

The Cliff-burial Complex in Qijiang, Santai, Sichuan in 2000

CPAM of Santai County

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Ranked as one of the State Protection Unit “Qijiang Cliff-burial Complex” situates in 105° 5′–105° 10′ E and 30° 42′–30° 58′N. It lies in the whole Qijiang 鄞江 Township and 4–8 Commune of Anju 安居 Township, Santai 三台 County, Sichuan 四川 Province, covering 15 sq km.

Qijiang town has a long history. Since pre-Qin period, it was the capital of Qi State. In the sixth year of Emperor Gaozu of the Western Han Dynasty (201 BC), it was established as a county and rich with economical resources. Its topography is low hills and shallow valleys made of fine sandstone and purple shale. Due to they are easy to be cut, a great number of cliff-burials were created.

From February to June 2002, the CPAM of Santai County carried out a detailed survey to this complex and cleared up six exposed cliff-burials of the late Eastern Han to Three Kingdoms periods.

The cliff-burials are cut along the slope, consisting of tomb passage, door, corridor, chamber, side chamber or aisle, and varied auxiliary parts. The tomb passage is oblique outwardly and connects with door by a staircase. Its length has no relation with the size of chamber. There is no specific drainage system in these cliff-burials.

I. No. 1 Cliff-burial at Tiantaishan

No. 1 cliff-burial at Tiantaishan 天台山 has a single chamber and slope approach. It is 34 degrees on the compass and 17.2 m in total length (Fig. 1).

The tomb chamber is of oblong shape in plan with flat roof. Its left (west) wall carved with a niche imitated pile-supported house with single-eave and gable-end roof. To the center, it is a side chamber for kitchen carved with niche in board shape and a cooking stove

with arched fire door, single chamber, and stone top. There are two side chambers in the right (east) wall. The ante one is of L-shape. There is no decoration on the ceiling and four walls. The rear one is of oblong shape in plan (Fig. 2). One pillar carved in four-angle in the lower part and octagon shape in the upper part flanks the entrance. Their top is carved into half bracket with one *dou* and two *sheng*. The upper pillar and bracket paint blue. Its east wall cuts into a house-niche shaped stone sarcophagus. The one side of the open is a gabled ridge roof with double-sloping and single-eave. The ridge delineates with red, the rows of roof tiles are vividly outlined, and even the image of eave purlin is drawn red. Both sides of the open have windows with horizontal sash bar. Beneath the south window, it is a dog-entrance; under the north one is a gate. The sarcophagus measures 2.2 m long, 1.25 m wide, and 1 m high. Its four walls, red painted pilasters and caisson, are delineated with blue paint. Two toad figurines used as supports are beneath the sarcophagus.

The funerary artifacts include heads of male and female figurines made of red ceramic, one horseshoe of gray ceramic, and one bowl of rough brown ceramic.

II. No. 1 Cliff-burial at Fentaizui

No. 1 cliff-burial at Fentaizui 坟台嘴 is a large-scale burial with sloping approach and 175 degrees on the compass. It consists of tomb passage, door, corridor, four chambers, five side chambers, and one aisle. Three steps connect chambers. The burial is 27.3 m long in total. The sloping difference between the rear chamber and the tomb door reaches as high as 4.3 m (Fig. 3).

The four chambers are of rectangle in plan and four walls carved with pilasters and connecting purlins re-

