

PRECIPITATING CHANGE OR SUSTAINING TRADITIONS: SOCIAL PATTERNS OF A BRONZE AGE COMMUNITY FROM THE UPPER PEARL RIVER DRAINAGE IN YUNNAN BEFORE THE HAN IMPERIAL PERIOD

Alice Yao

University of Michigan, Museum of Anthropology, 1109 Geddes Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48109, USA
Email: yaoa@umich.edu

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ABSTRACT

This paper expands on current understanding of indigenous communities in southwestern China before the Han imperial conquest by examining mortuary practices at two multigenerational cemetery mounds dating from the 8th century BC to the 1st century AD. Using published excavation reports and new data from the Qujing plain in Yunnan, this study investigates long term trends in local organization in order to assess the meaning of material culture change in a region increasingly drawn into interaction with Central Plains states.

INTRODUCTION

During the Han Dynasty (202 BC–AD 220), the Chinese state underwent a period of great territorial expansion, incorporating culturally distinctive regions from Korea to Vietnam. Study of this period of imperial expansion usually relies on archaeological data in those regions to corroborate with the textual references in Chinese ancient accounts. Han cultural influence is then identified by finds of Han objects in the frontier regions and Han documentary evidence of conquest over those respective regions (Pai 1992:312; Barnes 1993:208-209).

This cultural change appears as a set of distinctive material traits represented in Han technology, such as iron implements, brick architecture, tomb structure (chambered tombs), and mortuary offerings (bronze mirrors, Han coins, mortuary domestic models). These objects together comprise an index of ‘Han’ influence in native cultures. Based on the proportional representation of local to Han artifacts in the assemblage, the degree of “Sinicization” can be evaluated.

However, this interpretational approach can present some conceptual problems. First, interpreting from the event of conquest implies a pre-determined outcome. Conquest presupposes a single direction of change, one that emanates from the imperial state to the pacified subjects. In effect, what may have likely been a lengthy process of cultural interaction is truncated to one event. The objects from which we make interpretations about culture contact only represent conquest, while in reality multiple

modes of cultural interaction likely preceded colonization in most historic empires.

To understand the effects of culture contact on imperial subjects, it is necessary to screen foreign objects against the larger universe of objects in the context of the local consumption system. This paper investigates how foreign objects specifically constitute or re-order the mortuary ritual of a Bronze Age society located in southwestern China, before and after its conquest in 109 BC. By examining changing mortuary traditions and grave good assemblages from pre-contact to post-conquest periods, we can evaluate the degree of structural continuity versus transformation in the local culture. From there, is it possible to systematically integrate foreign objects into a discussion about assimilation or “Sinicization”.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Southwest China in the first millennium BC was occupied by different bronze-producing polities ranging widely in their social and political organizations. The most familiar, due to their archaeological and textual visibility, are the Dian Kingdom located on the Lake Dian plain, and the Yelang Kingdom located in northwestern Guizhou province. Excavations at the Shizhaishan site have revealed a seal of the Dian leader along with marvelous bronze drums and cowrie containers. According to Han texts, polities in the Yunnan region submitted to the Han Emperor Wudi in 109 BC and the region was then incorporated as the Yi commandery.

This paper investigates a less well known regional culture located in the Qujing alluvial plain, located 90 km northeast of Lake Dian (Fig. 1). The Qujing region is one of the largest intermontane basins in Yunnan province. The basin is bisected along a north-south axis by the Nanpan River, which forms the upper reaches of the Pearl River (Fig. 2). In addition to the comparative fertility of the Qujing region, it was also an important communication node located along the southwestern Silk Route connecting China to India through Myanmar during the late first millennium BC (Yang 2005). This strategic importance was recognized by the extension of a transport route into the region, the *wuchi dao* (five paces wide road), under the Qin State in the 3rd century BC (Fan 1989:3).



Figure 1. Map of Yunnan Province showing the locations of the Qujing region and the 'Dian' cultural area.

