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From tomb-keeper to tomb-occupant: the changing conceptualisation of dogs in early China

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Abstract

Dogs have played a vital and varied role in the social history of early China. Whether used as a source of food, a hunting-aid, or a sacrificial victim, dogs were intimately connected with human life and death. The placement and significance of dismembered and slaughtered dogs in human tombs have been a source of scholarly interest across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, less attention has been paid to sources which present us with a spectrum of concerns surrounding the treatment of dogs after their death. Should they be consumed, discarded, or buried? Which dogs were deserving of burial, and how were such burials viewed by human commentators? By analysing textual, archaeological, and material sources, this article explores the changing conceptualisation of dogs in life and in death through the medium of the tomb, showing how the transition from tomb-keeper to tomb-occupant reflects an increasingly anthropomorphic view of canine potential and moral fibre by the early medieval period.

Keywords: Animal studies; archaeology; material culture; dogs; tombs; human-animal relations; early China; early medieval China

Dogs are known to have lived in close proximity with humans for millennia in China, with the domestication of the dog in the region of modern-day China pre-dating the fifth millennium BC.¹ Archaeological, textual, and material sources from across the Shang 商 (circa 1600 BC–circa 1050 BC), Zhou 周 (circa 1050 BC–222 BC), and Han 漢 (206 BC–220 CE) periods

¹ The process of dog domestication can be dated to circa 15,000 BP according to G. Larson et al., 'Rethinking dog domestication by integrating genetics, archeology, and biogeography', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 109.23 (2012), pp. 8878–8883, or perhaps even earlier according to M. Germonpré et al., 'Fossil dogs and wolves from palaeolithic sites in Belgium, the Ukraine and Russia: osteometry, ancient DNA and stable isotopes', *Journal of Archaeological Science* 36.2 (2009), pp. 473–490. The earliest extant dog remains in the region of modern-day China were discovered at the Neolithic site of Nanzhuangtou 南庄頭 (Hebei): J. Yuan and R. Flad, 'New zooarchaeological evidence for changes in Shang Dynasty animal sacrifice', *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 24.3 (2005), pp. 252–270. Some studies, like that of P. Savolainen et al., 'Genetic evidence for an East Asian origin of domestic dogs', *Science* 298 (2002), pp. 1610–1613, suggest that dogs may even have been first domesticated in East Asia, while L. A. F. Frantz et al., 'Genomic and archaeological evidence suggest a dual origin of domestic dogs', *Science* 352 (2016), pp. 1228–1231, argues for a dual domestication of the dog in eastern and western Eurasia, with western Eurasian sites yielding older remains. See also Wang Lihua 王利華, 'Zaoqi Zhongguo shehui de quan wenhua' 早期中國社會的犬文化, *Nongye kaogu* 3 (1992), p. 265. There is an ongoing addition of new studies on the process, region, and time period of dog domestication, and it is highly likely that information challenging or supporting the above assertions will be published in due course.

depict dogs as a kind of livestock animal, as a sacrificial and ceremonial victim, and as guarding property or used in hunting but not, interestingly, as a companion animal or lapdog. On the contrary, post-Han accounts linger on the moral qualities of canines, recording acts of heroism that signify a deep bond between human and dog. This changing conceptualisation of dogs in textual sources is paralleled by archaeological findings that reorient the dog from being associated with human burials to being the occupants of their own tombs.

Much scholarship has explored the relationship between humans and dogs in the context of wider human history and in the specific regional context of China—in particular, the Neolithic, Shang, and Zhou periods. This has largely centred on archaeological findings from sites like Anyang 安陽 (Henan) which display a range of dismembered or slaughtered dogs as part of ritual practices, as will be discussed. The Han era provides more replete textual information that can furnish our understanding of dogs in non-ritual contexts; however, current scholarship consistently views the dog in early China as an object rather than as a multivalent, complex site of interaction. In other words, this article seeks to evaluate the changing conceptualisation of dogs, particularly in the Han to post-Han period, through the lens of both human- and dog-occupied tombs.

This article divides the dog's role within the tomb into three phases, though these are in no way definite when considering regional incongruities and dead spots in archaeological or textual records. The first phase situated the dog as a ritual accessory involved in either the consecration of the tomb or other funerary practices. The second phase saw the substitution of the physical dog with ceramic figurines and redefined the burial of physical dogs in human-occupied tombs as a marker of prestige. The third phase, in contrast to the initial restrictions imposed on dog-occupied tombs, saw the development of extravagant dog burials. This article thus contends that the vastly understudied transition in how dogs were treated in death parallels a redefinition of dogs in life.

Phase I: the dog in Shang and Western Zhou burials

There has been much research across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries on the unique placement of dogs in Shang and Western Zhou burials. This topic has burgeoned to the point where state-of-the-field articles have sought to address current research questions and trajectories with regard to dogs in the archaeological and textual records of pre-imperial China.² Archaeological evidence from the Shang period in particular largely presents fragmentary, slaughtered, or dismembered dog remains in three contexts: in waste deposits, in ritual pits, and in relation to human-occupied tombs.

The presence of fragmentary bones in waste deposits from Shang sites like Xiaomintun 小民屯, Anyang, is reflective of the consumption of dogs both as a food source and as a sacrificial victim.³ As Li Zhipeng 李志鵬 and Roderick Campbell note, sacrificial practices cannot be fully understood through the study of interred animals in sacrificial pits alone as many sacrificial offerings or practices involved consumption, and these remains are likely to be mixed with regular food waste deposits.⁴ Oracle bones certainly mention the sacrifice of dogs, as has been analysed by Zhang Bingquan 張秉權, Ling Chunsheng 凌純聲, and Yang Yang 楊楊.⁵ These studies have shown that sacrificing dogs was largely

² Wu Zhuang 武庄, 'Xian Qin shiqi jiaquan yanjiu de xianzhuang yu zhanwang' 先秦時期家犬研究的現狀與展望, *Nanfang wenwu* 1 (2014), pp. 65–73.

³ Z. Li and R. Campbell, 'Puppies for the ancestors: the many roles of Shang dogs', *Archaeological Research in Asia* 17 (2019), pp. 161–172.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁵ Zhang Bingquan first summarised references to sacrificial dogs in Shang oracle bones in Zhang Bingquan, 'Jisi bu cizhong de xisheng' 祭祀卜辭中的犧牲, *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 38 (1968),

part of ancestral worship, in relation to cardinal directions, or associated with winds.⁶ Adam Schwartz's analysis of the Huayuanzhuang dongdi 花園莊東地 corpus of oracle bone inscriptions shows only five instances of dog sacrifice as part of royal ancestral rites carried out by a son of King Wu Ding 武丁 (r. circa 1250–1192 BC), either suggesting that dogs were a prestigious sacrificial offering, as argued by Yang, or a lowly offering, as maintained by Schwartz.⁷ However, as Campbell notes with regard to finds at Anyang, 'each context is different from the others and shows a different pattern of animal deposition, suggesting that a range of ritual practices occurred at Anyang, using alternative taxa and likely having a variety of objectives'.⁸ Dogs may have been sacrificed in certain ceremonies more so than in others, but in totality were one of a range of domesticated animals raised for consumption and sacrifice in the Shang period.⁹

Two ceremonial practices single the dog out above all else in Shang rituals: the consecration of buildings and the waist-pit (*yaokeng* 腰坑) of tombs.¹⁰ The former aspect is evidenced by finds at Xiaotun 小屯, Anyang, with dog skeletons being found in ceremonial pits in Compound C and in seven important buildings in Compound B. According to Shi Zhangru's 石璋如 analysis, these burials were associated with the consecration of: a building's foundations; pillar bases; and the threshold when buried with a human victim.¹¹

pp. 181–231. Ling Chunsheng then interpreted these references as reflecting the dogs being utilised in certain rituals mostly associated with the wind, four directions, and the sun, in Ling Chunsheng, 'Gudai Zhongguo ji Taiping yang diqu de quanji' 古代中國及太平洋地區的犬祭, in *Zhongguo bianjiang minzu yu huan Taiping yang wenhua* 中國邊疆民族與環太平洋文化 (Taipei, 1979), pp. 663–710. More recently, Yang Yang also concurred that dogs were used in ceremonies related to the four directions as well as for ancestors and thus was a prestigious sacrificial offering in Yang Yang, 'Qianxi jiaguwen zhong de quansheng' 淺析甲骨文中的犬牲, *Zhengzhou shifan jiaoyu* 1 (2013), pp. 57–61.

