

Excavation on the Ming Period Site at Fushujie Street in Xuzhou City

Xuzhou Museum

Keywords: Xuzhou Ming period site

In late April 2000, during a capital construction, a site of the Ming period was discovered in the area north of the Pengcheng 彭城 Square and south of Fushujie 富庶街 Street downtown, Xuzhou 徐州 City, at a depth of 4.5 m beneath the ground. Hearing the news, the Xuzhou Municipal Commission for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments and the Xuzhou Municipal Museum carried out a rescuing excavation in early May. In the excavated area of above 3,100 sq m, they revealed house-foundations, roads, an ash-pit and a well, brought to light more than 300 intact artifacts, and found nearly 20,000 pottery and porcelain shards.

I. Stratigraphic Deposits

On the site 4.5 m in depth from the ground, the deposits fall into four layers. The first layer is disturbed vestiges of current buildings; the second belongs to the late Ming and the Qing periods; the third is formed by floods of the Yellow River from its old course; and the fourth is debris of late Ming houses, which are superimposed upon house-foundations of the Ming period.

The earlier deposits underlying the Ming remains contain various ceramics, including white-glazed porcelain pots, lotus-flower design tile-ends, celadon jars, cloud design tile-ends, flat and cylindrical tiles, pictorial

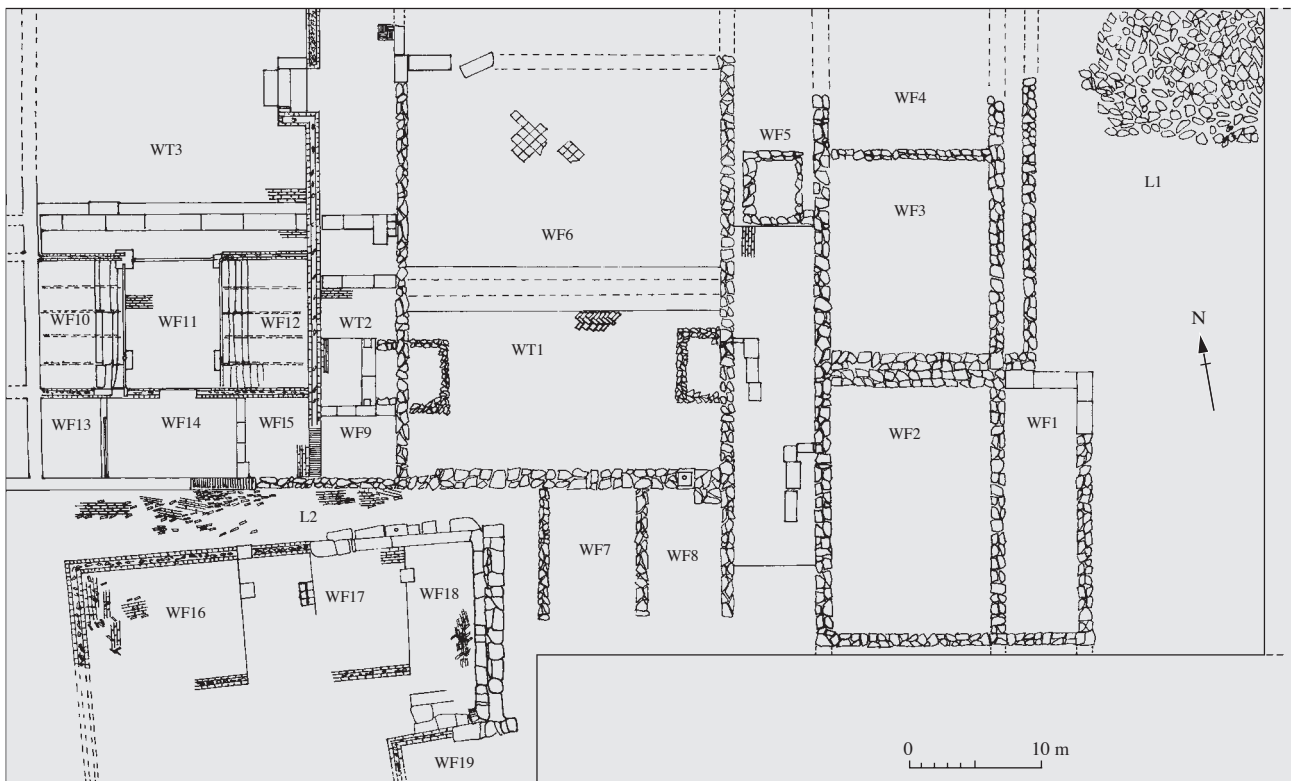


Fig. 1 Plan of House-foundations in the western area

stones, and pottery *li*-tripods. These finds will be reported in another account.

II. Vestiges

1. The house-foundations are concentrated in the west and south of the site, all belonging to brick-and-stone buildings. There are more than 40 remaining houses and several small yards, passages and corridors. They can be divided into the eastern area and the western one according to their location, layout and structure.

The western area of house-foundations lies in the southwest of the site. The excavated part measures 40 m

in length from the west to the east, 24–29 m in width from the north to the south, covering 1,100 sq m of approximately 20 houses (Figs. 1–4). These remains are divided into two groups by a L-shaped road (L2). The northern-and-eastern group is rather intricate in structure. It consists of 15 houses, which forms a building complex with the WF6 as the center. The other group is in the southwest of the western area. Excavation covered only its three houses, the remains of which include square stone plinths, brick window sills, stone steps and brick pavements. Their nature and use can not be determined owing to the lack of an entirely-revealed layout.



