

## 5 The Middle Yangzi: The Archaeology and History of Chu and Its Predecessors

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### Historical Accounts of Chu

The Middle Yangzi has been more continuously subjected to concerted archaeological research than the Sichuan Basin owing to its proximity to the Central Plains, a history of exciting archaeological finds, and association with significant polities and individuals known from historical sources. Rather than being a perpetually marginal area, the Middle Yangzi has fluctuated in the degree to which it is connected to the primary narrative of Chinese civilization. In the Late Western Zhou, this region became the core area of the Chu polity.

In contrast to Shu, Chu (pre-790–223 B.C.) was one of the urbanized states within the sphere of literate, bronze-producing peer polities around the Central Plains during the Zhou period. Early in its development, Chu became centered in the Middle Yangzi area immediately east of the Three Gorges. The political and cultural characteristics of the Chu polity that emerged in this region are known from both historical documents and archaeological finds. Nevertheless, scholarship on Chu is complex because the meanings of *Chu* are highly varied (Li X. 1991). *Chu* is used variously to refer to a region, a specific polity, people with a shared ethnic identity, and a culture that is associated with, but not necessarily coincident to, the Chu state. These definitions reflect different foci of analysis (Cook and Major 1999a, 1999b).

The Middle Yangzi area where Chu became ensconced had a lengthy history of direct connection to the Central Plains. This begins as early as the proto-historic “Early Shang” period associated with the site of Erligang in modern Zhengzhou (ca. 1425–1250 B.C.). However, no historical records discuss the archaeologically documented expansion of Erligang Culture into the Middle Yangzi region. By the Late Shang contemporary with the site of Yinxu in Anyang, the archaeological connections between the Shang core and the Middle Yangzi are less obvious, and Shang oracle bones – the earliest primary documents in East Asia – do not discuss the Middle Yangzi with any specificity.

Instead, the Middle Yangzi becomes an important element of historical narratives through its association with Chu. During the Shang period, some entity called “Chu” existed, but it is unclear whether it was a state (Blakeley 1999b:9 and n. 2) and when it became associated geographically with the Middle Yangzi. On this latter point, “the most that can be said at present is that Chu was in Hubei by 706 B.C.” (Blakeley 1999b: 13), or more conservatively, “no Chu-related archaeological materials from before circa 600 B.C. have been found in the Middle Yangzi area” (Falkenhausen 2006b: 265). During the Shang, “Jing-Chu” was said to have been a vassal group that rebelled during the reign of Wu Ding and had to be suppressed by a Shang punitive expedition (Li X. 1991). “Jing-Chu” is mentioned in the poem “Yin Wu” of the *Shijing*, a text that is said to date to the Shang period, and “Jing-Chu” is also found in oracle bone inscriptions. These Shang references do not specify the nature of Chu, nor are they directly relevant to the region of interest here.

A Chu state in the Middle Yangzi has somewhat murky origins. Numerous studies exhaustively outline the traditional account of the Chu state and associated people (e.g., Wang and Liu 1992; Wen 1967, 1990). This account focuses on the granting of Chu “barbarian” lands by King Cheng of Zhou to Xiong Yi, an early Chu lord, in the late eleventh century B.C. (*Shiji* 40.5–6 (645)). This was an early example of the *fengjian* system by which territories were assigned to members of the extended family of the Zhou rulers for governance in perpetuity (Li F. 2003a, 2006: 110–116). Chu then came into its own at the end of the eighth century with the decline of the Western Zhou (see Li F. 2006). During the Springs and Autumns period (770–480 B.C.), Chu was a major player in the political maneuverings among Central Plains states. It remained a powerful political entity through the Warring States period, until it was one of the last obstacles to Qin unification in the third century B.C.

During this period between establishment and conquest, Chu went through several phases of expansion and transition (Blakeley 1999b: 14–15). Until the third century, its center remained in southwest Henan and western Hubei. From 710 to 689 B.C., Chu engaged in a first major expansionist phase, consolidating a region along the Han River. This involved attacking nearby polities such as Deng, Jiao, Luo, Lurong, Sui, and Yun. These were probably statelets that comprised individual walled towns and a nearby hinterland of dependent households. A second expansion focused northward between 688 and 656 B.C. Further expansion into the Huai River valley occurred between 655 and 585 B.C. Chu received its first setback in the form of a defeat suffered at Chengpu in 632 B.C. From 584 to 508 B.C., Chu was in conflict with the state of Wu over the

Middle Huai River region, which led to all-out war as Wu turned Chu subject states against them and eventually occupied the Chu capital at Ying in 506 B.C. This may have prompted a southward movement of Chu people and political institutions. Thereafter, until the late fourth century, records are scarce, but the Chu reoccupied lands in the Huai region lost to Wu. The fourth century saw somewhat of a stalemate with northern states, until hostilities between Chu and the state of Qin heated up in 312–311 B.C. and again in 281 B.C. This followed the Qin conquest of Sichuan in 316 B.C. (cf. *Shiji* 5.207), which caused Qin to be an increasing threat on the western flank of Chu. When the Qin occupied the Nanyang Basin (including the city of Ying) in 278 B.C., the Chu aristocracy fled, ultimately relocating their capital in the East. Finally, the capital fell to the Qin in 223 B.C.

Chu during the Eastern Zhou period (771–221 B.C.) was closely connected with the Zhou states of the Central Plains (Major 1999; Sukhu 1999). Like other Central Plains states, Chu administration was kin based, and the rise and fall of different royal lineages is central to the political history of the state (Blakeley 1999a). Despite such connections, Chu has often been considered “alien” to the norms of North China based on characterizations of Chu practices as foreign and bizarre by Sima Qian, Ban Gu, and other early authors (Cook and Blakeley 1999). This understanding seems to have been a post hoc projection of difference, however, and masks the many commonalities between Chu and other states (Falkenhausen 2006b: 264). Many aspects of Chu ritual and court behavior were modeled on the norms of the Central Plains.

The Middle Yangzi drainage was the political center of the Chu state from its inception until the early third century B.C. – although the Chu court moved frequently during this period. The Chu established two political capitals in this region, the first called “Danyang” and the second named “Ying.” The Danyang capital was that said to have been established by Xiong Yi. Around 690 B.C., the capital was moved to Ying, where it remained until 278 B.C. Precisely where these capitals were located is not clear. Some have argued for southern locations for both capitals: Danyang near Zigui and/or Dangyang counties and Ying north of Jingzhou, perhaps at Jinancheng (see later discussion). Other scholars argue for locations much farther to the north, closer to the Zhou core in the region of the Nanyang Basin. Accordingly, Danyang would be located in southeastern Shaanxi or southwestern Henan along the Dan River, a tributary to the Han River. This perspective places Ying near modern Yicheng in northern Hubei (Blakeley 1999b; Wang H. 2006).

Of course, the entire Middle Yangzi was not controlled by Chu, even during its most expansive periods. Many small villages were not incorporated into any state apparatus, particularly those located in remote regions, including mountainous areas and the distant reaches of Hunan. These small communities and several small states besides Chu were located in the Middle Yangzi during the early periods of Chu development. A number of these polities in the region between the Han and Huai rivers in northeastern Hubei and southern Henan included Li, Lü, Sui, Shen, and Tang, among others (Li X. 1985: 171). Some of these polities have been associated with archaeological discoveries in recent years, particularly on the basis of bronze vessels with inscription. In Hunan, indigenous Bronze Age communities not incorporated into the Chu state are sometimes (rather improperly) referred to by the ethnonym “Yue” or “Yangyue.” For example, indigenous bronzes from the Springs and Autumns period in this region are referred to as “Yue ethnic bronzes” (Hunan 1984). Such ethnic terms refer generally to the various southern groups that remained outside the Huaxia polities during the Bronze Age.

#### Archaeological Perspectives

Archaeological work in the Middle Yangzi began in fits and starts in the first half of the twentieth century. By the 1950s, systematic research on prehistoric phases of occupation in the region picked up steam (e.g., Changjiang 1961; Shilongguo 1956; Zhongguo 1965). Discoveries since then have helped form a generally accepted cultural sequence. Although we focus here on the period from the Late Neolithic through the Chu era, we will begin with a brief outline of the earlier phases of the Middle Yangzi Neolithic (see Table 5.1). We then focus on the sequence of cultures contemporaneous with those in the Sichuan Basin described in Chapter 4.

#### *Neolithic*

In fact, some of the earliest evidence for the gradual transition from mobile hunting-and-gathering populations to settled, pottery-producing agricultural groups in all of China comes from the Middle Yangzi region. Pottery production began extremely early (ca. 16,350–12,490 calBC) at sites such as Yuchanyan in southern Hunan (Boaretto 2009; Yasuda 2002; Yuan 2002). However, although early rice remains have also been found at Yuchanyan (Crawford and Shen 1998), and future research

Table 5.1. Archaeological chronology of the Middle Yangzi River area

Culture	Approximate dates B.C.	Region of concentration
Pengtoushan	7500–6000	Li River/western Dongting
Chengbeixi	7200–5000	Yangzi River/western Jiangnan Plain
Lower Zaoshi	6000–4800	Li River/western Dongting
Gaomiao	5800–4800	Upper Yuan River, Hunan, and Guizhou
Tangjiagang	4800–3500	Li River/western Dongting
Daixi	4300–3300	Western Jiangnan Plain/Dongting?
Youziling	4300–3300	Eastern Han/North Jiangnan Plain
Qujialing	3300–2600	
Shijiahe	2600–2000	
“Post-Shijiahe”	2100–1900	
Early Shang (Erligang)	1425–1250	Panlongcheng/Yueyang
Feijiahe/Zhangshutan	1300–1000	Yueyang
Late Shang	1250–1050	
Western Zhou	1050–771	
Springs and Autumns	770–481	
Warring States	480–221	

may demonstrate early stages of plant cultivation there, at present, there is little support for settled agricultural activity this early.

