

The Royal Palace and Government Office Sites of the Nanyue Kingdom in Guangzhou

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The royal palace and government office sites of the Nanyue Kingdom lie on the northern side of western Sun Yat-sen IV Road in Guangzhou City, where archaeologists repeatedly discovered important cultural remains of the Nanyue Kingdom under the Western Han Dynasty. In the former Children's Park, a part of large-sized pal-

ace complex of the Nanyue Kingdom was discovered in 2000. Soon the Guangzhou Municipal Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, the Institute of Archaeology of CASS and the Preparatory Office of the Museum of Nanyue Royal Palace organized jointly the Nanyue Kingdom Palace and Government Office Sites Archaeological Team, which began excavation there in 2003, with an area of about 3,900m² opened in that year (Figure 1).

Stratigraphic Deposits

The sites contain rather complex stratigraphic deposits, which measure generally over three meters in thickness, even reaching five meters for some spots in the south. Below is the eastern wall of Square IT806 for example.

Stratum 1 is 0.2–0.3m thick and now directly beneath current buildings.

Stratum 2 is a layer of gray soil 0.1–0.18m deep and 0.45–0.58m thick. It is divided into three sub-layers: 2A, 2B and 2C, which measure 0.2–0.3m, 0.2–0.3m and 0–0.08m respectively in thickness, with the former two belonging to the late Qing to Republican period and the latter one left over from the auxiliary building foundations of the Buzhengsi Office (provincial administration) of Qing period Guangdong.

Stratum 3 is a 0.58–0.66m deep and 0.2–0.4m thick layer of grayish-brown soil.

Stratum 4 is similar to the third layer in texture, color and content, and has a depth of 0.8–1.04m and a thickness of 0–0.18m. Both of them are layers of leveling earth paved at the turn between the late Ming and the early Qing.

Stratum 5 is formed of gray soil 0.9–1.05m deep and 0.55–0.7m thick. It falls into Sub-layers 5A and 5B, which measure 0.16–0.25m and 0.4–0.6m respectively

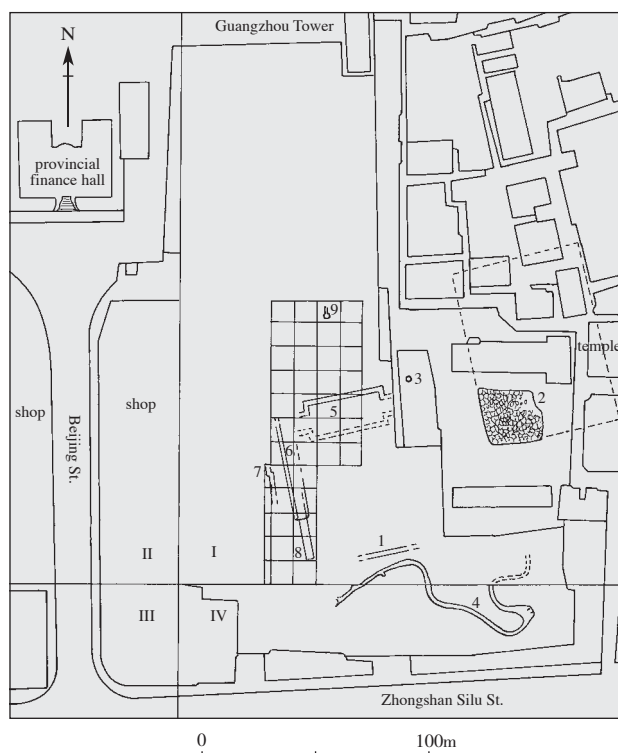


Figure 1. Map of the vestiges on the Nanyue Kingdom palace and government office sites

1. brick-and-stone-paved path (excavated in 1975)
2. stone pool (excavated in 1995)
3. brick well (excavated in 1996)
4. winding stone ditch of the Royal Park (excavated in 1997)
5. palace I
6. corridor I
7. palace II
8. brick-and-stone-paved path
9. wooden well

