

Excavation of a Sixteen Kingdoms Period Tomb in Pingling, Xianyang

Xianyang Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology

Key words: Xianyang Pingling tomb of the Sixteen Kingdoms period funeral figurines of drummers and wind instrument players funeral figurines of seated female musicians

In early 2001, the Qindu 秦都 District Bureau of Communications, Xianyang 咸阳 City, discovered an ancient tomb (Ping-M1 for short) in the construction of a highway in the south of Pingling 平陵 Township of Qindu District in Xianyang City, between the villages of Wangjiazhuang 王家庄 and Huzhucun 互助村, with funeral objects revealed from the chamber. Pingling Township is named after the Pingling Mausoleum of Liu Fuling 刘弗陵, the Western Han emperor Zhaodi 昭帝, and now belongs to Shuangzhao 双照 Town. On 28th to 29th May 2001, archaeologists from the Xianyang Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology excavated this grave.

I. Location and Structure of the Tomb

Tomb M1 lies in the sloping zone between two tablelands within Xianyang, above 500 m southwest of the Pingling Mausoleum. The interior of the tomb chamber is rather dry and has no silt and traces of robbery. It is an earthen cave, the major axis pointing to the north and south with an azimuth of 185 degrees. The whole grave consists of a tomb-passage, a corridor-tunnel, a courtyard, and a chamber. In its upper part, a 6.70 m thick earthen layer was destroyed when road constructors leveled the ground with bulldozers. The tomb-passage is roughly trapezoid in plan, 3.92 m in remaining length and 0.80–0.90 m in width, and has a sloping bottom. The corridor-tunnel measures 0.74 m in horizontal length and 0.90 m in height. The courtyard has a rectangular plan, 2.27 m long and 0.80 m wide. The chamber is roughly square in plan with the sides curved outward, 2.28–2.70 m long, 2.44–2.60 m wide and 1.76 m high, and has a vault. The tomb is 9.70 m in depth. The chamber entrance is furnished with a brick

sealing 1.42 m high, 0.82 m wide and 0.38 m thick. Inside the chamber, a wooden coffin is placed in the rear part, head pointing to the east, 1.98 m long and 0.46–0.64 m wide. It contains a badly rotten, indiscernible human skeleton. In the coffin bottom, a layer of plant ash is covered with a layer of copper coins.

The grave goods total more than 60 pieces/sets and are largely disposed on the eastern and western sides of the chamber and in the coffin. In the east are funeral figurines of 16 mounted drummers and wind instrument players, arranged in two north-to-south eight-person rows, face to the west: five drummers and three horn players in front; and five horn players, two drummers and one panpipes player at the back. Near the coffin are models of two barded horses. In the west of the chamber, round models of two ox carriages and a one-horse chariot, six figurines of maids and musicians are placed on the two flanks, and pottery artifacts belonging to the types of jar, pot and models of granary, cooking range, well, chicken, dog and pig and a bronze skillet and a *fu* 釜 cauldron are arranged in front, on the southern side. In the center of the chamber are a bronze pendent lamp and a pottery one with several branches. In the southwest of the chamber entrance is a clay statue of Lokapala, which, unfortunately, has become unclear in a poor condition. In the coffin, the main finds are the tomb-owner's personal ornaments, which belong to the types of silver hairpin and bracelet and small bronze bell and finger ring; and quantities of bronze coins are laid on the coffin bottom. In addition, a glazed pottery chamber pot was found outside the coffin, against the middle of the northern wall of the chamber (Fig. 1).

