

# The excavation of the Wangyukou Locus South at Yinxu Site in Anyang City, Henan in 2009

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## Abstract

In March through December 2009, Anyang Archaeological Team of the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences conducted excavation to the remains of the Shang Dynasty at Wangyukou Locus South. The excavation recovered roads, house foundations, wells, ash pits, sacrificial pits, burials, etc. The family cemetery represented by tombs M103 and M94 was the main achievement of this excavation: the bronzes unearthed from these two tombs bore inscriptions with the same name as that of the diviner “𠄎” in the oracle bone inscriptions. Therefore, this cemetery might be the family cemetery of diviner “𠄎”. These two tombs belonged to Phases II and III respectively, the different characteristics shown by which provided rare materials for the researches on the positions of the diviner groups and the changes of the diviner 𠄎 in the Yinxu Period.

**Keywords:** Diviner tombs-Shang Dynasty; Wangyukou Locus South; Yinxu Site (Anyang City, Henan)

## Brief introduction of the remains

In March to December 2009, archaeological excavation was carried out at Wangyukou Locus South. It opened

an area of 0.9132ha, which was divided into seven excavation zones, namely Zones A to G (Figure 1). The discovered remains of the Yinxu Period are distributed mainly in the south and east of the excavated area, while the west is the zone of thick layers formed in later times. On the whole the cultural remains accumulated at this locus are relatively thin and sparse.

## Vestiges

1. Roads, nine in total. Most of them belong to later times; those of the Yinxu Period are represented by L4 and L8.

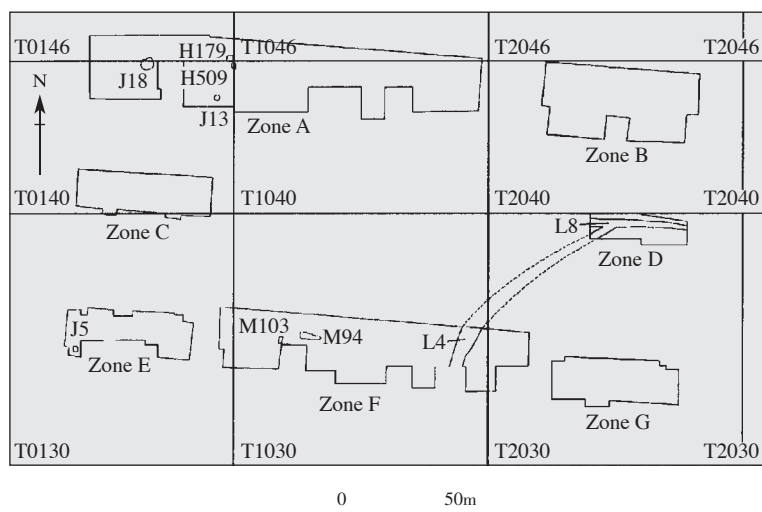
L4 lies in Zone F and runs from northeast to southwest at an orientation of 20°. In structure it can be divided into three layers, the total thickness of which is 0.35m. The surface measures 4.6–5.7m in width and bears ruts in the middle.

L8 is in the middle of Zone D and runs from east to west with an intersection occurring in excavation grid T2439, from there a branch road stretches to the southwest. L8 is 0.3m in thickness; the surface is paved of mixed gravel, smashed potsherds and animal bones and measures 2–3.3m in width. Judged by the extending direction, it might have elongated eastward to join the recently discovered road network at Liujiashuang Locus North.

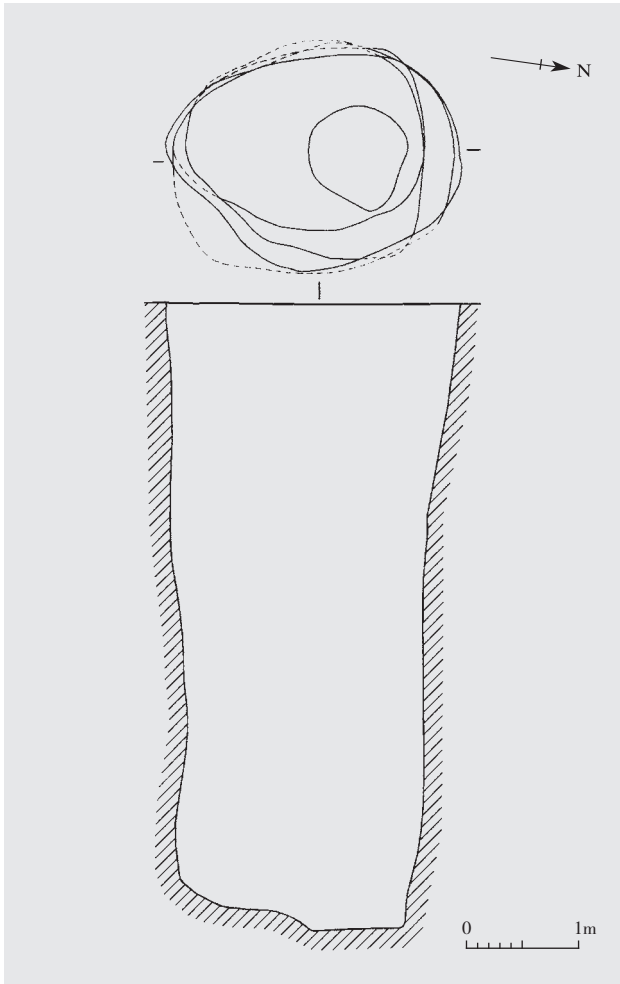
The analysis of the contents in the road surface indicates that both L4 and L8 belong to Phase IV of the Yinxu Period.

