

QUADRILATERAL PATTERNING IN THE TOMB OF FU HAO

Kwok Kian-Chow*

In the Shang oracle bone language, concepts of territorial organization were expressed in quadrilateral terms; *situ* "the four lands", *sifang* "the *fang*-polities in the four (directions)". The *situ* are believed to have been lands under the political influence of Shang. The *sifang* were hostile to the Shang. In the so-called "royal mausoleum" of Xibeigang in the Anyang region the *ya* (cross)-shaped burial is another example of Shang quadrilateral patterning. Examples are also seen in the decoration of bronzes, where a pair of reversed symmetrical motifs can be repeated to produce four design compartments. Another example occurs in the tomb of Fu Hao, as described in this paper.

The tomb of Fu Hao (Fig. 1) was excavated in 1976 (Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1977, 1980) and has been receiving continual scholarly attention since then (see symposium proceedings in Kaogu 1977 and reviews in Kane 1982; Thorp 1982, 1988). The significance of the tomb of Fu Hao, also known as tomb Xiaotun M5, lies in the circumstance that it is the only intact Shang tomb of this scale and the only one whose owner-occupant might have been associated with a large group of oracle bone inscriptions found previously (Wang *et al.* 1977; Zhang 1983). It is also the only Shang burial whose condition allowed detailed documentation of the placement of large burial objects on the grave floor. This pattern of placement, which I shall associate with the quadrilateral patterning found so frequently in Shang symbolism, is another significant feature of this tomb which has not before been pointed out.

The tomb is a rectangular pit grave of about 5.5 by 4 metres and 7.5 metres in depth. It was packed with an enormous quantity of burial goods, including about 2000 bronze, jade, stone, pottery and ivory objects and about 7000 cowrie shells which were tightly packed into its 165 cubic metres of space. The basic structure of the tomb may be said to be of a "conventional" type in its basic vertical-oblong spatial orientation. The existence of a second-level ledge (*ercengtai*) and the use of outer and inner coffins occurred earlier in Late Neolithic cultures.

The so-called "waist-pit" in the grave floor is a Shang feature first seen in several large tombs in Zhengzhou and Panlongcheng. The niches at the ledge level are unusual and both the waist-pit and ledge niches contained sacrificial humans (see Fig. 1). There were