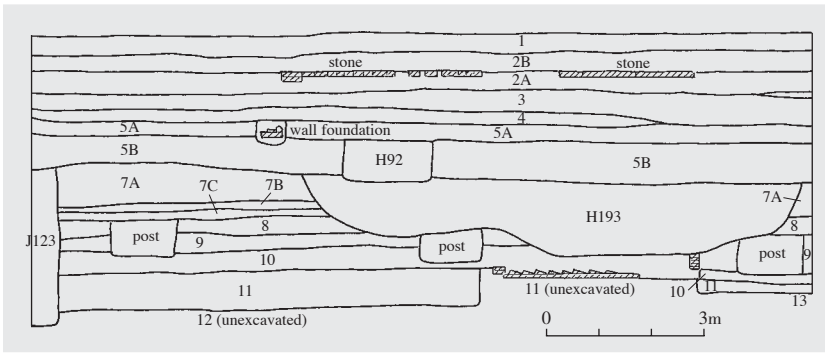


Figure 2. Section of the eastern wall of excavation square IT806

1. building foundations and leveling earth of modern times 2A and 2B. deposits of modern times since the late Qing period 2C. building foundations and leveling earth of the Qing period 3 and 4. building foundations and leveling earth at the turn from the late Ming to the early Qing 5A and 5B. building foundations and leveling earth of the Ming period 7A. cultural layer of the Song period 7B and 7C. leveling earth of late Song period buildings 8. cultural layer of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period 9. leveling earth of a late Tang building-platform 10. building foundations and leveling earth of the Tang period 11. building foundations and leveling earth of the Jin and Southern Dynasties period 12. cultural layer of the Eastern Han period 13. cultural layers of the Nanyue Kingdom period

