

Excavation of Fengpengling Tomb of Han Dynasty in Wangcheng County, Hunan

Wangcheng Office of Preservation of Cultural Relics

Key words: Chamber Tombs-Wangcheng County (Hunan Province) Imperial Tombs-Han Dynasty

In late December 2005, during the course of development works on top of a hill at Fengpengling - located in Yinxing Village of Xingcheng Township, Wangcheng County - a large-scale vertical shafted grave containing a wooden *guo*-chamber was discovered (Grave M1 Fengpengling). The grave was located in the area between the Xiang River and a range of hills, with a large open plain to its east and rolling hills facing the remaining sides. Between March and October 2006, the Institute of Archaeology of Changsha City collaborated with Wangcheng County Cultural Relics Management Bureau on an excavation of this grave.

Description of the Grave

M1, a vertical shafted grave with a wooden *guo*-chamber located just above the bedrock, had a Γ -shaped plan with a ramped passageway passing through the center of its northern side, oriented at 347° . Because the topmost portion of the tomb had been removed, the shape of the burial mound could not be determined. The damaged grave was 30.3m in length, 14.6m wide and 3.26m deep. Rammed earth was used for filling the grave and it had a yellowish brown hue and sticky consistency. This soil contained many pebbles, 0.5–5cm in diameter, mixed with small amounts of charcoal. Looter's entrances were found at the southwest and northeast sides of the grave,

with Sui-Tang period celadon bowls and double-rimmed jars found at the former location that indicated the period of disturbance. The tomb unit consisted of the passageway, grave pit, *guo*-chamber and its timber border (*ticou*), and the casket set (Figures 1 & 2).

Passageway and grave pit

The passageway, situated at the center of the north wall of the grave pit, was a ramp passing through multiple terraces. In its damaged condition, the entrance was 11m long and 5.6–5.9m wide; the base of the ramp was about 0.54m above the base of the grave pit. At the northern portion of the ramp were three damaged terraces, measuring about 1.9m, 1.6m, and 1.6m wide, respectively, from top to bottom; the terraces had a slight downward tilt toward the pit. On the second terrace, two holes were found aligned in east-west axis along the southern edge; these openings, spaced 1.7m apart,

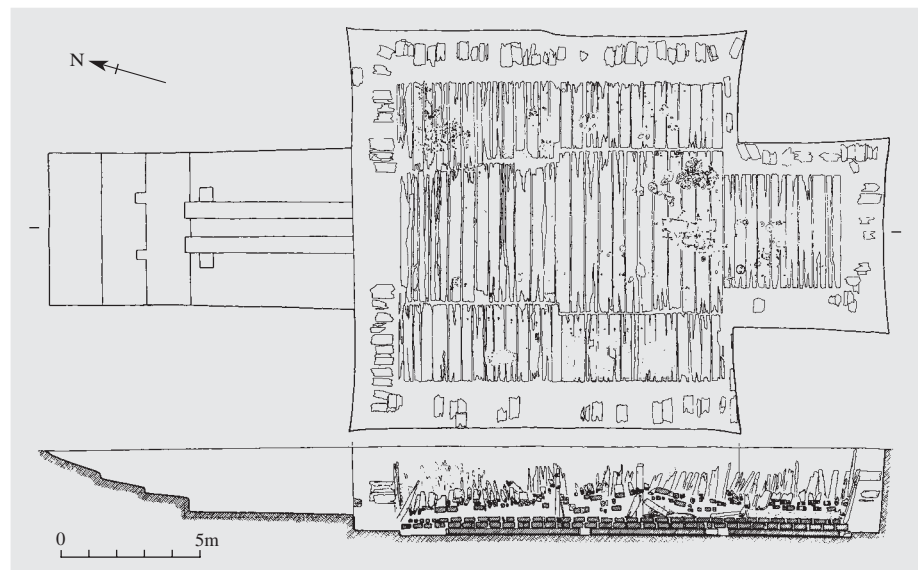


Figure 1. The Plan and Section of Fengpengling M1



Figure 2. Bird Eye's View of Fengpengling M1 (South–North)

were 0.36–0.4m long, 0.36 wide and 0.25m deep. Between the third terrace and the base of the ramp were two troughs that ran parallel to the main passageway, spaced 0.65m apart and approximately 6.1m long, 0.6m wide and 0.1–0.7m deep. On the outer side of the troughs, in its northern section, was each a rectangular shallow pit in symmetrical layout, measuring 0.5–0.55m long, 0.5m wide and 0.1m deep.