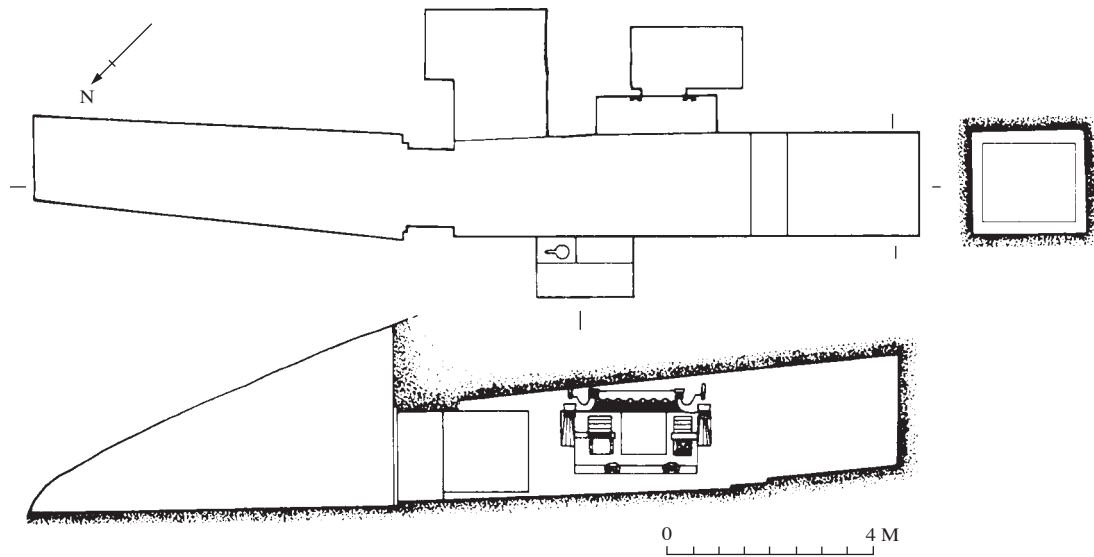


Fig. 1 Plan and elevation of No. 1 cliff-burial at Tiantaishan



Fig. 2 The east side chamber of No. 1 cliff-burial at Tiantaishan

flected wood siding wall. Some drilled *ding-tou-gong* 丁头拱 in the corner. Its ceiling carved in bucket shape and carved with coffer. The purlin ceiling, made in oblong 井-shape, divided into two or three squares by short purlins. The small squares carved with four corbelled coffers or three ridged camp respectively and

their centers drilled circles represented the sun and the moon. The corners of ceiling carved the image of turtle, soft-shelled turtle, and lotus. In the sloping roof between purlins and lintels of four walls, there are eaves. Five side chambers are drilled to both sides of Nos. 1 and 2 central chambers and one side of the rear chamber (Figs.

