

Significant Finds from the Han Period Tomb No. 1 at Huxishan in Yuanling

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Han period tomb No. 1 (M1) at Huxishan 虎溪山 is located to the west of Chengguan 城关 Township in Yuanling 沅陵 County, Hunan 湖南 Province in the area of the confluence of the Yuan 沅水 and You 酉水 Rivers. The surrounding cemetery is 130 m above sea level. Salvage excavations were carried out at the site under the direction of the Hunan Provincial Institute of Antiquity and Archaeology from June to September, 1999.

I. The Structure of the Tomb

Tomb M1 is a rectangular shaft-pit tomb with a sloping entrance passage oriented due east. The tomb fill is composed of mixed earth that was tamped into place. A large number of cobbles were discovered at the location where the sloping passage meets the tomb chamber.

At its mouth, the burial pit was 17.5 m in length and 14.2 m wide. A 1.1 m wide step exists 1.3 m below the surface. Excavations uncovered stairs on both the north and south walls of the pit that have 人-shaped profiles. The stairs slope at a 32–35 degrees angle. At a depth of

9.7 m, a second ledge measuring 0.75–0.8 m wide lies adjacent to the burial chamber. This ledge and the walls of the chamber were created out of earthen fill. The burial chamber is 9.5 m long, 7.2 m wide, and 3.27 m deep. The total depth of the burial is 12.97 m (Figs. 1 and 2).

The entrance passage to the tomb is 37 m long. At the surface, the width of the tomb passage ranges between 4.8 and 8 m. At its base, it is 4.5–4.8 m wide. It slopes upward at an 18% grade. Two small side chambers are located on the north and south sides of this passage, 5.2 m from its end. The northern chamber has an entrance at the surface that is 10 m long east-west and 2.3–3 m wide north-south. It is 4.1 m deep. The southern side of this chamber is made of the northern wall of the tomb passage. The other three walls extend to the surface. Stairs are found on both sides of the tomb passage.

II. The Structure of the Tomb Chamber

The upper level of the tomb chamber was filled in with a large amount of livid clay. Parts of the burial chamber

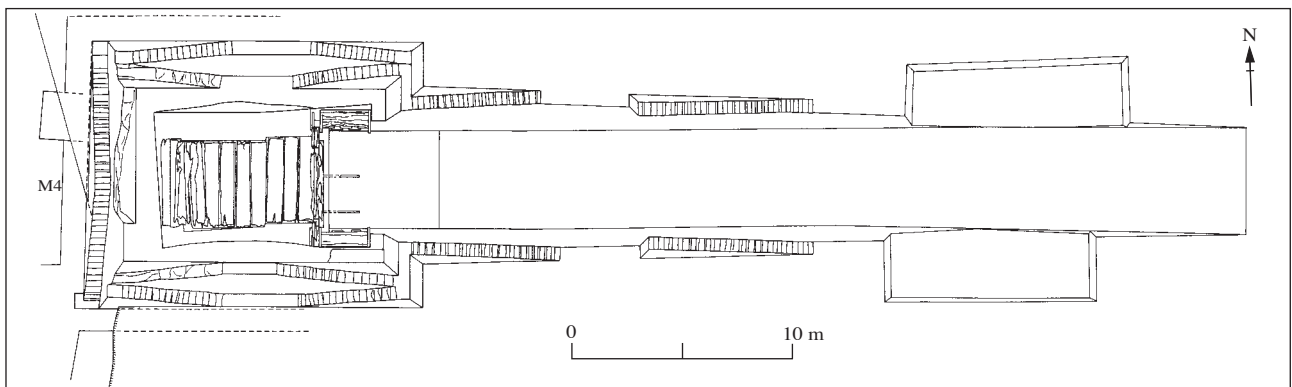


Fig. 1 Plan of burial pit (M1)



Fig. 2 Burial chamber of M1

and coffins have decayed and collapsed. The chamber includes both the main chamber and exterior storage compartments. The compartments are separated from the main chamber by two layers of wood-plank panels. On the inner layer, the words *nanshan* 南扇 (southern panel) and *beishan* 北扇 (northern panel) are written on the planks in lacquer.

The exterior compartments are divided into two areas: the north and the south. The northern compartment is 2.3 m long, 0.78 m wide, and 0.9 m high. Its southern wall comprises five planks that are staggered aligned. The other walls made of one whole plank are attached to one another by means of tenons. The southern compartment is made in the same fashion. The spaces above the exterior compartments and between the exterior walls of the compartments on the north, west, and south sides and the sides of the burial pit are all filled with tamped charcoal. The dimension of exterior compartments is 6.92 m long, 3.9 m wide, and 3.6 m high. The base of the exterior compartments is placed directly on top of a bed of wood charcoal, which in turn rests on sterile soil (Fig. 3).

The first layer of wooden planks is made of 10 segments labeled from east to west from “Lower East I” up to “Lower X.” Each plank measures 3.9 m long,

0.7 m wide and 0.22 m thick. They are tightly joined by a series of mortises and tenons. The second layer is constructed in the same manner as the first. The planks in this layer are numbered from east to west as “Lower East Top I” through to “Lower Top X.” Above this level three cross-ties lie in an east-west direction. At each end of these cross-ties, protruding tenons connect the cross-ties to two north-south oriented beams. As a result, a wooden frame is built. At either end of the south cross-tie, the characters for “southwest” and “southeast” are inscribed. Above the cross-ties is a third layer of planks. The planks in this layer from east to west are labeled “East Lower I” to “Lower IX” in lacquer. The exterior walls of the compartments are built out of wooden planks on top of this third layer of baseboards. On the east side the wall is formed by the wood-plank doors. The plank surfaces on both the north and south walls all have lacquer inscriptions (See Fig. 3).

