

# The Shaoqingshan Site in Kunshan, Jiangsu

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The Shaoqingshan 少卿山 site, located in northeast Qiandeng 千灯 Township of Kunshan 昆山 in Jiangsu 江苏 Province, is of a man-made earthen mound with altitude of 12.7 meters above the sea level. This site is stratified by layers from top to bottom including stamped earthen-platform of the Spring and Autumn Period, the earthen platform of Liangzhu 良渚 Culture, the pre-Liangzhu cultural deposit, and the Songze 崧泽 cultural deposit.

The deposits underlying the platforms are divided into 11 layers according to the profile on the eastern wall of T2 square unit.

Layer 1: 0.35 meter thick surface horizon.

Layer 2: a modern layer made up of gray-black soil with lots of debris.

Layer 3: 0.1-0.4 meter thick solid cinnamon soil.

Layer 4: 0.15-0.55 meter thick soft gray-black soil with some red-clay crumbs.

Layer 5: 0.2-0.4 meter thick yellow cinnamon soil, the earth in which is a bit hard.

Layer 6: 0.3-0.65 meter thick dense yellow-gray soil with occasional gray-black earth.

Layer 7: 0.2-0.4 meter thick yellow-greenish hard soil as if beaten.

Layer 8: 0.05-0.3 meter thick soft ashen-gray soil.

Layer 9: 0.3 meter thick hard yellow soil.

Layer 10: 0.1-0.35 meter sticky yellow soil.

Layer 11: 0.2-0.5 meter thick hard and comparatively pure yellow soil.

Layer 3 to layer 6 contains early Liangzhu cultural deposit while layer 7 to layer 11 belongs to occupational layers of Songze culture.

## I. Cultural Deposits

The early village of Liangzhu culture consisting of the cemetery and inhabitation quarters.

1. The cemetery area is in the south of Shaoqingshan. Six rectangular or trapezoid earthen pit tombs were excavated. It was found that tomb occupants were laid in extended supine position with their heads facing south. Ash traces of wooden planks on the bottom of tomb pits were observed, indicating that wooden coffins had been used in the burials (Figures 1;2). In most tombs grave goods include pottery cups (Figures 3-4), stone axes, semi-annular jade pendants, bracelets, beads and other jade wares. Following are some descriptions of these objects.

A black pottery cup (M4:1) with a contracted mouth and petal-shaped legs. The arc-shaped belly of this cup is decorated with four groups of hollow bowstring patterns. The whole body of the cup is covered by cinnabar. Inside the cup remained a bone spoon. The rim diameter of this cup is 8 cm, the bottom diameter 3 cm and the height 12 cm (Figure 4).

A trapezoid stone axe (M4:6) was made from a gray-greenish rock, and polished after being chiseled. The axe tapers from the flat back to the curved edge. Some parts of the sharp cutting edge are missing. The length of this axe is 11.9 cm, the width 10 cm and the diameter of aperture 1.7 cm (Figure 5).

A semi-annular yellow-and-white agate pendant (M4:4) was recovered under the neck of the tomb occupant. The edge is polished as round and a pair of elephant nostrils decorates either end of



