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A TRICKY GAME: A RE-EVALUATION OF *LIUBO* 六博 BASED ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND TEXTUAL EVIDENCE*

ARMIN SELBITSCHKA

1 Introduction

In the past, scholarship has barely acknowledged the entertaining qualities of the ancient Chinese board game *liubo* 六博. Instead, the main focus has been on its occult properties for close to a century.[1] This is due to the idiosyncratic TLV pattern that adorns the surfaces of *liubo* game boards.[2] Since the early 20th century, authors have disagreed on whether

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1 Most recently, for instance, Chiang 2012; von Falkenhausen 2006, 316; Field 2008, 95–97; Juliano 2005; Li Ling 2000, 22; Mackenzie 2004; Major 1999, 127; Raphals 2013, 137, 344–346; Tseng 2011, 55–59; M. C. Wang 2006, esp. 24–28; Zheng 2012, 73, 74. For a more cautious assessment, see Bower 2005. For a notable exception, see Wu 1987.

2 Rather than being an acronym as one might suspect at first glance, the letters TLV describe the shape of the individual elements of the pattern. All in all four T-shaped elements are placed at a right angle at the center of each side of a central square; four L-shaped elements, which point either in clockwise or counter-clockwise direction, are located opposite of the T-shapes. The V-shaped elements are right angles, whose tips are diagonally opposed to the corners of the central square.

In general, the TLV design is believed to represent the so-called "cord-hook" diagram; it depicts the cosmos as it is described in the *Huainanzi*. See, for instance, Loewe 1979, 60–85; Major 1984, 155–159; Major 1993, 38–43; Kalinowski 1998–1999, 138–141; Sofukawa 1988, 38–46. Most of the publications cited in nn. 4 and 7–9 below also deal with this subject. However, they base their arguments largely on the works of Michael Loewe and John Major introduced here.

It should, moreover, be mentioned that four bamboo slip manuscripts that each depict one "cord-hook" diagram came to light in Tomb No. 30 at Zhoujiatai 周家台 in Hubei province (dated 209 BCE). See Hubei sheng Jingzhou shi Zhouliang Yuqiao Yizhi Bowuguan 1999, 26–32; Hubei sheng Jingzhou shi Zhouliang Yuqiao Yizhi Bowuguan 2001, 28–31, 44, 107–109 (slips 156–181); 39–40, 45, 122–123 (slips 266–279); 40–42, 46, 123–124 (slips 281–

artifacts that carry the TLV design ought to be considered magic boards, tablets, diviner's boards, or sun dials. In 1947, Yang Lien-sheng broke new ground by referring to a Chinese bronze mirror that was published in Umehara Sueji's *Shōkō kokyō shūei* 紹興古鏡聚英 (*Selected Ancient Mirrors Found at Shaoxing*, 1939). The back of the mirror illustrates four humans sitting next to a square board with the TLV design. More importantly, the scene was accompanied by the inscription "immortals [playing] *liubo*" (*xian ren liu bo* 仙人六博; Figs. 1 and 2). The TLV pattern has been accepted as the defining feature of the *liubo* game ever since. Scholarship has been equally certain that it was a pastime favored by immortals.[3]

Fig. 1: A 2nd century CE bronze mirror found at Shaoxing, Zhejiang province. It depicts four anthropomorphic figures sitting around a square board that features the [T]LV design. An inscription above the board reads: "immortals [playing] *liubo*" (*xian ren liu bo* 仙人六博). (After: Yang 1947, Plate 1.)

293); 42–43, 47, 124–126 (slips 296–308). Similar diagrams also emerged from Tomb No. 8 at Kongjiapo 孔家坡 in Hubei province (dated 142 BCE); see Hubei sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2006, 143–144 (slips no. 124.a–134a), 144–145 (slips no. 123.a–126c, 130d, 134c, 135b–137b), and 145–146 (slips no. 121c–122c, 123d–125d, 130e, 133c, 134d, 135c–137c).

3 Yang 1947, 203.

Fig. 2: Detail of the mirror illustrated in Fig. 1: *liubo* board, *liubo* players, and inscription (After: Yang 1947, Plate 1.)

In addition, the intrinsic relation between the TLV design and *liubo* is attested by three additional bronze mirrors, whose inscriptions establish a direct link between the pattern and the game. Only one of these mirrors has come to light in the course of systematic archaeological excavations. This particular item was retrieved from Tomb No. 4 at Yinwan 尹灣 (dated early 1st century CE) in Jiangsu province in 1993. An eighty-three character long inscription was part of the ornamented back of the mirror. The phrase "engraving and ordering the *liubo* [pattern] at the center [of the mirror] and thus connecting the square" (*ke chi liubo zhong jian fang* 刻治六博中兼方) not only equals the T, L, and V elements that were also cast onto the back of the mirror to a *liubo* game board, but refers to the general layout of the TLV pattern. As most depictions of *liubo* boards or so-called TLV mirrors demonstrate, the outline of a central square is commonly located at the center of the TLV design. From a methodological point of view, the information provided by the remaining two mirrors is nearly useless since the provenance of either item is unknown. They are now held by the Chinese History Museum in Beijing and the Tokyo National Museum. Unless artifacts come from archaeologically verifiable contexts, their authenticity can always be called into question. Be that as it may, the Yinwan find clearly attests to the inherent link between the TLV pattern and the *liubo* game.[4]

4 Tseng 2004, 167–169. For a review of contrasting explanations of the central square, see

In the years following the publication of Yang's seminal article, pictorial evidence of *liubo* competitions among immortals gradually accumulated. Especially stone carvings and decorated bricks from Eastern Han (23–220 CE) tombs illustrate winged human beings that gather around square boards. For instance, one stone sarcophagus discovered at Guitoushan 鬼頭山 in Sichuan province provided another instructive caption that denotes a group of two heavily feathered (?) figures and six long sticks as "immortals [playing the] *bo* [game]" (*xian ren bo* 先[仙]人博).[5] However, the theme was by no means restricted to graphic arts as Western and Eastern Han literary sources occasionally recount similar contests. Here, the contestants are not exclusively immortals, but more often than not there is one human that faces an immortal. Thus it has been argued that the primary goal of *liubo* games was not mere amusement, but the transmission of supernatural faculties. The victory of a human over an immortal is believed to result in the transfer of the latter's powers to the former.[6]

The notion of ascertaining one's fate by playing *liubo* has also been explored by associating the TLV design and *liubo* game boards to so-called "diviner's boards" (*shi pan* 式盤). Similar to the diviner's boards, *liubo* boards have been taken as symbols of the whole world.[7] The results of competitions in such microcosmic universes were indicative of the player's fortune in real life. Yet again, the game was ascribed more than entertaining qualities: It was one (of many possible ways) to foretell a person's future.[8] This interpretation gained even greater currency after Michael Loewe reprised the idea that the TLV design

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Didier 2009, 139–144. For the mirror found in Yinwan Tomb No. 4, see Lianyungang shi Bowuguan 1996, 9; for the remaining finds yielded by the grave, see Lianyungang shi Bowuguan 1997, 160–161.

5 Tseng 2004, 186. For the brief excavation note, see Lei Jianjin 1988. For a description of the individual motifs on the sarcophagus, see Finsterbusch 2000 and 2004, 47, no. A170. Finsterbusch identified the anthropomorphic figures as "two immortals with open hair playing (*liubo*)" ("zwei Unsterbliche mit aufgelöstem Haar beim (Liubo)Spiel").

6 For an in-depth discussion of the association of *liubo* with immortals that includes references to archaeological and textual evidence, see Tseng 2004, 186–191. Tseng also suggests that so-called TLV mirrors possessed talismanic powers that enabled their owners to attain immortality; see Tseng 2004, 191, 201, 207. Finsterbusch 2006, 57–59 provided additional visual clues for the link between *liubo* and divination. For a discussion of the transfer of superhuman powers, see Yang 1947, 206; Yang 1952, 138–139; Lewis 2002, 14; Lewis 2006, 10, 280–281.

7 For a discussion of Han period diviner's boards, see Harper 1978–1979; Cullen 1980–1981; Harper 1980–1981; Yan Dunjie 1978; Yan Dunjie 1985. For a more recent interpretation of its symbolism, see Didier 2009, 155–161.

8 Cammann 1948, 160–161. However, the TLV design/*liubo* boards have been related to diviner's boards as early as the 1920s; for references, see n. 3 above.

actually was an adaptation of the pattern on diviner's boards.[9] Apart from ornamental resemblances of *liubo* boards and diviner's boards, scholars found parallels to divination in the way the game was played. As will be discussed below, movements on the board were determined by throwing either (six) sticks or a die. This process strongly recalls the divinatory practices introduced by the *Yijing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*).[10] Nowadays, people sometimes still use yarrow stalks, coins, or dice to generate numbers, which, in turn, allow them to consult the trigrams and hexagrams and their interpretations in the *Classic of Changes*.

The most conclusive evidence of the divinatory function of the TLV design and *liubo* boards appeared in the form of a manuscript yielded by Tomb No. 6 at Yinwan in Jiangsu province (dated ca. 10 BCE). The upper section of the backside (verso) of a 23-cm-long and 9-cm-wide wooden tablet shows a TLV pattern in black ink. The individual lines of this diagram were identified by binoms of the sexagenary cycle, which means that certain positions within the diagram correlate with specific days. The space below the illustration is covered by five horizontal sections of written text, each comprising ten columns of one to eight characters. The first graph of the columns on the far right of each section betrays the purpose of the chart. Inquiries such as *zhan* 占 ("to divine") and *wen* 問 ("to ask") reveal that the tablet was a divination manual (Fig. 3). The subjects of inquiry included auspicious/inauspicious days for weddings, travelling, being incarcerated, dealing with disease, and going into exile.[11] This remarkable manuscript has all but cemented the connection between divination and the *liubo* game.[12]

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9 Loewe 1979, 82. Based on the fact that the earliest known diviner's boards date at least two centuries younger than the youngest archaeologically verified *liubo* boards, the idea that *liubo* boards derived from diviner's boards has been disproven in recent years. See, for instance, Tseng 2004, 194; Brashier 1995, 212.

10 Röllicke 1999, 32; Lewis 1999, 9; Lewis 2002, 3, 9.

11 Lianyungang shi Bowuguan 1997, 21, 125–126, 166, 174. For additional information on all six tombs excavated during the 1993 campaign (M1–M6), see Lianyungang shi Bowuguan 1996. For a reconstruction of the exact method of divination, see Tseng 2004, 177–186. Didier 2009, 146–155 offers a critical analysis of Lillian Tseng's interpretations of the general meaning of the TLV pattern. Finally, it deserves to be noted that the TLV divination method is at least once mentioned by an early received text. *Han Feizi* 17.41 (Wang Xianshen 2003, 395) voices criticism against those who "used the *bo* design in deliberations" (*yi bo wen wei bian* 以博文為辯). On the date of the *Han Feizi*, see Levi 1993, 116–117.

12 See, for instance, Li Xueqin 1997, 49–50; Liu Hongshi 1997, 71–72; Röllicke 1999, 32; Lewis 2002, 3, 10–11; Tseng 2004, 184; also see n. 2 above.

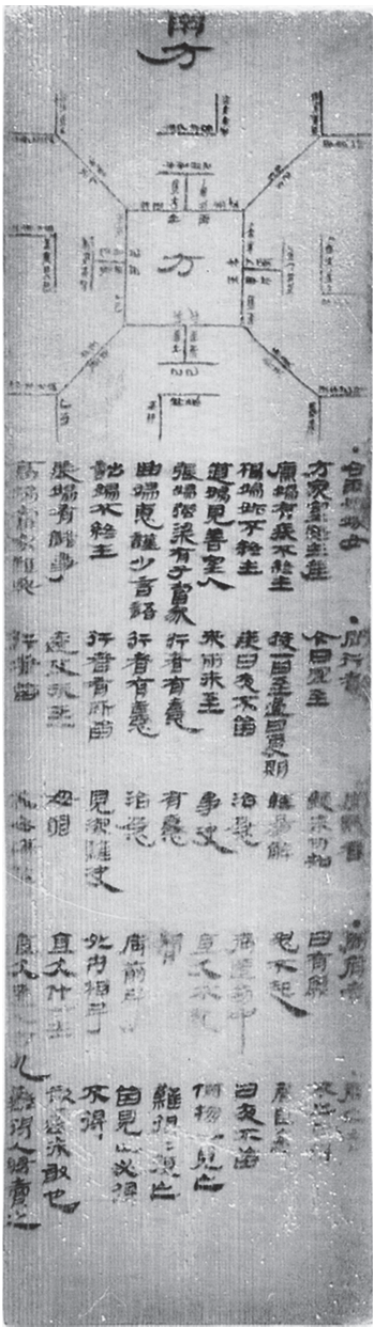

Fig. 3: TLV divination chart yielded by Tomb No. 6 at Yinwan, Jiangsu province (dated ca. 10 CE) (After: Lianyungang shi Bowuguan 1997, 21)

Accordingly, authentic *liubo* game boards that have come to light in several mid-4th through late 1st century BCE burials (Tab. 1) are widely perceived as occult paraphernalia. But this is just one side of the coin. As I will show, actual game boards were embedded in rather "profane" settings within the respective tomb assemblages. In view of the fact that burials dating from the late Warring States (475–221 BCE) period onwards are generally believed to symbolize underground houses, the finds and features that surrounded game boards testify to their earlier function. Numerous food and beverage containers along with music instruments that are regularly associated with *liubo* game boards highlight that such clusters of burial goods recreated banquet scenes. Further, a comprehensive survey of late pre-imperial and early imperial texts discloses that the majority of *liubo*-related passages portray the game as a source of entertainment rather than an occult practice or a technique to prolong one's life. That is not to say that the *liubo* game bore no relation whatsoever to divination and the search for immortality. Indeed, my analysis of the available archaeological and textual evidence of *liubo* boards and depictions of *liubo* players demonstrates that both ideas co-existed in ancient Chinese society. On the other hand, they were emphasized to vastly different degrees and, more significantly, at different times. Ties between *liubo* boards and divination/immortality during the late Warring States and Western Han periods (206 BCE–9 CE) are few and far between, as only limited textual and no archaeological references may be found. They increase noticeably, however, in Eastern Han sources, particularly in visual representations of the *sujet* in tombs of certain regions. It is crucial to realize, though, that most of the Eastern Han archaeological and textual data continue to depict human gamblers that mainly sought to amuse themselves.

2 The Archaeological Evidence

2.1 Boards, Sticks, and Tokens: Actual Game Boards and their Archaeological Settings

The *liubo* game: Some rules and equipment

Starting roughly from the 4th century BCE until the 3rd century CE, the ancient Chinese knew at least three board games[13] that received literature addresses as *liubo*, *saixi* 塞戲, and *boyi* 博奕 / *weiqi* 圍棋.[14] Edmund Lien has pointed out that the terms *boyi*/*weiqi* describe a game that was quite different from *liubo*. The chessboard-like grid pattern of the square *boyi*/*weiqi* game boards already indicates that the rules were incompatible with *liubo*. Thus, *boyi*/*weiqi* will not be part of the present discussion.[15] *Liubo* and *saixi* varied in two aspects: First, the L-shaped patterns on *saixi* boards ran clockwise, while their counterparts on *liubo* boards ran counterclockwise. Secondly, movements on *liubo* boards were sometimes determined by dice rather than the sticks that were usually used at *saixi* games.[16]

Considering that contemporary sources are largely missing or, if they are available, often obscure, reconstructing the way *liubo* was played has not been an easy task. Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531– ca. 591 CE) distinguishes two major variations: "Larger *bo*" (*da bo* 大博) featured the very six sticks (*zhu* 箸) that gave the game its name. The character *liu* 六 of the binom *liubo* is convenient to translate; it simply means "six." In contrast, sticking with the original meaning of *bo* 博, "broad, wide-ranging, extensive, vast; to barter, to exchange" leads us nowhere. Judging from the context, though, it seems safe to assume that *bo* should be rendered "sticks" or "[counting] rods." The appellation "six sticks," then,

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13 See, for instance, Tseng 2004, 173; Bai Yunxiang 2008, 63.

14 For a survey of references to *liubo* and *saixi* in transmitted texts, see Zheng Yan'e 1999, 53–54. An abridged English translation of this article (2002) provides two additional tables that catalogue finds of *liubo* boards and illustrations of *liubo* games in other media. On the game *boyi*, see Lien 2006. *Liubo*, *saixi*, and *boyi* have also been discussed in Bai Yunxiang 2008, 60–64.

15 Edmund Lien (2006, 571) suggests that *boyi*/*weiqi* seemingly became more popular by the 3rd century CE. Nevertheless, I was able to gather at least eight direct references to *boyi* in pre-imperial through 1st century CE sources; see *Lunyu* 論語 22.19 (Liu Baonan 1990, 705); *Hanshu* 27A.1476, 53.2428, 64B.2829, 92.3709; *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論 6.31 (Wang Liqi 1992, 405); Wenzi 文子 4 (Wang Liqi 2000, 206); *Huainanzi* 20 (Zhang Shuangdi 1997, 2099). For a translation of the *Huainanzi* passage, see Major et al. 2010, 831; the translators, however, did not distinguish *liubo* from *boyi*.