This tomb has a single burial chamber and two coffins. The burial chamber contains a head compartment, a southern compartment, a northern compartment, and the coffins (Fig. 3). The head compartment is 3.28 m long and 1.94 m wide. The north compartment is 3.8 m long and 0.9 m wide. The south compartment is 3.8 m long and 0.7 m wide. The inner walls of the burial chamber form

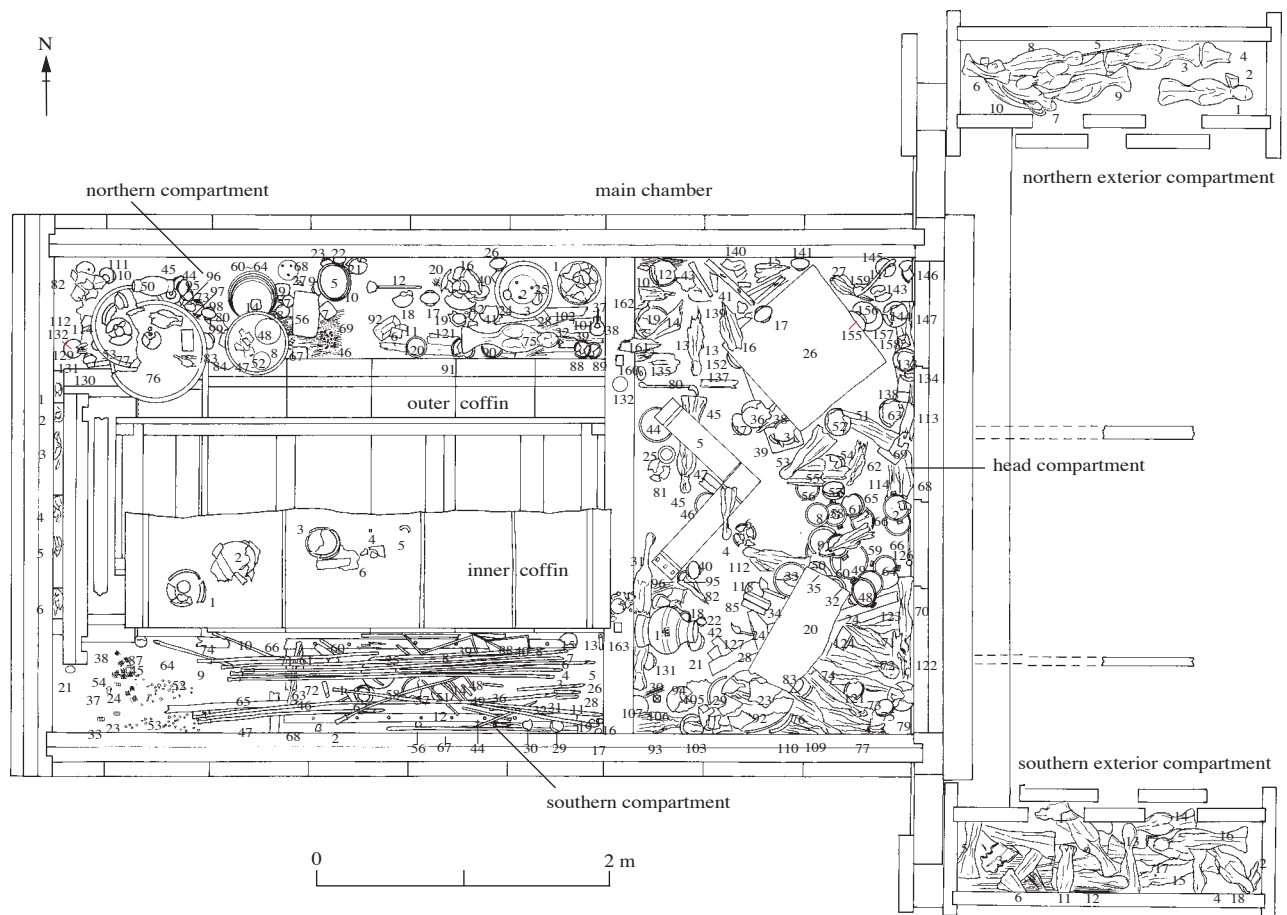


Fig. 3 Plan of burial M1

- Head compartment (MIT): 1, 23. ceramic *zhong*-measures 2, 48, 60, 66. ceramic *ding*-tripods 3, 6, 8, 9, 146. ceramic boxes 4, 7, 13, 30, 31, 45, 53, 72-74, 78, 92, 94, 109, 110, 161. lacquer wooden figurines 5. *ji*-table 12, 19, 36, 44, 46, 49, 63, 81, 93, 103, 107, 118, 144, 145, 156. lacquer platters 20, 28. lacquer *an*-tables 24. weapon 26, 137. wooden planks 27, 80, 127. wooden spoons 37, 155. lacquer cups with loop handle 43. bamboo slip 47. lacquer ceremonial platter-sets 83. lacquer *yi*-vessel 135. lacquer urinal
- Southern compartment (MIS): 1, 3-7, 10, 25, 26, 28, 47, 64. weapons 15. lacquer lid 35. ornament object 37. box with clay seal 38. straw mat 40, 51, 58. lacquer platters 52. peach core 87. ceramic box
- Northern compartment (MIN): 1. ceramic basin 2, 68, 110. wooden lids 5, 8, 48, 60, 74, 76, 77. wooden basins 6. ceramic *guan*-jarlet 17, 88-90. lacquer cups with loop handle 8, 21, 52, 120. lacquer platters 12, 37. lacquer spoons 38. lacquer *yi*-vessel 46. bamboo box 47, 82, 112. fragments of lacquer 54, 56, 92. lacquer cosmetic boxes 67. lacquer *se*-music instrument 69. bamboo slip 75. wooden figurine 101. wooden sword 114. pottery fragment
- Northern exterior compartment (MINW): 1-10. wooden figurines
- Southern exterior compartment (MISW): 1-4. lacquer shields 5-18. wooden figurines
- Coffin (MIG): 1, 2. lacquer cosmetic boxes 3. bronze mirror 4. clay seal 5. jade *bi*-disk 6. fragment of lacquer

