

A Brief Report of the Excavation of Kang Wentong's Tomb, Tang Dynasty

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Key words: Xi'an City tri-colored ceramics painted glazed ceramics brick-constructed tomb chambers

The Tang Dynasty tomb of Kang Wentong 康文通 lies west of today's Yanxingmen 延兴门 Village, in the Yanta 雁塔 District of Xi'an 西安 City. It is approximately 8 km from the center of the city, outside the dynasty's Yanxing Gate 延兴门. From March to June of 2002, the Xi'an Institute of Monument Preservation and Archaeology and excavated 37 tombs dating from the Han to Tang dynasties. Among them was the tomb of Kang Wentong (M2). Although the tomb was badly damaged by earlier looters, a large number of intact and well-constructed tri-colored figurines were unearthed.

I. Tomb Structure

The brick-constructed tomb faces north-south, oriented at 180 degrees. It consists of a long sloping entrance-way, three vertical shafts, three passageways, two wall niches, and front and rear chambers connected by a corridor. The overall length of the tomb is 35.7 m (Figs. 1 and 2).

The entrance to the tomb lies 1.2 m below the present surface. The long, sloping path is south of the tomb chambers and measures 26 m wide and 27.84 m long,

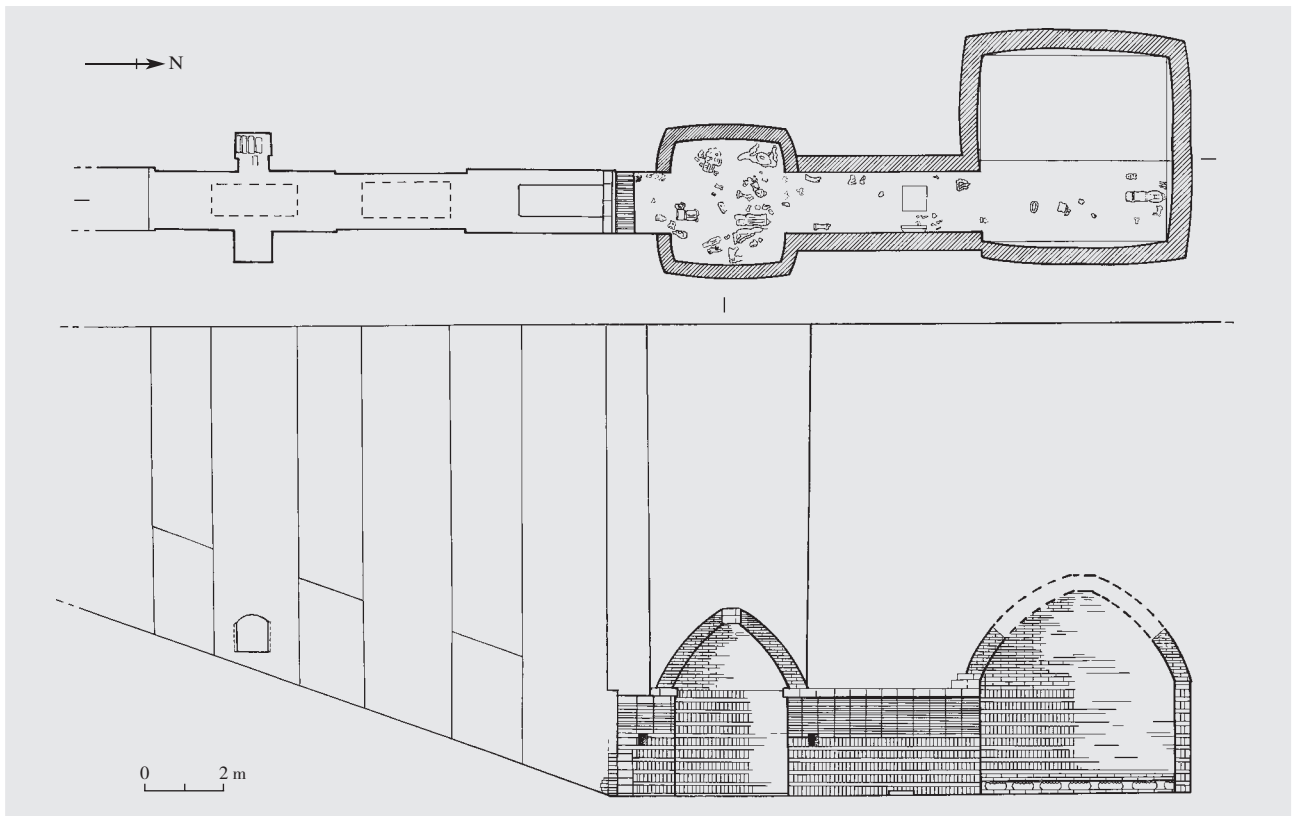


Fig. 1 Plan and cross-section of tomb M2



Fig. 2 Tomb M2

with a slope of 19 degrees.

The rectangular vertical shafts divide one long passageway into three. Although of uniform widths (the passageways are 1.24 m wide; the shafts 0.6 m) they vary in length and height. The lengths of the passages, from south to north, are 1.6 m, 1.36 m, and 1.4 m, respectively; their heights, in the same order, range from 6.12–6.68 m, 7.28–7.76 m, 8.32–8.84 m. The lengths of the shafts, again from south to north, are 1.68 m, 1.68 m, and 1.4 m. Their heights, of course, correspond with those of their linking passages, e.g., the height of shaft 1 measures 6.68–7.28 m.

At ground level of the first shaft two identical niches with arched openings face each other on the side walls. Nothing remained in them except a few pieces of long bricks used originally to seal the niches.

