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**SIX DYNASTIES CIVILIZATION**

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**CHAPTERS 6, 7 & 12**



# 6

## TOMB FURNISHINGS

Three broad categories of materials are found inside Six Dynasties tombs: (1) tomb furniture, such as coffins, altars, canopies, and tomb records; (2) apotropaic and symbolic objects, such as guardian figures, both human and animal, so-called jade shoats, and crossbow mechanisms, and (3) offerings of objects of quotidian usefulness, either real or especially made for the tomb, the latter including models, to serve the deceased in the afterlife. Despite some overlap, these categories provide a useful framework for discussion. We are fortunate to have recovered so much, even though the ubiquitous robbery of tombs and the decay of organic material with the passage of time prevent us from learning what the full range of grave goods may have been.<sup>1</sup>

There is not much literary evidence available for this period, and certainly none that explicitly explains the significance of what was placed in the tombs. Table 6.1, for example, is a list of items that He Xun 賀循 of the Jin drew up to be included among the grave goods of a high-ranking burial, but no reasons are given for the basis of this particular selection of utilitarian objects, nor is the overall significance clarified.<sup>2</sup> Yan Zhitui (531–91+), in his *Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓, mentions a number of objects that he did not wish placed in his grave; these include some that are clearly apotropaic, but there is no explanation.<sup>3</sup> Finally, there are the inventory lists found at Turfan and elsewhere that are extremely interesting, but again, we are not provided with a discourse on the beliefs that dictated the inclusion of these particular items.<sup>4</sup>

TABLE 6.1

## HE XUN'S LIST OF NUMINOUS VESSELS TO BE DEPOSITED IN THE GRAVE

- 
- armrest (*pingji* 憑几), one  
 wine vessel (*jiubu* 酒壺), two: holds six *sheng*, covered with hemp cloth  
 lacquer screen (*qi pingfeng* 漆屏風), one  
 three grains—three vessels: nonglutinous rice, glutinous millet, panicked millet,  
     burned and dried  
 pottery spittoon (*wa tubu* 瓦唾壺), one  
 dried meat, one hamper: use the meat of the two sacrificial animals to make a  
     substitute—place it in the funereal sacrificial meat stand to serve as a stored object  
 sandals (*ju* 屨), one [pair?]  
 pottery goblet (*wa zun* 瓦樽), one  
 clogs (*ji* 屐), one [pair?]  
 pottery *bei* cup (杯)  
*pan* 盤 plate  
 ladle (*shao* 杓)  
 staff (*zhang* 杖), one  
 pottery candle plate (*zhuban* 燭盤), one  
 chopsticks, one hundred pairs  
 pottery box (*wa lian* 瓦奩), one  
 pottery stove (*wa zao* 瓦灶), one  
 pottery incense burner (*wa xianglu* 瓦香爐), one  
 cauldron (*fu* 釜), two  
 pillow, one  
 pottery steamer (*zeng* 甗), one  
 handkerchiefs, bestowed silk, three black, two crimson, thin fully hemmed [each] a  
     foot long  
 pottery brazier (*wa lu* 瓦爐), one  
 pottery wash basin (*wa guanpan* 瓦盥盤), one
- 

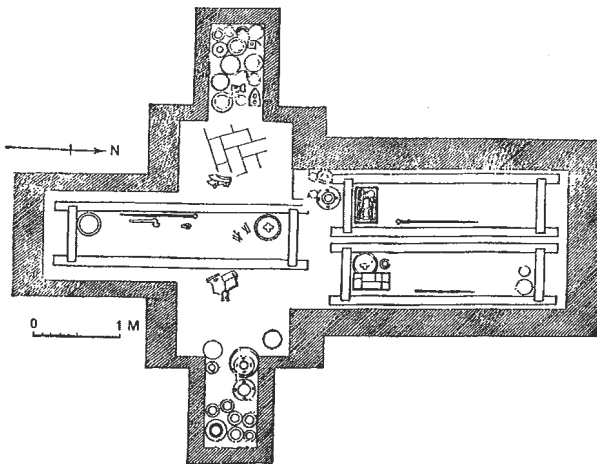
## TOMB FURNITURE

## COFFINS

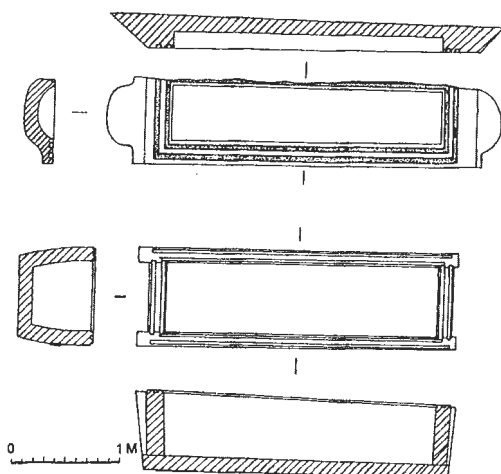
The Chinese coffin came to have its characteristic shape during the Six Dynasties period: wider and higher at the head than at the foot, and with a curved lid. There is some evidence that this shape was introduced into China by the northern non-Han peoples. Because coffins were generally made of wood, few examples have survived, and much of the evidence is indirect, derived primarily from patterns of nails, lacquer, plaster that was at times used to line the bottom of the coffin, and surviving fragments of wood.

Even so, regional variations can be discerned. In the south, there is evidence from the early part of the period, during the Wu, of the use of coffins carved out of single logs, the so-called boat burial. Generally, the bottom and sides are in one piece, with the head- and footboards attached by means of mortise-and-tenon or tongue-and-groove joinery. Coffins of this type are found in Guangdong, Anhui, Hubei, and Jiangxi. Some of the best preserved, and most dramatic, are the three in the tomb of Gao Rong 高榮 of Nanchang, Jiangxi. All were carved from logs of *nanmu* 楠木, a kind of cedar (*Machilus nanmu*). The largest of the three measures on the inside 2.49 m long, 0.55 m wide at the head tapering to 0.51 m at the foot (a negligible difference in size), and, excluding the lid, is 0.55 m high. The other two coffins are slightly smaller (fig. 6.1).<sup>5</sup> The lids are longer than the bodies of the coffins and fitted to them by tongue and groove. The two log coffins in the tomb of Zhu Ran (d. 249), at Maanshan, Anhui, are lacquered black on the outside and red inside. The lids and bodies in this case also are joined by tongue and groove (fig. 6.2).<sup>6</sup> At other sites the coffins have only red lacquer, but there is no evidence that coffins were otherwise decorated at this time in the south.

No coffins carved out of logs are reported later than the Wu; coffins constructed of boards, which were already in use during the Wu, were the most common type thereafter. One Wu-period coffin in good repair has been reported from Maqiao 麻橋, Anhui. The lid is rounded and the boards making up the coffin are joined by mortises and tenons. Another coffin, from Jiangning, Jiangsu, of the Eastern Jin, is interesting because of its compartment for grave



6.1. Plan of a tomb at Nanchang, Jiangxi (after Kaogu 1980.3:220, fig. 2)



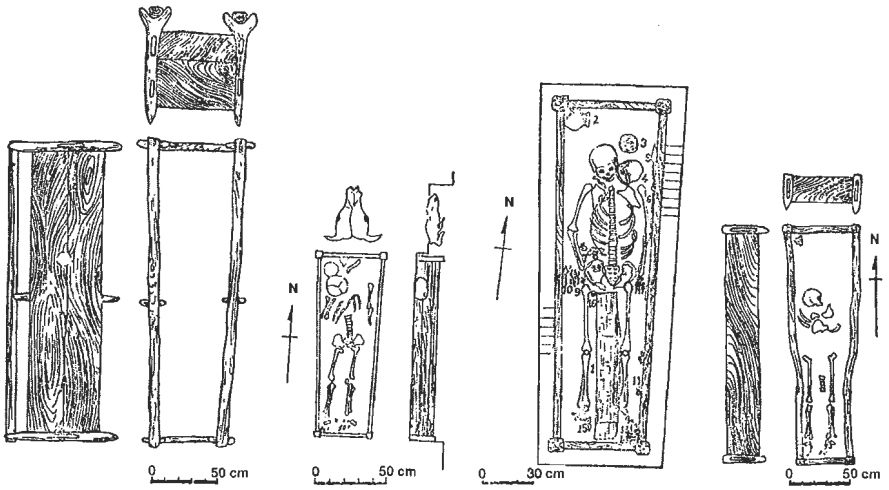
6.2. Wooden coffin, Maanshan, Anhui (after *Wenwu* 1986.3:4, fig. 6)

goods at the head end.<sup>7</sup> In general, however, this sort of board coffin did not survive well, perhaps because its wood was thinner than that of the better-preserved log coffins. Nails of bronze or iron are sometimes found with the decayed or rotted wood, and from fragments of coating we know that many of these coffins were also lacquered.<sup>8</sup>

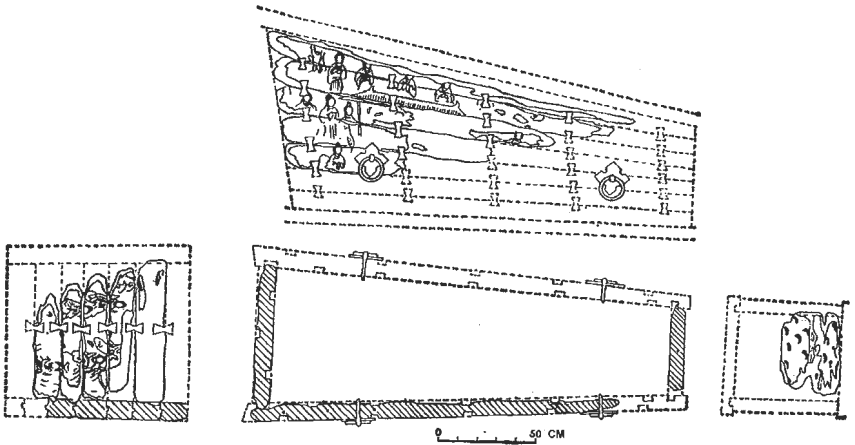
Wooden coffins with a broad, high head and a narrower foot seem to have appeared earliest among the northern non-Han peoples on the borders of China (fig. 6.3).<sup>9</sup> A Northern Wei coffin of this shape from Meidaicun, Inner Mongolia, is described as being made of pine boards some 4 cm thick and held together by hourglass-shaped inset plugs. Some nails were also found, which may have been used to attach the lid.<sup>10</sup> Similar coffins with traces of lacquer coating, often decorated, as well as iron handles for transport have been reported from the Northern Yan state, which was heavily influenced by the Murong culture (fig. 6.4).<sup>11</sup> In short order, such wooden plank coffins of that shape became the characteristic Chinese coffin.

In most cases where nails have been found though the coffin itself has decayed, they are too few to have been the sole means of holding the boards together. Moreover, nails have been found in only some 14 percent of the southern tombs and 21 percent of those in the north, evidence of the importance of joinery in coffin construction.

Coffins that have survived intact, primarily from Jiayuguan and Dunhuang, both in Gansu, demonstrate indeed that various methods of joinery were employed. Although a report on a pair of relatively complete coffins has no

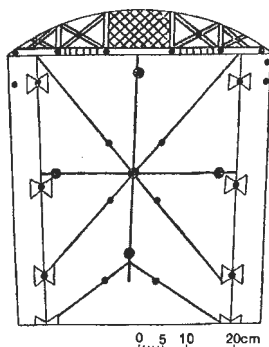


6.3. Coffins, Zhalaينوer, Inner Mongolia (after *Wenwu* 1977.5:49, fig. 9)



6.4. Coffin, Liaoning (after *Wenwu* 1973.3:4, fig. 4)

information on this score, from the illustration it would appear that hourglass plugs were used. The coffins were covered with black lacquer and the lids decorated with drawings in red, black, white, yellow, and green. The anterior surface of the lid of the male's coffin has a representation of the King Sire of the East, while the rear portion has the Queen Mother of the West, with a background of a cloud pattern. The female's coffin is similarly decorated with drawings, in this case those of Nüwo and Fuxi. In addition the footboard of the female's coffin is



6.5. Constellation on the footboard of a coffin, Gansu (after *Wenwu* 1982.8:12, fig. 6)

decorated with a complex pattern described as a *gua* 卦, composed of dots and connecting lines drawn in ink (fig. 6.5). Though it has been suggested that this design may represent the Big Dipper, it bears no apparent similarity to that constellation.<sup>12</sup>

The most spectacular coffin thus far recovered is from a Northern Wei tomb at Guyuan, Ningxia. The body of the coffin has decayed away, but the lacquer covering, though in fragmentary condition, reveals a complex and beautifully executed surface decor featuring again the Queen Mother of the West and the King Sire of the East, as well as the Milky Way, strange creatures, a portrait of the deceased as host, and a series of vignettes illustrating examples of filial piety. The figures are garbed in typical Xianbei clothing (fig. 6.6; see also fig. 7.74).<sup>13</sup>

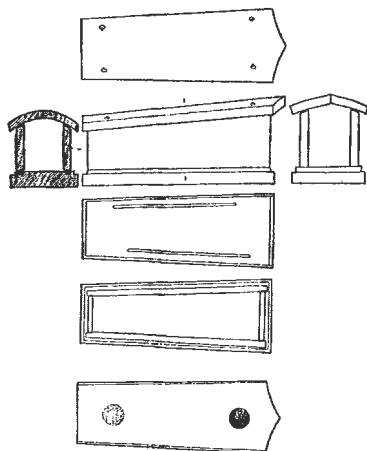
Remains of coffins found at Hanjiang 邗江, Jiangsu, dating from the Southern Dynasties period, have the high head and low foot, but in addition they have convex, or rounded, outside surfaces, which also became a characteristic of the traditional shape. The lid of this type extends beyond the body of the coffin and is seen as representing a transitional stage between the Han square box and the late-Tang type found in this area, in which both the lid and the bottom extend outward.<sup>14</sup>

Stone coffins, or sarcophagi, which appear in the Luoyang area from the Northern Wei on, are in a sense the counterpart of the jade suits of the Han in offering the promise of protection of the corpse for all eternity. Stone coffins were probably used only by members of the royal family and others of high status. Their shape is precisely the same as that of the wooden coffins, and apparently the carved decorations were painted to resemble the lacquered finishes of wood coffins (fig. 6.7).<sup>15</sup> Very few of these stone coffins have been found, perhaps because expense and sumptuary regulations limited their number.<sup>16</sup>



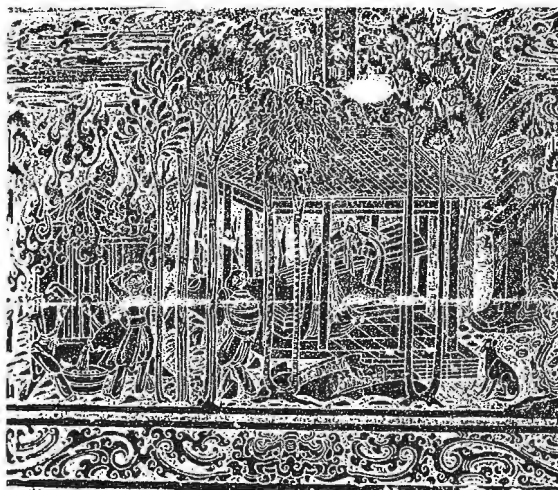


6.6. Lacquer coffin lid (detail) Guyuan, Ningxia (after Ningxia Guyuan bowuguan, *Guyuan Bei Wei mu qiguanhua*, fig. 7)



6.7. Stone coffin, Luoyang (after *Kaogu* 1980.3:229, fig. 1)

The techniques for rendering the designs covering the outer surface of the body of the sarcophagi vary. In some cases, the figures are produced by incised lines, but in others the background is shaved away, leaving the figures to stand out; additional details may then be added by incised lines (fig. 6.8). While the themes are similar, there is no standard composition. In a sarcophagus recovered in 1977 and described in detail by Huang Minglan, the lid is plain on the



6.8. Scene, stone sarcophagus (after Huang Minglan, *Luoyang Bei Wei shisu shike xianhuaji*, 4, pl. 6)

outer surface, but its inside has representations of the sun and moon. The head-board has a door depicted with an attendant on each side dressed in official robes and holding a sword. Above is a pair of birds and in the center the Buddhist *mani* jewel. On the footboard is a depiction of an elderly person sitting on a stretcher being carried by two younger persons, a scene from an anecdote about filial piety, perhaps originally a part of some other structure and recycled here. Along one side of the sarcophagus is an elaborate depiction of flying transcendants accompanying the deceased, who rides a dragon, followed by attendant musicians and regalia bearers. The opposite side has a female person being similarly accompanied. Along the front and rear edges of the bottom stone are depictions of the green dragon and white tiger, while in the center of each edge is a fierce animal head, perhaps representing the traditional *fangxiang* 方相, or exorciser. Twelve panels along each side of this bottom piece depict a different divine beast or bird, some of which resemble those on the cover of the Northern Wei lacquered coffin from Guyuan.<sup>17</sup> The whole structure thus creates a container that simultaneously protects the body, provides uplifting associations, and indicates the final transference to a paradise.<sup>18</sup>

Stone sarcophagi are also found in Sichuan, representing a continuation of a Han tradition. The decorative style differs from that of the Luoyang region, and the themes include scenes of entertainment on earth and the *tianmen* 天門, or entrance to paradise above.<sup>19</sup>

Stone sarcophagi continued to be used through the Sui. The sarcophagus of Li He 李和, dated 582, is an example. The tops of both the head- and footboards

are semicircular, to accommodate a curved lid. The sarcophagus's surface is covered with elaborate incised drawings of transcendents, animals, dragons, and floral patterns. The circles carved on the lid may be meant to simulate the patterned cloth, found in Xinjiang, that was used to cover the head and chest of the deceased.<sup>20</sup>

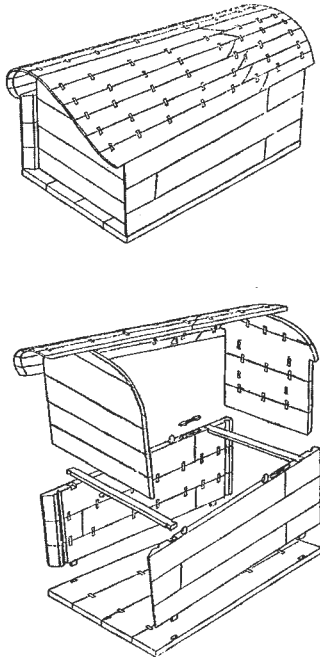
Stone sarcophagi took other shapes, such as a model of a building. The most famous example is the sarcophagus in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, mentioned in chapter 4.<sup>21</sup> Given the concern for the preservation of the body, one might expect that such stone sarcophagi would have been more common. No doubt their expense limited their use.

Wood remained the primary material for fashioning coffins. A passage in the sixth-century *Luoyang qielanji* identifies Fengzhong 奉終 Ward, north of the main market of Luoyang, as a place where coffins, both inner (*guan* 棺) and outer vaults (*guo* 槨), and grave goods were sold. Based on the evidence of someone who had returned from the land of the dead, it was learned that coffins should be made of cypress and that the use of mulberry wood for any part was frowned upon by the underground authorities; the result was the price of cypress shot up. There was the suspicion that the story had been planted by those in the coffin trade to manipulate prices.<sup>22</sup>

The reason for the adoption of the trapezoidal shape for coffins is not clear. The northern, non-Han peoples from whom it was probably borrowed often placed grave goods at the head of the coffin, and so the larger dimension at that end may have had some functional purpose, but the Chinese coffin seldom, if ever, would have needed that much space. Miniature models of this type of coffin came to be used in the Tang for reliquaries for Buddhist relics, replacing the typically Indian practice of using vases or other small containers. The use of these coffin-shaped reliquaries has been cited as further evidence of Buddhism's adaptation to Chinese culture.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps the analysis needs to be turned around, however: that is, the trapezoidal coffin came early to be associated with Buddhism and the *parinirvana* of the Buddha, and it was this Buddhist association that underlay its popularity and its eventual use for holy reliquaries.

## Vaults

The vault (*guo*), the structure surrounding a coffin, was not common during the Six Dynasties period, but a few instances have been reported. In Guangdong, for example, shallow niches in the walls of a pair of tombs have been interpreted to have been supports for beams on which wooden planks were placed to form a wooden vault.<sup>24</sup> In the case of a Jin tomb from Changsha, enough of the wood survives to reveal a wooden chamber that occupied the entire interior of the tomb. The walls of the vault are composed of upright boards, the floor and roof



6.9. Wooden vault, tomb of Luo Rui, Taiyuan, Shanxi (after *Wenwu* 1983.10:4, figs. 5–6)

are of planks laid side to side, while another layer of three boards laid lengthwise top off the structure. They are all connected by various sorts of joinery. Nothing remains of the coffin or body.<sup>25</sup> The Lou Rui tomb in Shanxi, famous for its murals, yielded much undecayed wood, from which an even more elaborate wooden vault could be reconstituted, though the inner coffin was too far gone to be restored. The vault, a larger version of the usual coffin shape, provides much information about the methods of woodworking and joinery of this period (fig. 6.9).<sup>26</sup> In a Northern Qi tomb of 562, substantial fragments of an elaborate wooden vault were found, complete with bracketry and carved finials, in which a large coffin containing three bodies had been placed. Unfortunately too much of the wood had decomposed to allow a reconstruction.<sup>27</sup>

#### COFFIN PLATFORMS AND LAMPS

Platforms served to hold the coffin or the body in those cases when no coffin was used. One would expect that the general dampness in the south would have led to more frequent use of this means of raising the coffin from the floor, but

there is in fact little difference in this regard between the north and south. According to the database used in this study, platforms occur in 14.02 percent of tombs of this period, and the incidence is 12.7 percent in the north and 14.4 percent in the south. The variation is most striking by region; at the high end are Shaanxi (47.6 percent), Hubei (34.7 percent), and Fujian (37.2 percent), followed by Hunan (21.4 percent) and Liaoning (21.2 percent), and down to 0.6 percent in Jiangxi (one instance in 164 tombs). The platforms range from a few bricks to hold the coffin off the floor to elaborate, ornately carved stone couches, such as that in the tomb of Sima Jinlong at Datong.<sup>28</sup>

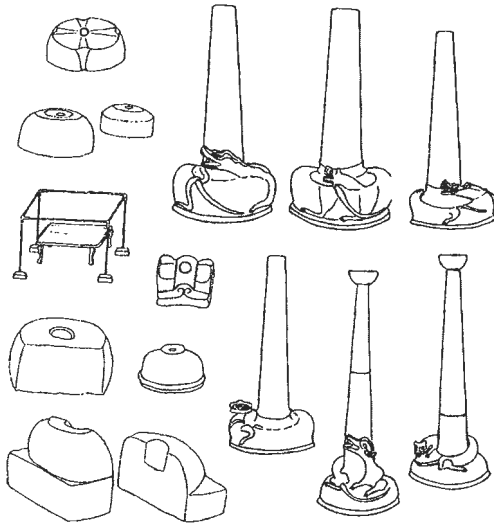
Utting brick shelves or wall niches often held small saucers of oil used as lamps that were meant to burn for eternity. Naturally, no traces of oil remain, and it may be that such lamps were placed in other parts of the chamber as well. Here as in many other aspects of the tomb there is much variation even within any one region; the question as to why there is not more uniformity is one that deserves more study.

#### ALTARS AND CANOPIES

The name “altar” barely suits, for generally it refers to a number of bricks placed together in a tomb’s front chamber, if there was one, or otherwise in the coffin chamber near the door. On these bricks were placed a few offerings of grave goods. The remainder of the offerings were usually placed in the entryway, if there was one, and around the doorway inside the coffin chamber; if the coffin was at the side of the chamber, usually to the left, the grave goods occupied the other side. The term “altar” may also be misleading because no overtly religious symbol or icon found a place there.

Altars have been reported overall in only 7 percent of the tombs, and that portion is concentrated primarily along the Yangzi: Jiangsu (in 19.6 percent of the reported tombs), Anhui (11.8 percent), Hubei (22.5 percent), and Fujian (16.4 percent); Guangdong and Hunan have far fewer instances—9.7 percent and 9.6 percent, respectively. Altars occur sporadically elsewhere. While it would appear that a desire to keep the offerings from the dampness of the floor was of significance here, strangely, no altars have been reported in other parts of the south, such as Jiangxi, and only one instance in Zhejiang. Clearly there are other factors involved.

In some cases a small canopy was placed over the altar and its offerings. A few of these were formed by metal tubing at the corners and at the apex if the canopy had a peak, the rest of the structure being of wooden rods and cloth, examples of which have not survived. Some of the canopies were supported by stone stands, often quite elaborate, or by ceramic stands of some height (fig. 6.10).<sup>29</sup> The stone stands found in Sima Jinlong’s tomb at Datong are elaborately carved,



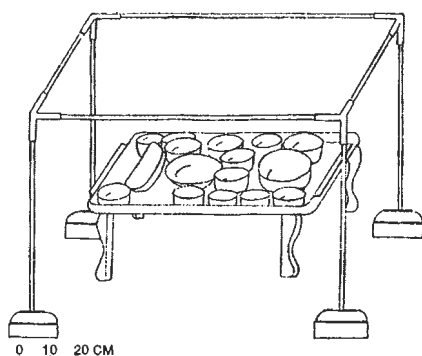
6.10. Canopy stands (after *Wenwu* 1991.2:83, fig. 2)



6.11. Canopy stand, Northern Wei (after *Cultural Relics Unearthed in China*, 146, top)

with a lotus flower decor (fig. 6.11).<sup>30</sup> An undisturbed set in an Eastern Jin tomb at Yuantaizi, Chaoyang, Liaoning, reveals the way in which the offerings might have been organized. Instead of an altar, there was a low lacquer table, 17.5 cm high, laden with fourteen lacquer dishes and other utensils. A canopy had been raised over the table, the four legs of which would have been inserted into the stone stands, and on the table, resting where they had fallen, were bronze corner tubings that had originally supported the canopy's framework of wooden rods (fig. 6.12).<sup>31</sup>

In some cases stone stands have been found in the corners of a coffin chamber, indicating that a canopy of a much larger size had been erected to extend over



6.12. Reconstruction of a canopy (after *Wenwu* 1984.6:39, fig. 34)

the whole room. This would have converted the coffin chamber into a bedchamber.

#### TOMB RECORDS

The tomb record (*muzhi*) emerged as a recognizable artifact during the Six Dynasties period, although its antecedents can be traced back to the Han if not even earlier.<sup>32</sup> These forerunners include various kinds of inscribed records sometimes placed in the tomb such as announcements to the underground deities and “grave-quelling” and land-purchase contracts, as well as inscriptions on coffins and on bricks. Whatever their purpose, they commonly bore the name of the deceased, and in some cases the place of origin, titles, and date of death. At the surface there were a variety of grave markers, including stelae, which already in the Eastern Han had evolved to contain longer, elegiac inscriptions. These stelae had become common during the Eastern Han, but when extravagant burials were forbidden in the last years of that dynasty,<sup>33</sup> the stelae were also specifically prohibited. Said to contain exaggerated and false statements, the stelae were, in 287 under the Jin, again prohibited.<sup>34</sup> Although there were times when stelae reappeared, their use was largely discouraged, and it was at this time that the *muzhi* came to be used as a substitute; buried inside the tomb, they could avoid official censure.<sup>35</sup> The *muzhi*, usually incised on stone but sometimes on brick, were usually placed before the head of the deceased or in the passageway of the tomb.

There were basically four types of *muzhi*: stela-like, rectangular, square, and turtlelike.<sup>36</sup> Those resembling the surface stelae had a pediment, and can be further subdivided into four based on the format of the pediment: with a dragon

design, rounded, triangular (the so-called *gui* 圭, or tablet shape), and square. The stela-like *muzhi* frequently had an identificatory heading at the pediment and a base in the shape of a tortoise-like creature as a support, and though modeled after the surface stelae, they were smaller, usually only 50 cm tall or 1 m at most, and therefore had shorter texts.

The rectangular *muzhi* were usually set upright, although some were longer than high. The larger of these had no base or pediment heading, perhaps because they were used with surface stelae, which did have those features. Shorter rectangular *muzhi* usually occur in the tombs of less-distinguished persons, and aside from the basic notation, had no eulogies or messages of condolence.

The third type, the square *muzhi*, which was laid flat on the floor of the tomb with the inscribed surface up, first occur in the early Six Dynasties period, and at the time of the move of the Northern Wei capital to Luoyang in 494, began to be supplied with covers, or lids, shaped like an inverted *fudou*, that is a four-sided truncated pyramid. This lidded square stone *muzhi* represents a maturation of the *muzhi* form, and it became the standard format in later times. Increasingly the cover and sides of the *muzhi* came to be decorated with incised depictions of the four directional animals, strange beasts, and floral decor. Placement of the heading with the name of the deceased on the top surface of the lid became standard in the Sui-Tang. The inscription itself, in either *lishu* 隸書 or *kaishu* 開書 script, varied in length depending on the importance of the deceased.<sup>37</sup>

The final shape in which the *muzhi* occurs, rare but interesting, is the form of a turtle, with the lid representing the turtle shell. Liu Fengjun has suggested that the lidded *muzhi* became the most popular format because the square body was seen to represent the earth and the lid, somewhat domed, heaven, in essence repeating the symbolism of the tomb chamber itself. In support of this hypothesis, Liu points to the galaxies sometimes painted on the tomb domes and the astronomical symbols incised on some of the *muzhi* lids. The turtlelike creature, with its round shell and flat plastron, has been said to incorporate those same symbolic shapes, a suggestion that Liu sees as confirming his thesis.<sup>38</sup>

The scholar Zhao Chao has also speculated that the emergence of the *fudou*-lidded *muzhi* is related to the conception of the tomb, seen as a heavenly dome over the square earth, as a microcosmic reflection of the universe.<sup>39</sup> He points out that earlier the cosmic board, which consisted of a round piece set on a square board, both pieces being covered with various sets of coordinates and other significant markings, and which was used in divinations, was modeled on this cosmological concept.<sup>40</sup> This divinatory equipment made its appearance in the Warring States period and had become widespread during the Han. Zhao considers that the various types of ceilings—arched, barrel vaulted, and



domed—could be thought to resemble the heavens; this is confirmed for him by those tombs that have the heavenly constellations painted above, along with the four directional animals and other celestial phenomena. The walls of the tomb, representing the terrestrial sphere of man, are then reserved for the murals picturing the deceased in life. Zhao relates the development of the domed tomb and later the *fudou*-lidded *muzhi* to the spreading influence of Han Confucian orthodoxy and its aspects of yin and yang and the “five agents” (*wuxing* 五行). By means of the tomb’s form and decor, an apotropaic function was thus built into the structure of the tomb itself.

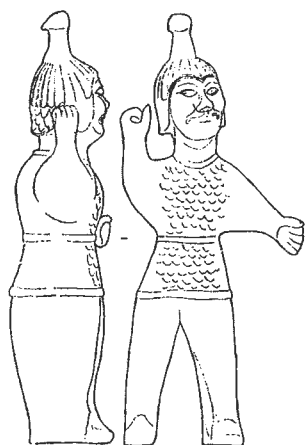
The texts of the early *muzhi* are rather simple, containing only the deceased’s name, place of origin, offices, date of death, place of burial, and perhaps the names of wife and children. As time went on, they became much more elaborate, adding to the essential biographical information concerning the person’s career more narrative and ending in an elegiac *ming* 銘, expressing both praise and grief at the passing of the individual.<sup>41</sup> The purpose of the tomb record, clearly stated in a number of inscriptions, was to provide information to future generations and, in the event of a reburial, to identify the deceased. It was not, as was the case of certain documents buried in Han tombs such as land contracts, to make a statement to the deities or spirits of the underground. The *muzhi* are important not only as a source of historical and biographical information, but also as a social document revealing attitudes toward death and the importance assigned to personal identity in contemporary society.

## APOTROPAIC AND SYMBOLIC OBJECTS

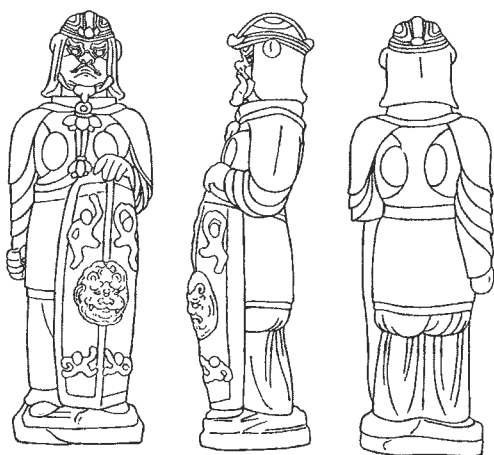
The building of tombs to hold the bodies of the deceased and the placement inside of a wide variety of grave goods concretely reveal a set of religious beliefs. A number of objects included among the grave goods had no quotidian use but appear to have had much symbolic significance worth special attention in this connection. The rich and complex array of symbols placed in the tomb and designed to protect its integrity include such things as guardian figures, stone pigs, crossbow mechanisms, “tomb-quelling beasts,” and mirrors.

### GUARDIAN FIGURES

Objects included for their apotropaic or symbolic nature are usually found in the area of the coffin, having originally been placed by the side of the coffin or within it. Guardian figures, however, were, more logically, put at the entrance to the tomb chamber, where they would have been seen as being more effective. An early type of tomb guardian, perhaps better characterized as an exorcist, is a figurine depicted wielding a spear and often holding a shield. It appears in tombs dating from the late Han to the Jin. One such type, shown with a spiked



6.13. Tomb guardian in scale armor (after *Kaogu* 1985.8:731, fig. 17.1)



6.14. Tomb guardians with shields (after *Wenwu* 1984.9:36, fig. 61)

helmet and suit of scale armor, may represent the non-Chinese often used as mercenaries in that period (fig. 6.13).<sup>42</sup> The exorcistic figurine came to be replaced by a more formal guard, usually a pair of guards in more conventional armor, either with hands resting on a long sword planted on the ground before the figurine or with the left hand resting on a large shield and the right hand clenched, presumably clutching a long-handled weapon that has not survived (fig. 6.14). These guardian figurines were usually larger than other figurines in the tomb. On occasion, such guardians were painted on the wall at the tomb's doorway.

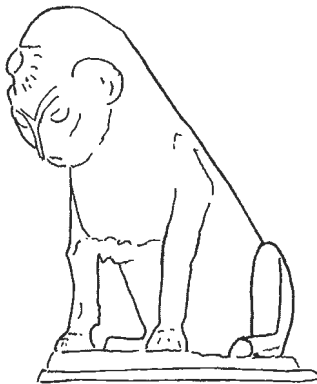
#### ZHENMUSHOU

Another apotropaic object placed in tombs was the *zhenmushou* 鎮墓獸, usually translated as “tomb-quelling beasts,” though *zhen* means rather to guard or garrison, and so “tomb-guardian beasts” would be a better rendering.<sup>43</sup> The defense of Han tombs seems to have been left primarily to figures in tile reliefs or in murals, but a kind of single-horned beast has been found represented in some tombs. Such a beast, resembling a unicorn, with an arched neck, raised tail, and single horn extending forward, was found in a tomb at Wuwei 武威, in Gansu,<sup>44</sup> while another, more closely resembling a winged rhinoceros, emerged from an eastern Han tomb at Yidu 宜都, Hubei.<sup>45</sup> A third type, with the shorter legs of the latter and raised tail of the former, but with a number of spike-like projections along the back, was found in Shandong.<sup>46</sup> These standing figures,

with or without the spikes along the back, are found in Three Kingdoms and Jin tombs in the Luoyang area and farther south, in Hubei, Anhui, and Jiangsu. Usually labeled by archaeologists as *zhenmushou* or *xiniu* 犀牛 (rhinoceros), this type of beast has also been identified as a *qionggi* 窮奇, a creature with the body of an ox, the bristles of a hedgehog (which could explain the spikes), the voice of a howling dog, and an appetite for human flesh.<sup>47</sup> There have also been finds in the northwest, in Ningxia and Shaanxi, of a protective beast in a crouching pose with a knob at the top of its head and, in one case at least, a prominent spine.<sup>48</sup>

There was in the north a shift from the rhinoceros or bull to a doglike creature with a human face. An early example, from the Datong area, is depicted standing on its four legs.<sup>49</sup> The earliest datable appearance of this new type is from the tomb of Sima Jinlong, of 484, at Datong, Shanxi (fig. 6.15).<sup>50</sup> The beast sits on its haunches, its human head peering downward. It has a knob on its head, as if the top of a horn had broken off, and five rectangular holes along the back of its neck, perhaps for inserting a mane of hair. Its face is painted white and the body has white lines representing scales. All subsequent examples of this doglike creature are in the seated pose.