Early Holocene sites in the Liyang Plain west of Dongting Lake are among the earliest known sites but are poorly understood. The first well-documented Neolithic culture is the Pengtoushan Culture associated with Pengtoushan, Bashidang, and other sites in northern Hunan (Hunan 1996, 2006a; Hunan and Li Xian 1990; see Figure 5.1). The Pengtoushan settlement contained both surface-level and semi-subterranean houses, 21 burials, and 15 pits from three phases of occupation dated to the late eighth and early seventh millennia B.C., based on 27 radiocarbon dates (Hunan 2006: 613–618). Ceramics at Pengtoushan and related sites are relatively simple bowl and jar forms, some of which have lug handles on opposite sides and all of which have faint impressions of cord-covered paddles on their exterior surfaces. The pottery is coarse and fired at low temperatures using carbonized rice husks and grains as temper. Stone tools at Pengtoushan are mostly flaked, with some ground-stone objects.

About 15 other affiliated contemporary sites have been found in the Dongting Lake area (Hunan 1986, 2006a: 14). The most extensively investigated among these is Bashidang, which contained 24 structures, 80 pits, and 98 burials as well as ubiquitous rice remains (Hunan 2006a).

Rice cultivation was clearly an important economic activity at Bashidang and in the Pengtoushan Culture generally.

Roughly contemporaneous with the Pengtoushan Culture is the Chengbeixi Culture, named after a site in Zhicheng City, Hubei (Changban and Zhicheng 1988; Hubei 2001c; Li Z. 1991). Altogether, seven sites associated with this culture were investigated in the early 1980s along the banks of the Yangzi River in Yidu County: Chengbeixi, Huamiaodi, Jinzishan, Lishuwo, Qinglongshan, Sunjiahe, and Zhichengbei. Archaeologists originally associated some of these localities with the later Daixi Culture, but three radiocarbon dates place the beginning of the Chengbeixi Culture much earlier, probably about 7200 B.C. Chengbeixi sites are characterized by simple pottery and stone tools made from flaked pebbles. The ceramics are broadly similar to those of Pengtoushan Culture sites farther to the southeast. In the northern parts of the Middle Yangzi, Nanyang Basin sites from this period fit into cultural sequences of the Central Plains and are associated with the predecessors of the Yangshao Culture (which dates to ca. 5000–3000 B.C.).

Local scholars associate the next phase in the archaeological sequence of the Lower Li River area with the lower-stratum remains at Zaoshi (He J. 2004: 329). The so-called Lower Zaoshi Culture is superimposed on Pengtoushan remains at Bashidang and distributed at sites around Dongting Lake, including Fenshanbao (Yueyang 1994), Huangjiayuan (Guo and Luo 1996), Jinjigang (Hunan 1986), and Tujiatai. The appearance of ring-footed vessels and certain types of handles, among other ceramic features, distinguishes Lower Zaoshi Culture remains from earlier materials.

Roughly contemporary with Lower Zaoshi but farther south along the Upper Yuan River and Qingshui River near the Hunan–Guizhou border, a new cultural entity named the Gaomiao Culture has recently been identified (Hunan 2000, 2006b). Gaomiao Culture sites (ca. 5800–4800 B.C.) include shell middens and small settlements with white-ware pottery decorated by elaborate intaglio designs on the exterior surface. A large 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> sacrificial area was identified at the Gaomiao site in 2005, containing pits with elaborately decorated pottery.

Slightly later, and developing directly out of the Lower Zaoshi Culture in the western Dongting Lake region, is the Tangjiagang Culture. There is some disagreement over whether the later phases of this culture belong to the Daixi Culture (discussed later) or make up a separate culture preceding a local variant of the Daixi Culture (see Guo L. 2005a: 40). Tangjiagang ceramics include a variety of types, mostly bowls and jars found at Tangjiagang (Hunan 1982), Chengtoushan (Hunan 2007), Dingjiagang (Hunan 1982b), Huachenggang (Hunan 1983a, 2001; Hunan

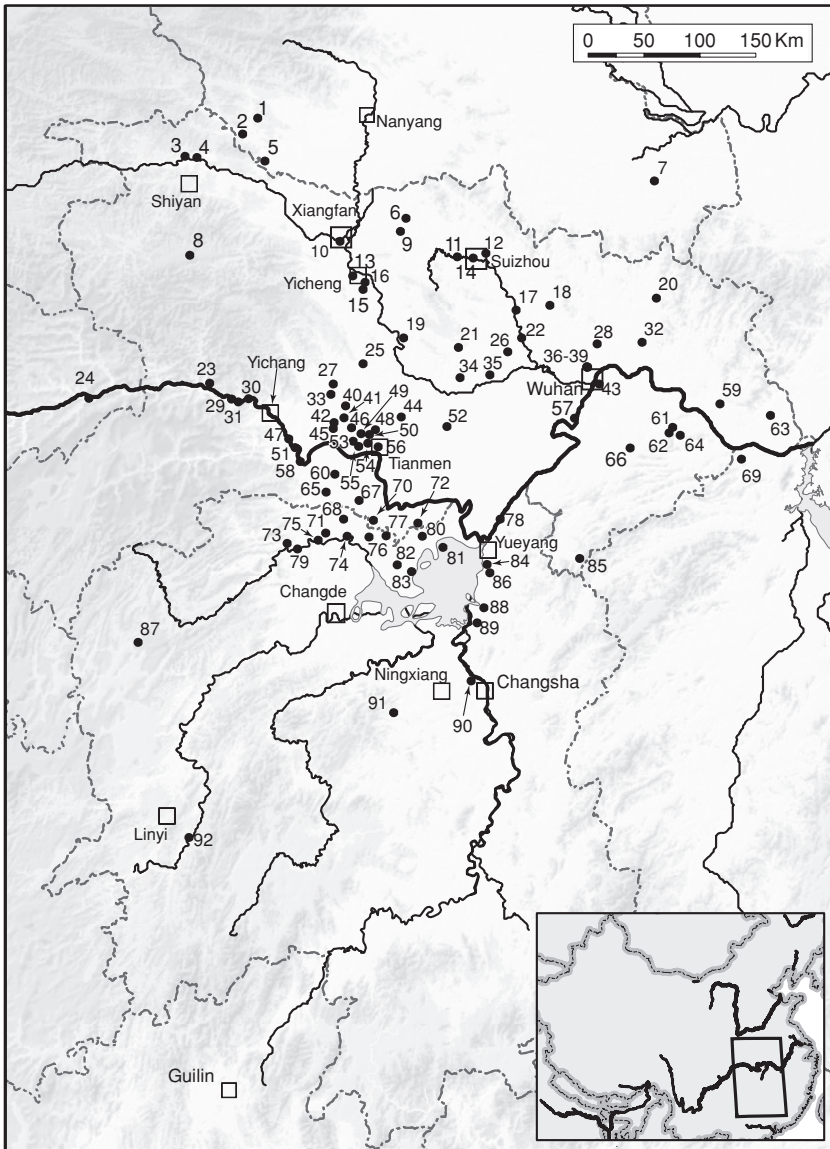


Figure 5.1. Sites and locations in the Middle Yangzi region mentioned in the chapter: Anju (11), Baimiao (31), Balingshan (49), Baota (79), Bashidang (68), Boyushan (65), Bu'ermen (87), Caijiatai (55), Caowangzuicheng (61), Chaotianzui (29), Chengbeixi (47), Chengtoushan (71), Chu Huangcheng (50), Chuwangcheng (22), Daixi (24), Dasi (3), Diaolongbei (6), Dingjiagang (74), Duimenshan (84),

et al. 2005), Liubutai (Hunan 1989), Xihu (Yiyang and Pan 1999: 175–178), and Sanyuangong (Hunan 1979b), among other places (Guo L. 2005a: 48–53; Yin J. 2007).

Beginning in the second half of the fifth millennium B.C., the region's fragmentary cultural topography began to coalesce. At this point, the Daixi Culture emerged out of the western Jiangnan Plain and eastern Three Gorges and spread more widely.

The Daixi Culture (ca. 4300–3300 B.C.) type site in the Three Gorges was first identified by Nels C. Nelson and then investigated more extensively in 1959 and 1975–1976 (Sichuan 1961, 1998c). Daixi Culture (often mistransliterated as “Daxi” or transliterated in the Wade–Giles system as “Ta-hsi”) sites are concentrated in western Jiangnan and northern Hunan and are also found farther north in the Jingzhou area (Xu Z. 1990; Zhang Z. 1982). Jingzhou-area sites east of the Han River are sometimes labeled sites of the Youziling Culture (Guo L. 2005a) and are distributed between Tianmen and Jingshan. Others consider this to be a “regional phase” (*leixing*) of the Daixi Culture (e.g., Xiang X. 1983; Xiang and Huang 1995). Black pottery is typical of Youziling Culture assemblages. The Nanyang Basin remains connected to Yangshao Culture developments during this period.



Figure 5.1 (*continued*) Ewangcheng (66), Fangyingtai (43), Feijiahe (84), Fenshanbao (81), Gaomiao (92), Gaoshaji (90), Guanmiaoshan (45), Guanzhuangping (23), Guihuashu (60), Guojiagang (13), Gulougang (50), Honghuatao (47), Huachenggang (76), Huamiao (51), Huangjiayuan (89), Huanglianshu (2), Jijiahu (41), Jijiaocheng (68), Jimingcheng (67), Jinancheng (50), Jingjiacheng (44), Jingnansi (54), Jinjigang (75), Jinpen (36), Jinzixiang (58), Lishuwo (51), Liubutai (80), Liuhe (19), Longwan (52), Lüwangcheng (37), Lutaishan (28), Majiahuan (25), Maogoudong (9), Maojiashan (48), Maojiazui (59), Meihuaiqiao (53), Menbanwan (26), Miaotaizi (12), Mopanshan (40), Niejiazhai (18), Panlongcheng (39), Pengtoushan (71), Qilihe (8), Qinglongquan (4), Qinglongshan (58), Qingshan (42), Qingshuitan (30), Qujialing (21), Sanyuangong (68), Shaishutai (17), Shamaoshan (57), Shijiahe (34), Sunjiahe (51), Tangjiagang (77), Tanheli (91), Taojiahu (35), Tonggushan (78), Tongling (69), Tonglùshan (62), Tucheng (34), Tujiatai (83), Wangjiagang (70), Wulijie (64), Xiaji (1), Xianguoshan (32), Xiaojialing (16), Xiasi (5), Xiawanggang (7), Xihuayuan (14), Xihu (82), Yangjiawan (38), Yangmugang (27), Yaojialin (85), Yinxiangcheng (46), Yishengsi (63), Yujiashan (20), Yusishan (88), Zaoshi (73), Zhaojiahu (33), Zhangjiashan (54), Zhangshutan (86), Zhichengbei (58), Zhenwushan (10), Zhongbaodao (31), Zhouliangyuqiao (56), Zhujiatai (50), Zoumaling (72). (Elevation shading is the same as in Figure 4.1.)



