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Sacred-political center of Zhou in Qizhou 1095–771 BC

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Abstract. The relevance of the topic of the study is due to the fact that in the history of the Western Zhou state (1027–771 BC), there were three simultaneous capital centers of the state, the functions of which were not of sufficient interest to researchers of Ancient China. The purpose of the study is to identify the functions of one of these centers — Qizhou, which appeared before the founding of the Western Zhou state and existed until the end of the Western Zhou. In the process of identifying the functions of the metropolitan center, the author also turned to the problem of finding analogues of the territory under research. Consideration of archaeological materials from the monuments of the center of Qizhou made it possible to propose a new term to define such a territory — a sacred-political center. Based on the method of historical and archaeological description, the author concluded that there were two large zones in Qizhou, the first of which was a vast settlement with palace and temple areas, workshops for the manufacture of products from stone, bone, clay, burials ordinary community members and nobility of different levels, etc. The second zone is the cult space of the royal Ji dynasty, where palace and temple complexes and burials of the Vans, female relatives and other persons associated with the family are located.

Keywords: Western Zhou, metropolitan center, archeology, history, sacred space, burial, palace and temple complex, politics

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Сакрально-политический центр чжоуской государственности в Цичжоу в 1095–771 гг. до н.э

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Аннотация. В истории государства Западное Чжоу (1027–771 гг. до н.э.) одновременно существовали три столичных центра государства, функции которых не представляли достаточного интереса для исследователей древнего Китая. Цель исследования — выявление функций одного из таких центров — Цичжоу, который появился до основания государства Западное Чжоу и просуществовал вплоть до завершения периода Западного Чжоу. Автор также обратился к проблеме поиска аналогов рассматриваемой им территории. Рассмотрение археологических материалов памятников центра Цичжоу позволило предложить новый термин для определения подобной территории — сакрально-политический центр. Опираясь на метод историко-археологического описания, автор пришел к выводу о том, что в Цичжоу располагалось две крупные зоны, первая из которых представляет собой обширное по площади поселение с дворцово-храмовыми зонами, мастерскими по изготовлению изделий из камня, кости, глины, погребениями обычных общинников и знати разных уровней и др. Вторая зона — культовое пространство царской династии Цзи, где расположены дворцово-храмовые комплексы и погребения ванов, родственников по женской линии и других связанных с родом персон.

Ключевые слова: Западное Чжоу, столичный центр, археология, история, сакральное пространство, погребение, дворцово-храмовый комплекс, политика

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Introduction

The sacred-political center of the Zhou people, Qizhou 岐周 (Qiyi 岐邑 in the inscriptions on the bronze vessels) is located at the foot of the Qishan Mountains 岐山 in the western part of the Middle Weihe Valley (In Shaanxi Province, Baoji City District, Qishan County).

The **main purpose of this study** is the historical and archaeological characteristics of the sacred-political center of Qizhou as a type of capital center

of Zhou statehood during the “Early Zhou” (ca. 1200–1027 BC) and Western Zhou (1027–771 BC) periods.

As a result of the study, we concluded that the sacred-political center, from an archaeological point of view, is a complexly organized space, which includes a palace and temple area, individual workshops and villages, as well as socially ranked burial grounds for the population of this center.

This is a more or less permanent settlement that served as the headquarters (residence) of the ruler, in which the main political actions of the bearer of supreme power could be carried out, such as the beginning and completion of significant state events, the endowment of titles, possessions and positions of representatives of noble families, and in which religious ceremonies were held to honor the spirits of the sovereign’s ancestors, various sacrifices were made.

Such a center combined the functions of the sacred center of the state and the political center. There was the central residence of the ruler from where orders for appointments were given from, and representatives of the nobility flocked here with reports to the audience of the *wang*.

From the *Shiji* (“Historical Notes”) of Sima Qian it is known that the Zhou people moved to the area of the Qishan Mountains from the Bin region under the Gu-gong Dan-fu (ca. 1124 BC) [1]. From that time on, a sacred (cult) and at the same time political center of the Zhou people arose there, it operated until the emergence of the Western Zhou state in 1027 BC. The further fate of Qizhou is not mentioned in the sources, but archaeological materials confirm its existence and use as a sacred-political center until the end of Western Zhou.

In Western Zhou (1027–771 BC), the number of centers of power of the Zhou king increased to three: one appeared in the area of the modern city of Xi’an — Feng-Hao 丰镐, and the second — near the modern city of Luoyang — Luoyi 洛邑. All three of them functioned until the collapse of the Western Zhou state (fig. 1).



Figure 1. Map of the sacred-political centers of the Zhou people and the royal burial ground in Zhou-gong Miao
Source: Google Maps online. URL: <https://www.google.ru/maps/@34.13489,107.7764777,8.96z?hl=ru&entry=ttu> (accessed: 15.04.2022).