16 See, for instance, Zheng Yan'e 1999, 53–55; Zheng Yan'e 2002, 81, 83. Since *liubo* and *saixi* only differed from each other in the two minor aspects while maintaining a similar play mode, I am only going to speak of *liubo* in what follows.

alludes to the method of movement determination. "Smaller *bo*" (*xiao bo* 小博), in turn, required the rolling of a die or two dice.[17] Either way, the goal was to defeat the opponent's main token, the so-called "owl" (*jiao* 驕 / *xiao* 梟). That is to say, if we are to trust the 3rd century BCE "Summons of the Soul" (*zhao hun* 招魂) that is now part of the *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Songs of the South*). A 12th century commentary on the "Summons" passage cites the long lost *Classic of the Ancient bo [Game]* (*Gubo jing* 古博經) that originally may have dated from the post-Han period. It explains that two players sat across the board from each other and that each commanded a total of six tokens (*qi* 棋). The "owl" was placed at the center of the board and charged with eating the two "fish" (*yu* 魚) tokens. However biased or inaccurate information in considerably later sources may be, the archaeological evidence discussed below nevertheless shows that six sticks, twelve tokens (six for each player), and sometimes even dice were essential parts of the *liubo* equipment.[18]

Yang Lien-sheng suggests that sticks (and dice) were not necessarily thrown onto the game board itself or the surface surrounding the game board, but onto separate wooden boards that were likely covered by "textile mats." Yang's claim was informed by four lead-filled bronze weights that were recovered from Tomb No. 16 at Wan'an 萬安 in Inner Mongolia. Given that neither sticks, tokens, nor a game board were documented during the excavation, the relation between these four mat weights and *liubo* remains vague at best.[19] Such uncertainty notwithstanding, Yang seems to have been on the right track as a number of tombs have produced similar weights in the past sixty odd years. More importantly, some of those mat weights were discovered either in direct vicinity of *liubo* boards or slightly removed from them, as was the case in Tomb No. 33 at Jinqueshan 金雀山 in Shandong province (Fig. 4).[20]

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17 See, for instance, Fu Juyou 1986, 34. One sub-variation of "larger *bo*" is said to have featured two or eight sticks (p. 33); also see, Yang 1947, 204; Röllicke 1999, 28–30. On the name *liubo* and its relation to the six sticks, see Lewis 2002, 9. On Yan Zhitui, see Knechtges and Chang 2016, 1790–1801.

18 As the exact rules of the game are of minor importance to the present study, I am not going to discuss the highly complex and sometimes contradictory arguments here. For comprehensive discussions, see, for instance, Fu Juyou 1986, 28–35; Yang 1947, 203–205; Yang 1952, 129–132; Röllicke 1999, 28–30; Tseng 2004, 174–177.

19 Yang 1952, 127–128; Mizuno 1946, 9.

20 See Yangzhou Bowuguan 1988, 21 (fig. 3.30–3.33), 29; Hubei sheng Jingzhou Bowuguan 2003, 31 (fig. 17.73, 17.76–17.78), 98–99; Yantai Diqu Wenwu Guanlizu 1980, 11 (fig. 12.25–12.28), 14; Linyi shi Bowuguan 1989, 27 (fig. 8, nos. 12, 21, 22, 27), 43. For a general discussion of the purpose of said (bronze) weights, see Sofukawa 1988, 27–28.

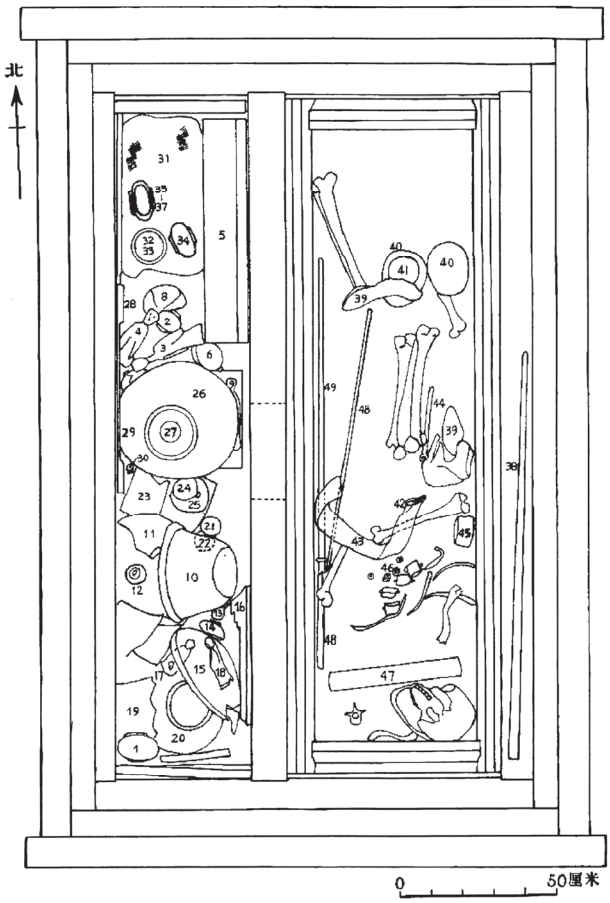

Fig. 4: Plan of Tomb No. 33 at Jinqueshan, Shandong province (dated ca. late 2nd century BCE). Four possible bronze mat weights (nos. 12, 21, 22, and 27) are slightly removed from the *liubo* board (no. 16). (After: Linyi shi Bowuguan1989, 27, Fig. 8.)

Additional evidence comes from many bas-relief stone carvings or pictorial bricks yielded by Eastern Han (25–220 CE) tombs. Scenes that feature a *liubo* board and two players are often accompanied by a second square board. Occasionally, these show six sticks at the center and weights at each of the four corners.[21] So-called "inventory lists" of burial goods (*qiance* 遣策) written on bamboo slips that were recovered from Fenghuangshan 鳳凰山 Tomb No. 8 (dated early to mid-2nd century BCE) in Hubei province further corroborate Yang's initial assumption. The manuscript mentions a *liubo* game set that comprises a game board, sticks, tokens, and a "stick mat" (*bo xi* 博席). The set also included a pouch in

21 See, for instance, Finsterbusch 1966 and 1971, nos. 26, 148, 153 (all Sichuan province), and Finsterbusch 2000 and 2004, nos. C 99, C 100 (both Jiangsu province), O 270, O 437 (both Shandong province).

which the smaller pieces could be kept. The fact that the excavators did not encounter any mats or pouches is not surprising as both objects most probably were made from organic materials; reed mats or any kind of cloth surely have long since degraded. Nevertheless, the fact that the tomb still contained one wooden game board, six bamboo sticks coated in black lacquer, and twelve tokens carved from animal bones suggests that mats of some sort might have been an integral part of the *liubo* game.[22] However, since the majority of the tombs under review neither revealed weights nor remnants of mats, we should not infer that both kinds of paraphernalia were absolutely necessary to play the game. Sticks and dice could have been tossed on all kinds of surfaces.[23]

As far as additional accessories of actual *liubo* game boards in 4th through 1st century BCE tombs are concerned, very few match the Fenghuangshan finds in number and diversity. They are only surpassed by an elaborate game set recovered from Tomb No. 3 at Mawangdui 馬王堆 on the outskirts of Changsha 長沙 in Hunan province (dated 168 BCE; Figs. 5 and 7). This extraordinary artifact encompasses a lacquered wooden game board, twelve larger and eighteen smaller ivory tokens, and forty-two bamboo sticks that were supposedly used as tallies to keep score. The individual items are neatly kept in a wooden case. Here, the eponymous sticks were substituted by an eighteen-sided wooden die.[24]

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22 Changjiang Liuyu Dierqi Wenwu Kaogu Gongzuo Renyuan Xunlianban 1974; Jin Li 1974, 74 (slips 165 [95], 166 [142]). Röllicke (1999, 28–30) claims that "several texts" denote the purported mats as *ping*. Unfortunately, he does neither provide references nor the respective character. Similar to Yang Lien-sheng, who argues that a second board was covered with cloth, Sofukawa (1988, 36, n. 15) relies on Yang Xiong's 揚雄 *Fangyan* 方言 and identifies such additional "mats" as either *ping* 枰 ("(game) board") or *guang ping* 廣平 ("wide plane").

23 In addition, four bronze weights in direct association with a small table in Fangwanggang 放王岗 Tomb No. 1 in Anhui province suggest that weights were also used to hold down seating mats; see Anhui sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2007, fig. 4 (nos. 324–327), 34–35. Tomb No. 19 at Tianchang in Anhui province yielded another four (iron) weights. Their regular arrangement along the western and southern walls of the wooden burial chamber indicates that they weighed down a mat as well; see Tianchang shi Wenwu Guanlisuo 2006, 5 (figs. 2.9, 2.14, 2.10, and 2.20), 6. Four gilded bronze weights were recovered from Tomb No. 7 at Yinqueshan 銀雀山 near Linyi 臨沂 in Shandong province. Since the preliminary report does not include a tomb plan, it is impossible to determine whether the finds were encountered in some kind of regular formation; see Yinqueshan Han Mu Fajuedui 2000, 54. Another regular arrangement of four bronze weights (items no. 11–14) was discovered in a late Western Han tomb in Hepu 合浦 county in Guangxi province; see Guangxi Zhuangzu Zizhiqu Wenwu Kaogu Xiezuo Xiaodui 1972, 21 (figs. 1.11–1.14), 25. Also see M. C. Wang 2006.

24 An inventory list of burial goods (*qiance*) yielded by Mawangdui Tomb No. 3 records "one *bo* [set, comprising] one *bo* board, twelve ivory token, twenty ivory 'upright eating' token, and three ivory counting rods." The strikingly named "upright eating" tokens might refer to the

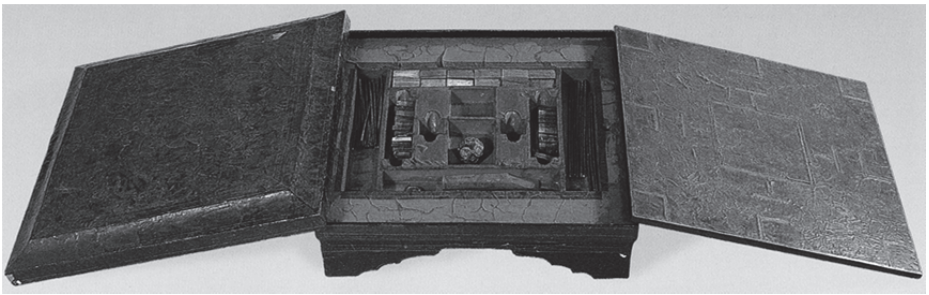

Fig. 5: *Liubo* game set in customized case yielded by Mawangdui Tomb No. 3, Hunan province (dated 168 BCE). Case and board were both made from lacquered wood. (After: Hunan sheng Bowuguan 2004, Color Plate 36.1)

In general, sticks, tokens, and game boards (*ju* 局, 梮) appear with certain regularity, although not exclusively in association with each other. Moreover, the grand total of game pieces does not always add up to the expected sum of either six or twelve items.[25]

"fishes" known from later texts. It is, however, puzzling that only eighteen smaller tokens were stored in the case. It is just as curious that only three "counting sticks" are listed, while forty-two sticks have been found. The editors of the excavation report argue that three out of the forty-two sticks are considerably shorter (16.4 cm) than the rest (22.7 cm), which leads them to conclude that the shorter three rods are the "counting sticks" mentioned in the inventory (p. 166). Moreover, the case included two items that the editors describe as "knives," one was made from bone, the other from ivory. Any statement as to the application of these 17.2 and 22 cm long objects would be highly speculative since neither the game set itself nor the inventory list provide further clues as to their exact purpose. See Hunan sheng Bowuguan 2004, 162–166.

25 For lists of burials that contained at least one kind of *liubo* paraphernalia, see Zheng Yan'e 2002, 89–92; Huang Ruxuan 2010, 52–54. Zheng Yan'e (2002, 89–90) claims that five bone boards have been unearthed in a late Warring States tomb in Anhui. This obviously is a mistake as the respective report on Tomb No. 10 at Changfeng only records "five bone devices ... that resemble [cuboid token] used in the *bo* game." See Anhui sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1994, 124–125. The "Western Han tomb, Yunmeng, Hubei" referred to by Zheng (p. 90) is in fact not different from "Tomb M1, Dafentou, Yunmeng, Hubei" cited on the same page. See also Table 1 below. Moreover, it is unclear whether Tomb No. 34 at Jinqueshan referred to by Zheng (p. 92) really contained a board. The object descriptions of the excavation report mention a total of three *liubo* boards, while only describing the board from Tomb No. 31 in detail. At the same time, the plans of Tombs Nos. 31 and 33 illustrate one find each; the plan of No. 34, however, just hints at the location of twelve tokens. See Linyi shi Bowuguan 1989, 28 (fig. 10).

In addition to both lists, six tokens have also come to light in Tomb No. 4 at Shaliangpo in Shanxi province; see Datong shi Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2012, 33. Another six tokens made from bone and two bamboo counting rods/throwing sticks were revealed by Tomb No. 6 at Longgang near Yunmeng in Hubei province; see Hubei sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1990, 24; Hubei sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1994, 88.

For instance, all in all eight ivory tokens carved with dragon, bird, and feline motifs were collected from Tomb No. 1 at Dabaotai 大葆台 near Beijing. Its occupant, Liu Jian 劉建, reigned as King of Guangyang 廣陽 from 73 until his death in 44 BCE. The fact that the sum total of tokens fell four short of the twelve tokens mentioned in later texts may be related to the heavy looting of the burial.[26] Yet, neither game boards nor any other kind of *liubo* paraphernalia appear on the art market in significant numbers. Robbery thus seems unlikely to be the cause of any missing game pieces. It was definitely not the reason why Tomb No. 105 at Qianping 前坪 in Hubei province and Tomb No. 1 at Lingtai 靈台 in Gansu province (both dated to the late 3rd to early 2nd century BCE) yielded but one and two tokens, respectively, for the two burials had not been disturbed at the time of excavation.[27] While loss through decay might be a plausible explanation for missing components,[28] we should not dismiss the idea that the game was considerably more varied than later received literature would have us believe. Another possibility might be that we are looking at the remnants of an entirely different game. I will return to this prospect shortly.

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26 A game board (*qi pan* 棋盤) made from stone has also been reported at Dabaotai; see Beijing shi Gumu Fajue Bangongshi 1977, 27; Dabaotai Han Mu Fajuezu 1989, 50, 53. Zheng Yan'e (2002, 91) incorrectly speaks of only one token and does not mention the game board at all. For additional information on the tomb and its occupant, see Loewe 1991, 25; Loewe 2000, 317–318 [Liu Jian (8)].

27 Yichang Diqu Kaogudui 1982, 58; also see Lingtai xian Wenhuaguan 1979, 124 (objects designated *gu pai* 骨牌). Sofukawa (1988, 34) linked the latter to the *liubo* game by associating four anthropomorphic bronze (mat) weights that were found together with the two tokens. Additional finds that are not included in Zheng Yan'e's list (2002, 89–92) have come to light in two Western Han tombs at Xuzhou, Jiangsu province. Since both excavation reports only speak of one "set" of tokens (*tao* 套; *fu* 副) each, it is impossible to fathom exactly how many items were in fact documented. See, Xuzhou Bowuguan 1993, 44–45; Xuzhou Bowuguan 2004, 50.

28 Tomb No. 52 at Qufu 曲阜, the ancient capital of Lu 魯, might be a fitting example. The burial yielded six jade tokens, twelve stone tokens, and an unspecified number of silver and ivory counting rods. Seeing that no wooden finds but numerous bronze weapons that once had wooden shafts were reported, it seems plausible to assume that a wooden *liubo* board might once have existed. If so, and if the board indeed did exhibit the typical TLV pattern, this would have been the earliest *liubo* board known so far as the burial dates from the late 5th century BCE; the earliest verified TLV boards from Tombs Nos. 197 and 314 at Yutaishan 雨台山 roughly date from the mid-4th century BCE. See Shandong sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1982, 128; Hubei sheng Jingzhou Diqu Bowuguan 1984, 104–105, 134. See also Zheng Yan'e 2002, 89; Huang Ruxuan 2010, 57.

