

Discovery of Well No. 7 at Dongpailou, Changsha

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Key words: Changsha Dongpailou well written slips

In April to June of 2004, the Changsha Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, during a rescue excavation at the center of the Changsha 长沙 city, discovered a cluster of 35 wells (Figure 1). These wells are of various periods, from the Western Han to the Qing Dynasty, and yield hundreds of ceramics, stoneware, lacquerware, and wooden objects. This report will focus on Well No. 7, which yields written wooden slips of Eastern Han period (Figure 2).

Structure, Deposit, and Artifacts

The shaft pit of Well No. 7, circular in plan, is 1.2m in diameter. The upper part of this well was ruined in the process of current construction, and the remaining part of the well is 7.6m deep. It slightly expands in size near the bottom. It has five layers of deposit, and the wooden slips are casually dumped in the 2nd–5th layers (Figure 3).

The well yields twenty celadon wares, 176 ceramic products, and one lacquer ware. The celadon all have gray or grayish white core, which are made of fine clay and fired hard. Their glaze is bluish green or bluish beige glaze, and it covers only their upper parts. The wares are jars with four grips and bowls. The ceramic products include 52 utensils and 123 construction materials. Among the utensils, two items are bowls, which are glazed on both interior and exterior. The glaze is red or brownish red. Twenty-five items are stoneware with rhombic designs. The remaining twenty-five items are regular earthenware baked under low firing temperature (Figure 4). The 123 construction materials are tiles, tile-ends, and bricks, which carry imprints of textiles, net design, comb design, geometric design, and imprints of coins. 11 wooden objects are discovered, one of which was lacquered. Every piece is cut out of a whole wood block. They are structure members, clogs, top-shaped object, spoon and comb.



Figure 1. On-the-spot excavation of Dongpailou site

Wooden Slips

The written slips found in Well No. 7 count altogether 426 pieces, among which 216 pieces bear inscriptions. By form and function, these slips fall into five categories. (Figures 5–11)

The first category is of the written slips. Most of them are intact, 23–23.5cm long and 1–2cm wide.

