

Preliminary Report on the Excavation at the Nanhebang Site in Jiaxing

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The Nanhebang 南河浜 site is located between the Yunxi 云西 and Nanzi 南子 Villages of the Daqiao 大桥 Township about 11km east to the Jiaxing 嘉兴 City. It is more than 2 ha in size and occupies an irregular tableland (3.5m to 4.9m above sea-level at the excavation area) about 2m higher than the surrounding lowland (2.3m above sea-level). The site was discovered in the spring of 1996. The Zhejiang Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology conducted a salvage excavation at two locations of the site (Location A and Location B) from late April to middle November in the same year.

The thick cultural deposit at Location A consists of 14 layers, within which were found 4 burials of the Liangzhu 良渚 culture, and 85 burials, 22 pits, 7 houses and an altar of the Songze 崧泽 culture.

Cultural deposit at Location B consists of 5 layers, within which were found one pit of the Shang to Zhou period, one pit of the Ming to Qing period and 7 burials and one pit of the Songze culture.

The excavation exposed an area of about 1000 sq m and unearthed more than 600 ceramic vessels, 64 jade objects, more than 80 stone objects and more than 10 objects made of bone, horn or tusk.

Stratigraphy

Nanhebang is a relatively large site with long occupation period. Our excavation just exposed a small part of the site. It is still difficult to yield a comprehensive understanding of the deposit and features of the whole site. Even just 30m away from each other, Location A and Location B are quite different in stratigraphy, reflecting the development and change of the site through time.

1. Location A

Location A occupies a relatively independent flat

tableland. The about 3m thick cultural deposit consists of 14 layers. Layer 1 is modern cultivated soil. Layer 2 is the deposit of the Ming to Qing period. Layer 3, the deposit of the Liangzhu culture, is only found in some test grids. Layers 4 to 14 are the deposit of the Songze culture.

2. Location B

Location B is on a tableland 30m east to Location A. The about 2.8m thick cultural deposit consists of 5 layers. Layer 1 is modern cultivated soil. Layer 2 is the deposit of the Ming to Qing period. Layers 3 to 5 are the deposit of the Songze culture.

The Altar and Burials of the Songze Culture

1. The altar

The altar and related burials of the Songze culture found at Location A are the most important discoveries at Nanhebang. The altar is a north-south orienting flat top rectangular earth platform whose section is trapezoid-shaped. Its southern part had been slightly destroyed. The remaining part is 10m from east to west and 10.5m from south to north on the top, 12.5m from east to west and 13m from south to north at the bottom, and 1m high. Two ash ditches, G1 and G2, were found around the northern and eastern sides of the altar. They might have close relationship to the construction and usage of the altar (Figures 1 and 2). The top of the altar was discovered under the Layer 2. The sloping sides of the altar were covered by Layers 4 and 5.

The altar had been constructed with different kinds of soil through time. Shapes of different soil layers can be clearly identified on the top and section of the altar. Based on the ash layer covering the sloping sides of the altar, we infer that the altar at least had been enlarged twice to its east and south. The original altar was made