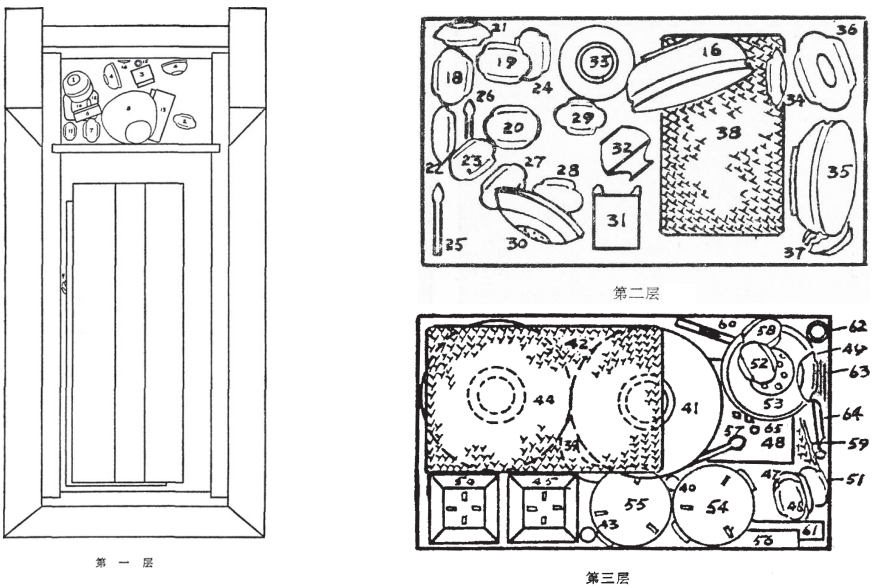

Fig. 6: Two compartments at Tomb No. 11 at Shuihudi, Hubei province (dated 217 BCE). A wooden *liubo* board (no. 48), six sticks (no. 63), and twelve tokens (no. 65) were recovered from the lowest (i.e. third) layer of burial goods. (After: Xiaogan Diqu Dierqi Yigong Yinong Wenwu Kaogu Xunlianban 1976, 2, Fig. 3)

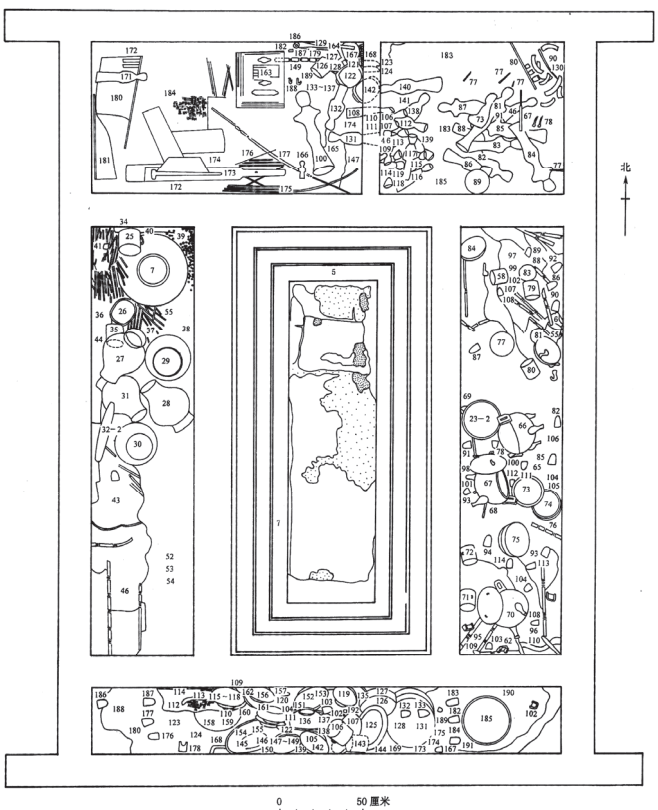

Fig. 7: Lowest level of burial goods that were deposited in the five compartments of Tomb No. 3 at Mawangdui. The *liubo* set was found in the northwestern compartment (no. 163). (After: Hunan sheng Bowuguan 2004, 46, Fig. 18.)

Actual *liubo* game boards

It is well-known by now that the TLV design is representative of the *liubo* game. The safest way to identify the latter in mortuary contexts, then, is to look for actual boards that feature T, L, and V patterns.[29] Indeed, authentic game boards make up the bulk of *liubo*-related objects known to date. All in all forty-one tombs that predominantly date from the mid-4th through late 1st century BCE have been reported to contain *liubo* boards.[30] The majority of finds comprise (lacquered) wooden boards, whose surfaces are adorned by carved TLV patterns. In order to provide some contrast to the darker background, brighter colors were used to accentuate the TLV design. The open spaces between individual design elements are sometimes filled with geometric, floral, or zoomorphic ornaments. More elaborate game boards such as the four interred in the eastern ancillary chamber (*dong er shi* 東耳室) and eastern lateral chamber (*dong ce shi* 東側室) of Zhao Mo's 趙昧 burial, who reigned as King of Nanyue 南越 from 137 through 122

29 Occasionally, square wooden boards that feature only one of the decisive design elements are also addressed as *liubo* boards. See, for instance, Hubei sheng Bowuguan 1986, 514. The purported board from Yunmeng Tomb No. 45 showed a fairly large V pattern at each of its four corners. As corroborating finds such as tokens or sticks are missing, I have not taken this board into account. However, some archaeological reports are indeed sensitive to the fact that not all square objects recovered from tombs need necessarily be *liubo* boards. The author of the description of a 19.5 x 19.5 cm glazed pottery square retrieved from Tomb No. 8 (dated early 3rd century CE) at Liujiaqu in Henan province was keenly aware of the object's formal similarity to *liubo* boards, but clearly pointed out that the artifact's plain surface was not embellished by any ornamentation; see Huanghe Shuiku Kaogu Gongzuodui 1965, 145. A plain "game board" (*qi pan* 棋盤) is also attested for Tomb No. 53 at Echeng, Hubei province; see Hubei sheng Echeng xian Bowuguan 1983, 247.

30 See the lists provided by Zheng Yan'e 2002, 89–92; Huang Ruxuan 2010, 57; and Tab. 1–3 below. With two boards from Wangchengpo 望城坡, Hunan province and one object discovered in Tomb No. 2 at Daishu 岱墅 in Shandong province, Tab. 1 includes two sites not mentioned by Zheng and Huang. Moreover, a late 2nd century CE stone chamber tomb at Shilipu near Xuzhou in Jiangsu province yielded a *liubo* board (36 x 36 cm). So far, it is the only known find retrieved from a burial that dates from the Eastern Han period. The grave, however, was severely looted and contained barely any artifacts. It has therefore not been included in the present analysis. See Jiangsu sheng Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1966, 80.

Tab. 3 below lists two *liubo* boards – the item found at Ruicheng, Shanxi province only exhibits a T and L pattern – that supposedly date from the early Eastern Han period. However, no excavation report has been published so far; see Li Baiqin 2003; Jiang Zhilong 2008. Tab. 1 includes a ceramic board that was retrieved from the aforementioned late Eastern Han tomb at Shilipu. The board only features L and V figures. In this instance, the L replaced the usual Ts at the central square; see Jiangsu sheng Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1966, 80.

BCE, at Guangzhou 廣州 (Figs. 8 and 9) were originally equipped with metal fittings. Yet, all that remained from the wooden boards were thirteen golden, four silver, and several gilded bronze applications. The larger item of the two boards that emerged from the ancillary chamber originally stood on four bronze feet that are shaped like bird of prey talons with ivory shafts (i. e. legs).[31]

Liubo boards came in materials other than wood as well. At least two bronze boards, three stone boards, and five ceramic boards are known to exist so far. In contrast to the wooden, stone, and bronze boards, the ceramic boards were not part of tomb assemblages, but exclusive to settlement sites.[32] The fact that game boards differed in material, size, shape, and decoration has prompted some scholars to contend that they evolved over time and became increasingly standardized.[33] If we accept Bai Yunxiang's 白雲翔 interpretation of a board that surfaced from a kiln at the Western Han (206 BCE–9 CE) capital Chang'an 長安, the contention of a straightforward trajectory – from simple ceramic boards to elaborate wood and stone boards – appears to be overstating the case. Bai asserted that the Chang'an board was used by craftsmen, who worked at the kiln to pass the time.[34] Given that artisans of low financial means resorted to engraving the TLV pattern on pottery tiles, while extremely rich burials such as Mawangdui No. 3 and Zhao Mo's tomb yielded highly valuable game boards, the choice of game board essentially seems to have been a matter of economic means.

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31 Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1991, 66–67; for more information on Zhao Mo, see Loewe 2000, 707.

Game boards whose decoration exceeded the obligatory TLV patterns were, for instance, yielded by Tomb No. 3 at Mawangdui, Tomb No. 101 at Yaozhuang (Jiangsu province), Tomb No. 1 at Fangwanggang, and Tomb No. 19 at Sanjiaowei (both Anhui province). See Hunan sheng Bowuguan 2004, 163; Yangzhou Bowuguan 1988, 24; Anhui sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2007, 58; and Anhui sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1993, 21. Also, see Tab. 1 and 2 below.

32 See Tab. 1–3 below. At least one additional ceramic board has been published in Juliano 2005. It is said to have been excavated in 1975 at Zhangqiu, Shandong province, and kept at the collection of the Zhangqiu Municipal Museum, but references to excavation reports are missing. It is thus unclear whether this Western Han artifact came to light in a tomb or a settlement site. Its designation "tile" allows for both possibilities as tiles were used to panel floors and/or walls of tombs and buildings alike. This choice of denomination might also point to the fact that these kinds of "boards" not necessarily served as game boards, but rather were decorative elements. Considering the rather crudely incised TLV pattern on the findings included in Tab. 3 below, it is, however, more likely that they were indeed used as game boards.

33 See, for instance, Tseng 2004, 173–174; Huang Ruxuan 2010.

34 See Bai Yunxiang 2008, 61.

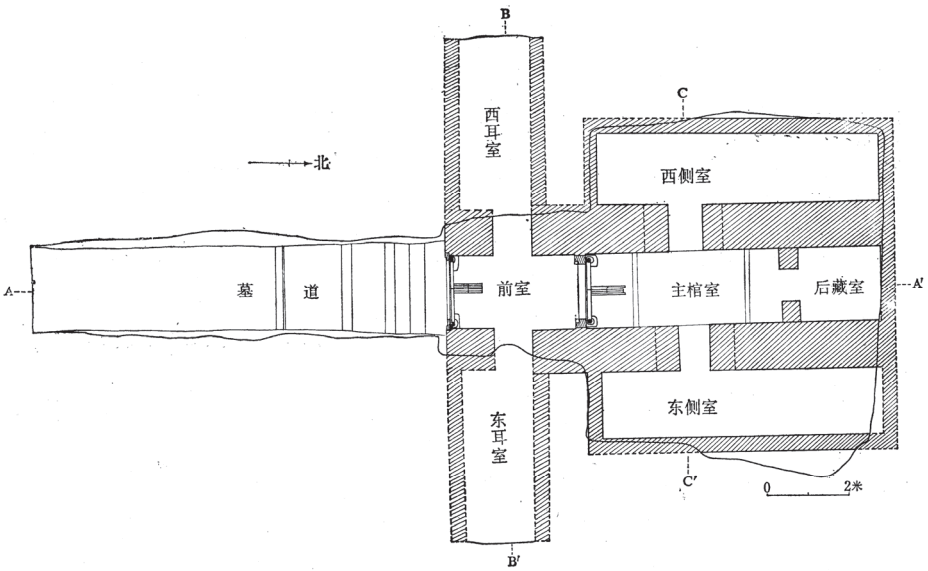

Fig. 8: Stone chamber tomb of Zhao Mo, King of Nanyue (r. 137–122 BCE) at Guangzhou (After: Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1991, 10, Fig. 5)

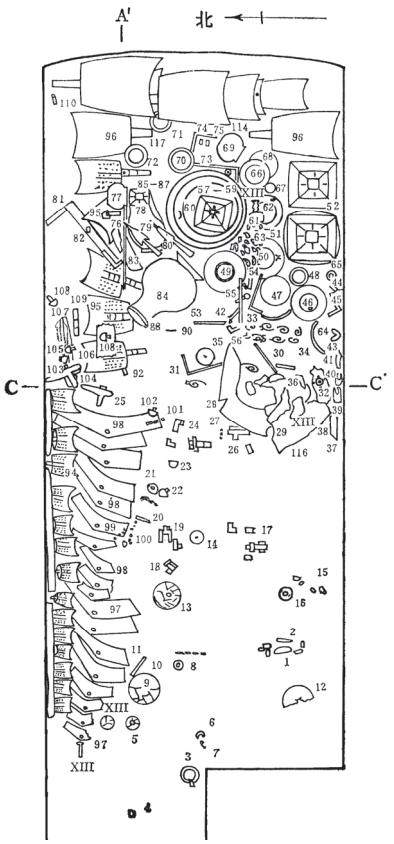

Fig. 9: Musical instruments, food container, drinking vessels, and remnants of two *liubo* boards (nos. 30, 31, 53, 73, and 81) in the eastern ancillary chamber of Zhao Mo's tomb at Guangzhou (After: Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1991, 38, Fig. 26)

The captions of Tables 1 through 3 already indicate that the standards of documentation of archaeological data vary considerably. Table 1 lists a total of twenty-five burials for which line drawings of tomb plans were available that enabled me to reconstruct the exact positions of *liubo* boards within clusters of associated finds. Such object arrangements were not at all random, but followed an intentional pattern. Burial goods were deposited in the same way they were used during the occupant's lifetime. The twenty-five tombs in Table 1, consequently, are the material basis of my analysis. Excavation reports that introduced the tombs compiled in Table 2 either mention *liubo* boards (and related paraphernalia) solely in their short descriptions of excavated artifacts, or they depict *liubo* boards in tomb plans but do not provide keys that would allow us to identify the surrounding objects.[35]

Moreover, an exceptional find requires some explanation: In 1972, a four-legged bronze *liubo* board, four nine-to-ten centimeter tall figurines of seated men (i.e. mat weights), and about 270 other bronze artifacts along with the remains of a roughly twenty-five year old man were unearthed near Putuo 普馱 in Guangxi 廣西 province. What makes this discovery truly special is the fact that it was not a regular tomb. The grave goods and human bones were not placed in a wooden coffin, as was customary at the time (the burial probably dates from the late 3rd to early 2nd century BCE), but deposited in four large bronze drums. This is clearly a secondary burial. Following the body's decomposition, the bones of the deceased had been collected and were reburied in the drums. Since the objects and bones were haphazardly piled into the drums, this particular game board was not suitable for this study.[36]

From a methodological perspective, two factors might also theoretically preclude some of the burials listed in Table 1 from figuring into my analysis. First, there are disturbances. Whether they were caused by environmental influences such as floods or earthquakes or human interference in the course of, say, construction work, they may have altered the original position of grave goods. This means that correlating *liubo* boards and paraphernalia with objects in their immediate vicinity would no longer be tenable. However, the tomb assemblages of the three disturbed burials recorded in Table 1 (marked by the phrase "dist." in the column "Looted") appear to have not been affected by any damage to the tomb structure. Second, there are diminished tomb as-

35 The latter only applies for Tomb No. 8 at Fenghuangshan; see Changjiang Liuyu Dierqi Wenwu Kaogu Gongzuo Renyuan Xunlianban 1974, 43 (fig. 8), 50–51.

36 Guangxi Zhuangzu Zizhiqu Wenwu Gongzuodui 1978(2), 43–44. The four bronze figurines may very well have been used as mat weights. However, it is not entirely certain whether they were indeed used in the context of *liubo* games as Sofukawa (1988, 30–32) has suggested. For instance, they may also have been used to hold down seating mats; see n. 23 above.

semblages due to looting. There is no way of knowing how many and what kinds of objects were originally placed in the tomb. It might seem contradictory, then, that Table 1 presents quite a number of looted burials. But in none of these cases did the robbers reach the compartments in which *liubo* paraphernalia were stored.[37]

The very mention of the existence of compartments raises the question of mortuary architecture and its prevalent interpretation. Except for the rock-cut and stone-slab tombs of a certain Liu Zhi 劉治 at Cuipingshan 翠屏山 in Jiangsu province and Zhao Mo 趙昧, all burials under review were constructed as vertical shaft pits featuring wooden chambers (*guo* 槨) at the pit soles. Wooden partition walls divided the interiors of the chambers into two to seven smaller compartments. One compartment always housed the coffin of mostly one or occasionally two occupants (Figs. 6 and 7),[38] while the remaining compartments were stocked with burial goods. The distribution of tomb assemblages followed a distinct pattern as items of similar function were put together in groups that were spatially separated from other object clusters. The more sections a chamber exhibited, the clearer the reasoning behind such behavior: The individual compartments represented rooms of different functions that were common in residential quarters above ground.[39] A tomb inventory (*qiance*) written on a bamboo slip from Tomb No. 2 at Baoshan 包山 (dated ca. 317 BCE) in Hubei province even refers to the compartment in which it was deposited as a "dining hall" (*shi shi* 食室). What is more, this entire section of the tomb was indeed furnished with a table, numerous food and beverage containers as well as tableware.[40] The symbolism of underground houses was further magnified by doors and windows that were actually built into or painted onto the partition walls of numerous

37 See, for instance, Changsha shi Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2010, 19 (fig. 6).

38 One burial good compartment in addition to the coffin compartment is attested at Shuihudi 睡虎地 Tomb No. 11 (fig. 6), five at Mawandui Tomb No. 3 (fig. 7) and six at Tomb No. 1 at Xinyang 信陽, Henan province (dated roughly mid to late 5th century BCE). See Xiaogan Diqu Dierqi Yigong Yinong Wenwu Kaogu Xunlianban 1976, 2; Hunan sheng Bowuguan 2004, 31–41; Henan sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1986, 5–14.

The chambers at Yaozhuang Tomb No. 101 and Dongyang Tomb No. 7 (both Jiangsu province), for instance, were occupied by the remains of two human beings; see Yangzhou Bowuguan 1988, 19–20, and Nanjing Bowuguan 1979.

39 See, for instance, Poo 1998, 165; Lewis 2006, 119–121; Cook 2006, 55–63, Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens 2009, 950–951; Erickson 2010, 14; Wu 2011, 38–40.

For a slightly different interpretation that views late pre-imperial and early imperial "underground homes" as way stations to the afterlife, see Lai 2005; Lai 2015.