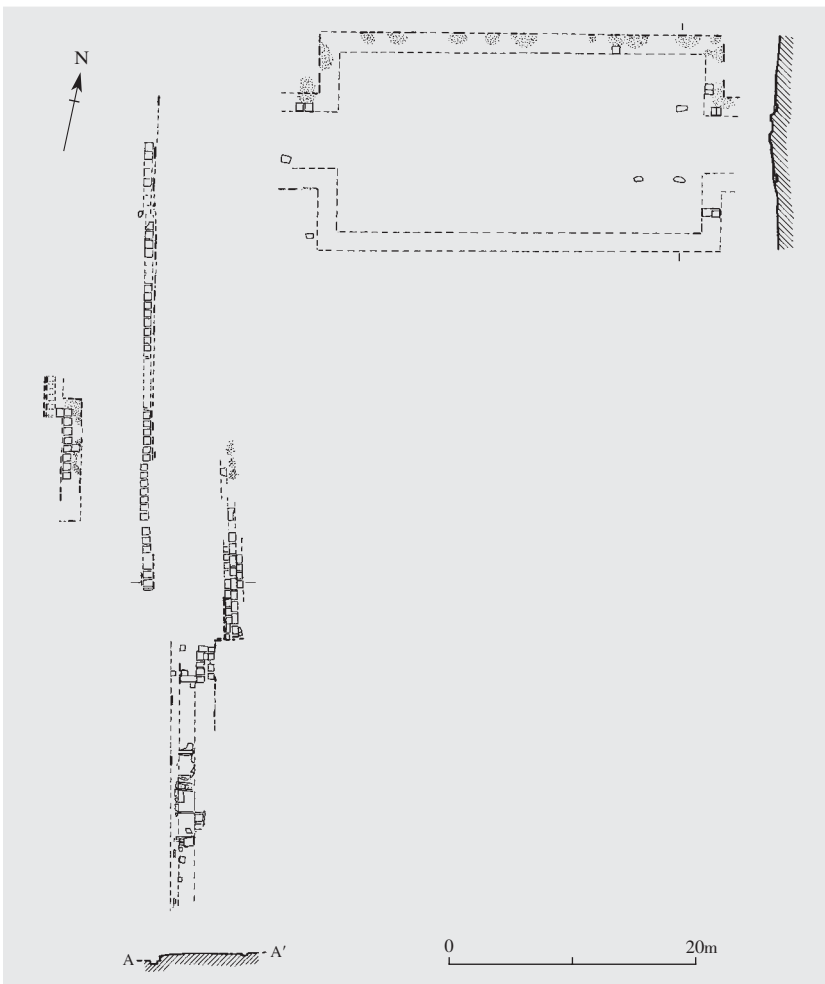


Figure 3. Map of the building vestiges of the Nanyue Kingdom period

in thickness.

Stratum 6 is absent in this excavation square. It occurs mainly in the south of the excavated area and belongs to the Yuan period.

Stratum 7 is a Song period cultural layer and a leveling earth layer for a building ground, and yielded celadon and white porcelain shards and bronze “Huang Song Tong Bao” coins. It measures 1.5–1.8m in depth and 0.48–0.72m in thickness, and falls into three sub-layers.

Stratum 8 contains grayish-brown soil. It has a depth of 2.2m and a thickness of 0.2–0.24m, and belongs to the Southern Han State.

Stratum 9 is formed of yellowish-brown and grayish-black soil layers that are superimposed upon each other. It measures 2.4–2.45m in depth and 0.18–0.52m in thickness, and functioned in the late Tang period as a leveling earth layer for large-sized buildings.

Stratum 10 is grayish-brown in color and is formed of a leveling earth layer and edge-covering bricks of a platform of Tang period Building F129. It yielded a small quantity of Southern Dynasties and Tang periods tile fragments and celadon shards. Depth 2.6–2.94m, and thickness 0.12–0.3m.

Stratum 11 contains reddish-brown soil with burnt clay grains and charcoal scraps. It is the remains of an earth-leveled and brick-paved platform of Building F138 of the Jin and Southern Dynasties periods and yielded some ceramic shards and tile fragments of that time. Depth 2.88–3.08m.

Stratum 12 is an Eastern Han cultural layer with a depth of 3.4m. The revealed part is entirely in the north of the square and has not been excavated.

Stratum 13 is a cultural layer of the Nanyue Kingdom under the Western Han Dynasty. Depth 3.2m. It was discovered only in the south of the square and no excavation has been made for its investigation (Figure 2).

Vestiges

The main findings are Palaces I and II, Corridor I and a brick-and-stone-paved road (Figure 3).

1. Palace I (F24) It lies in the east of the whole excavation area and was excavated in 2000. The foundations have a rectangular plan, major axis pointing to the west and east with an azimuth of 348.7°. At the western and eastern ends are two passageways in a symmetrical layout (Figure 4).

The platform is 30.2m long from the west to the east, 14.4m wide from the north to the south, and 434.88m² in area. The east of the present-day remains is 0.46m higher than the brick edge-coverings of the apron; the surface bears a layer of reddish-brown rammed earth with a large amount of red-burnt earth grains, and keeps a spot of floor with clear traces of firing. The other finds include three column plinths, which are roughly rectangular, 75–95cm long and 45–54cm wide. They are arranged in a regular layout, with the west-to-east interval between Plinths 2 and 3 measuring 3.3m (for the central point, below is the same); the north-to-south one between Plinths 1 and 2, 5.8 m, and that between either of them and the eastern brick edge-covering, 4.3m. Round the platform, some odd bricks for edge covering were found standing on the edge; and an apron extends beyond them.

The apron is better preserved on the northern side of the platform and in the north of the western and eastern sides; and these sections show identity in structure. It is 1.5m wide and is bordered by tenoned long narrow bricks standing on the edge and paved with gravels 5cm in diameter that form a 0.7m wide strip. Inside the gravel strip, near the platform edge, is a pavement of large-sized impressed design bricks, which are slightly inclined down to the outside (Figure 5).