Important classic Daixi sites include the type site, Caijiatai, Chaotianzui, Guanmiaoshan, Guihuashu, Honghuatao, Jingnansi, Maojiashan, Qingshuitan, Wangjiagang, Wuxiangmiao, Yangmugang, Zhongbaodao, and Zhujiatai (for extensive synthetic discussions of the Daixi Culture, see Guo L. 2005a; He J. 1982; Li W. 1986, 1988; Lin X. 1982; Meng 1992; Xiang and Huang 1995; Zhang Z. 1982). Daixi communities produced roughly polished stone tools, although as the culture progressed, more well-polished implements and drilled tools were made. Ceramics were made of clay slabs, with the use of tournettes introduced in the later stages of the culture. The most distinctive Daixi Culture pottery is red on the outside and black on the inside. Black colorant was applied to oxidized bodies, in some cases in banded or wavy designs. Some characteristic ceramic objects include heavy clay feet that are used as vessel stands and ceramic balls with punctuated lines as decorations. Daixi Culture houses were generally built aboveground and with hard-fired walls and floors. Well-preserved examples have been found at Guanmiaoshan (Zhongguo 1981, 1983) and other locations. Burials are common, mostly shaft-pit tombs oriented north–south.

In these early stages, known settlements are clustered on the western fringes of the Jiangnan and Dongting Lake plains, particularly in two areas. To the north, sites along the banks of the Yangzi River between the Three Gorges and Jingzhou are associated with the Chengbeixi to Daixi sequence. Farther south, in the Li River valley of northern Hunan and around Dongting Lake, sites are associated with the cultural sequence from Pengtoushan, to Lower Zaoshi, to Tangjiagang (Pei 2004). During the late stages of the Daixi Culture, similarities among sites indicate an increasingly strong interaction sphere, a phase of consolidation some call the “Proto-Qujialing Culture” (Guo L. 2005a: 57–61).

The Qujialing Culture (ca. 3300–2600 BP) is characterized by painted, eggshell-thin pottery, painted wheel-made pottery, painted spindle whorls, unpainted black pottery, double-bellied bowls, and *dou* stemmed vessels and tripods. Bizarre, tubular objects with horizontal appliqué bands and spiky clay protrusions have been found at several sites (Figure 5.2A). Stone tools include ground-stone chisels, adzes, perforated axes, shovels and sickles, and flaked projectile points, spear points, and stone balls used for hunting. Qujialing communities engaged in rice agriculture (Pei 1990) and raised domestic animals, particularly pigs, yet hunting and fishing remained important economic activities.

The Jiangnan Plain and Dongting Lake region was central to the distribution of the Qujialing Culture. This region includes the type site located in Jingshan County, Hubei (Qujialing 1992; Yang and Huang 1995; Zhongguo 1965), and other sites across the region (overviews

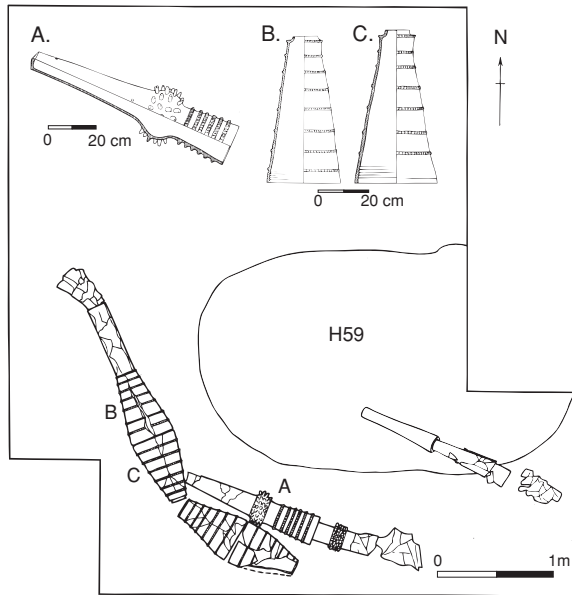


Figure 5.2. Qujialing Culture ceramic tubular objects from excavation trench AT301(4) at the Dengjiawan site. (Redrawn after Hubei et al. 2003: 29, 63–64.)

of the Qujialing Culture include Guo L. 2004b, 2005a; Meng 1997; Pei 1990; Qi 1986; Shen 1986; Wang J. 1987). Qujialing Culture sites number in the hundreds. Among the more important are Chengtoushan, Guanmiaoshan, Maojiashan, Qinglongquan, Qingshuitan, Zhujiatai, and Zoumaling in Hubei and sites in southwest Henan, including Xiawanggang, Huanglianshu, and Xiaji. These sites sit in the area east of the Han River in the northern part of the Jiangnan Plain that was associated with the Youziling Culture in the early fourth millennium B.C. The distribution differs from that of the Daixi Culture sites, which were concentrated in the western Jiangnan area. The wide spread of Qujialing Culture sites extends from the Huangpi region near Wuhan and into northern Jiangxi in the east, to the Three Gorges in the west and the Dongting Lake area in the south, to the Shiyan area of the Nanyang Basin in the north. It is at this point that sites like Qinglongquan and Dasi draw the Nanyang Plain into the cultural topography of Central China (Zhongguo 1991c).

Qujialing houses continue Daixi Culture construction traditions. Several well-preserved examples at Menbanwan (Hubei 2001, 2007b: 66), Diaolongbei (Zhongguo 2006), and Qinglongquan (Zhongguo 1991c) indicate two construction processes. Some had wall foundation trenches

dug around a flattened area, whereas others had floors built up within a dug-out area (Pei 1990). Roofs were supported by internal posts and earthen walls built onto wooden or bamboo skeletons and then fired, and floors were plastered with lime. Rooms often contain hearths and fired earthen platforms. At both Diaolongbei and Menbanwan, worn channels along the bottoms of walls adjacent to doorways are evidence of the use of sliding doors.

Houses were typically rectangular, with multiple rooms (Figure 5.3). At Diaolongbei, several rooms shared interior walls, and in some cases, the rooms were connected as multiroom dwellings. These rooms contained redundant features, such as fired hearths and areas that may have been for storage. In other cases, such as Menbanwan and the Huanglianshu site in Xichuan, Henan (Changjiang 1990), the rooms were arranged in rows with separate entrances to the outside. Similar structures are seen at Central Plains villages such as Kangjia in Shaanxi (Shaanxi 1988, 1992) and Yuchisi in Anhui (Zhongguo 2001). These composite structures probably housed extended kin groups, with each room used by a separate family unit.

Qujialing Culture burials are clustered separately from residential areas but not organized into well-defined cemeteries (Zhou G. 1993). Most adult burials were single, primary interments in rectangular shaft pits without coffins. The individuals are found in extended, supine positions, with few exceptions. Children were sometimes buried in urns beneath house floors or in graves of adults.

Qujialing Culture sites are located in several different types of topographic contexts. Some, such as Huanglianshu, are located at the convergence of rivers or streams, while others, such as Xiawanggang (Henan and Changjiang 1989), are located on terraces, further removed from the riverbanks. Still others, like Guanmiaoshan in Zhijiang (Zhongguo 1981, 1983), are found among lakes in the Jiangnan Plain. Several prominent Qujialing sites have walls that can be dated to at least as early as the Late Qujialing Culture. Some, like Chengtoushan, started as sites surrounded by ditches, and, subsequently, these moats were improved on (Hunan 2007; Hunan and Guoji 2007). As was the case in the walled sites of the Baodun Culture, it is likely that these original constructions primarily served for water control. During the Shijiahe Culture, however, walled sites may have been increasingly defensive in nature.

### *The Shijiahe Culture*

The Shijiahe Culture (ca. 2600–1900 B.C.) is roughly contemporaneous with the Baodun Culture of Sichuan and is divided into two phases,

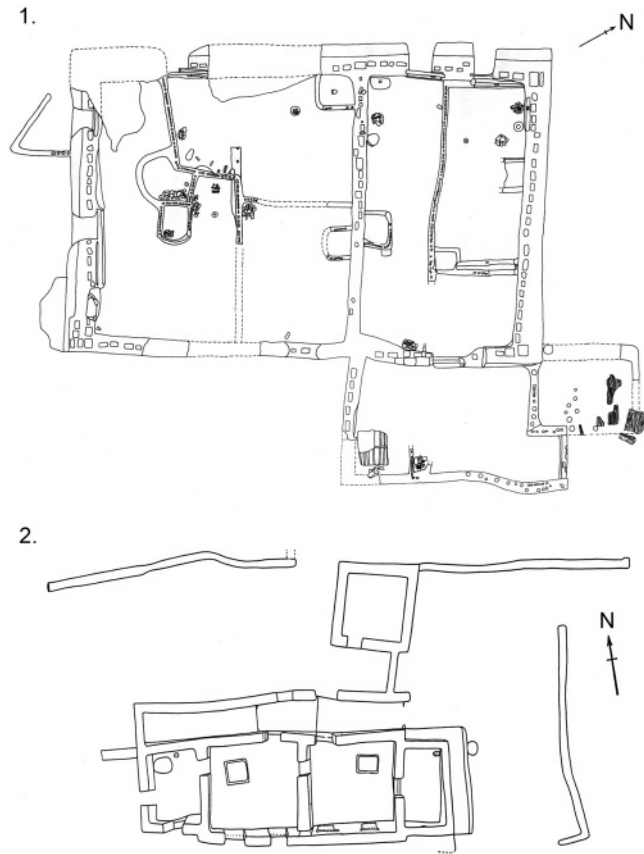


Figure 5.3. Building foundations with multiple rooms from Qujialing Culture contexts: (1) Foundation F19 at the Diaolongbei site (redrawn after Zhongguo 2006: 178); (2) foundation F1 from the Menbanwan site (redrawn after Hubei 2001a: 10).

