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Archeology of the Lu City: Place memory and urban foundation in Early China

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1. Introduction

Besides the concentration of residents, the florescence of market-places and craft production, and a sense of security afforded by collective defense, the notion of city often also includes the idea of it as a sacred place, which helps connect people with their past and their religion. By comparing the Zhou state-building narrative from textual sources with patterns observed in our landscape archeology research of the Lu city in the Qufu region, we argue that the place memory associated with the legacy of past political developments served as an important foundation for the creation or renewal of urban tradition in early China.

The Zhou conquest of the hegemonic Shang state during the last decades of the second millennium BCE did not merely mark a dynastic change. Rather, the Shang-Zhou transition gave rise to important political and ritual institutions that were significant in defining the conceptual framework for later Chinese civilization. The great challenge for the Zhou state founders was to consolidate a large domain inherently characterized by great cultural and historical diversity. In order to control its large territory, the Zhou kings implemented the *fengjian* (to assign and establish) system by granting land, people, historical relics, gifts, and titles to members of royal lineages and high elite, making them lords of the regional states (Creel, 1970; Hsü and Linduff, 1988; Li Feng 2006, 2008). These lords acknowledged the political and ritual authority of the royal house by offering military assistance, services, and tributes in the form of finished products, raw materials, and local produce. Having served as their seats of political authority, the capitals of these regional states evolved to be great cities during the Eastern Zhou period (Von Falkenhausen, 2006, 2008).

In a debate on the lineage seniority attributed to 506 BCE in *Zuozhuan*, invocator Tuo (Ziyu) of the Wey state recounted the colonizing missions associated with the founding lords of three major Zhou regional states during the early Western Zhou period, namely the states of Wey, Lu, and Jin (Fig. 1).¹ The royal investiture addresses incorporated into Tuo's speech highlighted the symbolic and logistical consideration of Zhou state-building in a newly established political domain with great cultural diversity. The Zhou founders instructed these lords to govern the local population according to the historical notions of political authority specific to their region (Yang, 1990:1534–40). Place memory provided Zhou rulers the spatial definition of legitimacy, and helped these Zhou military colonies to incorporate the memory communities associated with each of these historically significant places (Li, 2016). The construction of these military colonies in the name of the past helped the Zhou cope with cultural diversity and the historical notion of legitimacy.

Li's (2016) case study of the construction of Luoyi in the Luoyang Basin and the establishment of the Jin state in the Jinnan Basin shows that the Zhou state-building processes in the two great basins were guided by historical precedents and a historical landscape that dates back approximately a thousand years before the conquest of Shang. These two major Zhou political centers were built in the two basins that, prior to the Zhou conquest, were sparsely populated for over two centuries. From an archeological perspective, however, these two basins were not empty in the historical sense, since some of the most

¹ Completed by 300 BCE, *Zuozhuan* was compiled as a commentary to the Lu state chronicle *Chunqiu*, the Spring and Autumn Annals, during the middle first millennium BCE (Yang, 1990; Schaberg, 2001; Pines, 2002; Durrant et al., 2016). As China's first great work of history, this layered text contains stories about the past told by storytellers in Eastern Zhou society.

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Fig. 1. Locations of Western Zhou royal centers (Zhouyuan, Feng-Hao, Luoyi) and major Zhou regional states (Jin, Wey, Lu) mentioned in invocator Tuo's speech in 506 BCE (based on Li, 2003 Fig. 1).

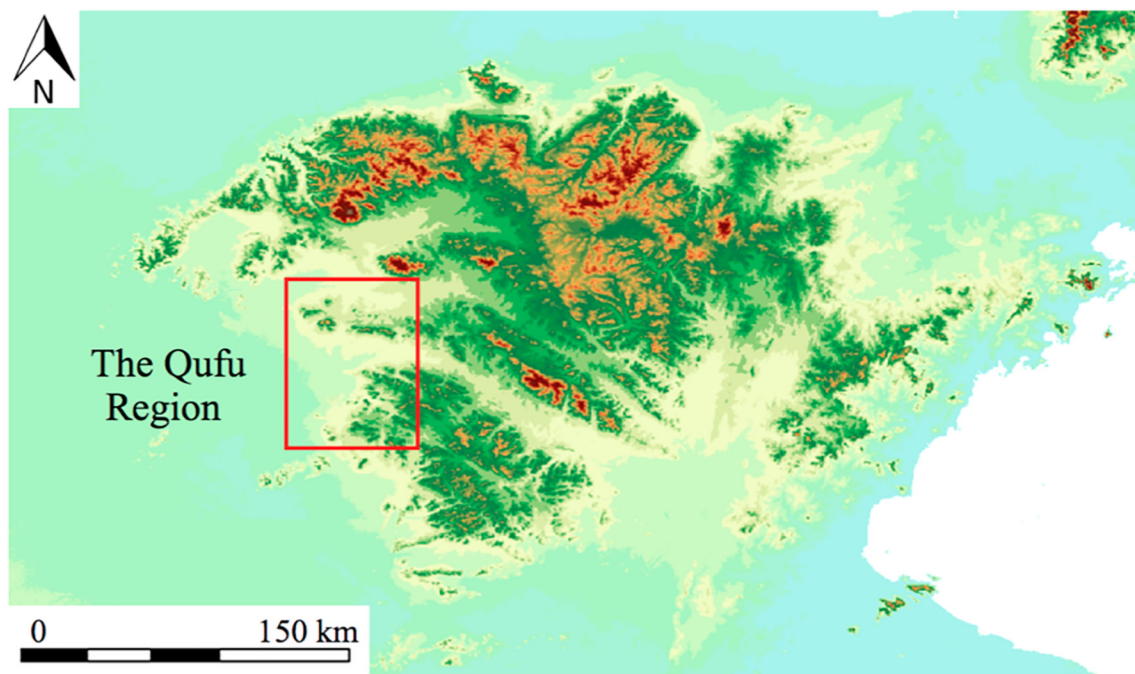


Fig. 2. The location of the Qufu region in coastal Shandong, eastern China.

important instances of political development from the late third to the early second millennium BC took place there.

Through the construction of cities in these two basins in the name of the historical legacy associated with *Xia*, the “Ruins of Xia,” the architects of the Zhou state transformed the basins into well-populated Zhou political strongholds that effectively closed the gap between its eastern and western territories (Li, 2016).² Place memory, therefore, provided

² Zhou historiography places the Xia dynastic regime to approximately 2100 to 1600 BCE. The Xia narrative in Zhou sources probably incorporated the Longshan legacy and the Erlitou legacy from the late third to the second millennium BCE (Li, 2016).

the cultural foundation for Zhou's geographic choice to establish its political centers. The claim to the past not only reconstituted the regional society in the two basins, but also created a new framework for the Zhou claim to legitimacy under the notion of the Heavenly Mandate, which came with its assumptions of dynastic change.

In this paper, we focus on urban development in the Lu state in the Shang heartland and its transformation from a Western Zhou military colony into a full-blown urban center during the Eastern Zhou period (Fig. 2). For the consolidation of Zhou control in the eastern part of Shang heartland, invocator Tuo's speech highlighted the state-building strategy for the important state of Lu granted to the heir of the Duke

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