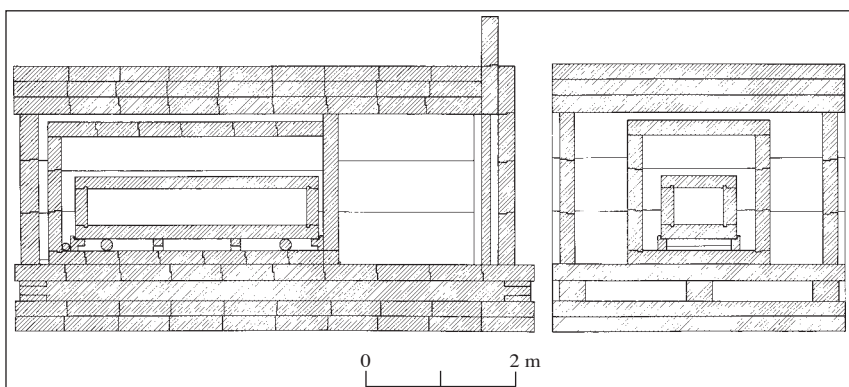


Fig. 4 Reconstruction of the section of the outer and inner coffins

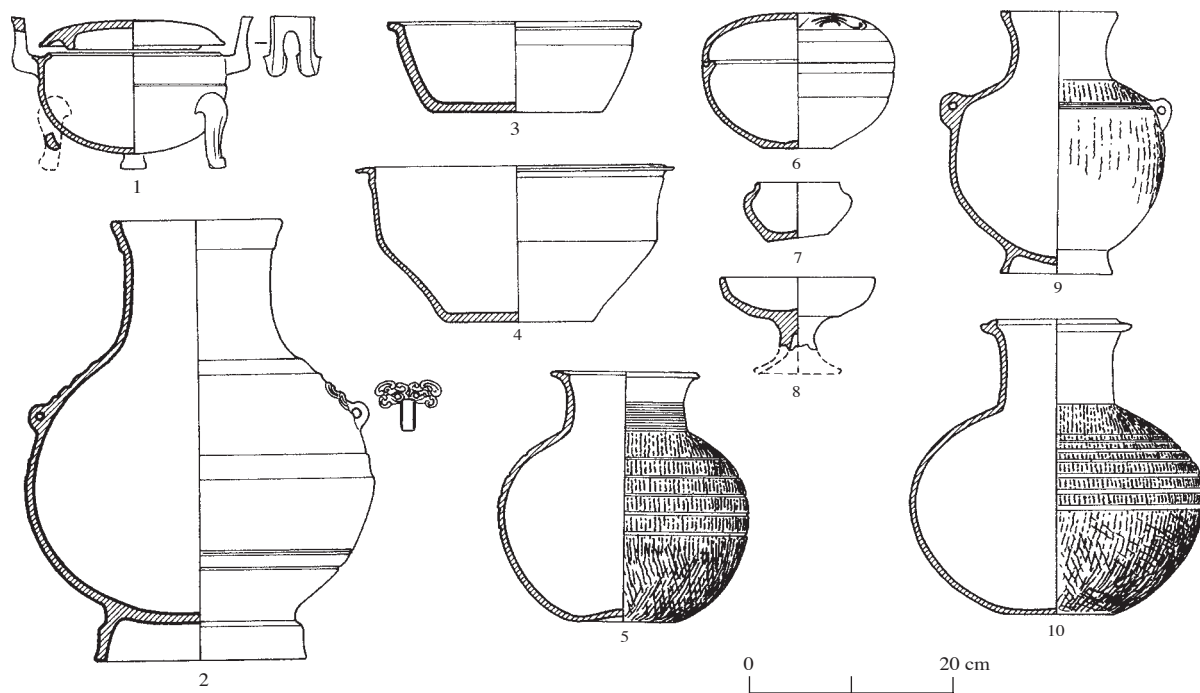


Fig. 5 Unearthed pottery

1. *ding*-tripod (MIT:60) 2. *zhong*-measure (MIT:1) 3, 4. basins (M1N:1, M1N:36) 5, 10. *guan*-jarlets (M1N:16, M1N:124) 6. box (MIT:3) 7. *yu*-vessel (MIT:149) 8. *dou*-stemmed plate (MIT:75) 9. pot (MIT:18)

the walls of the outer coffin. The burial couch rests on the baseboards of the outer coffin. It is 3.34 m long and 1.1 m wide (Fig. 4). The lid of the inner coffin is covered with lacquer drawings. The lid of outer coffin comprises five planks. The outer coffin is 3.5 m long, 1.5 m wide, and 1.52 m high. The burial chamber has three lids in total, each of which is composed of nine planks.

III. Burial Furniture

A total of 1,500 burial objects were found within this grave including ceramics, lacquered wood, bronzes, jades, talc objects, silk, and bamboo slips. These were given field catalogue numbers as follows: Objects in the head compartment are labeled MIT; objects in the southern compartment are M1S; those in the northern compartment are M1N; objects from the coffins are M1G; and objects found in the exterior compartments are labeled M1W. The objects found in the exterior compartments are mainly wooden tomb figurines and shields. The head compartment mostly contains ceramics and large numbers of lacquered wood objects. The southern compartment contains weapons and large numbers of fruits. The northern compartment contains large number of lacquered basins and bamboo slips. Large amounts of sealant have been recovered from both the northern and southern compartments.

1. Ceramics comprise *ding*-tripods, boxes, pots, *zhong*-measure, *guan*-jarlets, *yu*-containers, *dou*-stemmed plates, basins, and chimes.

Ding-tripods. Seven examples. Most are undecorated. A few have lids covered with lacquer. MIT:60 is one example. It is made of fine clay and has a gray core and black surface. It has a nested lid, attached ring handles, a deep belly, round bottom, and three solid feet. The lid is flat. The vessel rim diameter is 17 cm and it is 15.2 cm tall (Fig. 5:1).

Twenty boxes have been identified. Example MIT:3 is fine ware that has a gray core and black surface. The opening is a nested shaped lid and the belly is round with a slightly protruding base and a round lid. The diameter of the vessel mouth is 19.5 cm and the vessel is 13.4 cm high (Fig. 5:6).

Pots are thirty-two in number. MIT:18 is gray in color, has a trumpet-shaped mouth, a constricted neck, two circular handles on the shoulders, a round belly, and is ring-footed. The rim diameter is 11.6 cm and the vessel is 26 cm tall (Fig. 5:9).

Thirteen ceramic *zhong*-measures were also found. One example is MIT:1. It is made of gray fine-ware, has an everted rim, a long neck, and two handles on its shoulder, a round body, and a ring foot. The diameter of the vessel mouth is 18.4 cm and it is 45.5 cm tall (Fig. 5:

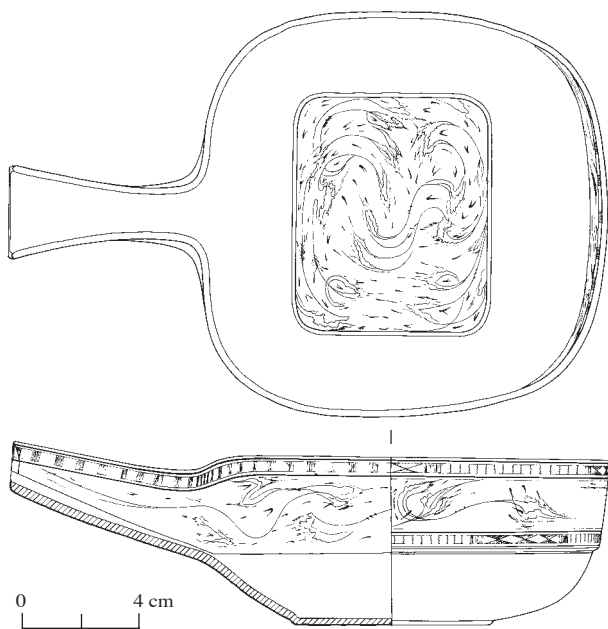


Fig. 6 Lacquer *yi*-vessel (MIT:83)

2).