40 Cook 2006, 55, 212–215. For a list of finds preserved in the "dining hall," i.e. the eastern compartment, of Baoshan Tomb No. 2, see Hubei sheng Jing Sha Tielu Kaogudui 1991, 70–74, 84–87.

chambers.[41] Thus, correlating *liubo* boards with the finds that were directly associated with them reveals the social situations in which *liubo* games were usually embedded.[42]

Tables 4 and 5 highlight that the game boards under review were commonly accompanied by tables or trays (*an* 案), armrests (*ji* 幾), different kinds of beverage containers and drinking vessels, food containers, and serving utensils. In addition, more elaborate burials such as Mawangdui Tomb No. 3, Tianxingguan 天星觀 Tomb No. 2, and Zhangji Tuanshan 張集團山 Tomb No. 1 brought to light full sets of bells and/or lithophones along with string and/or wind instruments for musical entertainment.[43] Although less prominently, the notion of feasts that combined music and the consumption of food and drink was also present in Tombs No. 1 at Fangwanggang 放王崗, Anhui province, and No. 43 at Longshenggang 龍勝崗 in Guangzhou, each of which contained several instruments.[44]

All in all, the composition and arrangement of tomb assemblages in compartments with *liubo* boards resemble banquet settings. This was particularly evident in Zhao Mo's tomb, whose eastern ancillary chamber housed two sets of bronze bells, a lithophone, a drum, the remains of three zithers (one *qin* 琴 and two *se* 瑟), various food and drink

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41 Wu 2011, 22; Cook 2006, 14. For examples of partition walls that featured doors and/or windows among the tombs listed in Tab. 1, see Yangzhou Bowuguan 1988, 19–20 (appears as Yangzhou Tomb No. 101, Jiangsu province in Tab. 1); Hubei sheng Jingzhou Bowuguan 2000, 15–17, 47–48 (Gaotai Tombs No. 2 and 33, Hubei province); Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1957, 144 (Longshenggang Tomb No. 43, Guangzhou); Jiangsu sheng Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1966, 413 (Dongyang Tomb No. 7, Jiangsu province), Linyi shi Bowuguan 1989, 23, 27 (Jinqueshan Tombs No. 31 and 33, Shandong province; the purported "doors" measured only 40 and 21 cm respectively in height); Xiaogan Diqu Dierqi Yigong Yinong Wenwu Kaogu Xunlianban 1976, 2 (Shuihudi Tomb No. 11, Hubei province).

42 Numerous tomb chambers were flooded at the time of excavation, especially in humid provinces such Anhui, Jiangsu, Hubei, and Hunan. Thus, objects of comparable little specific gravity such as lacquer wares and wooden artifacts often were not encountered at the original deposition spot. Some objects freely floated around the chamber as it was the case at Tomb No. 2 at Gaotai, Hubei province; see Hubei sheng Jingzhou Bowuguan 2000, 19. Unlike this exceptional case, finds were usually contained inside the compartments in which they were deposited by partition walls. The latter often extended all the way up to the chamber ceiling. Thus, the general symbolic integrity of a room designated by its finds remained intact.

43 For references to Mawangdui Tomb No. 3, see n. 24 above; for Tianxingguan Tomb No. 2 and Zhangji Tuanshan Tomb No. 1, see Hubei sheng Jingzhou Bowuguan 2003, 31–32, 167; Nanjing Bowuyuan 1992, 480 (fig. 4.3), 487, 489–490.

44 Anhui sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2007, fig. 4 (no. 277; should correctly read 276), 67–68; Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1957, 150.

containers, and some weapons (Figs. 8 and 9).[45] As Table 5 illustrates, bows and swords seem to have been favorite items for display in these designated entertainment areas. One might very well argue that such feasts were ritual events that incorporated *liubo* divinations. Yet, the archaeological evidence suggests otherwise. Some tombs that consist of more than one single compartment exhibited separate "ritual rooms" similar to the "dining room" mentioned above. Burials that lacked internal subdivisions often accumulated fairly large quantities of bronze ritual vessels at a single location away from the *liubo* paraphernalia. We may, therefore, confidently address these as separate "ritual spaces."[46]

To sum up, the mortuary data under review show *liubo* boards to have been components of profane social gatherings, where food, drink, and musical entertainment served as the backdrop for *liubo* games. Ritual areas that were spatially detached from these "feasting and game zones" indicate that *liubo* games primarily served the personal amusement of the deceased and their guest(s). It is no coincidence that additional finds – such as so-called "mountain/hill censers" (*boshan lu* 博山爐) that have been attributed supernatural functions in the past – are completely missing from these settings.[47] Save for one exception, the ideologically highly charged TLV mirrors (which, as mentioned earlier, scholarship has linked to divination and the quest for immortality) were likewise absent from the banquet scenes.[48]

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45 Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1991, 38, 39–46. It should be mentioned, though, that musical instruments are missing from the burial good assemblage in the eastern lateral chamber in which the remnants of two more *liubo* board were found (p. 251). See Tab. 4 and 5 below.

46 The latter was, for instance, the case in Fangwanggang Tomb No. 1 (north of the nested coffins); see Anhui sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2007, fig. 4. In addition, the southern compartment at Yaozhuang Tomb No. 101 contained a variety of "ritual bronzes," see Yangzhou Bowuguan 1988, 70 (fig. 3). Judging from the finds that remained behind after the looting of Tomb No. 2 at Tianxingguan, i. e. four bronze tripods, two cylindrical lacquered cups, two lacquered ladles, and one bronze spoon, its southwestern compartment was mostly stocked with so-called ritual vessels; see Hubei sheng Jingzhou Bowuguan 2003, 30 (fig. 14).

47 Scholarship commonly relates the appearance and use of "mountain censers" to the search for immortality that grew widely popular in the higher echelons of society around the time of Wudi of the Western Han (r. 141–87 BCE). See, for instance, Erickson 1992, 15–20; Rawson 2006, 77–78, 82; Schäffler-Gerken 2003, 127–129.

48 In general, only three tombs that contained *liubo* boards also brought TLV mirrors to light; an observation that in itself already weakens the divinatory functions of both groups of objects to some extent. Should game boards and mirrors really have served primarily divinatory purposes, much more instances of combinations thereof could be expected. Zhao Mo's tomb, for instance, contained numerous mirrors, among them several that featured the TLV design. All in all seven bronze mirrors were discovered together with the *liubo* boards in the eastern ancil-

2.2 Abstractions of the Game: *Liubo* in Other Media

Unfortunately, the poor quality of the available archaeological data themselves or their documentation in published excavation reports prevents a thorough analysis of depictions of *liubo* boards and the TLV pattern in other media. Objects that, in theory, would be eligible for closer scrutiny are either part of museum and private collections or originate from severely looted tombs. In any event, they all lack reliable information as to their individual dates and provenance. For instance, a ceramic miniature model that comprises of three figurines, a *liubo* board, six sticks, and a vase in the British Museum collection "is reputed to have been found near Loyang." Apart from this vague information, nothing more is known about this widely cited model.[49] Since many looted tombs were almost devoid of grave goods at the time of excavation, published data remain limited. At best, excavation reports publish rubbings or line drawings of *liubo* depictions on stone sarcophagi, stone slabs, or bricks. Such pictorial representations of various motifs became increasingly common in brick chamber tombs from the late 1st century CE onward.

Liubo and pictorial representations in tombs

So far, very few stone sarcophagi that feature TLV patterns have been unearthed. They date roughly from the late 1st century BCE through the early 3rd century CE and are generally believed to be some kind of talisman that either protected the tomb occupants or aided them in attaining immortality in the afterlife.[50] Considerably more instances are

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lary chamber; none of which bore the TLV pattern; see Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1991, 38, 50–57. Liu Zhi's tomb at Cuipingshan (dated early to mid-2nd century BCE) and Yaozhuang Tomb No. 101 (both Jiangsu province) produced one TLV mirror each. The latter item (M101:2) is the only mirror that was found in the same compartment as the *liubo* board. The mirror was stored in a lacquered box that was part of the banquet setting; see Yangzhou Bowuguan 1988, 21 (fig. 3.2), 26. The former mirror technically did not even belong to Liu Zhi, who was identified by a jade seal, as it was not retrieved from the lateral burial chamber itself. In fact, it did accompany the remains of a second individual that was interred in the vertical shaft that led down to the lateral chamber. The TLV mirror was encountered inside a mostly degraded lacquered wooden coffin, next to feet of the occupant and a ceramic vase; see Xuzhou Bowuguan 2008, 13 (fig. 3.47), 21.

49 Hobson 1934. Also see www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?partid=1&assetid=447645001&objectid=227768 (last accessed on August 2, 2017); Rudolph 1950.

50 Zheng 2012; Tseng 2004, 202. In addition to the sarcophagus discovered at Guitoushan that has already been discussed in the introductory remarks above, Zheng and Tseng both cite sarcophagi from Linyi 臨沂 and Zaozhuang 棗莊 (both Shandong province); see Zheng's nn. 18–19 (p. 70) and Tseng's n. 91 (p. 202) for references. Several slightly different motifs were

known of *liubo* scenes engraved in low relief on stone slabs or impressed on fired clay bricks. Both kinds of materials were used to line the interiors of complex brick tomb structures with vaulted ceilings that roughly date from the early 1st through early 3rd centuries CE. Occasionally, TLV stone carvings served as lintels of tomb entrances.[51] In all of these cases, the *liubo* game motifs were part of larger narratives, whose significance has yet to be explored in a comprehensive and systematic study.[52] Thus, scholarship has focused on individual *liubo* scenes that were not only taken out of their original contexts, but also largely analyzed in isolation from similar motifs in other tombs. As will be demonstrated below, the singling out of selected depictions has led to a distortion of the actual situation. I contend that looking at *liubo* games as a recurring theme yields more accurate conclusions.

My discussion above shows that *liubo* scenes are usually perceived as competitions between immortals (*xian ren* 仙人) and humans or immortals and immortals. This view is mainly based on isolated finds such as the inscribed stone sarcophagus from Guitoushan in Sichuan province. Tracing all references to *liubo* in Käte Finsterbusch's highly useful *Verzeichnis und Motivindex der Han-Darstellungen*, however, clearly reveals it to be misperception.[53] Among the sixty-five *liubo* depictions the author compiled in the book,

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included in Käte Finsterbusch's fairly comprehensive four volume collection of Han period pictorial art. In nine cases she addresses two (winged) anthropomorphic figures at the side of square boards that were depicted on the surfaces of stone sarcophagi as *liubo*-playing humans/immortals (see the ensuing discussion below).

51 Finsterbusch 1966 and 1971, nos. 26, 32, 49, 118, 143, 148, 153 (all Sichuan province), 261m, 370 (both Shandong province), 260a (Yunnan province), 415 (Shaanxi province), 542, 545 (both Jiangsu province), 786, 789 (unknown provenance), and 1001 (Henan province). Furthermore, see Finsterbusch 2000 and 2004, nos. A 48, A 92, A 94, A 128, A 170, A 248 (all Sichuan province), C 5, C 23, C 56, C 94, C 99, C 100, C 116, C 122, C 160, C 168, C 175, C 183, C 190, C 207 (all Jiangsu province), E 172 (mural), E 385 (both Henan province), O 41, O 45, O 50b, O 125, O 139, O 247, O 252, O 259, O 270, O 287, O 289, O 429, O 430, O 437, O 440, O 479, O 482, O 484, O 485, O 506, O 516, O 518, O 525, O 537, O 544, O 702, and O 741 (all Shandong province); apart from these sixty-five references to *liubo*-playing anthropomorphic figures, no. O 769 (Shandong province) points to a TL(L)V pattern that was engraved on the surface of a stone sarcophagus.

52 Several scholars have tried to explain the phenomenon. However, their efforts were either limited to one particular tomb or individual motifs from several different graves. See, for instance, Wu 1989; Wu 1994; Wu 1995; Wu 2011, 194–201; Powers 1991.

Rudolph 1951 and Finsterbusch 1966–2004 are but collections of various motifs. The authors do not deliver in-depth analyses of the reliefs as a whole.

53 For a complete list of all of Finsterbusch's references to *liubo*, see n. 51 above.

Finsterbusch only speaks of "winged beings" (geflügelte Wesen), "spirits" (Geister), or "immortals" (Genien *xian*) in nine cases.[54]

More importantly, though, even these nine illustrations of supernatural beings are open to interpretation, as the Guitoushan relief (A 170) was the only *liubo* scene that was accompanied by the caption "immortals [playing] the *bo* [game]" (*xian ren bo* 先[仙]人博). Three of the remaining eight examples emerged from three different tombs at Xinjin 新津, also in Sichuan province (Fig. 10). They portrayed players that exhibited protrusions from their shoulders, which Finsterbusch viewed as wings. Such wings, in turn, mark the figures as immortals. They enjoy a *liubo* game under a Cassia Tree (*gui shu* 桂樹), which is yet another symbol of immortality.[55] In addition, the three motifs are stylistically nearly identical. Fairly similar shaped immortals appeared on a brick relief (A 128) that was retrieved from a tomb at in Peng county 彭縣 of Sichuan province prior to 1949. The motif, however, lacks a *liubo* board and only outlines six (?) sticks on top of a square shape that stretches in front of the two kneeling figures.[56] Since characteristic features are missing, Finsterbusch herself was reluctant to identify the two players that gathered around a square board on the side of another stone sarcophagus as immortals (A 92). The carvings on a second stone coffin from the same tomb in Pi 郫 county of Sichuan province were less ambiguous. The *liubo* players share the scene with several symbols of immortality such as a hare and a toad, a three-legged raven, a nine-tailed fox, and the so-called Queen Mother of the West (*Xiwangmu* 西王母). Moreover, the entire scene is located on top of a high mountain that elevates the protagonists close to the celestial realm (A 94). The motif A 248, in turn, is ambivalent, not least because the "wings" of the kneeling players look more like flowing parts of their garments. More significantly, the rubbing does not show any meaningful pattern on the surface of the square board. Originally, the latter indeed may have featured the TLV pattern and six sticks, but the brick was too poorly preserved to allow for an unambiguous conclusion. Quite the opposite holds true for the last of the nine immortal *liubo* players that is recorded in Finsterbusch's four volumes. The rubbing of a brick unearthed from a tomb near modern-day Zhanglou 張樓 in Henan province (1001) unmistakably shows two winged humans, six sticks on the surface of a mat, and a square board boasting the TLV design.

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54 Finsterbusch 1966 and 1971, nos. 118, 143, 148 (all Sichuan province), 1001 (Henan province); Finsterbusch 2000 and 2004, nos. A 92, A 94, A 128, A 170, A 248 (all Sichuan province).

55 Finsterbusch 1966 and 1971, nos. 118, 143, 148; Finsterbusch 2006, 47, 53.

56 Finsterbusch 2000 and 2004, A 128; for additional information on the date and circumstances of discovery, see Sichuan sheng Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1983, 899–900.

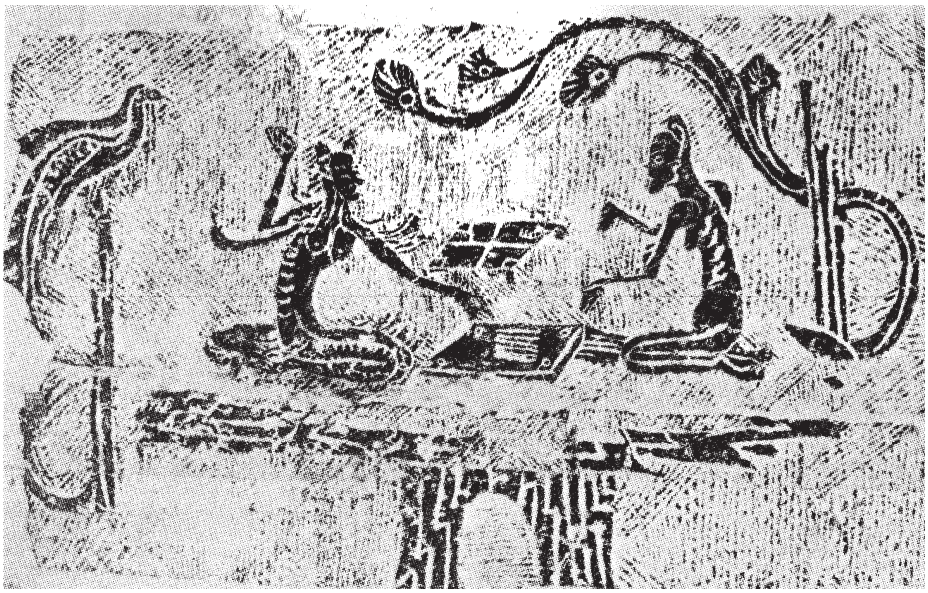

Fig. 10: Rubbing of *liubo*-playing "winged beings" (*yu ren*) that were engraved on a stone chest from an Eastern Han tomb at Xinjin, Sichuan province (After: Finsterbusch 1971, 148)

Based on these observations, several crucial points may be made. First and foremost, *liubo* scenes on stone slabs and clay bricks, once again, were representations of a mundane game. The vast majority of the sixty-five *liubo* scenes published in Finsterbusch's *Motivindex* are either part of larger festivities or more private gatherings that were mainly set in domestic environments in which food, drink, and musical entertainment played a prominent role. Most anthropomorphic figures in these scenes are not immortals but actual human beings. Eight out of the nine scenes that are somewhat linked to immortality not only stem from Sichuanese tombs, but are restricted to five locations. It seems as if depictions of *liubo* playing immortals became a local phenomenon in some parts of Eastern Han Sichuan.

The nature of the depicted game boards is another subject that deserves some attention. Mostly due to the poor condition of the stone reliefs, it is not always possible to determine the exact patterns on the square boards (Fig. 11). Some clearly display the TLV design (occasionally with minor variations) often in combination with six sticks that lay on separate squares.[57] However, the surfaces of other boards only show several lines

57 Finsterbusch 1966 and 1971, nos. 26, 148, 153, 370, 789, 1001; Finsterbusch 2000 and 2004, nos. A 170, C 5, C 94 (?), C 99, C 100, C 116, C 168, C 175, E 172, O 41, O 50b, O 125, O 247, O 252, O 270, O 287, O 289, O 429, O 437, O 440, O 479, O 482, O 484, O 485, O 516 (?), O 544 (?).

(sticks?)[58] or plain boards.[59] At least one purported *liubo* scene includes no board whatsoever.[60] It follows that not all of the sixty-five scenes necessarily portray *liubo* games.