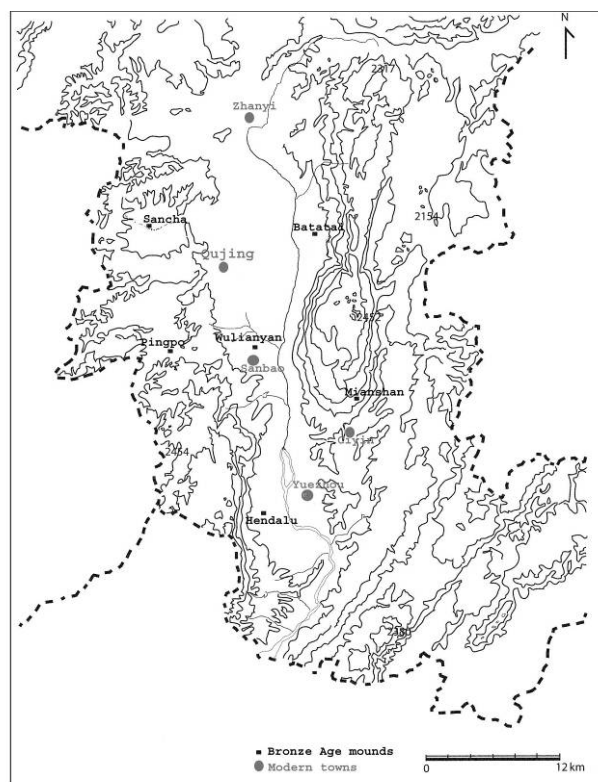


Figure 2. Map of the Qujing basin showing the locations of Bronze Age cemetery mounds.

Archaeological data from the Qujing region span the 7th century BC to the 1st century AD and come from large mounded burial sites distributed along the terraces of the Nanpan River. Unlike contemporary burial practices in

other areas of Yunnan, Qujing is distinguished by the use of distinct cemetery locations over successive generations with estimated time spans of 500 to 700 years (YPICRA 2003). The resultant burial mounds are unique artificial constructions that constitute prominent features in the landscape and contain numerous shaft tombs placed in superimposed succession over previous interments. The nature of this mortuary practice affords a rare opportunity to evaluate cultural trends in a controlled context over a lengthy time, spanning pre-contact to post-contact periods.

To date, the Yunnan Cultural Relics Team has identified six Bronze Age burial mound sites and extensively excavated three of them, yielding nearly 800 burials (YPICRA 2003). The largest of the Bronze Age mound complexes, Batatai, has 9 meters of stratified burial deposit and measures 4300 m² in area. Fig. 3 shows a panoramic view of the Batatai mound complex. Because little survey work has been carried out in the Qujing region, we have no knowledge of Bronze Age settlement patterns. Two extensively excavated mounds are the primary focus of this research.

The first, *Batatai* (n=348 burials), consists of eight mounds. The plan view of the excavated area from seasons 3, 5 and 6 of fieldwork is shown in Fig. 4. The site is located on the lower eastern bank terrace of the Nanpan River in the northern corner of the Qujing Basin. The Cultural Relics team excavated mound 1 and the western corner of mound 2, the largest in the group, over seven seasons, and opened a horizontal exposure measuring 480 m². Discovery of Western Han and Wang Mang coins in upper level burials indicates use of the site into the post-conquest period.

The second site, *Hengdalu* (n=188 burials) (Fig. 5), is a single mound located 20 km southwest of Batatai on the opposite bank of the Nanpan River. The mound measures 90 by 40 m at its base and reaches a height of 8.10 m. The Yunnan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology excavated 1000 m² of the mound in 1998. A radiocarbon date from a lower stratum burial yielded a date of 2625±65 BP (lab. number not reported), while bimetallic objects found in top stratum burials suggest terminal use of the site in the late Western Han period (YPICRA 2003:187).

Materials recovered in excavations include bronze implements typical of the neighboring Dian, with distinctive local ceramic vessel forms represented by *ding* tripods (Allard 1998:338). The primary ceramic vessel types are illustrated in Fig. 6. Tripods are considered to have served as cooking vessels based on occurrences of charred residues on their insides and soot on the exterior walls. Vessels with constricted necks are classified as liquid containers, including beakers, which appear in three size categories, and *guan* container jars. Non-ceramic artifacts consist of wooden bangles, bronze buckles, jade ornaments and bronze weapons. Stone and bronze ornament types are illustrated in Fig. 7.

Site chronologies have been constructed based on superpositions of burials, stylistic attributes, numismatics,



Figure 3. View of the eight burial mounds comprising the Batatai site. The mound complex is the rise seen in the foreground dotted with an orchard farm on top. Mounds consist entirely of stratified burials deposited in sequential levels of construction.



Figure 4. Plan view of excavated area of mound 2 from Batatai site showing burials from season 3, 5 and 6 of excavations (after Yunnan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology 2003, pl. 3, 4, and 5).

and radiocarbon dates (Table 1). Initial use of the burial sites dates to the 8th century BC. The Bronze Age is divided into early, intermediate and late phases based on the stratigraphic positioning of the burials and diagnostic artifact types. By the 2nd century BC, Chinese imports including iron and bimetallic objects and bronze coins start to appear as burial offerings.