The grave had a T-shape plan. The walls of the chamber and grave pit were slightly curved, and were more so at the six outer corners. The tomb opening was damaged, its dimensions 19.3m by 14.6m and 3.26m

deep. The pit walls were cut out of yellowish brown fine sandstone rock that had collapsed in many sections. The earth at the base of the pit had been rammed and had seven troughs for wooden ground beams in north-south alignment.

The Intermediate Timber Border

An intermediate timber border, or *ticou*, was sandwiched between the walls of the grave pit and the walls of the *guo*-chamber. Apart from the ruined portion between the base of the passageway and the chamber's front room (in the north), the timber border basically surrounded the entire chamber. Altogether 111 rectangular timber poles made from *nan*-wood (*phoebe zhennan*) were used to line the chamber; they were not of uniform length or thickness, but most were around 0.8m long -- the longest was 1m -- with square cross-sectioned sides of between 0.2m to 0.4m length. Most of them were hollow due to serious decay. The stacking of the timber poles was not orderly and varied from 1 to 3 layers deep. Neither the height nor alignment of poles was uniform; further, earth was used in place of poles at many sections.

Guo-chamber

Following a T-shaped plan, the dimensions of the *guo*-chamber was about 16.5m by 11.5m. The entire chamber was made up of wooden ground beams laid over the base of the pit (*zhenmu*), base planks (*diban*), wall planks (*qiangban*), pillars, doors, and ceiling planks (*dingban*). The *guo*-chamber, tomb passageway, and casket room lie on the same axis, and the entire chamber can be divided into east, center, and west columns, which were further sectioned, from north to south, into front, middle, and rear rooms, to produce nine rectangular spaces. At the time of excavation, the ceiling planks were cracked and broken, and the wooden structure had collapsed, so that the grave pit was filled with the soil used for filling the tomb above the ceiling planks.

Ground Beams

Square-sectioned *nan*-wood beams were placed in seven wooden troughs at the base of the grave pit, also known as *zhenmu* troughs. Within each of the center column's three troughs were placed four beams, aligned north-south, lengths 1.65m, 5.2m, 4.8–5m, and 4.5m. Four troughs – two each in the eastern and western columns – each had three wooden beams 1.9m, 4.8–5.2m, and 4.6–4.8m in length. These poles were approximately 0.24m wide and 0.22m thick. On base pole number 88, located in the southern portion, was an inscription “南 (south).”

Base Boards

Two layers of *nan*-wood planks, numbering 163 pieces and aligned east-west, were laid as base boards over the ground beams. The upper layer, for example, was divided into eastern, middle, and western sections and was made up of 21, 33, and 28 planks, respectively. This central column of the chamber can be sectioned into southern (rear), middle, and northern (front) portions: the southern section, where the coffin room was located, was laid with nine wooden planks each 4.15m long; the middle section had 12 planks each 5.9m long, while the northern section contained 12 planks of 5.1m each. The eastern column was subdivided into a southern and a northern section, with the middle and rear rooms located in the southern section containing 14 base planks each 2.5m long; the eastern column's front room was located in the northern section, lined with 7 base planks each about 2.86m long, laid out mostly in the southern half. The western column's base planks were divided into southern and northern sections. The base planks in the center and rear rooms totaled 14 pieces of approximately 2.5m each, and were located in the southern part; the base planks of the front room were in the northern section, totaling 14 pieces of approximately 2.86m each. The base planks of the topmost layer were 0.4–0.5m wide and 0.18m thick. These planks in the eastern, center, and western sections had inscribed numbering, such as “east thirteen,” “east fourteen,” “east twenty-six,” “eight,” “nine,” “west eight,” “west seventeen,” and so on.