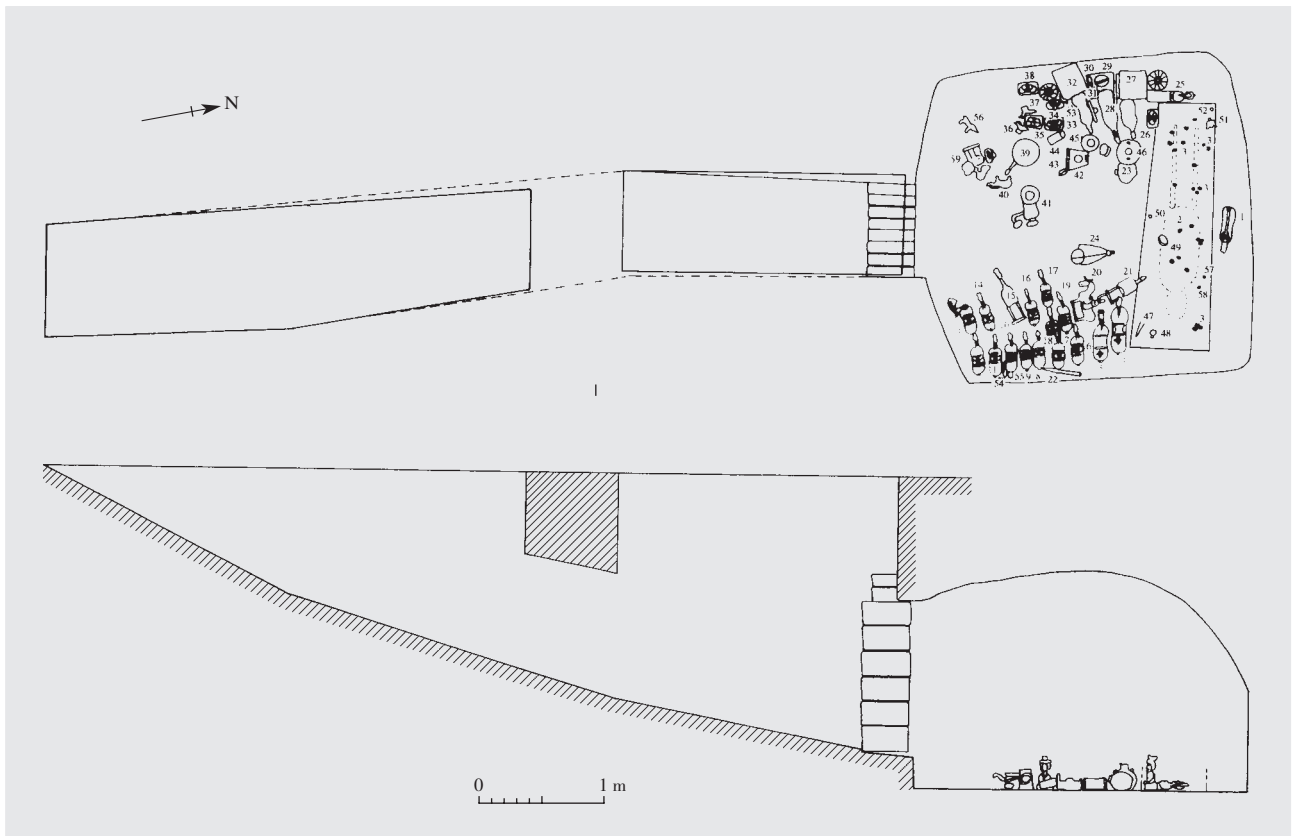


Fig. 1 Plan and section of Tomb M1 and disposition of its funeral objects

II. Funeral Objects

The tomb yielded above 60 pieces/sets of grave goods, which fall into five categories: pottery, bronzes, silverware, ironware and clay artifacts. In addition, there are more than 130 bronze coins.

1. Pottery, 44 pieces/sets. There are everyday utensils or their models, belonging to the cooking range, granary, jar, pot, lamp, well and chamber pot; figurines of domestic animals and fowl, belonging to the chicken, dog and pig; figurines of mounted drummers and wind instrument players, seated female musicians and maids; and models of barded horses, ox carriages and a one-horse chariot. The figurines are all made in sectional molds. They are hollow inside, the two sides bear traces of smearing, the surface is usually painted in colors, and the body is quite hard.

Multi-branch lamp, one piece (M1:41), light yellowish-brown, cylindrical, and hollow inside. At the top is a round lamp-bowl. The upper body has four even-interval sockets for four branch lamps, of which only two remain. The lower part is a flared ring-foot. It is 35.5 cm high (Figs. 2:1; 3).

Chamber pot, one piece (M1:1), livid in body, glazed

in yellowish brown with the coating largely having peeled off. Its spout is incomplete, maybe broken on purpose. The whole object is shaped like a lying tiger with a ventilating hole in the rear. It is 32.6 cm long (Figs. 2:3; 4).

