



ANALYZING THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND AESTHETIC VALUE OF THE WESTERN
HAN DYNASTY THROUGH THE ARTWORKS OF THE HAIHUNHOU TOMB



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ANALYZING THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND AESTHETIC VALUE OF THE WESTERN
HAN DYNASTY THROUGH THE ARTWORKS OF THE HAIHUNHOU TOMB



A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of DOCTOR OF ARTS
(D.A. (Arts and Culture Research))

Faculty of Fine Arts, Srinakharinwirot University

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THE DISSERTATION TITLED

ANALYZING THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND AESTHETIC VALUE OF THE WESTERN HAN
DYNASTY THROUGH THE ARTWORKS OF THE HAIHUNHOU TOMB

BY
XIONG YING

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This study uses artworks from the Haihunhou tomb as a starting point to explore the social organization and aesthetic values of the Western Han Dynasty in depth through qualitative research and literature analysis. The study revealed that the burial culture highlights the differences between the nobility, and the artworks reflected in the aesthetic pursuits of the times. This study not only deepens our understanding of the social organization of the Western Han Dynasty, but also provides a new perspective for modern aesthetic research, which is conducive to the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage.

Keyword : Aesthetic value, Burial culture, Cultural heritage, Social organization, Haihunhou tomb

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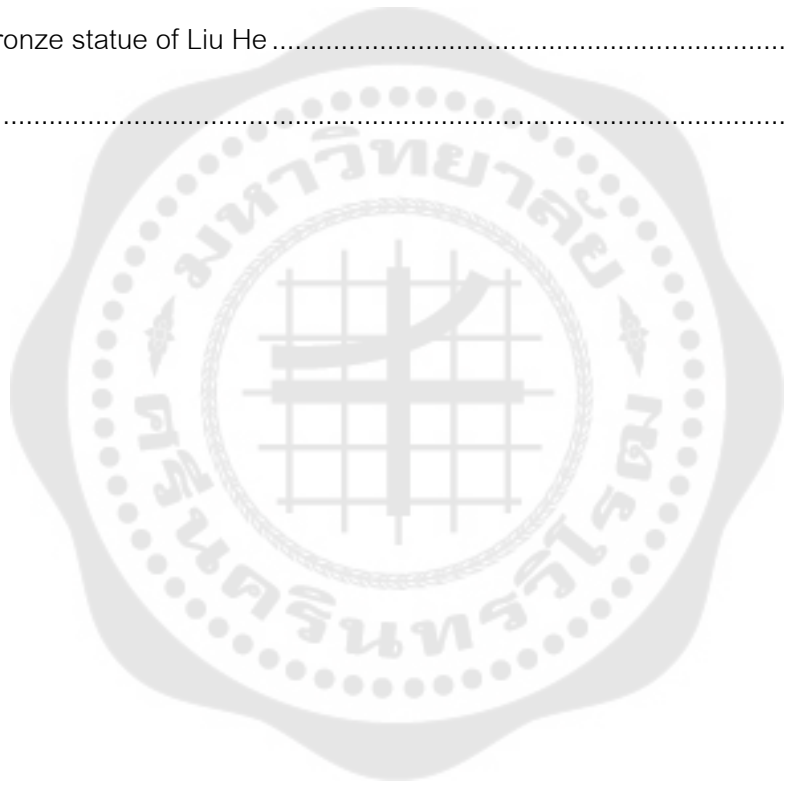
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The Western Han period, as an important stage in the history of ancient China, made remarkable achievements in many aspects, including politics, economy and culture, and had a far-reaching impact on later generations. The social organization of the Western Han period was the core of its political, economic and cultural development, while aesthetic values were an important manifestation of its cultural prosperity. However, due to the ancient age of the Western Han Dynasty, relevant documentary materials are scarce. Noble tombs from the Western Han period have always been an important basis for researching social customs, political power, institutional changes, and aesthetic culture in Chinese historiography.

During the Western Han era, people believed that the soul persisted after death, leading to the prevalence of elaborate burial customs. The text “Mozi” states: “The coffin and burial must be heavy, clothing abundant, and textiles intricate; the mound must be substantial” (Jiajian & Zhongyuan, 2009). This vividly illustrates the prevailing trend of lavish burials during that time. Archaeology, as a primary discipline within history, has always integrated with other fields of study. The excavation of the Haihunhou’s tomb injected fresh vitality into the study of historical aesthetics. The Haihunhou’s tomb, an important tomb in the Western Han period, has unearthed artworks that not only provide us with a unique window into the Western Han society, but also provide valuable physical materials for the study of the social organization and aesthetic values of the Western Han.

Since March 2011, archaeologists in Jiangxi, along with experts from the National Cultural Heritage Administration, have completed the excavation of the main tomb, three accompanying tombs, and a chariot pit, uncovering over 10,000 precious artifacts. These artifacts are not only numerous, but also rich in variety and exquisite

craftsmanship, and are valuable materials for the study of the social economy, culture and art of the Western Han period. In particular, the Bamboo Slips, musical instruments, lacquer ware and other artifacts directly reflect the political system, social customs, aesthetic concepts and other aspects of the Western Han period, and reveal to us the complexity of the social organization of the Western Han and the plurality of aesthetic values.

Based on the discovered relics and remains, this tomb is the largest, best-preserved, and most content-rich marquis-level burial in China. The excavation of the Haihunhou's tomb provides firsthand material for studying the burial system of Western Han feudal lords and significantly advances research on Han culture. The discoveries associated with the Haihunhou's tomb have set many records and were listed as one of the "Top 10 Cultural Events in China in 2015," serving as a compass for current archaeology and historical studies. Although fundamentally a marquis tomb, the artifacts unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb—such as currency, weapons, and burial figurines—differ from those found in ordinary marquis tombs, further confirming its royal scale, marquis specifications, and imperial regulations.

The artistic artifacts excavated from the Haihunhou's tomb reveal both commonalities and individual characteristics of the Western Han aristocracy in terms of dining, music, and other aspects. The utensils, wine vessels, and food found in the tomb served not only to sustain an afterlife existence but also reflected the rich culinary lifestyle of the upper-class nobility during the Han period. These artifacts provide glimpses into the diverse culinary practices and entertainment habits of Han-era people, shedding light on social organization.

The artistic treasures from the Haihunhou's tomb offer abundant material and visual evidence for studying Western Han aesthetic culture. Currently, most scholars, both domestically and internationally, focus on the archaeological and cultural aspects of these artifacts, with few approaching them from the perspective of aesthetic culture, to provide us with new perspectives and insights for a more comprehensive understanding of Western Han society.

In addition, with the continuous progress of archaeological technology and in-depth research, more and more Western Han tombs have been excavated, providing us with more physical materials. However, how to make full use of these materials to deeply explore the social organization and aesthetic value of the Western Han Dynasty is still a topic worthy of further research. This study is based on this background and tries to contribute to the study of this topic by analyzing in depth the artifacts of the Haihunhou's tomb.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study will focus on two main objectives:

1. Analyzing the social organization of the Western Han period through the artistic artifacts from the Haihunhou's tomb.
2. Examining the aesthetic values of Western Han art based on the artifacts unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb.

1.3 Research Questions

This paper will address the following two questions:

1. What aspects of social organization are reflected by the Haihunhou's tomb?
2. How do the artistic artifacts from the Haihunhou's tomb reflect the aesthetic values of the Western Han period?

1.4 Definition of Terms

1. Social Organization:

Social organization refers to the process by which order is established in human social life. During this process, social members form orderly social actions and adopt them as common behavioral norms in their daily lives.

Social organization encompasses two aspects:

- (1) Ordered Groups: Refers to a group of people who have social relationships with each other. They share common practices, established goals or responsibilities, and are subject to social control.

(2) Social Organizational Processes: Includes considerations of status and roles.

This study aims to analyze social organization by examining the status, roles, and social stratification of Western Han period society through the artistic evidence from the Haihunhou's tomb, artifacts unearthed from the tomb, cultural activities, and relevant literary sources.

2. Aesthetics:

Aesthetics pertains to the aesthetic value, appreciation, and emotional impact of artistic objects from the Haihunhou's tomb during the Western Han period. It involves analyzing both the form and content of art.

1.5 Importance of Research

By studying the artistic artifacts from the Haihunhou's tomb, this research seeks to deepen our understanding of Western Han social structure, particularly regarding social classes, power distribution, aesthetic preferences, and artistic practices. This exploration contributes significantly to enhancing our knowledge of historical culture and aesthetics.

1.6 Benefits of Research

1. Enhanced Understanding of Western Han Social Organization: The study delves into the intricacies of social organization during the Western Han period.

2. Revelation of Western Han Aesthetic Values: By examining the tomb's artistic artifacts, researchers gain insights into the aesthetic values of that era.

3. Preservation and Continuation of Cultural Heritage.

1.7 Research Framework

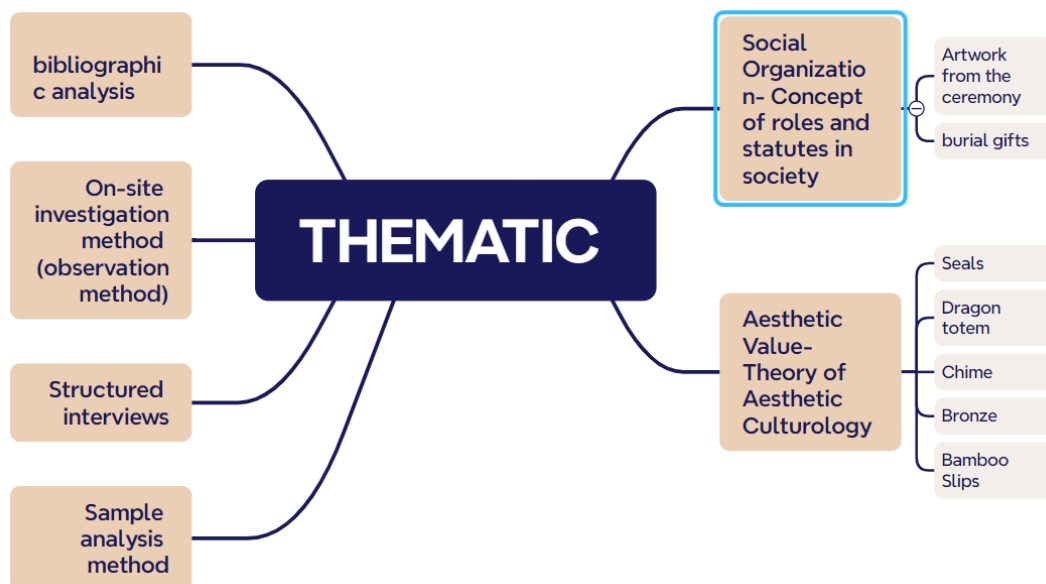


FIGURE 1 Research framework diagram

Source: Photographed by the Author

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, researchers consulted relevant literature and research findings, focusing on the following topics:

2.1 History and Origins of the Haihunhou's tomb

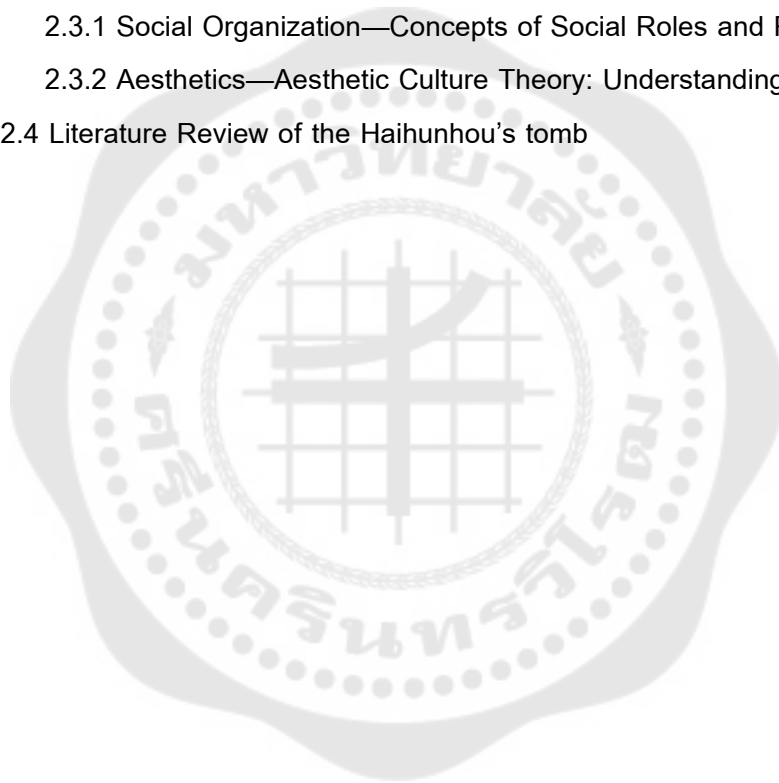
2.2 Classification of Artifacts from the Haihunhou's tomb

2.3 Theoretical Research

2.3.1 Social Organization—Concepts of Social Roles and Regulations

2.3.2 Aesthetics—Aesthetic Culture Theory: Understanding Beauty and Art

2.4 Literature Review of the Haihunhou's tomb



2.1 History and Origins of the Haihunhou's tomb

The Haihunhou's tomb, a large-scale burial site, was excavated in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, China. It dates back over two thousand years. The archaeological exploration of this tomb has garnered significant attention from various sectors of society. As the site is uncovered and preserved, the mysterious veil surrounding a Han dynasty regional king, rarely documented before 63 BCE, has been largely lifted. The Haihunhou's tomb has become a hot topic and was even listed among the "Top 10 Archaeological Discoveries of 2015." The tomb's scale corresponds to that of a king, its specifications to a marquis, and its regulations to an emperor. The sheer quantity of unearthed artifacts and the tomb's size have astonished the entire archaeological community nationwide. Many experts consider the uniqueness and exemplar nature of the Haihunhou's tomb in Nanchang unprecedented. It provides valuable insights into the burial system and garden design of Han dynasty regional lords, serving as a crucial basis for studying Han culture, ideology, beliefs, and daily life.

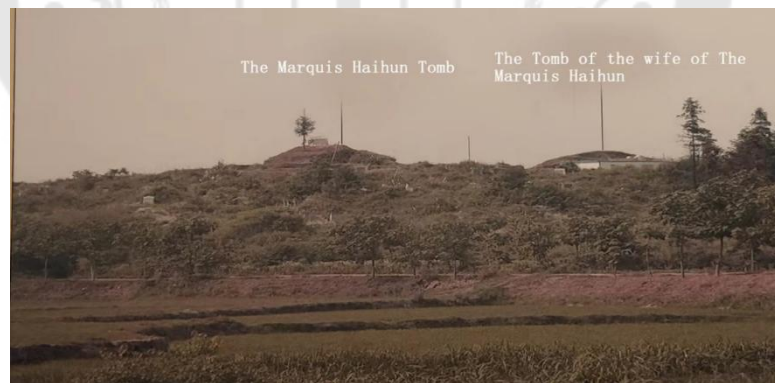


FIGURE 2 Geomorphological map before excavation of the main tomb

Source: Photographed by the Author

The Haihunhou's tomb, located on Dundun Mountain in Guanxi Village, Xinjian District, Nanchang City, Jiangxi Province, China, lies to the north of Poyang Lake and to the east of the Gan River. It is approximately 60 kilometers south of Nanchang city. The Haihunhou's tomb complex centers around the tombs of Haihunhou, Liu He, and his

wife, with a total of nine burial sites. According to excavation data, the other seven tombs belong to their children or concubines. The tomb complex spans approximately 141-186 meters north to south and 233-248 meters east to west, covering an area of about 46,000 square meters. In addition to the two main tombs and seven accompanying burials, the entire cemetery features structures related to the tomb, including a chariot pit, garden walls, northern and eastern gates, and a complete road system with drainage facilities. Liu He's tomb is shaped like the Chinese character “甲” (jia) and faces north. The tomb chamber is a square wooden coffin room with a total area of 400 square meters. The tomb passage runs approximately 17.2 meters north-south and 17.1 meters east-west, with a depth of about 8 meters. The passage width ranges from 5.92 to 7.22 meters, and the north-south length is between 15.65 and 16.17 meters. The entire tomb area is functionally distinct, including the main coffin chamber, corridor-shaped hidden coffins, passageways, and a garage. A passage about 0.6 meters wide separates the main coffin chamber from the hidden coffins. The hidden coffins are divided into three sides: east, west, and north. The east hidden coffin serves as a “food official” storage area, containing wine and kitchen utensils. The west hidden coffin houses clothing chests, weapons, document archives, and entertainment items. The north hidden coffin stores money, grain, and musical instruments. The corridor primarily contains musical instruments, while the east and west sides house chariots and horses. The main coffin is positioned northeast of the main coffin chamber and consists of two coffins. The coffin room measures approximately 3.71 meters north-south and 1.44 meters east-west, with a height ranging from 0.46 to 0.96 meters. According to archaeological calculations, the original coffin was approximately 1.36 meters high, 2.7 meters long, and 0.8 meters wide, all made of camphor wood. Between the inner and outer coffins, numerous burial items were placed, including gold, jade, and lacquerware. The remains of the tomb owner were oriented north-south, with the head covered by a lacquered mask. Dental remnants were found, and the waist area contained jade-adorned swords, book knives, and ornaments. Beneath the remains, a golden silk glass mat was laid out, with evenly spaced gold cakes. Overall, the structure

of Liu He's tomb exhibits a residential tendency and represents a mid-Western Han period marquis burial.

Liu He, born in the third year of the Taishi era (92 BCE), was the grandson of Emperor Wu of Han (the seventh emperor of the Western Han Dynasty). His father was Prince Ai of Changyi, Liu Bo. Liu Bo was born to Emperor Wu of Han and his favorite concubine, Lady Li, and was the fifth son of Emperor Wu of Han, who was an outstanding emperor in the history of the Han Dynasty. According to the Book of Han, Emperor Wu of Han was described as having “great talent and strategic vision” (Gu, 1962). Liu Bo had one son and four daughters, with Liu He being his only son. When Liu Bo passed away, young Liu He inherited his father's title and became the second-generation Prince of Changyi. Growing up without paternal guidance, Liu He acted impulsively, disregarding social norms. He enjoyed lively activities and hunting, lacking patience for formal rituals. These early experiences would later contribute to his tragic fate. After Emperor Wu's death, Liu Bo's younger brother, Liu Fuleng (the eighth emperor of the Western Han Dynasty), ascended the throne as Emperor Zhao. Emperor Wu appointed Huo Guang, Jin Midi, Sang Hongyang, and Shangguan Jie as regents. Unfortunately, Liu Fuleng passed away after a 13-year reign at the age of 21, leaving no heir. Without a designated successor or imperial edict, Liu He, the Prince of Changyi, was chosen as the heir. He assumed the title of Emperor Zhao and became the nominal son of Emperor Zhao. Liu He became the ninth emperor in Western Han history, but his reign was the shortest, lasting only 27 days. He is historically known as “Emperor Fei”.

In history, Liu He was deposed due to his “licentious” behavior and perceived threat to the state. According to the Book of Han, during his 27-day reign, he committed 1,127 misdeeds, leading powerful minister Huo Guang and others to request his removal and the installation of a new emperor—Emperor Xuan (the tenth emperor of the Western Han Dynasty). Following Liu He's deposition, over 200 former officials from Changyi (his original kingdom) were executed. The political struggle between Emperor Liu He and the influential minister Huo Guang ultimately resulted in Liu He's downfall. Scholars have debated the reasons for Liu He's deposition. Some, like Lü

Simian(Simian, 2017), believe that the recorded crimes attributed to him are unreliable. Lü suggests that Huo Guang's jealousy and power play led to Liu He's removal, effectively staging a political coup. Another scholar, Liao Boyuan(yuan, 2008), contends that Liu He's deposition was due to his power struggle with Huo Guang. Meanwhile, late Qing scholar Wu Rulun(Rulun & Kaiyu) posits that Liu He's downfall resulted from his failure to reward deserving officials, as well as his close association with Changyi courtiers who had disappointed the imperial court. In reality, Liu He's deposition is multifaceted. Subjectively, his reckless behavior and the strong feudal tendencies among Han dynasty regional lords contributed to his downfall. Objectively, Huo Guang's entrenched power and complex political landscape made uprooting his authority a challenging task. Notably, despite Liu He's numerous transgressions, he managed to survive. The Book of Han records: "He was returned to Changyi, granted a fief of 2,000 households, and given a bath." This unexpected turn of events occurred after his deposition. Changyi was renamed Shanyang County, and Liu He was imprisoned there for ten years. When Emperor Xuan ascended the throne, he confirmed that Liu He posed no further threat. In the third year of the Yuanping era (63 BCE), Emperor Xuan issued a decree: "Liu He, the former Prince of Changyi, is now the Haihunhou, with a fief of 4,000 households"(Gu, 1962). Liu He, after eleven years of deposition, was once again enfeoffed as the Haihunhou. He relocated from Changyi to Yuzhang (modern Jiangxi Province) and established his marquissate in Haihun County. Archaeological evidence reveals the rich pre-Qin heritage in Jiangxi, with numerous cultural sites reflecting the region's historical development. During the early Han Dynasty, Emperor Liu Bang implemented a dual system of commanderies and kingdoms, establishing the Yuzhang Commandery with its capital in Nanchang. The commandery included eighteen counties, spanning a vast area that roughly corresponds to present-day Jiangxi Province. However, economic development in southern China during the Western Han period was not as robust as in the north. As the Records of the Grand Historian notes: "The Chu and Yue regions have vast land but sparse population. They subsist on rice gruel and fish, practicing slash-and-burn agriculture. There is no accumulation of

wealth, and few are wealthy. Therefore, south of the Yangtze River, there are no people suffering from cold or hunger, nor are there wealthy families”(Han, 1959; Qian) . Thus, Liu He’s relocation from Changyi to Yuzhang, while seemingly a demotion, was, in reality, a form of punishment. The arduous journey from Shandong to Jiangxi, coupled with the economic disparity between the two regions, underscored this punitive intent. Liu He spent approximately four years in Haihun County before passing away, ending his tumultuous life.

2.2 Classification of Artifacts from the Haihunhou’s tomb

Wooden Tablets (Jiandu) and Bamboo Slips (Zhujian): Approximately 200 wooden tablets and around 5,000 bamboo slips were unearthed from the Haihunhou’s tomb. The wooden tablets primarily include dispatch orders (belonging to the category of “Qiance”) and memorials (known as “Zoudu”). Dispatch orders were labels tied to bamboo or wooden boxes, while memorials were copies of reports submitted by the tomb owner to the emperor or empress dowager. Preliminary examination and preservation of the bamboo slips reveal various contents, including: Eulogies for the Deceased, The Analects of Confucius, The Book of Changes (I Ching), The Book of Rites (Li Ji), The Classic of Filial Piety (Xiao Jing), Medical Texts, Records on Five-Colored Foods. Notably, a section from The Analects of Confucius titled “Understanding” was discovered, possibly belonging to the lost “Qi Lun” version of the text. In ancient times, there were three versions of The Analects: “Gu Lun,” “Lu Lun,” and “Qi Lun.” The “Qi Lun” version was lost during the Han and Wei dynasties. Compared to the extant “Gu Lun” and “Lu Lun,” the “Qi Lun” version included additional chapters such as “Understanding” and “Asking the King.” The content of The Book of Changes (I Ching) begins with explanations of hexagram names. However, the material below the “Tuan” section is similar to the “Ri Shu” version, although the order differs significantly. The medical texts relate to health and sexual practices. Records on Five-Colored Foods describe using five colors to represent corresponding foods, serving as metaphors for the principles of mutual generation and control (Lingyi, 2020).

Lacquerware: Approximately 3,000 lacquered wooden and bamboo artifacts were unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb. All of these belong to the M1 excavation category. These artifacts include various items: Everyday Utensils: Over 610 lacquered ear cups, 24 lacquered trays, and 15 lacquered chests. Musical Instruments: Three lacquered se (a type of stringed instrument), as well as other musical instruments like qin (a traditional Chinese zither), BianZhong (bronze bells), and xiao (a vertical bamboo flute). Shields, Colored Chariots, and Model Musical Chariots. The large quantity of lacquerware covers diverse aspects such as economy, military, and culture. Most of the lacquerware was made using a technique called "jiazuotai," which involves applying lacquer to a woven fabric base. During the early Western Han period, wooden-based lacquerware was prevalent, while the use of woven fabric bases (jiazuotai) increased during the mid-Western Han period.

Gold Artifacts: The Haihunhou's tomb yielded a significant number of gold coins and gold-silver ornaments on chariots and carriages. Specifically, there were 478 gold artifacts, weighing approximately 115 kilograms. Among these, there were 385 gold cake-shaped objects, 48 "youdi" gold pieces (also known as "horse hoof gold"), 25 "linzhi" gold pieces, and 20 gold plates. Whether in terms of quantity or weight, these gold artifacts rank first among the high-level Western Han tombs discovered.



FIGURE 3 Horseshoe gold and Lin-toe gold, Western Han Dynasty

Source: Rao Jianwei. (2018). An Exploration of Aesthetic Culture of the Haihunhou tomb,

Bronze Artifacts: Approximately 3,000 bronze artifacts were unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb, accounting for about one-third of the total excavated relics. When combined with the more than 3,000 bronze chariot and horse ornaments, the total reaches over 6,000 items. Within the main tomb, more than 500 bronze objects were discovered, including various types: **Everyday Utensils (111 pieces):** These include lamps, seals, hooks, dustpans, water clocks, weights, incense burners, mirrors, buckles, weights, coins, whistles, play items and mortars. **Wine Vessels (69 pieces):** These consist of pots, jars, flasks, ladles, goblets, cups, wine vessels, and distillation equipment. **Food Containers (50 pieces):** These include cauldrons, steamers, tripods, dyeing furnaces, food containers, and jars. **Water Containers (65 pieces):** These comprise basins, water scoops, and plates. **Musical Instruments (62 pieces):** Musical instruments such as bells, chimes, and drums. **Chariot and Horse Ornaments (48 pieces):** These include harnesses, bits, bridles, and other decorative elements. **Weapons (5 pieces):** Swords, sword guards, spears, and other weaponry. **Miscellaneous Bronze Items (over 100 pieces).**

Jade Artifacts: Over 500 jade artifacts were unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb. These include jade bi discs, jade rings, jade pendants in the shape of mythical creatures, sword decorations, and seals. Jade bi discs and sword decorations are particularly exquisite, featuring smooth and polished jade with intricate craftsmanship.

Pottery Artifacts: The tomb yielded approximately 300 pottery items. Types of pottery artifacts include roof tiles, jars, pots, bowls, basins, tripods, cauldrons, and other clay vessels.

2.3 Theoretical Research

2.3.1 Social Organization—Concepts of Social Roles and Regulations

Given that this study pertains to the Haihunhou's tomb from the Western Han period, the theoretical research framework for social organization is as follows:

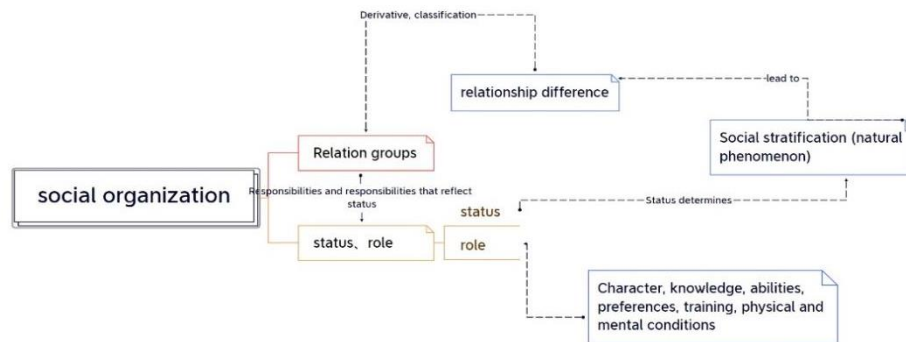


FIGURE 4 Theoretical framework map of social organizations

Source: Drawing by the Author

Social organization typically consists of two essential elements: the first being “social relationships” and the second being “status and roles.”

As depicted in the diagram above, status determines social stratification—a natural phenomenon that ultimately leads to differentiation among people. In this study, specific groups of individuals are categorized, resulting in distinct “relationship groups.” Responsibilities and duties associated with status are addressed within these “relationship groups.” On the other hand, roles are composed of personality traits, knowledge, abilities, interests, and physical and mental conditions. Roles serve as labels for individuals.

Through our research on the Haihunhou’s tomb, researchers gain insights into the social status of the tomb’s owner. The complete set of musical instruments unearthed from the Haihunhou’s tomb provides a glimpse into Western Han music practices, suggesting that a focus on etiquette and music was a tradition among the aristocracy during that period. Additionally, the discovery of a massive jade stone with a diameter of 35 centimeters—similar in size to the “Cangbi” mentioned in the Rites of Zhou—may indicate that Liu He, the tomb’s owner, once held the title of emperor. Only individuals of certain status could be buried with pottery artifacts, and the white pottery items found were exquisite, typically reserved for nobles and royalty, further reflecting

the tomb owner's social standing. These findings align with the concepts of social roles and regulations.

2.3.2 Aesthetics—Aesthetic Culture Theory: Understanding Beauty and Art

Culture encompasses the material and spiritual sum of all human racial groups throughout social and historical development. Based on the concept of culture, aesthetic culture can be defined as any cultural expression with aesthetic qualities—a dialectical unity of aesthetic form and content. The term “aesthetic culture” is not unique to the domestic aesthetics field; Western aesthetic works from the 19th century have also explored this concept. In Chinese aesthetics, Ye Lang was the first to systematically expound on the concept of “aesthetic culture” (Lang, 1999). From the perspective of practical historical aesthetics, “aesthetic culture” refers to the aesthetic consciousness activities generated through aesthetic practices and their materialization. Specifically, aesthetic culture encompasses two intertwined aspects:

1. Social Ideological Content: Formed based on people's own social practices, it represents the social consciousness of aesthetic culture.
2. Sensory Ideological Form: Arises from individual sensory experiences and reflects the pursuit of beauty at the micro level.

Aesthetic culture consists of three fundamental components. The first is the function of embodying the materialized products of aesthetic activity. Including various art forms and other artificially crafted items with aesthetic attributes—such as clothing, architecture, and everyday crafts—along with human-modified natural landscapes. Additionally, it involves the social facilities that disseminate and preserve these aesthetic material artifacts, such as museums. Second, aesthetic culture includes the conceptual framework of aesthetic activities, representing a society's aesthetic consciousness. This framework encompasses aesthetic tastes, ideals, and value standards. Third, aesthetic behavior refers to the specific ways individuals engage with aesthetics. It encompasses both creative expression and aesthetic appreciation, continually transforming aesthetic concepts into tangible objects and imbuing materialized aesthetic artifacts with

subjective aesthetic experiences (including craftsmanship and technology), i.e. the artwork's decorative process(Lang, 1999).

This study primarily explores aesthetic theory within the context of cultural beauty and art during the late Western Han period. During this time, Confucianism adapted to the needs of centralized authority, becoming the orthodox ideology of feudal society. The artistic artifacts from the late Western Han period, such as those found in the Haihunhou's tomb, still bear the influence of Confucian thought, emphasizing the expression of inner spirit.

In particular, Western Han pottery exhibits unique aesthetic qualities in terms of form, ornamentation, color, and material. The archaeological findings from the Haihunhou's tomb reveal a diverse range of practical pottery shapes—robust and elegant—with simple yet dynamic decorative patterns. These aesthetics provide glimpses into the world of Western Han pottery.

2.4 Literature Review of the Haihunhou's tomb

Scholars both domestically and internationally have extensively researched the Haihunhou's tomb. Recently, some art scholars have expressed skepticism regarding the cautiousness in contemplating the essence of aesthetic value. The issue lies in the traditional approach to aesthetic value, which fails to capture the nuances that empirical art scholars must address. Dominic McIver(Lopes, 2022) diagnoses the problematic nature of how tradition has historically approached aesthetic value in his work titled "How to think about how to think about aesthetic value." He then outlines an alternative approach to understanding aesthetic value, providing tools that allow art scholars to focus on the specificities they care about while avoiding the pitfalls of traditional methods.

Additionally, Guo(Guo, 2019) offers a contextual analysis of a mysterious object recently unearthed from the tomb of Liu He (Haihunhou) in 2015. Rather than considering this object in isolation, Guo treats it as an assemblage. By analyzing its complete material composition and physical placement within Liu He's tomb, he sheds light on the broader context of early imperial Chinese funerary material culture and burial

practices. Methodologically, Guo emphasizes the importance of contextual analysis in interpreting traditional concepts, such as “lived objects” and “funerary objects,” within actual funeral rituals.

The tomb and its excavation findings represent a valuable heritage left by ancient people. Not only are they significant achievements in archaeology, but they also hold importance for the broader field of humanities and social sciences. These discoveries provide essential material and literary evidence for in-depth research across disciplines such as history, folklore studies, museum studies, art history, economics, and sociology. Liu Aihua (Aihua, 2019) explores the wine culture of the Western Han upper nobility, focusing on aspects related to winemaking, storage, and wine pairing, using the unearthed artifacts from the Haihunhou’s tomb in Nanchang as a basis.

Within the newly discovered Nanchang Western Han Haihunhou’s tomb, the system of symbolic combinations exhibits logical coherence. Cao Keping et al. (Keping et al., 2018) analyze three sets of decorative patterns found in the K1 chariot and horse pit. These patterns reflect the Haihun people’s understanding of an alternative world structure: the underworld as the settled realm of the tomb owner, the celestial realm as the world where the tomb owner is about to ascend, and rebirth as the path for the tomb owner’s return to the mortal world. Each of these realms is associated with a primary deity—the white tiger, the phoenix, and the phoenix-shaped bird—narrated through stories of the “Northern Sea,” “Mount Kaiming,” and “Disguise Day,” respectively, creating a dynamic and interconnected narrative.

The unearthed musical materials from the Haihunhou’s tomb adhere to clear stylistic standards. The combination of bells and chimes creates an elegant musical ensemble, while stringed instruments such as the qin and se, along with flutes and music figurines, represent folk music. Whether in form or composition, these artifacts to some extent reflect the Western Han’s adherence to pre-Qin ritual music norms. They also reveal the complex social status of Liu He and shed light on certain characteristics of lost early Western Han literature (Wei & Li, 2019).

Additionally, Yang Bo (Bo, 2021) discusses the significance of unearthed bamboo slips from the Haihunhou's tomb, emphasizing their meticulous structure and adherence to chapter divisions. These texts provide valuable insights into the social and cultural context of the Western Han period.

Regarding Liu He's funeral music arrangements, they were based on pre-Qin ritual instruments, Qin dynasty artifacts, and Yin-Yang cosmology. Liu He, who experienced transitions in status from the Prince of Changyi to emperor, commoner, and marquis, even utilized music arrangements typically reserved for emperors. While the tomb's accompanying artifacts reflect the rank of a prince, they do not directly follow the four-sided arrangement used in imperial palaces. However, details such as the ten Yong Bells and inscriptions related to the "Eastern (Western) Route" subtly hint at Liu He's former imperial status. Furthermore, the musical traditions of Liu He's grandmother's family and Emperor Xuan's public sealing of the tomb, combined with covert depreciation and a "farewell with courtesy" attitude, contribute to the unique features of Liu He's tomb. Liu Kaiyuan (yun & jie, 2022) further explores the musical hanging system in Western Han tombs in his book "Emperor and Prince Combined: Revisiting the Bell Hanging Ritual in the Haihunhou's tomb".

In summary, research on the Haihunhou's tomb has predominantly focused on unearthed artifacts and cultural customs, with relatively less attention given to its aesthetics.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The researchers in this study primarily collected data and information based on books, literature, articles, and relevant research papers. They predominantly employed qualitative research methods.

3.1 Research Method

3.2 Scope of Research

3.2.1. Location Selection

3.2.2. Selection of Interviewees

3.2.2.1 Reason for Selection

3.2.2.2 Selection Criteria

3.2.3 Sample Selection

3.2.3.1 Reason for Selection

3.2.3.2 Selection Criteria

3.3 Research Methodology

3.3.1 Literature Research Method

3.3.2 Structured Interviews

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Combined Literature Research and Field Investigation

3.4.2 Aesthetic Value and Social Organization Reflected in Artifacts

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Categorization and Analysis of Artifacts from the Haihunhou tomb

3.5.2 Aesthetic Value Reflected in Different Types of Burial Artifacts

3.5.3 Social Organization Evident in Different Types of Burial Artifacts

3.1 Research Method

This study will employ qualitative research methods. The approach includes the following components:

1. Literature Analysis:

Collect and analyze classic texts such as Records of the Grand Historian, Book of Han, Records of the Three Kingdoms, Huainanzi, and Fengsu Tongyi. Extract relevant information related to the Haihunhou's tomb and the Haihunhou Book from these sources.

2. On-Site Observation (Field Method):

Conduct on-site investigations at the Haihunhou Site Museum. Observe and analyze the unearthed artifacts from the Haihunhou's tomb, focusing on their social organization and aesthetic value.

3. Interviews:

Utilize interviews as a data collection method. Engage in face-to-face or remote conversations with research subjects to gather their viewpoints, opinions, experiences, and knowledge.

4. Sample Selection and Analysis:

Based on on-site investigations and case analyses, select 30 representative and typical samples for in-depth study. Consider diversity, geographical distribution, social status, and other factors to ensure reliable and effective research outcomes.

3.2 Scope of Research

3.2.1 Location Selection: The Haihunhou Site Museum.

3.2.2 Selection of Interviewees

3.2.2.1 Reason for Selection

In this study, experts, professors, staff members, and archaeologists have been selected as interviewees due to their extensive knowledge and professional experience in researching Western Han social organization and aesthetic values. Here are the reasons for choosing these individuals:

Experts and Professors: Typically possess in-depth academic knowledge and research experience in specific fields. Their viewpoints can provide

profound insights into Western Han social organization and aesthetic values, offering theoretical support for the research.