Early (2600–2300) and Late (2300–1900), although some argue that Late Shijiahe is so different that it represents a different population and should be recognized as a distinct culture (Bai 1993; Wang J. 2007). Shijiahe is associated with the “Longshan interaction sphere” of Late Neolithic China (Chang 1986) and originally, in fact, remains we now associate with the Shijiahe Culture were labeled “Hubei Longshan” or by other terms, including “Mid-Yangzi Longshan Culture,” “Jijiahu Culture,” “Guihuashu Culture,” and “Qinglongquan period 3 culture” (Yang and Huang 1995: 61). This period saw an increase in recognizable

connections between the Middle Yangzi region and the Central Plains of northern China. Some scholars dub this era “chalcolithic” owing to evidence of copper use and small-scale bronze production (e.g., Yan 2004: 60; Zhang C. 1997; for evidence of metal use at Shijiahe sites, see Hubei et al. 1999: 236; Zhang X. 1992: 279–282).

The Shijiahe Culture is named after a site cluster in Tianmen County that contained highly variable ceramic remains (Shilongguo 1956; Zhang X. 1991a: 407). Polished black pottery reflects association with other “Longshanoid” cultures. Over half of Shijiahe ceramics are undecorated, and although a few are painted, most surface treatments are basket impressions, appliqué, perforations, and engraved lines. Certain jade objects, such as *bi* disks, *huang* pendants, tubes, and cicada-shaped objects, show similarities with contemporary jades from the Lower Yangzi River valley. Others, like human and animal heads, relate to a local tradition emphasizing figural representation.

Particularly famous are the clay figurines of the Shijiahe Culture. These include representations of domestic animals such as pigs, dogs, sheep, and chickens; wild animals, including ducks, tigers, elephants, turtles, and monkeys; structures; anthropomorphic figures; and scenes such as people fishing (Shihe 1990; Yang and Huang 1995: 68–69; Zhang X. 1991b). The figurines have been tied to a general tendency for Shijiahe artistic objects to emphasize naturalistic motifs (So 1999: 40). Many of these figurines have been found grouped in pits and are thought to have been associated with community ritual activities. Likewise, other large homogeneous caches, such as a collection of an estimated 100,000 red pottery cups found at the Sanfangwan locus of Shijiahe, have also been interpreted as ritual deposits (Beijing et al. 1992: 220–228; Yang X. 2004: 119).

Shijiahe Culture sites exhibit technological sophistication in construction (Yang and Huang 1995: 69). Houses typically included slightly raised platforms on one side of an open living area. Occasionally, the entryways and living areas were plastered with lime. Wooden posts within the houses held up roofs. Sometimes these posts were set on potsherds or fired-hard earth. In western Hubei, some house foundations were semi-subterranean, a marked difference from earlier, Qujialing Culture structures in this area (see Li and Chen 2008). Other notable architectural features include networks of pottery vats that are connected together at Dengjiawan, a locus in the northwestern part of Shijiahe (Hubei et al. 2003: 139–141; Figure 5.4). These vats are curious features that look like water pipes, but they have closed bottoms, and many have incised markings. Some of the bizarre ceramic tubular objects with protrusions found in Qujialing Culture contexts at Shijiahe were also discovered inserted

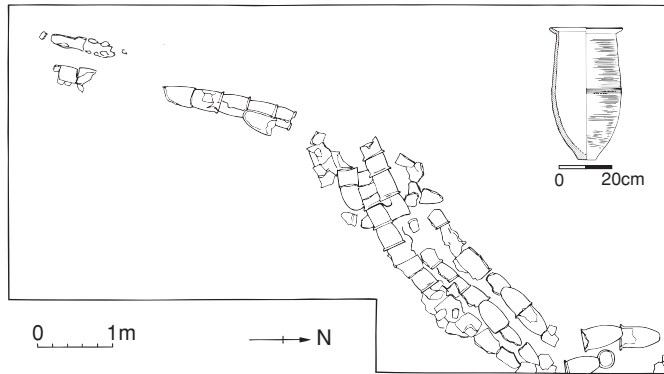


Figure 5.4. Shijiahe Culture ceramic vat feature 1 at Dengjiawan. (Redrawn after Hubei et al. 2003: 140, 159.)

into one another in lines, and in these cases, the objects were tubular, with openings at both ends or with closed ends broken off (see Figures 5.2A–5.2C). These rows of objects (both the Qujialing Culture and Shijiahe Culture examples) have been interpreted as “ritual features” by the excavators, though their exact purpose is unclear. They are reminiscent of ceramic pipes that demonstrate a degree of urban planning and community integration found at Longshan Culture sites such as Pingliangtai in Huaiyang County, Henan (Henan and Zhoukou 1983) – a medium-sized (5 ha) walled town where archaeologists discovered gates guarding the settlement entrance, sun-dried bricks, early metal remains, rows of buildings, and drainage trenches with ceramic pipes.

At least eight Shijiahe Culture sites are walled (Figure 5.5). These were first Qujialing Culture walled sites that continued to be occupied during the Shijiahe period (Hubei 1997b, 2007a: 102; Zhang X. 1994, 2000). Walled sites include Jijiao Cheng (Hunan 2002), Jimingcheng (Jia 1998), Majiahuan (Hubei 1997), Menbanwan (Hubei 2001; Wang H. 2003), Shijiahe (Beijing et al. 1992; Nakamura 1997c; Shihe 1990, 1994), Taojiahu (Li and Xia 2001), Yinxiangcheng (Jingzhou 1998; Jingzhou and Fugang 1997), and Zoumaling (Jingzhou et al. 1998). As was the case with the Baodun Culture in Sichuan, these reflect the ability to mobilize human labor for collective benefit (Ozawa 1998; Ren 1998). The most significant labor mobilization, however, took place during the late Qujialing Culture, prior to the Shijiahe period. Nevertheless, these walls continued to be used in the Shijiahe period, and in some cases, they may have been made more useful for military defense at this time.

The largest of the walled sites was Shijiahe itself. The wall at Shijiahe is massive. It surrounds about 100 ha: 5–10 times larger than most

contemporary sites (though smaller than the recently discovered walled area at Baodun). The best-preserved section is the western wall, which was around 50 m thick at the base, 4–5 m wide at the top, and over 6 m tall. Outside the wall is a huge moat from which the earth needed for the wall was excavated. Assuming that these dimensions were roughly maintained around the walled area, at a total length of around 3,750 m, this wall would have contained about 607,500 m<sup>3</sup> of earth or perhaps as much as 760,000 m<sup>3</sup> (Nakamura 1997b). Accordingly, the initial construction would have required between 555 and 1,664 person-years of labor to complete. Nakamura's estimate would result in slightly higher totals but still not "tens of thousands of people" as he suggests, a hyperbolic statement that Okamura (2000) has criticized. Nevertheless, the construction of this wall was a major undertaking with few parallels at its time in China.

A variety of estimates have been given for the population of Shijiahe. Some propose that at least 20,000 people resided in the cluster of sites near Tianmen during the peak period of occupation (ca. 2600–2300 B.C.) (Zhang X. 2000: 177). Nakamura Shinichi (1997a) has argued for an urban population at Shijiahe itself of over 5,000 people. These estimates are based primarily on the large size of the site and an expanse of housing that was discovered in the site center. Okamura Hidenori (2000) has pointed out, however, that the entire walled area was probably not residential – a fact that is probably also true for the huge area surrounded by the outer wall at Baodun discussed in the previous chapter. At Shijiahe, the settlement was limited to the central zone of the site (Tanjialing locus), while other areas, in the north and south, probably served different functions (Beijing et al. 1992). The southern part of the site (Sanfanggang locus), which contained huge numbers of small cups, may have been a production center of some kind. The northwestern zone (Dengjiawan locus) contained pits with thousands of figurines and may have been an area used primarily for the staging of ritual activities (Shihe 1994; Hubei et al. 2003). Furthermore, several settlement loci have been identified outside the wall at Kuboshu, Luojiaboli (Hubei and Zhongguo 1994), and Xiaojiawuji (Hubei et al. 1999). The local population size, therefore, remains unclear, although several thousand seems like a reasonable estimate.

Shijiahe sites are concentrated in the Jiangnan region, particularly around Tianmen (Tianmen 1987). The overall distribution is as broad as that of the Qujialing Culture. There is an increase in the number of sites in the eastern parts of the distribution zone, however, with many Shijiahe Culture sites found along the Tongbai Mountain range in the corridor from the Nanyang Basin southeast to the eastern part of the Jiangnan Plain near Wuhan – a region with few Qujialing Culture

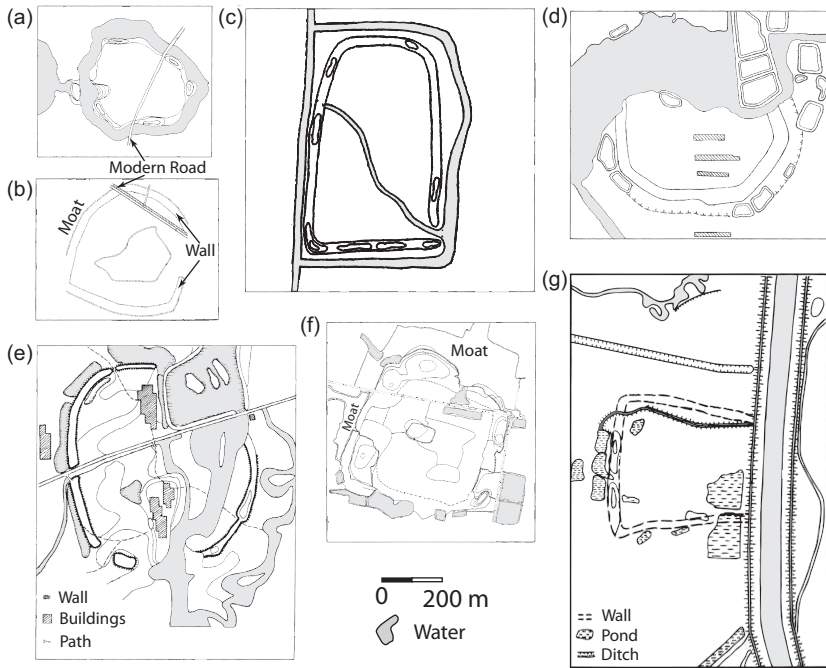


Figure 5.5. Compilation of wall plans from Shijiahe sites (all at approximately the same scale): (a) Zoumaling, (b) Jimingcheng, (c) Majiayuan, (d) Yinxiangcheng, (e) Taojiahu, (f) Jijiaocheng, and (g) Menbanwan. (Redrawn after Yan 2004: 120–121.)