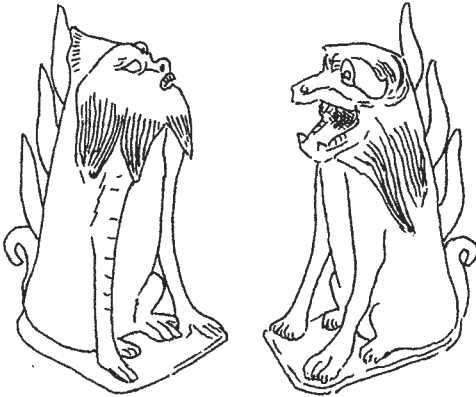
By the early sixth century the form has evolved further. The beasts are found in pairs, almost identical except that one has a human head and the other that of an animal. They are still depicted sitting on their haunches, and the human head continues to exhibit a knob or truncated cone on its crown. Both now have a series of spikes, usually three, emerging from the spine, as well as a curling tail. In a pair from a tomb of 524 at Quyang 曲陽, Hebei, the human-headed beast has bared teeth. The heads of both are framed by manes of clumped hair, but while one has claws, the other has something more like fingers (fig. 6.16).<sup>51</sup> In



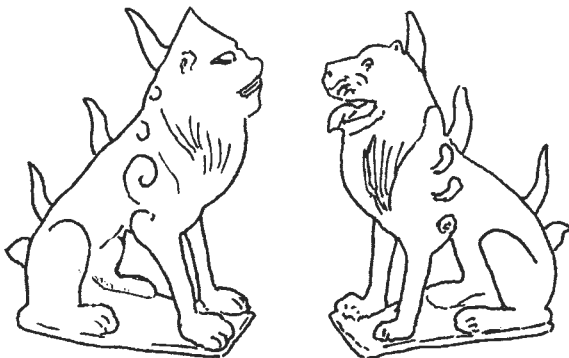
6.15. *Zhenmushou*, Datong, Shanxi (after *Cultural Relics Unearthed in China*, 142)

the contemporary tomb of Yuan Zhao at Luoyang (d. 528), a more finely modeled pair shows the same characteristics, except that the semihuman figure has paws rather than fingers and, perhaps influenced by the southern chimera, scroll-like wings behind the shoulders (fig. 6.17).<sup>52</sup>

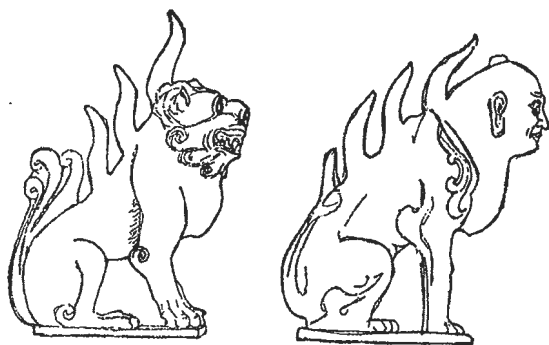
Soon the human head develops a more recognizably human likeness, more akin to the example in Sima Jinlong's tomb, and the incongruity of this realistic human head on an animal's body is somewhat shocking compared to the overall more bestial versions. Several other examples have been recovered: from a Northern Wei tomb of 518 or 537 at Jingxian 景縣,<sup>53</sup> from the Feng family tombs, also at Jingxian, of unknown date;<sup>54</sup> from nearby Gaotang 高唐, Shandong, a fragment to be dated;<sup>55</sup> from the tomb of the Avar princess of 550 at Cixian, an example with four spikes on the back (fig. 6.18);<sup>56</sup> and from the tomb of Mrs. Yao 堯, née Zhao, of 547, also at Cixian (fig. 6.19).<sup>57</sup> A decade or



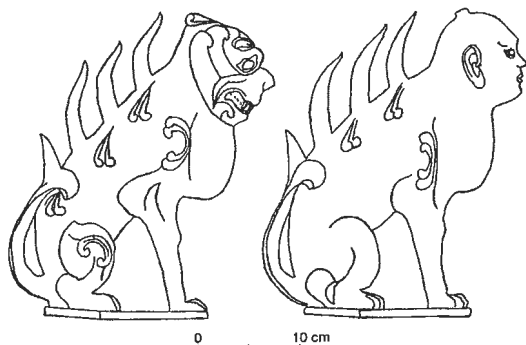
6.16. *Zhenmushou*, Quyang, Hebei (after Kaogu 1972.5, pl. 11)



6.17. *Zhenmushou*, Luoyang (after Kaogu 1973.4, pl. 12.1-2)



6.18. *Zhenmushou*, Cixian, Hebei (after *Wenwu* 1984.4:5, fig. 5)



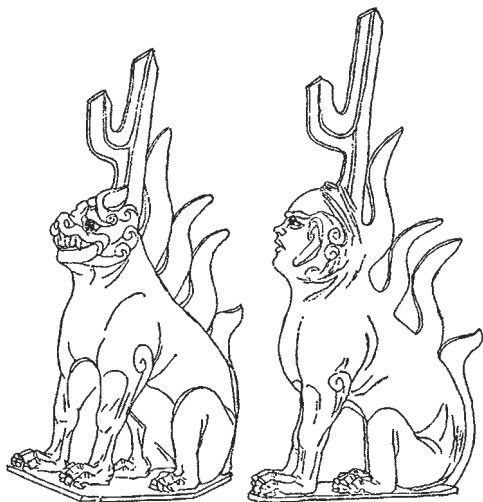
6.19. *Zhenmushou*, Cixian, Hebei (after *Kaogu* 1977.6:397, fig. 8)

two later, these figures have sprouted in addition a forked point emerging at a spot just behind the head, as in the examples in the tomb of Yao Jun 堯峻, of 566,<sup>58</sup> and that of Gao Run, of 577 (fig. 6.20), both in Cixian.<sup>59</sup>

In the tomb of Lou Rui, farther west, the human-headed figure has hooves like those of a horse, the fork is at the top of the head, replacing the truncated cone, and the number of spikes has increased to nine (fig. 6.21).<sup>60</sup>

The figures described thus far are primarily from the northeast, but there is one example from Hanzhong 漢中, in southwestern Shaanxi, of the Western Wei period (535–57). Here the human face appears more friendly than awe-inspiring, and the body resembles that of a frog (fig. 6.22). There are no spikes or other typical features. Could this figure have been made by a local artist for a transplanted northeasterner?<sup>61</sup>

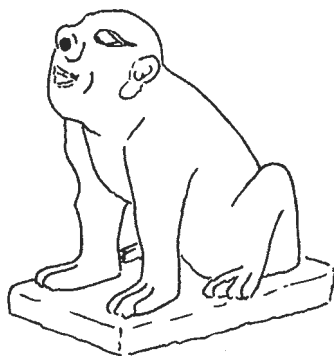
There are many Sui examples that largely resemble earlier ones, but without the fork on the head. What had been a typically northeastern form appears in the middle and third quarters of the sixth century to have spread more widely.



6.20. *Zhenmushou*, Cixian, Hebei (after *Kaogu* 1979.3:240, fig. 6.2-3)



6.21. *Zhenmushou*, Taiyuan, Shanxi (after *Wenwu* 1983.10:8, fig. 16)



6.22. *Zhenmushou*, Hanzhong, Shaanxi (after *Kaogu yu wenwu* 1981.2, pl. 13.2)

Sui-period examples of the form have been found in Henan, Hubei, Anhui, and Jiangsu. Its use continued into the Tang and was elaborated in three-color ware to almost baroque proportions.

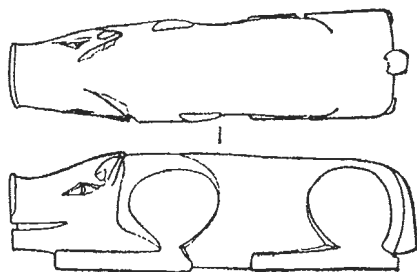
It may not be happenstance that this sort of guardian beast replaced the earlier horned animals of the Jin just when the north came under the rule of the Xianbei and other northern peoples. These figures can perhaps be associated with the belief among the Wuhuan (and thus among the Xianbei as well) mentioned earlier that the spirit of a sacrificed dog accompanied the deceased to the abode of the dead.<sup>62</sup>

## JADE SHOATS

The stone pig, *shizhu* 石豬, or jade shoat, *yutun* 玉豚, as it was traditionally called, a small tubular carved object usually 3.5 cm to 11.5 cm long and intended to represent a reclining pig, is found in many Six Dynasties tombs (fig. 6.23).<sup>63</sup> The carving is usually very crude, in some cases the details merely scratched into the surface. Most of these objects were carved out of steatite (*huashi* 滑石), though a few made of jade, red sandstone, wood, or even carbon have been reported. In most cases the pigs are found in pairs, but in others there may be one or three associated with a single burial; tombs with four such objects are most probably double burials.

The use of these stone pigs was a southern practice. Overall, 10 percent of Six Dynasties tombs contained these stone pigs among their grave goods, but that number includes only three tombs north of the Yellow River, two in Gansu and one in Henan.<sup>64</sup> The custom was at first concentrated in a sector including the modern provinces of Hunan, Jiangxi, and Guangdong. Stone pigs were found in 44 percent (forty out of one hundred forty-three)—the highest incidence—of the tombs in Guangdong during the period before 317. After the establishment of the capital in Nanjing in 317, the custom spread more widely, most noticeably in Jiangsu, where the capital was located. This trend would seem to go against the conventional wisdom that the period witnessed a spread of northern culture imposed on the native population by the northern émigrés.<sup>65</sup>

The small pigs were meant to be held in the hands of the deceased.<sup>66</sup> It is possible that the use of these jade shoats (*yutun*) involved a pun on the homophonic word *tun*, as in *tunxi* 寃窆, literally “long night” and used metaphorically to denote the tomb.<sup>67</sup> It is clear that *tunxi* was used in that sense during the Six Dynasties period. The placement of the pig in the tomb may have been intended to represent a laying to rest of the deceased, perhaps in line with the inscriptions on jars occasionally found in Han tombs expressing the sentiment that the dead should stay in peace in the tomb and not come to disturb the living.<sup>68</sup>



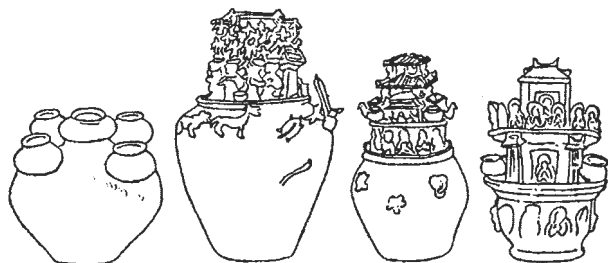
6.23. Stone pig (after Kaogu 1978.2:144, fig. 2.7)

## CROSSBOW MECHANISMS

Though crossbows are among the array of weapons found in Han and earlier tombs, their function appears to have changed upon entrance into the Six Dynasties period. Unlike the earlier examples, Six Dynasties bronze mechanisms included no adhering fragments of wood, indicating that the whole weapon had not been deposited. Further, imitations made of stone and even of silver, unaccompanied by other weapons and placed within rather than alongside the coffin, have turned up.<sup>69</sup> Some twenty crossbow mechanisms have been found in tombs ranging through the Western Jin in Hebei, Henan, Gansu, Hubei, Hunan, and Jiangxi, and another twenty in Eastern Jin tombs; none has been found in tombs identified as post-Jin in date. Clearly the crossbow mechanism had some symbolic significance, probably apotropaic, but its precise role remains to be explicated. As in the case of the jade shoats, a pun may be involved. The term *ji* 機, often used to refer to the crossbow mechanism, may have been taken to represent its near homonym, *ji* 吉, “auspicious,” a word that occurs on bricks used in tomb construction.<sup>70</sup>

## FIGURED JARS

The figured jar (*duisuguan* 堆塑罐), sometimes called *hunping* 魂瓶, or “spirit urns,” is a distinctive and even picturesque type of vessel whose purpose remains something of a mystery. This jar, whose lid depicted elaborate scenes of modeled buildings, humans, and animals, was one of the most distinctive vessels of the Six Dynasties period (fig. 6.24). The earliest prototypes date from the Western Han and are found primarily in Guangzhou. They are composed of five equal-sized *guan* jugs, one in the center surrounded by the other four. There were also instances of two, three, and four linked *guan* jug complexes. The earliest ones often rested on feet and had a decor of a mat pattern or fine grooves. By mid-Han the legs had given way to a flat bottom, the jugs had plain surfaces,



6.24. “Spirit urns” (after *Wenwu* 1979.2:51, fig. 2)



and only the five-linked jug version survived. The vessels of this period were made of pottery and held the remains of plum kernels, leaves, and other plant material. One might therefore surmise that the vessels were meant to hold fruit and other foodstuffs rather than grain. The linked *guan* jug is found only in the south, mostly in Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang. In its origins, there seem to be connections with the native Baiyue aboriginal peoples who occupied precisely those areas, but it would appear to have become a part of Han culture.<sup>71</sup>

By the Eastern Han and early Wu, the vessel's middle *guan* jug had become larger while the four surrounding ones had shrunk and were merely perched on the shoulder of the middle jug. During this time, too, its distribution had spread to the lower Yangzi (Jiangzhe 江浙) and included jars made of a brown glazed pottery, gray unglazed pottery, and, in the earliest examples, ones of buff ware, a protoceladon stoneware.<sup>72</sup> An Eastern Han example dated 175, found at Fenghua 奉化, Zhejiang, already exhibits the decor of embossed figures of men, animals, and birds that soon after became much more elaborate. While the five pots, one central and four peripheral, are still clearly delineated, there are also clusters of birds at the top and below and a number of sitting creatures, kangaroo-like but possibly representing mice, facing outward.<sup>73</sup> The late Wu and Western Jin periods are the time of the greatest development of this type of vessel. The central jug became even larger, often taking the shape of a multistoried building, while the peripheral jugs became even smaller, sometimes disappearing amid the corner towers, human figures, and animals crowding the scene. Each vessel is different, and their wide variety is what makes them so interesting. In their later stages, the peripheral jugs had all become buildings, their earlier form lost in the transformation. Originally the body of the *guan* jug supporting the lid with its superstructure of buildings and figurines was plain, but all sorts of figures came to be sprigged on. Among these animals and human figures were seated Buddhas.<sup>74</sup> The figured jar had disappeared by the start of the Eastern Jin, but similar vessels, clearly derived from the earlier forms, appeared in the Tang and were especially popular in the Song.

In the archaeological literature this type of vessel is often called a *gucang* 穀倉, or "storage jar," because it is taken to represent a granary, which would explain the large number of birds depicted clustering about it; the many dogs often displayed around the buildings are thought to be rat chasers. Occasionally an inscription in the form of a stela offering good wishes is found, and there is at least one case in which a coffin and some kneeling mourners are depicted in front of the model of a building. Rather than solving their mysteries, these elements only increase the number of theories attempting to explain the significance of these intriguing vessels.

It has been said, for example, these jars depict Taoist paradises and immortals, but there is little reason to accept this suggestion.<sup>75</sup> In the belief that they have something to do with housing the spirit of the dead person, they are also called "soul urns." Wai-kam Ho has argued that these vessels were used as a refuge for the spirit in cases when the body of the deceased was not available for burial.<sup>76</sup> Wu Hung has apparently accepted this explanation, tying these jars to what he believes to have been a popular cult of Buddhism. Chen Dingrong has suggested they were multipurpose, serving as a ritual object for burial, a memorial, grain storage for the afterlife, and a Buddhist sanctuary, all for the benefit of the deceased.<sup>77</sup> I would agree that the jar had multiple values and would add that the significance of the jars in the tomb may well involve the name by which they were known in their own time. In one inscription on such a vessel, it is called a *ling* 甕, defined in the *Shuowen* simply as a pottery vessel,<sup>78</sup> but this name was homophonous with *ling* 靈, "numen," thus giving the jar an important symbolic function as well.<sup>79</sup>

#### MIRRORS

Another possibly apotropaic object was the mirror, which was usually placed in the coffin at the head of the deceased. Mirrors are found in almost 20 percent of the tombs that have been reported on and thus played a significant part in the ritual of burial. They are also important for their artistic merit.

These mentioned here by no means exhaust the apotropaic and symbolic objects included in the burial rites, but they may serve as an indication of the importance assigned in this period to funereal rites and to the protection of the tomb.

#### QUOTIDIAN OBJECTS

Quotidian objects include those useful also in the living world and were represented by actual utensils, replicas made for placement in the tomb (*mingqi*), as well as by models of animals, machinery, and humans intended to serve the deceased in a variety of ways.

#### COINS

The widespread custom during the Six Dynasties period of placing coins in the tomb continued a Han practice. Although tomb robbery certainly might be expected to have affected the record available to us, it seems in fact it may not be so serious a problem; some 20 percent of tombs were found to contain one or more coins, and coins were recovered from 36 percent of intact ones. Therefore,

although our figures almost certainly underreport the frequency with which coins were placed in the tombs, enough remains to make an assessment possible, though the conclusions must be tentative.

Placing coins in the tomb is characteristic primarily of the area roughly north of the Yangzi River. The percentages of coins in tombs in the north range, by province, from 23 percent in Jiangsu and Shanxi to 77 percent in Gansu, while in the south, in contrast, the range is 4–16 percent. For the overall area north of the Yangzi, the average is 30 percent, and for that south of the river, it is 13 percent. There does not seem to be much change over time, as 39.5 percent of the pre-Jin tombs contained coins (this number includes tombs labeled as Wei-Jin) and 33 percent of Sui tombs did so. The amount of coins found in the tombs ranged from a single copper to strings of cash, but I make no attempt here to aggregate this data. Symbolic representations of coins apparently were considered effective; in one case at least, coins fashioned of clay were used.<sup>80</sup> In inventories that survive from the Astana tombs at Turfan, enormous numbers of coins are listed, though of course these amounts were imaginary and very few actual coins were found.

The history of coinage in this period is a rather sorry one. For many places and periods, commerce was based on barter, with grain, cloth, and even salt operating in place of currency. Very early on, even before the formal end of the Han, the warlord Dong Zhuo 董卓 abandoned the reliable *wuzhu* 五銖 coin of the Han and issued a smaller, cheaper one, with the result that inflation followed. Cao Cao, on gaining power, abolished Dong's coinage and restored the *wuzhu* coin, but a natural economy was already in effect. The governments of the north and the south struggled with the perennial shortage of copper, the debased quality of coins (some coins were so light it was said they could float!), the effects of these problems on trade, taxation, and the cost of living, and the vacillation between viewing private coinage as legal and as counterfeit.<sup>81</sup> Kawakatsu Yoshiro has posited the thesis that these monetary problems and the resulting difficulties at the local level were an important factor in the fall of the southern courts and their eventual conquest by the north.<sup>82</sup>

Coins recovered from hoards<sup>83</sup> and from tombs are an important source of information on the economic history of the Six Dynasties period as well as for what they have to tell us about religious beliefs. A large number of recovered coins had had their rims clipped, and, it can be inferred, many older, Han coins continued to circulate well into the Six Dynasties period; these circumstances have been cited by some as evidence of the disorders and disturbed economic conditions of the time.<sup>84</sup> But others, such as Liu Jianguo and Gao Lan, disagree. They point out that though many Han coins were indeed used in the post-Han period, it is also true that many new coins were minted. Further, although fewer coins are found in the tombs of the later periods, this decrease cannot simply be

ascribed to worsening economic conditions because, contrary to expectation, the decrease is more apparent in the wealthier tombs. Rather, they suggest, the placing of fewer coins in the tomb indicates a change in burial practices.<sup>85</sup> This is a valuable warning against accepting the stereotype of the Six Dynasties as a period of decline and regression.

In addition to copper (more accurately, bronze) coins, the inventories list silver and gold, which were also used in trade transactions, though not in the form of coins. In the case of silver, measured in *liang* 兩, or ounces, ingots and flat round wafers have been found.<sup>86</sup> Cloth was also used as currency.<sup>87</sup> Finally, there is mention of iron coins first minted in 523, but this was not a success.<sup>88</sup> Also found in the tombs were Persian and Byzantine coins that had come via the Silk Road and, because of their rarity, must have had a special cachet. Currency in whatever form presumably had much the same purpose as the paper “spirit” money of later times, namely to permit the spirit of the deceased to survive in greater comfort in the hereafter.<sup>89</sup>

#### FIGURINES

The early Six Dynasties figurines were simply continuations of what had been produced in the Han, but as time went on, the modeling became much more realistic, to the point that some scholars consider the later ones worthy of attention for their artistry.<sup>90</sup> Fewer than 15 percent of the tombs contained human figurines, and these tombs are not distributed uniformly over space and time; still, they provide excellent material for the study of many aspects of the material culture of the Six Dynasties period.

To facilitate discussion of these human figurines during the Six Dynasties period, they may be divided into those of the Three Kingdoms period, of the Jin, of the post-Jin—this last divided into the northern and southern traditions—and finally the culmination of the craft in the Sui, laying the foundation for the superlative developments of the Tang. The categories of figures represented are rather standard, given their purpose in serving the deceased in the afterworld: male and female retainers, male and female servants, grooms (often non-Chinese), musicians and other entertainers, and warriors, both mounted and on foot. Among the few exceptions are a nursing woman found in a Hunan tomb, a kneeling figure with what is apparently an enormously long tongue from a Wu tomb in Echeng, thought perhaps to be an apotropaic figure, and a representation of Buddhist monks found in a Sui tomb.

The Three Kingdoms pottery figurines have been found only in Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Henan, and Sichuan.<sup>91</sup> Excluding those of Sichuan, the figurines found in a few scattered tombs are poorly made, sometimes merely of pinched clay or from molds and baked at low temperatures. They represent attendants

standing with hands clasped at the chest and with cone-shaped lower bodies, similar to those of the Han period. There are a very few examples of warlike exorcists or guardians.

The Sichuan figurines are quite different. Some one hundred were found in a group of fifteen cliff tombs at Zhongxian, sixty-five coming from one especially rich tomb. They represent musicians, dancers, singers, servants, both male and female, engaged in all sorts of household tasks, attendants (twenty-three males and five females), and only one warrior. The figurines are remarkable for the detail in the clothing and hairstyle; they are 40–60 cm tall and of red or gray pottery (figs. 6.25–6.27).<sup>92</sup>



6.25. Figurine, Zhongxian, Sichuan (after *Wenwu* 1985.7:69, fig. 40)

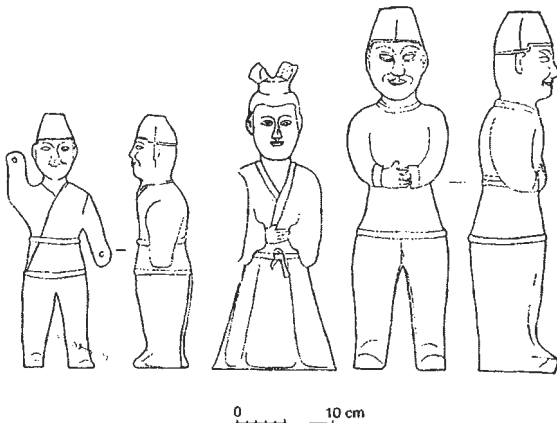


6.26. Figurine, Zhongxian, Sichuan (after *Wenwu* 1985.7:70, fig. 44)

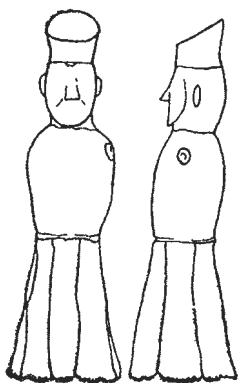
6.27. Figurine, Zhongxian, Sichuan (after *Wenwu* 1985.7:71, fig. 49)

During the Jin period, the modeling of these figurines became finer. In Henan and Jiangsu, where the principal capitals of that period were located, figurines occur in some 11 percent of the tombs. In and around Luoyang, there appeared the sort of figurines so familiar from museum collections. The typical complement in tombs that have figurines is the exorcist in scale habergeon, spiked helmet, and with a strange, foreign face (fig. 6.13), as well as a pair of attendants with hands clasped before the chest, the women in robes reaching to the floor (fig. 6.28). Tombs from Nanjing and its vicinity yielded similar figurines, usually a pair of attendants or servants and rarely military figures. The occasional figurine from such areas as Gansu, Hebei, and Shanxi are crudely made (fig. 6.29). The most interesting of this period are from Changsha, Hunan, where 116 pieces were recovered from three tombs, one of which is dated A.D. 302. They include six mounted military men and fourteen civil officials, fifty-four foot soldiers, nineteen standing male attendants, and twenty-three kneeling figures, some of which are scribes at work (figs. 6.30–6.33). Although rather rudely modeled, these figurines provide an interesting view of some aspects of life at this provincial capital during this period.<sup>93</sup>

The clothing styles depicted in these figurines do not change very much during the early years of the Six Dynasties period. Men and women who were apparently of higher rank, attendants or retainers, both wore long wide-sleeved robes, the lapel usually crossing over to the right, and a straight-necked shirt underneath. Less commonly, the lapels came down to the belt without overlapping. Occasionally a jacket of the same cut is shown worn over a skirt.<sup>94</sup> Often males and females are distinguished only by their hairstyle or headgear (figs. 6.34, 6.35). The women's hairstyles include buns on either side of the head, hair



6.28. Figurines, Luoyang area (after *Kaogu* 1985.8:731, figs. 17.3–5)



6.29. Figurine, Changzhi, Shanxi (after *Kaogu* 1988.2:184, fig. 2.2)



6.30. Figurine, Changsha, Hunan (after *Kaogu xuebao* 1959.3, pl. 6.1)



6.31. Figurine, Changsha, Hunan (after *Kaogu xuebao* 1959.3, pl. 7.1)



6.32. Figurine, Changsha, Hunan (after *Kaogu xuebao* 1959.3, pl. 11.1)

piled up, or even more elaborate fashions; some women are represented with a kind of arched cap, and others with very elaborate hairdos that may well have been wigs.<sup>95</sup> Servants and others of low status usually wore trousers and belted tunics with short or long, close-fitting sleeves. The clothing styles of later figurines is more diverse.

In the post-Jin period tomb figurines underwent enormous changes in the north. The numbers and types of figures burgeoned and the quality of manufacture reached new heights. The non-Han invaders from the steppes who ruled the north during these centuries may have provided the impetus for this devel-



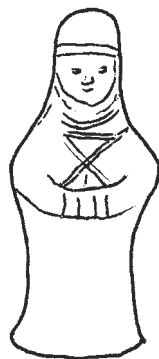
6.33. Figurines, Changsha, Hunan (after *Xinzhongguo chutu wenwu*, pl. 119)



6.34. Figurine, Nanjing (after Wang Zhimin, Zhu Jiang, and Li Weiran, *Nanjing Liuchao taoyong*, front cover)



6.35. Figurine, Nanjing (after Wang Zhimin, Zhu Jiang, and Li Weiran, *Nanjing Liuchao taoyong*, front cover)



6.36. Figurine, Huhehot, Inner Mongolia (after *Chūgoku Naimōko hoppō kiba minzoku bumbutsuten*, 58, fig. 57.2)

opment. The earliest examples, fifteen in number, from a tomb near Huhehot, do not show extraordinary artistic achievement but are interesting in their depiction of the northern conquerors as they were perceived in the early years of their conquest. Aside from the grotesque-looking warriors, one immediately notices the high round cap with hood that marks the figures as Xianbei tribesmen (fig. 6.36).<sup>96</sup>



Throughout the north, tombs come during this period to contain large sets of figurines, most of which are military. They include representations of heavily armored cavalry on fully barded horses, armored foot soldiers, and archers. Mounted musicians with long horns and drums, as well as insignia bearers, mounted and on foot, accompany these processions. For example, the tomb of Sima Jinlong (d. 484), near Datong, capital at that time of the Northern Wei, contained eighty-eight armored cavalymen and one hundred twenty-two footmen, together with an additional eighty-one in typical Xianbei garb, making up almost four-fifths of the three hundred sixty-seven figurines (fig. 6.37).<sup>97</sup> Very clearly the military dominated in the north, and those buried in these northern tombs expected in death to be accompanied by the same sort of armed escort and martial music to which their offices and status had entitled them in life. The same sort of processions of a slightly earlier date can be seen in a mural in the tomb of Tong Shou (d. 357), in the northeast, and on painted bricks from the far west, at Jiayuguan.<sup>98</sup>

This practice of furnishing the tomb with large numbers of figurines flourished especially in the northeast, in the modern provinces of Shanxi, Hebei, Shandong, and Henan; that is, in the area controlled by the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi. Such tombs are particularly numerous in the area around Anyang, near where the capital of those states had been located. Taking Hebei as an example, during the Jin two of eleven tombs contained the usual scant number of figurines, but in the post-Jin period, seventeen of twenty-six, or 65 percent of the tombs contained anywhere from one to more than fifteen hundred figurines, for an average of one hundred fifty-one per tomb. The incidence for Shandong is 40 percent, for Shanxi 41.6 percent, and for Henan 35 percent.



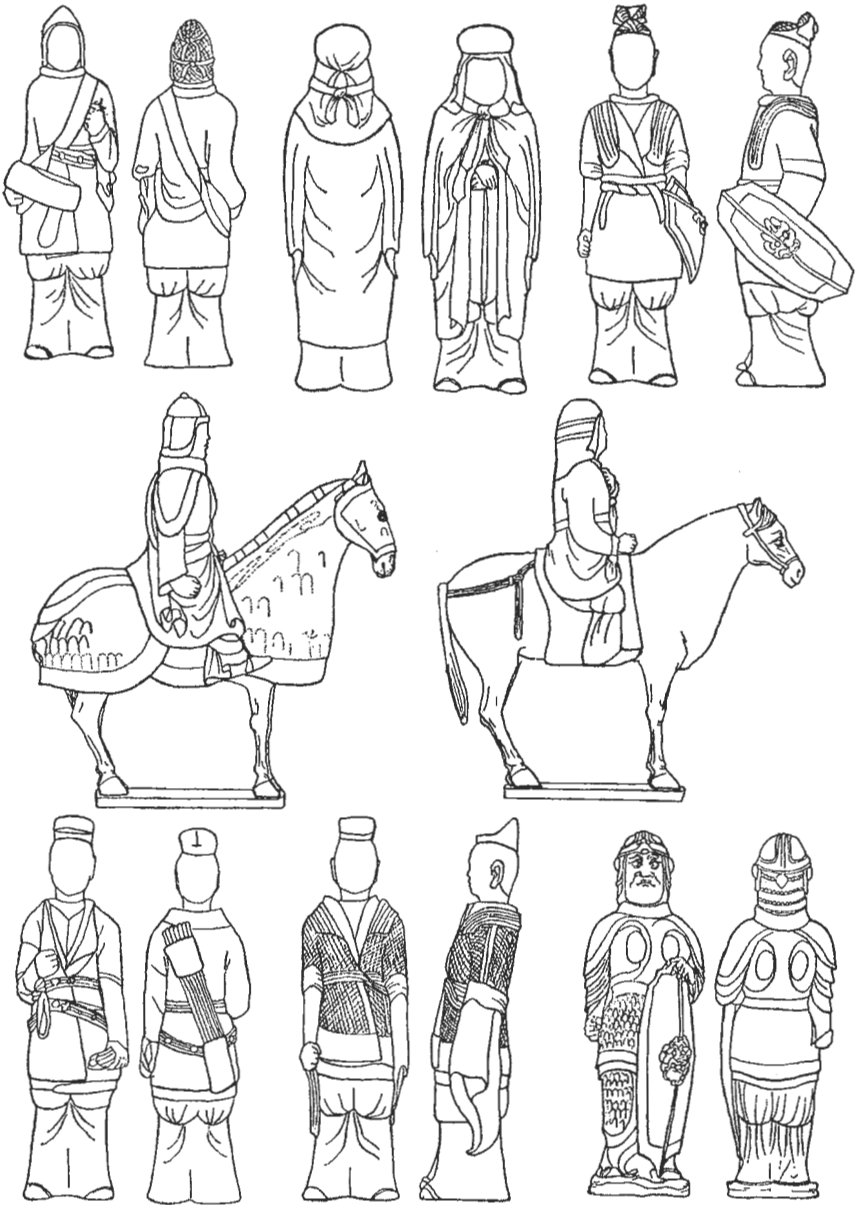
6.37. Female musician, Northern Wei, Datong, Shanxi, in the Shanxi Provincial Museum (after Caroselli, ed., *Quest for Eternity*, 51; drawing based on "Female Musician" owned by Shanxi Provincial Museum)

Every tomb of this sort had two heavily armored guards at the door, armored cavalry, figures with *liangdang* 兩當 armor, with or without a sword, hooded and caped figures usually said to have foreign features and generally identified as Xianbei, foot soldiers with shields or as archers, foreign grooms, insignia bearers, attendants, both male and female, musicians (especially drummers), and servants (fig. 6.38).<sup>99</sup> In addition to the headgear seen before, at this time appeared what is called *longguan* 籠冠, or “basket hat,” a high, close-fitting semitransparent bonnet apparently made of a lacquered woven material (fig. 6.39); this basket hat continued to be a part of court attire long after the Six Dynasties.<sup>100</sup> The figurines were formed in two molds, front and back, that were then joined, and the head, separately molded, was then added. After being fired, the figurines were coated with a white slip and other colors were added. They were produced in specialized workshops, which explains the large numbers of identical figurines that have turned up.<sup>101</sup>

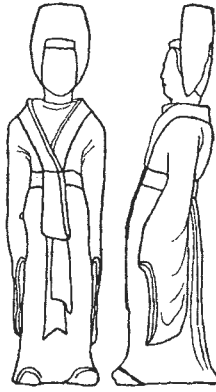
The inclusion of these figurines among the grave goods in tombs of the elite was apparently equally prevalent in northwest China, in modern Shaanxi and Ningxia, and the numbers are just as impressive. Over a hundred were contained in a Northern Wei tomb at Guyuan, Ningxia,<sup>102</sup> and two hundred thirty-nine in the Northern Zhou tomb of Li Xian (d. 569), also at Guyuan (figs. 6.40, 6.41).<sup>103</sup> In the Xi’an area, a Western Wei tomb at Xianyang had a group of eighty-five figurines, of which twenty-one were mounted musicians.<sup>104</sup> A group of fourteen Northern Zhou tombs recently excavated near Xi’an yielded figurines ranging up to two hundred six, with an average of forty. They are in the same northwestern style as the others, rather less realistic in execution than those of the northeast.<sup>105</sup>

During this time in the Southern Dynasties, even in the area of the capital at Nanjing, figurines appear only sporadically; a tomb might include representations of a male and a female attendant, with a rare servant or groom. In the larger tombs, probably of the imperial family, figurines carved of stone have been found, but such objects are few in number and usually heavily eroded. Still, five tombs with a fair quantity of pottery figurines have been located: one in southern Henan, two in Hubei—one at Xiangyang 襄陽 and the other at Wuchang—and two in Guangxi, where no figurines predating this period have been found. Though the Henan and Hubei tombs had an unusually large number of figurines for the south, fifty-five, forty-four, and twenty-two, respectively, suggesting a degree of northern influence, the number of military types among them was nonetheless relatively small.<sup>106</sup>

Xuzhou, Jiangsu, is in an area often contested between the north and south, and the relatively large number of southern-style figurines found in what seems to be an Eastern Jin tomb is seen as evidence of the resulting mix of cultures. The tomb, some 15 li north of Xuzhou, yielded eleven figurines, nine male and



6.38. Figurines, Eastern Wei and Northern Qi (after *Kaogu* 1977.6:393, figs. 3.2-7; 394, fig. 4.1; 396, fig. 6.6; and *Kaogu* 1979.3:239, fig. 5.6)



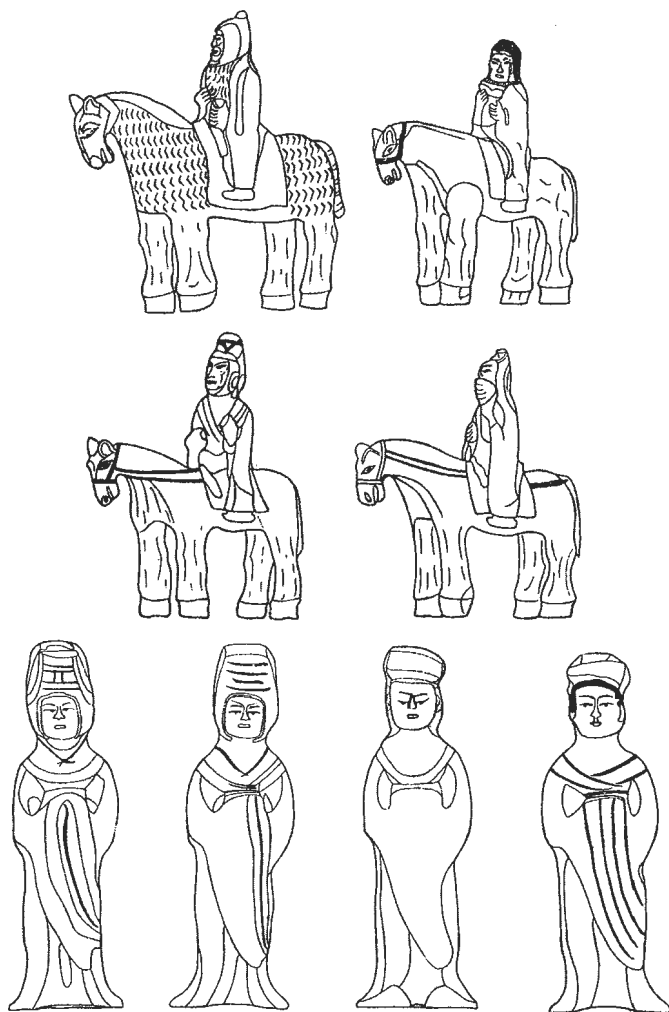
6.39. Figurine of female attendant, Eastern Wei (after *Kaogu* 1977.6:394, fig. 4.3)



6.40. Equestrian figurine, Northern Wei, Guyuan, Ningxia (after *Wenwu* 1988.9:33, fig. 12.4)

two female, none of which represented a warrior. Some of the figurines wear short, tight-sleeved jackets and trousers that the tomb report traces to the clothing styles introduced into China by the northern nomads. The most unusual of the eight animal figurines is a rider on an elephant, the only one thus far reported for the Six Dynasties period.<sup>107</sup>

The situation in Guāngxī is more complex. In that province six Southern Dynasties tombs (out of sixteen) had human figurines, but in four of them the figurines consisted of simple pieces carved out of steatite.<sup>108</sup> The remaining two tombs contained military processions (which in one tomb included a person being carried in a litter shaped like a square *ding* 鼎). The officers and pennant



6.41. Figurines, Northern Zhou, Guyuan, Ningxia (after *Wenwu* 1985.11:5–6, figs. 7–8)

carriers are wearing interesting split-shaped helmets, and the ordinary soldiers pointed casques. The men buried in these tombs, which contained twenty and twenty-four figurines, respectively, presumably were local governors.<sup>109</sup>

The production and placement of figurines in northern tombs continued into the Sui period. There were few if any changes in the composition of figurine groups. About the only deviation from the strictly frontal pose of the figures was instances of foreign grooms turning the head one way or the other. There are observable regional variations, but in general the similarity of figures from one tomb to another leads one to consider the possibility that they were produced in

large numbers by specialized craftsmen and purchased, as it were, off the shelf by the bereaved family. There has also been some speculation that the widespread occurrence of these figurines evidences changes in the social structure. One would expect that, as in so many other aspects of life in this period, there were sumptuary regulations governing the use of tomb figurines; otherwise it would seem there would be at least a few in even the poorest grave, and yet such is not the case.<sup>110</sup> However, in a group of twenty-nine Sui tombs found at Anyang, of a simple catacomb type dug out of the earth, it was reported that ten (actually nine) had figurines, ranging in number from twelve to fifty-three. The report goes on to say that in the past those supplied with such figurines had served as officials, even as low as district magistrates, and that commoners (that is, nonofficials) had not been permitted to have figurines as a part of their grave goods. The inclusion of figurines, and in this case in such ordinary graves, led the authors of the report to propose that this signaled a decline in the strength of the large, powerful clans (*menfa dazu* 門閥大族), and that the status of commoner landlords and their economic power had risen to the point that they, too, could have such figurines.<sup>111</sup> Such an analysis does not, however, take into account the permeability of the boundary between the elite and commoners. It may be that in this area figurines in commoners' tombs represent a weakened central government and the emergence of local people taking on the trappings of status formerly forbidden to those who did not hold office. In time, the Tang dynasty was able to reexert control over the area, and one would expect that the use of tomb figurines conformed once again to customary practices.<sup>112</sup>

There was nothing overtly iconographic about these tomb figurines; except for the miniature Buddha in the tomb of Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou, mentioned above, there are no other iconic representations of the Buddha, for example. There is a case in an Eastern Wei tomb, that of an Avar princess (d. 550) who married into the royal family, of a startlingly powerful-looking shaman or exorcist in a sweeping headdress (fig. 6.42).<sup>113</sup> The same figure of a shaman was found on a molded brick in a tomb at Dengxian 鄧縣, Henan, thus making it unlikely that the shaman in the north was a steppe element brought with the princess to the Chinese court.<sup>114</sup> In addition, two figurines representing Buddhist monks were included in a Sui tomb.<sup>115</sup> Since tomb figurines represented the entourage of the deceased, it would have been out of place to include a representation of a superior being; such a being would be faced by the deceased in another realm, and not in the tomb.

