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REVIEW ARTICLE

Excavation and Academic Value of the Canglishan Site in Zhangpu County, Fujian Province, China

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Abstract

The Canglishan Site in Zhangpu County, Fujian Province, China, dating back approximately 9,000 years, is the earliest Neolithic site discovered in Fujian Province to date. It holds significant academic value in the history of ancient Chinese civilization, the exchange of civilizations along the southeastern coast of China, and the development of language.

1. Brief Introduction to Canglishan Site

According to comprehensive reports, the 2025 archaeological excavation project at the Canglishan site in Zhangpu County, Fujian Province, China, successfully passed acceptance on December 3, 2025. Carbon-14 dating by the BETA laboratory and the School of Archaeology and Museology Laboratory of Peking University determined that the Canglishan site dates back approximately 9,000 years, making it the earliest Neolithic open-air site discovered in Fujian Province to date. Its discovery fills a gap in early Neolithic archaeology in coastal Fujian Province and also completes a crucial missing link in the Neolithic cultural sequence of southern Fujian and eastern Guangdong.

The Canglishan Site is located in Cangli Village, Pantuo Town, Zhangpu County, Fujian Province. Excavations were conducted jointly by the Fujian Provincial Institute of Archaeology, Peking University, and the Zhangzhou Municipal Cultural Relics Protection Center from July to November 2025. The site currently covers an area of approximately 30,000 square meters, with a core area of about 10,000 square meters. In 2025, 500 square meters were excavated, yielding over 1,000 artifacts, including pottery, polished stone tools, and chipped stone tools.[1]

2. The Discovery of this Site has the Following Important Value

Firstly, the core breakthrough of this excavation lies in the updated chronological coordinates and the improved cultural lineage. Previously, no early Neolithic cultural remains had been discovered along the coast of Fujian Province, and the excavation of the Canglishan site fills this archaeological gap. The pointed-bottom pottery, unique decorations, triangular stone adzes, and a large number of stone grinding discs and pestles unearthed at the site exhibit distinct cultural characteristics.

Secondly, the pottery unearthed at the site shares certain similarities in shape, texture, manufacturing process, and decorative style with pottery unearthed at prehistoric sites across the Taiwan Strait, such as the Qihedong Site [2]in Fujian Province, the

[1]There are many reports on this topic; the main reference is a Xinhua News Agency report dated December 5, 2025.

[2]The Qihedong Site, located in Zaotou Village, Xianghu Town, Longyan City, Fujian Province, is a transitional site from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic period. It was discovered during the Third National Cultural Relics Census in 2008. The site contains multiple cultural layers and is of great value for studying the transition from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic period, the development from chipped to polished pottery techniques, the invention of early pottery, the migration and cultural exchange of ancient populations across the Taiwan Strait, and establishing a prehistoric archaeological cultural sequence in southeastern China. See Fujian Provincial Museum and Longyan Municipal Bureau of Culture and Publication: "Brief Report on the Excavation of the Qihe Cave Prehistoric Site in Zhangping City, Fujian Province", Archaeology, No. 5, 2013, pp. 7-19.

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Liangdaodaowei I Site[3], and the Jin Guishan Site in Kinmen[4], as well as the Chenqiao Chaoan Site in Guangdong Province. This provides new materials for exploring the interaction and migration of early populations in the Jiulongjiang River Basin and the islands along the southeast coast, and also offers new ideas for the study of prehistoric cultural exchanges across the Taiwan Strait. In addition, the discovery of Hutoupu culture-type tombs at the site reveals cultural exchanges between Fujian and Guangdong during the late Neolithic period.

Third, from the perspective of human survival history, the Canglishan site witnessed a crucial transformation in prehistoric humans in Fujian Province, from cave living to open-air living. Dr. Lü Jinyan, an archaeologist, said: "The discovery of burial areas, production tool areas, and areas with dense pottery shards within the site indicates that the site should have had preliminary functional zoning, providing an important sample for studying the origins of early human settlements and social organization in Fujian." Professor Chen Xingcan, President of the Chinese Archaeological Society and Academician of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said: "The Canglishan site is extremely rare in China due to its early age, complete settlement, and rich artifacts. It is one of the most important discoveries in the archaeological work of Neolithic sites in China this year (2025)."

Fourth, the excavation of this site once again proves that Chinese civilization is ancient, diverse, and unified. In prehistoric times, civilizations and cultures existed in various parts of China, each independent yet interacting and coexisting with other regional civilizations. Each regional civilization had its unique characteristics, and later they all merged into the river of Chinese civilization, becoming an indispensable part of its composition. The historian Sima Qian commented in the "Biographies of the Eastern Yue"in *Shiji*, "Although Yue were barbarians, did their ancestors ever have any great merit towards the people? How could they have existed for so long!" From an archaeological perspective, the ancestors of Southern Fujian contributed to the construction of civilization and culture, thus ensuring the continuous transmission of Southern Fujian civilization.

3. Conclusion

This archaeological excavation is believed to provide new materials for the study of the evolution of prehistoric human life in Fujian Province, the origin of the Austronesian language family, the interaction and migration of early populations in Fujian and the islands of southeastern coastal China, and cultural exchanges. It has important academic value and deserves continued attention and research.

4. References

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2. "Liangdao Island Tail Site - National Cultural Heritage Website": https://nchdb.boch.gov.tw/assets/overview/archaeologicalSite/20210618000002
3. Kinmen Jin Guishan Site, https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%87%91%E9%BE%9C%E5%B1%B1%E9%81%BA %E5%9D%80/15578655.
4. Xinhua News Agency report "Important discovery! The Canglishan site in Zhangpu County dates back approximately 9,000 years." dated December 5, 2025.

[3]The Liangdao Island Tail I site is an important prehistoric archaeological site located on Liangdao Island in the Matsu Islands. It was accidentally discovered in September 2011 by Yang Suisheng and others during an expedition. Archaeological excavations revealed prehistoric cultural layers dating back approximately 8300–7300 years, yielding numerous shell mounds, pottery, stone tools, bone tools, and human skeletons, reflecting the dependence of the people at that time on marine resources. The discovery of the Liangdao Island Tail I site is of great significance to the study of the origins of the Austronesian language family, providing crucial evidence that the Austronesian language family originated in the southeastern coastal region of mainland China (archaeological, anthropological, and DNA evidence confirms that the Austronesian gene originated in the coastal area of Fujian Province, dating back to 8400 years ago). For information about the Liangdao Island tail site, please see "Liangdao Island Tail Site - National Cultural Heritage Website":

https://nchdb.boch.gov.tw/assets/overview/archaeologicalSite/20210618000002

[4]The site was discovered during an archaeological survey conducted by Dr. Chen Zhongyu's team from 1994 to 1995. Excavator Dr. Chen Weijun pointed out that the site is of academic importance for studying the development and interaction of prehistoric cultures in southeastern coastal China. For information about the Kinmen Jin Guishan Site, please see https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E9%87%91%E9%BE%9C%E5%B1%B1%E9%81%BA%E5%9D%80/155 78655.