The excavation of the Hailong Tun site in Zunyi City, Guizhou in 2012

Guizhou Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology

Abstract

In 2012, the “New Royal Palace” of Hailong Tun site was the focus of the archaeological excavation, and the investigation and recovering to the kilns and quarries in and nearby the “New Royal Palace” were also conducted. Moreover, trial excavation was conducted to the “Old Royal Palace” Site. The “New Royal Palace” was a grandiose architectural complex enclosed by walls and with the central stepped path as the symmetric axis, from which architectural parts including stone blocks, bricks, tiles, ridge ornaments, and pottery pipes and artifacts such as tablets and porcelains. Hailong Tun site was a castle of tusi (hereditary headmen system in the minority areas) which integrated the fortress and administrative offices; it provided new data for the researches on the tusi system in the angle of archaeology and the relationship between the central government and the local powers from the Tang to the Ming Dynasties.

Keywords: Castles (fortifications)—minority areas—China; Hailong Tun site (Zunyi City, Guizhou); Ming Dynasty; tusi (hereditary headmen system)

A brief introduction of the site

The Hailong Tun site is located about 20km to the northwest of the old seat of Zunyi City and built at the top of the Longyan Mountain, so it was also called Longyan Tun. The site is surrounded by cliffs and streams on three sides and backed against mountains on one side; its terrain is very steep and dangerous and could only be reached through the narrow paths on the east and west sides.

Zunyi has ever been under the jurisdiction of Bozhou Prefecture; but from the 9th to the 17th centuries CE, it was ruled by the Yang Family, a local headman clan which inherited the ruling of Bozhou Prefecture for 27 generations in 724 years, during which there have been 30 people from Yang Family in the position of the chief of Bozhou Prefecture. According to the historic literature available to date, Hailong Tun began to be built in the fifth year of Baoyou Era (1257) of the Southern Song Dynasty, when Yang Wen, the fifteenth generation of the chief of Bozhou Prefecture from Yang Family, was in his position, and was destroyed and abandoned in the “Bozhou Campaign” of the “Three Major Campaigns of Wanli” of the Ming Empire in the twenty-eighth year of Wanli Era (1600). The comprehensive survey shows that the entire castle was enclosed by stone walls 5.6km long in total, which were built along the winding terrain and enclosing an area of about 40ha. On the east of the castle, there were six fortified passes: the Bronze Pillar Pass, Iron Pillar Pass, Flying Tiger (Thirty-six-step) Pass, Flying Dragon Pass, Chaotian (Imperial Audience) Pass and Flying Phoenix Pass, and on the west, there were three: the Rear Pass, West Pass and Wan’an (Eternal Peace) Pass, all of which were built of huge stone blocks in grand scales. The internal of Hailong Tun is flat and broad, the largest two architectural complexes in which are the “Old Royal Palace” and the “New Royal Palace (Figure 1).”

In the autumn 1999, small-scale excavation has been

---

Figure 1 The general plan of Hailong Tun Site.
The “New Royal Palace” site

The “New Royal Palace” site is located in the center slightly to the west of the castle and left large amounts of remains exposing on the ground, so it is the focus of the fieldwork of this term.

1. The remains.

The “New Royal Palace” is a grandiose architectural complex enclosed by walls and built with the middle stepped path as the central axis. Its building procedure would be restored like this: first, retaining walls were built on the slopes, the slopes between the retaining walls were leveled into five tiers of terraces, and then the foundations of the architectures were laid on the terraces, over which the architectures were built and the paths and drainage facilities were arranged among them (Figures 2 and 3).

(1) The detecting and confirming of the enclosing wall of the “Palace” is one of the main achievements of this excavation. It defines the scope of the “New Royal Palace” and makes it possible to further explore its detailed plan. The enclosing wall is built of stone blocks and rammed earth, most parts of which have collapsed and covered by accumulated soil, but some sections are still 0.5–1.5m high above the ground. The wall is about 1.9–2.4m thick, the entire length (the perimeter of the “New Royal Palace”) is 504m and the area enclosed by it is 1.8ha.

(2) The architectural remains in the “Palace”, including house foundations, paths, ponds, drainage ditches, stoves, etc.