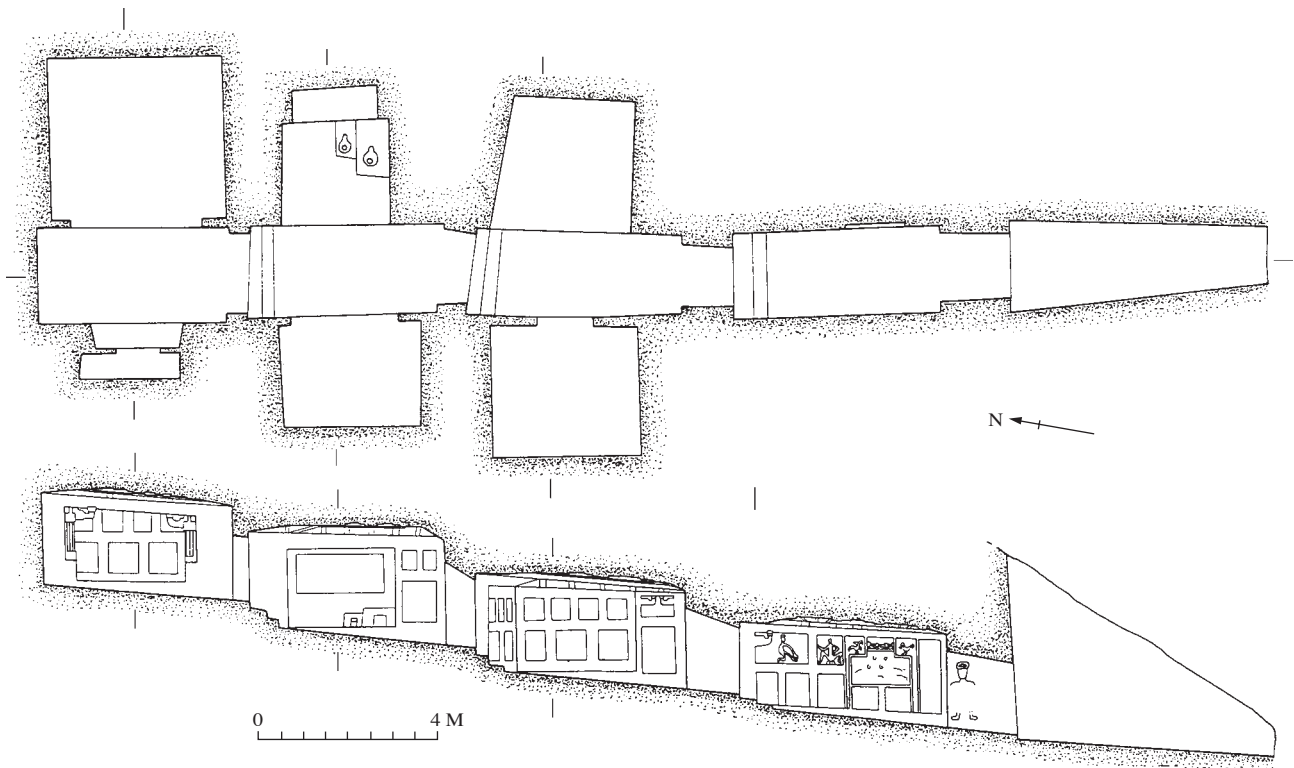


Fig. 3 Plan and elevation of No. 1 cliff-burial at Fentaizui



Fig. 4 The columns and half walls to the entrance of right side chamber of No. 1 chamber in No. 1 cliff-burial at Fentaizui



Fig. 5 The left side chamber of No. 2 chamber in No. 1 cliff-burial at Fentaizui

4 and 5). They are of square shape in plan. There is one approach connected the chambers. Horizontal window sash-shaped wall and pilasters carved on the both sides of entrance. Four walls of the chambers carved with pilasters, connecting purlins 壁穿, and lintels reflected

wood siding wall. Except the side chamber, drilled with double interconnected stoves and ritual board, used as kitchen has flat roof, the other chambers have bucket-shaped roof and carved with ceiling and corbelled coffer.