METHODOLOGY

This paper focuses on mortuary ritual to examine societal change under culture contact circumstances. Archaeologists (Binford 1971; Peebles 1977; O'Shea 1984) have long used mortuary data in their study of ancient societies because they present a unique opportunity to investigate

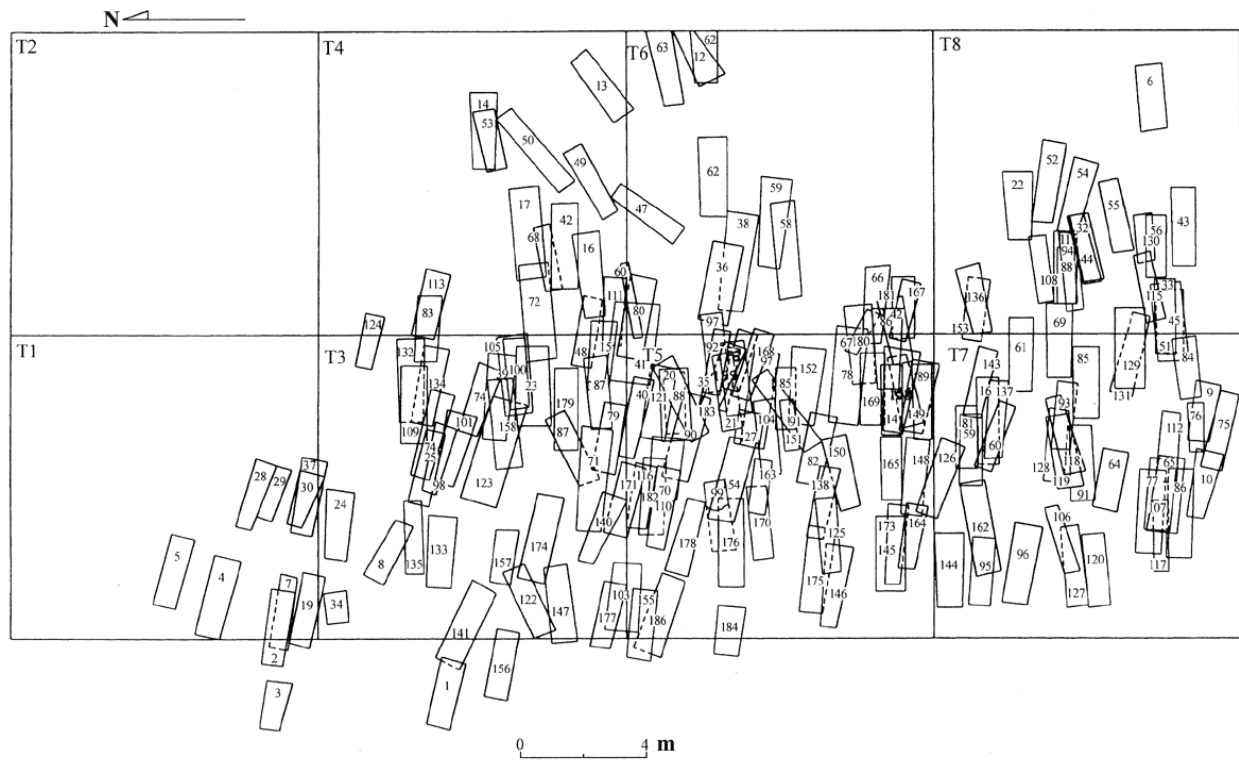


Figure 5. Plan view of excavated area of the Hengdalü site (after Yunnan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology 2003, pl. 8).

Table 1. Archaeological phases and chronology for the Bronze Age in Qujing.

Local Phase		C14 & TL Dates	Diagnostic Markers
Bronze Age	<i>Early</i> (770-580 BC) Spring Autumn	Hendalu, 2625±65 BP (YNSWWKGYJS 2002:187) Pingpo, ZK-3176, 2657±46 BP	Bronze swords without guards. Few bronze artifacts.
	<i>Intermediate</i> (580-400 BC) Mid Spring Autumn to early Warring States		Flat hilted sword Square hilted halberd, with counterpart in Lijiashan burial M21 (ZK-0294, 2575±105 BP)
	<i>Late</i> (400-mid 2 nd c. BC) Late Warring States – Qin State – Early Western Han		Bronze sword with guard Bronze curved dagger-axe and hollow hand knives, with counterparts in Tianzimiao burial M41 (PV- 0321, 2150±80 BP) (Two radiocarbon dates from Tianzimiao are ex- cluded because of issues with sample contexts) Pedestalled ceramic vessels and shouldered jars.
Protohistoric/Iron Age (late 2 nd c. BC – AD 25) Western Han 206 BC – AD 9 Wang Mang AD 9-25			Bronze cauldron and <i>lian</i> serving vessel Bimetallic implements Chinese coins (W. Han – Wang Mang) Chinese belt buckle

directly the “conscious and intentional” action of a social group (O’Shea 1996:10). Since mortuary ritual requires collective recognition and maintenance to be effective, societal values and prescriptions have a direct bearing on

the proper treatment of the deceased individual. The deceased individual thus receives burial treatment defined by his relation within the social, political, and religious organization of the society in which he has membership.