Qizhou is considered the first center of Zhou statehood for a number of reasons. First of all, in written sources it is called Qiyi 岐邑, that is, historiographers pointed to it as the capital yi 邑 of Western Zhou. In addition, there is a vast area with a high density of over a dozen palace and temple complexes, numerous settlement monuments, hundreds of burials, pits with oracle bones with inscriptions and ritual bronze vessels with inscriptions, the number of which reaches tens of thousands of units. Thirdly, the discovery of large burial grounds of the lower, middle, high nobility and, in particular, *Wangs* of the early-middle Western Zhou (the Zhou-gong Miao monument) confirmed the fact that a large center of the state was located in the Qizhou region.

Historiography

In the works of Russian historians, the first sacred-political center of the Zhou people, Qizhou, was not studied in detail. In the chapter “Archaeological monuments of Early Zhou (about 1200–1027 BC)” of volume 1 of “History of China” S.A. Komissarov and S.I. Blumkhen described in detail only the palace in Fengchu, confirming that here, in the vicinity of the Qishan Mountains, the center of the early Zhou statehood, indicated in the “Historical Notes” of Sima Qian, was located [2. P. 629].

The works of Western specialists also lack comprehensive studies of Qizhou. In “The Cambridge History of China” Ed. Shaughnessy and J. Rawson paid little attention to the Qishan region [3. P. 352–449]. The authors provided illustrations with images of the palace in Fengchu, but did not give its characteristics. They also briefly mentioned a few scattered sites, such as the palace at Shaochen, the treasures at Dongjia and Zhuangbai. However, consideration of the monuments and archaeological materials of the center of Qizhou in their integrity as a single complex was not presented.

M.S. Khayutina addressed the capitals of Western Zhou in her article “Western ‘Capitals’ of the Western Zhou Dynasty: Historical Reality and Its Reflections Until the Time of Sima Qian” [4]. She examined references to sacred-political centers in written narrative sources starting from the Chunqiu period (771–453 BC) and pointed out that they ignored the early centers of Zhou statehood, the priority of the center of the state was given to Luoyang. She noted the exceptional role of the “Book of Poems” (Shijing) in preserving the historical memory of the Western sacred-political centers of Western Zhou in Feng-Hao and Qizhou, the memory of which, as the early capitals of the Zhou people, arose, in her opinion, during the Warring States period (453–221 BC).

Numerous reports on excavations carried out by Chinese archaeologists are devoted to the description of the archaeological monuments of the center of Qizhou. The main emphasis in them is on consideration of general issues

related to the discovery and excavation of monuments [5–10]. Several authors have made attempts to summarize the data obtained and compare the monuments of three metropolitan areas [11; 12]. However, the purpose of such works is a brief description of the finds, and not an analysis and comparison of all materials as a whole.

**Description of the archaeological sites
of the sacred-political center of Qizhou**

The sacred-political center of Qizhou is located at the mouth of the Baijiayao River, flowing from the Qishan Mountains. The area is protected on all sides by mountains and divided into western and eastern parts by ravines, it covers an area of approx. 5 sq. km. Further we describe the structure of the center with the palace and temple complexes in Fengchu, Yuntang and Shaochen, then move on to the description of the burial grounds, workshops and treasures of bronze items (fig. 2).