Thirty-five *guan* jarlets were discovered in the tomb. One example is M1N:124. This vessel is gray fine-ware and has an inverted mouth. Its neck is elongated and it has arched shoulders and a body in the form of a flattened drum with a flat bottom. The diameter of its mouth is 12.6 cm and it is 29.4 cm tall (Fig. 5:10). Another example is M1N:16, which is also made of gray fine-ware. This specimen has an everted rim, a squat neck, round body, and a concave base. The surface is coated with black lacquer. It has a 15 cm wide mouth and is 25 cm tall (Fig. 5:5).

Seven *dou*-stemmed plates were discovered including MIT:75 that is composed of fine-ware paste that has a gray core and a black surface. The mouth of this example is everted and it has a shallow basin and an incomplete stem. The surface of the vessel is undecorated. The vessel has a mouth diameter of 15.4 cm (Fig. 5:8).

Seven basins including M1N:36 were recovered from the tomb. This example is made of gray, fine-ware. Its rim is everted and it has a deep, straight belly with a flat bottom. The exterior surface is undecorated. The mouth of this vessel is 32.4 cm in diameter and it is 15.6 cm high (Fig. 5:4). A second example is M1N:1, which is also gray, fine-ware with an everted rim, slanted walls, and a flat bottom. It has a rim diameter of 25 cm and is 9 cm high (Fig. 5:3).

Twelve *yu*-vessels have also been recovered includ-

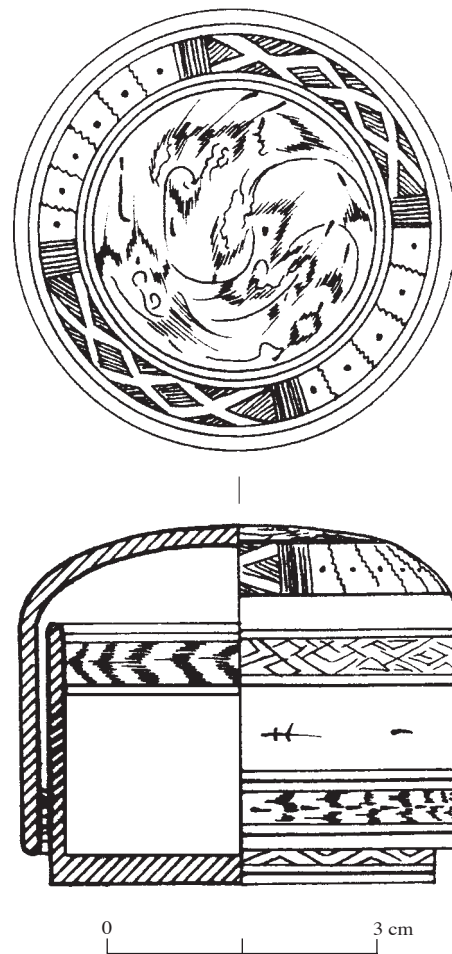


Fig. 7 Lacquer cosmetic box (M1G:1)

ing M1T:149, which is fine, gray ware. This vessel has an inverted and a short neck, rounded shoulders, sloping sides and a flat bottom. The vessel surface is coated with deep-red colored lacquer. It has a rim diameter of 8.2 cm and is 5.2–6 cm tall (Fig. 5:7).

Twelve chimes comprise the final set of ceramic objects. These objects are in the shape of a carpenter's try square with a perforation above the corner. The chimes can be divided into two sets, each with a sequence of six from large to small. Chimes in the first set are numbered from 1 to 6. They are all non-functional objects made specifically for burials. One typical example, M1T:52-1 is made of fine, gray ware. The character for the number "1" is inscribed on it. It is 12 cm in length.

2. Lacquer vessels

Most of these are extremely fragmentary and damaged. Only a few complete specimens remain.

Two lacquer *yi*-vessels 匜 were found in the tomb including M1T:83 (Fig. 6). This vessel is made with a wood core and is shaped like a gourd with a spout. The