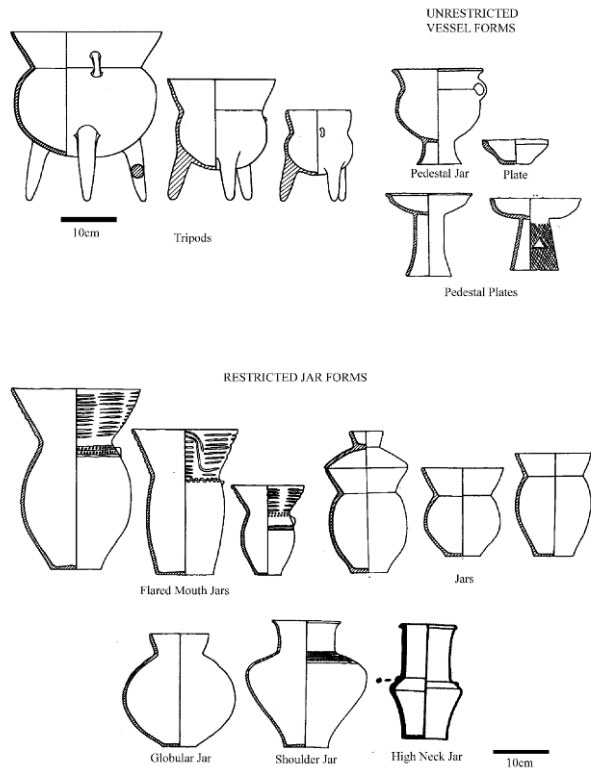


Figure 6. The range of ceramic vessel types documented at the Bronze Age cemetery mounds of the Qujing region.

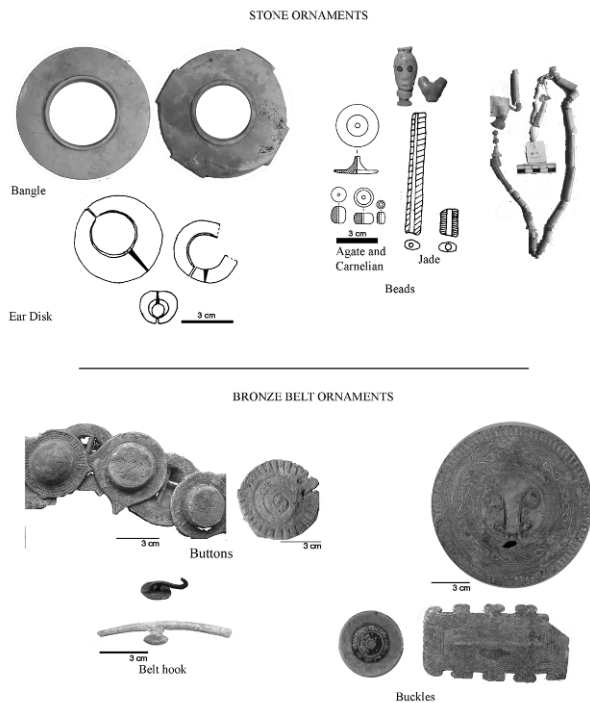


Figure 7. The range of stone and bronze ornaments documented at the Bronze Age cemetery mounds of the Qujing region.

If these structures undergo change, then the mortuary domain may likewise respond with corresponding shifts

in burial practice. For instance, where group identification is being challenged in contexts of culture contact, mortuary ritual may provide a social domain through which collective identity can be reaffirmed or modified. In other words, if the internal coherence of the native society undergoes cultural change, responses at the local level may be reflected in changing mortuary practice. The analysis will therefore examine 1) the cemeteries at a synchronic level to document existing local traditions and 2) at the diachronic level for comparing social practices between periods.

Given the absence of biological data, this paper relies on the grave good assemblage as the primary source of observation. The analysis uses multivariate statistical methods combining principal components (PCA) and cluster analysis (CA) to screen the grave good assemblages. PCA attempts to identify sets of variables (grave goods) that covary in a consistent manner, and CA distinguishes groups of graves based on the similarity of their mortuary content (O'Shea 1984; Lee 1996, Yao 2005). Incidence data from the two site assemblages are initially screened using principle components analysis, from which new variables based on the component scores are generated. These new variables are then submitted for cluster analysis. These techniques aid in the detection of patterning in the composition of grave goods, which potentially reflect the social rules structuring burial practices. This patterning allows us to examine the configuration of burial offerings and to identify potentially significant markers of different social identities and roles. A comparison of the configuration of these social identities and their material markers between periods then clarifies how native/foreign objects played a role in generating cultural change.