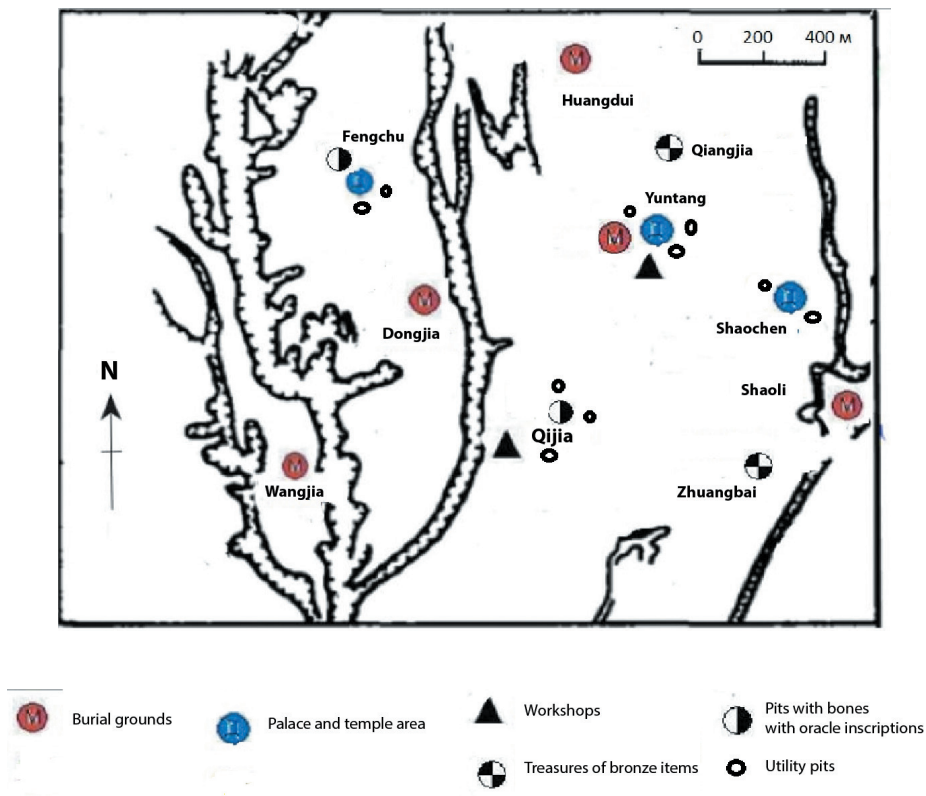


Figure 2. General diagram of the monuments of the Qizhou region (excluding the Zhou-gong Miao monument)
Source: compiled by the M.V. Efimenko.

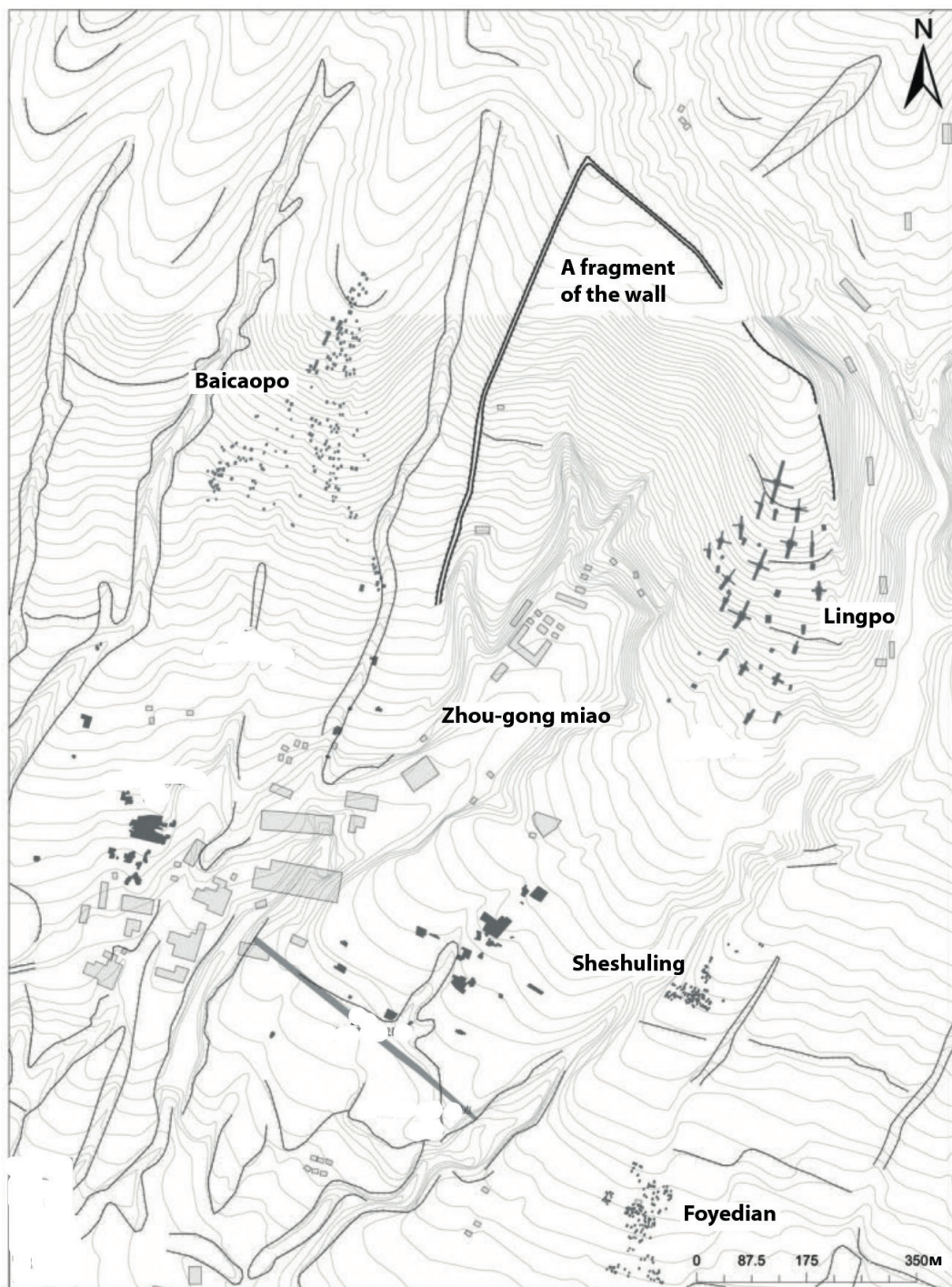


Figure 3. Scheme map of the Zhou-gong Miao monument (archaeological sites are marked in black)
Source: compiled by the M.V. Efimenko.

