

Archaeological Excavation in

CHINA

1949-1966

A. Gutkind Bulling

Much too little is known in this country about archaeological work and excavations carried out in China since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. In fact, the scale of work done in this field is unprecedented and perhaps surpasses excavations done in any other region of the world or by any other nation during this period. The flood of new material now available to students of Chinese archaeology and art is immense and has vastly increased and, to a certain extent, changed our knowledge of the development of Chinese civilization.

The policy of the People's Republic of China in regard to remains of the past was made clear from the beginning. Soon after its founding a Bureau of Cultural Relics (*Wên-wu kuan-li-chü*) was set up and the government promulgated a series of directives on the preservation of the national heritage and the advancement of research. The result was that quite considerable funds were allocated by the State for the restoration and maintenance of such places as the famous caves of Tun-huang, Yünkang and Lungmen as well as historic buildings and places, and last but not least, for archaeological excavations. Two lines were followed, the first being planned excavations on sites known or expected to contain important remains of the past. These were organized by the Institute of Archaeology of the Academia Sinica in Peking or its provincial branches or by provincial or local museums, departments of archaeology in universities or archaeological societies. To prevent damage to sites known to be rich in archaeological remains the State Council placed them under special protection. Among these were the region around Anyang, the site of the ancient capital of the Shang dynasty, some areas in the neighborhood of Sian (ancient Ch'ang-an) in Shensi, old Loyang in Honan, parts of Ch'ang-sha in Hunan.

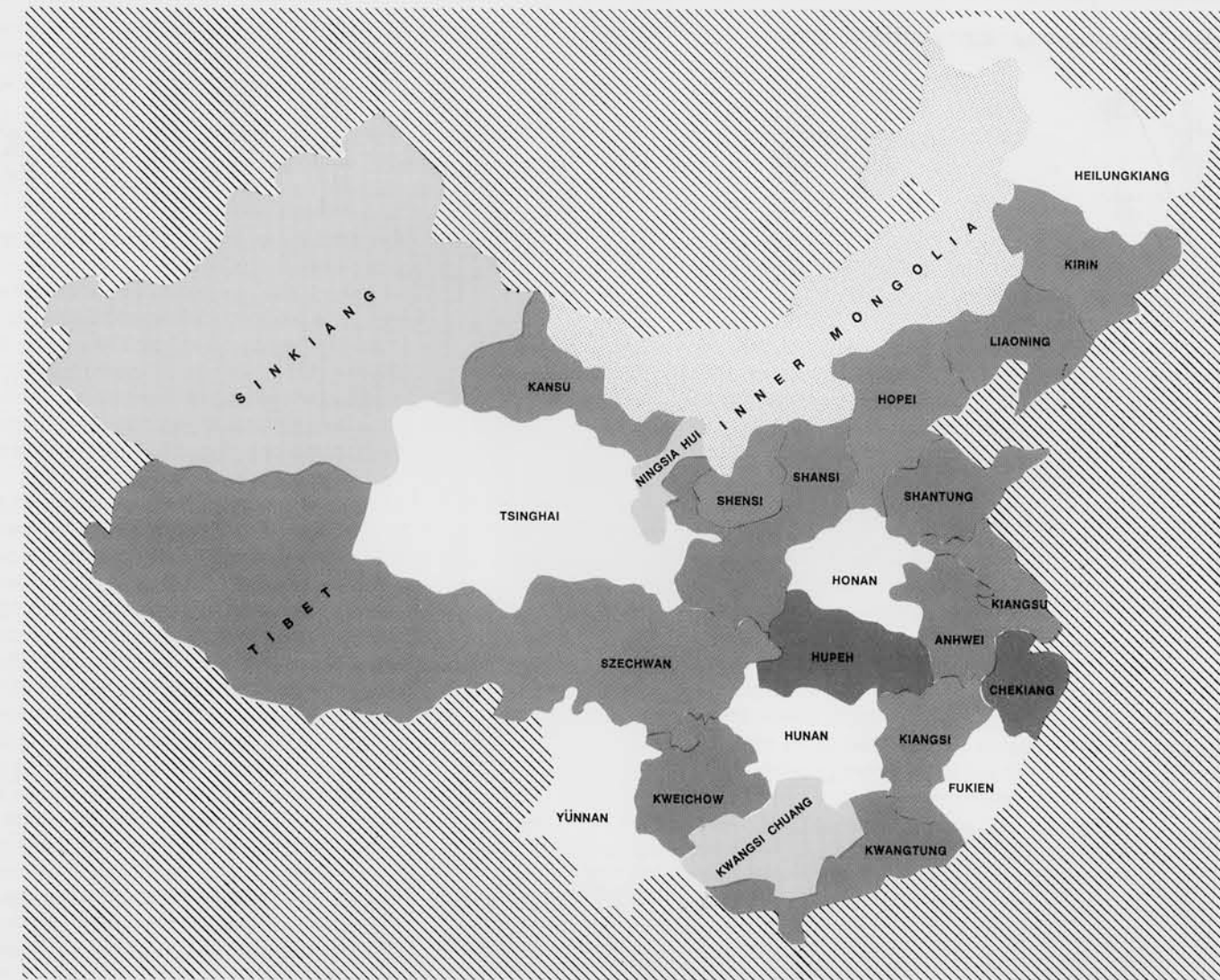
The other line concerned excavations resulting from chance discoveries in the course of such construction work as large projects for the conservation of water, the building of bridges, railways, factories and new cities, or during agricultural activities. That so much was discovered in this way is due to the fact that in China, as in Rome, the massive presence of the past reveals itself wherever the ground is disturbed to any depth. China is fortunate in that work demanding earth-moving jobs is still done by hand with shovels, baskets and simple tools and not, as in

the West, with large machines which destroy all evidence of the past.

During such chance discoveries the usual procedure is for workmen or farmers to immediately inform the authorities when they discover some remains of the past, be they part of an ancient building, a tomb, or other relics; then members of the provincial museum, the Office of Culture or other institutions are sent out to investigate the site. According to their recommendations, arrangements are then made for excavation by trained teams of local or provincial archaeologists attached to a government office, university or local or provincial museum, or, if the site is considered of national importance, members of the Archaeological Institute of the Academia Sinica are asked to take charge of the operation. At some of the major construction sites—for example, at the water conservation project at the San-mên gorge—archaeologists were in permanent attendance and were empowered, if necessary, to order construction work to be altered so as to preserve important discoveries. Most of the excavated objects were placed in provincial or local museums or sent to Peking. However, some sites were left as found and some tombs even partially re-buried to prevent damage.

