Ancient China

From the Neolithic Period to the Han Dynasty

Asian Art Museum
Education Department

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Ancient China:
From the Neolithic Period to the Han Dynasty

Packet written and illustrated by
Brian Hogarth, Director of Education, Asian Art Museum

with generous assistance from:
Pearl Kim, School Programs Coordinator, Asian Art Museum
Michael Knight, Curator, Chinese Art, Asian Art Museum
He Li, Associate Curator of Chinese Art, Asian Art Museum
John Stuckey, Librarian, Asian Art Museum
Lisa Pollman, Graduate Student, University of San Francisco
Whitney Watanabe, Graduate Student, University of Washington
Deb Clearwaters, Adult Programs Coordinator,Asian Art Museum
Rose Roberto, Education Programs Assistant, Asian Art Museum

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Introduction–Studying Ancient China

This teacher's packet accompanies a school tour program of the same name. The tour program emphasizes ancient Chinese ceramics, bronzes and jades in the collections of the Asian Art Museum from the Neolithic period (ca. 6,000 BCE–1,700 BCE) through the end of the Han dynasty (ca. 220 CE) This packet complements an earlier one produced by the Asian Art Museum, *Stonecutter, Metalsmith, Potter: Artists of Ancient China*. Although there is some overlap between the two packets, this one emphasizes the broader historical contexts of the art objects on display, with archaeological, philosophical and technological perspectives.

This packet contains historical overview of the main periods, as well as examples of three important archaeological excavations from the 1970s. In the summer of the year 2000, the Asian Art Museum will present a new exhibition of recent archaeological finds from China, *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology*. At that time, a supplementary guide featuring some of the highlights of that exhibition will be added to this packet.

Studying ancient China is like trying to hit a moving target. New archaeological discoveries are frequently being made in China meaning that the histories are constantly being rewritten. Another challenge is that, even when new finds are announced, it often takes years for work and reports to be completed, and even longer for the results of this work to appear in English. The reader and student should be aware that much of what is written now will likely be revised before long.

An important point to consider when dealing with the distant past is that there is much that we do not, and cannot know. The archaeological record is limited at best, and even spectacular finds, such as those profiled in this packet, often raise more questions than answers. Similarly, objects that appear in museum collections were usually collected privately as works of art appealing to the individual collector, rather than as historical documents, or as attempts to fill in a historical record. They too, form a picturesque, but incomplete view of the past. It is the museum's task, then, to try and fill in some of the gaps in the viewer's understanding. The task of the student of Chinese art objects is to study the objects as products of an original cultural environment, without going too far into the realm of pure speculation. In reading this packet, a distinction should always be made between what is clearly evident, and what is interpreted or speculative. This point will come up again in the slide descriptions and enclosed student activities.

Some overall goals for this packet and program are:

- To explore the rise of ancient Chinese civilization, and how characteristics of this civilization are reflected in surviving examples of its material culture; for example, how objects reflect belief systems and cultural values;
- To understand some of the technical and artistic breakthroughs achieved in ancient ceramics, jade and bronze;
- To recognize the limitations and opportunities of interpreting historical objects, especially those excavated from tombs by archaeologists

Defining "Ancient China"

In this packet, Ancient China refers to the time between the Neolithic period, beginning about 8,000 years ago, and the Han dynasty, which is roughly equivalent to the period of the Roman Empire in the West. This is the formative stage of Chinese civilization. During this time, what we now call China developed from a collection of isolated cultural communities to a set of organized states which eventually coalesced around the idea of a single unified state, and then expanded to include contact with other civilizations.

The first step was the development of agriculture. This resulted in settled life which produced surplus or stored goods. As more and more cultures came into close contact, the need for defence arose, and communities were walled in for protection. Societies became stratified around rulers and subjects, with allegiances and authority based on clan lines. Organized warfare on a massive scale began. In its rise to civilization, China developed a system of writing, various beliefs about heaven and the cosmos, as well as technological breakthroughs that allowed for political control and economic expansion.

The rise of civilization in China meant a gradual process of organizing disparate groups around a set of common beliefs, first by force, and then by articulating what it meant to be Chinese. This self-consciousness of 'Chinese-ness' first occured during the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770–221 BCE) when a 'hundred schools' of philosophy debated everything from the nature of man to notions of proper conduct and the ideal ruler. This period was so influential that later dynasties would refer back to it as a measure of their own worth.

Discussing Ancient China with students

In addition to the student activities enclosed in this packet, here are some suggestions on discussing ancient China with your students:

- Have students recreate the timeline, noting the long history of Chinese civilization, and the importance of studying the history and culture of such a large portion of the world's current population (1.3 billion people);

- There is a tendency for children's books on Ancient China to include everything before the modern era. Try to define the period as noted above; similarly, note the differences between ancient customs and rituals and what the students see as characteristics of today's Chinese cultures and communities;

- Use this packet to explore different dimensions of ancient China such as technolgical innovations; social and political developments, beliefs and practices as revealed through burial sites, and artistic achievements;

- Before (using the slides) or after you visit the museum, ask the students to recreate aspects of ancient China that are suggested by the art objects on display: who made and who used each object, where would these objects have been used; what sort of life did these people live, what was a typical day like?

- Having thought about the previous questions, how much of what the students imagine can be gleaned from the art objects and written records of ancient China? What can be said for certain about these things, and how much is speculation? How do different scholars (ie archaeologists, art historians) use these objects to interpret the past?

Historical Overview–Neolithic to Han

This booklet covers the time period between approximately 5,000 BCE (Before Common Era) and the end of the Han dynasty at 220 CE (Common Era). This is an immense amount of time, about two-thirds of the total span of Chinese history. It can be broken down into the following periods and dynasties:

Neolithic period*	ca. 6,000 – ca. 1,750 BCE
Erlitou period**	ca. 1,750 –ca 1,500 BCE
Shang dynasty:	
Erligang period	ca. 1,500 – ca. 1,300 BCE
Anyang period	ca. 1,300 – ca. 1,050 BCE
Western Zhou dynasty***	ca. 1,050 – 771 BCE
Eastern Zhou dynasty:***	770 – 221 BCE
Spring/Autumn	770 – 475 BCE
Warring States	475 – 221 BCE
Qin dynasty	221 – 206 BCE
Han dynasty:	206 BCE – 220 CE
Western Han	206 BCE – 9 CE
Xin	9 – 23 CE
Eastern Han	23 – 220 CE

* The Neolithic period, or New Stone Age, is usually broken down into regional areas, such as North-eastern China, North-Central, Eastern, South-eastern and South-central China. Furthermore, each area can be broken down into earlier and later Neolithic cultures. See map.

**The Erlitou period, named after the excavated site of an ancient capital, continues to be a source of debate. Some historians believe it to be the site of the ancient Xia dynasty. Others consider it to be the early stages of the Shang dynasty. Dates for the Erlitou, Erligang and Anyang phases of ancient China are also subject to debate. The period of time from the Xia through the Zhou is often referred to as the Bronze Age in China.

***Western and Eastern signify a change in the capital of that dynasty from west to east, for example from ancient Chang'an (Xi'an) to Luoyang. The Eastern Zhou is divided up into several periods. During the Warring States, for example, power shifts to several competing states. Zhou continues to rule as a puppet state while others jostle for power. The Qin eventually suceed in defeating all other states, uniting China for the first time. Imperial China begins at this point.

Overview of the Neolithic Period

The Neolithic Period is part of prehistory, which is usually broken down into two main sections: Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) and Neolithic (New Stone Age). The Neolithic begins about 7,000 or 8,000 BCE and ends with the Bronze Age around 2,000 BCE, but as we shall see, bronzes emerge before the so-called Bronze Age. Dating is problematic and unresolved. For the purposes of simplicity, this period runs roughly between 6,000 BCE and 1,750 BCE. The Neolithic cultures discussed below have been divided by regions and as early or later Neolithic.

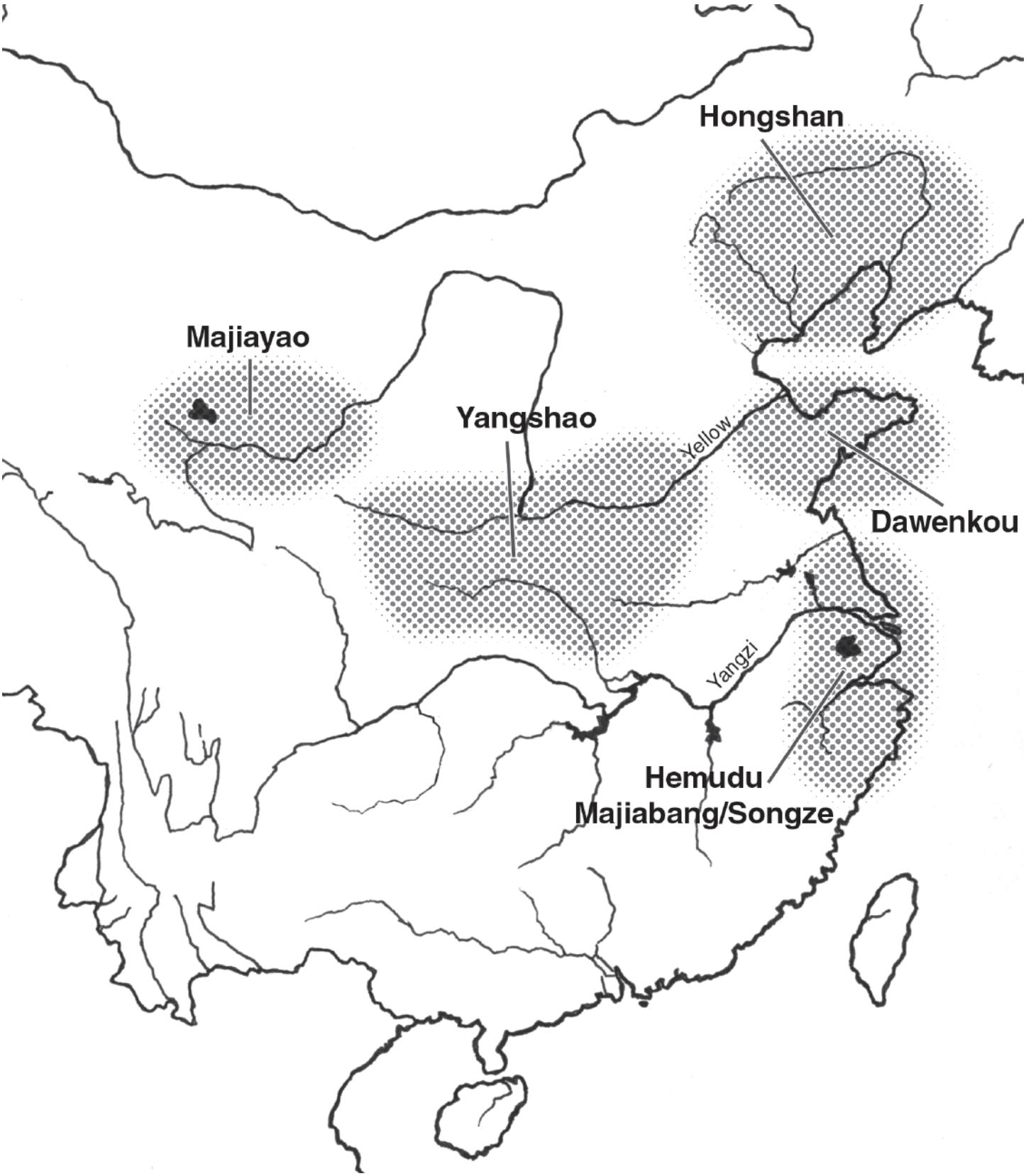
It was originally thought that prehistoric communities first emerged in north central China, and then spread to other parts of China. The archaeological record, however, now suggests the simultaneous emergence of a variety of cultures across China, each with their own characteristics. Our discussion will be limited to some of the major cultures to emerge in North-central China and Eastern China, as these are reflected in the Asian Art Museum collections.