In total, 20 single or groups of house foundations have been detected (numbered as F1 to F20), 11 of which are excavated. The foundations were all laid with large-sized stone slabs, over which brick walls and tiled roofs were built; the internal floors were paved with bricks and the external ground was paved with stone slates. Three paths (numbered as L1–L3), four ponds (numbered as C1–C4), eight drainage ditches (numbered as G1–G8) and three stoves (numbered as Z1–Z3) are recovered. The plan of the “New Royal Palace” is generally formed by architectures built along three parallel axes arranged from east to west, which are called as the east, central and west courses by the excavators.

The core of the central course was datang (the main hall), which is rebuilt as Haichao (Sea tide) Monastery after Hailong Tun was abandoned; in front of it, there is a flight of nine steps leading to the main gate;
the gate is flanked by stone splayed wing walls linked to the “palace walls” to the left and right (hereafter, the “front” in this report refers to the northeast and the “rear” or “behind” refer to the southwest; the “left” refers to the northwest and the “right” refers to the southeast). Outside the gate is again the stepped path (L1). Behind the main hall is the secondary hall (F7), which was a five-bay hall built on the high platform, in the central bay, a stone pedestal with dragon relief and waisted moldings is set, which is said to have been the base of Yang Yinglong’s seat, but the seat has been lost long ago. The main hall and the secondary hall are linked by two parallel covered corridors (F20) which are perpendicularly joined the main and the secondary halls. These four buildings formed a 回-shaped plan, the central axis of which became that of the entire “New Royal Palace”, the orientation of which is 38°, facing the mountains opposing it miles away to the northeast.

In the east course, there is a square pond (C1) to the right of the secondary hall; the pond is lined with stone blocks and still in use as a well at present. It is built together with the house in front of it (F1) as a whole, and the water in the pond is ducted out to the right through the covered ditches G5 and G6 underneath F1. F1 is separated from the main and secondary halls in the central course by a lane. At the right end of F1, a door is set, out of which is F12, but it is severely damaged (Figure 4). This complex might have been an entertainment garden; during the trial excavation in 1999, weiqi (go game) stones have been unearthed here. In front of F1 is another complex (F10) consisting of two tandem courtyards; the main house (F10-1) is in the rear, built with thick brick walls, decorated with elaborate stone windows, flanked by two corridors and separated from the secondary house (F10-2) in front of it by a patio; the secondary house is a three-bay transverse architecture, in front of which is a stone-paved courtyard fitted with steps. From the main house (F10-1), a bone steelyard, two pottery weights and some deer antlers are unearthed, and therefore this house is estimated to be a treasury (Figure 5). To the right of F10 is F11, which is separated from F10 by a narrow lane (underneath which a covered ditch G3 is set); but it has been damaged too badly to show a clear plan. In front of its platform is the remains of another house, but not excavated in this time.

In the west course, there is a quadrangle-shaped complex (F8, Figure 6) consisting of the main house, the left and right wings and the “front corridor (severely damaged and the details of the structure no longer restorable)”. The patio in the middle is deeply sunken and might have been used for catching rainwater as a fire pool. In the patio, an inkstone and a bronze xiangqi (Chinese chess) piece (a shi-advisor) are unearthed. Referred to the rule recorded in the 騎馬将軍仁示谕龙岩囤严禁碑 (Tablet of the decree of Piaoji jiangjun [the agile cavalry general, a military rank] X [Yang] for seriously restricting the entrance control
system of Longyan Tun) saying “if [the high-ranking officials] come to our castle in person followed by a series of assistants and servants, these followers should be listed in the Study and the lists are sent to the passes for the guards to check in [但恐亲临本囤，跟随一应人役，书房听点题单，预发龙凤关查点进出]”, the F8 might have been a study. The above-mentioned F1, F7, F8 and F12 shared a common masonry foundation, which is about 2m high. In front of F8 and to the left of the main hall, is a five-bay house (F19, only partly recovered); the width of each bay is very narrow (less than 2m), but the construction of the house was exquisite. The floor in F8 is paved with two layers of bricks, between which a layer of fine sand 5cm thick is applied. To the left of F8 is a high terrace, which is built against the mountain; it is called by local people as “Santai Xing (Three-tiered star)”, but actually it has five tiers rising gradually. In the middle of each tier, steps are set; the gable walls flanking the terrace have stone dados made into the cyma molding (F17). In front of the terrace, symmetrical steps are set. It is estimated that the “Santai Xing” is the bedroom. The overall planning of the “New Royal Palace” followed the traditional pattern of “qiantang houshi (official hall in the front while private rooms in the back)” in the architectural designing of ancient China. To the west of “water cell (L2)” is F9, from the east end bay of which tens of thousands of blue-and-white porcelain sherds, as well as the fragments of iron cauldron, stove and water trough are unearthed, showing that this was a kitchen. In front of it and below the foundation are the houses F2, F3, F4 etc., but they were only partly recovered (Figure 7).