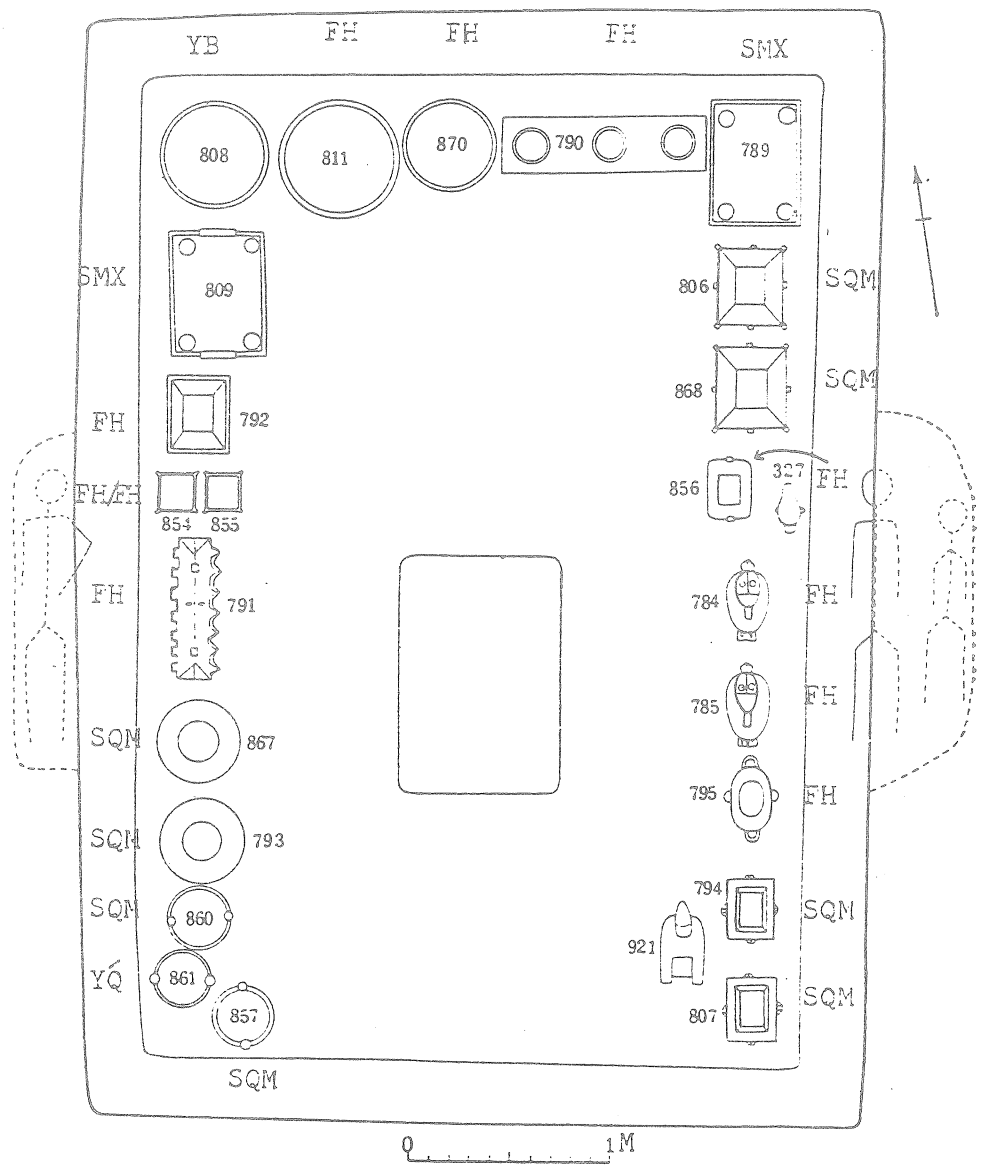
16 sacrificial humans and six dogs in the tomb all together, with one human placed in the waist-pit and three in the niches. The rest were scattered below the ledge level. At least one had been beheaded and another may have been cut in two at the waist. A structural foundation and several plinth bases and holes were found directly above the tomb.

Eleven inscriptions were found on 199 objects (mostly bronzes) in the tomb. The identification of the tomb as that of Fu Hao is based on the fact that this name occurred 111 times. Other inscribed objects may also be categorized by their associated inscriptions. Around three sides of the tomb floor were placed 27 large bronze vessels and one stone animal sculpture (Fig. 1). The most intriguing feature about these large inscribed objects is that the bronzes with the Fu Hao inscription were placed in the middle sections of each line whereas different names were found on the objects in each corner; *Si Mu Xin* in the northeast, *Si Qiao Mu* in the southeast, *Ya Bi* in the northwest and *Ya Qi* in the southwest.

The emphasis on corner positions is further attested by the forfeiting of symmetrical positioning of vessel pairs in order to give priority to the corner positions. Given the Shang obsession with symmetry as manifested in mirror image arrangements in oracle bone inscriptions and design motifs in art, one would expect to find the *Si Mu Xin* rectangular *ding*-container (809) in the position occupied by the *Ya Bi* round *ding*-container in the northwest corner of the tomb, rather than just to the south. This peculiarity can be explained by the priority given to the corners which should be occupied by different inscriptional names. Likewise, a pair of adjacently positioned *Si Qiao Mu hu*-pots (794 and 807) occupied the southeast corner whereas the pair of *Si Qiao Mu* tripodal *jia*-cups on the west side had to be moved slightly to allow the southwest corner itself to be occupied by the *Ya Qi* tripodal *jia*-cup. This deliberate quadrilateral corner-focused patterning overrides the general Shang practice of symmetry. In this regard, the Fu Hao tomb can be structurally associated with the Xibeigang burial and the oracle bone language.