sites. Even farther to the northeast, sites in the Huai River valley, such as Yangzhuang in Zhumadian, Henan, are associated with the Shijiahe Culture as well (Beijing and Zhumadian 1998). Related sites fall into five distinct regional groupings: the core area of the Jiangnan plain, the north around Qinglongquan, the east affiliated with Yaojialin, the south related to Huachenggang, and the west associated with Jijiahu (Yang and Huang 1995; Zhang X. 1991b). Among the hundreds of sites with Shijiahe Culture remains, important published ones include Fangyingtai (Wuhan 1998; Hubei 2003), Jingjiacheng (Jingmen 1987), Liuhe (Jingzhou and Zhongxiang 1987), Qilihe (Hubei 2008; Hubei et al. 1984), Shamaoshan (Hubei 1987b), Xihuayuan (Wuhan 1991; Wuhan et al. 1993b), Yishengsi (Hubei 2006a), Yujiashai (Hubei et al. 2006), and Zhujiatai (Jinancheng 1988; Hubei 1991c; Hubei and Wuhan 1996).

The widespread distribution of sites that share Shijiahe Culture characteristics probably does not represent an expansionist polity with political control over the entire region. Nevertheless, the Shijiahe site cluster near Tianmen does seem to have emerged as a paramount center (Beijing



et al. 1992; Okamura 2000). As this area became increasingly influential during the Early Shijiahe period, other walled sites, which had also been occupied since the Qujialing period, became relatively less important (Zhang X. 2000: 178). At the same time, however, there is evidence that walls at some of these other sites, which had been first built during the Qujialing period, were reinforced during the Shijiahe period (one example is Jijiaocheng; see Hunan 2002). This may mark an increasingly defensive function played by walls during the Shijiahe era. The cultural influence of Shijiahe was not limited to the Middle Yangzi River valley either. Elements of elite Shijiahe Culture seem to have affected the Erlitou repertoire in the Yellow River valley, and Shijiahe influence is apparent in the Chengdu Plain at Sanxingdui as well (Asahara 1984: 25; Falkenhausen 2003: 220).

Some scholars have suggested that at the beginning of the second millennium, there was a cultural collapse in the Middle Yangzi region (Ke 1990). This collapse is apparent in the paucity of sites from the centuries after 2000 B.C. in both Hubei and Hunan (Liu S. 2007). This phenomenon has been tied to an environmental event around 2000 B.C. that some argue led to other demographic declines across China around this time (Wu and Liu 2004; Zhu C. et al. 2007). The event may have involved both climate fluctuation and, perhaps more important, erratic hydraulic changes and major floods (Yan 1992). According to this perspective, many sites would have been submerged under the growing Yunmeng Marsh at the end of the third millennium, forcing relocation and abandonment (Wu and Liu 2004; Wu and Wu 1998; Yang X. et al. 1998). Others have suggested that the collapse reflects political events, particularly warfare between Central Plains-based “Huaxia” people and indigenous peoples of the south (Gao 2000). These perspectives are not mutually exclusive and may have combined with other factors to radically affect settlement patterns during the early second millennium. Considerably more systematic research, particularly around the Jiangnan region, will be necessary to assess these hypotheses.

In summary, the northern Hubei Neolithic around the Nanyang Basin was associated with the Central Plains Neolithic from an early stage. In contrast, the early stages of the Neolithic in the Jiangnan Plain and around Dongting Lake are characterized by locally idiosyncratic archaeological cultures. In particular, a fragmented cultural map paralleled the fragmented physical topography of Hunan (Liu S. 2007). In the flatter areas of the Jiangnan Plain, the earliest sites are seen in the west, and these developed into the Daixi Culture. Later independent cultural developments, associated with the Youziling Culture, are seen in the east. Starting in the period of the Qujialing

Culture, strong connections developed across the plain, and the interaction sphere that developed across the Middle Yangzi River region reflects an emergence of social complexity (Guo L. 2005a). This interaction sphere strengthens with the Shijiahe Culture, which is more clearly present in the eastern parts of the Middle Yangzi region and more obviously connected with regions closer to the Central Plains. In the second millennium, eventually, these connections to the Central Plains became rather strong. This is most obvious during the middle second millennium, during the Early to Middle Bronze Age.

*Early to Middle Bronze Age (Shang)*

In the early part of the second millennium B.C., the archaeological situation in the Middle Yangzi region remained unclear. The northern part of the region was characterized by “Post-Shijiahe Culture,” with connections to the Central Plains (Meng H. 1997; Wang J. 2007). The early second millennium saw a resurgence of the northern orientation of communities in northern Hubei. Farther to the south, the first centuries of the second millennium saw the aforementioned waning (or collapse) of the Shijiahe Culture.

More substantial, albeit fragmentary, data illuminate the middle and latter parts of the second millennium. These data are contemporaneous with the Erlitou and Erligang traditions of northern China. Sites that are said to have ceramics that show affinity with Late Erlitou or Early Erligang assemblages include Baimiao, Jingnansi, and Panlongcheng (Zhongguo 2003: 472–473). Additional information about the Early Bronze Age in Central China is increasing rapidly (Zhongguo 2003: 473–491), but Panlongcheng remains the most important site (Box 5.1).

Bronzes comprise a significant portion of other scattered Shang-era finds from around the Middle Yangzi region. Some are contemporary with ones from Panlongcheng, whereas others are probably products of the terminal second millennium, contemporary with the last Shang capital of Yinxu. During this era, a distinctive “southern” bronze tradition developed (Bagley 1980, 1999; Li X. 1991). Among the characteristics of southern bronzes are larger, more eccentric designs than seen in the north, including “animalistic motifs.” These include three-dimensional animal designs, animal heads, and bird-shaped flanges. Furthermore, bronzes in this region contain higher proportions of lead and tin than those in the north. The lead content may have been adjusted to ensure that the molten bronze was sufficiently viscous to flow into the elaborate designs of the southern casting mold-core assemblages.

### **Box 5.1. Panlongcheng**

Panlongcheng is located in Huangpi County, Hubei, about 5 km north of Wuhan (Bagley 1977; Hubei 1976b, 1976c, 2001b, 2007b; Panlongcheng 1976; Wuhan 1998a). Although the earliest occupation at the site apparently is contemporaneous with Erlitou Phase II or III (Hubei 2001b: 442), scholars have long associated Panlongcheng with the Erligang phase of the Shang Culture based on strong similarities between bronze vessels found at the site and those from the Erligang locus in Zhengzhou, Henan, as well as other features connecting these two sites (Li X. 1976, 1991: 3). Consequently, Panlongcheng has been seen primarily as a Shang outpost established during an expansionary phase of early state formation in the Central Plains, possibly as part of an effort to secure access to nearby copper resources (Bagley 1999; Chang 1980; Liu and Chen 2003).

Connections between Panlongcheng and Erligang include similarities in the site walls and building foundations. The Panlongcheng wall measures 290 m north to south and 260 m east to west (Hubei 2001b, 2007a). Until 1954, when they were destroyed during flood mitigation, these walls were preserved up to about 5 m above ground. Subsequent research, particularly in the 1970s, revealed rammed-earth foundations of large buildings in the northeastern sector inside the wall, as was the case at Erligang.

The foundations include a large (40 × 12 m) building (F1) divided into four rooms and a smaller (27.5 × 10.5 m) building (F2) that was not subdivided and is thought to have been an administrative hall. F1 and F2 are parallel to one another and are thought to be part of a larger palace compound. The compound was oriented 20° east of true north. These buildings are similar both in construction technique and orientation to those found at Erligang, including palace structure C8F15 (oriented 15°) and foundation 92ZSC8 II F1 (20°) (Henan 2001: 248, 275). Other aspects of Panlongcheng follow this orientation, including the site wall and large burials found nearby. The construction process of the site wall was also similar to that used at Erligang. In both cases, the *hangtu* wall sloped gradually on the inside but was more vertical on the exterior, enhancing the defensive function of the wall.

Bronze Age remains at Panlongcheng are distributed over about 100 ha surrounding the 7.5 ha walled area. At Wangjiazui (south of the wall; see Figure 5.6), excavators discovered several different types of kilns in addition to scattered features such as pits and small structures.

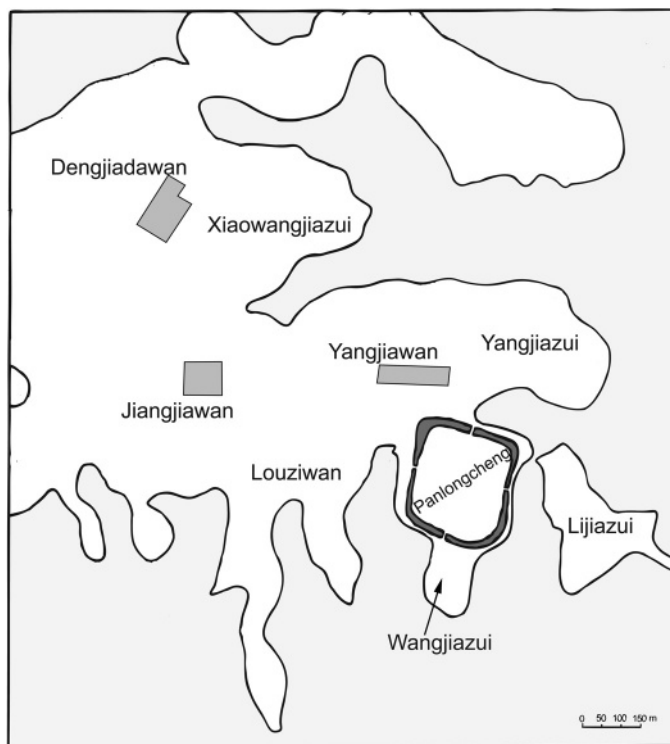


Figure 5.6. The walled site of Panlongcheng and nearby loci. (Redrawn after Hubei 2001b: 5.)