The second is of tablets, which are mostly broken,

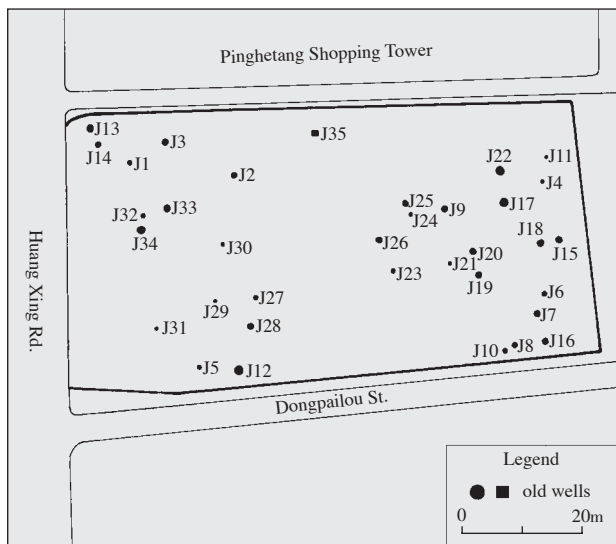


Figure 2. Illustration map of wells at Dongpaolou site

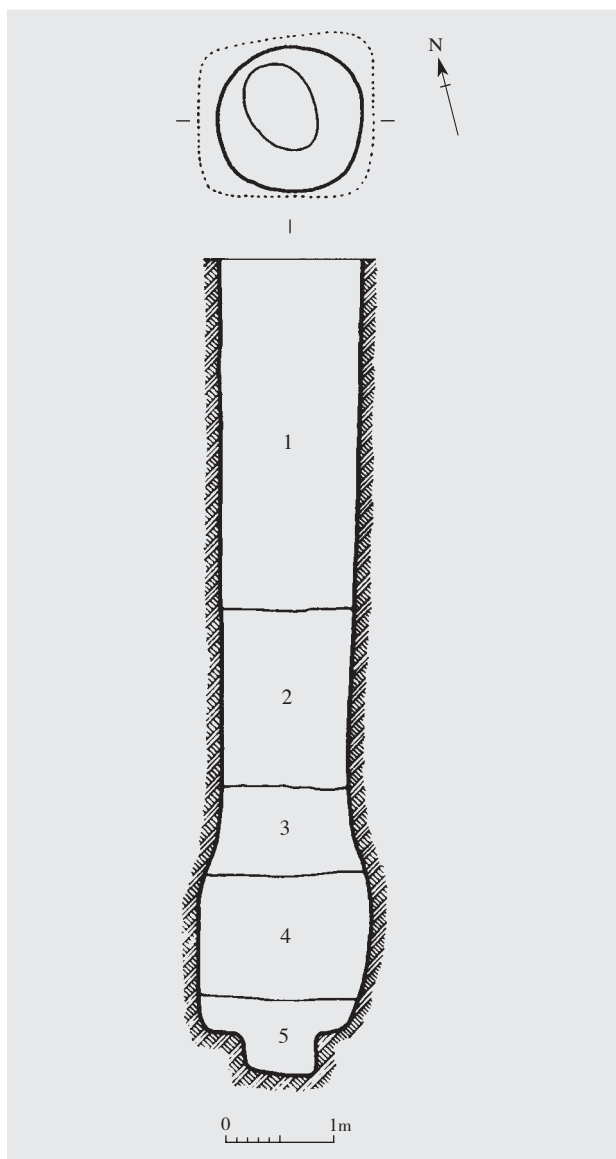


Figure 3. Plan and cross section of Well J7

20–24.5cm by 2.2–6.3cm in size.

The third is of sealing slips. Their shapes are quite diverse and three types can be singled out. Type A is trapezoid in shape and has sealing grooves in the middle. As an example, Item No. 1218 is 19.2cm long, 7.9cm wide, and 1.9cm thick (Figure 12:1). Type B is larger in size and takes the form of trough. The surface inside the trough is plain and written with characters. Item No. 1128 is 23.8cm long, 9cm wide, and 1cm thick in the middle and 3.1cm thick at either side (Figure 12:4). Type C is in the F-shape, and has three grooves at the thick side. Item No. 1129 is 17.5cm, 7.1cm wide, and 3.3cm thick (Figure 12:2).

The fourth category is of name-bearing slips, which are small in quantity and small in size. Item No. 1051 is 23.8cm long and 8cm wide (Figure 12:5).

The fifth is of tags, which are also small in quantity and small in size. Item No. 1197, carrying a small hole at one end, is 7.5cm long, and 4.3–4.6cm wide (Figure 12:3).

The sixth is irregular in shape. Slips of this category, all broken, have a mortise at one end and a hole at another. Item No. 1161 is 16.3cm long (incomplete) and 4.2cm wide (Figure 12:6).

Among inscriptions of these clips are found reign marks of Jianning 建宁 (AD 168–172), Xiping 熹平 (AD 172–178), Guanghe 光和 (AD 178–184), Zhongping 中平 (AD 184–189), all within the reign of Emperor Ling 灵帝. They should represent the dates of these slips.

The slips include dozens of sealing slips and stamps. Their inscriptions contain post related characters, such as “邮” (post), “亭” (station), “邮亭” (post station), “督邮” (post supervisor), “中部督邮” (central division post supervisor), “邮书掾” (post scribe), “诸亭” (stations), “平亭” (the Ping Station), “广乐亭” (the Guangle Station), “长兰亭” (the Changlan Station), “府朱掾家书” (family letter).

The majority of the slips, by content, are official documents, private letters, legal documents, demographic records, name lists, name cards, contracts, tags, accounts, and practice slips. These appear to resourceful historical material. Interesting pieces are one that is titled “临湘守令丞肃上言荆南地区频遇军寇文书” (officials at Linxiang reporting frequent encounters with armed bandits in the Southern Jingzhou region) (Figure 9:4), and another piece that is titled “监临湘李永, 例督盗贼段何言实核大男李建与精张净田自相和从书” (the superintendent of Linxiang Li Yong and security officer Duan He reporting that Danan Li Jian and