⁶ References to dogs in oracle bones as compared to other animals is made evident in Li and Campbell, 'Puppies for the ancestors', p. 169, Table 3, which articulates how dogs were strongly associated with ancestral worship and sacrifices to the directions, winds, and clouds. See also B. Schindler, 'On the travel, wayside and wind offerings in Ancient China', *Asia Major* 1 (1924), pp. 624–656 and Kei Shōran 桂小蘭, *Kodai Chūgoku no inu bunka: shokuyō to saishi o chūshin ni* 古代中國の犬文化: 食用と祭祀を中心に (Suita-shi, 2005).

⁷ A. C. Schwartz, 'Shang sacrificial animals: material documents and images', in *Animals through Chinese History: Earliest Times to 1911*, (eds) R. Sterckx, M. Siebert and D. Schäfer (Cambridge, 2019), p. 40. On the origins of this collection of 2,452 individual divination accounts, see *ibid.*, pp. 27–28. Li and Campbell, 'Puppies for the ancestors', p. 168, discuss the relative scarcity of dog remains in royal cemeteries as related to the larger role of war captives in royal sacrifices, with the dog playing a lowly role in such activities.

⁸ Li and Campbell, 'Puppies for the ancestors', p. 167.

⁹ An argument for a potential industry catering to raising dogs can be made on two bases: first are the Shang oracle bones which mention officials, termed as *quan* 犬 (dog [keepers]), who seem to have been tasked with the welfare of a quantity of dogs. One such record is translated in M. Fiskesjö, 'Rising from blood-stained fields: royal hunting and state formation in Shang China', *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 73 (2001), p. 103. Second are the findings of Li and Campbell, 'Puppies for the ancestors', pp. 169–170, wherein many Shang dogs interred at Anyang were juvenile puppies, which is especially notable when compared with midden deposits in other sites that attest to the use of adult dogs as a food source. This suggests there was an available source of puppies bred for ritual use in tomb- and consecration-related ceremonies. See also Li Zhipeng, 'Shang wenhua muzang zhong suizang de gousheng yanjiu erti' 商文化墓葬中隨葬的狗牲研究二題, *Nanfang wenwu* 2 (2011), pp. 100–104. As R. Sterckx, 'Animal to edible: the ritualization of animals in early China', in *Animals through Chinese History*, (eds) Sterckx, Siebert and Schäfer, p. 51 argues, it is likely that sacrificial victims were selected from a common group and so it is likely that a *quan* oversaw a quantity of dogs intended for different post-mortem purposes.

¹⁰ Of course, the *yaokeng* may itself have been a tomb-specific consecration sacrifice offering the dog as a food source, as argued in A. Selbitschka, 'Sacrifice vs. sustenance: food as a burial good in late pre-imperial and early imperial Chinese tombs and its relation to funerary rites', *Early China* 41 (2018), pp. 220–223.

¹¹ These sites and the dog skeletons discovered therein are elucidated in Shi Zhangru, 'Yinxu zuijin zhi zhongyao faxian fulun Xiaotun diceng' 殷墟最近之重要發現附論小屯地层, *Kaogu xuebao* 2 (1947), pp. 1–181; 'Xiaotun C qu de muzang qun' 小屯C區的墓葬群, *Academia Sinica* 23 (1952), pp. 447–488; and 'Xiaotun Yindai de jianzhu yiji' 小屯殷代的建築遺跡, *Academia Sinica* 26 (1955), pp. 131–188. These findings are further

Unlike the ‘ritualised destruction’ seen in consecration victims for buildings or elaborate tombs, where the focus lies on the act of killing and an anonymised ‘stacking’ of victims, so-called death attendants present an individualised treatment and preservation of the body.¹² Dogs and horses are by-and-large the only non-human death attendants found in Shang burials from Anyang and the Central Plains, suggesting that both animals were, for some reason, differentiated and selected for this purpose.¹³ While the topic of horses and their interactions with humans is one worthy of further research, this article will predominantly focus on the dog because of the unique transformation it underwent in relation to the tomb in the post-Han period. Nevertheless, this will not be the last time we see the horse and dog singled out from other animals.

Turning to tombs, dogs are most often found in waist-pits in many types of tomb across the Shang period. As Campbell has noted with regard to finds at Anyang, humans and dogs could both be positioned in waist-pits, on tomb ledges, and in associated tomb fills.¹⁴ With a noteworthy increase in the presence of dogs rather than humans in the waist-pits and tomb ledges of smaller burials, he asserts that dogs could have been substituted for humans in certain contexts.¹⁵ For Shang tombs, approximately 50 per cent of dogs were placed in waist-pits, 30 per cent in related ceremonial pits or tomb fill, and only 20 per cent on ledges in smaller burials. Equally, half of the waist-pits at Anyang were empty, a feature that occurred in 60 per cent of tombs, suggesting that the function of the *yaokeng* could be accomplished merely by its existence.¹⁶

Many Western Zhou tombs with *yaokeng* can be found in Shaanxi, Gansu, Shandong, Beijing, Shanxi, and the heartland of the previous Shang dynasty in Henan, with this practice being heavily associated with Yin 殷 adherents.¹⁷ Clearly, the burial of dogs in waist-pits was regionally divergent and, particularly after the fall of the Shang, proliferated in certain areas but not others.¹⁸

This practice dwindled, particularly during the Eastern Zhou period, and is interpreted by Han Wei as marking the dissemination of Zhou rituals in place of Shang practices.¹⁹

summarised in Chêng Tê-K'un (Zheng Dekun 郑德坤), *Archaeology in China. Vol. II: Shang China* (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 53–55, 57 and Fiskesjö, ‘Rising from blood-stained fields’, pp. 79–85. The various sacrificial and ceremonial uses of dogs, as evidenced by sites in Anyang, are summarised in Li and Campbell, ‘Puppies for the ancestors’, p. 168.

¹² R. Campbell, ‘On sacrifice: an archaeology of Shang sacrifice’, in *Sacred Killing: The Archaeology of Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, (eds) A. M. Porter and G. M. Schwartz (Winona Lake, IN, 2012), p. 314.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

¹⁴ Some examples of waist-pit dogs include: Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Anyang gongzuo dui 中國社會科學院考古研究所安陽工作隊, ‘Henan Anyang YinXu Liujiashuang beidi Yinmu yu Xi-Zhoumu’ 河南安陽殷墟劉北地殷墓與西周墓, *Kaogu* 1 (2005), p. 8; Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Anyang gongzuo dui, ‘Henan Anyang shi Wangyukou nandi Yindai yizhi de fajue’ 河南安陽市王裕口南地殷代遺址的發掘, *Kaogu* 5 (2004), p. 12; and Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan 河南省文物考古研究院, ‘Henan Qixian Dalizhuang Shangdai wanqi muzang fajue jianbao’ 河南淇縣大李庄商代晚期墓葬發掘簡報, *Kaogu* 5 (2018), pp. 24–40. Royal tombs show dogs used in several contexts, see, for instance, Tomb 7 at Wuguancun 武官村, Anyang, in Huang Zhanyue 黃展岳, ‘Yin Shang muzang zhong ren xun ren sheng de zai kaocha—fulun xunsheng jisheng’ 殷商墓葬中人殉人牲的再考察—附論殉牲祭牲, *Kaogu* 10 (1983), p. 938 and Tomb 1001 at Houjiazhuang 侯家庄, Anyang, in *ibid.*, pp. 937–938.

¹⁵ R. Campbell, *Violence, Kinship, and the Early Chinese State: The Shang and Their World* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 218.

¹⁶ Li and Campbell, ‘Puppies for the ancestors’, pp. 168–169.

¹⁷ The association between dogs in *yaokeng* and the Shang is discussed in both Han Wei 韓巍, ‘Xi-Zhou muzang de xunren yu xunsheng’ 西周墓葬的殉人與殉牲; (unpublished Masters dissertation, Beijing University, 2003) and Li Zhipeng, ‘Shang wenhua muzang’, p. 102.