In order to house the wealth of newly excavated material a great number of new museums have been built or installed in existing buildings, not only in provincial capitals but sometimes in small places near the sites of excavations. As long ago as 1958 the Bureau of Cultural Relics claimed that China in regard to the numbers of her museums ranked third in the world.

To stimulate the interest of the people in their past, excavated objects were shown in some large-scale exhibitions and an essential part of the success is due to the fact that the government took pains to make the people understand the value of information and objects gained in excavations. This was done by a mass movement for the preservation of antiquities. Everywhere in the country, not only in large cities but even in small villages, Associations for the Preservation of Antiquities were established. This explains why clandestine diggings which were rampant before 1949 have stopped completely. I am sure this is due not—as cynics believe—solely to the absence of private dealers and the impossibility of selling excavated objects but, to a large degree, to the changed attitude of the people. They look upon excavated objects with pride and want them properly preserved. In some excavation reports we are told that it was a poor peasant or soldier who discovered the ancient tomb or found some valuable relics when working in the fields.



Map of China showing 21 provinces: Anhwei, Chekiang, Fukien, Heilungkiang, Honan, Hopei, Kiangsu, Kiangsi, Kirin, Kwangtung, Kweichow, Liaoning, Shansi, Shantung, Shensi, Szechwan, Tsinghai, Yünnan; and 5 autonomous regions: Inner Mongolia, Kwangsi Chuang, Ningsia Hui, Tibet, Sinkiang.

Fortunately, up to the spring of 1966 several journals reported regularly on excavations and archaeological work, in many cases soon after the excavations, so that, by and large, information about the work was available. Certainly not all excavations were reported in papers available to us and I am sure that a great many surprises will await us when we visit China. As far as we can judge from publications, the fifties and early sixties were periods of most intense archaeological work. During that time, in addition to excavation reports in archaeological journals, a series of monographs of field work carried out by the Field Workers of the Archaeological Institute of the Academia Sinica was published, as well as a number of handsomely produced large monographs and small illustrated booklets. There appears a growing tendency to consider excavations foremost as teamwork undertaken by an organization and to minimize the importance of the single individual in charge of the operation. This is the reason why in reports of excavations the name of the group is given first of all, e.g., "Workteam of the Archaeological Department of the provincial museum in such and such a place" though the names of the participants are mentioned in the introduction and those who wrote the report are allowed to sign it with their names.

However, except for field work, individual scholars sign for the work they do.

The acute shortage in 1949 of archaeologists trained in Western methods was overcome by training a great number of students and members of museums and other institutions in modern techniques of field work, academic research, laboratory work and other relevant subjects. Scholars familiar with various branches of Chinese literature and history were called in to deal with epigraphical, historical and other aspects of documentation. The gradual improvement of archaeological work can be followed over the years in publications.

Excavation finds range in time from palaeolithic or even earlier periods through the last Imperial dynasty, the Ch'ing. In variety they include houses, temples, palaces, villages, city walls, cities and, most important in China, tombs which, all through the ages, were the repository of objects used in funerals and other rites as well as in daily life. For this reason this survey will be devoted mainly to tombs. It should be understood that the material is enormous. However, I hope that the few selected examples will suffice to make clear the impact of these discoveries on our knowledge of Chinese civilization and its achievements.

Dr. A. Gutkind Bulling studied at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin and at Newnham College, Cambridge, receiving the degrees of M. Lit. and Ph.D., the subject of her dissertation being *Representational Art in the Han Period*. She has given courses at Birkbeck College, University of London, and at several universities on the continent. She has written numerous articles on Chinese art and two books, *The Meaning of China's Most Ancient Art* and *The Decoration of Mirrors of the Han Period*. In 1964 she joined the Dr. Sackler Translation Project at Columbia University and has since translated a number of Chinese books and articles. In 1966 she was appointed a Research Associate at the Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia.



1 House foundations at Pan-p'o ts'un. Generally huts were about 5 meters in diameter. Entrance from the south through low covered porch about 70 cm. wide.

Hsin Chung-kuo ti k'ao-ku shou-hou (Archaeology in New China), edited by the Institute of Archaeology, Peking 1962. Pl. 1.



2 First time that a Yang-shao type of pottery vessel was found decorated with a human face. Since then another similar one has been discovered in Shensi (Honan). Height, 16.4 cm.; diameter, 44.5 cm.

Archaeology in New China, op. cit. Pl. 5.

3 Tomb in Wu-kuan ts'un (Anyang), province of Honan. It was laid out on a south/north axis and including the ramps measured 45 meters. The actual coffin chamber had been built of wood—now decayed. In its very center a hole was dug underneath the coffin. Such a hole usually contains only the skeleton of a dog but here, in addition, was found that of a man. On the platform above were found human skeletons and impressions of coffins. Inside the tumulus a few other skeletons were found and 32 human skulls. Pits in the northern passage contained remains of horses. Skeletons of birds, dogs and deer were found at several other places.

Archaeology in New China, op. cit. Pl. XXXIII (see: *K'ao-ku Hsüeh-pao* 1959. N. 5. Pp. 1-61).

A great number of neolithic sites have been discovered in all parts of China and partly excavated. The most spectacular site is the one found east of Sian in Pan-p'o ts'un in the province of Shensi. It was discovered by chance and preliminary investigations were started by local archaeologists in 1953; in 1954 and 1955 the Institute of Archaeology of the Academia Sinica took charge of the excavation. It revealed that the site had been occupied for a considerable length of time. The upper level showed the remains of a complete village of the late Neolithic period, that is the later part of the third millennium B.C. It covered altogether an area of 2.5 acres. The foundations of houses were well preserved. Some of them were round in shape (Fig. 1), some rectangular. Some were built half subterranean (about one meter below ground level), others above ground with a low wall constructed of clay and apparently baked by fire. In the center of each hut were the remains of a fireplace often pear-shaped. Postholes around the center show the position of wooden posts supporting the thatched roof. Round the houses are remnants of many storage pits. Interestingly, the village had been laid out according to a fixed plan, the huts were arranged in a circle around a larger rectangular building (measuring about 13.5 meters from south to north) which may or may not have served as a communal hall. The village had been surrounded by a moat, outside of which was discovered the cemetery. However, small children were interred inside the village in buried jars. Remnants of pottery kilns and bone implements indicated the location of workshops. This whole village has been roofed over and preserved as a museum.