Staff Members: Often work in museums, archaeological institutions, or related cultural heritage organizations. Their practical experience involves direct interaction with archaeological materials, artifacts, and literature, providing substantial understanding of Western Han social organization and aesthetic values.

Archaeologists: Actively participate in archaeological excavations and research. Their firsthand evidence and discoveries contribute significantly to understanding Western Han social organization and aesthetic values.

In summary, selecting interviewees from diverse backgrounds helps us gain multifaceted insights into Western Han society. Experts and professors offer academic perspectives, staff members provide practical experience, and archaeologists contribute on-site evidence, enhancing the comprehensiveness and credibility of our research. By combining different types of interviewees, researchers form a holistic research perspective, where their viewpoints and findings can mutually corroborate, deepening our understanding of Western Han social organization and aesthetic values.

3.2.2.2 Selection Criteria

In this study, researchers will select three experts/professors, three staff members, and four archaeologists as interviewees.

Selecting three experts/professors as interviewees is a crucial component for in-depth research on Western Han social organization and aesthetic values. The following criteria guide our selection of experts and professors as interviewees:

Educational Background: Researchers choose experts and professors with advanced degrees and extensive research experience in relevant fields such as ancient history, archaeology, and art history. They should hold doctoral degrees in their respective fields and possess years of research experience.

Research Focus: Priority is given to experts and professors with specialized knowledge in Western Han social organization and ancient art. Their profound understanding of the research subject allows them to provide authoritative academic opinions.

Publication Record: Researchers investigate whether these experts and professors have significant scholarly publications related to the field. Their research output can support our study and provide essential background knowledge.

Regional Relevance: Whenever possible, researchers select experts and scholars who have conducted in-depth research on Chinese ancient history or art, especially those familiar with Western Han historical culture. Their insights into the background and significance of sites like the Haihunhou's tomb are invaluable.

Diversity: Researchers consider experts and professors with diverse research backgrounds and academic viewpoints. Different experts may offer varying theories and methodologies, enriching our study with diverse perspectives.

Willingness to Collaborate: Researchers choose experts and professors who are willing to actively participate in interviews. Ensuring their strong interest in the research topic and their willingness to share knowledge and opinions is essential.

Selecting three staff members as interviewees is a crucial part of in-depth research on Western Han social organization and aesthetic values. The following criteria guide our selection of staff members as interviewees:

Background Knowledge: Researchers choose staff members directly involved with the Haihunhou's tomb Site Museum. They should possess substantial knowledge of the site's historical background, cultural features, and unearthed artifacts.

Work Experience: Priority is given to individuals with practical experience, especially those engaged in activities related to artifact preservation, site conservation, museum interpretation, etc. Their experience can provide valuable insights from on-site investigations and work outcomes.

Diversity: Researchers consider selecting staff members from different organizations or teams to obtain varied work experiences and perspectives. This approach enhances the diversity and comprehensiveness of our research.

Willingness to Collaborate: Researchers choose staff members who are willing to actively participate in interviews. Ensuring their strong interest in the research topic and their willingness to share knowledge and opinions is essential.

Four archaeologists have been selected as interviewees. First and foremost, they are professionals in the field of archaeology, possessing a profound understanding of Western Han social organization and aesthetic values. When choosing archaeologists as interviewees, researchers consider the following criteria:

Expertise: Researchers select archaeologists with extensive experience and knowledge in Western Han or ancient civilization archaeology. Their understanding should encompass Western Han social organization, burial customs, and unearthed artifacts.

Research Contributions: Priority is given to archaeologists who have published research on Western Han social organization and aesthetic values. Their studies can provide comprehensive and in-depth information for our research.

Regional Relevance: Researchers consider selecting archaeologists who have conducted on-site archaeological work at Western Han sites, such as the Haihunhou's tomb. Their deeper understanding of these sites can offer additional fieldwork details and discoveries.

Academic Reputation: Researchers prioritize archaeologists with high academic standing in the field. Their viewpoints and opinions carry authority, enhancing the credibility of our research.

Willingness to Collaborate: Researchers choose archaeologists who are willing to actively participate in interviews. Ensuring their strong interest in the research topic and their willingness to share research findings and opinions is essential.

Diversity: Researchers consider selecting archaeologists with diverse backgrounds and academic viewpoints. Different archaeologists may offer varying theories and research methodologies, enriching our study with diverse perspectives.

Through the above standard screening, a group of suitable experts, professors, staff, and archaeologists can be selected as interviewees. Their expertise and research experience will provide valuable insights and information for studying the social organization and aesthetic values of the Western Han Dynasty from the 'Haihunhou tomb'.

3.2.3 Sample Selection

3.2.3.1 Reason for Selection

The Haihunhou tomb yielded over ten thousand cultural relics, which are abundant and hold significant value for historical, cultural, and artistic research due to their high technical level. This article categorizes the artworks from the 'Haihunhou' tomb based on their functions. One category consists of burial ritual artifacts, including jade bi discs, jade plugs, and gold-threaded glass mats. Another category comprises burial goods, such as seals, dragon patterns, musical instruments, bronze artifacts, and bamboo slips.

For this study, researchers will select seals, dragon patterns, chime bells, bronze artifacts, and bamboo slips from the burial goods as research samples. These relics are important representatives for studying the social organization and aesthetic values of the Western Han Dynasty. Here are the reasons for choosing these samples:

Diversity: These artifact categories represent different materials and techniques, covering various aspects of Western Han social life. Bamboo slips record official documents, private letters, and more, while bronze, jade, and dragon patterns represent the technology and artistic expression of that era.

Social Organization: Bamboo slips serve as crucial textual evidence, documenting political, administrative, and economic information during the Western Han period. They can reveal insights into social organization, bureaucratic systems, and societal structures.

Aesthetic Value: Bronze artifacts, jade objects, and dragon patterns are representative of ancient art, reflecting the aesthetic sensibilities and artistic achievements of the time. Studying them can uncover the aesthetic preferences and artistic value of Western Han society.

Archaeological Discoveries: The Haihunhou tomb is a significant archaeological site from the Western Han period, yielding a diverse array of artifacts. Classifying the tomb's excavated relics allows us to better understand the cultural features of that era.

Feasibility of Study: These five types of artifacts are commonly found in archaeological excavations and are readily available for research. Their accumulated study provides a rich reference for our research.

Complementary Knowledge: By studying these five artifact categories, researchers can gain multifaceted insights into Western Han social organization and aesthetic values, mutually reinforcing our findings and enhancing the reliability and comprehensiveness of our research.

3.2.3.2 Selection Criteria

1. The selection of research samples for this study will be carried out by experts in the relevant field. During interviews, experts will be asked to choose research samples suitable for this study. Their opinions will be collected and summarized, and the artifacts most frequently nominated and recognized by the majority of experts will be selected as the investigative samples for this study. This ensures the reliability, representativeness, and comprehensiveness of the sample selection.

2. Based on expert interviews and research opinions, for a comprehensive and multi-dimensional exploration of Western Han social organization and aesthetic values, this study on the "Haihunhou tomb" will select 30 artifacts from burial goods as representatives. Using these artifacts as a foundation, researchers will analyze the aesthetic value and social organization of the Western Han period.

3.3 Research Methodology

In this study, researchers employed the following methods for information collection:

3.3.1 Literature Research Method

The researcher extensively reviewed literature related to the Haihunhou tomb. From these sources, they analyzed the aesthetic value and social organization of different types of artifacts, explored the aesthetic sensibilities and artistic levels of people during the Western Han period, and delved into the social aesthetic preferences and artistic value of that era. This analysis revealed insights into Western Han social organization, bureaucratic systems, and societal structures.

3.3.2 Structured Interviews

For this study, three expert professors, three staff members, and four archaeologists will be selected as interviewees. Experts and professors can provide academic perspectives, staff members contribute practical experience, and archaeologists offer on-site evidence. This diverse group enhances the comprehensiveness and credibility of the research. The selection of artifacts discussed in this paper will be based on the interviewees' nominations, focusing on burial goods that best represent Western Han social organization and aesthetics. Combining insights from different interview types allows the authors to collect artifacts from various angles. The mutual corroboration of their viewpoints and findings deepens our understanding of Western Han social organization and aesthetic values.

During expert interviews, it was revealed that the artistic artifacts unearthed from the Haihunhou tomb reflect the hierarchical system and aesthetic tastes of the Western Han period.

3.4 Data Collection

In this study, researchers followed the following sequence for data collection:

3.4.1 Combined Literature Research and Field Investigation

The paper categorized the artistic artifacts excavated from the Haihunhou tomb through a combination of literature research and on-site investigation. These

artifacts can be divided into two categories: those used in burial rituals and accompanying burial goods.

3.4.2 Aesthetic Value and Social Organization Reflected in Artifacts

To comprehensively collect information related to Western Han social organization and aesthetic values, the study employed both literature analysis and structured interviews. Regarding social organization, the literature analysis and interview results confirmed that the burial goods and accompanying items from the Haihunhou tomb reflected the hierarchical system of the Western Han period. Additionally, in terms of aesthetics, the literature analysis and interviews revealed the aesthetic standards and trends of that era. Experts generally agreed that the accompanying burial goods from the tomb (including seals, dragon patterns, musical instruments, bronze artifacts, and bamboo slips) reflected the aesthetic preferences and cultural orientation of the time.

3.5 Data Analysis

In this study, researchers analyzed the data in the following sequence:

3.5.1 Categorization and Analysis of Artifacts from the Haihunhou tomb

Through on-site visits to the Haihunhou tomb Site Museum and examination of excavated relics, extensive literature research led to the classification of burial goods from the tomb. For this study, 30 representative artifacts will be extracted from the accompanying burial goods found in the Haihunhou tomb in Nanchang, Jiangxi. The specific breakdown is as follows: Seals (4 pieces), Dragon patterns (8 pieces), Chime bells (5 pieces), Bronze artifacts (6 pieces), and Bamboo slips (7 pieces).

3.5.2 Aesthetic Value Reflected in Different Types of Burial Artifacts

These artifacts represent various materials and craftsmanship, encompassing many aspects of Western Han social life. Bronze objects and jade artifacts serve as representatives of ancient art, reflecting the aesthetic sensibilities and artistic levels of people during that time. Exploring these artifacts allows us to delve into the aesthetic preferences and artistic value of Western Han society.

3.5.3 Social Organization Evident in Different Types of Burial Artifacts

Bamboo slips contain important textual information, including official documents and private letters. They serve as crucial records of political, administrative, and economic aspects, revealing insights into Western Han social organization, bureaucratic systems, and societal structures. Additionally, the abundant jade artifacts unearthed from the Western Han period exhibit distinct characteristics related to practicality and social status. The discovery of jade artifacts in the Haihunhou tomb indicates an increased everyday use of jade by the upper echelons of Han society.



CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Social Organization

4.1.1. Artifacts in Funeral Rituals: Burial Customs

4.1.1.1 Jade Bi discs

4.1.1.2 Jade 窍塞 (qiào sāi)

4.1.1.3 gold-threaded glass brocade mats

4.1.2 Artifacts Accompanying Burials

4.2.1.1 Seals

4.1.1.2 Dragon Patterns

4.1.2.3 The Chime Bells

4.1.2.4 Bronze

4.1.2.5 Jian Du

4.1.3 Summary

4.2 Aesthetic Value- Aesthetic Cultural Studies

4.2.1 Seals

4.2.1.1 “Da Liuji Seal”

4.2.1.2 Liu He Yuxi (刘贺玉玺)

4.2.1.3 Wordless Jade Seal

4.2.1.4 The “海” character bronze seal

4.2.1.5 Summary

4.2.2 Dragon Pattern

4.2.2.1 Three bronze “DangLu” with inlaid mythical beast motifs

4.2.2.2 Líwén - Líwén Yùjiàn Yún(璃纹-璃纹玉剑璏)

4.2.2.4 Dragon-shaped stone toggles, dragon-shaped bronze curtain

hooks, and dragon-shaped jade ornaments.

4.2.3 Musical instrument – Chimes (BianZhong)

4.2.3.1 Niu Zhong bells

4.2.3.2 Yong Zhong bells

4.2.3.3 summary

4.2.4 Bronze

4.2.4.1 Bronze Chariot Carriage

4.2.4.2 The bronze goose-fish tank lamp

4.2.4.3 'Nanchang' bean-shaped bronze lamp

4.2.4.4 A three-legged bronze tripod -Jitián Bronze Dǐng

4.2.4.5 A phoenix-shaped bronze wine container

4.2.4.6 Summary

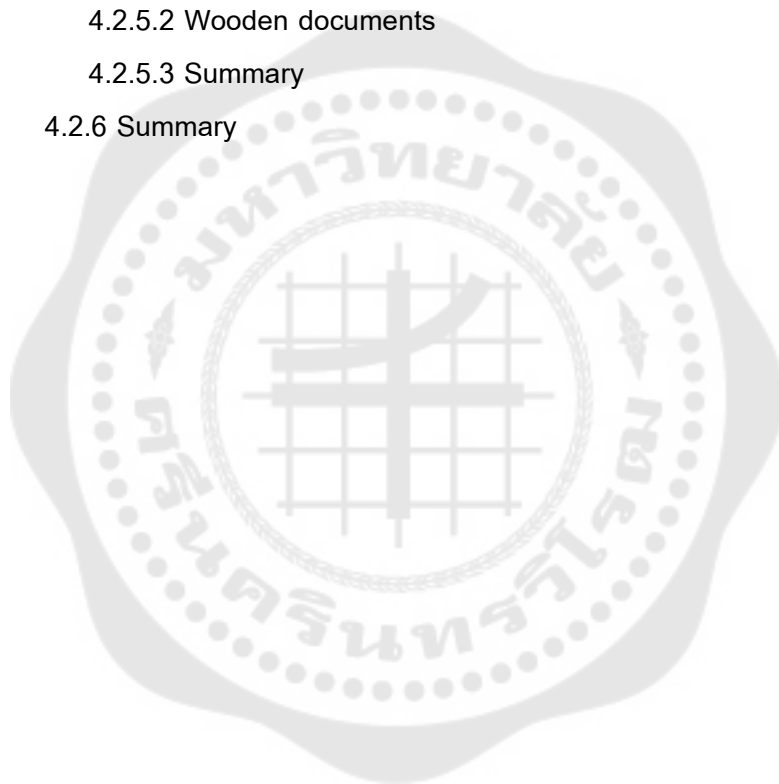
4.2.5 Jian Du

4.2.5.1 Bamboo slips

4.2.5.2 Wooden documents

4.2.5.3 Summary

4.2.6 Summary



The research has two objectives: social organization and aesthetic value.

The researcher will analyze Western Han history and artifacts unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb, combining expert interviews and other aspects to present a multidimensional analysis of the social system and aesthetics during the Western Han period.

According to historical records, after the death of Haihunhou's Liu He, his descendants followed the Han Dynasty's tradition of elaborate burials. They adhered to the principle of "treating death as one would treat life," arranging the tomb layout based on the deceased's living environment. The main coffin and all the possessions Liu He owned during his lifetime were buried in succession. Research conducted by experts such as Wang Qinglei, Wang Junxing, and Tang Zhengang confirmed that all the burial items in the Haihunhou's tomb belonged to the rank of marquis. Based on these research findings, all the study samples in this thesis are classified as marquis-level artifacts.

4.1 Social Organization

Social organization refers to the arrangement of individuals in society and their relationship patterns. The core of social organization research is to understand how a society or group constructs relationships to meet the needs of its members. Based on the social organization theory discussed in Chapter 2, this study focuses on investigating the status of the Haihunhou's tomb through the visual lens of burial culture.

In the Han Dynasty, people were categorized into two social classes: commoners and nobles. Commoners, especially the poor, had a specific designation during that time—known as 'lǜ zuo.' Lǜ zuo referred to economically and socially disadvantaged individuals, including poor farmers, hired laborers, tenant farmers, and unemployed wanderers. On the other hand, the nobility belonged to a class associated with royal or imperial authority. Their most crucial qualification for noble status was their blood relationship with the highest ruler. Those meeting this condition were typically part of the imperial family or related to it by marriage. While the influence of in-laws fluctuated with changes in rulers, the nobility within the imperial family remained relatively stable as

long as there was no change in dynastic succession. Compared to in-laws, the nobility features were more pronounced within the imperial family during the Western Han and Eastern Han periods. However, merely having a blood connection with the emperor, whether through the imperial family or in-laws, did not automatically grant noble status. Nobles needed a form of political protection, and this safeguard came in the form of titles. Titles were not only honorary designations and symbols of status but also represented the power and wealth associated with them—the latter being the foundation for the former. The process of the Liu clan's nobility transformation relied on titles such as regional kings and marquises. 'Nobilization' is a dynamic process, and researchers use titles as a measuring scale to assess the degree of nobility within the Liu clan (Economy, 2012). This nobility extends beyond one's lifetime; even after death, individuals continue to enjoy their 'nobilization.'

From several aristocratic tombs unearthed during the Western Han period, researchers can observe distinctions in burial artifacts based on the social status of the deceased (marquis, regional kings, and emperors). According to Professor Liu Zhendong, examining tombs from the Spring and Autumn period through the Han Dynasty, before the prominence of large mounds during the Warring States period, tombs occasionally had structures, but they were not widespread. The core elements of tomb classification during the Eastern Zhou and early Han periods were coffins, ding vessels, and chariots and horses as accompanying items. However, with the emergence of large earthen mounds as central features, above-ground structures quickly became essential components of tombs, eventually forming the core of the tomb classification system. The Han Dynasty tomb classification system is reflected in two main parts: the above-ground and below-ground components. The above-ground portion strictly regulates the rank order of tomb owners based on factors such as mound height. The below-ground section, apart from tomb structure, coffins, and accompanying items, primarily uses burial garments and jade clothing to signify differences in social status. Focusing specifically on Han Dynasty coffins.

The book 'Hou Han Shu' (Book of Later Han) states: '(For grand funerals), the craftsmen and artisans of Dongyuan present the secret instruments of Dongyuan, with both inner and outer surfaces painted red. The designs include sun, moon, birds, turtles, dragons, tigers, linked bi discs, and crescent shapes. Marquises, regional kings, princesses, and noblewomen all have camphorwood coffins with red lacquer and cloud motifs. Dukes and special officials have black-lacquered camphorwood coffins. Officials below the rank of two thousand stones use lacquered coffins. (Ye & Xian, 2005)'. From this, researchers learn that Han Dynasty coffins varied in terms of nomenclature (such as 'palace' or 'coffin'), material (such as catalpa wood or camphorwood), and lacquer color (red or black). Additionally, the painted designs ranged from intricate to simple. According to annotations in the 'Hou Han Shu,' the secret instruments of Dongyuan were made of plain wood, measuring three zhang (approximately 3 meters) in length and four zhang in width and height. In another example, a legal document titled 'Zang Lu' (Laws of Burial) from an early Western Han tomb in Yunmeng, Hubei, specifies the dimensions of a marquis's coffin (Hong, 1985): 'The width of the coffin should not exceed three chi and two cun (approximately 2.541 meters), the depth should be three chi and one cun (approximately 0.739 meters), the length should be one zhang (approximately 0.716 meters), and the thickness of the coffin board should be seven cun (approximately 0.162 meters) (Zhendong, 2022)'. Although the recorded coffin specifications for emperors and marquises may not correspond to the same time period, they demonstrate that the size of coffins varied based on social rank during the Han Dynasty.

In 2013, the Xi'an Municipal Institute of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology conducted excavations in the southern part of Xiganhe Village, Chang'an District. They discovered 35 ancient tombs and one pottery kiln. Among the 22 tombs with confirmed dating, spanning from the Eastern Zhou to the Qing Dynasty, the majority were Western Han tombs (14 in total). These Western Han tombs contained single coffins and were relatively small in scale, suggesting that they belonged to commoners (Chinanews, 2013). This highlights the importance ancient people placed on posthumous matters, as evidenced by the saying 'treating death as one would treat life.' When someone passed

away, if conditions allowed, they would pay great attention to funeral rituals and processes. Of course, this varied based on economic means—nobles spared no expense, while commoners adhered to traditions as best they could. This included considerations for coffins and various ceremonial items.

In summary, researchers found that the discovered Western Han aristocratic tombs exhibit the following characteristics:

1. Abundance of Discoveries: A large number of tombs have been unearthed, including imperial tombs, regional kings' tombs, and numerous medium-sized and small tombs.
2. Diverse Structural Types: The tombs exhibit various structural types, such as vertical shaft wooden coffins, earthen pit tombs, cave tombs, cliffside tombs, brick chamber tombs, and stone chamber tombs. Special types include 'huangchang ticou' tombs, hollow brick tombs, portrait tombs, and mural tombs.
3. Transition from Wooden Coffins to Brick Chambers: During the Western Han period, wooden coffin tombs declined in popularity, and brick chamber tombs became prevalent. After the Han Dynasty, brick chamber tombs became the mainstream form of ancient Chinese burials.
4. Changing Burial Concepts: Han Dynasty burial practices underwent changes. The choice of burial materials transformed tomb chambers to accommodate multi-room family burials and emulate living spaces. Elaborate burials became fashionable, and a wide variety of pottery models, figurines, and animal-shaped objects related to production and daily life were included as burial goods.

Researchers based on the literature and interview research, researchers find that Western Han aristocrats can be categorized into three roles (as shown in the table below): marquises (列侯), regional kings (诸侯王), and emperors (帝王). Due to their different statuses, funeral rituals, the quantity of accompanying items, and social ranks varied. Therefore, in the study of social systems, the primary focus is on the aristocratic group, with writing concentrated in two main areas: One is Artifacts in Rituals: During Western Han funerals, various artistic items were used, including jade bi discs, jade plugs (玉窍塞), and silk brocade mats with gold thread (包金丝缕琉璃席). The second is Funerary Artifacts: These artifacts, mostly used by the deceased during their lifetime, include seals, decorative items with dragon motifs, musical instruments, bronze objects,

and bamboo slips. These findings provide valuable insights into the social organization and aesthetic values of the Western Han period.

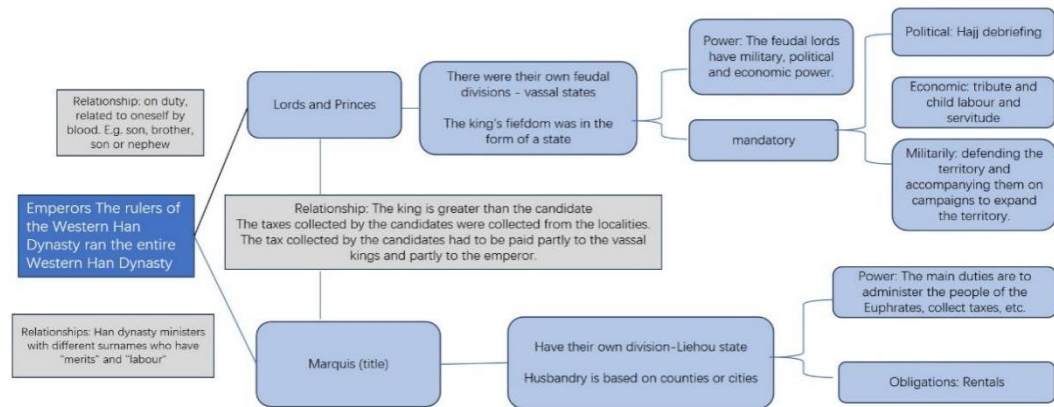


FIGURE 5 Aristocrat Group Relationship Chart

Source: Drawing by the Author

4.1.1. Artifacts in Funeral Rituals: Burial Customs

During the Han Dynasty, funerals held great significance, with elaborate rituals and customs. The term “丧” (sāng) referred to the mourning ceremonies related to a deceased person, while “葬” (zàng) denoted the burial methods for the departed. Historical records indicate that Han Dynasty funeral rites inherited traditions from the Spring and Autumn period, with some modifications and increased solemnity. The overall process can be divided into three stages: The first stage is Pre-Burial Rites: 招魂 (Zhāo Hún): Invoking the spirit of the deceased. 沐浴饭含 (Mùyù Fànhán): Ritual bathing and providing food offerings. 大小殓 (Dàxiǎo Liàn): Preparing the body for burial. 哭丧停尸 (Kūsāng Tíngshī): Mourning and laying out the body. The second stage is Funeral Ceremony: 告别祭典 (Gàobié Jìdiǎn): Farewell ceremony. 送葬 (Sòngzàng): Escorting the deceased to the burial site. 下棺 (Xià Guān): Lowering the coffin into the grave. The third stage is Post-Burial Mourning Customs: After the burial, mourning attire and rituals were

observed. During the Qin and Han periods, elaborate burials were popular, emphasizing tomb decoration and ancestral worship (Gang & Rui, 2022). Notably, the Han Dynasty was characterized by abundant 陪葬品 (péizàngpǐn)—funerary items buried alongside the deceased. These items reflected not only funeral regulations but also economic development and the widespread adoption of filial piety. While such items included clothing, jewelry, incense pouches, musical instruments, and weapons, the practice of human sacrifice had significantly diminished during this time due to Emperor Wen of Han's abolition of the practice.

During the Han Dynasty, social stratification was distinct, and consequently, funeral customs varied among different classes. Researchers found that the differences in funeral practices based on social status during this period:

Imperial Family Funerals: The imperial family held the highest standards for funeral ceremonies. Their funerals typically involved multiple stages and were much grander in scale compared to other classes. After the death of an emperor, the court would establish temples and conduct elaborate rituals known as “大行天子” (dà xíng tiānzǐ). Imperial tombs were also more magnificent, containing numerous offerings and treasures for future generations to honor.

Civil and Military Officials: The funeral standards for civil and military officials varied based on their positions and status. High-ranking officials had more elaborate funeral requirements. Civil officials observed the “三朝降級” (sān cháo jiàng jí) ritual, where the court symbolically downgraded the deceased's rank three times during the funeral to show respect. Military officials' funerals emphasized military customs, including soldiers carrying weapons and military ceremonies such as cannon fire and elegies.

Wealthy Merchants and Aristocrats: Funerals for wealthy merchants and aristocrats had higher standards than those for commoners but were not as elaborate as imperial or official funerals. They focused on the quality and quantity of offerings and funeral attire. Some even included performances like songs and acrobatics to commemorate the deceased.

Commoners: Commoners had simpler funeral standards and rituals compared to other classes. They prepared offerings and set up tables and chairs for mourning and ancestral worship. Commoners adhered to burial regulations, such as burying the deceased shortly after death to prevent family misfortune.

In summary, researchers found that Han Dynasty funeral practices reflected social hierarchy, wealth, and cultural attitudes toward life and death. The specific content and regulations varied across different social classes, but overall, these funeral customs were an essential part of ancient Chinese culture and tradition.

Based on the information from “汉代表葬礼俗” (Han Dynasty Funeral Customs) (Rushen, 2003), the royal funeral ceremonies during the Western Han period consisted of 18 steps. Let's explore these steps in more detail:

1. 初终 (Chūzhōng): When a person in critical condition passes away, it is called “初终.” At this point, the body is placed in the main room or bedroom.

2. 复 (Fù): This is a ritual to call back the soul of the deceased. The person performing the ritual holds the deceased's clothing, stands with one hand on their waist, faces the northern direction (associated with the afterlife), and loudly calls out the deceased's name.

3. 殓 (Liàn): After the “复” ritual, the body is placed on a bed under the southern window in the main room. A wedge-shaped object (楔齿) is inserted between the upper and lower teeth to keep the mouth open for future food offerings.

4. 命赴 (Mìng Fù): Messengers are sent to inform the deceased's superiors, relatives, and friends about the passing.

5. 吊唁 (Diàoyàn): Relatives and friends receive the news and come to offer condolences, expressing sympathy to the deceased's family.

6. 铭旌 (Míng Jīng): A wooden tablet inscribed with the deceased's name is erected in the courtyard, symbolizing the temporary replacement of the ancestral tablet.

7. 沐浴 (Mùyù): A pit is dug outside the western wall of the main room. Rice water is heated and used for bathing the deceased. Hair is combed, nails are trimmed, and these items are buried in the pit. The water is poured into the pit afterward.

8.饭含 (Fànhán): Relatives place pearls, jade, rice, and other items in the deceased's mouth.

9.设重 (Shè Zhòng): Also known as “设燎重,” a wooden plaque is prepared and placed in the courtyard. The size corresponds to the deceased's status. It temporarily represents the ancestral tablet, symbolizing the presence of the deceased's spirit.

10.小殓 (Xiǎo Liàn): On the second day after death, the deceased is formally dressed in burial clothes and placed in the coffin.

11.大殓 (Dà Liàn): On the third day after death, the formal coffin-sealing ceremony takes place.

12.成服 (Chéng Fú): After the funeral, family members wear mourning attire based on their blood relationship with the deceased.

13.朝夕哭、奠 (Zhāoxī Kū, Diàn): From the time of wearing mourning attire until the burial, family members mourn twice a day—once in the morning and once in the evening. When guests come to offer condolences, the host responds with proper etiquette, including crying and bowing.

14.筮宅、卜日 (Shì Zhái, Bǔ Rì): Divination is performed to select the burial site and determine the burial date.

15.既夕哭 (Jì Xī Kū): On the evening before the burial, a final mourning session is held at the funeral location.

16.停灵 (Tíng Líng): The day before the burial, the coffin is moved to the ancestral temple for temporary placement.

17.发引 (Fā Yǐn): On the burial day, the coffin procession departs for the burial site.

18.下葬 (Xià Zàng): At the burial site, the previously prepared grave is used. Lime and charcoal are laid, and a monument is placed in front of the grave. If there is a tomb chamber, it is already prepared. The coffin is lowered, and the final rituals take place.

These steps constitute the essential process of Han Dynasty funerals. Keep in mind that specific details and regulations varied, including aspects like mourning attire, ritual items, and ceremony specifications. Additionally, the funeral customs differed across social classes, reflecting the societal hierarchy and varying attitudes toward life and death during that time.

After the passing of Haihunhou's, following the soul-calling and bathing rituals, the next step is the 入殓 (rù liàn)—the process of dressing the deceased and placing them in the coffin. Based on interviews, Professor Cai Baoquan mentioned that specific details about the 殓 (liàn) ritual are recorded in both the Liji (Record of Rites) and the Yili (Book of Rites) texts.

There are two types of 殓 (liàn): 小殓 (xiǎo liàn): On the morning of the day after death, the deceased is formally dressed in burial attire. 大殓 (dà liàn): On the second day after death, the body is placed inside the coffin. Regardless of whether it's 小殓 or 大殓, filial sons and relatives must be present and participate in mourning rituals, expressing grief.

During the 入殓 (rù liàn), there is a custom known as 饭含 (fàn hán). Here's what it entails: 饭 (fàn): Rice is placed in the deceased's mouth. The type of rice used varies based on social status: '粱 (liáng)' for rulers (such as dukes), '稷 (jì)' for high officials, and '稻 (dào)' for commoners (Xuan, 1982). 含 (hán): Precious items such as pearls, jade, or shells are also placed in the mouth. This practice is sometimes referred to as '哈 (hā)' or '珍 (zhēn).'

Notably, when an emperor passed away during the Han Dynasty, it was customary to include pearls in the mouth. The Hou Hanshu (Book of Later Han) notes: 'When the emperor passed away, pearls were placed in the mouth.' Similarly, during the funeral of an emperor, the ritual involved '饭哈珠玉如礼' (placing pearls and jade in the mouth), specifically referring to imperial customs. The differentiation in items placed during 饭含 reflects the social hierarchy. After the body is placed in the coffin, filial sons and relatives pay their final respects, weeping loudly to bid farewell. Once the coffin is

sealed, and the proper memorial ceremonies are conducted at the spirit seat, the 入殓 ritual is considered complete.

In interviews, experts and scholars generally agree that among the burial goods unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb, jade artifacts were the most common. Jade was used extensively in funeral rituals during the Han Dynasty. It was believed that using jade for burial could preserve the body and potentially allow for resurrection. Consequently, during the Han Dynasty, burial jade became widespread and gradually evolved into a comprehensive system that included various forms of jade, such as jade garments, jade pendants, jade plugs for the nine orifices, and jade beads.

The significance of jade in ancient Chinese material culture extends beyond its physical properties. It also carries profound symbolism related to thoughts and morality, forming a unique jade culture. Scholar Xia Nai defined burial jade as "specific jade objects created for the purpose of preserving the body, distinct from all other jade objects buried in tombs(Nai, 1983)." Therefore, it is also referred to as "jade for preserving the body".

In historical texts, the Zhouli (Rites of Zhou) recorded: "In every state, there are jade towns and repositories of precious vessels. When there are grand ceremonies or major funerals, these are taken out and displayed. After the ceremonies, they are stored away(Jingfen, 1990)." This indicates that there are two main categories of burial jade: 丧玉 (sāng yù): These are jade objects used solely for display during funeral ceremonies but not actually buried. 葬玉 (zàng yù): These are jade objects specifically made for burial, accompanying the deceased into the tomb. The distinction between burial jade and ordinary jade artifacts is straightforward. Burial jade forms cannot be practically used in daily life due to their unique shapes and purposes. For instance: Jade garments: They are too heavy for living individuals to wear, lack articulated joints for movement, and are aesthetically different. Jade pendants for the mouth (饭含): Living individuals would not place crushed jade in their mouths as decoration. Jade plugs for the nine orifices: These are not suitable for use by the living (Yibing, 2007).

In summary, the researcher's definition of burial jade includes the following characteristics: 1. Made specifically for preserving the body: These jade objects serve the purpose of preserving the deceased. 2. Produced solely for burial: They are not intended for use during the individual's lifetime. 3. Carry special funeral significance: These jade artifacts hold unique meaning related to burial rituals and practices.

Researchers found that the burial jade found inside the Haihunhou's tomb primarily includes 16 jade bi discs, a set of jade plugs for the nine orifices, a jade pillow, and a glass thread-inlaid jade mat. These artifacts reflect the prevalent practice of “玉殓葬” (jade burial) during the Han Dynasty. It's worth noting that the 16 jade bi discs placed within the inner coffin are also considered burial jade. Although originally intended for other purposes, their inclusion alongside the tomb owner, Liu He, clearly designates them as part of the burial ritual. Through various historical texts, researchers learn that the burial jade unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb was primarily used for 敛葬 (liǎn zàng, closing the tomb) and the 饭含 (fànhán, placing jade in the mouth) ceremony.

4.1.1.1 Jade Bi discs

Firstly, let's discuss the jade bi discs. Among the 16 jade bi discs found in the Haihunhou's tomb, they can be categorized based on their decorative patterns. These patterns include grain motifs, interlocking grain motifs, reed motifs, and double-bodied kui dragon motifs—all of which are commonly seen on Western Han jade bi discs. The distribution of these 16 jade bi discs within the inner coffin can be divided into two main groups (as shown in Figure 6): Seven discs placed directly on the body of the tomb owner (highlighted in blue in the figure). Nine discs placed beneath the body of the tomb owner (highlighted in gray in the figure).

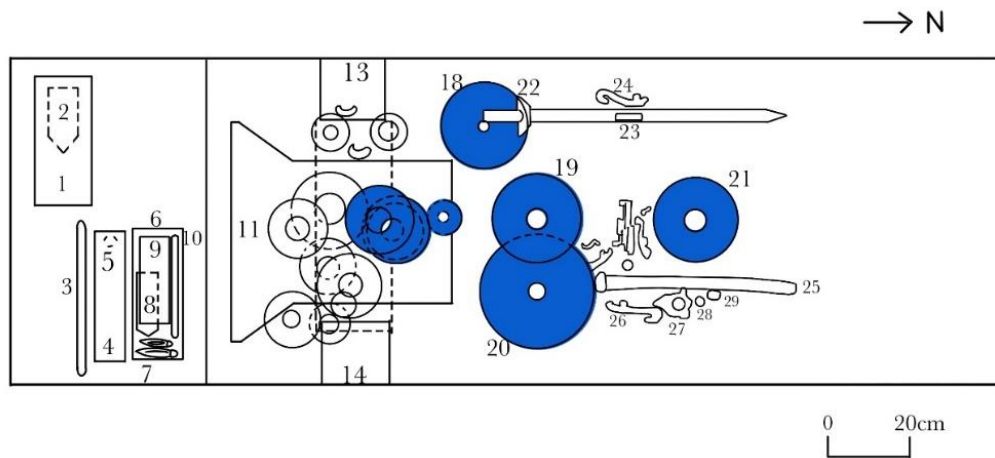


FIGURE 6 Distribution of Burial Jade Artifacts within the Inner Coffin

Source: Drawing by the Author

The 7 jade bi discs placed directly on the body of the tomb owner (some visible in Figure 7) include 2 placed on the face, 1 on the neck, 3 on the chest, and 1 on the pelvis.

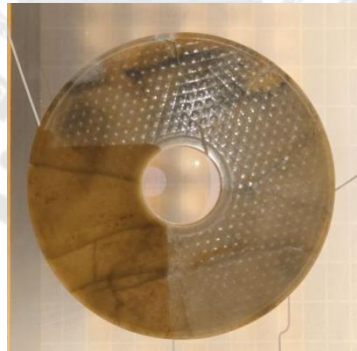


FIGURE 7 Jade Bi Disc with Grain Motifs

Source: Photographed by the Author

The nine jade bi discs placed beneath the body of the tomb owner (some visible in Figure 8) are concentrated around the tomb owner's head and the southern side of the head.



FIGURE 8 Jade Bi Disc with Grain Motifs

Source: Photograph by the author

In terms of material, apart from the four double-bodied kui dragon motif jade bi discs made from Hetian green jade, the remaining twelve jade bi discs are all crafted from Hetian white jade. The prevalence of white jade bi discs reflects the Han Dynasty's reverence for white jade. As mentioned in the *Chunqiu Fanlu* (Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals): "Gentlemen compare jade to virtue—it is lustrous and untainted, representing benevolence and purity... As clean as white silk, it remains unstained. Jade, when abundant, is considered precious by nobles and lords (Zhongshu, 1975)." This illustrates how the Han people associated white jade with virtue and combined this reverence with Confucian ideals.

