

The Shang Building Remains at Xiaomintun in Anyang City

Yinxu Xiaomintun Archaeological Team

Key words: Anyang City, Henan Province; Xiaomintun; Shang Dynasty; building remains

Xiaomintun is located on the western section of the Yinxu Cultural Relics Protected Zone. Approximating 220 000m², previous discoveries here have included tombs and evidence of bronze casting activity. Between April 2003 and May 2004, members of the Institute of Archaeology (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) and the Henan Provincial Institute of Archaeology jointly formed the archaeology team for Xiaomintun at the

Yinxu site to carry out excavations. The work resulted in large finds dating from the Yangshao to Ming-Qing periods, with the majority of artifacts belonging to the late Shang. The excavated area was divided into two sections, north and south. About 90 late Shang semi-subterranean buildings were excavated during this period (Figure 1).

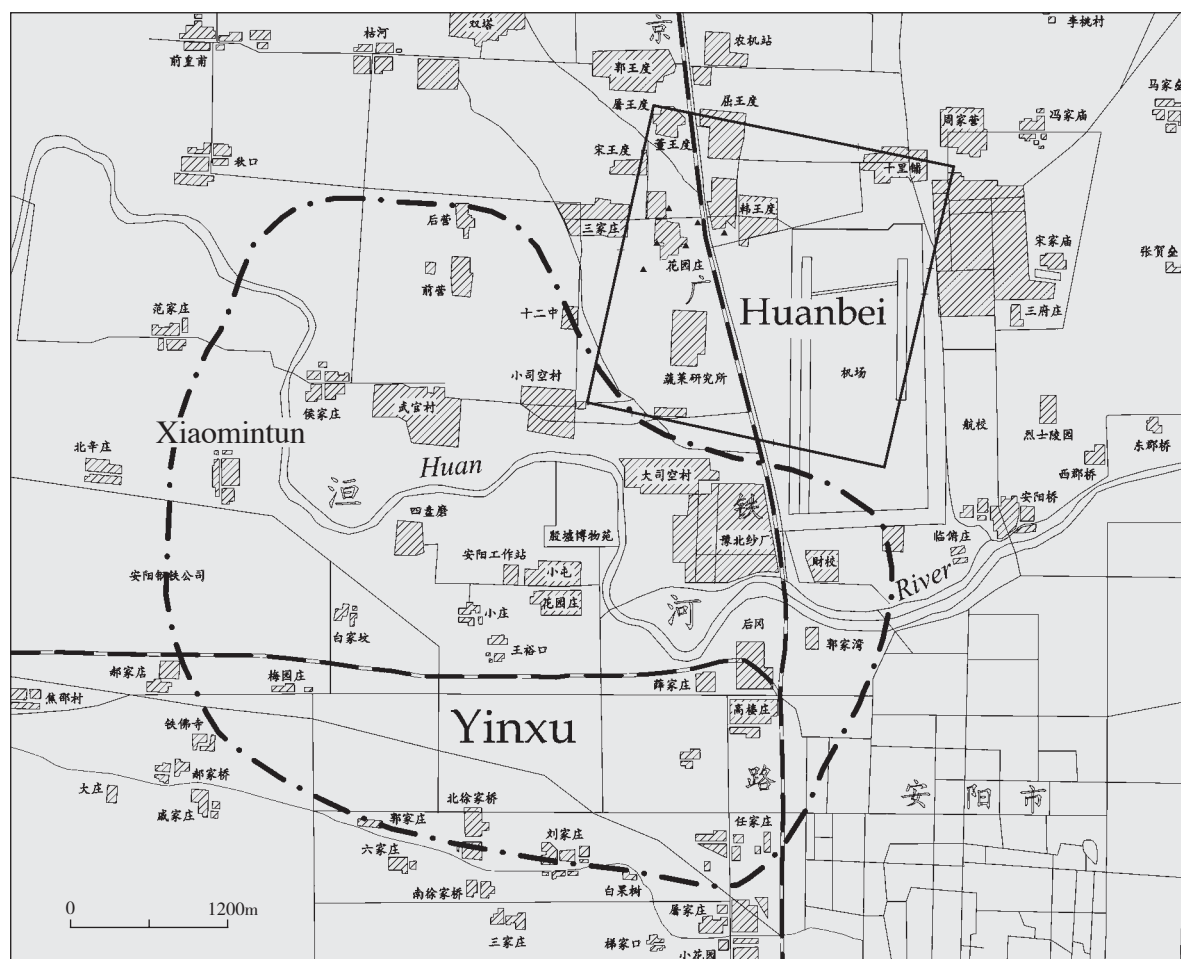


Figure 1. Location of the Xiaomintun site

Description of Building Remains

The building remains in the southern section clustered in the middle (Area A), southeast (Area B), and south (Area C), all clearly separated by open ground. The remains in Area A were preserved fairly well, while Areas B and C suffered serious damage (Figures 2 & 3).