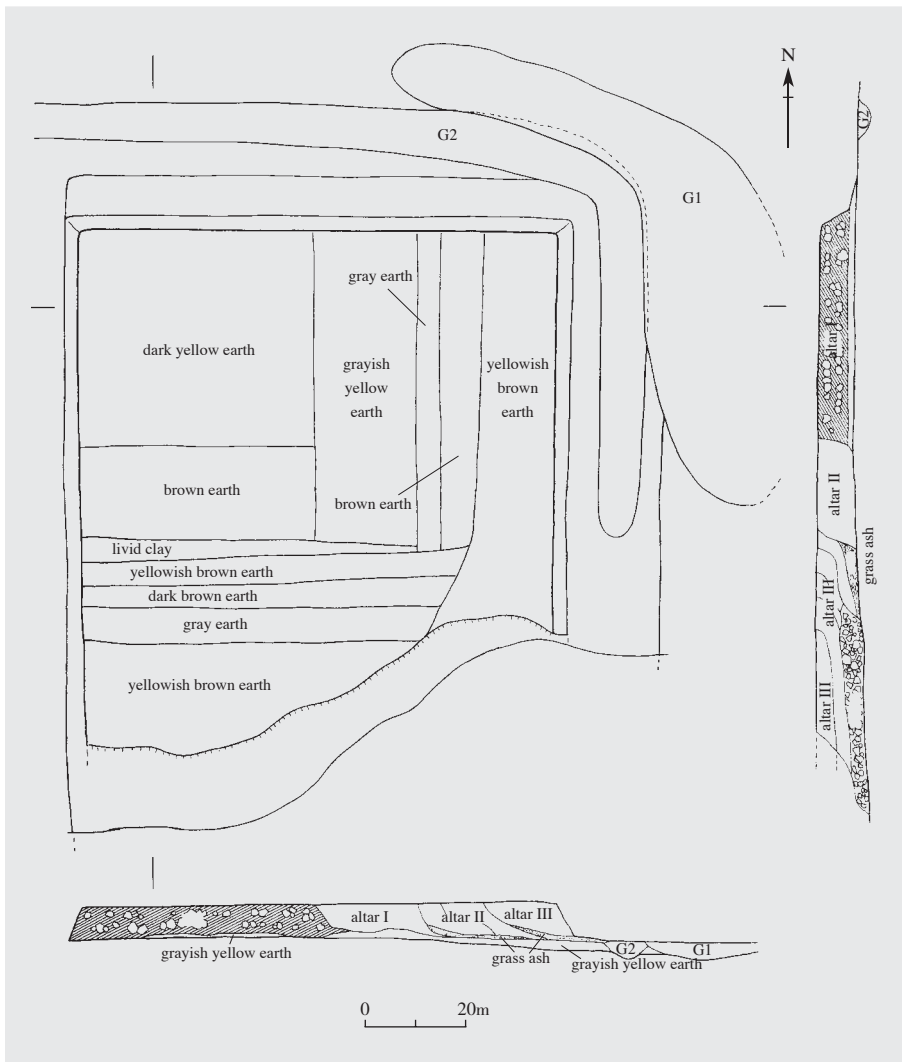


Figure 1. Plan and cross section of altar at Nanhebang site



Figure 2. The altar at Nanhebang site (photo taken from north to south)

of three kinds of soil and about 6×7 sq m in size. It was enlarged 0.5m southward with gray clay and 1.2m eastward with brown and gray clay after a period of usage. After another period of usage, the altar was enlarged southward and eastward again and formed the shape we discovered.

Soil for altar construction is relatively solid and pure with few impurities. The three kinds of soil for the construction of the original altar were rammed from the bottom to the top layer by layer at different parts of the altar. The boundary between each kind of soil is straight on the section of the altar, indicating that developed ramming technique might have been applied.

Besides the burials and pits of later period, no other features were found on the altar.

2. Burials

Totally 96 burials, including 92 Songze burials (M1–M31, M33–M52, M54–M87, M89–M91 and M93–M96) and 4 Liangzhu burials (M32, M53, M88, M92), were discovered at Locations A and B.

The 89 burials (M8–M96, including 4 Liangzhu burials) at Location A were discovered under three different layers. They might be contemporary to or later than the altar.

The 7 burials (M1–M7) at Location B were all discovered under Layer 3 and broke Layer 4.

Each Songze burial has a

small burial pit about 2m long and 0.6m wide. The largest burial has a burial pit 2.5m long, 0.8m wide and 0.4m deep. Majority of the burials at Location A head to 170–180°. Some burials (mainly earlier ones) head to the north. All the burials at Location B head to 350–360°.

Traces of wooden coffin were discovered in many burials. Burial offerings were often put within the coffin. Interestingly, offerings in big burials are usually extremely fragmentary, while offerings in small burials are relatively in good condition. Remains of red paint were discovered in many big burials. Finely made black ceramic vessels also often have red painting on the surface.