ANALYSIS

Given the extensive data output from the multivariate analysis, this section only presents the final results of the cluster solution. The presentation of the results in the following format intends to provide a clear and comprehensive view of these grave assemblage configurations. Principle component scores, cluster solutions and dendrograms are available upon request from the author. The section presents the results in temporal order, from Phase 1 (early) to Phase 4 (late) for Hengdalu and Batatai.

Hengdalu Phase 1

Fig. 8 illustrates the configuration of grave goods for the different clusters in the initial phase at Hengdalu. All 47 burials have ceramic grave offerings and the arrangement of ceramic vessels into distinctive sets is summarized in Fig. 9. As shown in Fig. 8, 49% of the burials have 3-vessel configurations, as represented by clusters A2, B1 and B2. These grave sets consist of a tripod vessel, a jar or large beaker, and a plate or small beaker (see Fig. 9). Twenty-three percent of the burials, all in cluster A1, have a 2-vessel combination consisting of a tripod vessel and a liquid *guan* jar or large beaker or plate. Cluster C consists of seven burials with single vessel assemblages. Cluster D

Hengdalu Phase 1

Cluster A1 n=11	2-vessel
Cluster A2 n=9	3-vessel
Cluster B1 n=6	3-vessel
Cluster B2 n=8	3-vessel
Cluster C n=7	1-vessel
Cluster D n=3	'Provider' set

Figure 8. The six primary burial clusters of Phase 1 at Hengdalu. The configuration of ceramic offerings range from singular vessels to the standard three-vessel assemblage found in 49% of the assemblage and more elaborate sets consisting of two ceramic sets represented by cluster D.

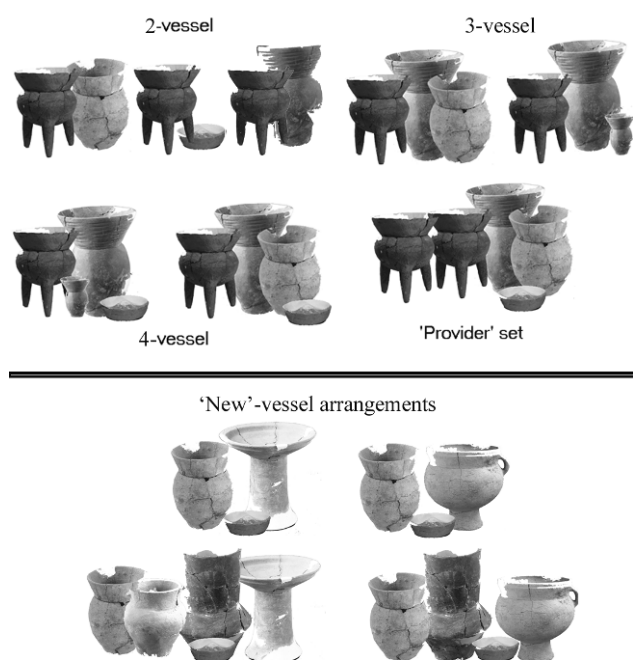


Figure 9. The composition of ceramic sets in the Hengdalu burial assemblage. Ceramic vessels are configured into distinctive offering sets that serve as the primary units of analysis.

consists of three burials with 3-vessel assemblages, but having two sets of the tripod and liquid vessel combination and either a plate or small beaker. This ceramic configuration is referred to as a 'provider' set (see Fig. 9).

85% of the burials have some configuration of the basic ceramic assemblage, suggesting that this was a normative practice rather than marking a distinguished status. Only the 'provider' set appears to be marking distinction, emphasizing greater volume in food offerings. This is further emphasized by burial #134, which possessed a significantly large cooking tripod. Individuals having greater access to food and liquid staples beyond individual portions suggest the means to provide to others. In general, there is limited evidence of social differentiation in the pre-contact period, where social distinction was represented by greater access to staple sources.