The upper parts of the buildings were ruined and what remained were the dugout portions and floors of the interior, which were lower than the ground level outside. The buildings had between one to five rectangular rooms. Single-room buildings numbered the most, followed by doubles, then triples; there were four four-room buildings discovered and only one with five rooms. Most of the multi-room buildings had the entry hall (*menting*) as the central space, and their plans were varied: two rectangles placed side-by-side, triangular, and cross-shaped. Some buildings had an entry/exit path linked to the outside of the building, but they did not all point in the same direction, indicating that the buildings were also not sited in the same direction. The size of the buildings also varied: the largest being the five-roomed building F115 at 23.88m², while most single-room structures ranged from 5–7.5m².

Rooms had different functions. Some rooms had an entry/exit path, while in others were found an earthen platform for resting purposes and amenities for daily life. The dwelling rooms (*jushi*) usually did not connect directly out of the building, as this was done through the entry hall. Dwelling and entry spaces were also not of the same size, with the latter being the smaller of the two. Among three- to five-room buildings, all rooms other than the designated entry hall were furnished with items used in daily life. All the dwelling rooms were of about the same size.

The interiors had relatively flat or slightly raised floors—this was the level of sterile ground (*shengtū*)—where there was a stratum of trodden soil layers (*caitamian*). The upper portions of the walls were completely destroyed and few buildings were found to have postholes. The walls were mostly constructed around the edge of the building foundation, formed with rammed earth or stacked earthen bricks. An observation of the collapsed portions

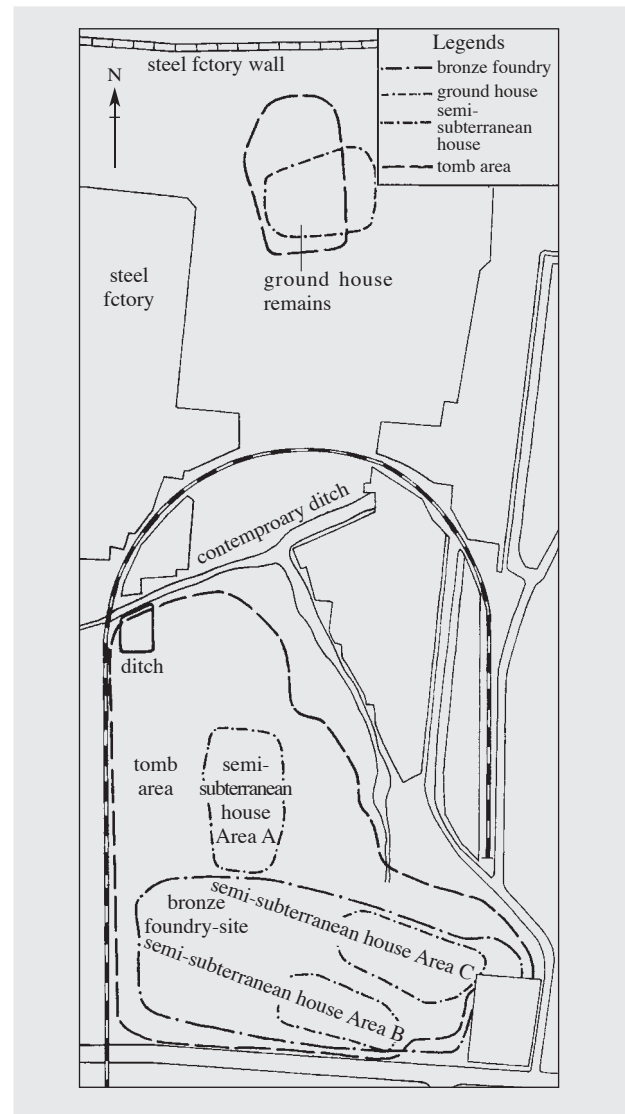


Figure 2. The territories of Shang period remains in the Xiaomintun site



Figure 3. Area A building remains of Shang period in the Xiaomintun site

revealed many different building methods that included rammed earth, mud-and-grass mixture, and adobe bricks.