2. Sacrificial pits, six units in total.

H509 is located in Zone A. It has an oval plan. The opening is larger than the bottom and 1.2m below the present ground; the depth measures 5.6m. The bottom is roughly flat. In the pit are three layers of human and animal victims (Figure 2). The first layer consists of one animal and three human skeletons. They are placed a little to the eastern side of the pit and arranged roughly as a circle. The second layer comprises one animal and two human skeletons, which are put a little to the southeastern side, with the human victims superimposed each other. The third layer is a human victim with the body lying on side, the limbs flexed, the left arm separated from the body and the knees pointing to the north (Figures 3 to 6). Identification shows that the human victims A, E and H are females, B and F are males and C is unknown in sex. Judged by the human skeletons, there may have been suffered from beheading, hand severing, foot chopping-off and other measures. The



**Figure 1** Excavated Zone at Wangyukou Locus South and the distribution of the vestiges revealed in this area.

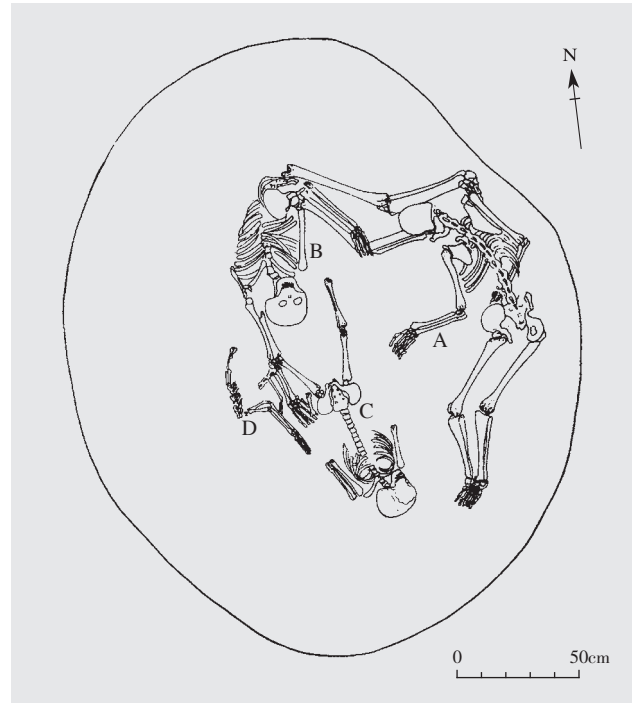


**Figure 2** The plan and section of ash pit H509.

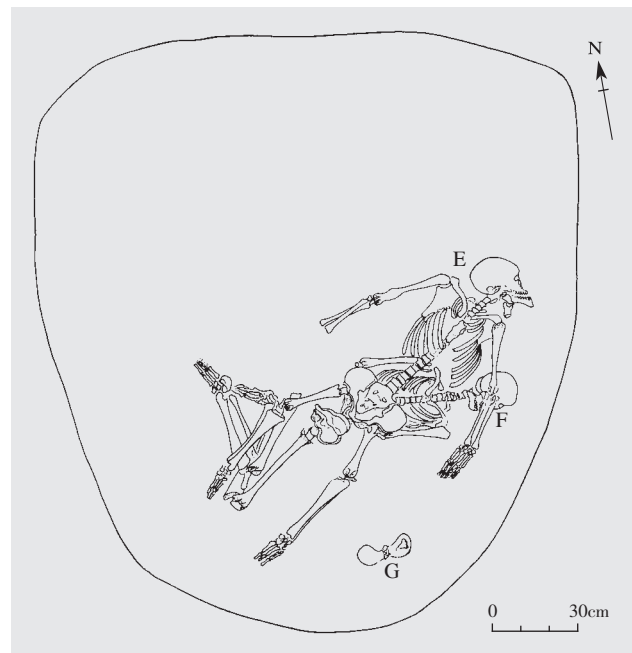
unearthed potsherds and stratigraphical relations indicate that H509 belongs to Phase III of the Yinxu Period.

The water well J5 is located in Zone E. It has a sub-oval plan and measures 2.4m in length and 1.5m in width at the opening and 9.10m in depth. Originally it was a water well and later became a sacrificial pit after being abandoned. It contains roughly four layers of sacrificial remains. The first layer consists of five human skeletons and one horse skull randomly piled up. The second layer contains an intact human skeleton in a flexed supine position heading west. The third layer contains large amount of scattered animal bones, an oracle bone and two scapulae. The fourth layer comprises quantities of animal spines, ribs, phalanxes, etc. along with an intact pottery *li*-cauldron and a pig skull (Figures 7 to 11). Osteological identification shows the human victims A, C and G to be adult males, B and D adult females and E a child seven to nine years old. Based on the unearthed pottery, J5 as a sacrificial pit can be attributed to Phase III of the Yinxu Period.

