

REVIEW

Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu yuan 湖北省文物考古研究院 and **Wuhan daxue jianbo yanjiu zhongxin** 武漢大學簡帛研究中心 (ed. in Chief **Chen Wei** 陳偉 and **Xiong Beisheng** 熊北生, ed. **Cai Dan** 蔡丹, **Huang Haobo** 黃浩波, **Lei Hailong** 雷海龍, and **Li Jing** 李靜): **Shuihudi Xi Han jiandu (Yi) Zhiri** 睡虎地西漢簡牘 (壹) 質日 [Shuihudi Western Han Bamboo Slips and Boards (I) Event Calendars] xi, 426 pp. Shanghai: Zhong Xi shuju, 2023. ISBN 978 7 5475 2054 3.

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Those familiar with the archaeological work of the Hubei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology and the textual scholarship of the Center of Bamboo and Silk Manuscripts of Wuhan University, will not be surprised to find that this volume is solidly organized, clearly presented, well researched, and carefully edited. As the first of eight projected volumes spanning the Shuihudi Western Han tomb 77 manuscript finds, this volume highlights the outstanding work brought to bear on the rejoining, arranging, transcription, and study of these fascinating materials, some of which were heavily damaged before they could be recovered in a rescue excavation.

In 2006, when strengthening the buttressed foundations of a railroad in Yunmeng 雲夢, workers accidentally stumbled across a Western Han dynasty tomb. The outer coffin and side chamber were disturbed and archaeologists were called in to start a rescue excavation. This was hampered by the precarious placement of the tomb underneath the railway. The tomb lay only 70 metres from the famous 1975 Shuihudi tomb-site inhabited by the official Xi 喜, which revolutionized the field's understanding of Qin legal practice.

Yue Ren 越人, the occupant of the present tomb, was a low-level clerk stuck on the career ladder. He likely died in his mid-fifties, about a year after multiple fines for mistakes on the job. Despite his low rank and simple burial, he too was accompanied with a wealth of manuscripts that allow us to reconstruct details of his personal and professional life and of local administration. In a bamboo box in the side chamber of the tomb, over twenty rolls comprising 2,137 mostly intact bamboo slips (and over 10,000 fragments) were found carrying a range of event calendars 質日, official documents 官府文書, personal logbooks 私人簿籍, legal statutes 律典, a mathematical text 算術, literary texts 典籍, and a daybook 日書.

In this tomb library, the event calendars present one of the most notable finds. Out of the twenty-three calendar finds thus far, fourteen are contained in this tomb. These calendars contained a tabulated year-long calendar, indicating the month and

cyclical dates, and some seasonal days. Officials would record professional and personal business in the lemma of the calendar. These event calendars were used to control performance, and they provide immensely useful data in reconstructing the day-to-day life of officials and the processes governing the operation of local administration.

The event calendars comprise 718 complete slips but would have amounted to roughly 900 slips if undamaged. The difficulty in preparing this volume came in large part from the fragmentary nature of many of the slips. As became clear from the presentations at the book launch held on 6 January 2024, this volume is truly the result of a collective effort – with the team sometimes going back and forth over a period of several months in rejoining a single bamboo slip – admirably reflected in the full credit given to all the writers as well as the editors.

This volume presents all the event calendars and related fragments. It is headed with an informative and succinct introductory foreword, followed by annotated transcriptions, and two appendices tabulating the occurrences of seasonal and ritual days. Hi-res images are presented both in actual-size slips and enlarged format and also include the fragments of slips that could not be arranged into individual manuscripts. If pushed to name areas of improvement, it would be the lack of images for the back of the slips, an absence that is also regretted in the foreword. In terms of building on the excellent clarity and quality of the present publication, there is much additional research potential that could be extracted from the manuscripts if they were available in a digital file format suitable for databases, GIS, and other forms of data management. Especially these calendrical and travel-related materials would enable the establishment of an interactive map of movements and activities, for instance, giving detail and pattern to local history.

Shuihudi M77 is significant in several respects. From a micro-historical perspective, the event calendars and personal logbooks put a human face on the archaeological finds. For example, in recording his father's death and funeral, the usual strong and bold-set calligraphy of Yue Ren turns pale and wispy, and one cannot help but feel some of the anguish shining through. He is back in office inspecting affairs within two days of the funeral. On a meso-level, this find resonates with Zhangjiashan 336 and Hujia caochang in furnishing a grass-roots view of social, literary, and economic history of the early Han. On a macro-level, tomb libraries such as these provide a clear connection between the personal and professional life of the tomb occupant, the (local-) state's administrative practices, and the spread of literature across the country. As a nexus of various spheres of written culture, it is therefore an excellent site of comparison, both with other tomb libraries in early China but also with similar sites across the ancient world.

This high-quality volume heads an eagerly awaited series comprising the remaining materials from the tomb. Two more volumes are reportedly scheduled for publication in this year. This volume and the series as a whole is a welcome addition to the field and will undoubtedly propel our understanding of early Han society to new heights and stimulate numerous new avenues of research.