The passageways are furnished at the western and eastern ends of the palace. Their revealed parts measure about 3.5m in length and 4.5m in width. The western way must

have been joined with Corridor I.

2. Palace II It is located on the western side of Corridor I, with an azimuth of 348.7°. The excavation covered only its southeastern corner and a part of the brick covering of the platform edge. The apron outside the brick covering is the same as the platform of Palace I in structure and material, and measures 1.48–1.50m in width and 11.56m in length for the revealed section (Figure 6).

3. Corridor I It extends between Palaces I and II and points to the north and south with an azimuth of 348.7°. The revealed part is 44.05m long and 5.94m wide, inclining down from the north to the south; the platform-foundations measure 0.16–0.35m in remaining height; their edges are covered with bricks standing on the edge (Figure 6). The western apron is paved with a sloping column of square impressed design bricks and furnished with a floor drain and a covered wooden trough (Figure 7). The eastern apron is partly paved with sloping rectangular bricks with impressed design and is joined with an open ditch built of curved-groove bricks, which leads to a stone-grid floor drain at the southern end (Figure 8).

4. Brick and Stone Path It extends and inclined down from the end of Corridor I to the south. The revealed section is 22.2m long and 3.5m wide. The middle strip is paved with sandstone slabs and flanked by brick pavements, which are bordered with long narrow stones or bricks standing on the edge (Figure 9).

In addition to the above-described vestiges, there is a



Figure 4. Western side of Palace I of the Nanyue Kingdom period (photo taken from west to east)



Figure 6. Palace II and Corridor I of the Nanyue Kingdom period
(photo taken from north to south)

Figure 5. Western apron of Palace I of the Nanyue Kingdom period
(photo taken from south to north)



Figure 7. Western apron and floor drain of Corridor I of the Nanyue Kingdom period (photo taken from south to north)



Figure 8. Open ditch and floor drain of the Nanyue Kingdom period (photo taken from south to north)

square wooden well (J228) of the Nanyue Kingdom period about 31m north of Palace I. It is joined to the wooden trough on the northern side (see Figure 1).

Unearthed Objects

1. Building Materials They are mainly various types of bricks, tiles and tile-ends.

The bricks are quite a lot in number. All of them are clay in body. They are largely used for paving the ground, covering platform edges, bordering aprons and building drains. In shape and size they fall into large and small square, large and small rectangular, long narrow, triangular and grooved types (Figure 10).

The large square bricks are usually yellowish-white and occasionally grayish-white. They measure about 70cm in side length and 10–15cm in thickness. The obverse is decorated with mold-made rhomboid, triangular and other geometrical designs. The edges and reverse often bear pricked conic pits varied in size, a few of which even passing through the brick body. Brick I H389:21 is 65cm long for each side and 11–13cm thick, with pricked pits about 3.4cm in diameter.

The small square bricks do not occur so frequently. Those of the apron pavement on the western side of Corridor I, for example, have a yellowish-white clay body and bear, on the obverse, a mold-made double-line rhomboid motif filled with four leaves as the main design, which is bordered also with double-line rhomboid pattern. They are 36cm long in each side and 5–6cm in thickness.

The large rectangular bricks are largely yellowish-white and partly grayish-white. Take those of the pavement on the eastern apron of Corridor I for example. They have a yellowish-white clay body and bear, on the obverse, double-line rhomboid design as the central motif, which is surrounded by triangular or double-line rhomboid pattern, and, on the four edges and reverse, pricked conical pits. Length 73cm, width 10cm, thickness 10cm, and pit diameter 2.5–3cm.

The small rectangular bricks are all clay-made in body and grayish-white in color. They are plain, bear traces of glazing on the surface in a few cases and generally measure 36cm in length, 34cm in width and 4cm in thickness.

The long narrow bricks are also clay-made and grayish-white. They are plain, with tenons and usually 64–66cm long, 22cm wide and 5–6cm thick.