3. Cellars and wells. Both are frequently recorded vestiges of daily-use facilities in the Yinxu Site.

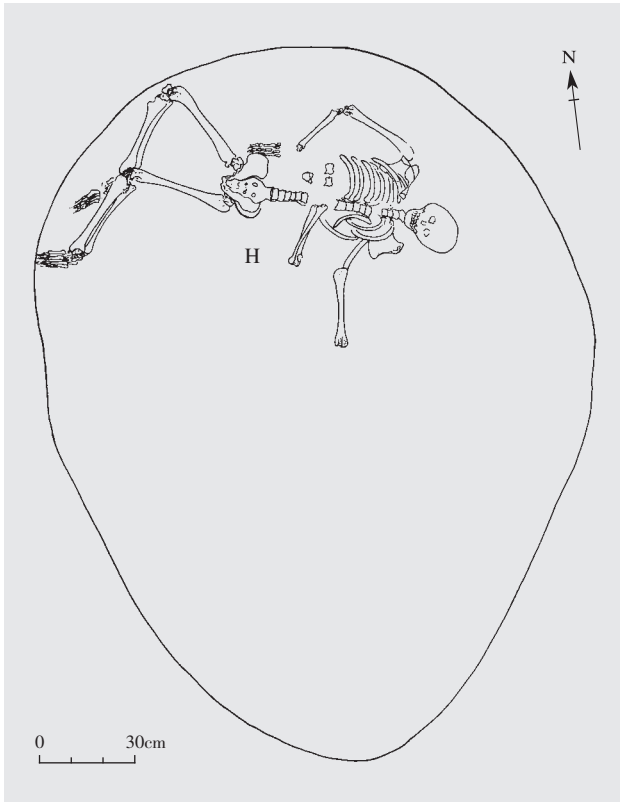


**Figure 3** The plan of the victims in the first layer of ash pit H509.

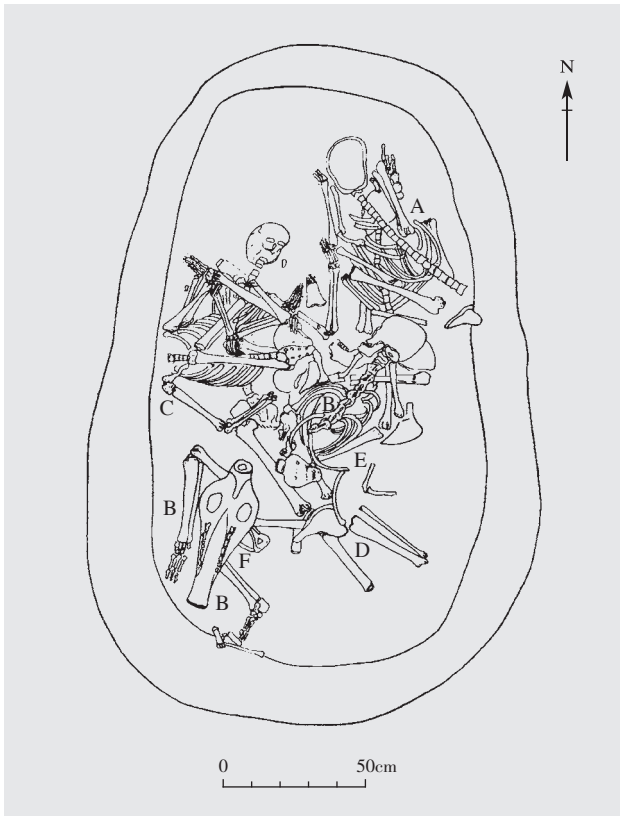


**Figure 4** The plan of the victims in the second layer of ash pit H509.

J13. It is located at the center of the west of excavation grid T0944 in Zone A and measures 10.5m in depth. It has a circular plan with a diameter of 2.1–2.2m. The opening is larger than the bottom, the wall is slanting and remains neat and smooth, and the bottom is level. On the eastern



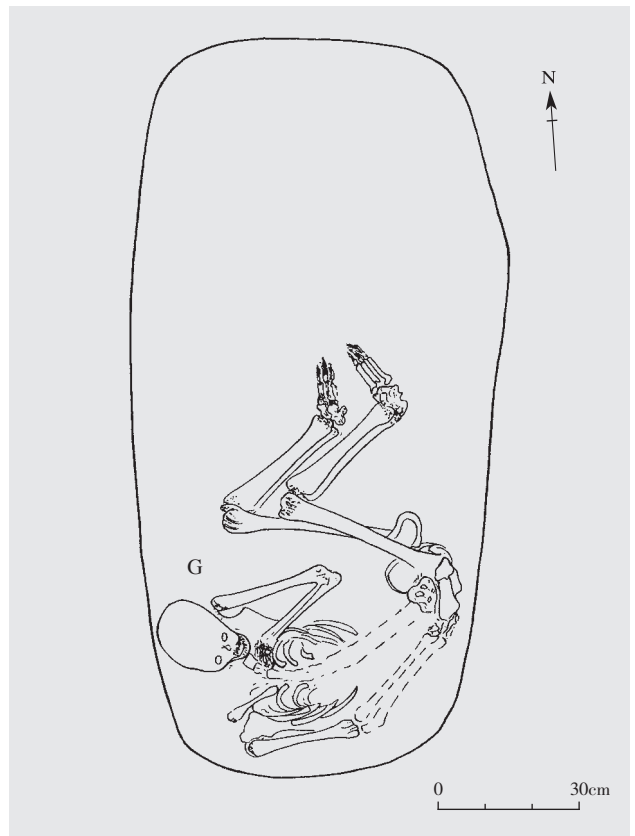
**Figure 5** The plan of the victim in the third layer of ash pit H509.



**Figure 7** The plan of the victims in the first layer of J5.



**Figure 6** The victims in the first layer of ash pit H509 (top is west).



**Figure 8** The plan of the victim in the second layer of J5.

side of the wall, from the opening to the point at a depth of 8.6m, 17 square toe holes for descending and ascending are distributed at an interval of 0.2–0.46m roughly in a tidy line (Figure 12). The accumulations form four layers, which contain potsherds, animal bones, an oracle bone, a bone hairpin, etc. The typological features of the unearthed potsherds show that J13 belongs to Phase III



**Figure 9** The plan of the victims in the third layer of J5.



**Figure 10** The plan of the victim in the fourth layer of J5.

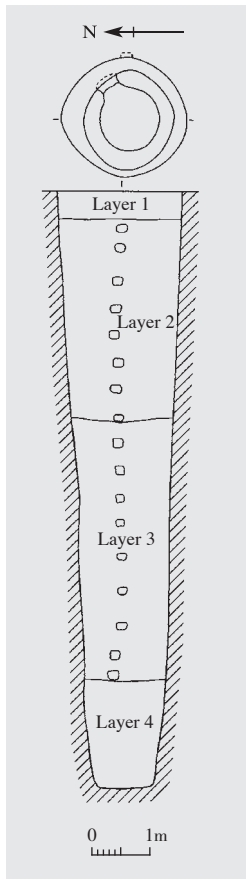
of the Yinxu Period. Despite its great depth, the wall bears no water-line marks that are commonly seen in other cases, and no water-drawing pottery vessels were discovered, so this may have not been a water well but an ice cellar for preserving food in the summer.

**Well J18.** It is located in the south of excavation grid T0645 in Zone E. The opening is oval with a length of 4.7m and a width of 4.12m. The bottom is in a circular plan with a diameter of 1.7m, much smaller than the opening, and is slightly inclined with the east a little higher than the west. The wall is made slanting for the upper part, curved outward for 0.8m in the middle (beginning at the depth of 6m), and vertical for the lower part (from the depth of 8m to the bottom), and bears tool marks. The objects unearthed from the interior are potsherds and animal bones, as well as 21 pottery jars

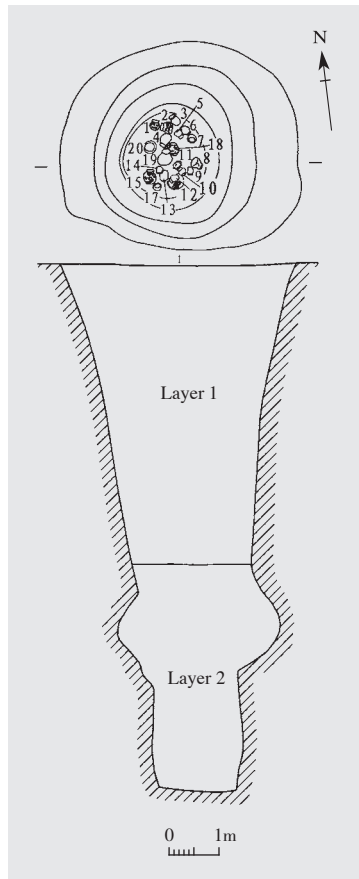


**Figure 11** The victims in the first layer of J5 (top is west).

and some bone material and deer antlers from the bottom (Figure 13). The yielded potteries suggest that J18 belongs to Phase IV of the Yinxu Period.