2. The excavated architectural parts.

(1) The stone parts are used for building castle walls, house foundations, steps, and the pillar bases, doors and
windows are sometimes made of stone. The materials can be classified into marlstone and mudstone, the former of which are mainly used for building house foundations and wall bases, and the latter are mainly used for paving the floor. Both of the stone materials were quarried locally on the Longyan Mountain. The largest stone part is as heavy as 3ton, and the ones around 1ton can be seen everywhere.

(2) The bricks are used for building the walls and paving the floors. By the shape, the bricks could be classified into the rectangular bricks, wedge-shaped bricks, beveled bricks, round-edged bricks and pillar-curbing bricks, etc., and the rectangular bricks take the bulk. The rectangular bricks are usually 30cm long, 16cm wide and 7.5cm thick.

Some bricks bear mold-impressed inscriptions on the end or the side, the text of which are “yan 验 (checked and accepted)”, “zhuan 砖 (brick)”, “dian 甸 (suburb, here might be a place name)”, “shiliu 十六 (sixteen or the sixteenth)”, “shiliu zhuan 十六砖 (brick of the sixteenth), chu yi hao 初一号 (the first, or number one)” and so on, and the latter three take the most. In addition, large amount of hollow ridge bricks are also found, which are decorated with impressed intertwined branch and flower designs on the two faces.

(3) The tiles can be classified into flat tiles and semi-cylindrical tiles. The flat tiles are generally 20.5cm long, 15.5-17.5cm wide and 1.3-1.8cm thick. The semi-cylindrical tiles are usually 26-29.5cm long, 12.5-13cm wide and 1.7-2cm thick. The outer faces of the tiles are all plain and polished and with textile impressions on the inner face.

The tile-ends and drip tiles are all decorated with lotus flower design, only the sizes are varying. The lotus flower design is fully blooming with raising pod and naturally stretching petals. The drip tiles are made into the shape of “ruyi 头”, the lotus flower design of which is the same as that of the tile-ends, but triangular lotus leaves are decorated flanking the flower. The lotus designs of the eave tiles and drip tiles are slightly different (Figures 8 to 11).

(4) Large amounts of fragments of roof figures are unearthed, from which 17 pieces are restored. All of them are unglazed pottery works, including zhengwen (dragon head-shaped main ridge end decoration), hejiaowen (dragon head-shaped ridge decoration at the corner of two ridges joining at an angle), wangshou (outward-watching beast at the main ridge ends), chuishou (outward-watching beast on the descending ridge) and/or qiangshou (outward-watching beast on the hip).

The form of zhengwen and hejiaowen are almost the same: the mouth is wide open, the tail is turning upward

Figure 8 Unearthed building parts.
Figure 9  Drip tile with rosette design (2012HXG2 ① :2).

Figure 10  Eave tile with plant and floral design (2012HXG2 ② :50).

Figure 11  Drip tile with plant and floral design (2012HXG2 ① :1).

Figure 12  *Wangshou* (outward-watching beast at the main ridge ends, 2012HXF2 ② :1).

Figure 13  *Hejiaowen* (dragon head-shaped ridge decoration at the corner of two ridges joining at an angle, 2012HXF1 ③ :2).
higher than the head and curling backward; the sword hilt (to fix the figure to the ridge) on the back is also high. Three of them are restored, two of which have beveled rears, therefore they are estimated to be *hejiaowen*; one has the rear lost but is considered to be a *zhengwen*. In addition, fragments of sword hilts, curling tails, figure bases, wide-opening mouths are also unearthed (Figures 12 to 14).

