

《Identity of Han-Dynasty marquis confirmed》

The results are in for Haihunhou, the ancient burial site discovered in 2011. After five years of painstaking excavation, archaeologists have concluded that the main tomb was indeed that of the marquis of Haihun, a deposed emperor of the Western Han Dynasty.



Hoof-shaped gold wares are displayed at an exhibition in Capital Museum in Beijing. The gold wares were unearthed from the 2,000-year-old tomb of Marquis of Haihun. (Xinhua/Luo Xiaoguang)

Now, the most significant finds from the cemetery in eastern China's Jiangxi province are on display at the Capital Museum in Beijing.

One of China's greatest archaeological finds has come to Beijing. Dating back more than 2,000 years, the tomb of Haihunhou, in Jiangxi province, has proven a trove both of treasure and of historical insight into China's Western Han Dynasty. A three-month exhibition opens in the capital Wednesday.

The 441 exhibits—including bronze ware, gold ware, jade articles, and lacquerware replicas—were selected from 20,000 items unearthed since excavations began at Haihunhou in 2011.

The site dates back to the Western Han Dynasty, covers roughly 46,000 square meters, and contains eight small

tombs as well as a burial site for chariot horses. This is the best-preserved cemetery of its age found in China, with the most complete worship system.

Experts have now confirmed the long-held belief that the tomb's occupant was Liu He, grandson of Emperor Wu. Liu was given the title "Haihunhou" ("Marquis of Haihun") after he was deposed as emperor after only 27 days. Haihun is the ancient name of a very small kingdom in the north of Jiangxi. By now, the weight of evidence supporting this deduction is incontrovertible.

"There are six pieces of evidence to prove our conclusion. The three direct pieces of evidence are: letters from Liu He and his wife to the emperor, the 90 golden pieces we found between the outer and inner coffins, and a jade stamp, all of which bore his name," said Xin Lixiang, an expert of State Administration of Cultural Heritage.



Hoof-shaped gold wares are displayed at an exhibition in Capital Museum in Beijing. The gold wares were unearthed from the 2,000-year-old tomb of Marquis of Haihun. (Xinhua/Luo Xiaoguang)

"And the indirect evidence includes Han-Dynasty official scripts we found on bamboo slips and wooden tablets, coins and porcelain and ceramics, in styles consistent with the works of that age."

The exhibits on display in Beijing are only a small part of the massive discovery. Some may take years to clean up and restore before facing the public. Most highly anticipated are the bamboo slips and wooden tablets, which are not appearing this time. They are the first such find in Jiangxi and a groundbreaking discovery for the whole of China.

"We have so far excavated between four and five thousand bamboo slips and wooden tablets, and now they are stored in our laboratory. We presume they were the fragments of Liu He's favorite books," said Yang Jun, the

leader of excavation team.

“Those light wooden pieces are among the most difficult items to clean and preserve, and they are terribly rotten. We are using the most advanced technologies to restore them.”

Lying on a mountain near the city of Nanchang, the cemetery site was reported robbed five years ago. The Jiangxi Institute of Archaeology then started a rescue excavation and has since unveiled a spectacular hoard of treasure.

The exhibition in Beijing runs until June 2. It will prioritize group visitors and allow only 1,000 individual visitors a day in the first week, and increase the daily limit to 5,000 people after that.