Wall Planks

Wall planks were closely arranged vertically above the base boards. Based on the positioning of the wall planks, the inner and outer divisions of the *guo*-chamber can be identified. The main purpose of the outer planks was to separate the chamber from the *ticou* border,

while the inner wall planks sectioned off the rooms within the chamber. The outer surrounding wall planks can be divided into two layers. The outer layer surrounded the chamber following a T-shape plan. Severe decay had occurred and only 132 pieces remained. The longest piece measured 2.3m with a cross-section of lengths between 0.2–0.3m. Their base was flushed on the inside to the ends of the upper-level base planks, while the external face was adjacent to the *ticou*. The inner layer of wall planks was positioned on the walls east, south, and west of the coffin room. In other words, in the eastern column of the *guo*-chamber, the planks lined the eastern side of the center and rear rooms and the southern side of the rear room in a reversed L shape; and in the western column, they covered the western side of the center and rear rooms and southern side of the rear room in an L shape. The base of the inner layer wall planks was fitted into grooves, cut 0.04m from the edge of the upper layer base planks, at about 0.09m wide and 0.02m deep. The chamber's inner wall planks were thus mostly positioned on top of the upper layer base planks, with about 70 decayed pieces remaining. The longest of these planks was 2.14m, with rectangular cross-sections 0.2–0.3m in length.

Pillars

The middle room of the center column contained two quadrilateral pillars positioned 2.66m apart along the central axis of the eastern and western sides. These *nan*-wood pillars were approximately 1.87m high, 0.3m wide, and 0.2m thick, and their bases stood on the base planks. The top of every pillar had a tenon 0.04m high with a 0.08m diameter that fit into the mortise of the 0.1–m thick board above it.

Entryways

Two distinct designs of entryways were built for the *guo*-chamber. The first – frameless – occurred in the gaps between wall planks and indicated that they allowed for unobstructed access; there were seven of these access points that were between 0.7–1.9m wide. The second type had doorjambs and doors, and two were found; both were located in the middle section of the center column and served as the northern and southern doors to the front room and the rear/coffin room respectively. The southern door was located at the center column's tenth floor plank counting from south to north; on each of the left and right of the southern side was a small rectangular hole about 0.13–0.16m long, 0.08m wide, 0.03m deep, spaced about 2.9m apart. These were

thought to be the mortises located at the base of the doorjambs. Around each mortise was a rectangular depression, about 0.28m by 0.18m by 0.3m, probably the result of pressure exerted from the doorjambs. During the excavation, the eastern doorjamb, measuring 1.8m by 0.28m by 0.18m, was found to have collapsed into the coffin room. Two mortises on the southern side each had a rectangular tenon on the left and right, measuring 1.82–1.86m by 0.08m by 0.03m, placed 2.2m apart; these indicated where boards had existed to separate the door from the ground. The entryway was shuttered by two *zi*-wood (*catalpa ovata*) door leaves, about 0.06m thick and in decayed condition, each having been attached with a gilt bronze monster head fitting with a suspended ring.

Ceiling Planks

Nan-wood ceiling planks, located at the uppermost part of the *guo*-chamber, were arranged in horizontal, east-west alignment above the wall planks. There was no evidence of mortise-and-tenon joints used. There were 102 ceiling planks in total, their length spanning the three sections of the *guo*-chamber; the planks were 0.2–0.5m wide and 0.2m thick. In the middle room of the center column, south of the two pillars, ceiling planks were divided into upper and lower layers; however the rest of the chamber only had a single layer of planks. Some of the planks in this central room had the numbers “ five, ” “ six, ” “ nine, ” and so on, carved into them.

Enclosing Caskets

An enclosing coffin, made up of an inner and an outer casket, was placed in the rear room of the center column in a north-south orientation. The caskets had been crushed to pieces by the collapsed ceiling. At the time of excavation, the wooden caskets had mostly decayed to leave scarce remnants of wooden planks and poles; however the lacquer skin of the caskets' wooden boards had remained in fairly good condition. The base, side, end and top boards that formed the caskets were made from *nan*-wood. Based on its decayed condition, the outer casket was estimated to be 3.2m long and 1.08m wide, lacquer-painted black on the outside and bright red inside. The undecorated inner casket was about 2.78m by 0.5m, painted on the exterior and interior using dark and bright red lacquer, respectively. The top board of the casket had what appeared to be mortise imprints, indicating that the casket was constructed using a mortise-tenon system.

Accompanying Grave Goods

A large number of grave goods were excavated and can be categorized into objects made from ceramic, bronze (vessels and currency), lacquer (with wooden core), jade, crystal, gold (including gilded objects), silver, and silk products.