With the Sui unification of China, the practice of placing large numbers of such figurines in the tombs spread to the south as well. Anhui, Hubei, Hunan, and Jiangsu all have documented tombs with varying numbers of figurines, ranging from eight to forty-three. Civilian figurines predominate, but there are



6.42. Figurine of a shaman, Eastern Wei (after *Wenwu* 1984.4:3, fig. 4.8)

also armed figures. Whether these tombs are of northerners sent to take up posts in the south or of native southerners has still to be determined.

There was thus a profound difference between the north and south in the inclusion of human figurines in the tombs. On the question of what occasioned that difference, it cannot be a coincidence that the north during this period was ruled by a series of dynasties of conquest while the southern courts were basically those of émigrés whose subjects consented to be ruled. That is to say, in the north a procession of retainers and military escorts accompanied by military bands was not merely a sign of status but also a show of force meant to legitimize rule, whereas in the south such displays would have been out of place. There, status was manifested by the more traditional appeal to excellence in letters and lifestyle. Consequently, in the south evidence of such displays of power is found only in the tombs of the frontier areas.

It would appear that the prerogative of commanding such an entourage was taken to the grave and transmuted into the means of entering the other world. Transportation for that purpose was indicated by the provision of the saddled horse or oxcart, in model or in painting, that stood at the ready within the tomb. The presence of the entourage in the tomb thus not only gave evidence of the high status of the deceased, but also furnished the retinue for the final procession accompanying the deceased to the afterworld.

#### MODELS OF ANIMALS AND EQUIPMENT

Models of household and agricultural equipment, buildings, and animals were also placed in many of the tombs to provide the deceased with the necessities of life in the hereafter. The grave goods by He Xun included a stove, obviously to

be represented by a model, but excavations have yielded a much wider array of objects. They include models of such farm implements as rollers (*nian* 碾, to grind or husk grain), mills (*mo* 磨), foot pestles or hullers (*dui* 碓), pounders (*chong* 舂), mortars (*jiu* 臼), as well as wells (*jing* 井), buckets (*tong* 桶), sifters (*shai* 篩), and work baskets (*benji* 畚箕). Horses, camels, donkeys, and oxen with ox carts have also been found. The types of buildings included range from a model of a whole fortified compound to simple structures, granaries, and even outhouses, as well as coops and barns. Farm animals included pigs, sheep and goats, chickens, ducks, geese, doves, and dogs.

There does not seem to be a discernible pattern as to what models and nonhuman figurines were placed in the tomb. The most common object, models of stoves, is found in 10.2 percent of the tombs, and each of the most common animals, the pig and the chicken, in only 6.1 percent. Though some animals would be expected to be favored in one region more than in another—the camel, for example, appears almost entirely in the northern tombs—regional preferences in animal husbandry cannot be inferred from the appearance or nonappearance of specific animals because so many other factors would have played a part in the selection of grave goods. One such factor is differing customs over time and space on the appropriate balance of various categories of goods.

Including these items was in general more popular north of the Yellow River and dropped off farther south. The proportion of tombs reported to have such grave goods ranges from 46 percent to 61 percent in Hebei, Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Gansu; for the middle provinces of Shandong, Henan, Jiangsu, Anhui, and Hubei, the range is from 12 percent to 32 percent, while for the rest of the south, including Sichuan, the range is 0 percent to 11 percent. Although the display cases in museums and the large illustrated reports on archaeological finds might seem to suggest the practice of including such objects in the tombs was universal, such was not the case.

Another striking phenomenon is the reversal in the popularity of such grave goods between the north and the south over time. In the south overall, 26 percent of the tombs dating through the Western Jin contained this category of grave goods, while only 7 percent of tombs from the Eastern Jin did so; in the north the trend is reversed, with the occurrence increasing from 15 percent to 28 percent. Further study is necessary before any definitive conclusions can be drawn.

The list of objects included among the grave goods is extensive. With the exception of pottery vessels, a partial list would include wine warmers, inkstones, irons (for ironing clothing), scissors, thimbles, whorls, rulers, combs, earpicks, whetstones, weapons, jewelry, musical instruments, chopsticks, candleholders, lamps, tweezers, girdle ornaments, and buckles. All of these objects were made of nondecayable materials and have therefore survived. In general,



the materials from which grave goods were made include pottery of various sorts, bronze, iron, lacquer, wood, jade, stone, gold, silver, gilt, agate, turquoise, amber, crystal, glass and glass paste, shell, bone, ivory, horn, lead, mica, bamboo, paper, carbon, coral, tortoiseshell, tin, shell, and steatite. As to what might have dictated what was to be included among the grave goods, general patterns do not emerge either by period or by region. Some objects are, of course, gender specific, but apparently the composition of grave goods in any particular tomb varied according to the wishes of the deceased or the piety of the survivors.

In the few surviving tomb inventory lists, what is listed is primarily items of clothing. Such a list was found in a tomb dated 361 at Changsha.<sup>116</sup> In addition to clothing, the inventory included toilet articles, ornaments, and sewing equipment, all of which presumably had been in the possession of the deceased during her lifetime, hence the term *gu* 故, "former" or "deceased," preceding each of the listings except for some coins. Most of the items, which included everything from aprons and shirts to skirts and jackets, were made of silk and other fine materials. In contrast, in the inventory for the woman in Tomb 1 at Mawangdui 馬王堆, also at Changsha but of some five hundred years earlier, the garments included only robes, wrappers, and skirts, and no undergarments. Another inventory list, from Nanchang, in Jiangxi, written on wood and dated as Western Jin, likewise primarily lists clothing, but, interestingly, also included were a writing box, a hundred sheets of paper, brush, ink, and inkstone; hairbrushes, combs, fragrances, and cosmetics were also included.<sup>117</sup> The extensive lists of grave goods testify to the wealth possessed by these women before their deaths and the continuing production of a wide variety of woven materials in this period.

Interestingly, these inventories do not list pottery objects, which were the most common grave goods. Over three-fourths of the tombs contained something made of some form of ceramic. Jugs, pitchers, vases, and storage jars held provisions for the deceased, and steamers and kettles were available to prepare the food; pottery utensils for eating and drinking included trays, plates, dishes, cups, bowls of all sorts, and ladles, as well as multicompartment boxes to hold delicacies. Aside from the vessels related to food, there were spittoons, urinals, braziers, incense burners, censers, lamps, candleholders, bowls and basins for washing, water droppers used in making ink, and pottery inkstones. The type of objects varied over time, no doubt reflecting changing styles in the world of the living. Some items occurred throughout the Six Dynasties period, such as models of stoves, wells, and animals and pottery bowls and dishes. Typically Han utensils such as the *ding* tripod fell out of fashion, while others, for example the four-lugged *guan* jar and the lamp with a bear-shaped base, became popular in the Three Kingdoms period; the dish-mouthed *hu* jar and hollow-stemmed *pan* 盤 dish appeared during the Jin.<sup>118</sup>

The emphasis on filial piety during this period, an emotion that found expression in part by providing the dead with many of the necessities for their life after death, often on a lavish scale, has made it possible for us to learn much about the material aspects of life during those years. Though time and the manner of burial have caused the organic components, including the body itself, largely to decay into oblivion, what remains is quite substantial.

# 7

## MATERIAL CULTURE AND THE ARTS

### CERAMICS

The natural materials available to potters in the north and south were vastly different, and this difference greatly affected the technologies and products of the two areas.<sup>1</sup> In the north the sedimentary processes drawing on the loess deposits laid down beds of true clay, whereas in the south potters had available to them porcelain stone derived from weathered igneous rock.<sup>2</sup> The virtue of this porcelain stone was that, when mixed with kaolin (which has very little content to act as a flux) and fired at high temperatures (1,200°C–1,300°C), its sericite component acts as the flux and its feldspar and the kaolin fuse to form a uniformly dispersed vitreous material.<sup>3</sup> The porcelain stone was obtained by using water-powered trip-hammers on igneous rock, from which was procured a material rich in quartz and mica that had a claylike plasticity and, supplemented by small amounts of clay, could withstand the high temperatures required to produce the early stoneware so distinctive of the Six Dynasties period.<sup>4</sup> This stoneware is usually referred to as *qingci* 青瓷, or buff ware.<sup>5</sup>

The origins of this ware, more generally termed *yuanshi qingci* 原始青瓷, or protoceladon, have been traced back as far as the Western Zhou,<sup>6</sup> but buff ware in the narrower sense has its beginnings in Zhejiang during the Eastern Han period.<sup>7</sup> Buff ware achieved a high level of quality during the Six Dynasties period, thanks to improvements in the handling of the clays, the composition of

the glazes, the construction of the kilns, and the control of the firing of the vessels. Evidence of these advances can be seen in the greater uniformity of color, evenness of glaze thickness, lower levels of permeability and porosity of the body of the vessels, and improved bonding of glaze to core, resulting in less crackling and flaking of the glaze.<sup>8</sup> Six Dynasties buff ware achieved levels comparable to those of Song, Yuan, and Ming, and came near to modern standards of porcelain in the sintering of the clay, the vitrification of the glaze, and the overall quality of the vessels.<sup>9</sup>

This buff ware is characterized by a close-grained clay highly contractive in firing. The core is a bluish gray color, probably a result of iron in the clay causing the color to appear during reduction firing.<sup>10</sup> The distinctive color of this ware derives from its calcareous or lime glaze that has undergone reduction firing. This glaze, sometimes termed an ash glaze, is a mixture of porcelain stone, lime, and ash. The ash was obtained from wood and ferns, the latter high in iron and plentiful in the Yangzi area.<sup>11</sup> The color results specifically from oxidized iron, especially ferrous oxide (FeO); the lime, or calcium oxide, is the primary flux. The glazes, better in quality than any that preceded them, range in color from a bluish olive green to a light green. The amount of calcium oxide varied, with an average of 18 percent, while the iron content ranged from 1.54 percent, which produced a light blue-green color, to 6–8 percent, which resulted in a lacquer-like black color.<sup>12</sup>

Major advances in the early Six Dynasties period were possible in the south since the area largely escaped the extensive disturbances that rocked the north. The economy of the lower Yangzi steadily improved and even flourished, providing a ready market for the growing production of buff ware. By the time of the Wu state, buff ware constituted a relatively high percentage of the grave goods. As its quality rose during the Six Dynasties period, it came to replace earthenware pottery in the tombs. At the same time its use for everyday utensils widened, and buff ware replaced objects made of lacquer, wood, bamboo, earthenware, and even metal. This in turn led to new forms that replaced some older ones, such as cups and bowls in place of the traditional eared cup, a development that may have meant significant changes in social customs.<sup>13</sup>

There were two types of kilns in ancient times: the round, or *mantou* 饅頭, type, used chiefly in the north, and the so-called dragon kiln, widespread in the south during the Six Dynasties period. The dragon type was long and narrow and built on a slope with its mouth at the lower end. It goes back at least to the Chunqiu–Warring States period and is still used today in one form or another.<sup>14</sup> The dragon kiln was often constructed in hilly areas, which were advantageous for this sort of kiln for several reasons: higher ground minimized any ill effects dampness might cause during the firing process; a hilly area made it possible to build the kiln at an optimal angle, usually 8 to 20 degrees, although there are

Han cases of an angle as much as 30 degrees; the kilns were close to their fuel supply, the wood growing in the mountainous areas; and finally hilly land, not ideal for agriculture, was readily available for establishing kilns.

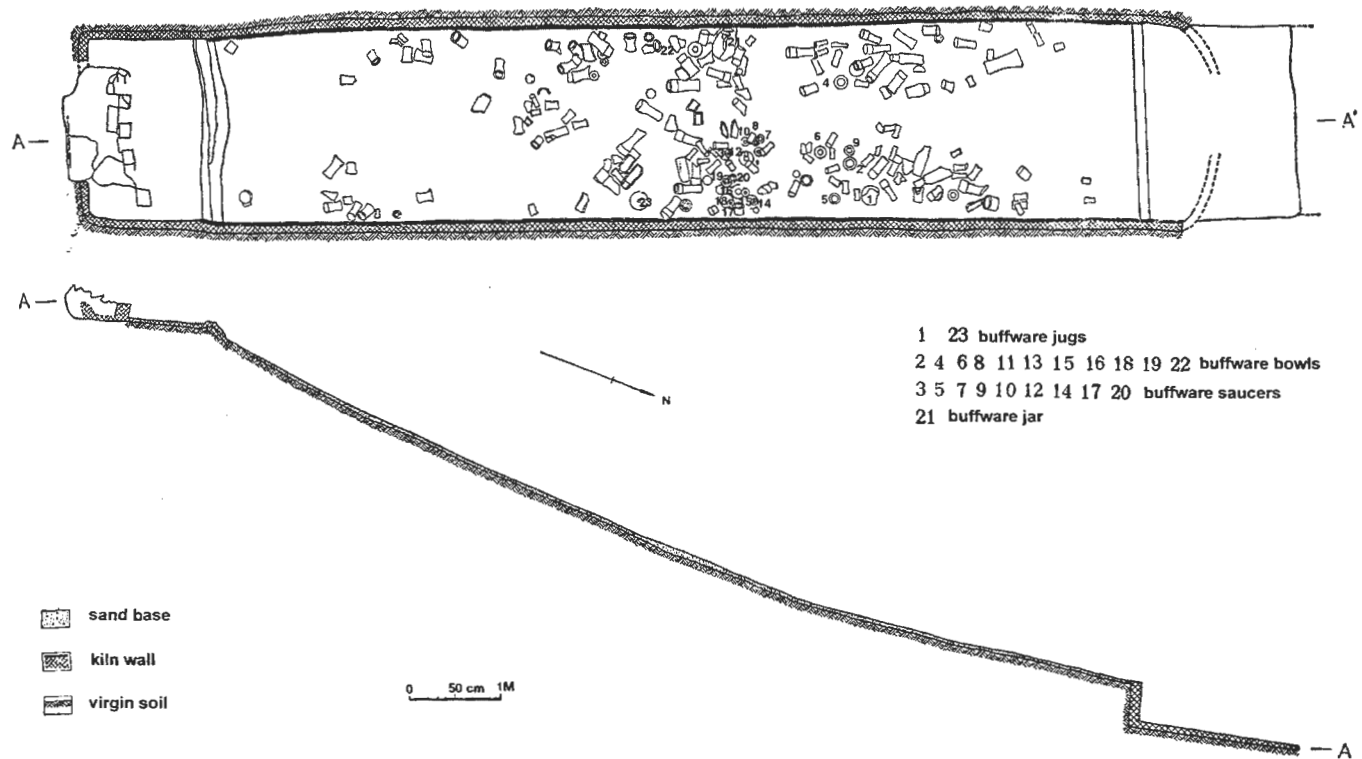
The dragon kiln was composed of three parts, the head, body, and tail. At the front was the combustion chamber, usually semicircular in shape, with a small opening acting as a draft for efficient burning of the wood fuel.

The kiln chamber itself was long and narrow, ascending the slope of the hill on which it was located. A balance had to be struck between the chamber's length—the longer the chamber the more pots that could be fired—and firing efficiency: beyond a certain length it was difficult to control temperature and airflow, limitations that affected the quality of the ware. Older kilns thus did not achieve much length. The eventual addition of fire openings along the sides permitted greater kiln length.<sup>15</sup> The kiln's floor was natural earth, often covered with a layer of sand to prevent the kiln furniture holding the pottery from being dislodged.

The third and final portion of the kiln was the smoke box, separated from the kiln chamber by a fire wall that concentrated the flames within the kiln, thus maximizing the pottery's exposure to the flames and raising the temperature in the kiln. A number of equidistant flues of similar size at the bottom of the fire wall allowed smoke and waste gases to enter the smoke box and be dissipated. Because of the natural draft created by the kiln's sloped orientation, no chimney was necessary; the smoke box alone was adequate.

Dragon kilns from the Han to the Jin varied greatly in construction, indicating a process of experimentation. Judging from a site at Anshan 鞍山, in the Shangyu 上虞 area, by the Three Kingdoms period kiln length had reached over 13 m (fig. 7.1). Very little kiln furniture was found at the rear of the kiln chamber, suggesting that the far reaches of the chamber could still not be heated high enough to fire vessels satisfactorily. Since lengthening the kiln chamber thus did not increase production, kilns tended to be built short. Also, since adding to the kiln height in order to stack the ware higher did not enhance productivity but rather only wasted fuel and dissipated the heat more rapidly, the kilns of the Eastern Han to the Jin were characteristically short, low, wide, and steep. This low, wide construction resulted, however, in an unstable structure prone to collapse, thus giving the kilns a short life. In time, as the problem of heat distribution was solved and saggars and other kiln furniture were developed that allowed vessels to be stacked higher, the kilns tended to become longer and narrower.

These basic problems remained until fuel holes were added along the kiln's sides, probably beginning in the Tang. With their addition to the long chambers, heat could be used more efficiently, less fuel was needed, and the cost per unit of production decreased.<sup>16</sup> Compared to a Southern Dynasties kiln at



7.1. Plan of a dragon kiln, Anshan, Zhejiang (after Zhongguo guisuan yan xuehui, *Zhongguo taocishi*, 153)

Lishuixian 麗水縣 10.5 m long and 2 m wide, a certain Tang kiln of the same area was 39.85 m long and 1.7 m wide. Such long kilns were set at less of an angle (10–12 degrees in the Tang example) to prevent too strong a draft.

Some progress has been made in locating southern kiln sites of this period, though much remains to be done in identifying the provenance of individual pieces. The oldest kiln sites are in the area south of Hangzhou Bay, primarily at Shangyu, Yuyao 余姚, and Shaoxing, but also at Yinxian 鄞縣, Ningbo 寧波, Fenghua, Linhai 臨海, Xiaoshan 蕭山, Yuhang 余杭, and Huzhou 湖州, all in an area administered during the Six Dynasties period by the Kuaiji Commandery.<sup>17</sup> (Map 4) The area was ideal for ceramic production: it had hills on which to locate the dragon kilns, flat land for workers' housing and buildings associated with the kilns, excellent-quality clays, woodlands for fuel, and waterways for transportation to markets. The four- to five-fold increase in the number of kiln sites in the Shangyuxian 上虞縣 area alone just from the Eastern Han to the Wu indicates how well the products of these kilns were received.<sup>18</sup>

Other kiln sites that have been identified in the lower Yangzi basin include the Junshan 均山, Ou 甌, Jinhua, and Deqing 德清 kilns.<sup>19</sup> The Junshan kilns, also known as the Nanshan 南山 kilns, were in the area of Yixing, in a particularly favorable location because of access to excellent trade routes. Junshan ware was similar to that of the Kuaiji kilns, albeit inferior in quality. The body was more friable and crude, and had a higher rate of permeability. The clay was not finely prepared, its iron and titanium content was rather high, and so the color of the core was gray, dark gray, or reddish. This explains the relatively high permeability and poor quality of glassiness. In addition, crazing and flaking of the glaze occurred frequently because of inadequate glaze fit.<sup>20</sup>

The Ou kilns, centered around Wenzhou 溫州 in southern Zhejiang, also enjoyed commercial advantages from their seaboard location north of Fujian and proximity to navigable rivers connecting areas upcountry. This favorable location had early made Wenzhou an important commercial center. The body of this ware was whitish with only traces of gray, and the light blue-green glaze was translucent to a relatively high degree; still, the quality of the product suffered, especially in the early period, when firing did not always result in complete sintering. As a result the glaze often flaked off and the colors were not always consistent. The quality improved in the Eastern Jin period, only to be followed by a decline during the Southern Dynasties period. While the employment of decorative elements was minimal in this kiln area, the use of the brown or black glaze for decorative effect was distinctive. There were two formats: dots placed around the mouth and shoulder of the vessel or as a pattern on its shoulder and belly, or secondly, long lines of varying lengths and thicknesses depending on their location on the vessel.



Map 4. Southern Dynasties kiln sites

The kilns of the Jinhua area, in central Zhejiang, produced Wuzhou 婺州 ware, long recognized as an individual style from the Tang and only relatively recently seen to have had its origins as far back as the Three Kingdoms period. The earliest pieces were rather crudely made, the glaze applied unevenly and not well bonded. The color has traces of yellow, and yellow crystals appear in the core where the glaze has flaked off. Clay suitable for making buff ware was in short supply in this area. In great supply was a clay with a high content of ferric



oxide and titanium dioxide that resulted in a deep purplish red color (famous in the Yixing teapots) affecting the buff color of the glaze. A white slip added to the body to cover up the color reacted with the glaze to produce a rich and soft effect, with brown spots appearing amid the greenish gray or greenish yellow, but it also exacerbated the tendency to flake. The quality of Wuzhou ware improved over time, and by the Tang and Song periods it had become highly renowned.<sup>21</sup>

The Deqing kilns were in an area bounded by Yuhang to the south and Wuxing 吳興 to the north, with the Dongtiao 東苕 River running by Deqing on its way to Taihu Lake, thus providing a ready means of transport of the ware to its various markets. While buff ware was also produced in these kilns, the primary product was a ceramic ware with a dark brown or black glaze. The fired body of this ware was variously brick red, purple, or light brown, its chemical composition identical to that of Wuzhou ware from the other side of Taihu Lake. Of course the dark glaze made the body color irrelevant. When a buff glaze was used, a layer of white clay was applied to the body, as in Wuzhou ware, resulting in a rather dark buff ware described as bluish green, pea green, and greenish yellow. Its glaze layer tended to be even with a relatively good gloss. The black ware had a rather thick layer of glaze with the look of lacquer. This dark color was the result of a high content of oxidized iron, as high as 8 percent. While the kilns of this area were active for only some hundred years, from the Eastern Jin to the early Southern Dynasties period, the black ware was extremely popular, and specimens have been found as far away as Sichuan.<sup>22</sup> The buff ware celadon glaze and black glaze were sometimes combined, producing black or brown spots dotting the surface of a green ware. This ferric oxide glaze decoration on green ware was always in the form of spots and never lines.<sup>23</sup>

Tomb reports only rarely speculate about which kilns might have produced uncovered ceramic grave goods. One example of such an attempt is the report on a Western Jin tomb from Weigang 衛崗, Nanjing. Its authors reported that the core of the buff ware, fine grained and of excellent quality, was light gray, but where the surface had been unglazed and exposed to the firing, it was dark red because of a high iron content. Such features were characteristic of Zhejiang kilns, not those of Jiangsu, whose products had light-yellow (*baihuang* 白黃) cores and a coarse quality. It was further noted the color of the glaze was the same as that of two pieces, a *hu* jar from Jintan and a *buzi* urinal from Nanjing dated 251, both of which were labeled as being made in Shangyu, in Kuaiji. The authors thus concluded that the newly uncovered pieces of buff ware were the products of kilns at Shangyu, Zhejiang.<sup>24</sup> Such identifications will eventually add to our knowledge of trade routes and the extent of commercial activity.<sup>25</sup>

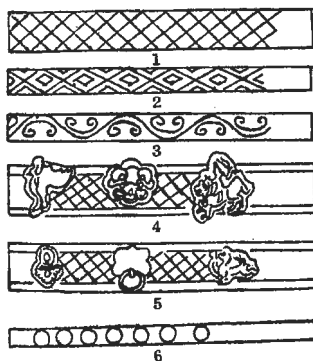
Though the Taihu area of modern Zhejiang and Jiangsu continued to be the center of buff ware manufacture, its area of production expanded significantly, and in time the quality in these new regional kilns improved and local variations in color and form arose. Kiln sites have been found at such widely separated places as Chengdu and Qionglai 邛崃 in Sichuan<sup>26</sup> and various places in Fujian.<sup>27</sup>

An example of regional ware is that of the Jingchu 荆楚 area (middle Yangzi), which by the Wu period had already begun to produce some protoceladon and buff ware. The core of this ware was purplish red or light gray, and the glaze a yellowish brown or buff, uneven and easily flaked; in strict terms, it could not be called porcelaneous. Despite an overlap in the types of vessels with other areas, there were pieces exhibiting a local style. By the Western Jin porcelaneous clay was being used in this area; the ware's core was fine grained, the color dark gray or grayish white, with a yellowish green glaze, though the color had not yet been brought fully under control. The glaze was crackled and, because of poor bonding, sometimes entirely flaked off. This was a serious problem even in the major ceramic areas, and it wasn't until the Tang that a solution was achieved.<sup>28</sup>

The wide variety of decorative techniques employed in the Six Dynasties period, incision, stamping, appliqué, modeling, and openwork, continued Han traditions. The designs included geometric and floral patterns, depictions of animals, most often animal heads, and human figures. The geometric patterns included web, rhomboid, dot, cloud, and linked-pearl decorations, probably imitating contemporary woven designs, and they occurred in bands around the rim, shoulder, or body of the vessel (fig. 7.2). These decorative bands were most prevalent from the Eastern Han into the Western Jin, but beginning in the middle of the Western Jin period, they became simpler, often reduced to one or two simple ridges or grooves.

In the south floral designs consisted primarily of the lotus flower. An impressive example is the *zun* 尊 jar, whose body is covered with a lotus-flower decoration. The lotus-flower motif developed under the influence of Buddhism, to which the flower was closely associated.<sup>29</sup> The earliest form of the lotus decor was a simple stamped design, but in time it developed into spectacular carved relief. The lotus design was especially popular during the Southern Dynasties period.

Animals also figured in vessel decor, usually as appliquéd heads, with or without vestigial pendant rings, as part of the decorative bands, but animal heads and complete figures and depictions of transcendents also occurred as appliqué designs on the bodies of vessels. Three-dimensional representations of humans, animals, and buildings are found crowded together in the enthralling scenes depicted on the tops of the *hunping*, or spirit urns, discussed earlier.



1. Web
2. Rhomboid
3. Cloud
4. Animal mask, transcendent,  
scarlet bird, web
5. Animal mask, bixie,  
Buddha image, web
6. Linked pearl

7.2. Types of vessel decor (after *Wenwu* 1979.2:51, fig.1)

Buff ware is the most common of the grave goods in Six Dynasties tombs, and even the poorest grave had one or two pieces. It had emerged in the Eastern Han as a cheap, durable, water-resistant alternative to bronze and lacquer, and the earliest shapes mimicked vessels made of the materials it replaced. New and distinctive shapes began to appear in the Eastern Jin, marking a new era in the history of ceramics in China.<sup>30</sup> The discovery of a large number of dated tombs over the last few decades permits us to lay out a developmental scheme for buff ware (table 7.1).<sup>31</sup>

The buff ware of the first period (220–80) is globular and top-heavy, and the overall tendency during the Six Dynasties is for vessels to become slenderer and taller. During this first period dish-mouthed *hu* jars assumed rather squat or globular shapes, with small mouths, short necks, high shoulders, and relatively small, concave bases; this shape resulted in rather unstable vessels. Other types of vessels, such as spittoons and *guan* jugs, had similar silhouettes. The same low, squat profile extended to *wan* bowls and *xi* 洗 basins. The chicken-headed ewer, a distinctive vessel of the Six Dynasties period, appeared during this time as a simple chicken or bird head added to a *hu* or *guan*, sometimes with wings modeled on the sides of the vessel. The chicken-headed ewer reached its distinctive appearance in the next period.<sup>32</sup> Other animal forms appeared as decoration or vessel shape—water droppers in the form of frogs, candleholders in the shape

TABLE 7.1  
SOUTHERN POTTERY TYPES

	GUAN JUC	CHICKEN- HEADED EWER	DISH- MOUTHED VASE	EARED BOWL CUP	BOXES	BRAZIER	SPITTOON	URINAL
Third century								
Three Kingdoms to Western Jin								
Eastern Jin								
Southern Dynasties								

Source: adapted from *Wenwu* 1979.2:51.

of lions or goats, and lamps held up by bearlike creatures. Vessel types also included flattened flasks, storage jars, cups with handles, inkstones, and braziers or incense burners. The *huzi*, or tiger-shaped urinal, which had appeared in the pre-Han period, continued to be made. There is a famous example dated 251 that has an inscription giving the place of manufacture and the name of the potter. The strangely flattened rump of these *huzi* enabled them to be set upright in the kiln, thus saving space. Finally, the distinctive and even picturesque *hunping*, or spirit urn, type of vessel emerged in this period.<sup>33</sup>

During the second period (280–317) in the development of buff ware in the south, under the Western Jin, pieces tended to be somewhat more slender but with thicker walls. To counter the resulting appearance of heaviness, the rims of vessels such as *wan* bowls and *die* 碟 plates were made relatively thin; *xi* basin lips were curved inward; and the rims of dish-mouthed *hu* jars were given a crest line, thus imparting an effect of lightness. An expansion in production also introduced some changes. With the practice of piling vessels higher in the kilns

for increased production came thicker, flat bottoms to support the added weight, and the more pleasing foot ring was thus abandoned.<sup>34</sup>

During the Eastern Jin (318–420), the third period, buff ware reached a new level of maturity and excellence. The number of kilns and the scale of production increased, which is reflected in the greater number of buff ware vessels found in contemporary tombs; even the smallest tombs contained a few pieces, revealing the large quantity of vessels being turned out. Additionally, high standards in quality and craftsmanship were achieved. A clear regional differentiation related to glaze selection led to a rich variety of glaze colors. The strength of the bonding between glaze and body improved to the point that the problem of flaking was largely overcome. By virtue of the newly achieved translucency and smoother layer of glaze, the natural beauty of the buff ware became more apparent and permitted new developments in modeling and decor.<sup>35</sup>

This period was also marked by the production of fewer types; vessels and utensils of quotidian use predominated, while the various miniatures and tomb-oriented *bunping* disappeared. The chicken-headed ewer developed a handle, but there were generally fewer animal-shaped pieces. The tendency was toward a standardization of existing patterns. The trend of elongation continued; while mouths and bases become wider more attention was given to the aesthetics of the contour line. In decor, plain surfaces dominated; decoration became simpler, and the embossed, sprigged, and incised patterns characteristic of the earlier periods waned. The decorative band on the shoulder or body of pieces generally evolved into a simple crosshatch design, and the use of grooves as the only decoration increased.<sup>36</sup> Decorative dark brown spots, arising first during the Western Jin, became an important characteristic during the Eastern Jin, and the greater control of glaze application led to the use of crackle as a means of decoration. The advances made during this period finally freed the potter from the influences of bronze and lacquerware of the earlier period, and buff ware came into its own. The use of the term *ci* 瓷 as a designation of buff ware first appeared in the Jin to label what had become a discrete category of ceramic ware.<sup>37</sup>

The buff ware of the post-Jin period (420–589) continued to develop along the same lines: a dominance of quotidian vessels; a standardization of established patterns; longer and more slender contour lines; and little if any surface design. The belt of crosshatch and other stamped designs disappeared and the broadleaf lug fell out of favor. A lotus-petal design came into fashion and, in time, became quite ornate, being incised in high relief. By the end of this period, the bodies of *bu* jars and *guan* jugs developed tall, slender, curved forms; in the case of the *bu* jar, the ratio of its height to mouth diameter grew from 1 : 1 in the Three Kingdoms period to 2 : 1 by the end of the Six Dynasties. For some reason spittoons went the opposite way, becoming increasingly squat as the period progressed. The handle of the chicken-headed ewer developed a dragon head

gripping the lip of the vessel. There was thus both a continuing tendency toward simplification and an increasing elegance and even ornateness in certain pieces, demonstrating the mastery of the craft that had been achieved in the south over the course of the Six Dynasties.<sup>38</sup>

It is often said that the south had its buff ware and the north had its white ware, but the history of ceramic ware in the north during the Six Dynasties period is more complex than that generalization suggests. Once political and social order had been restored in the north, important developments in the production of ceramics arose there that would have a bearing on ceramic manufacturing in the Tang. Also, the variety of northern wares contrasted with the almost monotonous emphasis on buff ware in the south, revealing vitality and a willingness to experiment.

The most accessible clays in the north were derived from loess deposits. Because they were fusible and prone to melt or become deformed under high temperatures, they were used for earthenware fired at low temperatures. Vessels were most often not glazed, while figurines were usually covered with a slip and details added with paint. The importation of southern buff ware inspired among northern potters a revival of this tradition starting in the late fifth century and expanding in the sixth century. The clays needed for this ware were deeply buried and, further, required high temperatures over a relatively long period of time in order to fuse and form stoneware.<sup>39</sup>

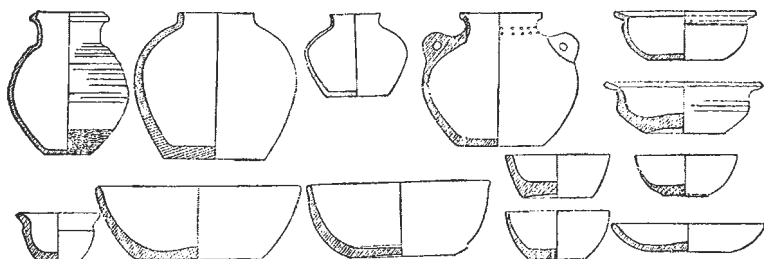
In addition to differences in available clays, there were contrasts between the north and south in terms of the style of kiln construction and the fuel used, and these differences were reflected in the coloration of the buff ware of the two areas. Northern kilns were of a round, or *mantou*, shape, and the fuel was chiefly charcoal, while in the south it was pinewood. The flames of the pinewood, less intense but of longer duration, increased the rate of reduction and resulted in a better color.<sup>40</sup>

A fair amount of information about southern kilns has become available, but little is known about the kilns in the north. A number dating back to the late Northern Dynasties, that is the sixth century, have been located in central Shandong, primarily the Zhaili 寨里 kilns near Zibo 淄博, the kilns of Zhongchenhebei 中陳郝北, near Zaozhuang 棗庄, and those of Zhuchen 朱陳, at Linyi 臨沂. The kiln sites in this area are in hilly country either on or near rivers, which served as both a source of water in the manufacture of the pottery and a means of transportation. The sites are also in the proximity of coal mines and drew on clay interspersed with layers of coal. Such clay, mixed with quartz and feldspar, is still used today in the production of ceramic ware. Judging from the shards left at these sites, it would appear that the ware produced in this area was not of high quality. The common types were the *wan* bowl, *guan* jug, high-footed *pan*

plate, dish-mouthed *hu* jar, *bei* cup, and *pen* 盆 basin. The cores were heavy and coarse, a light or grayish yellow in color, with air pockets and dark specks. The glazes, in a variety of colors, were applied in an uneven layer; surfaces were mottled, with traces of drips and a lack of finish. These and other nearby kilns remained active during the Sui and Tang.<sup>41</sup> Save for these and another kiln site, dated to the Sui, at Jiabicun 賈壁村, Cixian, Hebei,<sup>42</sup> the sources of northern ceramic ware remain unknown, and the development of pottery making into a mature craft in the north must be pieced together primarily from the material excavated from tombs.

In general the quality of northern ceramic ware in the immediate post-Han period fell away from the standards achieved during the Han. In the years leading up to the Jin dynasty, the ware was largely low-fired, poor-quality crude gray pottery. The types may have been influenced by southern buff ware, but while many advances were being made in the south, the northern pottery industry languished through the Jin dynasty. Up to the unification of the north under the Northern Wei in the mid-fifth century, the variety of northern pottery types was small. They consisted largely of *guan* jugs with or without lugs, and also *wan* bowls, *bo* bowls, *pen* basins, and *pan* plates. Most of this pottery was gray and occasionally red sand-tempered earthenware (fig. 7.3). The surfaces were plain, and in cases in which there was a glaze, its application was not uniform and the green or yellowish green color varied because of poor control of the firing process.<sup>43</sup>

A much greater variety of ware has been found in the Luoyang area, as befits its status as capital, but even there, the vast majority of pieces are unglazed earthenware pottery, and examples of buff ware are few in number.<sup>44</sup> A curious pottery has been found in Xinjiang tombs of this period. It is a friable gray earthenware made especially for funerary purposes. The surface is painted black and decorated with red, white, and green designs; the rows of white dots are especially distinctive.<sup>45</sup>



7.3. Early northern ceramics (after *Wenwu* 1983.10:64, fig. 8)




















Though the development of northern lime-glazed buff ware lagged behind what was being produced in the south, eventually some significant advances were made. The Zhaili kiln in Shandong provides evidence of the development of this craft in the north. The glaze of the early period was thin and unevenly mottled, but as skills improved, a two-stage glazing process was instituted that resulted in a thicker glaze, bright and rich in color. Nevertheless, problems continued at Zhaili in the production of buff ware. Incomplete control of the reduction firing caused an uneven glaze color, and imperfect bonding of the glaze to the core resulted in flaking. Since buff ware of better quality has been found in northern tombs, obviously there were other kilns that commanded a higher level of expertise.