Our knowledge of the Neolithic period is based entirely on the archaeological record. Most of the evidence appears in the form of burials or cemetaries near encampments or the remains of ancient villages. The Neolithic is characterized by the beginning of settled life, brought on by agriculture. This coincides with the use of stone tools for farming, and the fashioning of ceramic pots to store and cook the harvested foodstuffs. Therefore, most of the objects found at these ancient grave sites are pots, and to a lesser extent, tools and other objects made of bone and stone. There is usually enough evidence to make some observations about the historical environment. For example, sites often reveal bits of foodstuffs and discarded bones and shells that help indicate eating habits. We know that in many cases, a diet based on domesticated plants and animals was still supplemented with hunting and gathering of food.

The name of a culture is usually based on a single site which defines a distinct cultural group. For example, Yangshao is based on a village in Henan close to a site excavated first in 1921, even though the term can be applied to a vast area. Similarly, Longshan cultures are named after a single village in Shandong province, even though a variety of Longshan cultures exist across China in the later Neolithic period. The names given to these groups are of course modern appelations, and we do not know what the original peoples called themselves until we reach the historical period.

According to K C Chang, who has written extensively on ancient Chinese archaeology (Chang, 1986), China was very moist and much greener in prehistoric times. The evidence of animal remains, soil samples from archaeological sites, and the imagery used on ancient ceramic vessels, suggest a more tropical, forested environment throughout China. Animals found in north-central China at this time would have included water buffalo, bamboo rat, elephants, tapirs, water deer–animals normally associated with a more southern climate. Some of the earliest domesticated animals appear to have been dogs, pigs, and water buffalo; pig remains turn up most often. In the north, farmers raised millet crops, hemp and cabbage. Some of the earliest remains of farming are found at the sites of Peiligang and Cishan. In the south, rice was the main crop, with some of the first evidence showing up in the middle reaches of the Yangzi river. Along the east coast, there is evidence of bottle gourds, acorns and water chesnuts. Cord was made from a nettle plant known as ramie.

Ancient China–Early Neolithic Cultures



North–central/North west–Yangshao/Majiayao Cultures

The group of sites and associated cultures of the north central plains in early Neolithic times are collectively known as **Yangshao** cultures. This is the group most often represented in western museum collections of Asian art, since it was the area first collected by western and Chinese archaeologists in the first half of this century. The pottery from this group is distinguished by a variety of painted designs, hence the term, 'painted pottery' cultures.

Some of the major phases represented by pottery from this group are, listed from earliest to latest:

Yangshao–
Banpo phase (ca. 4,800 – 3,600 BCE)
Miaodigou phase (ca. 3750 – 3,200 BCE)
Miaodigou II phase
Majiayao phase* (ca. 3,800 – 2,000 BCE)
-Banshan type
-Machang type
* some see this phase as a separate cultural group

Slide # 1 in this teacher's packet is one of the oldest pieces in the Asian Art Museum's collections, a small painted bottle from Banpo.This site is quite well known to tourists, as it is often seen on trips that include the First Emperor's tomb outside of present-day Xian. Banpo was a large fortified village along the banks of the Wei river. The use of slash and burn agriculture meant that the villagers would have abandoned the site after a short time (Chang, 1986). An unusual feature of this site is the presence of children buried in urns, usually beneath the houses or within the walls of the habitations. Adult bodies were buried outside the village, which was surrounded by a ditch. Houses were made with wooden poles plastered with mud. Inside each house was a hearth for cooking, and benches or raised areas possibly used for sleeping. The layout of the homes suggests some kind of social organization, with larger houses surrounded by smaller ones.

An interesting development in the Majiayao phase burials is the separation of men's and women's graves, men buried with stone tools, and women buried with spindle worls and pots. During this period, it is suggested that there was a transition from matriarchal to patriarchal forms of society (He Li, 1996).

Yangshao pottery

Yangshao pottery is characterized by the use of reddish earthenware painted with black decorative designs. These designs change from site to site, moving from representational art to more abstract designs. In some instances, the designs resemble mask shapes with fish-like protrusions, in others, the designs are swirling patterns with a tooth-like pattern (see illustration). Some 90% of Banshan pottery is painted. Tripod vessels used for cooking (*ding*) appear at this time, and a lot of basket and cord impressions suggest a sophisticated level of fabric and basket technology.

Banshan Vessel

North–east –Hongshan Cultures

Some of this century's earliest archaeological work in China was carried out by the Japanese in north-east China. **Hongshan** cultures flourished between 3,500 – 2,500 BCE, in the hills above the Manchurian plain bordering the grasslands of Mongolia (Liaoning province). Hongshan finds include some of the earliest jades used as pendants, traces of bronze casting, larger-than-life female statues, and cist tombs marked by slabs. Some well-known jades from this culture are the so-called 'pig dragons' that were placed on the chest of tomb occupants. Perhaps most interesting is the presence of central stone altar areas, suggesting that the Hongshan built some of the earliest temple structures in ancient China (Lei, 1996).

East Coast – Dawenkou, Hemudu, Majiabang, Liangzhu

Traveling south from the area of Hongshan cultures, we encounter sites of the **Dawenkou** cultures (ca. 4,500 – 3,000 BCE) in what is now Shandong and Jiangsu provinces. Peoples of this culture used finely polished stone tools and built complex pottery forms, usually grey and black. Whereas Yangshao and Majiayao cultures are distinguised by the frequent use of painted designs, east coast cultures appear to have emphasized form over decoration. Dawenkou vessels show several advances, such as the use of the wheel and firing techniques to achieve very thin, delicate wares. Increased social stratification occurs in Dawenkou sites, where some graves have wooden coffins with goods, some with only goods, and others with no grave goods. Pig heads turn up in some of the larger graves. Perforated turtle shells appear, a precursor to the oracle bones used in divination we shall see later in the Shang.

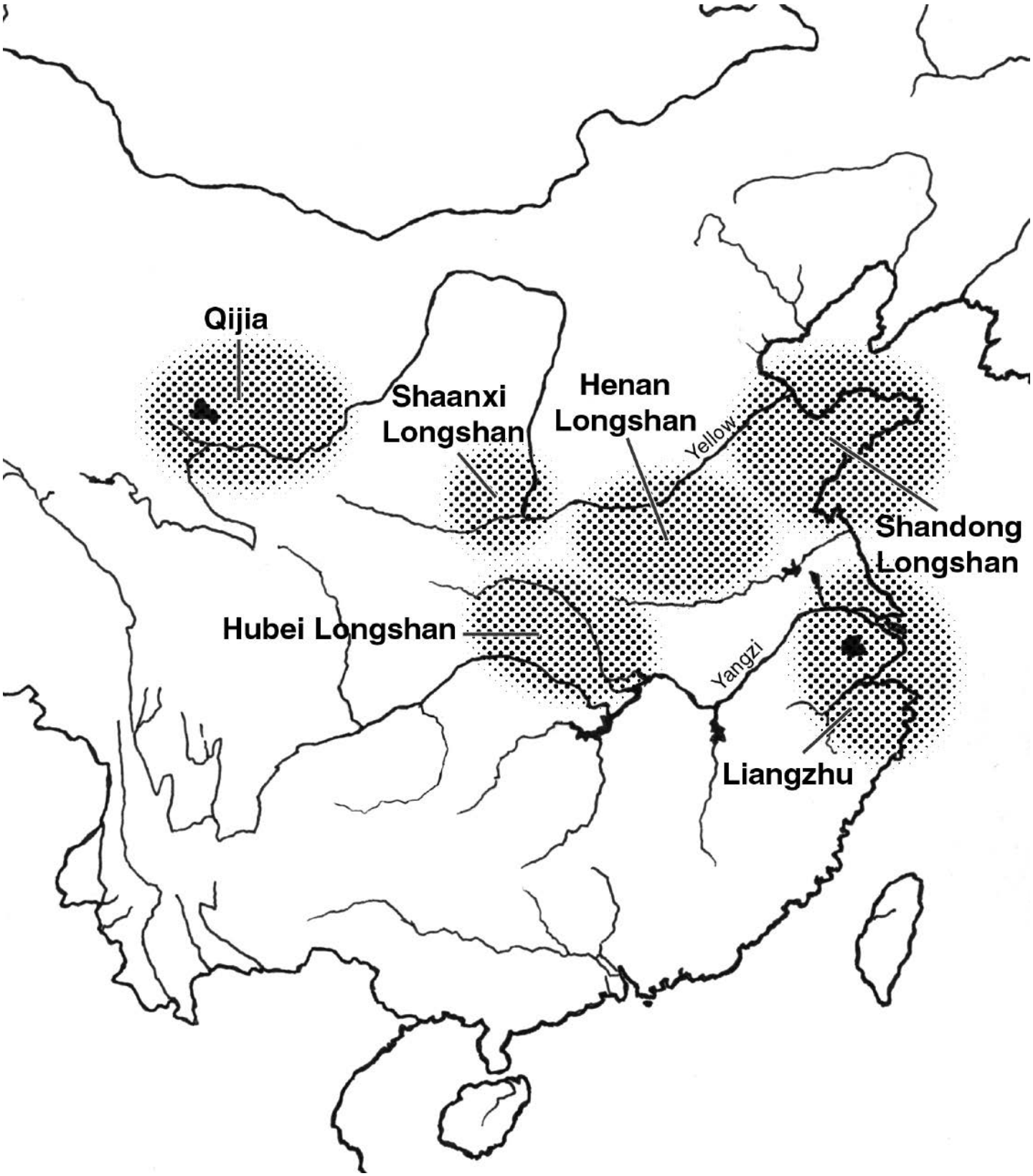
Hemudu (ca. 5,000 – 4,500 BCE) and **Majiabang** (ca. 5,000 – 3,000 BCE) cultures inhabit the areas south and north, respectively, of Hangzhou Bay on the central east coast of China. The late phase of Majiabang is known as Songze. It is hard to know the exact range of many of these cultures, often named on the basis of a single site. Hemudu, for example, in nothern Zhejiang province, reveals many interesting finds. These include joinery found in the remains of timber buildings, evidence of rice cultivation, blackware pottery, hoes made of animal shoulder blades, and one of the earliest lacquered bowls found in China.