Types and position of burial offerings are different between the burials of the two locations. The *ding* 鼎 tripod, *dou* 豆 stemmed plate, cup, *hu* 壺 vessel, pot and basin are the typical ceramic vessels in burials at Location A. The *ding*, *dou* and pot were usually put beside the feet of the deceased, and the cup, *hu* and basin were usually beside the upper body or head. Some burials have jade and stone objects near the middle of the body of the deceased. Types of jade objects include *huang* 璜 ornament, bracelet, *yue* 钺 axe and small pieces of pendant. Types of stone objects include *yue* axe, adze, chisel and spindle wheel. Among the 7 burials at Location B, only M2 owns relatively abundant offerings. Ceramic vessels in these burials are usually incomplete. The *fu* 釜 vessels and *ding* tripods in burials M4–M7 were intentionally destroyed and put near the head or feet of the deceased.

The Songze burials exhibit clear hierarchy. High-rank burials usually have jade and stone objects and larger quantity of ceramic vessels. They are small in number and were mainly discovered in the upper and lower layers at Location A. Majority of the Songze burials just have several ceramic vessels and jade, stone objects. A few poorest burials, mainly discovered in the upper layers at Location A and at Location B, are small in size and only have one or two ceramic vessels. Some burials in the middle layers of Location A even have no offerings or just have incomplete skeleton. They are all at the western side of the altar and the deceased in them might have been buried during the performance of certain ritual ceremony on the altar. Here are three examples of the burials.

M5 was found under Layer 3 in grid T1 at Location B. Heading to the north, it is 2.25m long, 1.1m wide and 0.35m deep. The extended supine skeleton of the female deceased is in good condition. A disturbed skel-

eton of a child was found beside the right foot of the adult deceased. Only two ceramic offerings: a *fu* vessel and a *ding* tripod, were found (Figure 3).

M27 was found under Layer 2 in grid T401 at Location A. It was dug on the altar, heading to 180 degree, 2.53m long, 0.72 to 0.74m wide and 0.23m deep. Two layers of ash left by the decayed coffin were discovered at the bottom of the burial pit. The skeleton also had decayed. Twenty-three burials offerings were found, including 8 ceramic cups, 2 ceramic *dou* stemmed plates, 2 ceramic basins, 2 ceramic *ding* tripods, 2 ceramic turtles, 1 ceramic *hu* vessel, 1 ceramic spindle wheel and 5 jade objects. Red paint was discovered near the ceramic vessels (Figure 4).

M61 was discovered under Layer 5 in grid T301 at Location A. Heading to 160 degree, it is 2.5m long, 0.62m wide and 0.4m deep. The 17 to 20 years old male deceased has 11 burial offerings, including 1 ceramic pot, 1 ceramic *dou* stemmed plate, 1 ceramic *ding* tripod, 4 bone and tusk objects, 2 stone adzes, 1 jade *yue* axe and 1 jade ornament. Skeleton of a small dog was found between the feet of the deceased (Figure 5).

3. Burial offerings

More than 750 ceramic, jade, stone, bone, antler and tusk artifacts were found from the burials.

There are more than 600 ceramic artifacts, including *fu* vessel, *ding* tripod, *dou* stemmed plate, cup, basin, pot, lid, spindle wheel and turtle (Figures 6 and 7).

M5:1 is a typical *fu* vessel with a flared mouth 26.8cm in diameter, a straight neck, a flat belly, a round bottom.

A typical *ding* tripod has a straight mouth with the rim bending outside, a convex line around the belly, chisel-shaped feet and a lid. M29:5 is 15.6cm in mouth diameter and has four symmetric cockscomb-shaped handle on the rim. M29:6 is another example which is 12.4cm in mouth diameter. M61:11 is a *fu*-shaped *ding* tripod 14.7cm in mouth diameter with rectangular feet and a lid with 3 animal designs.

A typical *dou* stemmed plate has a high thick or thin ring-foot, some have a lid. M27:11 is a thin ring-foot *dou* with four symmetric flat triangle knobs on the rim and 14.4cm in mouth diameter. M27:12 is a *dou* with a thick and relatively short ring-foot, four symmetric turtle-claw-shaped knobs decorated by fish-design on the rim and 21cm in mouth diameter. It has a lid with awl-point designs.