Figurines of barded horses, two pieces, similar in shape. The body is hollow, and a board is attached below the hooves. One piece (M1:4) is coated with yellowish-brown glaze, holds a bit with check pieces in the mouth and has a noseband with a tassel socket. The saddle is shaped like a rectangle without corners. The bard consists of four parts respectively for the face, neck, middle body and croup, all covered with densely laid scale plates. The stirrups are oval. On the rear back is a socket. It is 43 cm long and 46 cm high (Figs. 5:1; 6). M1:5 is painted in colors: on a greenish-white ground, the halter and eyes are painted in black and the mouth and nose in red. Check pieces are represented on the face, but no tassel socket is furnished. On the middle body, 11 horizontal armor bands are painted in red with neatly arranged scale plates depicted within them in black. The rear back is painted with five red armor bands with a red circular socket on three legs. The tail armor is represented as three horizontal plate bands, to which

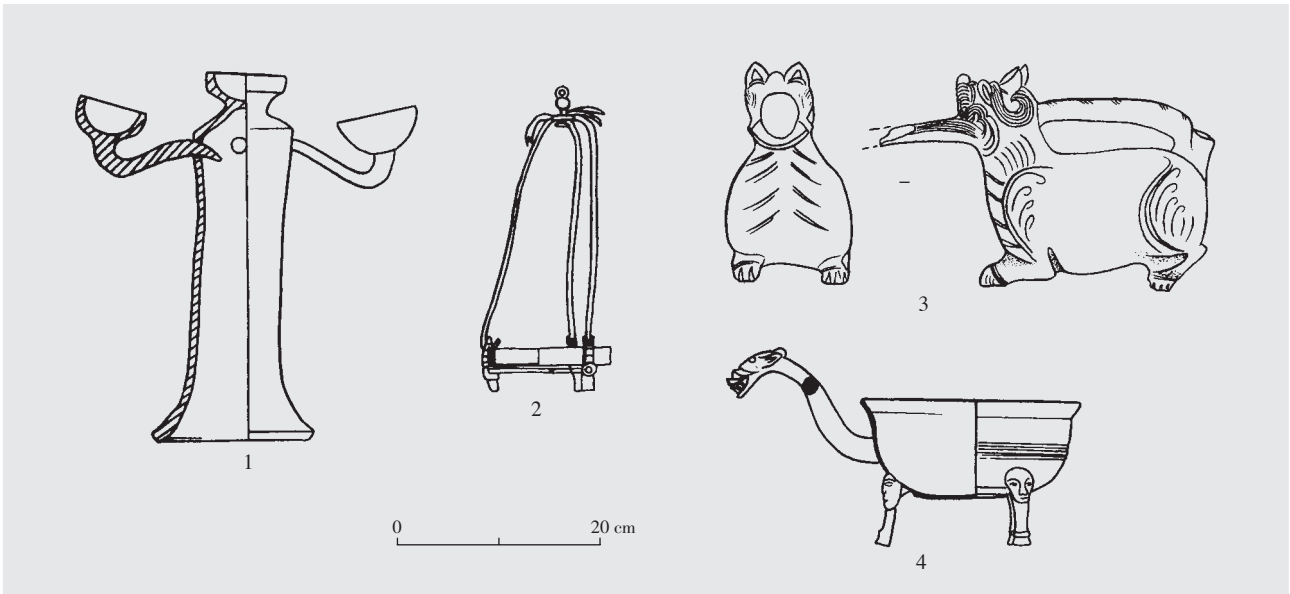


Fig. 2 Funeral objects

1. multi-branch pottery lamp (M1:41) 2. bronze pendent lamp (M1:24) 3. pottery chamber pot (M1:1) 4. bronze skillet (M1:39)



Fig. 3 Multi-branch pottery lamp (M1:41)

the horse's wide, flat, hanging down tail is attached. The pommel and cantle are rectangular and rather low. On the flanks of the body are two oval stirrups. It is 40.5 cm long and 44.3 cm high (Figs. 5:2; 7).