There are two corridors. The first is located between the No. 3 shaft and the front chamber and measures 1.32 m long by 1.2 m wide, with a height of 1.8 m. The entry into the room had been sealed by long, rectangular bricks, interlocked horizontally to form a flat wall. Eleven layers, reaching a height of 1.04 m, remain. The second

corridor, linking the two chambers, is 3.84 m long, 1.2 m wide, and 2 m high.

The walls of both rectangular-shaped chambers are slightly bowed; both are framed by arched entrances. The front chamber is 2.24 m from north to south, 2.44 m from east to west, and measures 3.38 m high. The rear chamber measures 3.76 m from north to south, 4 m from east to west; the walls rise to a height of 3.96 m. The front room yielded many of the burial goods.

The west side of the rear chamber contained the coffin platform. Constructed of smooth, rectangular bricks, it is 3.68 m long from north to south, 2.04 m wide, and 0.4 m high. It is difficult to tell the burial style from the few human bones, vegetal fragments and wood-ash that remained on the coffin platform.

Two entries bored by robbers were found. One, round in shape, lays south of the sealed wall. The other appeared at the northwest corner of the rear burial chamber's ceiling.

II. Burial Goods

The surviving burial goods include tri-colored figurines and other tri-color objects, painted figurines, porcelains, jades, metal objects, coins, and tomb tablet.

1. Tri-colored figurines (10 pieces).

Tri-color refers to the well-known *sancai* 三彩 lead-glaze ceramics produced in the Tang dynasty. The three main colors were green, amber (brown), and cream (white), although blue and black were often added, as well. The tri-color figurines and objects from this tomb were made of white clay.

The civil clerk (M2:3) wears a lobed cap called a *jinxian* 进贤 and a brownish-yellow short robe bound by a sash. The edges of the wide sleeves are decorated with brown, green, and white dots. His boots with their turned-up toes are called the *yuntou* 云头 style. He clasps both hands in front of his chest and stands erectly on an elliptical, lobed platform on which ovoid hollows are carved out on the sides. The body of the figurine is covered with brown, green, and white glazes. The surface of those glazes is further decorated with gold paint. It measures 100 cm tall (Figs. 3:1; 4).