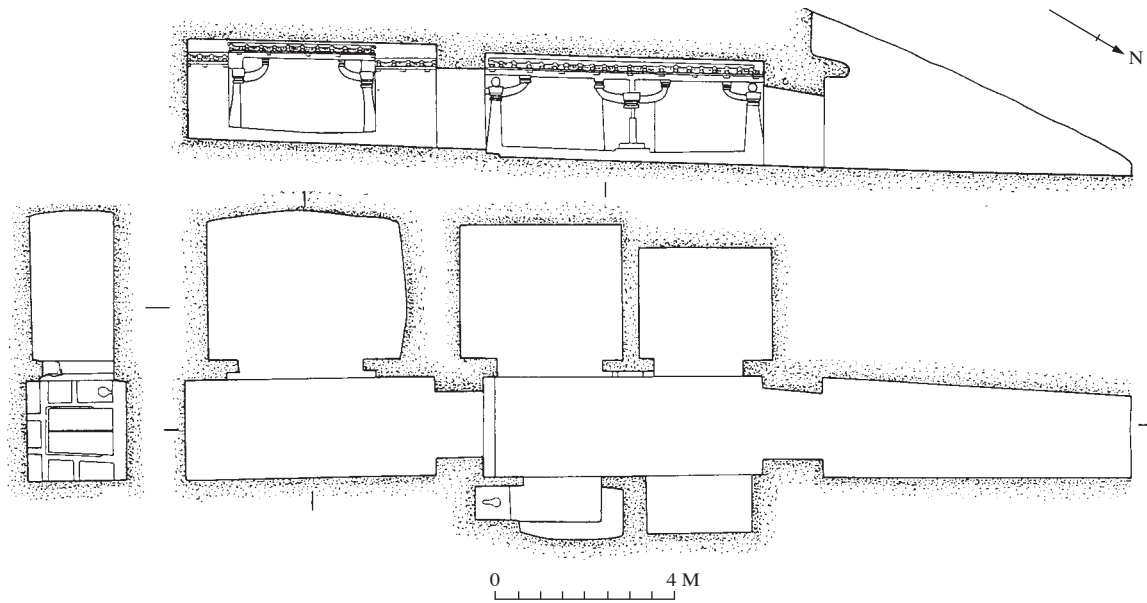


Fig. 6 Plan and elevation of No. 1 cliff-burial at Liujiayan



Fig. 7 Two side chambers in the left wall of the front chamber in No. 1 cliff-burial at Liujiayan

The two walls of the front chamber and corridor also carved with images of door servant, *buqu* 部曲 servant, cranes, three-fish, barbarian statue, and farmer.

III. No. 1 Cliff-burial at Liujiayan

No. 1 cliff-burial at Liujiayan 刘家堰 is a double-chamber burial with sloping approach and 308 degrees on the compass. The total length is 20 m (Fig. 6). This burial is imitated the dead's living house.

On the upper of tomb gate, there is a protruding part imitated the house's eave. The chamber is of rectangular shape in plan, flat roof, and has no timber-imitation architecture. Its two sides build with side chambers and aisles. Two sides of left (southwestern) wall of the front chamber and the wall between two side chambers carved with vertical prop and bracket system in supporting double-pitched ridged roof with single eave and gable, which made this side in two bays (Fig. 7). The roofs