Majiabang cultures, to the north of Hemudu, also incorporated mortise and tenon joints in their habitations. Bones of boar, elephant, deer, turtle, fox, alligator, fish, and mollusk appear, indicating the importance of hunting wild game. Tools include hoes made of animal shoulder blades, items made of bone, antler and stone, and ring-shaped jades. Domesticated animals include dogs, pigs, and water buffalo. Burials are usually single, with heads facing down and pointing north.

Liangzhu

One of the most remarkable cultures to emerge slightly later along the east coast is known as Liangzhu (ca. 3,000 – 2,000 BCE) located in the area around present-day Shanghai, and possibly a later outgrowth of Majiabang/Songze cultures. Originally, it was felt that this was another branch of Longshan culture, but it is now seen as an independent culture. Liangzhu has been studied at nineteen sites in Zhejiang province.

Ancient China–Late Neolithic Cultures



Like the Dawenkou, Liangzhu culture showed a preference for black pottery wares produced on the wheel. Most importantly, the Liangzhu are known for their jade work. This consisted of ornaments, ritual weapons and ritual objects known as *bi* and *cong*. (See slides # 3, 4 for further details). Jade was used as an indication of status in burials (based on the time required to produce such quantities), or it may have had religious or symbolic significance. The development of surface design motifs on Liangzhu jades may have influenced the later art of the Shang dynasty.

Later Neolithic cultures–Longshan

Longshan is a term originally based on a site in Zhangqiu, Shandong province, discovered in 1928, but now applied to three major areas of later Neolithic cultures, all approximately 2,500 – 1,700 BCE:

Shandong Longshan (eastern China)
Henan/Hebei Longshan (central China)
Shaanxi Longshan (north central China)

The Longshan period is represented in this packet by slide # 2, a very delicate goblet made of egg-shell thin black pottery from about 2,750 – 2,000 BCE.

Generally, this later Neolithic period is characterised by the emergence of copper objects, increased use of the potter's wheel, a general decline in painted pottery, the use of stamped earth walls for defence, indicating an increase of violence and stratification of society, plus the use of jade ritual objects and bones for divination. Cultures were becoming more complex and diversified. The archaeological record shows increased contact between cultures (Chang, 1986).

Social stratification is best exemplified by a large cemetary at the site of Taosi, in southern Shanxi province. Here, over a thousand burials have been studied. They have been divided into three types: 9 large graves, 80 medium graves, and 610 small graves. One large grave contained 200 items, including red pottery plate with a dragon design, a wooden drum with crocodile skin, music stone, drum-like pottery, wooden table, stand, various vessels, jade, stone rings, axes, and a whole pig skeleton. (Chang, 1986)

At the site of Hougang, Hubei province, five layers of bodies, apparently scalped, were dropped in a well. There is a circling wall of stamped earth. Both the well victims and the circling wall suggest an increase in violence and the need for defence. Pig bones account for roughly 90% of domesticated animal bones at the site. Pig and deer shoulder blades were used as oracle bones.

The Transition from Late Neolithic to the Bronze Age

The late Neolithic appears to be a crucial time in Chinese history when new technologies, new ways of organizing society, and increased contacts between cultures occured. Social stratification, as seen in burial sites and grave goods became even more pronounced as the dynastic period began. Certain objects such as jade, moved beyond utilitarian purposes to acquire special significance associated with the ruling elite. This process now extended to bronze, in particular bronzes cast as ritual vessels.

The next period is referred to as the Bronze Age, or the period of the three founding dynasties (*sandai*): Xia, Shang and Zhou*. We know about these early dynasties through a variety of sources– partly through legend, through historical records from several centuries later, and more recently, from the archaeological record. What makes this period so exciting for archaeologists is that much of what has been found in this century actually confirms the earlier historical records, turning what was assumed to be legend into fact.

A later text from the Eastern Zhou dynasty, the *Zuo Zhuan*, (577 BCE) testified to the importance of bronze technology as an instrument of power in a famous quotation: "the principal affairs of the state are rituals and warfare". The Bronze Age was also characterized by the development of a writing system, larger urban centers with temple structures, more specialized industries, and the mobilization of larger armies. Royal lineages would now become a key element in political structure of the state, and towns and villages would be organized along feudal lines into *guo* (vassal states or kingdoms).

Legendary rulers and the question of the Xia dynasty

Later Chinese histories speak of a number of legendary rulers. These rulers are treated like fact for most of Chinese history, and are often depicted in works of art, for example on Wu Liang's tomb carvings from the Han dynasty. After a period of creation, and the formation of the various elements, three sovereigns and five emperors emerge. Shenong invented agriculture. Fu Xi, the common ancestor, invented writing, hunting and fishing. Huangdi invented government and Daoist philosophy, and his wife introduced silk spinning. These 'three cultural heroes' are followed by the last of the model emperors, or 'three sage kings'–Yao, Shun and Yu. Yu is credited with controlling the floods, and founding the Xia dynasty. In a symbolic gesture, Yu casts nine bronze vessels (*ding*), each representing one of the regions at that time, and these are passed to succeeding dynasties as a way of legitimizing the right to rule. Xia begins on a high moral note, but concludes with a decadent king, who falls to Tang, the founder of the Shang dynasty.

Solid evidence for the existence of the Xia dynasty is still under debate. Where was it located for example? Some scholars arguing that remains found at Erlitou, Henan province, are the site of Xia; other groups arguing that Erlitou is early Shang, depending on how the various layers or strata of excavations are interpreted. It seems possible, given the compliance of Chinese histories and current archaeology of later Shang sites, that the Xia did in fact exist, but we may not be sure, anytime soon, of their exact whereabouts in terms of material remains. The controversy is likely to continue, given that there are about thirty references to Xia places in the traditional histories, and that the Shang are indicated as having overtaken the Xia. At this point, it seems safer to speak of an Erlitou phase or culture, arising out of the Henan-Longshan culture, leading to a more definable Shang period at several other sites.

* Xia is pronounced 'shee-ah', and Zhou is pronounced 'joe'.

The Shang Dynasty

The Shang dynasty extends from roughly 1,500 to 1,050 BCE. According to various histories and traditions, the Shang people originated along the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow river. They defeated the Xia under the king Chengtang and established a number of city states. The Shang have been known in the archaeological record from around 1898–99,

when oracle bones drew attention to the site of Anyang, revealing the last capital of the Shang, and confirming the existence of the dynasty. Since then, the period has been divided into two main stages known as Erligang and Anyang. It is believed the Shang moved their capital at least five times, and several dozen Shang sites have been identified. At this point, however, the best known sites are at Anyang and Zhengzhou.

Erlitou	-either Xia or early Shang?
Erligang	-represented at Zhengzhou, middle stage
Anyang	-last capital of the Shang

One of the important factors in determining the history of the Shang is the presence of written records. Writing at this time was mostly pictographic, meaning that a word was represented by a picture that closely resembled its meaning. Overtime, this writing would become more ideographic. During the Shang, there were scribes who recorded important events. What has survived are inscriptions on bronzes, and more importantly, inscriptions on oracle bones used by the Shang for divination. Thousands of bones have been recovered, many of them broken. The bones contain not only intriguing questions about what will happen and whether or not certain actions are bound to be effective or not, but also the names of kings. We know, for example, the names of the kings that ruled for a period of 273 years at Anyang.

The oracle bones attest to the importance of ritual divination among the Shang rulers. The oracle bones were used to divine, or determine, answers to various questions concerning agriculture (ie the success of a particular harvest), military expeditions, future events such as pregnancies or military engagements, and very personal matters such as what to do about a toothache. The questions, answers and outcomes were all recorded on the bones, usually plastrons and scapulae of cattle and turtles. A metal rod, or perhaps a burning ember was heated and placed on the bone near where the question had been written. The shape of the crack determined the answer, and the outcome (what followed) was sometimes written on the bone.

Shang kings maintained a tightly controlled state. They acted not only as priests, but also waged military campaigns and controlled numerous workshops for producing ceramics, bone objects and most importantly, bronzes. Cowrie shells, an imported item, were used as currency. The technological advances in the production of bronze did not benefit the average person. Bronze was produced for the ritual and military needs of the state. The casting of bronzes was a laborious process, involving the mining of copper and tin, or lead ores, smelting these into ingots, and then transporting the ingots to the bronze casting workshops. Finally, bronzes were produced with intricate designs using ceramic piece molds. The bronze industry was therefore a complex enterprise involving massive human and material resources. K.C. Chang has suggested that the movement of Shang capitals may have been influenced by the continual search for new sources of copper and tin. (Chang, 1986)

The Shang aristocracy were buried in lavish tombs. Those at Anyang are typically cruciform in shape, with one to four ramps leading down to the coffin at the bottom. Although plundered, there is enough evidence to show that coffins were lacquered, and sometimes inlaid. Beneath the coffin was a sacrificial dog or human, or series of human sacrifices surrounding the coffin pit area or on the ramps. Sometimes, the sacrificial victims were beheaded. Whole chariots were buried with the owner. A large tomb, # 1001, from

Anyang is seen in slide # 9. One of the few tombs to survive untouched by looters is Tomb no. 5, believed to be the grave of Fu Hao, one of the consorts of Wu Ding, the fourth king at Anyang. This was an astonishingly rich grave, filled with hundreds of bronzes, jades, and bone objects, as well as thousands of cowrie shells. (see separate article in "Three Tomb Excavations")

Shang ritual bronze vessels

Ritual bronze vessels were more than just elegant objects of status, but symbols of power, commanding respect. They were cast using ceramic piece molds, built around a clay model. The molds were imprinted with designs from the model, then the model was cut or carved down to allow for bronze to be poured in the empty space between the model and the molds. Each piece was unique, since the ceramic piece molds had to be broken to release the bronze inside. The bronzes were used in rituals conducted by the ruling elite. These rituals required the use of wine vessels, water containers and food containers, for heating and serving purposes. (See section on "The Importance of Rites").

What makes the bronzes unique are the precise, intricate designs and motifs that cover their surfaces and the interesting repertoire of shapes developed during the Shang and Zhou dynasties. The shapes of the bronzes appear to have developed from ceramic prototypes, and experimentation with hammered shapes and different forms. The designs employ composite animal motifs, from fairly straightforward linear patterns on the surface to more intricate patterns with main motifs protruding from background designs. A characteristic design is the so-called *taotie* or monster mask, essentially a face divided in the middle and splayed across the bronze so that there appears to be two profiles or a single face. (see additional information in separate section on "ceramics, jades and bronzes").

The Shang period brought a new level of sophistication to the production of weaponry, luxury and ritual items for the ruling elite, as well as tomb construction. This involved considerable mobilization of labor and resources. The presence of sacrificial victims suggests a harsh regime. The Shang were frequently at war with their neighbors, and eventually were overtaken by the Zhou, a subservient state which rose in power to the southwest of Anyang along the Wei River Valley.

The Zhou dynasty

A date around 1,050 BCE is generally accepted as the date of the defeat of the Shang by Wen Wang and the establishment of the Zhou. The Zhou is divided into Western and Eastern stages, with 771 BCE a critical year, when the Zhou court moved east to Luoyang. After this point, political control is shared among a number of states during the Spring and Autumn, and Warring States period (see time chart at beginning of this section).

