



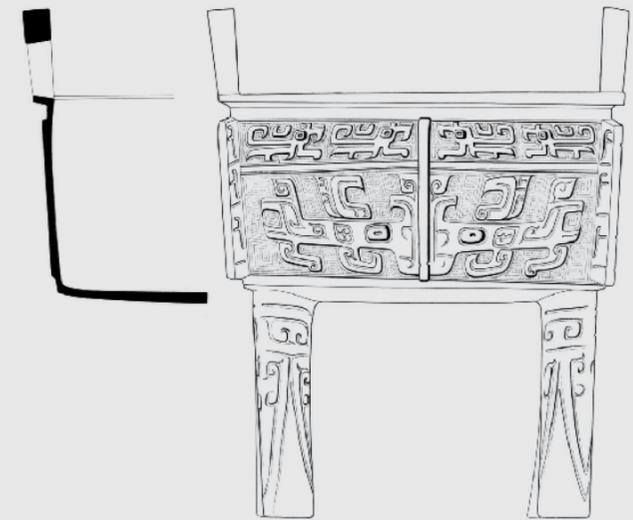
方鼎 **Fang Ding** *Cat. 16*
Early Western Zhou Period, H. 21.7 cm

Supported by four high, cylindrical legs, the shallow and rectangular body widens slightly toward the top. Two U-shaped handles rise from the flat lip on the shorter sides of the body. Eight simple flanges, at the corner and the middle of each side, extend the full height of the decorated panels. The two sides of the flanges are decorated with F-shaped carvings separated by single horizontal lines.

On each side of the body are two registers of decoration. The main register consists of a carefully organized *taotie* shown in full, with C-shaped horns, eyes, ears, trailing claws and a compact flayed body. Those on the shorter sides are compressed versions of the *taotie* found on the longer sides. On the upper register of each longer side, four birds flank the central flange, while on each shorter side there are only two birds. The beaks clearly identify them as birds. Both registers are set off against a background of neat, angular *leiwen* thunder patterns. The legs are decorated with one whole and two

half intaglio pendant triangles, simplified from cicada designs (fig. 1). Two ear-shaped patterns are on top of each leg, and two ear-shaped designs fill in each triangle. The entire vessel is dark grey and mostly covered by a layer of green rust.

The most accurate translation of *fang* is quadrilateral. In Chinese, *fang* means both square and rectangular, as opposed to *yuan*, or round. There should be specific connotations associated with the greater number of round *ding* and fewer *fang ding*, at



least during the Xia dynasty. In transmitted texts there are records of the casting of *fang ding* by Yu the Great, the founder of the Xia dynasty. There has not yet been any bronze *fang ding* found from the Xia culture, but pottery imitations strongly imply its existence.¹ The *fang ding* was the largest and most important bronze vessel during the Shang period. During the Early Western Zhou period, *fang ding* began to decline, and gradually disappeared during the Middle Western Zhou period. Scholars typically associate the *fang ding* of the Early Western Zhou as Shang leftovers.² In differentiating *ding*-usage rituals, scholars argue that Shang ritual bronzes are often found in even numbers, whereas Zhou ritual bronzes are often found in odd numbers.³ This theory

¹ Kaogu 1965.5: 219, fig. 7: 10. *Erlitou taoqi jicui*: 207.
² Zhang Maorong 2002: 84–5.
³ Li Yujie 1998: 55.



fig. 1

explains why Shang period *fang ding* are usually found in pairs and Western Zhou examples such as this one are single.⁴

More than three hundred *fang ding* have been recorded in excavation reports and catalogues,⁵ and scholars have done several comprehensive studies on the *fang ding*.⁶ The most significant point of its evolution is the ratio between the height of the body and the feet. After comparing the MacLean Collection piece with the samples in the most comprehensive periodization chart, we found that the most similar example is dated to the Early Western Zhou period,⁷ so we date this *fang ding* to the same period. This dating is also backed by examining the morphological change of the bottom. Over time, the bottom changed from rounded to flat, and the nearly flat bottoms are only seen on the Western

Zhou period pieces, such as the Shuyu *fang ding* from tomb 114 at Beizhao北赵, Quwo, Shanxi, and the Zi X *fang ding* from tomb 13 at Zhuyuangou竹园沟, Baoji, Shaanxi (app. cat 16, 1: 2, 3). The ratio of the heights of the body and feet of the MacLean *fang ding* is closer to those of the Shuyu *fang ding*, while its bottom is similar to both of them. The Zi X *fang ding* is dated to King Kang,⁸ while the Shuyu *fang ding* is dated to the transitional period from the Early to Middle Western Zhou periods. Based on the dating of these comparative examples, we should date the MacLean piece to the Early Western Zhou period.

⁴ Yang Baocheng and Liu Senmiao 1991: 539.

⁵ Zhang Baoyun 2005: 14.

⁶ Yang Baocheng and Liu Senmiao 1991; Gao Xisheng 1997; Gao Xisheng and Zhu Liang 2004; Zhang, Maorong 2002; Zhang Baoyun 2005; Zhang Guoshuo 1994.

⁷ Yang Baocheng and Liu Senmiao 1991: 536, fig. 1: 11.

⁸ Baoji Yuguo mud: 263.