The triangular bricks are very small in number. IG41:1 is grayish-white and has a clay body. It bears a mold-



Figure 9. Brick-and-stone-paved path of the Nanyue Kingdom period (photo taken from south to north)

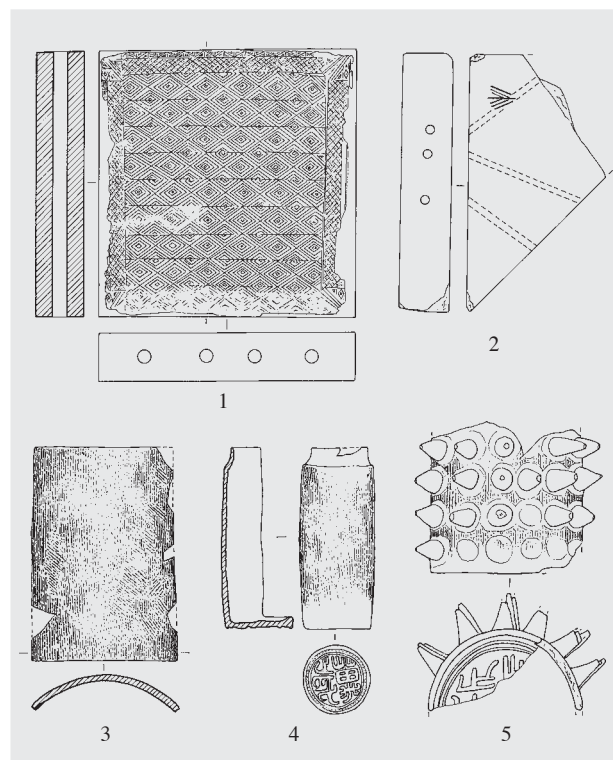


Figure 10. Objects of the Nanyue Kingdom period
1. large square brick (IH389:21) 2. triangular brick (IG41:1)
3. flat tile (IT406^⑬:18) 4. cylindrical tile (IT807^⑬:3)
5. nailed tile (IT206^⑬:7) (Scale: 5. 1/5; the rest 1/10)

made double-line rhomboid design on the obverse and no decorations on the edges and reverse but a round-section hole passing through the length of the body. Remaining length 62.8cm, thickness 13cm and hole diameter 1.6–2cm.

The grooved bricks are yellowish-white, clay-made, plain-surfaced, and with a curved section. They are made exclusively for laying open ditches. Length 94cm, width 58cm, thickness 9cm, and groove depth about 10cm.

The flat tiles IT406⑬:18 is yellowish-white, and has a ring-built sandy clay body. It is large in size and regular in form. The obverse is decorated with vertical course cord marks and with crisscross ones in some zones; and the reverse, with impressed dot pattern. The total tile length 50.2cm, width 34.5cm, and thickness 1.2cm.

The cylindrical tiles IT807⑬:3 has a ring-built yellowish-white sandy clay body. The obverse is decorated with fine, compact vertical cord marks, and the reverse with coarse dot pattern. It is 42cm long, 17.5cm wide and 0.9–1.2cm thick. In the front is a tile-end, and traces of hand smearing remain at the joint. In the center are the mold-impressed characters “Wan Sui” (longevity). The obverse is 16cm in diameter, 0.8–0.85cm in edge width and 0.8cm in central thickness.

The nailed-tiles IT206⑬:7 has a yellowish-white sandy clay body and bears fine, close vertical cord marks and conical pottery nails (remaining 17 pieces in six rows) on the obverse, and is decorated with dot pattern on the reverse. It is broken and remains 17.4cm in length, 18.2cm in width and 1cm in thickness. A tile-end is attached to the front with traces of hand smearing still seen at the joint. In the center remains upper half of the mold-impressed inscription “Wan Sui”(longevity) in seal script in relief, and the rim is decorated with raised bow-string pattern in two circles. Face diameter 18cm

and central thickness 0.8cm.

