

The Reliability of Burial Assemblages and Other Ceramic Assemblages in Similar Context as Indices for Dating

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More often than not, we face a problem of dating ancient ceramics at a given archaeological site. If the date of the site is already known, it is quite helpful in estimating the date of the buried ceramics and vice-versa: the date of the ceramics can become a good tool for fixing the date of their mother site whose life period was uncertain because of lack of records. A close relation does exist between a site and its ceramics. However, no matter how advantageous it may be to apply the interrelationship to dating the other, the result obtained would hardly be reliable unless the following factor is carefully taken into consideration.

The most important factor is ascertaining that the ceramics were actually produced in the same period as the site and that different aged ceramics were not used in the graves. A ceramic made in the pre-

ceding period but buried in a site of a succeeding period cannot be used for deciding the date of the latter; neither can the date of the site be a good indication of the date of the ceramics.

Until around the 13th century, the burial implements of various kinds, except coins and foreign goods, were made in almost the same age as the tombs. This conclusion is derived from the results of examining the tombs of high class families; this might also be true in the case of the implements buried in the tombs of common people.

In ancient time, it had been very important to the Chinese people to show their respect to their ancestors. They put great emphasis on funeral, hence its ceremony was very luxurious. Based on such way of thinking and custom, a number of implements were buried along with the dead. In accordance with the status and class of the dead and his family, newer and higher grade goods were chosen. Used ones or things of former period were not usually included in the burial offerings. Therefore, almost all metal, jade, lacquer works, ceramics et al. found in the tombs in ancient and middle ages may be considered as contemporary with the buried person. The following could serve as examples:

1. The famous burial implements

of the "Han Tombs at Man-Ch'eng" (Tombs of Lisheng and his wife) in the second century found in North China.

2. The gorgeous ones of the "Han Tomb No. 1 at Mawang-tui, Changsha" (Tomb of the wife of Li-T'sang).
3. Those in the tombs of the following: a) the third century tomb (297) found in Nanking; b) the seventh century (608) tomb of Li Chikung at Sian; c) the eight century (706) ^{buried} T'ang tomb of Princess Ying-tai at Si-an district; and d) the tombs in the Sung period.
4. Some celadons found in the tombs in Wu and West Ching period in the third century bore the inscription of the year they were produced. In this case, the date of the construction of the tomb could be estimated with considerable accuracy.

Coins and foreign goods found in tombs constructed prior to the 13th century did not necessarily belong to the same period as the tombs. For example, bronze coins recovered in T'ang and Sung tombs were not made in only one corresponding period but in several periods. Since coins of several periods could be used at one time, the people might have thought that all the coins belonged to a specific

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period and hence buried them together. In this case, the coin bearing the latest date should be considered as the most helpful in dating the tomb, the tomb, thereby, is dated at the same time the newest coin in the lot was minted or after.

Most gold and silver coins found in T'ang tombs were of the Sasanian dynasty of Iran which fell during the early T'ang period and of the Byzantine Empire in the fifth and sixth century. These coins could not have been used in China; rather they must have been kept by the T'ang people as precious treasures with a special value beyond the frame of the period and, hence, buried with the dead.

Aside from coins, the other imported items included in the T'ang burial were metal works and glass wares from West Asia.

New Burial Customs

From either the Yuan period in the 14th century or the Ming period in the 15th century, the custom of burying new goods of the same period seemed to have been altered as evidenced by the burial implements in the tombs built around Nanching in the early part of the Ming, the first half of the 15th century. They were as follows:

1. The tomb of the wife of Sung-cheng who died in 1418,
2. The tomb of Sung-hu (1440) and his wife, Princess An-cheng (1443),
3. The tomb of Pieng-cheng (1439),
4. The other tombs built in the first half of the 15th century.

In these tombs were found marvelous wine bottle (Meipin), deep bowls which are 14th century's blue and white, and ewers of white ware of the same century.

During that period, the people started using goods of former period as burial implements if these were excellent products and were used by the person before his death. Under such circumstance, the date of the tomb does not always become a proper measure for dating the burial implements and vice-versa.

This custom of including goods of former period into burial implements was also observed in the Ching period. From the tomb of Hei-Shali (1676) at west suburbs of Peipin, excellent enameled wares (overglazed ware) of Ming period in the 15th century were found in great quantity.

In Japan, before the seventh century, high class families built mounded tombs and buried contemporary goods made in Japan and some products, such as bronze mirror, from China and Korea. Among the foreign goods were some items made in the period preceding that of the tomb. By the seventh and eighth centuries however, when Buddhism rapidly expanded in Japan, the high class families tended to cremate their

tained. Hence, we need to be more cautious in using the goods in the tomb for dating.

To go into the study of the dating context between tombs and their burial implements in South-east Asia, we must have ample knowledge of the history and the burial concept and its related ceremonies of each country in the area. The people in these countries might not be well aware of the date and place of the imported Chinese ceramics. They might have buried the goods thinking naturally that those were contemporary even if, in fact, the goods belonged to a previous period. Or they might have believed that the Chinese ceramics had extraordinary magical power, hence buried them regardless of their production period.

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dead and to bury ashes in jars with only a few burial implements.

The jars used to contain the ashes included Japanese-made ones and Chinese-made celadons, black glazed ware, ash glazed ware and others. The Japanese vessels were apparently made in the same period. The Chinese ones still have to be studied carefully. However, some cremation tombs had their construction dates in them and they showed that the Chinese vessels used as ash containers were made at least by the time of the burial. In general, most Chinese wares belong to the same period as the cremation tombs. This indicates that they were used soon after they were imported.

After the 15th-16th century, the Japanese also began to include in the burial implements the goods that were long used by the deceased, precious foreign goods or a part of the family treasures. The contemporaneity of the burial goods, as a whole, was not main-

Sinan Relics

Other ceramic assemblages like the Sinan relics will serve as a good reference for dating other ceramics. An enormous number of relics were salvaged from a wrecked ship off Sinan country, southwestern part of the Korean Peninsula. The wreck was found in 1975, and since 1976, a joint survey of the Bureau of Cultural Property and the Navy of the Republic of Korea has been carried out every year.

In 1982, a total of 17,947 pieces of relics, all Chinese made were already salvaged. They included ceramics, metal work, lacquer, stone implements, glass, black pepper, fragrant wood and some 100 thousand ancient Chinese ceramic coins. According to the recently discovered wooden inscriptions and based on the coins, the ship had left Ning-Pao, Southeast China, in 1323 and was on its way to Japan via Korea

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