Figure 1. Plan of M1



Figure 2. Plan of M4

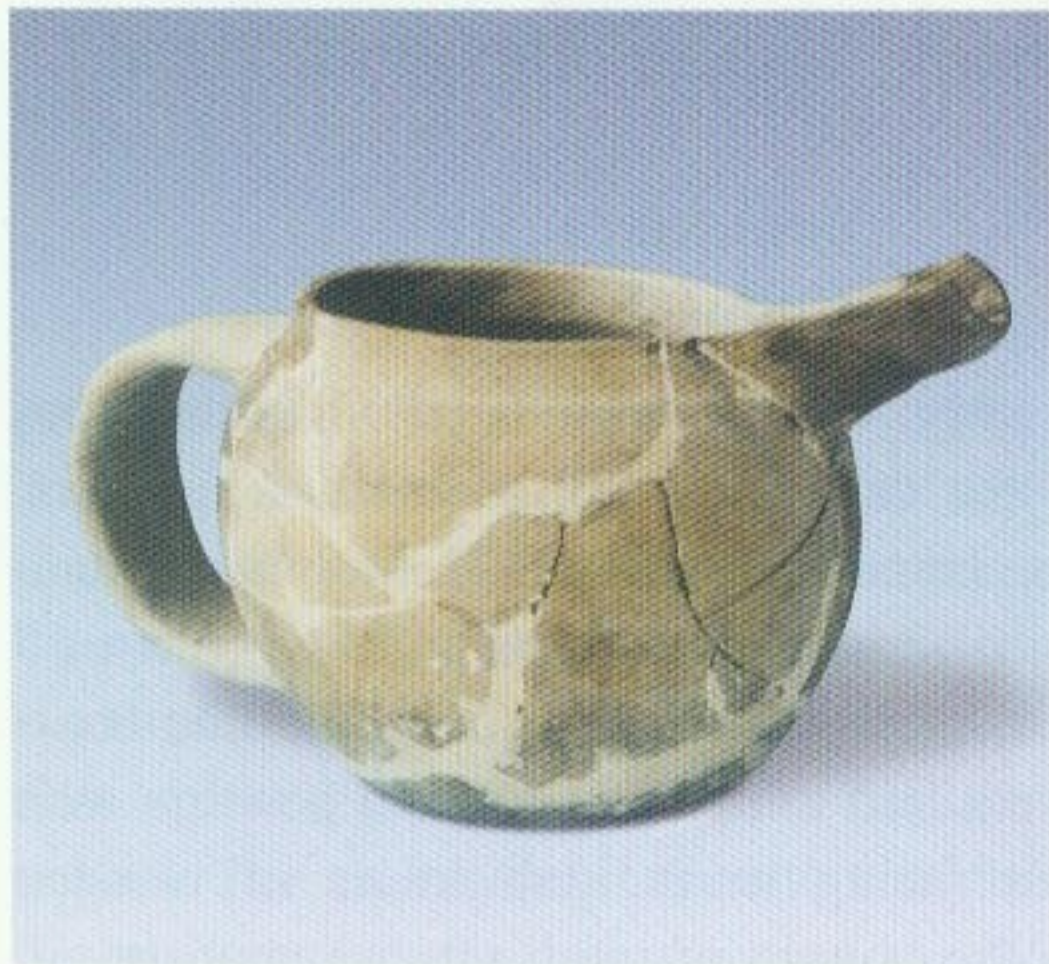


Figure 3. Pottery cup (M4:5)