Tile-ends The “Wan Sui” -inscribed tile-ends number quite a lot. They have a round face and a narrow rim. The characters “Wan Sui” (longevity) in the center are in seal script in relief, and without dividing lines but two circles of raised bow-string pattern in the periphery. On the reverse remain traces of cutting and two symmetric semi-holes. IT405⑬:26 is yellowish-white and clay-bodied, and measures 17cm in face diameter and 0.8cm in central thickness. IT406⑬:14 is reddish-brown, sandy-clay-made, and 18cm and 0.9cm in face diameter and central thickness respectively (Figure 11).

2. Pottery Inscriptions They were discovered quite often and fall into two types: pat-impressed and stamped. The former are generally seen on the reverse of flat and cylindrical tiles and largely difficult to discern as overlapping each other. The latter occur on both the obverse and the reverse usually single or double. Some inscriptions are made in a corner of bricks or on the surface of pottery objects. Below are examples of different inscriptions (Figure 12).

“Zuo Guan Nu Dan (Shou ?),” bordered with a sub-quadrate frame 2.8cm long and 2.5cm wide (IA389:20).

“You □ Nu Shun” with a square frame 2.5cm long for each side (IT305⑬:13).

“Gong,” quite a lot in number (IT305⑬:7).

“Ju Shi,” quite a lot in number, with a sub-quadrate border, largely 2.8cm long for each side.

“Zuo Guan Zu Yin,” with a sub-quadrate frame, each side 2.8cm long and 2.3cm wide (IT306⑬:1).

“Wei Yang,” stamped on an outer-rim shard of a pottery jar (IT205⑬:1), with a square frame, which measures 2.2cm long in each side and 2cm in remaining width.

“Hua Yin Gong,” stamped on a pottery vessel-cover (IT404⑬:1), close to the knob, with a rectangular frame 3.8cm long and 3.6cm wide.

Conclusions

The excavation of the important remains of the Nanyue Kingdom’s Palaces I and II, Corridor I and brick-and-stone path clarified on the whole the scope and structure of the palace-platforms and provided some knowledge of the layout and features of the buildings in the palace area.

Firstly, the main part of the palace area may have been in the west or northwest of the Royal Park, covering the territory of the present-day New Daxin Company on Beijing Road. Secondly, in the building and

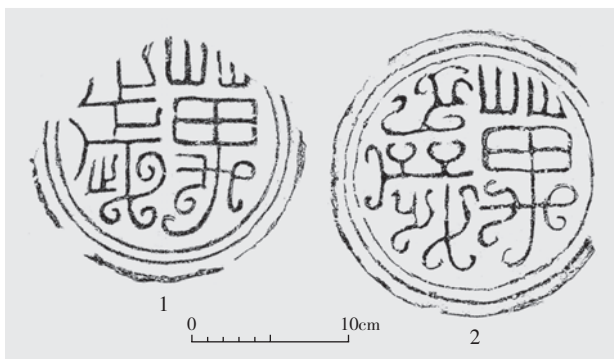


Figure 11. Rubbings of “Wan Sui” -inscribed tile-ends of the Nanyue Kingdom period
1. IT405⑬:26 2. IT406⑬:14