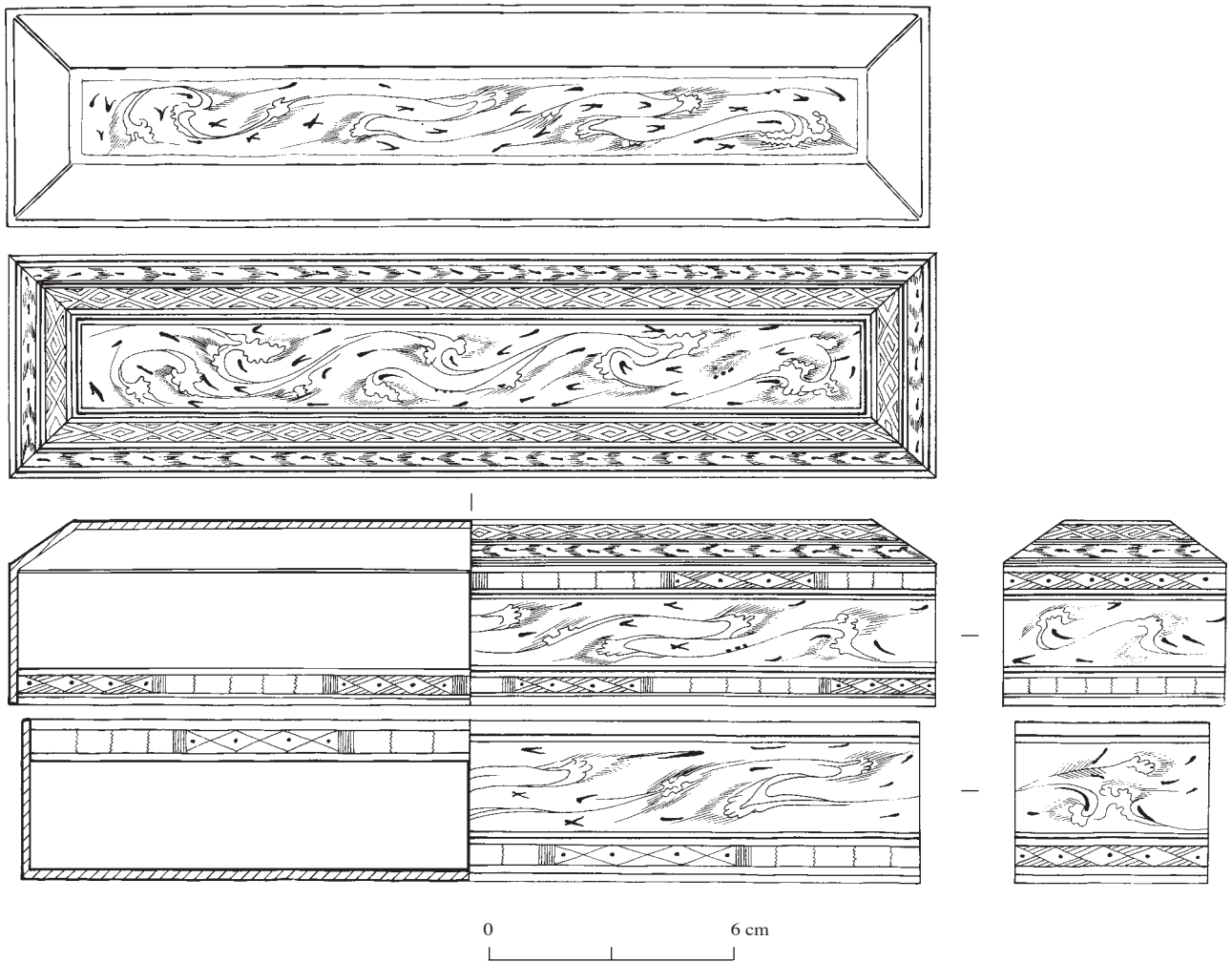


Fig. 8 Lacquer cosmetic box (MIT:85)

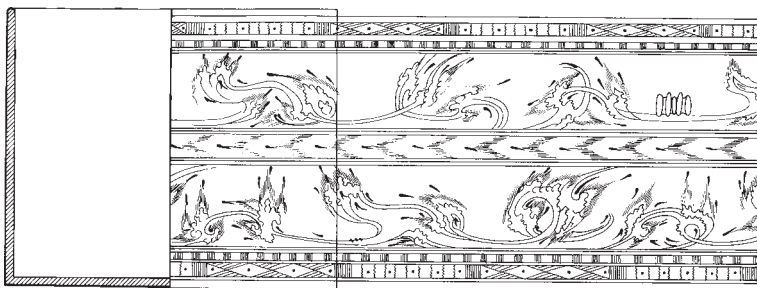


Fig. 9 Lacquer *zhi*-vessel (MIN:9) (Scale: 2/5)



Fig.10 Lacquer *zhi*-vessel (MIN:9)

exterior surface is covered with black lacquer while the interior is red. Both surfaces are decorated with incised scroll designs. The vessel is 29 cm long.

Fifteen cosmetic boxes were discovered in the tomb.

MIG:1 is one example. This object has a ramie fabric core, straight sides, a flat bottom, and scroll designs inscribed on both the interior and exterior surfaces. The mouth of the vessel is 4.4 cm in diameter (Fig. 7). Object MIT:85 is

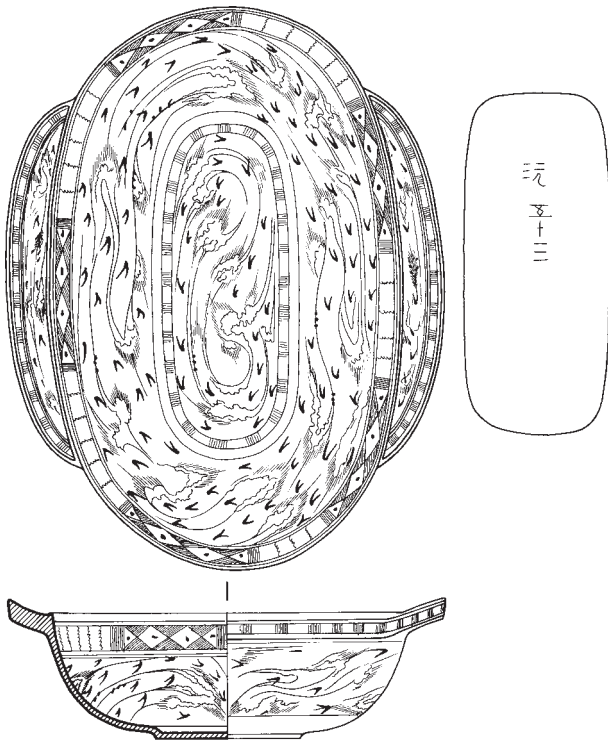


Fig. 11 Lacquer cup with loop handle (MIT:54) (Scale: 1/2)



Fig. 12 Lacquer cup with loop handle (MIT:54)

composed of similar materials and is rectangular with straight sides, a flat bottom, and red lacquer coating. It is entirely coated with scroll designs. The object is 21.8 cm long and 5.4 cm wide (Fig. 8).

Seven *zhi*-vessels were also discovered. One example, M1N:9, also has a ramie-cloth core and straight walls, flat bottoms, and red lacquer coating. The surface of this object is covered with incised cloud and air designs. The object has both a mouth diameter and height of 11 cm (Figs. 9 and 10).