Coarse gray and red painted pottery found at the site confirmed that it belonged to the so-called Yang-shao culture; however it included some decorations never seen before (Fig. 2).

Another surprise was the discovery of pre-Anyang bronze vessels around Chêng-chou in Honan. Already in the early thirties some royal tombs of the later part of the Shang dynasty had been excavated in the neighborhood of Anyang (province of Honan). Excavations at this place were resumed after 1949 and a number of tombs and living places dating from the 13th to the 11th century B.C. excavated. One of the most important discoveries was the tomb in Wu-kuan ts'un excavated by the Institute of Archaeology in 1950/51 (Fig. 3). It resembles in its lay-out and construction other royal tombs found in this region, although some of them had ramps on all four sides, not only on their northern and southern sides as does this one. The tomb had been entered a long time ago by tomb robbers and nothing much of its valuable content left. However, it raised some interesting questions in regard to the society of the Shang period. On the platform above the coffin chamber were found the remains of 41 human skeletons, 17 on the east and 24 on the west side. Who were they? Against the idea that they were sacrificed slaves are the facts that

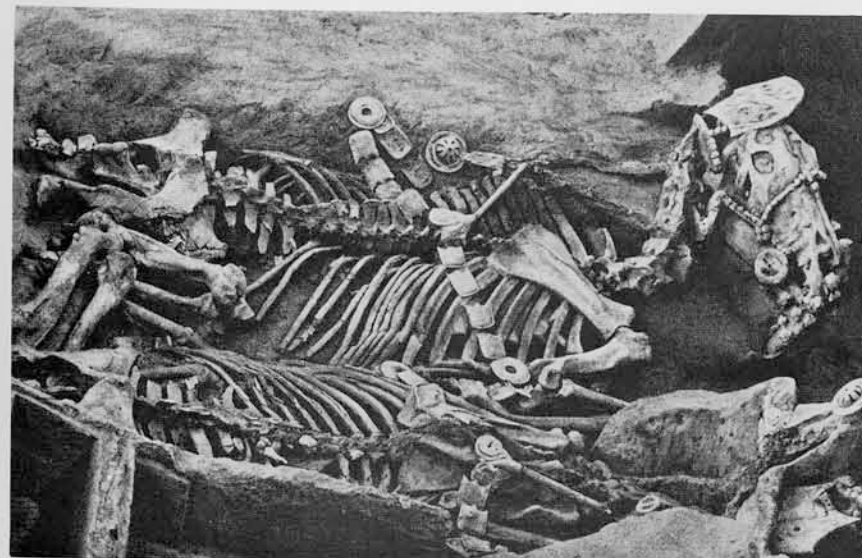
4 Ritual bronze vessel (square ting) of the later part of the Shang dynasty. It was found by peasants in the Ning-hsiang District in the province of Hunan in 1959. Its four sides are decorated with masks, a unique feature never seen before. However, it links the Shang civilization with its neolithic forebears because in 1958 a potsherd with a human face in relief had been discovered in Shensi. (*Kaogu* 1959, 11, Pl. 8, pp. 588-591, found in Chiang-hsi ts'un). Size of ting: height, 38.5 cm.

Wên-wu 1960. 10, on cover.



5 Horse-and-chariot pit excavated at Chang-chia-p'o, Chang-an District, province of Shensi. Western Chou period (10/9th century B.C.), tomb No. 2. Bridles and muzzles adorned with cowrie shells; frontlet covers the nose of one horse and between its ears is fixed a bronze animal mask. It has round cheek-pieces; harness and yokes are covered with bronze plaques of different shapes and with a rattle.

Archaeology in New China, op. cit. Pl. XXXVII (see: *Kaogu* 1959. 10. pp. 528-530).



some had been buried in coffins and all had been given such valuable gifts as weapons for the men, headdresses with turquoise for the women, bronze vessels and objects of jade. Dr. Magdalene von Dewall¹ thinks that they were members of the aristocracy put on the platform according to the rank they held in the feudal hierarchical society, those placed nearer the coffin pit ranking higher than those nearer the wall. However, this theory is open to doubt because in a civilization based on ancestor worship it seems unlikely that members not belonging to the same clan would be buried in the same tomb. (Common people or slaves, that is all those not belonging to the aristocracy, were not believed to have ancestors in the religious sense of the word.) Ritual customs survive longer than anything else and in later periods members of the same family were sometimes buried together in one tomb. For this reason it seems more likely that all those buried on the platform were members of the royal family. It is well known from many examples in literature of later times that coffins were kept above ground for a considerable time till an appropriate date for burial arrived. We may thus argue that the reason why some were placed in coffins may have been that they died before the king and their burial delayed till their coffins could be interred in the royal tomb. Furthermore, the building and closing of such a tomb took a long time. The bodies of those members of the royal clan who died before the tomb was finally closed would then simply be placed on the platform.

As in many other tombs of this period there is ample evidence that human and animal sacrifices were part of the burial rites. A number of pits near the tomb contained the skeletons of human sacrifices, mostly ten to a pit, some of them headless.