Figurines of mounted drummers and wind instrument players, 16 pieces: eight horn players, seven drummers and one panpipes player. They are roughly the same in human and horse shape and size. The instru-



Fig. 4 Glazed pottery chamber pot (M1:1)

ment players are straightly sitting on horseback, hat on head, Y-shape-collared narrow-cuffed jacket and cylindrical-legged trousers on body, and boots on feet. The horses are all in a standing position, head stretching ahead, body hollowed, and hooves on board. On the horseback are a sub-rectangular saddle and flancards. The halter and chest and tail belts are painted in colors. M1:12 represents a horn player on horseback. The horse is dark red; the musician wears a brown jacket and a brown hat, face in reddish-brown. It is 45 cm and 33.3 cm high (Figs. 5:4; 8). M1:18 is a brown statue of drummer on a livid horse, rattle-drum in one hand and drumstick in the other to beat the flat round

drum in front of the body. It is 33 cm and 39.5 cm high (Figs. 5:3; 9). M1:6 depicts a panpipes player on a livid horse with the chest and tail belts painted in red and adorned by black cloud and apricot-leaf designs. The musician's coat and hat are brown, face dark red, and hands holding a set of nine-tube panpipes. It is 32.8 cm long and 39.5 cm high (Figs. 5:5; 10).

Figurines of maids, two pieces, identical in size and shape, made in sectional molds, painted in colors, body hollowed. They wear a butterfly-shaped black headgear, the hair on the temples hangs down to the earlobes and below, and a curved-head comb is inserted atop the head. The space between the eyebrows and the mandible are painted with red dots, and the cheeks have small dimples made by piercing and red-painting. The eyeholes and eyelids are outlined in cinnabar. On the upper body is a medium-size-sleeved Y-shape-collared red dress with a short front, up-turned cuffs

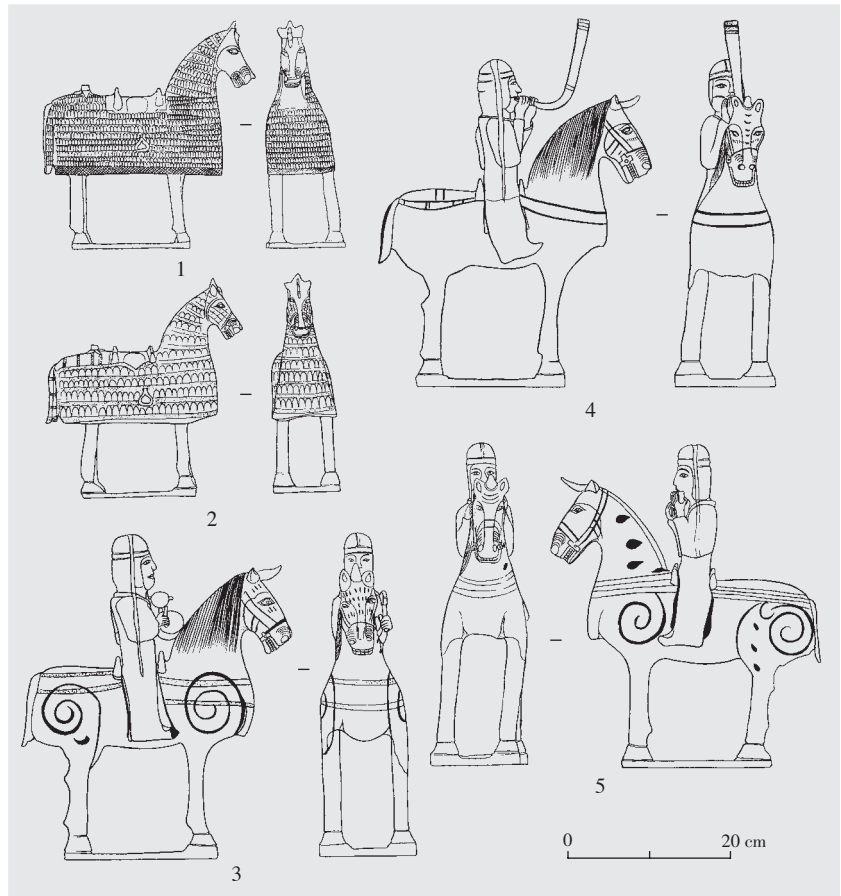


Fig. 5 Pottery funeral figurines

1. glazed pottery barded horse (M1:4)
2. color-painted barded horse (M1:5)
3. figurine of drummer on horseback (M1:18)
4. figurine of horn player on horseback (M1:12)
5. figurine of panpipes player on horseback (M1:6)



Fig. 6 Glazed pottery barded horse (M1:4)



Fig. 7 Color-painted pottery barded horse (M1:5)



Fig. 8 Pottery horn player on horseback (M1:12)



Fig. 9 Pottery drummer on horseback (M1:18)



Fig. 10 Pottery panpipes player on horseback (M1:6)

and a waist belt, all in brown. On the lower body is a skirt ornamented with stripes alternately in red and brown, and squared shoe-tips are revealed from the lower edge of the skirt. M1:34 is 36.7 cm high (Figs. 11:1; 12).