The buildings were furnished with earthen platforms, pits, stoves and wall niches. Earthen platforms were only found in the dwelling rooms, positioned on the far end from its entryway; there were two types of platforms, made from *shengtū* and from *shutū* (soil from agricultural fields or earlier cultural strata), with the former found in larger numbers. Three sides of the platform were adjacent to the walls—its length approximating the room’s width—and not all platforms were of the same width, although most were about 1m wide and 0.1–0.2m high. There were two kinds of pits, one being larger,



Figure 4. F1-2-Z3 (photo taken from west to east)

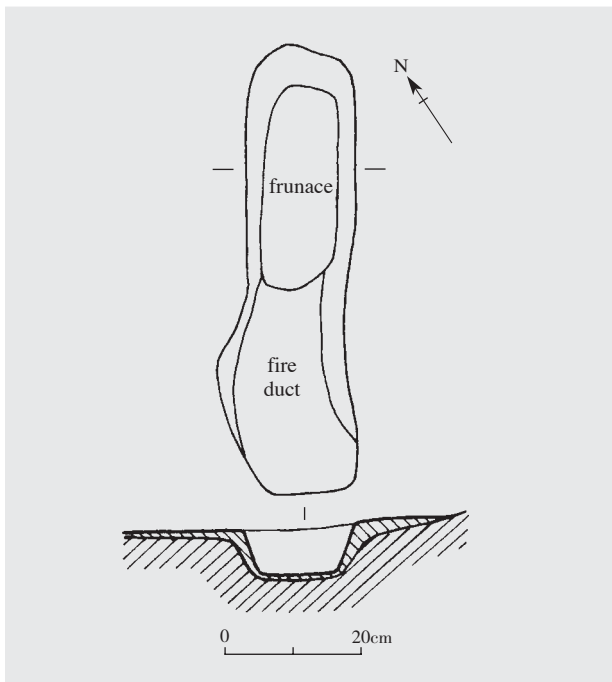


Figure 5. Plan and cross section of F71-Z1

deeper and dug in the entry hall, while the other was in the dwelling room, often located near the stove and serving an auxiliary purpose. Holes were dug into the wall to form niches, often located close to the stove; a few were positioned by the earthen platform for placing items of daily use.

The stove, categorized into four types, was the most common furnishing found in the remains, where they were mostly located in a corner or set away from the walls.

Type I stoves had a complicated design, for they were accessed from inside the building but dug through the wall so that they protruded out of the structure. Stove F1-2-Z3, dug into the east wall at the southeast corner of the room, had a stove door, fire duct, furnace, and flue. The furnace had a small opening and large base; it was widest across the midsection, at 0.37m, and 0.32m deep. The damaged upper portion still had a circular stove opening and the walls were covered with a layer of grass-and-mud mixture; a 2–3cm layer of burnt earth had been formed on the walls as a result of prolonged use. The furnace was linked to the room via the fire duct and stove door, which were both rectangular, and the vertical pipe-shaped flue was placed south of the furnace (Figure 4).

Type II stoves were made by digging a shallow pit into the ground, with neither flue nor stove platform in place. F71-Z1, located at the northeast corner of the