The tomb contained 101 lacquer cups with loop handles. One example is MIT:54 (Figs. 11 and 12). This cup has a ramie-cloth core and is coated with black lacquer and red paint. The interior and exterior are both decorated with scroll designs. Geometric patterns are incised on the interior surface, beneath the lip. The bottom of the vessel contains the four characters “沅五十三” meaning “Yuan 53.” This vessel is 16.2 cm long. M1N:95 is also comprised of ramie-cloth with black lacquer and red paint. The interior surface is decorated with scroll designs. Beneath the rim geometric designs comprise the decoration. On the exterior surface, geometric designs are also found below the lip and there are scroll designs on the vessel body. The base of this vessel is inscribed with the characters “沅卅九” which mean “Yuan 39.” This vessel is 15 cm long (Fig. 13). A third

example is MIT:101. It has a ramie core, black lacquer coating and red paint. The interior and exterior are decorated with scroll and divine animal-mask designs. The base of the vessel is inscribed with the characters “沅百一十五” meaning “Yuan 115.” This object is 17.3 cm in length (Fig. 14)

Fifty-six lacquer basins were also found. One example is M1N:5 which has a ramie core, an everted rim, and a flat bottom. The lip of the vessel is covered with geometric designs. On the interior surface near the rim the vessel is decorated by a combination of geometric designs and divine animal-mask designs. The basin interior is dominated by incised divine animal-mask designs and scroll motifs. The exterior surface is covered by scroll designs. Lacquer coating and painted-on color are found on both the internal and external surfaces. The base of the vessel contains the inscriptions “沅廿六” which means “Yuan 26.” This basin has a rim diameter of 27.7 cm (Fig. 15).

Three *ji*-tables 几, long narrow tables or benches, were discovered in the tomb including MIT:39. This example has a wood core beneath black lacquer. It is rectangular and is thicker at either end. Each end has four corset-shaped legs attached to the body of the object by a fully-penetrating tenon attachment. It is 54 cm long and 18.4 cm high.

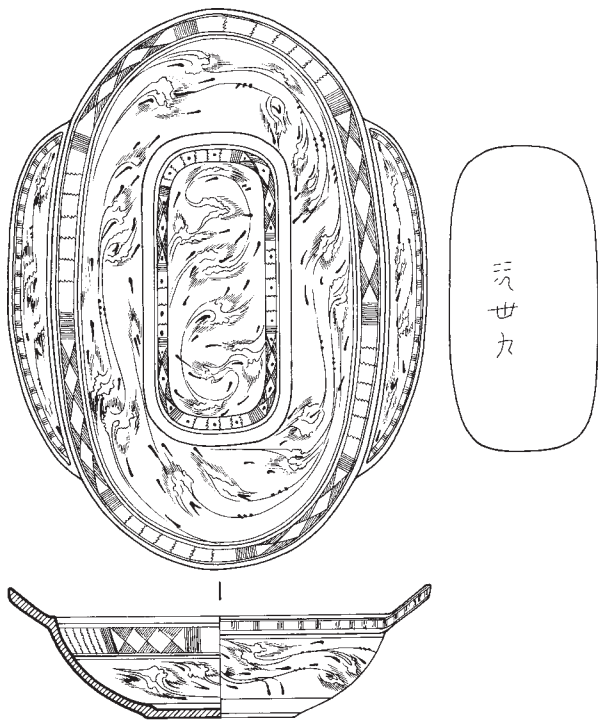


Fig. 13 Lacquer cup with loop handle (M1N:95) (Scale: 1/2)

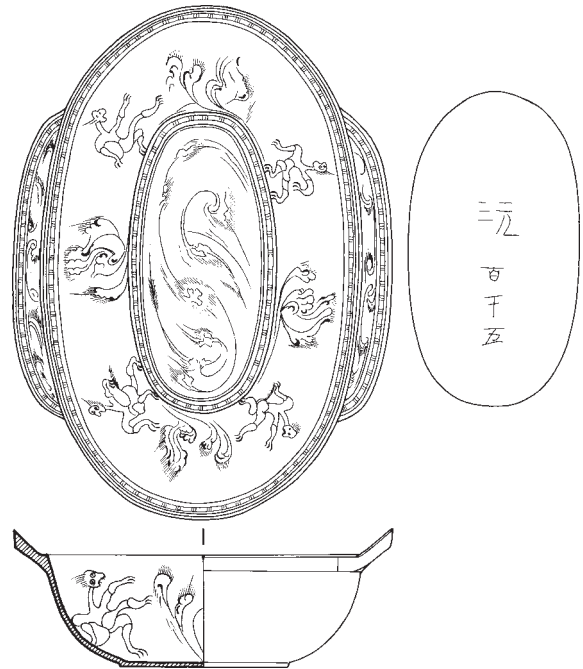


Fig. 14 Lacquer cup with loop handle (M1T:101) (Scale: 1/3)

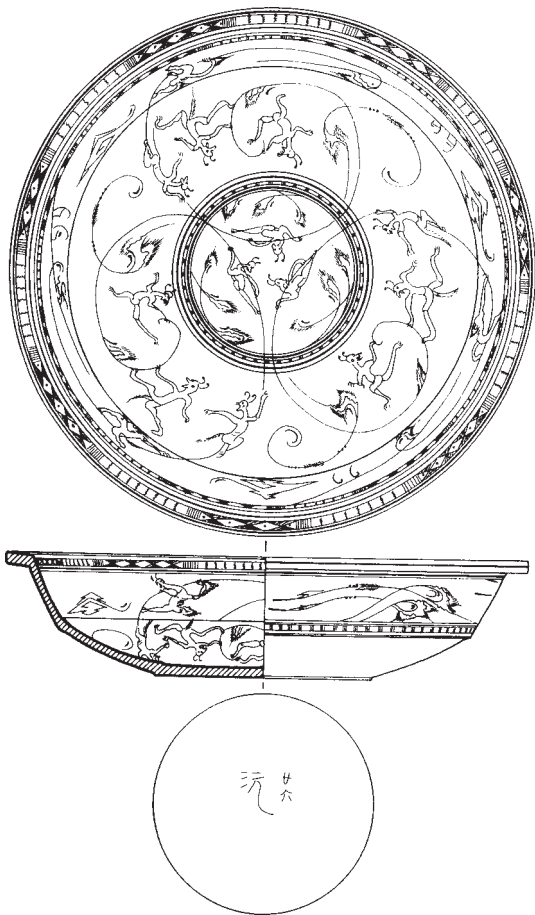


Fig. 15 Lacquer basin (M1N:5) (Scale: 1/4)