¹⁸ Song Yanbo 宋艷波, ‘Shandong diqu jige Zhou dai muzang suizang dongwu fenxi’ 山東地區幾個周代墓葬隨葬動物分析, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 5 (2011), pp. 105–109. Further sites are summarised in Chêng, *Archaeology in China. Vol. III: Chou China* (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 54–60.

¹⁹ Han Wei, ‘Xi-Zhou muzang’.

The number of tombs with *yaokeng* containing dogs drops off rapidly and texts mention straw dogs, which may have been used in burials, though none seem to have survived.²⁰ Clearly, dogs were still understood as being part of the ritual space of the tomb, but figurines could be substituted for their physical bodies. This coincides with the wider trend of using figurines in tombs, as reflected at a number of sites, which will be explored in the following section.

The preservation of the dog's body suggests that it was intended to serve the deceased in the next life as part of their retinue, and this again reflects a markedly distinct appraisal of the dog in relation to the ritual space of the tomb. When a human appears in the *yaokeng* with a dog, they are usually armed, which is suggestive of hunting or warfare.²¹ Here, this has led many scholars to interpret the function of the dog as a tomb guardian needed to protect the deceased from threats either within the tomb or on the passage to the next life.²² Arguments have also been made for a continued association of the dog with the four directions and the wind in these waist-pits, either in terms of geomancy or exorcising 'evil winds'.²³ Equally, the placement of dogs on the tomb ledge has been understood as marking the dog as a companion in death, that is, a beloved dog owned in life accompanying its owner in death.²⁴

The argument for the dogs being companions in death is challenged by the findings of Li and Campbell, wherein many Shang dogs interred at Anyang were puppies, which is especially notable when compared with midden deposits in other sites that attest to the use of adult dogs as a food source. This suggests that the mortuary use of puppies in tombs was likely to have been economic in nature, as this involves less expenditure in raising a dog that would ultimately be killed. Of course, there may have been a ritual significance to the interment of puppies that, as yet, remains undiscovered.²⁵ Equally, Song Yanbo's analysis of Western Zhou skeletal remains further attests to young dogs being buried in these waist-pits.²⁶

²⁰ Straw dogs are famously mentioned in Laozi 老子 (d. u.) (attrib.), *Daode jing* 道德經, chapter 5 as translated in A. Waley, *The Way and its Power: A Study of the Tao Tê Ching and its Place in Chinese Thought* (New York, 1958), p. 147.

²¹ On hunting with dogs in the Shang period as reflected in burial practices, see C. Li (Li Ji 李濟), *The Beginnings of Chinese Civilization: Three Lectures Illustrated with Finds at Anyang* (Seattle, 1957), p. 25. On the royal hunt in general, see Fiskesjö, 'Rising from blood-stained fields', pp. 48–191. As made clear by M. Guagnin, A. R. Perri and M. D. Petraglia, 'Pre-Neolithic evidence for dog-assisted hunting strategies in Arabia', *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 49 (2018), p. 226, hunting with dogs leaves few visible traces in archaeological remains but can be seen in pre-Neolithic rock art in northwestern Saudi Arabia. Thus dogs functioning as hunting-aids may have occurred even earlier than the Shang sites discussed.

²² For instance, Li and Campbell, 'Puppies for the ancestors', p. 169; Huang Zhanyue, 'Yin Shang muzang', p. 942; Zhao Zhiquan 趙芝荃, 'Lun Xia Shang wenhua de gengti wenti—wei jinian Erlitou yizhi fajue 40 zhounian er zuo' 論夏商文化的更替問題—為紀念二里頭遺址發掘40周年而作, *Kaogu yu wenwu* 2 (1999), p. 27, among others. See also Wu Zhuang, 'Xian Qin shiqi jiaquan yanjiu de xianzhuang yu zhanwang', p. 68. Dogs buried under tomb passages, on the other hand, are far more likely to have the function of guard-dogs; see Selbitschka, 'Sacrifice vs sustenance', p. 223.

²³ Wang Zhiyou has argued for these dogs being related to the four directions in Wang Zhiyou 王志, 'Shang-Zhou shiqi de yaokeng zangsu' 商周時期的腰坑葬俗, *Huazhongkeji daxue xuebao (shehui kexueban)* 6 (2006), while Jingshang Cong (Inoue Satoshi) 井上聰, 'Yinmu yaokeng yu gou wushu' 殷墓腰坑與狗巫術, *Huadong shifan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexueban)* 5 (1992) maintains that this was done to placate evil winds.

²⁴ As maintained by Xu Jinxiong 許進雄, *Zhongguo gudai shehui: Wenzhi yu renleixue de toushi* 中國古代社會—文字與人類學的透視 (Taipei, 1988), p. 69 and, among potentially diverse usages of dogs in burials, by Liu Dinghui 劉丁輝, 'Shangdai xugou xisu yanjiu' 商代殉狗習俗研究, (unpublished Masters dissertation, Zhengzhou University, 2011).

²⁵ Li and Campbell, 'Puppies for the ancestors', pp. 169–170.

²⁶ Song Yanbo, 'Shandong diqu jige Zhou dai muzang'.

If these dogs were not companions-in-death, then what were they? Clearly, Shang ritual culture associated the dog strongly with the tomb, especially given the fact that while other domestic animals could be used in sacrifice and consecration ceremonies, they rarely replaced the dog in the context of the *yaokeng*. Without explanatory texts from this time period it is difficult to be sure *why* humans from the Shang heartland singled out the dog for this ritual purpose nor what they felt such an interment signified. The Western Zhou period saw acute regional differences in the use of *yaokeng*, with new adaptations emerging. Western Zhou tombs at Puducun 普渡村, Chang'an 長安, all included items in the *yaokeng* alongside the dog skeleton, such as cowrie shells and jade pieces, which perhaps reflects alterations to the associated ritual practice or ceremony accompanying the burial of the dog under the tomb.²⁷ Equally, other areas have little to no attested *yaokeng*. Even during the Shang, the Central Plains saw inter-regional differences around each metropolis 'as if each megacenter was its own vortex and crucible of cultural transformation, pulling in regional traditions and creating new syntheses that lasted for a couple [of] centuries before becoming only part of the next metropolitan order'.²⁸ The continued uneven distribution is thus reflective of the adoption, adaptation, and discarding of wider ritual practices, as well as the dog's role therein. Nevertheless, as we will see, the dog continued to be associated with the tomb to a greater degree than other animals.

While covering an exceedingly long time span and despite showing regional incongruencies, the Shang and Western Zhou sites discussed tie the dog to the tomb as a ritual accessory. Whether intended to act as a guardian, an appeaser of the winds, or a sacrifice consecrating the tomb, the dog was part of the ritual furniture of the tomb and its associated ceremonies. In Phase I, then, we can understand the burial of dogs as being closely tied to ritual practices surrounding human burials.

Phase II: the dog in Zhou and Han burials

As has been noted, the dog was no exception to the overarching introduction of substitute miniature figurines, or, in other words, a move towards 'miniaturization, reduction and replacement', in mortuary practices from the late Shang period onwards.²⁹ Here, the lines between sacrifice and grave good become blurred—as physical dogs were replaced by figurines, did their ritual significance change? How was the dog, here as a miniaturised substitute, redefined in relation to the tomb? And what did the burial of physical dogs mean in this new dog-tomb dynamic?

The first issue is that such a transition is difficult to trace as the very materiality of these figurines means theoretically few survive.³⁰ Equally, the increased use of figurines was not a change that occurred overnight nor did it necessarily involve the total replacement of physical dogs from the late Shang period onwards, as has been seen in the aforementioned Western Zhou sites.³¹ This tendency to turn to figurines, however, is

²⁷ Shaanxisheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 陝西省文物管理委員會, 'Chang'an Puducun Xi-Zhou mu de fajue' 長安普渡村西周墓的發掘, *Kaogu xuebao* 1 (1957), pp. 76–77.

²⁸ Li and Campbell, 'Puppies for the ancestors', p. 171.