M29:7 is a typical *hu* vessel with a flared mouth, a curved shoulder, a curved belly, a low petal-shaped ring-

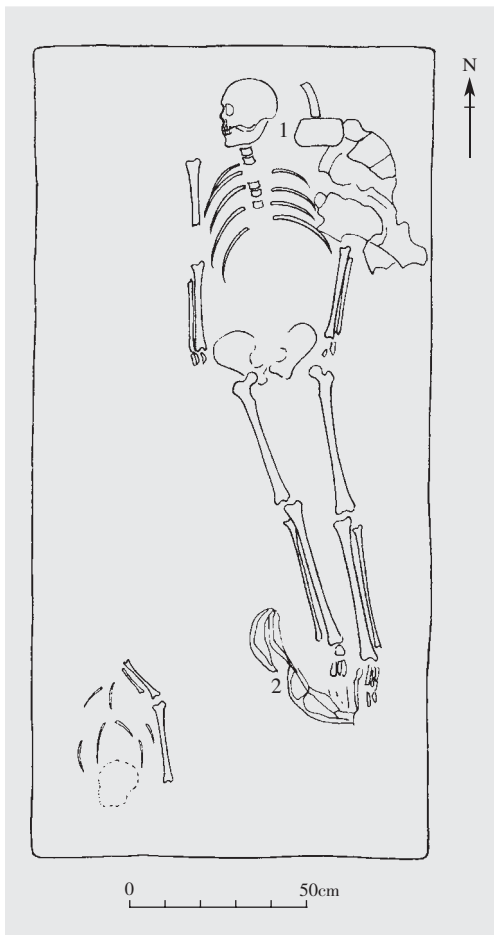


Figure 3. Plan of tomb M5

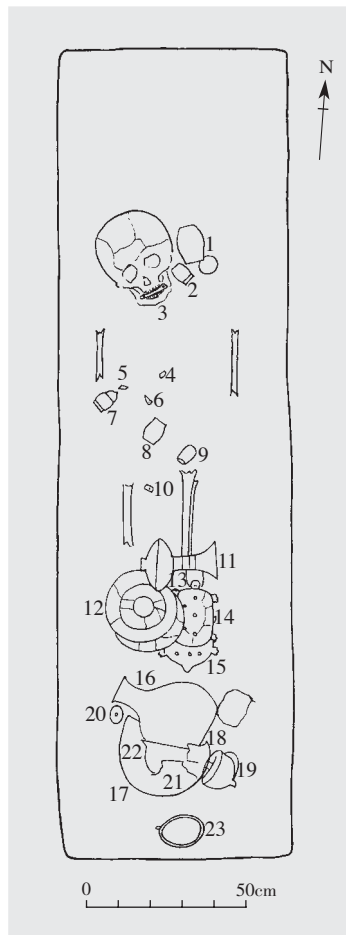


Figure 4. Plan of tomb M27

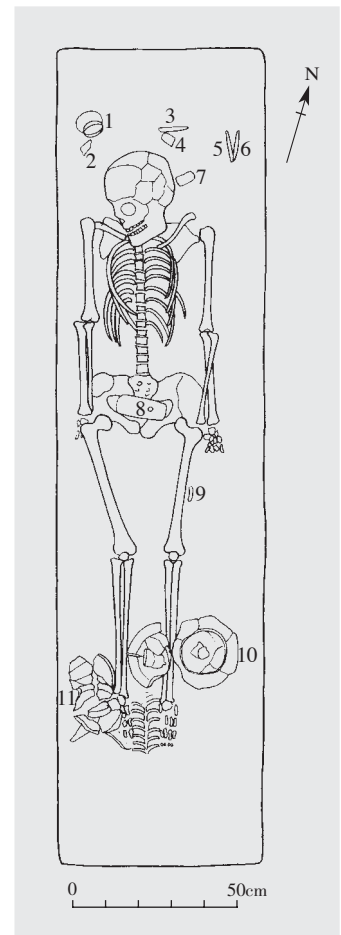