A variety of types of buff ware were made, including *wan* bowls very similar to those of the south, with deep bodies and an upright mouth, some with a crude lotus-petal design incised on the sides. There were also *pan* plates, *guan* jugs, *ping* vases, spittoons, dish-mouthed *hu* jars, and trays with cups, all quotidian vessels (table 7.2). However, there was one type of vessel not meant for daily use, and it is outstanding. It is the so-called lotus-flower *zun*, a number of which have been found primarily in the Feng family graves of Jingxian, in southeastern Hebei. They are tall jars with a deeply modeled decor consisting mainly of rows of lotus petals, some turned upward and others downward. Although they differ individually, in general the base features downward-turned lotus petals, similar to the pedestal of Buddhas of the period, then a row of upward-turned single-petal flowers at the bottom of the body that meets a row of double-segmented petals that descend downward, the line of contact of these two rows occurring at the widest diameter of the body. Above, on the shoulder of the vessel, is another row of smaller petals, topped by a number of lugs, with bands of modeled decor, including rosettes, lion masks, and *apsaras*, ascending the neck to the rim (fig. 7.4). While a number of similar jars have been found at Wuchang and elsewhere in the south, a chemical analysis of the glaze of the northern vessels indicates a different signature from that of the southern buff ware.<sup>46</sup> In time this type of *zun*, in some cases coated with lead glazes, lost its decorative integrity.<sup>47</sup>

Northern buff ware differed from buff ware of the south in a number of respects. The bodies of the northern ware were thicker, and their color was grayish white; the glazes were also thicker and had a glassier, more fluid quality. The surface often had glasslike globules and a yellow tinge. Finally, the pieces themselves were on average larger, and the variety within any particular type was greater.<sup>48</sup> In terms of chemical composition, too, there were differences. The cores of the northern pieces had a higher aluminum content ( $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ ), generally above 26 percent, and less ferric oxide ( $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ ), close to 2 percent. There was also a generally higher titanium ( $\text{TiO}$ ) content, usually over 1 percent. Firing tem-



TABLE 7.2  
NORTHERN POTTERY TYPES

	GUAN JUC	HANDLED GUAN JUC	DISH-MOUTHED HU JAR	PING VASE	WAN BOWL	SPITTOON
Northern Wei						
Eastern Wei						
Northern Qi		 	 		   	 
Northern Zhou			 			

Source: adapted from *Wenwu* 1979.2:52.

peratures for northern ware were also higher; northern buff ware was fired at 1,200°C or above, as compared to temperatures below 1,200°C for southern buff ware.<sup>49</sup>

On the whole, northern buff ware shows differences across the provinces, but there is still a recognizable northern type: it is relatively simple, direct, and functional (excluding, of course, the lotus-flower *zun*). Newly discovered kilns in Hebei and Henan indicate that buff ware production in the north was centered in those provinces. Though the level of accomplishment does not match that of the south, northern ware is still notable, especially since it was the foundation on which the buff ware of the Sui and Tang was based.<sup>50</sup>

The lead-glazed, low-fired pottery of the Han continued to be made on a small scale during the Six Dynasties period, but its quality improved only after the late



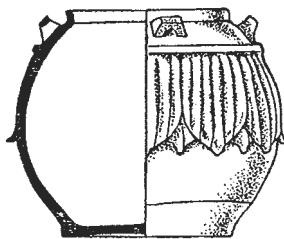
7.4. Lotus-flower zun (after Wenwu 1979. 2:53, fig. 3)



7.5. Flattened flask, Anyang (after Wenwu 1979.2:53, fig. 5)

fourth century with the establishment of the Northern Wei. The number of colors increased and included green, yellow, and brown—in some cases several on one piece. A high level of artistry was achieved by the Northern Qi dynasty, in the second half of the sixth century. A number of pieces made at that time may serve as examples. A *bianhu* 扁壺, or flattened flask, sometimes called a pilgrim's bottle, was a pear-shaped vessel some 20 cm tall with a short, straight neck; a band of linked raised beads appeared where the neck and shoulders met. There were two small lugs at the shoulders through which a strap could be strung. The front and back surfaces had modeled reliefs of Central Asians playing musical instruments and dancing. Specimens have been found in yellow and in green (fig. 7.5).<sup>51</sup>

The *gang* 缸 crock was another representative type. It was globular, straight necked, ring footed, with a variety of lugs, both bridge shaped or square, single or paired, set on the shoulder (fig. 7.6). Below the lugs was an incised band of scrolled foliage, and beneath that and covering the upper part of the body was a downward-pointing lotus-petal decor molded onto the body, with striations representing the natural patterns of the plant. The glaze on such pieces covered only the top half of the vessel, though often with drips reaching into the lower half. The glaze color was light yellow or light green with splashes of a darker green. The same sort of two-toned glaze was found on a *ping* vase recovered from a tomb of 575.<sup>52</sup> This two-toned glaze anticipated the polychrome glaze of Tang ware.<sup>53</sup> An analysis of the lead glazes reveals that the amount of lead oxide included in the glazes was quite high—55.42 percent in shards from the Zhaili kiln site.



7.6. *Gang* crock (after *Kaogu* 1973.6:348, fig. 8.1)

By the end of the Northern Dynasties period, lead-glazed pottery had reached a high level of maturity and included many vessel types. Their surfaces were usually relatively plain, relying on glaze color and modeling to provide aesthetic appeal.

Two other kinds of glaze emerged during the late Northern Dynasties period: black ware and white ware. The difference between the two depended on the amount of iron compounds in the glaze; black ware had more ferrous oxide and white ware less. Black ware had been produced at Deqing in the south as far back as the late Eastern Han, and its kilns had become famous for the ware by the Eastern Jin. The north began producing black ware a century later, as examples from Eastern Wei and Northern Qi tombs attest. These examples are well made, their glaze often jet-black, and the core fine and hard.<sup>54</sup> They demonstrate that the northern potters were gaining ground on those of the south.





















White ware, unlike buff and black ware, was an achievement of the north alone. The ability to produce white ware marked an important point in the history of Chinese ceramics: it was the basis for the later figured ceramics. White ware was produced by eliminating iron compounds from the raw materials used in its manufacture and controlling during firing contamination by residual water or sulfur.<sup>55</sup> Achieving these advances required a long period of experimentation. Originally white ware was thought to have first appeared in the Sui, but examples found in the tomb of Fan Cui, dated 575 范粹, at Anyang, Henan, push the date back. An examination of these pieces indicates that the core material had been put through a process of levigation to produce a relatively white, fine core. Their glaze shows a tinge of green, especially noticeable where it is thick, revealing that the technique for removing iron had yet to be perfected at this time. Sui white ware is more mature, but the Fan Cui material definitely represents an early stage in the development of that ware.<sup>56</sup>

The Sui dynasty brought unification of the country, and during the dynasty's short duration, the quality of ceramics rose dramatically. This improvement may have represented the culmination of developments already in motion, but it may also be that unification led to a new prosperity and easier exchange of information and skills between northern and southern potters. Whatever the reason, the Sui marked a milestone in the history of Chinese ceramics.<sup>57</sup>

The areas of production in the north during the Sui centered around Anyang, in the northeast, Xi'an in the northwest, and Ji'nan on the lower Yellow River. A number of kiln sites have been found in all three areas. Evidence related to production in the south has been found in Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Jiangsu, Anhui, Sichuan, Guangxi, and Fujian, indicating it was a much more active area. The output of porcelaneous ware increased greatly at this time; a tomb at Wuhan 武漢 yielded over sixty pieces. There was also a proliferation in the types of ceramic ware being made. Buff ware and related ware replaced articles made of gold, silver, bronze, and lacquer. At the same time, a multitude of variations of each type arose, as might be expected in a country of this size.

The general tendency toward elongation and elegance that developed in the years just before unification continued; the earlier-style *guan* jug, for example, had a height-width ratio of 1:1, which became 1.5:1 during the Sui (table 7.3).

TABLE 7.3  
POTTERY TYPES OF THE SIX DYNASTIES, SUI, AND EARLY TANG

	FOUR- HANDLED GUAN JUG	CHICKEN- HEADED EWER	DISH- MOUTHED PING VASE	DRAGON- HANDLED HUI JAR	SPITTOON	HIGH- FOOTED PAN DISH	HUI JAR	BRAZIER
Six Dynasties								
Sui								
Early Tang								

Source: adapted from *Wenwu* 1979.2:60.

Furthermore, a new form appeared at this time, a double-bodied *hu* jar with a dragon handle at each side. This double-bodied form became a single one during the Tang, though retaining the dragon handles. The chicken-headed ewer, a hallmark of the Six Dynasties period, also became more elongated; the lower body narrowed and lengthened, and the chicken head, earlier rather small with a neck like a tube, transformed, during the Northern Qi and Sui, into a vigorous rooster. This type of vessel seems to have become less common in the succeeding Tang. Whereas Six Dynasties ware generally had small, flat bases with solid feet, Sui pieces began to feature foot rings, a development that expanded during the Tang. Finally, a new decor emerged during the Sui. A more refined and yet more realistic and straightforward style broke through the standardized patterns of the earlier period, and decoration and form achieved a new harmony.<sup>58</sup> Thus, a clear Sui style arose during this period despite its short duration of some thirty years.

Most significant in Sui ceramic ware were the improvements in almost every aspect of its manufacture. White ware especially demonstrated these advances since any inadequacies in its manufacture would have been readily apparent. The levigation of the clays became more thorough, and these finer clays produced cores that had few, if any, coarse grains, specks of extraneous material, or air pockets such as are found in Six Dynasties examples. More precise control of the modeling was achieved, with varying thicknesses introduced at different parts of the bodies to reduce distortions during firing. White slips were applied over the cores to smooth out even the slightest imperfections and to afford the glazes a higher degree of luster and glassiness. The effect was particularly striking on white ware, which assumed the appearance of ivory. Finally, better control over the firing was effected, leading to greater uniformity from one firing to another and the avoidance of traces of unwanted colors on the vessels. The degree of sintering also increased, creating a harder ware than that of the preceding period. In all these ways, the Sui set the stage for the developments that came in the Tang.

## BRONZE

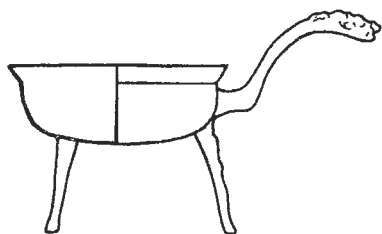
Although bronze objects are not numerous among the grave goods, the variety of forms into which the metal was cast lend bronze an important place in the material culture of the Six Dynasties period. Bronze artifacts, excluding coins, have been found in only a third or a bit more of the tombs, and for the most part these tombs contained no more than a single bronze object; in about half of the cases, that single object was a mirror. At one extreme a group of twenty-seven Jin tombs excavated at Changsha in the 1950s contained in all 399 objects, of which bronze accounted for 3, iron 11, stone 20, gold 25, crystal, agate, and jade

10, and ceramics 330 items.<sup>59</sup> At the other extreme a Three Kingdoms tomb from Sichuan yielded 73 bronze items as against 38 of pottery and 2 of buff ware; such a lavish display of bronze is unusual even for this early period.<sup>60</sup> Bronze objects obviously were less significant than had been the case in the Han, and while the reasons for this are not entirely clear, there have been some suggestions.

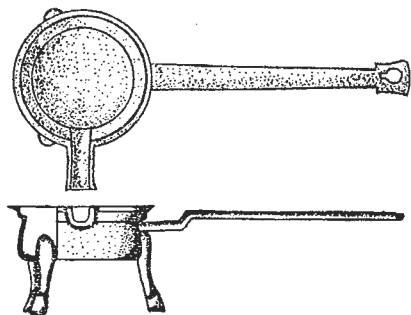
One reason for the declining importance of bronze objects in the tomb inventories may be that buff ware was becoming the material of choice for utensils used in daily life and, as was the case with the decrease in the use of lacquer, this predilection for buff ware vessels was also reflected in grave goods.<sup>61</sup> It has also been suggested that the fragmentation of the country and the accompanying political and economic instability resulted in a shortage of the metal.<sup>62</sup> If there was indeed a shortage of bronze, then economic factors rather than purely aesthetic reasons may have played a part in its replacement by buff ware during this period. The use of bronze for the casting of Buddhist iconographic figurines may also have had the effect of reducing the availability of the material.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, since bronze coinage was the medium of exchange, any scarcity and resulting rise in value of the metal would have redirected available resources into the minting of coins, further diminishing the number of bronze utensils used in daily life as well as those placed in the tombs.<sup>64</sup>

Despite its shortage, bronze was used for a wide variety of objects, almost ninety different ones in this period alone, but the predominant types were those for which the metallic qualities of bronze were best suited. These included vessels used over heat, such as the *fu* kettle, *jiaodou* 鑊斗 wine warmer, *xi* basin, *shao* 勺 ladle, and also the *yudou* 熨斗 iron, used directly with heat, and cast objects in which precision and tensile strength were desirable, such as knives, buckles, crossbow mechanisms, coffin nails, and mirrors. Finally, there was a wide assortment of bronze jewelry, such as rings, bracelets, hairpins, and other ornaments.

The *jiaodou* wine warmer typically was a bowl with a flared rim, three splayed legs usually in the shape of a horse's front limbs, and an upward-arched handle with a dragon-head finial. The diameter of the vessel ranged from a narrow 6.5 cm to 19 cm, with an average of some 14 cm, and a height of 5.3 cm to 24 cm, averaging 11.5 cm (fig. 7.7). Another style, found in both the north and the south, had a spout and a straight handle, usually with a right-angle jog near the body and a slightly broadened end with a hole so the vessel could be suspended on a hook when not in use (fig. 7.8). A number of unearthed pieces had traces of soot on the bottom, indicating they had been in use prior to placement in the tomb. The *jiaodou* were usually unadorned, having at most a groove or two around the body and differing only a bit in silhouette and height. There were some exceptions, however. An example from Dayu, Jiangxi, dated to the Western Jin, had a flaring dragon's head, a phoenix tail, a busy decor on the body, and legs ending



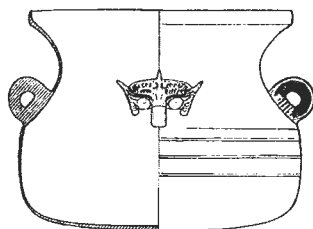
7.7. *Jiaodou* wine warmer (after *Kaogu* 1984.6:531, fig. 5.6)



7.8. *Jiaodou* wine warmer (after *Kaogu* 1973.6:349, figs. 10.1 and 10.2)



7.9. *Jiaodou* wine warmer (after *Wenwu* 1984.11:68)



7.10. *Fu* kettle, Sichuan (after *Wenwu* 1985.7:79, fig. 67.1)

in tiger paws (fig. 7.9).<sup>65</sup> Two from Guyang, Ningxia, had, in one case, a dragon-head handle and, in the other, an added element on the handle.<sup>66</sup>

The *fu* kettle was characterized by a globular body and a flaring collar, closely resembling old-fashioned Western spittoons, but often having two symmetrical vertical ring lugs (or in one case, a long handle).<sup>67</sup> The mouth diameters ranged from 16.5 cm to 33 cm, and kettle height extended from 14.5 cm to 29.4 cm. Many of the vessels were reported to have soot on the bottom, evidence of actual use.<sup>68</sup> The vessels appear to have been unadorned, ordinary pots used in preparing food, but there is one example of higher quality, from an Eastern Jin tomb in Sichuan, that has an animal mask on its side (fig. 7.10). Almost all these *fu* kettles (twenty-nine out of thirty-eight) were found in Sichuan and Guizhou, with a few from other southern provinces.

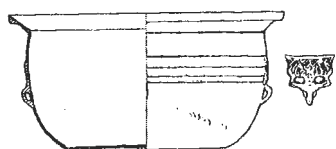
The *xi* basin was a low, wide vessel, some 14 cm to 30 cm in diameter, with a height usually one-third to half the diameter, giving it a lower silhouette than that of the *fu* kettle. There was usually a broad rim that curved outward, slightly rounded sides, and a flat bottom. In addition, the *xi* basin often had two lugs

placed low on the body and set symmetrically opposite each other, frequently in association with an animal mask; how these features may have facilitated use of the vessel is not clear. The inside bottom of the vessel often had a decor of two fish or two birds and two fish, and occasionally an inscription of a felicitous phrase (figs. 7.11, 7.12). In a few cases, the vessel had three legs. The *xi* basin tended to occur in central and southern China, and in the earlier rather than the later tombs.

Two bronze vessels have been reported from Guyuan, Ningxia, a *hu* jar with lid and ring handles and a *fang* 斝 container, also with ring handles; both exhibit the antique form of the Han period.<sup>69</sup>

Other bronze utensils included the *yudou* iron, the lamp, and the ladle. The *yudou* iron consisted of a pan, usually some 15 cm in diameter, with a wide flaring rim and a handle, semicircular in section with the flat side on top, some 20 cm long, joined to the pan either horizontally or at a rising angle (fig. 7.13). In at least one case, there is a dragon-head finial.<sup>70</sup> Traces of black grease and a thread found in one such pan led to the surmise that this particular *yudou* had been used as a lamp. The use of the artifact as an iron, however, can be seen in the famous painting ascribed to Emperor Huizong 徽宗 of the twelfth century that shows such an instrument in use to iron a roll of silk.

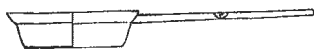
Though few in number, bronze lamps show great diversity. They range from a simple cup with a small handle, probably meant to hold oil and a wick, to an elaborate candelabra with lotus-flower holders and a lotus-bud base resting on a rectangular table.<sup>71</sup> A similar candelabra, though of simpler construction, appears in the lacquer screen from the tomb of Sima Jinlong (d. 484) at Datong.<sup>72</sup> One interesting Northern Wei candleholder has a stem resting on a plate, with two symmetrically attached small cups fitted into slots in the stem. The candles were placed on the cups and held upright by two rings at the top; as the candles burned, the cups could be slid up.<sup>73</sup> Another type was a simple cup placed on a



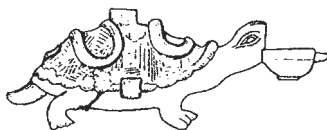
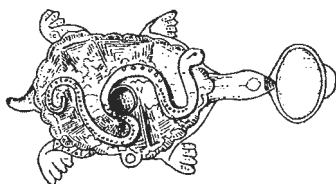
7.11. *Xi* basin, Sichuan (after *Wenwu* 1985.7:79, fig. 67.9)

7.12. Bottom of a *xi* basin, Sichuan (after *Kaogu xuebao* 1959.2:118, fig. 10)





7.13. *Yudou* iron, Anhui (after *Kaogu* 1984. 11:977, fig. 4.4)

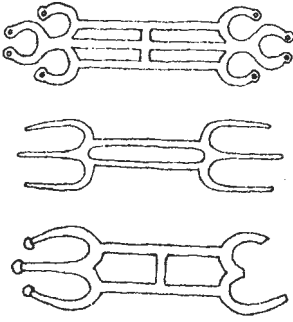


7.14. Lamp, Sichuan (after *Wenwu* 1984.8: 47, fig. 8)

stem resembling a piece of bamboo resting on a larger cup, with or without three short legs, and a curved handle with a dragon-head finial. Fragments of a complex structure in the form of a tree whose branches held lamp pans, and with peach-shaped leaves, was found in a Wei-Jin tomb in Gansu.<sup>74</sup> Such lamp trees are known from the Han. An unusual lamp from Sichuan features a turtle with a winding snake on its shell, symbolic of the north. The turtle holds an eared cup in its mouth, and there is a candle socket at the center of the shell (fig. 7.14). Finally, there is an example of a small (only 7 cm long) eared-cup-shaped container with lid. Half of the cover lifts up and over, thus forming a small cup held in place by a flange. The candle was held by a spindle on the bottom of the movable cup, and a spout enabled melted wax to be poured off into the base. Holes enabled the object to be suspended by wires or cords.<sup>75</sup> There were also many lamps and some candelabras made of buff ware, and frequently a simple *wan* bowl, supplied with oil and wick, served as a lamp in the tombs. Nevertheless, the bronze lamps display much more variety and interest, and great ingenuity on the part of the craftsmen who fashioned them.

Bronze was also used to fashion ladles, consisting of a bowl and a handle with, in a number of cases, a dragon-head finial. Other utensils of bronze included censers, braziers, spittoons, boxes, buckles, rulers, seals, needles, whorls, tweezers, tubing, and even, in one case, a pair of chopsticks, but all such objects have been few in number. In general, these bronze artifacts were undecorated or decorated simply and had rather coarse exteriors.

Bronze was also used for ornaments of various kinds. Approximately one-seventh of the rings and bracelets and one-third of the hairpins, hair clasps, and other ornaments found in the tombs were made of bronze. One of the more interesting types of objects has three prongs at both ends and double bars in different designs in the middle; they range from 15 cm to 17 cm in length



7.15. Hairdo frames (after *Wenwu tiandi* 1987.6:27, figs. 1–3)



7.16. Use of hairdo frame, Linyi, Shandong (after *Wenwu tiandi* 1987.6:27, fig. 4)

(fig. 7.15). Long a puzzle to archaeologists, they have recently been identified by Sun Ji as a frame for certain styles of hairdo, whose use is illustrated by an engraved stone of the Han (fig. 7.16).<sup>76</sup>

Despite its limited supply, bronze remained a significant element in the material culture of the Six Dynasties period. Publication of the results of scientific analyses of the metal and information on the location of the mines and smelters involved in its production will enhance our knowledge of the role of bronze during the period.

## IRON

Iron production was important for the state at this time, which had to ensure an adequate supply of the metal for its military needs. This became especially crucial as the use of heavy cavalry and barded horses grew during this period. The manufacture of iron agricultural tools was also given a high priority by government authorities. For the most efficient smelting of iron a large-scale operation with a ready labor supply was required, something best provided by state resources.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, in times of disorder and general unrest, a reliance on private resources might well have seemed too uncertain. For all these reasons the various regimes of this period established offices to oversee the government smelters and workshops. Most of the references to iron in the written sources of this time concern these state enterprises.<sup>78</sup>

A typical example is that of the Northern Qi, which established seven iron-works, three in an eastern circuit and four in a western one, all under the Taifusi 太府寺, the department responsible for supplying the material needs of the government.<sup>79</sup> During the Northern Wei local foundries made the agricultural and military equipment needed in each individual area, but, likely because of

the special expertise needed to produce high-quality arms, Qiankou 牽口 Ironworks, in Xiangzhou 相州 (near modern Linzhang, Henan), was assigned the task of making forged (*duan* 鍛) swords for the armory in the capital.<sup>80</sup>

The large number of workers required for the production of iron was often met by convict labor. In 404, for example, early in the Northern Wei, a number of foundries were established in the area east of the Taihang Mountains (Shandong) that used labor supplied by the transported convicts from various prefectures and commanderies.<sup>81</sup> Helian Bobo, who established the Xia state in the northwest, was said to have executed thousands of workmen for having produced products that did not meet his exacting standards.<sup>82</sup> Labor was also supplied by means of *corvée*. An iron foundry established at Xiayang 夏陽, modern Hancheng 韓城, Shaanxi, by the Western Wei to supply its military needs, for example, was manned by eight thousand *corvée* laborers.<sup>83</sup> Another indication of the reliance on such labor is apparent in a suggestion made by an official of the Eastern Jin who complained that the foundries were recruiting large numbers of workers at government expense and that the industry needed to be cut back while maintaining the capacity necessary for military needs.<sup>84</sup>

References to iron in the written sources indicate that privately run foundries were also in operation. During the Liu Song a governor of Yizhou 益州 established official foundries and closed the private ones, although the high price of the foundries' products led to much dissatisfaction among the people of the area.<sup>85</sup> There are also a few references to the private merchandising of farm implements.<sup>86</sup> In times of a weak central authority there likely would have been much private-sphere production activity to supply the needs of the populace, but during times of greater stability and control, official monopolization of the industry might well have driven these entrepreneurs out of the field. At any rate there is very little information available concerning the distribution network of iron goods.

Specific information suggesting the amount of iron available in this period is also rare. Only two sets of figures have been noted. In 450, a Liu Song army took by force a Northern Wei stronghold in modern Shandong, and included in the captured matériel were thirty thousand *jin* 斤 (a *jin* was approximately a pound) of iron and over nine thousand large and small iron objects.<sup>87</sup> In the other case, in 514, to close the gap in an embankment across the Huai 淮 River, workmen dumped in the iron utensils (*tie qi* 鐵器) from two foundries amounting to tens of millions of *jin*. The material ranged from large objects like kettles to small trowels and hoes.<sup>88</sup>

Though it is difficult to say much else about the scale of manufacture from the available sources, one site of a foundry active in this period has been reported on, and the find is an impressive one. The site is at Mianchi 澗池, Henan, on the Jian 澗 River (in ancient times the Gu River 穀水), a tributary of

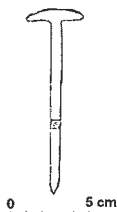
the Luo, joining it upriver from Luoyang. In a pit with a diameter of 1.28 m to 1.42 m, 1.68 m at the bottom, and 2.06 m deep were found 4,195 iron items, 1,300 of which were complete. The cache consisted of over sixty types of objects and weighed 3,500 kg. The site was sealed tightly under a layer of slag and dirt that prevented the iron from rusting away. The iron had probably been accumulated to be recycled at a nearby foundry. The material consists of molds, farm implements, and some weapons.<sup>89</sup> It is difficult to ascertain which of these objects are of Six Dynasties manufacture since the iron itself offers no clues, and the varieties of tools and other utensils were in use over long periods of time. Nevertheless, on the basis of the style of the legible words cast onto 292 of the objects indicating the place of manufacture, name of government foundry, and names of those involved in the manufacture, and for other reasons, the report concluded it is a Northern Wei site, and further, though some of the hoes and mattocks are of Han date, that the rest of the material ranges in date from the Wei of the Three Kingdoms to the Northern Wei periods.<sup>90</sup>

Iron-working techniques of this time were much the same as in the past, but there seem to have been some advances. The primary form of iron continued to be cast iron; that is, iron with a relatively high carbon content produced in a blast furnace and, since the iron was brittle, suitable for objects that would not be exposed to sudden shocks.<sup>91</sup> Water-powered double-action bellows, which had become common by the fifth century, supplied the continuous air blast needed for the working of the furnaces.<sup>92</sup> Iron was treated in a number of ways to make it suitable for specific purposes. These processes included converting the so-called raw iron into wrought iron by oxidation and reduction of the carbon content in a puddling furnace, after which the low-carbon material was subjected to repeated hammering and heating to produce ripe iron, which is tough, fibrous, and malleable and so suitable for nails, shafts, and axles. Steel has a carbon content between that of cast iron and wrought iron; it can be subjected to quenching for hardening and annealing, or slow cooling, to make it more ductile. Objects such as swords were produced by laminating steel of different carbon contents, folding one layer over the other, and then heating and hammering out the material. The repetition of this process resulted in a layered structure with improved strength and ductility. The references in Chinese texts to “thirty and one hundred refinings” (*lian* 煉) may well refer to this process, though the numbers should not be taken literally.<sup>93</sup> Producing iron with the correct amount of carbon to convert it into steel, meaning halting the decarburization associated with the puddling process at the correct point in time, required much skill. Eventually a simpler method of setting the carbon content was worked out in which cast iron and wrought iron were combined in the proper proportions to achieve steel of the desired carbon ratio. This method is termed *guangang* 灌鋼, or cofusion, in the literature. The clearest statement

concerning this cofusion process in the production of steel dates from the sixth century.<sup>94</sup> Somewhat earlier, Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (452–536) mentioned the process in detailing the uses to which the different ferric metals could be put, claiming cast iron was best for lock bolts and kettles and steel for blades and sickles.<sup>95</sup>

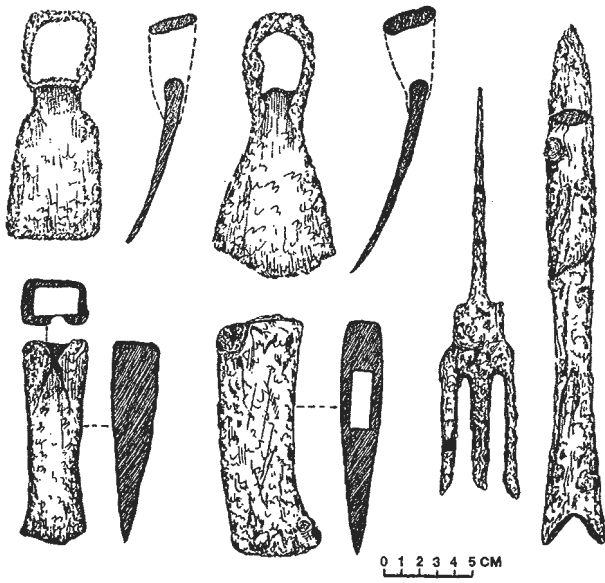
Although iron artifacts constitute a small portion of the grave goods of the Six Dynasties period, they indicate to some extent the purposes to which the metal was put during this time. Iron objects have been found more frequently in the north; some 44 percent of the tombs included in this sample contained iron in some form or other, reaching 69.7 percent in Liaoning, compared to 26.7 percent in the south. There was an increase over time in the proportion of iron grave goods: 34 percent through the Western Jin and 55 percent thereafter. Conditions of soil, climate, and time might also have been contributing factors in the state of survival of these iron goods. By far the most frequent use of iron was for coffin nails (192 cases, or 10.74 percent of the tombs; fig. 7.17); it was also used occasionally for coffin handles. Other iron objects included weapons, especially knives and swords (142), mirrors (65), scissors (88; fig. 7.18), tools, probably left inadvertently in the tombs (fig. 7.19), and a scattering of lamps, buckles, hairpins, a hinge, a needle, and some vessels (fig. 7.20). Iron was also used for horse equipment (fig. 7.21).

Such grave goods likely do not do adequate justice to the role iron had in the life of the times, but they perhaps suggest the sorts of iron objects used in daily life.<sup>96</sup> In general, despite the serious disorders and resulting economic dislocations that marked so much of this period, the skills and techniques achieved in earlier times were maintained and even in some respects advanced.<sup>97</sup>



7.17. Iron nail (after *Kaogu* 1984.8:719, fig. 8.7)

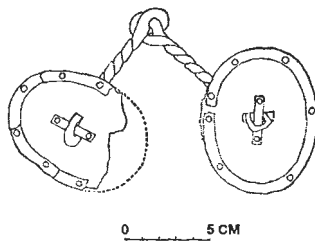
7.18. Iron scissors (after *Kaogu xuebao* 1957.1:181, fig. 12.6)



7.19. Iron tools (after *Kaogu xuebao* 1959.2:121, fig. 14)



7.20. Iron vessels (after *Kaogu* 1973.6:349, figs. 10.6 and 10.7)



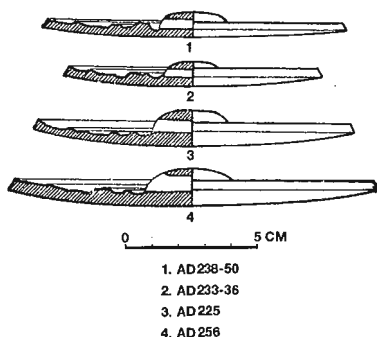
7.21. Iron horse snaffle bit (after *Kaogu* 1984.8:719, fig. 7.1)

## MIRRORS

As an apotropaic object, the mirror was an important burial item and is mentioned in almost 20 percent of the tomb reports. The mirrors were made of a “white bronze,” a bronze alloy similar to speculum metal and capable of taking a brilliant polish. An analysis of one mirror yielded 72.1 percent copper, 26.2 percent tin, and 1.4 percent lead. From the Han on the proportion of lead tended to increase. The mirrors were cast in a variety of molds, and the reflecting surface then burnished by a number of techniques.<sup>98</sup> The small size of the mirrors, generally from 8 cm to 15 cm in diameter, was compensated for by a convex surface that magnified the image (fig. 7.22).

These mirrors were highly reflective. Their use can be seen in the famous painting *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies*, the original of which is ascribed to the Jin artist Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (344–406). A figure to the right holds a mirror by a cord knob on its back as she applies eyebrow shadow, and the mirror’s reflective quality is apparent. To the left is a mirror mounted on a stand. A similar stand has been found in an Eastern Jin tomb at Nanjing consisting of three gilded bronze legs with bamboolike nodules and hinged onto a plate; a linking chain keeps the legs from spreading too widely. The plate has a hole into which a rod must have been inserted and that would have held a mirror by the mirror’s knob. When set up the mirror would have been 60–70 cm high, at the height of the face of a person sitting on the floor.<sup>99</sup>

Mirrors were highly valued and even bestowed as royal gifts; many such mirrors were sent to Japan.<sup>100</sup> Mirrors also had an important symbolic function: studying the mirror of history could enable the observant person to avoid the mistakes of the past. Beyond their functional and metaphorical values, mirrors were also associated with a wide range of beliefs—not limited to China, of course—concerning their magical properties. Failure to see one’s reflection in a mirror, for example, was a certain omen of imminent death.<sup>101</sup> Mirrors were



7.22. Convex surface of mirrors (after Kaogu 1984. 6:537, fig. 10)

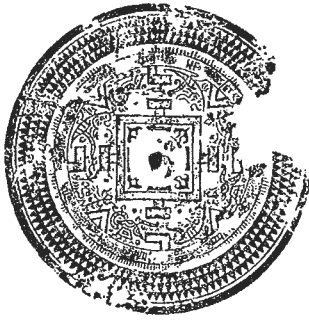
also a potent adjunct of Taoist beliefs, used in meditation, visualization, and astral travel.<sup>102</sup> More specifically, perhaps mirrors were believed to provide a view into the other world. These occult associations made mirrors especially suitable for placing in the tomb, usually within the coffin next to the body, at the ready to protect the spirit on its way to paradise.<sup>103</sup> In this connection the decor on the reverse side of mirrors was significant.<sup>104</sup>

The decorated side of a mirror had a central knob, pierced to hold a cord and perhaps to allow the mirror to be attached to a stand. The low knob was generally sited on a field or base, but not always. The remainder of the surface consisted of bands of decorative motifs, sometimes with felicitous phrases or inscriptions added. In some cases the rim, broad or narrow, was plain, but in others, the designs were extended to the very edge. The various classifications of mirrors derive from the names of these decorative motifs. The repertory of motifs available to mirror designers differed with time and place, but there was an almost infinite number of variations.

Following the high level of creativity and development displayed by Han mirrors, the Six Dynasties period would appear to suffer in contrast, but a number of innovations were made, and some types of mirrors that only began to appear in the Eastern Han reached their culmination in the Six Dynasties period. Compared with earlier examples, mirrors of this period moved toward more plasticity and away from concentric geometric patterns.<sup>105</sup> Another notable change was the appearance of the Buddha figure as a design element, joining as it were representations of the Queen Mother of the West and the King Sire of the East, along with those of many other sages and deities. Additionally, the political division of China at the time into northern and southern states led to regional distinctions in the development of mirrors. Finally, iron mirrors made their appearance during this period, though there is uncertainty as to the relative value placed on such mirrors.<sup>106</sup>

The evolution of mirror decor during the Six Dynasties period can be divided into three periods, and each of these in turn subdivided into northern and southern developments.<sup>107</sup> During the first period, from the closing years of the Eastern Han through the Western Jin (196–317), the importance of mirrors as a burial object is reflected in the number found; mirrors were reported as a part of the grave goods in over half of the tombs in the north and almost a third of those in the south. The decor on these mirrors followed closely the Eastern Han typology. In the north, the common types of mirror decor were the so-called TLV (fig. 7.23),<sup>108</sup> linked arcs (fig. 7.24), stylized quatrefoil (fig. 7.25),<sup>109</sup> and various combinations of coiled dragon, *kui* 夔 beast, birds, and phoenix. Another type, characterized by the written phrase *wei zhi san gong* 位至三公, "May you rise to a post as one of the Three Dukes," derived from the Eastern Han double *kui* beast design and became especially common in Luoyang

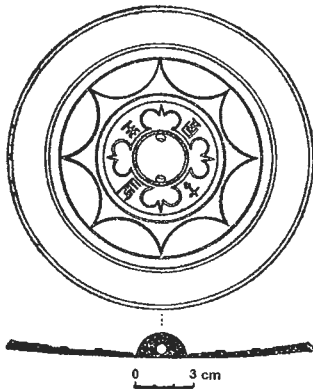




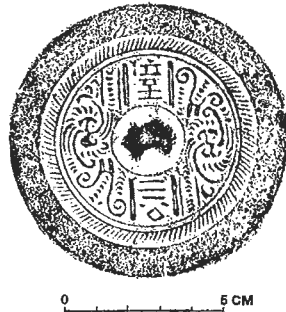
7.23. TLV mirror (after *Wenwu* 1983.10:67, fig. 28)



7.24. Linked-arc mirror (after *Kaogu xuebao* 1956.3:48, fig. 15.3)



7.25. Stylized quatrefoil mirror (after *Wenwu cankao ziliao* 1955.11:43, fig. 7, right)



7.26. *Wei zhi san gong* mirror (after *Kaogu* 1985.12:1118, fig. 11, right)

(fig. 7.26).<sup>110</sup> Many of these types also appeared in the south during this time, but in more elaborate forms (fig. 7.27). The most characteristic motifs during this period, however, were the pictorial (*huaxiang* 畫像; also called the genre or iconic) and the deity-animal (*shenshou* 神獸). The former was characterized by a variety of themes, including deities, animals, historical figures, vehicles, and mounted riders, similar in style to Han engraved stones (fig. 7.28). The deity-animal mirrors depicted in high relief such themes as the Queen Mother of the West and the King Sire of the East, dragons, and tigers (figs. 7.29, 7.30).<sup>111</sup> These elements were arranged in a variety of ways: ringlike, multilevel, unidirectional, and paired. The Buddha figure as a design element appeared in southern, or Wu, mirrors, placed in the lobes of the quatrefoil of the knob field



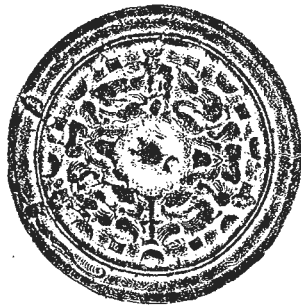
7.27. Mirror with *kuifeng* beast-phoenix  
decor (after *Kaogu* 1984.6:536, fig. 9)



7.28. Mirror with iconic decor (after  
*Kaogu* 5.11, pl. 6.2)



7.29. Deity-animal mirror (after *Kaogu* 1982.3:264, fig. 9)



7.30. Deity-animal mirrors (after *Kaogu* 1984.9:831, figs. 7-8)

either seated or in a half-seated meditative pose with attendants (fig. 7.31). An unusual mirror from Jinhua, Zhejiang, shows Confucius and three of his disciples in these quatrefoil fields (fig. 7.32).<sup>112</sup> In addition to such stylistic differences between the two regions of the country, there were also differences related to the conditions of production.