**Figure 12** Plan and section of Well J13.



**Figure 13** Plan and section of Well J18.

1, 2, 8, 15 and 20. Red pottery jars; 3–7, 9–14 and 17–19. Gray pottery jars (16. Pottery *gui*-tureen is covered by 12. Gray pottery jar).

## Burials

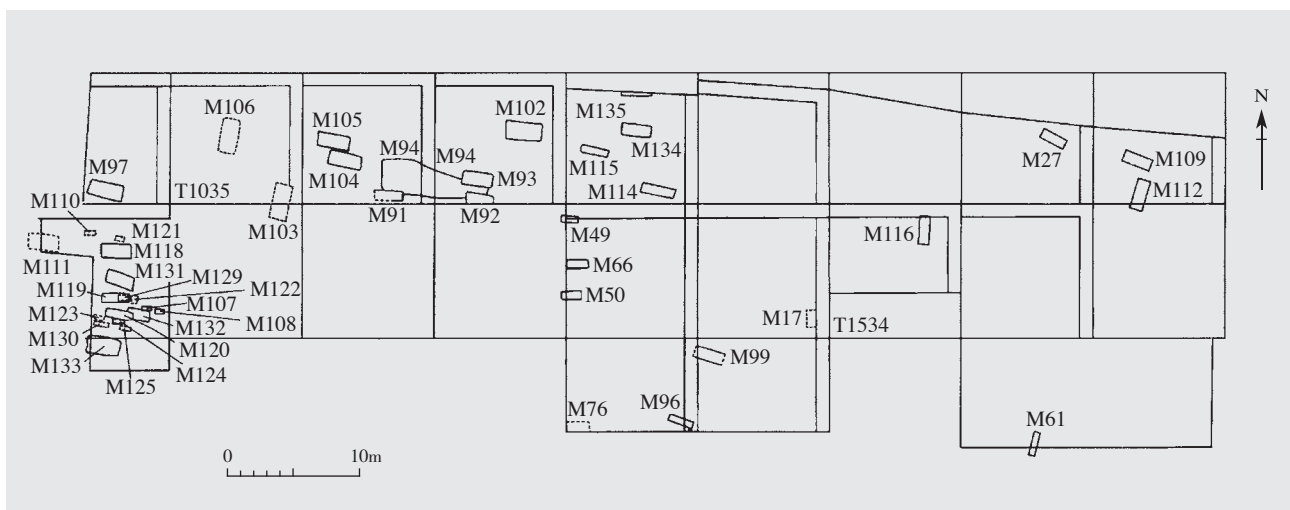
In total more than 330 burials of Yinxu Period are excavated, which are largely gathered in the family cemeteries discovered in Zones A, F and G. In Zone F 41 tombs are excavated, which must have been the remains of a family cemetery. Their basic distinctive features include the east-west orientation of the major axis, the east-heading and the extended supine position of the tomb occupants. In date they belong chiefly to Phases III and IV of the Yinxu Period (Figure 14).

### 1. Tomb M103.

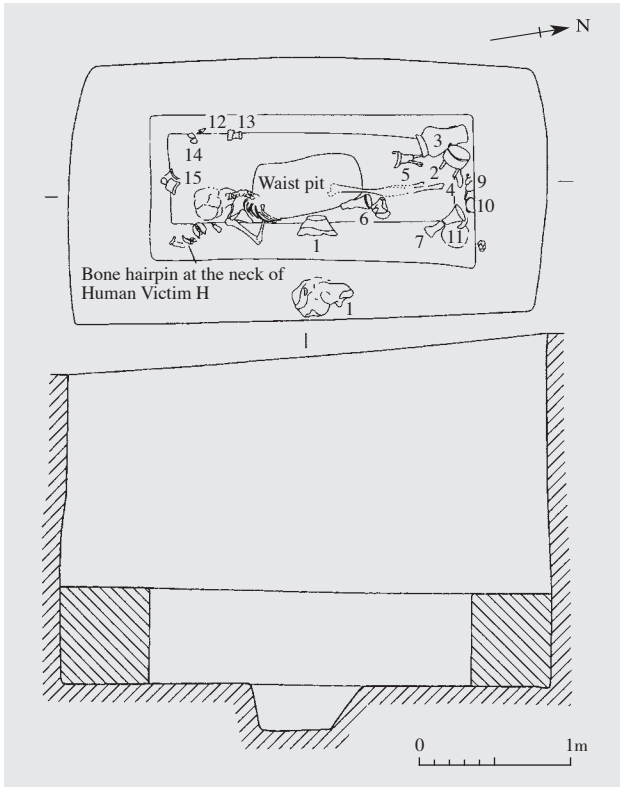
It is located in the southeastern corner of T1035 in Zone F. The burial pit is a rectangular earthen shaft with an orientation of  $190^\circ$ , the opening measures 3.2m in length and 1.65–1.75m in width and the bottom is at a depth of 2.36m. It is furnished with an artificial ledge rammed with mottled soil around the bottom, a waist pit with a dog skeleton in the grave bottom and a double coffin bearing red lacquer remnants. The tomb occupant is a roughly 30-year old male lying in an extended prone position heading south. The skeleton is in a poor condition (Figures 15 and 16).

Nine human victims are found and designated A to I. Of them A to G are put in two layers and buried in the artificial ledge, while H and I are placed in the narrow space between the eastern side boards of the inner and outer coffins, heading north and south respectively. In most cases, traces of mats or textile were discovered nearby the skeletons of the human victims and occasionally in association with marks of red lacquer. According to the results of identification, there are males and females in various ages, the youngest of which are 8–10 years old and the oldest, 40–45. Animal victims were brought to light in five places. They comprise three dogs, an ox leg and a sheep leg (Figures 17–19).