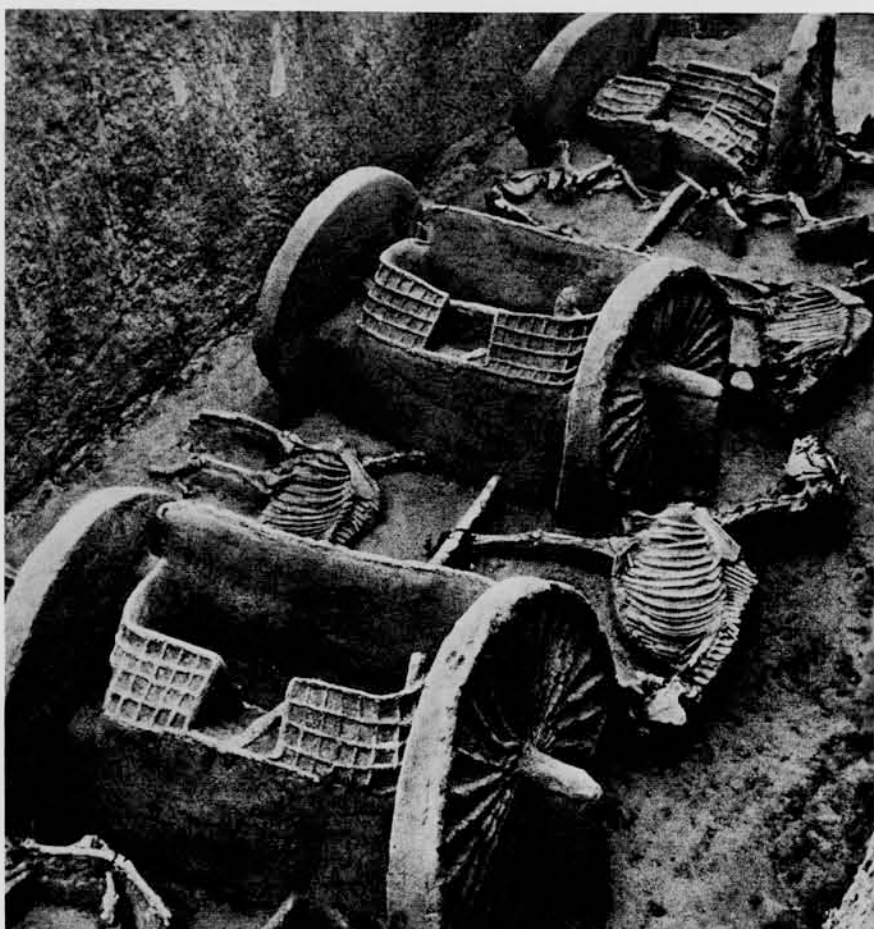
A great number of ritual bronze vessels of the Shang and Chou periods have been excavated, in some cases as in Fig. 4 revealing decorations never seen before on Shang ritual vessels.

Many horse-and-chariot pits in the neighborhood of tombs of nobles of the Shang and Chou periods were excavated in various parts of the country. The Institute of Archaeology conducted a great number of excavations in the neighborhood of Sian (province of Shensi) between 1955 and 1960. Among them were horse-and-chariot pits like the one shown in Fig. 5. It was found close to the tomb of a noble of the Western Chou period (11th-early 8th century B.C.). Although not seen in this picture others show that small bronze bells were often suspended from the necks of horses (and of dogs).

Among the chance discoveries we may mention those made during the construction of the water reservoir in the San-mên gorge. For example, a burial ground containing 234 tombs was found in Shang-ts'un-ling in the Shan District of the province of Honan. It proved to be that of the short-lived State of Kuo which was destroyed in 655 B.C., the tombs thus dating from the late Western Chou period to the middle of the seventh century B.C. Most of the tombs had not been robbed. Of the three horse-and-chariot pits found in this place, one contained as many as ten chariots and twenty horses. Again, the excavation was carried out by the Institute of Archaeology. Fig. 6 shows the quality of their work. The actual chariots had long disintegrated but their shapes were retained in the clay. Nothing had been damaged—not the spokes of the wheels, the pole between the horses, nor the box of the chariot with its low screen and opening at the back. The importance of chariots and horses is well docu-

mented in the *Shih-ching*, the Book of Songs, compiled in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C.² The burying of chariots and horses in tombs or in special pits on the occasion of the death of members of the aristocracy continues all through the Chou period and in a few cases even during the Han period, providing us with information of the changes in the construction of chariots and in the harness used.

For instance, Fig. 7 shows the reconstruction of a chariot found in a burial pit in Liu-li-kê (Huihsien, Honan). Typical of all chariots in the later part of the Chou period are the relatively thin spokes which give the wheels an elegant look. It is important that at this time, that is in the Warring States period (481-255 B.C.), the dishing of wheels was already known. According to Professor Joseph Needham³ this was introduced into Europe not before A.D. 1500. It is important because it gives the wheels an added strength against side-thrusts.



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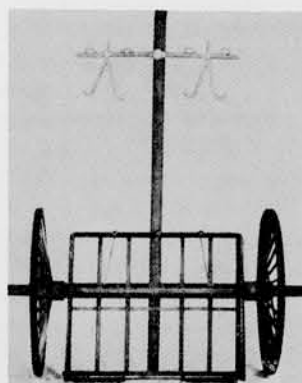
Horse-and-chariot pit excavated at Shang-ts'un-ling, province of Honan, tomb No. 1727 (burial ground of the State of Kuo, 8th to middle of 7th century B.C.). Harness and bronze fittings of the chariot had been removed before burial. The chariot had a central pole and the two wheels were linked by an axle. The box of the chariot was mounted on the cross formed by the pole and axle.

Archaeology in New China, op. cit. Pl. XLVII (see: *Shang-ts'un-ling Kuo-kuo mu-ti*. Peking 1959).

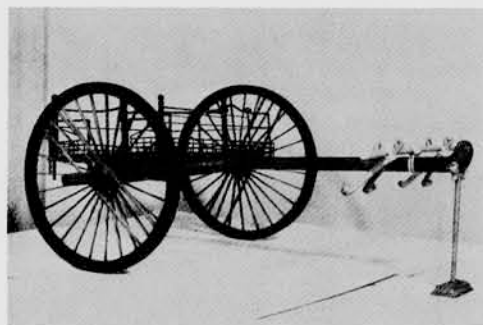
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Reconstruction of a chariot of the Warring States period found in Liu-li-kê, Hui-hsien province of Honan. The wheels are dished, i.e., the spokes are inserted into the mortise of the hub in a slightly slanting position, best seen in the view of the chariot from above. In addition, the wheels are furnished with some struts running diametrically from rim to rim to prevent them from breaking.

Hui-hsien fa chüeh pao-kao. Peking 1956. Pl. 24.