With the Zhou, we continue to have the advantage of written histories that have been verified and elaborated on by the archaeological record. Shang records referred to the Zhou as both an enemy and an ally. Later histories reported that the Zhou settled an area between two peaks, an area today located south-west of Xian in Shaanxi province. The founder was Wen Wang, whose son, Wu Wang is credited with the defeat of the Shang. Early Zhou sites turn up at Feng and Hao, complete with chariot burials. The Zhou learned bronze making sometime around the Erligang period of the Shang dynasty. Oracle bones with inscriptions were also in use. During the Anyang period, if not before, the

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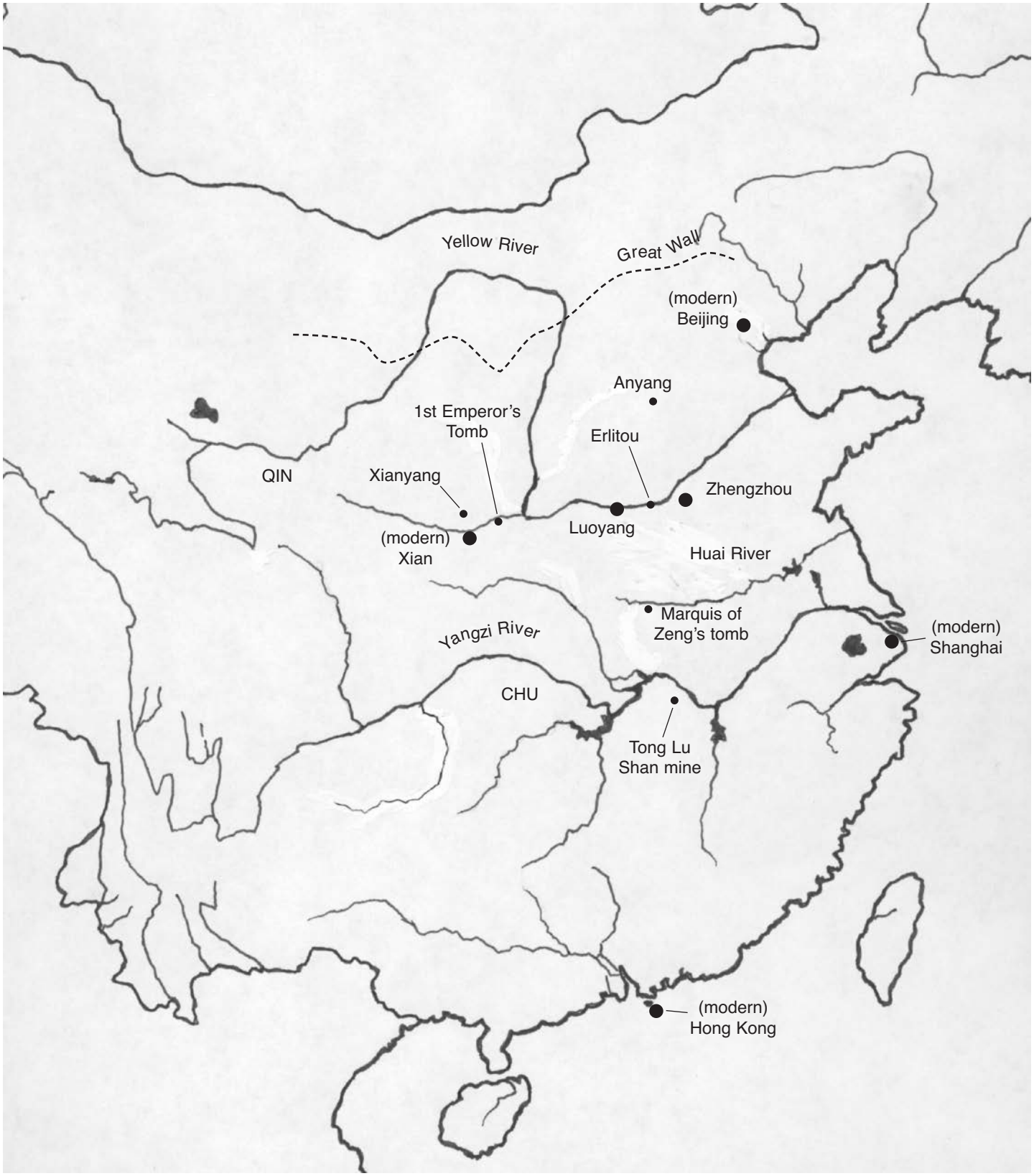


Sites associated with Shang, Zhou, Qin Dynasties

Zhou were already absorbing many Shang traditions and technologies. There were, however, critical differences between Shang and Zhou rule.

By the Shang, the idea that the king had a direct relationship to heaven was firmly established. The Shang worshipped *Shangdi*, the supreme lord who stood above the lesser gods of the elements and natural forces. The ancestors were worshipped in order to enlist their help in ensuring benevolence on the part of *Shangdi*. Ancestors continued to act in the world, either postively or negatively, depending on how well the king observed certain rituals. The king had a direct line to the ancestors, since he was the most direct descendent.

With the Zhou, a moral dimension was added to the celestial connection. Ancestors continued to be worshipped, but the important thing was to uphold the 'mandate of heaven.' The Chinese histories speak of the moral depravity of the Shang rulers, particularly the last, Di Xin. This king was portrayed as the embodiment of excess and harsh rule, apparently cutting out the heart of an advisor who displeased him, torturing others, and diminishing the treasury through wine-laden orgies. Di Xin committed suicide, and the Zhou proclaimed that they were taking over the mandate of heaven from the Shang, in effect saying that the Shang had failed to minister the welfare of the people. We know that the Shang had been fighting peoples to the north, and were probably in a weakened position already, but the appeal to moral responsibility probably won over some of the Zhou's allies in helping to defeat the Shang. Even in defeating the Shang, Wu left one son of the ruling Shang family alive to continue offering sacrifices to his family ancestors, so as not to incur the wrath of the ancestors of the defeated dynasty. This idea of the moral ruler or dynasty would be debated for some time to follow, and the (early) Zhou would be held as an example of statehood for future generations.

The Zhou inherited a vast network of city states and regions, controlling areas as far north as present-day Beijing and as far east as Shandong province. Initially, relatives of the Zhou kings were dispensed to various states to exercise control. A feudal system developed, with kings rewarding loyal subjects through a network of fiefdoms, in return for military aid and political allegiance. This structure may have contributed to a sense of civilization being contained within a central corridor, around which barbarian forces threatend. The Zhou had names for non-Zhou people in each of the cardinal directions. To the east were the Yi, to the west the Rong, to the south the Man and the north, the Di. New kingdoms began to emerge during the Zhou–the Yue to the east, and to the south, the Wu and the Chu. The peoples south of the Yangzi, according to Zhou records, tatooed themselves and cut off their hair. The notion of barbarian became even more entrenched in the idea of what constituted Chinese-ness when the Qian Rong invaded the western capital in 771 BCE. The Zhou king was killed, but his son, fled to Luoyang and reestablished the capital there.

The terms–**Spring and Autumn Period** and **Warring States Period**– are two different time periods that begin with the Zhou move to the Eastern capital at Luoyang. During these periods, the Zhou practice of delegating power to regional lords weakened Zhou influence, to the point where it held only puppet status. The real power was gradually transferring to new kingdoms such as Jin to the north –initially a strong ally of the Zhou, to the Chu kingdom expanding in the south, and later in the west, to the Qin. (see map) The Spring and Autumn periods saw many states and territories enter into alliances with one other. A brief period of peace was led by the Duke Huan of Qi (a kingdom in the northeast) who arranged a league of states that sent tribute to the Zhou king around 656 BCE. By the Warring States period however, as the title implies, the major states were at war

with each other. These rivalries and alliances are often documented in the inscriptions on bronzes and other objects from this time period.

Warfare changed during this time as well. During the Shang, battles were limited in scale and duration, compared to the large numbers of soldiers mobilized during the Warring States period. The advent of double edged swords and the crossbow deemphasized the dominance of the chariot, and increased the size of the infantry. Some chivalry was still observed, but the scale of battle meant that casualties ran high, and victors (such as the Qin army) were sometimes merciless in their treatment of defeated armies. Even worse was the plight of peasants, who made up the bulk of the infantry. Even if spared after defeat, their life might become one of slavery to an alien ruler.

Despite much political uncertainty during the Eastern Zhou, this was a time of economic expansion. In the south, irrigation canals extended the development of more rice paddies. Iron tools began to be used by more people, resulting in better agricultural production. The population expanded and commercial trade increased. Bronze coins began to be minted, allowing merchants to cross contested borders without the burden of silks, cowries and other former mediums of exchange.

The Hundred Schools of Philosophy

The uncertainty of the Eastern Zhou contributed to the development of the so-called 'hundred schools' of philosophy, a creative flowering of genius that laid the foundations for all major schools of Chinese thought with the exception of Buddhism. At this time, philosophers began to travel around from court to court offering advice on everything from how to run the state, how to achieve victory in battle and how to achieve immortality. The most famous systems of thought to develop during this time were:

Confucianism

Founded by Kong Fu Zi (ca. 551 – 479 BCE), known in the west as Confucius. Confucius concerned himself with how society should be governed, what constitutes an ideal ruler, and how people should behave by cultivating virtue. He stressed the importance of relationships, using the family as a model, where individuals obeyed their elders from one's father and elder brothers up to the head of state. Rather than controlling people through harsh laws or coercion, Confucius stressed education as the vital tool in developing appropriate behavior that would result in an orderly, virtuous society. It is not known how many of Confucius' ideas can be attributed to him, however Confucianism became the dominant state ideology, with some exceptions, for most of the later dynasties that ruled China up until the last century.

Meng Zi (Mencius) (371 – 289 BCE) was the most famous follower of Confucius, who upheld the master's ideals against the competing philosophies listed below. He emphasized benevolence and the important concept of filial piety, and is also known for the idea that people have a right to rebel against tyrannical rulers.

DAOISM

Based on two classic texts, the *Dao De Jing* and *Zhuang Zi*, the first attributed to the sage Lao Zi, whose existence and dates are uncertain; the second written by Zhuang Zi (ca. 369 – 286 BCE) The Daoist texts are difficult to decipher because they are written in poems and parables. Daoists deemphasized ambition and greed, seeing these very human tendencies as ultimately leading to oppression. Instead, they advocated non-action and non-interference in the affairs of the world, by following the way of nature. Daoism was to have a profound influence on many aspects of Chinese arts and culture.

MOHISM

Founded by Mo Zi (ca 470 – 391 BCE). Initially a follower of Confucious, Mo Zi rejected selective love based on the family, preaching universal or brotherly love, where everyone is treated equally with the same sense of obligation extended to the family. Similarly, rulers should treat enemies as if they were his own kin, and not wage war. Mohists emphasized engineering and other practical arts, and deemphasized music and ritual.

LEGALISM

Legalism assumed that humans are basically greedy and selfish and therefore need to be ruled with a strong hand. The ruler's job was to promote a set of harsh laws, to provide a system of rewards and punishments, so that everyone would work hard in the interests of the state, and refrain from wasteful discourse. Legalism was adopted by the First Emperor (Qin dynasty) under the direction of the chief minister Shang Yang. Legalism was also promoted by Han Fei Zi, a member of the ruling family during the Han dynasty.