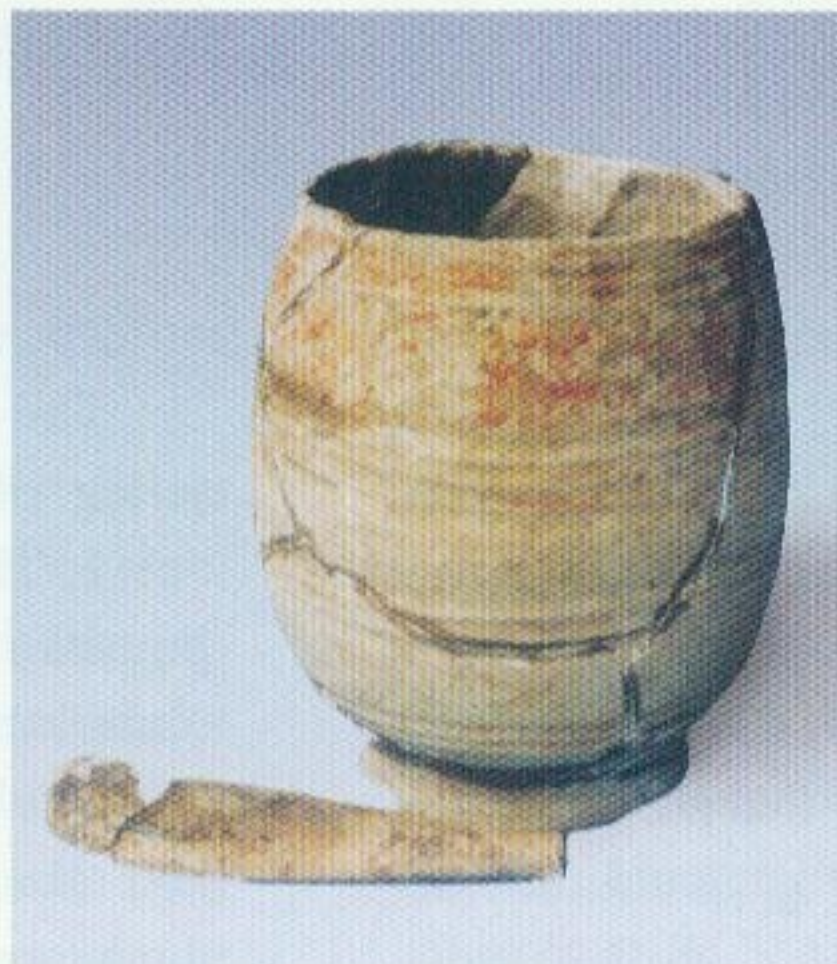


Figure 4. Pottery cup and spoon (M4:1)



Figure 5. Stone axe (M4:6)

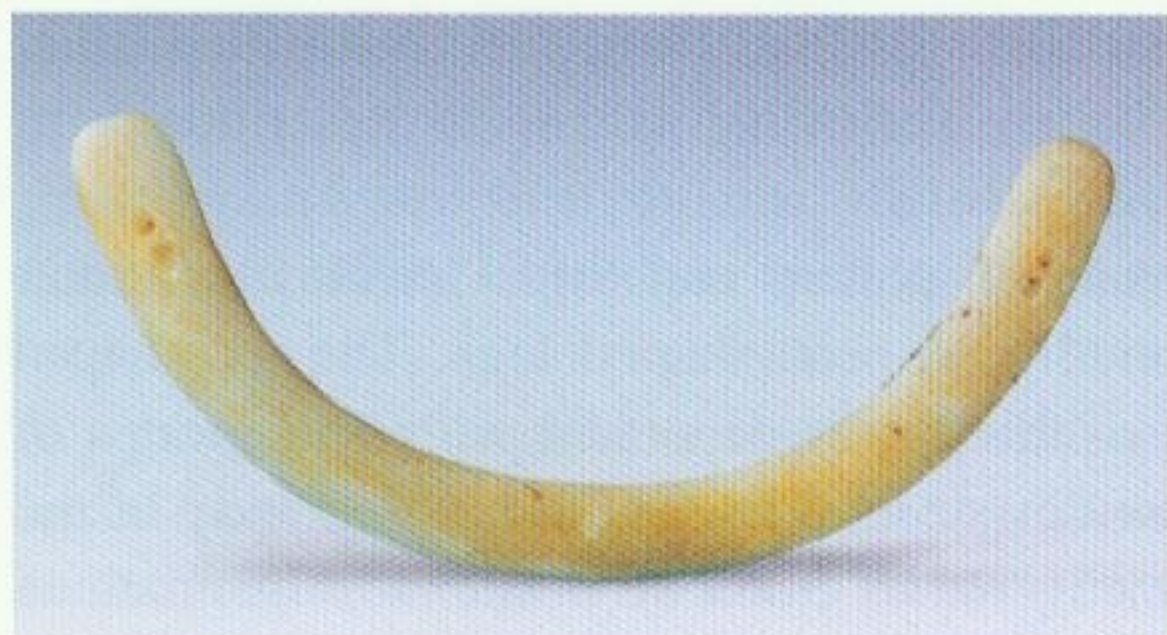


Figure 6. Agate pendant (M4:4)



Figure 7. Jade bracelet (M1:2)



Figure 8. Jade bracelet (M1:4)

the pendant. The diameter of it is 14.5 cm while the height is 6.5 cm (Figure 6).