²⁹ *Ibid.* See He Yuling 何毓靈, 'Yinxu muzang suizangpin mingqihua xianxiang fenxi' 殷墟墓葬隨葬品冥器化現象分析, *Sandai kaogu* (2006), pp. 375–382 and R. Campbell [Jiang Yude 江雨德], 'Guo zhi dashi: Shangdai wanqi zhong de lizhi gailiang' 國之大事: 商代晚期中的禮制改良, in *Yinxu yu Shang wenhua: Yinxu kexue fajue 80 zhounian jinian wenji* 殷墟與商文化—殷墟科學發掘 80 周年紀念文集, (eds) Tang Jigen 唐景根 and Yue Hongbin 岳洪彬 (Beijing, 2012), pp. 267–276.

³⁰ A. Selbitschka, 'Miniature tomb figurines and models in pre-imperial and early imperial China: origins, development, and significance', *World Archaeology* 47.1 (2015), pp. 20–44, touches on the dead spots present in the archaeological records of pre-imperial China.

³¹ There was an overlap of both practices, that is, grave good substitution and ritual sacrifice, for close to a millennium according to *ibid.*, p. 37.

particularly salient when considering the sheer quantity of ceramic dog figurines unearthed in Han tombs, a period which saw a further transformation in the conceptualisation and range of grave goods included in the tomb.³²

Despite evidence of grave good substitutes emerging in the late Shang period, according to Alain Thote it was during the Eastern Zhou period that tomb contents truly began to resemble ‘visual documents’ of life.³³ Figurines within the tomb were used to represent property for the use of the deceased while they were in the tomb or when they went to the land of the dead. As Armin Selbitschka’s analysis of miniature granaries as grave goods has shown, it would seem that grave goods were intended to furnish the deceased for a ‘perpetual afterworld that was imagined inside of tombs’.³⁴

As his earlier analysis of grave goods more generally attests, there were two coinciding motivations for the use of grave goods: the first being related to nourishing the dead, that is, model granaries, wells, and stoves, and the second substituting, specifying, and enlarging the palette of people, animals, and items that could be included in the tomb. Figurines of people have been identified as being particular kinds of people not usually interred as sacrificial victims, including named family members. So too does the burgeoning range of architectural buildings appearing from the late Western Han 西漢 (206 BC–9 CE) onwards, including workshops and multi-chambered residences, illustrate a focus on social status. These trappings rendered the tomb a ‘microcosm’ of owned property in life.³⁵ These grave goods provided both sustenance and income equivalent to a real-life estate, reflecting the expanding scale of private estates amassed by tomb occupants in this period.³⁶

Building on Selbitschka’s arguments for an increasing focus on the deceased’s social persona and associated property throughout the Han period, I contend that ceramic dogs thus came to embody themes of property. First, these ceramic dogs were not placed inside *yaokeng* and so must have had an additional significance beyond substituting for the waist-pit dog that was once utilised for hunting, guarding of the tomb or the deceased, exorcism, or geomancy. Secondly, nearly all known examples date to the first century CE onwards—suggesting that these ceramics were part of the same transformation discussed by Selbitschka with regard to the increased range of grave goods incorporated into late-Western Han tombs.³⁷

³² Of course, these are by no means the earliest ceramic dogs known to us, given evidence from the Shijiahe 石家河 culture (2500–2000 BC), as analysed by Wang Jin 王勁, ‘Qianyi Shijiahe wenhua taosu yishu’ 淺議石家河文化陶塑藝術, *Huaxia kaogu* 4 (2011), pp. 55–56. However, these do not necessarily seem to have come from graves specifically and are interpreted by Wang as representing sacrificial victims.

³³ Quot. G. Kuwayama, ‘The sculptural development of ceramic funerary figures in China’, in *The Quest for Eternity: Chinese Ceramic Sculptures from the People’s Republic of China*, (ed.) S. L. Caroselli (London, 1987), p. 68. A. Thote, ‘Burial practices as seen in rulers’ tombs of the Eastern Zhou period: patterns and regional traditions’, in *Religion and Chinese Society. Vol. I: Ancient and Medieval China*, (ed.) J. Lagerwey (Hong Kong, 2004), pp. 65–107.

³⁴ A. Selbitschka, ‘Quotidian afterlife: grain, granary models, and the notion of continuing sustenance in late pre-imperial and early imperial tombs’, in *Über den Alltag hinaus: Festschrift für Thomas O. Höllmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, (eds) S. Müller and A. Selbitschka (Wiesbaden, 2017), p. 90.

³⁵ Selbitschka, ‘Miniature tomb figurines’.

³⁶ Estates are discussed in H. Bielenstein, ‘The restoration of the Han Dynasty: vol. IV: the government’, *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 51 (1979), pp. 146–150 and P. Ebrey, ‘The economic and social history of later Han’, in *The Cambridge History of China. Vol. I: The Ch’in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.–A.D. 220*, (eds) D. Twitchett and M. Loewe (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 622–626. Explicit examples of tomb inscriptions discussing the imagined income raised by these miniature estates are discussed in Selbitschka, ‘Miniature tomb figurines’ pp. 38–39.

³⁷ Archaeological finds of ceramic dog figurines include: Zhongguo kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Luoyang fajuedui 中國科學院考古研究所洛陽發掘隊, ‘Luoyang xijiao Han mu fajue baogao’ 洛陽西郊漢墓發掘報告, *Kaogu xuebao* 2 (1963), pp. 11, 14 and 22; Luoyangshi di’er wenwu gongzuodui 洛陽市第二文物工作隊 and Yanshishi wenwuju 偃師市文物局, ‘Henan Yanshishi Wujiawan Dong-Han fengtu mu’ 河南偃師市吳家灣東漢封土墓’, *Kaogu* 9 (2010), p. 42; and Zhengzhoushi wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan 鄭州市文物考古研究院 and Dengfengshi



Figure 1. Ceramic dark green-glazed dog, shown to be snarling and wearing a harness, dated to the Eastern Han period. H. 26.7 cm. 1991.253.1. Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Open access image.

Dog figurines dating to the late Western Han and Eastern Han 東漢 (25–220 CE) periods from the Central Plains, particularly Henan and Shaanxi, are often depicted as harnessed, baring their teeth as if snarling, or else with open mouths as if barking (see Figures 1 and 2).³⁸

Many of the individual ceramic figures housed in museums are strikingly similar. While giving little indication of scale, the fact that many wear a harness attests to the size and strength of these dogs and to the fact that they were tethered.³⁹ This is clearly a defensive image of a guard-dog which could therefore be misinterpreted as encompassing the supposed guardian role of the once-buried *yaokeng* dog. However, what was the *yaokeng* dog protecting? In Shang and Western Zhou tombs, it would seem that it was protecting the ritual space of the tomb or, given its placement underneath the body, perhaps the deceased personally. In Han tombs, however, this does not seem to be the case. Unfortunately, it is not clear exactly where many of the ceramic figurines were discovered in the tomb chamber. Nonetheless, earthenware domestic scenes featuring dogs add to our ability to interpret these figurines.

wenwu baohu guanliju 登封市文物保護管理局, 'Zhengzhou Dengfeng Jindongcun Dong-Han mu M7 de fajue' 鄭州登封金東村東漢墓M7的發掘, *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guan kan* 12 (2016), p. 13.

³⁸ An unearthed harnessed example can be seen in Shi Dianhai 史殿海, 'Zhuozhou Lingyunjitan Xinchang Dong-Han muqun fajue jianbao' 涿州凌雲集團新廠東漢墓群發掘簡報, *Wenwu chunqiu* 3 (2007), fig. 5 (M1: 21). A selection of further harnessed ceramic dogs dated from the first century CE onwards include: a late-second-early-third century CE harnessed green-glazed dog in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (918.21.45) and a visually similar example dated to the Eastern Han period from Shaanxi in the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (B81P51); an Eastern Han open-mouthed harnessed dog in the Asian Art Museum (B60S205) and visually similar examples of a dark green-glazed dog from Northern China in the Asian Art Museum (B60P306) and a green-glazed first-second century CE dog in the British Museum, London (1928.0118.1). More rudimentary examples include second-early-third century harnessed dogs in the Royal Ontario Museum (921.21.60 and 926.21.82).