Fengchu Palace and Temple Complex

Fengchu Monument 凤雏 is located in the northwestern sector of the area studied (fig. 4). In 1976, the foundation of a large palace complex was discovered, which was conventionally called the “First Palace”. The monument dates from the period ca. 1095–984 BC (according to C14). The entrance to the palace was from the south side, where there was a stone barrier screen, a front building and a long corridor-wall along which the rooms and outbuildings were located [5]. The front part of the palace is divided into two parts: western and eastern. In the western part of the hall, utility pits were discovered with remains of chicken and pig bones, and fragments of ceramics [12. P. 78].

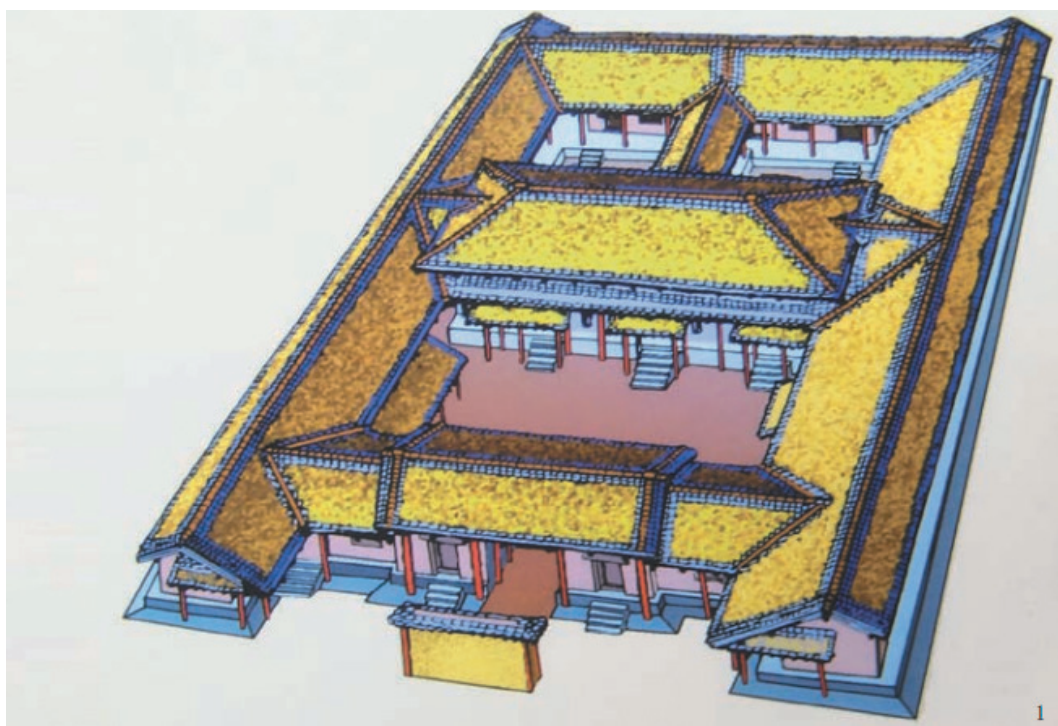


Figure 4. Reconstruction of the palace and temple complex of the Fengchu monument
Source: [7].

In the western wing, a large cache of inscriptions on turtle shells (about 17,000 fragments) was discovered, but only a few intact ones stand out among them, the rest of the shells either contain fragments with one sign or are damaged. Three inscriptions were translated and examined by M.Yu. Ulyanov in [13]. They date from the reign of Cheng-wang (1024–1004 BC) and confirm the existence of close contacts between the sovereigns of Zhou and Chu and other neighboring states.

In 1978, a treasure trove of bronze vessels from the Western Zhou era was discovered northwest of the palace [6]. It consists of five bronze vessels, three of which have relatively brief inscriptions. The texts of the inscriptions are short: on two items it is said that Bo Jing-fu 伯竟父 took advantage of the *wang*'s command to cast this vessel, so that generations of ancestors would keep it as a jewel. The inscription on the third vessel repeats the text about the subsequent storage of the vessel [14].