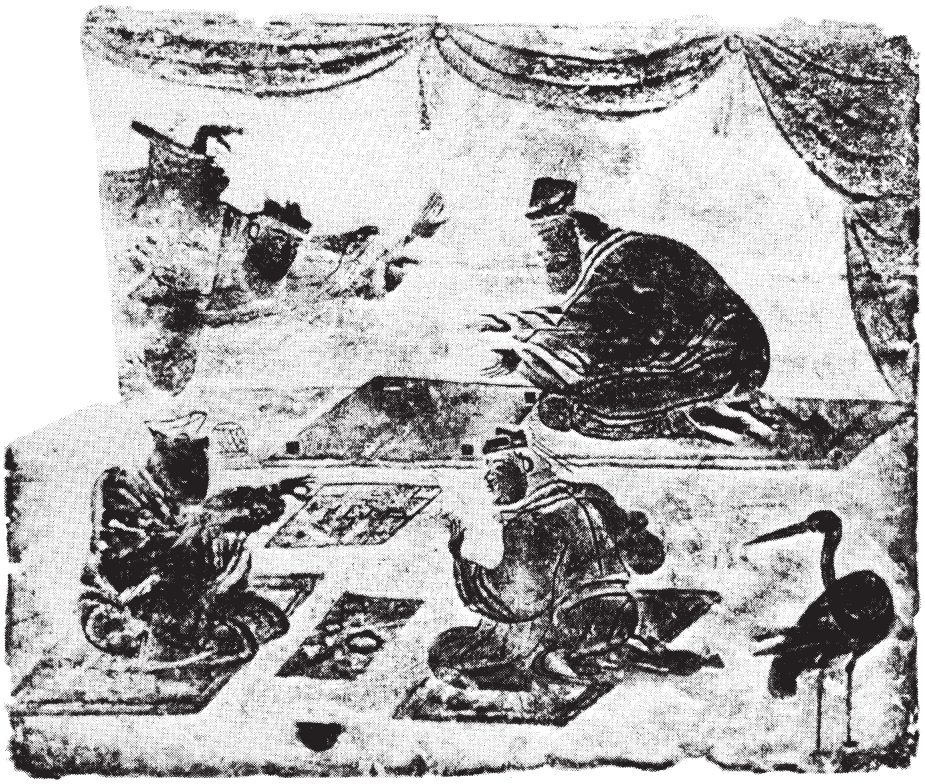

Fig. 11: Rubbing of human *liubo* players illustrated on a tile from an Eastern Han tomb at Chengdu, Sichuan province (After: Finsterbusch 1971, No. 26)

Liubo and miniature models

Besides pictorial representations, at least seventeen ceramic models and one wooden miniature model of anthropomorphic *liubo* players similar to the one kept at the British Museum are known. It is unfortunate that only three out of the seventeen artifacts stem from

58 Finsterbusch 1966 and 1971, nos. 49, 143, 260a; Finsterbusch 2000 and 2004, nos. A 94, A 128, O 525, O 537.

59 Finsterbusch 1966 and 1971, Nos. 153, 415, 542, 786; Finsterbusch 2000 and 2004, nos. A 248, C 23, C 56, C 122, C 160, C 183 (possible mat weights at the corners of a square shape), C 190, C 207, E 385, O 45, O 139, O 259, O 430, O 506, O 518, O 702, O 741.

60 Finsterbusch 1966 and 1971, no. 32.

archaeological excavations; the remaining fourteen are of unknown provenance and are now preserved in museums or private collections.[61] One of the archaeologically verified finds emerged from Tomb No. 3 at Zhangwan 張灣 in Henan province (Fig. 12). Looters left the grave goods in this multi-chambered vaulted brick tomb dating from the late Eastern Han period in complete disarray. Thus, any spatial correlation with associated finds is meaningless.[62] Conversely, the miniature deposited in Tomb No. 48 at Mozuiui 磨咀子 in Gansu province was neatly placed between the coffins of the male and female occupants of this undisturbed burial (Fig. 13).[63] Both players boast an elaborate moustache. Considering that miniature models were semiotic signs that faithfully represented important elements in the lives of the deceased,[64] this diorama likely signified the male occupant's penchant for *liubo*. In the same vein, *liubo* games were also considered a welcome distraction from the hardships (or boredom?) of military life. This is suggested by four ceramic miniature men who sit across from each other at the respective sides of a ceramic *liubo* board and a mat with six sticks. The tableau occupied the second floor of a ceramic model of a three-story watchtower recovered from Tomb No. 73 at Liujiaqu 劉家渠 in Henan province (dated early 3rd century CE).[65]

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61 The website "babelstone.blogspot.de/2009/05/lost-game-of-liubo-part-1-funerary.html" (last accessed on March 9, 2017) compiles thirteen actual sets that each comprise two or three figurines and a board; it also features four figurines that are seated around a *liubo* board inside the model of a model watchtower that was yielded by an Eastern Han tomb at Liujiaqu (see discussion below). In addition, a short report on two ceramic figurines plus game board has been published. It states that both finds were excavated from Tomb No. 10 at Jiyuan 濟源, but no further information on the burial are given. See Hu Chenglao 2007. Moreover, a rather similar watchtower to the one found at Liujiaqu was illustrated by Mackenzie 2004, 121, fig. 10.10. Apparently, the object was a gift to the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Kentucky; its provenance is unknown. For comments on the artifact held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, see n. 66 below. At last, one glazed ceramic model combining two figurines seated at the sides of a square *liubo* board is exhibited by the Portland Art Museum, Oregon (personal observation on March 14, 2013).

62 Henan sheng Bowuguan 1975, 80.

63 Gansu sheng Bowuguan 1972, 9 (fig. 1.9), 14.

64 Selbitschka 2015, 38.

65 Huanghe Shuiku Kaogu Gongzuodui 1965, 134–135. An anecdote recorded in *Huainanzi* 18 (Zhang Shuangdi 1999, 1930; Major et al. 2010, 753) and *Liezi* 列子 8 (Yang Bojun 1979, 262–263) describes the *liubo* game, along with music and alcohol, as part of festivities that were held "atop a tower" (*lou shang* 樓上).

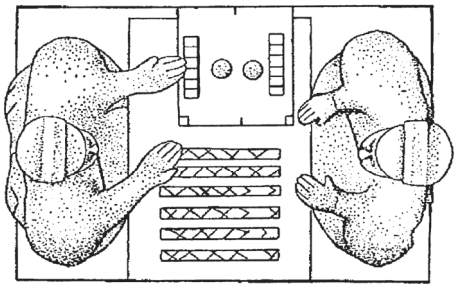


Fig. 12: Ceramic model of two *liubo* players yielded by Tomb No. 3 at Zhangwan, Henan province (dated early 3rd century CE) (After: Henan sheng Bowuguan 1975, 81, Fig. 5).

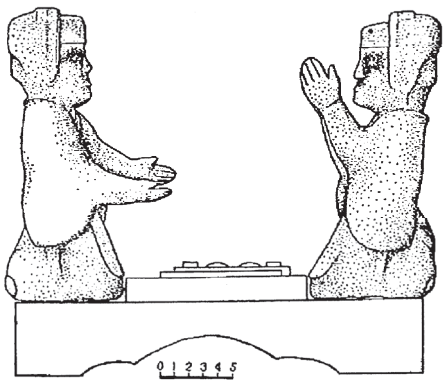
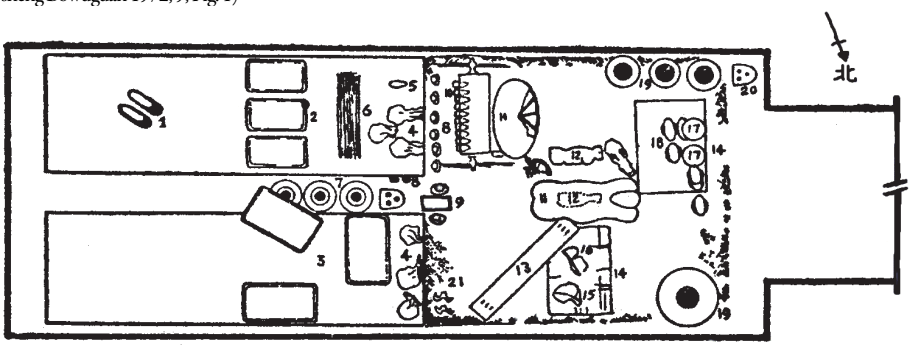


Fig. 13: Wooden model of two *liubo* players (no. 9) that was placed between the two coffins in Tomb No. 48 at Mozuizi, Gansu province (dated early 1st century CE) (After: Gansu sheng Bowuguan 1972, 9, Fig. 1)



Indeed, not all of the men associated with purported *liubo* models necessarily reveled in *liubo* games. Since the TLV pattern is *the* decisive feature of the *liubo* game, its absence on the surfaces of some boards needs to be acknowledged. In fact, only five out of the seventeen models offer clearly visible T, L, and V ornaments;[66] the remaining twelve boards

66 In addition to the Mozuizi and Liujiaqu finds, see nos. 1.13 and 1.14 at "babelstone.blogspot.de/2009/05/lost-game-of-liubo-part-1-funerary.html" (last accessed on March 9, 2017). Even though it is barely detectable on the picture, the fifth item owned by the Royal Ontario Mu-

barely show any of the three elements. Some present V patterns on each of the four corners of the boards, while others show a simple straight line at the position that is usually reserved for the L element. What is more, these boards share a rather uniform layout. We find two disc-like tokens at the centers of the squares and one straight line of six rectangular tokens in front of each of the players. However, we should not put too much stock in such minor differences. Reminding ourselves of *liubo* descriptions in transmitted texts helps to remove any lingering doubts: The "Summons of the Soul" and its 12th century CE commentary stipulate that each player commanded six tokens (*qi*) and two "fishes." The latter were placed at the center of the board and are likely represented by the small discs of the models. In addition, most of the miniatures featured six sticks. In short, despite reasonable grounds for skepticism, all seventeen sets epitomize the *liubo* game. Taking into account that artisans all but neglected the TLV pattern, i.e. the one element that links the *liubo* game to divination, it is highly unlikely that the model sets were symbols of occult practices. This is yet further evidence that *liubo* was considered just a game.

Liubo and bronze mirrors

As I pointed out in the introductory remarks, the rendition of *liubo*-playing immortals on the back of an Eastern Han bronze mirror along with the associated inscription "immortals [playing] *liubo*" paved the way for the supernatural interpretation of the game that has dominated scholarship for decades. I also showed that the mirror continues to be a singular find. Scrutinizing numerous publications on excavated mirrors from all corners of the Chinese mainland reveals nothing more than a) numerous TLV mirrors that lack figurative decoration, b) some mirrors that depict "winged human beings" (*yu ren* 羽人) and no accompanying inscriptions, and c) even fewer mirrors that portray winged humans that are identified as immortals by respective inscriptions.[67] Moreover, a definitive relationship between TLV patterns on mirrors and *liubo* is only suggested by the inscriptions on the aforementioned two mirrors in the collection of the Chinese History Museum in Beijing and the Tokyo National Museum as well as the mirror unearthed from Yinwan Tomb No. 4. If the latter had been found in an extraordinary position inside the tomb, one might argue that it fulfilled a special function. Since neither a tomb plan nor a complete

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seum in Toronto (no. 1.8) also displays at least a V pattern at each corners of the game board. The set numbered 2.1 – it is held by the Metropolitan Museum in New York – is not included among the five findings as its figurines and TLV patterned board originally were not part of one single ensemble.

67 Cheng Linquan and Han Guohe 2002; Shaanxi sheng Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1959; Sichuan sheng Bowuguan 1960; Zhang Ying 1990; Wu Shuicun 1993; Guangxi Zhuangzu Zizhiqu Bowuguan 2004; Kong Xianxing and Liu Yiman 1992.

inventory of the burial goods excavated from Yinwan Tomb No. 4 is available, the actual spot in which the mirror was found remains unclear. Yet, the vast majority of contemporary finds indicates that this particular mirror was also most likely regarded as a fairly mundane toiletry accessory.

Liubo and ceramic tiles

Apart from Eastern Han stone engravings, ceramic models, and bronze mirrors, the TLV pattern appears either engraved or imprinted on the surfaces of five ceramic tiles. One of these tiles was discussed earlier in the subsection "Actual *liubo* game boards." The ceramic square with a crudely incised TLV design was unearthed at a Chang'an kiln. Three more tiles came to light at different kilns of the ancient Western Han capital.[68] Bai Yunxiang thus asserts that some palace officials and artisans were devotees of the *liubo* game.[69] Seeing that the respective TLV patterns also give the impression of ad hoc incisions, it seems more likely that craftsmen rather than arguably more sophisticated bureaucrats competed on these fairly modest boards. However, again, as additional archaeological data are missing, it cannot be ruled out that the boards were applied in divinatory practices or produced at the kiln as construction material for tombs.

An ornamentally more elaborate tile is only known from an exhibition catalogue. Although the object description states that it was excavated at Zhangqiu 張丘 in Shandong province in 1975, there is no reference in the book to an excavation report. The surface of the nearly square item (26 x 25 cm) is adorned by a TLV pattern, four long-legged birds (cranes?), and the outlines of nine *wuzhu* 五銖 coins in high relief. The *wuzhu* ornaments were presumably crucial for dating the tile to the Western Han period (206 BCE–9 CE).[70] Since the object lacks any kind of archaeological context, it is impossible to determine whether it actually served as a game board or was part of a tomb structure as comparable tiles were regularly installed as flooring or wall paneling in brick chamber tombs from the 1st century CE onward.[71]

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68 Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1996(1), 168, 234; Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1996(2), 28.

69 See Bai Yunxiang 2008, 60–61.

70 The exhibition "Providing for the Afterlife: Brilliant Artifacts from Shandong" was held at the China Institute Art Gallery in New York City in 2005. For the object description, see Juliano 2005. Searching the major archaeological journals from 1975 to 1978, i.e. roughly the period during which a report would likely have been published, for an excavation report did not yield any results.

71 Juliano 2005; Liu 2005, 24. See also the discussion above.

Liubo and ceramic vessels

Supposedly, the TLV design was also inscribed on the lower part of a ceramic pot unearthed from Tomb No. 28203 at Ta'erpo 塔兒坡 near Xianyang 咸陽 in Shaanxi province. Since over one hundred tombs at the cemetery date from the Warring States to the Qin (221–206 BCE) periods, this find has been hailed as the first TLV pattern used by Qin people. Renditions of the TLV design on artifacts that are not inherently associated with gaming obviously invite speculation about the artifact's purported supernatural functions.[72] However, the incised ornament actually bears little resemblance with the common TLV pattern. Its four individual parts are more akin to the Chinese character *gong* 工 than the letter T, while any other elements are completely missing from the decoration. The fact that four T/工-shapes are arranged along the four sides of a square does not suffice to identify the motif as a fully-fledged TLV design. Taking into account that some comparable pots at the Ta'erpo necropolis displayed incised marks that either refer to the artisan that produced them or were intended as decoration, it seems more likely that the purported T/工(LV) pattern was indeed the personal tag of a craftsmen.[73]

To summarize, scrutinizing representations of *liubo* boards and TLV patterns on various kinds of media has again illustrated that *liubo* primarily was perceived as a pastime. Neither the ceramic tiles that boasted the TLV design nor miniature models of competing figurines indicate that divinatory practices were connected with the game. Notions of the supernatural only came into play in the context of a small number of Eastern Han bronze mirrors and pictorial scenes in tombs. If we take as somewhat conclusive evidence a single mirror that portrays and identifies *liubo*-playing immortals by an inscription and three mirrors – two of which are of doubtful provenance – that establish a link between their TLV patterns and *liubo* through inscriptions, one can hardly claim that the idea of transmitting supernatural powers by means of *liubo* competitions had wide currency. The same holds true for purported immortals featured in *liubo* scenes on pictorial stone slabs and bricks. This is all the more obvious if we consider that the close bonds between *liubo* and immortals on such architectural elements of Eastern Han vaulted brick chamber tombs were essentially a local Sichuanese phenomenon. If people in ancient China ever truly associated the game with occult practices, it was a) an idea that gained only (little) prominence during the Eastern Han period, and b) a geographically very limited phenomenon. Furthermore, it is uncertain how much actual meaning such depictions were ascribed at the time. Their rather sudden appearance in the archaeological record and a fairly uniform iconographic style suggest that *liubo*-playing immortals had by then become a mere *topos*.

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72 Xie Gaowen and Yue Qi 1997.

73 Xianyang shi Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1998, 108, 109 (fig. 84.1); for incised marks on other pots, see, for instance, items M35157:5 (p. 107) and M18402:4 (p. 108).

3 A Favorite Pastime: *Liubo* as Portrayed in Received Texts

The way scholarship deals with the portrayal of *liubo* in late pre-imperial and early imperial written sources is quite similar to the way it approaches representations of *liubo* in archaeological data. This is to say, the same selective passages are cited over and over in order to support quasi-religious interpretations of the game. Yet, as the following discussion will demonstrate, a comprehensive analysis of early texts paints a significantly different picture.