The military official (M2:4). The mesh weave of fabric is apparent on this official's cap. He is dressed in a short, green robe identical to that of the civil clerk's. Unlike the latter, who wears a floor-length robe, however, he wears trousers and pointed boots. He, too, stands on an elliptical platform, his hands clasped in the same gesture as the civil clerk's. Like the clerk's, this

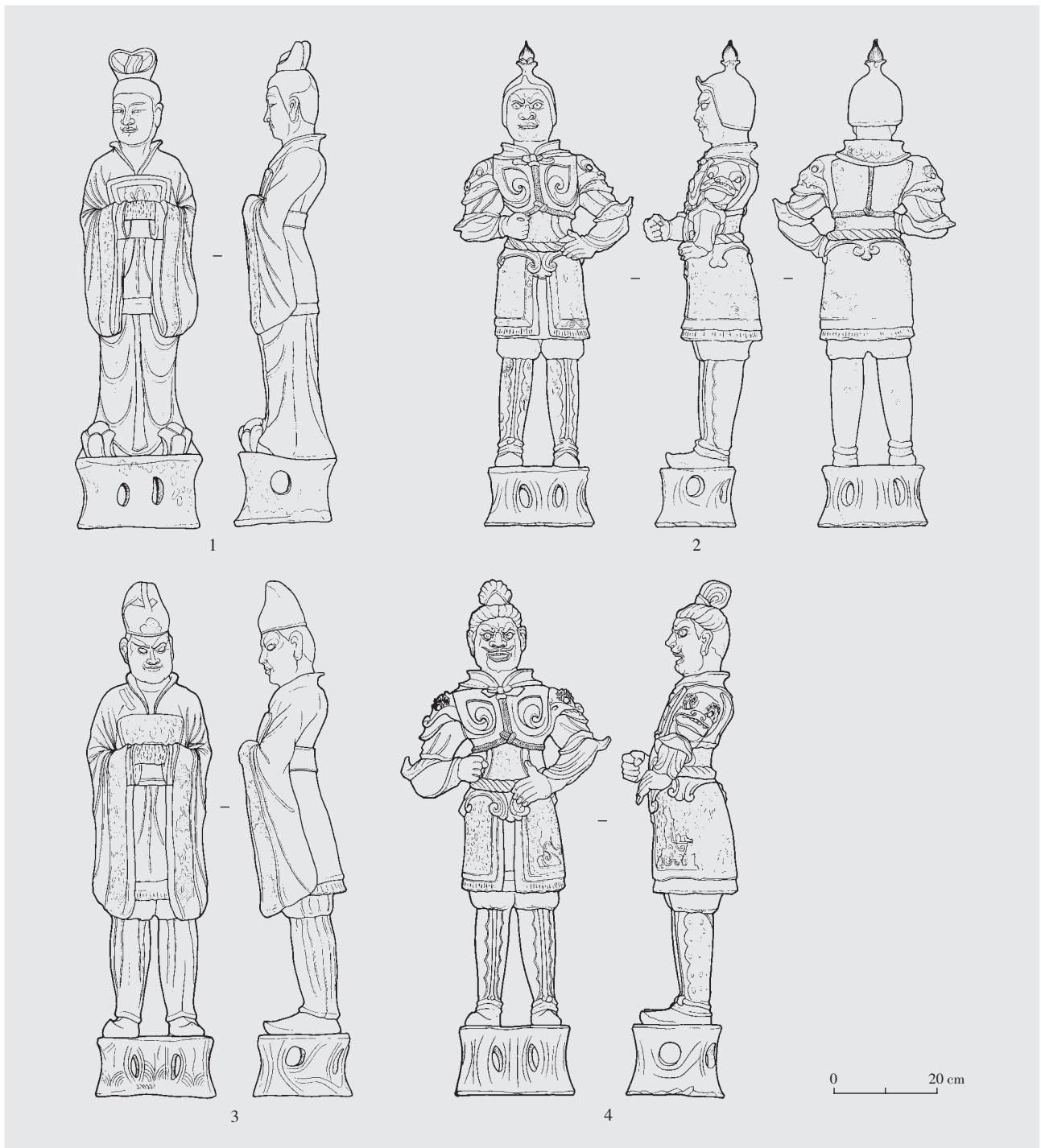


Fig. 3 Tri-colored ceramic figurines

1. civil clerk (M2:3) 2. warrior (M2:1) 3. military official (M2:4) 4. warrior (M2:2)

official's colored glazes are further decorated with painted gold lines. The figurine is 99.6 cm tall (Figs. 3: 3; 5)