Fig. 2 House-foundations in the western area (photo from west to east)



Fig. 3 Western part of house-foundations in the western area (photo from north to south)



Fig. 4 Western part of house-foundations in the western area (photo from north to south)

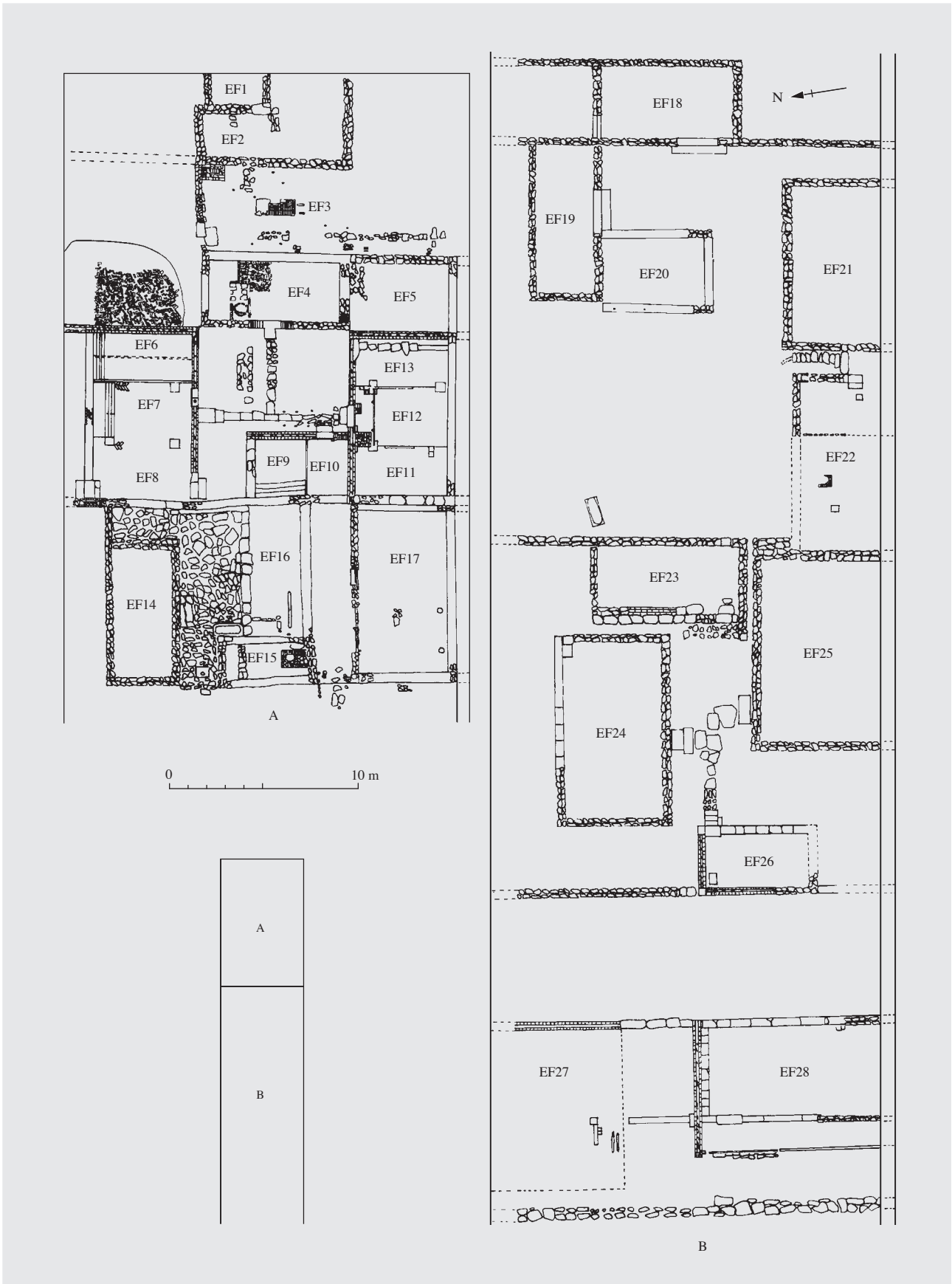


Fig. 5 Plan of house-foundations in the eastern area

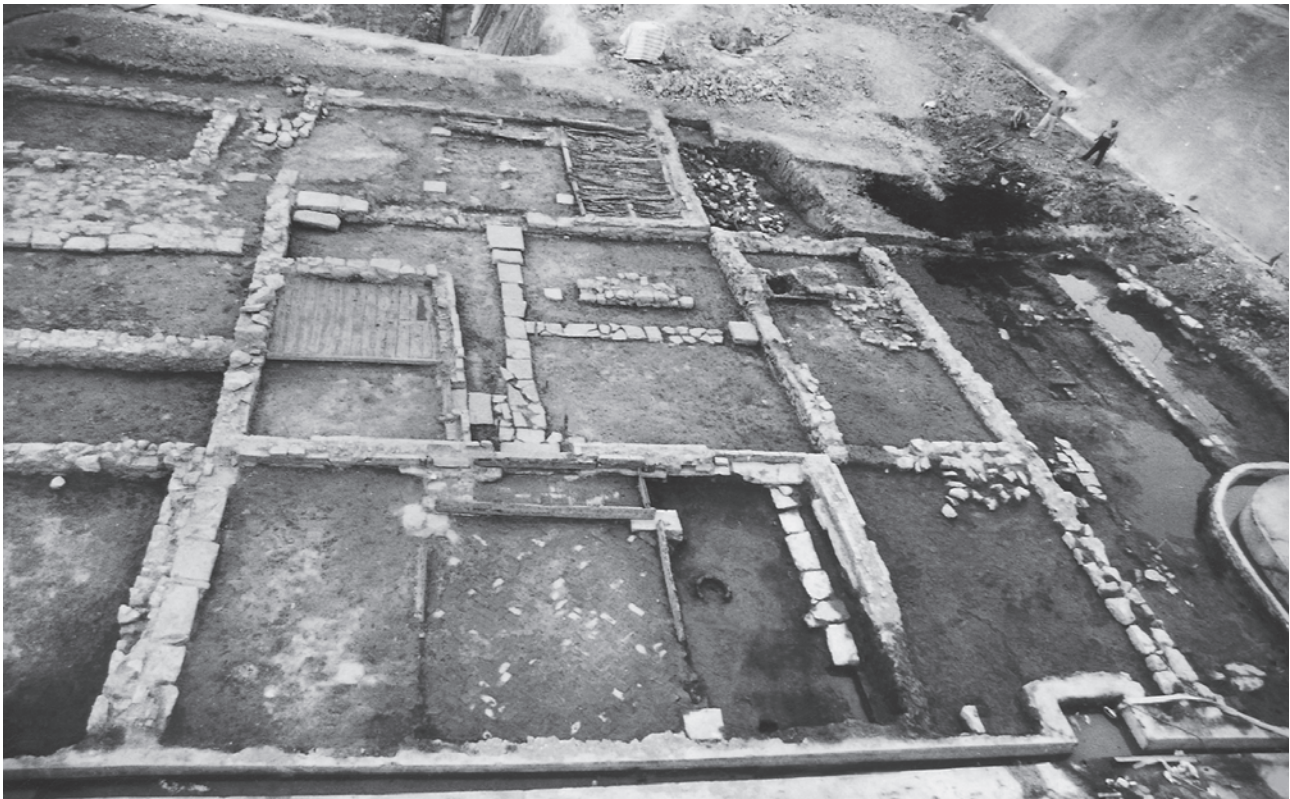


Fig. 6 Eastern part of house-foundations in the eastern area (photo from south to north)

The eastern area occupies 2,000 sq m with the revealed foundations representing above 20 houses. As excavation was carried out here for a longer time, the remains are better known in detail (Fig. 5). The largest group of house-foundations is in the eastern part of this area. It consists of 11 remaining houses (EF3–EF13) and a small yard (Fig. 6). They are centered on the yard and extend towards the north, east and south.

2. Roads (L) were excavated three.

3. Well (J1) was discovered one. It is 1.1 m in mouth diameter and 4.8 m in remaining depth. The mouth is broken. The whole well looks roughly like a pocket, with the walls built of irregular stones. The unearthed objects are mainly utensils for daily use, including pottery basins, jars, vases, porcelain bowls and dishes, iron weights, tin pots and wooden barrels for drawing water.