This palace was used for about 110 years. The reasons for its desolation are most likely due to the fact that the administrative and cult center was moved to a new palace and temple complex in Shaochen. The similarity of the palace from Fengchu with the Shang palace complex 2 from Anyang indicates that after moving to the Qizhou region under Gu-gong Dan-fu, representatives of the Zhou elites had extensive contact with the rulers of the Shang state. This interaction with a strong and developed state allowed the Zhou people to borrow both the principles of planning and construction of buildings, and the beliefs associated with them, where the cult of ancestors played a leading role.

Royal burial ground

Monument to Zhou-gong Miao 周公庙 is located in 10 km west of the Fengchu monument. Three burial grounds of representatives of different social groups were discovered at the monument. Lingpo burial ground is the burial place of the kings of the Western Zhou state, where 22 graves with 1–4 dromos were discovered. The large sizes of burials M1, M10, M18, M12 and M4, M5, their location in the center of the burial ground, and the presence of four dromos allow us to conclude that these are the graves of the rulers of the early Western Zhou [15]. Correlation of three cruciform burials of the Zhou-gong Miao (M1, M10 and M18) with the royal burials of Anyang (state of Shang-Yin, Xiaotun monument, ca. 1300–1027 BC) allowed us to conclude that the design of the burials of the Shang and the Zhou are similar — these are ground graves with a rectangular or square burial pit with a coffin and a sarcophagus or two sarcophagi. Apparently, the similarities in the funeral rite are due to the fact that the Shang and Zhou people are representatives of the same ethnic group — the Huaxia.

We assume that these could be the burials of Cheng-wang (1024–1004 BC), Kang-wang (1004–984 BC), Zhao-wang (984–966 BC), Mu-wang (965–928 BC), Gong-wang (927–907 BC), Yi-wang (I) (907–897 BC).

To the west, northwest and north of the burial ground with large burials along the deep gorge around the Linpo cemetery, sections of a wall made of rammed earth with a total length of about 1500 m were discovered (fig. 5). This is probably a fragment of the wall that protected this area from attacks by steppe inhabitants from the north.

In the southern part of the monument, a palace and temple area with a royal ancestral temple was discovered, where the most important objects of the Zhou cult were kept and religious ceremonies were held.