Liubo and its purported occult qualities in late pre-imperial and early imperial sources

Arguably the most often quoted passage is found in Sima Qian's 司馬遷 (ca. 145–86 BCE) *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Historian*). The historian describes a scene in which King Wuyi 武乙 of the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1045 BCE) competes against a manikin at *liubo*. The effigy was no ordinary substitute for an absent human opponent, though, as the king addressed it as "heavenly spirit" (*tian shen* 天神). He intended to produce an adversary of much greater powers than his own. Lo and behold, Wuyi defeated the "heavenly spirit," but still was not satisfied. He filled the puppet with blood and wrapped it in leather in order to give it a more human-like appearance. More crucially, he then began to humiliate his purported "celestial" opponent by shooting arrows at it. The king proudly proclaimed his actions as "shooting heaven" (*she tian* 射天). Modern commentators generally lose interest after this incident. They rely on this part of the story almost by default when stressing the occult significance of *liubo*. Yet, the anecdote does not end there: Before long, Wuyi ventured out on a hunt and got caught in a horrible storm. Eventually, the sound of a tremendous thunderclap literally scared him to death.[74]

Taking the entire passage into account highlights that the *liubo* game was not at all about transferring celestial powers, as is commonly assumed. Sima Qian used this sequence merely as a rhetorical device to emphasize Wuyi's amoral behavior. Not coincidentally, the historian's narrative immediately proceeds to underline the rapid decline of the royal house of Shang in the wake of Wuyi's demise. To Sima Qian's mind, the king's reprehensible deeds were the beginning of the end of the dynasty. This is underscored by the fact that Wuyi elevated the effigy to the rank of a spirit. The king was always going to win against an inanimate object; he simply wanted to give his "victory" more weight. By defeating a "celestial being" of his own making, he thus demonstrated his own might. In this exchange, Wuyi was *already* more potent than the spirit (i.e. heaven). There was no need to transfer any kind of powers.

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74 *Shiji* 3.104. For modern interpretations of the first part of the passage, see, e.g., Tseng 2004, 188; Zheng Yan'e 2002, 80; Han Yangmin 1986, 352; Fu Juyou 1986, 35; Yang 1952, 138.

It has been argued that the *Shiji* names the *liubo* game along with diviner's board as two modes of divination.[75] However, Sima Qian used the rather generic term *qi* 棋 (commonly rendered as "chess") instead of *bo* 博 or *liubo* in this particular passage. The commentary glosses *qi* as the "shapes [i. e. the stalks] used in the yarrow stalk oracle" (棋者, 筮之狀). The historian indeed might have referred to the (six) sticks that determined movements on *liubo* boards. However, he might just as well have alluded to a completely different game. I mentioned above that two different games of "chess" were known in early imperial China: *liubo* and *boyi*/*weiqi* 博奕 / 圍棋. Given that the character *qi* is part of the binom *weiqi*, it is tempting to assume that Sima Qian referred to *weiqi* instead of *liubo*. Yet, since *weiqi* only became popular during the 3rd century CE, the assumption has little merit.[76] Although it is vaguer than is generally admitted, this *Shiji* passage is one of the very few times that early received literature links *liubo* to divination.

The *Han Feizi* 韓非子 (3rd century BCE) recounts an episode in which King Zhao of Qin 秦昭王 (r. 306–251 BCE) orders artisans to cut "hooks and steps" (*gou ti* 鉤梯) into the slopes of Mount Hua 華山. Upon reaching the summit of this hallowed peak, the workers were supposed to fashion a *liubo* game set that included a board, sticks that measured eight feet in length (ca. 185 cm), and tokens that were eight inches long (ca. 18.5 cm) from the cores of cedar and pine trees. Afterwards, the king expected his aides to carve the following inscription into bedrock:

> 昭王嘗與天神博於此。
> King Zhao encountered a heavenly spirit and [competed] at *bo* with him at this location.

Whether we should really take this passage to mean that *liubo* was "favored by immortals and deities," as Yang Lien-sheng insisted, is open for debate.[77]

The *Han Feizi* does not portray the spirit as the main actor in this exchange. This role is fulfilled by King Zhao, who wished to present himself as being capable of ascending the summit of one of the sacred mountains (even though he did not even set foot on Mount Hua) so that he could get in contact with heaven. But King Zhao's pretensions did not stop there: The anecdote insinuates a level of intimacy with the celestial realm in which he was able to share a leisurely game with a heavenly spirit. Nothing indicates that the king was seeking to acquire supernatural powers. Quite the contrary, not unlike King

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75 Lewis 2002, 10. As far as the "diviner's board" mentioned in the *Shiji* is concerned, Sima Qian's main text uses the phrase *shi* 式 ("model, pattern, standard; to emulate") rather than *shi pan* 式盤 ("diviner's board). Only the commentary relates *shi* to the actual board. See *Shiji* 127.3218.

76 See nn. 14 and 15 above.

77 Yang 1952, 138; *Han Feizi* 11.32 (Wang Xianshen 2003, 276).

Wuyi – whose might already surpassed heaven's powers before his *liubo* competition with the celestial spirit – King Zhao's powers were already on par with those of heaven. *Liubo* was once again no more than a rhetorical device to point out the personal strengths (or weaknesses in Wuyi's case) of a historical figure.

A story from the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (*Intrigues of the Warring States*), a text that Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) compiled sometime between 23 and 8 BCE,[78] also features King Zhao of Qin. He has a conversation with his advisor, who tells him a curious story about a "cheeky adolescent" (*han shao nian* 悍少年). The young lad apparently tricked the spirit of an earth shrine into transferring its powers to him. The boy first suggested to the deity that they compete at *liubo*. If he should win, the spirit would confer its powers to him for three days; if the youth should lose, however, the earth god would be allowed to do with him as he pleased. As it turned out, the teenager defeated the spirit, but he neglected to return the latter's powers after the three days had passed. The deity then left his shrine, went looking for his foe, and eventually died en route from starvation. Once the anecdote has been told, the motives of the king's advisor for sharing it in the first place become clear: He wanted to caution the king against handing his power over to others.[79]

The episode, then, was but a metaphor to warn King Zhao of imminent dangers. Thus, modern scholarship should not put too much emphasis on the fact that the author used *liubo* as a medium of power exchange. The nature of the game in this story is entirely interchangeable with any other form of competition that would have served the same purpose. Yet, there may have been two reasons why *liubo* was chosen in particular. First, as the actual *liubo* boards recovered from tombs indicate, the game was quite popular among certain social circles when the *Intrigues* assumed their extant form. Second, the fact that King Zhao of Qin was the main protagonist in this anecdote and the preceding *Han Feizi* passage suggests that he was perceived as a keen follower of the game at the time both texts were written.[80] Thus, relating King Zhao to *liubo* was once again intended as a rhetorical device to make a distinct point.

Liubo in occult contexts is mentioned in two Eastern Han sources as well. One story appears in the "Wu xing zhi" 五行志 ("Treatise on the Five Phases") of Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92 CE) *Hanshu* 漢書 (*Book of Han*). Early in the year 3 BCE, a severe drought had the country in its grip. As a consequence, "a hundred thousand" (*qian bai* 仟佰) country folk streamed into the capital, where they

78 Tsien 1993, 5.

79 Yang 1952, 138; *Zhanguo ce* 5.197 [Qin 秦 3] (trans. Crump 1970, 108–109). The story is also cited in Lewis 2002, 12.

80 Also see a third episode that features the King Zhao of Qin as well as *liubo* in the subsection "Liubo *and its mundane expressions in the* Shiji" below.

設祭張博具，歌舞祠西王母。
erected [sacrificial] shrines, spread out [*liu*]*bo* boards, sang, danced, and worshiped the Queen Mother of the West.[81]

The association of *liubo* to sacrifice in general and the worship of the Queen Mother of the West in particular has been taken as confirmation that it served divinatory purposes.[82] It is worth noting that the same incident appears two more times in the *Hanshu*, yet there is no reference to *liubo* games on either occasion.[83] By explicitly including *liubo* in a chapter that stresses correlative thinking, Ban Gu may very well have tried to convey an occult understanding of the game. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that the event occurred at least half a decade before it was recorded in the *Hanshu*. Moreover, my analysis of *liubo* illustrations on stone slabs and bricks above has already demonstrated that depicting *liubo*-playing immortals had become a *topos* in certain regions from the early Eastern Han onwards. This modest proliferation of a somewhat empty idea roughly coincided with Ban Gu's work on the *Hanshu*. The passage thus might be regarded as the textual counterpart of the archaeological evidence. The historian simply picked up on a mildly popular trope.

The second Eastern Han source that links *liubo* with the supernatural realm is Ying Shao's 應劭 (140–206 CE) *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義. The author briefly describes a *liubo* game between Emperor Wu of the Western Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) and an immortal (*xian ren*). The story ends rather abruptly after the board (*qi* 碁) either falls into a crevice or descends into the rock itself (*qi mo shi zhong* 碁沒石中). Ying Shao reveals in the preceding sentences that Wudi was foretold that he would only live to be eighteen years old when he offered the *feng* 封 sacrifice at Mount Tai 泰山, even though he was already forty-seven at the time. While reading the divination results aloud, Wudi reversed the order of both digits and announced that his predicted age was eighty-one years.[84] Again, there was a considerable chronological gap of roughly 350 years between the events described in the *Fengsu tongyi* and the time when Ying Shao recorded them. Mark Edward Lewis has convincingly argued that the passage, in fact, reflects Ying Shao's own understanding of the *liubo* game. By merging an account of Wudi's foolish attempt to gain immortality with a story that features the emperor in competition with an immortal, Ying Shao reveals that he recognized *liubo* as a method to pursue immortality.[85] The pas-

81 *Hanshu* 27A.1476.
82 Röllicke 1999, 33–34.
83 I am grateful to Michael Loewe for bringing the two additional passages to my attention (personal communication). See *Hanshu* 11.342, 26.1311–1312; Loewe 1979, 98–99.
84 *Fengsu tongyi* 2 (Wang Liqi 1981, 69).
85 Lewis 2002, 13.

sage thus cannot be taken to attest to the supernatural connotations of the game during the Western Han period as it is sometimes suggested.[86] Instead, we should understand the story as the product of an era during which *liubo* had acquired quasi-religious meaning in certain circles of society.

Liubo and its mundane expressions in the *Shiji*

Taking into account that scholarship has singled out the most prominent passage that purportedly relates *liubo* with occult practices in the *Shiji*, one would do well to peruse the text for further appearances of the game. It quickly becomes apparent that Sima Qian touches on the subject more often than the two instances discussed above would indicate. Indeed, he mentions the game eight more times. None of the respective passages, however, have anything to do with divination or humans striving for immortality; they merely present the *liubo* game as a fairly mundane albeit emotionally charged source of entertainment.

Mundane should in no way be mistaken for insignificant, as the game was apparently not taken too lightly. For instance, in his attempt to topple Marquis Ying 應侯 as the minister to King Zhao of Qin, Cai Ze 蔡澤 brought up *liubo* tactics to illustrate a point. He said to Ying,[87]

> 君獨不觀夫博者乎？或欲大投，或欲分功，此皆君之所明知也。
> Lord, is it just you who does not watch the men that play *liubo*? They either desire the big cast or they wish to divide their achievements. All of this is clearly known to you!

The exact meaning of "desire the big cast" and "divide their achievements" remains unclear. Be that as it may, Sima Qian's account of a conversation of two 3rd century BCE statesmen shows that competing at *liubo* was a strategic endeavor. Whether or not this was the reason why Ju Meng 劇孟 and Zhu Jia 朱家 are said to have loved the game and "spent years of their lives playing it" (*er hao bo, duo shao nian zhi xi* 而好博, 多少年之戲)

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86 See, for instance, Bai Yunxiang 2008, 60.

87 *Shiji* 79.2423 (trans. Nienhauser Jr. 1994, 251). The *Shiji liubo* passage appears almost verbatim in *Zhanguo ce* 5.216 [Qin 3] (trans. Crump 1970, 135). In *Zhanguo ce* 24.864 [Wei 魏 2] (trans. Crump 1970, 433–434), moreover, we catch Liu Xiang's slightly different take on the so-called "big cast": 王獨不見夫博者之用梟邪？欲食則食, 欲握則握。"Your majesty, is it just you who does not see how the men that play *liubo* use the [token called] owl? If they wish for it to eat [other tokens], they eat [other tokens]; if [the players] wish to grab [other tokens], they grab them." Although putting the dialogue in a different context – Liu Xiang described an exchange between King of Wei and a certain Sun Chen –, he clearly modeled this argument on the above mentioned *Shiji* passage. Liu understood the killing of the "owl" as equivalent to Sima Qian's "big strike." For a third reference to *liubo* and political strategy in the *Zhanguo ce*, see *Zhanguo ce* 16.548 [Chu 楚 3] (trans. Crump 1970, 267).

is hard to decide. Yet, since both of them emerge in the *Shiji* as courageous and noble characters who were prone to support friends and allies in times of need by means of their respective fighting skills, it seems fairly likely that the game's strategic component was indeed paramount.[88]

Other passages disclose the fact that tactics could quickly fall by the wayside when tempers flared. The *Shiji* reports two incidents in which verbal abuse and physical violence followed an initially amicable game. Jing Ke 荊軻, the famous failed assassin of the First Emperor of Qin (*Qin Shihuangdi* 秦始皇帝), travelled to Handan 邯鄲 where he and Lu Goujian 魯句踐 played *liubo* together. When both opponents started to "quibble over the rules" (*zheng dao* 爭道), Lu Goujian began to berate Jing Ke. The latter responded to the insults by calmly rising from the game board and simply walking away. The two men were never to meet again.[89] It has been contended that the figure of Jing Ke was but a figment of Sima Qian's imagination.[90] Whether or not this is true, it is certainly far less controversial to claim that the entire scene was intended to promote Jing Ke's humble and gentle character.[91] Sima Qian's portrayal of *liubo* again served a narrative purpose. Contrary to the episode that featured King Wuyi, this particular scene was not meant to highlight the negative but rather the positive traits of an individual. Putting aside the historian's main intention for including the story in the *Shiji*, the incident in any event reveals that he believed the actual *liubo* game promoted aggressive behavior.

This aspect comes even more to the fore in a visit from the kingdom of Wu's heir apparent to the imperial court during the reign of Emperor Wen of the Western Han 漢文帝 (r. 180–157 BCE). After he arrived in the capital, he was supposed to tend to the needs of the imperial heir apparent. Seemingly, this also involved the two princes sharing drinks with each other and playing *liubo*. The Prince of Wu's tutors and teachers hailed from Chu 楚 and their crude southern ways reportedly rubbed off on their protégé. When the prince of Wu's casual, wild, and arrogant demeanor emerged during one of the two princes' *liubo* contests, the agitated imperial prince grabbed the game board in his rage and hit the Prince of Wu over the head with it. The blow eventually proved fatal.[92]

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88 *Shiji* 124.3184. For more information on Ju Meng and Zhu Jia, see Loewe 2000, 202–203, 740. The respective passage appears almost verbatim in *Hanshu* 92.3700. Another *Shiji* passage records a conversation in which one side chides Ju Meng for being a *liubo* gambler, yet the opposing party jumps to his defense and praises his exemplary moral character; see *Shiji* 101.2744 (trans. Nürnberger 2008, 341).

89 *Shiji* 86.2527 (trans. Nienhauser Jr. 1994, 326).

90 Loewe 2000, 201. Also see Pines 2008, 3 n. 4.

91 Nienhauser Jr. 1994, 326 n. 36.

92 *Shiji* 106.2823. The passage also appears almost verbatim in *Hanshu* 35.1904. Michael Loewe

A similar anecdote is transmitted in three texts altogether, the *Shiji*, the *Hanshu*, and the *Han shi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (dated ca. 150 BCE). Sima Qian presented a fairly sober account of the events that supposedly transpired in 681 BCE: Nangong Wan 南宮萬, a minister in Song 宋, joined Duke Min of Song 宋湣公 on a hunting trip. Trying to unwind with a few games of *liubo*, the two began to bicker about the rules. The duke then openly insulted Nangong, who, in turn, struck Duke Min with the game board, breaking his neck. Han Ying 韓嬰, the purported author of the *Han shi waizhuan*, and Ban Gu looked at the episode from a different angle: In their view, the duke's misbehavior was purely a reaction to some offense that Nangong had given prior to the game. Nangong, however, was not concerned with who started the fight. His overreaction was rather triggered by the fact that he had been terribly embarrassed in front of a female audience.[93] Naturally, this is not the end of the story, for all three passages subsequently render Nangong Wan a villainous regicide. In the end, his temper cost him his life as the people of Song are said to have "pickled" (*hai* 醢) him. In all three narratives, the *liubo* game made up the setting that unveiled Nangong's flaws. Liu Xiang even went one step further than Sima Qian, Ban Gu, and Han Ying in his assessment of the game, for he counted playing *liubo* along with indulging in alcohol among the vices of particularly despicable figures.[94]

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has suggested (personal communication) that in this and the subsequent episode (see n. 93 below) the *liubo* competition might be viewed as a mirror of real life. Seeing that Liu Qi 劉啓, the imperial heir apparent and "victor" of the contest, later became Emperor Jing 景帝 (r. 157–141 BCE), Sima Qian might have incorporated this passage as something of an auspicious omen of Liu Qi's political fate. Michael Loewe's reading of the event is certainly intriguing and I would agree, if Liu Qi would have beaten his opponent at the actual game instead of bluntly killing him. Assuming that the incident actually happened, the outcome was less an abstract forecast of fortune and more an act of *Realpolitik*. Eliminating a potential threat to his claim to power – the Prince of Wu was Liu Qi's second cousin – surely had political advantages. Apparently, Sima Qian was trying to make this exact point: Before the prince could even begin to convey his rude and arrogant demeanor onto the political scene, he was (fatally) put in his place.

Elsewhere, Michael Loewe has speculated that Liu Qi's overreaction was not at all caused by the Prince of Wu's inappropriate behavior, but by the fact that the throwing of the dice foretold a much better future for his opponent than for himself. Supposing that indeed the course of the game and not social misconduct triggered the assault, an equally plausible and, judging from the majority of textual evidence (see arguments above), more convincing explanation would be that Liu Qi simply was an extremely sore looser who could not bear to be defeated. See Loewe 2000, 335, 338–339.

93 *Shiji* 38.1624 (trans. Zhang 2006, 280–281); *Hanshu* 27A.1344; *Han shi waizhuan* 8.6 (Xu Weiyu 1980, 275–276). On the date and authorship of the latter, see Hightower 1993.