7



9

In one of the last copies of *Wên-wu* published just before the Cultural Revolution, the Workteam of the Office of Culture of the province of Hupeh reported the excavation of three tombs not far from the city of Chiang-ling.⁴ All resemble in construction those in Hunan and quite unmistakably were those of members of the high aristocracy of the State of Ch'u, dating from the Warring States period. They had not been robbed and provide a good example of the wealth and taste of this society and the importance attached to burials. In tomb No. 1 alone more than 400 objects were found, among them 160 made of bronze, including a great number of ritual vessels, chariot fittings, a bronze lamp held in the hand by a rider on a camel and a sword with an inscription "Kou Chien, King of (the state) Yüeh (had this) precious sword made for his own use"⁵ (Fig. 8). The king is renowned for his swords which are described as being "as lovely as hibiscus, as bright as stars, as smooth as calm waters, as hard as granite and as glossy as ice." When found, the sword was in perfect condition without a speck of rust, proving the skill of the metalworkers of that day. It is thought that to protect their finished articles they overlaid them with tin, silver or mercury. That this sword was found in the tomb of a noble of the State of Ch'u is important for its date, because the State of Yüeh was conquered by the King of Ch'u in 332 B.C. and we may suspect that on this occasion Kou Chien's famous sword was captured and given to a noble of the victorious State of Ch'u, finally to be placed in his tomb. This would rule out a date before 332 B.C. for the tomb but according to circumstances we may expect it to be no later than the turn of the century. Among other items found in the tomb may be mentioned part of a book written on bamboo slips and more than a hundred objects covered with often beautifully painted lacquer. They include cups, tables, writing brushes, boxes, a musical instrument (a *ssê* resembling a zither) with pegs and bridges still in place, and an openwork lacquered wooden screen with an extraordinary type of decoration of great beauty (Fig. 9). In addition, there were remains of food—plum pits, melon seeds, chicken and fish bones and so forth. The noble buried in this tomb—judging by its content—must have been a highly educated man with a sophisticated taste, a true contemporary of

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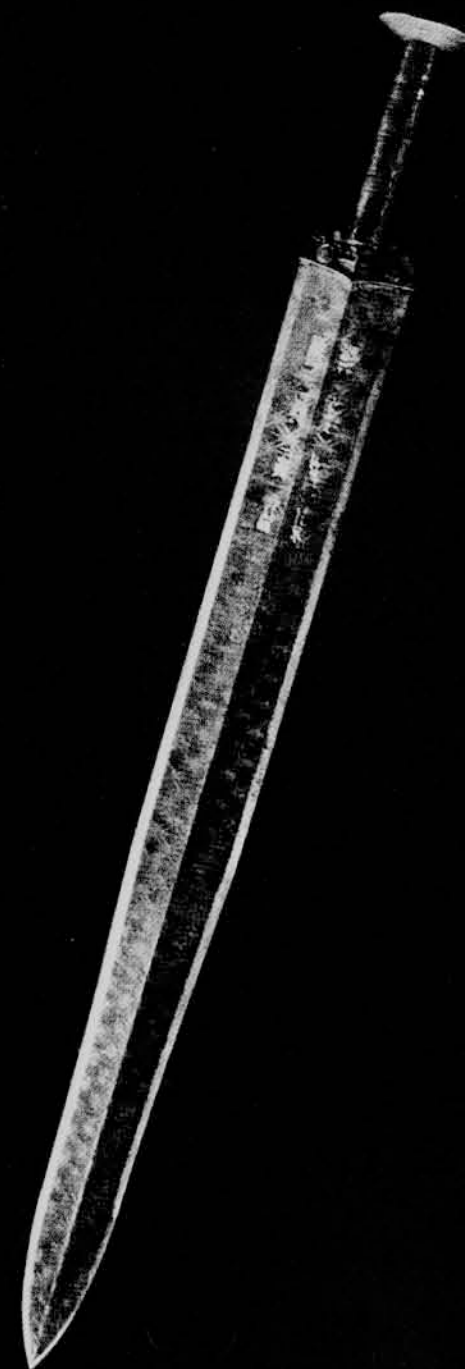
Sword found in Wang-shan tomb No. 1 in Chiang-ling District in a late Warring States tomb. It was sheathed in a lacquered wooden scabbard and has a hollow, round hilt which had been wound with a silk cord. The guard was inlaid with blue glass and the blade chased with arabesque design. Inscription in bird script. It was found in perfect condition without any rust.

Wên-wu 1966. 5. Pl. 1; pp. 33-55.

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In the same tomb as the sword was found a unique openwork, lacquered wooden screen painted in red, yellow and silver. It shows a base filled with writhing serpents and, above, birds and animals facing one another or swooping down upon a cluster of serpents.

Wên-wu 1966. 5. Pls. 2 and 4.



8

the philosopher Hsün-tzu who was educated in the State of Ch'u and in his chapter on "Cultivation of oneself" includes as one of the qualities demanded of the chün-tzu, the gentleman, the "beauty of refinement."

The wealth of beautifully lacquered and painted objects found in tombs of the Warring States period, especially in the State of Ch'u, is overwhelming; it reveals that in elegance and subtlety of design the art of lacquering reached its highest point during this period and perhaps in this region and not—as formerly believed—in the Han period.

Among the surprising discoveries found in Ch'u tombs were lacquered and brightly painted demon or monster figures (Fig. 10). They were most likely placed in tombs as guardians against evil spirits, catching them with their tongues.

10



There is a plethora of excavated material dating from the Han period (206 B.C. to A.D. 220, divided into an Early or Western and a Late or Eastern Han period). In general, one of the significant results of the many excavations is that now we know what kinds of tombs are typical of certain periods or regions and thus are able to date a tomb solely by its construction or building