Observing the placement within the tomb, these jade bi discs were arranged in two layers around Liu He's body: seven discs placed directly on the body (highlighted in blue) and nine discs placed beneath the body (highlighted in gray). This practice of using jade bi discs for burial was common among both large and small noble tombs during the Western Han period. However, the quantity of jade bi discs varied significantly based on tomb rank, ranging from dozens in some cases to just a few in others. Additionally, while these jade bi discs served as burial items, their original functions were likely more complex. Some may have been used for rituals or ceremonies, emphasizing social status and identity (Liangzhu, 2019).

During the Han Dynasty, a trend of elaborate burials emerged after the reign of Emperor Wen and Emperor Jing. Many tombs of feudal lords, kings, and marquises contained burial jade bi discs. These jade bi discs were often placed around the body of the tomb owner for the purpose of burial. In the case of the Haihunhou's tomb of Liu He, 16 jade bi discs were found both above and below his body, exemplifying the custom of using jade bi discs for burial. The origin of this practice can be traced back to the rise of Daoist and immortalist beliefs in the Chu region during the Warring States period. Archaeological evidence indicates that by at least the late Warring States period, it was common in Chu territory to place several jade bi discs either on or beneath the body of the deceased. Scholar Sun Qingwei suggests that the placement of jade bi discs in tombs since the late Warring States period reflects Daoist ideas of "ascending to immortality after death," with the primary purpose being to facilitate the soul's smooth transition to the realm of immortals.

Given the significant influence of Chu culture on Han civilization, the widespread use of jade bi discs for burial in the tombs of Han nobles, including feudal lords and marquises, likely represents an inheritance from the popular customs and beliefs of the Chu region during the pre-Qin period. Moreover, during the Han Dynasty, burial jade artifacts, including jade bi discs, were imbued with the concept of preserving the body and achieving immortality. The placement of jade bi discs around Liu He's body likely reflects the Han people's desire for the deceased to achieve immortality by ensuring the preservation of the body. This conclusion is further supported by the decorative patterns on the unearthed jade bi discs. For instance, consider the two jade bi discs placed on the face of Liu He's lacquered wooden mask. These discs feature shallow bas-relief grain motifs, which began appearing on jade bi discs during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. Scholars have suggested that the character "谷" (grain) in grain motifs symbolizes life and longevity, expressing the hope for the body to remain undecayed (Wenjia, 2011). Thus, the ten jade bi discs carved with grain motifs and placed around Liu He's chest and pelvis likely serve a deeper purpose of protecting the body from decay.

A similar concept is depicted in the T-shaped silk painting from the Mawangdui No. 1 Han tomb in Changsha. Between the earthly and heavenly scenes, a jade bi disc with grain motifs appears, flanked by intertwined dragons. Here, the grain motif jade bi disc likely symbolizes the passage for the soul to ascend, while the dragons play the role of guiding the soul toward ascension. Further supporting this interpretation, bronze plaques from Eastern Han tombs in Wushan County, Chongqing, bear the inscription “天门” (Heaven’s Gate)(see Figure 9) (Dexin & Zhihong, 1998). Researchers found that these plaques often depict the image of the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu) along with dragons and phoenixes. The jade bi disc atop the Queen Mother’s head is inscribed with the characters “天门” (Heaven’s Gate), clearly symbolizing the gateway to heaven or the passage into the celestial realm. The imagery of dragons in these contexts reinforces their role in guiding the soul’s ascent.

In summary, researchers found that These plaques often depict the image of the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu) along with dragons and phoenixes. Grain motifs, commonly seen on Western Han burial jade bi discs, align with the purpose of Han burial customs—to ensure the preservation of the body and facilitate the soul’s ascent to immortality. The dragon motifs on the four double-bodied kui dragon jade bi discs found around Liu He’s chest and pelvis likely represent this cultural significance.



FIGURE 9 Partial View of the T-Shaped Silk Painting from the Mawangdui Han Tomb

Source: Hand-drawn by the author

The jade bi discs placed around Liu He's body reflect the Han people's superstitious belief that jade could protect the body from decay and assist the soul in ascending. In other words, it was the gradual popularity of jade superstitions, which originated during the Warring States period and matured during the Western Han Dynasty, that led to the widespread practice of placing jade bi discs around the bodies of tomb owners in the archaeological findings researchers observe today.

In summary, Researchers found that the jade bi discs unearthed from Haihunhou's Liu He's tomb not only demonstrate the Han people's reverence for jade but also reveal their burial customs—believing that jade could preserve the body and facilitate the soul's ascent to immortality. The multifaceted functions of jade bi discs during the Han Dynasty also indicate a critical period of transformation in Chinese jade culture.

4.1.1.2 Jade 窍塞 (qiào sāi)

Jade 窍塞 (qiào sāi), also known as jade orifices, played a significant role in Han Dynasty burial customs. According to the Baopuzi (抱朴子), it was believed that “if gold and jade are placed in the nine orifices, the deceased will remain undecayed (Hong, 1983).” In ancient China, people inserted jade into the deceased’s eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, genitals, and anus to prevent the leakage of vital energy (精气, jīng qì) and protect the body from decay.

Archaeological findings reveal that jade orifices discovered in Han tombs are generally incomplete. Only in high-ranking noble tombs, such as those in M1 and M2 at Mancheng in Hebei, have complete sets of nine jade orifices been found. The Liu He tomb yielded a total of six jade orifices, including: Two jade eye masks: These appeared during the mid-Western Han period and were not common in early Western Han tombs. Liu He’s burial in 59 BCE falls within the late Western Han period, aligning with scholars’ observations that complete sets of jade orifices emerged during this time. Two jade nose plugs: Unlike the short cylindrical jade plugs typically found in Han tombs, Liu He’s nose plugs were two carnelian beads with perforations. These beads were likely decorative items repurposed as nose plugs. One seal-shaped jade mouth plug (see Figure 10): Known as kouhan (口琰), this jade piece was placed in the deceased’s mouth during burial. The use of jade in the mouth during funerals dates back to the Zhou Dynasty, as recorded in the Zhouli (周礼). It symbolized a ritual practice. Notably, the use of kouhan was not restricted to specific social ranks; nobles of various levels could possess them. The unique shape of the kouhan found in Liu He’s tomb resembles an ancient seal, with a perforation at the top and the inscription “合欢” (Hehuan) in seal script at the bottom. Originally, this piece might have been a pendant worn during the Warring States period. One jade plug for the anus (see Figure 11): This cylindrical jade piece features shallow bas-relief grain motifs. Although used as an anal plug in the burial context, it was originally a decorative jade cylinder.

In summary, the jade orifices found around Liu He’s body not only reflect the Han people’s reverence for jade but also reveal their burial customs. Jade orifices

were believed to protect the body and prevent decay, allowing the soul to ascend. The multifaceted functions of jade orifices during the Han Dynasty indicate a critical period of transformation in Chinese jade culture.



FIGURE 10 Jade Mouth Plug

Source: Photograph by the author



FIGURE 11 Jade Plug for the anus

Source: Photograph by the Author

Researchers found that the jade orifices unearthed from Liu He's tomb exhibit two distinct characteristics: First, the tomb did not yield complete sets of jade nine orifices; second, many of the jade orifices found in Liu He's tomb were substitutes.

The reasons behind these observations may be related to Liu He's relatively lower status as a marquis during his burial. Based on an analysis of jade orifices discovered in Western Han tombs, complete sets of jade nine orifices are rare and typically associated with high-ranking nobles, such as the Prince of Zhongshan, Liu Sheng, and his wife Dou Wan. This suggests that only nobles at the level of feudal lords could use the complete set of nine orifices. Additionally, the presence of substitutes may indicate that Liu He's burial was somewhat hurried, leaving insufficient time for the preparation of specialized jade orifices.

4.1.1.3 Gold-threaded glass brocade mats

In Liu He's tomb, a set of gold-threaded glass brocade mats (see Figure 12) was discovered. These mats consist of rectangular pieces of glass brocade arranged in 32 rows, with 12 pieces per row, totaling 384 pieces. The dimensions are 1.8 meters in length and 0.65 meters in width (Shuangjun et al., 2018). Regarding the usage of these glass brocade mats, according to research by Zhuang Huizhi, they were likely a lower-tier burial item within the Western Han jade burial system. In fact, their status was even lower than that of marquises, princesses, and high-ranking consorts. The fact that Liu He, a deposed emperor, used the same level of glass brocade mats as local county officials and daughters married to feudal lords indicates the unfortunate political circumstances he faced in his later years (Huizhi, 2018).

While researchers agree that the use of glass brocade mats reflects Liu He's predicament as a political failure, there are differing opinions on whether their status was lower than that of marquises. In other words, while the appearance of glass brocade mats in Liu He's tomb can be seen as an alternative in the absence of jade garments, it does not necessarily imply that they were of lower rank than the customary burial practices of marquises. According to Li Xiangxiang, the head of the archaeological expert group for the Haihunhou's tomb, Liu He's remains were wrapped in multiple layers of clothing and placed on this glass brocade mat. This practice aligns with the ancient custom of “绞衾制” (jiǎo qīn zhì), which involves wrapping the body in layers of fabric. Although the use of jade garments was prevalent during the Western

Han period, some nobles, including Liu He, continued to use the “绞衾制(Lixiang, 2016).” For instance, the Mawangdui No. 1 Han tomb in Changsha, Hunan, also employed this method.

Why did Liu He not use jade garments and instead opt for the “绞衾制”? The Hou Hanshu (Book of Later Han) records different types of jade garments worn by emperors, feudal lords, marquises, consorts, and princesses during the Eastern Han period. However, specific details about the use of jade garments by nobles of different ranks during the Western Han period are not well-documented in the Han Shu. Based on the available excavated Western Han tomb data, only two examples of jade garments were found in the tombs of marquises, such as the tomb of Marquis Zhou Bo and his wife (or Marquis Tiao Hou Zhou Ya and his wife). These instances were likely special grants. Therefore, it remains unclear whether nobles at the level of marquises commonly used jade garments during the Western Han period.

Additionally, the Zang Lu (葬律) states: “The clothing and bedding for a marquis should not exceed the dimensions of the coffin. The clothing and bedding should be of secondary quality(Hao, 2009).” This suggests that marquises were expected to use the “绞衾制.” Considering Liu He’s status as a deposed emperor, he naturally did not receive the honor of being granted jade garments. Thus, using the “绞衾制” was both in line with his politically awkward situation and compliant with the regulations outlined in the Zang Lu. Furthermore, since Liu He could not have jade garments, substituting them with a valuable gold-threaded glass brocade mat not only symbolized his immense wealth but also provided solace for his tumultuous political career.

In summary, Researchers found that the use of glass brocade mats does not necessarily indicate that Liu He was buried with a lower-tier item than that of marquises. On the contrary, their presence suggests that despite being a deposed emperor without the bestowed honor of jade garments, Liu He still enjoyed the status associated with the “绞衾制,” complemented by the addition of a glass brocade mat for burial. This clever choice reflects his circumstances.

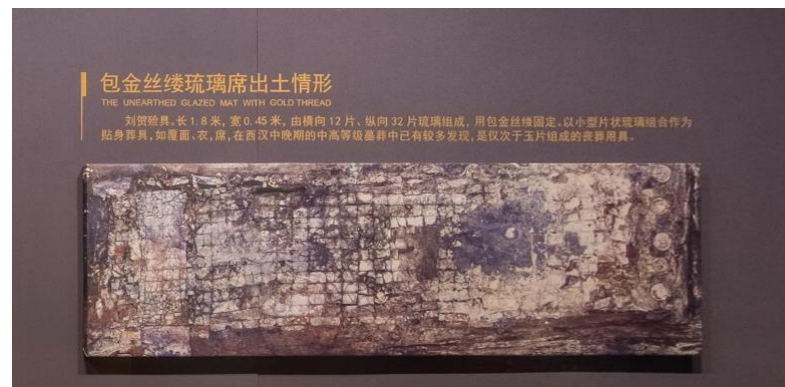


FIGURE 12 gold-threaded glass brocade mats

Source: Photograph by the Author

Researchers found that the prevailing belief among the ruling class and nobility during the Han Dynasty was that death mirrored life. They considered the afterlife in the underworld to be similar to the earthly existence, leading them to place great importance on tomb arrangements and accompanying burial items. During funeral ceremonies, nobles' relatives participated, and the opulence of the tomb often symbolized the deceased's power and status.

The concept was that as long as the body remained uncorrupted, the soul could continue a pleasant existence in the afterlife. Achieving ascension and immortality became the primary goal for kings, lords, and nobles. Their focus centered on jade, believed to preserve the body and prevent decay. This fervent pursuit led to the highly developed practice of using burial jade, including jade bi discs, jade orifices, and gold-threaded glass brocade mats. These burial customs persisted for over four centuries throughout the Western and Eastern Han periods.

As mentioned earlier, researchers found that burial jade (including jade bi discs, jade orifices, and gold-threaded glass brocade mats) served as symbols of royalty and nobility. These practices were closely tied to Daoist beliefs about "ascending to immortality after death." The primary purpose was to facilitate the soul's smooth transition to the realm of immortals. In the context of the 18 funeral rituals, Liu He's social status is reflected. For instance: Jade bi discs: Emperors had dozens, while the

Haihunhou's tomb yielded 16. Jade orifices: Nobles at the level of feudal lords used nine, but Liu He's tomb contained six. Gold-threaded glass brocade mats: Emperors and feudal lords used gold-threaded jade garments, while Liu He's tomb featured a substitute—gold-threaded glass brocade mats. This analysis suggests that Liu He's tomb belonged to the rank of marquis.

4.1.2 Artifacts Accompanying Burials

In Liu He's tomb, various precious political artifacts were unearthed, including a jade seal, a dragon totem, bronze bells, and bamboo slips. These treasures primarily appeared as part of Liu He's burial goods, signifying his significance and authority in politics. Let researchers delve into the meaning of each artifact: Jade Seal (玉玺): The jade seal symbolized Liu He's identity. In the context of Confucian thought, which was deified during that era, the dragon image represented divine beings. Dragon Totem (龙图腾): The dragon totem further emphasized Liu He's spiritual connection. Dragons were revered as powerful and auspicious creatures, often associated with heavenly forces. Bronze bells (The Chime bells) (编钟): The presence of bronze bells and bamboo slips indicated Liu He's adherence to the ritual music system. This system was not only a cultural legacy but also demonstrated its continuity in the upper echelons of society. Bamboo Slips (简牍): The bamboo slips served as written records and reflected Liu He's commitment to preserving knowledge and tradition. Bronze Artifacts (青铜器): The inclusion of bronze items as burial goods highlighted the practical aspects of daily life. These artifacts were essential for both the living and the deceased. All these burial items were used by Liu He during his lifetime.

4.2.1.1 Seals

Seals, made from materials such as jade, metal, wood, and stone, are one of the representative symbols of traditional Chinese culture. In the tomb of Marquis Haihun, four ancient seals were unearthed: the tortoise-knobbed 'Daliuji Seal', the tortoise-knobbed 'Jade Seal without Inscription,' a bronze seal engraved with the character 'Hai' (meaning 'sea'), and a toad-knobbed seal with the name 'Liu He' (Figure 13). These seals directly attest to the identity of the tomb's owner.



FIGURE 13 Liu He Yuxi

Source: Wen Leping, Zhou Guangming (2020). Haihunhou tomb unearthed "Liu He" jade seal of the seal button modeling discernment, p.167.

Seals are divided into two categories: official seals (官印) and personal seals (私印). Official seals are also known as public seals. Throughout different dynasties, official seals had their own systems, with varying names, shapes, sizes, and designs. These seals were issued by the imperial court and represented distinctions in rank and the display of authority. Official seals were generally larger, more formal, and more square in shape, often featuring a knob. Seals other than official ones were collectively referred to as private seals (私章). The system of private seals was complex, with various types based on meaning, character arrangement, production methods, sealing materials, and overall composition.

During the Han Dynasty, seals played four distinct roles:

1. Identification of the Owner: Two seals found in the tomb of Marquis Haihun helped identify the tomb's occupant. First, there was a square seal discovered near the remains of the tomb owner's waist. This seal was clearly inscribed with the characters '刘贺' (Liu He), confirming it as a private seal. Second, a jade seal known as the 'Daliuji Seal' featured the characters '大刘' (Daliu), indicating that the tomb owner was a relative of the Han imperial family. The knob on this seal was in the shape of a turtle, corresponding to the rank of a marquis. During the Western Han period, there was a

well-defined hierarchy for official seals, where different materials, knobs, and ribbons represented varying social statuses.

2. Symbol of Official Position: Another intriguing find in Liu He's tomb was a jade seal without any inscriptions. Despite its formal appearance, the absence of characters on its surface led archaeologists to speculate that it represented an official position. This seal was likely an imitation of an official seal, as during the Han Dynasty, officials were required to surrender their official seals upon leaving their positions. However, they could place imitation official seals in their tombs. Thus, this blank jade seal likely symbolized the 'Haihun Marquis' and served as a replica of Liu He's official seal.

3. Political Authority Symbol: Jade seals were symbols of power for rulers during the Han Dynasty. They represented legitimacy and authority. Succession to the throne involved the transfer of the imperial jade seal, signifying the ruler's identity. Historical records mention a lost Han imperial seal inscribed with the phrase '天子之宝' (Treasure of the Son of Heaven).

4. Authentication: Official seals used by government officials were symbols of their status and authority. Apart from the emperor's seal, officials at different levels had their own seals, varying in size and material. In matters of official promotion or upon one's passing, the imperial seals (印绶) must be returned. As recorded in the Book of Han (汉书), during the incident involving the deposed Prince Changyi, it is said that Huo Guang took hold of his hand, removed the seal from his waist, presented it to the Empress Dowager, and escorted the prince out of the palace (Gu, 1962).

According to historical records, Liu He was the ninth emperor of the Western Han Dynasty and held the dubious distinction of being the shortest-reigning emperor in Western Han history, ruling for a mere 27 days. He is commonly referred to as the 'Deposed Emperor of Han' due to his brief and tumultuous reign (Zijin, 2016). The Book of Han records: 'He received the imperial seal for twenty-seven days, issued edicts, and dispatched officials to various provinces for military campaigns, totaling 127 individuals (Han, 1981).' In essence, during Liu He's 27-day rule, Huo Guang and others

petitioned Empress Dowager Wang to depose him and install a new emperor. Liu He's imperial career ended in a rather somber manner.

In the third year of the Yuankang era (63 BCE), Liu He was posthumously titled the 'Haihunhou,' and his tomb contained an impressive array of burial goods, including two significant seals: the 'Liu He' jade seal and the 'Daliuji Seal(dynasty, 2002).' Let's delve into the significance of these seals: The 'Liu He' Jade Seal: This seal likely came into existence after Liu He assumed the title of the Haihunhou. It represents his authority and identity. However, its creation likely occurred after his initial arrival in Haihun. The 'Daliuji Seal': This seal, inscribed with the characters '大刘记印' (Daliuji Seal), holds particular importance. The term '大刘' (Daliu) suggests that the tomb owner was a relative of the Han imperial family. The turtle-shaped knob on this seal corresponds to the marquis rank. Interestingly, even though it is a private seal, it adheres to the regulations governing official seals. Beyond that, The Uninscribed Seal: The jade seal without any inscriptions remains intriguing. It likely symbolized an official position or reflected Liu He's status. After Liu He's deposition, his original turtle-shaped seal (associated with the title of Prince Changyi) could no longer be used. The uninscribed jade seal might have been a replacement, carefully crafted to represent his former official status. In summary, these seals provide glimpses into Liu He's complex life—from his brief reign as emperor to his subsequent role as the Haihunhou. Their discovery sheds light on the intricate political landscape of the Western Han Dynasty.

In summary, researchers found that from the perspective of jade seals, the following observations can be made: Princely Seals (诸侯王印): These were made of yellow gold and featured a camel-shaped knob. The inscription on these seals read '玺' (xi), and they were affixed to a red silk ribbon. Marquis Seals (列侯): Marquis seals were also made of yellow gold, but their knob was in the shape of a turtle. The inscription on these seals read '印' (yi).

Among the seals unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb, there were four jade seals and one bronze seal. Notably, no gold seals were found. Let's examine the significance of each: The 'Liu He' Jade Seal (螭钮刘贺玉印): This seal, originating from

the main coffin and serving as a private seal, best reflects Liu He's identity. The turtle-shaped knob with the inscription '刘贺' (Liu He) indicates his personal status. The 'Daliuji Seal' (龟钮“大刘记印”玉印): This jade seal, inscribed with '大刘记印' (Daliuji Seal), represents the Liu clan. Despite being a private seal, it adheres to the regulations governing official seals. The Bronze Seal with the Character '海' (无字印章): Professor Hou Xiaorong from the School of History at Capital Normal University suggests that this large bronze seal, featuring the character '海' (hǎi), is likely a rare Han-era official seal used for branding horses. Although it lacks inscriptions, its size and craftsmanship indicate a hou-level (marquis) status. In summary, the absence of the character '王' (wáng, meaning 'king') on these seals further confirms that Liu He held a marquis-level position (Shuangjun et al., 2018).

4.1.1.2 Dragon Patterns

The dragon totem patterns unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb are an important representation of Western Han culture. They serve as the ethnic totem of the Han people in China and are also a crystallization of craftsmanship and technology during the Western Han period. These decorative patterns comprehensively reflect the ideals and wisdom of ancient Chinese people. They serve as symbols and spiritual representations of Western Han social, cultural, and artistic achievements. Through expert interviews, several scholars have highlighted that the dragon motif is particularly indicative of the social organization found in the Haihunhou's tomb.

The dragon motif is one of the oldest auspicious patterns in Chinese culture. Since the Neolithic period, people have revered the dragon as a protective deity. As the Chinese nation grew and flourished, the dragon gradually became a shared totem revered by people of various ethnic backgrounds. The famous story of Ye Gong Hao Long originates from the Han Dynasty. Even today, researchers often refer to ourselves as “descendants of the dragon,” a continuation of the ancient totemic concept. Within the bloodline of Chinese traditional culture, the dragon totem has become a symbol of spiritual strength.

In the Han Dynasty, dragon motifs played various roles and held significant cultural, religious, and symbolic meanings. They were commonly found in artworks, objects, and architectural decorations of that era. Let's explore some of the key roles that dragon patterns played during the Han Dynasty:

1. Symbol of Power and Nobility: In Chinese traditional culture, the dragon symbolized divinity and authority, often representing the emperor. During the Han Dynasty, dragon motifs adorned royal artifacts, clothing, and architectural embellishments, signifying imperial power and nobility. The Haihunhou's tomb, a burial site for ancient aristocracy, contained items with significant symbolic value. These patterns reflected ancient political ideologies, emphasizing the harmonious relationship between heaven, gods, and humans, thereby maintaining and consolidating royal authority. Particularly, numerous dragon-related artifacts showcased the dignified authority of the imperial family.

2. Blessings and Protection: In Chinese culture, dragons were considered auspicious symbols capable of bringing good fortune and blessings. During the Han Dynasty, dragon motifs were commonly used in rituals and religious ceremonies to seek divine protection and safeguard social stability and prosperity. The ancient text "Shuowen Jiezi" describes dragons as creatures that could be both subtle and majestic, adaptable in size, and capable of ascending to the heavens during the spring equinox and descending into the depths during the autumn equinox. This flexibility made them symbols of auspiciousness, especially associated with wind and rain control. Notably, the Haihunhou's tomb featured an abundance of meticulously crafted dragon motifs. Among the auspicious patterns in the Haihunhou's tomb, the dragon pattern is the most numerous and the most refined. According to existing records, the first emperor to wear a dragon robe was probably the Zhou emperor (more than 800 years before the first emperor of the Western Han Dynasty), but the dragon robe was not worn only by the emperor, but also by other members of the royal family. After the Song Dynasty (800 years after the first emperor of the Western Han Dynasty), restrictions on the use of dragon patterns became stricter and more and more regulations were introduced. In the

Yuan Dynasty (900 years after the first emperor of the Western Han Dynasty), the monopoly on the use of dragon patterns reached a new stage, with clear regulations on the scope of use of dragon patterns. It was stipulated that, except the Mongols, no one else was allowed to use dragon and phoenix patterns. It can be seen that the use of dragon patterns was used by the nobility during the Western Han Dynasty and was not reserved for the emperor.

3. Decoration and Art: Dragon patterns were frequently used as decorative elements in Han Dynasty artworks, objects, and architectural designs. The intricate carvings and paintings of dragons reflected the exceptional craftsmanship and aesthetic pursuits of artisans during that period, resulting in magnificent and distinctive works.

4. Cultural Heritage and Folk Beliefs: Dragons have a rich history and legends in Chinese traditional culture, representing the cultural identity and spiritual beliefs of the Chinese people. During the Han Dynasty, the use of dragon motifs continued this cultural tradition, showcasing reverence and faith in these mythical creatures. Overall, researchers found that dragons in the Han Dynasty served as more than mere decorative elements; they embodied power, blessings, artistry, and cultural continuity.

Due to political needs, dragon motifs also carried a powerful royal aura, declaring the authority of monarchs and solidifying political rule. In Records of the Grand Historian, it is mentioned that Liu Bang, the founding emperor of the Han Dynasty, emphasized his resemblance to a dragon due to his humble background and fear of not gaining public acceptance. By transforming people's reverence for dragons into loyalty and awe toward his rule, Liu Bang secured his position as emperor. Han Dynasty rulers recognized that the existence of dragons could greatly strengthen their grip on power. Consequently, they regarded dragon motifs as the paramount symbol of royal authority, reserving their use exclusively for the ruling class and denying access to commoners.

Analyzing historical records, researchers can infer from the dragon-phoenix-tiger-butterfly-shaped jade pendant discovered in the Haihunhou's tomb (depicted in Figure 14) that the ancient idiom "dragon and tiger fight" not only described conflicts between two powerful entities but also symbolized power struggles among political leaders. This clarity highlights that the scope of dragons and tigers in ancient times was well-defined: dragon motifs represented imperial authority, and the jade pendant further attested to the elevated status of Haihunhou Liu He.

During the feudal era, ancestors employed associations, metaphors, and other methods to perceive all natural phenomena as objects of divine will. They revered these phenomena, attributing personality and divinity to them. Through totemic symbols and ritual activities, they prayed for their desires to come true. The objects of nature worship were those natural phenomena and entities that had been deified. Ancestors held deep reverence for the enigmatic dragon motifs, which originally embodied the forces of nature. Over time, these motifs acquired social significance, becoming symbols of reverence for nature. Despite technological advancements during the Western Han period compared to primitive societies, the concept of nature worship remained popular. The abundance of dragon motif artifacts found in the Haihunhou's tomb suggests that these motifs served as intermediaries for interacting with natural forces.



FIGURE 14 Dragon-Phoenix-Chimera-Tiger Pattern Waist Pendant

Source: Li Wenjin, Fan Lijun. (2018). *Appreciation of the jade pendant in the shape of a ying unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb of the Han Dynasty*, p.19.

In summary, researchers found that the dragon motifs found on the Haihunhou's tomb are auspicious symbols, reflecting our ancestors' aspirations for a better life. Through decorative patterns, they wove their desires and hopes into the fabric of existence. Over time, the cultural significance of these auspicious symbols evolved, incorporating additional cultural elements and acquiring new meanings through historical transformations. The composition of dragon motifs was closely tied to our ancestors' living environment and religious beliefs. The decorative style of dragon patterns in the Western Han period drew inspiration from pre-Qin dragon motifs while blending features from primitive society. This fusion allowed the expression of Han Dynasty aesthetics and artistic sensibilities while maintaining a rustic, robust, and grand artistic style. Dragon motifs adorned the artifacts of the ruling class during the Western Han era, becoming a prominent decorative pattern. Their presence in the Haihunhou's tomb vividly reflects the unique artistic creativity and cultural essence of that time, laying a solid foundation for the subsequent development of dragon motifs. The appearance of

dragon motifs in the Haihunhou's tomb not only attests to the creative achievements of the Western Han period but also provides valuable historical documentation and archaeological insights into the social and cultural ideologies of that era.

4.1.2.3 The Chime Bells

Rituals are a prominent feature of Chinese culture. Historical records state: "Music harmonizes heaven and earth; rituals establish order in heaven and earth. Through harmony, all things transform; through order, diverse entities find their distinctions.(Keqing, 2016)" The Yi Yi Zhi Yi (The Meaning of Rituals) further explains: "When paying homage to feudal lords at the Mingtang, rituals and music are employed, standards are established, and the entire realm observes solemnity(Chenghao, 2018)." Duke Zhou's establishment of rituals and music was a significant endeavor for governance and educating the populace. This also underscores that national ceremonies, celebrations, and other events are inseparable from the norms of rituals and music. The Old Book of Tang records: "Music, an essential tool for governing emotions, dates back to ancient sages(Xu, 1975)." Thus, in ancient Chinese society, rituals and music complemented each other, intertwined with legal penalties, and carried the vital responsibility of educating the people while nurturing their character and emotions. The discovery of chime bells and inscribed bamboo slips in the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng not only indicates Liu He's commitment to preserving rituals and music but also attests to the continuity of these systems in upper-class society.



FIGURE 15 The Chime Bells

Source: Wang Qinglei, Xu Changqing, Li Wenhuan, Zhang Lingling (2023).

Musicological research on the Niu bells from the Haihunhou Tomb, p89.

Chime bells, also known as BianZhong, are ancient large percussion instruments that can be traced back to China's Shang Dynasty (1600 BCE to 1046 BCE). China was the earliest country to manufacture and use chime bells. They flourished during the Zhou Dynasty and reached their peak during the Spring and Autumn period, continuing into the Qin and Han Dynasties. Chime bells are cast from bronze and consist of differently sized flat round bells arranged in order of pitch. They are suspended on a massive frame. Using wooden mallets shaped like the letter "T" and elongated sticks, musicians strike the bronze bells to produce various musical tones. Each bell has a distinct pitch, allowing skilled performers to create harmonious melodies by following a musical score.

During the Shang Dynasty, BianZhong (bronze bells) were widely used in ritual ceremonies. The craftsmanship of BianZhong continued to develop and improve during the subsequent Zhou Dynasty. In the Western Han period, they served as both musical instruments and essential components of court music. Additionally, they played significant roles in religious and social celebrations. The solemn and mysterious music produced by BianZhong reflected the cultural, religious, and ceremonial systems of ancient Chinese society. These bronze bells symbolized authority and rulership, while also serving as important ceremonial musical instruments.

In the Han Dynasty, BianZhong held various roles, primarily in three aspects:

1. Religious Rituals: BianZhong played a crucial role in religious ceremonies during the Han Dynasty. They were commonly used in occasions of worship and religious reverence, serving as carriers of sacred music. Through the dignified music produced by BianZhong, people expressed their awe and respect for deities, enhancing the solemnity and grandeur of religious rituals. Confucianism was the state religion during the Han Dynasty, emphasizing human relationships, political ethics, and moral cultivation. Confucian followers believed in the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things in the universe. Therefore, during worship ceremonies, Confucianism emphasized reverence for ancestors. Each year, during autumn, the Han

Dynasty held elaborate ancestral worship ceremonies. During these rituals, the emperor and officials paid homage to their ancestors, expressing their respect and gratitude. Private ancestral worship also took place, where ordinary people honored their ancestors by offering prayers at home.

2. Court Culture: Court culture thrived during the Han Dynasty, and BianZhong were frequently used in court music performances and entertainment. Emperors and nobles would hire court musicians to play BianZhong, adding beautiful music to banquets and court festivities.

3. Social Celebrations: BianZhong also played a significant role in social celebrations and national ceremonies during the Han Dynasty. They were commonly used in celebrations, state ceremonies, and important events. The musical performances enhanced the grand atmosphere of these celebrations, showcasing the prosperity and glory of the nation.

During the Han Dynasty, the system of 雅乐 (yǎ yuè), also known as “court music,” was well-established. It was used in significant ceremonial occasions such as 祭祀 (jì sì) (sacrificial rituals) and 燕饮 (yàn yǐn) (feasting). From the highest-ranking nobles to the 士大夫 (shì dà fū) (scholar-officials), various levels of aristocracy would arrange musical instruments and perform dances. The number of instruments displayed varied based on the noble’s rank.

The collective term for musical ensembles during the Han Dynasty was “乐悬” (yuè xuán). From this name, we can infer that these ensembles primarily featured suspended bells and 磬 (qìng) (stone chimes). There were four types of ensembles: 宫悬 (gōng xuán) (used by emperors), 轩悬 (xuān xuán) (used by marquis), 判悬 (pàn xuán) (used by official), and 特悬 (tè xuán) (used by scholars). According to the 《周礼》 (Zhōu Lǐ) (Rites of Zhou), the seating arrangement for these ensembles was as follows: In ancient times, the king’s musical instruments were hung on all four sides, as if there were walls on all four sides. The marquis’s removed the musical instruments on the south side and hung them on three sides. The high officials hung them on the left and right sides, and the scholars hung them on the east side or between the steps.

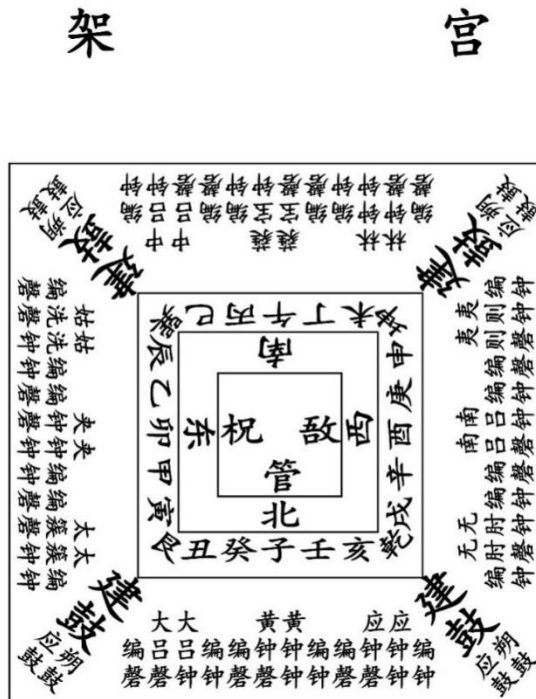


FIGURE 16 The emperor's musical system of ranks “gōng xuán” and layout

Source: Drawing by the Author

Figure 16: The “宫悬” (gōng xuán), also known as the “宫架” (gōng jià), was the scale of the orchestra used by the Han emperors. The emperor’s orchestra was arranged in the four cardinal directions: east, south, west, and north, following the order of the Eight Trigrams (from the Book of Changes) and the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches. The instruments placed in these directions included chimes (编钟), stone chimes (编磬), special suspended bells (特悬钟), and special suspended stone chimes (特悬磬). Additionally, drums were placed in the four corners (southeast, northeast, southwest, and northwest).

For different rituals and ceremonial occasions, specific drums were set up in these corners. As seen in the illustration, the central area of the orchestra featured wind instruments such as flutes (笛), vertical bamboo flutes (篪), and panpipes (箫). The use of the Gong Xuan-scale orchestra in the four cardinal directions symbolized the

emperor's residence, reflecting the idea that the palace was his home in all directions (“象宫室以四方为家”).

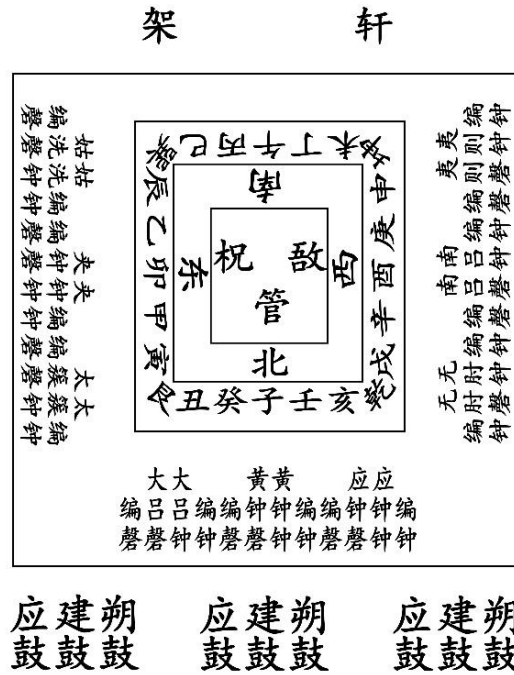


FIGURE 17 The Marquis musical system of ranks “xuān xuán” and layout

Source: Drawing by the Author

Image 17: The “轩悬” (xuān xuán) or “轩架” (xuān jià) refers to the scale of musical ensembles used by feudal lords during the Western Han Dynasty. Compared to the musical ensembles of the emperor (“天子” or “tiān zǐ”), the lords’ ensembles omitted the instruments on the southern side. In ancient times, the imperial palace faced north, and the emperor’s seat was oriented toward the south, symbolizing nobility. Therefore, the lords’ musical ensembles excluded the southern instruments, signifying their avoidance of the king’s esteemed position (“阙其南，避王南面故也”).

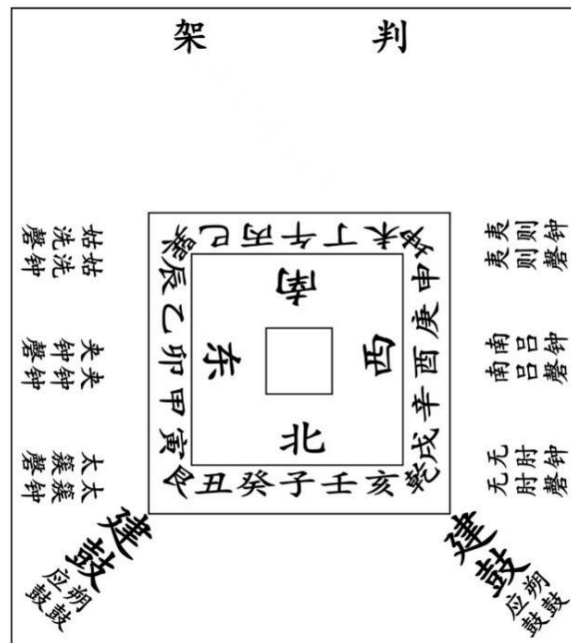


FIGURE 18 The Officials' musical system of ranks “pàn xuán” and layout

Source: Drawing by the Author

Figure 18: “判悬” (pàn xuán), also known as “判架” (pàn jià), refers to the scale of music ensembles used by Han Dynasty officials. When compared to the music ensembles of feudal lords, the “判悬” ensemble used by officials omitted certain northern instruments. Within this ensemble, the eastern and western sides retained the instruments on display. Symbolically, the officials were considered the emperor’s “left and right arms,” and their ensembles were positioned on the left and right sides of the emperor.