Batatai Phase 1

Unlike Hengdalu, 74% of the individuals (53 out of 72 burials) at Batatai have no grave goods at all, as represented in cluster A (Fig. 10). Ceramic offerings were

Batatai Phase 1

	CERAMIC	WEAPON	ORNAMENT
Cluster A n=53			
Cluster B n=3	2-vessel		
Cluster C n=7			
Cluster D n=1	'Provider'		

Figure 10. The four primary burial clusters of Phase 1 at Batatai. The configuration of grave contents ranges from the majority of poor graves lacking offerings to greater elaboration associated with significant bronze wealth in cluster D.

similar to Hengdalu, with the exception of a greater quantity and variety of bronze weapons and bronze buttons. Of the 19 (26%) burials with grave goods, most only have one type of inclusion. Cluster B contains three individuals each with 2 vessels, paired bronze weapons consisting of a halberd and a blade, bronze buttons, and jade ornaments. Cluster C has individuals with jade penannular earrings only. Cluster D is represented by one exceptional individual possessing the most diverse grave assemblage,

consisting of an oversized tripod vessel in addition to a provider set, with bronze armour, a quiver, a scabbard sheath and a buckle, in addition to halberd and a blade.

There is thus strong support for material differentiation at Batatai, with one individual receiving significantly more elaborate material offerings in contrast to the other poorer burials. Bronze weapons and jade ornaments appear in greater frequency at Batatai. The material items marking social distinction, however, share similarity to Hengdalu in the restricted distribution of provider ceramic sets. That the single individual so provided at Batatai was additionally distinguished by martial attributes, as represented by exclusive access to bronze armour and a quiver, suggests a high degree of social differentiation.

Hengdalu Phase 2

The burial assemblages of Hengdalu phase 2 sustain the same traditions in the previous period. The 3-vessel assemblage is again the normative offering. Fig. 11 shows that 53% of the burials, represented in clusters A1, B1, and B3, continue to have a tripod vessel, a liquid jar or large beaker, with a small beaker or plate as their standard

Cluster A1 n=8	3-vessel
Cluster A2 n=10	2-vessel
Cluster B1 n=4	3-vessel
Cluster B2 n=3	'Provider' set
Cluster B3 n=8	3-vessel
Cluster B4 n=5	4-vessel

Figure 11. The six primary burial clusters of Phase 2 at Hengdalu. The configuration of grave contents sustains trends observed in Phase 1.

grave offerings. Cluster A2, with 2 vessels, consists of 26% of the total burials. Cluster B2 is comprised of three individuals with the 'provider' set. Cluster B4 contains 5 individuals with the 4-vessel combinations of tripod vessel, liquid jar, small beaker and plate. The least common assemblage is again the 'provider' set, with only three occurrences in cluster B2. Neither bronze nor jade artifacts were preferentially distributed in any one kind of ceramic assemblage.

Batatai Phase 2

Of the 79 burials of this phase, most (59%) represented in cluster A have no grave offerings (see the first row in Fig. 12). Thirty-two (41%) burials with grave goods have a greater quantity of offerings than in the previous period. In general, the types of ceramic and bronze grave goods follow the same trends as in the previous phase. Cluster B consists of five individuals with the 3-vessel assemblage. Clusters C and D, 20% of the total burials, have bronze weapon sets consisting of a halberd and a blade (Fig. 12).







	Batatai Phase 2		
	CERAMIC	WEAPON	ORNAMENT
Cluster A n=47			
Cluster B n=5	3-vessel		
Cluster C n=8			
Cluster D N=8			
Cluster E n=5	3-vessel		
Burial 265	'Provider' 		

Figure 12. The five primary burial clusters of Phase 2 at Batatai. Burial clusters are largely distinguished by increasing order of grave elaboration from cluster A to E that is scaled by range of bronze artifacts and ceramic contents.

Cluster E consists of five distinctive burials with more elaborate bronze weapons including an axe, quiver and scabbard. In addition, bronze buckles and buttons, and jade bangles, are preferentially distributed. The most exceptional individual was buried in grave 265, with five sets of the 3-vessel ceramic assemblage and a bronze cauldron, a remarkable increase above even the 'provider' set. The emphasis placed on such an elaborate provider assemblage suggests that this individual had considerable access to staple resources.

Hengdalu Phase 3

New jar forms, globular and tall necked, were introduced in this phase. In addition, bronze spearheads now appear, as in Batatai. There was also a change in the proportional representation of 2 and 3 vessel assemblages, in that the 2

vessel types became more common. Fig. 13 shows that 37 burials (69% of the total in this phase) have 2 vessels, versus only 11 burials (20%) with 3. The assemblages are also more heterogeneous in composition than in previous periods. *Cluster E1* consists of five burials with 4 vessels – a tripod vessel, a liquid jar, a plate and a cup. There are also five individuals with ‘provider’ sets (cluster D). Neither bronze nor jade artifacts are preferentially distributed.