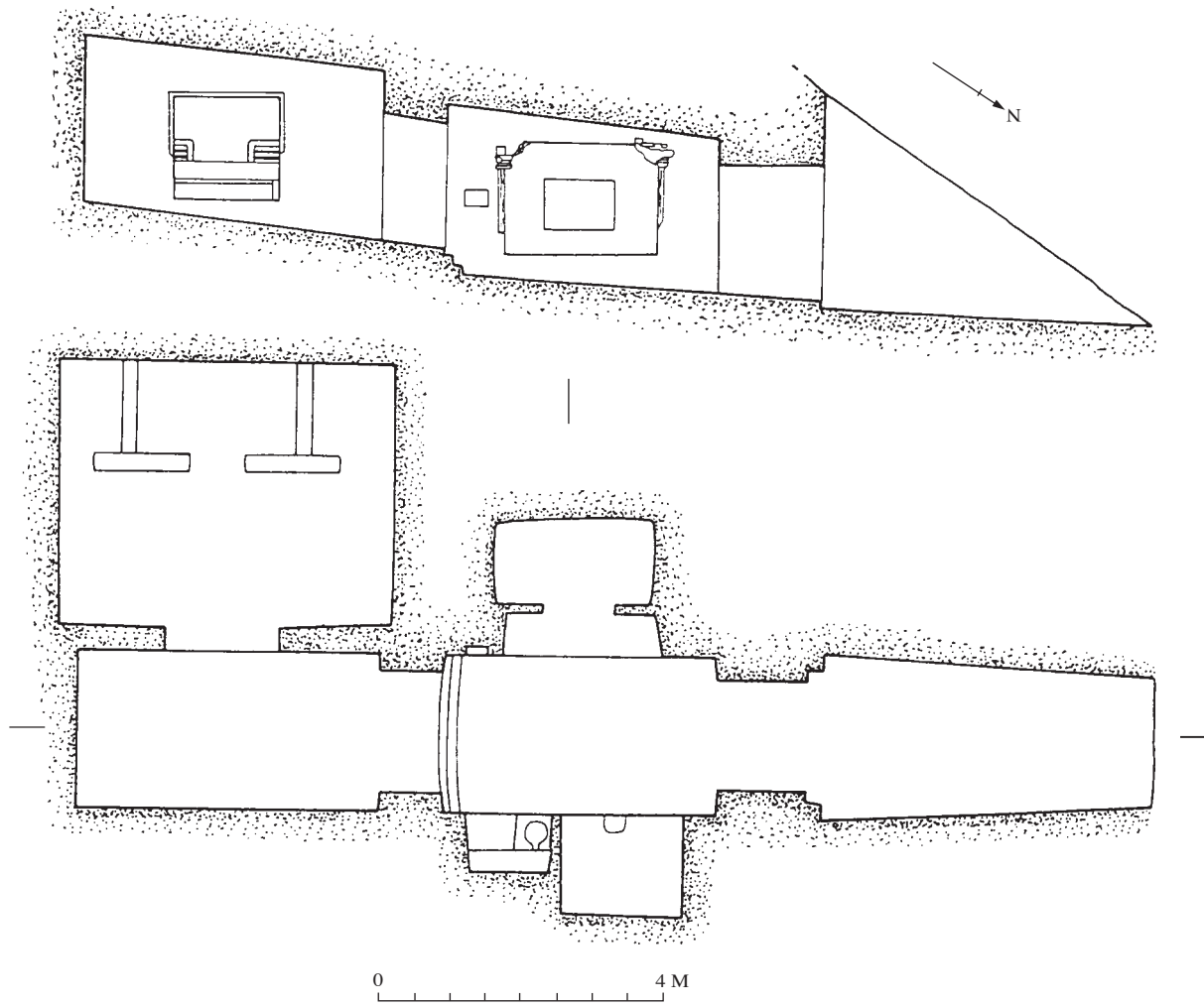


Fig. 8 Plan and elevation of No. 3 cliff-burial at Liujiayan



Fig. 9 Rock bed in the rear chamber of No. 3 cliff-burial at Liujiayan

connect through front chamber. The frontal ridge, rows of roof tiles, and structure of eave-end rendered fine and smooth. The right (northeastern) wall drilled two aisles represented grocery room and kitchen. The left (southwestern) wall of rear chamber consists a hall and a side chamber. The frontal hall chiseled with two vertical props and bracket system in supporting double-pitched ridged roof with single eave and gable. To its lower part, a covered room drilled with double-pitched ridged roof with single eave and gable. The rear wall of rear chamber carved with wood siding door, which shows that there might be another courtyard.

A number of tiled-coffins and four sized bricks decorated with geometric pattern are found in the front chamber. One grayish brown coarse pottery *guan*-jar and one plate are also recovered.

IV. No. 3 Cliff-burial at Liujiayan

No. 3 cliff-burial at Liujiayan 刘家堰 is a double-chamber burial with sloping approach and 305 degrees on the compass. The total length is 14.5 m (Fig. 8).

The chamber is of rectangular shape in plan, flat roof, and has no timber-imitation architecture at roof and four walls. The right (northeastern) wall of the front chamber drilled with one side chamber and one kitchen. The side chamber on the left (southwestern) wall drilled with niche-shaped sarcophagus. The side chamber on the left side of the rear chamber carved one rock bed, which measures 2.6 m in length, 1.54 m in width, and 0.82 m in height (Fig. 9). It has two feet in frontal side and is surrounded by railing panel. The frontal panel is of horizontal sash bar shape, one open in the middle for entering. Its two vertical props carved with bracket system connected with roof. It is very rare to see the Han to Jin periods rock bed preserved in such good condition and drilled in such delicate pattern, which provides valuable material for studying antique furniture.