4. The ash-pit (H1) lies in the northeast of the site, stretching from northeast to southwest. It is rather large in size, measuring about 50 m in remaining length, 10–20 m in width, and 6–7 m in depth. The finds in it are heaped in clear layers, each containing a unitary variety of object. The porcelain from the lower layer is celadon-glazed ware; that from the middle, white-glazed; and that from the upper, a large quantity of blue-and-white products and shards. Animal bones are largely unearthed

from the southwest of the pit. This must have been a rubbish pit.

III. Description of Objects

1. Bronzes consisting of two mirrors, two *suona*-horns, two ladles, a pair of scissors, an awl, a lock, an ornament and a “*Wanli Tong Bao* 万历通宝” coin.

The mirrors are imitative of the Han TLV mirror. One (WF12:1) is decorated with cloud design in the periphery, six-piece chess board design, auspicious animals and nipple pattern in the middle, and a four-lobed medallion in the central square, around the globular knob. The diameter is 13.6 cm (Figs. 7; 9:1). The other (EF9:1) is 8 cm in diameter (Figs. 8; 9:2). The *suona*-horns are unearthed from the southern corridor of the western house-foundation area (WT3). They are identical in shape. The pipe is made of two overlapping tubes and can be changed in length at will. The thinner tube is linked with the mouthpiece while the thicker one is ended with a bell. The whole instrument measures 65 and 120 cm at the minimum and maximum lengths respectively (Fig. 10).