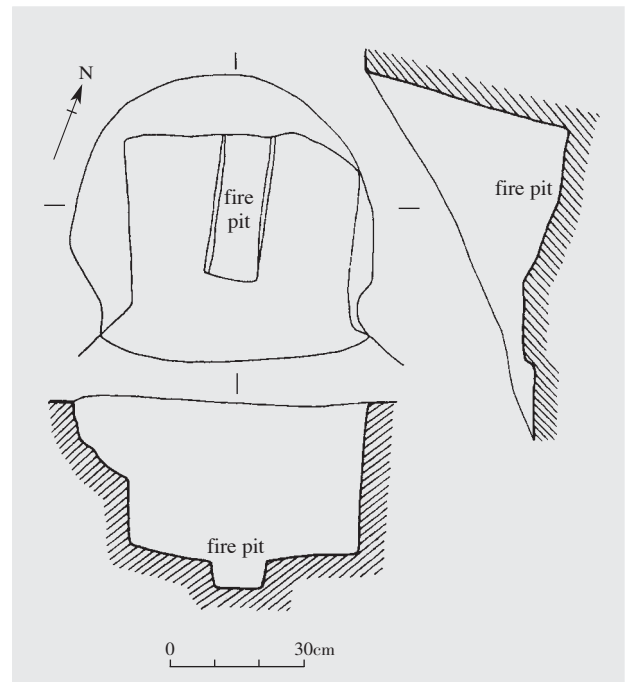


Figure 6. Plan and cross section of F102-3-Z4

building, was a rectangular stove with rounded corners. It was made up of a fire duct and furnace, with a north-south alignment, and measured 0.66m across and 0.15–0.19m wide. Its fire duct gently sloped downward from the ground and the furnace was located at the base. The stove pit was reddish-brown with a burnt layer on its walls (Figure 5).

Type III stoves were located in the niche through which fire was stoked directly, or at the base of the niche where a stove pit was dug; some of the stoves had a protective wall constructed away from the niche that served as a heat barrier. F102-3-Z4 was located in the northwest corner of the room, in a semi-circular niche with an almost square base. It had a rectangular, shallow pit, measuring 0.34m by 0.12m, flushed to the north wall of the niche. The surface of the fire pit had a burnt layer 2–3cm thick; the niche and the base area also showed signs of contact with fire (Figure 6). F21-2-Z3 was a square stove with rounded corners found in the southeastern corner. The stove was used at ground level and the area in direct contact with fire had produced a reddish-black layer 3cm thick. The wall where the niche was located had remnants of a grass-and-mud mixture worked into it (Figure 7).

Type IV stoves were usually located on the floor in the corner of dwelling rooms. Most had only the burnt surface extant, while a few were found to have protective walls. The semi-circular burnt area of F71-Z2 was 1.02m long, 0.53m wide, and 2.5cm thick. The stove was flushed to the room's north wall, which had 0.45m of it remaining and was marked by the same burnt surface as that found on the floor.

Examples of Building Remains

F71, located in Area B, was an 8.61m² single-room construction oriented at 205°. In its damaged condition, it measured 3.84m (east-west), 1.95m, and 0.38–0.51m deep. The floor was hard, and its level was set slightly lower in the center of the room while the northeastern section was somewhat raised. There were the remains of three stoves: Z1 (Type II) in the northeast corner, Z2 (Type IV) at the base of the eastern side of the north wall, and Z3 (Type II) in the center-south part of the floor. The entryway to the building, aligned north-south and located on the eastern side of the south wall, had a relatively level walkway. Located at the southern portion of the entryway was a shallow pit with sloping walls (K1); it was rectangular with rounded corners and a relatively flat base (Figures 8 & 9).

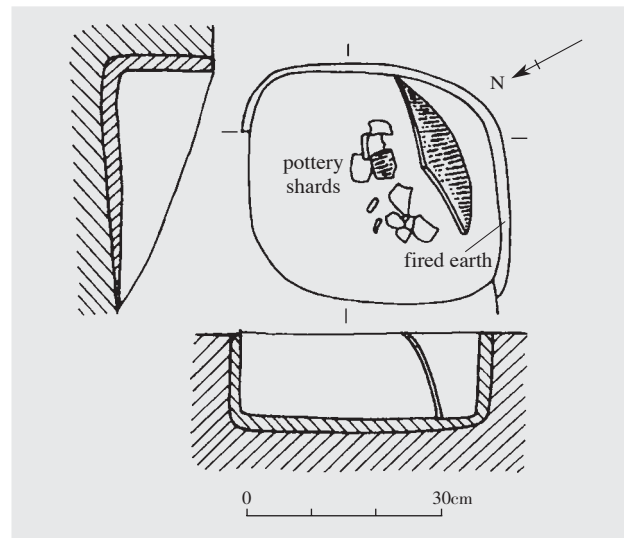


Figure 7. Plan and cross section of F21-2-Z3

F117, located in Area C, was composed of two rooms in an east-west arrangement. It was approximately 5.63m² and oriented at 290°. The entry hall (F117-1) was west of the dwelling room (F117-2) and they were joined in the middle by a passageway. The walls of the rooms were made from rammed earth.

