to just one or two specific factors. Such standardized practices seem to have been the consequence of multiple factors, including the wide circulation of ritual texts and specialists, large migrations of people and the dispersal of customs that they carried with them, the deliberate and consistent effort by the state to maintain control over ritual practice, and probably many more other factors not considered here. Meanwhile, regional differences never ceased to exist. Just as with standardization, local variety also needs to be understood from multiple perspectives, as it may have reflected different local realities (e.g., geography, customs, funerary industry, etc.) and views of different elite groups, and could also have been driven by fashion and by the availability of goods in the local market. Undoubtedly, there was, on the one hand, both tension and inseparability between "practice" and "belief," and, on the other hand, the "harmonious" coexistence of empire-wide standardization and regional variation.

As a final observation, I would like to emphasize the particular value of tomb epitaphs as both archaeological data and a historical source. They provide the possibility of looking at a broad spectrum of elite society, rather than just the very top of the upper crust, the subject of

12 Huang Yijun, *Song dai qingbaici de lishi dili yanjiu*, 259.

most extant historical records. I also hope to have demonstrated the usefulness of digital humanities in large database studies; this method helps to reveal patterns and variations over a wide scope of space and time, patterns that can be usually difficult to see through more traditional methodological approaches. Without tomb epitaphs and digital methods, this study reconstructing death ritual in the Tang dynasty would not have been possible. However, questions asked, sources used, and methods applied in this dissertation certainly are not exclusive to cases of the Tang. It would be interesting to use tomb epitaphs found in other eras and analyze the gleaned data by the same methods to reveal death ritual practices in pre- and post-Tang times for comparison, and eventually to consider the larger issue of standardization and variety over much longer spans of time and space.

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