2. Tin utensils comprise a wine-warming pot, a *ding*-tripod, a container, a ladle, two pots and six candlesticks. The wine-warming pot (WT3:11) has a small mouth,



Fig. 7 Bronze mirror (WF12:1)



Fig. 8 Bronze mirror (EF9:1)

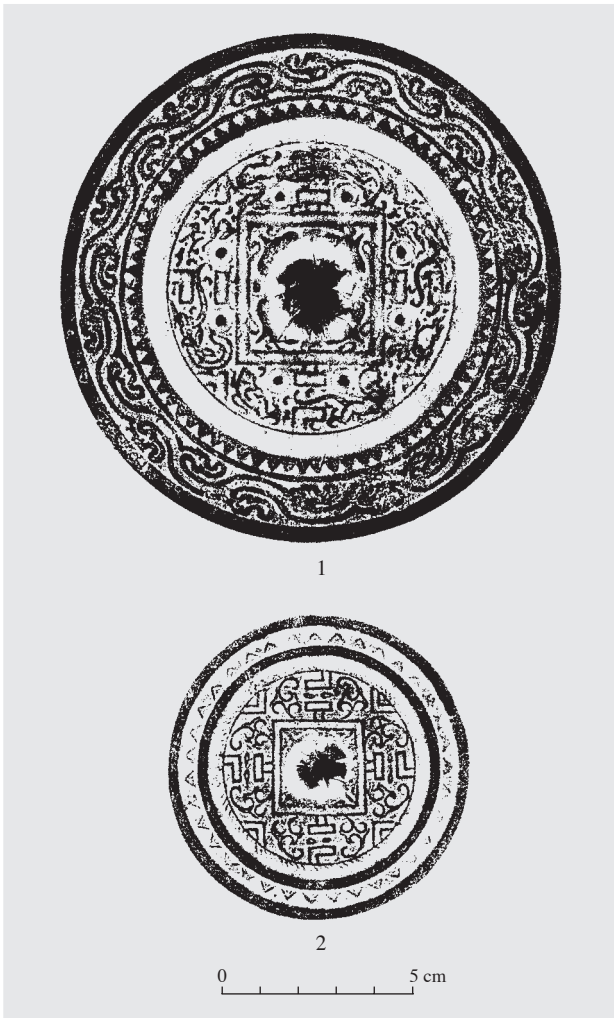


Fig. 9 Rubbings of the unearthed bronze mirrors
1. WF12:1 2. EF9:1



Fig. 10 Suona-horns (WT3:1 and 2)

swelling shoulder, slanting belly and flat base. Inside the belly is a copper cylinder with the lower part turning sidewise and leading to the arched outlet in the lower part of the pot belly. The pot body has a feed and a spout on the opposite sides. On the shoulder are four copper loops and two overtop handles. At the spout end and the opening in the lower belly, two copper plates are inlaid on the tin-made pot-body. The vessel is peculiar in shape and must have been used for warming wine with the central cylinder containing burning charcoal and the

opening in the lower part functioning as an air vent cum charcoal ash outlet. The copper cylinder is slightly dark red in color, which results obviously from long burning and evidences the vessel as a practical object. The whole utensil is 20.3 cm in height and 8.4 cm in mouth diameter (Fig. 11:2).

3. Iron ware includes a griddle, three mortars (Fig. 12), three weights, two small bells, two arrowheads, three saws, two spades, two keys, two knives, a hammer, a chisel, a file, a wedge, a pair of scissors, a fork, a fire

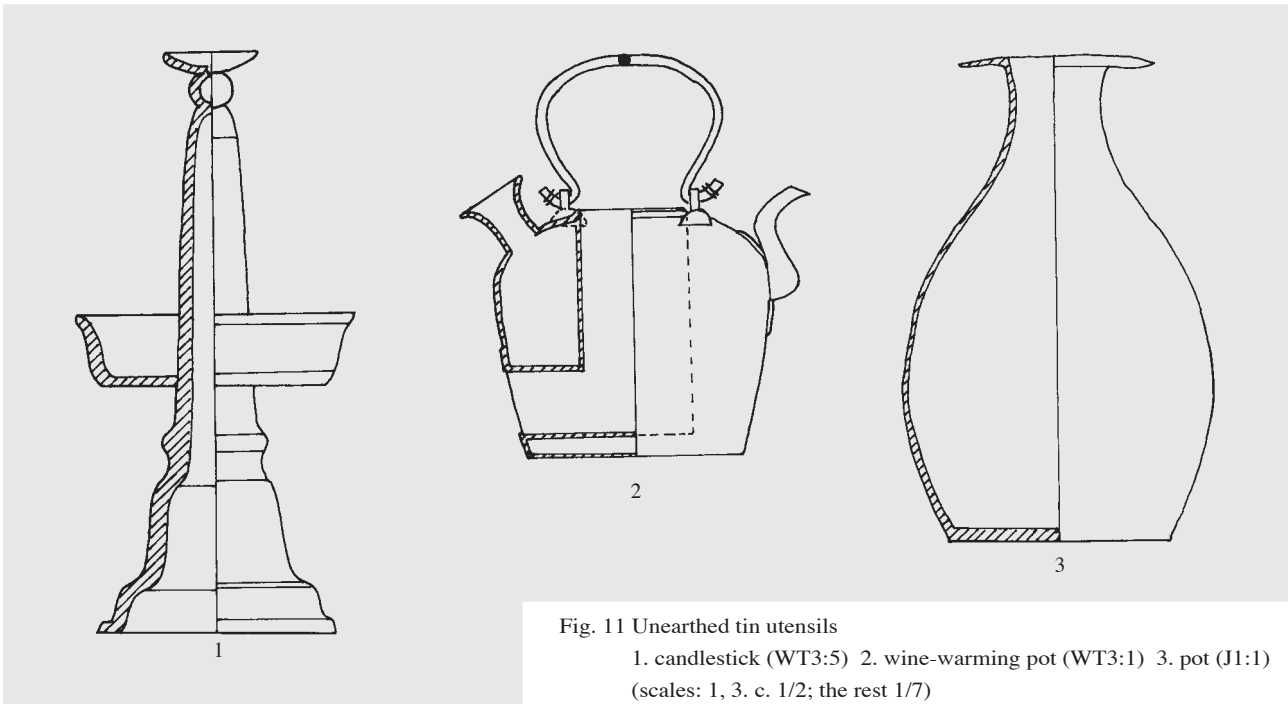


Fig. 12 Iron mortar (EF4:1)