³⁹ A Western Han rubbing from Cave VIII, Jiading 嘉定, now known as Leshan 樂山 (Sichuan), further attests to these harnesses being used for tethering, and is shown in R. Rudolph and Yu Wen, *Han Tomb Art of West China: A Collection of First- and Second-Century Reliefs* (Berkeley, 1951), pl. 20.



Figure 2. Monochrome image of a ceramic green-glazed dog, also depicted as barking and wearing a harness, dated to the first–second centuries CE. H. 21.4 cm. 1994.605.18. Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art. Open access image.

In the first instance, dogs can be seen next to ceramic stoves or in pens, presenting the dog as a source of meat and thus as a way of nourishing the deceased.⁴⁰ This is in keeping with the first motivation for grave goods identified by Selbitschka, that is, to provide eternal nourishment to the deceased. Indeed, dog meat was consumed to some degree in certain regions, with Han rubbings in Shandong often showing a dog hung from a well-sweep for skinning and gutting.⁴¹ Just how widespread the consumption of dog meat was and whether it was considered a luxury food reserved for the elite is unclear.⁴² Nevertheless, ceramics of this nature underline the continued role of the dog in culinary history.

However, in line with the increased range of domestic buildings seen in late Western Han and Eastern Han graves, several architectural ceramics from this time period feature a guard-dog prone in front of an entrance, a very different placement to general livestock, which were positioned at the rear of such buildings.⁴³ These dogs could be positioned

⁴⁰ One Western Han figurine of a dog next to a stove is photographed in Huang Qishan 黄啟善, *Guangxi bowuguan gu taoci jingcui* 廣西博物館古陶瓷精粹 (Beijing, 2002), p. 50, fig. 18, which was excavated from Tomb M36, Zongcangku 總倉庫, Guigang 貴港 (Guangxi).

⁴¹ Han rubbings featuring dog slaughter are shown in Xia Henglian 夏亨廉, *Handai nongye huaxiang zhuanshi* 漢代農業畫像磚石 (Beijing, 1996), p. 114, fig. C4 from Xiaotangshan 孝堂山, Changqingxian 長清縣 (Shandong); p. 116, fig. C6 from the Wuliang ancestral hall 武梁祠 (Shandong); p. 118, fig. C8 and p. 119, fig. C9, both from Songshancun 宋山村, Jiexiangxian 嘉祥縣 (Shandong); and p. 111, fig. C1 from Suncong 孫琮 tomb, Zhuchengxian 諸城縣 (Shandong). A further example of dog slaughter is shown in E. Chavannes, *Mission Archéologique dans la Chine Septentrionale. Vol. I: La Sculpture à l'Époque des Han* (Paris, 1913), pl. DVII no. 1224.

⁴² Excavated Qin 秦 (221 BC–210 BC) statues discovered in Tomb 11, Shuihudi 睡虎地 discuss the consumption of dogs killed by park wardens, as transcribed in Shuihudi Qinmu zhujian zhengli xiaozu 睡虎地秦墓竹簡整理小組, *Shuihudi Qinmu zhujian* 睡虎地秦墓竹簡 (Beijing, 1990), p. 20 and a variety of Qin–Han sources, ranging from day-books to legal codes, mention the slaughter and consumption of dogs, as summarised in Zhang Chaoyang 張朝陽 and Yan Lin 閔璘, 'Qin–Han shidai de gou: yi Yangzhou xin chutu Xi–Han xugou an wei zhongxin' 秦漢時代的狗: 以揚州新出土西漢尋狗案為中心, *Shilin* 2 (2018), pp. 50–51.

⁴³ Livestock placement at the rear of these ceramic buildings is discussed in Guo Qinghua, *The Mingqi Pottery Buildings of Han Dynasty China 206 BC–AD 220: Architectural Representations and Represented Architecture* (Brighton, 2010), p. 22 and is seen in a ceramic figure from Tomb M4, Gaozhong 高中, Guigang, shown in Huang Qishan, *Guangxi bowuguan*, p. 62, fig. 33.

lying down with their ears erect as if listening out for danger.⁴⁴ There are also further examples of dogs sitting up with pricked ears.⁴⁵

If these domestic scenes represent a miniaturised estate of the deceased, why are dogs so often added to the entrances of buildings, barns, and courtyards? As these scenes seek to recreate ‘a working world in miniature’, textual references to living dogs may make this placement clearer. Beyond hunting, a topic we will return to in due course, dogs were certainly used for guarding and ridding from at least the Zhou period onwards.⁴⁶ While seeking to define the term for dogs—*gou* 狗—through homophony, it is their role as guard-dogs that is underlined in this *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 entry:

狗叩也，叩氣吠以守也。⁴⁷

Gou (dog) means *kou* (knocking), guarding by means of knocking out breath and barking.⁴⁸

As Erica Fudge argues, the study of animals is ‘not the history of animals; such a thing is impossible. Rather, it is the history of human attitudes towards animals.’⁴⁹ A dog’s ability to guard is a canine behaviour that, when interpreted, written, and discussed in human-authored sources, becomes imbued with human consequences. This is manifested in texts like *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 which reference dogs’ guarding abilities:

俗說：「狗別賓主，善守御，故著四門，以辟盜賊也。」⁵⁰

It is often said that dogs can distinguish guest from host and are good at guarding and attending, therefore they are tethered at the four entrances to ward off thieves and robbers.⁵¹

⁴⁴ See, for instance, the burial model of a four-storied granary with a dog lying outside the entrance which was reportedly excavated from Anyang, dated to the late first to early second century ce. This piece is housed in the Royal Ontario Museum (920.1.105). Further examples of prone dogs can be seen alongside architectural figures, including from Tomb 159 Nanguan 南關, Zhengzhou 鄭州 (Henan), as shown in Henansheng wenhuaju wenwu gongzuodui 河南省文化局文物工作隊, ‘Zhengzhou Nanguan 159 hao Hanmu de fajue’ 鄭州南關 159 號漢墓的發掘, *Wenwu* 8/9 (1960), pp. 19–24 and discussed in S. L. Caroselli (ed.), *The Quest for Eternity: Chinese Ceramic Sculptures from the People’s Republic of China* (London, 1987), p. 109 as being the tomb of a minor landowner of the late Western Han. A similar example can be seen in Tomb 6 Baizhuang 白莊, Jiaozuo 焦作 (Henan), as shown in Suo Quanxing 索全星, ‘Henan Jiaozuo Baizhuang 6 hao Dong-Han mu’ 河南焦作白莊 6 號東漢墓, *Kaogu* 5 (1995), pp. 401, 403. Another example, excavated in 1992 from an Eastern Han tomb in Datong 大同, is housed in the Datong Museum (Shanxi). Finally, a dog can be seen lying in the doorway of a barn from the Eastern Han tomb M5 Yungaishan 雲蓋山, Wuzhou 梧州 city (Guangxi), as photographed in Huang, *Guangxi bowuguan*, p. 63, fig. 34.

⁴⁵ For instance, dogs can be seen sat in a ceramic house excavated from Tomb M124 Yinshanling 銀山嶺, Pingle 平樂縣 (Guangxi), photographed in Huang, *Guangxi bowuguan*, p. 51, fig. 20 and in a two-storied house unearthed from Eastern Han tomb M19 Liangshi cangku 糧食倉庫, Guigang, photographed in *ibid.*, p. 59, fig. 29.

⁴⁶ Rattling by dogs is shown in a rock painting in Gao Wenbian 高文編, *Sichuan Handai huaxiang shi* 四川漢代畫像石 (Chengdu, 1987), p. 48, fig. 35, from a Han cliff tomb in Qijiang 鄞江, Santai 三台 (Sichuan) and is also suggested by Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (290 BC–235 BC) (attrib.), *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋校釋 (Hong Kong, 1958), chapter 14, p. 157.

⁴⁷ Xu Shen 許慎 (circa 58–circa 148) and Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735–1815) (comm.), *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 (Shanghai, 1988), chapter 10A, p. 26b [p. 473].