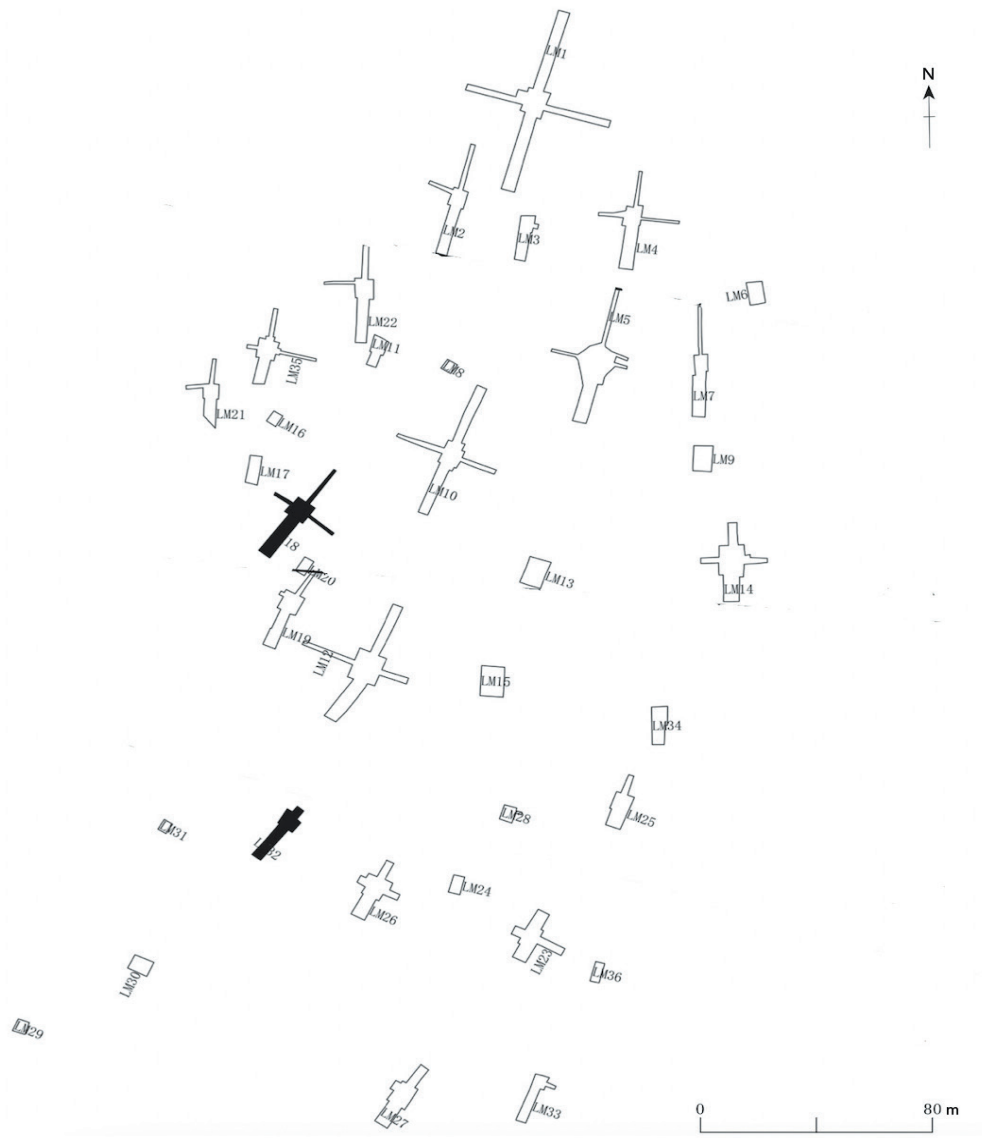


Figure 5. Plan of the Lingpo Royal Burial Ground of Qizhou District
Source: [16].

Next to the royal burial ground there were the cemeteries of Baicaoopo 白草坡, Sheshuling 折树棱 and Foyedian 佛爷殿, where representatives of the middle and lower nobility were buried, as well as a small number of communal peasants. Dating of the graves from early to late Western Zhou.

In 2004, workshops for the production of bronze utensils, clay vessels and stone products, as well as numerous utility pits with defective clay models for casting, were discovered south of the Linpo cemetery. The discovery of numerous turtle shells in various parts of the monuments indicates the high sacred status of this area [16]. Probably, there was a place of fortune-telling at the temples located in the southern part of the monument.

Shaochen Palace and Temple Complex

Shaochen 召陈 Monument is located in the eastern sector of the zone (see Fig. 2). In 1976, a large temple for sacrifices to ancestors was discovered here [17]. The structures date back to the Western Zhou era.

In the northern part of the monument, a utility pit was discovered with fragments of ceramics, one of which has the inscription: “The Zhou Wang made this vessel to record [the message] about the sacrifice that took place in honor of Cheng-wang and to remember the sacrifices made to Wu-wang” [10. P. 53]. This product was used for religious ceremonies here in the temple of our ancestors. It could have been used in ritual damage to ceramic products to report to the ancestors about the performance of the sacrifice. It appears to be a vessel from the Kang-wang era, since the sacrifices were made in honor of Cheng-wang and Wu-wang — his father and grandfather, respectively.

Also, jade discs and decorations, ceramic vessels and bronze vessels, bronze anthropomorphic figurines, vessels and figurines made of proto-porcelain were found around the platforms, on their surfaces and in the filling, as well as shell figurines (anthropomorphic heads).

Ceramic vessels and vessels made of proto-porcelain are relatively well preserved. They differ from the funerary and household ceramics examined at other sites of the Zhouyuan Plain and the Zhangjiapo site on the left bank of the Feng River, in the Middle Weihe. We assume that these items could be ceremonial ritual vessels used at temples to perform ceremonies in the temple of ancestors. This is another argument in favor of the fact that the temple of ancestors was located in these buildings.

Palace and temple complex, burial ground and bone-carving workshops at Yuntang

The Yuntang 云塘 Monument is located in the central part of the area (fig. 6). A large palace and temple complex from the middle-late Western Zhou period (dated to $C14\ 900 \pm 80\ BC$) was discovered here [18]. The complex consists of four foundations F1-3 and F8, surrounded by a wall and arranged in the shape of a cross [18. P. 39–42]. A stone road leads from the gate to the main building of the entire complex. The remains of bone-carving workshops

for the production of tools for peasants, dating from the middle to late periods of Western Zhou, were discovered. As a result of the excavations, it was also possible to clear graves from the early (1027–966 BC) and late periods (857–771 BC) of the Western Zhou era.

