

# LACQUERED WOODEN GRILLE FOR A COFFIN

This unique specimen came from a tomb near the city of Ch'ang-sha in the province of Hunan in central south China. It probably formed the inner lid of a coffin. Note the complex intertwining design.

The grille was carved from a single plank and then tooled down to give the ribboned effect along the centers of the lines. The thick coat of lacquer is apparently in several layers. Most of a geometric design painted on the lacquer with red pigment has disappeared, though some is visible at this end. When the grille reached Field Museum it was badly broken, shrunken, and warped. Restored parts appear a dark gray.

The archaeological importance of Ch'ang-sha became known about 1935 when

extensive leveling of ground for public buildings, highways, and airports exposed many tombs. They were of two types: large and deep pits with timbered chambers at the bottoms, and unmarked by mounds; and graves constructed close to the surface and covered by tumuli. The first were richly stocked with bronze, pottery, and jade objects stylistically of late Chou and Ch'in date, that is, of the few centuries prior to 200 B.C. Only in the deep tombs were a few wooden objects preserved by water. The mound-covered tombs contained imperishable objects of Han and later periods. Thus it is fairly certain that this wooden grille came from one of the deep tombs of pre-Han, or possibly early Han date, at the latest.

## ABOUT THIRD CENTURY B.C.