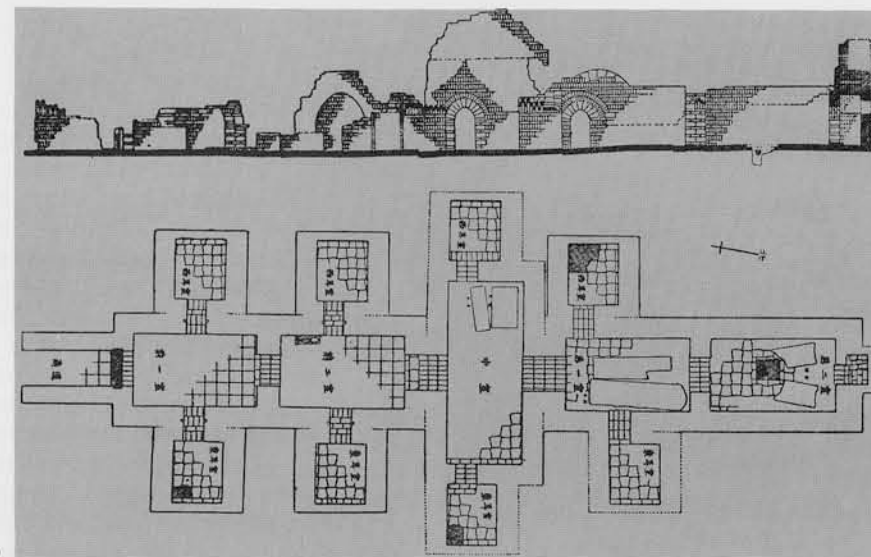


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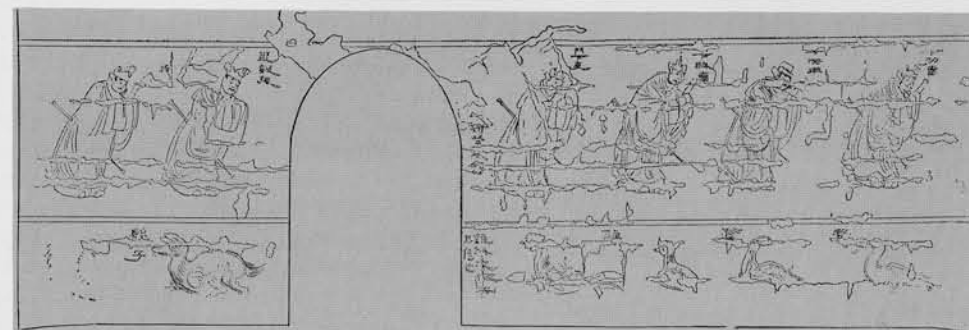
material. A great surprise was to find quite a number of Western Han tombs with wall and ceiling paintings. These proved that at this time realistic representation of men and animals in action had already reached a stage of perfection (Fig. 11) and sophistication which invalidated all our previous speculation with regard to the beginning of this type of painting in China. A crude picture of a garden impressed on hollow tiles and shown in a kind of perspective found in a Western Han tomb predates the beginning of landscape painting by several centuries. In general, the pictures in the newly excavated tombs of the Han period, whether painted, engraved on stone walls or impressed on bricks or hollow tiles, have widened considerably our knowledge of daily life,

10
Wooden demon or monster figure found in a Warring States tomb in Ch'ang-t'ai-kuan, Hsin-yang, province of Honan. Such figures were found in tombs of people belonging to the State of Ch'u. It is lacquered and brightly painted in red, yellow and brown or black. The tongue, eyes and lips are red. The creature is sitting in a human manner. Height, 195 cm.

Archaeology in New China.
Pl. LXVI (see: *Wên-wu*
1957. 5. Frontispiece and
pp. 21-22).



12



13

festivals, music, dances, acrobatics, theatrical plays and rites of this time.

The layout, construction and decoration of tombs reveal to a certain degree changes in the economic and social conditions of the Han period. Starting in the middle of the Western Han period we notice a steady increase in the size of tombs, reflecting the growing prosperity of large sections of the population. The ground plan and elevation shown in Fig. 12 is that of one of two tombs discovered in the neighborhood of Wang-tu in Hopei. Both were similar in construction and decoration, but this is the larger of the two. It is built on a north/south axis with side chambers on both sides. Such an arrangement corresponds to a certain extent to the lay-out of a family compound with courtyards one behind the other, each serving a special function, with the private rooms of the master of the house (or the ancestor hall) in the rear courtyard. This tomb reflects, in more than one way, the changes in the social structure of society. Feudal aristocracy had lost its power and had been replaced by new classes which had to establish their own status symbols. It was what we may call a more bourgeois society in which the display of wealth rather than refinement was important. The walls of the front chamber in both tombs had been covered with paintings, not with scenes of cavalcades and riders as customary in Eastern Han tombs but with pictures of officials, their titles listed in the inscriptions beside them (Fig. 13). Some were the same as those in other tombs, all typical of petty officials

whose function in life had been to serve and accompany high officials, such as provincial governors and others. Now in death their effigies—no more their bodies—had to continue to serve. Both tombs contain a number of short inscriptions; in one was a eulogy written in red ink and in the other a title deed to the burial ground. Unfortunately both are partly illegible and translation very difficult, so there is some room for speculation about the identity of the buried persons and their dates. However, it is important that these tombs were built in the middle or later part of the second century A.D.

Perhaps one of the most startling discoveries was made in the province of Yünnan, in Shih-chai-shan near Chin-ning, about thirty miles southeast of Kunming. Excavation was started in 1955 by the Yünnan Provincial Museum and continued through 1956 and '57 under the auspices of the Institute of Archaeology. A burial place was discovered which, according to a golden seal inscribed "Seal of the King of Tien," could be identified as that of the Tien people, a non-Chinese tribe, who buried their dead here in the second and first centuries B.C. The tombs yielded a rich harvest of containers, weapons, ornaments, bells and other objects made of bronze. Although some tombs contained some mirrors, belt hooks, coins and vessels imported from China, a great number of objects were made locally and revealed a fully mature bronze culture of which hitherto little had been known (except the Dongson bronze drums). The covers of some of the containers

11
An old man with an amused expression looks down at a tiny man. From a tomb of the Western Han period in Old Loyang, it is part of a scene painted in color on a gable dividing the tomb into two rooms. Height, 23' cm.

Wên-wu ching hua, No. 3.
Peking 1964. Pl. 5 (see:
Kaoguxuebao 1964, 2.
Pp. 107-126 and 1-7).

12
Ground plan and elevation of tomb No. 2 in So-yao ts'un, Wang-tu District, province of Hopei. From south to north it measures 32 meters and contains 14 different rooms plus a recess in the rear chamber. It was built of bricks and has barrel-shaped vaults made of fan-shaped bricks; lime was used as mortar. Double arches over the doors are frequently found in tombs in Hopei.