V. No. 1 Cliff-burial at Hujiawan

No. 1 cliff-burial at Hujiawan 胡家湾 is a double-chamber burial with sloping approach and 232 degrees on the compass. The total length is 16 m (Figs. 10 and 11).

The front chamber is of trapezoidal shape and flat roof. The middle of right (northwestern) wall drilled with half opening wood siding door. The lower parts of two sides of door carved with one small wood siding door and one pile-supported house-shaped niche with single eave and gabled roof, one scarlet bird standing beside the house. The left (southeastern) side chamber

drilled one house-shaped sarcophagus, however, only parts of it were drilled. The lid of hip roofed coffin cover joins with coffin body. The opening of the coffin is drilled in receiving mouth and sealed by three stone slaps.

The rear chamber is of square shape in plan, bucket-shaped roof (Fig. 12). The roof has two rounds of ceiling purlin; the outer one is square shape and the inner one is 目-shape. The center decorated with styled lotus flower. There are purlins in the four corners connected the inner and outer ones. The rear wall of the chamber drilled pilasters, which protruded outwardly. The center of rear wall situates one bulky column supporting one large rectangular corbel, 1.9 m in total length.

The funeral objects include ceramic *ding*-tripods, *guan*-jars, *bo*-bowls, basins, and lids, iron knife, bronze gilded gold rim of eared cup, *huoquan* 货泉 coins, and *wuzhu* 五铢 coins.

VI. No. 1 Cliff-burial at Dongzipai

No. 1 cliff-burial at Dongzipai 洞子排 is a double-chamber burial with sloping approach and 110 degrees on the compass. The total length is 18 m (Fig. 13).

The front chamber is of rectangular shape and bucket-shaped roof. In the middle of ceiling, one horizontal purlin divides the whole ceiling into two sections, which carved with 井-shaped ceiling purlins. Inside the purlins, there is a corbelling caisson ceiling. One circle represented the sun or the moon is carved in the center. The wall of chamber drilled pilasters with bracket system. The front side of right (southern) wall drilled one small aisle where has one niche-shaped sarcophagus. The rear side carved one side chamber used for kitchen. The front side of left (northern) wall drilled one small aisle. The rear side carved one pile-supported house-shaped niche with single eave and overhung gable-end roof. In the middle of left wall drilled one side chamber that broke the timber-imitation architecture. The one is of rectangular shape in plan with flat roof. It has the complete structure and makes itself an independent unit. Its two sides drilled side chambers respectively. The left side chamber is of horizontal rectangular shape in plan. Its two vertical props flanked the entrance have bracket system for supporting lintel. One house-shaped sarcophagus with relief is in the side chamber. The both sides of coffin opening carved with phoenix-shaped watch-tower image that represented “gate of the Heaven.” To its right two side chambers were drilled