Although they differ in height, the two warrior figurines closely resemble each other. The same color glazes on their bodies as described above are over painted with gold; the tips of the helmet worn by one are also deco-

rated with gold patterns. As befitting warriors, they have thick eyebrows, large, bulging eyes, big noses. The grimly closed lips of one and bared teeth of the other bespeak determination. Their body armor includes dragon-headed shoulder pads, neck coverings, and girdles. Knee-high boots and trousers complete their uniforms. The palm of the left hand rests on the waist,



Fig. 4 Tri-colored ceramic civil clerk (M2:3)



Fig. 5 Tri-colored ceramic military official (M2:4)



Fig. 6 Tri-colored ceramic warrior (M2:1)



Fig. 7 Tri-colored ceramic warrior (M2:2)



Fig. 8 Tri-colored ceramic tomb guardian (M2:34)



Fig. 9 Tri-colored ceramic groom (M2:5)

the right is raised slightly in a fist. Each warrior stands with feet apart on a high, elliptical platform. One (M2:1) is 104.8 cm tall (Figs. 3:2; 6), the other (M2:2) is 120 cm (Figs. 3:4; 7).

Only one tomb guardian (M2:34) was found in Kang Wentong's tomb. Its hairdo swirls to a point in the middle of its head. Its huge, fluted ears protrude, its round eyes bulge. Fanged and bearded, sprouting shoulder wings, the guardian squats on its lobed platform with its front legs rigid. Its head is painted but unglazed. Its body, however, is glazed with the usual three colors to which gold paint has been applied (Fig. 8).

A standing female figurine, the head for which is missing (M2:13), wears an outfit consisting of a long narrow-sleeved top, a vest, and a long skirt. A shawl covers her shoulders and trails over her hands, which are joined and held above the waist. Her outfit is glazed in yellow-brown and green. The height of the extant image is 20.1 cm (Fig. 10:1).

A now-headless standing male figurine (M2:14) is dressed in a round-necked, long robe, belted at the waist. His hands, hidden in his sleeves, are joined in front of his chest. Standing on a platform, this green glazed figurine is 18.2 cm high (Fig. 10:2).

The groom (M2:5) wears a black scarf that covers his head and a narrow-sleeved, short jacket with broad lapels. His hands are raised as if holding the reins of a horse. His jacket is glazed a yellowish brown; the collar is green. He is 44.4 cm high (Fig. 10:3; 9).

A horse (M2:6) glazed in white and yellow stands on a rectangular-shaped slab. His head is bowed, his jaw is open, his neck is bent slightly to the side. It measures 59 cm high (Fig. 11)

A camel (M2:7) with head raised high bares his teeth. He wears on his back an oval-shaped, checkered saddle-cloth. He is covered with brown and yellow glazes and stands, like the horse, on a small rectangular slab or footboard. It is 81 cm high (Fig. 12).

2. Four other tri-colored ceramic objects were found. The upper part of a miniature, square-shaped well (M2:8) is glazed with dark green dots. It measures 4.1 cm high overall and is 3.6 cm in diameter. A millstone (M2:9) is partially covered with a light green glaze; vertical and diagonal lines are carved on its edges and sides. It is 3.75 cm high, 2.3 cm in diameter. The yellow-brown glazed stove (M2:10) has an almost square-shaped body. It has a chimney and a facade with an arched opening for stoking the fire. It is 8.6 cm long. A long rectangular slab with short ends is a mortar, in the middle of

which two short vertical protuberances support another tapering slab, the pestle. It is covered with a yellow-brown glaze and is 15.2 cm long.