Wang-tu erh-kao Han-mu,
Peking 1955. Page 3.

13
Sketch of paintings on the west wall of the ante-chamber of tomb No. 1 in Wang-tu. In the upper part are shown officials, all with their titles written next to them. They all face the inner part of the tomb as if expecting their master to come out. Below are pictures of animals. Height of wall, 1.75 meters.

Wang-tu Han-mu pi-hua,
Peking 1955. Fig. 3.



14

14 Bronze cowrie shell container of the Western Han period found in one of the tombs in Shih-chai-shan, Chin-ning District, province of Yünnan. On its lid is shown a complicated scene centering round the taking of a loyalty oath by people sitting in the open building. Two big bronze drums (Dong-son type) stand on one side and a large number of small ones on the balcony of the house. Activities on the occasion of such a festival are shown all around the house from slaughtering animals to processions and children's plays and so forth. Height, 53 cm.; diameter of lid, 35 cm.

Yünnan Chin-ning, Shih-chai-shan ku-mu chün. Peking 1959. Pl. 52 (tomb No. 12).



15

15 Colored, mold-impressed bricks from the tomb in Hsüeh-chuang ts'un, Têng District, province of Honan. Musicians with drums and trumpets. Colors are red, green and black. Six Dynasties Period (5th century A.D.). Brick height, 19 cm.; width, 38 cm.

Têng hsien ts'ai-sse hua hsiang chuang-mu. Peking 1958. Pl. 10.

were filled with well modelled figures of men and animals in action, ranging from battles and human sacrifices to processions of oxen and harvest festivals. A most complex scene involving about 120 people, all engaged in different activities, is shown in Fig. 14. Together with pictures engraved on walls and lids of some containers, they provide us with a well-documented record of the life of the Tien people. Another outstanding feature of these tombs is the unusual abundance and strange types of highly decorated bronze weapons and tools and of openwork plaques.

One of the most interesting tombs of the Six Dynasties period (A.D. 222-589) was discovered in the Têng District in the southwestern part of Honan in 1957 and excavated by the Workteam of the Office of Culture of Honan in 1958. It was a fairly large brick tomb with vaulted ceiling. Its outstanding feature was molded and painted brick panels inserted into the walls at intervals. (There were also wall paintings near the entrance.) They show a procession consisting of soldiers, musicians, riders on horseback, grooms leading profusely caparisoned horses, men carrying incense burners, an oxcart and others. From the Han period onwards processions have been one of the most common subjects depicted in tombs. What is outstanding is the manner and style of these pictures (Fig. 15). They are of an elegance and decorative beauty never seen before. An inscription in the tomb tells us that the buried person had been born in the south in the region around Soochow in Kiangsu and had been an officer in the army. Actually this part of Honan had been fought over and changed hands several times during the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. It is a border region and belongs to the south as much as to the north. We are thus justified in taking these pictures as examples of the pictorial style of the south. This explains their superior quality because it is the southern part of China which in later periods became the center of painting and produced some of the greatest painters of China; on the other hand, the south was always poor in sculpture.

The T'ang period is the time of China's greatest splendor (A.D. 618-905). Perhaps the greatest surprise which the excavations have revealed is the large number of murals in tombs. Many of them are dated by inscriptions and will finally supply us with a more secure line of development than the arbitrary descriptions of paintings in contemporary literature written by collectors or connoisseurs. One of the most spectacular tombs excavated in 1960 was that of Princess Yung-t'ai, a granddaughter of Empress Wu, who, after her husband's death, ruled the country and tried to establish her own dynasty. Because she suspected her granddaughter of having criticized some of her favorites, she ordered the 17-year-old princess and her husband to be killed. When after the death of the Empress

16 Mural painting from the east wall of the front chamber of Princess Yung-t'ai's tomb in Ling-shan, Chien District, Shensi (A.D. 706). Colors: green, brown, yellow, black and red. Height of wall, 198 cm.; length, 420 cm.

T'ang Yung T'ai kung chu-mu pi-hua chi, Peking 1963 (see: Wên-wu 1964, No. 1 and Wên-wu 1963 No. 1).

17 Family picture on the wall of a Northern Sung tomb in Pai-sha, Yü-hsien, Honan. (Southwestern wall in tomb No. 2.) The man sits in an elaborately carved chair, behind him is a screen with four lines of characters. The pride of the house—a pitcher—stands on the table amidst food. The younger members sit behind the table; the girl is apparently playing a kind of game with revolving strings.

Pai-sha Sung-mu. Peking 1957. Pl. 38.

the father of this princess became Emperor he had his unlucky daughter reburied in a splendid tomb (A.D. 708) 68 meters long. The passageway into the tomb chamber was painted with pictures of horses, male servants and soldiers, that is, all those most commonly not admitted into the inner courtyards of the house of a noble. The walls of the inner chamber, on the other hand, showed groups of ladies (ladies-in-waiting), some carrying utensils as if bringing them to their mistress (Fig. 16). Strangely enough, one of the girls seems to be wearing a man's dress.

No less astonishing was the discovery of tombs of the Sung period (A.D. 960-1270) with painted walls. Three tombs discovered in 1951 during the building of a water reservoir in Pai-sha in the Yü District of Honan were excavated in 1952. Most commonly, a staircase leads down to the tomb door and the tomb consists of two chambers connected by a passage. The chambers are of different shape, one being square, the other round or hexagonal. All three tombs were built of bricks and resemble each other though they are not identical. Mostly a cupola is built over each chamber. What is remarkable is that the insides of the tombs are made to resemble in every detail the houses of the living. Wooden beams were fashioned out of bricks with brackets, all painted in bright colors with geometrical and floral patterns. The wooden construction resembles closely that illustrated in a contemporary book, the *Ying-t'sao fa-shih*. The walls had windows with draperies painted all around. A favorite subject is a girl made out of bricks appearing in a half open door. On the walls were pictures showing scenes from the daily life of the family. In one we see a lady arranging her hair in front of a mirror held by a servant girl; in another, a small orchestra composed of male and female players—most probably members of the family. In some cases, as in the picture of husband and wife sitting in front of a screen with servants behind them, the setting was carved in brick and painted over. In Fig. 17 we see the family with food and an elegant pitcher on the table in front of them, the girl apparently engaged in a game of skill with threads. Other pictures show money and men



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bringing in strings of coins. Although the painters of these pictures were competent, they were not great artists, but they do provide splendid material for the study of everything from furniture to fashion and from utensils to spittoons and wine pitchers. The use of chairs was fairly new at that time and so was the sharing of a table between people. The tombs most probably were those of members of a wealthy merchant family such as are known to have lived here during the Northern Sung period. (In one tomb a date was found corresponding to A.D. 1099.) The quality of murals in Sung tombs reflects the education and taste of the family who built the tomb; those displayed in some other tombs are more rewarding from an artistic point of view.

