The Tang Tombs at Xiangyuan, Shanxi

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and

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In March of 2003, the Xiangyuan Museum of Antiquity excavated a Tang tomb at the Xiangyuan 儋垣 County seat. They found a group of rare grave goods made of stoneware. Among them, some of the colorfully painted figurines reveal recognizable non-Chinese features. These supply important new data for the study of Tang costumes.

I. Tomb Structure and Burial Goods

The tomb was located south of Xinjian Xijie 新建西街. Based on the remains, the archaeologists concluded that the tomb was a single brick burial chamber with a sloped passageway to the south. The burial chamber was sealed with bricks. The tomb was square in plan, 3.6 m to a side, with a corbelled, domed top 3 m high (Fig. 1).

Archaeologists found a total of forty-one artifacts, including a tomb epitaph, figurines of tomb guardians, a figurine with a human head and fish body, oxen, sheep, pigs, chickens, ducks, dogs, a camel, and other objects including an incense burner, jar, pot, basin, and millstones. The ceramic pieces were made of light gray clay. The artifacts were fired first, and then painted. They included the following.

1. There were two armed warriors. They were 27.5 cm high (use M1:3 as an example). The bearded figurine wore a helmet decorated with tiger skins. Outside his long robe were a belt and armor that included shoulder guards. His robe was decorated with a diamond-shaped pattern near the hem, and a small black bag was carefully painted under the belt. He wore knee-high black boots (Fig. 2). His hands were held together in front of him; a hole through the hands suggests that an object was originally placed there. The other warrior (M1:4) wore same attire but with different textile patterns, and the hem of his robe was decorated with roundels (Fig. 3).

2. There was an official. The figurine was 26 cm high. He had a high hairdo, thick eyebrows, and round eyes. He wore a light yellow robe inside, and a short red jacket with wide sleeves outside, along with a black belt and black boots. Standing on a round platform with his hands in front, he looked as if he might be holding something (Fig. 4).

3. There were three grooms. Two of the grooms (M1:5; M1:1) wore colorful hats of red, white, and green. Their long robes were made of fur. Their pants were painted with tiger skin patterns, and they wore belts and boots. They were 26 cm tall (Figs. 5 and 6).

Fig. 1 Plan and cross-section of Tomb No.1 of the Tang period
The other one wore a black head scarf, a red cloth jacket, a black belt, and boots. He was 24.5 cm tall (Fig. 7).

4. There were three female attendants. All three had similar hairdos: high buns. They were 25 cm tall. One (M1:6) wore a long skirt with red and white stripes, together with a red shawl and sash. She held one bare arm in the front and one to the side (Fig. 8). Another (M1:7) wore the same clothing but her skirt was red and blue stripes. She had a high nose and red lips (Fig. 9). The third (M1:8) wore a skirt with red and green stripes, a blue shawl, and a red sash (Fig. 10).

5. There was a female servant holding a dustpan. Her hair was braided on top of her head. Sitting on a square platform, she bent forward, looking at the dustpan. She was 17 cm tall (M:9) (Fig. 11).

6. There was a dancing girl. Her right arm was partially broken. The dancing girl had a high hairdo, and she wore a tight green shirt with a long red skirt. Seated on a platform, her body leaned to the left. She was 9 cm tall (M1:11) (Fig. 12).

7. There was a crouching male figurine. Wearing a black head scarf, a long red robe, the bearded figurine knelt and bowed with both hands under his face. He was 5 cm tall (M1:12) (Fig. 13).

8. There was a standing male figure. The figurine has lost his head. He wore a long tight red robe with a crew collar and a belt. His present height is 14 cm (M1:13).

9. There was a figurine with a human face, fish body, and animal hooves (M1:16). Lying on a platform, the figure had a human

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Fig. 2 Armed warrior (M1:3, left: reverse; right: converse)

Fig. 3 Armed warrior (M1:4, left: reverse; right: converse)
face, a fish torso and tail painted with colorful scales, and four small limbs. It was 20 cm long (Fig. 14).

10. There was a tomb guardian (M1:14) with a human face. The sitting beast had a human head, and wore a pointed black hat. It had four hooves and was 26 cm tall (Fig. 15).

11. There was a double-headed figure (M1:15). This mythical creature had two heads, each wearing a pointed black hat. It also had two pairs of hooved front legs and two torsos, posed back-to-back and connected by a snake-like midsection. It crouched on a platform. It was 27.5 cm long (Fig. 16).

12. There were two more tomb guardians (M1:17; M1:18). The sitting beasts had dog-like faces, open mouths with sharp teeth, and painted green bodies with red and white stripes. They were 17 cm and 18 cm tall (Figs. 17 and 18).