The emergence of the states of Chu and Qin

One of the largest copper mines in use during the Warring States period was located at Tonglushan in Hubei, within Chu territory. **Chu** was the last great state before Qin domination. It had assisted the Zhou defeat of Shang, but had suffered the humiliation of being labelled barbarian. Chu expanded during the period of the eastern Zhou along the central region of the Yangzi river basin, swallowing up the eastern states of Wu and Yue and then Zeng to its north. Chu was a wealthy state, able to support a range of arts and crafts in a distinct regional style. Slide # 13 shows the famous tomb of Yi, Marquis of the state of Zeng, from a time when Zeng was allied to Chu. Objects in the tomb attest to the highly sophisticated state of bronze casting at this time, utilizing the lost wax technique, as well as the extensive use of lacquer. Lacquer was used in furniture, weapons, daily utensils and dishes, as well as coffins. An anthology of poetry, the *Chu Ci*, survives from the state of Chu, attributed to one of the earliest known Chinese poets, Qu Yuan.

The **Qin Dynasty** (221 – 206 BCE) lasted only fifteen years, but the rise of the Qin state began several decades earlier, and Qin's defeat of all the other rival states brought a definative conclusion to the Warring States period. Ying Zheng ascended the throne of Qin in the year 246 BCE at age thirteen, and only a few years later launched a series of military campaigns against the neighboring states of Han, Zhou, Wei, Chu, Yan and Qi, defeating the last in 221 BCE, 'as a silkworm devours a mulberry leaf' according to the Han historian Sima Qian. Zheng proclaimed himself Qin Shihuangdi–the First Emperor of Qin–a signal that this was the start of an imperial dynasty meant to rule over all the kingdoms. Qin built a new capital at Xianyang, on the opposite side of the Wei river from present-day Xian. Here, the First Emperor applied Legalist principles, centralizing control and gathering a huge bureaucracy around his court to administer the new empire. The country was divided into thirty-six areas, each with its own governor. He standardized weights, measures, writing scripts, money, roads and axle widths of chariots. His most famous building projects were construction of the first Great Wall, meant to keep out foreign invaders, and his own mausoleum, in which as many as 700,000 toiled to prepare a model army for his defence and a model palace for his afterlife. The First Emperor is also remembered for his fear of subversion, leading to the burning of books and harsh treatment of scholars, with the notable exception of items and people pertaining to medicine and immortality. Qin Shihuangdi unified China and instituted many procedures that would ensure its continuity. However, his brutal regime and harsh laws meant that the dynasty was toppled only three years into the reign of his successor, his youngest son. (see separate article in the section marked, "Three Tomb Excavations")

The Han Dynasty

The Han Dynasty is one of the great dynasties in Chinese history, encompassing nearly four hundred years of expansion and consolidation which coincided with the period of the Roman republic and empire in the West. The period is usually broken down into three stages:

Western Han	206 BCE – 9 CE (capital at Chang'an)
Wang Mang	9 – 23 CE
(also called Xin dynasty or Wang interregnum)	
Eastern Han	25 – 220 CE (capital at Luoyang)

The Han began with a devastating fight between two rebel groups, one led by Xiang Yu, the other by the leader who would eventually succeed, Liu Bang. (Posthumously, Liu Bang was known as Gaodi.) The rise and fall of Eastern and Western Han seemed to follow a typical pattern of political consolidation, imperial expansion, and exhaustion ending in peasant uprisings and a final breakdown of administration.

Significant developments during both major stages included the revival of learning and formulation of Confucian-based educational systems, the expansion of trade and empire to the north, south, and west along the Silk Route, and a general economic expansion domestically, coupled with changes in beliefs and burial practices.

The revival of learning began during the reign of Wendi (180 – 157 BCE) who instructed scholars to search for missing texts burned by the Qin Emperor. The five classics (as defined by Confucious) –the *I Qing* (Book of Changes), *Shijing* (Book of Odes or Songs), *Shujing* (Book of History or Documents), *Li Qi* (Book of Rites) and the *Chunqiu* (Spring

and Autumn Annals)–were selected as the basis for an educational system that supported a state bureaucracy based on merit, rather than lineage. An examination system was begun in 196 BCE and an Imperial Academy begun in 124 BCE. By the end of the Western Han, enrollment at the Academy had exceeded 3,000.

Various economic measures were taken that expanded state control, including (in 119 BCE) a state monopoly of iron and silk production. Forty-nine foundries produced large numbers of agricultural implements. Steel began to be produced from experiments in making alloys from different irons of different carbon contents. Many farms were involved in silk production. Silk was used to pay taxes, used to trade horses, and made its way to Rome via the Silk Route. During the Eastern Han, a form of paper made from boiled remnants of fabric, bark, rape and hemp was produced and came into wide use. Along with improvements in paper production, the first Chinese dictionary (*Shou wen*) was compiled around 100 CE listing more than 9,000 characters, with an explanation of their meanings.

During the long reign of Wudi (141 – 87 BCE) the Chinese empire expanded to include parts of Korea and Vietnam. Diplomatic and military expeditions were sent to Central Asia to deal with the Xiongnu, who threatened China's western frontier. As a result of these maneuvres, the Gansu corridor in the west was colonized by Chinese, and Ferghana horses were imported and incorporated into the Chinese cavalry. Wudi's expansion heavily taxed state resources, and there was a general decline in leadership following his reign, leading to the usurpation of the throne by an imperial minister, Wang Mang.

Despite Wang Mang's attempts at reform, his power base quickly eroded and the Han was restored by Liu Xiu (reign name, Guang Wudi) in 25 CE. The early period of the Eastern Han saw another phase of consolidation, and at one point the empire's borders expanded even further to the west. However, during the latter phase of the Eastern Han, political stability weakened.

Spectacular finds from the Han include the tomb of Prince Liu Sheng and his consort Dou Wan, hollowed out of rock cliffs at Mancheng, in the northern province of Hebei. The best known objects from this tomb are the jade suits and body plugs meant to protect the bodies of the prince and his consort. From the ancient Chu state territory in the southern state of Hunan comes the elaborate wooden chamber tomb pit of Lady Dai, filled with an abundance of lacquerware, clay and wooden figures, and most importantly, large quantities of silk, including a famous banner containing enigmatic views of the cosmos at that time. The growing preference for relief carvings on stone slabs is best illustrated by the extensive arrangement of scenes in the Wu Liang shrine (2nd century CE), built by the sons and grandson of the deceased, and containing many references to filial piety.

For the first time in Chinese history, we have images of rural and daily life during the Han in the form of contemporary records, numerous ceramic burial items and stone monuments. There is a rich array of hunting scenes, barnyard animals, houses, watchtowers, soldiers, entertainers, even kitchen stoves. Behind the proliferation of grave goods lay a belief in the depiction of both the real world and evolving concepts of heavenly realms and celestial beings. Various beliefs held that the soul divided at death, or was summoned to Mount Taishan to be weighed before a heavenly court. An elaborate cosmology involving the five elements and the principle of Yin-Yang, along with Daoist prescriptions for immortality were developing that inspired much of the imagery on art from this time,

including strange beings, animals, and cloud formations, as seen on the funerary urn. (slide # 16) and jade items (slide # 18) meant to preserve the body. The tomb became a place where the earthly and heavenly met.

Tombs were outfitted with provisions for the afterlife, a whole dwelling with different rooms for food preparation, banqueting and resting. Ceramic replicas (mingqi) stood in for real objects, and these were coupled with representations of celestial places and their inhabitants. The duality of earthly and heavenly concerns is reflected in the slides in this packet showing a very down-to-earth granary building (slide # 17) and a celestial money tree (slides # 19, 20) on the top of which sits *Xiwangmu*, the Queen mother of the West. Han funerary practices extend to this day in the form of burning paper money and models, the idea being that the smoke carries these representations to heaven, just as the smoke from the fires of ancestral altars in the Shang carried offerings to the ancestors thousands of years earlier.

Finally, Buddhism began to find its way into China, principally along the Silk Routes and by sea, during the Eastern Han, although it did not yet produce a large following.

Archaeology and the Study of Ancient China

Archaeology is the study of the material remains of humanity's past. Excavated materials, along with other historical objects and text records, form the primary source material on Ancient China.

When did archaeology begin in China? All the major dynasties, beginning with the Han kept historical records, documenting everything up until that time. These official histories were the primary source for Chinese history until a century ago. During the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE), there was a serious effort to study the past (*jinshixue* –literally "metal/stone study") through objects and related texts. This resulted in a number of catalogues, including the first classification of ancient bronzes. Modern archaeology got underway in the late 19th century with the discovery of oracle bones, leading to the excavation of the Shang tombs at Anyang. The writing on the oracle bones verified the existence of the Shang kings, which had been chronicled in the ancient historical texts. Since then, there has been a close relationship between the study of textual sources and archaeology.

Unlike other countries, China never had a huge influx of foreign archaeologists, with the notable exception of Swedish geologist, Johan Gunnar Andersson (1874–1960). He was involved in the famous discovery of homo erectus fossils at the cave of Zhoukoudian, southwest of Beijing, and excavated the site of Yangshao in Henan, one of the major cultural groups of the early Neolithic. The Academia Sinica, founded in 1928, excavated most of the tombs at Anyang (see slide # 9), but moved to Taiwan in 1949 when the Nationalists were defeated by the Communists. Two institutions that took its place were the Bureau of Cultural Relics and the Institute of Archaeology. From 1962–82, the Institute was headed by Xia Nai. During his tenure, archaeologists began to interpret finds on the basis of type (building a chronological sequence on the basis of changes in the physical features of what one finds). Work was primarily concentrated on the Yellow river area, and interpretation followed the Marxist view of history. Recent Chinese archaeology has de-emphasized Marxist ideological concerns in favor of a more regional focus, with new areas of research focusing on the east coast, Sichuan province and the lower Yangzi region. Current archaeology has been advanced by the lifting of rules barring foreign archaeologists from working in China. However, the pace of industrial and economic development in China has escalated, resulting in increased rescue archaeology–rushing in to salvage what has been unearthed through building projects and trying to study as much as one can while temporarily abating development.

What methods do archaeologists use to locate possible sites and decipher finds? Archaeologists use scientific methods by collecting and analysing data, conducting experiments and then forming hypotheses and conclusions. These are updated as new data emerges and over time, general patterns and trends emerge. Although the public is captivated by the idea of spectacular finds, most archaeological work is uneventful. The emphasis is on careful and systematic study of the site, and then publication of the research.

One of the most basic principles of archaeology is that of stratigraphy–the idea that layers of soil reveal layers of time. Because the history of China extends back thousands of years,

habitations have built up on top of each other, creating layers or 'strata' of history in the ground. Objects found at a higher level, for example, would be newer than objects found below that level.

Since the middle of the 20th century, archaeology has developed a number of other techniques such as the study of organic remains. This allows one to interpret a site in terms of the human response to the natural environment. Photography, and more recently satellite-based imaging systems support documentation and mapping procedures. Surveying for sites is assisted by the use of core samples and remote sensing. Dating has been advanced by the use of radio-carbon and thermoluminescense.

