
A Study of the Mixed Mortuary Furnishings of the Han Period Tombs of the Lelang Commandery in North Korea

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Abstract (in French and English)

The renewed interest for the archaeology of the Chinese Lelang commandery (108 BC – AD 313) is fairly recent in South Korea and coincided with an exhibition about Lelang at the National Museum of Korea in Seoul (2001). More than 3,000 Han period tombs associated with this commandery were found in the Pyongyang area, on the southern bank of the Taedong river. This paper analyzes the varied and mixed furnishings of the wooden chamber tombs, Han Chinese-style objects (lacquerware, seals, bronze ware, weapons, mingqi, jade) and local ones (mumun plain pottery, slender-type bronze dagger, animal-shaped buckle). Given that North Korean archaeologists do not recognize the existence of the Lelang commandery in the Korean Peninsula, there is a paucity of available reports. It is for this reason it is difficult to draw any conclusion, but one can see that some common rules presided over the placement and orientation of the wooden coffins, and that interment practices were different from the Chinese Central Plain. The study of mortuary assemblages of the wooden chamber tombs of the Pyongyang area, dating before the establishment of the commanderies, reveals furthermore that Chinese-style objects are rare, while slender-type bronze dagger, charriot pieces, local bronze horse trappings and pottery are common.

Keywords: Lelang, North Korea, wooden, chamber tombs, Han period

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