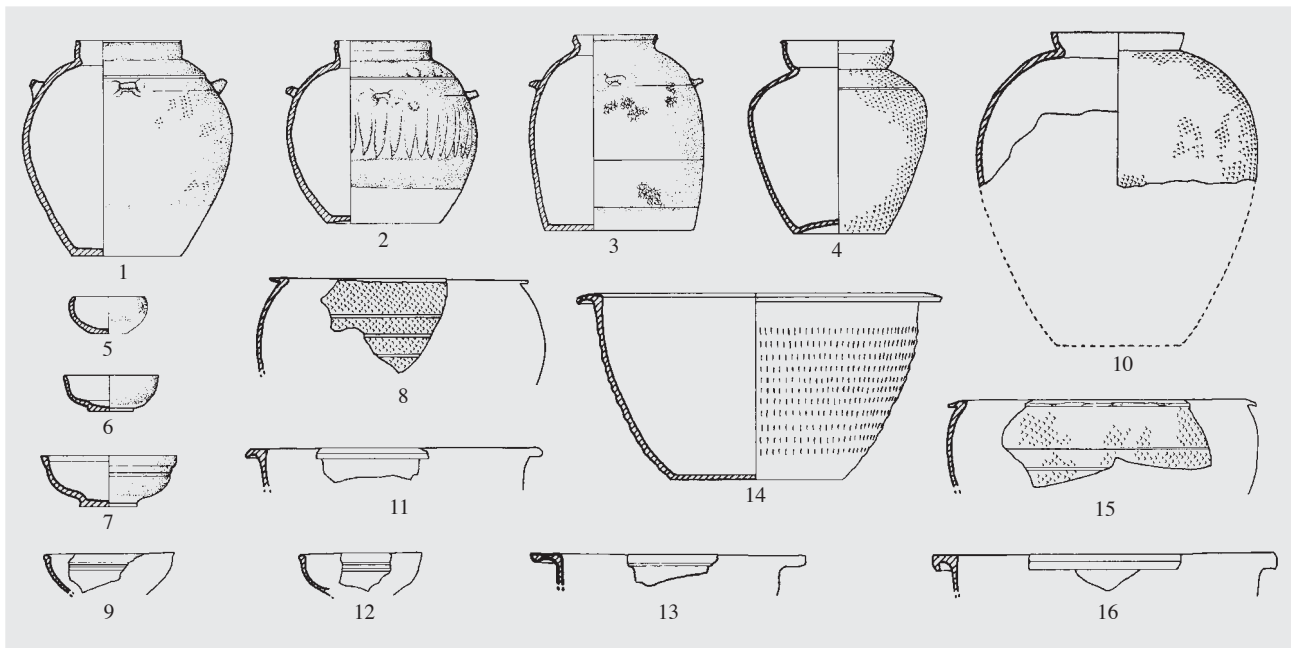


Figure 4. Earthen wares unearthed from Well J7 (Scales: 1/8)

1. Type AII celadon jar 2. Type AI celadon jar 3. Type B celadon jar 4. Type A hard ceramic jar 5. celadon bowl 6. Type B glazed ceramic bowl 7. Type A glazed ceramic bowl 8. Style II hard ceramic cauldron 9. Style I ceramic bowl 10. Type B hard ceramic jar 11. Style III ceramic basin 12. Style II ceramic bowl 13. Style IV ceramic basin 14. Style I ceramic basin 15. Style I hard ceramic cauldron 16. Style II ceramic basin



Figure 5. Written wooden slips from Well J7

1. No. 1124 (reverse side) 2. No. 1154 (reverse side) 3. No. 1164 (reverse side)



Figure 6. Written wooden slips from Well J7

1, 2. No. 1165 (obverse and reverse sides) 3. No. 1168 (obverse side) 4. No. 1169 (reverse side)