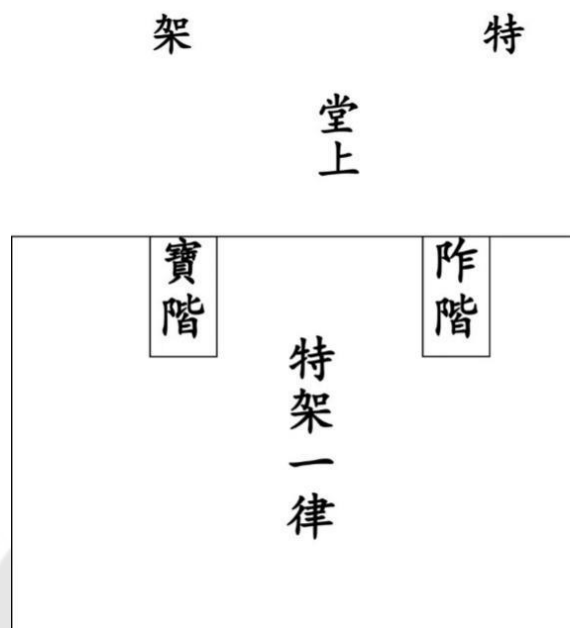


FIGURE 19 The scholars' musical system of ranks “tè xuán” and layout

Source: Drawing by the Author

Figure 19: The “特悬”(tè xuán), also known as the “特架”(tè jià), was a musical ensemble scale used by scholars during the Han Dynasty. As depicted in the diagram, the “特悬” ensemble consisted of only one side with musical instruments on display, symbolizing the independent spirit of scholars (“resembling the uniqueness of scholars”).

In summary, researchers found that during the Western Zhou period, Duke Zhou established strict class systems using rituals and music as carriers. These systems further regulated the behavior of people from all walks of life and effectively maintained the authority of the ruling class. Various activities were imbued with a sense of ceremony. Music served as an external expression of etiquette, and therefore, there were strict requirements for the scale of public performances and the types of musical instruments used. The establishment of the ritual and music system aimed to safeguard the interests of the ruling class and maintain internal order, with its development influenced by the political environment. During the Western Zhou period, the feudal

system was the primary mode of governance. If the princes supported the central government, ceremonies and music could be implemented. However, since the outbreak of wars, the status of the central court declined significantly, leading to the collapse of ritual norms, and regional lords became increasingly arrogant. The political environment played a significant role in shaping the development of ritual and music culture, and this cultural aspect was further influenced by the prevailing political context.

Researchers found that in the era of the Emperor, during the Western Han period, both the feudal system and the county system coexisted. Princes were not only subject to control by the central government but also enjoyed considerable independence in political and economic matters. Social systems impact culture, and thus, the social relationships of early Han society were reflected in the music system. The feudal system had certain drawbacks. When the authority of the central monarch was insufficient, the governing structure became loose, granting significant power to regional lords and allowing those distant from the emperor to exercise some autonomy. Such an environment also influenced the music system of the Han Dynasty. In interviews with experts, one scholar noted that due to these factors, abuses of power were common among nobles.

4.1.2.4 Bronze

Bronze ware primarily refers to various objects made from copper and tin, which were cast and forged during China's Xia, Shang, and Zhou periods. Bronze ware represents the culture and technology of ancient China and holds a special social status. It emerged around 5,000 years ago and gradually gave way to ironware during the Han Dynasty (Baiké, 2024).

Bronze culture in China has a long history and deep heritage. Over the course of extensive evolution and development, it gave rise to sacred and noble bronze ritual vessels, exquisite and unique decorative ornaments, and practical bronze tools with diverse functions, varied shapes, and colors. Bronze artifacts have long served as carriers for recording information and have been widely used since the Shang and Zhou

dynasties in various contexts, including rituals, governance, ceremonies, and historical documentation.

During the Han Dynasty, bronze artifacts played a significant role, encompassing various aspects such as religion, rituals, daily life, and art. Here are the main roles of bronze artifacts in Han society:

1. Religious Rituals: Bronze artifacts played an essential role in religious ceremonies and rituals during the Han Dynasty. They were often used as sacred vessels for worship, such as bronze jue (wine vessels) and bronze zun (ritual wine containers). These beautifully crafted bronze artifacts featured intricate patterns and designs, reflecting the solemnity and reverence of religious beliefs and rituals.

2. Etiquette and Court Ceremonies: Bronze artifacts also played a crucial role in Han Dynasty etiquette and court ceremonies. They were commonly used during banquets, court assemblies, and other formal occasions, showcasing the opulence and dignity of Han court culture. For example, bronze jue vessels were used to serve wine during feasts, and bronze bells were employed in court music performances.

3. Everyday Utensils: Bronze artifacts had widespread applications in daily life during the Han Dynasty. Items like bronze pots and bronze kettles were commonly used. These bronze utensils had excellent heat conductivity and durability, serving purposes such as cooking, storage, and water consumption, meeting the basic needs of people's daily lives.

4. Cultural Heritage and Burials: Some exquisite bronze artifacts were preserved as cultural relics, becoming essential components of China's cultural heritage. Additionally, high-ranking officials and nobles often included bronze items in their tombs as symbols of status and position. The tomb of Haihunhou's yielded a rich collection of bronze artifacts, primarily utilitarian pieces, including chariot fittings, lamps, musical instruments, incense burners, measuring tools, and containers. These artifacts provide insights into various aspects of daily life.

During the Western Han period, bronze artifacts (as shown in Figure 18) played an important role in social stratification, although they were not a direct representation of it. However, the production, use, and ownership of bronze artifacts reflected certain features and class differences in society at that time:

1. **Bronze Artifacts of Nobility and Ruling Class:** During the Western Han period, nobles and ruling classes typically owned luxurious and exquisite bronze artifacts. These objects were often used for rituals, ceremonies, or decorative purposes. The craftsmanship of their bronze artifacts was exceptional, with unique forms that often demonstrated high artistic and cultural taste.

2. **Bronze Artifacts of the Wealthy Class:** Besides the nobility and ruling class, some affluent gentry and merchants also possessed a certain quantity and quality of bronze artifacts. They might have purchased or commissioned bronze artifacts for decoration, gifts, or investment.

3. **Common People and Farmers:** Ordinary people and farmers generally did not own luxurious bronze artifacts because their production and acquisition required considerable wealth and resources. They might have had simple and practical bronze items for everyday use, such as tools and utensils. By the mid-Western Han period, Emperor Wu implemented the state monopoly on salt and iron, which prohibited local mining and copper casting. The extraction rights for important metal resources were centralized, and bronze artifact production was managed by the central government.

4. **Bronze Artisans and Craftsmen:** The artisans and casters who created bronze artifacts typically belonged to the artisan class within society. They might come from artisan families and learn bronze-making techniques through traditional skills or apprenticeship. Overall, while bronze artifacts themselves were not a direct reflection of Western Han social stratification, their production, use, and ownership revealed differences in wealth, status, and cultural preferences among different classes.



FIGURE 20 Bronze chariot and horse implement

Source: Photographed by the Author

Researchers found that the tomb of Liu He, the Haihunhou during the Western Han Dynasty, was discovered in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province. It is the most well-preserved, structurally complete, and clearly laid-out tomb of a Western Han noble discovered in China to date. Notably, the tomb yielded a significant number of gold artifacts, making it one of the most remarkable finds in Han Dynasty archaeology. However, in addition to gold, the tomb also contained an extensive collection of bronze artifacts. The bronze artifacts from the tomb can be categorized into ten major types: tableware, wine vessels, water containers, musical instruments, daily utensils, measuring tools, weapons, chariots and horses, tools, and miscellaneous accessories. Each major category includes various distinct forms, creating a comprehensive set of burial bronze objects. These artifacts primarily date from Emperor Wu of Han's reign (from 96 BCE to 59 BCE), with only a few pieces from earlier Zhou Dynasty times. The majority of the bronzes are associated with two regions: the Changyi Kingdom and the Haihunhou's domain. Among these, the Changyi Kingdom contributed a larger quantity of bronze artifacts.

The discovery of bronze artifacts from Liu He's tomb provides valuable insights for research on Western Han bronze burial practices. These artifacts serve as standard examples from the period, aiding in the identification, function, and usage

system of Western Han bronze objects. The tomb's well-preserved variety of artifacts holds significant academic significance for understanding burial customs during this historical period. The rich collection of musical instruments, chariots, and other items also sheds light on the lifestyle and cultural practices of high-ranking nobility in the Western Han Dynasty. Overall, the tomb of Liu He offers a unique glimpse into the material culture and rituals of ancient China.

4.1.2.5 Jian Du

The term “简牍” (jiǎn dú) refers to ancient bamboo or wooden slips used for writing. Among them, those made from bamboo are called “竹简” (zhú jiǎn), or simply “简” (jiǎn), while those made from wood are called “木牍” (mù dú), or simply “牍” (dú). Collectively, they are referred to as “简牍” (jiǎn dú). Due to the larger quantity of bamboo slips, sometimes the term “简” (jiǎn) is used more broadly, but it actually includes both bamboo and wooden slips. These slips played a significant role in ancient Chinese writing and communication, especially during the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD). They were gradually replaced by paper, and their use declined over time.

The bamboo slips and wooden tablets found in the tomb of Haihunhou have attracted attention. Archaeologists believe that the content written on these slips is the best material for studying Han Dynasty culture and Chinese history. To understand Marquis Haihun Liu He, who lived over two thousand years ago, and to learn about life during the Han Dynasty, one must start with these bamboo slips (STUDIES, 2023).

Before the invention of paper and printing technology, ancient people wrote texts on bamboo slips, wooden tablets, and silk books. Since silk was expensive and not widely available, most people used bamboo slips and wooden tablets for writing. These individual slips and tablets were then connected to form a complete “book.” In the tomb of Marquis Haihun, archaeologists discovered over five thousand bamboo slips and wooden tablets, with approximately sixty well-preserved wooden tablets. Each wooden tablet measures about 23 centimeters in length and 6.6 centimeters in width. Research by archaeologists indicates that these bamboo slips and

wooden tablets primarily contain ancient books, memorials written by Liu He, ritual prayers, and imperial edicts.



FIGURE 21 Except for the state imperial edict

Source: Zhang Jianwen, Cao Ji. (2023). Restoration and research of the 'Decree of the Haihunhou State' unearthed from the tomb of Liu He, Haihunhou of Nanchang, p.134.

The “Decree for Removing a State” (Figure 21) unearthed from the Haihunhou’s tomb is the third relatively complete Western Han dynasty decree, following the “Decree of the Third Year of Yongshi” and the “Decree of the Fifth Year of Yuankang” discovered in the Ju Yan Han bamboo slips. It is the only physical Han dynasty decree found in the southern region. The decree provides detailed records of the posthumous treatment of the tomb owner, Liu He, by the imperial court, corroborating accounts in the “Book of Han.” Its content covers the Han dynasty’s system of ministerial meetings, official appointments, and document procedures, making it a highly valuable artifact of the highest-ranking official documents from the Western Han period. According to the Han dynasty system, “a decree is an imperial edict... When ministers have proposals, the Prefect of the Imperial Secretariat presents them, and the Emperor responds with ‘approved.’” The process of the “Decree for Removing a State” found in the Haihunhou’s tomb is as follows: 1. Yu Zhang Prefect Liao Shang submitted a memorial proposing the “removal of a state.” 2. The Emperor decided to convene a meeting to discuss the matter. 3. After deliberation, ministers signed the memorial, expressing their agreement with Yu Zhang Prefect’s proposed course of action. 4. The Emperor endorsed the decree

with the phrase “approved,” transforming the memorial into the “Decree for Removing a State.”⁵ The “Decree for Removing a State” was then dispatched to the Haihun state, officially effecting the removal. The clear process and precise record-keeping in this document provide valuable new material for studying the mourning and burial practices of Western Han marquises.

From this, researchers found that it can be seen that during the burial period, the identity of the tomb owner was clear. The situation where Confucian classics, poetry, mathematics, and technical literature were found in the same tomb provides valuable information for understanding the intellectual and academic landscape during the reign of Emperor Zhaoxuan. Additionally, it offers an opportunity for research on the education, literary level, cultivation, and belief systems of the Han Dynasty’s feudal lords and kings. Previously, there was a lack of first-tier documents related to mid-Western Han kings and marquises. The large number of bamboo slips unearthed from the Haihunhou’s tomb, which include relevant literature related to King Changyi and Marquis Haihun, can effectively supplement existing records. For the first time, specific ritual information related to lords and marquises has been discovered, providing new and important material for the study of Western Han history, especially the system of feudal lords and marquises (Sohu, 2019).

4.1.3 Summary

In summary, researchers found that the elaborate burial culture during the Han Dynasty served the purpose of strengthening imperial authority. It aligned with the Daoist concept of harmony between heaven and humanity, confirming the idea of ‘divine right’ and ensuring the continuity of filial piety. The primary reasons for the elaborate burial customs in the Han Dynasty were as follows:

First Daoist Influence: Daoist reflections on life and death significantly impacted Han burial culture. Daoism considered the Dao (the Way) both the origin and the end of all things. The pursuit of immortality was central to Daoist thought, which influenced the elaborate burial practices aimed at achieving transcendence and becoming immortals. Secondly Confucian Filial Piety: In ancient Chinese society,

Confucian values emphasized filial piety (孝悌 xiào ti). Under the patriarchal system, children were expected to follow the rules of filial piety. Since the kinship-based feudal system required outward expressions of filial conduct, elaborate burial rituals became a tangible way to demonstrate family cohesion. Third Confucian Rituals and Music: Confucianism emphasized maintaining the interests of the ruling class. The concept of '礼' (lǐ), which encompasses rituals, ceremonies, and proper conduct, was highly regarded. Burial culture was an integral part of the Confucian ritual system, promoting social stability.

In conclusion, Han burial culture became a political tool, perpetuating social hierarchy and class interests. Through burial ceremonies, the ruling elite extended the system of status and identity beyond death, effectively solidifying class consciousness. This chapter examines Liu He's attire, burial goods, and specifications in reverse, shedding light on his social status and rank.

4.2 Aesthetic Value- Aesthetic Cultural Studies

From the aesthetic cultural theory discussed in Chapter 2, researchers can summarize that Ye Lang's theory of aesthetic culture is a comprehensive and systematic aesthetic system. Its purpose is to explore human understanding, perception, and creation of beauty, as well as the underlying principles and significance of these activities. This theory integrates both Eastern and Western aesthetic thoughts, emphasizing the universality and transcendence of aesthetics. It posits that aesthetics is not only a way of understanding the world but also a crucial component of human culture. Additionally, Ye Lang's theory focuses on the practical and applicable aspects of aesthetic experience, emphasizing the close connection between aesthetics and everyday life. In this study, researchers analyze and research 30 burial artifacts from the Haihunhou's tomb, considering three aspects: the materialized products of aesthetic activities, the conceptual framework of aesthetic activities, and human behavioral activities.

Based on the socio-cultural context of the unified Western Han dynasty, ancient Chinese culture entered a golden period of development. During this time, various fields

such as politics, economy, science and technology, philosophy, and the arts reached new historical heights. The flourishing development in different cultural domains contributed to the brilliance of aesthetic culture. Although researchers cannot directly observe the creative process of aesthetic works by the Han people due to the different historical contexts, researchers can still appreciate the aesthetic practices reflected in Western Han art. By examining these artifacts, researchers gain insights into the social aesthetic concepts of the Western Han period, allowing us to “revive” the materialized form of Han aesthetic culture. The artifacts from the desolate tomb of the Haihunhou’s, a fallen emperor, serve as a microcosm of Han aesthetic culture, waiting for us to explore and discover. Among the items unearthed from the Haihunhou’s tomb are gold objects, jade artifacts, bronze items, lacquered wood pieces, bamboo slips, and other practical objects that distinctly represent the characteristics of the Western Han era. Although the excavation work for the tomb artifacts has concluded, some items are still undergoing restoration in laboratories. Unfortunately, due to cultural preservation and scientific research purposes, the specific details of these artifacts cannot be publicly disclosed. As a result, I have not personally witnessed treasures like the Confucius screen or the Qilunyu (a collection of Confucian texts) from the Haihunhou’s tomb. In this article, I will rely on collected material data from field visits and online communication. Using examples such as jade objects, dragon motifs, musical instruments, bronze artifacts, and bamboo slips from the Haihunhou’s tomb, I will explore the fundamental characteristics of Han aesthetic culture. These characteristics include the integration of art and daily life, as well as the distinct tendencies toward personification and vitality within the specific socio-economic context of the Western Han period.

4.2.1 Seals

In the Haihunhou’s tomb, three ancient jade seals were successively unearthed: the ‘Da Liuji Seal,’ the ‘Seal Without Inscription,’ and the ‘Liu He Seal,’ along with a bronze seal called the ‘Hai Character Bronze Seal.’ These seals serve as direct evidence of the tomb owner’s identity and hold significant historical and artistic value. Based on discussions among experts and scholars, the semantic units are analyzed

from the perspectives of artistic function, decorative craftsmanship, and aesthetics. The summarized content is as follows:

4.2.1.1 “Da Liuji Seal”

On December 15, 2015, a jade seal inscribed with the words “Da Liuji Seal” was unearthed from the Haihunhou’s tomb (figure 22). The seal features a tortoise-shaped knob and measures 17.6 millimeters in length, 17.6 millimeters in width, and 16.4 millimeters in thickness. Examining the artifact displayed at the archaeological site in Nanchang, it is evident that the jade material is delicate and pristine, the seal script is elegant and fluent, and the engraving craftsmanship is exquisite, making it a remarkable piece among Han dynasty jade seals.



FIGURE 22 Da Liuji Seal

Source: Institute of Archaeology and Cultural Relics of Jiangxi Province, Department of History, Xiamen University. (2018). Jade unearthed from the Haihunhou tomb in Xihan, Nanchang, Jiangxi, p.64.

Experts believe that the “Da Liuji Seal,” both in its inscription and the design of the knob, exhibits typical characteristics of the late Western Han period. When comparing it to other seals found in similar tombs, these can generally be categorized as official seals, private seals, or commemorative seals. Clearly, this jade seal does not belong to the official sequence and is not associated with the tomb owner’s official title.

The tortoise-shaped knob of the “Da Liuji Seal” has a full and rounded overall form, with decorative patterns around its perimeter. The tortoise shell is broad, the back is arched, and the head of the tortoise tilts upward. Upon closer examination, the shell decoration reveals six sets of pentagonal concave lines. Each set features an irregular circular core of varying sizes, enveloped by two layers of identical shapes. Additionally, there are five sets of quadrilateral concave patterns, with centers that can be circular, rectangular, or trapezoidal, intricately carved with four double lines and one single line.

Historical records indicate that after Liu Bang ascended to the throne, he devoted efforts to strengthen his family’s political influence, suppressing rival kings and bestowing high titles upon the descendants of the Liu clan. This division resulted in the “Great Liu Clan” represented by the emperor and the “Branch Liu Clan” represented by various regional kings. The phrase “Great Liu” could only be used by the “Great Liu Clan,” as seen in the inscription on the “Da Liuji Seal.” When Emperor Zhao of Han, Liu Fuling, who had no biological heir, passed away due to illness in the first year of Yuanping (74 BCE), Changyi King Liu He was chosen by the influential courtier Huo Guang from the “Branch Liu Clan” to become the crown prince, thus elevating his status to “Great Liu.” Later, Liu He was deposed and returned to his original title as a member of the “Branch Liu Clan.” Subsequently, in the third year of Yuan Kang (63 BCE), Emperor Xuan of Han issued a decree: “It is said that when a ruler commits a crime, even his close relatives should be separated. Therefore, I appoint the former Changyi King He as the Haihunhou, granting him a fief of four thousand households.” (dynasty, 2002). The underlying message of this decree may have severed all connections between Liu He and the “Great Liu” lineage. Internally, Liu He likely resisted the arbitrary control of Huo Guang and Emperor Xuan. The emphasis on “Great Liu” in the “Da Liuji Seal” perhaps reflects this complex sentiment of not wanting to be cast aside.

The “Guangya Shigu” dictionary states: “Ji means recognition.” The term “Da Liuji Seal” implies markings, inscriptions, and identification. The character “Ji” likely serves to symbolize the esteemed identity of “Great Liu.” While private seals during the

Han dynasty often featured inscriptions like “Seal,” “Private Seal,” “Trust Seal,” or “Seal of Approval,” the term “Ji” or “Ji Seal” was relatively uncommon (Fuyi, 1978). The deliberate departure from contemporary seal norms in the phrase “Da Liu” and “Ji Seal” suggests an unspoken struggle.

In summary, researchers found that as a burial seal, the “Da Liuji Seal” need not strictly adhere to official seal regulations in terms of material and design. However, for the deposed Emperor Liu He, who had a unique life experience, the combination of “jade quality” and the tortoise-shaped knob might provide a fitting anchor for the characters “Great Liu.”

4.2.1.2 Liu He Yuxi (刘贺玉玺)

The Liu He Yuxi (刘贺玉玺) is a jade seal associated with Liu He, the grandson of Emperor Wu of Han and the first Haihunhou. Liu He, also known as the “Deposed Emperor,” was buried in the Haihunhou’s tomb. The newly discovered jade seal is a common square-inch seal from the Han Dynasty. Its inscription consists of only the characters “刘贺” (Liu He), indicating that it was Liu He’s personal seal. During the Western Han period, one inch was approximately 2.3 centimeters, and the “Da Liu Ji Seal” had an area of about 1.7 square centimeters, both falling within the normal size range for seals at that time.

The Jiangxi Daily published an article titled “Appreciation of the ‘Liu He’ Seal of the Haihunhou” on March 11, 2016. Accompanied by images of the seal face and knob, the article referred to the knob as the “Toad Knob” (蟾蜍钮). Since the “Liu He” seal was a private seal, it was not subject to official regulations. The use of a toad as the knob was considered normal. In ancient times, the toad was revered as a symbol of good fortune, protection from harm, and longevity. While the toad represented the “God of the Mid-Autumn Moon” during the Han Dynasty, the later Wei and Jin periods associated it with wealth and prosperity. The images published in the newspaper show that the upper part of the “Liu He” seal has four slanted surfaces, a common feature of Han jade seals. At first glance, the shape of this seal resembles that of a toad. However, according to Zhang Zhongli, the deputy head of the Haihunhou’s tomb excavation team,

the design combines elements from various animals. It features an asymmetrical pair of wings and resembles a phoenix, although its craftsmanship sets it apart as unique and beautiful. The “Toad Knob” jade seal differs from other contemporary seals, such as turtle knobs, nose knobs, bridge knobs, camel knobs, snake knobs, sheep knobs, and horse knobs.



FIGURE 23 Liu He Yuxi

Source: Wen Leping, Zhou Guangming (2020). Haihunhou tomb unearthed "Liu He" jade seal of the seal button modelling discernment, p167.

Based on the visual appearance in the image (Figure 23), the artistic design of the jade seal button for ‘Liu He’ can be identified. Overall, it depicts a three-dimensional animal that is crawling on the ground and looking upward. The key features of its appearance are as follows: The head is triangular in shape, with a wide, triangular mouth. It does not resemble the blunt mouth of a dragon or deer (like a chi) or the sharp beak of a phoenix. The head is adorned with two round eyes that bulge out and gaze forward. These eyes are not small and concave like those of a chi or feng bird. The neck is not clearly defined; instead, the head seamlessly connects to the body. Unlike the elongated neck of a chi or the slender neck of a feng bird, the head and abdomen are closely integrated. The back is slightly curved and features an elliptical pattern. It does not resemble the raised nodules seen on a toad’s back or the scale pattern of a fish.

Instead, it resembles the feather pattern of a feng bird. The abdomen is large and rounded, unlike the slender shape of a chi's abdomen or the diamond shape of a feng bird's abdomen. The short and robust forelimbs have distinct toes and visible webbing. The left hind limb surface displays an elliptical pattern, resembling feathers. It is longer, thicker, and more muscular than the forelimbs. The curved lower part of the hind limb has a circular opening, likely used for attaching a cord or ribbon for sealing purposes. It does not fully resemble a body or a phoenix's tail. Surprisingly, the right hind limb is absent. According to symmetry principles, it should be equally robust and muscular as the left hind limb, yet it is missing. This similarity to the 'three-legged' toad motif is intriguing."

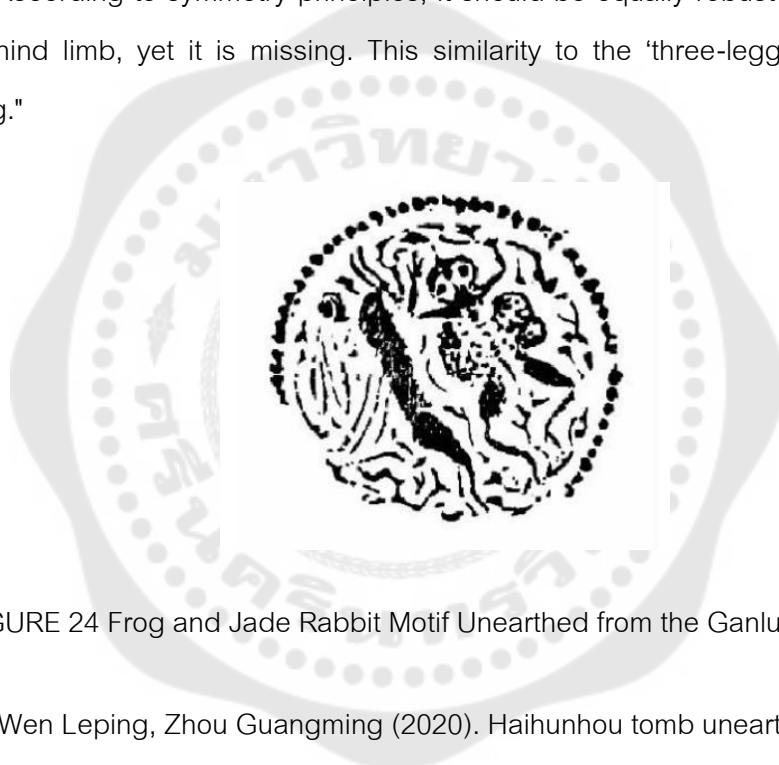


FIGURE 24 Frog and Jade Rabbit Motif Unearthed from the Ganlu Palace Site

Source: Wen Leping, Zhou Guangming (2020). Haihunhou tomb unearthed "Liu He" jade seal of the seal button modelling discernment, p.171.

According to archaeological excavations, numerous pictorial stones, silk paintings, and artifacts related to frogs and frog motifs have been unearthed from tombs dating back to the Qin and Han dynasties. Wen Leping from the Hydroculture Research Center at Nanchang University of Engineering stated that a silver frog was discovered in a Qin tomb in Shangjiao Village, east of Emperor Qin's Mausoleum. The frog had the characters '少府' (Shao Fu) inscribed inside its mouth. In the Gansu Palace site in Chunhua County, Xianyang City, Shaanxi Province, a frog-shaped jade tile with a rabbit

motif was also unearthed (see Figure 24). The frog has elongated limbs, round eyes, and a plump, rounded belly. The prominent central vertical line on its back gives it a sense of symmetry, resembling an artistic representation of a flower-backed frog.

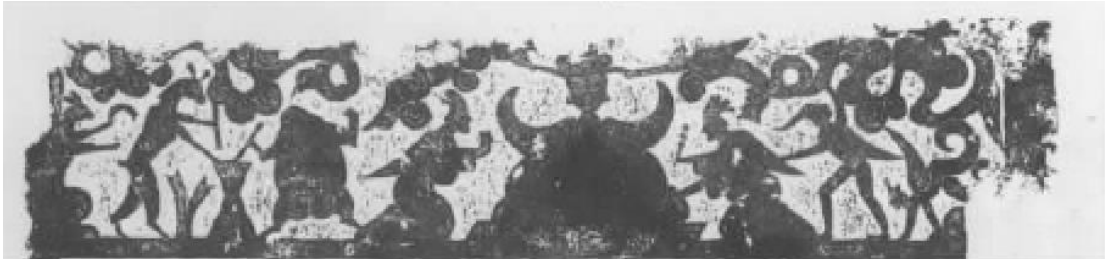


FIGURE 25 A chiseled stone from a Han Dynasty tomb in Songshan Village, Jiexiang County. The scene features a frog engaged in pounding medicine.

Source: Wen Leping, Zhou Guangming (2020). Haihunhou tomb unearthed "Liu He" jade seal of the seal button modelling discernment, p.167.

In the Han tombs unearthed in the Shandong region, there are numerous depictions of toads on portrait stones. Among them, the four-layer composition from the Songshan Han tomb in Jiexiang County stands out. In the first layer, the Western Queen Mother is seated, flanked by attendants with feathered wings, a jade rabbit, and a toad engaged in the process of preparing medicine (see Figure 25). These toads appear in combination with the Western Queen Mother, the jade rabbit, and the nine-tailed fox. The artistic representation of these toads is consistent: they are depicted from the back, with clearly defined limbs, round bellies, and plump bodies.



FIGURE 26 Explanation of the Danglu pattern displayed

Source: Photographed by the Author

Archaeologist Zhou Guangming from the Jiangxi Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology believes that in the chariot and horse pit of the Haihunhou's tomb complex, a bronze ornament with a sun and moon deity motif (K1:602) was unearthed. In the depiction (Figure 26), the moon disc features a clearly defined four-legged toad with evenly distributed circular patterns on its back, representing the warts on the toad's skin. Although the head appears somewhat blurry, its artistic composition is similar to the toad depictions found on Han portrait stones from Shandong. These toad images indicate common artistic features of moon toads during the Han period: all are depicted from a dorsal view, with small heads, round bellies, large abdomens, plump bodies, raised nodules on the back, distinct limbs, short forelimbs, and relatively thick and long hind limbs, capturing the essential biological characteristics of toads.

Comparing the artistic features of these toad depictions with those of the "Liu He" jade seal knob, researchers find relative alignment in the head, eyes, neck, forelimbs, hind limbs, and overall form. The concept of "three legs" in Han portraits often represents the feminine (yin) aspect and is frequently combined with the three-legged crow, symbolizing the harmonious interplay of yin and yang (Leping & Guangming, 2020).

“Yin and yang” is a common philosophical term in ancient China used to understand the world and express cosmological views. In the pre-Qin period, the Book of Changes (Zhouyi) states, “One yin and one yang constitute the Dao” (Guying & Jianwei, 2005), emphasizing that everything contains relative aspects of yin and yang, mutually opposing yet interdependent, transforming under certain conditions. Laozi, during the Spring and Autumn period, proposed, “The Dao gives birth to one, one gives birth to two, two give birth to three, and three give birth to all things. All things carry yin and embrace yang, and their interaction creates harmony” (Guying, 2020). Xunzi, during the Warring States period, similarly stated, “Heaven and earth combine to give birth to all things; yin and yang interact to bring about change” (Xianqian, 1988), highlighting the interplay of yin and yang in the generation and transformation of all things. This concept is often artistically expressed in Han portrait art, providing both simplicity and aesthetic appeal. Yin and yang exist in opposition, mutually transforming and serving as prerequisites and conditions—for example, yang represents the sky, yin the earth; yang is male, yin is female; yang is the ruler, yin is the minister; yang is the father, yin is the mother; yang is above, yin is below; yang is strong, yin is gentle. Han portrait art frequently depicts contrasting yin-yang images, such as Fuxi and Nüwa, Xihe (sun goddess) and Changxi (moon goddess), and Dongwanggong (Eastern King) and Xiwangmu (Western Queen Mother), all conveying the belief in harmonious balance.

Based on this analysis, researchers found that it is plausible that Liu He, the Haihunhou's tomb, who held titles as the King of Changyi and an emperor, deliberately chose the “three-legged toad” as the design for his personal private seal knob. The three-legged toad, symbolizing longevity and immortality, aligns with the concept of yin and yang harmony. Just as Dana states, “The purpose of art is to express a primary or prominent feature, a significant idea, more clearly and completely than actual objects...” (Mingjiu, 1963). Therefore, the “Liu He” jade seal knob likely features a three-legged toad in the form of a winged transformation, rather than any other animal motif.

The “Liu He” jade seal reflects the artistic quality and personal style of its creator. Liu He, born into nobility and well-educated, possessed a refined artistic sensibility. His accumulated knowledge of art, ability to appreciate art, aesthetic experiences, and artistic expression should have exceeded that of an average person. Additionally, Liu He’s tumultuous life—from being the Prince of Changyi to ascending the throne and later being deposed—profoundly influenced the depth and breadth of his artistic creations and aesthetics. However, it’s important to note that the “Liu He” jade seal was not necessarily crafted by Liu He himself. Instead, under the influence of Liu He’s artistic and aesthetic ideas, skilled jade artisans fully utilized their extraordinary artistic sensibilities and expertise. With adept artistic techniques and creative talent, they carved distinctive frog-shaped jade seals, showcasing their superior aesthetic experiences, artistic expression, and unique styles. The resulting “Liu He” jade seal became a remarkable piece in the artistic realm, continually adding to the infinite allure of aesthetics. The frog motif in the “Liu He” jade seal is indeed unique, especially when compared to more common designs. This particular artistic mode emerged during the mid-Western Han period. As a personal seal, Liu He deliberately chose the frog motif, symbolizing the unity of heaven and humanity and imbuing the physical object with emotional significance. Western Han carving art reflected the Han people’s contemplation and understanding of beauty in the world. It expressed new ideas about the connection between humans, nature, and the realms of immortals and spirits. To embody Confucian and Daoist philosophies in tangible objects, artists infused their creations with spiritual essence. Through careful attention to form, posture, lines, muscles, and gestures, they breathed life into their carved artifacts, infusing them with thought, spirit, and soul. The terracotta warriors and horses, stone sculptures, and bronze artworks unearthed from the Qin and Han dynasties all exemplify the artistic style of “harmony between heaven and humanity, infused with emotion.” These pieces predominantly revolved around the prevalent belief in immortality, ascension to the immortal realm, and the pursuit of spiritual freedom. Their unique artistic character resulted from both accidental factors and the essential influence of Liu He’s own

thoughts and frog symbolism. The accidental aspects complemented the inevitable, creating a path toward artistic uniqueness. While frog motifs were relatively common in Han society, the artistic individuality of frog-shaped seal knobs, such as the one associated with Liu He, stands out. It embodies both chance occurrences and the inherent charm of Han-era seal knob development, making it a fascinating blend of the accidental and the inevitable in artistic form.

Firstly, objective reality prompted Liu He to choose the toad as an auspicious protective creature. As mentioned earlier, the Han people regarded toads as divine creatures associated with the moon, symbolizing longevity, immortality, eternal life, and ascension. After experiencing the ups and downs of life, Liu He arrived in The Haihunhou's tomb and faced a challenging environment: the Haihunhou's territory was located downstream of the Gan River, characterized by a humid climate, heavy rainfall, and harsh natural conditions, earning it the nickname "Jiangnan" (which means "south of the river"). Additionally, Liu He suffered from a condition known as "wind paralysis." Therefore, he creatively chose the amphibious toad as the model for his jade seal. This choice not only aligned with traditional cultural customs, but also implied intentions related to warding off evil, healing, longevity, immortality, and posthumous ascension. Thus, he crafted the toad jade seal, which harmonized his personal emotional subjectivity with the objective reality of toad culture development.

Secondly, the vicissitudes of life influenced Liu He's seal preferences. The tomb of Haihunhou's Liu He did not yield the official seal of the Haihunhou's tomb Liu He, and the early official seal of King Changyi also remains missing—a historical mystery. However, the tomb did reveal a "Da Liu Seal" and a jade seal with a tortoise knob. The attributes of these seals may hold additional hidden meanings. Comparing the character "Liu" in the "Da Liu Seal" and the "Liu He" jade seal, researchers observe differences: the former conceals the head and front view, while the latter displays both. Moreover, the calligraphy style of other characters on the seals varies, indicating that they were not crafted by the same artisan. The creation of the "Liu He" jade seal likely occurred after the "Da Liu Seal." It may have been Liu He's private seal, newly crafted

upon his arrival in the Haihunhou's domain. The origin of the "Da Liu Seal" could be linked to Liu He's deposition, rendering him unable to use the official seal of King Changyi at home. After returning the king's seal to the court, he likely carved a new private seal with a hidden "Da Liu Seal" on the tortoise knob for external use. Consequently, the brushwork is discreet and circular.

In summary, researchers found that the "Liu He" jade seal underwent artistic refinement from ordinary jade. It served not only as a practical artifact but also possessed unique aesthetic and artistic value. Thus, the "Liu He" jade seal represents a harmonious unity of utilitarian and aesthetic values. Considering material, content, form, and style, its creation aligns with social norms, aesthetic purposes, and the artistic principles of beauty. In essence, its emergence reflects both institutional and adaptive aspects. Based on archaeological and literary evidence, along with considerations of artistic features, biological characteristics of the silver feather, the cultural significance of toads, Liu He's aesthetic psychology, and the era's sculptural trends, researchers can conclude that the "Liu He" jade seal likely features the three-legged feathered toad motif, rather than the young toad or phoenix. Its appearance can be seen as a reflection of sculptural art, achieving a synthesis of chance and necessity, content and form, individuality and universality, and subjectivity and objectivity(Leping & Guangming, 2020).

4.2.1.3 Wordless Jade Seal

According to a news report in the Jiangxi Daily on December 16, 2015 (Page A02), on December 15 of the same year, a journalist witnessed an unmarked seal (Figure 27) in the temporary artifact protection room of the Nanchang the Haihunhou's tomb. The seal had a smooth surface and was very similar in shape, size, material, color, and button style to the "Da Liuji Seal". Some experts believe that the lack of inscriptions on this seal may have been intentional by the tomb owner, perhaps signifying that the inscriptions would be added after their transition to another world. At the Beijing Capital Museum exhibition, a similar seal with a tortoise-shaped button made

of white jade was on display, measuring 23 millimeters in length, 23 millimeters in width, and 19.3 millimeters in thickness.