The grave goods from tomb M103 include bronze,



**Figure 14** Distribution of the tombs of the family cemetery in Zone F.

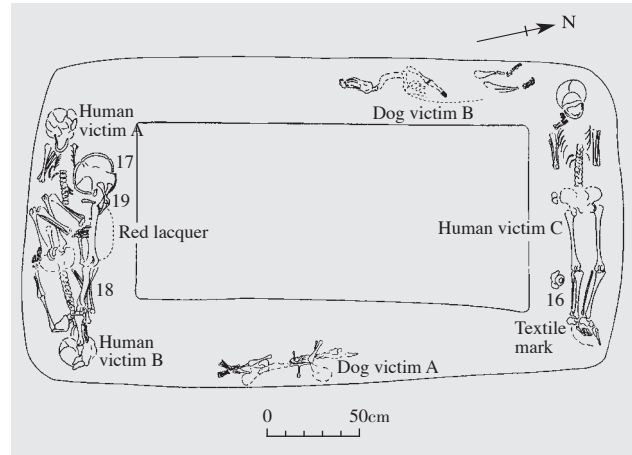


**Figure 15** The plan and section of tomb M103.  
 1. Bronze *lei*-wine jar; 2 and 10. Bronze *ding*-tripods; 3. Bronze vase; 4. Bronze *ge*-dagger ax; 5 and 9. Bronze *jue*-cups; 6 and 7. Bronze *gu*-goblets; 11. Bronze *gui*-tureen; 12. Bronze arrowhead; 13. Tubular bone object; 14. Pottery *jue*-cup; 15. Pottery *li*-cauldron. (No. 8 Bronze *ge*-dagger ax is covered by the No. 7 Bronze *gu*-goblet)

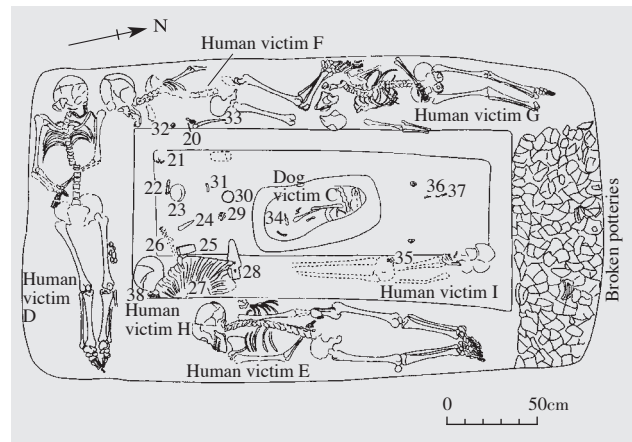


**Figure 16** Tomb M103 (top is west).

pottery, jade, shell, stone, bone, turquoise, goldfoil and spiral shell artifacts. They are put on and in the artificial ledge, between the inner and outer coffins and in the



**Figure 17** Plan of the victims in the upper layer in the artificial ledge of tomb M103.  
 16. Pottery *gu*-goblet; 17. Pottery *gui*-tureen; 18. Ox leg bone; 19. Sheep leg bone.



**Figure 18** Plan of the victims in the lower layer in the artificial ledge and between the inner and outer coffins of tomb M103.  
 20. Jade spindle whorl-shaped object; 21. Shell object; 22. Grindstone; 23. Mirror-shaped round bronze object; 24. Bronze ferrule; 25. Bronze adze; 26. Turquoise; 27. Bone tube; 28. Bronze *kui*-dagger ax; 29. Gold-foiled ornament; 30. Bracelet-shaped jade object; 31. Jade human figure wearing a high cap; 32. Bronze seal; 33. Bronze knife; 34. Tiger-shaped jade graver; 35. Shell; 36. Fish-shaped jade graver; 37. Jade bead; 38. Spiral shell.

inner coffin.

(1) Bronzes, altogether 18 pieces.

Vase, one piece (M103:3). It has an oblate body, a roughly vertical mouth, a swollen lower belly, and a short ring foot. The neck and foot are decorated with *taotie*

animal mask designs. The height measures 33.2cm (Figure 20).

*Gui*-tureen, one piece (M103:11). The mouth is flared, the neck contracted, the belly swollen in the lower part, and the foot ring-like. The decoration comprises the triangular banana-leaf and nipple patterns on the neck, the cloud-and-thunder and nipple patterns on the belly and the *taotie* animal mask design on the ring foot. The height is 13.3cm (Figure 21).

*Ding*-tripods, two pieces. They are roughly the same in shape, either having vertical ears, a vertical belly, a flat



Figure 19 Human and animal victims in tomb M103 (top is east).



Figure 20 Bronze vase (M103:3).

bottom and three solid column-shaped feet. M103:2 bears a *taotie* animal mask design on the neck and a cloud-and-thunder pattern on the belly. On the inner wall is the inscription “𠄎”. The height is 18.2cm (Figure 22). M103:10 is decorated with a circle of cloud-and-thunder pattern on the neck and a triangular banana-leaf pattern on the belly. On the inner wall is the inscription “𠄎𠄎”. The height measures 13.1cm (Figure 23).

*Jue*-cups, two pieces. Either has three short column-shaped feet, a slanting curvy belly and an egg-shaped bottom. M103:5 bears the inscription “𠄎𠄎” below the handle. The height measures 19.9cm (Figure 24). M103:9 has the inscription “shi 史” below the handle. The height is 19.0cm (Figure 25).

*Gu*-goblets, two pieces. They are identical in shape, either having a flared mouth and a slender stem. The body is decorated with triangular banana-leaf and *taotie* animal mask designs. M103:7 is 27.2cm in height (Figure 26).

*Lei*-wine jar, one piece (M103:1). It was smashed before entombment. The body is round, the mouth vertical, and the surface plain.

Seal, one piece (M103:32). It is roughly square and has a semi-ring knob. The obverse



Figure 21 Bronze *gui*-tureen (M103:11).



**Figure 22** Bronze *ding*-tripod (M103:2).



**Figure 23** Bronze *ding*-tripod (M103:10).



**Figure 24** Bronze *jue*-cup (M103:5).



**Figure 25** Bronze *jue*-cup (M103:9).

measures 2.2-2.4cm in length for each side and bears the character “𠄎” in intaglio (Figure 27).

*Ge*-dagger axes, two pieces. M103:4 has a straight tang and measures 20.6cm in length (Figure 28). M103:8 has a curved tang and measures 24.7cm in length (Figure 29).

In addition, M103 yielded a ferrule, a *kui*-dagger ax, an arrowhead, a knife and an adze.

(2) Potteries, in total 13 pieces. They are largely smashed and put in the artificial ledge. In type they belong to the *li*-cauldron, *lei*-wine jar, vessel lid, basin, round-bottomed jar, etc (Figure 30).

*Li*-cauldrons, two pieces. They belong to sandy ware. Either has three high crotches and bears cord marks.