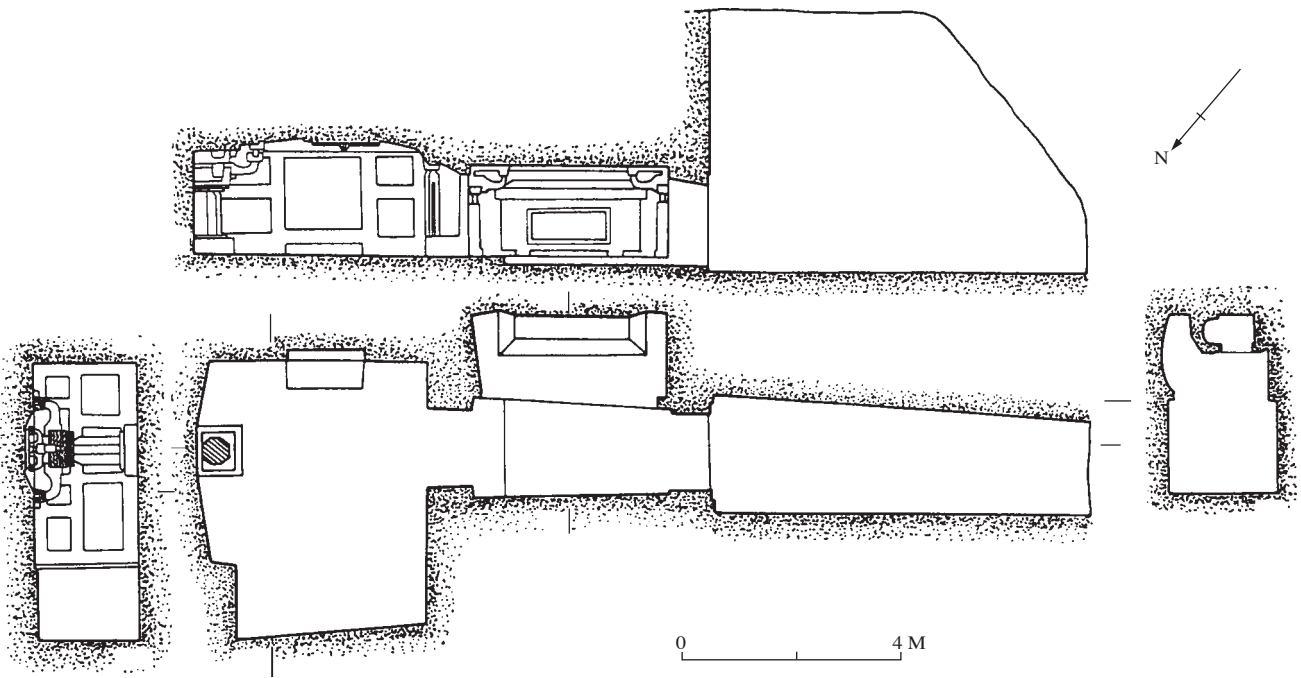


Fig. 10 Plan, elevation, and worm's eye perspective of No. 1 cliff-burial at Hujiawan



Fig. 11 Panorama view of No. 1 cliff-burial at Hujiawan

and the rear one is a kitchen. The front one is of square shape in plan, bucket shaped roof carved with 井-shaped ceiling purlins. Inside the purlins, there is a corbelling caisson ceiling. There is one horizontal window-lattice shaped half wall to the entrance and two pilasters in both ends of half wall. The pilasters supported *chui-gong* 垂拱 and *lu-dou* 栌斗. One aisle is drilled in this chamber and one niche-shaped sarcophagus was carved in the aisle (Fig. 14).

The rear chamber is of rectangular shape in plan with flat roof. Two side chambers flank it. There are pilasters supporting bracket system distributed between the rear chamber and side chambers, which made the latter into two bays. The ceiling and four walls of the left side chamber were roughly drilled and seemed not