Figure 5. Plan of tomb M61

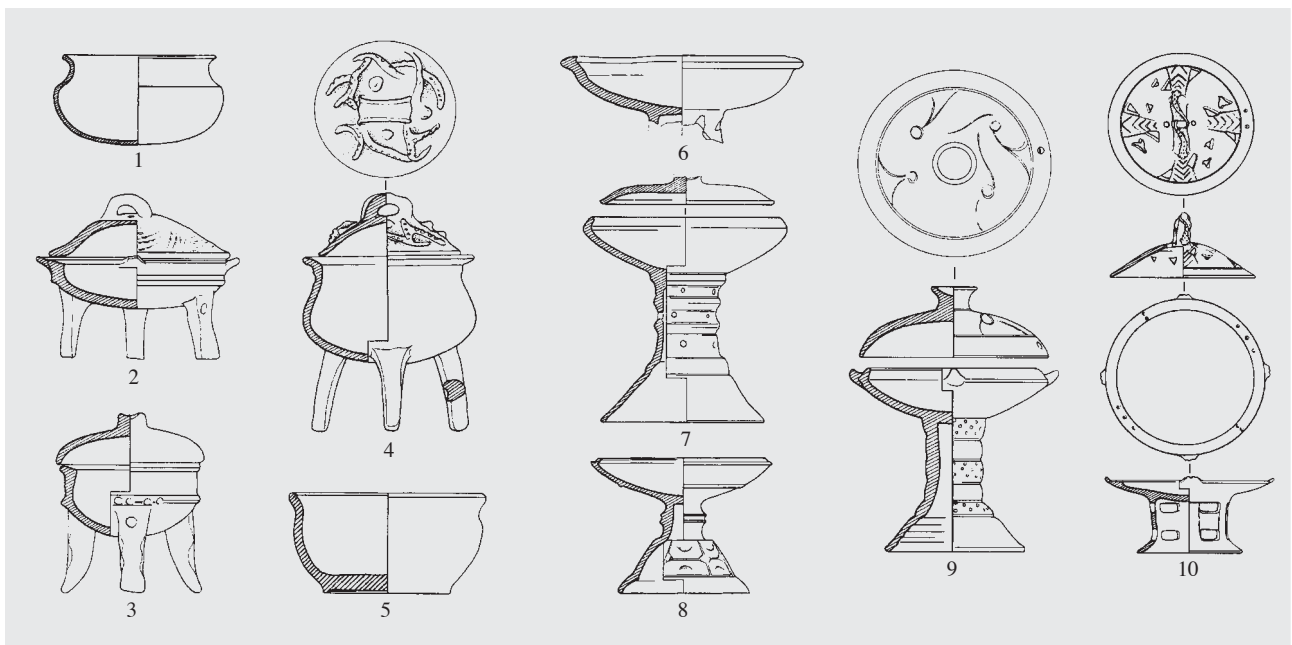


Figure 6. Ceramic wares from Nanhebang site

1. fu vessel 2-4. ding tripods 5. basin 6-8, 9. dou stemmed plates with a thin ring-foot 10. dou stemmed plate with a thick ring-foot (1. 1/12; 10. 1/9; all others 1/6)