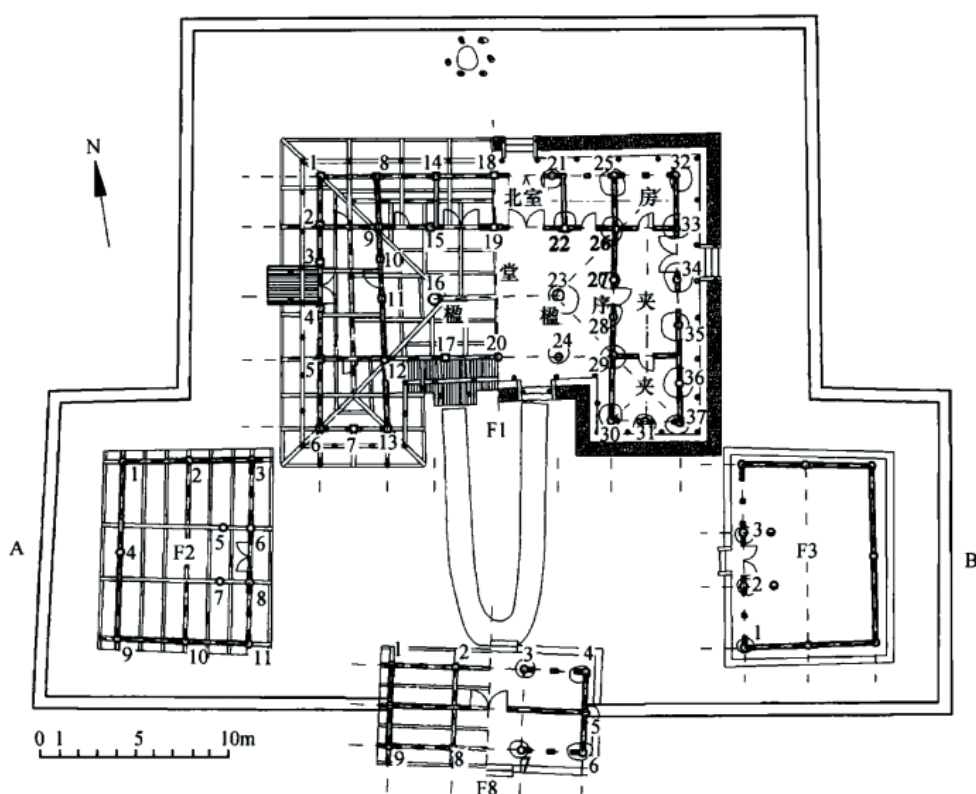


Figure 6. Plan of the palace and temple complex located at the Yuntang Monument
Source: [18].

The layout of this palace and temple complex differs from the layout of the palace complexes and temples in Anyang. This is probably Zhou's own construction tradition.

Burial grounds of Wangjia, Huangdui, Shaoli, Hejia

At the Wangjia site, rectangular dirt graves and a sacrificial pit with horses of early Western Zhou were cleared [8]. A layer of pearl chips was sprinkled between the coffin and the sarcophagus in burial M1. This ritual

occurs infrequently and is not characteristic of the ritual practice of the Zhou people [8. P. 1–3]. Apparently, the buried person belonged to the lower stratum of the nobility. This can be judged by the design of the burials and grave goods.

At the Huangdui monument, a small burial ground of representatives of the middle and lower nobility of the Western Zhou era was discovered [19]. Although the graves have been robbed, they can be dated to the middle to late Western Zhou periods. The grave goods are varied, but bronze vessels are missing, since all the graves were robbed.

In 1973, graves from the early Western Zhou period were excavated at the Hejia site here [19]. The sets of funeral utensils at the monument are monotonous. This indicates the ethnic and social homogeneity of the buried. In addition, judging by the design of the graves, the absence of dromos, the presence of a coffin and sarcophagus, a significant number of bronze vessels, as well as decorations, we can conclude that the buried represent a layer of the lower or middle serving nobility.

In 1975, a grave was discovered northwest of the Shaoli monument; it is dated to the late period of the Shang-Yin era — the early period of Western Zhou [9]. Bronze vessels and numerous grave goods were found in the grave. Judging by the funeral rite and the abundance of bronze items, a representative of the lower or middle nobility was buried in the grave, probably a Shang, as indicated by the presence of a dog in the grave pit of the grave, which is typical for the Shang funeral rite. Apparently, the deceased served at the palace and temple complex located at the Shaochen monument, where he was sent to serve at the Zhou palace.

Workshops and Burial Ground of Qijia Monument

Several burials of the middle — late Western Zhou (965–771 BC) were found at the monument [20. P. 45–50]. In the graves there are decorations made of bronze and jade, which indicates a fairly high status of the buried.

In utility pits to the north and east of the village, turtle shells and cow shoulder bones were discovered with inscriptions that date back to the Western Zhou era [20]. This was probably the site of a fortune telling, as the foundations of rammed earth structures are located nearby. After fortune telling and receiving an answer to the question, the bones could be buried in a cache pit near the place of fortune telling.

In 1989, a stone-cutting workshop was found [9]. A utility pit with damaged items was also excavated here: fragments of broken ceramics, stone blanks, both unprocessed and partially processed [20. P. 12]. A large number of stone axes and preparations for them were discovered.