Figurines of seated female musicians, four pieces, are similar in shape and size. They are made in sectional molds, painted in colors and hollowed inside. They wear a crossed, flat, black headgear; the hair on the temples and the hairdo at the back of the head are identical with those of the above-described maids. The upper body is in a narrow-cuffed Y-shape-collared red or brown dress; the lower body, in a skirt with red or brown vertical stripes; and the waist is tied with a belt. All of them are shown in a kneeling position with musical instruments in front. M1:33 wears a brown dress with red collar, front, cuff-border and belt, but the skirt is brown-painted in the middle front. The girl is playing on the red rectangular *zheng* 箏 eight-stringed zither laid on the thighs. It is 27.8 cm high (Figs. 11:2; 13). M1:26 is similar to M1:33 in dress except for the skirt red in the middle of the front. It has a flat round red drum in one hand and a white drumstick in the other. It is 28 cm high (Figs. 11:3; 13). M1:35 is in a red dress with brown collar, front

and belt and in a skirt with the middle of the front in red. The girl is playing on the four-stringed round *pipa* 琵琶 in her arms, one hand pressing the string and the other holding a plectrum. The *pipa* is red-painted on a white powder ground with the coating having largely peered off. It is 27.8 cm high (Figs. 11:4; 13). M1:38 is similar to the *pipa* player in dress. The skirt is brown in the middle of the front. The hands are carrying an instrument in a playing position, but the object is missing. It is 27.9 cm high (Figs. 11:5; 13).

Models of ox carriages, two sets, are roughly identical in shape and size, either representing an ox and a carriage, different only in some painting. M1:27 has a roughly rectangular box with two poles, the front projecting forward beyond the rectangular protecting board. The façade has a square window in the center; in the rear, a rectangular door is opened near one side; and the roof has a round ridge with overhanging eaves in the front and rear, eave-edges slightly up-turned. Either of the flanks has two small-sized square windows with a three-perforation board stretching out from below. The box body is decorated with designs painted in red, black and brown on a greenish-white ground. The four sides and the top are all adorned with connected floral patterns. The front of the protecting board and one flank of the box are painted with interlocked red branches; the other flank and the window boards bear vertical stripes in red. The door, windows, roof eaves, window boards and wheels are all painted with red borders. Under the box are two wheels with 19 spokes painted alternately in red and white. The length of the box is 22.8 cm. The ox figurine is hollow inside and has a board beneath the hooves, horn curved, tail on croup and white-painted halter on head. It is 30.9 cm long (Figs. 14 and 15).

One-horse chariot, one set (M1:28). The box is open. The front stretches out beyond the rectangular protecting board, which had two shaft sockets at the ends. The wooden shafts have rotted. The box has a rectangular door in the rear, near one side, and either flank is fur-