Cluster A1 n=5	3-vessel
Cluster A2&B1 n=11	2-vessel
Cluster B2 n=6	2-vessel
Cluster C n=20	2-vessel
Cluster D n=5	‘Provider’ set
Cluster E1 n=5	4-vessel
Cluster E2 n=6	3-vessel

Figure 13. The eight burial clusters of Phase 3 at Hengdalu showing increasing variability in the configuration of ceramic offerings among two-vessel type arrangements. Burials are mainly differentiated by 2- versus 3-vessel and ‘provider’ type assemblages.

Batatai Phase 3

Of the 119 graves in this phase, 26 (22%) have no offerings, a marked decrease from previous periods. New artifacts in phase 3 include pedestalled dishes, agate and turquoise ornaments, and tubes/balls made of lead. These objects are all concentrated in a select few burials. As at Hengdalu, there was a significant increase in the number of individuals with simplified 1- or 2-vessel assemblages, as represented by cluster B in Fig. 14. Weapon outfits were also scaled back from paired items to one item in cluster A.

Cluster C includes three burials that contain the normative 3-vessel assemblage, with the bronze weapon pair, bronze buckles and buttons, and stone ornament types including agate beads and buttons. These three burials also contain a new vessel, the *dou* or pedestalled dish. Within cluster C, burial #183 deserves further mention













	CERAMIC	WEAPON	ORNAMENT
Cluster A n=25			
Cluster B n=32	1-vessel		
Cluster C n=3	4-vessel		
Burial 183	Big Tripod		
Cluster D n=19			
Cluster E n=3			
Cluster F Burial 143			

Figure 14. The six burial clusters of Phase 3 at Batatai. Burial #183 and #143 represent the two cluster groups distinguished by the most elaborate set of grave offerings.

and its unique grave contents are depicted in Fig. 14. They include a scabbard and bronze quiver, material markers of distinction continuing from the previous periods. This grave also has an oversized tripod vessel. *Cluster F* is comprised of a single burial, number 143, that has no counterpart in previous periods. It contained a painted jar and large quantities of jade, agate and turquoise beads that possibly were sewn on to a shroud or body covering. In addition, this individual also possessed lead tubes and balls.

Hengdalu Phase 4

The pattern of simplified ceramic assemblages continued into this phase, with 35% of the burials having 2-vessel ceramic sets, represented by clusters A2, B2 and D2 in Fig. 15. There was also an increase to 25% of burials having only 1 vessel, represented by cluster A1. New jar types such as the *hu* or straight necked jar, and the globular jar, replace the large beaker jar in the 2- and 3-vessel assemblages in cluster D2. A departure from the ‘classic’ configuration pattern emerges in cluster D1, in which tripods and large beakers are excluded completely. These seven burials have 1 to 4 vessels based entirely on new types - *hu*, *dou*, *zun* and plates (see Fig. 6).

New vessel types aside, patterns in this period suggest a continuing trend toward simplified assemblages and the disappearance of the ‘provider’ assemblages. Social distinctions appear to have shifted from an emphasis on access to staple resources towards possession of personal


Hengdalu Phase 4	
Cluster A1 n=10	1-vessel
Cluster A2 n=7	2-vessel
Cluster B1 n=3	3-vessel
Cluster B2 n=7	2-vessel
Cluster C n=2	3-vessel
Cluster D1 n=7	'New'-vessel set
Cluster D2 n=4	2-vessel
Burial 40	4-vessel 

Figure 15. The six burial clusters and outlier burial #40 of Phase 4 at Hengdalu. Cluster A and B burials are primarily characterized by increasing variability in the configuration of existing ceramic vessel types while cluster C and D burials contain 2-vessel type assemblages composed of both existing and new ware types. Burial #40 is marked by exceptionally well-endowed ornamental and weaponry items.

ornaments. The only individual receiving material distinction was burial #40, which was excluded from the cluster analysis because of its unique nature. All the bronze weapons, bangles and buckles of this phase were buried solely with this individual, who also had a gold pin.

Batatai Phase 4

In the last phase of cemetery use at Batatai, Han imports consisting of iron weapons and implements, bronze serving wares, belt buckles, coins and seals appear in the assemblage. Twenty-one (30%) burials in clusters A, B1, and C1 (Fig. 16) have weapon pairs of either bronze or bimetallic combinations. Twenty (28%) burials in cluster B2 have bronze or stone ornaments and/or Han coins. Cluster B3 consists of six individuals having Han-style serving wares and ornaments. Clusters C2 and C3 consist of four individuals with bronze/iron weapons and either bronze or jade ornaments. Thirteen individuals (18%) in clusters D1 and D2 have an iron knife, a belt hook and