Dongjia treasure

In 1975, a treasure of bronze vessels was discovered on the territory of the monument [21]. The number of treasure vessels is not specified. Obviously, archaeologists did not get the entire treasure, but only some of its vessels. Among them, the most important for studying the history of the period are vessels with inscriptions belonging to the noble Wei family — four vessels: Wei ding 韦鼎 (two items), Wei he 韦盃, Wei gui 韦簋. All of them date from the reign of Gong-wang 恭王 (927–907 BC). The texts of the inscriptions on these products tell about the endowment of land, a title of nobility or a position at court by the van to one or more ancestors of the customer of the inscription. The presence of a treasure near a large palace (the palace in Shaochen is located east of Dongjia) may indicate significant changes in the life of its creators, since such important cult objects as bronze vessels are not left in the ground without a reason.

Zhuangbai Treasure

The main finds here are represented by several large hordes of bronze vessels from different periods of Western Zhou. In 1975, a treasure from the Mu-wang era (965–928 BC) was discovered consisting of 18 items, 11 of which have inscriptions [22]. In December 1976, another treasure was discovered (fig. 7) [23].

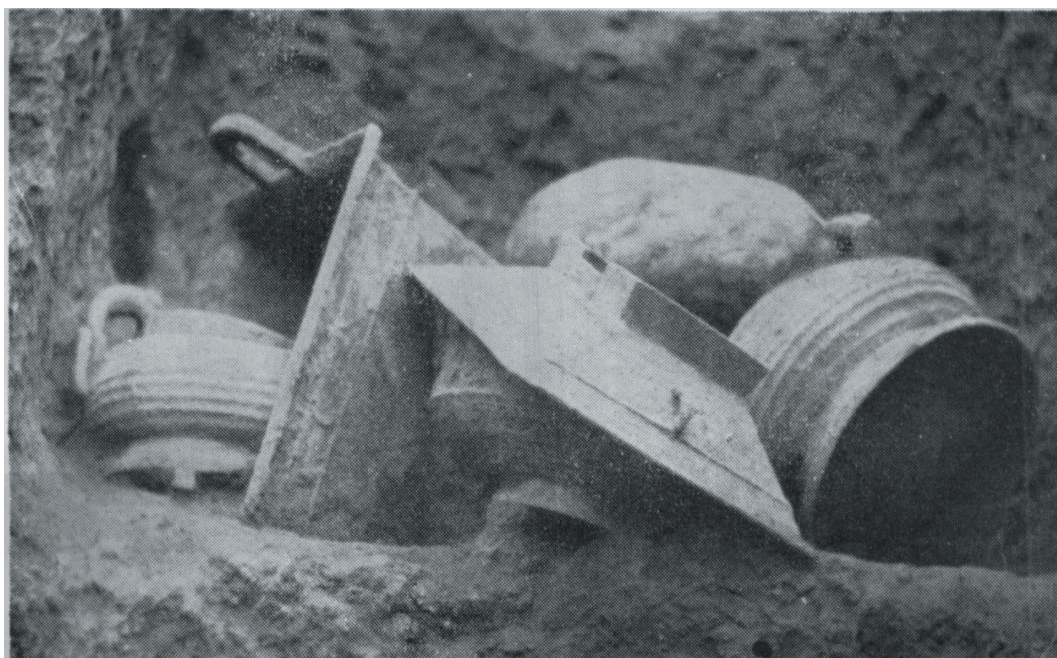


Figure 7. Photo of a treasure found in Zhuangbai village in 1976
Source: [23].

It contained 5 items that were thrown into a pile rather than placed in order. The treasure is dated to the late Western Zhou period. Probably, at the end of Western Zhou, an event occurred that required the residents of the center of Qizhou to leave their place of residence and flee, hiding valuable religious objects in a hurry in a dirt pit not far from the temple (to the north is the Shaoli Ancestral Temple and the Yuntang palace and temple complex).

Conclusion

We examined the archaeological sites of the sacred-political center of Qizhou before the founding of the centralized state (c. 1095–1027 BC) at “Early Zhou” period and after its foundation in the Western Zhou era (1027–771 BC).

The discovery in the study area of several palace and temple buildings, numerous burial grounds of different ranks, a large number of bones with oracle inscriptions and bronze vessels with inscriptions clearly indicates that a major center of the state is located here.

The most important conclusion of the study is that the space under consideration cannot be called a “city” in the sense of the sacred, administrative, commercial and military center of the state. This territory with a high concentration of archaeological monuments is not limited by fortification, therefore we propose to call this space «the sacred-political center» of the state. It existed simultaneously with other sacral-political centers of power of the wang in Feng-Hao and Luoyang.

The social composition of the inhabitants of the sacred-political center of Qizhou is diverse: from peasants and artisans working in workshops for the production of stone, bone, ceramic and bronze products to priests, representatives of the lower, middle and high nobility with members of the dynasty. It should be noted that in the sacred-political center there are zones separating different social groups (social burial grounds of the Zhou-Gong Miao monument). Further examination of the monuments of the center will allow us to draw a conclusion about the role of the center in the historical process in the state of Western Zhou.

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