As for the meaning of the quadrilateral pattern for the Shang, and for the Fu Hao tomb in particular, further investigation into the context of the Fu Hao tomb may yield plausible interpretations. In the oracle bone record, Fu Hao is believed to have been a consort of King Wu Ding (Kaogu 1977; Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1980). But some opinions suggest that if *hao* was read as a bisyllabic graph, *Fu Hao* could have been a common name for ladies from the Zi clan (Kaogu 1977; Zhang 1983). *Fu* could also have been a rank title as many *fus* in the oracle record are accorded high political status with no apparent male counterparts.

A related name in the tomb is that of *Si Mu Xin*, this being the posthumous name for a consort of King Wu Ding. It is difficult, however, to determine the significance of this name as inscribed on the burial objects. There is even less certainty with the third name *Si Qiao Mu* (Kaogu 1977), although it has been suggested that this could have been Fu Hao's style-name (Zheng 1986). Three other inscriptions have the rank title *ya*, which in the oracle record is often associated with military activities. The *ya* inscriptions could be



Starting with the northwest corner, measurements are heights:

- 808 YB round *ding* cooking pot, has scorch marks, single item, 72.2 cm.
 811 FH *yu* water container, single item, 43.9 cm.
 870 FH *yan* cooking pot, has scorch marks, single item, 78.1 cm.
 790, with 768, 769, 770 FH *yan* set, stand and 3 pots, stand has scorch marks, 103.7 cm in length.
 789, 809 SMX rectangular *ding* pair, ceremonial vessels(?), 789 has scorch marks, 80.1 and 80 cm.
 806, 868 SQM rectangular *zun* pair, ceremonial vessels(?), 55.6 and 56 cm.
 856 FH rectangular *lei* wine container, 52.5 cm, forming a pair with a counterpart found elsewhere in the tomb.
 327 Uninscribed animal-shaped *guang* wine container, 18.2 cm, forming a pair with a counterpart found elsewhere in the tomb.
 784, 785 FH bird-shaped *zun* pair of wine containers, 45.9 and 46.3 cm.
 795 FH *hu* wine container, 50.9 cm, forming a pair with a counterpart found elsewhere in the tomb.
 794, 807 SQM rectangular *hu* pair of wine containers, 64.4 and 64 cm.
 921 Uninscribed stone owl-figure, single item, 28 cm.
 807 See 794.
 857, 860 SQM *jia* pair of wine cups, 65.7 and 66.5 cm.
 861 YQ *jia* wine cup, 61.8 cm, forming a pair with a counterpart found elsewhere in the tomb.
 860 See 857.
 793, 867 SQM *zun* pair of wine containers, 47 and 46.7 cm.
 791 FH rectangular *yi*, wine container(?), single item, 88.2 cm in length.
 854, 855 FH rectangular *jia* wine cups, 67.6 and 68.8 cm, forming one set (total of three) with a counterpart found elsewhere in the tomb.
 792 FH rectangular *zun* wine container, single item, 43 cm.
 809 See 789.

FIGURE 1 (OPPOSITE PAGE): PLACEMENT OF BRONZES ON THE FLOOR OF THE FU HAO TOMB, XIAOTUN, ANYANG

FH = *Fuhao*; SMX = *Si Mu Xin*; SQM = *Si Qiao Mu*; YB = *Ya Bi*; YQ = *Ya Qi*

related thematically to two other inscriptions in the tomb having the graph *ru*, which maybe read as recording the presentation of tribute (to Shang).

Although there are unresolved questions pertaining to the inscriptions in the Fu Hao tomb (Li 1977; Li 1979; Zheng and Chen 1981), when these inscriptions and their probable interpretations are considered together with the activities of Fu Hao as preserved in the oracle bone record, a biographical sketch of Fu Hao as a powerful political figure personally involved in interactions with other polities emerges. Even if the bisyllabic reading of the graph *hao* is acceptable, the oracle inscriptions referring to Fu Hao in the context of foreign relations should still in high probability apply to the owner-

occupant of the tomb under consideration. This identification is supported in turn by the *ya* and *ru* inscriptions in the tomb.