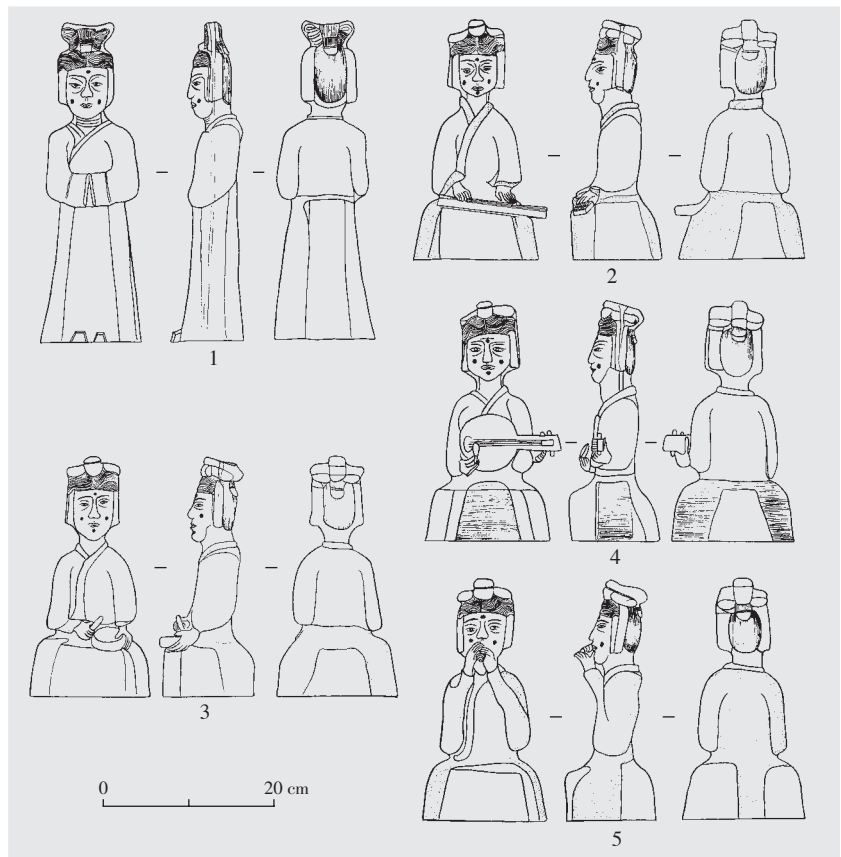


Fig. 11 Pottery funeral figurines

- 1. figurine of maid (M1:34)
- 2. figurine of female *zheng* eight-string zither player (M1:33)
- 3. figurine of female drummer (M1:26)
- 4. figurine of female *pi-pa* player (M1:35)
- 5. figurine of female wind instrument player (M1:38)



Fig. 12 Pottery maid (M1:34)



Fig. 13 Pottery seated female musicians (M1:26, 33, 35 and 38)

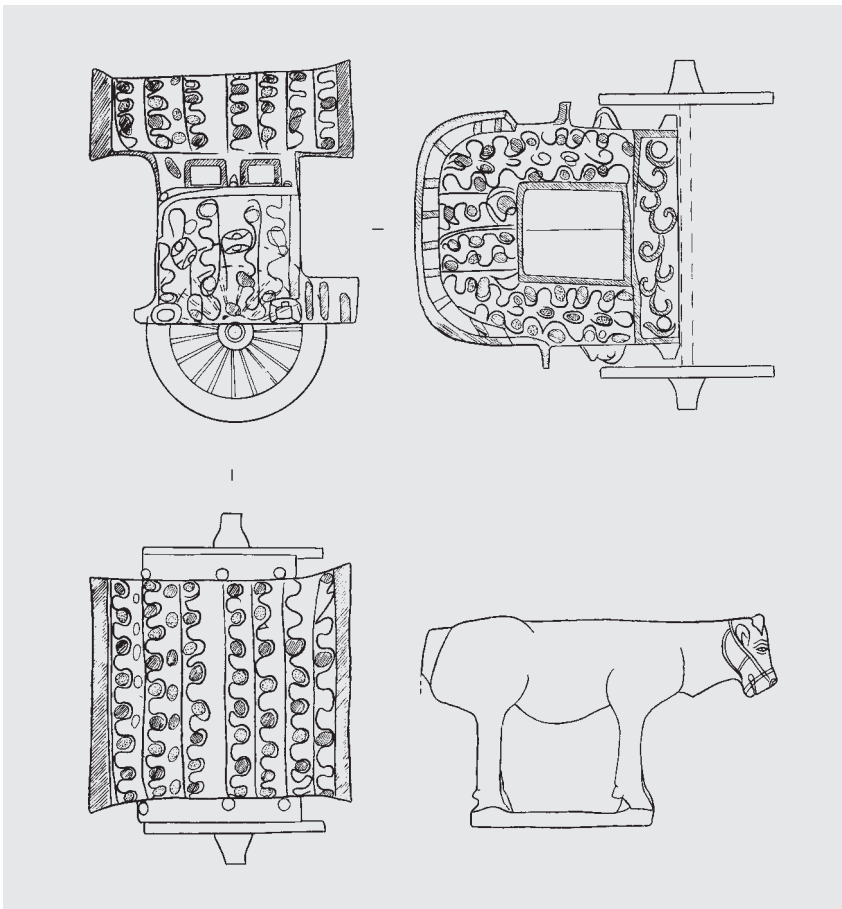


Fig. 14 Pottery ox carriage (M1:27) (scale: 2/5)