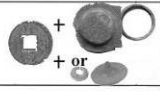













Batatai Phase 4		CERAMIC/BRONZE	WEAPON	ORNAMENT
Cluster A n=9				
Cluster B1 n=5				
Cluster B2 n=20				
Cluster B3 n=6				
Cluster C1 n=7				
Cluster C2-3 n=4				
Cluster D1-2 n=13	1-vessel			
Cluster D3 (Burial 69)				
Cluster E n=10				
Cluster F (Burial 41)				

Figure 16. The ten burial clusters of Phase 4 at Batatai. Cluster A and B burials are contrasted by the differential configuration of native to 'Han' items (iron weaponry, ornaments and coins) in their grave contents. Cluster D3 and F burials contain the most elaborately furnished grave contents in the group.

coins. In contrast to clusters D1 and D2, ten burials (14%) in cluster E have bronze weapons, buckles, buttons and a bangle. Cluster D1-2 and E also suggest interesting parallels between the native and the Han traditions: bronze buckles and belt hooks, bronze weapons and iron knives, and bronze buttons and coins.

These two cultural traditions were not mutually exclusive. Burial #69 contains paired native and foreign elements; pedestaled plate with Han serving ware, bronze weapon with iron weapon, bronze buckle with belt hook, and bronze buttons with coins. There are also distinctive Han objects such as a bronze seal and mirror, as well as distinctive native objects such as a bronze sheath, jade bangle and lead balls. Thus, prestige items of local origin are here included with Han counterparts. Burial #69 resembles burial 183 in Batatai period 3, an individual with a provider assemblage and bronze sheath. Burial #41 resembles burial #143 of phase 3 in having weaponry, a bronze buckle, and the highest concentration of jade, agate, turquoise and even amber beads of any phase.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The Synchronic Picture

Observations suggest that these two locations were communities organized along different social scales. While the material offerings at both sites consist of similar ceramic assemblages, the general configurations of ceramic offerings were different. Hengdalu emphasized standardized offerings while Batatai burials generally contained no grave offerings at all. In addition, provider assemblages tended to be preferentially associated with one individual at Batatai, in contrast to the wider distribution found at Hengdalu.

Batatai also had greater access to bronze weaponry than Hengdalu. It was widely distributed as a standard outfit at Batatai and represented social status, as evidenced by exclusive access to quivers, scabbards, and armor. While greater access to staples as represented by the 'provider' sets was emphasized in both communities, this treatment was more clearly associated with economic distinction at Batatai than at Hengdalu. The absence of a unified material ordering of grave goods between the two sites is interesting, and understanding would benefit from a study of the regional settlement system. For instance, the differences between the sites may reflect either relative autonomy or position within a regional political organization.

The Diachronic Picture

Notable social transformations emerged in the late Warring States period (480-221 BC), or phase 4 at Hengdalu. Simplified ceramic offerings became more pervasive, and there was an increase in the heterogeneity of offering configurations. However, the structure of the 2- and 3-vessel combinations continued earlier patterns, and only new vessel types were substituted.

Social elaboration at this time was no longer defined by access to staples, as the provider set disappeared. Instead, there was growing emphasis on greater social distinction, whereby all the bronze weapons, ornaments and a gold pin in Hengdalu phase 4 were buried with one wealthy individual.

Similarly, social changes emerged in phase 3 at Batatai. Instead of social distinction being emphasized by the provider set, wealth was expressed in ornaments, lead objects and painted pottery. In Batatai phase 4, Han items entered the mortuary assemblage in substantial numbers. In particular, iron weapons, belt hooks and Han coins became the most commonly occurring objects at Batatai. These objects, however, were combined with local elements in patterns of complementary substitution or addition. Local ceramic forms became less frequent, but continued to appear in some burials, including those with Han materials. Local and Han "cultural" counterparts were not mutually exclusive, and the two most sumptuous grave assemblages of this phase both combined foreign and native elements in relative parallelism.

Contrary to expectations of *sinicization*, observations from Qujing suggest the relative continuity of the local cultural system during the Han dynasty. Han objects

appear, but consumption follows local norms. Han goods alone did not become key markers of social status and prestige. Of course, it must be acknowledged that this local tradition of burial mound construction ceased after phase 4 in both sites. Therefore, it is unclear if these two sites represent a weak form of Western Han rule of the region, leaving local autonomy mostly intact. It is possible that under more direct rule during the Eastern Han Dynasty (AD 25 - 220), the region experienced acculturation leading to the abandonment of community burial practices.

This paper provides evidence for cross-cultural interaction pointing to variability in change, rather than unidirectional sinicization. And this should not be surprising. Given the complexity of imperial expansion and its diverse modes of interaction, cultural adoption and adaptation at the local level likely followed different trajectories.

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