The south during this period was relatively peaceful and for a time had adequate resources of the required metals. There were two centers of mirror production in the south, one at Wuchang, modern Echeng, in the middle Yangzi area,<sup>113</sup> and the other at Shanyin 山陰, Kuaiji, modern Shaoxing, both near copper mines.<sup>114</sup> In the north, on the contrary, there was a shortage of copper, and for this reason iron mirrors began to appear. At this remove it is difficult to know how their functional quality was judged, but one cannot assume that the iron mirrors were considered inadequate. There is a record of a gift made by Cao Cao to the last emperor of the Han and to members of the royal family consisting of gold-inlaid iron mirrors, their sizes calibrated to the status of the individuals.<sup>115</sup> As many as 13 percent of the northern tombs corresponding to this early period contained mirrors made of iron; the proportion tapered off to 7 percent and 4.6 percent in the subsequent periods, while in the south the numbers were much smaller, 3 percent, 3 percent, and 0.9 percent for the same periods. Thus, in both the south and north, mirrors were for the most part made of bronze.<sup>116</sup>

A number of mirrors carried inscriptions that are of interest, especially when a date of manufacture was included. It is clear from these inscriptions that Kuaiji and Echeng were important centers of bronze casting, and that certain craftsmen were so well-known that their names bore an imprimatur of excellence. Beyond these indications, the vocabulary describing the casting was couched in Taoist terminology, and included were wishes of good fortune and prosperity for the user of the mirror.<sup>117</sup>



7.31. Mirror with Buddhist decor (after *Kaogu* 1984.6:559, fig. 6)



7.32. Mirror with Confucian decor (after *Kaogu* 1984.9:822, fig. 9)

In the second period, from the Eastern Jin through the Liu Song (317–479), iron mirrors seem to have been favored in the north, the only period for which finds of iron mirrors outnumber those of bronze. Iron mirrors have been found even in such an important tomb as that of Feng Sufu (415). Iron is not as durable as bronze, and so the decorations on these iron mirrors frequently cannot be made out. Iron mirrors made an appearance in the south at this time, but bronze continued to be the material of choice. The discovery of designs earlier associated with the north, such as the TLV and coiled dragons, can be explained by the large migration of northerners into the south at the time. The deity-animal motif remained the most popular one in the south, although some of the earlier varieties gave way to an increasing popularity of other variations, one characterized by a midrange ring of alternating semicircles and squares and another of facing (*duizhi* 對峙) figures in the deity-animal style. The design details tended toward simplification; in some cases the animals were replaced by nipples, and the ring of semicircles and squares became a circle of linked pearls or a comb-tooth ring. This simplification was accompanied by a decline in craftsmanship and quality, and the mirrors became smaller and thinner.

The last period, from 479 to the unification of China in 589, is marked by a decline in the number of mirrors found in tombs. In the north, so few were being cast that some finds appear to be heirlooms handed down from earlier centuries. In the south, though some fine mirrors were produced, the trend toward smaller, inferior mirrors continued. A few examples are as small as 3.2 cm to 5 cm in diameter; obviously their value was symbolic and they were meant for the tomb rather than daily use.<sup>118</sup> The formerly popular deity-animal and pictorial motifs all but disappeared; the TLV, *kui* beast, and coiled dragon still occurred but in much cruder execution. As Xu Pingfang has said, these mirrors amply demonstrate the full decline of the mirror-casting craft in the south at this time.<sup>119</sup>

It has been claimed that a shortage of copper lay behind the decline in the casting of bronze mirrors, and indeed the shortage can be documented.<sup>120</sup> However, iron mirrors, which could be produced at a quality high enough to be worthy of an imperial gift, never came in to fill the void. One might therefore surmise that the decline of bronze mirrors in number and quality was the result of changing fashions, and that for some reason their inclusion in tombs—which is really our only evidence—became less important for a time. The craft revived, however, in the Tang, and the style developments of the Six Dynasties period formed the basis for further change during the succeeding periods.

## GOLD

The inclusion of objects fashioned from precious metals could be used as an indicator of economic conditions over time and space, but the attraction such

objects had for grave robbers means that the record is not necessarily a reliable one. One of the chief reasons adduced in advocating *bozang*, or austere burials, was that any riches deposited in a tomb were certain to encourage desecration of its site. Nevertheless, of the burials included in the database used for this study, 9.3 percent of the tombs of this period (162) yielded gold in some form, primarily rings, beads, bracelets, hairpins, and various ornaments. Other objects made of gold include a seal, a needle, bells, a nail, and a circlet.<sup>121</sup>

Most finds of gold objects were in the areas of Liaoning-Hebei and Gansu in the north, and generally through the south, especially in the Nanjing area but also in Guangdong, Hunan, and Guizhou.<sup>122</sup> Among these areas Guizhou stands out because of the 148 gold and 116 silver objects, as well as bronze, agate, amber, and glass ornaments found in sixteen Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties tombs at Pingba, in central Guizhou.<sup>123</sup> It is conjectured that this wealth is connected with the emergence of local magnates in the area. The gold at this site, untypical of the greater variety elsewhere, was primarily in the form of hairpins and gold-leaf ornaments.

A Jin-period tomb at Beipiao, Liaoning, yielded a rich trove of gold and silver objects. In addition to rings, bells (twenty-one!), hairpins, and others, there were two decorative pieces in the shape of trees with flowers, one 28 cm in height and the other 14.5 cm. These are thought to have been hat decorations. Two other objects, also believed to be hat ornaments, were squares composed of vines with tendrils and leaves. They appear to be closely related to head ornaments found in Korea.<sup>124</sup> Gold ornaments of various sorts, including items for hats, have been found in the graves of Feng Sufu and his wife, early fifth century, in the same area.<sup>125</sup>

At the opposite end of China, a double-burial grave in Guangzhou contained a large number of rather more typical objects, such as gold rings (four), bracelets (two), and the figure of a small dog with a hole for attachment. Silver articles included an ear pick, a needle, bracelets (three), rings (ten), a thimble, and a bead. From a clue provided by a brick inscription, it is believed this tomb was that of an affluent merchant, a part of the burgeoning commercial activity in Guangzhou.<sup>126</sup>

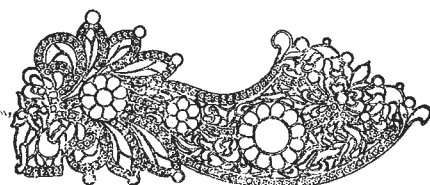
The relatively larger number of graves with gold objects in the Nanjing area (twenty-seven out of one hundred and sixty-six, or 16.3 percent) accords with its having been the capital of a series of southern dynasties. Two Eastern Jin tombs at Guojiashan 郭家山, yielded, in addition to two hairpins, one hundred and thirty ornaments. Among them were a tiger-shaped piece; reticulated ovals with beaded decor; six-petaled flowers; beads; and heart-shaped leaves.<sup>127</sup> Another Eastern Jin tomb at Nanchang, Jiangxi, contained four gold rings with a seated-Buddha motif; this is an extremely important find since these are the only rings of their kind uncovered to date.<sup>128</sup>

Usually the tomb reports include no comments on the quality of the gold, but there is one exception. Concerning a gold ornament, a small tube 1.7 cm long with symmetrically opposing flanges, found in an Eastern Jin tomb at Gong'an 公安, Hubei, the report says the gold was 95 percent pure, with no trace of welding, giving evidence of the high quality of the workmanship.<sup>129</sup> Among the twenty-five gold objects found in one of the undisturbed and best-preserved Jin tombs at Changsha were three oval, reticulated pieces with a facing phoenix design.<sup>130</sup> A similar piece was discovered in a Jin tomb at Nanchang, Jiangxi, perhaps from the same workshop and thus suggestive of trade in such objects (fig. 7.33).<sup>131</sup>

The tomb of Lou Rui, near the Northern Qi capital at Taiyuan, despite having been robbed, nevertheless contained an enormous array of objects, and one gold piece in particular gives a rare indication of the high level of artistry of this period. It is a fragment 15 cm long, reticulated, with inset pearls, agates, sapphires, turquoise, shell, and glass forming a distinct pattern (fig. 7.34), and, according to the report, it "is rather beautiful."<sup>132</sup> Unusually fine pieces emerged from a tomb of the end of this period near the Sui capital of Xi'an, the tomb of the young girl Li Jingxun 李靜訓. The objects included a gold bowl with a jade rim, a cup, two rings, two bracelets with inset pearls, and an elaborate necklace; the latter pieces, of foreign origin, are described in more detail below.<sup>133</sup>



7.33. Gold ornament (after *Kaogu* 1974.6:378, fig. 10)



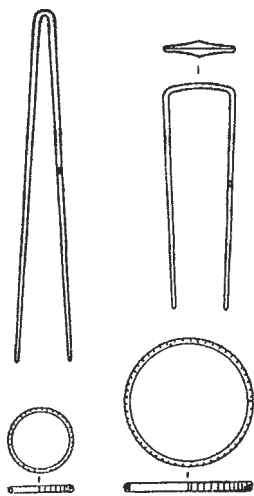
7.34. Gold ornament (after *Wenwu* 1983. 10:14, fig. 45)

In general, gold objects were small and plain, evidence that gold was in short supply. The most frequently found gold artifact in Six Dynasties tombs was a circlet, usually described as a ring or earring. It has been noted, however, that many of these pieces are too small to have fit on a finger; in addition, their number, sometimes ten or more in a tomb, argue against this identification. It may be that these small hoops were simply a means of displaying the precious metal.<sup>134</sup>

## SILVER

Silver, somewhat more plentiful than gold, has been found at 196 (11.3 percent) sites as against the 162 (9.3 percent) sites for gold. Sites yielding both gold and silver number over 60. While gold was proportionately more widespread in the tombs of the north of this period, the south had a slightly higher ratio of sites containing silver.<sup>135</sup> But the objects found in northern tombs seem to display greater variety.

As with gold, silver is encountered primarily in the form of rings, bracelets, and hairpins, though it also occurs in a number of other objects. The rings and bracelets are largely simple, unadorned circlets. Occasionally the surfaces are marked by striations (fig. 7.35).<sup>136</sup> The hairpins are likewise simple and rarely deviate from the normal patterns, though occasionally their ends are fashioned into an earpick (fig. 7.36)<sup>137</sup> or, rarely, a more complicated shape (fig. 7.37).<sup>138</sup>

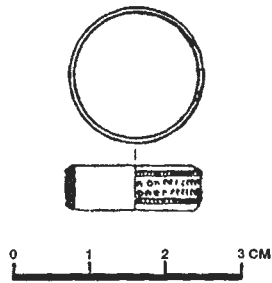


7.35. Silver bracelets and hairpins (after *Jiangnan kaogu* 1989.1:29, figs. 5.8–11)

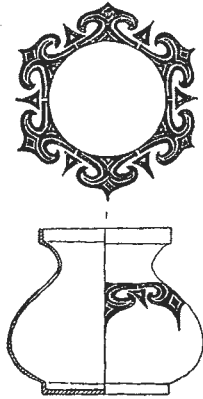
7.36. Silver hairpin (after *Jiangnan kaogu* 1984.3:48, fig. 7)



7.37. Silver hairpin (after *Kaogu xuebao* 1984.3:346, fig. 15.3)



7.38. Silver thimble (after *Wenwu* 1985.7:83, fig. 78.3)

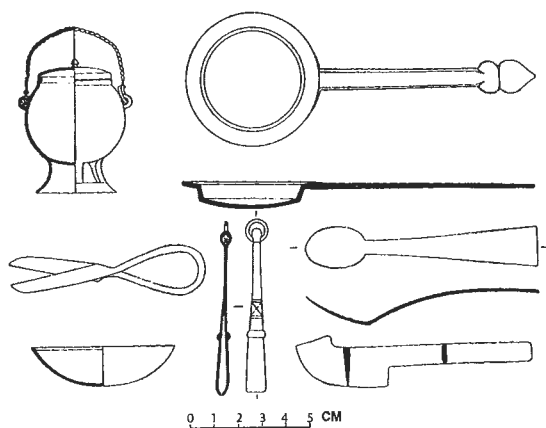


7.39. Silver spittoon (after *Kaogu* 1982.3:260, fig. 4.2)

This overall simplicity lends added interest to those few pieces that take other forms, which include *wuzhu* coins,<sup>139</sup> pairs of chopsticks,<sup>140</sup> thimbles<sup>141</sup> (fig. 7.38), a crossbow mechanism,<sup>142</sup> and two spittoons (fig. 7.39).<sup>143</sup>

Silver was also used as ornamentation on what may have been lacquer boxes, taking the form of a pendant ring on an animal face.<sup>144</sup> In a northern tomb of the Northern Zhou, which yielded a number of foreign imports, the silver objects of Chinese manufacture included, in addition to the chopsticks mentioned above, tweezers and a small bowl, as well as an array of unique objects such as an iron, scissors, a spoon, and a small *hu* jar with handle only 5.5 cm high (fig. 7.40).<sup>145</sup> A pagoda crypt of 481 at Dingxian, Hebei, yielded a wide array of silver objects. In addition to the usual bracelets, rings, earrings, and hairpins, there were belt ends, buckles, and a small jar 3.5 cm high with a lid attached by





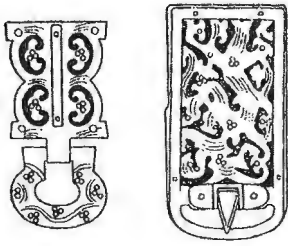
7.40. Miniature silver jar, wine warmer, scissors, ear scraper, bowl, and ladle (after *Wenwu* 1985.11:12, figs. 27.1–6)

a linked chain. The jar may originally have held a *sharira*, or holy relic, though nothing was found in it at the time of excavation.<sup>146</sup>

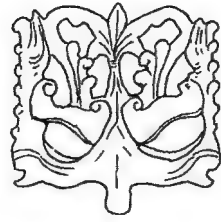
Most tombs were robbed in earlier days, and so the objects of precious metals described here are what was overlooked by the looters, perhaps accounting for the paucity of outstanding pieces. It is nonetheless apparent from this material that silver craftsmanship in China was not as highly developed in this period as in western Asia, and it was partly for the appeal of the high level of workmanship as well as the attraction of the exotic that imported wares were held in high esteem.

### GILDED BRONZE

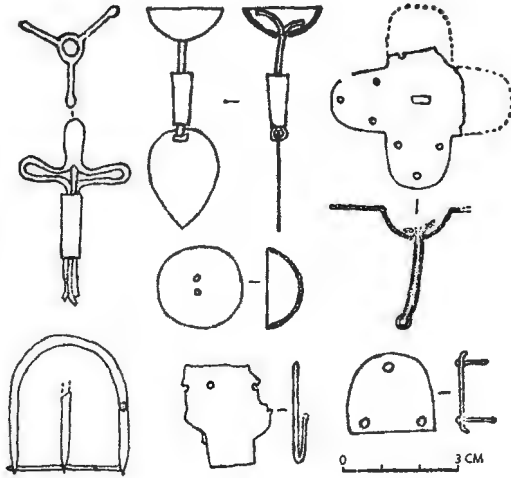
Although foreign imports included gilded silver objects, in China gilding was applied primarily to bronze. Gilded bronze objects such as rings, hairpins, and belt buckles have been found in Six Dynasties tombs but do not constitute a significant component of their metal pieces.<sup>147</sup> Those that have been identified come chiefly from the north. Two troves found near each other at Datong dating from the time that city was the capital of the Northern Wei yielded seventy objects, including sixteen decorative animal heads, nine highly decorated rings with pendants, sixteen plaques, and twenty-seven ornamental bosses (figs. 7.41, 7.42).<sup>148</sup> Liaoning is also significant in regard to gilded bronze objects; a Jin tomb at Benqi yielded thirty-three saddle and belt ornaments (fig. 7.43),<sup>149</sup> and one at Chaoyang fifteen such objects (figs. 7.44, 7.45).<sup>150</sup> The use of gilded bronze ornaments in the elaborate horse trappings characteristic of this area in part explains



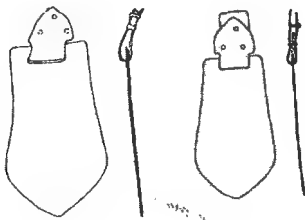
7.41. Gilded bronze buckles (after *Kaogu xuebao* 1957.1:180, figs. 11.5–6)



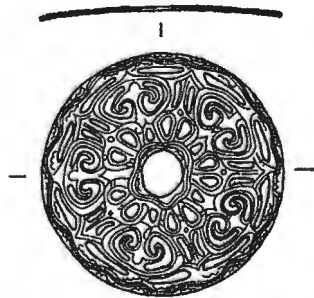
7.42. Gilded bronze decorative handle (after *Kaogu* 1983.11, pl. 4.1)



7.43. Gilded bronze saddle and belt ornaments (after *Kaogu* 1984.8:719, fig. 6)



7.44. Gilded bronze saddle ornaments (after *Wenwu* 1984.6:35, figs. 29.4–5)



7.45. Gilded bronze ornament (after *Wenwu* 1984.6:35, fig. 30.1)

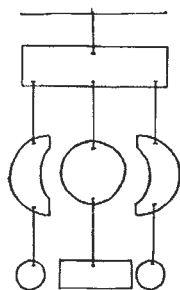
the relatively greater occurrence of the material in the north (fig. 4.26). There is no mention in the literature to date of the technique used in the gilding process, though it was most probably the mercury-amalgam process. In this process, gold is dissolved in liquid mercury, forming a paste that is spread on the object to be gilded. With the application of heat, the mercury vaporizes, leaving an even layer of gold that is then burnished to bring out its sheen.<sup>151</sup>

## JADE

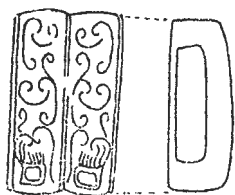
Jade traditionally had a close association with the grave as it was believed to have a life-giving force that counteracted the decay of the body. Nevertheless, jade objects are relatively rare among the tomb findings of this period, having been found in only fifty-three, or 3.05 percent, of the sites. Their rarity might be related to the inaccessibility at the time of the source of jade, actually nephrite, from modern Xinjiang.<sup>152</sup> This situation may also explain why the jade shoats, discussed above, were for the most part made of steatite, although expense might also have been a factor.<sup>153</sup> Three cicadas carved in jade and meant to be placed in the mouth of the deceased have been found at Nanjing.<sup>154</sup> In addition, two *bi* 璧, jade disks,<sup>155</sup> and a *cong* 琮, a cube with a round hole, both traditional forms,<sup>156</sup> have also been reported from Nanjing tombs. Utilitarian objects such as a bowl,<sup>157</sup> a cup,<sup>158</sup> and a few seals and buckles<sup>159</sup> (fig. 7.46) have been identified, but the majority of jade objects were decorative. Two pendant sets found in Eastern Jin tombs at Nanjing enable identification of scattered parts uncovered elsewhere. A complete set consisted of three horizontal pieces (*heng* 珩), two semicircular pieces (*huang* 璜), and two round parts (*zhu* 珠) strung together in such a way that, when hung from the belt, they hit together as the wearer moved, producing a tinkling sound (fig. 7.47). These sets persisted into the Tang and



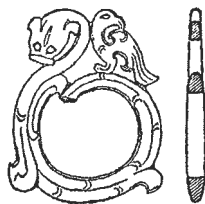
7.46. Jade buckle (after *Kaogu* 1966.4:195, fig. 5.5)



7.47. Schematic diagram of a jade pendant set



7.48. Jade *sui* pendant (after *Jiangban kaogu* 1983.2:50, fig. 6)



7.49. Jade *pei* belt ornament (after *Wenwu cankao ziliao* 1955.11:26, fig. 2)

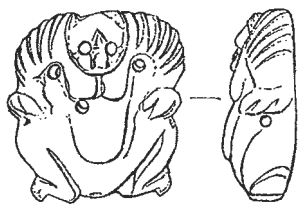
appear in contemporary murals.<sup>160</sup> Other items included pendants (*sui* 璉; fig. 7.48)<sup>161</sup> and girdle or belt ornaments (*pei* 珮; fig. 7.49),<sup>162</sup> as well as simple rings, beads, and hairpins. Sumptuary rules governing the sort of jade permissible as pendants in the Jin and Southern Dynasties periods listed six types of jade.<sup>163</sup> Jade pieces used as parts of sword assemblages, including the top of the pommel, the guard, and scabbard top and slide, have also been recovered.<sup>164</sup>

Jade of good quality was difficult to come by in the south,<sup>165</sup> and consequently older pieces brought from the north during the exodus were recycled or steatite was used as a substitute. The majority of jade objects have been found in Eastern Jin tombs at Nanjing or its environs and, secondly, in Sui tombs at Chang'an,<sup>166</sup> the wealth these objects represented being concentrated in these two capitals.

### PRECIOUS AND SEMIPRECIOUS JEWELRY

By far the most numerous decorative objects found in Six Dynasties tombs were beads of a wide variety of colors, shapes, and materials. They included beads made of agate, crystal, vitric materials or glass paste, amber, coral, and turquoise. The number of beads in the tombs varied from one to hundreds or even more.<sup>167</sup>

Aside from beads, other objects, though fewer in number, were also made of these materials. Ornaments made of agate (*ma'nao* 瑪瑙)<sup>168</sup> included a few rings, a small figure of a lion,<sup>169</sup> a pendant, and a bowl-like object with a flat bottom and flaring mouth of a light-brown semitranslucent stone.<sup>170</sup> Ornaments of mica (small plates), shell (either the natural shell or small carved figures), and carbon have also been reported. Amber ornaments included small carved figures, such as a fish, a lion-shaped object, and a protective demon (fig. 7.50). The Northern Zhou tomb of Li Xian, in Ningxia, yielded three crudely shaped amber objects resembling crouching cicadas.<sup>171</sup> An amber ear spool or capstan bead has been reported,<sup>172</sup> as well as a few examples in glass (fig. 7.51).<sup>173</sup> The colors of glass objects included various shades of blue, white, yellow, green, and red. Their shapes were standard, exhibiting none of the complexity of earlier periods.



7.50. Amber animal figurine (after *Wenwu* 1983.10:14, fig. 44.1)

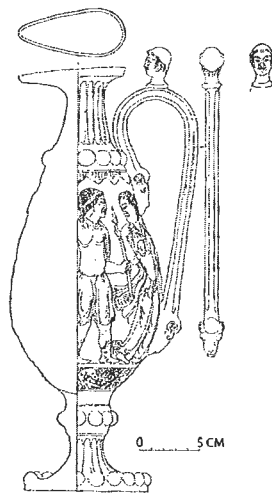
7.51. Amber capstan bead (after *Kaogu* 1988.8:723, fig. 10.9)

The predation by tomb robbers of jewelry and precious metals has no doubt affected the archaeological record, in terms of both the large number of tombs without any such material (over 80 percent) and the generally lackluster nature of what has been found. Yet, the comparable percentage of intact tombs without items of jewelry or precious metals (74 percent) suggests looting might not account for the situation. It may be that a pervasive sense of insecurity in this period and the likelihood of intrusion into the tombs, expressed frequently by the injunction against placing valuable materials in graves lest they attract robbers, help explain the relative paucity and generally low artistic level of such objects.

## EXOTICA

There are descriptions in the literature of luxurious goods made during the Six Dynasties period, but none of Chinese manufacture have survived. For example, in 461 the Northern Wei court commissioned twelve huge platters of gold, each two *chi*, two *cun* in diameter (60.5 cm), chased with silver and a floral filigree, and carrying a long self-congratulatory inscription celebrating their manufacture.<sup>174</sup> A disdainful description of Pingcheng, capital of the Northern Wei, contained in a southern history states that at banquets the Xianbei set out golden incense burners, glass and golden bowls, platters Chinese foot long, and served delicacies on round platters a Chinese yard (2.75 m) across.<sup>175</sup> Existing examples of this sort of elaborate ware made of precious metals are limited to the foreign goods imported into China. The Central Asian, non-Chinese background of the Xianbei elite perhaps made them receptive to foreign imports. During this period, although the imports were treasured, it is notable they exerted little apparent effect on the Chinese crafts that existed side by side with the foreign exotica. Apparently only in the Tang did Chinese craftsmen fully incorporate the foreign motifs and forms into their own art out of which emerged much of what is considered to be typical Tang styles.

One such exotic article found in China is a gilded silver ewer from the tomb of Li Xian (d. 569) and his wife at Guyuan, present-day Ningxia Province.<sup>176</sup> The tomb had been robbed, but not before some of the ceiling had collapsed, and because of that, the robbers missed the ewer as well as a glass bowl that had been placed in the space between the wife's coffin and the west wall. Other objects overlooked or ignored by the robbers included a gold ring, a number of silver pieces, including an ironing pan, scissors, tweezers, bowl, ladle, and chopsticks, as well as a few of jade, an iron sword, and numerous beads of amber, agate, and glass paste. But the ewer has aroused the greatest interest. It is 37.5 cm high and has a diameter of 12.8 cm at its widest (fig. 7.52). It has a long neck, duck-bill spout, narrow upper body and rotund lower part, and a high ring-foot base. The handle has an animal head at both ends where it is soldered onto the body, and at its top there is a head of a foreigner with deep-set eyes and, as the Chinese say, a high nose. The ring of roundels forming a linked chain where the neck meets the body and another where the body and high foot meet, and again on the base of the foot, are of course characteristic of Iranian art.<sup>177</sup> The figures in repoussé, that is of thin leaf hammered out from the back to form the relief, are in three pairs, each of a man and a woman (fig. 7.53). The women wear their hair bound up and are clothed in a diaphanous chiton, double belted, once at the waist, covered by a fold, and again below the breasts, and a cape over their shoulders. The men have a similar hairdo, but in one case the man wears a short-sleeved knee-length tunic and carries a short spear and shield, another is in a similar tunic and a cape but without the arms, and the third is nude but for a helmet. The objects the woman on the right and the two figures in the center carry are



7.52. Gilded silver ewer (after *Wenwu* 1985.11:11, fig. 23)



7.53. Detail of ewer (after *Wenwu* 1985.11:11, fig. 24)

not clear, nor are the gestures of the hands. Wu Zhuo, the Chinese scholar who has written about the ewer, has interpreted this as a series dealing with a man about to go to war. On the left is a romantic scene of the couple's last night together, in the center they exchange vows, and at the right the woman encourages the man to fight valiantly, as was the custom of Greek women.<sup>178</sup> B. Marshak, on the other hand, has identified the scenes as Paris's abduction of Helen. The central scene is of Aphrodite and Paris, who holds the golden apple. The scene on the left shows Paris seizing Helen. She is depicted boarding his ship, indicated by her raised foot and her hand on her knee to assist the effort. His hand to her throat is explained as a traditional Greek symbol of love. The scene to the right is of Menelaus, who sought to kill his unfaithful wife after the fall of Troy. Her flight is represented by the pointing of her feet in the opposite direction as she looks back over her shoulder at her husband. She holds in her hand a box with treasures, stolen earlier by Paris from Menelaus's palace and given to her. At this point Aphrodite has interceded and restored Menelaus's love for Helen; he is shown standing still, having given up his vengeful pursuit.<sup>179</sup> There is also no consensus on the date and place of manufacture. On the basis of the style of the ewer, the clothing, and the full figures of the women, Wu Zhuo hazards a date of the late fifth or early sixth centuries and creation by a Roman craftsman working under the aegis of some ruler east of Sassanian Persia in the Transoxiana area or under the Hephthalites, who controlled a large part of the area at the time. Marshak and Anazawa opt for Bactria in the sixth century.

Another import of this period is a Sassanian-type plate found in a tomb near Datong. The deceased, Feng Hetu 封和浹 (438–501), was a Xianbei who followed the court when it was moved from Pingcheng, modern Datong, to Luoyang in 494 and who held positions in the imperial guard and managed the imperial pastures, high enough offices to earn him a posthumous rank and title from the emperor. His body was returned from Luoyang to his native place at

Datong and he was buried in a brick tomb in 504.<sup>180</sup> The tomb had been robbed but nevertheless yielded a number of objects, including two other silver vessels apparently of non-Chinese origin: an eared bowl of typical Chinese design except for beaded handles and a goblet on a high foot, too damaged to make out any details. The plate, gilt silver in repoussé, is 18 cm across at the mouth and 4.5 cm high, sits on a foot ring 1.4 cm high, and has an interior molding of three ridges inside the rim.

The central portion depicts a hunting scene with a figure engaging three boars who rush out at him from a thicket of reeds. The hunter thrusts a spear into one of the animals while he lifts his right leg to ward off the boar coming at him from the rear (fig. 7.54). Since he has no crown or hair knot, signs of royalty, and the action is dynamic rather than static, Prudence Harper of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York surmises that the object is from the area east of Iran, in Sogdiana or Bactria/Tokharistan, and dates to the second half of the third century.<sup>181</sup> The late Xia Nai, an eminent Chinese archaeologist, came to the same conclusion on the place of origin but put the date of manufacture later, from the second half of the fourth century to the late fifth century.<sup>182</sup>

Similar artifacts have been discovered in Datong at the site of what may have been one of the Xianbei palaces or, some say, perhaps a Buddhist temple. Five pieces were found, a lobed silver bowl, three stemmed goblets, and a cup, all of foreign origin. They have not been reported on in any detail because they were uncovered during the Cultural Revolution when publication of the archaeological journals was suspended. The eight-lobed bowl is 4.5 cm high and 23.8 cm × 14.5 cm at its top; it has an oval in the center with two sea serpents in relief and a bronze ring foot with eight indentations matching the lobes. Of particular note is that, viewed above, each lobe is relatively deep, the rim is curved, and at each



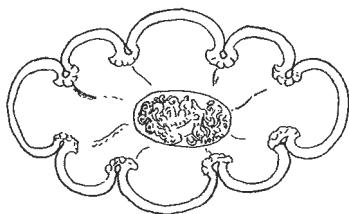
7.54. Rubbing of the interior surface of a silver vessel (after Prudence Harper, "An Iranian Silver Vessel from the Tomb of Feng Hetu," *Bulletin of the Art Institute* 4 [1990]: 52, fig. 2)



juncture there is a honeysuckle design (fig. 7.55). A number of such bowls have been found to the west at Perm, north of the Caspian Sea, on the so-called fur route.<sup>183</sup> The dating of the Datong example, even though only an approximation of sometime before 494, when the capital was moved, or at the latest the 520s, is helpful for dating other pieces found in the west.

The three stemmed goblets are of gilt bronze. The first has a row of crouching animals below the rim and is divided into four parts by acanthus leaves, with a human figure in high relief placed in each frame (fig. 7.56). The body of the second goblet is covered by a grapevine with five children climbing the branches, on which a bird sits (fig. 7.57). This is thought to manifest a Hellenic theme. The third goblet more closely resembles the first. A band of curling foliage framed by two rows of linked roundels rings its top, and the body is divided into four sections by acanthus leaves; but in place of the human figures, the sections are inlaid with red gems and turquoise (fig. 7.58). These goblets are also believed to have originated in the area east of Iran proper.<sup>184</sup>

The last of the five objects from the Datong trove is a small silver cup, only 5 cm high and 8.5 cm wide at the mouth (fig. 7.59). Its mouth is flared, the neck is slightly indented, and the line of the body forms an arc. The bottom is round



7.55. Lobed silver bowl (after *Cultural Relics Unearthed in China*, pl. 149)



7.56. Gilded bronze goblet (after *Cultural Relics Unearthed in China*, pl. 150)



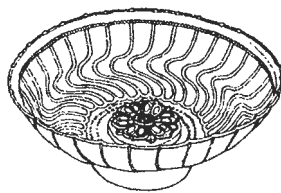
7.57. Gilded bronze goblet (after *Cultural Relics Unearthed in China*, pl. 151)



7.58. Gilded bronze goblet (after *Cultural Relics Unearthed in China*, pl. 152A)



7.59. Gilded silver cup (after *Cultural Relics Unearthed in China*, pl. 152B)



7.60. Silver bowl (after *Kaogu* 1977.6, pl. 5.4)

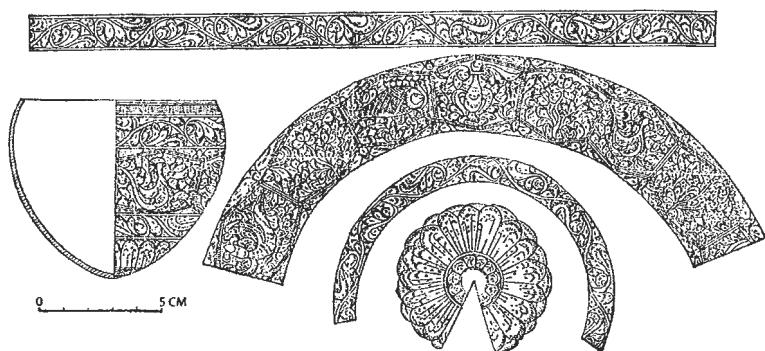
and has a circle of two ridges. The cup may or may not have had a stem. It also features acanthus leaves forming four sections, in each of which is a circle with a human bust. The head is in profile, the body straight on, and there is a cap on the head rather than a crown; the depiction is rather naturalistic and differs from what is found in Sassanian portraiture. Again, the conclusion of those who have studied this piece is that it comes from the area east of Iran proper and perhaps shows late Parthian influences. Sun Ji, however, has attributed it instead to the Hephthalites, who had wrested the Transoxiana area from the Sassanians in the fifth century and held it for a century or so. Chinese records speak of missions from the Hephthalites beginning in 456.<sup>185</sup> A similar cup of gilded silver, 4.6 cm high and 10.2 cm in diameter, was found in a tomb near Datong and might have come from the same workshop.<sup>186</sup>

Another piece that might well have been of foreign workmanship is a silver cup from an Eastern Wei tomb, part of a set that includes a gilded bronze wine warmer, a gilded bronze *hu* jar, and five ceramic bowls, all on a tray; these items are clearly of Chinese manufacture. The cup's decor includes a ring of linked beads around the inside rim, a double strand at the inside bottom surrounding a raised six-petal lotus flower, and a series of wavy lines on the sides that would have given an undulating effect to the contents of the bowl (fig. 7.60).<sup>187</sup> A bowl from the Urals provides an almost identical match, but the lotus flower on the former seems to point to Chinese manufacture.<sup>188</sup>

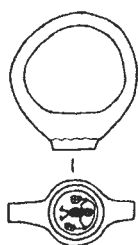
The objects described in the preceding came from northern sites, likely over the Silk Road one way or another; apparently few if any reached the southern states. What foreign goods reached the south would probably have come by sea, like the hoard of Sassanian gold and silver objects discovered near the coast in Guangdong, in the extreme southern part of China. The pottery jar in which the treasure was found contained some seven pounds of silver artifacts, both complete and in fragments, and twenty Sassanian coins from the reigns of kings

extending from 383 to 484. A reconstructed silver bowl had twelve lobes and an inscription along the outside rim that, unfortunately, was not translated in the report. There was also a silver box, two gilded cups (fig. 7.61), seventy-three silver bracelets, two gold hoops, and six gold rings of rather a rough and unadorned appearance. The hoard is thought to have been deposited around the beginning of the sixth century (late Southern Dynasties) and may have belonged to a merchant or a tribal chief of the area. The hoard demonstrates that China was receiving such objects at this time through the sea route and that the southern states were also recipients of these western treasures, though this is all that has been found so far.<sup>189</sup>

Jewelry from abroad was also highly appreciated in this period. The tomb of the Northern Zhou general Li Xian, in the northwest, yielded, in addition to the ewer discussed above, an unusual gold signet ring that apparently belonged to his wife. Its inset bluish gray stone of lapis lazuli is carved with an intaglio figure that appears to be holding two loads at the ends of a curved rod (fig. 7.62). It has been identified by comparison with a similar representation of a woman dancing and holding a scarf found in Siberia; this motif derives ultimately, however, from the Iranian area.<sup>190</sup> Another such ring, also worn by a woman, was inset with a stone of the same color but with an intaglio engraving of a deer and surrounded by a ringlet of beads. It was found in the Eastern Wei tomb mentioned above, the burial place of another couple surnamed Li, but they were Han, not Xianbei. Li Xizong 李希宗 (501–40) and his wife were related by marriage to the de facto Xianbei rulers of his state as their daughter was married to a prince, and so the ring, a Sassanian coin, the bowl with the undulating interior described earlier, and other precious objects in the tomb may well have been imperial gifts.<sup>191</sup> Similar rings, one with a purple stone and another decorated with a black stone and carved with intaglio figures, were found in Inner Mongolia near Huhehot



7.61. Decor of a gilded silver cup (after *Kaogu* 1986.3:245, fig. 7)



7.62. Signet ring (after *Wenwu* 1985.11:12, fig. 25)

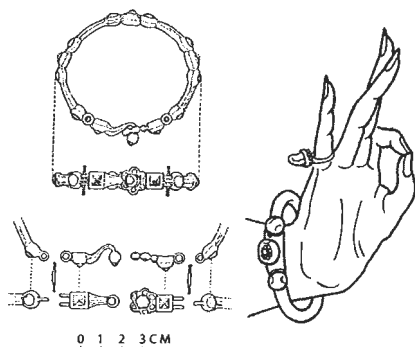


7.63. Golden necklace (after *Wenwu* 1987. 10:77, fig. 1)

along with Byzantine and Sassanian coins in what appeared to be an improvised burial, perhaps of a merchant on the road.<sup>192</sup> Such rings with inset stones carved with intaglio figures and with a broad setting differ from contemporary Chinese examples and so suggest a distinctively foreign origin.<sup>193</sup>

A similarly compelling object was found in the tomb of the great-granddaughter of Li Xian, Li Jingxun, who died at the age of nine.<sup>194</sup> The girl's family was illustrious, for her mother was a niece of Emperor Yang of the Sui dynasty and her father, Li Xian's grandson, had been raised in the palace as an orphan since his father had been killed in battle against the Turks. The mother, by the way, had chosen her husband from among the other blue bloods by sitting behind a screen and listening to them sing and play musical instruments.<sup>195</sup>

In the undisturbed sarcophagus of the young princess was found an outstanding necklace that had a carved gem in its clasp, again of a deer.<sup>196</sup> The necklace is composed of twenty-eight beads, each only 1 cm in diameter and made up of twelve small gold rings welded together; each ring was encircled by a band of gold granules. Ten small pearls occupy the interstices. A few such multifaceted beads, or polyhedra, have been found, but this is the only complete necklace to have appeared thus far in China. The main piece at the front of the necklace is a ruby surrounded by twenty-four seed pearls; to each side is a gold square with arc-shaped sides and a blue stone with a circle of pearls. An egg-shaped piece of lapis lazuli hangs at the center (fig. 7.63). A gold bracelet of quite complicated construction with inset pearls and colored glass also emerged from this tomb (fig. 7.64). The source of these pieces of jewelry is not clear; they were at first



7.64. Golden bracelet (after *Wenwu* 1987.10:79, fig. 4)

thought to have been imported from northern India or a neighboring area, but it now seems more certain that the necklace at least is of Byzantine origin.<sup>197</sup> They were truly worthy as the grave goods of a grand-niece of an emperor.