3. Painted ceramic figurines (11 pieces). All painted ceramic wares are made of reddish clay.

Male rider (M2:23). This figurine, whose lower torso and arms are missing, is identified by the remnants of his moustache, his turbaned headdress and the wide, overlapping lapels of his robe. An unidentified object like half-girdles is around his waist. The height of the remaining figure is 11.7 cm (Fig. 13:1).

Female rider (M2:24). Only the upper torso and head remain. The hair is dressed in a small bun; the wide, overlapping lapels of the robe are like those of the male rider. The height of the remaining figure is 11.8 cm (Fig. 13:2).

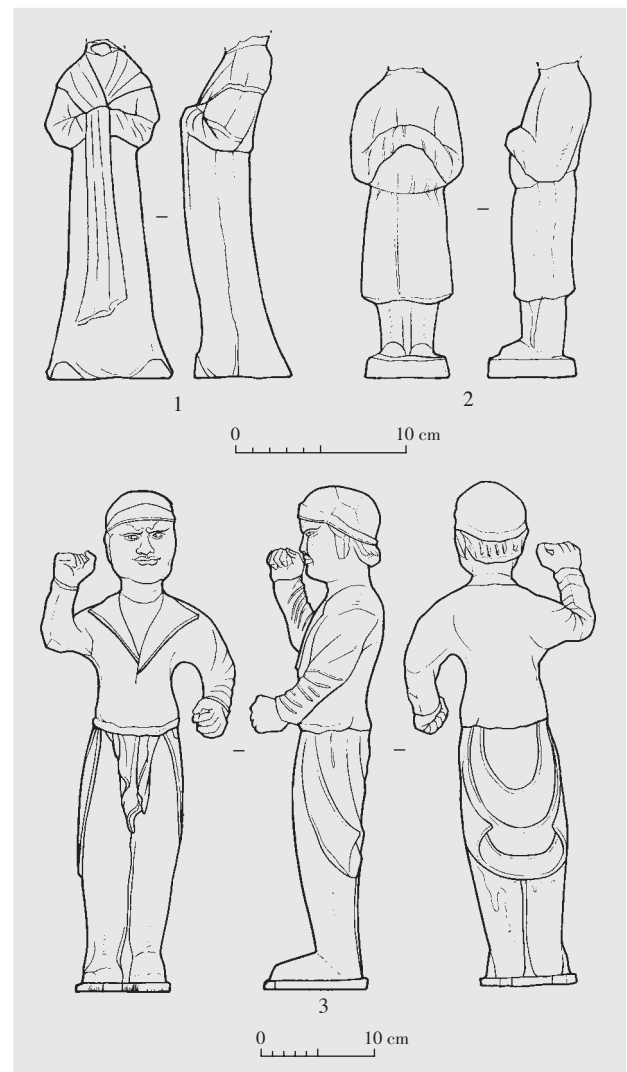


Fig. 10 Tri-colored ceramic figurines
1. standing female figurine (M2:13) 2. standing male figurine (M2:14) 3. groom (M2:5)



Fig. 11 Tri-colored ceramic horse (M2:6)



Fig. 12 Tri-colored ceramic camel (M2:7)