nished with a curved wide hand-rail decorated with a bird. Outside the flanks are two protections each with two sockets and, below, two flagpole-bases also having two sockets each. The four sockets form two groups, each consisting of an upper hole and a lower one directed at each other. It suggests that the chariot was furnished with four poles on the flanks: two erected vertically in the front and two inclined backward in the rear. The box surface is painted in colors on a greenish-white ground and outlines in red at the borders and along the rims of the openings. On the four inner walls and the front of the protecting board are connected floral designs in red with red and brown flower and fruit motifs as auxiliary adornments. The wheels are identical with those of the ox carriages. The horse is grayish-brown, head bowed, mane stretched forward like horns, body

hollowed inside and tail attached on croup. In the middle of the neck is a socket, perhaps for a yoke to set up. Box length is 18.6 cm and the horse length is 33.8 cm (Figs. 16 and 17).

In addition, there are a jar, a pot and molds of a well, a cooking range, a pig, two granaries, four chickens and four dogs.

2. Bronzes, ten pieces, belonging to the *fu* cauldron, skillet, pendent lamp, small bell, finger ring, *etc.*

Skillet, one piece (M1:39). The object is all covered by soot; the belly bear cracks, and the handle has come off. It has an out-turned mouth, a slightly swollen belly, a somewhat flattened round bottom and three cabrioles with human face pattern. The body is decorated with raised bowstring patterns: three in the middle and one at the bottom. The handle is curved with the end shaped like an open-mouthed dragon's head. It is 16.5 cm high and its mouth diameter 21.3 cm (Fig. 2:4).

Pendent lamp, one piece (M1:24). It has a three-legged round dish, from which three ribs extending upward and fixed together at the upper end. At the top is a knob shaped like a flying wild goose. Dish diameter is 12 cm, height 29.5 cm (Fig. 2:2).

The rest include four finger rings, a *fu* cauldron, a small bell and a door knocker.

3. Silver and iron articles have four pieces, belonging to the fork, bracelet and spearhead.

4. Bronze coins have more than 130 pieces, including one spade coin, four “*da quan wu shi* 大泉五十,” 12 “*huo quan* 货泉,” four “*shu wu zhu* 蜀五铢,” 18 *wu zhu* coins with edge cut, four *wu zhu* coins with rim polished and 86 *wu zhu* coins.



Fig. 15 Pottery ox carriage (M1:27)



Fig. 16 Pottery one-horse chariot (M1:28)

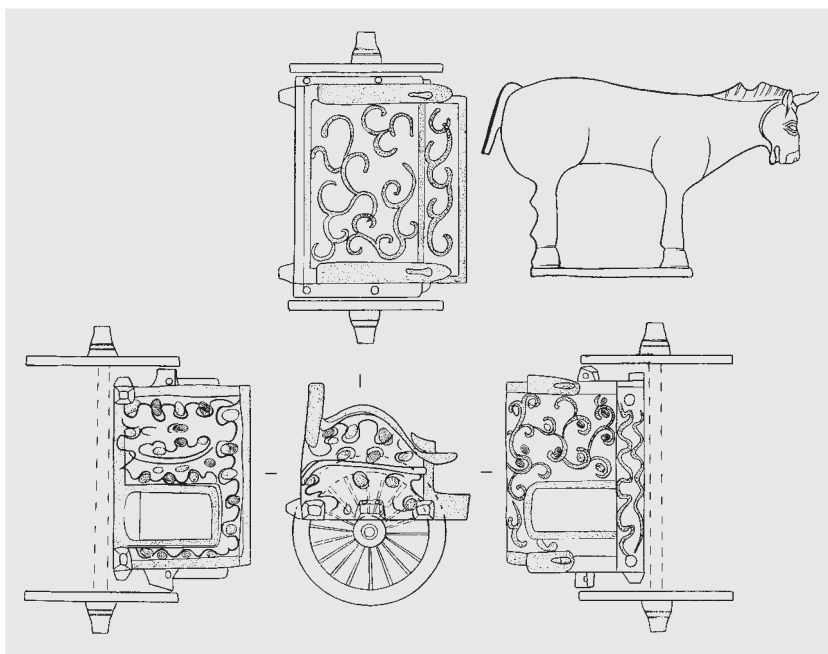


Fig. 17 Pottery one-horse chariot (M1:28) (scale: 2/5)