FIGURE 27 The Wordless Jade Seal

Source: Photographed by the Author

The reason behind the lack of inscriptions on the jade seal could be attributed to several possibilities. It might not have been fully engraved yet, intentionally left blank, or perhaps time constraints led to the omission of crucial text. When examining this no-inscription jade seal from the Haihunhou's tomb in the context of other similar seals found in the Mancheng Han tombs and the "Da Liuji Seal," it becomes evident that the meticulous craftsmanship, including the turtle-shaped knob (龟钮), has been carefully verified. Despite this, the decision to forgo inscribing significant text on the seal may have been due to time constraints.

In summary, researchers found that influenced by the funeral concept of "life after death," Liu He desired to cleanse the humiliation from his previous life of being deposed. He placed this strong desire in the realm of the afterlife. In this context, an uncarved jade seal, patiently awaiting new content, became indispensable due to the weight of its expectations.

4.2.1.4 The “海” character bronze seal

The “海” character bronze seal, also known as the “Hai” (Figure 28) character bronze seal, is an artifact from the Western Han Dynasty. It is currently housed in the Nanchang Han Dynasty the Haihunhou’s Site Museum. The character “海” (Hai) is an abbreviation for “海昏” (Haihun), a common phenomenon of omitting characters in place names during the Western Han period. This large bronze seal has dimensions significantly larger than the typical square-inch seals of the Han Dynasty.

The seal features the sunken inscription of the character “海” (Hai) in seal script on the front, surrounded by a frame. The bottom right corner of the frame and the base of the seal are damaged but do not affect the character “海” (Hai). This bronze seal is believed to be a horse branding seal, used as evidence for managing horses during the Han Dynasty. The absence of an imprint knob and its larger size distinguish it from official Han seals, suggesting that it likely belonged to a noble or high-ranking individual, such as the Haihunhou’s tomb. In summary, the “海” character bronze seal is a valuable historical artifact associated with the Haihun Marquis and provides insights into horse management practices during the Han Dynasty.



FIGURE 28 The “Hai” character bronze seal

Source: Photographed by the Author

The bronze seal with the character “海” (meaning “sea” in Chinese) unearthed from the Haihunhou’s tomb is a remarkable artifact. It exhibits typical features of Han dynasty bronze seals, including deep and vertical strokes, a flat base, and a distinctive mouth shape. The overall design suggests that the seal was likely cast using a pre-made mold or die, which was then trimmed with tools. Interestingly, the irregular notch at the top of the seal adds visual interest. Not only does the character “海” remain unaffected by this notch, but the “water” component also enhances the overall artistic effect. The seal’s appearance evokes a sense of antiquity. Experts, including Hao Xiaorong, believe that this particular bronze seal with the character “海” is larger than typical Han dynasty seals. It is a rare example of a noble-level horse seal (印马印). The Haihunhou’s tomb in Nanchang, located south of the Yangtze River, is the only tomb with an authentic chariot and horse pit in the region. In addition to practical high-quality chariots, over 3,000 exquisite bronze chariot and horse fittings were also discovered. This suggests that Liu He, the tomb’s occupant, had a significant number of horses.

The “海” seal likely played a role in Liu He’s horse administration. Its unique features, such as the irregular notch and the distinctive shape, set it apart from common official seals and ceremonial seals of the Han dynasty. The intentional damage observed on the seal’s edges and backside indicates that it held special significance during its burial, possibly related to Liu He himself. In summary, the bronze “海” seal from the Haihunhou’s tomb in Nanchang is a fascinating artifact with historical and cultural importance. Its distinctive characteristics make it a valuable piece for understanding the horse-related practices of the time.

4.2.1.5 Summary

During the Western Han period, the characteristics and style of sculpture art were primarily reflected in two aspects: First, “Simple, Profound, Robust” (ce, 2000): According to Mr. Yiping Ce, the sculpture during the Qin and Han dynasties reached its first peak in Chinese sculptural history. The terracotta warriors of Emperor Qin Shi Huang, the terracotta warriors unearthed from the tomb of Emperor Han Gaozu, and the stone carvings from the tomb of General Huo Qubing all exemplify the “simple,

profound, and robust” sculptural character. Compared to cultural images such as city centers, palaces, and tombs, sculpture not only had a three-dimensional material form but also possessed two distinct personality traits. First, it had relatively subdued practical utility, lacking obvious functional value. Second, it excelled in symbolism. The creation and production of sculpture were imbued with certain concepts and meanings, emphasizing expression rather than practical use. As a cultural artifact, sculpture embodies aesthetics and artistry, reflecting the aesthetic and cultural spirit of specific ethnic groups and eras. Thus, during the Qin and Han periods, sculpture not only served as a model for cultural images but also became one of the mainstream arts of that era. Throughout Chinese aesthetic history, the Qin and Han periods stand out as the only time when sculpture held such prominence, making it particularly precious (ce, 2000).

Second, “Harmony of Heaven and Humanity, Emotion Embedded in Objects”: The distinctive features of Han dynasty visual arts, including painting and sculpture, formed a unique system. Some believe that these arts were deeply rooted in the social reality of the Han period. With a broad perspective that encompassed both ancient and contemporary times, they absorbed cultural nourishment from Confucianism, Daoism, and the indigenous Chu folk culture, which retained remnants of primitive shamanistic traditions. Drawing from various artistic traditions spanning from prehistoric times to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, Han dynasty art developed its own aesthetic essence and a distinct style. It demonstrated rational attention to historical evolution and the real world, while also expressing a longing for mythical realms and divine beings. The pursuit of strength, simplicity, and mysterious aesthetics had a profound impact on post-Wei and Jin dynasty painting. The enduring aesthetic value of Han dynasty art remains evident today (Jian, 2001). Although this discussion primarily pertains to painting, similar principles apply to sculpture. Both forms of art employed flexible and diverse techniques, emphasizing the fusion of form and spirit and striving for a harmonious unity of heaven and humanity.

In the tomb of Haihunhou, jade seals belonging to Liu He, the “Da Liuji” seal, a blank seal, and a bronze seal with the character “Hai” were unearthed. The “Liu He” jade seal, as a work of carving art from the mid-Western Han period, is no exception. It cannot exist supernaturally apart from social reality but belongs to the characteristics of that era and its artistic style.

According to Han regulations, marquises used jade seals with turtle-shaped knobs. The turtle symbolized yin energy, and its hidden nature represented the virtue of a minister who achieved success and then withdrew (Xingyan & Tianyou, 1990). When Liu He, after being deposed, became a commoner and was enfeoffed as Marquis Haihun, he was overjoyed, thinking that his time had come and he no longer needed to hide away. However, he mistakenly overestimated his chances of becoming the “King of Yuzhang” (dynasty, 2002). In this mindset, Liu He’s official seal as Marquis Haihun should have been a jade seal with a turtle-shaped knob. However, the privately used “Liu He” seal that was unearthed was influenced by prevalent ideas about immortals and the Yin-Yang concept. It intentionally featured a moon-centered creature—the three-legged toad—as the knob. This design inherited traditional toad symbolism and was carved to represent positive energy. Liu He hoped for the toad’s protection and assistance in achieving immortality. This consistency between the artistic content and external form of the jade seal reflects Liu He’s and the jade carver’s good aesthetic sensibilities and artistic conceptual abilities.

From the Han seals discovered in the Haihunhou tomb, researchers found that can see that Han seals became exemplary for later seal engraving art not only because they symbolized social status but also because they embodied rich and diverse cultural meanings.

4.2.2 Dragon Pattern

“Patterns,” also known as motifs or decorations, refer to the collective term for decorative designs. Dragon patterns represent an artistic summary and abstraction of the “dragon” image, evolving over history and gradually taking on specific forms. During the Shang Dynasty, the concept of the “dragon” already had its own imagery,

typically characterized by having horns, a mouth, feet, and a curved body. Dragon patterns originated in the Neolithic period and developed through various dynasties such as Qin, Han, Tang, Song, Ming, and Qing. Their evolution exhibits a transition from simplicity to complexity, from fragmentation to unity, and from complexity to simplicity. Alongside this evolution, people's perceptions and ideas about dragon patterns subtly changed.

Among the decorative motifs found in the artifacts unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb, dragon patterns occupy the highest proportion. Although the Han Dynasty was no longer the peak period for bronze development, exquisitely designed bronze objects with dragon motifs continued to emerge. The dragon-shaped bronze artifacts from the Haihunhou's tomb exhibit novel forms and styles not seen in previous generations. The artistic style of Han Dynasty bronze shifted from the heavy, primitive, and mysterious style to a refined and practical lifestyle. The minimalist dragon patterns adorned bronze objects from the Haihunhou's tomb, such as the dragon-shaped bronze hooks and gold-inlaid bronze items. This contrast with the scarcity of dragon patterns in everyday objects of the past highlights the gradual transformation of the dragon from an ancient totem and divine symbol to a practical decorative motif. This shift represents a breakthrough in the artistic style of Han Dynasty craftsmanship and an innovative application of dragon patterns. Additionally, dragon motifs were commonly used on jade artifacts unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb during the Han Dynasty. These motifs appeared not only in various shapes but also employed diverse carving techniques, including line-carved dragon patterns and hollowed-out dragon motifs. The rich diversity of dragon imagery on different objects and in various forms adds vibrancy to the jade artifacts discovered in the Haihunhou's tomb.

The dragon, one of the Four Mythical Creatures, is also a quintessential symbol of Chinese civilization. During the long feudal era, the dragon's image was exclusively associated with feudal emperors, symbolizing supreme authority and representing the emperor's dignity and power. Behind it lies people's aspirations for beauty, auspiciousness, and protection against evil.

During the mid-Western Han Dynasty, the Hundred Schools of Thought were abolished, and Confucianism was exclusively revered. In the cultural context where Confucian thought gradually became deified, the dragon's image also acquired divine significance and was seen as a symbol of rulers consolidating their power. In the Han Dynasty, with its socially diverse population, various dragon images and legends gradually coalesced. Dragon motifs evolved from the whimsical and varied designs of the Warring States period to more dynamic and flexible forms. In the tomb of the Haihunhou, two main types of dragon motifs are prominent: Serpentine Dragon Motifs, One is a dragons have snake-like bodies, simple designs, and undulating forms. They are often combined with other mythical creatures such as the White Tiger, Vermilion Bird, and Black Tortoise to create a series of patterns or paired with another dragon. The other is Beast-Form Dragon Motifs. These dragons typically have four limbs and claws. Their heads are raised, eyes prominent, and bodies resemble land animals. The elongated limbs emphasize the visual characteristics of terrestrial creatures, conveying a sense of power and majesty.

As for the research on dragon motifs, this study focuses on eight artworks, including: Three bronze“当卢” (dāng lú) with inlaid mythical beast motifs, A jade sword with intricate dragon patterns. A jade Dragon-Phoenix-Chimera-Tiger Pattern Thumb Ring, A stone button with dragon motifs in the form of walking beasts, A bronze hook with dragon design, A jade ornament shaped like a dragon. Based on discussions among experts and scholars, the semantic units are analyzed from the perspectives of artistic function, decorative craftsmanship, and aesthetics. The summarized content is as follows:

4.2.2.1 Three bronze“DangLu” with inlaid mythical beast motifs

“交龙穿璧” refers to three exquisite bronze “当卢” (dāng lú) pieces with intricate gold-inlaid designs. These artifacts were unearthed from the tomb of Liu He, the Haihunhou, during the Western Han Dynasty (approximately 202 BCE to 8 CE). Let's delve into the details of these remarkable pieces:

The term “当卢” (dāng lú) originally referred to an ornament attached to a horse’s headgear. It adorned the junction between the horse’s noseband and browband, specifically on the upper part of the horse’s forehead. Initially, “当卢” served a practical purpose—to protect the horse’s face. However, as societal needs evolved, horse-drawn vehicles and their accessories became symbols of status and wealth. The craftsmanship of “当卢” improved over time, resulting in exquisite designs and aesthetic value. The Haihunhou tomb yielded over 80 “当卢” artifacts, each with unique shapes (such as circular, leaf-shaped, or elongated). Among them, three bronze “当卢” stand out as masterpieces. These three bronze “当卢” pieces are categorized as “长叶形” (cháng yè xíng), meaning they have a wide upper part and a narrower lower part. The intricate designs feature the theme of the “Four Divine Beasts” (四神): The uppermost section depicts a running white tiger. Below that, intertwined azure dragons take center stage, with a phoenix grasping a jade ornament in its beak. The dynamic composition also includes a leaping fish. The third section showcases a mythical bird (鸾鸟) standing and looking back. Cloud motifs connect the various design elements, reflecting the cosmological and philosophical views of the Han Dynasty, emphasizing harmony among heaven, earth, and humanity, as well as the pursuit of longevity. These bronze “当卢” pieces not only serve as valuable historical artifacts but also offer inspiration for contemporary and future design. Their intricate craftsmanship and symbolism continue to captivate us today.

The theme of the ‘Four Deities’ was widely used during the Han Dynasty. Most commonly, it appeared in decorative patterns on roof tiles and bronze mirrors as burial items. The most typical representation of the Four Deities pattern is found on Western Han roof tiles. These tiles feature the patterns of the Azure Dragon (青龙), White Tiger (白虎), Vermilion Bird (朱雀), and Black Tortoise (玄武), each imprinted on one of the four tiles. This arrangement not only indicated cardinal directions but also carried the symbolic meaning of warding off evil and protecting the home.

In a conversation with Professor Liu Juan, it was revealed that three bronze “当卢” (dāng lú) (a type of ritual vessel) unearthed from the Haihunhou’s tomb

ingeniously combined the Four Deities pattern in different compositions. These “当卢” (dāng lú) were adorned with intricate gold-inlaid carvings, arranged compactly and orderly. Despite the passage of over two thousand years, their craftsmanship remains remarkable. The three bronze “当卢” (dāng lú) share a high degree of similarity in their depiction of the Four Deities as the central theme. Smooth cloud motifs surround the deities, creating a cohesive visual narrative across the three vessels. The surface of these three gold-inlaid “当卢” (dāng lú) features a pair of intertwined dragons piercing through walls. The dragons exhibit dynamic postures, with coiled bodies leaping upward. Their heads are raised, eyes prominent, and whiskers naturally flowing. Their open mouths evoke the imagery of swallowing clouds and exhaling mist. The dragon bodies resemble serpents, with elongated torsos and gently undulating tails. Elegant cloud patterns adorn the sides, adding to the overall visual appeal. These dragons exude both strength and dignity. The overall composition of the cross-shaped dragon motifs follows an “S” curve, achieving left-right symmetry. The two dragons appear to surge and roll along the central axis of the composition. Their sinuous bodies flow gracefully, with rounded contours. Surrounding cloud motifs resemble dragon claws and tails, creating a sense of movement within the clouds. The “S” shape conveys a stable visual impression, while the orderly arrangement adds a sense of harmony. The resulting dynamic visual scene balances stillness and motion, mysterious dragon symbolism, and lively vitality.

The saying from the *Huainanzi* (淮南子·天文训) states, ‘Among celestial beings, none is more esteemed than the mouth of the Azure Dragon.’ Given that the Azure Dragon is the foremost among the Four Deities, its prominence in the visual layout of Four Deities patterns is not surprising. The overall symmetry and harmony of the Azure Dragon motif allow viewers to immediately connect it to the broader theme of the Four Deities, effectively conveying the intended message (Qian & Juan, 2021).



FIGURE 29 Explanation of the Danglu pattern displayed

Source: Photographed by the Author



FIGURE 30 Danglu 1

Source: Photographed by the Author

“当卢” (dāng lú) 1: The upper part features swirling cloud patterns; in the middle, there are two intertwined dragons. At the point where the dragons intersect, there is a space above them with a tiger-shaped auspicious beast. The tiger is slightly smaller than the dragon in Danglu A. Additionally, there is a small mountain-shaped symbol in this area. Below the intersecting dragons, there is a phoenix bird with wings

spread and both feet apart, creating a dynamic and energetic pose. At the very bottom, there is a majestic-looking mythical bird (the “luan”) with finely detailed cloud motifs.



FIGURE 31 Danglu 2

Source: Photographed by the Author

“当卢” (dāng lú)²: The upper part depicts a phoenix bird, similar in dynamic pose to the one in Danglu 28. However, this phoenix is larger in size, and its mouth holds a prominent round bead. The cloud patterns around it are denser. Below the phoenix, there is a white tiger, maintaining a consistent form. In the middle-lower section, researchers see the intertwined dragons again, along with a mountain-shaped symbol. At the bottom, there is another luan bird, although smaller in size, with similar auxiliary motifs as the other two Danglu pieces.



FIGURE 32 Danglu 3

Source: Photographed by the Author

“当卢” (dāng lú)³: The upper part features a phoenix bird with wings spread and feet lifted, similar to the previous depictions. Notably, this phoenix also holds a round bead in its mouth. In the middle, there are intricately intertwined dragons. The intersection of the dragon bodies divides the image into four spaces. Between the dragon heads, there is a feathered figure (possibly a deity). Next, researchers see a tiger-shaped auspicious beast, followed by a qilin. Finally, a bird-like creature stands on the tails of the intertwined dragons. Below the dragons, there is a turtle-like creature. Apart from minimal cloud-like decorations at the top, there are no other auxiliary motifs.

These three bronze “当卢” (dāng lú) images are rich in content. Their hierarchical structure can be roughly categorized into three aspects: First, Depictions of astronomical, geographical, and natural landscapes, including the sun, moon, mountains, and clouds. Second, Representations of auspicious mythical creatures, such as dragons, tigers, phoenixes, turtles, fish, golden crows, and toads. Third, Portrayals of divine or mythological figures, such as the feathered person (possibly a deity).

According to a conversation with Professor Jia Xizeng from the Academy of Fine Arts at Tsinghua University, in ancient times, the land of China was

inhabited by various tribes and clans. These tribes often engaged in conflicts, but over time, they gradually merged. To achieve unity and harmony among these tribes, leaders combined the animal totems from each tribe based on their totem beliefs. The dragon, as researchers know it today, emerged during this process. It incorporated typical features from animals such as tigers, snakes, fish, turtles, and deer, resulting in its ever-evolving form. During the Shang Dynasty, the dragon appeared on various bronze artifacts in its fierce and terrifying mythical beast form. By the Spring and Autumn period, dragon motifs adorned ritual and musical instruments. In the Han Dynasty, when the theory of Yin and Yang and the Five Elements gained prominence, the dragon became a common belief among the Han ethnic group, especially as people aspired to ascend to immortality.

The origins of visual art in China date back even earlier. While people often attribute the beginning of painting and calligraphy to Fuxi's divination diagrams and Cangjie's character creation, there were earlier examples, such as the fish-patterned pottery from Banpo and the bird-patterned bone utensils from Hemudu. Later, researchers see the emergence of the taotie motif on bronze vessels and the intricate hunting and battle scenes depicted on bronze vessels during the Qin and Han periods. Carving and painting expanded beyond decorative use on bronze, pottery, lacquerware, and textiles to include stone and brick images. During this time, professional specialization became evident. According to Ge Hong's "Miscellaneous Records of the Western Capital," Han artists like Mao Yanshou from Duling excelled in realistic human figures, while others specialized in birds, animals, or coloring. The Han period also saw a variety of craftsmen involved in religious markets, producing stone materials for Han paintings and providing related patterns and specialized graphic carving services.

Historically, the art and craftworks of any era reflect the spirit of their time and serve practical purposes. The images found in the tomb of Haihunhou during the Western Han period undoubtedly reflect the contemporary understanding of

relationships between humans and nature, carrying profound cultural and philosophical significance (Shizhu & Yusheng, 2021).

4.2.2.2 Líwén - Líwén Yùjiàn Yún (璃纹-璃纹玉剑璏)

Líwén Yùjiàn Yún (璃纹-璃纹玉剑璏) is a type of jade sword ornament. In terms of appearance, a jade sword ornament is a decorative item made of jade, consisting of four main parts: the top, upper section, middle upper section, and end. The Líwén Yùjiàn Yún is located in the middle upper section (see Figure 33).

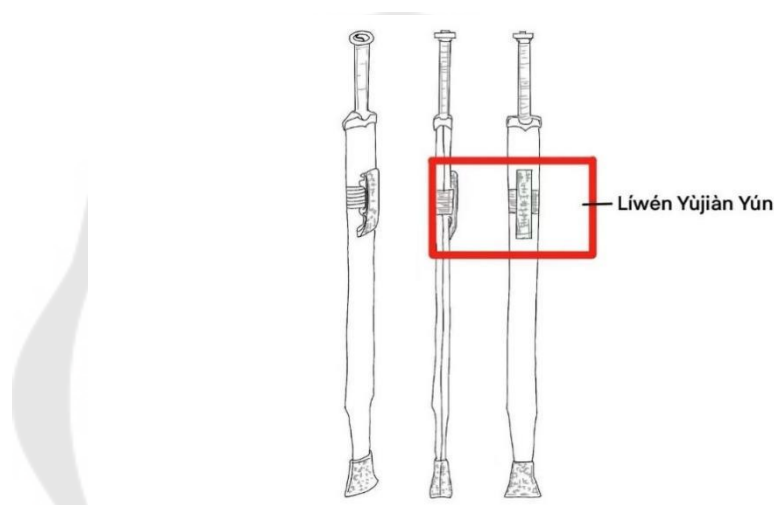


FIGURE 33 Jade Sword Ornament Diagram

Source: Drawing by the Author

In Liu He's tomb, the length of the sword hilt (剑璏) varies from 4.7 cm to 13.2 cm, with most being over 7 cm. The width of the face ranges from 0.8 cm to 2 cm, and overall, they are elongated in shape. This design likely considers the need for the sword to be parallel to the scabbard during practical use, aiming for proportional symmetry and aesthetic appeal by matching the hilt length with that of the scabbard.

The decorative patterns on the sword hilt in Liu He's tomb are exquisite (see Figure 34). On the front side, three chisels (螭) of different sizes are carved. Among them, a small chisel faces the large one, while another small chisel bites the tail of the large chisel, causing it to open its mouth, perhaps in pain. The large chisel has an "S"

shaped body resembling a snake, with a round head, sharp teeth, four limbs, and a long, smooth, undulating dragon tail. Both “small chisels” are in a “C” shape, crawling with short tails, exuding dynamic energy and vitality. This combination not only conveys the solemnity of the chisels but also highlights their courage and fearlessness. It aligns with Professor Cai Baoquan’s description of “the school of soaring eagles, the warriors of chisels!” and the motivation to inspire soldiers to fear no formidable enemies and fight bravely on the battlefield. Regardless of the specific symbolism behind these designs, this composition achieves a diverse visual effect, representing progress and development in the application of dragon motifs in sword ornamentation.



FIGURE 34 Líwén Yùjiàn Yún

Source: Photographed by the Author

4.2.2.3 The Dragon-Phoenix-Chimera-Tiger Pattern Thumb Ring

The “龙凤螭虎纹鞞形佩” (Dragon-Phoenix-Chimera-Tiger Pattern Thumb Ring) is a fascinating piece of ancient Chinese jade ornament (see Figure 35). Let’s delve into its history and symbolism.



FIGURE 35 The dragon and phoenix chilong-patterned waist pendant

Source: Institute of Archaeology and Cultural Relics of Jiangxi Province, Department of History, Xiamen University. (2018). Jade unearthed from the Haihunhou tomb in Xihan, Nanchang, Jiangxi, p.65.

The term “鞞” (shè) refers to a protective device worn on the thumb during archery in ancient times. It prevented the bowstring from causing abrasions to the thumb during the release process. The shape of these thumb rings evolved over time. Initially, they were practical tools made from materials like animal hide or wood, used by archers in war or hunting. During the Shang Dynasty, people carved thumb rings from jade, creating what researchers now call “形玉” (shapely jade). These jade thumb rings had a horizontal groove on the back to accommodate the bowstring, while the front featured shallow relief carvings, often depicting animal faces. They also had pairs of parallel holes near the lower edge, allowing them to be tied to the wrist. These early thumb rings served both practical and status-symbol purposes, emphasizing the wearer's dignity. As a product of animism and nature worship, the animal motifs on these thumb rings reflected reverence for the power of wild creatures. The belief that all things were interconnected led to the depiction of animal faces, symbolizing the wearer's desire for the same fierce strength possessed by animals. During the late

Warring States period, thumb rings coexisted with other jade forms. However, by the Western Han Dynasty, they had transitioned entirely into decorative pieces, no longer suitable for wearing on the thumb but rather around the waist. The circular hole in the center remained a consistent feature.

One remarkable example is the “龙凤螭虎纹鞞形佩” excavated from the tomb of the Haihunhou. This elliptical jade piece features intricate openwork carvings. The main body resembles a fruit pit, with a pointed protrusion at the top and a circular hole drilled slightly above the center. The front surface is subtly convex, resembling a cross-sectional view. On either side of the main body, there are additional carvings. The upper right section depicts a phoenix, while the lower part features a chimera (a mythical creature combining dragon and tiger elements). The elliptical side showcases flowing cloud patterns, and the left side is divided into two sections. The overall design incorporates dragon, phoenix, and chimera motifs. Professor Li Yinglong from Jiangxi University of Science and Technology emphasizes the aesthetic significance of these additional decorations, particularly the dragon, phoenix, and chimera motifs.

In summary, researchers found that the “龙凤螭虎纹鞞形佩” represents a blend of ancient craftsmanship, symbolism, and artistic expression, making it a captivating artifact from China’s rich cultural heritage.

According to legend, the dragon has nine offspring, and the one without horns is called the “panchi.” In the Book of Han, Sima Xiangru mentioned, “The red chilong is a female dragon.” From the Warring States period onward, jade pendants frequently featured a combination of dragon and chilong decorations. In ancient myths and legends, dragons lived in water, could become invisible, and had the ability to transform. During spring, they could ascend to the sky, while in autumn, they could dive back into the depths of water. As water deities, dragons controlled water, which in turn gave them the power to nurture all living things. The natural occurrence of pearls in oysters and the legend of mermaids shedding tears that turned into pearls also highlight the initial connection between pearls and water. Under this water-related context, the mythical imagery of dragons and pearls merged into a single concept: the “pearl”

expelled by the dragon represented the essence of water's life-generating superpower. The dragon capable of spitting out the "water essence pearl" was a divine creature with the ability to nurture all things. The dragon's pearl-spitting ability was abstracted into the chilong pattern on the waist pendant, carved on the right side following the Han tradition of honoring the right side. This symbolized both the wearer's noble status and the continuous life force provided by the chilong pattern.

Han dynasty jade artifacts featured a rich variety of decorative patterns, with the most representative being the pearl-spitting dragon pattern, the chilong pattern, and the phoenix pattern. The cloud and qi (vital energy) pattern served as an auxiliary decoration, often appearing alongside dragon, chilong, and phoenix motifs. It served two main purposes: First, the "cloud" attribute of the cloud and qi pattern. By using this pattern, the overall composition of the waist pendant depicted mythical creatures partially obscured within a sea of clouds, emphasizing the divine attributes of dragons, chilongs, and phoenixes. Second, the "qi" attribute of the cloud and qi pattern. The Han people believed that the fundamental essence of all things in the world was "qi," and mythical creatures were no exception. The presence of "qi" indicated that dragons, chilongs, and phoenixes were living beings, existing in reality rather than solely in the realm of imagination. For the Han people, possessing a waist pendant meant receiving the protection of these divine creatures, and this protection was tangible.

The Han dynasty's imperial nobility envisioned an ideal world filled with immortals and mythical beasts. Jade artisans expressed this through their ingenious and unique craftsmanship. The intertwining lines, structures, and proportions of various decorative elements broke free from traditional constraints, resulting in a diverse yet harmonious style. Through waist pendants, researchers can explore the Han dynasty's hierarchical system of jade ornaments and gain insight into the spiritual beliefs and daily lives of the nobility. The waist pendant exemplifies the fusion of the Han dynasty's unique concept of ascending to immortality and earthly reality. It reflects people's strong desire for posthumous transcendence and their hope for all things to go smoothly. The rise of divination and esoteric theology during the Han dynasty influenced the distinctive

decorative style found in attached ornamentation. This style, rich in charm, allowed Han nobles to find spiritual enjoyment and aesthetic satisfaction.

4.2.2.4 Dragon-shaped stone toggles, dragon-shaped bronze curtain hooks, and dragon-shaped jade ornaments.

In the tomb of the Haihunhou, there were animal-shaped dragon patterns with quadrupedal dragon motifs—dragon-shaped stone toggles, dragon-shaped bronze curtain hooks, and dragon-shaped jade ornaments. Taking the dragon-shaped stone toggle as an example (Figure 36), when viewed from the side, it has a dragon-beast form. The dragon's head is raised, holding a bright pearl in its mouth, with an expressive and lively expression. The entire dragon's body forms an 'S' shape. The dragon's body is compact, resembling a land animal, with limbs resembling animal claws. Its three claws are slightly bent, and it has a belly. The overall design is robust and exudes a powerful aura.



FIGURE 36 Beast-shaped Dragon Motifs - Dragon-Form Stone Lid Knobs

Source: Photographed by the Author

Unlike the fierce and imposing dragon motifs of later periods, the dragon motifs from this era exhibit a gentle yet vigorous demeanor. They have several distinctive features: First, Calm Facial Expression, these dragon motifs lack the mysterious fierceness often associated with dragons, but instead convey confidence

and vitality. Second, Simplified Design, they are characterized by a simple design without whiskers or scales on their bodies. Third, Minimal Horns, the dragon heads in this style lack prominent horns or have very small ones. These features imbue the dragon motifs from the Haihunhou's tomb with an uplifting essence.

Dragon motifs were a significant identifying feature of the Western Han the Haihunhou's tomb. By the Western Han period, the form of these dragon motifs had become well-established, and their decorative patterns had gradually stabilized. The dragon motifs from the Haihunhou's tomb can be categorized into two main types: beast-shaped and serpent-shaped. The beast-shaped dragon motifs prominently feature animals such as tigers and horses. Additionally, they exhibit short bodies, long necks, and slender tails. The heads, necks, torsos, and tails are all clearly defined. In contrast, the serpent-shaped dragon motifs have elongated, snake-like bodies with long necks and often appear in coiled or twisted forms.

Researchers found that the distinguishing feature of Han dynasty dragon motifs lies in their animalistic form. The dragon motifs from the Haihunhou's tomb closely resemble the shape of tigers. Most of these dragon motifs have distinct four claws and limbs, with clear differentiation between the neck and body. Their elongated bodies exude strength and vitality, and their postures and movements are powerful and graceful. Almost animal-like, they evoke a sense of majesty and symbolize strength, serving as protective talismans.

This stands in contrast to the intricate and elaborate dragon motifs seen in later periods after the Han dynasty. For instance, researchers found that the dragon-shaped bronze curtain hooks unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb (Figure 37) bear a striking resemblance to tiger-shaped bronze curtain hooks. They appear as if a tiger is turning its head to look back. With muscular limbs, distinct body structures, and rich layering, these dragon motifs uniquely embody the bold and vigorous characteristics of the Western Han Haihunhou's tomb.



FIGURE 37 Bronze Dragon-Shaped Curtain Hook

Source: Photographed by the Author

Researchers found that the dragon motifs unearthed from the tomb of Haihunhou exhibit various forms, with some resembling mythical beasts and others featuring dragon heads and serpent bodies. This diversity is due to the Han Dynasty being a period of dragon motif evolution, where it inherited certain characteristics from the Warring States period and added innovative elements. The coiled dragon pattern on jade ornaments (as shown in Figure 38) represents a transitional style during this evolutionary phase. The serpent bodies found in the Western Han Haihunhou tomb exhibit elegant shapes, with curves, coils, and elongated forms. Compared to previous generations, their designs are more refined, and the intricate details are skillfully executed.

These dragon-shaped jade ornaments retain the stylistic features of Warring States dragon motifs, boasting a strong three-dimensional effect and raised patterns. The sinuous “S”-shaped bodies of the serpents are particularly graceful, with downward-curved wings and scales that stand out. The dragon’s head and serpent tail

seamlessly merge, emphasizing the snake-like form. Notably, the serpentine connection to dragons stems from ancient beliefs that snakes were mysterious and awe-inspiring creatures, leading them to be revered as divine beings. Among the bronze artifacts discovered in the Haihunhou's tomb, the "Dan Ge" (a bronze vessel with gold inlay) features intersecting dragon motifs. These dragons lack claws, and their sinuous bodies are covered in patterns reminiscent of snake scales. The intertwined dance of these two beautiful serpents creates a rhythmic and dynamic composition, showcasing exquisite attention to detail.



FIGURE 38 The jade ornament with coiled dragon patterns

Source: Photographed by the Author

Dragon patterns have appeared in the creative activities of our ancestors. Therefore, the generation and development of dragon patterns undoubtedly contain profound historical and cultural connotations. Starting from the totem worship of the Neolithic era, ancient people hoped to receive protection from dragons, thus imbuing dragons with auspicious symbolism. Over time, as society evolved and changed, the meaning of dragon patterns became even richer, and their symbolic significance gradually strengthened and improved. The dragon patterns found on the Haihunhou's tomb also carry evident historical significance amidst the tides of time.

4.2.2.5 Summary

Dragon patterns hold a significant place in traditional Chinese art. They are diverse in type and form, closely tied to the environment and religious beliefs of ancient people. These patterns carry both practical and idealistic meanings, symbolizing hope for a better future and the harmonious integration of reality and ideals. The dragon motifs found on the Haihunhou's tomb exemplify the strong and positive aspirations of the real world.

Researchers found that the dragon symbols on the Haihunhou's tomb reflect a minimalist aesthetic. During the early Western Han period (202 BCE–141 BCE), the ruling class embraced the philosophy of simplicity, influenced by the Huang-Lao school of thought. This shift in social aesthetics gave Han dynasty dragon patterns a distinct character. Artistic creations in ornamentation were based on the Qin-Chu culture, emphasizing simplicity and elegance. The Haihunhou's tomb's dragon patterns, with their natural and unadorned essence, embody the wisdom of Daoism. For instance, the intricately carved jade pendant featuring intertwined dragon, phoenix, and tiger motifs harmoniously represents the Daoist concept of yin and yang. The bold, dynamic lines and exquisite craftsmanship evoke the extraordinary imagination of ancient artisans, providing aesthetic enjoyment.

The rapid advancement of bronze casting technology during the Han dynasty greatly influenced the innovation of dragon patterns on both bronze and jade artifacts. The dragon motifs on bronze objects exhibit purity and elegance, enhancing the dignity of these vessels. Meanwhile, the dragon decorations on jade artifacts carry rich cultural and religious connotations from ancient agrarian civilization. Not only are they exquisitely crafted, but they also hold high aesthetic value. The artifacts unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb showcase exceptional artistic expression, aesthetic sensibility, and decorative design, representing the pinnacle of Chinese art and culture during the Western Han period.

Throughout history, dragon patterns have played a crucial role in the evolution and continuity of Chinese decorative arts. They remain highly regarded by

contemporary designers. The unique design sensibility of the Haihunhou's tomb's dragon patterns continues to infuse vitality into modern artistic creations. These patterns not only reflect ancient aesthetic ideals but also inspire new possibilities in today's society.

4.2.3 Musical instrument – Chimes (BianZhong)



FIGURE 39 Chimes on display at the Haihunhou Museum

Source: Photographed by the Author

The BianZhong (编钟) is a set of bells, an ancient Chinese musical instrument. These bells (see Figure 39) were unearthed from the tomb of Haihunhou in China. The tomb belonged to Liu He (刘贺), the Haihunhou. Two sets of Chimes were unearthed from the Haihunhou tomb, both of which were single-layered and suspended. The BianZhong consists of 24 pieces, and their internal structures are well-preserved. Among them, 14 are 钮钟 (Niu Zhong), which were still hanging on the frame when discovered. The 钮钟 come in different sizes and are arranged in an orderly and uniform manner. The painted bell frames are exquisitely decorated with intricate patterns and adorned with square-shaped bronze ornaments. All 14 钮钟 feature dragon motifs.

Additionally, there are 10 甬钟 (Yong Zhong), placed in a relatively concentrated position, decorated with gilded dragon patterns and coiled serpent motifs(Yao, 2021).

In this chapter, five different patterns of BianZhong will be studied, including: Gilded dragon pattern bronze Niu Zhong bells, Dragon pattern bronze Niu Zhong bells, Bronze Yong Zhong bells, Bronze Yong Zhong bells with geometric patterns, Yong Zhong bells with coiled serpent motifs. These ancient bells hold significant cultural and historical value, and their study provides insights into ancient Chinese music and craftsmanship. Based on discussions among experts and scholars, researchers have analyzed the semantic units from the perspectives of artistic functionality, decorative craftsmanship, and aesthetics. The summarized content is as follows:

4.2.3.1 Niu Zhong Bells

In March 2015, a set of chime bells (see Figure 40) was unearthed from the tomb of Haihunhou, Liu He, in China. These chime bells were meticulously arranged, hanging in size order on a wooden frame. The physical condition of these bells was remarkably well-preserved, and the wooden frames were adorned with colorful decorations at both ends. This set of chime bells consists of 14 pieces. The largest bell measures 27.0 centimeters in height, 17.5 centimeters in width, and has a knob height of 7.1 centimeters. The smallest bell stands at 13.0 centimeters in height, 7.5 centimeters in width, and has a knob height of 4.0 centimeters. Based on their shape and decorations, they can be categorized into two styles. These chime bells provide valuable insights into the musical and cultural practices of the Western Han period.