M103:15 measures 13.8cm in height and M103:46, 19.9cm. *Lei*-wine jars, six pieces. Each has a mushroom-shaped knob atop the lid, a vertical mouth, a slanting curvy belly, a flat bottom, and three horizontal lugs. M103:40 measures 40.7cm in height. *Gui*-tureen, one piece (M103:17). It has a flat rim, a wide-opened mouth, a slanting belly and a short ring foot. The height measures 15.3cm. Basin, one piece (M103:45). The rim is outbent, the neck contracted, the belly swollen and the bottom small and flat. The height measures 19.3cm. Round-bottomed jar, one piece (M103:47). It has a flared mouth, a contracted neck and a round swollen belly. The height is 22.4cm. *Gu*-goblet, one piece (M103:16). Only





Figure 26 Bronze *gu*-goblet (M103:7).

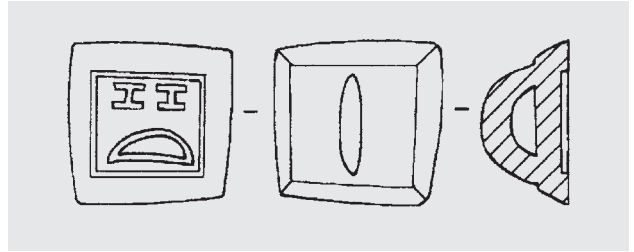


Figure 27 Bronze seal (M103:32).



Figure 28 Bronze *ge*-dagger ax (M103:4).



Figure 29 Bronze *ge*-dagger ax (M103:8).

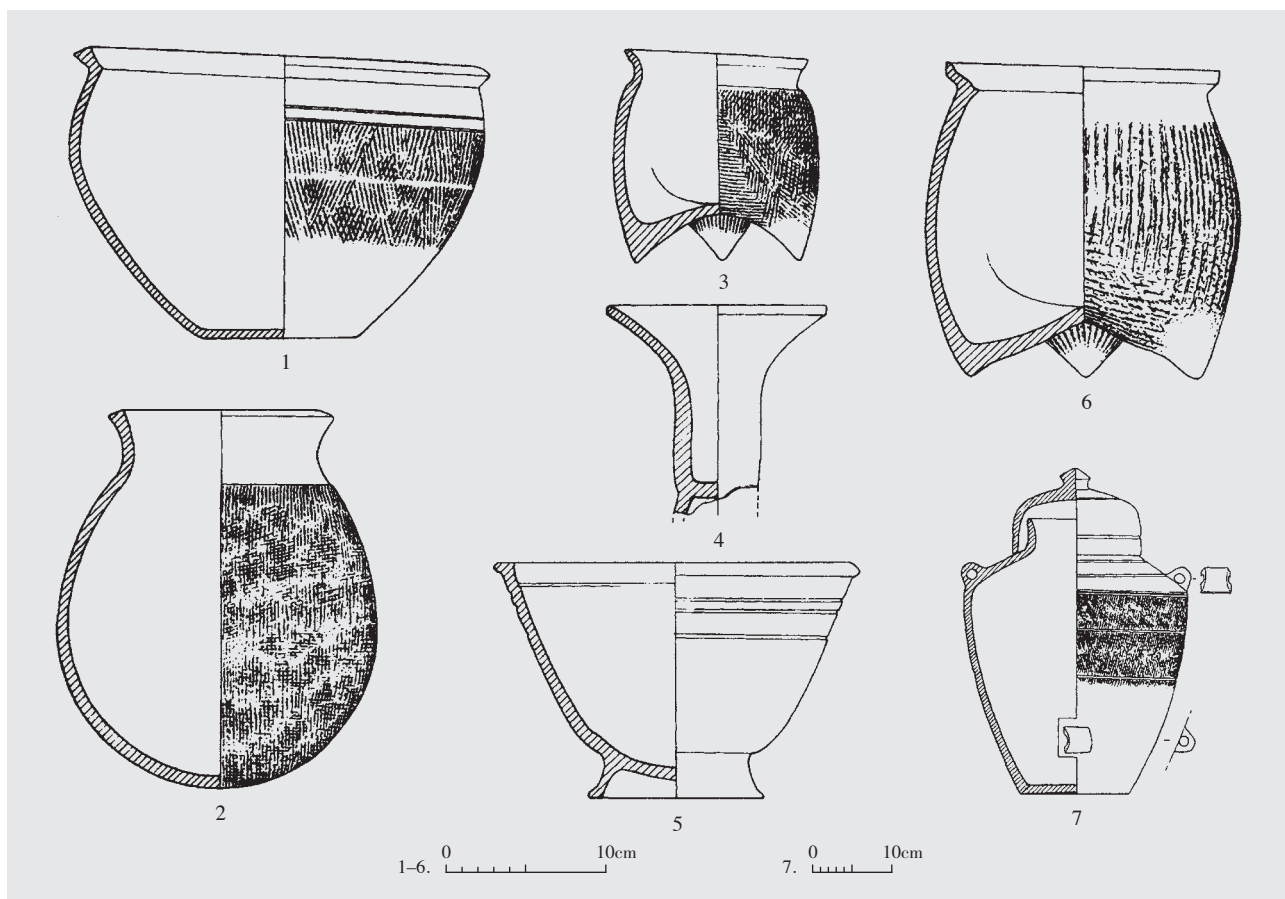
the upper part remains and has a height of 13.9cm. *Jue*-cup, one piece (M103:14). Only the upper part of the three legs remains in the tomb.

(3) Jades, eight pieces. One is a human figure wearing a high cap (M103:31). It depicts a human face on the two sides. The length measures 5cm (Figure 31). Tiger-shaped graver (M103:34). It has a tiger-shaped handle and a slanting-edged blade. The length measures 6.5cm (Figure 32). The rest artifacts include a fish-shaped graver, a spindle whorl-shaped object, three beads, etc.

Among the other grave goods are a grindstone, turquoise blades, bone hairpins, gold-foiled ornaments, etc. In date Tomb M103 goes back to Phase II of the Yinxu Period.

(2) Tomb M94.

