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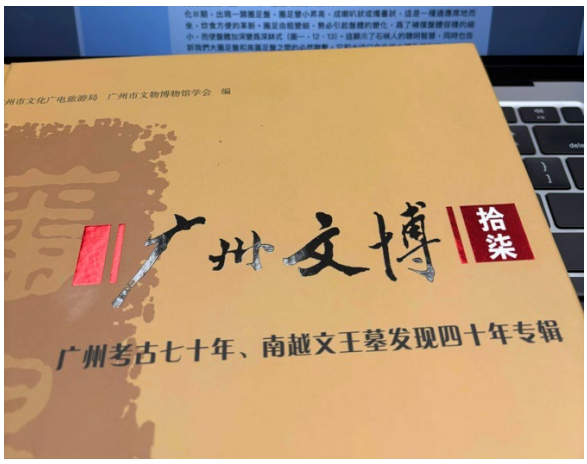
2025 Anthropology Summer Internship Report

I am grateful for the internship opportunity given by the Department of Anthropology and the Guangzhou Municipal Institute of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology. During my six-week internship, I was assigned to the Department of Science and Technology for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage. The internship program offered a valuable learning experience, especially in the fields of archaeological data organization, typology and archaeological illustration.

One of my primary projects is to review the excavation data of Xiaoguwei Island. In 2003, Xiaoguwei Island was chosen for the construction of Guangzhou Higher Education Mega Center. An in-depth field survey and rescue excavation were conducted on the island back then, which uncovered 145 ancient tombs and historic

sites. However, some primary data remains to be cataloged. My main task involved reviewing excavation journals and artifact record cards to verify the consistency between the quantity and reference numbers of artifacts. As all records are currently paper-based and scattered, it is necessary to create an Excel database for quick retrieval. Digitalization facilitates the identification of problematic or missing information, making the subsequent workload clearer. By reviewing the field diaries of archaeologists at various sites, I gained a basic understanding of the geographical locations, soil conditions and structural features of the tombs on Xiaoguwei Island.

In addition to gathering statistical data, I also participated in the drafting of the excavation report of a group of Han dynasty tombs. This was a novel experience for me. Generally, a systematic excavation report includes information such as the site's location, stratigraphic deposits, and artifact descriptions. The first part was to summarize the tomb descriptions based on the diary written by archaeologists working on the site. Switching my perspective from being a reader to an assistant editor was an exciting transition. The experience provided insight into the division of labor among staff members across different departments within the archaeological research institute, as well as deepening my understanding of the Han dynasty tombs in Lingnan.



For example, artifact descriptions require the measurement of each part of the artifact and the detailed description of its form, glaze color, and patterns. Hence, making close and multi-angle observations is essential. Before starting this work, it is necessary to take out artifacts from the Cultural Heritage Storage. The storeroom has strong security and systems to control the temperature and moisture to keep the artifacts in the best possible condition. To some extent, the storage is quite like a large library, where all the materials are stored in an organized way. Describing artifacts involves specialized terminology and is also a task that tests one's meticulousness. I am grateful to my mentor for providing some reference books related to Han Dynasty tombs in Panyu District and Guangzhou. These reading materials really deepened my understanding of the typological characteristics of artifacts from Guangzhou and made my writing process much smoother. After observation, the artifacts must be placed in baskets with acid-free paper and returned to the storage. During this process, I learned packing techniques to ensure the safe transportation of artifacts.

I noticed that most of the artifacts excavated from the tombs were pottery. Occasionally, bronze mirrors, ancient coins, accessories and iron swords were also found. The soil in Guangzhou is quite acidic, leading to poor preservation conditions for metal artifacts. Corrosion and mineralization of bronzes or ironware are common phenomena in

Guangzhou. Consequently, technologies like X-ray analysis are essential to assess the condition of artifacts and develop targeted conservation plans. Although my role did not involve conservation, through chatting with other interns and observing their work restoring bronze artifacts, I found that interventive conservation requires lots of patience and attention to detail.

Text is an essential component of a report, but it has limitations in comprehensively presenting the structure of cultural relics. Therefore, visual records like illustrations are equally important. I once experienced drawing artifacts in a tutorial section, but at that time, I only captured the simple pattern of a small piece of pottery shard. During my internship, I realized that illustrating artifacts is an important skill for archaeologists. It requires accurately depicting a clear front view and a sectional view, as well as decorative patterns of artifacts with proportional scaling, and the lines should be concise and clear enough. It's quite challenging for someone like me who isn't good at drawing. Under my instructor's guidance and after numerous revisions and corrections, I finally noticed substantial improvement in my later drawings compared to my first attempts. I believed that practice makes perfect, and I will keep practicing the drawing techniques of archaeology in the future. Besides, the quality of scanned paper-based illustration is

not as good as digital drawing, so mastering both traditional and digital drawing techniques is also essential for work.

To conclude, my work mostly involves post-excavation processing tasks, including cleaning, labeling, packing and documentation. Also, I learned to use portable XRF to test metals in the laboratory. These hands-on experiences not only deepened my comprehension of archaeology but also encouraged me to pursue further study in this field. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude again to the Department of Anthropology and Guangzhou Municipal Institute of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology for their continuous support.