F117-1 had a square plan with rounded corners, its dimensions approximated 0.9–0.92m across and 0.04–0.1m deep. The ground was relatively level and firm, with the northern portion especially compacted.

F117-2 was made up of a dwelling space and passageway. It was 4.65m² and measured 2.56–2.72m by 1.72–1.8m by 0.04–0.26m. The passageway, located at the northern side of the west wall, was about 0.15m². The dwelling space had a relatively level ground with a thin layer of trodden soil layers. A *shutu* platform, 0.92–1.04m wide and 0.15m high, was flushed to the south wall. The platform was relatively level and its top surface well-preserved. Stove Z1 (Type III) was found in the building's northeastern corner. A trapezoidal niche in the wall was located west of Z1. A small pit, positioned south of Z1, contained a single pottery *li* vessel (Figures 10 & 11).

F21, located in Area A, was a three-room structure of 14.8m² oriented at 210°. With two rooms forming a V-shape and the third positioned in the space between them, the entryway was located at the southwestern side of the building. The dwelling rooms (F21-2 & F21-3) were located east and north of the entry hall (F21-1), which was linked to both rooms by a passageway on each side. The walls were made from rammed earth (Figures 12 & 13).

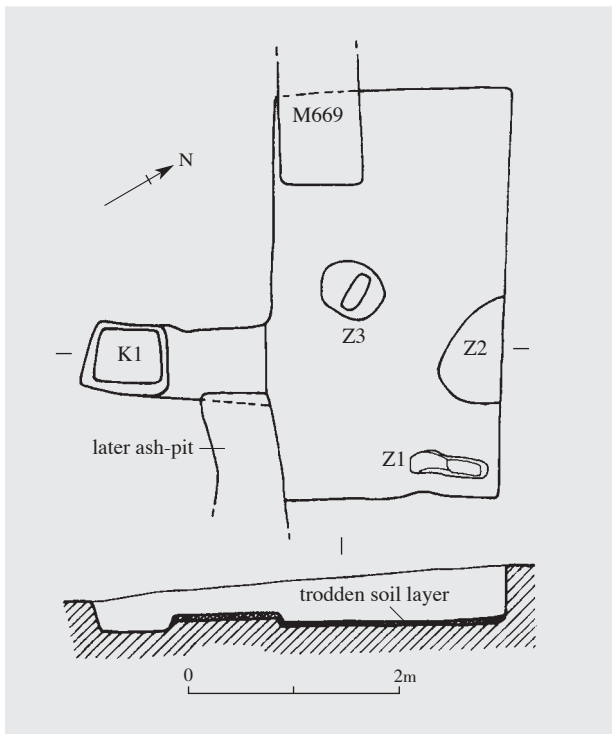


Figure 8. Plan and cross section of F71



Figure 9. F71 (photo taken from south to north)

F21-1 was 2.1m long (EW), 1.04–1.3m wide, and 0.2–0.36m deep. The floor, relatively well-preserved, tilted slightly from east to west. K1, situated at the southwest corner, was an oval pit with slanting walls, dug 0.41m into the ground. There were two stoves (Type II): Z1, in the northwest corner, was adjacent to and north of K1, whereas Z2 was in the northeast corner. The entryway was located at the southeast corner, with a stepped level at the southern end leading out of the building.

F21-2 was 2.7m long (NS), 2m wide, and 0.08–0.34m deep, with a relatively level and well-preserved floor. A level *shutu* platform, located at the base of the north