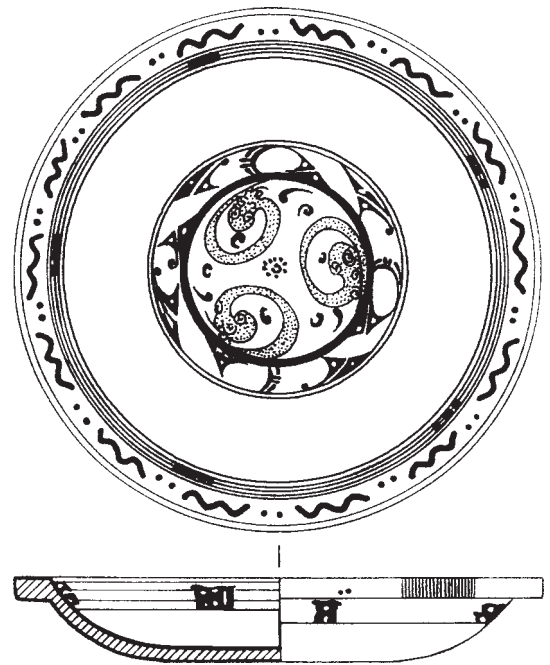


Fig. 16 Lacquer platter (M1N:13) (Scale: 2/5)

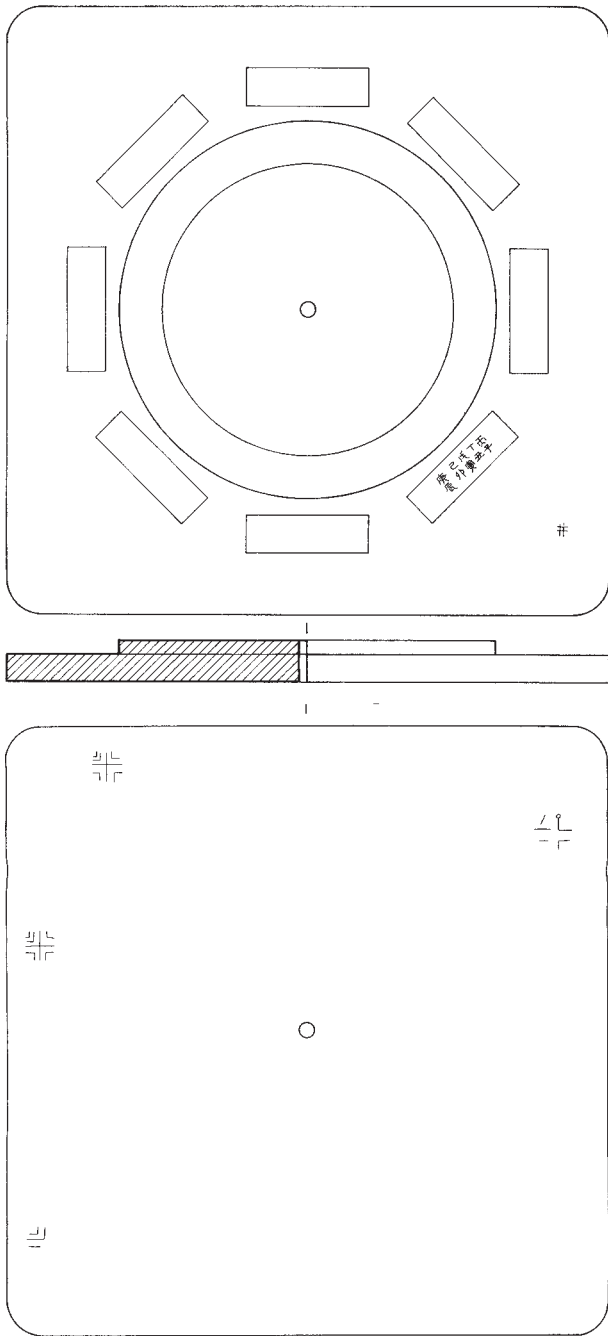


Fig. 17 Lacquer ceremonial platter-set (M1N:29) (Scale: 1/2)

Sixty platters were discovered. One example is M1N:13. This object has a ramie core, everted rim with an inverted lip, a belly with a minimal arch, and a flat bottom. The surface is covered with black lacquer and red color. Geometric designs encircle the lip area and the interior vessel base. Within this circle a divine animal-mask motif is incised. The platter rim diameter is 14 cm and it is 2.8 cm high (Fig. 16).

Two ceremonial platter-sets were found with wood cores and lacquer coatings. Example M1N:29 has black

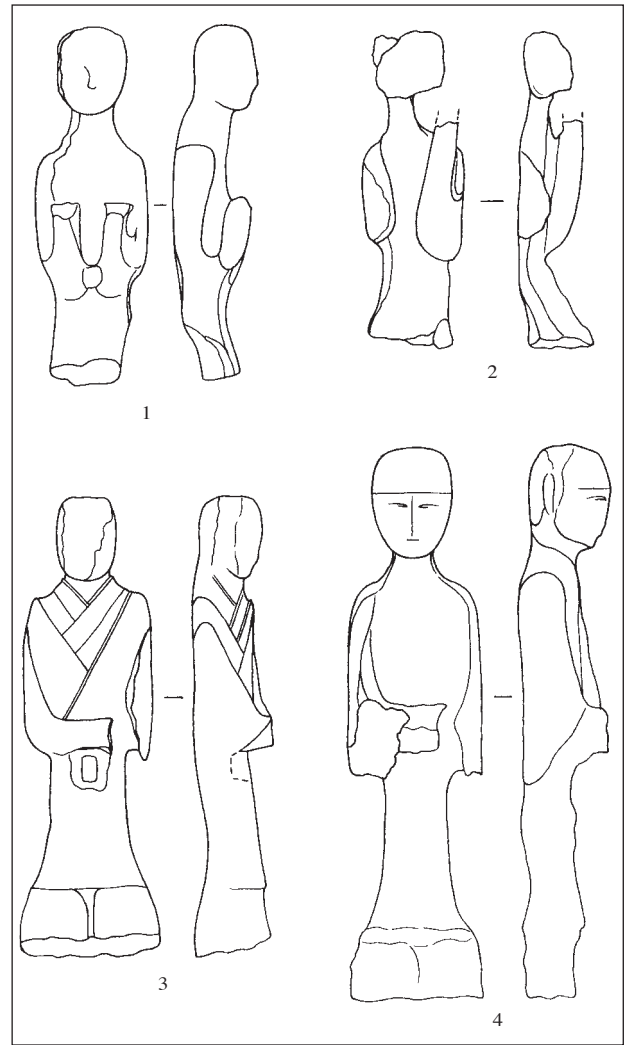


Fig. 18 Lacquer wooden figurines

1, 2. genuflecting figurines (MIT:72, MIT:73) 3, 4. standing figurines (M1NW:18, M1NW:15) (Scales: all 1/8)

lacquer coating the exterior surface. The under-pan of the platter-set is rectangular with rounded corners. The upper turntable is circular. The center of the vessel contains an axial perforation. Eight incised rectangular frames on the under-pan form a circle of designs surrounding the turntable. Vermillion is added to the lines of these frames. Red *ganzhi* 干支 pairs are inscribed within the frames and they are lined up in the proper order. On the lower right interior corner of the under-pan a symbol in the shape of “#” character has been inscribed in red. The reverse side of the under-pan also has inscribed orientation symbols. The under-pan is 19.7 cm wide and 0.9 cm thick. The turntable is 12.3 cm in diameter and 0.45 cm thick (Fig. 17).