Fig. 12 The rear chamber of No. 1 cliff-burial at Hujiawan

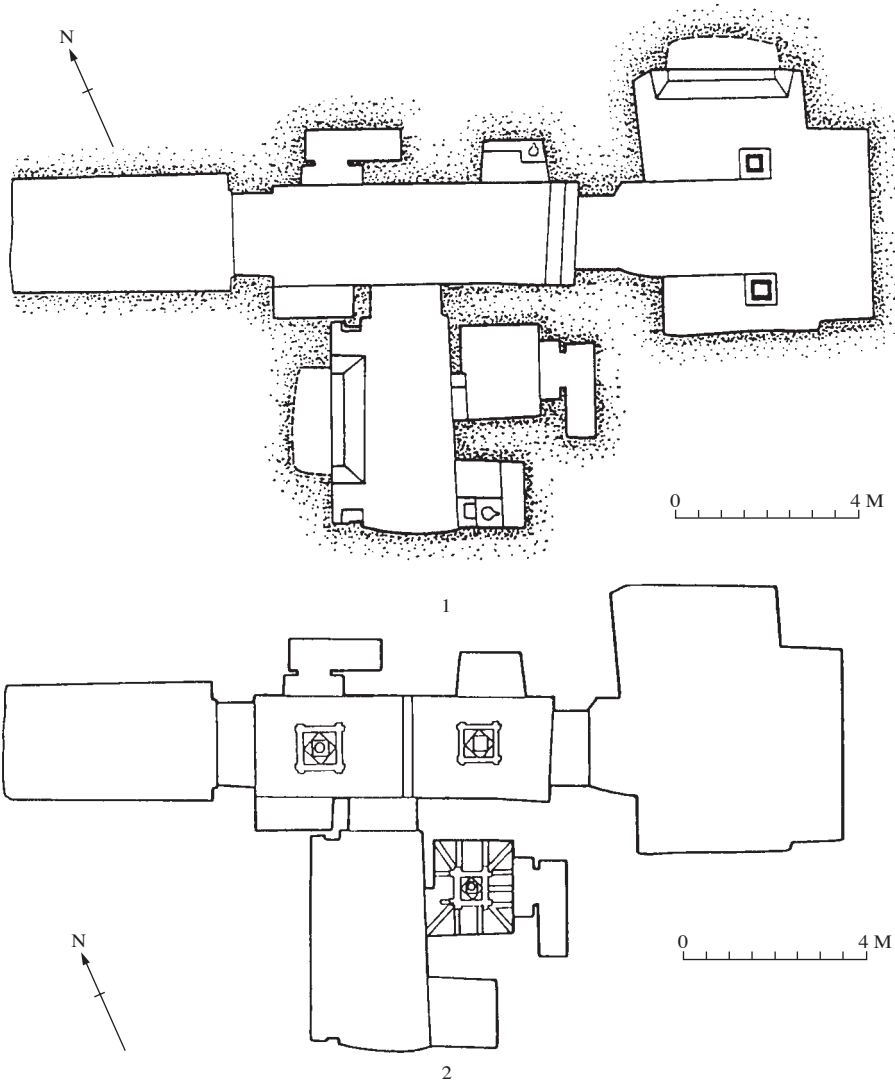


Fig. 13 Plan and worm's eye perspective of No. 1 cliff-burial at Dongzipai
 1. plan 2. worm's eye perspective



Fig. 14 The half wall and bracket system to the entrance of front right side chamber of the front chamber of No. 1 cliff-burial at Dongzipai

finish yet. The right side chamber drilled with one house-shaped sarcophagus.

VII. Concluding Remarks

This seasonal excavation provides clear information on the distribution and scope of the cliff-burial and finds out a batch of burial structures formerly un-occurred. For example, No. 1 cliff-burial at Fentaizui has four depths, No. 1 cliff-burial at Tiantaishan has painted architecture, and No. 1 cliff-burial at Liujiayan carved with images of hall and courtyard. The excavation also further confirms that the cliff-burials at Qijiang area has distinctive feature and becomes an independent

unit. It distributes concentrate with tremendous quantity. The burial richens with exquisite timber-imitation architecture, which plays an irreplaceable role in reconstruction of local-style dwelling house of the Han to Jin period in Sichuan 四川 and even in China. In particular, the image of *chu-ling-gong* 出令栱, which is equal to “*hua-gong* 华栱” *chu-ling-gong*, carved on the house-shaped sarcophagus in No. 1 cliff-burial at Hujiawan and the curving eaves and sticking up of corner eaves were never occurred in the Han to Jin period tombs. This discovery is the earliest example in Chinese timber structure architecture and furnishes new information for studying traditional Chinese architecture.

Note: The original report is published in *Wenwu* 文物 2002.1: 16–41, with 19 line drawings and 29 photos, and written by Zhong Zhi 钟治. The present version, an abridgment from the original, is prepared by the author himself and English-translated by Yi Nan 亦囡, revised by Cao Nan 曹楠.