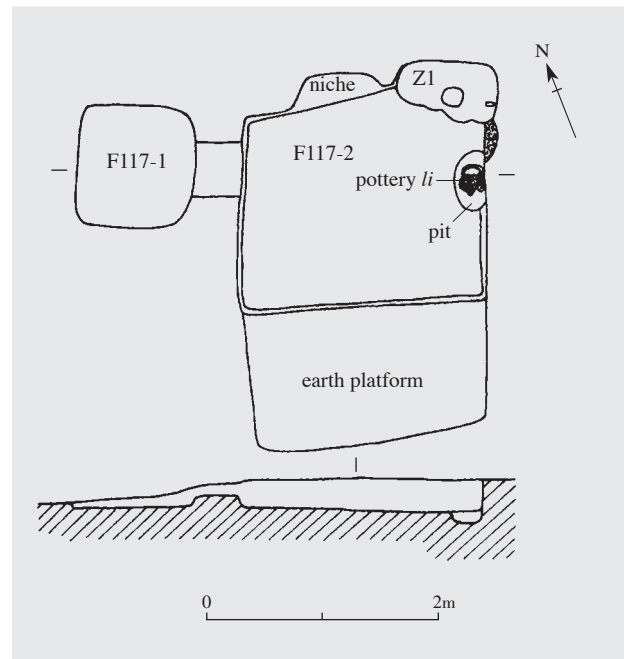


Figure 10. Plan and cross section of F117



Figure 11. F117 (photo taken from south to north)

wall, was 0.92–0.95m wide and 0.16m high. There were two stoves in the room: Z3 (Type III), located in the southeast corner, and Z4 (Type I), in the southwest corner. The passageway, at the southern section of the west wall, was joined to the entry/exit path of the building.

F21-3 was 2.8–2.9m long (EW), 1.68–1.7m wide, and 0.18–0.5m deep. It had a relatively level and well-preserved floor, on which a single damaged ceramic *dou* was found. The room was furnished with a *shutu* platform and stove. The platform, measuring 0.94m wide and 0.28m high, was located at the base of the east wall. It had a horizontal surface on which trodden soil layers

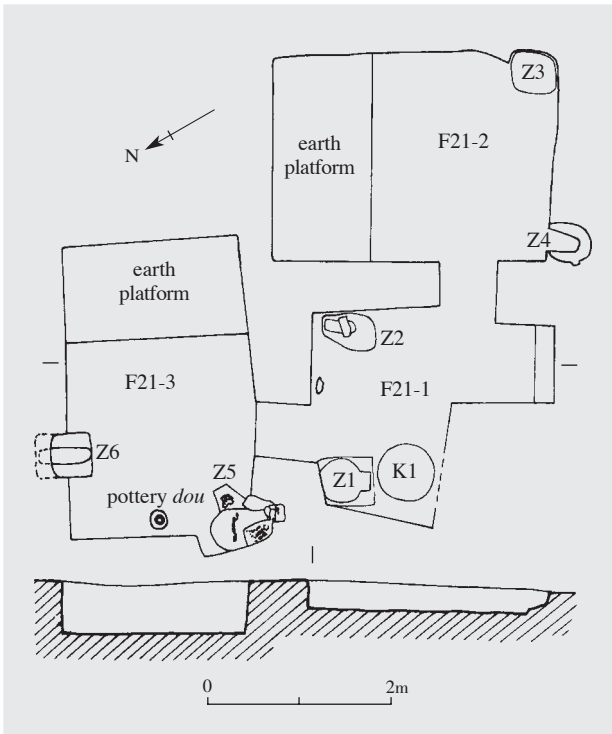


Figure 13. F21 (photo taken from south to north)