The most famous of the tombs of the Ming period (A.D. 1368-1644) is that of Emperor Wan Li near Peking. Excavation began in 1956 and was finished in 1957. It is a very large tomb with a number of rooms and contained the coffin of the Emperor and of two of his wives. Three marble thrones and three sets of altarpieces made of porcelain were found in the largest room (Fig. 18). The most precious objects were discovered inside the three coffins: splendid crown-like head coverings and jade and gold cups, bowls and pitchers of most delicate workmanship. It is known that the Emperor began to build his tomb in 1584 when he was 22 years old. It took six years to complete and cost eight million ounces of silver; when it was finished the Emperor gave a festival in his own tomb chamber. He died A.D. 1630. The tomb has been preserved at the site and has become a tourist attraction.

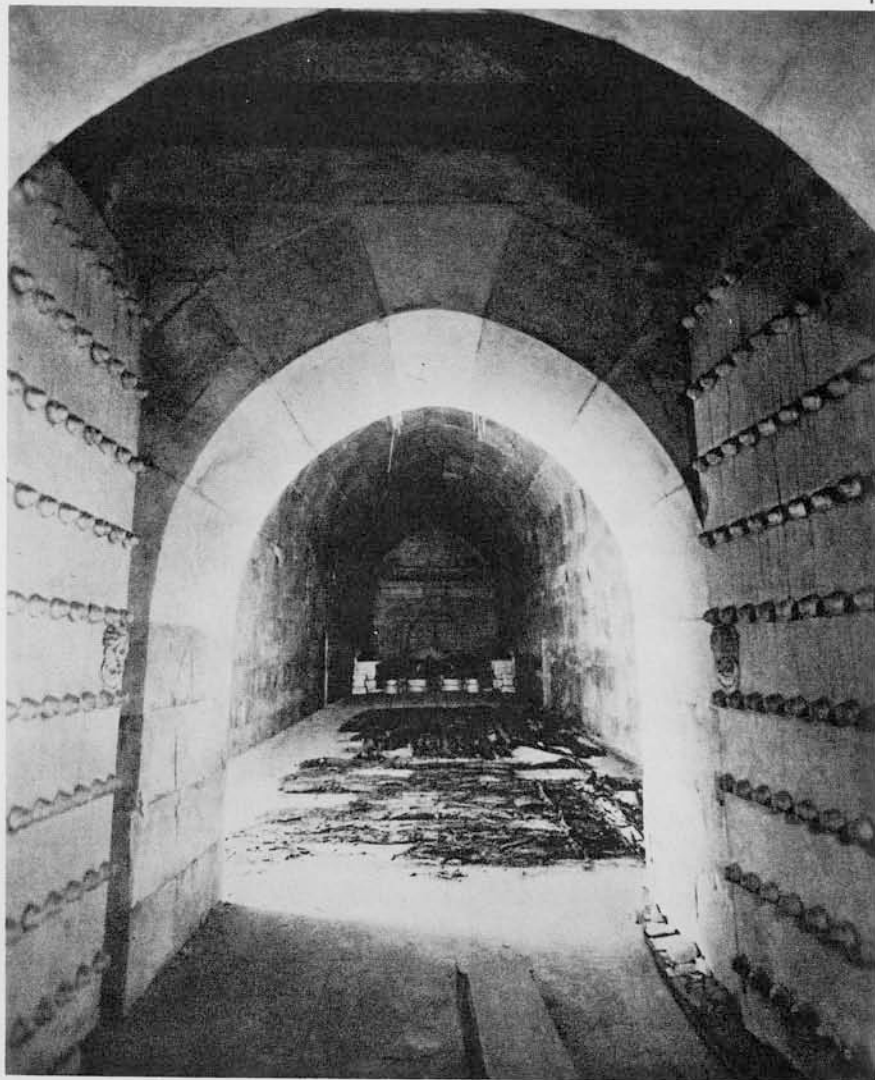
These are just a few examples, selected more or less at random. They will, I hope, suffice to show that archaeological work and excavation on this enormous scale could not have been carried through without the active support of the government and the cooperation of the people. It seems, therefore, appropriate to quote a sentence from Mao Tse-tung's little Red Book: "Make the Past serve the Present" which has been interpreted as positive encouragement of archaeological work. In a way, there can be no more precise statement about the "relevancy" of history. •

This is the first of two articles by Dr. Bulling. In the second, which will appear in the Fall number of Expedition, she will discuss the archaeological work done since 1966.

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View into the central chamber of Emperor Wan Li's tomb with the three thrones and altar sets in the background. Ming Dynasty; built 1584-90.

Archaeology of New China, op. cit. Pl. CXXIX.



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Notes

1 Magdalene von Dewall, *Der Grüberverband von Wu-kuan ts'un, Oriens Extremus* 1960 No. 7, pp. 129-151.

2 See Magdalene von Dewall, *Pferd und Wagen im frühen China*, Saarbrücker Beiträge zur Altertumskunde, Band I. Bonn, 1964.

3 Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. IV, 2, pp. 76ff. For more detail see Lu Gwei-djen, Raphael A. Salaman, Joseph Needham, "The Wheelwrights' Art in Ancient China," *Physica*, *Rivista di Storia della Scienza*, Vol. I, Fasc. 2, pp. 103-105, Firenze, 1959.

4 In this neighborhood the ancient capital of the State of Ch'u (Ying) is believed to have been situated.

5 Kou Chien, King of Yueh, is a well known person. Ssu-ma Ch'len in his *Shih-chi* reports at length about him. See translation by Edouard Chavannes, *Les Mémoires Historiques de Se-ma Tsieh*, Vol. IV, pp. 418ff.