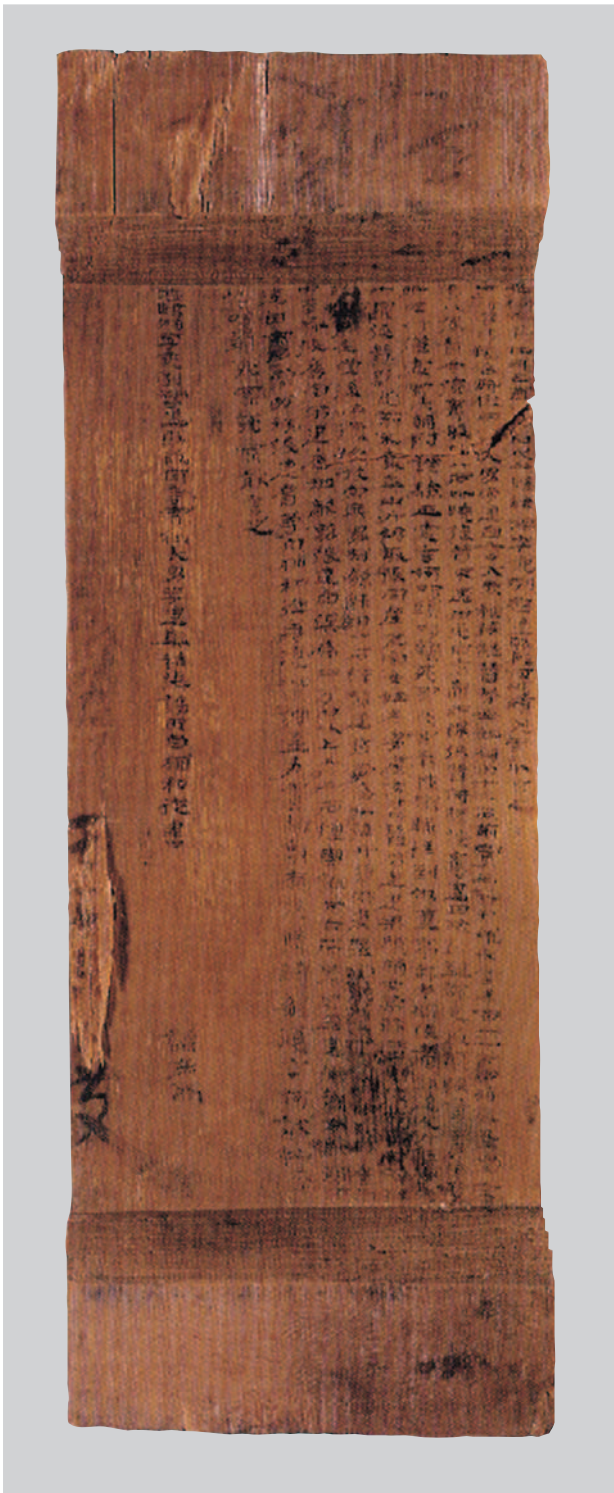


Figure 7. Written wooden slip from Well J7 (No. 1001)



Figure 8. Written wooden slip from Well J7 (No. 1003)