Figure 12. Plan and cross section of F21

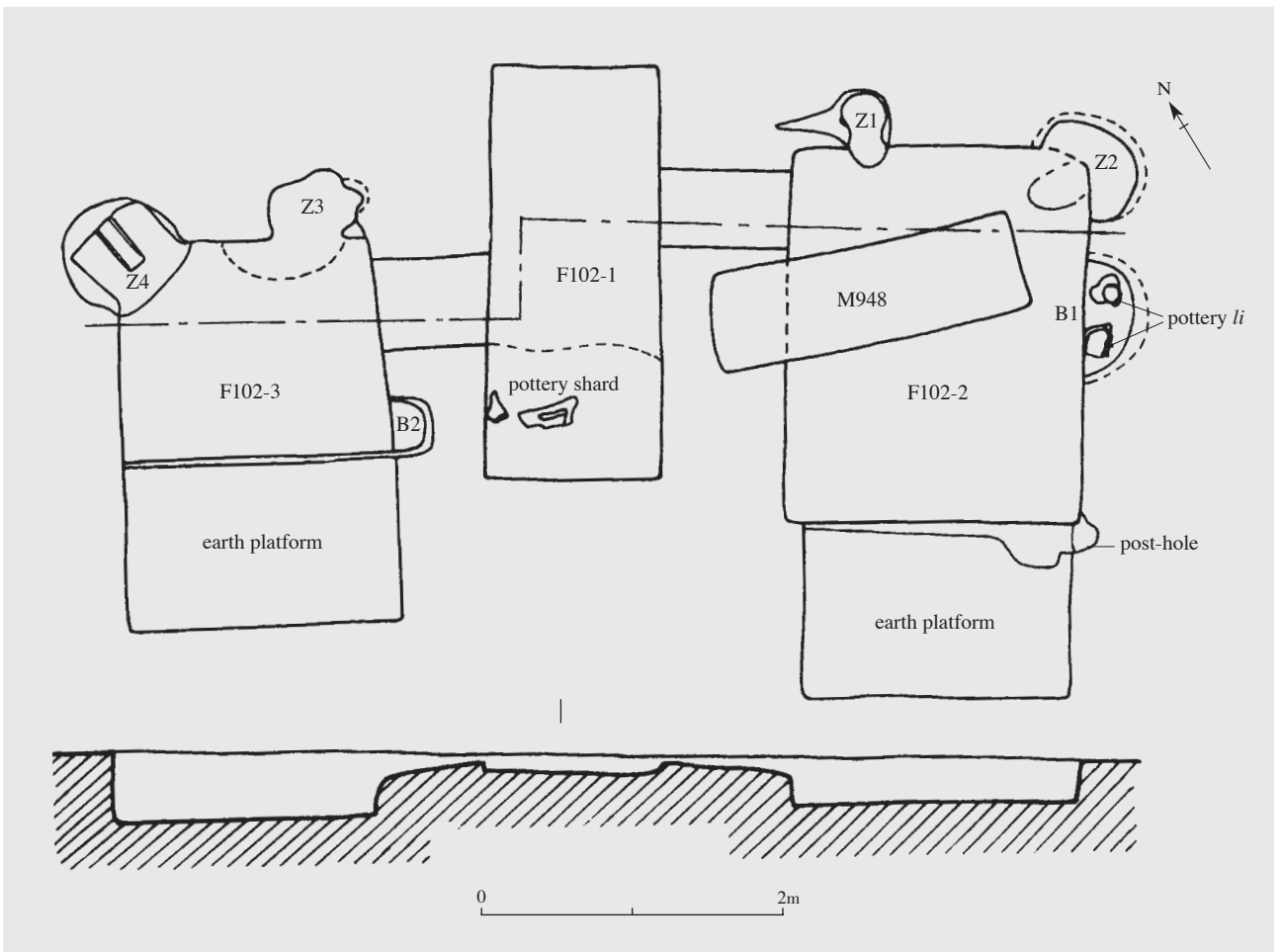


Figure 14. Plan and cross section of F102



Figure 15. F102 (photo taken from south to north)

were found. There were two stoves in this room: Z5 (Type I), located in the southwest corner, and Z6 (Type III), located in the western section of the north wall. The passageway to the entry hall was at the western portion of the south wall.

F102, located in Area B, had three rooms (F102-1, F102-2 and F102-3) arranged in a row. It was approximately 11.67m² and oriented at 30°. The entry/exit to the building was attached to entry hall F102-1, which was connected on each side by a passageway to the dwelling rooms (Figures 14 & 15). F102-1 was a rectangular room whose remaining dimensions were 2.4m long (NS), 0.8–1.02m wide, and 0.01–0.13m deep. The floor sloped north to south and the condition of trodden soil layers was better in the northern than southern section. The southern section had a layer of burnt earth that had deteriorated with no signs of trodden soil layers.

F102-2 was a rectangular room 3.2m long (NS), 1.54–1.72m wide, and 0.22–0.3m deep. The base was relatively level with a compact stratum of trodden soil layers. Attached to the south wall was a *shengtū* platform, about 1m wide and 0.15m high, which showed evidence of trodden soil layers. There were two stoves in the room: Z1 (Type I), located at the western portion of the north wall, and Z2 (Type III), in the northeast corner. A wall

niche (B1), positioned south of Z2, contained two pottery *li* vessels. The passageway was located at the northern portion of the west wall and connected to the northern part of the entry hall. The sloped passageway, built with stepped levels at each end, was higher at the entry hall.