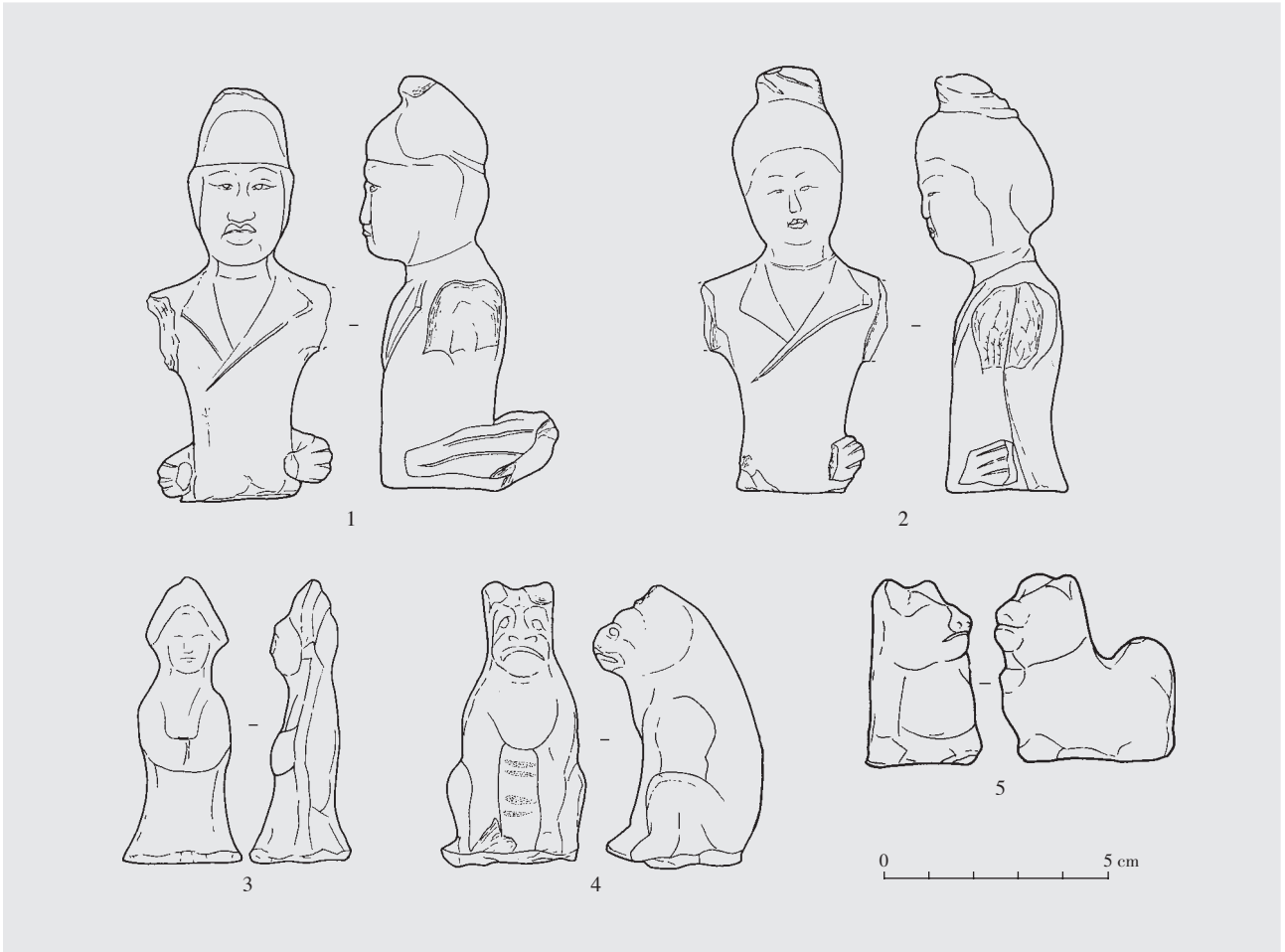


Fig. 13 Painted ceramic figurines

1. riding male figurine (M2:23) 2. riding female figurine (M2:24) 3. standing female figurine (M2:25) 4, 5. dogs (M2:32 and 30)



Fig. 14 Porcelain lamp (M2:12)

Standing female figurine (2 pieces). One (M2:25) has a tall bun for a hairdo and wears a long skirt. Her hands are held in front of her chest; her facial features are blurred. It is 8.1 cm high (Fig. 13:3).