⁴⁸ This quote is, quite likely baselessly, attributed to Confucius. Alternately translated in R. Sterckx, ‘Debating the strange: records of animal anomalies in early China’, *Working Papers in Chinese Studies* 1 (1998), p. 21, n. 75.

⁴⁹ E. Fudge, ‘A left-handed blow: writing the history of animals’, in *Representing Animals*, (ed.) N. Rothfels (Bloomington, 2002), p. 6.

⁵⁰ Ying Shao 應劭 (d. u.), *Fengsu tongyi*, in *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊, (ed.) Zhang Yuanji 張元濟 (1867–1959) (Shanghai, 1929), vol. 133, chapter 8, p. 8a.

⁵¹ Alternately translated in Sterckx, ‘Debating the strange’, p. 21.

The mere presence of dogs is thus deeply associated with security, as is made clear in an analogy from *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論 on border defences:

「今不固其外，欲安其內，猶家人不堅垣牆，狗吠夜驚，而闇昧妄行也。」⁵²

Now you don't fortify without and yet wish to be safe within, this is like a household not building walls or having a dog to bark at night in warning still blindly acting without care.

A dog is thus seen to be as essential to defining and defending the boundaries of a household as walls are. Dogs were not only used to physically patrol private borders but were also enmeshed in the very concept of security and peace within this context. It is clear, then, that the role of the dog in these domestic scenes is to protect the *property* of the deceased rather than the deceased directly.

As private estates in the late Western Han period expanded, the imagined afterworld of the tomb was increasingly equipped to provide eternal self-generating sustenance, wealth, company, and luxuries for the deceased. A dog, essential for guarding such property, was thus placed in these miniature scenes to watch for danger, and we can surmise that the larger individual ceramic figurines fulfilled a similar function. In Phase II, the dog was no longer there strictly to protect the ritual space of the tomb, and perhaps this function was entirely defunct. Instead, it was charged with guarding the *property* of the deceased. The dog was thus no longer a ritual accessory posed in the *yaokeng* but could be placed elsewhere in the tomb to fulfil this enlarged role.

How, then, should actual burials of dogs in human-occupied tombs from this second phase be interpreted? Several unusual finds have unearthed dogs buried with coffins or extravagant trappings. For instance, the excavation of Marquis Yi of Zeng's 曾侯乙 (*circa* 477 BC–433 BC) tomb shows a female dog buried in a wooden coffin accompanied by two stone discs and a bone object.⁵³ In addition, the excavation of the tomb of the King of Zhongshan 中山 (*circa* 344–308 BC) has revealed two dogs buried in golden necklaces.⁵⁴ These dogs were not positioned in a manner in keeping with *yaokeng* dogs, and the inclusion of objects alongside or on the bodies attests to their marked individualisation. It would seem that these dogs were specifically selected for inclusion in the tomb and were probably owned by the deceased in life. It is likely, given that these were elite tombs, that these were prized hunting hounds.

Hunting was undeniably linked with the royal clan in Shang and Zhou times, though even then the sport had its adherents among the wider populace.⁵⁵ It would seem that a variety of dogs could be involved in the hunt; Han art certainly shows clear distinctions between different 'breeds' or roles of dogs within the hunt, whether sight-hounds or

⁵² Huan Kuan 桓寬 (*fl.* first century BC), *Yantie lun* (Shanghai, 1934), p. 165, no. 50.

⁵³ Hubeisheng bowuguan 湖北省博物館, *Zeng Hou Yi mu* 曾侯乙墓. Vols. I–II (Beijing, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 55–56. The coffin is photographed in vol. 2, pl. XVIII, fig. E.C.9, and the skeleton is photographed in vol. 2, pl. CCLXXXIII, fig. E.C.9.

⁵⁴ Hebeisheng wenwu yanjiusuo 河北省文物研究所, *Cuomu: Zhanguo Zhongshanguo guowang zhi mu* 厝墓: 战国中山國國王之墓. Vols. I–II (Beijing, 1995), vol. 1, p. 154, gives information about these necklaces while a colour photograph is shown in vol. 2, pl. XVIII, fig. 4.

⁵⁵ Hunting with dogs by non-royals in the Zhou period is mentioned in both Qu Yuan 屈原 (*circa* 340 BC–278 BC) (attrib.), 'Tianwen' 天問, in Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) (comm.), *Chuci jizhu* 楚辭集注 (Taipei, 1991), chapter 3, p. 74 and in *Lishi chunqiu jiaoshi*, chapter 12, p. 147. Zhou art also depicts dogs in hunting scenes, as shown by a *ding* 鼎 (ritual food vessel) dated to the fourth century BC in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (EA1956.887) and a bronze *dou* 豆 (tazza) shown in Liang Shizheng 梁詩正 (1697–1763) et al. (eds), *Xi-Qing gujian* 西清古鑑 (Shanghai, 1888), chapter 29, p. 26a. This *dou* is discussed in B. Laufer, *Chinese Pottery of the Han Dynasty* (Leiden, 1909), pp. 150–154, 266.

scent-hounds, pointers or sprinters. Hunting may have fostered a great interest in the collection of rare and prized hunting hounds, perhaps coming as tributes from vassal states. For instance, the last Shang ruler Zhou Xin 紂辛 (r. 1075–1046 BC) was depicted in later historiography as infamous for his extravagance and debauchery, as reflected by his varied collection of dogs (presumably for hunting), horses, and other rare objects.⁵⁶ While his collection of dogs in the later records of the last Shang king underline his debauchery, which lent moral support to the Zhou conquest, this did not necessarily dissuade Zhou kings from similar practices. This is clearly articulated by the tribute of an *ao* 獒 dog by the Lü 旅 tribe to the first Zhou king Wu 武 (r. 1046–1043 BC).⁵⁷

While it is difficult to prove that these particular dogs were rare hunting hounds perhaps imported from afar, it seems likely that they were at the very least prized hounds on two fronts. First, these dogs are placed incongruously from the ritually significant *yaokeng* dog seen in the Central Plains in the Shang and Western Zhou periods. Secondly, the use of coffins and precious objects effectively denotes these animals as art objects—de-animalising and redefining them as prized possessions. In keeping with Selbitschka's criteria for assessing prestige items in tombs, these burials clearly elevated the dog to a luxury item.⁵⁸ Consequently, physical dogs found in human-occupied elite tombs, when placed so incongruously in the tomb chamber, were not ritually significant but socially significant. In this context, the dog embodies both political dominion, expressed by the receipt of tribute and the collection of exotics, alongside implied dominion over nature, as articulated by the very act of hunting itself.

In Phase II, then, we see two major shifts in the ways dogs were positioned in the tomb. Physical dog remains could be elevated into the tomb chamber, losing their ritual significance and incorporating themes of dominion, status, and luxury. Ceramic dogs from the first century CE not only exemplify the overarching trend towards miniaturisation, reduction, and replacement seen across the previous millennium, but also underline the growing relevance of social status to the conceptualisation of grave goods. Dogs were repositioned to guard the miniaturised property of the deceased, much as they did in life, rather than the ritual space of the tomb. The dog, in both cases, was not so much a ritual accessory as it was emblematic of changing themes of dominion, ownership, and property within this timeframe.

Phase III: a tomb of one's own: changing attitudes to the burial of dogs in their own tombs

What is clear in the previous two phases is that the death of the aforementioned dogs was unnatural, and timed with the burial of the deceased human. But what happened when a non-livestock dog died? Some were certainly consumed, given that the Qin statues discovered in Tomb 11 Shuihudi state that hunting dogs killed by park wardens should be eaten.⁵⁹ The metaphor *zougou peng* 走狗烹 (the running dog is boiled) also references a non-livestock dog being cooked for consumption.⁶⁰ According to Olivia Milburn, this

⁵⁶ Sima Qian 司馬遷 (circa 145 BC–86 BC), *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of History*) (Beijing, 1959), chapter 3, p. 105, records his debauchery, love of hunting, and that '[he] increasingly received dogs, horses, and strange creatures' 益收狗馬奇物。

⁵⁷ This tribute was seen as a cause for remonstrating against the prizing of exotics, encapsulated in the 'Lü'ao' 旅獒 section of *Zhoushu* 周書 within *Shujing* 書經, quoted and translated in J. Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (London, 1865), vol. III, part II pp. 345–350.