Figure 9. Written wooden slips from Well J7

1. No. 1063 (reverse side) 2. No. 1064 (reverse side) 3, 4. No. 1065 (obverse and reverse sides)

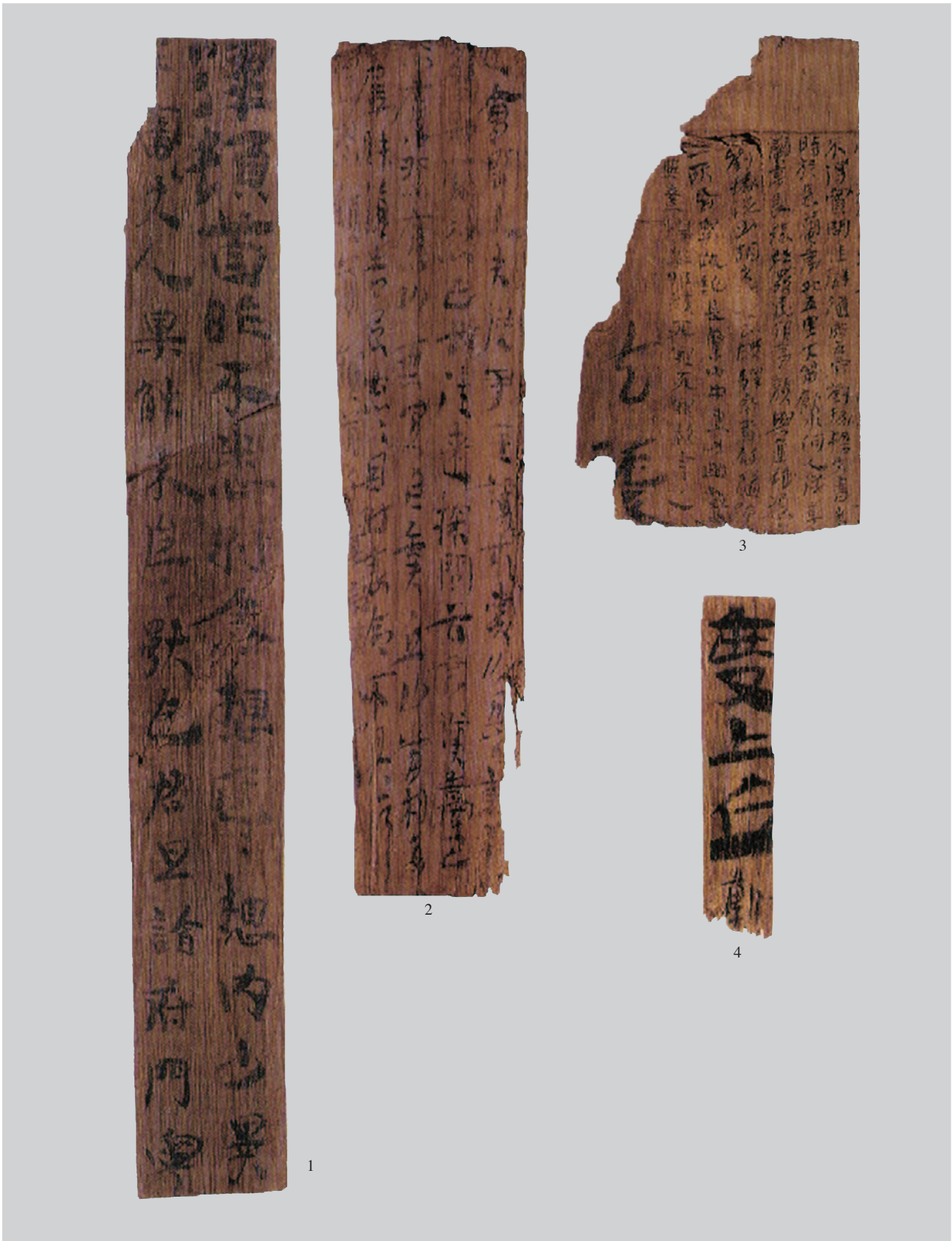


Figure 10. Written wooden slips from Well J7

1. No. 1068 (obverse side) 2. No. 1069 (reverse side) 3. No. 1075 (obverse side) 4. No. 1087 (obverse side)



Figure 11. Written wooden slips from Well J7
 1. No. 1104 2. No. 1105 3. No. 1106 (reverse side) 4. No. 1113 5. No. 1127