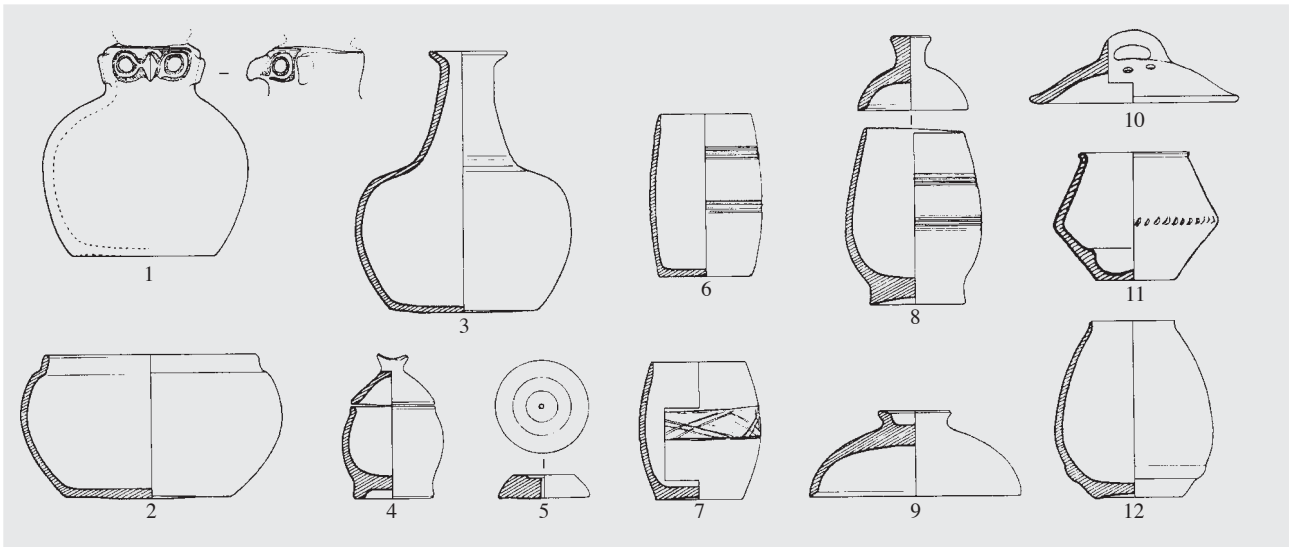


Figure 7. Ceramic wares from Nanhebang site

1. hu vessel decorated with an owl head 2. basin 3. hu vessel 4, 6–8, 12. cups 5. spindle whorl 9. lid 10. lid of ding tripod 11. guan jar (Scales: 2, 3. 1/8; all others 1/4)



Figure 8. Ceramic hu vessel



Figure 9. Hu vessel with a tower-shaped false ring-foot

foot and 20.4cm in height (Figure 8). M27:16 has a thin neck, a flat belly and is 28.6cm high. M29:8 is a tower-shaped *hu* vessel which is 20cm high and has a flat belly and a false ring-foot. Its incomplete rectangular upper part has round, triangle openwork designs (Figure 9). M15:2 has a straight mouth, a round belly, a flat bottom, a clay eagle-head on the neck and is 11.6cm high.

Two ceramic turtles were discovered in burial M27, each has a flat oval body, round head and six feet. M27:14,

which is 18.3cm long, has 9 nipples on the back yet no tail. The 25.8cm long M27:15 was discovered under M27:14 with its back on the ground. It has 11 nipples on the back and a point tail with two round holes (Figure 10).

Types of jade objects include *jue* 玦 earring, *huang* ornament, pendant, *yue* axe and other ornaments. Bone awls, bone arrowheads and stone adzes were found in some burials.



Figure 10. Ceramic turtle

Conclusion

The stratigraphical and typological research on artifacts both indicate that the Songze people had continually lived at Nanhebang for a long time. The thick cultural

deposit and various contexts provide reliable stratigraphical evidence for our study on the typological changes of artifacts through time. The site contains the remains of all the phases of the Songze culture, which was just between the earlier Majiabang 马家浜 culture and the later Liangzhu culture in the Lower Yangtze River valley. Based on previous radiocarbon dates of the Songze culture and typological study on pottery, we infer that the absolute date of the Songze assemblage at Nanhebang is between 6000 to 5100 BP.

The Songze assemblage at Nanhebang can be divided into two periods or five phases. Typical pottery of the early period include *ding* tripod, *fu* vessel, *dou* stemmed plate, pot, *hu* vessel, settler, sandy vat and stand of *fu* vessel. Typical pottery of the late period include *ding* tripod, *dou* stemmed plate, pot, *hu* vessel, cup, and sandy vat.

Stone adze and chisel are also different in shape between the early and late periods. Adze and chisel of the early period usually have thin upper part and thick lower part. On the contrary, those of the late period have thick upper part and thin lower part.

The Nanhebang site is another important discovery of the Songze culture after the excavation of the Songze site. Besides the systematical data of each phase of the Songze culture, the fieldwork at Nanhebang also found the first altar of the Songze culture and demonstrates the close relationship between the altar and the burials.

Note: The original paper, published in *Wenwu* 文物 (Cultural Relics) 2005.6: 4–15 with 19 figures and 6 plates, is written by Liu Bin 刘斌 and Jiang Weidong 蒋卫东. This summary is prepared by Liu Bin and English-translated by Li Xinwei 李新伟.