FIGURE 40 The Haihunhou tomb Niu Bells panorama

Source: Wang Junlei and Xu Changqing. (2017). *The Haihunhou tomb music artifacts for the first time to visit the main points*, p. 65.

come in two types. One of them is a gilded bronze bell with dragon motifs (see Figure 41), and there are a total of 13 such bells. These button bells are exquisitely crafted and beautifully made. The bell body has a tile-like shape, while the button is a long circular loop that is flat, beveled, and slightly bulging in the middle. On either side of the button, there are four sets of cone-shaped button pieces, with nine pieces in each set arranged in three rows and separated by raised bars. The central part of the seal bears cloud and dragon patterns, along with spiral-shaped blunt cone pieces. The drum section of the bell features a group of dragon head patterns, and the main drum is adorned with mushroom motifs as performance symbols. Both the dance section and the button section lack decoration. The interior walls of the bell chamber reveal sound beams, and the carving marks are clear. These 13 gilded button bells share the same decorative pattern, with exquisite, gilded dragon motifs on their surfaces, all featuring gold groove lines. The gilded decoration on the front is clear, while the gilding on the back has partially worn off due to damage. Regardless of size, they belong to the same set of Niu Zhong Bells.



FIGURE 41 Gilded Bronze Dragon-Patterned Niu Zhong Bells

Source: Photographed by the Author

The second type is the dragon-patterned gilded bronze Niu Zhong bells (Figure 42). It is a single piece and is the smallest among them. Its surface has not been gilded. This bell is well-preserved and its appearance is similar to the other 13 Niu Zhong bells. The knob (niu) is in the form of a long loop, and the body of the bell resembles overlapping roof tiles, with curved sides. There are a total of 4 sets of clappers (zheng) on both sides, arranged in a conical shape and colored milky white. Each set consists of 9 pieces, divided into 3 rows, with cloud and dragon patterns decorating the central section. Inside the bell cavity, one can observe the sound beams (yin liang), which are covered in carved marks, although their shape differs somewhat from traditional bells. This gilded bronze bell is part of the collection at the Nanchang Han Dynasty the Haihunhou's Site Museum. It showcases intricate craftsmanship and provides valuable insights into ancient music and ritual practices during the Western Han period.



FIGURE 42 Dragon pattern bronze Niu Zhong Bells

Source: The Haihunhou Site Museum of the Han Dynasty, Nanchang. (2010). *The Golden Haihunhou: History and Culture of the Haihunhou Kingdom of the Han Dynasty*, p135.

4.2.3.2 Yong Zhong Bells

A set of ten Yong Zhong bells were cast, all of which are hewa-shaped and roughly similar to the Niu Zhong bells. On the surface of the bells, there are cylindrical protrusions with spirals and spiral insect decorations. The bell bodies have curved structures on both sides, giving them a full appearance. Unlike the Niu Zhong bells, the Yong Zhong bells have a shape closer to a cone. Inside the bell chamber, square sound ridges can be seen, and the clappers bear varying inscriptions, which record important information about the Yong Zhong bells. Although the overall shape of several Yong Zhong bells is consistent, their decorative patterns are not uniform. Based on the surface decorations, this set of Yong Zhong bells appears to be assembled from different groups of bells, and the ten bells can be divided into three styles.

The first style consists of five bronze Yong Zhong bells, varying in size, all unearthed within the collapsed range of the bell frame. The largest one measures 73.0 cm in height and 31.5 cm in belly diameter, while the smallest one is 55.8 cm tall with a belly diameter of 22.5 cm. The bell body shape is similar to the dragon-patterned

Yong Zhong bells mentioned earlier, but the decorative patterns differ. They can be categorized into two types: geometric pattern Yong Zhong (Figure 43), with three bells featuring triangular patterns in the middle section of the bell, filled with rosette and floral motifs. The inscriptions, bands, clappers, and dance sections are adorned with fully patterned rhombus designs. The second type is the coiled dragon pattern Yong Zhong (Figure 44), represented by two bells with spiral-shaped clappers. In the middle section of the bell, there are triangular patterns filled with floral motifs, and the inscriptions, bands, clappers, and dance sections feature coiled dragon designs.



FIGURE 43 Bronze Yong Zhong Bells with geometric patterns

Source: The Haihunhou Site Museum of the Han Dynasty, Nanchang. (2010). The Golden Haihunhou: History and Culture of the Haihunhou Kingdom of the Han Dynasty, p136.



FIGURE 44 Yong Zhong Bells with coiled serpent motifs

Source: The Haihunhou Site Museum of the Han Dynasty, Nanchang. (2010). *The Golden Haihunhou: History and Culture of the Haihunhou State of the Han Dynasty*, p.138.

Five bells have inscriptions on different parts of their bodies (see Figure 45). The content relates to the weight of each bell and the names of the musical notes 'Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi, Yu.' The inscriptions are roughly carved, and the handwriting is not very neat, likely done by different people during different periods. The largest bell, known as the Yong Zhong bell, has an inscription indicating a weight of 110 jin (a Chinese unit of weight), and there is also the character 'East' in the dancing section. The second bell is inscribed with '105 jin' and has the character 'Gong' on the reverse side. The third bell is labeled '86 jin.' The fourth bell simply states '5 jin.' As for the fifth bell, the inscription below it reads 'First corner of the Western Path, weight □ jin'(Qinglei & Changqing, 2017). From the text above, researchers can deduce four pieces of information: The first part refers to the Eastern Path and the Western Path. The first, second, and third bells belong to the Eastern Path, while the fourth and fifth bells belong to the Western Path. The second part mentions the five musical notes (Gong, Shang, Jiao, Zhi, Yu). Among the five bells observed, the missing note is "Zhi." The first, second, third, and fourth bells do not have particularly noticeable inscriptions, requiring

further analysis and research. The fourth part provides information about the weight of the bells.



FIGURE 45 Inscriptions on bronze Yong Bells

Source: The Haihunhou Site Museum of the Han Dynasty, Nanchang. (2010). *The Golden Haihunhou: History and Culture of the Haihunhou Kingdom of the Han Dynasty*, p.143.

The second style is a gilt-bronze yong bell (Figure 45). There were a total of 4 of these bells unearthed, with 3 found within the fallen range of the Bian Niu bell frame and 1 discovered on an Oule chariot. The largest bell measures 52.0 centimeters in height and 21.3 centimeters in diameter at the widest point, while the smallest one is 38.5 centimeters tall with a belly diameter of 17.5 centimeters. The bell body has a flattened convex shape, with milled edges that taper inward, giving it a stout and rounded appearance. The mouth curves gracefully, featuring an angular inner lip. The interior is divided by thick raised lines into three sections: the seal, drum, and clapper areas. The solid bamboo-shaped yong (handle) has a folded edge at the upper end and a prominent wide band at the lower end. On top of the yong, there is a spiral motif resembling a mythical creature called a “chi.” The lower part of the spiral forms the eyes of the chi. The clapper section has four sets of nine raised knobs arranged in three rows, separated by seal bands. These knobs resemble nipples and are finely incised with linear patterns. The decorative patterns on the bell include gilded twisted cords

along the sides, as well as transformed dragon motifs on the dance, clapper, and seal bands. The drum section features symmetrically arranged gilded dragon heads. The gilded designs on the front are clear, while the back has some partial loss of decoration. This style of yong bell shares similar decorative patterns and style with the Bian Niu bells, suggesting that they were likely designed and cast by the same workshop during the same period.



FIGURE 46 Gilded dragon pattern bronze Yong Zhong Bells

Source: The Haihunhou Site Museum of the Han Dynasty, Nanchang. (2010). *The Golden Haihunhou: History and Culture of the Haihunhou Kingdom of the Han Dynasty*, p.145.

The third style is a type of ancient bronze bell known as a “Panlong” pattern bronze Yong Zhong bell (Figure 47). These Yong Zhong bells were discovered alongside three gilded dragon-pattern Yong Zhong bells in the collapsed area of a bell frame. They likely belonged to a complete set of chime bells. The dimensions of this particular bell are 46.5 centimeters in height and 20.4 centimeters in diameter. Its shape and decorative motifs are similar to the previously mentioned Yong Zhong bells. The bell

features a spiral-shaped nipple, and its body is adorned with coiled dragon patterns. Unfortunately, there are no inscriptions on it.



FIGURE 47 Bronze Yong Zhong Bells with coiled serpent motifs

Source: The Haihunhou Site Museum of the Han Dynasty, Nanchang. (2010). *The Golden Haihunhou: History and Culture of the Haihunhou Kingdom of the Han Dynasty*, p.146.

4.2.3.3 Summary

The chime bells unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb represent a typical example of bronze musical bells from the Western Han period, showcasing the highest level of bell casting during that time. Researchers found that upon examination of their external design and internal structure, it is evident that the Western Han chime bells have undergone significant improvements compared to their pre-Qin counterparts. These changes primarily relate to their shape, decorative patterns, and tuning methods.

Firstly, in terms of shape, the Western Han bells have shorter bell chambers but more spacious interiors, with a rounded profile. In contrast, the pre-Qin bells (known as "mei") were cylindrical, while the Han chime bells often featured spiral,

fingerprint-like, and flat shapes. Secondly, regarding decorative patterns, Western Han chime bells commonly display designs such as rice grain patterns, square grid patterns, dragon-cloud motifs, and geometric patterns. The dance sections of the bells are usually plain without any decorative texture. Notably, square grid rice grain patterns and mat patterns emerged as new types during the early Han period, while dragon and cloud motifs continued the stylistic tradition from the pre-Qin era. Lastly, the tuning techniques underwent changes in the Western Han period, particularly in how the inner walls of the bell chambers were adjusted. During the pre-Qin era, chime bells were typically tuned by filling the inner walls, and some even used elongated or raised sound sources for further tuning. The resulting marks from filing were relatively subtle. However, in the Western Han period, chime bells generally adopted sound beams for tuning, achieved through precise engraving within the bell chamber. These densely engraved marks differ significantly from the pre-Qin approach. Early Western Han chime bells emphasized short sound beams. The sloping sound ridges seen in Warring States period bells transformed into wedge-shaped beams during the Han dynasty. Longer sound beams, occupying roughly one-third of the bell body, allowed for better isolation and individual adjustment of specific syllables during tuning. The engraving technique for sound beams in Han dynasty chime bells was safer and more practical than the pre-Qin method.

In China, the culture of ritual music (礼乐文化) began to take shape during the Xia and Shang dynasties, reaching maturity around the Western Zhou period. It laid the foundation for the development of ancient Chinese ritual music culture. This cultural aspect played a crucial role in maintaining social order and received significant attention from rulers. During the Western Han period, rulers highly esteemed Confucian thought and emphasized ritual music culture. In the early years of the Western Han dynasty, Emperor Liu Bang established a ceremonial system for the court and ancestral temples, setting norms for ritual music. Under Emperor Wu of Han, China's overall strength further improved, and rapid political and economic development occurred. Guided by Dong Zhongshu's advocacy of "solely honoring Confucianism,"

Confucianism became the dominant governing ideology at the imperial court. Consequently, efforts were made across various sectors to establish and standardize ritual music systems. In this context, the revival of hierarchical ritual music systems became a primary governance tool for the Han dynasty. Confucian thought profoundly influenced Western Han society, with Confucians serving as custodians of ritual music, aligning it with the requirements of the ruling class.

4.2.4 Bronze

Mr. Chen, a staff member at the Haihunhou's Site Museum, stated: 'A total of over 3,000 bronze artifacts were unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb, including more than 500 bronze items from the main tomb. These artifacts consist of tableware, wine vessels, water containers, musical instruments, and more. Daily utensils, measuring tools, weapons, chariots, tools, and miscellaneous items were generally placed in the main chamber, chariot storage area, kitchen utensil storage, wine storage, musical instrument storage, and armory, respectively, based on their functions.' The excavation of the Haihunhou's tomb provides essential evidence for researching Han Dynasty history and related archaeological studies.

In this section, the researchers primarily focuses on nine burial objects, including bronze chariots, a bronze goose-fish lamp, a 'Nanchang' bean-shaped bronze lamp, a three-legged bronze tripod, and a phoenix-shaped bronze wine container. Based on discussions among experts and scholars, the semantic units are analyzed from the perspectives of artistic function, decorative craftsmanship, and aesthetics. The summarized content is as follows:

4.2.4.1 Bronze Chariot Carriage

Notably, the discovery of a practical burial pit containing real chariots and horses in the western part of the main tomb at the Haihunhou's tomb site in Nanchang, Jiangxi, represents the first such find in the region south of the Yangtze River during the Western Han period. Between 2012 and 2015, more than 3,000 chariot-related artifacts were excavated, with over 2,000 pieces neatly stacked inside a colorfully painted wooden box in the southwest direction, and an additional 1,000 scattered around the vehicles. These diverse and well-crafted chariot decorations serve

as crucial primary materials for studying the advanced aristocratic chariot system of the Western Han Dynasty, holding significant historical, artistic, and scientific value.



FIGURE 48 Restoration of bronze carriages and horses in The Haihunhou tomb of the Han Dynasty

Source: Photographed by the Author

The term “车马器” in ancient China refers to the bronze components used on horse-drawn carriages, such as bow caps and yokes. These artifacts date back to the Shang and Zhou dynasties, and they were often buried alongside nobles in tombs. The earliest discovered examples of these carriage and horse fittings are located in the Yinxu site in Anyang, Henan province. These artifacts typically appear near aristocratic burial sites, with each “车马坑” (carriage and horse pit) containing twelve horse-drawn carriages, most of which were made of bronze. Some carriages also contained weapons and tools, and in certain cases, the remains of charioteers were buried alongside the horses (Dan, 2020).

During the Western Han period, in higher-ranking tombs of emperors, princes, and marquises, complete chariots were found along with a rich variety of carriage and horse fittings. These fittings were made of bronze and served different functions. Specific locations within the tombs were designated for these chariots and

horses, and some tombs even included terracotta horse figurines. Depending on the purpose, chariots were equipped with weapons, while ceremonial processions had numerous figurines. Generally, higher-grade tombs featured well-preserved carriage and horse fittings, adorned with intricate decorations. In contrast, lower-grade tombs had fewer fittings with simpler designs, reflecting varying purposes and symbolism. The presence of these artifacts likely served to provide essential items for the deceased or symbolize their status. For instance, the tomb of Haihunhou Liu He (known as the Haihunhou's tomb) revealed that each chariot was drawn by four horses, emphasizing the strict ceremonial etiquette associated with chariots in ancient times (Jiao & Yanqin, 2017). The bronze fittings from the Haihunhou's tomb include both carriage components (车器) and horse fittings (马器). The carriage body primarily consists of five parts: the eighbridge beam (车衡), yoke (车軛), Shaft (车辕), axle (车轴), and Parasol (车伞) (see Figure 49). Archaeological excavations over an extended period have uncovered practical and aesthetically pleasing elements, such as bow caps, yoke decorations, harnesses, balance weights, whip handles, and canopies. In this chapter, we will delve into the shapes and functions of the bronze carriage components unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb.

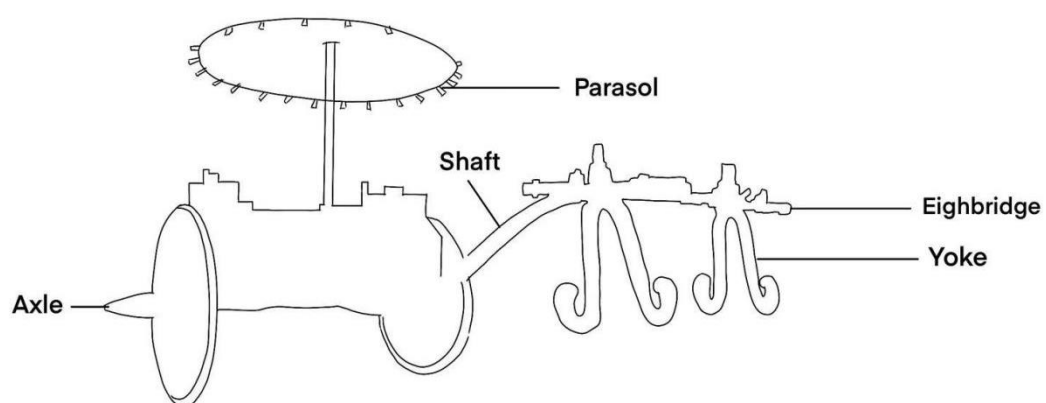


FIGURE 49 Schematic diagram of the position of the components of a bronze carriage

Source: Drawing by the Author

A Eighbridge

The eighbridge “车衡” can be translated to “truck scale” in English. It refers to a device used to control the direction of a vehicle, similar to the handlebars on a bicycle. In the context of a horse-drawn carriage, the 车衡 (vehicle scale) is an essential component connected to the carriage pole and yoke. There are two types of 车衡: straight scales (直衡) with a flat shape and curved scales (曲衡) with an upward-curved wooden piece that extends outward. Sometimes, additional components are attached to the ends of straight scales to achieve a curved and upward shape. This information is based on research related to bronze chariots and horses excavated from the Han Dynasty tomb of the Haihunhou in Nanchang(Sang, 2023).

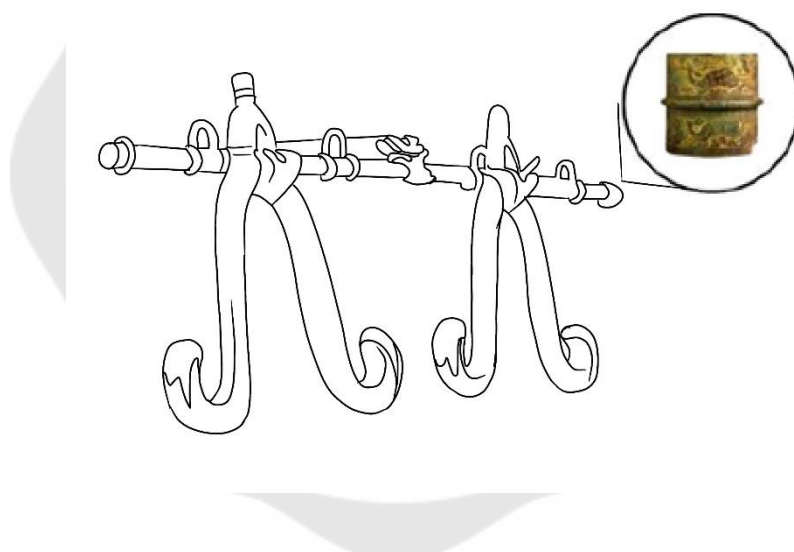


FIGURE 50 Schematic diagram of the location of the bronze carriage components

Source: Drawing by the Author

In the schematic diagram of the eighbridge (Figure 50), the bronze vehicle and horse ornaments on the eighbridge are mainly the eighbridge decorations. These decorations are placed at both ends of the eighbridge to prevent the wooden parts from rotting. Additionally, the surface is adorned with decorative patterns using techniques such as gilding and silver inlay.



FIGURE 51 Eighbridge

Source: Photographed by the Author

The bronze misplaced troy ornament from the Haihunhou's tomb is a hollow cylindrical object adorned with deer motifs (Figure 51). The deer is depicted in motion, with its head held high and focused eyes, exuding elegance. Its slender neck features irregular spirals and dot patterns on the back. At the top of this ornament, there's an intricately rendered phoenix. The phoenix's head is raised high, crowned with three feathers that cascade backward. Its slender beak appears as if in mid-song. The ornament's two straight legs extend downward, and its tail curves upward, encircling the body. Delicate lines define both the body and tail, combining to create a lifelike depiction. Cloud patterns fill the surrounding space, resulting in a dignified and graceful portrayal of the phoenix.



FIGURE 52 The decorative pattern of Heng ornament with gold, silver and bronze inlay

Source: Photographed by the Author

In the decorative patterns of gold, silver, and bronze ornaments (Figure 52), deer and phoenix motifs appear. Deer are symbolic carriers of harmony in Chinese culture. They are considered auspicious and beautiful due to their gentle temperament, graceful appearance, and preference for consuming flowers, grass, and trees. The antlers of deer also symbolize divine power. Consequently, ancient people often used deer motifs in their decorations. According to Professor Zheng Haohua's from Nanchang University, another reason for the popularity of deer motifs in ancient times is that the word "deer" sounds similar to the word for "prosperity" (禄) in Chinese, making deer patterns a representation of auspicious culture. During the Qin Dynasty, deer motifs gradually gained popularity. Over time, in different historical periods, deer motifs developed their unique styles, representing people's aspirations for a better life. The phoenix motif, on the other hand, is a romantic bird pattern associated with ancient beliefs in the phoenix totem. During the Han Dynasty, the phoenix symbolized people's hopes for a better future and was an essential part of decorative art. In Western Han, influenced by Confucianism and the concept of immortals, rulers expressed a longing for the divine world. Researchers found that deer and phoenix patterns were extensively used in burial items, reflecting the desire for auspicious creatures and guiding souls to ascend. By the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period, the imagery of

flying deer and phoenix had become a spiritual tool, serving as horses and divine birds to guide departed souls to ascend. In literary works related to the Han Dynasty, deer and phoenix motifs were often associated with themes of seeking immortality and transcendence.

B Shaft

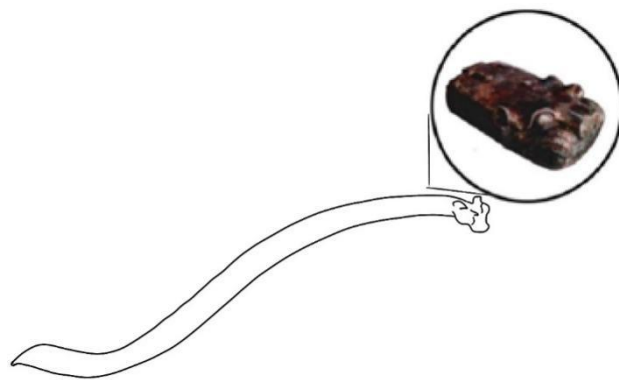


FIGURE 53 Schematic diagram of the location of the regulator end trims

Source: Drawing by the Author

The Shaft “车辕” (chē yuán) refers to the shaft that connects a carriage or cart to the draft animals (usually horses). It consists of two straight wooden bars extending from the bottom of the carriage to the shoulders of the animals. The curvature of the shaft allows it to fit properly. The front end of the shaft is often adorned with delicate bronze ornaments, as seen in the enlarged image labeled “辕端饰” (yuán duān shì) (Figure 53) in your description. These decorative elements not only enhance the appearance but also serve to protect the ornamentation and secure the harness. The specific example shown in the image features a tiger head design, vividly capturing the strength, bravery, and power associated with this majestic animal. In ancient China, tigers were revered as one of the four great mythical creatures and were considered auspicious symbols. The tiger-shaped ornament on the shaft not only adds beauty but

also symbolizes prayers for safety and good fortune during travel. It is indeed a fine piece of art!



FIGURE 54 Regulator endpiece

Source: Photographed by the Author

C Yoke

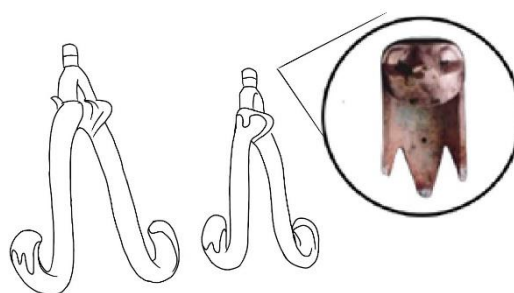


FIGURE 55 Schematic diagram of yoke jewellery position

Source: Drawing by the Author

The 车轭 (chē è) (Figure 55), also known as a “yoke”, is a horse-drawn carriage component that binds to the front end of the yoke. There is one yoke on

each side of the carriage, and it works in conjunction with the yoke harness to better control the movement of the horses. In the Han Dynasty, each horse-drawn carriage had two yokes, with one horse attached to each yoke.

The yoke has a distinctive “人” (human) shape, and it is adorned with a decorative piece called the 轭首饰 (yòu shǒu shì) (Figure 56). Typically made of bronze, this ornament serves both decorative and protective purposes for the top of the yoke. An example of such a bronze yoke ornament was unearthed from the Han Dynasty tomb of the Haihunhou in Nanchang. The ornament features a fierce-looking animal face with wide-open eyes, showcasing exquisite craftsmanship and a luxurious style.



FIGURE 56 Bronze and gold-silver shaft ornament yoke jewellery

Source: Photographed by the Author

D Parasol

Parasol also known as the canopy of a horse-drawn carriage, also known as a car umbrella, is positioned above the carriage to protect it from wind and rain. The Kao Gong Ji (a classic Chinese text on craftsmanship) provides detailed records about ancient car umbrellas, including their dimensions, materials, and craftsmanship. For instance, it mentions “bu guang six inches,” which refers to the need

to create twenty-eight small holes on a six-inch circumference umbrella body for the umbrella frame—a highly challenging process. In ancient times, emperors and kings would always carry an umbrella when traveling, and it served as a symbol of their status. The Book of Han, specifically in the chapter on the official Huang Ba, records that Emperor Wu granted special car covers to Yangzhou's governor, Huang Ba. These covers were exceptionally tall, reaching one zhang (approximately ten feet), and were used for the chief secretary's carriage. The use of such car umbrellas was strictly regulated during the Han Dynasty. The bronze decorations found on car umbrellas unearthed from the tomb of the Haihunhou are exquisite and intricate, reflecting his noble status. The main components of these car umbrellas include the umbrella handle and the cap, as depicted in the bronze umbrella handle and cap diagram (Figure 57).

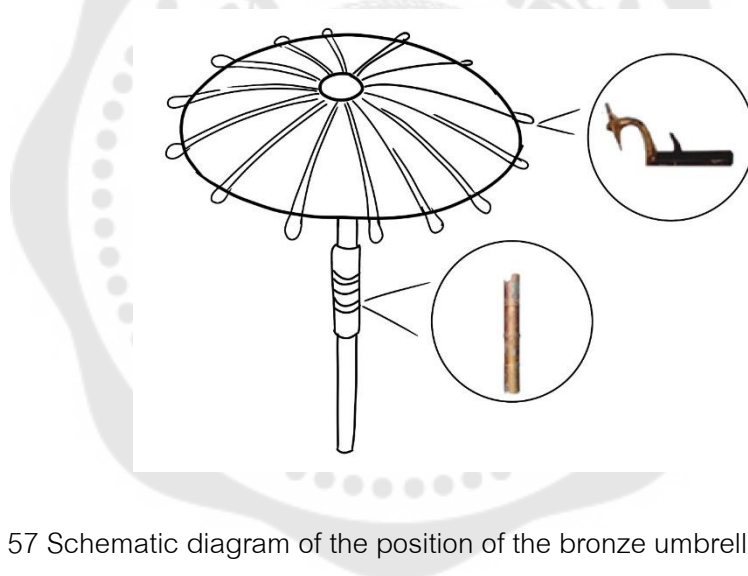


FIGURE 57 Schematic diagram of the position of the bronze umbrella handle and cover
bow cap

Source: Drawing by the Author

Professor Zheng Haohua pointed out that while most umbrellas are made of wood, the umbrella found in the Haihunhou's tomb was crafted from bronze. The cylindrical bronze fitting, with a simple yet elegant design, was used to connect the umbrella's canopy to its handle. This allowed for adjusting the umbrella's height and facilitated disassembly during strong winds or wartime situations. According to the

ancient text “Zhou Li,” there is a saying: “When the king is present, the umbrella is lowered; when the king is absent, it is carried by his side.” During travel, if encountering strong winds or combat, the umbrella had to be promptly folded. Therefore, the umbrella handle was designed with multiple sections for easy disassembly.



FIGURE 58 Covered Bow Cap

Source: Photographed by the Author

The cover bow cap on the edge of a carriage umbrella (as shown in Figure 58) played a role similar to the supporting ribs in modern umbrellas. In ancient times, this cover bow was also known as “Jinhua.” During the Han Dynasty, cover bows typically had twenty-eight branches, representing the twenty-eight constellations. There were also variations with fourteen, sixteen, or nineteen branches. The cover bow cap, located at the upper end of the cover bow, had a circular shape resembling flower petals. In the middle of the umbrella, there was a prominent hook designed to catch the edge of the umbrella fabric, ensuring that the umbrella opened properly. For instance, the “Jinhua zao” mentioned in the Book of Later Han refers to a type of cover bow cap. The cover bow caps discovered in the tomb of Haihunhou were even more exquisite, emphasizing the high status of the tomb’s occupant.

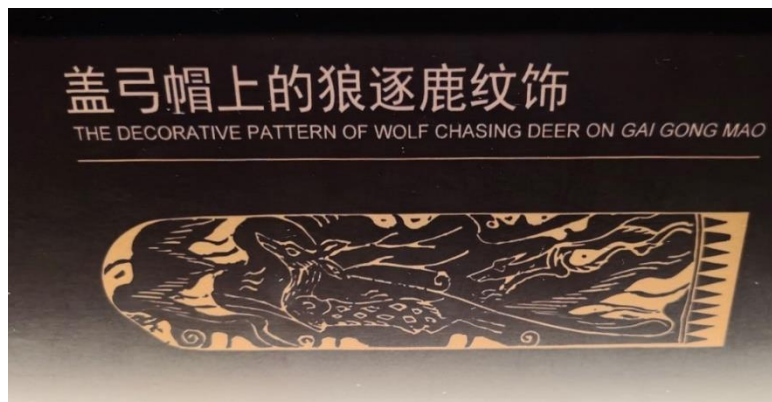


FIGURE 59 The decorative pattern wolf chasing deer on gai gong mao

Source: Photographed by the Author

Researchers in the analysis, it was observed that the side of the bronze gilded, and silver petal-shaped cover of the bow cap has a set of symmetrical and simple cloud patterns (Figure 59). Cloud patterns are traditional decorative designs in China, characterized by their diverse types, varied forms, wide applications, and long history. Despite the passage of time, societal changes, and shifts in aesthetic preferences, cloud patterns have not disappeared. On the contrary, they continue to thrive in the development of decorative patterns in China and are still applied to everyday objects.

E Axles

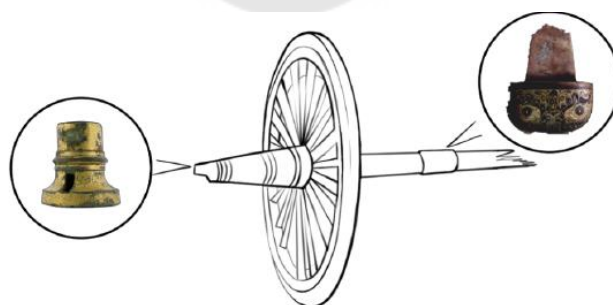


FIGURE 60 Schematic diagram of the position of the axle (left) and axle (right) trims

Source: Drawing by the Author

The 车轴 (chē zhóu) (Figure 60), also known as a half axle, is a cylindrical component that runs through the wheels and the carriage. It plays a crucial role in the functionality of horse-drawn carriages. The two ends of the axle pass through the middle of the wheels, and to prevent the wheels from coming off, 车轸 (chē yǐn) (also known as “轸”) is installed on the axle’s end face. The bronze components on the axle include both the 车轸 (chē yǐn) and the 车轴饰 (chē zhóu shì). The 车轸 (chē yǐn), depicted as a hollow cylindrical shape, protrudes outward on one end and forms a stepped structure on the other end. Its primary function is to secure the wheels to the axle, preventing them from detaching. Meanwhile, the 车轴饰 (chē zhóu shì) adds decorative elements to the axle¹. These components were essential in ancient carriages, ensuring stability and safety during transportation. The combination of the axle and its associated parts allowed for smooth movement and reliable carriage performance.



FIGURE 61 Axle (left side) and axle (right side)

Source: Photographed by the Author

When driving, the exposed wooden part of a cart axle is susceptible to erosion from mud and water. During the Western Han Dynasty, aristocratic carriages often used exquisite bronze decorations for their axles. In the illustration below, the top left corner shows a bronze axle decoration unearthed from the tomb of the Haihunhou in Nanchang during the Han Dynasty. These bronze decorations often featured intricate animal face motifs, with a simple yet vivid design and symmetrical presentation. Such animal face patterns were common decorative elements in ancient times and were

prevalent on Shang and Zhou bronze artifacts, also known as “taotie” motifs. The structure of these motifs typically included a central nose bridge, symmetrically positioned eyes with eyebrows, ears on the sides, an upper forehead, prominent angles on the sides, and a lower mouth with cheek-like features. Some animal face motifs even had curved body segments on both sides, often with clawed feet. Although these motifs could sometimes be identified as dragons, tigers, oxen, deer, or even human faces, they often defied precise classification (Xiao, 2002). The bronze axle decorations unearthed from the Haihunhou’s tomb were displayed at the Capital Museum, where magnifying glasses were used to observe the exquisite patterns on these decorations. The animal face motifs on these artifacts were meticulously crafted, maintaining symmetry and a clever black-white-gray layout. They served both practical and decorative purposes. The intricate and complex patterns were skillfully engraved onto such small bronze pieces using the technique of inlaying gold and silver, resulting in a remarkable visual experience.

Analyzing the components of bronze chariot and horse fittings from the Haihunhou’s tomb, researchers see that the combination of “utility” and “aesthetics” was a crucial design concept in traditional Chinese artifacts. In pre-Qin times, the concept of “perfection in both function and beauty” influenced Chinese design culture significantly. The idea of achieving both “utility” and “beauty” aligns with Confucian philosophy, which emphasizes moderation and balance. From the bronze chariot and horse fittings found in the Haihunhou’s tomb, researchers can clearly observe the integration of practicality and aesthetics. For instance: The yoke ornaments (as shown in Figure 56) were installed on the top of the yoke to protect the wooden yoke’s end. The overall design featured a unique bronze animal head, enhanced by gilding, resulting in a glossy and exquisite appearance. The balance beam ornaments (as shown in Figure 51) were fixed at both ends of the balance beam, resembling four deer with raised heads. These not only protected the balance beam but also created a visually impactful impression of deer in motion. Furthermore, other components like the “danglu” (previously discussed in the dragon motif) and the axle served both practical and

decorative functions, ensuring both utility and aesthetic appeal. This harmonious combination of practicality and beauty has been a consistent design philosophy throughout Chinese history, reflecting the cultural spirit of the past and present.

4.2.4.2 The bronze wild goose-fish tank lamp

The bronze wild goose-fish tank lamp (Figure 62) has a total height of 5080 millimeters, with the wild goose's legs measuring 1370 millimeters in height. It weighs 8055 grams and is proportionally designed to create a sense of visual balance. The lamp's overall shape resembles a large goose, standing tall and looking back, with a fish held in its mouth. It consists of four main structures: the wild goose body (including legs), the head and neck (with the fish), the lamp disc, and the lampshade. The components can be disassembled and reassembled, with the fish body, wild goose neck, and wild goose body connecting seamlessly.

The bronze wild goose-fish tank lamp combines light and form, merging two distinct entities into a perfect piece of art. When placed in a space, it provides both visual and spiritual comfort. The lamp's design serves both functional illumination and as a medium for conveying ideas. It represents not only the external visual presentation but also the combined effects of craftsmanship, historical cultural heritage, and the designer's progressive thinking. Two bronze wild goose-fish tank lamps were unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb. Both are made of bronze, similar in size and shape. One of them has an intact structure, with a plump goose body and two legs standing firmly to support the lamp's weight. The wild goose's abdomen resembles an olive, and its slightly raised wings feature an arched line and four nearly parallel lines, as if savoring the delicious fish without haste to fly away. The goose's short tail is slightly upturned, with defined edges softened by chamfering and finishing, closely resembling a real goose's tail. The wild goose's neck is slender and unadorned, with a gentle and comfortable curve that harmonizes with the body. The wild goose's mouth is open, with a broad beak that holds a plump fish. The fish's back forms a ridge, perfectly matching the shape of the wild goose's open mouth. The fish's head and body are distinguished by simple curved lines. The fish's mouth is round, its eyes carved in circular shapes with

prominent eyeballs. The fish's belly is plain and round, and its short, flat tail appears as if cut by a tool. The fish body and wild goose body are sandwiched between the lampshade and the lamp disc. The lampshade consists of two curved straight panels that can be opened or closed by rotating them. The lamp disc is circular, with a diameter of 1000 millimeters, and features a curved handle on one side.



FIGURE 62 Bronze lantern in the shape of a fish in a wild goose's bean

Source: Photographed by the Author

The bronze wild goose-fish lamp has a simple and sturdy design, with concise and elegant decorative techniques, showcasing the aesthetic views and artistic style of the Western Han period. During the Han dynasty, everyday scenes of simplicity, ordinariness, and practicality became new themes that people wanted to express in art. When combined with other animal-shaped basin lamps unearthed from Han tombs of the same period, such as the double-tube ox lamp from Changsha, Hunan Province, the peacock lamp from Gejiu Hei Maying Cemetery in Yunnan Province, and the Changxin

Palace lamp from Mancheng, Hebei Province, these artifacts reveal an ordinary and common life world of that time. The bronze wild goose-fish lamp captures the dynamic moment of a wild goose turning its head to look at a fish. Its combination of movement and stillness reflects harmonious rhythmic beauty, fully expressing natural, vivid, and interesting sculptural aesthetics. The lamp exudes a romantic spirit from within, giving it a lively presence. Moreover, the balanced and stable composition in terms of mechanics and visual appreciation demonstrates the advanced craftsmanship of the Han dynasty. The raised chest and curved tail of the wild goose, as well as the plump and prosperous fish, all reflect the prosperity of the feudal political and economic scene, making it a representative symbol of an era.

Wild goose have long been regarded as spiritual creatures embodying virtues such as benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness. The fish held in the goose's mouth also symbolizes fertility, marital harmony, and abundance. As funerary objects, goose-shaped artifacts were buried alongside the deceased, signifying loyalty. Confucian thought was prevalent during the Han dynasty, and the goose motif was widely used, especially in decorative arts, appealing to both the ruling class and the general populace. This may be one of the reasons for the emergence of goose-fish lamp designs. Discussions about the wild goose-fish lamp often revolve around natural beauty and functional aesthetics. Indeed, the lamp's design draws inspiration from the combination of animal forms found in nature, infusing it with harmonious and auspicious spiritual qualities. When used as a lighting tool, smoke passes through the goose's neck and reaches the water in its belly, where the water acts as a filter, reducing environmental pollution and promoting eco-friendliness. The fusion of practical and aesthetic functions exemplifies the Han dynasty's high aesthetic standards and craftsmanship. While I agree with the viewpoints mentioned above,

Researchers believe that the wild goose-fish lamp also embodies the Confucian aesthetic concept of "harmonious beauty." Its lifelike form, lines, dynamics, and colors are meticulously crafted, and its symbolism is equally rich. Through the imagery and symbolism of the wild goose and fish, the lamp harmoniously blends form

and content, integrating the harmony of heaven and earth, as well as interpersonal harmony. The wild goose-fish lamp conveys the ideological essence of seeking political and social harmony, especially evident in the context of feudal society.