⁵⁸ A. Selbitschka, 'Genuine prestige goods in mortuary contexts: emulation in polychrome silk and Byzantine solidi from northern China', *Asian Perspectives* 5.1 (2018), p. 12.

⁵⁹ See fn. 41.

⁶⁰ This phrase is seen in *Shiji*, chapter 41, p. 1746, while chapter 92, p. 2625 gives a variant of this phrase: *liegou peng* 獵狗烹 (the hunting dog is boiled). Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing, 1962), chapter 34, p. 1876

metaphor uses the servile dog discarded on its death to comment on the fate of ministers, even though the consumption of working dogs after their death does not receive condemnation elsewhere.⁶¹

There are two pre-imperial textual references to the burial of dogs in their own graves. In *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋, Yan Ying 晏嬰 (circa 578 BC–500 BC) is said to have criticised Duke Jing 景 (r. 547 BC–490 BC) of Qi's 齊 desire to have his *zougou* 走狗 (running dog) buried in a coffin with accompanying ceremonial sacrifices. Such criticism arose from the inequity Yan Ying, and indeed many other philosophers, saw in expending resources, particularly in death, on an animal in place of a human.⁶² Second is a dog raised by Confucius himself, as recorded in *Liji* 禮記. Here, frugality is highlighted by Confucius, stating that worn cloth could be used to bury a horse or dog.⁶³ The latter example from *Liji* appears to coincide with a later Han memorial, to be discussed, and so may be the result of heavy Han-era editing. Nevertheless, taking both texts together elucidates two points: the first being that once again the dog and horse are unique animals that operate on a different 'level' to other animals. Second, if a dog were to be buried, the burial should be highly economical. Confucius advocates using worn-out cloth or even a seating mat for this purpose, and it is the lavish trappings requested by Duke Jing that were most openly criticised by Yan Ying. The fact that in the end Duke Jing boils and serves up the dog is a marker of the parable nature of this anecdote, though this still suggests that the lavish post-mortem treatment of dogs, as we have seen in the two elite tombs above, was not inconceivable to people of the time.

Under certain circumstances, then, it would seem that non-livestock dogs could be deserving of a burial of their own as long as these burials were frugal and took place without excessive ceremonies. Gu Yong's 谷永 (d. circa 11~8 BC) memorial given in *Hanshu* 漢書 further explores the circumstances allowing for the burial of a dog or horse:

夫犬馬有勞於人，尚加帷蓋之報。⁶⁴

Since dogs and horses toil for humans, they ought to also have the repayment of a drape covering [them after death].⁶⁵

Evidently, it was the labour that dogs and horses performed on behalf of humans that allowed for their burial. But these burials might not always have been as frugal as thinkers advocated. The earliest known example of a dog-occupied tomb appears to be the Xin 新 (9–23 CE) burial of a small dog at Yueyangcheng 櫟陽城, Yanliang 閻良 (Shanxi); despite its simplicity, the placement of 31 small figurines in the tomb suggests a burial with some level of pomp and circumstance.⁶⁶

gives a further variant, *lianggou peng* 良狗烹 (the good dog is boiled). *Zougou* may refer to the dog's role in the hunt, though this is hypothetical at best. Further early Chinese sources given in R. J. Cutter, *The Brush and the Spur: Chinese Culture and the Cockfight* (Hong Kong, 1989), pp. 17, 20 and 22 may indicate that these dogs were raced for sport.

⁶¹ O. Milburn, 'Confucius and his dog: perspectives on animal ownership in early ritual and philosophical texts', *Hanxue yanjiu* 29.4 (2011), pp. 295–296.

⁶² Yan Ying (attrib.) and Wu Zeyu 吳則虞 (ed.), *Yanzi Chunqiu jishi* 晏子春秋集釋 (Beijing, 1962) p. 163 and translated in Milburn, 'Confucius and his dog', pp. 308–309. On the criticism of expenditure on dogs, see pp. 297–298.

⁶³ Sun Xidan 孫希旦 (1736–1784) (ed.), *Liji jijie* 禮記集解 (Beijing, 1989), chapter 11, p. 299, as translated in Milburn, 'Confucius and his dog', p. 306.

⁶⁴ *Hanshu*, chapter 70, p. 3021.

⁶⁵ Alternately translated in Milburn, 'Confucius and his dog', p. 307.

⁶⁶ Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院研究所, Xi'an shi wenwu baohu kaogu yanjiuyuan 西安市文物保護考古研究院 and Afangong yu Shanglinyuan kaogudui 阿房宮與上林苑考古隊,

The concept of 'toil' as an essential part of justifying burying dogs and horses is also forwarded by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) in his commentary on the aforementioned burial of a dog by Confucius:

畜狗，馴守。[...] 路馬，君所乘者。其他狗馬不能以帷蓋。⁶⁷

A 'raised-dog' is one trained to guard. [...] A 'road-horse' is one ridden by a ruler. Other dogs and horses cannot be covered with a drape.

In this commentary, the horse is specified as being owned by a *jun* 君 (ruler). This reinterprets the original *Liji* passage regarding burying a dog or horse as being restricted to the elite. Since Zheng Xuan commented on a later edition of the *Liji* compiled by Dai Sheng 戴聖 in the Western Han period, it may be that his interpretation was shaped by this edition or by prevailing attitudes of the time. Here, it would seem that both status and servitude were required to rightfully bury dogs and horses.

Returning to the Xin burial of a dog, the inclusion of ceramics may then be reflective of its master's status rather than affection for the dog. It would seem that across the first–second centuries there was a subtle shift regarding both *how* to bury dogs and horses and *who* should carry out such practices. Unfortunately, there is scant archaeological material attesting to further dog-occupied tombs for us to assess how these debates were actualised or the geographical spread, timeframe, or ubiquity of such burials. Nevertheless, the fact that such discussions even occurred heavily implies that people *did* bury their dogs, and so the burial of dogs in recompense for their labour in a manner befitting the master's social status around the first–second century CE will be termed as Phase III.a.

Though there is a continued dearth of archaeological materials to explore in the fluid post-Han landscape, it is clear that attitudes towards dog-occupied tombs underwent a stark reconceptualisation in this timeframe. This is manifested in anecdotes or *zhiguai* 志怪 (anomaly tales) from the post-Han period. A mixture of fiction, exaggeration, observation, and fact, these tales record and praise dogs performing heroic tasks on behalf of their owners.⁶⁸ Rather than being transgressive shape-shifters poised on the threshold of life and death, canine-centred *zhiguai* in the post-Han period were unique in paralleling tales of filially loyal servants.

This striking phenomenon was first noted by both Fu Kaijing 付開鏡 and Keith N. Knapp in the context of filial animal tales more generally.⁶⁹ Building on their research, I would like to first outline instances of dog burials in these tales before moving to contextualise the overarching transformation of the dog's relationship with the tomb.

One example of a dog being buried is the *Shuyi ji* 述異記 account of a hunting dog named Huang'er 黃耳 (Yellow Ears) delivering and returning with a letter for its

⁶⁷ Xi'anshi Yanliangqu Qin-Han Yueyangcheng yizhi muzang de fajue' 西安市閻良區秦漢櫟陽城遺址墓葬的發掘, *Kaogu* 9 (2016), pp. 65–66.

⁶⁷ *Liji jijie*, chapter 11, p. 299.

⁶⁸ Dogs are also referenced in relation to auspicious omens, disastrous prophecies, and shape-shifting. Examples include Tao Qian 陶潛, also written Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (circa 365–427), *Soushen houji* 搜神後記, in *Wenyuan ge Siku quanshu* 文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei, 1986), vol. 1042, chapter 9, pp. 4a and 4a–b [p. 494]. See also Wang, 'Zaoqi Zhongguo shehui', pp. 268–269 on canine myths. However, I will be focusing on the observed behaviour of 'ordinary' dogs rather than mythical canines.