Ceramic Vessels

Only nine jars were found, most of which were placed in the front room of the eastern column. They were made from gray clay fashioned in the same style, characterized by an everted rim, narrow neck, bulbous body, and recessed base. On the shoulder of sample M1:1-1 (height 30.4cm) was an inscribed “ *zhong* ” (“ center ”) and a second, obscured character. The shoulder of M1:1-2 (height 30.8cm) was also inscribed (Figure 3).

Bronze Articles

There were altogether 28 bronze vessels, primarily located in the middle room of the center column. Types of objects included *ding*-tripod, *zhong*-wine jar, *hu*-pot, *he*-pitcher, *zeng*-steamer, *pan*, and bowls, a mirror, lamb-shaped weights, belt hooks, crossbow triggers, monster head fittings with suspended rings, lamps, and ladles. Below is a description of a few bronze articles, all of which were damaged.

Two *ding*-tripod vessels: Their dish-like lids, deco-

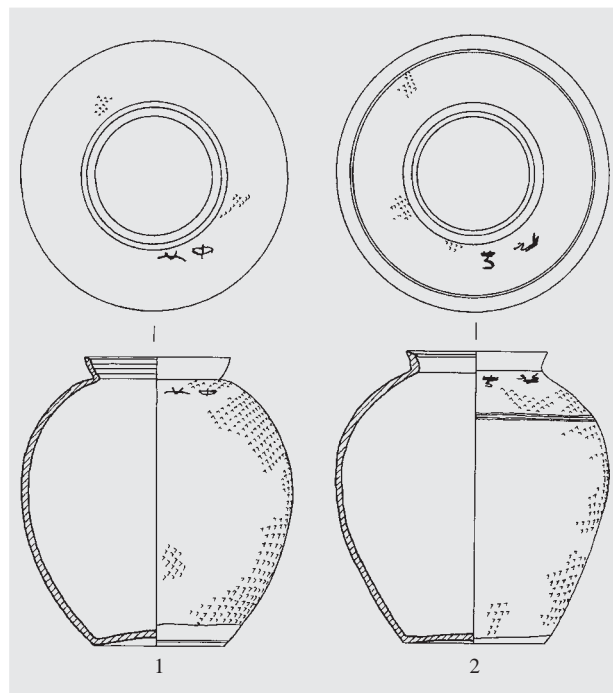


Figure 3. Pottery Jars

1. M1:1-1 2. M1:1:2 (both 1/8)

rated with three small lugs, fitted over the vessel rims. The *ding* also had oval handles, a round belly and short-hoofed feet; its body was decorated with a single horizontal line in relief. Along the rim of vessel M1:95 was an inscription in seal script: 一 二有盖并重十七斤八两长沙 [X 1 X 2 X with lid, weighing 17 *jin* 8 *liang*, Changsha X X X]. The diameter at the rim was 21.6cm (Figure 4).

Three *zhong*-wine jars: They had protruding lids decorated atop with three standing animals, an everted mouth, long neck, ball-shaped belly, and high-footed base. Their shoulders and midsections were decorated with three horizontal lines in relief. M1:87 was 51.4cm high (Figure 5).

Two *hu*-pots: Their protruding lids were decorated atop with three standing animals. The vessels had an everted mouth, narrow neck, drum belly, and a ring-footed base. On the mouth rim was a line of inscription in seal script and attached on opposite sides of the belly was a monster head with a suspended ring. The inscription on M1:96 was: 铜壶一容五斗有盖并重 斤十二两长沙元年造第七 [One bronze *hu* of capacity 5 *dou*, with lid, weighing XX *jin* 12 *liang*, made in the first year, Changsha, number 7]. The diameter at the rim was 14.4cm (Figure 6).

One *he*-pitcher: It had a hollow, square cross-sectioned handle, a beak-shaped spout and thin, short-hoofed feet. The damaged handle and spout measured 7.4cm and 1.8cm respectively.

Two *pan* vessels: Each had a flaring mouth, flat rim, shallow midsection and flat base. Vessel M1:101-3 was 21.6cm in diameter at the mouth and 1.9cm high.

Two bowls: Each had a flaring mouth, level rim and round base. The diameter of the mouth rim of M1:101-4 was 10cm.