Researchers found that in the broader context of feudal society, “ritual” played a crucial role in class governance, while “harmony” was a central concept in Confucian ethics—a concentrated expression of social beauty. The culture of ritual and music emphasized ritual as the primary focus, with music as a secondary aspect. The influence of ritual extended to various levels, including regulations, institutions, etiquette, customs, habits, and moral laws. While rulers aimed for harmony, they also recognized the need for moderation through ritual. The pursuit of “harmonious beauty” in the wild goose-fish lamp reflects this ideal.

Considering the lamp’s craftsmanship and rarity, it is likely that the wild goose-fish lamp served as a prestigious gift during the Western Han period. Similar to the Changxin Palace lamp unearthed from the tomb of Prince Jing of Zhongshan (Liu Sheng), both lamps could adjust light direction and intensity through their built-in mechanisms. The goose-fish lamp symbolized harmony, tranquility, and balance, conveying its message to Liu He, the deposed Prince of Jiaoxi (as seen in the Western Han tomb’s wild goose-fish lamp).

4.2.4.3 ‘Nanchang’ bean-shaped bronze lamp

The “Nanchang” bean-shaped bronze lamp (Figure 63) unearthed from the tomb of Liu He, the Haihunhou, is a remarkable discovery in Jiangxi. This lamp, which is partially damaged, represents the earliest physical evidence related to Nanchang found in the region. Let researchers delve into the details: Appearance and Structure: The lamp has a basic appearance shaped like the Chinese character “工” (gōng), slightly tilted. It consists of three main parts: the upper lamp dish, the middle lamp column, and the lower lamp base. The upper part of the lamp column has a knot-like structure. The dimensions are approximately as follows: The diameter of the upper plate: about 11.50 centimeters. The diameter of the base: about 12 centimeters. Height: approximately 22 centimeters. The outer walls of the lamp dish and the lamp base are

both inscribed with the characters “南昌” (Nanchang). The inscription is arranged horizontally from right to left, with moderately thick strokes and some angular brushwork.



FIGURE 63 "Nanchang" bean-shaped bronze lamps

Source: Photographed by the Author

The “豆形灯” (dou xing deng) is one of the oldest and most commonly used lamps in ancient China. Later lamp designs drew inspiration from the basic shape of the “豆形灯.” During the Han Dynasty, the ruling class primarily used lamps made of bronze. The bronze material of the “豆形灯” reflected the esteemed status of individuals like the Haihunhou.

In ancient Chinese beliefs, the concept of an immortal soul persisted. People believed that after physical death, the soul could achieve eternal life through reincarnation. By the Han Dynasty, this belief in the immortality of the soul, influenced by Confucian values of filial piety, became a widely accepted funeral practice. Tomb artifacts symbolized the hope that blood-related family members could continue to live well in the afterlife. Lamps, as sources of light, were buried in tombs to provide illumination for the deceased, allowing their souls to thrive in the otherwise dark environment and maintain a semblance of earthly happiness.

Researchers found that the “豆形灯” and the previously mentioned “雁鱼灯” found in the Haihunhou’s tomb, both made of durable bronze, have transcended time and connected the aesthetics of the Han Dynasty with contemporary culture. These lamps embody the spirit of an era marked by exploration and conquest of the external world. They reflect the philosophical contemplation of giving life to light and the continuity of existence. As artifacts, they offer valuable insights for aesthetic and cultural research, as well as artistic appreciation.

4.2.4.4 A three-legged bronze tripod -Jitián Bronze Dǐng

A dǐng is one of the most important bronze vessels in ancient China. It was originally used for cooking food but later became a symbol of political power for ruling classes. It was considered a treasure that represented the stability and continuity of a nation. The character 鼎 itself also carries connotations of prominence and dignity. For instance, idiomatic expressions like ‘一言九鼎’ (literally ‘one word, nine dǐng’) emphasize the weight and significance of a statement. Throughout the Three Dynasties and the Qin-Han periods, dǐng remained both common and mysterious. These vessels came in two main types: round dǐng with three legs and square dǐng with four legs. They could be either covered or uncovered. The specific dǐng mentioned in the researcher’s text has an inscription: ‘昌邑籍田铜鼎，容十斗，重世八斤’ (Changyi Jitián Bronze Dǐng, with a capacity of ten dou and weighing eight jin). This indicates that this particular dǐng was used during the reign of Liu He and his father as the kings of Changyi. It likely served ceremonial purposes, such as offerings in ancestral temples. The basic appearance (Figure 64) of a dǐng includes an elliptical body without a lid. Its mouth slightly curves inward, and the interior has a deep arc shape. On both sides, there are two loop handles. The overall shape resembles a hoof. The diameter of the mouth is approximately 34 centimeters, the body diameter is around 45.5 centimeters, and its height is about 36.8 centimeters.



FIGURE 64 Three-legged bronze tripod

Source: Photographed by the Author

The exterior of the ding (a type of ancient Chinese bronze vessel) features a 7-row, 15-character inscription in small seal script. The characters are arranged from right to left, with moderate stroke thickness. Some strokes exhibit slight angles and curves. The inscription reads: “Changyi’s jitianding bronze ding, with a capacity of ten dou (a unit of volume), weighing forty-eight jin (Xiao, 2002). The phrases “one dou (sheng),” “forty-eight jin,” and “second” are common content found on Han dynasty bronze vessels, representing capacity, weight, and sequence, respectively. This well-proportioned ding bears clear inscriptions, a distinct rust color, and patina. It is the first physical evidence of the “jitianding” ritual associated with the feudal lords of the Western Han period, highlighting China’s historical emphasis on agricultural production.

The discovery of the jitianding bronze ding confirms the Han dynasty’s agricultural-centric economic ideology. It also reflects the economic situation of Changyi Wang’s fiefdom, which prioritized agricultural production during the Western Han period (Yinmei, 2019). The jitianding ritual was a springtime ceremony promoting diligent farming. Both the Zhou dynasty emperors and feudal lords participated in this ritual. Based on the inscription, this ding was likely used during the annual agricultural planting

and worship ceremonies conducted by Changyi Wang to encourage farming. The “second” designation indicates its order of use. During the spring plowing season, the emperor and ministers would ceremoniously engage in “personal plowing” and worship the mountains and rivers in the suburbs, emphasizing the importance of agriculture and praying for abundant harvests. This practice was later codified in the Tang Xuanzong’s Kaiyuan Li.

Researchers found that analyzing its purpose, the jitianding ding served as a ritual vessel. Su Yinmei suggests that the location mentioned in the inscription, “Changyi,” refers to the capital of Changyi Wang, located in present-day Daxie Township, Juye County, Shandong Province. The first-generation Changyi Wang, Liu Ti, received his title in 97 BCE. Therefore, the casting of the jitianding ding likely occurred between 97 BCE and the deposition of Liu He (Emperor Hui of Western Han) around 74 BCE, during the mid-to-late Western Han period. After Liu He was demoted to The Haihunhou’s tomb, the ding was transported from Shandong to Yuzhang (present-day Jiangxi). Due to the diminished status of Changyi Wang, the ding may have lost its original function in promoting agricultural rituals and instead became a purely utilitarian cooking vessel.

Bronze artifacts from the Haihunhou’s tomb exhibit both “complex” and “simple” decorative styles, harmoniously balanced. This reflects the Han dynasty’s pursuit of aesthetic harmony and appropriateness. Among the numerous plain bronze vessels unearthed from the tomb, the jitianding ding stands as a representative example. During the Han dynasty, lacquerware reached its peak and gradually replaced bronze vessels, especially in everyday utensils. The tomb yielded a wealth of lacquered spoons, trays, and cups, relegating bronze vessels to a subordinate role.

4.2.4.5 A phoenix-shaped bronze wine container



FIGURE 65 A phoenix-shaped bronze wine container

Source: Photographed by the Author

This phoenix-patterned bronze jue (as shown in Figure 65) was unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb site. The jue has a total height of approximately 32.6 centimeters, with a pendant belly. The elliptical shape of the belly measures about 29.1 centimeters along the longer axis and 23.2 centimeters along the shorter axis. It features a flat base and a high ring foot, belonging to the Eb type of jue according to *Comprehensive Studies on Chinese Bronze Artifacts (Zhongguo Qingtongqi Zonglun)*. Its dating places it in the early Western Zhou period, leaning toward the earlier phase (Fenghan, 2009).

The jue consists of two parts: the lid and the body, connected by a mother-and-child mouth. The lid has a floral bud shape with cicada motifs and is crowned by a cross-shaped flange. Four sets of phoenix patterns adorn the lid, all set against a background of cloud and thunder motifs. The lid's wall features bird-shaped decorations, distinct from the phoenix patterns on the lid surface, with raised angular protrusions on both sides. The body of the jue, including the belly and the ring foot, has four wide flanges corresponding to the well-side flanges. These flanges are also

decorated with phoenix patterns. *Decorative Motifs on Shang and Zhou Bronze Artifacts* categorizes such splendid and exquisite large phoenix patterns as “flower-crowned phoenix with trailing tail” (Group, 1984). The neck of the jue features four kui dragon motifs, while the ring foot displays intertwined double dragon patterns. On both sides of the neck, there are circular ears that connect to the ends of the handle. The handle ends take the form of animal heads with palm-shaped horns, and a central elliptical protrusion. The handle itself is adorned with diagonal-facing kui dragon patterns. The main decorative motif on the belly of this jue closely resembles the decoration found on a jue from the Liangdai Village Ruiguo Cemetery M27:1021 in Hancheng, Shanxi (as shown in Figure 66) (Bingjun et al., 2007).



FIGURE 66 M27:1021 Liangbaicun Rui State Cemetery M27:1021 Comparison between the topography of the wine container decoration and the Haihunhou's photograph of the decoration

Source: Wang Youliang and Jin Dachao. (2021) *A Study on the Restoration and Conservation of the Phoenix and Bird-patterned Carrying Wine Containers Unearthed from the Haihunhou tomb of Liu He in Jiangxi Province*, p.274.

The inscriptions on the inner walls and the bottom inner walls of the 提梁卣 (see Figure 67) (a type of ancient Chinese vessel) in the Haihunhou's tomb have been studied by Mr. Chen Zhi and Mr. Li Xueqin. There are two possible interpretations: “子田允父乙” and “子峻父乙.” Mr. Chen Zhi believes that the inscription should be read as “子田允父乙,” which can be interpreted as “子允父乙.” In this context, “子允” would be a personal name, and there is evidence of this name in historical literature (Chi, 2016). On the other hand, Mr. Li Xueqin suggests that “子峻” could be either a personal name or a clan name (Xueqin, 2006). Both interpretations agree that this inscription likely refers to a person's name or a clan name (Youliang & Dachao, 2021). The context of these inscriptions is related to the 凤鸟纹提梁卣 (a phoenix-patterned 提梁卣) unearthed from the Liuhe tomb of the Haihunhou in Jiangxi province.



FIGURE 67 Inscription on the bottom of a wine container

Source: Wang Youliang and Jin Dachao. (2021) A Study on the Restoration and Conservation of the Phoenix and Bird-patterned Carrying Wine Containers Unearthed from the Haihunhou tomb of Liu He in Jiangxi Province, p.274

The phoenix-patterned raised-lidded wine vessel (tí liáng yǒu) in bronze from the late Shang to early Zhou period is a remarkable representative. Although few examples exist, they can be found not only in Baoji but also in Shanghai, New York, Boston, and the Frick Collection. These exquisite bronze vessels stand unparalleled in the world of ancient bronzes, both in terms of regional distribution and stylistic characteristics. Researchers found that in terms of form, the raised-lidded wine vessel has distinct angular edges. As for decorative motifs, the long-tailed phoenix pattern on the body of the vessel represents a typical style seen in early Western Zhou bronzes. During this period, phoenix motifs were commonly used for ornamentation, leading to the designation of this era as the “Phoenix-Patterned Age.” The discovery of a well-preserved phoenix-patterned raised-lidded wine vessel from the Western Zhou period in the tomb of the Haihunhou underscores its opulence and places it in the possession of Liu He, the Haihunhou. Despite nearly a millennium of historical changes from the early Western Zhou to the Western Han, this rare treasure has remained intact.

The phoenix imagery during the Western Zhou period departed from strict linear representations, favoring graceful and flowing curves to depict the bird's lively and light posture. The elongated and stylized body of the phoenix on the raised-lidded wine vessel, with its raised head and simplified neck decoration, exudes vitality. The upward-curved tail captures the unique demeanor and movement of the phoenix, resulting in a dynamic and free-flowing design. The appearance of the phoenix pattern is rooted in ancient reverence for the phoenix as a guide to ascension, fulfilling the tomb owner's desire to transcend mortality and achieve immortality. This cultural legacy is deeply imprinted in these exquisite artifacts.

4.2.4.6 Summary

Bronze artifacts are one of the carriers of China's ancient splendid civilization, renowned worldwide. Approximately 3,000 bronze artifacts were unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb, accounting for about one-third of the total excavated cultural relics. If researchers include over 3,000 bronze chariots and horse ornaments, the total reaches more than 6,000 pieces. These Han Dynasty bronze artifacts are not

only abundant in quantity and variety but also exhibit exquisite craftsmanship and beautiful decorative patterns. They reflect the late-stage development of metallurgy, casting, and decoration during China's Bronze Age, while also showcasing the luxurious lifestyle enjoyed by the tomb's occupant.

The Haihunhou's tomb Liu He lived during the late Western Han period, which marked the later phase of China's Bronze Age. During this time, mature lacquerware, rapidly advancing ironware, and emerging porcelain were gradually replacing bronze artifacts. As social productivity improved, the lifestyles of nobles and aristocrats evolved, leaving an imprint on the bronze artifacts found in the Haihunhou's tomb.

Interestingly, the Haihunhou's tomb yielded a bronze "tiliangyou" vessel from the Western Zhou period, indicating Liu He's appreciation for antiquity. This intricately designed bronze vessel features elaborate decorative patterns and multiple layers of cast welding, providing a vivid contrast between the peak and decline of the Bronze Age.

Researchers found that China's Bronze Age initially prioritized practicality, later shifting toward a focus on ritual use with practical elements, and eventually returning to practicality. Correspondingly, whether in terms of shape, casting techniques, or decorative motifs, there was a progression from simplicity to complexity and back to simplicity. During this developmental context of the Bronze Age, Liu He's Western Han period aligned with the phase where practicality regained prominence. However, this practicality was not a mere mechanical return to the early days of bronze production; rather, it represented a higher-level, spiraling development, culminating in the last peak of bronze culture.

In this chapter, building upon the analyses from previous sections, researchers delve into a detailed study of several representative bronze artifacts unearthed from the Nanchang the Haihunhou's tomb during the Han Dynasty. Found that China's Bronze Age initially prioritized practicality These artifacts, adorned with phoenix, deer, and cloud motifs, reveal the Han people's belief in immortal souls and

mutual interaction between heaven and humanity. They also reflect the aspirations of Han scholars and literati for transcendence and eternal life. The harmonious combination of these elements exemplifies a unified aesthetic and embodies the Han people's philosophical outlook.

4.2.5 Jian Du

The 5200-plus bamboo slips discovered in the tomb of Liu He, the Western Han Emperor (see Figure 68), in Nanchang, include nearly 180 wooden tablets and approximately 110 inscribed tags. These artifacts were primarily found within seven rectangular lacquer boxes. Prior to excavation, the lacquer boxes had mostly deteriorated, with fragmented lacquer skin. The bamboo slips inside the boxes were exposed and exhibited various forms of damage, including saturation, shrinkage, curling, deformation, fragmentation, and decay. The media extensively covered the discovery of these bamboo slips, which has garnered significant attention from scholars and society at large. The content of these bamboo slips includes a variety of classical texts, making them valuable for understanding aspects of life during the Western Han period.



FIGURE 68 The Haihunhou Jane Unearthed

Source: Photographed by the Author

In the document repository of the main chamber (tomb) of the Haihunhou, bamboo slips are stored in four lacquered boxes. Among the bamboo slips, wooden documents are scattered sporadically. Signboards are also scattered throughout the main chamber. Based on their content, these bamboo slips can be roughly categorized into three types: literary works, official documents, and signboards.

In this chapter, the researchers primarily selected five bamboo slips and two wooden documents for analysis. Based on discussions among experts and scholars, the semantic units are analyzed from the perspectives of artistic function, decorative craftsmanship, and aesthetics. The summarized content is as follows:

4.2.5.1 Bamboo slips

The basic appearance of the bamboo slips unearthed from the tomb of the Han Dynasty's Haihun Marquis in Nanchang is as follows: They are long, rectangular bamboo strips with fine edges and visible fractures. Each slip is approximately 23 centimeters long and 1 centimeter wide, although intact slips are rare. Most of these bamboo slips were made from hard bamboo sourced from the southern regions. The writing appears on the yellow side of the bamboo, with characters arranged vertically from top to bottom. Some slips have writing on both sides. Typically, each slip contains no more than two lines of text. The content of these bamboo slips mostly pertains to administrative affairs and rituals within the Haihun Marquis state. The ink color used for writing on the slips is black, and the tool employed was a brush, with the script following the Han Dynasty's official script style.

A The Book of Songs



FIGURE 69 The Book of Songs

Source: Photographed by the Author

In the tomb of the Han Dynasty's Haihunhou in Nanchang, more than 1,200 surviving bamboo slips containing the Book of Songs (also known as the Classic of Poetry) were unearthed (see Figure 69). These bamboo slips were woven in a three-directional pattern and typically contained 20 to 25 characters each. The content of the slips includes both chapters and poems, written in a four-column format. During an interview, Mr. Zhu Fenghan pointed out that the discovery of the Book of Songs bamboo slips from the Haihun Marquis's tomb signifies a shift in aesthetic consciousness. The concept of "beauty" is no longer solely associated with "goodness" but is now encompassed by the higher-value term "good" (hao). This suggests that Chinese aesthetic consciousness has become independent from moral consciousness, marking the true beginning of Chinese aesthetic thought.

Researchers found that in the Book of Songs, all instances of the word "beauty" describe people, indicating that Chinese aesthetic thought was originally centered around "human aesthetics" rather than artistic aesthetics. Its essence lies in the "thoughts of beautiful people," signifying not only the awakening of Chinese aesthetic consciousness but also the liberation of human emotions. Furthermore, all occurrences of the word "beauty" in the Book of Songs appear exclusively in the section known as Guofeng (or Airs of the States), suggesting that Chinese aesthetic

consciousness first emerged among the common people and was not solely a product of later Confucian ethical and political interpretations. Simultaneously, the Book of Songs not only reflects poetic and artistic reflections but also marks the budding of Chinese artistic aesthetic thought.

B Analects

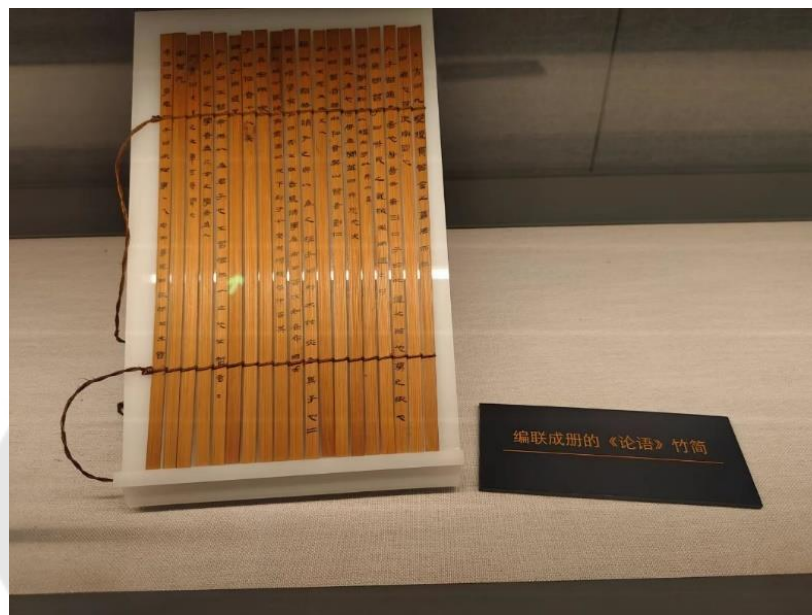


FIGURE 70 Analects

Source: Photographed by the Author

Archaeologists pointed out during an interview that more than 500 bamboo slips of the “Existing Analects” were unearthed from the tomb of the Han Dynasty’s Haihunhou’s tomb in Nanchang (see Figure 68). On the back of each bamboo slip, there are three woven ropes and diagonal marks. Each rope contains 24 characters, and scholars have identified it as the “Qi Lun” (Discourses of Qi), including a section titled “Knowledge” (which is absent in the current “Analects”). The text begins anew with each chapter, without chapter headings. The entire text is meticulously copied, avoiding repetition of words, characters, or sentence structures. The calligraphy style is overall dignified and elegant, although there are variations that suggest different

calligraphers. Due to poor preservation conditions, complete manuscripts are extremely rare, and currently, only about one-third of the text can be deciphered compared to the existing version of the “Analects.” Notable chapters with more surviving text include “Gong Yichang,” “Yongye,” “Xian Jin,” “Zilu,” and “Xian Wen.” However, corresponding content to existing chapters like “Xiang Dang,” “Weizi,” and “Zizhang” has not been discovered. Whether the chapter “Yanyuan” exists remains uncertain. Most strikingly, this version includes the title “Zhi (Knowledge) Dao” and some brief text that is absent in the current version, indicating that it should be the “Qi Lun” recorded in the “Han Shu Yi Wen Zhi.” Wang Ji, a prominent scholar of the “Qi Lun” during the Western Han Dynasty, once served as the Grand Commandant under King Liu He of Changyi. It can be inferred that this version originated from Wang Ji and represents the “Yi Lun” system. Clarifying the structure, chapters, and textual content of this book not only deepens our understanding of the essence of the “Analects” but also provides an important opportunity for studying its historical context.

Confucius’ philosophy is a theoretical system centered on ethics, with “ren” (benevolence) as its foundation and core. The aesthetic aspect of “ren” is expressed through the formalization of “li” (ritual) in relation to “ren.” German philosopher Ernst Cassirer stated, “In aesthetics, researchers no longer live in the direct reality of things but in a world of pure sensory forms.” Through the formalization of “li,” “ren” is aesthetically expressed in artistic creation. In pre-Qin classics, the concepts of “goodness” (“shan”) and “beauty” (“mei”) were somewhat ambiguous and even interchangeable. However, Confucius believed that “beauty” is distinct from “goodness.” While “goodness” emphasizes the content of things, “beauty” focuses on their form. Although form differs from content, they are mutually interconnected, and thus “beauty” and “goodness” should be harmonized. Confucius’ aesthetic thought, summarized as ritual and music aesthetics, explores the relationship between “beauty” and “goodness.” Both “li” and “yue” (music) are external manifestations of “ren.” From a social perspective, “li” directly externalizes “ren,” concretizing its content into moral norms,

political systems, and ritual practices. From the perspective of human perfection, “yue” represents the highest level of human refinement.

The saying “Xing yu shi, li yu li, cheng yu yue” (“Originate from poetry, establish through ritual, culminate in music”) highlights the roles of poetry, ritual, and music. Poetry serves to arouse interest and capture attention through vivid imagery and melodious sounds, leading people to accept moral education (“shan”) or intellectual enlightenment (“zhen”). This process is known as using “beauty” to introduce “goodness” and using “beauty” to inspire the pursuit of truth. “Li” signifies establishment—it encompasses various ethical rules and regulations, emphasizing the construction of individuals’ moral and psychological structures. It includes both the construction of moral content and the formal aspects of morality. Finally, “cheng yu yue” suggests that music achieves a higher level than mere establishment. While “li” establishes, “cheng” signifies accomplishment. Music plays a transformative role in shaping individuals holistically, ultimately culminating in the influence of music. Music can elevate the human spirit to a certain realm, allowing individuals to be influenced deeply, forget worldly differences, and achieve a harmonious balance between emotions and reason, resulting in joyful harmony.

Researchers found that Poetry (primarily emotional but with rational elements) – Ritual (essentially rational but also with emotional components) – Music (emotional, yet dissolving rationality). This process, from emotion to reason and back to emotion, constitutes a spiral ascent in personal development. Aesthetics combines both emotion and reason, unifying them. Virtue, when established, is purely rational, but the transition from emotional to rational requires an intermediary: aesthetics. “Inspiration from poetry” serves as this intermediary. “Music” represents art, and appreciating music is an aesthetic experience. Aesthetics not only initiates virtue (“inspiration from poetry”) but also elevates it (“culmination in music”). The triad of truth, goodness, and beauty places beauty at the highest level. Beauty doesn’t merely encompass truth and goodness; rather, beauty encompasses them. Through beauty, truth is revealed, and

goodness is elevated to the realm of ultimate beauty. This perspective is not arbitrary speculation but rather follows logical deduction.

C Xiaojing



FIGURE 71 Xiaojing and Poetry

Source: Photographed by the Author

In the tomb of the Han Dynasty's Haihunhou's tomb in Nanchang, more than 600 severely damaged bamboo slips were unearthed, including documents like the Xiaojing (Figure 71). Currently, it appears that their content is related to the interpretation and explanation of 'filial piety' (孝). From the textual content, words such as 'filial piety,' 'parents,' and 'siblings' are frequent. In terms of structure, there are many question-and-answer formats, such as 'How can researchers define filial piety? Answer: By...,' which highlights the characteristics of expository writing.

Mr. Han Wei pointed out in an interview that the bamboo slips mention the Xiaojing in more than one place, and there are passages similar to the Xiaojing. However, it cannot be said that all these bamboo slips directly interpret the Xiaojing. Even if there are interpretations of the Xiaojing, the term 'interpretation' does not refer to literal explanations but rather explanations of its meaning. Some sentences

in the bamboo slips are related to the Han bamboo slips from the Bajiaolang in Hebei Province and the Han bamboo slips from Jingguan in Gansu Province.

The Xiaojing contains multiple related or overlapping passages, suggesting that they all belong to interpretations and explanations of 'filial piety' during the Western Han period. Confucius' thought system centers around 'benevolence' (仁), and 'love for others' is the most fundamental meaning of 'benevolence.' 'The gentleman seeks the root; once the root is established, the Way is born. The ladder of filial piety is indeed the root of benevolence' (Shiming, 2005). This summarizes Confucius' belief that love between people is deduced from the most basic blood relationships between parents, children, and siblings. Therefore, the natural affection among people should manifest as this kind of love. 'Filial piety' refers to the duty children owe to their parents, while the 'ladder' refers to the responsibilities between siblings, especially the duty of younger siblings to older ones. Filial piety toward parents stems from love for them, and the 'ladder' toward siblings stems from love for one's brothers and sisters. Blood ties represent natural emotions, and there is no greater emotion in the world than this. Confucius also said, 'When a disciple enters, he practices filial piety; when he leaves, he practices fraternal respect. He is cautious and trustworthy, broad-minded in his love for all, and close to those who practice benevolence'(Shiming, 2005). He not only emphasized love for one's parents and siblings but also extended this love to all people, promoting universal love and closeness to anyone who embodies benevolence. In this sense, Confucius' 'filial piety' unfolds as interpersonal love with broad social implications, reflecting humanity's need for love.

Researchers found that the concept that 'the ladder of filial piety is the root of benevolence' forms the foundation of Confucius' benevolent thought. The essence of 'filial piety' lies in the continuation of life—honoring ancestors, respecting parents, and passing on one's legacy to future generations constitute natural life. Inherit the achievements of predecessors and gain wisdom from their experiences to continue cultural life. Human value lies not only in perpetuating ancestral bloodlines and

transmitting historical culture but also in realizing the innate 'Way of benevolence.' Ultimately, 'filial piety' gains aesthetic character by relying on 'benevolence.'

The Haihunhou's tomb bamboo slips, and the Xiaojing are the most abundant extant documents of this kind, holding significant importance for the study of Confucianism during the Han Dynasty.

D Poetry

The bamboo slips from the tomb of Haihunhou (Figure 71) number over 200, but only a few are intact. Preliminary analysis indicates that they contain the "Zixu Fu" and another Han fu (a type of prose poem) provisionally titled "Fu." Additionally, there are some songs and poems. The wooden slips also contain poetic texts, but the sparse writing requires further interpretation. There are currently more than ten surviving bamboo slips of the "Zixu Fu," but they are severely damaged. Most of the sentences resemble passages from "Records of the Grand Historian" and "Book of Han," specifically the "Fu Shuo" section, although there are some variations. The discovery of bamboo slips from Marquis Haihun provides new material for the study of the "Zixu Fu."

The "Daowang Fu" consists of 26 surviving slips, totaling around 700 characters. These slips show evidence of being written first and then bound together. The text follows the popular fu style of the Han dynasty, incorporating the "xi" particle commonly found in classical poetry since the Warring States period. Sentences typically consist of four, five, or six characters, although some exceed six. The rhyme endings belong to the yang division, including characters like "pang," "chang," "guang," "yang," and "tang." The text frequently mentions titles such as "junhou" (lord marquis), "hou" (marquis), and "furen" (lady), aligning with the status of a marquis. The language is veiled and filled with a mournful atmosphere, discussing illness, prayers, small and large burials, mourning, condolences, tomb sizes, and some burial items. It likely relates to Marquis Haihun, and Zhao Huacheng suggests that the mourned individual is probably Marquis Haihun himself. The lack of terms like "xianfu" (deceased father), "wangfu" (deceased king), or "mu" (mother) makes it unlikely that the author was Liu He's son.

Instead, it may be a relative who wrote the piece between Haihunhou's death and burial. Compared to earlier works, the language of the "Daowang Fu" is more elegant and refined, akin to Confucian aesthetics, with deeper layers of beauty.

Researchers found that Han fu combines realistic descriptions with mythological imagination, resulting in an artistic effect where myth and reality intertwine. When researchers consider bamboo slips like the "Daowang Fu" and the "Zixu Fu" alongside other Han bamboo texts such as the "Tang Yue" from Yinqueshan, the "Shenwu Fu" from Yinfu Bay, and the "Kang Yin" from Peking University, researchers gain insights into the role of Han fu during the Western Han period. These discoveries provide an opportunity to further explore the collective and poetic aspects of Han yuefu. The bamboo slip poems represent another significant find after the Dunhuang Han bamboo slips' "Fengyu Shi," offering a chance to delve deeper into the study of collective and poetic works during the Han dynasty.

E Numerological numerology



FIGURE 72 Yizhan

Source: Photographed by the Author

The “The Haihunhou’s tomb Bamboo Slips” also include several previously unseen texts related to divination. There are over 300 bamboo slips in existence, with more than 60 of them specifically discussing concepts such as yin and yang, the five elements, the five directions, and the five emperors. These slips explicitly mention terms like “metal, wood, water, fire, and earth” and the cardinal directions: “Azure Dragon of the East, White Tiger of the West, Vermilion Bird of the South, and Black Tortoise of the North.” Unfortunately, the inscriptions on the bamboo slips are severely damaged, and their exact nature remains to be further determined.

Among the texts found in the Western Han the Haihunhou’s tomb, there are three categories related to divination: “Yizhan” (易占)(Figure 72), “Buxing” (卜姓), and “Quyì” (去邑). Among these, “Yizhan” is the longest and most content-rich. The content of the “Yizhan” slips involves using the “Yijing” (Book of Changes) for daily fortune-telling. Similar to the “Yijing” texts unearthed from the Ruyinhou tomb in Fuyang Shuanggudui, these slips primarily provide simple explanations of the hexagrams from the “Yijing” to determine auspicious or inauspicious outcomes during different seasons or specific months.

The “Yizhan” consists of a total of 64 hexagrams, with each hexagram represented on a separate bamboo slip, totaling no fewer than 64 slips. The format of the slips includes the hexagram name, the hexagram text, and the hexagram imagery. Unlike the hexagram texts in the classic “Yijing,” these slips briefly describe the composition of upper and lower trigrams before providing a concise interpretation of each hexagram. The imagery section also differs from the traditional “Yijing” imagery, focusing on the compatibility of certain numbers and their corresponding directions. It then explains the appropriate celestial stems and earthly branches, the sequence of hexagrams, and finally, the auspicious or inauspicious outcomes during the four seasons (spring, summer, autumn, and winter), accompanied by references to specific animals.

Researchers found that the “Yijing” contains profound aesthetic reflections that serve as the oldest source for Chinese aesthetic thought. Many

philosophers emphasize its significance in the history of aesthetics. The “Yizhuan” (Commentary on the Changes) within the “Yijing” highlights categories and propositions that constitute a crucial development in ancient Chinese aesthetic thought. Its dialectical approach has deeply influenced classical Chinese aesthetics. Elements such as yin and yang, emptiness and substance, beauty and ugliness found in the “Yijing” serve as foundational concepts in classical Chinese aesthetics (Bo, 2021). From a philosophical perspective, these elements reflect reverence for natural forces and prophetic insights into the divine. Viewing it through the lens of classical aesthetics, these philosophical elements contribute to the preconceptions of aesthetic subjects and gradually merge with religious and cultural influences, enriching the external forms of artistic expression. The three divination texts found in the Haihunhou’s tomb bamboo slips provide valuable insights into Han dynasty divinatory practices and have significant implications for the study of Western Han classics, divination, numerology, and related fields.

4.2.5.2 Wooden documents



FIGURE 73 Wooden documents

Source: Photographed by the Author

The main chamber of Liu He’s tomb is divided into two rooms: an eastern room containing a coffin and a western room with a bed and items such as

Confucius' clothing and mirror. In the western part of the main chamber, there are two lacquer boxes containing nearly 180 wooden slips. These slips primarily consist of official documents, including decrees and memorials. The lacquer boxes are heavily decayed, and some wooden fragments are scattered in the western room. Based on their location, both lacquer boxes were originally adjacent to the document archives in the western storage chamber. It is speculated that the collapse of the tomb caused the lacquer boxes to shift from the archives to the western room, contributing to the scattered and damaged wooden slips. Additionally, 109 wooden slips were unearthed in the clothing storage area of the main chamber.

A Wooden tablets

Many official documents were unearthed from the Marquis Haihun Tomb in Nanchang, all of which were official documents submitted by the Marquis Haihun state to the imperial court. The style of the calligraphy is relatively uniform, all written in regular script, and the characters are neat and tidy. The documents are numbered 58 in total, of which 49 are basically complete in appearance and 9 are fragmented. The author has selected a few of the more complete documents for study.



FIGURE 74 Calligraphy on Wooden tablets in the Haihunhou Site Museum

Source: Photographed by the Author

Researchers found that in the calligraphy of the Haihunhou bamboo slips, ink writing is a major component, divided into two categories: meticulously crafted and naturally expressive. The official documents belong to the meticulously crafted style. As shown in Figure 74, this type of ink writing is uniform, dignified, and each character stands independently. The size is consistent without losing its liveliness. The spacing between lines is evenly distributed, and the strokes flow elegantly, reflecting the writer's skill and control. Since official documents are much larger than ordinary bamboo slips, they can accommodate multiple columns of writing. Each character is arranged in an orderly manner, with consistent column widths and neatly arranged rows, creating a harmonious appearance. The center of each character is stable, exuding an atmosphere of dignity. The strokes are delicate and elegant, with uniformity from left to right, achieving a graceful and magnificent beauty.

Weixinying believes that the official documents of the Haihun Marquis were written by Haihun Marquis Liu He and his wife to the emperor and empress dowager. These documents covered matters such as tributes, rewards, and autumn requests. Writing official documents was an extremely serious and solemn task in the feudal society of that time. There could be no negligence. From the explanatory text of the official documents, researchers can see the writer's respectful attitude towards superiors. The official documents followed specific shapes and formats, using the prevalent regular script (zhengti lishu) of that era. The writing was extremely neat. Since the recipients of these official documents were rulers of the time, the writers approached their task with reverence and meticulousness, striving for perfection. They had to balance practicality and aesthetics, allowing us to glimpse the meticulously crafted style of ink writing.

B Signboard

In a conversation with the museum curator, the author learned that approximately 110 signboards were unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb. They are all rectangular with rounded tops. Most of the signboards have their upper semicircular parts painted black with ink, while a few are marked with grids or horizontal lines. After

being separated, a hole is drilled on the top, and the sequence number is indicated below, such as 'First,' 'Second,' 'Tenth,' etc. The largest number observed so far is 'One Hundred and Tenth' (Figure 74). This unique shape is referred to as 'jie' (楬) and similar wooden tablets have also been found in the Fisherman's Tomb in Wangchengpo, Changsha, and the No. 1 Tomb of Ma Wangdui in Western Han.



FIGURE 75 Signboard

Source: Photographed by the Author

“Mu Jie” (木楬) refers to rectangular wooden tablets with a semi-circular upper part. Among these tablets: Of these, 67 have black ink on the semicircular part, 13 are separated by a horizontal line, 3 have a grid pattern in black ink, 7 are not separated, 1 is randomly inked, and 18 have incomplete semicircular parts that are difficult to judge. Most of these wooden tablets have writing on both sides, with no specific columns. Each line describes a type of item and its quantity. If there are many items, they are divided into two columns, but not exceeding two. A few tablets lack columns and rows, with item categories and quantities written at the top of the grid. The content written on these tablets can be categorized into clothing and fabric, letters,

ceremonial utensils, and miscellaneous items. Notably, some tablets bear titles such as “Yan Li” (《燕礼》), “Xiang Yin Jiu” (《乡饮酒》), “Yue Ji” (《乐记》), and “Hun Li” (《昏礼》), which belong to the “Xiao Dai Li Ji” (小戴礼记), indicating that the “Li Ji” (礼记) texts were still transmitted as individual sections during that time.