Modern archaeology is often carried out by teams of experts. Analysis of an site might involve the input of field archaeologists, art historians, conservators, geologists and other scientists. Teams of Chinese and foreign archaeologists are now working together.

China is currently experiencing a 'golden age of archaeology', with new, important finds and new information turning up frequently. One of the most spectacular recent finds (1986) was the unearthing of two pits filled with sacrificial offerings in Sichuan province that correspond to the period of the Shang dynasty. The site, known as *Sanxingdui*, contained numerous elephant tusks, and many bronze heads with striking features (see photo below). As a result of this find, scholars have had to revise their histories of the Shang dynasty and its regional influence.

Ceramics, Jades and Bronzes–Production and Design

This section covers the production and design of the three dominant media to have survived from ancient Chinese times: ceramics, jades and bronzes. It should be noted that lacquer and silk were also important during ancient times, however they are much more perishable and easily damaged. They are also not represented in current gallery displays of ancient Chinese materials at the Asian Art Museum, and for these reasons are not discussed here.

Ceramics

Chinese ceramics are world-renowned, and are characterized by a high degree of technical excellence and experimentation with form and surface decoration developed over thousands of years. In China, ceramics and jade work prcecede the development of bronze, however all three materials are linked in a number of ways.

Ceramics are among the most ancient material remains produced by humans, along with tools made of bone and stone, and appear in the archaeological record of ancient times around the world. Some of the earliest remnants of pottery appear in China 9,000 years ago. Ceramics were probably formed by people leaving clay objects to dry in the sun. Possibly, the idea evolved of heating the clay artificially next to the hearth, and from there the process of firing clay in a confined space (kiln) would have been a logical development.

China was blessed with an abundance of clay and especially large deposits of ochre-colored loess in the north, what the Chinese refer to as yellow earth. The earliest Chinese ceramics were earthenware vessels, coiled (rather than thrown on a wheel) from the bottom up, then smoothed between joints and fired. By using a thin layer of watery clay (slip) the surface could be made into a smooth ground for painting. Images on early Chinese ceramics come in a rich variety of forms: fish, humans, geometric patterns, swirling shapes, cross-hatching and so on. The fact that so many vessels appear in ancient burials means that pots must have been highly regarded possessions.

From very early times, then, the Chinese potter learned to transform raw materials such as earth, fire, wind and water into something that was both creative and functional. Having mastered these basic elements, the stage was set for experimentation with firing temperatures, different types of raw materials, forms, decoration and glazes. Glazes may have begun with potters observing kiln ash accidentally falling on the surface of a pot, and then fusing with the ceramic body to form a glaze.

The earliest kilns were built into the earth. The fire area was placed on an angle below and horizontally removed from the area where the pots were, the idea being to create an updraft of efficient heat with an efficient use of fuel. Towards the later part of the Bronze Age,

higher temperatures were achieved by the development of free-standing *mantou* (dome-shaped) kilns in the north, and *long* (dragon-shaped) kilns in the south. Increased temperatures meant that one could produce vessels that were more refined in shape and more impermeable, meaning that they would be less porous and able to hold liquids better. The other innovation, the wheel, required the use of more water, but allowed the potter to create more slender and delicate forms than hand-coiling.

Most Chinese ceramics during the Neolithic period and Bronze Age were either reddish-colored, grey or black wares. The vast majority of these ceramics are vessels– urns, jars, tripod vessels. The addition of handles, legs and more slender shapes on vessels would have meant a more delicate object . Over time, the differentiation of forms would have led to more specialized uses. Vessels for storage looked different, for example, than vessels for pouring.

Two slides in this packet show two very different styles that emerged in the Neolithic period. The principle interest of the mushroom shaped Banpo bottle (slide # 1) is its decoration. The shape of the vessel is very basic, probably quite functional. The artist has paid particular attention to the painted design. The main interest of the Longshan goblet (slide # 2), however, is its long, slender form, and the tiny holes that form a design in the middle of the vessel. The walls of the goblet are extremely thin ("egg-shell" pottery). This must have been a very precious object, not something to be used every day. Here we have art raised above the purely functional, appealing to the senses and perhaps used for ceremonial or special purposes.

During the Shang and Zhou periods, experiments with ceramics, including white wares, continued. However pride of place was clearly assumed by bronzes. As bronze was expensive to produce, however, it was only a matter of time before ceramics would begin to 'stand in' for these more expensive goods. This did not only happened with bronzes. During the Shang and Western Zhou, humans were sacrificied and interred along with the tomb owner. By the Warring States period, models of humans had pretty much replaced the real thing. The First Emperor's army, some 7,500 life-sized terra cotta figures made of fired component parts, must have made quite an impression, and trend of protecting the tomb with clay armies extended into the Han. Such scale required efficient organization of labor and mass production techniques that seem remarkable even today.

During the Han, rising standards of living and the increased demand for affordable grave goods (*mingqi*) stimulated a vast new industry of craftsmen, not only in the administrative centers of north-central China, but also in the south. Most of the objects depicting figures and real life scenes during the Han were simple, unglazed wares, some painted on the surface like the Hu (slide # 16). Some figures were hand formed, others were made in parts from molds. Decorative tiles for placing along tomb walls were also later produced in molds. It is interesting to note that at one point during the Han, sumptuary laws had to be passed to curb the excesses and bankrupcies caused by spending lavishly on goods for the tomb.

Experiments with new glazes may have been prompted by the desire to simulate the shiny surfaces of bronze.The famous lead glazes from this time were strictly for use in burials; they were poisonous if used in real life, and might in fact have killed many workers involved in their production. Brown-colored glazes, produced by the addition of iron oxide, were popular during the early Han, but were replaced by green-colored glazes,

produced by the addition of copper oxide, during the later periods. These green-colored glazes degraded with exposure to the silvery appearance that we see today.

Jades

Jade is held in the highest esteem in Chinese culture, (as gold is appreciated in the West), and is seen as reflecting noble virtues, durability, beauty and refinement. Hundreds of words that incorporate the jade graph as a radical (a root part of a Chinese character) connote beauty, wealth and power. Confucius compared the work required to form jade to the long years required to form an educated person. Jade has been worked throughout Chinese history, most notably in ancient times, and then again in later Imperial times.

When we speak of jade today, we are referring to both jadeite and nephrite, two extremely hard stones that cannot be cut, but must be worn away through abrasion. Ancient jade workers would have worked with bamboo drills and quartzite crystals mixed with water to wear down the jade.Jade in its pure form is white, but ordinarily, a block of jade is colored grey, brown or green indicating the presence of impurities. The ancient Chinese worked nephrite, which they probably quarried from areas principally along the east coast. It is in this region that some of the most spectacular jade work was done in the late Neolithic period.

The early Chinese may have experimented with jade as a utilitarian object, but it quickly assumed symbolic value. One reason may have been that, despite its toughness, jade can shatter. Also, jade could not be mass produced the way ceramic vessels, or even bronze weapons were. On the other hand, jade was rare, difficult to work, beautiful to look at and to touch. Jade's properties, therefore, suggested display rather than utilitarian use.

Jade first appears in large quantities as a type of ornament in burial sites of the Hongshan culture (3,500 – 2,500 BCE, see Historical Overview section) in the northeast, then most notably among the graves of the Liangzhu culture (3,000 – 2,000 BCE) in the central east coast region. Hongshan jades include pendants in the form of clouds, rings, plaques, and 'pig dragon' objects, so named because they resemble dragons with the head of a pig-like creature. The placement of burial jades around the body, sometimes far and above any other type of object, is most pronounced at various Liangzhu sites. Here several new types of jade known as *bi* (disc) and *cong* (tube)* are found in abundance. (see slides no 3 and 4). Because jade was hard to locate and required a tremendous amount of time to work, it must have been associated with the powers of the ruling elite. As Brian Hayden has suggested (Hayden, 1993), certain individuals in a culture, having mastered the control of essential resources, would have used surplus resources to develop possessions of a purely symbolic nature.

Later Chinese sources indicate that *bi* and *cong* jades symbolized the heavens and the earth, respectively. Religious significance is strongly suggested by the detailed mask designs that develop on the corners and sides of the *cong* tubes. The AAM example (slide # 3) is decorated with a fairly simple motif of eyes, mouth and horizontal bands. One famous example (see illustration) shows a much more elaborate motif–a figure with a plumed headdress holding a pair of eyes, with a pair of legs with clawed feet. While the

meaning is unclear, it has been suggested that this is an early example of a protean or changing motif on a ritual object that may have influenced the formation of the bronze *taotie* or monster-mask design on ritual bronzes. (K.C. Chang, 1990, Wu Hung, 1995)

By the Bronze Age, jades had taken on a number of standard forms. In addition to the various ornaments, *bi* discs and *cong* tubes already mentioned, there were a variety of ceremonial blade, hoe and axe shapes known as *chan*, *gui*, *dao*, *jue* and *zhang*. The *zhang** appears in the Erlitou phase and has a distinctive form resembling a sword with a flared end, and a handle area with finely delineated serrated edges (see illustration). During the Shang and Zhou dynasties, incised designs on the surface were replaced by more relief work, perhaps influenced by designs on gold objects from central and western Asia. (Rawson, 1995) During the Eastern Zhou, shrouds (or coverings) with jade plaques made their appearance.

A text from the Han dynasty, the *Zhou li*, attempted to categorize various jades in terms of reflecting rank and ritual significance. Six ritual jades were defined as the *bi*, *cong*, *gui*, *zhang*, *huang* and *hu*. How reliable these references are is uncertain, but the important point is that certain jades were acquiring long-standing cultural significance as objects of veneration, symbolic power and rank.

Han beliefs in the hereafter prompted a further use of jade as an aid to immortality. Emperor Wudi, in particular, took an active interest in elixirs of immortality, the work of alchemists and astrologers. Daoist priests even recommended the eating of jade stones. This culminated in the production of jade plugs and suits (or 'skins') that completely covered the body and its nine orifices, a practice however, that could only be afforded by the very rich.

* (*zhang*- pronounced 'jahng')
* (*cong* -pronounced 'tsong')

Bronzes

The ancient Chinese ruling class produced a range of decorated bronze vessels for offering sacrifices to ancestors and as status objects. These bronzes epitomize ancient Chinese culture, particularly during the Shang and Zhou dynasties. They would have appeared in banquets, in ancestor halls and public events designed to reaffirm cultural values and assert positions of power. The qualities of bronze, like those of jade, lent themselves to ritual use–bronze offered strength, durability, shiny surfaces, and resonance when used for musical instruments. Unlike jade, however, bronze was also used in the production of weapons. If weapons were the means by which the ancient rulers exercised their power, bronze vessels helped symbolize that power through state ritual and display.

Bronze production

Shang and Zhou ritual bronze production assumed a close relationship between the art of the potter and the metallurgist, between the organization of labor and the exploitation of resources, and between the shapes of vessels and their designs.