Two ladles: On the back of M1:101-7 was an inscription in seal script: *tong dou yi zhong yi jin jiu liang Changsha yuan nian zao* [One bronze *dou*, weighing 1 *jin* 9 *liang*, made in the first year, Changsha] (Figure 7).

Four lamps: They were of different designs. The base of lamp M1:130 had a circular, shallow dish, within which stood a pair of bird feet. The other three shallow dishes had a wick in the center and were raised on a bamboo-shaped handle that extended to a large circular base. An inscription in seal script was found on the foot of M1:90: 铜灯一高二尺重廿二斤七两长沙元年造 [A bronze lamp, height 2 *chi*, weight 22 *jin* 7 *liang*, made in the first year, Changsha] (Figure 8).

One mirror: The single mirror (M1:120) had a spherical knob in the center surrounded by a ring of pearl motifs, beyond which was a concentric register of cat-



Figure 4. Inscription on the Rim of Bronze Ding-tripod M1:95



Figure 5. Bronze Zhong-wine Jar (M1:87)

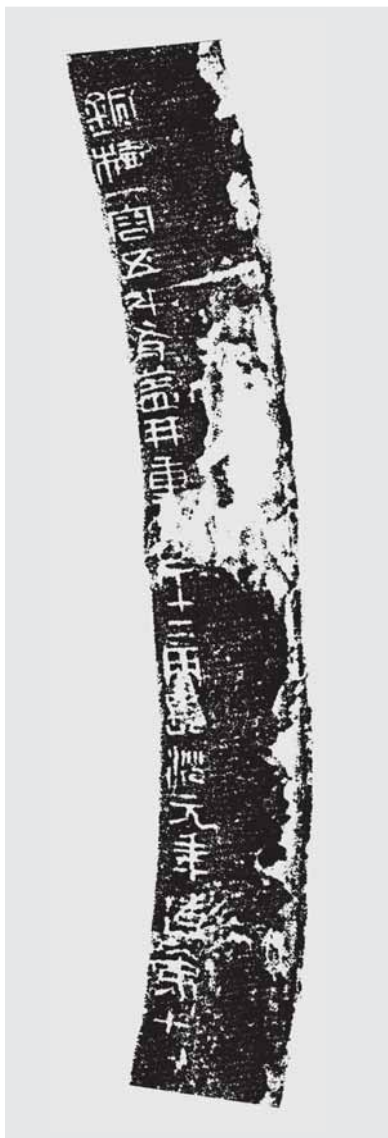


Figure 6. Inscription on the Rim of Bronze Hu-pot M1:96



Figure 7. Inscription on the Back of Bronze Ladle M1:101-7



Figure 8. Inscription on the Foot of Bronze Lamp M1:90

enarries with decorative motifs within the inner section. The third register was an inscription in seal script cast in relief. The mirror's diameter was 16.6cm and thickness was 1.2cm (Figure 9).

Bronze Currency

There were in total 163 coins of *wuzhu* denomination.

Lacquerware

There were altogether 61 pieces of lacquer vessels - mostly located in the middle rooms of the center and eastern columns - in the form of cases, *dou*, bowl, basin, *pan*, ear-shaped cups, horse legs, and vessel lids.

There were four lacquered boxes, all with a *jiashutai* core that was made from hemp cloth, shaped square, rectangular, oval and spherical. Three boxes had silver

fittings and were decorated with animal and cloud designs in gold leaf. M1:145 was 8cm long and 6.75cm high (Figures 10 & 11).

There were 31 *pan* vessels in the same style and all of them were small with a *jiashu* 夹苎 (dry-lacquer) core. These dishes had a flaring mouth, angled belly, and a small, flat base. Around the base of the side of M1:106-1 (diameter at mouth rim: 11.5cm) was an inscription written in red ink using upright clerical script: 张姬 (姬) 榜槃. " Its mouth rim was 11.5cm across (Figure 12), while that of M1:18's was 12.2cm (Figure 13).