There was an enormous contrast in use and appearance between the imported vessels and jewelry of precious materials and those of native origin in the Six Dynasties period. As far as the archaeological record shows, in the eighteen hundred tombs of this period for which I have a record, only two such vessels, one gold and the other silver, were of Chinese manufacture. Both were small, third-century spittoons, one 6 cm tall, the other 7.5 cm. A small silver jar with a lid attached by a chain, possibly meant to hold a sacred relic, found in a crypt below a stupa in Dingxian 定縣, Hebei, of 481, is possibly of Chinese manufacture, but it may have been imported. As already mentioned, native gold and silver objects consisted primarily of plain rings, beads, circlets, bracelets, hair-pins, and small ornaments. None of the jewelry found in any of the tombs of the Six Dynasties period approaches the quality or complexity of the necklace. Likewise, the four rings described above stand out from the ordinary rings and bracelets of the time, which were simply circlets of bronze, silver, or gold with no decoration except for occasional striations. Certainly very little of Chinese manufacture in this period, as reflected in the archaeological record, comes close to these imported items. Not until the Tang was there the efflorescence of vessels of gold and silver for which the Tang is so rightly famous; clearly, the production of these Tang wares was stimulated by these foreign imports.

The paucity of such foreign objects in tombs of the Six Dynasties and Sui should not mislead one to conclude their numbers were small at the time. The *Luoyang qielanji*, an account of Luoyang at the end of the Northern Wei in the 530s, speaks of the wealth of a prince, Yuan Chen 元琛, whose riches included

“over one hundred golden and silver bottles, with bowls, dishes on legs, plates, and boxes to complement them. In addition to these, the wine vessels included dozens of crystal cups, bowls of agate and glass, and red-jade goblets. They were all exquisitely made in ways not known in the central lands as they all came from the West.”<sup>198</sup>

In considering the reasons for the interest in these exotic wares in the period of the Six Dynasties, it is a mistake to think of the Silk Road as connecting two very different societies. North China was ruled by the Xianbei and related nomadic groups who may well have shared elements of their culture with the peoples of Transoxiana. Certainly there were ample opportunities to know these people from the west firsthand. At the capital at Luoyang, there were special wards where foreigners were settled, and as the *Luoyang qielanji* says, “foreign traders and merchants came hurrying in through the passes every day.”<sup>199</sup> They brought with them their own culture and customs, some traces of which have survived in China. One example is a Northern Qi funerary shrine that features a panorama of scenes, not entirely understood, but one in which figures in a distinctive Central Asian costume engage in wine drinking under grape arbors. It has been suggested that this sort of ceremony was from the Transoxiana area, perhaps Samarkand, and that the shrine was created for the tomb of a native of that area who died in China.<sup>200</sup> A series of inscribed stones from another Northern Qi funereal monument, found not far from where the first probably originated, depicts a Chinese, but his retinue includes foreigners dressed, as in the previous example, in Central Asian garb. It is surmised that the deceased was a merchant involved in east-west trade (fig. 7.65).<sup>201</sup>

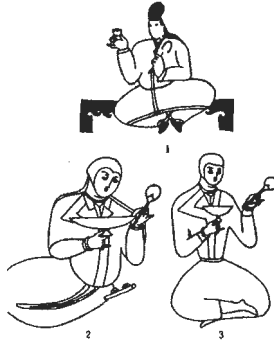
Iranians from Transoxiana, more commonly called Sogdia, were called Hu 胡 in Chinese, a word perhaps etymologically related to the word for “beard.” There were a number of Iranian communities in China; those of two hundred households or more were, like others in China, self-governing and had a hierarchy of officials responsible to the central government for the behavior of their compatriots, an early form of extraterritoriality. The head of the Iranian merchant community had the title of *sabao* 薩寶 (or 保), a Chinese transcription of the Sanskrit *sārbhavāha*, or “merchant chief.” Included in his staff were various Zoroastrian and possibly Manichaean officiants.<sup>202</sup>

The Xianbei rulers of the time also wore distinctive clothing and in other ways maintained their individuality. This tendency to avoid merging with the Chinese population that so outnumbered them was probably intentional since it was their membership in the ruling elite that brought the rewards and perquisites. There was an attempt by Emperor Xiaowen in the 490s to ban Xianbei clothing and language in an attempt to force his fellow tribesmen to assimilate, but it was short-lived, and only with the emergence of the self-identified Chinese dynasties of the Sui and Tang did the Xianbei traces disappear. An interesting



7.65. Rubbing of an inscribed stone, Northern Qi (after *Wenwu* 1985.10:50, fig. 2)

example of a midpoint in this process can be seen in the remains of the lacquer coffin of the Northern Wei, mentioned earlier, from the same area where Li Xian's tomb was found. On the lid of the coffin the deceased is shown in Xianbei garb, seated and holding a goblet and a fan; the figures illustrating the Chinese stories of filial piety, including those of the Emperor Shun of antiquity, are also dressed in Xianbei garb. The seated figure holding a goblet also appears in the Northern Qi monuments cited previously and in murals in Sogdia, at Panjikent, near Samarkand, and Balalyk Tepe (fig. 7.66). The Chinese scholar Sun Ji sees in this example evidence of the strong influence the westerners had on China.<sup>203</sup> I would say rather that it reveals a common Central Asian complex. Sun makes an important point in emphasizing that the stories of filial piety do not mean that the deceased subscribed to Confucianism but rather that



7.66. Seated figures: (1) on Guyuan lacquer coffin; (2, 3) at Balalyk Tepe (after *Wenwu* 1989.9:41, fig. 3)

a work like the *Xiaojing*, or “Classic of Filial Piety,” had attained religious powers; Sun also points out that the Xianbei garb indicates a resistance to assimilation.<sup>204</sup>

Certainly there was a great deal of friction between the Xianbei and their Chinese subjects. The Xianbei were the warriors and held the important posts, which they jealously guarded, while the Chinese nursed their sense of cultural superiority. Yan Zhitui, a Chinese who was a high official in the Northern Qi state and one who placed much importance on Confucian learning and culture, once met another Chinese official who told him, “I have a boy, already seventeen, who has a talent for literary studies. I am teaching him the Xianbei language and how to strum the lute, for I want him to know these in order to better serve the dukes and lords. It is also important for him to gain their favor.” Yan was disgusted by this revelation and told his sons he did not wish them to adopt such effects even if it would enable them to gain high office.<sup>205</sup> In this situation lie clues as to the reason the gold and silver vessels described in the preceding seem to occur only in the tombs of the Xianbei and their Chinese allies. The ruling elite had the financial resources for such treasures, some of which may have been imperial gifts, and there was a cachet in owning the real thing. The Chinese generally, meanwhile, sore pressed to maintain their own culture, may have looked at these foreign objects with less interest, and without a market, Chinese craftsmen had no incentive to produce their own versions of these exotic items. Not until the Sui and Tang dynasties, when the Chinese enjoyed a prosperity that came from a united China and their armies were victorious on all fronts, did foreign exotica become attractive and native craftsmen respond by producing their own versions of such excellent quality.<sup>206</sup>



## GLASS

While the Shang had knowledge of glazes and refining techniques and some pieces of a glasslike substance have been found, the belief has been that the earliest glass objects in China were the large number of beads of early Western Zhou date found in Henan, Shaanxi, and Shandong. Recent tests have shown, however, that the beads are actually faience, that is fused silicate grains, and not homogeneous glass.<sup>207</sup> The increased technical skills in many areas during the Warring States period made possible production of the earliest glass in the form of fine-quality monochrome and multicolored beads, as well as *bi*-shaped disks and cicadas; the cicadas were placed in the mouth of the deceased and appear as a part of grave goods over a wide area. During the Han glass was used in place of gems in earrings and inlays.<sup>208</sup> It has been suggested that glass was used as an inexpensive substitute for jade.<sup>209</sup> That much of the glass from the Zhou to the Han is of a lead-barium silicate type, not generally found elsewhere, has led to the conclusion it is of native manufacture.<sup>210</sup>

The terms for glass, *liuli*, written 流漓 or later 琉璃, and *biliuli* 璧流漓, first appeared in the Han and are thought to be transcriptions of Sanskrit *vaidurya* or Pali *vainurya*, "blue stone" or "lapis lazuli." Earlier terms of the Warring States period, *qiulin* 璆琳 and *luli* 陸漓, may be cited here, although they are usually considered to refer to types of jade. *Poli* 頗梨 was used a bit later for an item in a *Weishu* list of imports from Persia.<sup>211</sup> Since *liuli* was used for a separate entry in that list, there must have been a distinction between the two, though it is not clear what it was. Today the terms are used with a certain degree of imprecision to distinguish the degree of opacity; that is, *liuli* applies to opaque or semitranslucent glass used for jewelry, beads, and other such objects, while *boli* 玻璃 refers to transparent glass. The term *liaoqi* 料器 seems to have referred generally to glassy substances.<sup>212</sup>

An inconsistency of language in the archaeological reports is especially apparent in the case of beads, for which three terms are used: *liao*, *liuli*, and *boli*. Earlier reports do not seem, for example, to maintain a clear distinction between *liao* and *liuli*; in some instances the two terms are applied to the same object.<sup>213</sup> In one report, *liao* and *liuli* are specifically said to be synonymous,<sup>214</sup> while another report lists both *liao* and *liuli*.<sup>215</sup> In this last case, the distinction seems to be that the *liuli* beads are *touming* 透明, "translucent," or *bantouming* 半透明, "semitranslucent," while the *liao* beads are *butouming* 不透明, "opaque."<sup>216</sup> Thus, a distinction seems to have evolved based on translucency, so that vitric material that is opaque is termed *liao* or *shaoliao* 燒料,<sup>217</sup> and material that is to some degree translucent is termed *liuli*. *Boli* objects are without question translucent, so the question concerns how this word is differentiated from *liuli*. The criterion may be one of transparency rather than translucency, but this is not

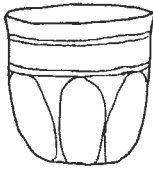
certain since there is not one report listing both *boli* and *liuli* objects.<sup>218</sup> In other words, although a distinction has emerged between *liao* and *liuli*, the choice in usage between *boli* and *liuli* may be an arbitrary one.

Glass appears to have been an uncommon material during the Six Dynasties period. Foreign glass came to China in the form of trade goods, perhaps as early as the late Warring States period, ca. the third century B.C.<sup>219</sup> By the third century A.D., Roman glass products, including bowls and jars, were being imported. According to the third-century *Weilue* 魏略, by Yu Huan 魚豢, glass came in ten colors,<sup>220</sup> but there must also have been some transparent, or at least translucent, glass if an anecdote in the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 is to be believed. It relates that Man Fen 滿奮, who was afraid of drafts, was disturbed while in attendance on Emperor Wu of the Jin because he mistook glass set into a screen for an opening.<sup>221</sup>

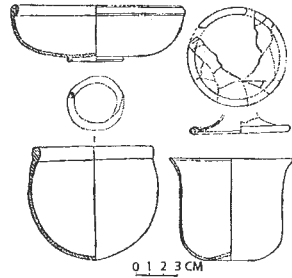
Only some 6 percent of the tombs of the period have yielded glass in some form, and of these, over 70 percent contained glass beads. Other items of jewelry in glass, such as rings, earrings, pendants, and even *weiqi* 圍棋 pieces, have also been found. Few glass *wan* bowls, *bei* cups, and *ping* vases have been reported, and it was perhaps the rarity of glass that made it so prized.<sup>222</sup> Glass vessels recovered from archaeological sites of this period may be divided into two categories, imported and domestic, and the former can be further divided into Roman and Sassanian.<sup>223</sup>

Roman glass is a loose term applied to blown-glass vessels of a soda-lime silicate made in various places in the Mediterranean area from the first century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. This glass was high in aluminum oxide and low in potassium and magnesium oxides. A number of such pieces have been found in the larger Eastern Jin tombs in the Nanjing area; they are characterized by straight sides with slightly flared mouths and a variety of etched decorations. The glass is usually clear or has a slightly yellow tint (fig. 7.67).<sup>224</sup> Contemporary anecdotes in such works as the *Shishuo xinyu* suggest the high esteem in which these glass vessels were held. Thus, Wang Dao 王導 (276–339) asked a courtier why a glass bowl (*liuli wan*), empty of wine, was still considered precious, and the reply was that its luster and translucence made it so. The point of the gibe was that the bowl, like Wang Dao himself, owed its status to outward appearance, not content.<sup>225</sup>

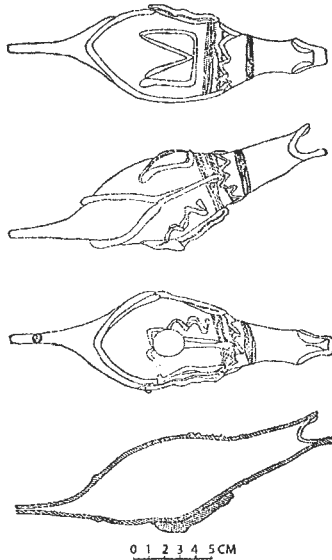
The tomb of Feng Sufu (d. 415) in Liaoning yielded five glass objects. Among them were a *wan* bowl, *bo* bowl, *bei* cup, and a fragment of a stand, perhaps a stem originally attached to one of the vessels. This glassware apparently was undecorated except for the *wan* bowl, which has a groove below the rim (fig. 7.68). The cup is dark green, while the other items have a light green tint. The fifth piece, a bottle-like object resembling a duck with an open bill, is unusual. It is 20.6 cm long and 5.2 cm in diameter at its widest point. The decor consists



7.67. Glass cup, Roman (after *Kaogu xuebao* 1984.4, pl. 3.3)



7.68. Glass vessels, Roman (after *Wenwu* 1973.3:6, fig. 9)



7.69. Glass object, Roman (after *Wenwu* 1973.3:7, fig. 10)

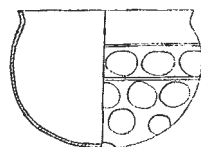
of ribbons of glass applied in a winding fashion (fig. 7.69). Though nothing of this shape has been found elsewhere in China, a Roman glass fish-shaped object with a similar decor dating around the second to third centuries was found at the Kushan site at Begram. These Liaoning pieces were blown without the use of molds, a technique common in Roman glassmaking, and the lack of bubbles gives the glass a high degree of translucence.<sup>226</sup>

The Feng family graves of the Northern Wei at Jingxian, Hebei, have also yielded glass *wan* bowls, one of which was intact; the other has been restored. The first is pale green and has a slightly everted mouth and almost straight sides,

typical features of Roman glass. There is a scar on the bottom from the blowpipe and marks on the outside from its having been blown in a mold, a method that came to be used in the Mediterranean area beginning in the first century A.D. Ribbons of glass were applied to the outside of the vessel to create a design of wavy lines (fig. 7.70). The other piece, like those mentioned earlier, is a blown-glass *wan* bowl, plain except for a thin ridge below the rim; the ridge and the foot both consist of a ribbon of glass sintered onto the body of the vessel after it was blown.<sup>227</sup>

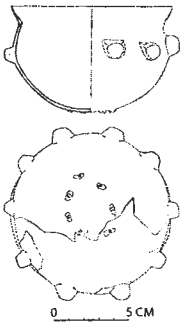
In sum, the examples of Roman glass found in China of this period, whether made in Syria, Egypt, or elsewhere in the Roman empire, are ordinary blown soda-lime/silicate glass made without molds, except in one case. They are transparent and have very thin walls, and their color, usually only a tint, is of various shades of green or yellow. Their straight sides and slightly outward-turned mouths are shapes not traditionally found in China.

Examples of Sassanian glass, that is to say glassware similar to that found at Iranian sites of the third to seventh centuries, have also been found in China, and even in Japan.<sup>228</sup> A number of such pieces are characterized by rows of concave circles cut into the glass. In some cases, the vessel has one row or more of projections or knobs, each face of which is concave. One example, a *wan* bowl found at Echeng, Hubei, and dating from the Western Jin, is transparent with a slight yellowish green tint; it has a cut design of grooves and three rows of slightly concave flowerlike shapes (fig. 7.71).<sup>229</sup> A second example, also from the Western Jin but found in the Beijing area, has ten such knobs, in one row, and a ring of seven slight projections at the bottom to provide a foot (fig. 7.72).<sup>230</sup> Another example, more cuplike in appearance but with similar cut faces in rows, was found at Yingpan, on the Konche Darya River, Xinjiang, and it has been dated by Aurel Stein as fifth to sixth centuries.<sup>231</sup> Finally, in the tomb of Li Xian (d. 569) at Guyuan, Ningxia, a particularly fine example of such glassware was found. It is light yellow-green in color, has a high degree of transparency, and features two rows of knobs with concave faces (fig. 7.73).<sup>232</sup> These pieces were usually free blown, although the object from Li Xian's tomb was blown in a

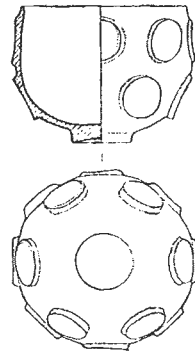


7.70. Glass bowl, Roman (after *Kaogu tongxun*, 1957.3, pl. 10.4)

7.71. Glass bowl, Sassanian (after *Kaogu* 1986.2:173, fig. 1.2)



7.72. Glass bowl, Sassanian (after *Kaogu* 1986.2:173, fig. 2)



7.73. Glass bowl, Sassanian (after *Kaogu* 1986.2:173, fig.1.1)

mold, and the knobs were either fused to the body while still hot or emerged from the surface after the vessel's thick walls were ground down. In either case, the walls of the vessels are very thin, almost sheer, especially near the mouth. As in the Roman examples, the glass is of soda-lime composition.

Glassware was highly prized at the time and even appears as the subject of poetry. There is, for example, a rhapsody (*fu*) by Pan Ni 潘尼 (d. 311) entitled "Rhapsody on a Glass Bowl" celebrating the rarity and special attributes of glass.<sup>233</sup>

Examining those rarities amid the regional tributary offerings,  
 One prizes the uniqueness of this bowl.  
 It would have had to cross the remote perils of the shifting sands  
 And traverse the precipitous dangers of the Pamirs.  
 The way it came was obstructed and distant,  
 The place to which it was consigned was dark and deep.  
 One relied on the multitudinous paces of repeated peaks  
 And overlooked the myriad spans of flooding streams.  
 One came into contact with jade trees and lustrous gems  
 And was neighbor to the sand-plum tree\* and fine green jades.  
 One regarded with awe the rocky summits of the "Boundless Winds"  
 And gazed at the majestic ranges of the "Mysterious Garden."<sup>†</sup>  
 Thereupon one journeyed to the Western Antipodes  
 And looked from afar at the Great Cover.<sup>‡</sup>

\* The fruit of this tree gives one buoyancy, and boats made with its wood will not sink.

† Both Boundless Winds and Mysterious Gardens are names of sections of the Kunlun Mountains.

‡ Where the sun goes after setting.

One would have passed through the Kunlun Mountains,  
 Where one might catch sight of the Lantern Dragon.<sup>5</sup>  
 One would have had an audience with the Queen Mother [of the West]  
 And paid a call on the sylph youths.  
 They would have drawn on the flowing splendor of glass [*liuli*]  
 And given orders to the excellent craftsmen of that far world.  
 These then assembled the mysterious insignia to select the image  
 And calibrated the Three Heavenly Bodies [sun, moon, and stars] to  
     determine the capacity.  
 Its gleam and glitter [match] the sun's dazzle.  
 Its roundness and repletion [mirror] the moon's fullness.  
 Hairline blemishes are not to be found,  
 And flying dust does not adhere.  
 Its clarity and sparkle are on a par with a candle flame,  
 Its outer and inner surfaces conform to [one] shape.  
 Congealed frost is inadequate to match its purity,  
 Limpid water is unable to convey its clarity.  
 Its hardness is beyond that of gold or stone,  
 Its strength challenges the most excellent jade.  
 Grinding does not wear it down,  
 Besmirching does not soil it.  
 To raise this bowl to toast the guests  
 Is to add luster to the imperial banquet's close-packed ranks.  
 Its flowing luminosity is bright and brilliant so as to discern what is inside,  
 The clear wind's glitter and gleam can be seen from without.

According to a traditional account, glass manufacture in China began in the fifth century when a native of Dayuezhi 大月氏 (apparently the former territory of the Kushans) came to Pingcheng, capital at the time of the Northern Wei, and was given the opportunity to make glass. One of his accomplishments was the construction of a hall able to seat a hundred people and, the account adds, that was illuminated by light streaming in from transparent windows. While the account maintains that from the time glass began to be made in China it was no longer so highly prized, it seems imported glass objects continued to be highly valued.<sup>234</sup> Native Chinese glassware apparently never achieved the quality of that of imported material.

Early Chinese glass<sup>235</sup> differed from imported ware in being primarily lead-barium glass. Although the method of using soda ash<sup>235</sup> to make soda-lime glass

<sup>5</sup> A deity of the Kunlun with a human head and snake's body who controls the changes of day to night, winter and summer.

had been known at least as early as the third to fourth centuries,<sup>236</sup> it seems that soda-lime glass wasn't made until the Sui, and even then it was produced only in very small quantities, perhaps because there were few sources of soda ash in China.<sup>237</sup> Representative pieces of Chinese glassware of the Six Dynasties period include the find of a *bo* bowl and six *ping* vases in a stone crypt at Dingxian, Hebei, of a Northern Wei date of 481. They are of traditional Chinese shapes, free blown with no molds, rather small in size, and unequal in quality to their western Asian counterparts.<sup>238</sup> A few pieces found in the tomb of Li Jingxun in Xi'an, dated 608, represent a slight improvement over the Northern Wei pieces, but the large number of bubbles contained in the glass adversely affects their translucency.<sup>239</sup> By the Sui Chinese glass had become very high in lead (as much as 60 percent lead oxide), with only traces of barium.<sup>240</sup>

In summary, Chinese-made glassware was small in size, usually not over 8 cm in diameter, undecorated, and had very thin walls that made it extremely fragile in comparison with imported ware.<sup>241</sup> Although early Chinese glassware was influenced by foreign techniques, it retained its own materials and vessel types. Chinese glassmaking never became a major industry, and ceramic ware continued as the primary material for vessels used for food and drink.

## LACQUER

Because lacquer does not survive well and the original objects have been lost, mainly only slivers and fragments of lacquer skin have been documented.<sup>242</sup> The following review of lacquer finds, therefore, should be read in terms of what has survived rather than as a measure of the extent to which it was used.

During the Six Dynasties period lacquer was found primarily in the south, especially in Jiangsu and Jiangxi, but also in Hubei and Guangxi, with scattered reports from Hunan and Guangdong. No lacquer has been reported for Sichuan, though that area was known to be a center of production. The early period showed the widest variety of types: *wan* bowls, *erbei* 耳杯 eared cups, *pan* plates, *he* 盒 boxes, *lianhe* 奩盒 toilet boxes, and *guohe* 果盒 compartmentalized trays, with a scattering of other utensils. In the Jin and Southern Dynasties periods the use of lacquer became more restricted, employed primarily for *pan* plates and *he* boxes. There was also a noticeable trend from ornate and complicated decor to a simple one over the period of the Eastern Jin to a plain surface in the Southern Dynasties period, though whether this is evidence of a decline in craftsmanship or a change in aesthetic taste is not clear.<sup>243</sup> The growing popularity of buff ware likely cut into the use of lacquer vessels at this time.

The tomb of Zhu Ran (d. 249), located at Maanshan, Anhui, an important garrison point of the Wu state, is significant for a number of reasons, but especially because of the large quantity of lacquerware that it preserved. Their survival

seems to be due to a hole in the ceiling left by grave robbers that allowed the tomb to fill with a protective covering of silt.<sup>244</sup> The find consisted of more than sixty pieces of over ten types;<sup>245</sup> the cores included wood, bamboo splint, and leather, and the techniques ranged from unadorned surfaces to those with paintings, surfaces etched with gold inlay (*zhuike qiangjin* 錐刻戩金), carved surfaces revealing layers of different colors (originally thought to have begun in the Tang), and some featuring a combination of carving and painting. The paintings, which offer an important opportunity for studying the art of this period, include legendary themes, scenes of contemporary life such as banquets and entertainment, as well as flora and fauna. Among the items a large table, 82 cm × 56.5 cm, and an armrest are especially noteworthy. Other objects include *pan* plates, some with paintings and others plain, *erbei* eared cups, a finely decorated *guohe* compartmentalized tray, an inkstone (with fine grit added to the lacquer), a ruler, a box, and a dipper. One of the plates has a label on its bottom indicating it was made in Sichuan, and it has been suggested that, since Zhu Ran was involved in two military expeditions into Shu, the large amount of lacquer in his tomb may well be loot that he brought back from those wars.<sup>246</sup>

Another assortment of twenty-six pieces of lacquerware was found in some Eastern Jin tombs at Nanchang, Jiangxi. They included a *lian* toilet case, red inside and mostly black outside, decorated with two horse-drawn vehicles and seventeen people, some seated and others advancing while holding objects. An elaborate banquet scene is depicted on the red background of a tray: four elderly men sit on mats; one is playing a *qin* 琴 lute, two are holding bowls, and the fourth seems to be talking. Zhang Yan has convincingly argued that the scene depicts an emperor approaching the Four Hoary Sages of Shangshan (Shangshan sihao 商山四皓) in search of transcendancy, and that the same theme underlies the appearance of idealized recluses such as the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove in some tombs of this period. A fragment of another item pictures the Queen Mother of the West playing a *qin* lute while a number of animals and a half-human, half-bird creature look on. Other objects at this site included an arm rest, trays, *erbei* eared cups, and chopsticks. This find is particularly important for the history of lacquerware and painting in this period.<sup>247</sup>

Lacquer objects were particularly difficult to maintain in the humid and hot regions of China. Jia Sixie 賈思勰, in his sixth-century *Qimin yaoshu* 齊民要術, included some advice on this topic.<sup>248</sup>

After the guests have been seen off, lacquerware, whether or not genuine, must be washed with water and placed on a framed screen, exposed to the sun for half a day to allow them to dry and collected after sunset. Only then will they be durable and last for a long time. If they are not immediately



washed, the salt and vinegar will be absorbed, and, their essence having penetrated, the utensils will shrivel and the ware will be ruined. The red interior should face up and be exposed because the red, mixed with oil, is by nature glossy and can endure the sun.

During the continuous rain at the height of summer the atmosphere is steamy and hot, and though the utensils may not have been used in the summer, during the sixth and seventh lunar months, each must be sun-dried. People today fear that lacquerware will be ruined by the heat if exposed even a little to the sun, and so store them in shady, damp places; although believing they are caring for them, they only hasten their ruin.

As for lacquer paintings on wood, knickknacks, chests, and pillows, if, at the end of the fifth month through the seventh and ninth months,<sup>249</sup> after each rainfall, one wraps a cloth around one's fingers and wipes them thoroughly, the lacquer will be preserved and its sheen will last a long time. If one does not wipe them clean, a coating will form when the air becomes humid and hot, the excess moisture will penetrate the material, and wrinkles will develop; the affected spots will swell and abruptly crack.

Most of the lacquerware documented in the north is from Liaoning and dates from the inception of the Six Dynasties period through the Sixteen Kingdoms; after that, such finds in general become scarce. The ware usually consists of an occasional *he* box or an *erbei* eared cup, but an Eastern Jin tomb at Yuantaizi, Chaoyang, yielded an *an* 案 table on which had been placed fourteen lacquer and pottery vessels, originally containing foodstuff offerings. The table and its contents had been covered by a canopy, as evidenced by its remaining stone bases and bronze corner joints (fig. 6.12).<sup>250</sup>

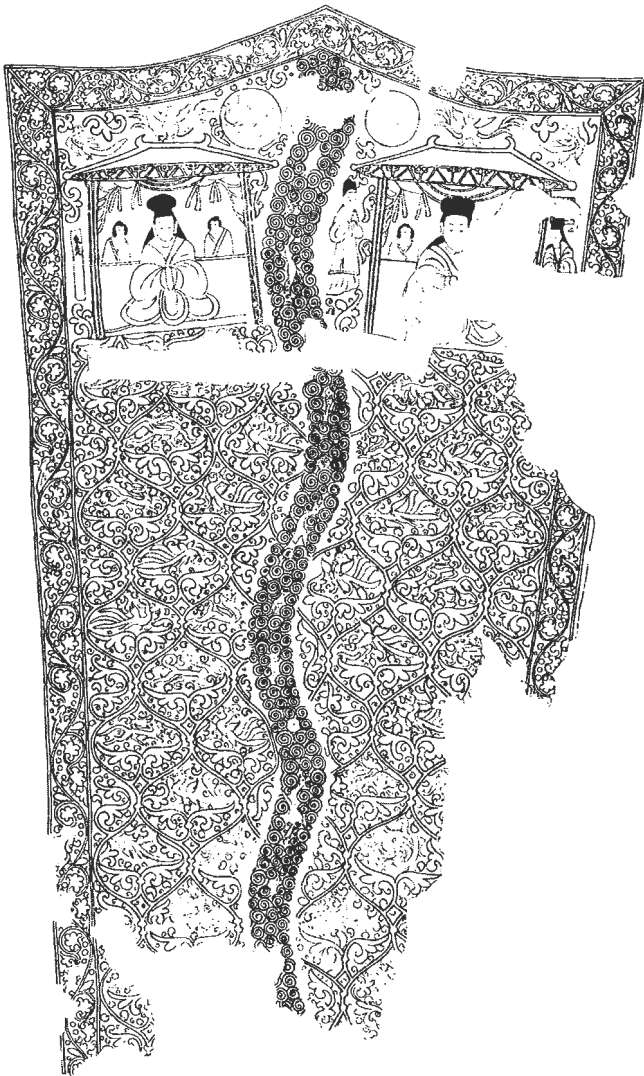
The scarcity of lacquer objects found in the north is, in some cases, compensated for by their spectacular nature. The Northern Wei tomb of Sima Jinlong (d. 484) at Datong, Shanxi, yielded a painted lacquer screen unlike anything seen before. What remains are five boards, some of which originally were adjoining. Each board is about 80 cm high, 20 cm wide, and 2.5 cm thick. The boards had been joined by mortise and tenon. The screen's surface is vermilion, while the cartouches and broader areas on which the identifying labels and texts were written are yellow. The various lighter colors were made using an oil base mixed with pigment and lacquer. Which oil was used remains uncertain; it may have been walnut oil or *rentong* 荏桐 oil (*Aleurites cordata*, or Japanese wood-oil tree); litharge, or lead monoxide, was also utilized. Further research will no doubt provide more information.<sup>251</sup> Because this material was less durable than the darker, purer lacquer of the background, there has been some loss of detail. Each section, front and back, is divided into four panels that for the most part

contain scenes illustrating incidents in the lives of former worthies and emperors, chaste women, and other paragons of virtue. The topmost panel of one section, for example, shows, to the left, the future emperor Shun's father and stepmother throwing a boulder into the well where they believed he was at work repairing it. Unbeknownst to them, Shun had fortunately emerged a short while earlier. Shun nonetheless maintained his filial loyalty toward this nefarious couple, and his devotion led to his selection by Emperor Yao to be his successor. To the right is depicted Shun as emperor with his two consorts, the daughters of Yao. Shun holds in his right hand an implement of some sort. The panel below shows three women in flowing robes, elaborate headdresses, and long ribbons; they are the three virtuous empresses of the Zhou, namely King Wen's grandmother, mother, and consort, the last of whom was also the mother of King Wu, founder of the Zhou. The three women are given much credit for the successful establishment of the Zhou. In the next panel, a mother sits on a platform facing her daughter. The woman, of the Shi 師 family of Lu 魯, instructs her daughter on proper deportment at court. Unfortunately, her biography in the *Lienüzhuan* 列女傳 has been lost, so the meaning of the scene remains murky.<sup>252</sup> The last and lowest panel of this section presents the virtuous consort Ban 班, a favorite of Emperor Cheng of the Han, who refused to ride with the emperor in his palanquin on the grounds that he should have wise ministers at his side, not women, lest he suffer the fate of the last rulers of the preceding dynasties.<sup>253</sup> These scenes were painted with great vitality and are a valuable resource as illustrations of contemporary costumes and furniture. It has been suggested that the screen was a product of the south brought by Sima Chu 司馬楚, Jinlong's father, to the north when he fled the massacre of the Sima family in 420 and, further, that it was included in Jinlong's tomb as a family heirloom.<sup>254</sup>

The earlier tradition of applying lacquer to coffins continued in the Six Dynasties period, although not many examples have survived. The coffins in which Zhu Ran and his wife had been laid, mentioned earlier, were painted black on the outside and red inside.<sup>255</sup> The Northern Wei coffin found at Guyuan, Ningxia, also mentioned earlier, was unfortunately severely damaged in an exploratory probe. However, its cover, headboard, and side boards have been restored relatively well. They have a red background, as in the screen above, with paintings in reddish brown, azurite, mineral green, and yellow, all mixed with lacquer, although some parts, in gold and white, apparently were applied directly without lacquer as a binding agent. The richly decorated coffin cover has a border of intertwined honeysuckle flowers forming diamond shapes inside of which are strange beasts or animal-headed birds. Down the middle in an S curve is a streak of whorls intermingled with doves, ducks, and fish, representing the Milky Way. On either side at the head are depicted structures under which sit, on the left, a figure labeled King Sire of the East and, on the right,

what must represent the Queen Mother of the West. Above are the sun with the three-legged bird and the moon, which probably also featured the toad, but it is too damaged to say (fig. 7.74; see also fig. 6.6).<sup>256</sup>

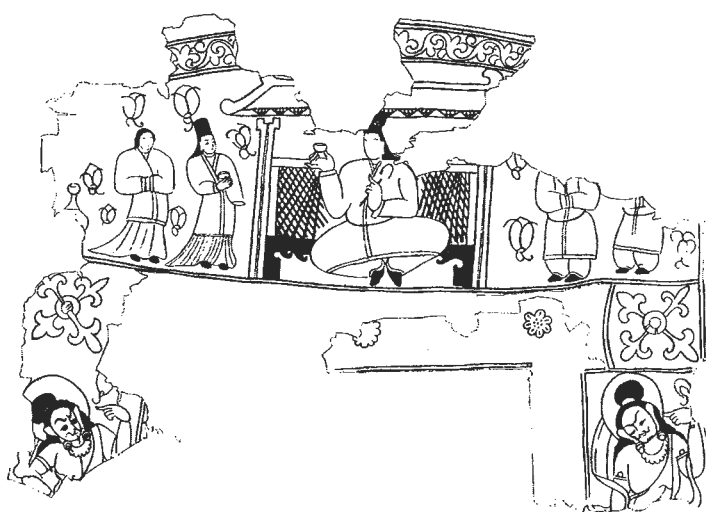
The headboard depicts a structure similar to those on the coffin cover, but inside is the figure of a man, obviously representing the deceased, who is seated aslant a platform, backed by a screen, and wearing a nomadic or non-Chinese outfit, as do the two male and two female attendants standing on each side of the structure. The Xianbei clothing of these figures and others, described



7.74. Lacquer coffin lid (after *Meishu yanjiu* 1984.2:8)

below, as well as the Central Asian manner in which the deceased is depicted, are important in considering the way in which the Xianbei fitted into Chinese society at the time. Below, one on each side, are two bodhisattvas decked out in high coiffures, jewelry, and flowing robes (fig. 7.75).<sup>257</sup>

The sides, the most heavily damaged portions of the coffin, are divided into three registers: the top depicts stories of filial sons and the middle a series of interlocking pearl roundels inside of which are pairs of facing strange beasts and more bodhisattvas, with a rectangular window at the front end through which can be seen two attendants. The registers are divided by floral designs. The series of filial sons consists of frames divided by triangular flame shapes, and the stories proceed from front to back. The first series on the right side is composed of eight frames dedicated to Emperor Shun, including the early episodes of his escaping from the burning granary and out of the well when his father and stepmother attempted to kill him. The final series on this side depicts the story of Guo Ju 郭巨, who planned to bury his son in order to provide more food to his mother but who, in digging the hole, discovered a treasure of gold. The frames include cartouches of yellow with identifying labels describing the scenes. The left side is more heavily damaged and one can make out only a series depicting Yin Boqi 尹伯奇,<sup>258</sup> one of Cai Shun 蔡顺,<sup>259</sup> and others as yet unidentified. The footboard, also heavily damaged, appears to have featured a depiction of Yanzi's stratagem that caused the three knights to kill themselves over two peaches.<sup>260</sup> The decor of these uplifting tales of filial loyalty and wisdom



7.75. Detail of a lacquer coffin (after *Meishu yanjiu* 1984.2:9)

was seemingly meant to impart a sort of sanctity to the tomb and, even more, to indicate to the nether world the values to which the deceased subscribed.<sup>261</sup>

The list of articles made of lacquer and recovered from the tombs of this period is a lengthy one, including over twenty different types, though the numbers are not large. Eared cups, *pan* plates, *wan* bowls, and boxes of various sorts are the most common, but examples of ladles, hairpins, shuttles, rulers, inkstones, and even shoes have turned up. Given that lacquer does not survive well, the relatively small number of tombs that yielded traces of lacquer (81, or 4.66 percent of the sites) may not give a true picture of its role in the material culture of the time.



# 12

## ASPECTS OF DAILY LIFE

### URBAN LIFE

The limited nature of the relevant archaeological data makes it difficult to reconstruct urban life in China during the Six Dynasties period; little remains of the cities themselves other than the foundations of city walls and gates. The written sources do not carry us much further because their focus is on the court and the higher echelons of society. The *Yezhongji*, for example, has many passages on the palace, its furnishings, the gardens and parks, the harem, courtiers, and the workshops at Ye, the capital of Shi Hu (d. 349), ruler of the Later Zhao, but nothing about the city itself. The other account of a city of this period, the *Luoyang qielanji*, a memoir of Luoyang as it may have existed from 493 to 534, written not long after its destruction, is more helpful. As the title indicates, the focus is on the monasteries, with the organization and layout of the city serving as a background.