The other loci around the site (Louziwan, Yangjiawan, Yangjiazui, and Lijiazui) included a mix of pit and house features as well as 37 burials (see Chapter 9). Many of the burials included bronze weapons and ritual vessels, in addition to jades and pottery.

Panlongcheng ceramics are generally thinner and fired at higher temperatures than their counterparts from Erligang but are otherwise very similar. Panlongcheng ceramics are used to divide the remains into seven phases. The wall and palatial area at the site were constructed during Phase IV, contemporaneous with the transition from Lower to Upper Erligang Culture (ca. 1425 B.C.). Consequently, Phases I–III are referred to as the early period of Panlongcheng and are estimated to date from 1800 to 1425 B.C. During this early occupation, Panlongcheng was about 20 ha – a fraction of the 100 ha area during the phase contemporary with the site wall.

*(continued)*

### Box 5.1 (continued)

Other sites to the northwest of Panlongcheng also contain deposits from this period, perhaps indicating a route of sustained interaction between the Central Plains and the Wuhan region (Liu and Chen 2003: 78). These sites include Niejiazhai in Xiaogan (Xiaogan and Xiaogan 1994), Shaishutai in Anlu (Yu C. 1980; Xiaogan 1993), and Xianglushan in Xinzhou (Wuhan et al. 1993a), but they have not been comprehensively investigated or published, and some loci appear to postdate the Erligang period (Zhongguo 2003: 473).

During the early phase at Panlongcheng, black pottery and fine-ware ceramics are relatively more common, whereas Phases IV–VII are characterized by more sandy-ware pottery. From the beginning of occupation at the site, ceramic forms include *ding* tripods, jars, ring-footed forms, and large-mouthed *zun* vessels. Over time, more vessel types were introduced, many of which show clear connections to the Central Plains, including cord-marked *li* tripods with pouch-shaped legs, steamer vessels, *jia*, and *jue* tripod vessels with handles.

Bronzes at Panlongcheng and associated loci are more or less identical to those found at Erligang and are among the strongest evidence of direct connections. This is not to imply that the bronzes at Panlongcheng were all imported from the Central Plains. Evidence for metallurgy at Panlongcheng is present in the form of smelting crucibles and slag at Yangjiazui, although no molds for casting vessels have been found. Panlongcheng may have become a colony of Erligang elites established to ensure consistent access to the copper sources nearby, particularly at Tonglūshan in Daye, Hubei (Hou 1996; see Chapter 7). In total, 186 identifiable bronze vessels, 35 tools, 123 bronze weapons, and 7 other bronze objects were recovered at Panlongcheng. The vessels are mostly *gu* goblets (32), *jia* (54) and *jue* (50) wine vessels, *ding* tripods (19), and *zun* tureens (13), all forms with Erligang counterparts and all with similar decorative motifs.

The Shang-era bronzes that compose the Middle Yangzi corpus do not all come from residential sites. In Hubei, some have been found in caches. Examples are known from Sui County (Suizhou 1981), Yichang (Yichang 1986), and elsewhere. To the south, in Hunan, many Shang-era bronzes have been discovered in small pits scattered throughout relatively remote areas and, rarely, in tombs. It is not clear whether these bronzes were hidden in response to political upheavals in the region or are the remnants of a widespread, ritual practice – perhaps sacrifices to

mountains and rivers (Hsü and Linduff 1988: 218; Hengyang 1978; see Chapter 8).

Despite such evidence of some shared cultural norms in the Hunan area, there is little evidence of substantial political integration. Instead, the region was culturally and politically fragmented. Most sites are relatively modest in size. In the Weishui River region, one example is the site of Tanheli in Ningxiang County, which has a circular, *hangtu* wall dating to the Shang–Zhou transition period (Gao Z. 1963; Hunan et al. 2006; Xiang T. 2006). Recent excavations revealed evidence of large buildings and ritual bronzes at the site. Farther downstream, where the Weishui River joins the Xiang, the site of Gaoshaji also dates to the Late Shang or Early Western Zhou (Hunan et al. 2001).

Farther north, many sites around Dongting Lake reflect some contact with the Erligang Culture, probably filtered through Panlongcheng (McNeal n.d.). In Yueyang, to the east of Dongting, examples include Tonggushan, where Erligang-style ceramics and bronze have been discovered (Guo S. 2001; Yueyang 2002; Hunan and Yueyang 1989), the nearby Erligang Phase II site of Zhangshutan (Luo 1999), and elsewhere. Tonggushan may have been an outpost, established by individuals from Panlongcheng or otherwise embedded in Erligang cultural traditions (Guo S. 2001; McNeal n.d.). It may also represent a lower-tier settlement on a bureaucratic hierarchy but within the sphere of political influence by Panlongcheng (Xiang T. 2008). Occupation of the site continued into the late part of the second millennium, at which point, local cultural elements become more prominent.

At this time, roughly contemporary with Yinxi, several sites are known south of Tonggushan along southern tributaries to Dongting Lake such as the Mi-Luo and Xinqiang rivers, including Duimenshan, Feijiahe, Yusishan, and Zhangshutan (Luo R. 1999; Guo S. 2005; T. Xiang 2008: 52–90). These sites are variable but have been grouped together along with the latest material from Tonggushan into the Feijiahe or Zhangshutan culture (Guo S. 2001; Xiang T. 2008: 52–53). Some of their pottery elicits comparison with the stoneware of the Yue Culture in Jiangxi, farther to the southeast across a mountainous area (McNeal n.d.).

Other mid-second millennium B.C. sites in Hunan document an indigenous population with less evidence of Erligang-associated material culture. To the west, for example, along the Li River, mold fragments and copper slag at the site of Zaoshi (Zhou S. 1962; Hunan 1992b; He J. 1986) provide evidence for Erligang-period occupation, including the only direct evidence of a bronze workshop in the Middle Yangzi. Around Shimen, materials contemporary with Erlitou and Erligang have been found at Baota (He J. 1996; He and Cao 1987; Wang and Long 1987).

These materials show a complex mix of objects associated with the Erligang Culture and local types. Even farther west, in Hunan, sites like Bu'ermen in Yongshun exhibit no evidence of connection to the Erligang Culture and probably remained isolated until much later (Hunan and Xiangxi 2002).

In western and central Hubei, second millennium sites include Zhongbaodao near Yicheng (Guojia 2001; Hubei and Sichuan 1987), Zhouliangyuqiao in Shashi (Peng J. 1986), and Jingnansi outside Jiangling (Jingzhou 2009). At Jingnansi, cultural deposits 12 m thick document an indigenous culture in the Jianghan Plain contemporaneous with Panlongcheng (Jingzhou 2009; Jingzhou and Beijing 1989; Jingzhou and Jiangling 1987; He N. 1994). The Zhouliangyuqiao remains are somewhat later than the Jingnansi remains, dating to the period of the Late Shang.

In summary, the site of Panlongcheng, on the eastern end of the Jianghan Plain, has the strongest evidence known to date of a political center during the Early Bronze Age. Panlongcheng seems to have developed out of a smaller-scale indigenous settlement that was incorporated into the sphere of influence of Erligang. It is expected that settlements to the north and west of Panlongcheng will show evidence of involvement in a network of communities connecting Panlongcheng to the Erligang core in Henan. During the last part of the second millennium, the ties between Panlongcheng and the Central Plains seem to have waned, and several small-scale local centers have emerged or regained prominence, including sites like Tanheli.

### *Western Zhou Era*

In the Central Plains, the end of the second millennium B.C. saw the transition from the Shang to the Zhou state. This transition had widespread ramifications, including influence on Central China. The effects were not sudden and dramatic, however, and the dividing line between the Shang and Zhou periods is not a sharp one – particularly in terms of archaeological data.

Among representative Western Zhou artifacts from Central China, the most important are scattered bronze vessels (Li X. 1991). Examples include the Western Zhou bronzes found in Xiaogan County during the Song Dynasty mentioned in Chapter 3, a cache of 14 Western Zhou bronzes from tomb M30 at Lutaishan, near Panlongcheng (Huangpi et al. 1982; Zhang Y. 1984), and Western Zhou bronze bells and vessels found around Lake Dongting at sites such as Xiangtan (Hunan 1966). Overall, the bronzes are few in number relative to the Shang era, possibly

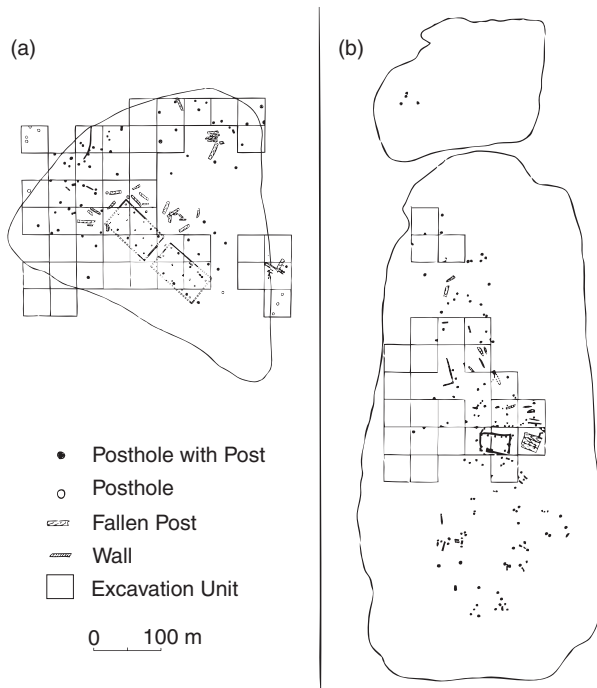


Figure 5.7. Building foundations (a) 1 and (b) 2 at Maojiazui. (Redrawn after Zhongguo 1962: 2–3.)

reflecting a decline in the political fortunes in this region after the Shang–Zhou transition (Li X. 1991).