There are about 300 accounts of Fu Hao in the oracle bone record (Wang *et al.* 1977; Yan 1981), covering nine out of the 17 topics listed by Keightley (1978) as major foci of Shang oracle bone inscriptions: sacrifice, military campaigning, sickness, childbirth, distress or trouble, dreams, orders, divine assistance or approval, and requests addressed to ancestral or natural powers. About 20 accounts in the Fu Hao oracle bone record pertain to her involvement in interactions with other polities, usually in the form of leading armed forces on coercive campaigns. The following examples are translated:

1. ? (this graph is not legible) - *wu* day crack-making, *Bin* divined: it should be *Fu Hao* whom the king will order to rectify the *Ren* (*Yingi yicun*: 527)
2. Divined: the king ought not (to order) *Fu Hao* (to follow...) to attack the *Tu fang* (*Ku Fang ershi cang jiagu buci*: 237)
3. *Que* divined: *Fu Hao* will send an envoy to *Mei* (*Yinxu shugi xubian* 4.29.1)

The high probability that these inscriptions refer to the owner-occupant of the Fu Hao tomb has been discussed above. Although there is no corresponding mention in the Fu Hao oracle bone record of the three *yas* in the inscriptions from the tomb, the placement of the *Ya Bi* and *Ya Qi* vessels on the west side could have actual geographical significance as studies have shown that both *Ya Bi* (Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1977) and *Ya Qi* (Cao 1980) were located west of Anyang.

Keightley (1983) characterizes the state structure of Shang as a thin network of pathways and encampments; state power was in some areas intermittent and transitory. This study highlights the diagrammatic characteristic of the Shang state network as opposed to a broad zone of evenly-controlled state territory. In this network emphasis would have been placed on points, directions, and the constant alterations in political forces. It is probable that the quadrilateral patterning might have been related to the cognitive symbolism produced by a constant political need for expansion: reaching the *situ* and subjugating the *sifang*.

If we accept the identification of Fu Hao as a consort of King Wu Ding, this would support the above interpretation even more forcefully as later historical accounts state that the Wu Ding reign was a period of great expansion of the Shang political sphere (although the usual note of caution must be added regarding the usage of later historical sources). The *Xuanniao* chapter in *Shijing* ("The Book of Odes") records that the "martial king Wu Ding, had none whom he did not vanquish... he set boundaries for those (states between the four seas)" (Karlgren 1950a). The *Wuyi* chapter in *Shujing* ("The Book of Documents") records that king Wu Ding "tranquilized Yin's state; it reached to small and great; there were none who peradventure bore resentment against him" (Karlgren 1950b). The Wu Ding period is contrasted with the austerity of the earlier Pan Geng period, during whose reign the Shang capital was moved to Anyang: "Pan Geng of Shang regarded the palace of the former king to be too extravagant..." (*Fanzhi* chapter in *Shuoyuan*, a Western Han text); "(In Pan Geng's palace) the woods were (merely)

polished but not carved (and) the walls were (merely) glazed but not painted..." (*Yang Xiong* chapter in *Hanshu*).

In the now commonly-used periodization of Anyang (Yinxu) archaeological remains, the sudden surge of cultural remains in Yinxu Period II also suggests this rapid growth of the power of the Shang state during the reign of Wu Ding (Chang 1986; Thorp 1988). The Yinxu Period II bronzes also mark the beginning of several new features: bronze as the prime material of choice, an increase in the number of bronze container types for alcohol, the initial appearance of vessels in animal form, and the production of pairs and sets of vessels (Thorp 1988), suggesting again an expeditious cultural growth.

The quadrilateral pattern in Shang language and burial, the corresponding placement of large burial objects in the Fu Hao tomb, the inscriptions on the Fu Hao tomb objects, the oracle record sources, later historical texts, archaeological verification and art historical consideration have been put together here to arrive at an interpretation of the meaning of the quadrilateral pattern in the Fu Hao tomb. In a recent study, Helms theorizes on the knowledge and representation of "the other" as a locus of power. The association of élites with "distance" is a significant legitimation of power (Helms 1988). With expansionism as a key political theme during the Wu Ding period, and with Fu Hao playing a significant role in external relations, reaching the *situ* and subjugating the *sifang* would have been a cognitive pattern that could find its physical expression in the quadrilateral pattern in Fu Hao's tomb.

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