Luoyang was established as a capital of the Northern Wei with no intrinsic economic function other than that which stemmed from its political purpose. As a result, the enormous wealth that characterized the city was a product of the trade and industries that served the court and the administrative officialdom. As rebuilt in 493, the city was made up of a center with suburbs in all four directions and, apart from the palaces, imperial temples, and administrative offices, contained 220 wards. The average size of the wards was some three hundred

paces square; each ward was surrounded by a wall with four gates and had a constabulary to maintain order and man the gates.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, crime was rampant in the city, no doubt because of the overcrowding of many of the wards.<sup>2</sup> By the time of its downfall of 534, there were 1,376 monasteries and nunneries occupying as much as one-third of its area.<sup>3</sup> The *Luoyang qielanji* spares no words in describing the magnificence of some of these establishments, dwelling on the tree-lined avenues leading to them, their extensive halls, and their wonderful gardens. The inhabitants of Luoyang flocked to view these wondrous sites and their awesome statues of the Buddha.<sup>4</sup> The processions parading these icons on the fourth day of the fourth month attracted huge crowds of spectators, who were entertained by all sorts of performers, such as flagpole climbers, tightrope walkers, sword swallows, and fire belchers.<sup>5</sup> Elaborate funerals must also have attracted gawkers.<sup>6</sup>

The wealthier inhabitants tended to live in certain parts of the city, and the *Luoyang qielanji* describes in detail the ornate mansions with their lofty gates, gardens, lakes, and orchards that bore wonderful fruits,<sup>7</sup> and the lavish parties held on these premises.<sup>8</sup> Other wards were allocated to members of specific trades, such as brewers, singers and musicians,<sup>9</sup> coffin makers and undertakers,<sup>10</sup> potters and the ceramic workers who made the tiles for the city,<sup>11</sup> butchers and tradesmen,<sup>12</sup> and finally the merchants, some of whom became enormously wealthy. One is described as having proceeded through the town with an entourage that compared with that of the royal princes.<sup>13</sup> Among this throng, estimated at one point to include 109,000 households,<sup>14</sup> were some 3,000 foreign monks<sup>15</sup> as well as the large communities of Sogdians and other foreigners housed in four wards to the south, across the Luo River.<sup>16</sup>

This thriving metropolis, once it ceased to serve as a capital, was abandoned and not revived until the Sui and Tang once again designated it as a capital.

Contemporary comments on the level of culture and sophistication in the north suggest changes occurred over the century since the founding of the Northern Wei. The account in the *Nan Qishu* and cited in W. F. J. Jenner's translation of the *Luoyang qielanji* painted the capital at the time, at modern Datong, as "barbaric." The palace was engaged in the manufacture of goods that were traded and sold, the city wards had numerous evildoers, drunkenness among the population led to a decade-long ban on liquor, deities were worshipped in Xianbei style, and the dowager empress showed her face when she went out with her escort of armored cavalry women.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, Luoyang was a very civilized place according to the remarks of Chen Qingzhi 陳慶之, a southerner who had visited the Northern Wei court at Luoyang after his return to Jiankang. Chen's remarks were included by Yang Xuanzhi in his *Luoyang qielanji*: "Ever since Jin and Song times, Luoyang has been called a desolate region, and here we say that everyone north of the Yangzi is a barbarian; but on my recent visit to Luoyang I



found that families of capped and gowned scholars live on the northern plains, where proper ceremony and protocol flourish. I cannot find words to describe the magnificent personages I saw. In the language of the old saying, the imperial capital was majestic, a model for the four quarters.”

Yang adds that everyone followed Chen's lead in adopting the Wei style of feathered canopies, insignia, and dress, including the *baoyi bodai*, or loose robes with wide girdles.<sup>18</sup>

As for northern views of the south, at least from what Yang included in the *Luoyang qielanji*, northerners found little there to admire. This came out in an exchange between Chen Qingzhi and Yang Yuanshen 楊元慎, a high Northern Wei official, while Chen was in Luoyang. Yang is reported to have made the following observations:

South of the Yangzi they enjoy a temporary peace in their remote corner. Much of your land is wet; it is cursed with malaria and crawling with insects. Frogs and toads share a single hole while men live in the same flocks with birds. You are the gentlemen of the cropped hair, and none of you have the long heads [that foretell longevity]. You tattoo the puny bodies with which you are endowed. Floating on the Three Rivers or rowing on the Five Lakes you are untouched by the Rites, and the Music cannot be reformed by official statutes. Although some Qin survivors and Han convicts provided an admixture of Han speech, the awkward languages of Min and Chu are beyond improvement. You may have a monarchy but your rulers are overweening and your masses unruly.

Yang continued by citing the patricide of Liu Shao 劉紹 when he attempted to seize the Song throne, incest on the part of Liu Xiulong 劉休隆, Emperor Wu of the Song, and the carnality of his daughter, the princess of Shanyin, who, complaining of gender inequality, was allowed to take thirty male concubines.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately there are no descriptions of the southern capital at Jiankang to compare with those of Luoyang. The *Jiankang shilu* 建康實錄, compiled by Xu Song 許嵩 in the eighth century, is a chronicle of the Six Dynasties period that includes biographical descriptions, but none of the city itself. Many of the anecdotes concerning the elite contained in the *Shishuo xinyu* are set in Jiankang and, despite Yang Yuanshen's characterization of southern life, reveal that the lives of these worthies bore delicacy and refinement. Pulling together information from scattered sources, Liu Shufen has characterized the city and its inhabitants as a bustling metropolis with a very mixed population and, citing the *Suishu*, concludes that Jiankang was similar to Luoyang and Chang'an in the mixed nature of its population and in its customs.<sup>20</sup> As she and others have shown,

Jiankang, unlike Luoyang, was an important commercial center connected by a network of rivers and canals with an area of economic importance and so was not entirely dependent on its position as a capital for its existence.

## RURAL LIFE

Turning from the city to the countryside, one finds the usual litany in the literary sources of the hardships faced by the peasantry during this period of disorder and endemic warfare. Under the Northern Wei, in 483 an "equal-fields" system was introduced to allocate land to farmers. A single household received on average 140 *mou* 畝 of land (a *mou* is equal to approximately one-sixth of an acre), but the amount varied over time, and allowances were made for age, for the number of slaves and oxen available, and for land dedicated to long-range use such as for the planting of mulberry trees.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the amount was adjusted periodically to reflect household changes. On the other hand, there are references during this time to estates running to the thousands of *qing*, a *qing* being a hundred *mou*. Somewhere in the middle falls the view of Yan Zhitui (531–91+): "I have always thought that in a family of twenty mouths the male and female slaves should not at most exceed twenty persons, with ten *qing* of good land and a house just good enough to keep away wind and rain; a carriage and horse simply to take the place of a walking stick; and a reserve of several ten thousands of cash for the expenses of fortunate, unfortunate, and urgent circumstances."<sup>22</sup>

Yan also had strong opinions concerning the importance of agriculture and the inadequacy of most officials to carry out their responsibilities in this area.

The men of old wished to know the hardships of farming, for they regarded grain as the necessary source of life. Food is the people's heaven; without food people cannot live. Without a single grain of food for three days, father and son cannot exist. To plough [*geng* 耕], to plant [*zhong* 種], to weed and hoe [*baochu* 耨鉏], to reap [*yihu* 刈穫], to pile up [*zaiji* 載積], to thresh [*dafu* 打拂], and to winnow [*boyang* 簸揚]—these are the required procedures before grain can be stored in a granary. How can farming be neglected and unimportant professions honored? Court officials south of the Yangzi, taking advantage of the restoration of the Jin dynasty, moved to the south of the river, where they have lived continuously for eight or nine generations as immigrants. Not one of them worked hard at farming but rather lived on a salary. Since all that they had was owing to work by young slaves, they had never seen the turning of a furrow of soil [*botu* 撥土] nor weeded [*yun* 耘] a blade of grass; they did not know the month in which to sow or reap. How then could they know other fundamentals of world affairs?<sup>23</sup>

Jia Sixie, who lived in the middle of the sixth century and thus was a contemporary of Yan Zhitui, shared Yan's serious regard of agriculture. His *Qimin yaoshu* (Essential techniques for the general public), of ca. 540, is a detailed handbook on many aspects of agriculture and food preparation.<sup>24</sup> As the earliest surviving work of this nature and given its detailed treatment, it is especially important in the study of a whole range of topics for this period. According to Francesca Bray, Jia had served as a middle-ranking official, probably in the Shandong area, and so his experience was basically a northern one. He dealt very little with sericulture, and though he included animal husbandry and even dairy products, most of the work concerns systems of continuously cropped land, a wide variety of plants, techniques, tools, the intensive use of land and labor, and the raising of both subsistence and commercial crops. As Bray suggests, the stage of agriculture with which he dealt was that before the shift of the economic center to the south.<sup>25</sup>

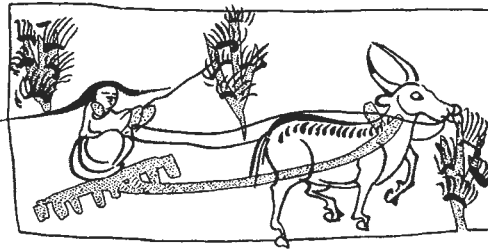
His instructions on ploughing offer an example of the kind of detail and care he devoted to the subject:

When ploughing high and low fields, no matter in the spring or autumn, always pay attention to moisture; in years of unsuitable rainfall, it is best to plough when dry and never when wet. Ploughed when dry, the soil comes up in clods that will crumble when moistened by rain. When wet soil is ploughed, it will form stubborn clods that remain hard for years to come. The proverb that "it is better to go home and rest than to plough the wet and hoe the drenched" means that such practices are not only useless but actually harmful. If the ground has been ploughed when wet, a good remedy is to draw an iron-toothed rake over it as soon as the surface turns pale. If this is not done, it will definitely be very bad.<sup>26</sup>

Based on the *Qimin yaoshu* and other sources, Bray provides a description of agricultural conditions and practices and cites a number of advances in technology made during the Six Dynasties period. According to Bray, the range of soils and availability of water in China required different strategies. In the dry areas of northern China, tillage was done by a light plow, a tined harrow (*lao* 耨), bush harrow, and roller to create a fine dust mulch to prevent the evaporation of what water there was (fig. 12.1). The heavier clay soils of the lower valley of the Yellow River, where drainage was important, required the use of the heavy turn plow (*li* 犁) with a well-developed moldboard for creating furrows and stout metal-tined harrows (*ba* 耙 and *chao* 抄) for breaking up the clods, while the roller and brush harrow were less important.<sup>27</sup> The moldboard, once thought to have been a fourth-century development, is now assigned to the Western Han.<sup>28</sup> The first evidence of the single-ox plow, made possible by the invention of the whiffletree, dates to the Jin at the earliest.<sup>29</sup> The *Qimin yaoshu*



12.1. Plowing, sowing, and harrowing. Painted tile, Jin, Jiayuguan, Gansu (reprinted from Hayashi Minao, *Kandai no bumbutsu*, 118, fig. 6–32)



12.2. Harrowing. Painted tile, Jin, Jiayuguan, Gansu (reprinted from Hayashi Minao, *Kandai no bumbutsu*, 118, fig. 6–33)

contains the first description of the practice of harrowing, which became such a fundamental element in traditional Chinese farming (fig. 12.2), and of the pairing of the tined harrow with the plow to create the dust mulch necessary in dry areas.<sup>30</sup> The work treats all stages of raising crops, such as sowing, transplanting, composting, fertilizing, weeding, and harvesting; it also includes the earliest-known systematic account of crop rotation.<sup>31</sup>

## FOODS AND FARM PRODUCTS

Grain crops in China are often referred to as the “five grains” (*wugu* 五穀), commonly including (1) foxtail or *Setaria* millet, *Setaria italica* (*ji* 稷); (2) broomcorn or panicum millet, *Panicum miliaceum* (*shu* 黍); (3) rice, *Oryza sativa* (*dao* 稻); (4) wheat and barley, *Triticum turgidum* and *Hordeum vulgare*, respectively (*mai* 麥); and (5) legumes, specifically soybeans, *Glycine max* (*shu* 菽). “Millet” is a general term for a wide range of small-seeded cereals, including millet, bulrush millet, and barnyard wheat (*bai* 稗), considered a weed to be eliminated.<sup>32</sup> The *Qimin yaoshu* lists eighty-six varieties of nonglutinous *Setaria* millet alone,

including those with such features as being early ripening, drought resistant, insect free, and wind resistant, and, based on such features, suggests varieties best suited for specific areas.<sup>33</sup> *Setaria* was an everyday food, eaten mainly in the form of a gruel or congee, while panicum was more a delicacy or used to make wine.<sup>34</sup> Another plant often included in the lists is hemp, *Cannabis sativa* L. (*ma* 麻), grown both for its fiber and edible seed, though it is possible that, in reference to a food crop, *ma* denotes sesame (*huma* 胡麻 or *zhima* 芝麻).<sup>35</sup> Although wheat and barley became important in the Tang, they were increasingly planted earlier as the taste for noodles and dumplings grew.<sup>36</sup> The rotary quern or stone mill, which had been developed in the Han, was employed to produce the wheat flour (*mian* 麵) that was used in a wide variety of pastas, termed *bing* 餅 at the time, unleavened and raised, fried, baked, steamed, and boiled, including some that are still familiar today, such as early forms of filamentous noodles.<sup>37</sup> It was during the Six Dynasties period that China became divided into two dietary zones, the north, where the primary food is from wheat flour, and the south, where it is cooked grains or granule food.<sup>38</sup> Although the cultivation of rice was rare north of the Huai River, Jia mentions twelve nonglutinous and eleven glutinous varieties (*shu* 秫) and offers much advice on how to care for the crop.<sup>39</sup>

Besides cereals Jia also treats in detail legumes, including soybeans, which he advises planting as a hedge against famine since it produces well even in poor soil. The types of products made from the soybean underwent a change during the Six Dynasties period; once considered a grain, from which a kind of mediocre congee was made, it was gradually replaced as a primary food by wheat and became a supplemental food from which sprouts, curds, fermented pastes, and some sort of sauce were made.<sup>40</sup> In the area of oil crops Jia describes seed-bearing hemp, brassicas, which were far more popular at the time for their oil and which, according to the *Qimin yaoshu*, were grown on a considerable scale, colza (*wujing* 蕪菁), which had a much higher yield than any other grain, and finally sesame, whose oil was prized.<sup>41</sup> The *Qimin yaoshu* also mentions a wide variety of fruits, including jujubes, peaches, plums, apricots, pears, apples, persimmons, and pomegranates, and explains methods of transplantation and grafting.<sup>42</sup> Among the tuberous crops the treatise lists the yam as a non-Chinese plant.<sup>43</sup> Fiber crops included silk, of course, but also hemp, which produced a rather coarse cloth called *bu* 布. Fibers were obtained by retting, soaking the plant in water until the peel and pith are dissolved by bacterial action. When cotton came in during the Tang and its cultivation gradually spread north, hemp cloth fell out of favor.<sup>44</sup> Hemp was more common in the north while ramie (*zhu ma* 苧麻) was more characteristic of the south.<sup>45</sup>

The *Qimin yaoshu* describes thirty-one vegetables, of which about twenty are still grown. They include cucumbers, pickling melons, musk melons, *donggua*

冬瓜, or wax gourd, calabashes, purple-flower garlic, bunching onions, scallions, Chinese chives, radishes, Chinese cabbage, white mustard, yellow seed mustard, rutabagas, coriander, basil, water dropwort, eggplant, ginger, and Japanese peppers.<sup>46</sup> Mallow, *Malva verticillata* L. (*kui* 葵), was popular because of its mucilaginous quality, but its use tapered off after the Tang when seed oil for cooking became more easily available.<sup>47</sup> The work offers detailed information on planting and care for each vegetable.

Jia also includes recipes; for example, for preparing jujube sauce, salted plums, the drying, pickling, and pressing of various fruits, such as peaches, plums, apricots, pears, crab apples, and persimmons, mainly in the north, and a wide array of others in the south. The use of mold fermentation, or *qu* 麪, for creating certain food products has a long history in China.<sup>48</sup> An early mention of *qu* as a source of enzymes for converting starch into glucose can be found in the *Shujing*.<sup>49</sup> Shih Sheng-han, in his study of the *Qimin yaoshu*, discusses in some detail Jia's directions for alcoholic fermentation; for preparing vinegar (Jia gives twenty-four recipes); a wide variety of *jiang* 醬 sauces (using certain molds able to break down various proteins into their component amino acids and amides); black bean sauce (*shi* 豉) from soybeans; pickles (using lactic-acid fermentation to prevent spoilage of fresh vegetables); *zha* 鮓 (fish and succulent vegetables in fermented starch); jerked and salted meat (*fu* 脯 and *la* 臘); and *luo* 酪, or dairy products.<sup>50</sup>

The northern Chinese prized dairy products: The *Qimin yaoshu* contains detailed instructions on how to produce *luo* (also pronounced *lao*), a kind of liquid yogurt or buttermilk made from cow's or goat's milk, as well as dry *luo*, which could keep for years.<sup>51</sup> There is the story that Wang Ji 王濟 (ca. 240–85) served some goat's milk yogurt (*yangluo*) to Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303) shortly after Lu came to Luoyang and asked him what southern dish could match it. Lu responded by citing two delicacies, water-lily soup (*chun'geng* 蓴羹) from Jiangsu and the salted black-bean sauce (*yanshi* 鹽豉) from Jiankang.<sup>52</sup> The northern disdain for the southern diet comes out in a tirade recorded in the *Luoyang qielanji* that criticizes the people of the Wu area for eating the seeds of tares (*gu* 菰) and darnel (*bai* 稗), crab spawn (*xiahuang* 蝦黃, also usually discarded in the West), water chestnuts (*ling* 菱), lotus roots (*ou* 藕), and "chicken heads" (*jitou* 雞頭, an aquatic plant with edible fruit and pith, also known as *qian* 芡); for chewing betel nut, drinking water-lily soup, and considering frog soup (*wageng* 蛙羹) and oyster stew (*bangfou* 蚌浮) as delicacies.<sup>53</sup> The *Shishuo xinyu* mentions, without reference to region, such dishes as bamboo shoots (*sun* 筍) with rice, steamed shallots (*xie* 薤), and steamed glutinous rice cakes wrapped in bamboo leaves (*zong* 粽).<sup>54</sup> Gruel or congee, made from such staples as tares, millet, and beans, was an important part of the diet. According to this work, a certain cook revealed that the secret of instant bean gruel was to prepare

ahead of time cooked bean powder (*shumo* 熟末) that could then be added to ordinary rice gruel. This resourceful person was also able to produce leek and duckweed pickles on short order by pounding the leek roots in a mortar and mixing them with wheat sprouts (*maimiao* 麥苗). For revealing these and other secrets, the cook was put to death by his employer.<sup>55</sup>

Fish dishes included sardines, shrimp, and salted fish. A southern delicacy at this time was minced sea perch (*luyukuai* 鱸魚膾).<sup>56</sup> Meat came from pigs, oxen, sheep/goats, and venison, as well as chickens, ducks, and geese. Special delicacies included steamed suckling shoat (*tun* 豚); the part from the nape of the neck was reserved for the emperor alone and called the "forbidden meat slice" (*jinluan* 禁脔).<sup>57</sup> Sliced ox heart was also prized, perhaps because the meat was thought to impart some of the strength of the animal to its consumer.<sup>58</sup>

If the number of references to it in the *Shishuo xinyu* is any indication, wine was an important part of the diet during this period. The high incidence of alcoholism it alludes to is said to have been the consequence of the political uncertainties of the time.<sup>59</sup> The *Qimin yaoshu* provides ten methods for obtaining eight different ferments, or starters, for the fermentation process, all of which involved a well-steamed cereal and fresh water. The fermentation agents were added to a variety of cereals, including glutinous and ordinary millets, rices, and spiked or panicked millets, to produce various wines; the *Qimin yaoshu* lists some forty different kinds of alcoholic beverages.<sup>60</sup> Yan Zhitui, in his *Family Instructions*, relates that Xiao Yi, Emperor Yuan of the Liang, had told him that as a youth of twelve and suffering from crippling sores, he was able to continue his studies by drinking Shanyin wine to alleviate the pain.<sup>61</sup> Shanyin is modern Shaoxing, in Zhejiang, still the source of a well-known rice wine. Grape wine was available during this period, brought to China by the large number of merchants from the so-called Western Regions, but it had not yet achieved any great popularity.<sup>62</sup> The process for making distilled wine, or *baijiu* 白酒, was perhaps known as early as the Han, but even in the Tang only small amounts were being made.<sup>63</sup>

There is mention of tea as early as the Han, when it was introduced from Sichuan, and it was a fashionable drink in the south during the Six Dynasties period. It became more widespread in the Tang owing, at least in part, to its use as an aid to meditation in the Buddhist monasteries.<sup>64</sup> Its early names include *tu* 荼 and *ming* 茗, among others; the modern name *cha* 茶 arose in the Tang. During the Han and Six Dynasties periods apparently the tea leaves were steamed, pounded, and molded into cakes that were then slowly dried over a low fire and finally suspended for a final airing. For drinking, chunks of the tea cake were boiled in water and flavorings such as orange peel, mint, jujube, scallions, and ginger were added. This style of preparation gradually changed during the Tang.<sup>65</sup>

Sweeteners during the Six Dynasties period consisted primarily of malt sugar (*yi* 飴) and honey (*mi* 蜜). The making of malt sugar from grains had a long history in China; the *Qimin yaoshu* describes the manufacturing process for a variety of these sugars.<sup>66</sup> Sugarcane and the technology for deriving sugar from its juice was known in this period, but the general production of refined cane sugar did not occur until the Tang.<sup>67</sup>

Any discussion of food in the Six Dynasties period suffers from the difficulties of terminology and inadequate sources, but it seems clear that the diet of this time was a wide and varied one. Although the cuisine differed in some respects from that now associated with China—for example, the importance then of dairy products in the north and what appears to be early stages in the development of such staples as filament noodles, soy sauce, and tofu—overall the technology for the processing and utilization of the natural food resources that one finds in China today were already in place. Without a study of some depth, it is not possible to say with any certainty what new developments took place in the Six Dynasties period, but fortunately, the *Qimin yaoshu*, that remarkable work, makes it possible to survey the end of the period, and it is clear that there was a respectable culinary art that, as in other periods, was an important feature of the culture.

## CANDLES AND LAMPS

The use of fire for illumination to extend the period of human activity must date back to the earliest times. The need to provide a mobile and efficient source of light led to the invention of lamps and candles.<sup>68</sup> Such artificial light represented a break with nature, and many of the situations in which candles, for example, are mentioned in the literary sources are related to nefarious and devious activities, or those of urgency in which the sense of drama is enhanced by the flickering lights. On the other hand, the use of candles could also symbolize diligence. Emperor Wu of the Liang, though burdened by the affairs of state, did not, it is said, leave off his interest in books and read by candlelight until the wee hours of the night.<sup>69</sup> He must have gotten very little sleep because he is also said to have risen before dawn to go over documents by candlelight, his hands as he wielded his brush becoming chapped from the cold.<sup>70</sup>

Candles are also mentioned in descriptions of lavish entertainments. When a former classmate arrived as an envoy from the north, Yang Kan 羊侃 of the Liang entertained him at a party with three hundred guests; the utensils were all of gold and jade, troupes of dancing girls provided entertainment, and, when darkness fell, over a hundred servants appeared holding gold decorated candles.<sup>71</sup> In the case of Shen Yuzhi 沉攸之, who was sent to quell a rebellion at Jingzhou in 472 and set himself up as a semi-independent satrap, "His



wealth was comparable to that of the princes; at night candles were lit in the rooms and corridors until dawn, and in the rear quarters hundreds wore pearls and jades. It was beyond anything of the time."<sup>72</sup> Shi Chong 石崇 (249–300), famed for his ostentatious display of wealth, is said to have cooked roasts over wax candles.<sup>73</sup>

While there is mention of a variety of substances for candles,<sup>74</sup> by and large candles were made of wax, either beeswax or that secreted by other insects or plants. In terms of chemistry, beeswax is composed for the most part of wax esters (chiefly myricyl palmitate  $C_{30}H_{61}OH$ ), wax acids (such as cerotic acid  $C_{30}H_{51}COOH$ ), and hydrocarbons. After being separated from impurities by rendering and refining, it is usually bleached to form a white and translucent substance without scent or taste.<sup>75</sup> The bleaching is accomplished by reducing the wax to thin ribbons that are then exposed to air and sunlight; the process is repeated until the wax is completely whitened. Finally, it is formed into cakes for use.

The process by which wax was made from the secretions of a small winged insect—found chiefly in western China, where it is raised for its wax—is described in the *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目.<sup>76</sup> The insect in question, called the *bailachong* 白蠟蟲 (*Coccus sinensis*), thrives on various trees of the genus *Ligustrum*, including *dongqingshu* 冬青樹 or *nüzhen* 女貞 (*Ligustrum lucidum* Ait. and *Ligustrum japonicum* Thunb.) and *shuila* 水蠟 (*Ligustrum ibota* Sieb.).<sup>77</sup> The *Bencao gangmu* claims the wax from the *Coccus sinensis* was unknown before the Yuan dynasty, but a Tang list of tributary goods indicates that waxes other than that from bees were known, and a study of the list by Edward Schafer and Benjamin Wallacker specifically cites the *Coccus sinensis*.<sup>78</sup> It may be, then, that this source of wax was already known before the Tang.

Another source of wax was the *wujiu* 烏臼 or *jiusbu* 柏樹 tree (*Sapium sebiferum* Roxb. or *Stillingia sinensis* Baill.), commonly called in English the Chinese tallow tree. This deciduous tree grew in Shandong, Hunan, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Sichuan, Yunnan, Fujian, Guangdong, and Guangxi. Its seeds and capsules were gathered, crushed, and boiled, and the tallow skimmed off. Natural wax was added to give the material more consistency; the resulting product was used for making candles.

Tallow was perhaps another source of candle wax. The basic process involves boiling the fat and skimming off the surface oil that is then allowed to harden. The whiter, purer grades of tallow were used for candles while those of lesser quality were used for other purposes. In England, at least, sheep's tallow was considered to be the best, that of cattle next, and pigs' tallow the least desirable because of the odor given off when burned. Mention in the Chinese sources in this connection of *zhizhu* 脂燭 may well refer to tallow candles, but that remains to be studied.

The *Tiangong kaiwu* 天工開物 describes the use of bamboo or paper molds to form the body of candles,<sup>79</sup> but there is no evidence that this procedure was used in the Six Dynasties period. In the West, molds did not come into use until the fifteenth century and were not widely employed in England until the nineteenth century, when the appropriate machinery was invented.<sup>80</sup> It may be that in China, as in the West, before the employment of molds candles were made by a dipping process that consisted of dipping a wick repeatedly into molten wax, with appropriate pauses to allow each coat to congeal.

Wax was used for other purposes in this period aside from making candles. There were a number of ordinary household applications, such as waxing wooden clogs, though this may have been restricted to the wealthy.<sup>81</sup> Wax was also used in darker ways. When Wang Dun (266–324), the power behind the throne, died at a critical time, in an effort to keep his death a secret, his corpse was wrapped in a mat, covered with wax, and buried in his headquarters.<sup>82</sup> Similarly, when Emperor Wu of the Chen dynasty died in 559, the heir was not present, and it was decided to keep the death secret until he arrived. Since the body had to be encased because of the summer heat, and yet the sounds of constructing a coffin would have alerted outsiders, wax was used to make the coffin.<sup>83</sup> The use of wax in the preparation of a corpse for burial is said to have also occurred in the Eastern Jin. Upper-class women during the Taiyuan 太元 period (376–96) wore their hair in elaborate styles, often resorting to wigs, which they called “false heads.” Poorer women who could not afford such an expense termed themselves “headless.” This proved to be an ill omen, for soon after, when disorder broke out, many people were executed by beheading, and in preparing their corpses, a “false head” was made of wax or other materials.<sup>84</sup> Finally, seals made of wax were sometimes substituted for real ones as a part of the grave goods.<sup>85</sup>

Melted wax was occasionally used for deadly purposes. When, for example, Hou Jing attacked Jiankang in 548 using a number of wooden attack apparatuses to breach the walls, its defenders doused torches in oil and wax, which adhered to the wooden equipment and thus destroyed it.<sup>86</sup>

#### OIL FOR THE LAMPS OF CHINA

Oils for use in lamps are “fixed oils,” that is oils that do not evaporate on exposure to air and consist of glycerine in combination with various fatty acids such as oleic acid or linoleic acid. Such oils are obtained by subjecting the source seeds or related materials to pressure from a mill.<sup>87</sup> As Bray has pointed out, not much is known of the processes used for the extraction of oil in this period since the oil press (*zha* 榨) is not described before the Song dynasty.<sup>88</sup> It may well be that the process of oil extraction was not included by Jia Sixie in his *Qimin*

*yaosbu* because his intent was to describe only what the farmer himself would do. At one point he merely says that the rape seeds were to be taken to the oil pressers (*yayoujia* 壓油家).<sup>89</sup> Still, it is surprising given his detailed descriptions of crops that he does not say anything about the amount of oil yielded by the various plants. Such information is found, however, in the *Tiangong kaiwu*.<sup>90</sup>

The description of oil extraction in the *Tiangong kaiwu* dates from a much later period, but the same process might have been used in the Six Dynasties period as well.<sup>91</sup> To prepare the seeds for pressing, they were roasted, crushed into fine particles, screened for size, steamed, and wrapped into cake-sized parcels; all of these steps required experience and expertise. The mill itself was a hollowed tree trunk (camphor tree, sandalwood, or alder were best because of their ability to resist splitting). The cakes were placed in the hollow, wooden blocks were inserted to fill the rest of the space, and wedges positioned between the blocks were hammered to apply pressure to squeeze out the oil, which drained through a hole at the bottom of the hollow log.<sup>92</sup>

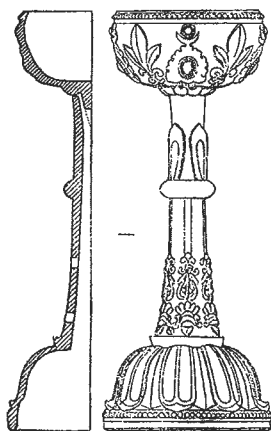
The plight of Che Yun 車胤, who as a youth in the fourth century was too poor to afford oil for a lamp and had to study by the light of fireflies, underlines the fact that poor families had to make a choice between using their precious oil as an illuminant and reserving it as an edible.<sup>93</sup> There is a section in the *Qimin yaosbu*; on hemp cultivation. Hemp oil was probably used primarily for lamps since, though it had an offensive smell, it produced no smoke when burned and did not harm the eyes.<sup>94</sup> Rapeseed oil, linseed oil, and sesame oil (though it burned off too quickly) were also used for lamps. Jia Sixie accordingly encourages in his treatise the planting of brassicas, as well as hemp, as oil crops.<sup>95</sup>

#### LAMPS

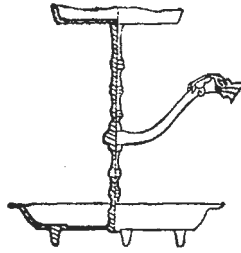
Lamps in this period basically consisted of a bowl, fuel, and a wick that delivered the fuel to the flame in the presence of an air supply.<sup>96</sup> A wick floating in oil generally makes it difficult to control the flame and produces smoke. For this reason, in the Mediterranean world and elsewhere a trough or nozzle was incorporated into the lamp by creasing the rim of the bowl, along which the wick was laid with one end in the oil so as to supply the flame at its other end.<sup>97</sup> This design makes it easy to remove the buildup of soot that would otherwise result in a dim light and smoking flame.<sup>98</sup> It would appear that the lamp in China differed from its counterparts elsewhere in the world in that it had no such nozzle, either open or bridged,<sup>99</sup> but remained an open bowl or saucer lamp, also called a cruse, with a floating wick, with the resultant difficulties. Further, without such a nozzle or blackened edge from a wick laid along the rim, it is often difficult to differentiate a container that had been used as a lamp from an ordinary shallow bowl.<sup>99</sup>

Most lamps of this period in China, whether of bronze, iron, or ceramic, consisted of one or more bowls with a stem and a base. In the north the cruse was generally placed on top of a columnar stem, while in the south the stem was in the shape of a Bundt cake pan, that is, a hollow column rising out of a larger bowl that served as the base. The lamps were either plain and simple or decorated in a variety of ways. One interesting example is a bronze lamp from Pingliang, Gansu, of the Wei-Jin period, that has the figures of three camels placed around the rim.<sup>100</sup> Another example, a bronze lamp with three bowls, two of which are supported by some attractive curlicue branches, is from Nanjing. Its base is in the form of a shallow plate set on three legs.<sup>101</sup> In general, bronze lamps of this period do not approach the complexity or ingenuity of those of the earlier Han, though a lamp in the form of a turtle holding the bowl in its mouth is comparable (fig. 7.14).<sup>102</sup> Iron lamps are mentioned in the context of Shi Hu setting out 120 in front of his Basilica for Formal Assemblies (*zhengdian* 正殿).<sup>103</sup>

Ceramic lamps tended to have more surface decoration and could be quite elaborate. The one found in the Northern Qi tomb of Lou Rui at Taiyuan is an example of this type (fig. 12.3). The bowl, fitted onto the stem, has a band of pearls at its rim, a medallion and palmetto design on its body, an elaborate honeysuckle design on the lower part of its stem, and a reversed lotus-petal decor on its stand that culminates in another band of pearls.<sup>104</sup> Ceramic lamps with multiple bowls have also been found. A particularly interesting one because of its complexity was uncovered in the Northern Wei tomb of Song Shaozu (d. 477) at Datong, but a report on this item in the inventory has not yet been



12.3. Ceramic lamp from the tomb of Lou Rui (d. 570), Taiyuan, Shanxi (after *Wenwu* 1983. 10:10, fig. 25)



12.4. Bronze lamp with handle, Western Jin, Wuxian, Jiangsu (after *Wenwu ziliao congkan* 3 [1980]:135, fig. 10.1)

published.<sup>105</sup> Another complex lamp, earlier in date, with nine bowls and 59 cm in height, was found in the Caochangpo 草廠坡 tomb at Xi'an.<sup>106</sup> These lamps usually did not have a handle because moving them while lit risked spilling the oil contained in the bowl, but a Western Jin tomb at Wuxian 吳縣, Jiangsu, yielded a lamp with a handle (fig. 12.4). The handle has a dragon head finial, and the stem is shaped like a piece of bamboo.<sup>107</sup> There is also mention in contemporary literature of lamps that could be suspended (*zhang* 張 or *gua* 挂), presumably from a hook, but none seem to have survived.

In terms of lamps depicted in art, there is an illustration of a lamp with a single bowl, stem, and stand, with a tongue of flame emerging from the bowl, at the Yi'nan 沂南 shrine (fig. 12.5). A more elaborate, three-bowl candelabra is shown on the Sima Jinlong screen, where the flames clearly emerge from the bowls as long tapered columns.<sup>108</sup>

Lamps began to appear in the Dunhuang murals only at the very end of the sixth and the early years of the seventh centuries, when the cult of Bhaishajya-guru, the Buddha of Medicine, gained in popularity. The first of that Buddha's vows was to shine upon all beings with his light, the rays of which would disperse the disease of ignorance as well as other illnesses.<sup>109</sup> Zhang Yuan 張元, who became known for his filial piety, in an effort to cure his grandfather of blindness took inspiration from the *Bhaishajya-guru sutra* and engaged seven monks, each carrying a lamp, for seven days and nights to circumambulate with the sutra while he prayed for his grandfather's recovery; included in his prayer was the phrase "Now using the light of this lamp to extend everywhere in the dharma realm," which illustrates the importance of the lamp in the worship of this particular Buddha.<sup>110</sup> In the depiction of Bhaishajya-guru's paradise in Cave 220 at Dunhuang, bodhisattvas are shown placing small bowls with flames on the many arms of a very large, three-tiered lamp tree or candelabra (fig. 12.6).<sup>111</sup>



12.5. Scene with lamp, second to third centuries Yi'nan, Shandong (after Zeng Zhaoyu, Jiang Baogeng, and Li Zhongyi, *Yi'nan gu huaxiangshimu fajue baogao*, pl. 80, fig. 71)



12.6. Lighting of lamps in the paradise of Bhaishajya-guru, Cave 220, Dunhuang (after Xie Chengshui, *Dunhuang bibua xianmiaoji*, 67)

## REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN LIGHTING

There are a number of indications that lead one to conclude that, in the Six Dynasties period at least, candles were more likely to have been used in the south than in the north. The offer of candles by the south as an item in the exchange of gifts that occurred in 450 between the north and south would seem to confirm this hypothesis.<sup>112</sup> In the south there have been finds of candleholders in the form of a reclining sheep with a hole at the top of its head or a reclining lion with a socket on its back, or even with a human rider in addition to the socket, a bowl with a support for the candle or with a pricket onto which it could be pressed. The only example of a candleholder of this sort in the north is from the Zhang Sheng tomb at Anyang, dated 594.<sup>113</sup> Lamps, on the contrary, have been found in both the north and south, with an average of 9.3 percent of the tombs listed as having a lamp. (Here I include only those objects listed as *deng* 燈.) However, the distribution by region indicates 16.2 percent of the tombs in the north, as against 7.4 percent in the south, contained lamps, again arguing for the greater use of candles in the south. An explanation for this imbalance may be that the sources for wax tended for the most part to be southern.

## OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING LIGHTING

Archaeological finds of lamps used in everyday life in the West number in the hundreds and even thousands, but there is no parallel in China, partly because archaeology in China is primarily tomb oriented and because the open bowls apparently used as lamps are so difficult to distinguish from ordinary ware. It is strange that the open bowl with the floating wick remained the standard device in China since it was less economical for a number of reasons: the oil could more easily be devoured by rodents and, heated by the flame, it was prone to evaporation and less-efficient combustion. Needham expressed enthusiasm about the solution to this last problem, the addition of a reservoir below the cruse to hold water to cool down the oil, seeing this as leading to the water jacket of the condenser used in distillation. A far simpler solution would have been to develop the domed cruse with a bridged nozzle in such widespread use by the Greeks and Romans. One wonders why this simple device did not make it over the Silk Road for adoption in China.<sup>114</sup>

Finally on this subject, the lighting of tinder by a spark produced by striking flint with steel or from heat produced by friction from a fire drill served the need for a flame to light a candle or lamp; during the day, a mirror could be used to focus the rays of the sun to produce the required heat. Matches had not yet been invented.<sup>115</sup> The sources for this period are silent about what recourse was possible when a source of fire was not readily available to light (*ran* 燃) a candle or lamp.