There were 18 *erbei*, ear-shaped cups, of the same design with wood cores. They were oval with handles in the form of crescent moons, tilted up outwards. Four



Figure 9. Bronze Mirror (M1:120)



Figure 10. Lacquered Box (M1:145)

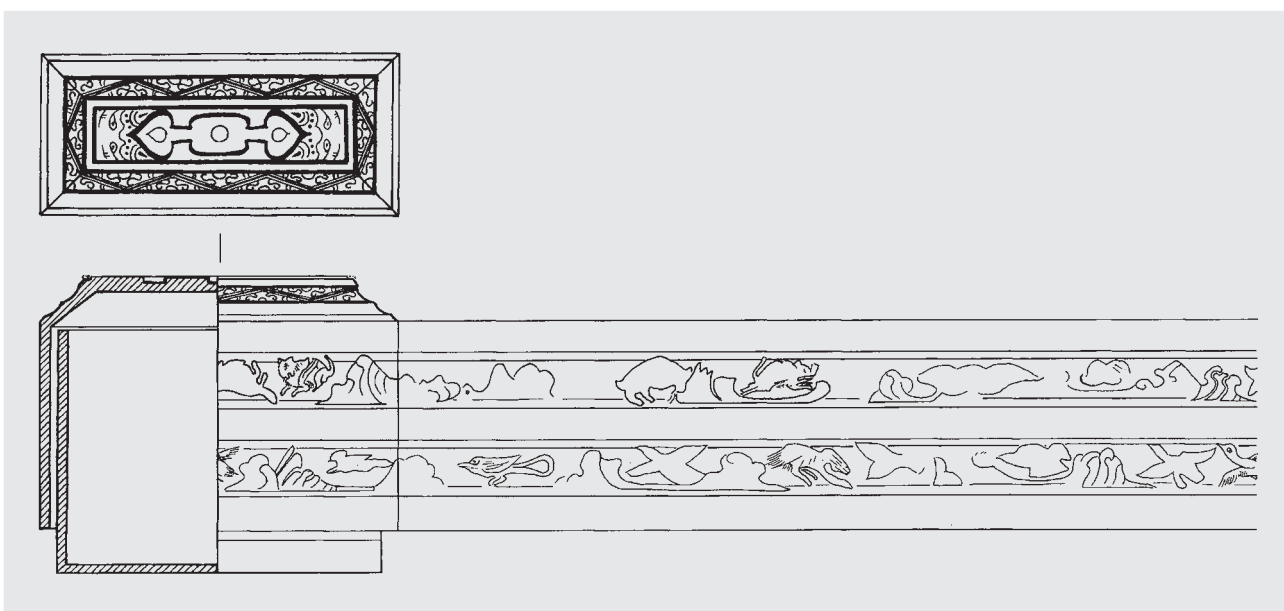


Figure 11. Lacquered Box (M1:145)

of them were complete, with inscriptions in red ink on the external surface at the lower sides and around the base: 长沙王后家杯 [Cup from the household of the Queen of Changsha]. The mouth rim of M1:106-2 measured 9.2cm across (Figures 14 & 15).

Jade objects

Jade artifacts, excavated from the rear room of the center column, included the remains of a jade suit, *bi*-discs, and a *gui*-scepter.

There were 32 jade pieces and a small amount of gold wire that came from a damaged jade suit. Of the jade

pieces, 25 had holes drilled into their four corners. There were two *bi*-discs inscribed with concentric circles that demarcated two decorative registers – the outer had a dragon-and-phoenix design while spirals and intersecting parallel lines marked the inner register. M1:132 had a diameter of 17.3cm (Figure 16).

There was one *gui*-scepter. It had a peaked upper portion and a rectangular base, where a hole had been drilled. It was 18.5cm long.

Gold objects

There were 19 cake-shaped gold inglets, each weigh-



Figure 12. Lacquered Pan-tray (MI:106-1)



Figure 13. Lacquered Pan-tray (MI:18)