Fig. 13 Celadon-glazed goblet (H1:1)

grate, a hoe, a hook, and a pair of chopsticks.

4. Porcelain is the largest group in number. According to the glaze coating it can be divided into celadon-glazed, blue-and-white, greenish-white-glazed and miscellaneous wares.

The glaze color of celadon-glazed ware is varied in darkness. Typologically there are the *yi*-wide-mouthed

vessel, jar, etc., numbering two goblets (Fig. 13), five saucers, six dishes, ten bowls and a *yi*. They are mostly unearthed from the lower layer of the ash-pit.

Blue-and-white ware is the largest in quantity, and is unearthed from the upper layer of the ash-pit, house-foundations and the well. More than 60 pieces are intact or restorable. They belong to the bowl, saucer, cup, *gui*-

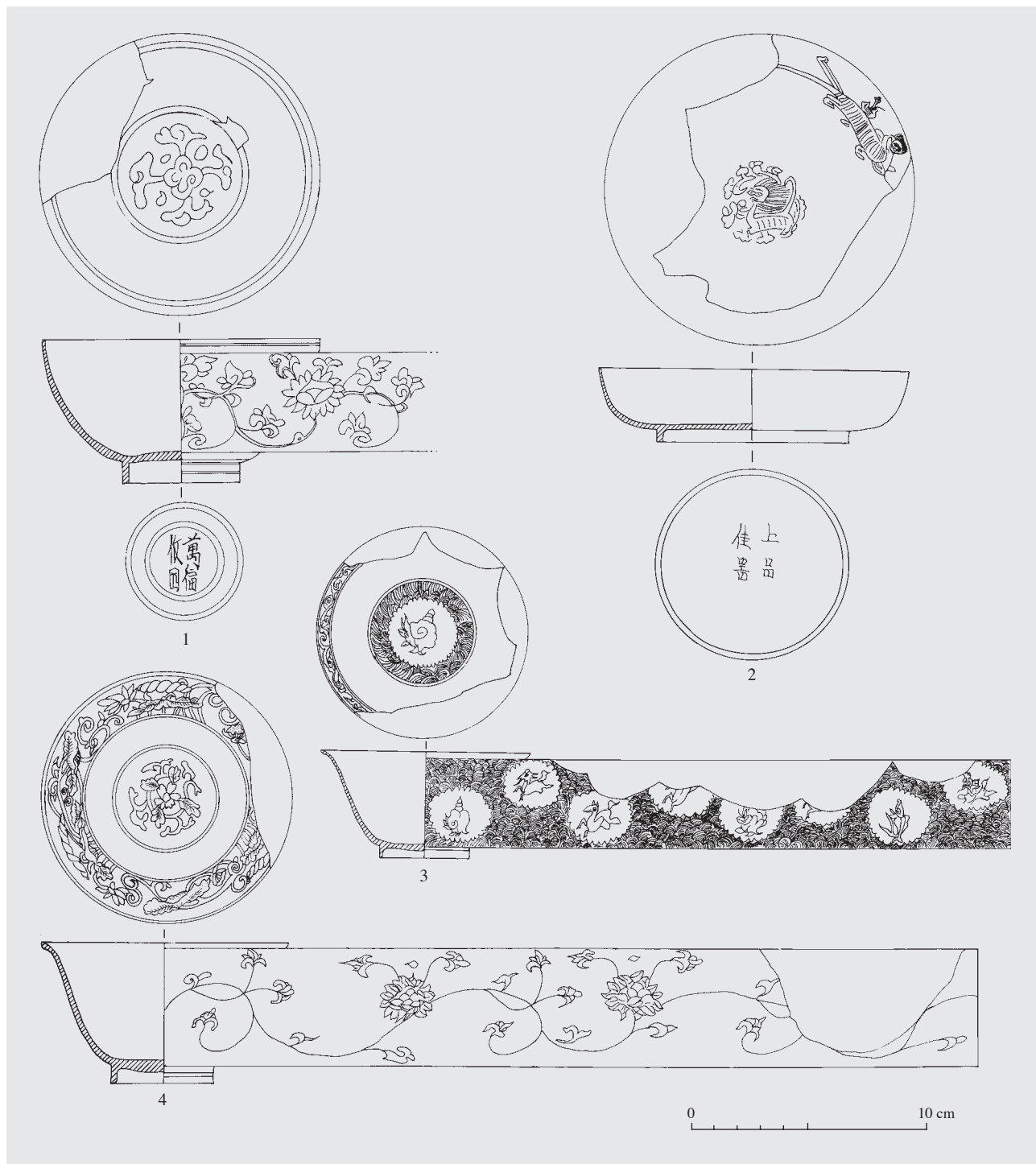


Fig. 14 Unearthed blue-and-white porcelain
1, 3, 4. bowls (EF3:1, EF3:2, EF3:3) 2. saucer (H1:43)