13. There was a set of millstones (M1:33). The set contained two pieces. It was 14 cm in diameter (Fig. 19).

14. There were three oxen (M1:19, M1:20, M1:21). One was standing (with one leg missing), and the other two were resting. All had painted harnesses. The standing ox was 26 cm long, and the other two were 12.5 cm long (Figs. 20 and 21).

15. There was one camel (M1:24). The standing camel was 31 cm long (Fig. 22).

16. There were two sheep (M1:23, M1:22). The sheep were black and earth colored. They measured 11 cm long (Fig. 23).

17. There were two pigs (M1:24, M1:25). Both rested on platforms, they were 14 cm long (Fig. 24).
18. There were two dogs. Similar in shape, the gray-black dogs had pointed ears and thin tails, and measured 13 cm long (M1:26, M1:27) (Fig. 25).
19. There were two chickens (M1:28, M1:29). The two painted chickens were similar in shape, each measuring 8 cm long (Fig. 26).
20. There were two ducks (M1:32, M1:35). The painted ducks were similar in shape. They were depicted swimming in water and measured 8 cm long (Fig. 27).
21. There was a grinding stone (M1:30), 17.2 cm in diameter and 6 cm tall.
22. There were two stoneware pots. One jar (M1:31) had rounded shoulder and short body, 7 cm in diameter and 10 cm tall. The other (M1:34) had a double-folding rim, sloping shoulder, and slanted body. It was 8 cm in diameter and also 10 cm tall.
23. There were two stoneware basins with thick rims (M1:38, M1:39). The open-mouthed basins measured 10.5 cm in diameter and 6.5 cm tall.
24. There was a stoneware steamer. Its shape was similar to the basins. It had a broken rim. There were holes in the bottom. It was 11 cm in diameter and 7 cm tall (M1:37).
25. There was a tripod (M1:40). Both its rim and legs were broken. It had a sharp-turned rim and an oval-shaped body. The three legs were attached to the lower body. It was 6.5 cm in diameter and its present height was 6.5 cm.
26. There was a pottery pot (M1:36). With a small mouth and round shoulder, the jar was 12.5 cm in diameter and 23 cm tall.
Fig. 8 Female attendant (M1:6)

Fig. 9 Female attendant (M1:7, middle: reverse; right: converse)

Fig. 10 Female attendant (M1:8, left: reverse; middle: converse)

Fig. 11 Female servant holding a dustpan (M1:9)
Fig. 12 Dancing girl (M1:11)

Fig. 13 Crouching male figurine (M1:12)

Fig. 14 Figurine with a human face and a fish body (M1:16, left: side; right: front)

Fig. 15 Tomb guardian (M1:14)

Fig. 16 Double headed figurine (M1:15)

Fig. 17 Tomb guardian (M1:18)
Fig. 18 Tomb guardian (M1:17)

Fig. 19 Set of millstones (M1:33)

Fig. 20 Porcelain oxen (M1:19)

Fig. 21 Porcelain oxen (M1:20)

Fig. 22 Porcelain camel (M1:24)

Fig. 23 Porcelain sheep (M1:22, 23)
II. Epitaph Brick

The square brick was 36 cm on a side and 7 cm thick. The epitaph was written in cinnabar color. Each line contained 18 characters; there were 18 lines and a total of 323 characters. Each character was less than 2 cm in size. Most characters, including the name of the male occupant, are not legible. From the limited information that we could read, we learned that the occupant was a low ranking official who worked in Chang’an County 长安 in Yongzhou Prefecture 雍州 during the Zhenguan 贞观 reign period (627–650). His grandfather was once an elected zhongzheng 中正 of Xiangyuan County. His wife, Mme. Zhang, was a Baishui 白水 native of Nanyang 南阳. He died in 652, and was buried together with his wife the next year, 2.5 km southwest of today’s Xiangyuan county seat.

III. Conclusions

Archaeologists have found many Tang tombs in the Changye 长冶 area. The published ones include Fan Cheng’s 范澄 tomb of 660, Yue Fangshi’s 乐方士 tomb of 679, and Wang Xiutai’s 王休泰 tomb of 771. This tomb at Xiangyuan (M1) had a tomb structure and grave goods assembly similar to those. In addition to the servant figurines, tomb guardians, grooms, and domestic animals commonly seen in Tang burials, this tomb also contained other figurines typical of this region, including the crawling male figurine, double headed figurine, and the human-face fish-body figurine. However, the painted
warriors and grooms have not been seen in previously excavated tombs. Their costumes show strong foreign influences. This is the earliest Tang tomb found in this region so far and such painted stoneware warriors and grooms figurines have not been seen in this area before.

Note: The original report, published in Wenwu 文物 2004.10: 36–48, with 48 illustrations including 35 photographs, is written by Zhang Qingjie 张庆捷 and Liu Yaozhong 刘耀中. The summary is prepared by the original authors and English-translated by Suzanne Cahill and Ye Wa 叶娃.