The occupant of tomb M1 had a jade bracelet on either wrist. One of these bracelet (M1:2) found on the right wrist is of deep green, and broken into four fragments. One can still see angular surface on the outer circle and heavily rounded edges or corners on the inner circle. The outer diameter is 8.6 cm and the inner diameter is 5.6 cm (Figure 7). The bracelet on the left wrist (M1:4) is of yellow

low and white. Its edges or corners on the bracelet were heavily rounded. A hole was drilled on either fracture. The outer diameter is 10 cm while the inner diameter is 6.2 cm (Figure 8).

In addition to the above-mentioned objects, a jade bead (M1:1) was also discovered inside the mouth of the body from the tomb M1, glued to the molar teeth. The profile of the bead is triangular and 1.4 cm in length and 0.9 cm in height.

2. The living quarters in the north of Shao-

qingshan site cover a fairly large area. A nearly complete house (F1) was discovered from layer 9 in T3. Since only 12 square meters were excavated so far and part of the house remain unexposed to the north of the test pit, the excavators believed that the house may be rectangular. As for the walls, two parallel reeds were used as the warp and five parallel reeds were used as the weft and the weaving of these reeds formed the framework of the wall. Mud was then applied to the interior and exterior of the framework. On each of the walls was smeared 5-6 cm thick clay and rice-straw mixture. According to fired-clay particles, one side of the wall is flat while the other side of the wall is impressed with traces of reed or bamboo (Figure 9). In view of the remnants on such walls are about 15-20 cm thick.

## II. The Earthen Platform of Liangzhu Culture and Related Features

The original platform was 40 meters long from south to north. From west to east it runs about the same length as the present Shaoqingshan site. The platform is about 6 meters high, containing about 10,000 cubic meters of earth. Such amount of earth were probably transported from elsewhere, suggesting that construction of this platform surely required a great degree of manpower. It indicates that the Liangzhu society had institutionalized at fairly high-level. One burial was unearthed in the south of the platform, whose grave goods include 19 jade objects including *cong* tubes, *bi* discs, axes and bracelets. The richness of exotic grave goods indicates that the occupant of this tomb is of higher social rank instead of being a commoner.

A number of pits were also discovered in the platform. Some jade wares were discovered from these pits. For example, from burial M9, 7 fragmentary *bi* discs and 4 fragmentary axes were retrieved in the backfill. In H4 only some jade beads were retrieved. Some pits contained no artifacts but some fired-clay particles and black-and-gray earth. In the northern end of the platform 3 pits containing animal skeletons or human skulls (H1, H2 and H5) were excavated. The animal skeletons in H1 and H2 and the complete skull in H5 are all facing the platform. Obviously these features have something to do with the sacrificial rites performed on the platform. According to historical records



Figure 9. Impressed traces of reed or bamboo on the wall

such as *Book of Rites* 《礼记·郊特牲》 the early wide-spread field cult evolved into sacrificial rites to God of the Earth. One method for offering sacrificial rites is as the following: constructing a high platform made up of earth as the origin of earth for receiving sacrificial offerings from late offspring. Since some ancestors were also buried in this platform, the platform also served as the site for offering sacrifices to ancestors. Though the sacrificial rites and the worshipped beings differ, both rites employed jade ware as the offering objects. *Bi* disc is especially a remarkable item almost employed in every sacrificial rite. Another method for offering sacrifices was to kill a pig, an ox and a sheep (the combination of these three animals is called *tailao* 太牢) or a sheep or a chicken and bury the animal sacrifice in a pit dug in the platform. The beads and *bi* and other jade wares along with complete animal skeletons retrieved from pits in the platform may corroborate with ancient re-

cords. This platform served both as the cemetery and the site for offering sacrifices to God of the Earth.

Apart from that, large quantities of phytolith of rice were discovered from this ancient village settlement. Specialists have pointed out that if one gram of earth contains more than 5,000 phytolith of rice, the soil may have been field of rice. From deposit of F1 house structure, the number of rice phytolith within one gram of earth exceeds 10,000, suggesting that the clay inside the house may contain ash of rice straw or the clay may be of soils transported from rice field. Whatever the causes are, this indicates that in the early period of Liang-

zhu Culture, the people had not only domesticated wild rice but also grown it as a common practice.

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