F102-3 was a rectangular room 2.25m long (NS), 1.45–1.55m wide, and 0.35–0.38m deep. The ground had a stratum of compact, grayish-brown trodden soil layers. A *shengtū* platform, flushed to the south wall, was 0.98–1m wide and 0.15–0.2m high. Its surface was not level and some parts of it had remains of a thin stratum of trodden soil layers. B2, a wall niche located at the northeast corner of the platform, contained eight neatly arranged bone hairpins. The room had two stoves: Z3 (Type I), in the eastern part of the northern wall, and Z4 (Type III), in the northwest corner. The passageway, located in the northern section of the east wall, was linked to the southern part of the entry hall. The path had a slight incline with stepped levels on both ends.

Artifacts

There were few artifacts excavated from the buildings, with the majority constituting daily use ceramic vessels that included *li*, *gui*, *dou*, *yu*, *yan*, *guan*, *pen*, *bo*, *zeng*, *lei*, and *bing*.

The *li* vessel F117-2:1, made from sandy gray clay, had an angled rim, raised lip, and slightly arched body. It had three awl-shaped feet, designed with a high crotch, and a thick cord-marked pattern on its body; the diameter at the mouth was 17.9cm (Figure 16:1). F102-2-B1:1 was made from sandy gray clay, an upward-angled rim with a groove around it. It had a slight drum-shaped body, three awl-shaped feet, high crotch, and thick cord markings; the diameter at the mouth measured 18.9cm (Figure 16:2).

The *dou* F21-3:1, made of loamy gray clay, had a thick foot rim that had been damaged. This piece had a triangular profile and plain surface. The dish was shallow with a flaring rim of 13.7cm in diameter (Figure 16:5).

The *gui* F106-1:3, made of loamy gray clay, had a thick, everted rim, deep, curving body, and broken foot rim. A pair of grooved horizontal lines ran below the mouth rim, with another three above the foot. The diameter of the mouth was 28cm (Figure 16:3).

The *yu* F75:1, made of loamy gray clay, had a vertical mouth rim, and a low, angled foot rim. A pair of horizontal groove-lines ran under the mouth rim. The mouth had a diameter of 9.8cm (Figure 16:4).

Conclusion

Portions of the ceramic artifacts found in the building remains, or those found in the niches and stoves, were probably remains from the buildings' time of use. Most of them can be dated to Yinxu Phase II or as early as the end of Yinxu Phase I. As such the dating of the buildings and artifacts should correspond.

The site was divided into three clusters of building remains that formed independent but closely associated settlements. The buildings within the settlements were mostly distributed along a northwest-southeast axis. As buildings of different sizes were interspersed, there was no obvious class differentiation.

Note: The original report was published in *Kaogu* 考古 (Archaeology) 2007.1:3–13, with 12 figures and 2 pages of plate, written by Tang Jinqiong 唐锦琼, Wang Xuerong 王学荣, He Yuling 何毓灵, Gu Fei 谷飞, Yue Zhanwei 岳占伟, and Yin Qun 印群. This summary is prepared by Tang Jinqiong and translated into English by Ho Han-Peng.

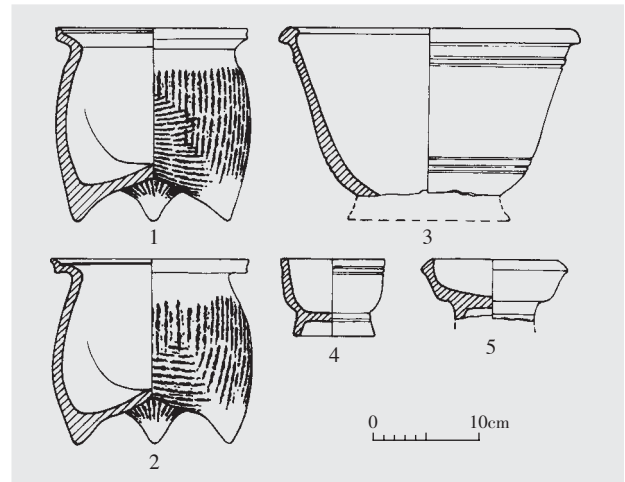


Figure 16. Pottery

1, 2. *li* tripods (F117-2:1, F102-2-B1:1) 3. *gui* tureen (F106-1:3) 4. *yu* vessel (F75:1) 5. *dou* stemmed bowl (F21-3:1)

The discovery of these building remains has provided new information for the study of daily life in the Shang dynasty, providing fresh clues to the investigation of its basic social structure and household organization.

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