Two *an*-tables 案 have been found including example MIT:20, which has a wooden core and is covered



Fig. 19 Lacquer shield (MINW:4)

with black lacquer. The surface of the table, its outer and inner edges, and the outside of the legs are all covered with lacquer designs. The surface is divided by a rectangular lacquer frame. The area outside the frame comprises triangles and arc-shaped motifs made of dispersed, painted, red dots. The area between these is filled in with gray and red whorl designs. Within the frame the designs consist of scroll motifs and compound bird motifs formed of dispersed, painted, red dots. The interstices are filled with gray and red whorl designs and with red dots. The table is 71 cm long and 6 cm tall.

Fifty-six lacquered wooded tomb figurines are also among the excavated objects. Most of these are poorly preserved. They can be divided into genuflecting figurines and standing figurines.

Twenty-two are classified as genuflecting figurines. These were discovered in the head chamber. Based on their overall body positions it seems that these were figurines of musicians. In the case of figurine MIT:72, for example, this is suggested by the orientation of the face, and the lower body and by the position of both hands at the chest. This figurine is 42 cm tall (Fig. 18:1). Similarly, the hair on the front of the head of figurine MIT:73 is behind the head, the face points sideways, and



Fig. 20 The jade seal inscription (M1G:4) (Original size)



Fig. 21 Bronze mirror (M1G:3)

its left arm is raised. This figurine is 37.6 cm tall (Fig. 18:2).

Standing figurines number 34 and most were found in the exterior compartments. Example M1NW:18 is wearing a long robe attached on the right side with expanding sleeves. This figurine is 54 cm tall (Fig. 18:3). The overall composition of a second example, M1NW:15, is clear, but the details of the figurine are poorly preserved. It is 64.8 cm tall (Fig. 18:4).

Additional lacquer objects found in the tomb include four shield shaped objects (Fig. 19), a urinal, five spoons, four pestles, and 20 arrow shafts.

3. Jades and stone objects

This category includes two talc cups with handles. Example MIT:42 is coated with black lacquer on the exterior surface and red on the interior surface. It is 10.2 cm long. Two jade objects were found within the inner coffin. M1G:4 is one example. It is a name stamp made of black “jade” and has a perforated knob on one end. The seal inscription is made by an intaglio inscription that reads “Wu Yang 吴阳.” The seal is 0.8 cm long and 1.5 cm tall (Fig. 20). The other jade object is a *bi*-disk but it is fragmentary.

4. A single bronze object was discovered in the tomb. This object, M1G:3, is a mirror that was discovered in the



Fig. 22 Bamboo slips “Rishu,” “Yanshi Wu Sheng” (part of them) from Han tomb No. 1 at Huxishan in Yuanling (M1N:69-Wu–M1N:69-Wu 9)

coffin. The background pattern on the mirror comprises whorls. The primary decoration is three dragons that are connected rectilinearly. The loop of the mirror is in the form of a three-line decorated button. The mirror has a diameter of 17 cm (Fig. 21).

5. Bamboo slip fragments numbering 1336 have been discovered in the head chamber and northern chamber of the tomb. It is suspected that originally over 800 slips were interred (Fig. 22). The slips can be divided into three types.

(1) *Huangbu* 黄簿 (“Yellow Book”) slips were all found in the head chamber. The contents all relate to the *Huangbu*. A total of 120 slips were found in the chamber. Each is 14 cm long, 0.7 cm wide, and 0.1 cm thick. Two strands of cord were used to connect the slips together. Both ends of each slip are flat. The inscriptions are rendered in Han Dynasty *lishu* style. The *Huangbu* records aspects of the establishment of the administration of the state of Yuanlinghou 沅陵侯 during the early Western Han including the number of officials, the population of officially registered persons, the taxes on parcels of agricultural land, numbers of large livestock (like farm cattle), amount of trees exploited for economic purposes (such as pear trees, plum trees, etc.), changes in the amount of weapons, armor, boat, and soldiers and the reasons for the changes, and information about transportation and group assembly, and about the course of development of roads and traffic and the distance to and from Chang’an 长安.

(2) Slips related to art were discovered in the north chamber. These number 500 and were 27 cm long and 0.8 cm wide. Either end of each slip contains cord-grooves

and the edges are flat. The contents are written in clear or cursive script. They can be divided into “*Yanzhao* 阚昭,” “*Tianyi* 天一,” and “*Meishifang* 美食方.” These also contain superscript notation from “*Yanshi Wusheng* 阎氏五胜,” “*Yanshi Wusheng* 阎氏五生,” which are related to *Yinyang Wuxing* 阴阳五行. These slips provide direct evidence for those studying Han history and cosmology.

(3) The *Meishifang* 美食方 slips discovered in the north chamber are mostly fragmentary or damaged. Over 300 slip fragments were discovered. Complete slips area about 46 cm long and 0.8 cm wide. These slips have three cord grooves. The identifications were made by the analysts. The script on these slips was neat. Based on the contents of these documents, food made of plants and dishes comprising meat and fish were divided into two different categories. The notes on cooking processes for plant-based foods comprise seven slips whereas the prescriptions for meat and fish dish cooking comprise over 148 slips.

IV

The occupant of tomb M1 was a son of King Wu Chen 吴臣 of the Changsha 长沙 area named Wu Yang 吴阳. He was among the first generation of high officials in the Yuanling 沅陵 area, was enfeoffed in 187 BC, and died in the second year of the Houyuan 后元 reign period during the Emperor Wendi 文帝 (162 BC). The excavation of this tomb is very significant for investigations of the Western Han aristocratic burial system, particularly as it pertains to the burial system employed by various subsidiary clans and lineages.

Note: The original report was published in *Wenwu* 文物 2003.1: 36–55 with 38 figures and written by Guo Weimin 郭伟民 and Zhang Chunlong 张春龙. The present version, an abridgment from the original, is prepared by the original authors and English-translated by Rowan Flad 付罗文.