⁶⁹ Fu Kaijing, 'Wei-Jin Nanbei chao jiaquan xingwei jishu de Rujiahua' 魏晉南北朝家犬行為記述的儒家化, *Nongye kaogu* 6 (2012), pp. 249–253; K. N. Knapp, 'Noble creatures: filial and righteous animals in early medieval Confucian thought', in *Animals through Chinese History*, (eds) Sterckx, Siebert and Schäfer, pp. 64–83. The latter notes that dogs can be involved in tales involving the reciprocity of human kindness or vengeance for wrongful killing, but these acts are not unique to the dog.

homesick master Lu Ji 陸機, covering a great distance in a very short amount of time. The dog is explicitly said to have understood human speech and communicates with humans to agree to take the letter, to cross over lakes and rivers, and finally to obtain a letter in reply from Lu Ji's family. When the dog later died, it was buried in its owner's village graveyard.⁷⁰ This account is given in a condensed form in *Jinshu* 晉書 with minor changes.⁷¹

Furthermore, two similar *Soushen ji* 搜神記 accounts tell of a dog saving its drunken owner from a wildfire by shaking water onto the surrounding grass and, when its owner then falls into a well, barking to attract help from a passer-by. In one account this dog is owned by Yang Sheng 楊生 and, both surviving this ordeal, they remain inseparable.⁷² In the second, the dog Heilong 黑龍 (Black Dragon) dies from exhaustion, having saved its owner.⁷³ His owner Li Xinchun 李信純 is devastated on seeing Black Dragon dead and, from his damp fur, surmises what has happened. He tells the governor of this matter, who replies:

「犬之報恩，甚於人，人不知恩，豈如犬乎！」⁷⁴

The reciprocity of dogs is greater than that of humans—if humans do not know gratitude, are they really better than dogs?!

The dog is then buried in a burial mound. A further example of a dog burial is that of Hucang 鵠蒼 (Swan Grey) who was buried after its sudden transformation into a dragon when on the brink of death.⁷⁵

Here, we see three examples of dogs being buried after performing monumental feats involving canine skills like running, barking, and shape-shifting. The burials are also much more extravagant—Huang'er is buried 200 steps from its owner's home, while Heilong is buried with an inner and outer coffin in a burial mound over ten *zhang* tall. While we lack the archaeological evidence needed to ascertain whether these post-Han burials were as extravagant in actuality, it is clear that the logic underpinning these burials has matured and developed in the post-Han period.

The tales of Huang'er and Heilong in particular reflect themes of filial loyalty seen in similar accounts of filial slaves. As Knapp notes, one tale of canine loyalty even directly parallels that of a dutiful son: a hunting dog named Diwei 的尾 (Real Tail) bites to death a snake which had constricted around its owner Hua Long 華隆. As Hua Long falls unconscious, Diwei barks to induce Hua Long's companion to follow it and carry Hua Long to safety. It refuses to eat for two days until Hua Long recovers.⁷⁶ Diwei's refusal

⁷⁰ Zu Chongzhi 祖沖之 (429–500), *Shuyi ji*, no. 16, <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=658022> (accessed 12 December 2022).

⁷¹ Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (576–648) et al. (eds), *Jinshu* 晉書 (Beijing, 1974), chapter 54, p. 1473; also given in Li Fang 李昉 (925–996) et al. (eds), *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Beijing, 1981), chapter 437, pp. 3558–3559.

⁷² The Yang Sheng account is given in *Soushen houji*, chapter 9, pp. 3a–b [p. 494] and in the later Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641) et al. (eds), *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Shanghai, 1982), chapter 94, p. 1638 and *Taiping guangji*, chapter 437, pp. 3552–3553.

⁷³ The Li Xinchun account is given in Gan Bao 干寶 (fl. 317–350), *Soushen ji* 搜神記, in *Chuanshi zangshu* 傳世藏書, *ziku* 子庫, *xiaoshuo* 小說, (eds) Liu Youping 劉佑平 et al. (Haikou, 1996), vol. I, chapter 20, p. 85 [no. 457].

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, chapter 20, p. 85 [no. 457].

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, chapter 14, p. 60 [no. 343]. This story is an abridged version of King Yan's 偃 (d. u.) supposed biography, *Xu Yanwang zhi* 徐偃王志, as fragmentarily preserved in Zhang Hua 張華 (232–300), *Bowu zhi* 博物志, in *Wenyuan ge Siku quanshu* 文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei, 1986), vol. 1047, chapter 7, pp. 2b–3a [pp. 599–600].

⁷⁶ Knapp, 'Noble creatures', p. 73, fn. 35. Liu Qiqing 劉義慶 (403–444), *Youming lu* 幽明錄, in *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 (Beijing, 1991), p. 105. This account is also given in *Taiping guangji*, chapter 437, p. 3552.

to eat parallels similar human cases, for example, the dutiful son Ru Yu 汝郁 who refuses food when his mother grows too ill to eat.⁷⁷

The reference to reciprocity made by the Governor in relation to Heilong is key in understanding the changed conceptualisation of dogs as possessing human morals and an understanding of filial loyalty. Rather than simply labouring for humans and thus deserving recompense, or *bao* 報, from their master to deserve a burial, it is instead a dog's performance of *bao* that grants it a burial. As Knapp has shown, certain animals were credited with understanding *bao* in direct relationships across post-Han accounts. Nevertheless, the connection with themes of filial loyalty, as expected of slaves, is unique to dogs.⁷⁸ The incorporation of the human master-servant relationship into the conceptualisation of the human-dog relationship speaks more to a humanisation of dogs than to a de-humanisation of servants. This is because the attribution of human morality, that is, a limited understanding of *bao* and filial loyalty, attests to dogs possessing human, even *superhuman*, moral potential.

In the third to fifth centuries, tales emerged of loyal dogs that would perform heroic acts to save their owners. Should they survive, they would be treated with great affection by their owner and, should they die, they would be buried in a manner that *elevated* the status of the dog beyond its master's standing. This then differentiates Phase III.b from Phase III.a in that the burial of dogs is no longer restricted by economic concerns but rather by emotional concerns centred on the theme of filial loyalty.

Conclusions

This article has traced the positioning of the dog in relation to the tomb across early China and divided this into three overarching phases. Nevertheless, the divisions given here remain cursory at best, given the lack of archaeological findings from certain time periods, especially the Han and post-Han period, and continued interregional differences. Without these archaeological findings, much of Phase III is based on texts rather than archaeological evidence and could thus be enriched or even disproved by relevant excavations.

Nevertheless, it is evident that there was a continual reassessment of the dog's positioning in the tomb that mirrored pressing social concerns of the time, as seen in Phase II, and eventually a broader acceptance of burying dogs in their own right. The transition from tomb-keeper to tomb-occupant thus underlines the changing relationship between humans and dogs up to the sixth century in China. As Leslie Day argues in the context of Ancient Greece, 'the changes in the treatment of dogs after death suggest something about their position while alive'.⁷⁹ While it is difficult to directly apply the situation of one culture neatly to another, the theory that the treatment of an animal after its death may inform us about its life, value, or function is certainly applicable here.

By analysing the placement of the dog in relation to the tomb, we can better trace changes in the conceptualisation of dogs in life as well as in death. From a ritual accessory to a protector of property, and from a tool used by humans to a sentient being driven by humanised morals, the role of the dog in the tomb underwent marked transformations mirroring changes to its role in life. As the place of humans in the natural order was once more debated in the post-Han period, the dog emerged as a parallel for the loyal

⁷⁷ Tao Qian (attrib.), *Wu xiaozhuan* 五孝轉, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/30544> (accessed 12 December 2022), chapter 5.

⁷⁸ The servant-master relationship is categorised as *xiao* 孝 (filial piety) in early legal codes: Jia Liying 賈麗英, *Qin Han jiazou fanzui yanjiu* 秦漢家族犯罪研究 (Taipei, 2010), pp. 70–102.

⁷⁹ L. P. Day, 'Dog burials in the Greek world', *American Journal of Archaeology* 88.1 (1984), p. 29.

servant in life as well as in death, rewriting canine motivations, from being sinister to being humanised, moral, and worthy of reward. Dogs in post-Han China could be used to hunt, to guard, to protect one's property and oneself, or could be buried in their own tombs, the latter being the clearest indicator of how the conceptualisation of dogs had evolved by the early medieval period.

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