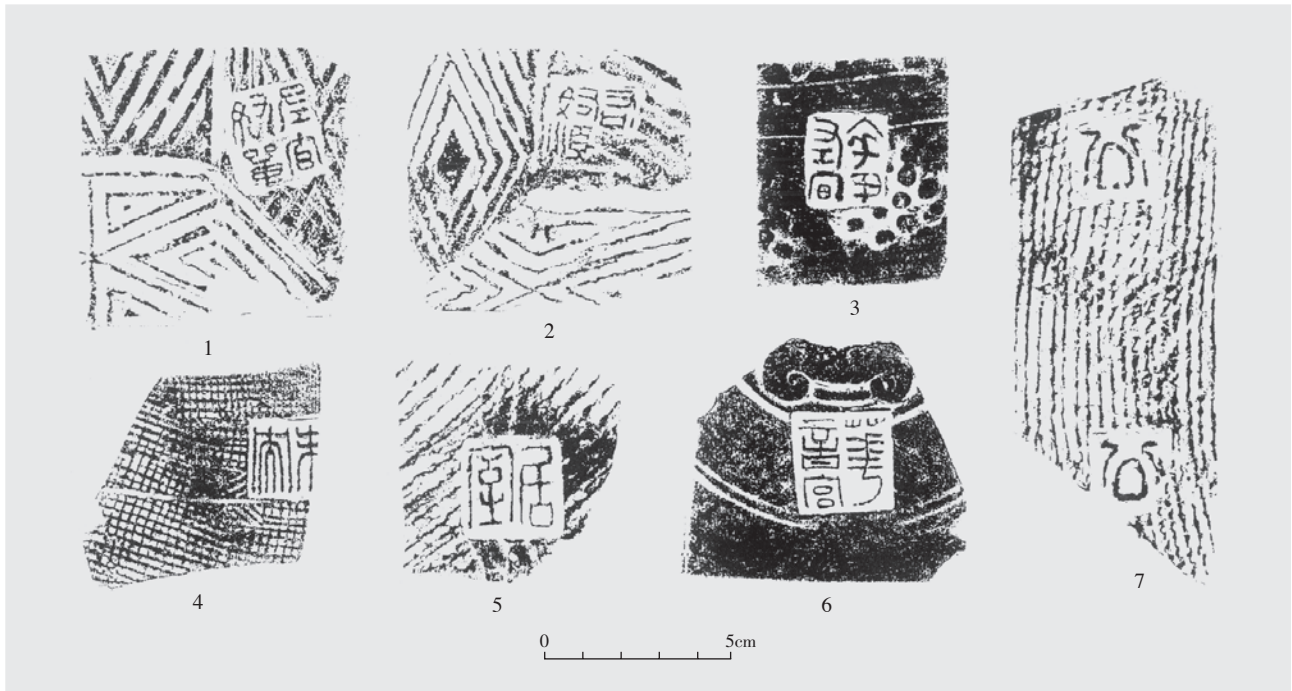


Figure 12 Rubbings of Pottery Inscriptions of the Nanyue Kingdom Period

1. “Zuo Guan Nu Dan (Shou ?)” (IH389:20) 2. “You □ Nu Shun” (IT305^⑬:13) 3. “Zuo Guan Zu Yin” (IT306^⑬:1) 4. “Wei Yang” (IT205^⑬:1) 5. “Ju Shi” 6. “Hua Yin Gong” (IT404^⑬:1) 7. “Gong” (IT305^⑬:7)

layout of palaces, the Nanyue Kingdom, on one hand, followed the urban architecture of the Central Plains, and, on the other, developed its own features, such as the characteristics of the Region South of the Five Ridges embodied in the plan of palaces and the layout of palaces and pool gardens. Thirdly, pottery and wooden water supplying and draining systems, aprons and open ditches, and pottery, wooden and stone floor and covered drains have been discovered a lot, which, along with the direction of the water floating of stone pools and the Winding Ditch in the Royal Park, suggests that the royal palaces and government offices of the Nanyue Kingdom were constructed with great attention paid to the design and building of supplying and draining systems. Fourthly, the basic identity of the “Wan Sui” tile-ends and cord-mark tiles from these important vestiges with those from the Winding Ditch of the Royal Park indicates that the two groups of buildings were close in their dates of function and abandonment. Fifthly, the stamped inscriptions “Hua Yin Gong” and “Wei Yang” again evidence that the Nanyue Kingdom may have followed the Central Plains also in the building and naming of

royal palaces and parks as previously inferred on the basis of the excavation results of the Nanyue king tomb.

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