Most Western Zhou sites in the Middle Yangzi are concentrated between the Dabie Mountains and the Yangzi River in the Jiangnan Plain. In particular, the region around Panlongcheng continued to be important into the first millennium. Nearby sites include loci at Jinpen, Lüwangcheng and Lutaishan in Huangpi, and Maojiazui in Qichun. Maojiazui was among the first sites excavated in the Middle Yangzi region (Zhongguo 1962). The most significant discovery was two clusters of well-preserved wood-frame buildings (Figure 5.7). These rectangular wattle-and-daub building remnants included large clusters of scattered postholes. In the western group (Figure 5.7a), lacquered objects and oracle bones were found within this cluster of postholes, perhaps indicating a locus of elite, possibly public activities. In the eastern group (Figure 5.7b), an Early Western Zhou bronze *jue* vessel was found, as were bronze tools and ceramics.



Near the Maojiazui settlement, a cache of bronzes was discovered in 1996 (Hubei and Hubei 1997). The cache included seven bronze vessels: five rectangular *ding*, one round *ding*, and a ladle. This cache led the excavators to argue that the bronzes and the wooden buildings were all evidence of elites tied to the Zhou royal house, perhaps in charge of a military garrison in the Qichun area (Wu and Hong 1997). The bronzes share characteristics with others found in the Wuhan area, such as the four rectangular *ding* from tomb M30 at Lutaishan (Huangpi et al. 1982; Zhang Y. 1984), but also are similar to Late Shang and Early Western Zhou vessels found in Shaanxi, Henan, and Shandong (Zhongguo 2004: 133–135).

Farther west, Western Zhou remains in central and western Hubei are known from the Jiangnan Plain, at Xianglushan (Wuhan et al. 1993), Meihuaiqiao (He N. 1991), Miaotaizi (Wuhan et al. 1993), and Tucheng (Beijing et al. 1992: 237–238). In western Hubei, Western Zhou remains have been found near Jiangling at Zhangjiashan and Boyushan (Chen X. 1980; Jingzhou 1987a) as well as at Guanzhuangping in Zigui (Guowuyuan and Guojia 2005b). Farther south, on the southern side of Dongting Lake near modern Changsha, Hunan, bronzes found at Gaoshaji in Wangcheng document the presence of Western Zhou–era elites along the Xiang River (Zhongguo 2004: 138–141; Hunan 2001). Evidence of Western Zhou settlement in Hunan is relatively scarce, however.

Western Zhou bronzes from the Middle Yangzi cannot necessarily be associated with the Chu polity. It is only at the end of the Western Zhou that there is any semblance of a widespread archaeological culture that might correspond with an area of political control (Cook and Blakeley 1999: 3), and even then, the association with the Chu state is not clear or direct (Li L. 1991). Furthermore, Chu material culture at this time may not be that different from the material culture of the Central Plains (Falkenhausen 2006b: 264). The presence of Chu state political institutions in Central China during the Western Zhou is similarly equivocal.

As mentioned, historical sources place the first Chu capital at a place called Danyang. Although some scholars locate Danyang close to the Yangzi, perhaps in Zigui or possibly at Jijiahu in Dangyang (e.g., Zhongguo 2004: 270), most likely it was situated along the Dan River, a tributary to the Han River in southwestern Henan and northwestern Hubei (Blakeley 1999b: 11–12; Shi 2004 [1988]; Wang H. 2006; Zhang X. 1983). It is possible that the elaborate burials discovered at the site of Xiasi in Xichuan, Henan, relate to the early Chu elite in this region (Henan 1979; Henan et al. 1991; So 1999: 34). No Western Zhou urban centers in this area are yet known that might represent Danyang,

however, and it is possible that such remains have been lost beneath the Danjiang Reservoir (Wang H. 2006).

*Eastern Zhou Era: Springs and Autumns to Warring States*

Historically, the Springs and Autumns period was an era of Chu expansion. This expansion focused southward into the region on either side of the Yangzi and along the Xiang River in Hunan. The Chu impact during this expansion was felt as far south as the Lingnan region of modern Guangdong and Guangxi (see Allard 2004).

By some point during the Springs and Autumns era, elements of a distinct material culture begin to emerge. These cultural traits are often associated with Chu and include distinctive bronzes, including bells and vessels, as well as certain burial practices (Xu 1999; see Chapter 9). For example, certain normative structural features occur – elite burials face east and lower-status burials face south. This contrasts with north-oriented burials in the Central Plains and west-facing orientation in the Qin region.

Some differences between Chu-style (or southern) material culture and those from the north are also evident. Certain forms that are common in sets of bronze vessels in the north are replaced by others, such as *gui* being replaced by *fu*. The use of bronzes in sets differs in some ways as well. For example, sets of *ding* tripods often occur in even numbers rather than odd, as they do in the north. Furthermore, certain new forms are introduced, including *shengding* tripods with flat bottoms and curved handles; *shiding* tripods with deep, round bellies, lids, and straight handles; and *dui* orb-shaped vessels. Water vessels such as *dian*, *shuiyu*, and *jian* represent a class of burial objects not commonly found in northern burials, as do “tomb-protecting beasts” (*zhenmushou*) (Falkenhausen 2006b: 269). As elsewhere in the Zhou interaction sphere, decorations on vessels become increasingly elaborate over time, particularly by the Late Springs and Autumns period, as evidenced by those in burials associated with the polities of Cai and Zeng (Xu S. 1999: 23). Finally, bronze seems to be gradually replaced by lacquer and silk as the primary medium of prestigious burial goods over the course of the Springs and Autumns period (So 1999).

Burial remains comprise the majority of Eastern Zhou archaeological materials connected to the Chu and associated polities in the Middle Yangzi, and elite tombs can be separated into various ranks based on burial goods, burial size, and grave furniture (Falkenhausen 2006b: 374–385; see Chapter 9). Throughout the region, richly furnished tombs number in the thousands. For example, over 10,000 tombs associated with Chu have been documented in Hubei, Hunan, Henan, Anhui, and

Chongqing, at least 8,000 of which lie in the Middle Yangzi region (Chen Z. 1987; Falkenhausen 2006b: 371–392; Guo D. 1982, 1983, 1995; Li X. 1985; Peng 1982; So 1999; Xu S. 1999).

Eastern Zhou settlement sites are fewer, and most of the dozens investigated during the past 50 years have only been subjected to preliminary work. The Nanyang Basin had the largest concentration of walled settlements in the Chu realm (Xu S. 1999: 29). One example, the Dengcheng site in Xiangyang, was established in the Late Western Zhou and remained an important center through the Qin–Han period, when the existing wall was built. Most Dengcheng remains date to the later part of the Eastern Zhou, including as many as 2,000 Late Eastern Zhou tombs. This region was important throughout the Chu period because of its strategic location.

Farther south, along the Middle Han River and in the triangle between Jingmen, Yicheng, and Jingzhou, Eastern Zhou settlement sites associated with Chu are abundant. In the northern part of this area are Chu Huangcheng, Guojiagang, and Gulougang in Yicheng. Farther south, Eastern Zhou settlements include Jijiahu, Mopanshan, and Yangmugang in Dangyang; Jinancheng, Jingnansi, Yinxiangcheng, and Zhangjiashan in Jiangling; and Longwan in Qianjiang.

Among these sites, Chu Huangcheng, Jinancheng, and Jijiahu have all been argued to be the later Chu capital of Ying. Chu Huangcheng is located 7.5 km southeast of Yicheng City to the west of the Han River. Surveys and excavations in 1976 investigated the encircling wall and several Warring States through Han cemeteries (Hubei 1965; Chu 1980a, 1980b). The wall surrounding the site is 6,440 m long, 24–30 m wide, and 2–4 m high, encircling about 2.4 km<sup>2</sup> (Figure 5.8a). This wall would have taken between 475 and 1,430 person-years to construct, slightly less estimated effort than the wall at Shijiahe. It is certainly possible that the height was more substantial in antiquity, and this estimate does not take into account an interior wall surrounding a 0.38 km<sup>2</sup> district in the northeastern part of the site. The majority of remains at Chu Huangcheng date to the Warring States through Han, although the excavators argue that occupation is evident from Springs and Autumns and even earlier eras. Further research is needed to substantiate an argument that would place the Ying capital of Chu at this location.

The same can be said about Jijiahu, a walled site in Dangyang that has been linked to both Dangyang and Ying (Zhongguo 2004: 270). The site was surrounded by a wall encircling 2.25 km<sup>2</sup> (Hubei 1980c; Yang 1980), somewhat smaller than Chu Huangcheng. Jijiahu contains raised platforms and is near several large Chu burial grounds, including Zhaojiahu, Balingshan, and Qingshan. It was clearly an important location during the Chu era, even if it was not the state capital.

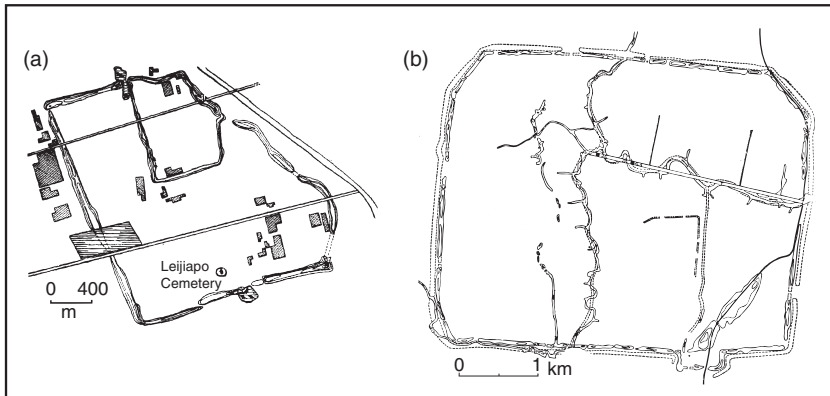


Figure 5.8. (a) Chu Huangcheng (redrawn after Chu 1980a: 109); (b) Jinancheng (redrawn after Höllmann 1986).