III. Conclusions

The grave goods of Tomb M1 are much similar to those from the tomb of the Six Dynasties period at Caochangpo 草场坡 in Xi'an in general style and specific character and shape, which is clearly mirrored from the figurines of female maids with crossed false hair worn in a bun, seated female musicians, color-painted and barded horses, as well as the models of ox carriages, chickens, dogs and pigs. Their counterparts have been commonly found in Western Jin and Sixteen Kingdoms period burials in the Xianyang area, such as Tomb M5 at the Teachers Training College 咸阳师专, M3 at the office of the third section, First Bureau for the Management of Railways 铁一局三处, and the Zhu family tombs of the Former Qin period at Wenlin Neighborhood 文林小区, Xianyang. Therefore the tomb under discussion can be dated to the Former and Latter Qin period of the Sixteen Kingdoms epoch.

The tomb has not been disturbed by robbery. Its funeral objects, rich in variety and complete in combination, constitute one of the finest groups of the Sixteen Kingdoms period grave goods so far recorded across the country. The most noticeable is the figurines of a complete orchestra formed of 16 mounted musical instrument players. This sort of band was also called “*Heng Chui* 横吹” (horizontal band of drummers and wind instrument players), which was owned mainly by military commanders. Judged by the number of these figurines, the tomb-owner must have been of high status. Moreover, the figurines of four female musicians and two maids are distinctive in shape and gorgeous in dress, showing strong temporal and regional features. All the statues of females are adorned with “dots” on the checks and crossed or butterfly-shaped headgears, actu-

ally a sort of false hair coil, which has its counterpart in Six Dynasties period tombs at Nanjing 南京 and the Dong Shou 冬寿 tomb of the Eastern Jin period at Anak, Korea. The models of two ox carriages and a one-horse chariot are intact in structure and elaborate in decoration, and feature couples of pole sockets on the flanks of the box, which are similar to the represented in murals of the Lou Rui 娄叟 tomb and Xu Xianxiu 徐显秀 tomb of the Northern Qi period. The unearthed models of barded horses, iron spearhead, chamber pot and bronze skillet suggest that the tomb-owner must have been a male related with military affairs.

Reference Works

1. Hong Qingyu 洪晴玉 (1959). “Guanyu Dong Shou mu de faxian he yanjiu 关于冬寿墓的发现和研究” (On the Discovery and Study of the Dong Shou Tomb). *Kaogu* 考古 1959.1.
2. Shaanxi Sheng Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 陕西省文物管理委员会 (1959). “Xi'an nanjiao Caochangpo Beichao mu de fajue 西安南郊草场坡北朝墓的发掘” (Excavation of a Northern Dynasties Period Tomb at Caochangpo in the Southern Suburb of Xi'an). *Kaogu* 1959.6.
3. Xianyang Shi Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 咸阳市文物考古研究所 (1998). “Xianyang Shizhuan Xijin Beichao mu qingli jianbao 咸阳师专西晋北朝墓清理简报” (Excavation of Western Jin to Southern and Northern Dynasties Period Tombs at the Xianyang Teachers Training College). *Wenbo* 文博 1998.6.
4. Xianyang Shi Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo. “Xianyang Wenlin xiaoqu Qianqin Zhushi jiazhu mu qingli jianbao 咸阳文林小区前秦朱氏家族墓清理简报” (Excavation of the Zhu Family Tombs at Wenlin Neighborhood in Xianyang). *Kaogu* (in press).

Note: The original report, published in *Wenwu* 文物 2004.8: 4–28, with 52 figures, including 33 color photos, is written by Liu Weipeng 刘卫鹏 and Yue Qi 岳起. The present summary is prepared by Liu Weipeng and English-translated by Mo Runxian 莫润先.