Bronze is produced by combining copper with one of several other metals. Copper has to be mined or extracted from its ore. Copper itself can be hammered or molded into shapes quite easily, but when heated, it can produce small bubbles of gas that result in a metal that is brittle and can break. Bronze is produced by adding tin, to which the Chinese added lead. The typical composition of many Shang vessels, for example, is about 80 percent copper, about 13 pecent tin and 7 pecent lead (Chase, 1991). Tin helps overcome the porosity of copper, and lead allows the molten alloy to pour more easily. Overtime, the ancient bronzes take on a greenish/greyish appearance, a combination of corrosion, burial factors, and handling.

The mining of ores, shipping of ingots, working of foundries and supervision of workshops must have taken a high degree of organization. The largest surviving ding vessel from antiquity comes from Anyang (late Shang capital) and weighs almost a ton, an incredible casting feat even today. The tomb of Fu Hao–also at Anyang–contained 1600 kilograms of bronze objects. Evidence of bronze foundries have been found at various sites, and help to reveal the nature of bronze casting technology.

When ancient Chinese bronzes first came to light in the West, it was assumed that they must have been made using the lost-wax technique, a technique that prevailed in early Western cultures. However, analysis of piece molds found at ancient sites beginning with Orvar Karlbeck's studies (Karlbeck, 1935) and of the bronzes themselves revealed a process that used ceramic piece molds. The casting process was begun by making a model of the proposed bronze in ceramic. Decorations were included in the model. Slabs of fresh clay were pressed against this model in sections or piece molds. These pieces were fired to ensure stability of form and design. The original model was trimmed back enough to allow space for the bronze itself. The whole set was reassembled with spacers or chaplets and the

molten bronze was poured in through ducts. After cooling, the mold pieces were broken off, and not used again, meaning that each bronze vessel is a unique piece. (Chase, 1991)

Some of the challenges ancient bronze casters faced included controlling the thickness of the bronze, dealing with the addition of parts such as handles, and finishing the surfaces of the bronze after casting. The ancient Chinese already had a well-developed ceramics tradition, and therefore knew about the reaction of various materials to heat, firing temperatures, kilns and so on. The range of bronze shapes suggest continual experimentation. The tripod shape had already been developed in ceramic form. Early *jue* vessels may have been based on hammered metal prototypes, given the thin, delicate form of the vessel (see illustration).

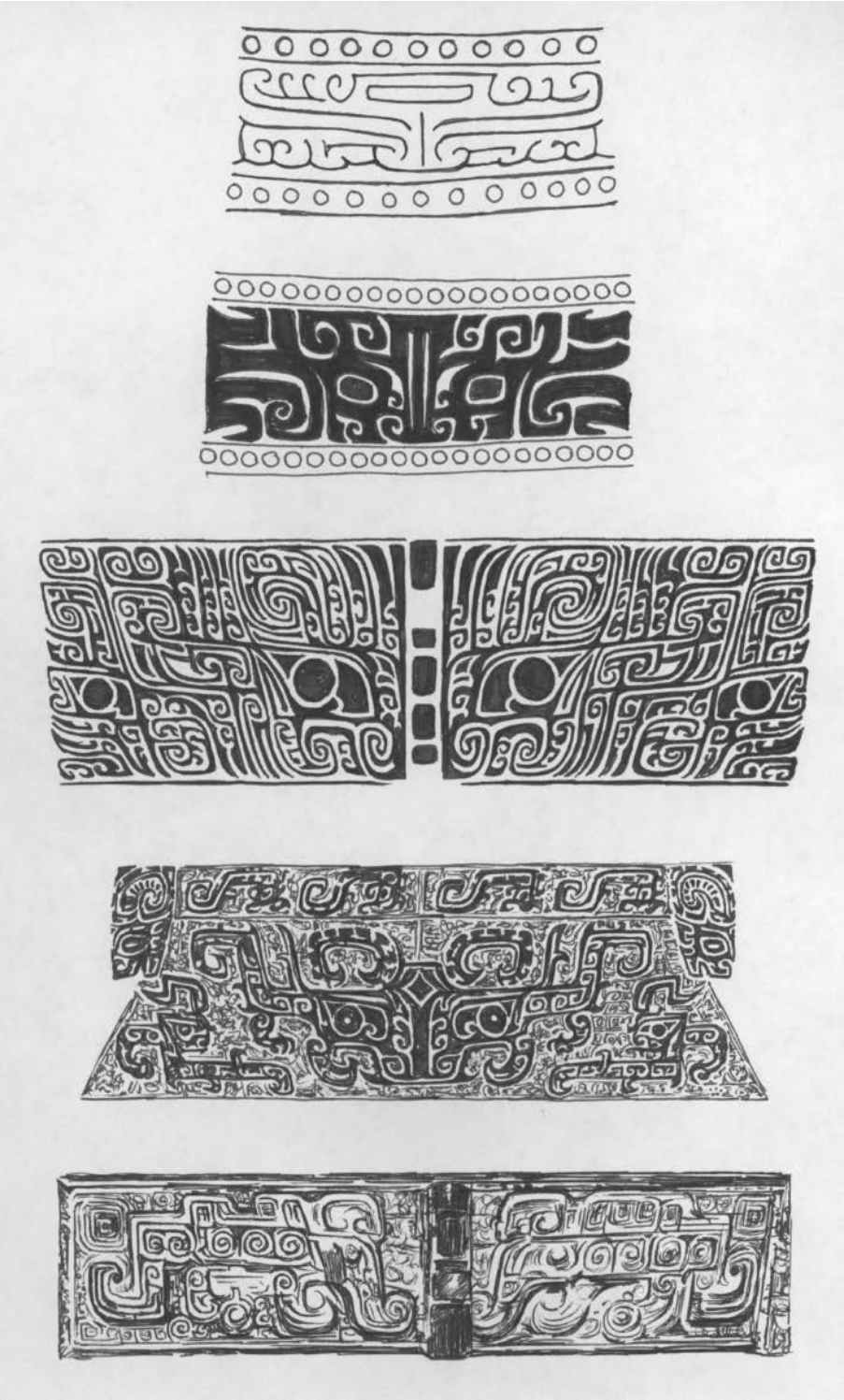
Bronze designs

As the shapes of bronze vessels became more established, designs could also be experimented with. For example, it was discovered that designs could be worked into the mold sections, not just on the model. This meant that some parts of the design could recede into the bronze, and other parts protrude. Robert Bagley has argued that this continual interplay between form and design is what accounts for the continual shifts in surface design and patterning. Designs on Shang vessels, according to Bagley, are responses by the designer to working within compartments dictated by the individual mold pieces. (Bagley, 1987, 1990)

Any casual observer of ritual Chinese bronze vessels can see that most of them are covered with numerous designs and patterns. A more careful look reveals a number of intersecting lines and shapes that form mask-like faces, especially on corners, as well as animal shapes that seem to transform into other each other. The mask shape is a split face that can be read both straight on and from the profile as two halves. The name given to this motif is *taotie*, sometimes also referred to as a zoomorphic mask or monster mask. The split face or monster mask design may have developed from earlier ceramic or jade surface decorative motifs (see illustration)

The idea of the evolution of style is one that is often advanced by art historians. One of the most influential theories was advanced by Max Loehr (Loehr, 1953), who proposed five styles of Shang design. (see illustration) The prevailing view is that Loehr's list does not represent a chronology of styles, but it helps to identify the inventive range of decorative schemes during the Shang.

Max Loehr–Five styles of Shang bronzes



Style 1
bands of thin lines/
animal motif

Style 2
broad ribbons/animal motif

Style 3
more complex version of
styles 1 and 2

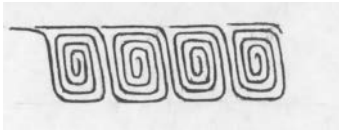
Style 4
background spirals separate
from main animal motif

Style 5
animal motif in high relief

With Loehr's divisions in mind, we can trace some prevailing characteristics of bronze designs as well as changes in preferred vessel forms.

a. Erlitou and Shang periods

During the early stages of bronze vessel production, the most popular forms were the *jue*, *jia* (wine vessels) and the *ding* (food vessel) with the emphasis on wine vessels. Other vessels to develop included the *zun*, *fang-yi* and pitcher-shaped *gong*. Slides # 6, 7, 8 represent Shang vessels. Initial surface designs were linear patterns contained within a band along one section of the bronze. These patterns eventually covered the whole vessel, but the dominant motif was then set apart from the increasingly busy background designs. The *taotie* mask is the main element of decoration, along with *kui* (dragon figures) and background spiral motifs known as *leiwen* (see illustrations). Inscriptions on Shang bronzes (inside the vessel) usually consisted of a simple clan symbol, or dedication to an ancestor. A great variety of Shang shapes and decorative schemes were revealed by the Fu Hao tomb from Anyang (see separate section on "Three Tomb Excavations").



Leiwen

Kui

b. Western Zhou period

In the Western Zhou, a number of Shang practices and rituals continued, except there was a shift in emphasis away from the production of wine vessels towards food vessels. The gui (food basin) vessel assumed greater importance (see slide no. 11). Fewer vessels were made for burial, with more being cast in sets for temple altars. The flanges (or ridge-like formations that divide up sections of a bronze) grew more sculptural. Where Shang bronze decoration was tightly packed within the shape of the vessel, Zhou bronzes were becoming increasingly exhuberant in form. Another factor in this shift was undoubtedly the influence of regional styles. In the middle of the Western Zhou period, large bird motifs proliferated on bronze vessels, their plumes and tails curling about the surface just as the *taotie* and *kui* motifs did on earlier vessels.

From the middle of the ninth century BCE onward, significant changes occurred, probably a result of a system of guidelines that was introduced specifying how many bronze vessels could be owned depending on one's rank. Forms such as the *jue* ,*zun* and *gong* faded from use. Others, such as the *hu* (see slide no. 12) with its distinctive wave pattern, became more common. The *taotie* mask design was diminishing, in some cases abstracted into the new patterns. The strict compartments introduced in Shang vessels gave way a new emphasis on patterning, especially interlaced dragon designs.

c. Eastern Zhou period

During the Eastern Zhou, the use of ritual bronzes continued to change. Bronze inscriptions, as Michael Knight points out, " chronicle particular events...laud the moral virtues of the patron, the patron's ancestors and the Zhou king, and how the actions of all are in keeping with the wishes of heaven." (Knight, 1994) The preference for repeated pattern design was made easier by the use of pattern blocks, allowing a greater degree of

mass production. Human activity showed up as a pictorial theme for the first time. During the Warring States period, gold and silver were inlaid to create new abstract patterns. The lost-wax technique was introduced as a way of embellishing the core vessel with even more elaborate handles and fixtures. Overall, the effect was one of increased geometric design and theatricality.

Beginning in the Eastern Zhou, bronze began to be used increasingly in the production of accessories such as belt hooks and in mirrors, objects that used less raw material, and were affordable luxuries for the expanding population. Bronze use continued to decline in the Han, however the shapes and forms of the ancient ritual bronzes continued to influence art objects in other media and at other times in Chinese history. Bronze as a major medium of Chinese art, however, would not appear again until the development of Buddhist imagery.