The *wangshou*, *chuishou* and *qiangshou* are also in the same form but varying sizes; from the places they were unearthed, the larger ones are thought to be *wangshou* on the ends of the main ridge and the smaller ones are *chuishou* and *qiangshou* on the descending ridge and hip. 14 pieces are intact or restorable, all of which have staring and bulging eyes, forward-stretching horns and backward-flying long manes. The fragments include horns, legs, claws, eyebrows, eyes, ears, curling manes, etc.

3. The other artifacts, including stone tablets, porcelains, iron lock, tile nails, coins, etc., and hereby we present some important ones of them to our colleagues.

(1) The stone tablets. Of them, the *骠骑将军□示谕龙岩囤严禁碑* (*Tablet of the decree of Piaoji jiangjun [the agile cavalry general, a military rank] X [Yang] for seriously restricting the entrance control system of Longyan Tun*) is the most famous and the most important. It is 0.85m high, 1.75m wide and 0.15m thick. It was originally erected in the Flying Phoenix Pass and later moved to the present-day Haichao Monastery (Figure 15).

(2) The porcelain wares, most of which are fragments and sherds. Only from the east end bay of F9 (the kitchen), tens of thousands of porcelain sherds are unearthed. Generally, they could be classified into the blue-and-white porcelain, local-made brown-glazed stoneware and celadon, and the former two take the most. The identifiable types of local-made brown-glazed stoneware are jars, basins, pots, palm-bowls, mortar, etc. Some are decorated with bowstring pattern or impressed designs. The sizes of this kind of wares are usually very big, and they would be produced locally.

According to the tint of the cobalt pigment, the blue-and-white porcelains could be again classified into the blue-colored and gray-colored ones. The former are elaborate and regular, and would be the products of Jingdezhen Kiln. The latter are usually coarse and would be local products. The identifiable types of the blue-and-white porcelains are cups, plates, bowls, spoons, jars, vases, censers, etc.; the practical utensils for daily use take the bulk while the ornament porcelains such as vases and censers are very few. The decorating methods of these porcelains are painting, impressing, underglaze red and polychrome designs. The motifs of the decorations are mainly the flowers, birds, beasts, human figures and landscapes. The flowers include chrysanthemum, lotus, peony, prunus, rose, intertwined branches and flowers, plucked branches and flowers, etc. The birds include mandarin ducks, flying bird, crane and phoenix, the beasts include lion, leopard and dragon, and the human figures are the "Eight Immortals", hermits, etc.

Some blue-and-white porcelain sherds bear inscriptions in the center of the ring feet, the contents of which include dates and auspicious words. The dates are “Xuande”, “Chenghua”, “Jiajing”, “Longqing” and “Wanli”, and most of them are “Xuande” and “Wanli”. The “Xuande”
In the local folklore, the “Old Royal Palace” was the residence of the “Prince White Dragon”, who was a bandit chief of the Bozhou Prefecture. A piece of record in an old gazetteer quoted by Cao Xuequan 曹学佺, a scholar of the Ming Dynasty, in his *Shu zhong guangji* 蜀中广记 (Treatise on Sichuan) said, “Hailong Tun was the den of Yang, the outlawed chief, ⋯⋯local legend says that this place had ever been seized by Prince White Dragon.” In the same work, there is another note saying “at the beginning of Qianfu 乾符 Era (of the Tang Dynasty, 874–879 CE), Prince White Dragon harassed the Bozhou Prefecture.” Both reflected that the story about the Prince White Dragon has a long history, and he was said to live at the end of the Tang Dynasty. Does this mean that the “Old Royal Palace” was the remains of the Tang Dynasty, or that of the Song Dynasty, as the earlier excavators estimated? To solve the problem of the *terminus post quem* of the Hailong Tun Site, the excavators made small-scale trial excavations to the “Old Royal Palace” site; in the localities of Sangdunping, Xinmiao etc., five sectioning trenches are opened, the widths of which are all 2m with varying lengths, the total area uncovered is 82sq m.