It is a 甲-shaped tomb located in Zone F, about 7m apart from Tomb M103, with an orientation of 100°, and consists of a small-sized seven-step passage and a grave. The passage opening has a trapezoid plan and measures 4.1m

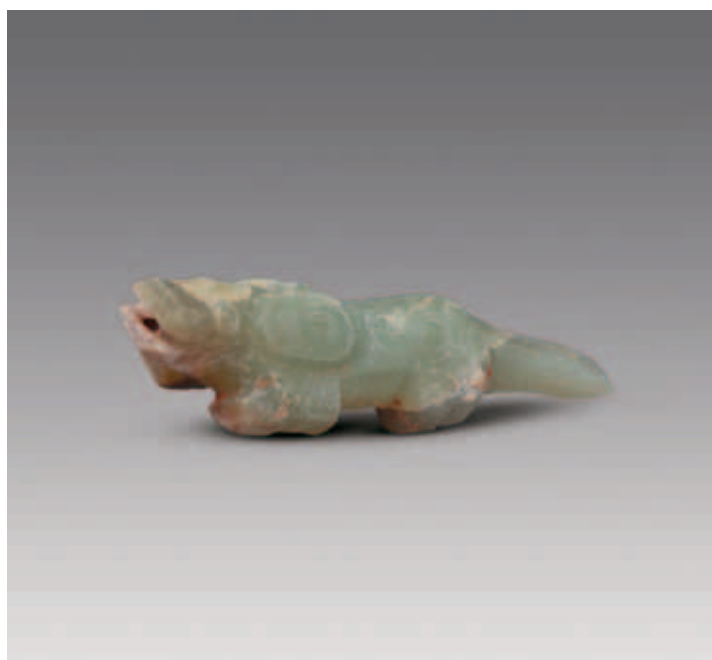


**Figure 30** Potteries from tomb M103.

1. Basin (M103:45); 2. Round-bottomed jar (M103:47); 3 and 6. *Li*-cauldrons (M103:15 and 46); 4. *Gu*-goblet (M103:16); 5. *Gui*-tureen (M103:17); 7. *Lei*-wine jar (M103:40).



**Figure 31** Jade humam figure wearing a high cap (M103:31).



**Figure 32** Tiger-shaped jade graver (M103:34).

in length. The grave is 3.9m long from east to west and 2.6m wide. The walls of the two parts bear tool marks in some spots. The bottom is furnished with an artificial ledge, a waist pit containing a dog victim, a wooden chamber and a double coffin, all of which are rotten away (Figures 33 and 34).

The tomb occupant lies in an extended supine position heading east and feet to the west. Only the skull and a part of cervical vertebrae remain in the coffin. Two human victims and four dog victims were discovered in association with grave goods, which number 80, including bronzes, potteries, jades and artifacts made of bone, shell and stone (Figures 35 and 36).

(1) Bronzes, 58 pieces plus 15 bronze arrowheads.

*Gu*-goblet, one piece (M94:56). It has a wide-opened mouth and a slender stem. All the body bears triangular banana-leaf patterns and *taotie* animal mask designs. The inner side of the ring foot bears an inscription, which has become illegible owing to rust-eroding. The whole vessel measure 27.4cm in height (Figure 37).

*Jue*-cup, one piece (M94:52). It has a deep belly and a pointed round bottom. On the belly are *taotie* animal mask designs. The height is 20.3cm (Figure 38).

*Ding*-tripod, one piece (M94:78). It has been broken into several bits. The belly bears *taotie* animal



Figure 33 Tomb M94 (W-E).

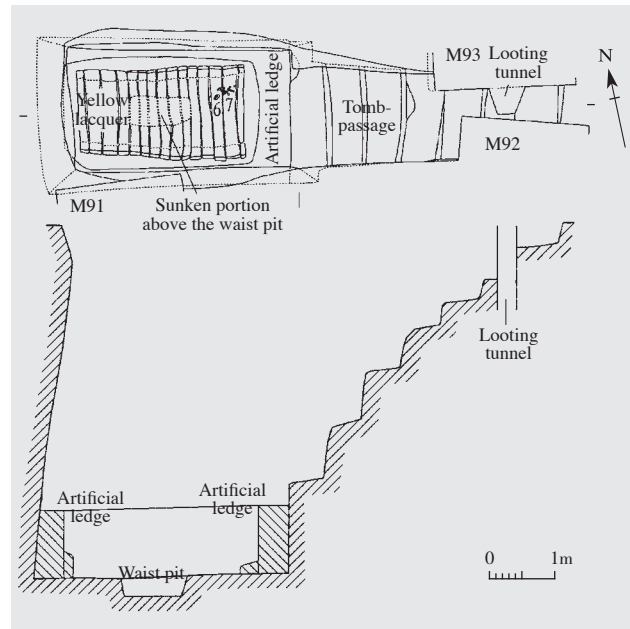


Figure 34 The plan and section of tomb M94.  
6. Shell artifact; 7. Pebbles (33 pieces).

mask designs. On the inner wall of the rim are the characters “*𠄎*”.

*Zun*-vessel, one piece (M94:8). The mouth and belly have been deformed and damaged by intentional hammering. The height is 22.2cm.

Ladle, one piece (M94:36). It has an egg-shaped body and a long flat handle, and is decorated with embossed *kui*-dragon and straight ridge patterns. The whole object is 27cm long (Figure 39).

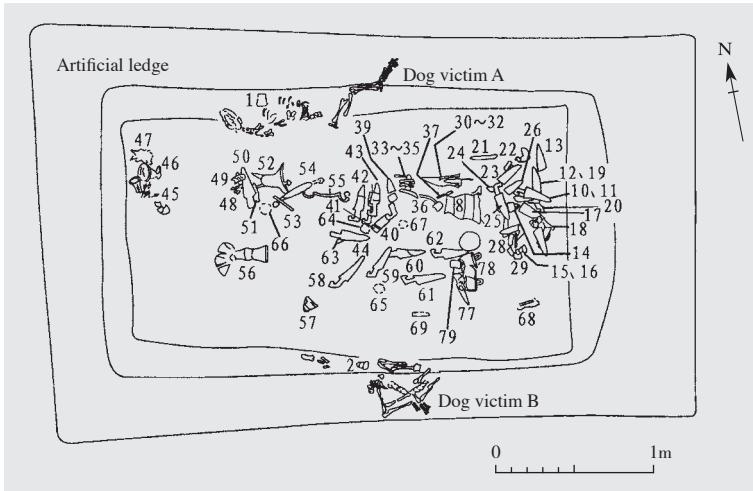
*Yue*-battle ax, one piece (M94:51). The tang is straight and wide and the edge curvy. The length measures 12cm.

