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# **Zuling Mausoleum of the Liao Dynasty:**

**Report on the Archaeological Surveys and**

**Excavations from 2003–2010**

**( III )**

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# Zuling Mausoleum of the Liao Dynasty:

## Report on the Archaeological Surveys and Excavations from

2003–2010

(Abstract)

The Liao Dynasty's Zuling Mausoleum site is located to the northwest of Shifangzi Gacha (Village), Qagaan Qada Süm (Township), Bairin Left Banner, Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. It is the mausoleum of the Taizu (the first emperor) of the Khitan Liao Dynasty, Yelü Abaoji, and his empress. The mausoleum was constructed in the first year of the Tianxian reign (926 AD) and abandoned in the tenth year of the Tianqing reign (1120 AD). From its establishment following the burial of Yelü Abaoji to the fall of the Liao Dynasty, the Zuling Mausoleum continually served as a sacred place of ancestral veneration for the royal family.

This report is the first published archaeological monograph on the Liao Dynasty mausoleums based on Chinese scholars' scientific archaeological excavations, with data yielded from archaeological surveys and trial excavations conducted from 2003-2004 by the Second Working Team in Inner Mongolia, Institute of Archaeology, CASS, and more important, the data from the archaeological surveys and excavations jointly conducted from 2007-2010 by the Liao Zuling Archaeological Team comprised of the Second Working Team in Inner Mongolia, Institute of Archaeology, CASS and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Regional Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology. Related issues are also preliminarily discussed.

This report is composed of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the geographical location and natural environment of the Liao Dynasty's Zuling Mausoleum, the historical context of the region, the history of the mausoleum's discovery and research, as well as the background and academic purposes of excavation project, the summary of fieldwork, as well as other relevant information. The first chapter also summarizes the academic framework and the writing process of the monography. The second chapter highlights major burials inside the mausoleum courtyard

as well as the location of the *xuangong* (underground burial chamber) of the mausoleum, with the detail of burial No. 1, a companion burial of a noble couple, and burial No. 2 with disturbed skeletons. The third chapter primarily provides a report on the major architectural foundations in the mausoleum courtyard, including the Heilong Gate, Group A and the No. 4 architectural foundations, along with the data from the trial excavations of the No. 2 and 3 architectural foundations. It also investigates the drainage system and stone walls along the hill ridge in the mausoleum. Chapter four focuses on the data from the excavations and surveys of important architectural foundations outside the mausoleum, including the architectural foundation at Guifushan which was also excavated, and the No. 2, 4 and 5 architectural foundations discovered outside the courtyard. The foundations of the symmetrical *quetai* (gate towers) inside the courtyard and the *shendao* (sacred way) outside the courtyard were investigated. The companion burials area and kilns for brick and tile firing are also briefly introduced. Chapter five primarily describes the mapping and survey data of the mausoleum town, Zuzhou. Building upon detailed data published in previous chapters. Chapter six preliminarily studies unearthed rooftile ends and porcelain remains in order to establish the chronological framework of the material remains. Meanwhile, inscriptions in Chinese and Khitan large script on pieces of stone steles celebrating Taizu's life achievements unearthed from the stele pavilion are also interpreted to expand our historical knowledge. Lastly, the mausoleum organization, courtyard layout, and the mausoleum institution are also preliminarily discussed.

It is documented in the article of Zuzhou in "*History of Liao - Treatise on Geography - Shangjing Circuit*" that "Taizu's mausoleum was built by cutting the mountain to construct the hall, and named it the Ming Hall. There was a dining hall in the range to the south of the Ming Hall for seasonal veneration. The gate is called Heilong. There was a Shengzong (Sacred Track) Hall to the east, in which a stele was erected recording Taizu's hunting travels. There was a pavilion to the east of the Shengzong Hall, in which a stele was erected recording Taizu's achievement of establishing the Liao Dynasty. All of them are located five *li* to the west of Zuzhou." Through archaeological coring, trial excavations, and full-scale excavation at the Liao Dynasty's Zuling Mausoleum by the archaeological team, the locations of Taizu's underground burial chamber, dining hall on the south ridge, Heilong Gate, Shengzong Hall, and the stele pavilion are approximately established and the reliability of historical records on the Zuling Mausoleum documented in *Liaoshi* are thus confirmed.

This report publishes all archaeological data according to features and units completely. It provides significant data for the study of Liao Dynasty mausoleums. New data unveiled in this

report complements the historical records in *Liaoshi*, and enriches historical material on the Zuling Mausoleum. Therefore, it offers crucial data for the study of Liao Dynasty mausoleums, and will also benefit the study of mausoleum systems in ancient China.

This publication offers the most comprehensive report on Liao Dynasty mausoleum archaeology. The publication of the report will greatly enrich the archaeological study of Liao Dynasty mausoleums as well as ancient mausoleums in China. It will also have a profound influence on historical studies and other related disciplines.

This report will also be of interest to researchers focusing on archaeology, history, architecture, the Khitan writing system, fine arts, environmental science, zoology, and botany. It is also a great reference for those interested in ancient ceramics and numismatics.