94 *Shuoyuan* 9 (Xiang Zonglu 1987, 215); *Hanshu* 53.2434. The *Shuoyuan* 說苑 (*Garden of*

Maybe it was the commotion that *liubo* competitions stirred up which added to the game's allure. The initial excitement might have been further augmented by (high) monetary and material stakes as a legal manuscript yielded by Tomb No. 247 at Zhangjiashan 張家山 in Hubei province (late 2nd century BCE) seems to suggest:

> 博戲相奪錢財，若為平者：奪爵各一級，戍二歲。(slip 186)
> Those who rob one another of money and property at *liubo* games or those who act as referees at such competitions are to be relieved of one rank [of nobility]. [Those who do not hold a noble rank are to serve] two years of garrison duty.[95]

The so-called *Statute on Miscellaneous Matters* (*Za lü* 雜律) indicates that stakes were an essential component of the game. Yet, there are two ways to read this passage: Either the authorities considered *any* competitions that involved monetary or material stakes to be improper conduct (i.e. as "stealing" from each other), or cheating was such a common occurrence that rather severe punishments had to be enforced.[96] Whatever the case may be, we can almost be certain that raising the stakes only made the game more attractive to gamblers, of which there appears to have been plenty. For instance, the people of 4th century BCE Linzi 臨菑, the capital of ancient Qi 齊, are portrayed as avid supporters of cock fights, dog races, a kind of kickball, and *liubo*. An air of suspense and the (off) chance to get rich were thus vital to the success of the most popular pastimes in late pre-imperial and early imperial China.[97]

Socializing and, in particular, alcohol consumption were also important factors that made *liubo* contests attractive. This is illustrated by an exchange between King Wei of Qi 齊威王 (r. 356–320 BCE) and one of his subjects: The king wonders why exactly the latter got drunk on one occasion after having just a tiny amount of alcohol, while on another occasion he required vast quantities of alcohol to get inebriated. The subject replies that it all depends on the circumstances. He says that in the presence of the king, he only

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Explanations) was compiled by Liu Xiang and submitted to the throne in 17 BCE; see Knechtges 1993, 443–444.

95 Zhangjiashan Ersiqihao Han Mu Zhujian Zhengli Xiaozu 2001, 158; for a slightly different translation, see Barbieri-Low and Yates 2015, 614, 615.

96 In his *Lunheng* 論衡, Wang Chong 王充 (27–100 CE) expressed similar views on the game and its effect on people. For more details, see n. 106, below.

97 *Shiji* 69.2257 (trans. Nienhauser Jr. 1994, 106). The passage appears nearly verbatim in *Zhanguo ce* 8.337 [Qi 齊 1] (trans. Crump 1970, 157–158). A voice of reason rings out in *Huainanzi* 14 (Zhang Shuangdi 1997, 1513) whose compilers contend that "an accomplished player does neither strive to win nor fear to loose" (*shan bo zhe bu yu mou, bu kong bu sheng* 善博者不欲牟, 不恐不勝). Judging from the bulk of literary references to *liubo*, this was definitely a minority opinion (and, of course, yet again a rhetorical device). For a slightly different translation, see Major et al. 2010, 563.

allows himself a small drink of "one *dou*" (*yi dou* 一斗; almost two liters) that already has an effect on him, whereas the situation is entirely different when he is among friends. Amidst the commotion of a casual feast, the subject claims he can tolerate as much as "eight *dou*" (*ba dou* 八斗; close to 16 liters) of alcoholic beverages. His description of such gatherings far removed from the rigid social conventions of the court is most revealing when he divulges that his favorite kinds of celebrations involve men and women sitting and drinking together, gazing into each other's eyes, holding hands without fear of persecution, and playing *liubo*. As a result of such felicitous conditions, he can easily consume "one stone" of alcohol (*yi dan* 一石; almost twenty liters).[98]

Another bonding experience can be gleaned from a *liubo* game recorded in the *Hanshu* between a group of males, rather than men and women. Three previous companions of Li Ling 李陵 were sent to persuade the former military leader, who had defected to the Xiongnu 匈奴, to return to the Western Han. During his years in the steppe, Li had adopted a nomadic lifestyle. For instance, he sported a foreign robe and hairdo when he encountered his earlier comrades-in-arms. His behavior, on the other hand, had not changed quite as much. Before addressing the issue at hand, Li offered *kumiss* to the Han envoys, which they shared over a game of *liubo* (or two). Evidently, gambling habits among old friends died hard.[99]

In the final reference to the game in the *Shiji*, the Prince of Wei 魏公子 and King Zhao of Wei 魏昭王 (r. 295–227 BCE) are playing *liubo* when news arrives that a contingent of Zhao 趙 people has breached the northern border of Wei. The king sets aside the game board and confers with his senior advisors. The prince interrupts the game as well and tries to reassure the king that the incident does not represent an act of aggression. He argues that the King of Zhao merely passed Wei territory while hunting; he thus posed no threat to the state of Wei. The prince then returns to the board as if nothing out of the ordinary has happened and the king soon rejoins him. Still anxious that an invasion is imminent, the king's heart is no longer in the game. Shortly after, he discovers that it was indeed just the King of Zhao's hunting party that had trespassed Wei territory. Although Sima Qian employs the *liubo* game here yet again as the backdrop of a moral anecdote – the King of Wei was so intimidated by the prince's uncanny foresight that he did not dare entrust him with the reins of the state – it is clear that he perceives it to be a leisurely pastime.[100]

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98 *Shiji* 126.3199. The fact that things could get a little out of hand when alcohol and *liubo* was involved is highlighted by a passage transmitted in the *Liezi* and *Huainanzi*; for references, see n. 65 above.

99 *Hanshu* 54.2458. For more information on Li Ling's fate, see Loewe 2000, 224–225.

100 *Shiji* 77.2377 (trans. Nienhauser Jr. 1994, 215). For an assessment of Sima Qian's portrayal of the Prince of Wei, see Durrant 1995, 116–119.

Apart from the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, several other pre-imperial and early imperial texts touch upon *liubo* in non-occult contexts. More significantly, they all share a somewhat bleak view of the game. For instance, one passage in the *Han Feizi* describes Kuang Jing 匡倩, who poses a question to King Xuan of Qi 齊宣王 (r. 319–301 BCE). Kuang wants to know whether "Classicists" (*Ru* 儒) play *liubo*. The king denies this because,

> 博者貴梟，勝者必殺梟，殺梟者，是殺所貴也，儒者以為害義，故不博也。
> *liubo* players value the owl [token] while those who want to win at the game inevitable must kill the owl. Those who kill the owl, then, kill the things they value. The minds of classicists (*ru*), such behavior is akin to destroying righteousness. That is why they do not play [*liu*]*bo*.[101]

In the *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語 (ca. late 1st century BCE), the Duke Ai of Lu 魯哀公 (r. 494–468 BCE) asks Confucius himself why he opposes *liubo* games. The master's slightly obscure response reads as follows:

> 「為其有二乘。」公曰：「有二乘則何為不博?」子曰：「為其兼行惡道也。」
> [Confucius answered:] "Because it [i.e. the game] has two beneficiaries." Duke [Ai of Lu] said: "If it has two beneficiaries, why do you not play [*liu*]*bo*?" The master replied: "Because they both are treading the evil way."[102]

What exactly Confucius regarded as the "evil way" is unclear. Perhaps the master's dislike of *liubo* was in line with *Han Feizi*'s criticism: to kill the things one holds dear was considered to be utterly immoral. It is also conceivable that Confucius was arguing against pleasure for its own sake.

A subtler message can be detected in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子. In chapter 15, the text argues that as long as people are content because they are given what is due to them, it is of little consequence if a ruler spends his days by

> 射雲中之鳥，而釣深淵之魚，彈琴瑟，聲鍾竽，敦六博，投高壺
> shooting birds that [fly in] the clouds, angling for fish in deep abysses, plucking *qin* and *se* zithers, making sounds on bells and mouth organs, playing *liubo*, or tossing the "tall flasks."[103]

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101 *Han Feizi* 12.33 (Wang Xianshen 2003, 300). See also Röllicke 1999, 31.

102 *Kongzi jiayu* 1 (Chen Shike 1987, 35). Also see Zheng Yan'e 1999, 57–58; Zheng Yan'e 2002, 85–86. Moreover, the *Kongzi jiayu* passage appears almost verbatim in *Shuoyuan* 1 (Xiang Zonglu 1987, 4).

103 *Huainanzi* 15 (Zhang Shuangdi 1997, 1609); for a slightly different translation, see Major et al. 2010, 608.

The state's welfare does not necessarily hinge on a ruler's ostensibly meaningless pastime activities; he just needs to take care of his people first. Once he has fulfilled his duties, he may in good conscience indulge in trivial pursuits – and playing *liubo* seems to have been a fairly popular one.

To the group of literati mentioned in the *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論 (*Discourses on Salt and Iron*; compiled sometime between 74–49 BCE), *liubo* was an expression of the detriments of wealth. They complained that "*liubo* players and gamesters" (*bo xi* 博戲) were "all sons and brothers of rich people, who had enough of everything" (*jie fu ren zi di, fei bu zu zhe ye* 皆富人子弟, 非不足者也). This led the scholars to conclude that "if the people revel in opulence, they turn presumptuous and wasteful while the rich get arrogant and pretentious" (*min rao ze jian chi, fu ze jiao she* 民饒則僭侈, 富則驕奢).[104] This can hardly be described as a positive attitude towards the *liubo* game and its players.

In short, the episodes discussed in the first part of this section are usually invoked in order to support supernatural or occult interpretations of *liubo*. Yet, scrutinizing these literary references to *liubo* in the contexts of their narratives rather than perceiving them as isolated statements has led to a considerably more nuanced understanding of *liubo*. This inclusive approach has illustrated that supernatural or occult functions of *liubo* are barely detectable in early received literature. The one passage that directly links *liubo* to divination relies on the glosses of a much later commentary and thus remains rather vague. In most other cases – be they quasi-religious or mundane – ancient authors employed *liubo* as a rhetorical device. The game becomes a metaphor that imparts significantly more salient insights on readers. As such, *liubo*, in theory, is interchangeable with any other form of competition. The very fact that *liubo* is repeatedly used in these metaphors, however, confirms what is suggested by the existence of actual boards in tombs: *liubo* games were a form of entertainment that was popular among a certain group of people.

The fact that Sima Qian (and Sima Tan 司馬談; d. 110 BCE) in particular frequently referred to *liubo* games in descriptions of events that mostly occurred roughly 200 years earlier suggests that it must have been *en vogue* in his own time. To express his points to contemporaries, he needed to come up with examples that they could relate to. By and large, Sima Qian's *liubo* accounts were retroactive interpolations to purported historical events that predated the *Shiji* narrative by several centuries. Thus, we cannot take Sima Qian's records to mean that *liubo* games were common (or even known) well before the 4th century BCE. Again, all of this is mirrored by the archaeological evidence, as the majority of actual game boards came to light in burials that largely date from the early through mid-Western Han period (Tab. 1 and 2).

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104 *Yantie lun* 6.35 (Wang Liqi 1992, 422–423). A similar attitude may also be found in *Hanshu* 24B.1171.

Aside from their literary functions, examples of *liubo* in received literature paint a (somewhat rough) picture of the social situations in which they are embedded. At the very least, transmitted texts highlight how early imperial writers imagined the cultural settings of *liubo* contests. These were not solitary affairs between two single contestants. *Liubo* competitions involved audiences of both sexes, food, drink, and music. What is more, all of these elements are evident in the clusters of burial goods that comprised *liubo* boards. Even audience members were sometimes represented in the form of human figurines (e.g. Fig. 7).

4 Conclusions

So far, scholarship has focused on selective archaeological and textual evidence when explaining *liubo* boards yielded by tombs as well as the game itself. My comprehensive analysis of mortuary data has shown that, during the Western Han period, *liubo* was mainly considered a game that was supposed to entertain the contestants and guests of associated feasts.[105] One can hardly deny that the element of chance that was associated with throwing sticks or rolling dice contributed to the primal appeal of the game. Certainly, counting rods in particular were important tools in divinatory practices, but *liubo* games did not primarily fulfill divinatory functions. This is also supported by the fact that additional finds of occult meaning such as "mountain censers," TLV mirrors, or diviner's boards are largely missing from tomb assemblages that feature *liubo* boards. Occult tendencies likely would have been expressed by other material means as well. Even the most unambiguous evidence of divination such as the so-called *rishu* 日書 (*Daybooks*) are absent from most of the burials under review, with Tombs No. 101 at Yaozhuang, No. 11 at Shuihudi (Fig. 6), and No. 3 at Mawangdui being the sole exceptions.

The little information on actual *liubo* games (rather than contests that involved supernatural beings) that is recorded in written sources basically reflects the situation in the tombs: mortuary data and texts present *liubo* as an integral part of banquet scenes. *Liubo* contests were social events. Yet, received literature discloses a darker side of the game as well. Ostensibly, *liubo* promoted amoral behavior, which was enough of a reason for some authors to look at it and its players with contempt.[106] Perhaps such views were further

105 On the importance of audiences, see especially the game between Nangong Wan and Duke Min of Song; see n. 93 above.

106 Wang Chong's *Lunheng*, a text that has only been mentioned once so far due to its relatively late date (see n. 96 above), regards *liubo* players as greedy gamblers who aimed to "rob each other's money and property" (*xiang duo qian cai* 相奪錢財); see *Lunheng* 10 (Huang Hui 1990, 462). In another passage, Wang argues that "if young men do not study the classics, they have only *liubo* in their hearts [i.e. minds]" (男子不讀經, 則有博戲之心); see *Lunheng* 28 (Huang Hui 1990, 1126). On the date of the *Lunheng*, see Pokora and Loewe 1993, 309.

fueled by its provocative effect on some contestants. On more than one occasion, the heat of the game sewed discord among players and even led to murder.

Given that several burials unveiled *liubo* boards in close association with weapons (or imitations of weapons; Tab. 5), one might wonder whether the distinctly strategic or even martial nature of the game appealed to military personnel in particular. However, the typology and quantity of the rest of the tomb assemblages suggest otherwise. These were burials of individuals of relatively high social status, who valued the art of combat and a good *liubo* contest. The tomb of the King of Nanyue at Guangzhou and Dabaotai Tomb No. 1, for instance, show just how far up the social ladder people appreciated the game. Although reduced to a rhetorical device, *liubo* was more often than not attached to the actions of kings (or dukes) in early received texts. Nonetheless, the game clearly had a broader following. The archaeological record shows that a local official such as the occupant of Tomb No. 11 at Shuihudi was a devotee of the game, while Sima Qian's account of the exchange between King Wei of Qi and his subject suggests boisterous feasts that included *liubo* contests in the lives of lower court officials.

Moreover, distribution patterns of archaeologically verified boards indicate that *liubo* was especially popular in the proximity of modern-day Jingzhou (including Yunmeng) in Hubei province, Xuzhou in Jiangsu province, and Linyi in Shandong province. Whether such a concentration of finds at certain locations is purely coincidental – boards made from organic materials might have degraded – or indeed a manifestation of historical reality will remain uncertain pending further archaeological data.

Another significant observation is that *liubo* boards are limited almost exclusively to the tombs of male occupants; only Yaozhuang Tomb No. 101 and Dongyang 東陽 Tomb No. 7 each housed a male and female occupant.[107] Literary sources also favor men in the roles of *liubo* players. There is but one passage that explicitly names a female contestant. Ban Gu tells the story of Liu Qu 劉去, the King of Guangchuan 廣川 (r. 91–71 BCE), his queen Yangcheng Zhaoxin 陽成昭信, and several servants, who were passing time by playing *liubo*, drinking, and taking leisurely walks.[108] Archaeological and textual

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107 For references, see notes 20 and 38 above. The tomb at Cuipingshan, Jiangsu province also yielded the remains of two individuals. However, the second occupant was most likely interred at a later date. More importantly, she/he was buried outside of the heavy stone door that blocked the entrance to the main burial chamber. See Xuzhou Bowuguan 2008, 24; also see n. 48 above. Finally, there is Zhao Mo, who was accompanied by fifteen women in his tomb. Yet, none of the female skeletons were immediately associated with *liubo* paraphernalia. See Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1991, 249, 252, 306–308, 356.

108 *Hanshu* 53.2431. Ban Gu's generally negative portrayal of Liu Qu and Yangcheng Zhaoxin inevitably invites doubts about its accuracy. However, Michael Loewe suspects that Ban Gu

sources thus indicate that *liubo* was predominantly played by men. This observation should not be mistaken for evidence of rigid restrictions. In the higher echelons of society, people might have frowned upon the active engagement of women in *liubo* contests. This is visible in the archaeological record and, for instance, in Ban Gu's personal take on the conduct of Liu Qu and his wife. In the eyes of the historian, it was inappropriate for royalty to socialize with servants. The general rejection of female players is further visible in the *Hanshu* and *Han shi waizhuan* passages discussed above, in which women were assigned the roles of spectators. I have also shown that an all-female audience was the reason why the game between Nangong Wan and Duke Min of Song got out of hand.[109] However, as the vivid scenes of comingling men and women described by the subject of King Wei of Qi seem to indicate, things were far less stringent in the slightly lower levels of society.

The foregoing discussion does not intend to argue that *liubo* boards were never used for divination or were completely unrelated to the pursuit of immortality of some individuals. It may indeed be the case that "the overlap between gambling and divination was part of a more general debate about the relation of humanity to the cosmos."[110] Nevertheless, the participants in this debate are either not visible in the tombs that have been excavated so far or the group of people involved in such discussions was, in fact, much smaller than scholarship has claimed. Indeed, it seems that for the majority of individuals known to us in archaeological and textual sources personal entertainment was much dearer than occult practices.