Battle ax, one piece (M94:49). The body is narrow, looks like a short *ge*-dagger ax with a tubular handle socket and measures 15.6cm in length (Figure 40).

Finial, one piece (M94:33). It is an ornament for the end of a weapon shaft. The length measures 9cm (Figure 41).

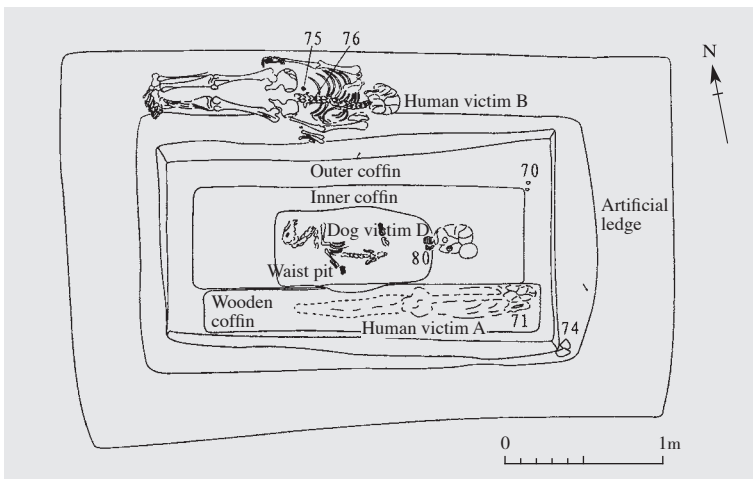
*Ge*-dagger axes, 33 pieces. M94:50 has a socket and a straight tang without any decorative pattern and must be a practical weapon; the rest may be specially made funeral objects for they are light and thin and, for the most, have been bent, spoiled or broken. The sample M94:50 is 25.2cm long (Figure 42).

Spearheads, three pieces, all heavy and large. The two wings are rather wide and are contracted in the middle. In form there are two types. Two pieces belong to Type A which are without designs. The two wings extend down to the middle and lower parts of the socket; either side bears a triangular concavity in the center. M94:30 measures 23.3cm in total length (Figure 43). Type B is represented by the other piece (M94:32). The wing bottom almost reaches the edge of the socket. It has a length of 25.3cm (Figure 44).



**Figure 35** The distribution of the grave goods in tomb M94.

1, 2, 14 and 57. Small bronze bells; 8. Bronze *zun*-vessel; 10-13, 15-29, 31, 39-44, 50, 58-62 and 77. Bronze *ge*-dagger axes; 30, 32 and 68. Bronze spears; 33. Bronze finial; 34. Bronze chisel; 35. Bronze graver; 36. Bronze ladle; 37. Triangular-bladed bronze knife; 45 and 48. Bronze arrowheads; 46. Pottery *gu*-goblet; 47. Pottery *jue*-cup; 49. Bronze battle ax; 51. Bronze *yue*-battle ax; 52. Bronze *jue*-cup; 53. Bronze horsewhip; 54 and 55. Bow-shaped bronze objects; 56. Bronze *gu*-goblet; 63 and 69. Grindstones; 64. Jade ring; 65. Tenoned jade ornament; 66. Jade ornament; 67. Jade tube; 78. Bronze *ding*-tripod; 79. Stone *yue*-battle ax (3. Small bronze bell is discovered at the neck of dog victim C in the earth fill of the grave. 4. Pottery *li*-cauldron and 5. Shell object are discovered in the earth fill of the grave; 9. Bronze chisel and 27. Bronze *ge*-dagger ax are in 8. Bronze *zun*-vessel and the flat long-narrow bronze object is covered by 36. Bronze ladle).



**Figure 36** The plan of the tomb occupant, sacrificial victims and part of the grave goods in tomb M94.

70. Pebbles (two pieces); 71. Small bronze bell; 74 and 80. Shell sickles; 75. Cowrie; 76. Jade *ge*-dagger ax. (72. Grindstone and 73. Jade *ge*-dagger ax are covered by the human victim A)



**Figure 37** Bronze *gu*-goblet (M94:56).



**Figure 38** Bronze *jue*-cup (M94:52).



**Figure 39** Bronze ladle (M94:36).



**Figure 40** Bronze battle ax (M94:49).



**Figure 41** Bronze finial (M94:33).



**Figure 42** Bronze *ge*-dagger ax (M94:50).



**Figure 43** Bronze spearhead of Type A (M94: 30).



**Figure 44** Bronze spearhead of Type B (M94:32).

Bow-shaped objects, two pieces. They are roughly the same in shape, either having two bell-shaped ends with four perforations each. The body is in the shape of an arc. M94:54 is inscribed with the signs “𠄎𠄎” at either end. It measures 31.7cm between the bell-shaped ends.

Besides, there are a horsewhip, a graver, a triangular-bladed knife, two chisels and six small bells.

Shell sickles, four pieces. All are broken. M94:74 is 22.6cm in length.

In date tomb M94 belongs to Phase III of the Yinxu Period.

## Conclusions

1. The present excavation further increased our understanding on the distribution of the vestiges in the southwest of the Yinxu Site. From the Phases I to IV of the Yinxu Period, residential, burial and other zones in this area were alternatively superimposed upon each other.

2. The most important results of this fieldwork are the excavation of the family cemetery represented by tombs M103 and M94. Both of them yielded bronzes with the inscriptions “𠄎” and/or “𠄎”. The “𠄎” is a diviner name that occurred quite frequently in oracle inscriptions

of Phases II and III of the Yinxu Period. Therefore the occupants of tombs M103 and M94 must have been related to diviner 𠄎. The four-color pebbles and the bronze and jade gravers unearthed from M94 may all have been related to witchcraft and divination.

3. Both tombs M103 and M94 contain broken object-furnished burial. This funeral custom has been discovered more and more in the Yinxu Site, which is worthy of close attention for academic circles.

4. The bronze seal bearing the character “𠄎” unearthed from tomb M103 is the second case in this type of object archaeologically discovered so far on the Yinxu Site. It provided forceful evidence for solving the long-disputed problem on the origins of Chinese seals and for discerning the false from the genuine among the handed-down seals whose provenances were attributed to the Yinxu Site.

## Postscript

The original report authored by Yuling He 何毓灵 and Jigen Tang 唐际根 was published in *Kaogu* 考古 (Archaeology) 2012.12:3–25 with 32 illustrations and nine plates. The present version is prepared by the authors and translated into English by Runxian Mo 莫润先.