Fig. 15 Blue-and-white bowl (EF3:1)



Fig. 16 Blue-and-white bowl (EF3:2)



Fig. 17 Blue-and-white bowl (EF3:3)

turen, pot and so on. The earlier products are coarse in body texture and gloomy in glaze color, and are largely decorated with snail, orchid and peony design and the characters “Fu” (福 Happiness) and “Shou” (寿 Longevity). The later articles are finer, brighter, and wide-varied in decoration, bearing floral design, human and animal figures, and landscapes, all full of vividness. On the bases are diverse inscriptions, including reign-titles, auspicious words and workshop names, such as “Made in Zhengde Reign 正德年制,” “Made in Chenghua Reign, Great Ming 大明成化年制,” “Made in Great Ming 大明年制,” “Made in Xuande Reign, Great Ming 大明宣德年制,” “Wan Fu You Tong” (万福攸同 Happiness for all), “Yu Tang Jia Qi (玉堂佳器 Excellent decoration for the splendid hall), “Shang Pin Jiao Qi” (上品佳器 Excellent decoration of first grade), “Fu Shou Kang Ning” (福寿康宁 Happiness, longevity, good health and peacefulness), and “Bai Yu Zhai” (白玉斋 Baiyu Workshop).

Bowls number 30 pieces altogether. EF3:1 is decorated with interlocking lotus-flower design on the outer wall, two circles of line patterns along both the outer and inner rims, and cloud design on the bottom. The base inscription reads “Wan Fu You Tong.” The mouth diameter is 12 cm (Figs. 14:1 and 15). EF3:2 bears wave pattern and animal figures on the outer wall. The inner rim is adorned with a circle of cloud pattern, and the bottom with wave and conch design. The mouth diameter is 18 cm (Figs. 14:2 and 16) EF3:3 is decorated with sparse interlocking lotus-flower design on the outer wall and floral design on the inside. The base is inscribed with “Made in Xuande Reign, Great Ming.” The mouth diameter is 10.4 cm (Figs 14:3 and 17).

Dishes have 10 pieces. EF3:6 is decorated with sparse floral design on the outer wall, lotus design on the inner wall, and aquatic bird and lotus-leaf design on the bottom. The mouth diameter is 10 cm (Figs 18:1 and 19). H1:43 has a plain outer wall. Its decorations consist of a dragon design on the inner wall and a hydra-tiger design on the bottom. On the base is the inscription “Shang Pin Jia Qi.” The mouth is diameter 13.5 cm (Fig. 14:2). XF-Cai:22 bears an interlocking peony design, a floral pattern and a deer, bird and floral design on the outer wall, the inner one and the bottom respectively. The base has a seal impression. The mouth diameter is 13.4 cm (Fig. 18:2).

Cups have six. WF12:2 is drawn with a cowboy, a traveler, trees and flowers. The mouth diameter is 7 cm (Figs. 18:4; 20). H1:44 is adorned with a landscape on the