## TRANSPORTATION

The modes of transportation during the Six Dynasties period included horseback riding, wheeled vehicles, sedan chairs, and, especially in the south, watercraft.

## HORSEBACK RIDING

The horse provided the most rapid form of travel but of course it required a certain degree of skill as well as the means to keep the animal. Before the invention of the stirrup in the fourth century, saddles were built with especially high pommels and cantles, and skirts, called *zhangni* 障泥, or “mud protectors,” were perhaps fashioned out of a stiff material shaped to the legs of the rider, providing a more secure seat.<sup>116</sup> The lack of stirrups may explain the accidental spills mentioned in the *Shishuo xinyu*.<sup>117</sup> It seems that riding largely fell out of fashion during this period among the elite in the south. Wang Gong 王恭 (d. 398) attempted to flee by horseback after a defeat but developed severe blisters because he was unused to riding. Shifting to a boat, he was captured and executed.<sup>118</sup> According to Yan Zhitui, by the Liang dynasty no one rode horses in the capital. Even riding a pony was considered beyond the pale, and for a high official to do so was grounds for impeachment. Wang Fu 王復, the magistrate of Jiangkang, had never ridden a horse, and when confronted with a galloping and snorting horse, would tremble and claim that the animal was a tiger, that to call it a horse was a misnomer.<sup>119</sup> Still, there are references to travel by horse, so one should not read too much into these anecdotes.<sup>120</sup> Jia Sixie's sixth-century *Qimin yaoshu* goes into great detail about horse breeding, even including how to tell the age of a horse from the number and appearance of its teeth.<sup>121</sup> Shi Shenghan mentions that the work provides thirty veterinary treatments for horses, as well as others for oxen, donkeys, and sheep, and he translates the one for ovine scabs as an example. As he says, “most of them are reasonable and perhaps one should say skillful.”<sup>122</sup> In any case, the elite could, when in need of transportation, turn to carriages and sedan chairs.

## VEHICLES

During the Six Dynasties period the horse-drawn chariots of the Han gave way to ox-drawn two-wheeled carts. The types of vehicles also changed. The *ziping* 輜輶, or “covered cart,” previously restricted to the general population and used for transporting goods and for carrying women, was held in low esteem in the Han but came in this period to be the favored means of transportation. At the same time, the *yaoche* 輶車, a light uncovered vehicle resembling the war chariots of yore, had been used in the Han by all levels of society, but from the Wei-Jin on,

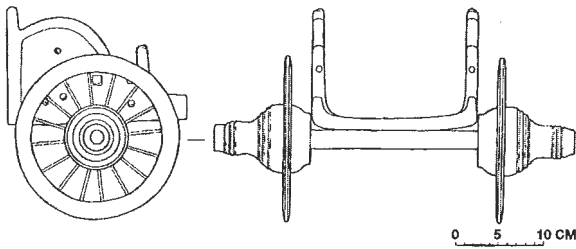


it was reserved for the highest officials. It could be that the rising popularity of the ox as the draft animal of choice favored the use of the larger, more comfortable *zipping* vehicle, but in any event, both types of vehicles came to be drawn by oxen. It should be noted that wagons of four or more wheels only appeared in a Buddhist context and derived from descriptions in the scriptures.<sup>123</sup>

The transition in vehicle types had already begun in the Han, as may be seen in the well-known Wuwei, Gansu, procession of bronze models in which an oxcart appears together with the more dashing chariot-like vehicles.<sup>124</sup> The Yi'nan reliefs, perhaps of the third century A.D., show a preponderance of horse-drawn vehicles, but there is a row of three parked oxcarts with the unharnessed oxen nearby.<sup>125</sup> The carts had carried the foodstuffs being prepared for the feast, and obviously they were of a lesser status than the horse-drawn vehicles. Oxcarts may have had smaller wheels than those drawn by horses; the shafts were also straight or almost so, without the upward curve of those pulled by horses. The yoke or crossbar rested on the back of the ox in front of its hump, and the vehicle was propelled by the ox leaning into the crossbar.<sup>126</sup> Various straps held the crossbar in place, and there was evidently some apparatus at the rear as well, shown in the Yi'nan relief.

The transition from horse-drawn to ox-drawn vehicles is especially noticeable in the *lubu* 鹵簿, or regulations concerning the makeup of processions, from those of the emperors down to the lower official ranks, as presented in the various histories. These were detailed regulations concerning the number and types of vehicles, their decor, and the size of the remainder of the entourage, mounted and on foot, including honor guards and musicians. These processions were an important symbol of status.<sup>127</sup> One such procession is depicted in the tomb of Tong Shou, of the fourth century (fig. 11.9). As Liu Zenggui has pointed out, in the Qin and Han sumptuary regulations regarding clothing, seals and vehicles replaced the bronze vessels as indicators of status, and monographs on clothing and vehicles made their appearance in the standard histories.<sup>128</sup> The sumptuary laws during the Six Dynasties period made many grade distinctions relating to the vehicles, dictating the type and shape of vehicle, whether the occupant stood or sat, the draft animal and number of such animals, the sort of cover and draperies, the color of the body and of the wheels and hubs, and the insignia. The southern states rather closely followed the Qin-Han codes, while the northern states made more changes. The Northern Zhou, for example, took as its model the *Zhouli* 周禮, and the Sui made the number of drivers/grooms a mark of distinction, one that is not mentioned in accounts of the Han-Jin or southern states.<sup>129</sup>

A screen or awning (*xian* 幟) used as a shield from the weather took several forms, set above both the animal and the vehicle or the vehicle only. A curved canopy attached to the sides of the vehicle in the form of an arch also occurred.



12.7. Rendering of a model of a *yaoche*, Northern Wei, Guyuan, Ningxia (after *Wenwu* 1988. 9:38, fig. 1)

Even these covers were subject to sumptuary laws, their type and color dependent on the status of the owner of the vehicle. In the Northern Wei and Northern Qi, for example, officials of grade eight and below were not permitted to use any awning.<sup>130</sup>

The pottery models of carts found in the tombs generally have the same structure as those depicted in the art. A model of the *yaoche*, or chariot type, the sort in which Tong Shou rode, was found in a Northern Wei tomb at Ningxia (fig. 12.7).<sup>131</sup> The majority of the models, however, are of the covered-cart type. In them, the two shafts extend from the sides of the box to the sides of the ox. The wheels are quite high, taller than the ox, since the shafts are relatively parallel to the ground. The spokes, usually sixteen in number, radiate from large, protruding hubs. The axle, as was the case in earlier chariots, does not rotate but rather consists of an axletree anchored to the bottom of the body. The body of the vehicle is sometimes uncovered but usually closed, with a door or door and window in front and a door at the rear. The covering is of cloth supported by a framework and either round or flat on top. In many there is a slight overhang in front, sometimes at the back as well, no doubt to keep rain out of the openings. The driver sits in a sort of box or step at the front or, as one frequently sees today in China, walks alongside the animal.<sup>132</sup> An awning in some cases extends from the roof of the cart out past the ox, protecting it from the sun. The front end of such an awning is held up by long poles fastened to the box of the vehicle. A full awning (*tongxian* 通幃), an extensive sunscreen over the whole of the vehicle, can be seen in the Sima Jinlong screen<sup>133</sup> and in a mural from a Jin tomb at Jiayuguan.<sup>134</sup> The extra protection from the sun's rays must have been especially welcome in that desert area.

There is a lively depiction of an oxcart on a Northern Wei coffin couch from Luoyang (fig. 12.8).<sup>135</sup> The ox seems to have a head halter and a band connected to the ends of the yoke; the band then runs under the neck of the animal, no doubt to prevent the yoke from slipping off the hump. There seems to be a



12.8. Rubbing depicting an oxcart from a Northern Wei coffin couch, Luoyang (after Huang Minglang, *Luoyang Bei Wei shisu shike xianbuaji*, 79, fig. 87)

curtain hanging over the door at the back, perhaps to keep out dust or to maintain some privacy. In an actual case, a miniature armrest was found inside the cab of a model vehicle, though the discomfort of the ride in such a vehicle was probably not much ameliorated by the use of such armrests. Since such carts continued to be used until recent times, there are firsthand accounts of how uncomfortable they were. Imperial conveyances must have been much more elaborate. There are contemporary descriptions of such vehicles being drawn by teams of twelve oxen, two elephants, six horses, or fifteen horses.<sup>136</sup>

The popular term for ox, *huangniu* 黄牛, includes both *Bos taurus* and *Bos indicus*, or zebu, as well as their cross, sometimes referred to as *Bos chinensis*.<sup>137</sup> The *huangniu* of central China was characterized by a cervico-thoracic muscular hump, one that extends onto the neck and was the result of the crossbreeding of the thoracic-humped zebu and the humpless *Bos taurus* that was originally found in China.<sup>138</sup> Placing the yoke in front of this hump enabled the animal to pull a load with efficiency. The pure zebu is still found in the southern part of China and is closely related to that of Southeast Asia, from where it no doubt

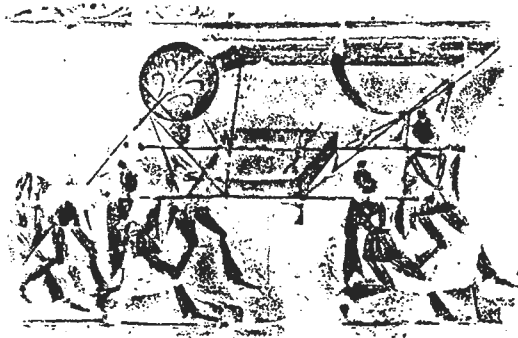
came. There is a reference to the zebu, termed *fengniu* 犏牛, in the commentary to the *Erya* 爾雅, by Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324), who placed them in southernmost Guangdong and Guangxi.<sup>139</sup> If the breed was found only so far south as late as the fourth century, when did the interbreeding with *Bos taurus* take place that produced the animals so well suited as draft animals for the oxcart? These vehicles were often called bullock carts, bullock referring to a castrated bull. Other terminology differentiated between a steer, the name for a castrated bull in its first two or three years, and an ox, its label thereafter. The male of the hybrid species had a larger hump and was stronger than the female, or cow, and so was more suitable for yoking.

A number of factors have been suggested to explain the shift of draft animals from horses to oxen. Before the Six Dynasties period oxen had been used by the general population, but, remarkably, during this period ox-drawn vehicles came to be employed in imperial processions and as the ordinary means of conveyance of the elite. The unsuitability of the south for raising horses and the resulting paucity of the animal might appear to be a reasonable hypothesis, but the shift occurred also in the north, where horses should not have been any less available than in the earlier period. As Liu Zengui has astutely pointed out, a shortage of horses there would have made them even more prestigious, and yet the elite turned to ox-drawn vehicles. It has been suggested that the change from horse-drawn vehicles to those employing an ox was the result of the heavy losses of horses during the constant warfare that raged from the late Han to the Jin.<sup>140</sup> Liu has brought forward other possible reasons: the center of gravity of an ox-drawn vehicle is lower, it is easier to drive, it has a larger carrying capacity, and is thus more spacious and comfortable. He also raises the possibility of influences from Taoism (Laozi riding an ox-drawn vehicle off to the West) and Buddhism (the ox being one epithet of the Buddha), but he does not give these serious consideration. Liu believes rather that the more significant basis of the change was one of social perception and attitude. The emergence of an ideal of purity and merit as the criterion for selection to official position meant that ostentatious display of wealth and position was rejected, and frugality became an indicator of purity. This new perspective thus led to the elite choosing to use the ox-drawn vehicle, which in turn led to its general adoption by all levels of society.<sup>141</sup> Lao Gan, in an addendum to Liu's article, indicates that he is not convinced and falls back on the paucity of horses due to the troubled times.<sup>142</sup> By the start of the Six Dynasties, at any rate, horse-drawn vehicles had all but disappeared.<sup>143</sup>

The vehicles described above are all two wheeled, but what is apparently a three-wheeled conveyance appears in the pictures incised on a stone vault of 489 from Luoyang as well as on a stone tomb vault of the sixth century (fig. 8.12). As a part of a depiction of a paragon of filial piety, an aged father is seated in the contraption, and it must have required someone to push it.<sup>144</sup>

## SEDAN CHAIRS

Another mode of transportation available to a few was the sedan chair (*jianyu* 肩輿). The *Songsbu* calls it a *nianche* 輦車, hence the term *bunian* 步輦, and traces its origins to a wheeled vehicle that had its wheels removed but adds that it is not known when this happened.<sup>145</sup> This history also suggests that when Emperor Cheng 成 of the Han (r. 32–6 B.C.) invited his favorite concubine to join him in an excursion and she refused, saying he should be accompanied by a counselor, not a woman, this was the conveyance in which he rode. In the depiction of this incident in the scroll *Admonitions of the Court Instructress*, attributed to Gu Kaizhi, it is difficult to make out the details, but as seen more clearly on the Sima Jinlong screen, it is an elaborate box with a high back and an awning, and above that there is an umbrella, probably an insignia of status, the whole carried by four men shouldering two poles.<sup>146</sup> A slightly simpler version of the sedan chair appears on a tile from Dengxian, also of a seat with an awning and, since no one is being carried, easily supported by four men (fig. 12.9). A tomb in Guangxi yielded a model of a stripped-down version of the sedan chair, a simple box with four legs and two men carrying it, though the nature of the carrying poles is not clear.<sup>147</sup> The sedan chair appears several times in the *Shishuo xinyu*, in relation to events of the mid-fourth century, but there is no information there as to its construction or the number of men employed to carry it.<sup>148</sup> When Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 was provided with a sedan chair to return home after visiting a provincial governor, a servant and two lads were dispatched to carry it. It was remarked that Tao gave every evidence of being pleased, not appearing to mind that he was not supplied with a more prestigious conveyance. Perhaps it was in the form of a *banyu* 版輿, or “board litter,” which



12.9. Rubbing of a tile depicting a sedan chair, Dengxian (after Juliano, *Teng-hsien*, fig. 41)

also had a long history in China.<sup>149</sup> The sedan chair remained a less-common means of transportation until it caught on in the Southern Song.

The Six Dynasties period was the golden age of animal-drawn vehicles among the elite, but during the Tang, except for attendance at special rituals, horse riding became the usual mode of transportation. This undoubtedly was the heritage of the northern peoples who were so influential on the lifestyle of the Tang ruling house.<sup>150</sup>

### WATER TRANSPORT

The designation of the south as the land of rice and water points to one of the clearest contrasts between the north and south. Unlike the dry loesslands of the north, where travel was usually undertaken by carts creaking their way over rutted roads, the major mode of travel in the south was by boat through a network of rivers and canals. The main thoroughfare, of course, was the Yangzi, called simply the Jiang 江, and running into it were its large tributaries, the Han, the Gan, and the Xiang rivers, with their own networks of tributaries and lakes along the Yangzi into which they drained that in turn served as important waterways. The capital at Jiankang was a focal point of a network of rivers and connecting canals that brought the produce of the rich San Wu area to its docks. Where necessary, locks (*dai* 埭) were built or portages made, with rules established to regulate the traffic and tolls for their upkeep; unfortunately, sometimes these tolls came under the control of local strongmen who exacted the fees for their own use.<sup>151</sup>

The itinerary of Li Ao 李翱, who went by water from Luoyang to Guangzhou in 809 and took a half year to travel the 7,000 li and then some, is perhaps suggestive of the situation in the Six Dynasties period.<sup>152</sup> There are a number of anecdotes in the *Shishuo xinyu* about officials going by boat out to office or returning to the capital; in one case passage was taken on a trading vessel.<sup>153</sup> As is still the custom, travelers were importuned to carry things as a service for others. One official, Yin Xian 殷羨, setting off from his post at Nanchang, in Jiangxi, was entrusted with over a hundred letters to deliver in the capital, which, however, he threw into the Yangzi once he reached Shitou 石頭, the port for Jiankang, saying that those that would sink would sink, and those that would float would float, that he was no postman, an act that was said to characterize his self-sufficiency.<sup>154</sup>

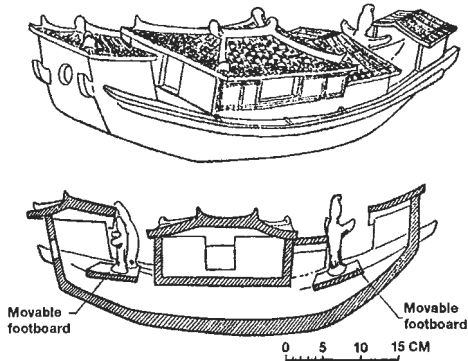
Travel by water was not without its risks, and the river provided a ready means to hide any crime committed on its waters. One story has it that a son was bringing the body of his father back home for burial when his servants killed him, threw his body overboard, and made off with his valuables. The son's ghost reported the event to his mother, who in turn enlisted others to investigate and

to punish the evildoers.<sup>155</sup> In another story, a raft 1,000 paces in length was bringing material downriver for the building of a temple by an emperor of the Liang. A corrupt official brought trumped-up charges against the owner of the raft, had him executed, and confiscated the raft so as to gain credit for the gift. Happily, the ghost of the innocent victim appeared and the official died shortly after.<sup>156</sup> But then, judging from similar stories of travel by land at that time, it was not much safer. The greater danger, however, may well have been from nature. As a later source said, "For boats used in Hukuang and Jiangxi provinces, which ply the great lakes and the Yangzi and often encounter unexpected storms, the proper measurements of the anchors, chains, sails, and masts must be strictly adhered to before a safe voyage can be undertaken."<sup>157</sup>

Shipbuilding in China differed greatly from that in the West.<sup>158</sup> In the West, the hull of a ship was formed by laying a keel, attaching ribs, and finally attaching strakes; the shape can be thought to derive from a hollowed log, the earliest form of water conveyance. The Chinese concept was completely different, taking its basic format from bamboo. While there were some exceptions, in general the hull of the traditional boat in China had neither keel nor ribs, but rather was flat bottomed and consisted of a series of bulkheads joined by strakes that thus formed watertight compartments. The front was square, forming a transom bow, and at the rear the wales continued beyond the square stern in a rising curve to form a stern-gallery overhang, from which was suspended the balanced rudder, that is to say one that was divided by the rudder post, perhaps a third of it being forward of the axis; the rudder was suspended so that it could be lifted by a windlass in shallow water. In some cases, in place of a rudder a long steering oar or sweep was used; this sweep was also used at times in conjunction with a rudder. Propulsion was effected by poles, oars, or a sail. The oarsmen stood along the sides, facing forward, either rowing or using long poles to punt the vessel forward. The Chinese also invented the sculling oar, manipulated in imitation of the motion of a fish's tail; the process, termed *yaolu* 搖櫓, was in use in the third century and can still be seen today.<sup>159</sup> To provide adequate room for the rowers, the deckhouses were often positioned toward the rear of the vessel; there were, in any case, poling galleries on both sides. If the vessel had a sail, the mast or masts were inserted into tabernacles and wedged against the bulkheads, obviating the need for rope supports. Sails were usually attached to yards that hung obliquely, that is they were lugsails, and they were of mat and batten construction: mats woven of reeds or rattan with strips of light wood as a stiffening to make the sails set flat. If the anecdote about Gu Kaizhi importuning his superior for the loan of a cloth sail is to be believed, cloth sails were apparently reserved for officials.<sup>160</sup>

No remains of boats of this period have been uncovered, such as have been found for the Song and later, but models found in Han tombs lend some support

to the idea that naval architecture had developed by this time to the extent just outlined (fig. 12.10).<sup>161</sup> A depiction of a boat on a Buddhist stela found at Chengdu provides a few additional details (fig. 12.11), such as the raked mast and high, upward-curved aft superstructure, but Needham expressed concern that the sail, filled out by the wind, was not the taut mat-and-batten sail he would have expected.<sup>162</sup> Another notable depiction is that appearing in Gu Kaizhi's painting *Luoshenfu* 洛神賦, "Rhapsody on the Spirit of the Luo River" (fig. 12.12). The difficulty here is that the two extant versions are Song copies of the eleventh or twelfth century of Gu's fourth-century original, and so there is no guarantee that the ship Gu painted looked like that in the later copies. Such features as the raised balanced rudder at the rear, with what appears to be a sculling oar next to it, and the general configuration of the hull do, however, appear to be authentic.<sup>163</sup> The size of the ship is not problematic, for much larger

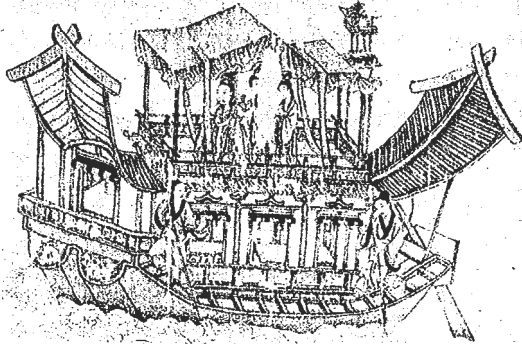


12.10. Han model of a boat, Deqing, Guangdong (after *Wenwu* 1983. 10:96, fig. 2)



12.11. Detail of a rubbing of a stela depicting a boat, fifth to sixth centuries, Chengdu, Sichuan (reproduced by permission from Nagahiro, *Rikuchō jidai bijutsu no kenkyū*, pl. 9 [1969 Bijutsu Shuppan-Sha, Ltd.]





12.12. Detail of a painting attributed to Gu Kaizhi (Zhang Anzhi, *Zhongguo meishu quanji*, 138, pl. 96)

ones had been built at this time. Yan Zhitui (531–91+) said that southerners did not believe there could be tents that held a thousand people and northerners could not believe there were ships that contained 20,000 bushels (*bu* 斛) of grain—some 1,400 tons.<sup>164</sup>

Ships this size were probably used for ocean trade, with different parts of the state as well as with nearby countries such as Korea, Japan, and Annam.<sup>165</sup> In 230 Sun Quan sent ten thousand men to search for some isles out in the ocean where it was reputed the expedition sent by Qin Shihuang had ended up. They returned the next year without having established contact, and the two commanders were executed.<sup>166</sup> In 233 Sun, in an effort to establish friendly relations with the Gongsun 公孫 regime in Liaodong, sent an envoy with titles of enfeoffment and another ten thousand men ostensibly to bolster the Gongsun defenses against the Wei, a common enemy. This, too, came to naught when the Gongsun sent the head of the envoy to the Wei as a token of their loyalty.<sup>167</sup> Undismayed, Sun also sent an expedition to the South Seas that brought back reports on over a hundred states.<sup>168</sup>

Guangzhou was an important port during this period, but much of the trade was probably carried by foreign ships. The famous voyage of 413 recounted by the monk Faxian 法顯 in his *Foguoji* 佛國記 was intended to sail from Ceylon to Guangzhou but ended up at Qingzhou, in Shandong. The ship had lost its way at sea and Faxian and his fellow passengers had faced death many times, an indication of the difficulties encountered by the ocean-going merchants of the time. The ship on which he had taken passage was not a Chinese one, revealed by the fact he had to act as interpreter once it had made landfall.<sup>169</sup> It carried two hundred men and was not the largest of these foreign argosies, which were

described in a work of the third century as being over 20 *zhang* (1 *zhang* at the time was approximately 2.4 m, so perhaps 48 m in length), rising 2 or 3 *zhang* above the waterline, looking from a distance like a “flying gallery” (*gedao* 閣道), and able to carry six hundred to seven hundred men and 10,000 bushels of grain.<sup>170</sup> There is little information about Chinese ocean-going craft, but there is much on the naval forces of this period.<sup>171</sup>

Accounts of battles in the standard histories are generally meager about specific details, but naval encounters do seem to have been of interest to the historians. One example is the naval force assembled by the Jin to come down the Yangzi in their campaign against the Wu in 280. The governor of Ba 巴 Prefecture, upriver from the border with Wu, was ordered to construct ships (*zhou-jian* 舟艦) for that purpose. They included huge warships 120 paces (*bu* 步) long (some 600 feet), capable of holding two thousand men, with towers for archers, wooden bulwarks, and four sally ports, and on which horses could be ridden. On the prow were painted strange beasts with the head of a fish hawk to frighten off the river deities; similar figures have been painted on junks down to modern times. The size of the oars (*ji* 楫) surpassed any seen up to that time. Wooden shavings from the shipyard floated downriver and should have alerted the Wu court of this impending invasion, but the warning was ignored. When the fleet moved out to descend on Wu, the Wu forces attempted to hold back the ships by stretching iron chains across the Yangzi at narrow points and also planted iron spikes in the riverbed to rupture the hulls of the invading ships. The chains were broken by applying huge torches soaked in oil that melted the iron links, and the spikes were disposed of by skilled sailors who operated from large rafts that were filled with dummies dressed to resemble soldiers, no doubt to hold off the enemy while the clearing took place. The flotilla thus made its way down the Yangzi and played its part in the conquest of Wu.<sup>172</sup>

David Graff has pointed out that the battles generally consisted of the exchange of missiles and rarely involved boarding vessels or hand-to-hand combat. Archers were protected by battlements of wood or oxhide.<sup>173</sup> The Jin attack on the Wu was mirrored in the Sui conquest of Chen in 588–89, in which again a fleet made its way down the Yangzi in conjunction with marine forces that took the fortifications along the river. By this time the larger ships had as many as five decks and carried trebuchets or mangonel artillery that lobbed projectiles from a sling powered either by manned ropes or a counterweight. Another tactic was to use large swinging picks, spike-bearing booms (*paigan* 拍竿) that could act as grappling irons to hold the enemy vessel while subjecting it to raking fire.<sup>174</sup> Setting enemy boats aflame by means of fire boats and ramming by ships called *mengchong* 蒙衝 were other tactics that were used. With the unification of the empire, the heyday of naval conflict on the Yangzi in the Six Dynasties period came to a close. To ensure that it would remain that

way, in 598 the Sui ordered that all vessels in the south longer than 3 *zhang* (some 25 ft) were to be confiscated.<sup>175</sup> For a time, then, only smaller rivercraft plied the waters of the realm.

## ENTERTAINMENT

*Weiqi*, a type of chess perhaps better known as Japanese Go, is a two-person territorial game played on a board marked with a grid. Its players alternate in placing black and white stones on the intersections of the lines of the grid. Territory is gained by occupying space with one's stones without the possibility of being surrounded by the enemy. The game ends when all points are occupied and the winner is the one with the most territory.

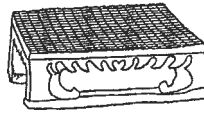
*Weiqi* became extremely popular during the Six Dynasties, and archaeological evidence indicates that the game developed into its modern form during this period. The earliest reference to it is in the *Zuozhuan*, Duke Xiang, twenty-fifth year, 547 B.C., when the possible unfortunate consequences of actions taken without forethought are compared with making such a move in the game of *yiqi* 弈棋.<sup>176</sup> Confucius thought that playing the game was at least better than complete idleness, and Mencius said that even in such a "minor art," one needed to dedicate one's full attention to it if one were to succeed in it.<sup>177</sup> The game was popular in this pre-Han period but was seen only as a recreation, and no particular value was assigned to it. This attitude began to change in the Han; Ban Gu 班固 praised it as an aid in cultivating one's moral character, and Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166), in his rhapsody on the game, compared it to deploying troops on a battlefield.<sup>178</sup> But it was in the Six Dynasties period that skill in it came to be seen as an essential accomplishment of a gentleman, so that by the Tang it was on a par with calligraphy, playing the zither, and painting.<sup>179</sup> Manuals dedicated, at least in part, to the game appeared at the time, an early example of which is the *Yijing* 藝經, by Handan Chun 邯鄲淳 of the Wei state, of the Three Kingdoms period.<sup>180</sup> Perhaps the most ambitious of such works was the *Qipin* 棋品, compiled by Liu Yun 柳惲 (465–517) on the order of Xiao Yan, Emperor Wu of the Liang, that ranked 278 men in nine grades according to their ability in the game.<sup>181</sup>

There are many examples in the literature regarding the discipline of mind imposed by the game, to the extent that playing with calmness and concentration in the face of crisis or momentous events became a topos. For example, when news of the victory over Fu Jian's army at Feishui in 383 reached Xie An, who was in charge of military affairs of the area facing the enemy, while he was playing a game, he continued play with no change of demeanor.<sup>182</sup> The other well-known anecdote in this vein concerns Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–63), who did not give way to his grief over his mother's death until he had finished his game.<sup>183</sup>

There are also incidents recounted of generals facing defeat calmly playing a game to show their confidence in the outcome and give heart to their men.

The game also apparently caused addiction and other abnormalities. Emperor Ming of the Southern Qi (r. 494–98), who was not very good, was nevertheless encouraged to think he was a third-rank player. He went so far as to establish a Weiqi Prefecture, and a prince and various officials who were excellent players were given additional titles connected with that prefecture.<sup>184</sup> Addiction among the population reached the point that it became a matter of great concern. Sun Quan, founder of the Wu state, convinced that the craze was interfering with state affairs, instructed eight officials to propose ways of bringing it under control.<sup>185</sup> Another time, Wei Yao 韋曜, asked by the Wu prince Sun He 孫和 for his opinion on the game, said that people were so addicted that they were neglecting their study of the classics, forgetting to eat or sleep, and playing the whole day and on into the night by candlelight; he condemned the game as deleterious to the state.<sup>186</sup> Tao Kan 陶侃 (259–334), who must have been somewhat of a martinet, berated any of his underlings whom he found playing that and other games, saying that *weiqi* was a game used by Yao and Shun to teach their imbecile sons.<sup>187</sup> Emperor Ming of the Southern Qi was himself advised that “[according to tradition] Yao had used the game to teach his son Danzhu [丹朱, who was not very bright] that it is not what a ruler should be fond of.”<sup>188</sup> Yan Zhitui, as was his wont, advised his sons to practice moderation, saying that *weiqi* was “a refined game. But it makes people self-indulgent and neglectful of other duties. You should not play it often.”<sup>189</sup>

The game underwent an important change during the Six Dynasties: sometime between the Han and the Sui, the board changed from having seventeen lines in each direction, with 289 crossings (called *dao* 道), to having the modern nineteen, with 361 crossings. A stone board with seventeen lines found in an Eastern Han tomb at Wangdu 望都, Hebei, was 17 cm in height and 69 cm to a side.<sup>190</sup> That the board continued to have seventeen lines at the start of the Six Dynasties period is confirmed by the above-mentioned *Yijing*, by Handan Chun, who also said each player was to have 150 black stones or 150 white.<sup>191</sup> A black stone was found in a Western Jin tomb at Yiyang, Hunan.<sup>192</sup> Another find of stones has been reported from a Southern Qi royal tomb that contained thirty-six white stones of jade and forty-seven stones of a purplish black translucent vitrine material.<sup>193</sup> In addition to the Wangdu example, a board was discovered in the tomb of Zhang Sheng (d. 595) at Anyang. It is made of buff ware, is 4 cm high, 10.2 cm to a side, and has nineteen lines. It also has the modern feature of a center crossing and strategic points at the four corners (four lines in from each side) marked by a small pit (fig. 12.13).<sup>194</sup> Two literary texts bear on the question of the number of lines on the board. One is a Dunhuang manuscript, entitled *Qijing* 棋經, possibly of Northern Zhou date, that says the board reflects the heavens in



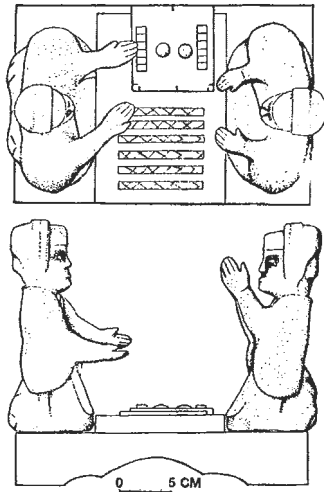
12.13. Model of a *weiqi* board, Sui, Anyang, Henan (after *Kaogu* 1959.10:543, fig. 3.14)

having 360 degrees, which would indicate a board of nineteen lines.<sup>195</sup> The other is the *Sunzi suanjing* 孫子算經 that is listed in the *Suishu* bibliographic chapter; one of the problems contained in it asks for the number of crossings in a *weiqi* board and gives the answer as 361, also indicating a board with nineteen lines. This text, despite its title, may reflect a Sui context.<sup>196</sup> The transition from seven-teen to nineteen lines has generated much discussion, but it is clear that the date is sometime in the Six Dynasties period, and from the Tang on, usually only boards with nineteen lines seem to have occurred.<sup>197</sup>

*Weiqi*, like Western chess, is a board game that relies entirely on mental activity—no physical skill or luck (such as in the throw of dice) is involved, and this explains why it came to be held in such high esteem among the literati. But *weiqi* did not lend itself well to gambling, and for that purpose there were many other games popular in the Six Dynasties period.

One that has attracted much attention is *liubo* 六博, a game characterized by a board usually termed TLV because of the design it carries, which is also seen in mirrors (fig. 7.23). The game was popular before and during the Han, and there are pottery figurines and illustrated tiles showing the game in progress. The players are invariably depicted in a high state of excitement (fig. 12.14). The equipment for what was known as the “big game,” beside the board, consisted of sticks (*zhu* 箸) some 12 cm in length, of ivory, wood, or other material, and inscribed with a variety of designs. The sticks were thrown to determine the moves of the draughtsmen (*qi* 棋) over the TLV pattern. If dice (*qiong* 檠) were used in place of the sticks, it was known as the “small game.”<sup>198</sup> There are many illustrations of the game being played from the Han, but apparently only one from the post-Han, a painted brick from Tomb M7, Jiayuguan.<sup>199</sup> There is evidence that the game continued to be popular into the Six Dynasties period, but it gradually lost its appeal. By the time of Yan Zhitui in the latter half of the sixth century, the rules of the game had been lost, and attempts to recapture them have been speculative.<sup>200</sup> There has been some discussion of the relationship of divination and gaming, especially in relation to *liubo*, but it would seem that the connection in this case concerns the diagram of the board rather than the playing of the game.<sup>201</sup>

Another board game that relied on the toss of dice as well as a sense of strategy was *shupu* 樗蒲, identified by Mather as being originally an Indian game similar



12.14. Model of figurines said to be playing *liubo*, Han, Lingbao, Henan (after *Wenwu* 1975.11:81, fig. 5)

to backgammon.<sup>202</sup> This game first made its appearance in the Latter Han<sup>203</sup> and became so popular that when the biographer of Ge Hong 葛洪 (284–363) wanted to emphasize his lack of worldly concern, he said Ge did not even know how many rows there were on the *weiqi* board or the names of the tosses of the dice (*chi* 齒) in *shupu*.<sup>204</sup> The game used five strips of wood (*wumu* 五木) as dice; each was painted white on one side and black on the other, with some having a depiction of a pheasant or a cow (or calf). The various combinations equalled a set number of points, and these determined the movement of the pieces (*ma* 馬) on the board. The best toss was for all five strips to come up black (*lu* 盧).<sup>205</sup>

Addiction to gambling featuring this game and its consequences are the theme of a number of anecdotes in the *Shishuo xinyu*.<sup>206</sup> The social costs led to its being forbidden, for example, in 405,<sup>207</sup> but to no avail. The martinet Tao Kan, mentioned above, also fulminated against *shupu*, in one instance confiscating and throwing the board into the river, along with utensils used to serve wine, apparently a common adjunct to the game, calling it the pastime of slaves who tended pigs and claiming it had been brought from abroad by Laozi.<sup>208</sup>

Other games required skill rather than the luck of the toss. *Toubu* 投壺, or “pitch pot,” was an ancient game mentioned in the *Zuozhuan*<sup>209</sup> and fully described in the *Liji*. The *Liji* sets forth the claim that the ritualized conduct of the game would inculcate proper behavior and a set of moral values.<sup>210</sup> The game’s contestants, in a very formal setting, tossed arrows at a jar, scoring points based on their success in having the arrows drop into its mouth. At some point a number of rings were added around the mouth and base of the jar, which

offered the possibility of additional means of gaining points. A group of tomb figurines and some illustrated stones, all of the Han, show the game in progress.<sup>211</sup> Yan Zhitui described in detail how greater demands were made on players' skill over time, including having the arrow bounce out of the jar, and he cites some who could make this maneuver, called *xiao* 驍, happen over forty times in a row.<sup>212</sup> The game is often linked to *shupu*, and its fans described as pleasure-seekers and lovers of music, evidently to illustrate their character.<sup>213</sup> Something is known of the method of scoring because Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–86), in an attempt to revive the game, explained in detail the changes he proposed in his new version, thus revealing what had been the older rules.<sup>214</sup> Nevertheless, *toubu* never became as popular as the other games and, despite his efforts, in time it ceased to be played.

Among other games mentioned in this period was *gewu* 格五, perhaps also called *saixi* 塞戲. It may have been a derivative of *shupu* but with no tossed dice or strips of wood, only the moving of the counters. The decorum with which this game was played contrasted with the raucous atmosphere of a *liubo* contest.<sup>215</sup> Mather has likened the game to checkers.<sup>216</sup> Finally, there was *danqi* 彈棋, or "pellet chess," in which pieces were flipped in a variety of ways onto a board.

The popularity of these games is suggested by a description of tournaments of a sort sponsored by Zhuge Rong 諸葛融 (d. 253), who was in command of troops at Gong'an, near the modern place of that name in Hubei, on the western border of the Wu state.

When there was nothing happening beyond the borders, in the autumn and winter he held archery [practice] and hunts and war exercises, while in the spring and summer he invited guests for a large-scale meeting. Retired officials and soldiers on leave did not consider a thousand li to be too distant to come to take part. At each session he would screen the guests and, as they declared their abilities, he would group them and pair them up [according to their levels of expertise], some for board games [*boqi* 博弈, that is *liubo* and *weiqi*], some for *shupu*, *toubu*, or *gongdan* 弓彈.<sup>217</sup> Once this was all sorted out, sweetmeats and clear alcoholic drinks would make the rounds. Rong circulated tirelessly, observing [the action] the whole day.<sup>218</sup>

Much of the information in this chapter was derived from literary sources; the histories, the encyclopedias, or florilegia as they might more aptly be called, and works of literature such as the rhapsodies contain a wealth of information on the material culture of the Six Dynasties period, and much more could be said about the multitude of objects of daily use in this period, which were no less numerous than those of any other period. The only limitations here are those of time and space, which require bringing this chapter to an end.