Female head (3 pieces). The three female heads are distinguished by their hairdos. The hair of one (M2:27) is full at the sides, then pulled high to make a tall, centered bun; another (M2:28) is fixed in a small, centered bun; the third (M2: 29) is arranged in a small bun that slopes to one side. Heights of each piece, respectively, are 7.7 cm, 5.6 cm, 5.5 cm.

Dog (4 pieces). Two seated dogs, M2:32, 8.1 cm high (Fig. 13:4) and M2:33 are painted with black stripes on their abdomens. Two others are reclining, their heads raised high and tails erect, M2:30, 4.3 cm high (Fig 13:5).

4. Porcelain objects (2 pieces), both with white glazes. Lid (M2:11). This white glazed lid, 6.4 cm in diameter, has a pearl-shaped knob in the center. Lamp (M2:12). The shallow plate of the oil lamp sits on a long, trumpet-shaped stem that ends in a flat, round base. Crystallization in a hairline crack has produced a green glaze. It is 12.6 cm tall (Fig. 14).

5. Jade object

A pig of dark green jade (M2:15) reclines with its limbs close to the body. A hole has been bored in its tail. It is 9.3 cm long (Fig. 15).

6. Metal objects (3 pieces)

Two of the metal objects are ornaments. One (M2: 16) is a broken U-shaped object with a pattern of scales. Its remaining height is 4.7 cm. The other (M2:17) is a nail with a round top. The top is 0.75 cm in diameter.



Fig. 15 Jade pig (M2:15)

The third object is a *Kai yuan* 开元 coin with a crescent mark on its edge.

7. Tomb tablet

The square-shaped stone epitaph is 52 cm long on each side and 15 cm thick. The edges are decorated with swirling patterns (*juancao wen* 卷草文). The epitaph is incised in regular script (*kaishu* 楷书) within a border of fine lines. The epitaph comprises 20 lines for a total of 424 characters. Many of them are characters used only during the Wu Zetian era (AD 684–701).

III. Conclusion

Several tombs of construction similar to Kang Wentong's have been unearthed in the Xi'an area. All have long sloping passageways, several vertical shafts, wall niches, and front and rear burial chambers made of brick. Some of them have stone doors and stone sarcophagi. The majority were constructed during the reigns of Gaozong 高宗 (650–683) and Zhongzong 中宗 (684), for example, the tombs of Yuchi Jingde 尉迟敬德, Zheng Rentai 郑仁泰, Prince Yide 懿德, and Su Dingfang 苏定方. The occupants of these tombs were either members of the imperial families or high ranking officials (above rank three) who were selected for burial in the imperial mausoleums.

Although Kang Wentong's epitaph claims that he came from a prominent family, his grandfather and father were not high ranking officials. Nor can any record of the family be found in official documents. Kang died in 696 in Anyi 安邑 ward of Chang'an 长安 and was buried the next year in Longshou 龙首 Township of Wannian 万年 County. He was 79 *sui* 岁 (i.e., 78 years old) and never held office. In the Xi'an 西安 District, it is rare to find a person like Kang in such a high ranking tomb.

The tri-colored figurines with painted-gold decoration are the most important among the grave goods. The Heavenly King, the tomb guardian, and the military official, for example, are not only large in size, but also skillfully crafted. They are very different from similar types of figurines found earlier in the Xi'an area. The most noticeable difference is the over painting of the glazes with gold paint. Paint was applied to earlier glazed

figurines, but only to the faces, where plain colors with simple strokes were applied to the facial features. In addition to the gold paint, the Heavenly King also shows traces of red paint of cinnabar. The horse as well as the nose and mouth of the rider, also show such traces. Together with the painted, unglazed figurines, grave goods of such quality provide important information concerning the development of tri-colored ceramics.

Note: The original report, published in *Wenwu* 文物 2004.1: 17–30, with 30 illustrations, including 20 photos, is written by Yang Junkai 杨军凯, Sun Wu 孙武, and Feng Jian 冯健. This summary is prepared by Yang Junkai and English-translated by Audrey Spiro and Ye Wa 叶娃.