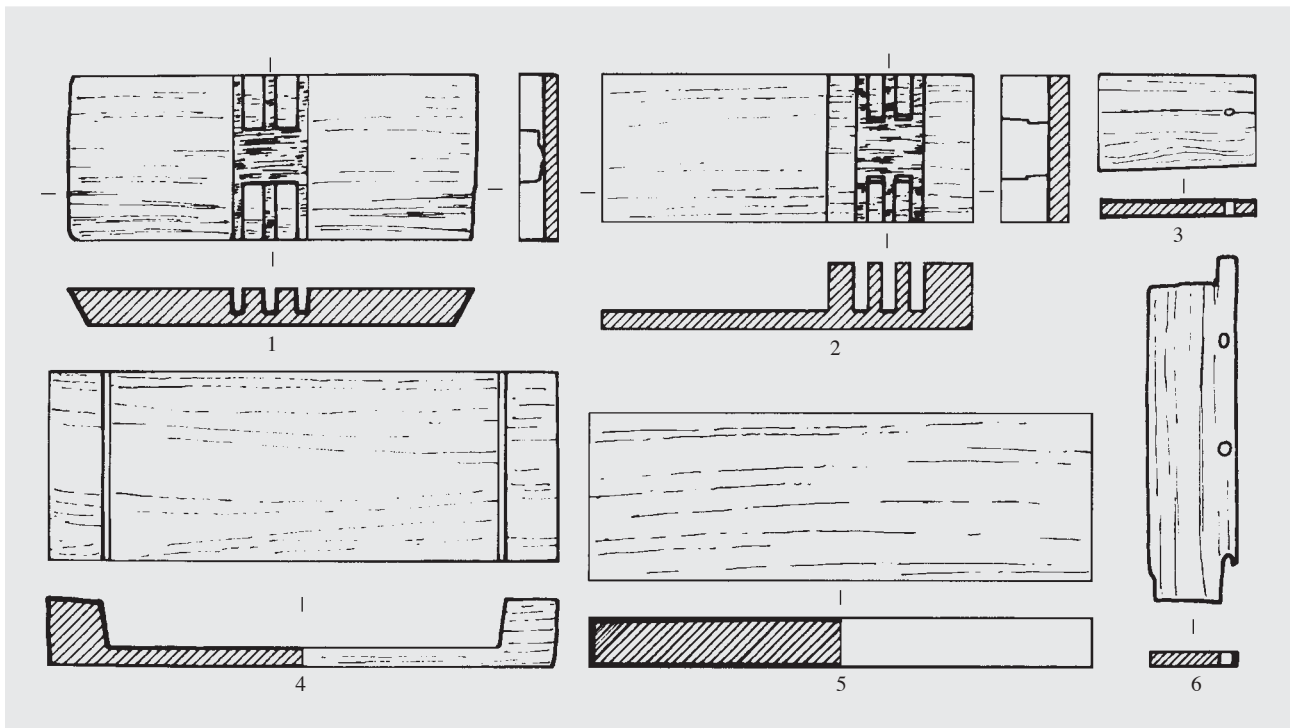


Figure 12. Types of written wooden slips (Scales: 1/4)

1. Type A sealing slip (No. 1218) 2. Type C sealing slip (No. 1129) 3. signature slip (No. 1197) 4. Type B sealing slip (No. 1128) 5. name-bearing slip (No. 1051) 6. irregular slip (No. 1161)

Jingzhang Zhengtian have settled their case themselves) (see Figure 5). Private letters, of both governmental officials and ordinary people, were written in the Zhang style of cursory calligraphy. The language and grammars used in these letters can be fascinating subjects of inquiry. Legal documents, one class of local governmental documents, register accusations and defenses, and criminal cases. The demographic records for the first time shows the existence of the “算卒” (*suan zu*, capitation and conscription) program (see Figure 9:5). Some contracts, bearing characters “同文” (duplicate), attest to duplicating of contracts, which is an interesting practice.

Conclusion

Having compared ceramic evidence with finds from Well No. 22 at Zoumalou 走马楼 in Changsha, Tomb M1 in Nanchang 南昌 County in Jiangxi 江西, Tomb M5035 in Guangzhou 广州, Tomb M18 at Chenjiadashan 陈家大山 in Huanggang 黄岗 City, Well No. 2 in Ezhou 鄂州, Tomb M11 in Hengyang 衡阳, and taken into consideration the datable slips, we come to the conclusion that Well No. 7 was used through the reigns of Emperor Huan 桓帝 and Emperor Ling 灵帝 and abandoned by

end of the reign of Emperor Ling and the beginning of the Three Kingdoms period.

Written slips from Well No. 7 are not particularly impressive in quantity, but they are very important. First of all, few written slips of the late Eastern Han have ever been found in the past and this discovery fills this gap. Secondly, the slips link up with those of the Wu Kingdom in both chronology and content, and they together form an unbroken history of calligraphy of this period. Thirdly, these slips include various types of slips and documents, which throw light into the document preparation, sealing, and posting methods of the time. Fourthly, the demographic record is the first discovery of its kind in its original form. The same claim can be made of the legal document “监临湘李永, 例督盗贼段何言实核大男李建与精张诤田自相和从书” (the superintendent of Linxiang Li Yong and security officer Duan He reporting that Danan Li Jian and Jingzhang Zhengtian have settled their case themselves),” the out-of-court settlement of which supplies an interesting case for the study of civil legal affairs of this period. Fifthly, the documents also provide fresh material for the study of Eastern Han calligraphy. It appears that the seal, clerical, cursory, and running, and normal styles found among them were all routinely used in local governmental

documentation. This is different from what we have learned from stelae and other isolated written documents of this period.

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Note: The original report, published in *Wenwu* 文物 (Cultural Relics) 2005.12: 4–21 with 17 figures and 8 photos, is written by He Xuhong 何旭红, He Jia 何佳, Wang Su 王素, and Huang Puhua 黄朴华. This summary is prepared by He Jia and Huang Puhua and English-translated by Zhang Liangren 张良仁.