Some stone-laid house foundations are revealed by the trial excavation, but their dates are hard to infer. However, the stone pillar bases almost have no differences from that seen in the “New Royal Palace” site, and the bricks, tiles and tile-ends are also in the same sizes and types with that of the “New Royal Palace”; the tile-ends also bear lotus flower design, and some bricks also have inscriptions of “chuyi hao 初一号 (number one)”, “shiliu zhuan 十六砖 (brick, sixteen or the sixteenth)” and so on, and many sherds of the blue-and-white porcelains produced in the Wanli Era are unearthed from the strata. All of these showed that down to Wanli Era, the “Old Royal Palace” was still in use, but the date when it began to be built is still waiting for further research.

### The sites of the kilns and quarries

Our surveys on the resources of the building materials have rich achievements; several sites of kilns and quarries are found and confirmed, which proved that the building materials for Hailong Tun are all obtained locally.

1. The kilns. Nearby the large court to the northeast of the “Old Royal Palace”, three kilns are found and one of them (numbered as Y1) is recovered. The Y1 is in an oval plan, 5.34m long, 3.32m wide and the remaining height is 1.56m. From the kiln, large amounts of brick sherds and unburned adobes are unearthed, the sizes of which are the same as the bricks seen in the “New Royal Palace” and some bear inscriptions such as “chuyi hao 初一号”, “shiliu 十六” and so on, hinting that this is a kiln of the Ming Dynasty (Figure 18).

2. A quarry is found to the southwest of the “Old Royal Palace”. The site is a marlstone hill 1342.8m above the sea level, which is higher than the locations of the “Old Royal Palace” and “New Royal Palace.” It has been called “quarry” by the local people for a long time, but no clear
quarrying remains have been seen. The archaeological team made partial clearance to this site and found over 120 wedge slots, 80 or so of which are clear. The wedge slots are 9-85cm long, 2-21cm wide and 5-23cm deep, but most of them are 30cm long, 5cm wide and 10cm deep. The shapes and sizes of these wedge slots completely matched the traces of the wedge slots left on the masonries of the “New Royal Palace (Figure 19).”

**Preliminary understandings**

1. The “New Royal Palace” is an architectural complex of the Ming Dynasty; the unearthed artifacts showed that it developed to its climax in the Jiajing and Wanli Eras and was finally abandoned after the fire in Wanli Era. All of the building materials including stone, brick and tiles were all quarried or made locally. Hailong Tun site is the largest, highest-ranking, well preserved and long durative physical remain of the *jimi* (loose control on the subordinated local chiefs) and *tusi* (hereditary headmen) systems; it assembled the mountain fortress and the local administrative office together and integrated the safeguarding of the national security and maintaining the clan continuity and interests together.

2. The Hailong Tun site witnessed the complete procedure of the change of the administrative systems in the minority areas of China, from the *jimi* system of the Tang and Song Dynasties via the *tusi* system of the Yuan and Ming Dynasties to the “gaitu guiliu” (“converting aboriginal to regular”, i.e. abolishing the hereditary chiefs of the minority people and appointing officials by the central government to govern them) policy started in the Ming Dynasty. The survey and excavation to this site provided new materials and perspectives for the in-depth researches on the *jimi-tusi* systems and culture and the interactions between the central and local governments in ancient China in the angle of archaeology.

3. The layout and design of Hailong Tun fully expressed the relative independence of the *jimi-tusi* systems and their affiliation with the central government, and vividly demonstrated the existence of the “one country with multiple systems” in the history of China. This policy is favorable for the intercommunication and integration of the different ethnic groups in some given historic periods and improved the unification of the country in a pluralistic pattern. Therefore, the excavation and research of the Hailong Tun site has double meanings in the historic and realistic aspects.

**Postscript**

The original report published in *Kaogu* 考古 (Archaeology) 2013, 7: 69-82 with 24 illustrations was authored by Fei Li 李飞, Bisu Zhou 周必素 and Wan Peng 彭万. This abridged version was prepared by Fei Li and translated into English by Xiaolei Ding 丁晓雷.