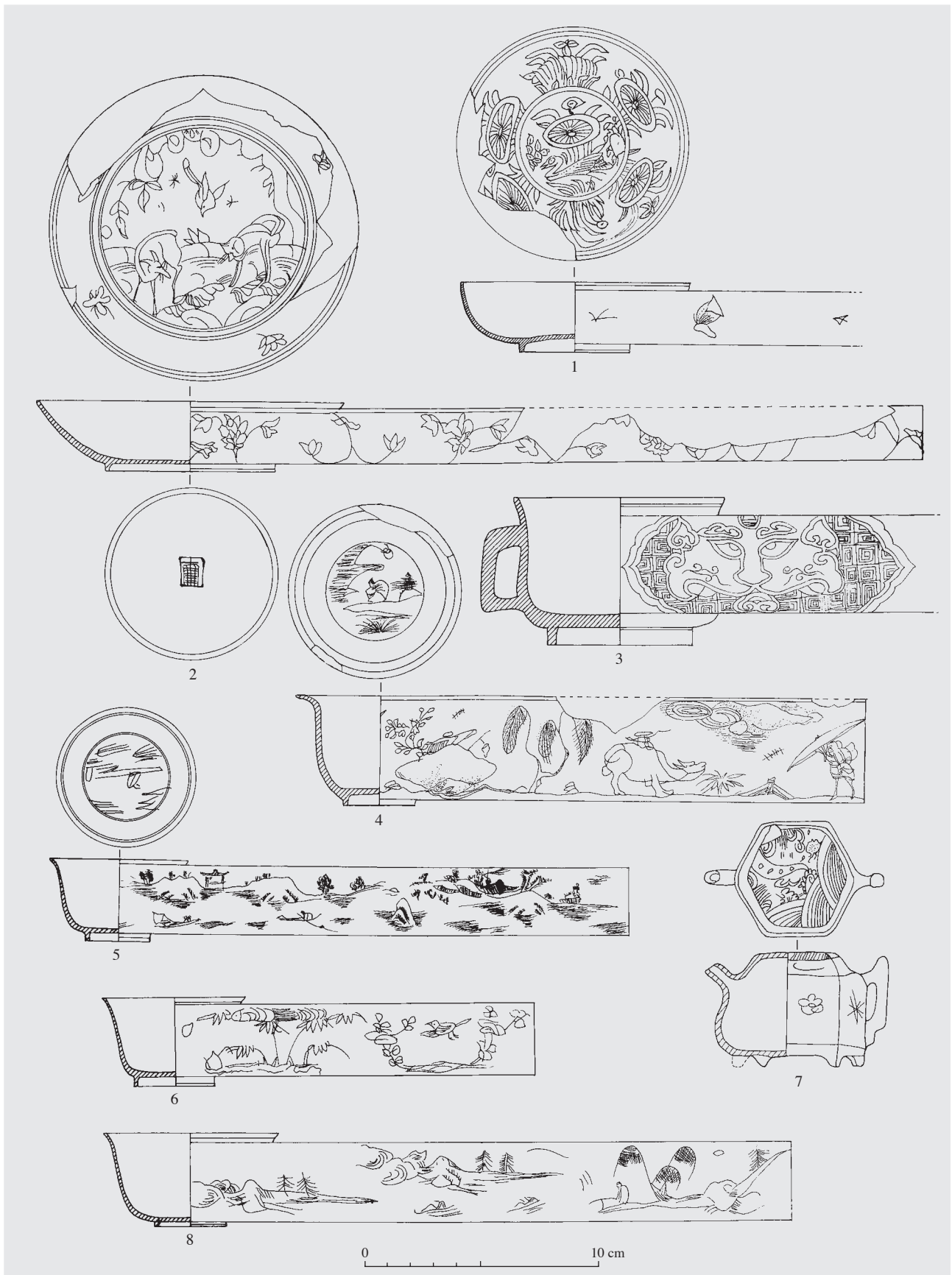


Fig. 18 Unearthened blue-and-white porcelain

1, 2. saucers (EF3:6, XF-Cai:22) 3. *gui-tureen* (EF12:3) 4–6, 8. cups (WF12:2, H1:44, EF3:16, EF3:20) 7. pot (XF-Cai:23)

outer side. The mouth diameter is 6 cm (Fig. 18:5). EF3:16 is depicted with blossoms and birds (Figs. 18:6 and 21), and EF3:20, with a fisherman in a landscape (Fig. 18:8).

Gui-tureen has one piece (EF12:3). It is an imitation of a bronze vessel with two symmetric dragon-shaped handles on the upper part and two symmetric *taotie*-animal mask design on the belly. The mouth diameter is 10.6 cm (Figs. 18:3 and 22).

Pot has one piece (XF-Cai:23). It has a hexagonal body, no mouth but a small perforation instead, six short legs, a flat base, a handle and a spout on the opposite side. The body is decorated with cloud pattern on the upper part and lotus-flower and floral design on the lower. The height is 5.2 cm (Fig. 18:7).

White-glazed porcelain was unearthed from the ash-pit, the well and house-foundations. The products from the middle layer of the ash-pit are greatest in number. The glaze coatings are white, greenish-white or grayish-white. In type there are the cup, saucer and incense burner.

Incense burner has one piece (XF-Cai:24). It has a slightly constricted mouth and a cylindrical body with three short legs beneath the flat base. The glaze coating is grayish-white and has rather sparse crackles. The mouth diameter is 9.4 cm (Fig. 23:3). The rest of finds are a cup and two saucers.

Miscellaneous wares include three white-grounded black-glazed vessels (a jar, a basin, and a bowl), a brown-



Fig. 19 Blue-and-white saucer (EF3:6)



Fig. 20 Blue-and-white cup (WF12:2)



Fig. 21 Blue-and-white cup (EF3:16)



Fig. 22 Blue-and-white *gui-tureen* (EF12:3)



Fig. 23 Greenish-yellow-glazed porcelain incense burner (XF-Cai:36)

glazed bowl, a light-blue-glazed bowl, and a dark-blue-glazed bowl. A fragment of bowl-base coated with black glaze on the white ground also belongs to this class.

5. Pottery includes glazed and glaze-less articles and building materials.

The glazed pottery fall into greenish-yellow-, brown-, black- and brownish-yellow-glazed wares.

The greenish-yellow-glazed pottery embraces a basin, a lamp, four dishes, and 20 small bowls. Besides, there is an incense burner (XF-Cai:30) with nipple and banana-leaf pattern on the outer wall, peony and coiled dragon design in high relief on the belly and three hoof-shaped legs beneath the base. The mouth diameter is 11.6 cm (Fig. 23).

The brown-glazed ware embraces a double-looped spouted jar, five mugs and a brownish-yellow-glazed double-looped pot.

The black-glazed ware comprises a double-looped jar, a four-looped pot and a lamp (XF-Cai:38). The last article has a wide mouth, a curved belly and a flat bottom. The body is a double-layered bowl with a hollow interior between the two layers. On one side of the rim is an opening for water poured in for lowering the heat of the lamp body and oil and decreasing the evaporation of the oil. On the other side is a spout-shaped groove for a wick to put in. The rim is decorated with a circle of nipple design on the edge and sculptured design near the water-pouring opening. This type of object is called oil-saving lamp among common folks. The mouth diameter is 8.5 cm (Fig. 24).