FIGURE 76 Calligraphy on item-recording slips

Source: Photographed by the Author

Researchers found that the writing style of signboards is another form of ink writing—natural and candid, closer to everyday writing. As shown in Figure 76, this type of ink writing appears more lively, spontaneous, and natural. While official documents (奏牍) in ink writing may seem somewhat rigid, this category exudes romance and genuine interest. Firstly, the spacing between characters is not strictly controlled; it tends to be more compact. Stroke variations are also less deliberate, resulting in richer variations within the same stroke. The ink writing on signboards features varying font sizes, adapting to the shape of each character. The arrangement is not uniform horizontally, creating a columnar effect without strict rows. Overall, this style presents a vibrant and whimsical charm.

Signboards, although still ink writing, exhibit a natural and candid style that sharply contrasts with the formal style of official documents. Signboards, also known as wooden labels (木榻), are primarily used for labeling items with their names

and quantities. They emphasize visual clarity and practicality. It is precisely this lack of constraint that reveals the natural beauty of the writer's script, characterized by spontaneity and abundant charm. The contexts in which official documents and signboards are used differ significantly, leading to distinct writing styles. Signboards serve more practical purposes in daily life and are less solemn, allowing for a more relaxed and genuine approach to writing, unlike the careful handling required for official documents. Therefore, the specific purpose determines the variation in writing style (yingchun2023).

4.2.5.3 Summary

Researchers found that the bamboo slips and wooden tablets unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb reflect both aesthetic content and form. The calligraphy on these slips and tablets embodies the charm of the Eastern culture during the Han Dynasty. The visual expression of characters on objects combines practicality with aesthetics, representing the intersection of life and art. In modern visual composition, the beauty of characters lies in their ordered geometric forms—whether neat or flowing, curved or straight, thick or thin—all contributing to aesthetic appeal. The style of writing itself becomes a manifestation of artistic aesthetics. Han Dynasty aesthetics integrated philosophical views on life and death, values, aesthetics, and politics. It emphasized service to governance and focused on political matters, encompassing Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Confucian aesthetics during this period can be categorized into three main branches: 1. 经学美学 (Aesthetics of Classics): This branch explores the aesthetic characteristics of the Confucian Six Classics, including the Book of Songs, Book of Documents, Rites, Yijing (I Ching), Music, and Spring and Autumn Annals, as well as the new interpretations by Han Confucian scholars. 2. 文学美学 (Aesthetics of Literature): It considers literature's transition from a knowledge-based concept to an institutional one, influenced by overflowing aesthetic factors, resulting in literature with modern characteristics. 3. 艺术美学 (Aesthetics of Art): This branch primarily examines the Confucian understanding of the relationship between “经” (classics) and “艺” (art), extending from the artistic aspects within the Six Classics to

general art. The integration of these three dimensions—classics, literature, and art—forms the core framework of Han Dynasty aesthetics.

4.2.6 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher selected the highest-quality burial artifacts from the tomb of the Western Han Dynasty's Haihunhou, nominated by 30 experts, as the research subject. Through an analysis of the functional aspects, aesthetic perspectives, and decorative craftsmanship of these funerary artifacts, it becomes evident that they vividly embody the ideological principles of Neo-Confucianism during the Han Dynasty.

During the Han Dynasty, a new school of Confucianism emerged, represented by the great Confucian Dong Zhongshu, which became the ruling school of Confucianism for several generations of dynasties in the future. Dong Zhongshu based his thinking on Confucianism, but also absorbed and integrated many other schools of thought, such as Taoism, Legalism, Mohism, and Yin-Yang. The positive elements of the theories of the pre-Qin philosophers, which were interrelated, complementary, and mutually reinforcing, were concentrated and strengthened here, and integrated with the basic ideas of Confucianism. The theories of Daoism, Huang Laoxue, such as the theory of Dao, the theory of essence and spirit, natural inaction, yin and yang, the theory of power and strategy, and the theory of love and qi health preservation, all had a profound influence on Dong Zhongshu's Confucianism and became an important part of the new Confucianism of the Han Dynasty.

Researchers found that the burial artifacts of the Haihunhou reflect the prevailing culture of lavish burials during that era. These artifacts served various purposes: Symbolizing Identity and Power, Items like seals, three-legged bronze tripods, and dragon-shaped jade ornaments were used to denote status and authority. Displaying Aristocratic Life and Rituals, Bronze bells (BianZhong) and bronze vessels adorned with phoenix and bird motifs showcased the refined lifestyle of nobility. Conveying Spiritual Aspirations, Decorated bronze chariots and horses featuring deer and phoenix imagery symbolized the desire for auspicious creatures and ascension to

the heavens. Recording Human Information, Wooden and bamboo slips (jian du and mu du) contained written records.

The aesthetic qualities of the Haihunhou's burial artifacts are closely tied to Neo-Confucian thought. Jade artifacts, in particular, exhibit a distinct feature: the fusion of stone material with decorative imagery. For instance, dragon-shaped jade ornaments, repurposed from Shang dynasty jade cong, conveyed communication with divine beings. Similarly, the dragon-phoenix-chimera jade pendant reflected both the hierarchical status of the Han imperial family and the concept of divine protection. Bronze artifacts combined functionality with aesthetics. The phoenix, deer, and cloud motifs on bronze vessels revealed the Han people's belief in the immortality of the soul and the interconnectedness between heaven and humanity. The harmonious integration of form and content exemplified the Neo-Confucian concept of "beauty in harmony." This aesthetic philosophy emphasized political and social harmony, aligning with the Han rulers' focus on ritual (li) and music (yue). The inscriptions on bamboo and wooden slips showcased the cultural beauty of Eastern Han China. Calligraphy, with its distinctive Eastern characteristics, adorned these artifacts. The visual form of characters on objects demonstrated both practical and aesthetic qualities, representing the intersection of daily life and art. The orderly geometry of characters conveyed a sense of beauty, whether flowing or precise, curved or straight, thick or thin. This stylistic diversity reflected artistic aesthetics.

The decorative craftsmanship of the Haihunhou's burial artifacts drew from the Qin-Chu cultural heritage, emphasizing simplicity and elegance. Among the decorative motifs, dragon imagery dominated. On bronze artifacts, dragon motifs were concise and pure, enhancing their elegance and solemnity. Jade artifacts, with their intricate dragon carvings, not only exhibited exquisite craftsmanship but also held significant aesthetic value. For instance, the dragon-phoenix-chimera jade pendant exemplified the Daoist concept of yin and yang. Its powerful lines, delicate details, and dynamic composition showcased the extraordinary imagination of ancient artisans.

In summary, the Haihunhou's burial artifacts provide valuable insights into the Neo-Confucian ideology of the Han Dynasty. Their functional, aesthetic, and symbolic aspects reveal a rich cultural tapestry, where form and meaning harmoniously coexist.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter summarizes and analyzes the research findings on the artifacts unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb, with a particular focus on seals, dragon motifs, bamboo slips, and bronze objects. By comprehensively summarizing the previous chapters' research, researchers delve into the social organization and aesthetic value reflected in the tomb artifacts. Additionally, researchers explore potential directions for future research and offer recommendations, aiming to provide a fresh perspective for the study of the Haihunhou tomb artifacts.

5.1 Research Introduction

This study employs methods such as literature analysis, field investigation, and case analysis. It selects 30 artifacts unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb. From the functional aspects, aesthetics, and decorative techniques of these material products, as well as the burial items reflecting Western Han burial culture, the study explores the unique social organization and aesthetic values during the Western Han period.

5.1.1 Social Organizations

The elaborate burial culture during the Western Han Dynasty served the purpose of reinforcing imperial authority. It aligned with the philosophical concept of "harmony between heaven and humanity" advocated by Dong Zhongshu, confirming the idea of "divine right of kings." Additionally, it ensured the continuity of the principles of loyalty and filial piety. The Western Han burial culture was influenced not only by Daoist beliefs in immortality and the cyclical nature of existence but also by Confucian values that upheld ritual and music systems to maintain the interests of the ruling class. As a political tool, Western Han funeral practices directly solidified the hierarchical social structure through elaborate burial ceremonies. In this chapter, researchers take a reverse approach, examining the social status and rank of Liu He (Emperor Fei of the Western Han) based on the quality, quantity, and specifications of his attire and accompanying burial items.

5.1.2 Aesthetic Value

In this chapter, the researchers selected 30 artifacts from the tomb of the Western Han Haihunhou as the research objects. Combining these artifacts with specific historical content from the Western Han period, the researchers preliminarily explore the aesthetic and cultural characteristics of some tomb artifacts from the Haihunhou. This exploration aims to elucidate the aesthetic cultural connotations of that specific historical period and its particular experiential forms.

It is evident that the aesthetic values of the Haihunhou tomb artifacts absorbed and integrated various philosophical ideas from Han Dynasty Neo-Confucianism, including Daoism, Legalism, Mohism, and Yin-Yang principles. The aesthetic content of these tomb artifacts is rich, highlighting the political, ethical, religious, and philosophical aspects of Western Han culture. The contours, images, and decorative patterns on the Haihunhou tomb artifacts are diverse, emphasizing the experiential forms of Western Han aesthetic culture.

Notably, the jade objects unearthed from the Haihunhou's tomb exhibit a significant feature: the combination of stone material with decorative imagery. This conveys specific aesthetic connotations, such as communication with deities, the interpretation of the imperial hierarchy, and the belief in divine protection. Additionally, the bronze bells (Bianzhong) have become a practical study for governing the Western Han state. The decorative patterns on these bells reflect the fusion of Han and Chu cultural ideas. Finally, the majority of inscribed bamboo slips (jiandu) primarily consist of Confucian classics and commentaries, indicating that Confucian thought had become the orthodox ideology of the time and the official state consciousness.

5.2 Results and Discussion

Based on extensive research findings and on-site investigations, this study systematically analyzes and interprets the Western Han period's social organization and aesthetic values reflected in the art objects from the Haihunhou's tomb. It is the first comprehensive and systematic study of its kind. By applying concepts related to social roles and rules, as well as theories from aesthetics and cultural studies, the research fills

a significant gap in understanding. It may also serve as a valuable reference for scholars in other fields.

5.2.1 Social Organization

5.2.1.1 Elaborate Burial Culture of “heaven and humanity as one”

Inheriting from the pre-Qin period and influenced by social, political, economic, and cultural factors, the concept of funerals during the Western Han dynasty gradually evolved and formed a comprehensive system. The opulence of the burial artifacts in the tomb of Haihunhou reflects the Daoist concept of the unity of heaven and humanity in life and death. The idea of ‘heaven and humanity as one’ is a crucial aspect of the Western Han funeral system. It elucidates the relationship between ‘heaven’ and ‘humanity.’ In this context, ‘heaven’ refers to the universe, including the concept of ‘earth,’ and represents natural laws. Heaven operates according to its own rules, and humans should understand the way of heaven and harmonize with nature. The Western Han concept of ‘heaven and humanity as one’ manifests in the mutual resonance between heaven and humans, as well as the harmonious unity of heaven, earth, and humanity. The burial artifacts in the Haihunhou’s tomb exemplify the rich expression of the idea of harmony between humans and nature.

Compared to existing literature, Western Han culture of lavish burials was influenced by Daoist thought on the unity of heaven and humanity, which aligns with the viewpoint proposed by Han Guohe in his research on “Qin, Han, and Wei funerary practices”(Guohe, 1999). Han Guohe points out that from an ideological perspective, luxurious funerals are related to people’s views on life and death, ancestor worship, and the unity of heaven and humanity. People hoped that the deceased could continue their existence in an environment similar to their earthly life. However, the focus of Han Guohe’s paper is an overview of funeral systems, tomb forms, and burial goods throughout the Qin, Han, Wei, and Jin periods (approximately 640 years from 221 BCE to 420 CE). This study aims to center on the Haihunhou, emphasizing the funeral rituals during the Western Han period (approximately 210 years from 202 BCE to 9 CE).

In his work “Research on Han Dynasty Funeral Rites” (Zhijun, 2006), Fan Zhijun suggests that the extravagant burials of the Haihunhou were influenced by

various factors, including societal norms, institutional practices, customs, habits, and ideological beliefs. Additionally, the subjective burial wishes of the tomb owner or their descendants contributed to the opulent funerary practices. This phenomenon of lavish tomb burials became prevalent during the Western Han Dynasty and persisted despite occasional prohibitions. However, this perspective differs from the viewpoint presented in your paper. Fan Zhijun's research attributes the prevalence of elaborate burials during the Western Han period to the tomb owner's personal desires rather than active promotion by the ruling class. Instead, this study proposes that the concept of "harmony between heaven and humanity" (天人合一) served as the theoretical foundation for Han Dynasty luxurious burial culture. This ideology emphasized alignment with nature, reverence for celestial principles, and the pursuit of an immortal "Path of Tranquility" (安息大道). The ruling elite of that time advocated for these ideas to strengthen imperial authority.

5.2.1.2 Funeral supplies of the culture of "loyalty and filial piety"

The diversity of burial goods accompanying the Haihunhou reflects the strict social hierarchy and ancestral beliefs of the Western Han Dynasty. The phenomenon of lavish burials is closely tied to the concept of "loyalty and filial piety" propagated during the reign of Emperor Wu of Han. Filial piety served as the ethical foundation for extravagant funerals. In Western Han society, which operated as a small-scale agrarian economy centered around individual households, promoting filial piety was essential to maintaining family and clan stability. The saying "Filial piety and brotherly respect are the greatest virtues under heaven" emphasized the ruler's view that promoting filial piety was crucial for maintaining social order and stability. Filial piety extended beyond one's lifetime and was demonstrated even in death. Later generations expressed filial piety and grief through elaborate funeral ceremonies, which gradually became a societal benchmark for assessing an individual's filial devotion. Rulers rewarded filial sons by allowing them to conduct opulent burials for their deceased family members. Additionally, rulers used this criterion to select talented individuals. Consequently, the idea emerged that filial piety could be demonstrated through funeral

practices and could lead to both reputation and material gain. Whether genuine or driven by ambition, lavish burials were considered acts of filial piety, and a societal norm even emerged: "Unable to care for parents in life, but reverent in death."

Compared to existing literature, researchers have found that the Chinese people placed great emphasis on the concept of life and death in the funeral culture of the Haihunhou. This aligns with the viewpoint presented by Guo Jing in the 2019 paper "The Life and Afterlife of a Western Han 'Covered Mirror' from the tomb of Haihunhou (59 BCE)" (Guo, 2019). However, there is a distinction: Guo Jing's study primarily interprets the "Covered Mirror" as a funerary item from a different perspective. In contrast, this study focuses on jade artifacts as burial goods and provides a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the social system during the Western Han period through the lens of "burial with jade."

In 2019, Liu Aihua's article "Research on the Wine Culture of the Haihunhou State in Western Han: A Case Study of Banquet Vessels Unearthed from the Haihunhou tomb in Nanchang"(Aihua, 2019), examines the wine customs of the Haihunhou State using unearthed artifacts. The analysis of the upper-class nobility during the Western Han period reflects the social hierarchy of that time. Similarly, Zhang Wei and Ke Li's research in "Exploring the Music System of the Haihunhou State Based on Music Materials Unearthed from the tomb" (Wei & Li, 2019), analyzes the ritual music system and social hierarchy during the Haihunhou period from a musical perspective. These two studies share conceptual similarities with the present research. In this study, five different categories of burial goods are analyzed, focusing on the quantity, quality, and specifications of these accompanying items. Through this analysis, we further explore the social status and identity reflected by the burial goods, shedding light on the societal background and ideological concepts of the time.

The burial goods of Haihunhou reflect the strict social hierarchy based on the Confucian concept of "divine right of kingship" and the virtues of "loyalty and filial piety" during the Western Han period. This aligns with Xu Weimin's viewpoint in the paper "Reasons for the Prevalence of Elaborate Burials in the Haihunhou tomb during

the Western Han Period” (Weimin & Yanlin, 2022). Xu Weimin highlights that the large scale, well-equipped facilities, high burial rank, tall tomb mounds, spacious tomb areas, intact internal structures, and intricate designs of the tomb itself demonstrate the rigorous social hierarchy. Additionally, Cao Keping’s research in “Symbolic World of the Haihunhou tomb: A Study of Lu Decorative Patterns” (Keping et al., 2018), also points out the background of the prevalence of luxurious tombs during the Han Dynasty. As a social phenomenon, the emergence of elaborate tombs is influenced by various factors, including traditional customs, religion, and ideological systems. Considering the unique identity of the tomb owner, the opulent burial practices in the Haihunhou tomb have distinct reasons. This study primarily focuses on analyzing the reflection of the “divine right of kingship” and Confucian concepts related to social hierarchy through burial goods. For instance, the Haihunhou tomb, as a burial site for ancient royal nobility, features dragon motifs prominently in the unearthed artifacts, symbolizing the regal authority and legitimacy of rulers.

In summary, this study not only deepens and expands upon existing research but also presents new insights and discoveries. During the Han Dynasty, the practice of elaborate burials was prevalent, but it was limited to royal and noble families, local elites, and wealthy merchants. Ordinary impoverished people did not have the means to achieve such lavish funerals. Regarding the behavior of the imperial family, elaborate burials were characterized by a wide variety of accompanying items. The reasons behind these lavish burials were influenced by the concept of ‘treating death like life’ and the principles of loyalty and filial piety. The culture of filial piety developed in ancient China is deeply rooted in people's hearts. As one of the core values of traditional Chinese society, filial piety is not only the core of ethics and morality, but also an important part of Chinese culture. After the death of Liu He, his funeral was arranged by his children and close relatives. Since Liu He’s eldest son, Liu Guocong, had passed away before him, researchers can infer that Liu He’s funeral was organized by his wife and other children. Analyzing the Haihunhou's tomb as a special case reveals that burial

culture can be used to differentiate social organization and aristocratic populations during the Western Han period.

5.2.2 Aesthetic Value

The Western Han period was an important era in Chinese history, and its artistic style exhibited unique aesthetic characteristics. Building upon the foundation laid by the Qin dynasty, Western Han art integrated cultural traditions from various regions, resulting in a distinctive aesthetic style during the Han dynasty.

5.2.2.1 Functions of Materialized Products

In terms of the functions of unearthed artifacts, the art pieces from the Haihunhou's tomb serve purposes related to identity recognition and symbolic power. These artifacts were used extensively in daily life. After Haihunhou's death, these art pieces were buried alongside Liu He. This aligns with the viewpoint presented by Liu Kaiyun (2022) in the book 'Imperial System and Royal System: Revisiting the Music Suspension System in the Western Han the Haihunhou tomb'(yun & jie, 2022). The book discusses how the ritual of hanging chimes was imbued with hierarchical concepts and reflected the system of ritual music. In this study, researchers also explore the Western Han ritual music system, using the BianZhong (bronze bells) as an example. Researchers discuss their cultural and aesthetic value, suggesting that the Confucian ritual music ideology embodied in the BianZhong began to serve Emperor Han Wu's rule.

Zhou Liang's article 'Nature and Dating of the "Jitian Ding" Unearthed from the Haihunhou tomb' (Liang & Chao, 2023) mentions that the jitian ding (a type of bronze vessel) served as a ceremonial object for the royal Jitian ritual during the Western Han period. This aligns with our research viewpoint. However, our study further analyzes the shape and inscriptions on the jitian ding, confirming the Han Dynasty's economic ideology centered around agriculture. It also reflects the economic conditions of Changyi Wang's (Marquis of Changyi) land, which primarily relied on agricultural production during the Western Han period.

Additionally, our research delves into the aesthetic functions of various artifacts found in the Haihunhou tomb. These include items with dragon motifs, such as

seals, three-legged bronze cauldrons, and jade ornaments. Researchers also explore tomb artifacts that depict noble life and ritual music, such as Bianzhong and phoenix-shaped bronze handles. Furthermore, there are burial objects aimed at auspicious symbolism and guiding souls to the heavens, such as bronze chariots adorned with deer and phoenix birds. Finally, researchers examine artifacts used for recording human information, such as bamboo slips and wooden tablets.

5.2.2.2 Aesthetic

The aesthetic features of artifacts unearthed from the Haihunhou tomb vividly reflect the new Confucian thought during the Western Han Dynasty. Taking jade objects as an example, the combination of jade and decorative patterns embodies one of the traditional Confucian aesthetic ideals: “harmony in beauty.” However, this perspective differs from that presented in Li Wenjin’s article “Appreciation of Jade Pendants in the Shape of Wei from the Haihunhou tomb of the Han Dynasty” (Wenjin & Lijun, 2018). Li Wenjin argues that the Han Dynasty’s Confucianism became infused with religious elements, leading to the rise of divination and astrology. These trends were reflected in the decorative themes of artistic craftsmanship, which prominently featured motifs related to immortality, heavenly ascension, and auspicious beliefs.

The appearance of tiger patterns, phoenix-bird motifs, dragon patterns, and cloud designs on the Wei-shaped jade pendants exemplifies the ruling class’s pursuit of longevity, immortality, and divine aspirations. These motifs represent a unique fusion of the Han Dynasty’s concept of ascension to the heavens with earthly realities, reflecting people’s strong desire for posthumous transcendence and well-wishes. The emergence of divination and astrological thought during the Han Dynasty influenced the distinct decorative style found in these artifacts. This style, rich in elegance, allowed Han nobility to derive spiritual enjoyment and aesthetic satisfaction. Additionally, in the case of bronze vessels, Fang Hongyan’s article “The Harmonious Beauty of the wild Goose-Fish Lamp from the Haihunhou tomb of the Western Han Dynasty”(Hongyan, 2022), aligns with the viewpoint presented here. Fang Hongyan emphasizes the symbolism of the wild goose and fish in terms of “harmony in beauty,” consistent with Confucian

aesthetics. However, this study further elaborates on the lamp's form, lines, dynamics, and colors. By integrating the imagery and symbolism of the wild goose and fish, the lamp achieves a harmonious balance between form and content, symbolizing harmony between heaven and earth and among all people.

5.2.2.3 Decorative techniques

The decorative craftsmanship of the artifacts from the Haihunhou tomb is based on Qin-Chu culture and emphasizes simplicity and elegance. This aligns with the research perspectives of scholars like Cao Keping. In their article "The Symbolic World of the Haihunhou tomb: A Study of Lu Decorative Patterns"(Keping et al., 2018), they discuss how cloud patterns, mountain-shaped motifs, and dragon and phoenix designs are widely used in the tomb's artifacts. Dragon motifs, phoenix motifs, and other mythical creatures are common decorative elements found on objects from the Haihunhou tomb. Similar motifs, including dragon patterns, white tiger patterns, phoenix patterns, and animal face patterns, are also present on chariots and other vehicles, consistent with the findings mentioned in this study. The study highlights dragon motifs as a prominent decorative feature. Examining dragon motifs on various vessels, it reveals that the Han Dynasty bronze artifacts unearthed from the Haihunhou tomb exhibit novel shapes and styles not seen in previous periods. The preference for understated dragon motifs became a hallmark of bronze artifacts from the Haihunhou tomb, such as the dragon-shaped bronze hooks and gold-inlaid bronze vessels. This shift suggests that dragons, once revered as totems and divine beings in ancient times, gradually transformed into practical decorative patterns.

Taking the example of the "fengniao" (phoenix) motif on the "tiliangyou" (a type of bronze vessel), studies by Tian Xiaojuan(Xiaojuan & Jianling, 2016), Tao Li(Li & Yan, 2019), and Zhou Yanming(Yanming, 2016) all agree that the long-tailed phoenix motif on the "tiliangyou" body represents a typical style seen in early Western Zhou Dynasty bronze vessels. Further comparison of the phoenix motifs in terms of form and decoration with those from the Daijiawan site in Baoji and the Shigushan site reveals consistent stylistic features and distinct regional characteristics. Consequently, it can be

inferred that the casting of these early Western Zhou phoenix-patterned “tiliangyou” vessels occurred in the Baoji region. The presence of such phoenix motifs in the early Western Han Haihunhou tomb indicates that they were part of the personal collection of The Haihunhou himself.

In summary, the researchers selected 30 artifacts from the Western Han Haihunhou tomb as the research objects. Analyzing these artifacts from the perspectives of their functionality, aesthetics, and decorative techniques, the author found that it is possible to analyze the form and content of burial objects from an artistic standpoint. Additionally, the ‘aesthetic culture’ theory can be applied to analyze aesthetics in the context of modern aesthetics.

5.3 Suggestions

1. This study has preliminarily explored the relationship between the art in the Haihunhou tomb and the social organization of the Western Han Dynasty, but there is still room for further research. Future research can analyze the symbols, patterns and symbolic meanings in the art more carefully, revealing their deep connections with social organization, social status and social roles. Through in-depth research, researcher can more accurately understand the functions and roles of art in social organization, and how they reflect and shape the values of society.

2. Based on existing research, scholars can further advance the study of the Haihunhou and related topics from the following perspectives:

First, from a holistic historical perspective, scholars should systematically grasp the relevant research on the Haihunhou. Although there are numerous academic works on the topic, covering areas such as politics, economy, culture, technology, craftsmanship, religion, history, and music, most scholars tend to focus on specific domains. There is a lack of comprehensive historical consideration and a holistic academic understanding. Therefore, it is advisable for future research on the Haihunhou to be grounded in a broader historical context, incorporating it into studies of Western Han history, ancient Chinese politics, economy, culture, and society for further exploration.

Secondly, exploring different theoretical perspectives, such as studying the decorative patterns of Haihunhou tomb artifacts from a semiotic angle, could yield diverse research directions and conclusions.



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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

The Haihunhou Tomb Map



FIGURE 77 The Haihunhou Tomb map

Source: Photographed by the Author

APPENDIX B

Nanchang Han Dynasty the Haihunhou State Site Museum



FIGURE 78 Nanchang Han Dynasty the Haihunhou State Site Museum

Source: Photographed by the Author

APPENDIX C

The History and Culture of the Haihunhou State in the Han Dynasty



FIGURE 79 The History and Culture of the Haihunhou State in the Han Dynasty

Source: Photographed by the Author

APPENDIX D

Nanchang Han Dynasty the Haihunhou National Archaeological Site Park

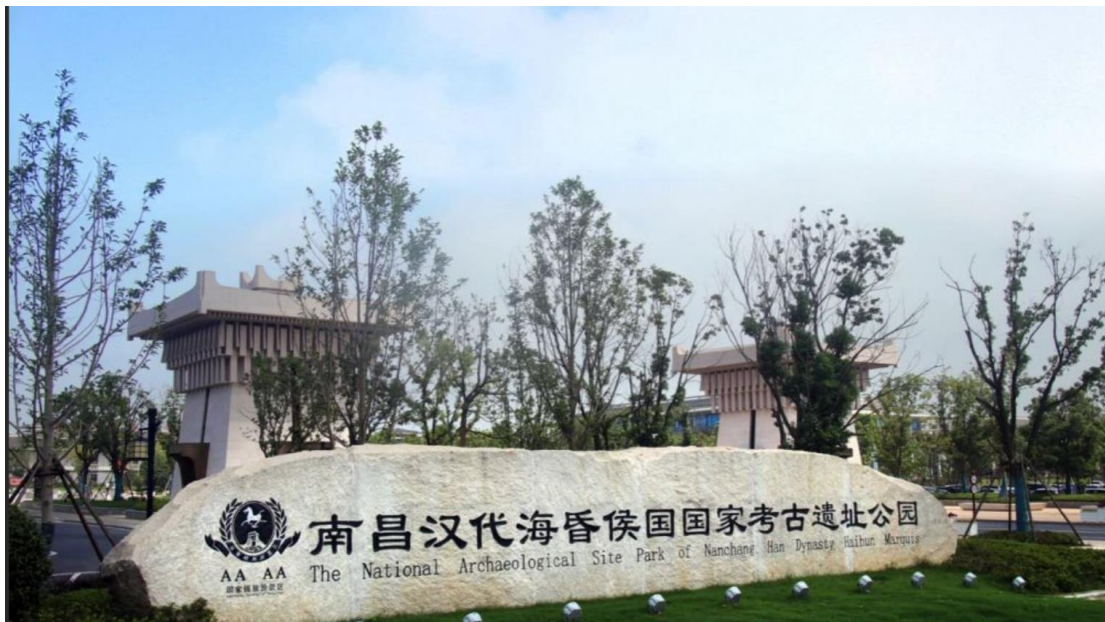


FIGURE 80 Nanchang Han Dynasty the Haihunhou National Archaeological Site Park

Source: Photographed by the Author

APPENDIX E

Map of the Haihunhou Tombs

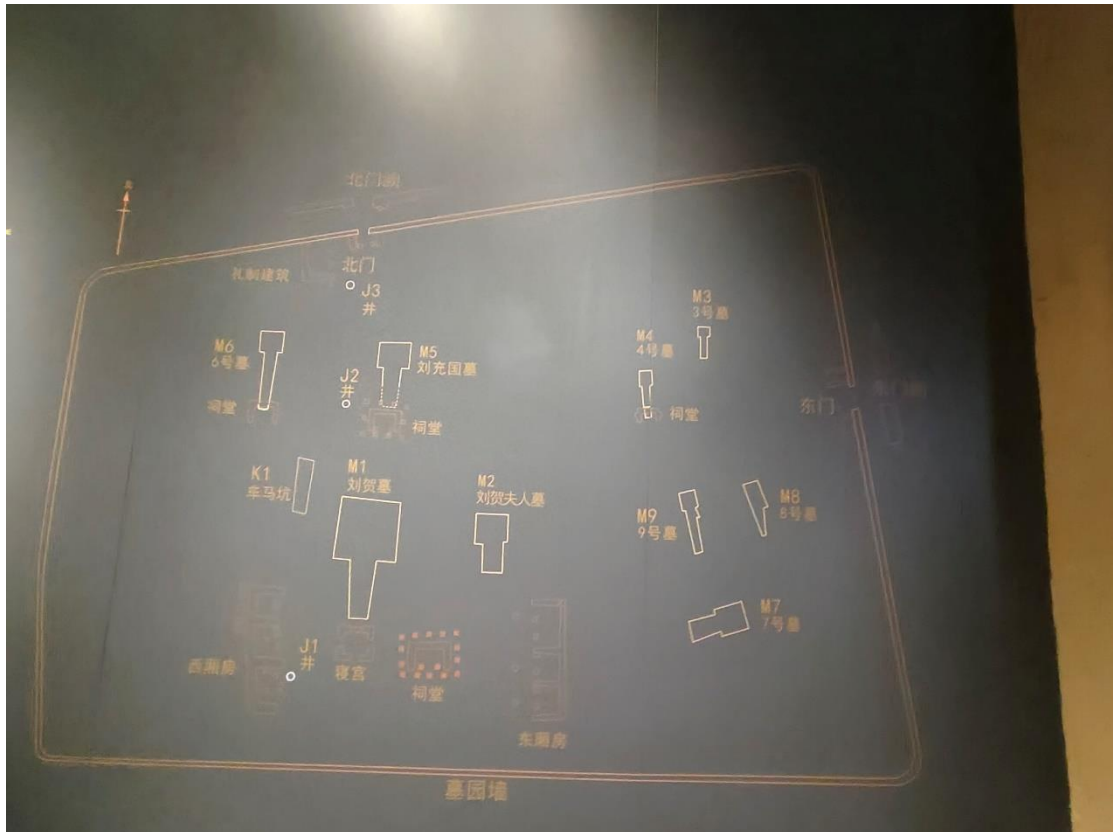


FIGURE 81 Map of the Haihunhou Tombs

Source: Photographed by the Author

APPENDIX F

Schematic diagram of the tomb chamber

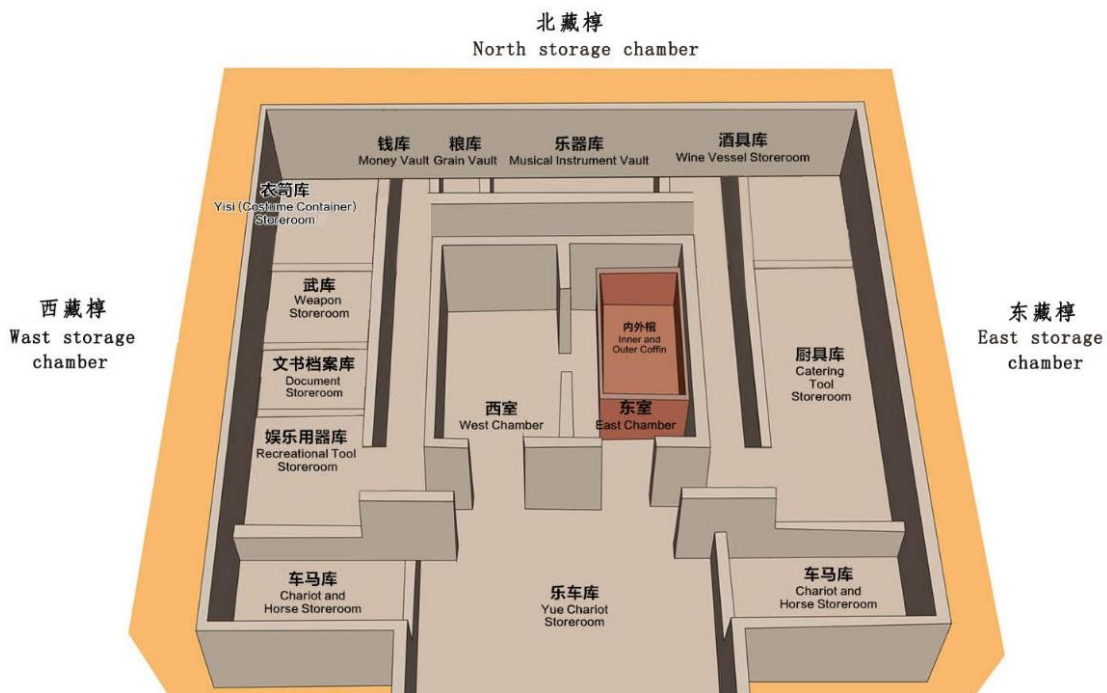


FIGURE 82 Schematic diagram of the tomb chamber

Source: Drawing by the Author

APPENDIX G

Tomb and coffin chamber of Liu He



FIGURE 83 Tomb and coffin chamber of Liu He

Source: Photographed by the Author

APPENDIX H

Bronze statue of Liu He

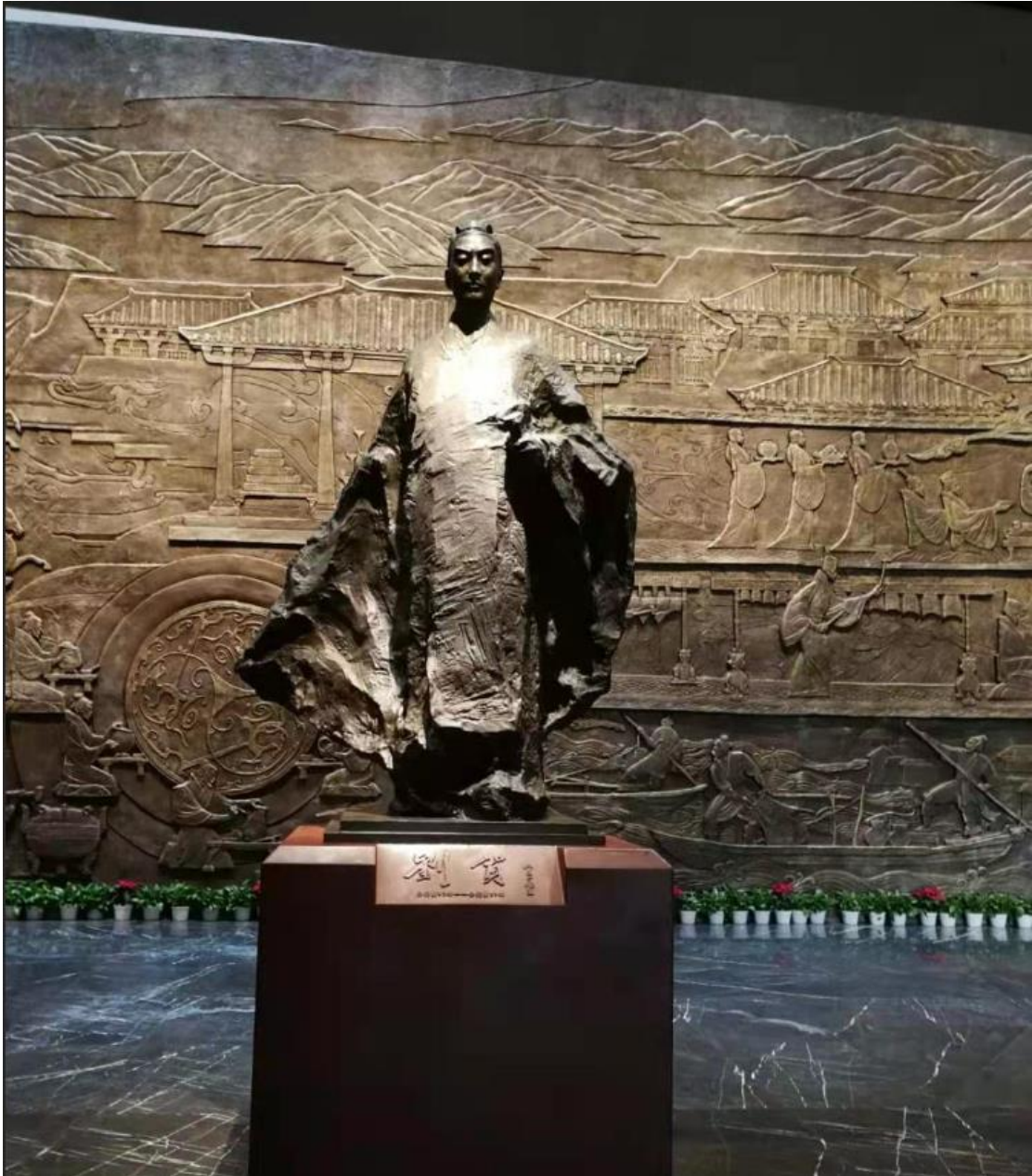


FIGURE 84 Bronze statue of Liu He

Source: Photographed by the Author

VITA