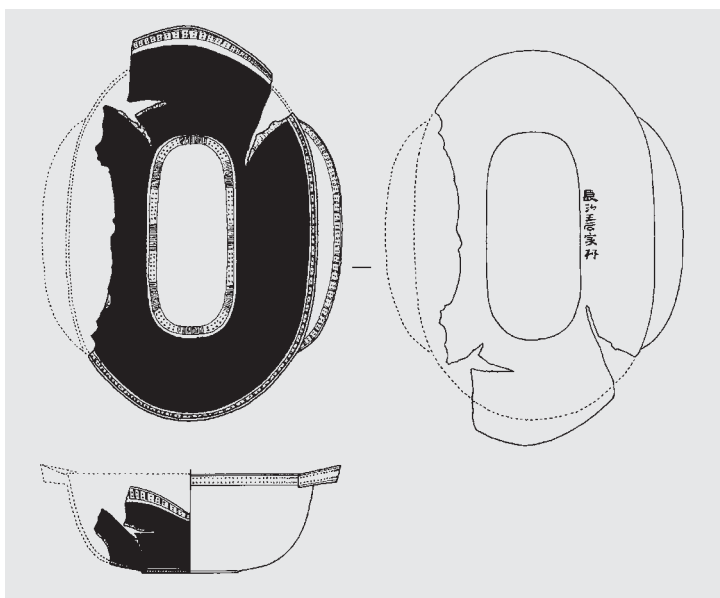


Figure 14. Lacquered Erbei (MI:106-2)



Figure 15. Inscription Near the Foot of Lacquered Erbei (MI:106-2)

ing about 250.5 g, excavated from the rear room of the center column.

Conclusion

Dating of the Tomb

163 pieces of *wuzhu* currency were excavated from tomb M1. The *Hanshu* (Emperor Wu, No. VI) records, “ (In the) fifth year (of Yuanshou 元狩 Era), spring, third month, *jiawu* day, *banliang* was ended and *wuzhu* was circulated. ” As such, the *Terminus Post Quem* of the tomb would be the fifth year of Yuanshou Era (118 BCE) of Emperor Wu. The existence of the inscribed lacquered *erbei* in M1 indicates that the tomb occupant was a queen of Changsha. According to the *Hou Hanshu* (Emperor Guangwu, No. 1B), “ (In the) thirteenth year, second month of Jianwu) on *bingchen* day, the edict states, ‘ King Xing of Changsha, King De of Zhending, King Shao of Hejian, and King Mao of Zhongshan, had all inherited aristocratic titles and were made king; this is not in accordance to regulations; Xing is to be made Marquis of Linxiang; De, the Marquis of Zhending; Shao, the Marquis of Lecheng; and Mao, the Marquis of Shanfu. ” The royal seat of Changsha was removed in the thirteenth year of Emperor Guangwu in the Jianwu Era (37 CE) during the Eastern Han, which should also point to the *Terminus Ante Quem* of the tomb’s dating.

Tomb Occupant

The inscriptions on the lacquered cups and dishes indicate that the tomb occupant, Zhang Ji, was a consort of a certain King of Changsha. Two considerations were made. First, the entombment was taken to be between the fifth year of Emperor Wu’s Yuanshou Era in the Western Han (118 BCE) and the thirteenth year of Emperor Guangwu’s Jianwu Era in the Eastern Han (37 CE). Second, based on the *Hanshu* (Chronology of the Various Lords, No. 2) under “ Fa, King Ding of Changsha, ”

Postscript: The original article was published in *Wenwu* 2007. 12: 21–41 with 36 illustrations and 19 photographs. Authors were He Xuhong 何旭红, Zhao Xiaohua 赵晓华, Ma Daizhong 马代忠, He Jia 何佳, Zhang Jingyao 张景尧, Shi Lei 师磊, Lei Yongli 雷永利 and Huang Puhua 黄朴华. Abridged version is written by He Xuhong and Huang Puhua and translated into English by Ho Han-Peng 何汉平.



Figure 16. Jade B-disc (M1:132)

the kings of Changsha who reigned in this period were Liu Yong (ascending the throne in the second year of the Yuanshuo Era as King Dai), Liu Fujun (first year of Tianhan Era, as King Qing), Liu Jiande (fourth year of Shiyuan Era, as King La), Liu Dan (first year of Huanglong Era, as King Yang), Liu Zong (fourth year of Chuyuan Era, as King Xiao), Liu Luren (second year of Yongguang Era, as King Miao), Liu Shun (ascended in the second year of Jushe Era but in the first year of the Jianguo Era, was “ demoted to duke and removed from position in the following year ”), and Liu Xing (re-appointed to his royal position around the second year of the Jianwu Era but removed in the thirteenth year). Given these considerations, therefore, Zhang Ji should have been the consort of one of the eight rulers of Changsha listed above.