In addition, there is a jar, a pot and a vase coated with brown glaze.



Fig. 24 Black-glazed porcelain lamp (XF-Cai:38)

The glaze-less pottery comprises a single-handed jar, a Chinese chess piece *shi*-bodyguard, a whistle, and two tomb-figurines' heads. The whistle (XF-Cai:40) has an official's head on the front, a hole on the lower side and an air outlet at the back. The height is 5.5 cm (Fig. 25).

Building materials comprise bricks, drip-tiles and *chiwen*-ridge ornaments. The small bricks vary in size. The square ones measure $28 \times 28 \times 6$ cm; and the large-sized ones, $45 \times 22 \times 11.5$ cm. The decorations of drip-tiles include the chrysanthemum, peony, and fish designs.

Chiwen-ridge ornaments have two pieces. Both of them are unearthed from the western side of house-foundation WF6 in the western area. The height of WF6: 4 is 44 cm (Fig. 26).

6. Stone Objects embrace a lion, a broken ink slab, a chime stone, an incense burner, an ox-nose stone, a roller, a grinding trough, and two mortars.

The lion (EF28:1) is sculptured on a drum-shaped base. It represents the animal crouching on its rear legs with tail raised, the front legs stepping on the drum and a ball respectively. The neck is tied with a ribbon and a ball, the head turns to the left, and the eyes are wide open. The height is 40 cm (Fig. 27).

The incense burner (XF-Cai:52) is a rectangle 9.6 cm long, 3.2 cm wide and 8.5 cm high. The central part is shaped like an offering table resembling a high base with decorated moldings. The upper part has three perforations, the side sections both have six holes, and the table has four openings. In the vertical view of the upper part are two round hollows and a rectangular groove (Fig. 28).



Fig. 25 Glaze-less pottery whistle (XF-Cai:40)



Fig. 26 Stone chiwen ridge ornament (WF6:4)



Fig. 27 Stone lion (EF28:1)



Fig. 28 Stone incense-burner (XF-Cai:52)

IV. Conclusions

1. Date of the site

The unearthed objects are great in variety and number, especially the porcelain articles. Judging from the chronological features of the porcelain, the final limiting point of the site can be dated to the late Ming period. An iron mortar bears the inscription “Great Ming [dynasty], Wanli [reign], Guisi [year], Guiyou [moon], Bingwu

[day]” (大明万历癸巳癸酉丙戌), i.e. AD 1593. Another dated object is the copper coin with the legend “Wanli Tongbao 万历通宝”.

The terminal date and the 1–2 m thick silt in the upper layer of the site indicate that the remains of houses and other buildings discovered on the site are buried by the silt deposits formed due to a tremendous flood of the Yellow River in the late Ming period. According to

literal records, Xuzhou suffered in history serious inundations owing to its location on the innermost Yellow River and Huaihe 淮河 River Plain. Within the 277 years of the Ming period alone, the territory of Xuzhou was hit by 120 water-loggings, and the city proper was also often subjected to disasters. The heaviest flood happened in the fourth year of Xizong's Tianqi 天启 reign, late Ming Dynasty. It lasted as long as three years. The silt it carried down from the upper river course thoroughly buried the city. After the flood receded, Xuzhou was rebuilt according to the layout of the old city. This was a city of the Ming Chongzhen 崇贞 reign, which continued to function during the Qing period. Thus in the history of Xuzhou appeared the unique phenomena of "city underlying city and residences, streets and wells being superimposed upon their counterparts respectively."

The above-analyzed data suggest that the remains of houses and roads discovered this time belong to the buildings of late Ming period Xuzhou City that were destroyed by the flood of Yellow River in the fourth year of Tianqi (AD 1624).

2. Nature of the site

The results of surveying Ming and Qing city walls in Xuzhou City suggest that the Fushujie site was in the center of Ming Xuzhou City. As recorded in historical records, the then government offices were situated only

100 m apart from the location of the site. Judging from their layout, structure and unearthed objects, the wide stretch of Ming period ruins discovered this time must not be uniform in nature. The vestiges of a building complex in the western area show features of government offices, while those in the eastern area are evidently left over from common folk residences with a part of houses simultaneously functioned as handicraft workshops.

3. Achievements and significance of the excavation

The excavation revealed a vast area of late Ming vestiges, which yielded objects great in quantity and variety. The ceramics are much varied in source and ware. There are products of Jingdezhen 景德镇, Longquan 龙泉, Jun 钧 and Cizhou 磁州 wares from kilns in north China, as well as Jieshou 界首 ware of Anhui 安徽 and boccario ware from Yixing 宜兴, Jiangsu 江苏. Especially the blue-and-white porcelain, with its typological diversity, quantitative plenty and great chronological coverage, has great value to the study of this ware produced in different phases of the Ming period, although it is all from civilian kilns. The unearthed objects are lower in grade but close to people's actual life of that time and so helpful to understanding social and economic conditions in Xuzhou City of the Ming period.

Note: The original paper, published in *Kaogu Xuebao* 考古学报 2004.3: 357–376, with 12 illustrations and 14 plates, is written by Sheng Chubin 盛储彬 and Liu Zunzhi 刘尊志. The present summary is prepared by the first author and English-translated by Mo Runxian 莫润先.