Tab. 1: *Liubo* boards yielded by tombs that were published with tomb plans

Tomb	Publication	Date	Looted	Material of the Board	Orientation of L Pattern	Additional *liubo* Paraphernalia
Guangzhou, Tomb of Zhao Mo, King of Nanyue (r. 137–122) (eastern ancillary chamber)	Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1991, Vol. 1, 64, 66, and 67	died 122 BCE, inter. 120 BCE	no	lacquered wood	unintelligible	12 tokens (6 jade, 6 rock crystal)
Anhui, Fangwang-gang M1	Anhui sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2007, 58	Mid-W Han	yes?	lacquered wood	counter cw	
Gansu, Tianshui, Fangmatan M14	Gansu sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1989, 9	Early W Han	no?	wood	counter cw	

might have had access to records of a law suit that involved Liu Qu and thus argues that the account might indeed be accurate; see Loewe 2000, 348–349. As for male *liubo* players, *Lunheng* 28 (Huang Hui 1990, 1126) cites a lost *zhuan* 傳 passage that claims, "If boys do not read the Classics, they have the *bo* and other games in their hearts/minds" (*nan zi bu du jing, ze you bo xi zhi xin* 男子不讀經, 則有博戲之心). For this translation also see n. 106 above.

109 See n. 93 above.

110 Lewis 2002, 4.

Tomb	Publication	Date	Looted	Material of the Board	Orientation of L Pattern	Additional *liubo* Paraphernalia
Guangzhou, Tomb of Zhao Mo, King of Nanyue (r. 137–122) (eastern ancillary chamber)	Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1991, Vol. 1, 64, 66, and 67	died 122 BCE, inter. 120 BCE	no	lacquered wood	unintelligible	12 tokens (6 jade, 6 rock crystal)
				lacquered wood (traces)	unintelligible	
Guangzhou, Tomb of Zhao Mo, King of Nanyue (r. 137–122) (eastern lateral chamber)	Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1991, Vol. 1, 251, 252	died 122 BCE,	no	lacquered wood	unintelligible	12 tokens (ivory)
		inter. 120 BCE		lacquered wood (traces)	unintelligible	6 tokens (ivory)
Guangzhou, Longshenggang M43 = Guangzhou Hanmu M4013	Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui, 151; Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1981, 355			lacquered wood (only fragment preserved)	counter cw	
Hubei, Jingzhou, Tianxingguan M2	Hubei sheng Jingzhou Bowuguan 2003, 167	350–330 BCE	yes	lacquered wood	counter cw	18 tokens (6 stone, 12 bone)
Hubei, Jingzhou, Gaotai M2	Hubei sheng Jingzhou Bowuguan 2000, 19, 211	Gaozu–Wendi	no	wood	counter cw	
Hubei, Jingzhou, Gaotai M33	Hubei sheng Jingzhou Bowuguan 2000, 49, 211	Gaozu–Wendi	no	wood	counter cw	
Hubei, Jingzhou, Jicheng M1	Hubei sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1999, 13	Early Mid Warring States	yes	lacquered wood	L and V shapes L counter cw	
Hubei, Yunmeng, Dafentou M1	Hubei sheng Bowuguan 1979, 26; Hubei sheng Bowuguan 1981, 9–11.	Early W Han	dist.	lacquered wood	counter cw	
Hubei, Yunmeng, Shuihudi M11	Xiaogan Diqu Dierqi Yigong Yinong Wenwu Kaogu Xunlianban 1976, 5; Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin Mu Bianxiezu 1981, 7–8, and 55	217 BCE	no	wood	counter cw	6 sticks (lacquered wood?), 12 tokens (lacquered bone)
Hunan, Changsha, Mawangdui M3	Hunan sheng Bowuguan 2004, 162–166	168 BCE	no	lacquered wood	counter cw	1 case, 12 larger and 18 smaller tokens (ivory), 42 tallies (bamboo), 1 dice
Hunan, Changsha, Wangchengpo	Changsha shi Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo2010, 32	Wendi-Jingdi	yes	lacquered wood	counter cw	2 dice
				lacquered wood	none	
Jiangsu, Xuzhou, Tomb of Liu Shen	Xuzhou Bowuguan 2010, 39–40	Late 3rd–early 2nd c. BCE		wood? (deteriorated, only bone inlays/fittings remain)	indeterminable	2 sets of sticks (actual number undisclosed), 2 sets of (bone) tokens (à 12 pieces; 6 items inscribed: *qing long* 青龍; *xiao sui* 小歲; *de* 德; *huang de* 皇德; *si chen* 司陳; *bai hu* 白虎

Abbreviations: *WW* = *Wenwu* 文物; *KG* = *Kaogu* 考古; *KGTX* = *Kaogu tongxun* 考古通訊; *KGXB* = *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報; *WWZLCK* = *Wenwu ziliao congkan* 文物資料叢刊; cw = clockwise.

Tab. 2: *Liubo* boards yielded by tombs that were published without tomb plans

Tomb	Publication	Date	Material of the Board	Orientation of L Pattern	Additional *liubo* Paraphernalia
Anhui, Tianchang, Sanjiaowei M19	Anhui sheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1993, 21	Mid–Late W Han, no later Yuandi	lacquered wood	counter cw	18 sticks (silver)
Beijing, Dabaotai M1 (Liu Jian, King of Guangyang; r. 73–44 BCE)	Beijing shi Gumu Fajue Bangongshi 1977, 27; Dabaotai Han Mu Fajuezu 1989, 50, 53	80 BCE	stone	L pattern at four corners	8 tokens (ivory)
Guangxi, Xilin, Putuo	Guangxi Zhuangzu Zizhiqu Wenwu Gongzuodui 1978(2), 44	Early W Han	bronze	clockwise	*secondary burial in bronze drum*
Guangxi, Guixian, Luobowan M1	Guangxi Zhuangzu Zizhiqu Wenwu Gongzuodui 1978(1), 30; Guangxi Zhuangzu Zizhiqu Bowuguan 1988, 60	Early W Han	wood	counter cw	
Hebei, Pingshan, Zhongshan Guo M3	Hebei sheng Wenwu Guanlichu 1979, 13	ca. 310 BCE–late Warring States	stone	counter cw	
			stone	counter cw	
Hubei, Jiangling, Fenghuangshan M8	Changjiang Liuyu Dierqi Wenwu Kaogu Gongzuo Renyuan Xunlianban 1974, 50–51	Wendi-Jingdi	wood	undisclosed	6 sticks (bamboo), 12 tokens (bone)
Hubei, Jiangling, Yutaishan M197	Hubei sheng Jingzhou Diqu Bowuguan 1984, 104–105.	Mid Warr. States	lacquered wood	4 V, 2 L patterns counter cw	24 dice or tokens (?; small pebbles; 9 red, 9 black, 6 white)
Hubei, Jiangling, Yutaishan M314	Hubei sheng Jingzhou Diqu Bowuguan 1984, 104–105	Mid Warr. States	lacquered wood		
Hubei, Yunmeng, Shuihudi M13	Hubei Xiaogan Diqu Dierqi Yigong Yinong Wenwu Kaogu Xunlianban 1976, 58; Yunmeng Shuihudi Qin Mu Bianxiezu 1981, 55	ca. 217 BCE	wood	counter cw	6 sticks (bamboo), 12 tokens (bone)
Zhejiang, Anji, Wufu M1	Zhejiang Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2007, 73	Late 3rd c. BCE	lacquered wood	counter cw	9 tokens (lacquered wood?)

Abbreviations: *WW* = *Wenwu* 文物; cw = clockwise

Tab. 3: *Liubo* boards yielded by either settlement sites or tombs that lack data on accompanying archaeological finds and features

Tomb	Publication	Date	Type of Object	Orientation of L Pattern
Site of Weiyang Palace at Han period Chang'an	Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1996(1), 234	Han	Fragment of ceramic board (or maybe floor tile?)	parts of TLV pattern visible
Site of Weiyang Palace at Han period Chang'an	Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1996(1), 168	Han	Fragment of ceramic board (or maybe floor tile?)	parts of TLV pattern visible
Kiln site at Northern Palace (*Bei gong* 北宫) at Han period Chang'an	Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1996(2), 28	Early–Mid W Han	ceramic board	counter cw
Ritual complex at Emperor Jing's (r. 156–141 BCE) tomb (*Yangling* 陽陵)	Han Yangling Kaogu Chenlieguan 2004, 83	Ca. 141 BCE	ceramic board	
Shandong, Feixian	Guangzhou shi Wenwu Guanli Weiyuanhui 1959, 32, 33	Han	stone	counter cw
Tomb at Yunnan, Gejiu, Heimajing	Jiang Zhilong 2008.	E Han	bronze	counter cw
Antechamber of vaulted brick tomb at Shanxi, Ruicheng	Li Baiqin 2003. 16–17	E Han	ceramic board	T and L-pattern
			stone board	no pattern

Abbreviations: *HXKG* = *Huaxia kaogu* 华夏考古; *KG* = *Kaogu* 考古; *WW* = *Wenwu* 文物; *WWSJ* = *Wenwu shijie* 文物世界; cw = clockwise.

Tab. 4: Objects related to feasting that were discovered in close proximity to *liubo* boards

Nr.	Tomb	Furniture			Drinking Vessels		Beverage Container	
		Table/Tray (*an* 案)	Arm-rest (*ji* 幾)	Tablet (*ban* 板)	Various Cups (*zun* 樽, *zhi* 巵, *bei* 杯)	"Ear-cup" (*erbei* 耳杯) +case	Flask (*hu* 壺); *you* 卣	*fang* 舫; *he* 盉; weng 瓮
1	Anhui, Fangwanggang M1	4	1		9	33	3	1
2	Gansu, Fangmatan M14							
3	Guangzhou, Tomb of Zhao Mo, King of Nanyue (east. ancillary ch.)	1			1		2	4
4	Guangzhou, Tomb of Zhao Mo, King of Nanyue (east. lateral ch.)						2	2
5	Guangzhou, Longshenggang M43	1				2	4	
6	Hubei, Tianxingguan M2	1	2	2				2
7	Hubei, Gaotai M2	1	1		3	93	4	3
8	Hubei, Gaotai M33	3						
9	Hubei, Jicheng M1					7+	5	
10	Hubei, Dafentou M1					14	2	2
11	Hubei, Shuihudi M11				2	22	1	2
12	Hunan, Mawangdui M3	1	1		11	15		1
13	Hunan, Wangchengpo				1	11		
14	Jiangsu, Tomb of Liu Shen					2		
15	Jiangsu, Tomb of Liu Zhi						7	2
16	Jiangsu, Tomb of Liu Yinke/Wu	1				5	1	1
17	Jiangsu, Zifangshan M1				1		7	
18	JiangsuYaozhuang M101	2	1	1	1	29+		
19	Jiangsu, Zhangji Tuanshan M1							1
20	Jiangsu, Dongyang M7	1			4	5?	5	
21	Jiangsu, Fenghuanghe						2	
22	Shandong, Daishu M2				3	15	1	
23	Shandong, Yinqueshan M1					4	5	
24	Shandong, Jinqueshan M31		1	1	1	7	1	
25	Shandong, Jinqueshan M33		1	1	1	7	1	

Nr.	Tableware	Food Container			Serving Utensils		Other	Musical Instruments	
	plates (*pan* 盤, *die* 碟); dish (*pen* 盆); bowl (*wan* 碗)	tripod (*ding* 鼎); *mou* 鍪	pots (*guo* 鍋, *bu* 瓿); steamers (*fu* 釜, *zeng* 甑)	pot (*guan* 罐)	fork (*cha* 叉); knife (*dao* 刀)	ladle (*shao* 勺); saucier (*yi* 匜); spoon (*bi* 匕)	basin (*xi* 洗)	bells, chime stones	string, wind
1	24	1				1	1		1
2									
3	4			17				44 bells, 1 drum	2
4	2	4	8	17	1	2			
5	3	1	1	15					1
6	2	1				2		32 bells, 1 ch.stone, 1 dr.rack, 1 drum	5
7	39		7	6		3			1
8									
9	5	4	4						
10	2			3		2			
11	1	2	2	4		4			
12	5					1		18 (wood), 5 racks	7
13	9					1			
14									
15	5			12	1	2			
16									
17		5	4	8		1			1
18	11					1			
19				2		6		10	
20	5			2			1		
21	1	1		4		1			
22	14		1						
23	3	4		3					
24	2	2	1	3	1	1			
25	5	1	1	3	1	1	1		

Tab. 5: Additional finds that were commonly found in close proximity to *liubo* boards

Nr.		**Figurines** (servants?)	**Lamps**	**Writing Utensils**			**Weapons**				
			deng 燈, *lu* 爐	brush	ink slab	iron knife	bow, arrow, etc.	bow rack	cross-bow	sword, halberd, lance	shield
1	Anhui, Fangwanggang M1	35 figurines, 1 cart, 1 horse	3	1						9	
2	Gansu, Fangmatan M14			1							
3	Guangzhou, Tomb of Zhao Mo, King of Nanyue (eastern ancillary chamber)	2	1				6			3	
4	Guangzhou, Tomb of Zhao Mo, King of Nanyue (eastern lateral chamber)									2	
5	Guangzhou, Longshenggang M43	3					2		2	3	1
6	Hubei, Tianxingguan M2	8	1							2	
7	Hubei, Gaotai M2	28 figurines, 12 horses, 4 carts									
8	Hubei, Gaotai M33	19									
9	Hubei, Jicheng M1	2					1 bow, 9 arr., 1 quiv.			2	1
10	Hubei, Dafentou M1	7 figurines, 1 cart, 7 horses								1	
11	Hubei, Shuihudi M11			1						2	
12	Hunan, Mawangdui M3	95	3 1 table				2 bows, 12 arr.			5 (horn), 1 rack	
13	Hunan, Wangchengpo	1									
14	Jiangsu, Tomb of Liu Shen		1							4 swords, 2 lances, 1 halberd	
15	Jiangsu, Tomb of Liu Zhi			2						3	
16	Jiangsu, Tomb of Liu Yingke					3				6 swords, 9 lances, 29 halb.	
17	Jiangsu, Zifangshan M1		2								
18	Jiangsu, Yaozhuang M101	11	2	1	4	1	6	1	2		1
19	Jiangsu, Zhangji Tuanshan M1										
20	Jiangsu, Dongyang M7								1	3	
21	Jiangsu, Fenghuanghe										
22	Shandong, Daishu M2									2	
23	Shandong,Yinqueshan M1	4									
24	Shandong, Jinqueshan M31	7								2	
25	Shandong, Jinqueshan M33	3								2 iron, 1 wood	

Nr.	Tableware	Other
1		4 weights, 1 mirror, 4 boxes, 2 toiletry boxes (combs, spatulas, boxes), 2 combs, 4 hairpins, 3 staffs, 2 belt hooks
2		1 neck rest, bamboo mat
3		3 boxes, 1 toiletry box, 7 mirrors (no TLV), 3 (belt?) hooks, 8 hooks, 3 rings, 1 ornam.; 1 jade *bi* 璧, 1,jade *huang* 璜, 2 hoes, 3 spades, 1 wooden "awl," 1 lock, 1 iron ring, 1 bronze ring, 1 awl, 4 ornaments (ivory)
4		14 mirrors (no TLV), 2 silver and 9 bronze (belt?) hooks, 4 pairs of iron tweezers, 6 iron knives, 9 jade *bi*, 10 jade *huang*, 6 jade pendants, various ornaments and beads (jade, gold, glass), 5 bronze and 1 ceramic incense burner, 7 seals (gold, ivory) referring to (a) female owner(s)
5		models: 1 boat (both wood), 1 granary, 1 house, 1 stove, 1 well (all pottery), 1 cart (lacquered)
6		4 weights, 4 screens, 1, fan, 1 box, 1 fish (wood), 7 baskets, 1 winged figurine, 1 incense burner, 1 coals scoop, 1 coal basket, 1 flying bird figurine
7		1 mirror, 1 seal (all bronze), 3 bamboo boxes, 5 cases, 5 boxes (all lacquered), 2 wooden combs
8		4 boxes, 1 comb
9		1 axle caps, 2 snaffle, 1 carriage canopy, 3 bit gag, 2 (belt?) hooks, 1 bamboo mat, 26 "kauri" (bone), 1 *zhenmushou*
10		1 toiletry box (1 mirror, 4 combs, 2 knives, 1 jade *bi*), 2 jade ornaments, manuscripts (1 slip, 1 slab)
11		7 baskets, 3 boxes, 1 toiletry box, 1 fan
12		1 screen, 1 fan, 1 bamboo mat, 1 box (combs, mirror, dice…), 1 box (silk girdle), 1 box (1 mirror), 1 box (hat), 3 (belt?) hooks, 1 pair of shoes (hemp), 2 silk girdles, 2 silk fragments,
13		1 dice, 5 wooden *bi*, 5 rhinoceros horn, 11 elephant tusks (all wood)
14		1 small box
15		1 mirror (TLV), 1 (belt?) hook, 1 jade *bi*
16		1 mirror, remains of at least 10 lacquered boxes, several bronze fittings, 3 lead mat weights
17	1 BL	
18	100 WZ	2 combs, 2 mirror (1 TLV), 4 weights
19	ceramic BL	1 toiletry box, 11 circular/semicircular bronze artifacts
20		2 boxes, 1 mirror
21		2 boxes, 1 toiletry box
22		4 weights
23	BL	3 boxes, 2 baskets, 2 staffs, writ. Board?
24		4 boxes (1 incl. millet), 2 baskets
25		4 weights, 1 box, 1 basket

Abbreviations: WZ = *wuzhu* 五銖; BL = *banliang* 半兩.

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