Jinancheng is located southeast of Jijiahu, outside of Jiangling in west-central Hubei. Intensive explorations from the 1950s to the 1970s (Hubei 1980a, 1980b, 1982a, 1982b), together with subsequent targeted research, have produced a basic understanding of the site (Guo D. 1999; Höllmann 1986; Hubei 1987a, 1988b, 1991b, 1995a; Zhongguo 2004: 259–263). The walled site covers approximately 16.65 km<sup>2</sup>, within which four sectors are divided from one another by stream courses (Figure 5.8b). The site wall is 15.5 km long, with a height of 4–8 m, a base of 30–40 m, and a top width of 10–20 m. This would have required between 2,125 and 6,370 person-days to construct – three to four times that of Shijiahe and Chu Huangcheng. Site survey located seven gates in the site wall and 85 *hangtu* platforms. The platforms are concentrated in the eastern portion of the site, particularly in the southeast. One particularly dense cluster was surrounded at least partially by another *hangtu* wall (Hubei 1991b), reminiscent of the inner walls around elite compounds at early walled sites in the Central Plains and the northeast compound at Chu Huangcheng. Jinancheng is commonly associated with Ying (e.g., Höllmann 1986; Zhongguo 2004: 259; Wang H. 2006), although some argue that the height of occupation seems to have been in the Warring States, after the supposed peak of the Ying Capital (Blakeley 1999b). This may be the result of insufficient excavation at the site, however. Despite the importance of this site, no comprehensive report has yet been published.

Evidence of political authority at settlements beyond these purported capital sites comes from recently published excavations at the site of Longwan in Qianjiang, 50 km southeast of Jinancheng. These excavations revealed extensive remains of palatial structures – the first of

their kind excavated in the Chu realm (Hubei and Hubei 2005; Jingzhou and Qianjiang 1987). Excavation work has focused on Palace Structure No. 1 at the Fangyingtai locus (Figure 5.9). The palace is thought to have covered a 1.3 ha area and have been built in the Late Springs and Autumns or Early Warring States period. Another, earlier palace foundation is thought to exist below, possibly dating to the Western Zhou. The palace building was complicated and involved the integration of a thick rammed-earth foundation, shell-paved passageways, and courtyard areas. Previously unknown techniques were used in its construction. The building was covered with a tile roof and included fragments of bronze vessels, further supporting the interpretation of this structure as an elite building.

Other Eastern Zhou settlements existed along the Lower Han River and in eastern Hubei at Anju in Sui County, Chuwangcheng in Yunmeng, Ewangcheng in Echeng, and Wulijie in Daye (Hubei 2006c, 2006d, 2006e; Wuhan 1984; Xu S. 1999; Zhang Z. 1983; Zhu and Li 2005). The sites of Ewangcheng and Wulijie and the Han site of Caowangzuicheng lie close to the copper mines at Tonglüshan, which continued to be a significant source of metal ore throughout the Zhou period. The sites were surrounded by walls with battlements and a moat and may have been situated to protect access to metal ores at Tonglüshan (Peters 1999: 103). Around Dongting Lake and south of the Yangzi into Hunan, Eastern Zhou settlements are known from Changsha, Cili, Linyi, Mayang, Pingjiang, Shimen, Taoyuan, and Xiangyin. Excavations in the 1940s first confirmed that the Chu polity had extended as far south as Changsha (Rao 1946), and subsequent excavations of thousands of tombs confirm the Chu presence there (Hunan et al. 2000).

The Chu state is thought to have colonized Hunan in the Late Springs and Autumns or, more likely, Early Warring States period (Wagner 1987). Chu control in Hunan was probably uneven throughout the Eastern Zhou. Other remains in this region are sometimes identified with the Yue ethnic group, indigenous to this region before the arrival of Chu (e.g., Hunan 1984). Among the scattered sites with Late Eastern Zhou remains are locations such as Bu'er men – a series of rock shelters and caves that were occupied from the Shang period through the Late Bronze Age (Hunan and Xiangxi 2002). Evidence from these loci reflects the persistence of a hunting and fishing economy and small-scale communities throughout the period of Chu presence elsewhere in Hunan.

Eastern Zhou Chu remains are, of course, found outside of Central China – in Henan, Anhui, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Shanghai (Xu S. 1999) – but these are beyond the scope of this study. Here we have seen that the population centers with political institutions were concentrated primarily

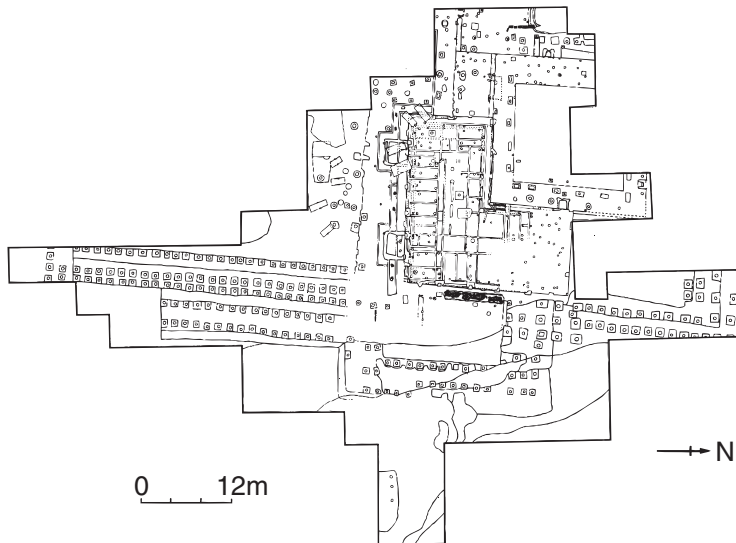


Figure 5.9. Fangyingtai foundation F1 at Longwan. (Redrawn after Hubei and Hubei 2005: 226–227.)

in the Nanyang Basin and the Jiangnan Plain. Important settlements are located in eastern Hubei as well, in the corridor between the Dabie Mountains and the Dahong highland around Suizhou. These sites were associated with the smaller polities, such as Zeng, Tang, Li, and Sui, that succumbed to Chu expansion during the Eastern Zhou and thereby were incorporated into the political topography of the Chu state.

### Summary

Unlike the case of Sichuan, archaeological information from the Late Bronze Age in the Middle Yangzi is extremely abundant. It is, however, heavily biased toward burial data. Material associated with Chu, in particular, comes mainly from the thousands of so-called Chu burials discovered and excavated across Hunan and Hubei as well as in Henan, Anhui, and Chongqing (we return to the burial data in Chapter 9). These burials, together with the settlement information from a much smaller number of sites, reflect intense political and cultural hegemony emanating from the political core of Chu. This core area comprised the corridor from the Nanyang Basin, south along the Han River, into the western part of the Jiangnan Plain, and by the Warring States period, extending south along the Xiang River to the Changsha region.

Before the Eastern Zhou, the picture is somewhat more muddled. The Chu state may not have been extended south beyond the Nanyang Basin until the end of the Western Zhou, and communities during the Late Shang and Western Zhou elsewhere in the Middle Yangzi region do not seem to have been politically integrated. Even earlier, in the middle second millennium B.C., Panlongcheng near Wuhan was a local political center, drawing its influence from its associations with the Erligang core and its role as a garrison and economic transshipment point. Elsewhere in the Middle Yangzi, communities were relatively local in their political and cultural influence.

Yet earlier, the Shijiahe period at the end of the third and beginning of the second millennia B.C. was the first chronological phase during which cultural influence seems to have flowed outward from a prominent core area – the region of the Shijiahe site cluster near Tianmen. Throughout the Late Neolithic and Bronze ages, the political and cultural topography of the Middle Yangzi region saw tremendous shifts in the locations that had the most influence. This overview has been necessarily coarse in the scale of description and generalizing, but it presents the basic culture-historical framework within which we can investigate more specific aspects of the political and cultural topographies of the Middle Yangzi region.

### Problematizing Traditional Narratives

The historiographical topography outlined in Chapter 3 has led to relatively uneven research across Central China. Certain areas have been investigated with more intensity and regularity than others, and this inevitably skews our understanding of the political and cultural topographies presented here. The available data tell a story that is focused on the Chengdu Plain in the case of the Sichuan Basin and on the migration of political centers around the Jiangnan Plain and Nanyang Basin in the case of the Middle Yangzi.

We might ask what factors were important in the emergence of the political centers in the locations where they are found. In the Sichuan Basin, Sanxingdui seems to have arisen in the context of a fertile plain where interacting peer villages developed during the preceding centuries. Sanxingdui itself was likely a participant in a network of peer-polity interactions despite its location on the northeastern fringe of this network. This slightly removed position may have been advantageous to social and political development at the site. In particular, the Chengdu Plain proper may have been an unpredictable region owing to floods, and Sanxingdui

may have been less affected by frequent flooding. Subsequent developments, particularly the shift of power from Sanxingdui to the Chengdu area, may reflect changes in the ability to control hydrological activities and/or variations in political fortune, possibly related to advantages that Chengdu may have offered in terms of access to resources. The general character of the political topography in Sichuan remained fairly stable throughout the first millennium, even when the Qin conquered the region in 316 B.C.

In the Middle Yangzi, the Shijiahe region may have become an important location owing to environmental factors, including its location in the fertile Jiangnan Plain. Certainly cultural connections across the region increased during this period. The emergence of Panlongcheng in the middle first millennium marks a dramatic change as the Middle Yangzi was pulled into the political networks emanating from the Central Plains. These connections had effects on indigenous communities, as evidence for local elites attest. What began as political relations driven by economically motivated connections reflected by Panlongcheng was followed, in the first millennium, by the establishment of political and ideological patterns that tied the Middle Yangzi inextricably to communities farther north. This was bolstered by a developing sense of local identity in the Chu polity during the first millennium.

The long-term changes in the Sichuan Basin and the Middle Yangzi were not completely independent of one another. Wall construction at Late Neolithic sites in both regions shows one early potential sign of indirect connections. These were followed by more direct evidence for some interactions. For example, the jades and bronzes at Sanxingdui show evidence of long-distance connections, some of which relate to the Middle Yangzi region (Falkenhausen 2006b), possibly being transferred into Sichuan along the Han River (Falkenhausen 2011). How these connections occurred is a question that draws our attention to the area in between the political centers – the Three Gorges.

Focusing our attention on the Three Gorges not only allows us to examine questions of interaction between the political and cultural cores of the Chengdu Plain and Middle Yangzi but also forces us to examine the nature of local communities in this region. In Chapter 6, we outline the current state of research on political and cultural patterns in this region and set the stage for a discussion of other topographies in Part III.