Questions surrounding the exact meaning of bronze vessel designs will probably never be resolved. It is tantalizing to speculate, however, that the transformation of a set of raw materials into a permanent form, the profuse imagery of animal motifs across the surface of the vessel, and the use of these vessels as a tool to communicate between earthly and heavenly realms–all these elements strongly suggest religious beliefs and practices that had transformed themselves into a rich, visual iconography.

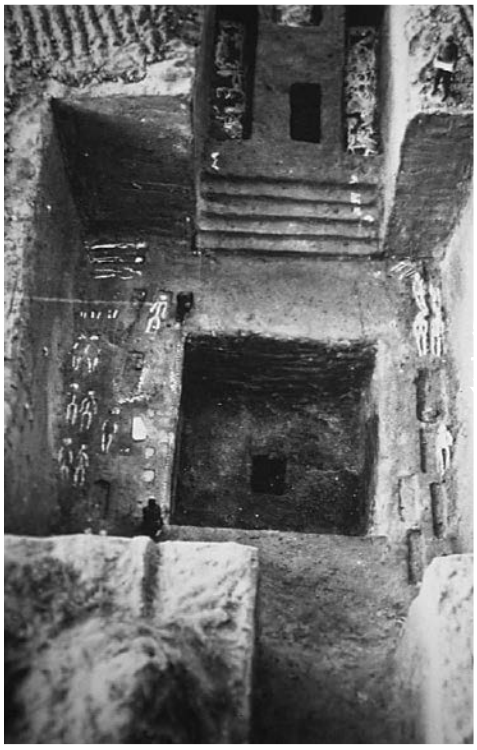
Three tomb excavations

The following are descriptions of three important tomb excavations from the 1970s that have added significantly to our knowledge of ancient China.

1. The Shang Dynasty Tomb of Fu Hao

The area around Anyang, Henan province, was the site of the last capital of the Shang dynasty (1,500–1,050 BCE) The ancient capital was known as Yin. Excavations of the Yin ruins began in 1899, but more recent work has revealed that the ancient capital covered almost ten square miles and contained a palace, commoners' dwellings, craft workshops, over twelve tombs, eighty pits, and over 100,000 oracle bones and shells.

The most famous find took place in 1976– the tomb of Lady Fu Hao, or Tomb # 5 The discovery of her tomb was most valuable because of the nearly perfect condition in which it was found and because of the positive identification of the tomb's occupant and her date of her death, ca. 1200 B.C. The finding of the tomb was also significant because it confirmed oracle bone inscriptions about her husband, King Wu Ding, one of the rulers of the Shang dynasty. In addition to Fu Hao's coffin, there were 1,600 objects found, including bronze vessels, weapons, tools, 750 jade pieces, 560 bone objects, stone sculpture, ivory carvings, ceramics, and roughly 6,000–7,000 cowrie shells used as currency.



Lady Fu Hao's tomb was a large single rectangular-shaped pit with a wider square-shaped section in the middle. The tomb was oriented from north to south with a depth of 7.5 meters (about 21 feet). There were also burial niches carved into the east and west walls of the tomb for sacrificial victims. Fu Hao's tomb is also interesting for there was a large rectangular-shaped building on top of the tomb. The exact purpose or meaning of this upper-building is unknown, but scholars speculate that it may have served as some sort of ancestral hall of continued memorial or sacrificial services for Lady Fu Hao after her death.

Below a layer of earth directly beneath this building was the lacquered wooden coffin of Lady Fu Hao, whose skeleton had disintegrated. In addition to this were also sixteen skeletal remains of humans and six dogs used as sacrificial victims. The artistocratic position of Fu Hao was further emphasized by the inclusion of numerous jade pieces. Most of the jades were either green- or brown-colored and were used as ceremonial objects, food containers, decorative pieces (animals or figurines) or even weapons worn by guards of honor.

One of the most exquisite works of art in Fu Hao's tomb was an ivory beaker inlaid with turquoise. The handle of the beaker is in the form of a bird with a prominent beak. The decoration and shape of this piece are like some bronze pieces. The presence of this beaker indicates that similar vessels in other media once existed. Whereas many other bronze pieces were made as pairs or sets, this beaker is a single piece and, hence, may have been a unique personal possession of Fu Hao. Ivory was a local material, gathered from elephants who lived further north at this time when the climate was much warmer. Turquoise, on the other hand, came from afar suggesting the rarity and uniqueness of this material.

In addition to the ivory beaker, the most complete set of Shang bronzes were also found. These included ceremonial vessels, musical instruments, weapons, everyday articles, and art objects. One of the most interesting of these bronze pieces was the square-shaped vessel called a *fang jia*, used for offering wine to the ancestors in special ceremonies. The square shape of the vessel is rare. The large size, decoration, and complicated casting process reveal the wealth that Lady Fu Hao had accumulated. Bronze vessels were very important objects as they were often used in ceremonial banquets where sacrifices were made to ancestors. They were frequently buried with their owners so that continued sacrifices could be made.

Another intriguing bronze was a four-piece cooking vessel set, the first of its kind ever to be found. The set consisted of a cooking range with three steamers. The cooking range weighed 248 pounds and from the marks on its legs, is thought to have been used daily. As with the case of the other bronze pieces, this set reflects the opulent and lavish lifestyle of Fu Hao and of her aristocratic peers. On each of the three steamers and middle socket "Fu Hao" was inscribed.

Besides the cooking range, other bronze objects had inscriptions as well, and these were significant for they confirmed the tomb was definitely that of Lady Fu Hao. Fu Hao was often mentioned with the inscription: "Si Mu Xin," which means "Mother Xin"; or with the name "Hou Hsin," meaning "Queen Hsin," thought to be her posthumous name. Fu Hao was one of sixty-four wives of King Wu Ding, the fourth King of the Shang dynasty who reigned for fifty-nine years. She was considered a general under King Wu Ding. In oracle inscriptions, Fu Hao was mentioned more than any of Wu Ding's other consorts and was noted as playing an active role in Wu Ding's military enterprises. She headed wars against tribes in the west, north, southwest, and east, and was in charge of an army of 13,000 for her military expeditions and campaigns. The presence of weapons in a tomb usually signifies the occupant as male, but the existence of weapons in Fu Hao's tomb showed her power and status as a woman with great military expertise. Fu Hao was also afforded the important responsibility of conducting ritual ceremonies honoring ancestors and gods.

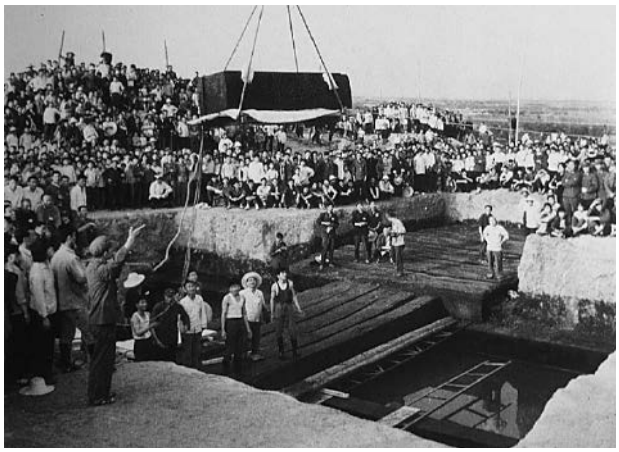
The discovery of bronzes from Fu Hao's tomb allows scholars to compare excavated pieces with those in museum collections, thus helping to place objects within more specific time periods, and determine their stylistic development over time. Compare the *fang jia* vessel from Fu Hao's with the Asian Art Museum *jia* in slide # 8. Both are believed to come from the same time period and possibly similar locations. On what basis do you think art historians and archaeologists reached these conclusions?

ANCIENT CHINA

Three tomb excavations

2. The Warring States period tomb of Yi, Marquis of Zeng

In 1978, an excavation was carried out in Leigudun, Suizhou, Hubei province, that revealed a complete, undisturbed ancient tomb. The tomb was that of Yi, Marquis or Prince of the State of Zeng (called *Zeng Hou Yi* in Chinese). The tomb contained approximately 7,000 relics, including an extraordinary set of musical bells and lavish bronzes.The tomb has been dated to ca. 433 BCE. when Marquis Yi and the state of Zeng were thought to have existed. Although the state of Zeng was not known previously, it is now thought to be one of many states competing for power during the latter half of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, more specifically known as the Warring States period (475 BCE.–221 BCE.) At this time, the Zhou ruled in name only, while the most powerful states encircled them in ever-changing alliances. One of the most powerful states at this time was the Chu state to the south, and a neighboring state of Zeng.



The tomb was found located in a small hill of red sand. Unlike the Anyang tombs in the shape of a large pit, this tomb was composed of four tightly packed individual chambers (see slide no. 13 in this packet) The eastern chamber housed the coffins of Marquis Yi, the western chamber encased coffins of sacrificial human beings and a dog, the northern one held weapons and armor, and the central one possessed the main core of musical instruments. Each of the four chambers were bordered by wooden beams. A total of 171 beams were used to house the ancient relics; wooden supports were used to cover and protect the objects. The height of the chambers was 3–3 1/2 meters (about 9–10 feet). The length from east-west was 69 feet, from north-south 53 feet. It has been noted by some scholars that the design of Marquis Yi's tomb represents a transition between tombs that replicated the ritual environment of ancestral temples to tombs that were made as models of the deceased's own material world.

In the eastern chamber, two coffins, inner and outer, were created for Marquis Yi. The preservation of these two coffins was due, in large part, to the lacquer applied to the wooden surfaces and by water entering the tomb chambers that helped to preserve the rare lacquerwork. Twenty–one smaller coffins were also enclosed in the tomb: eight were found in the eastern chamber and thirteen others in the western chamber. The smaller size of these twenty–one coffins was due to the size of the occupants: young girls between the ages of 15–25 whose skeletal remains were left intact. It is thought that these young women were either concubines of Marquis Yi, singers, or dancers.

In addition to gold and jade for personal adornment and funeral purposes, there were sculptural pieces of animals, birds, and humans as well as wood and bamboo objects, some of which show calligraphic writing. Inscriptions were included on the approximately 4,000 weapons, horse and chariot ornaments, and relics found in the northern chamber.

Lacquerware, some of which were painted, were prominent objects in this collection of cultural relics. The lacquered objects included utensils and vessels for daily living, and furniture and artifacts for funerals (such as Marquis Yi's inner coffin). The colors of red and black were frequently used to provide striking contrast in the lacquer paintings. Some of the pictures showed images of the sun, moon, dragons, and tigers. These mysterious drawings indicate that the Chinese were interested in cosmology as far back as two thousand years ago.

The most fascinating objects found in the tomb of Marquis Yi were the 140 bronzes. Some of the bronze objects were noteworthy for their sheer weight and intricate shapes. Besides ordinary utensils, animals, and decorative objects used for ritual and daily use, there were remarkable bells and unusually decorative vessels, many in pairs or other sets of numbers. Inscriptions on some of the musical instruments were important because they indicated the musical pitch standards and greatly advanced our knowledge of musical theories in this part of ancient China.

The number of musical instruments was astounding and included panpipes, drums, bamboo flutes, a bell-set and stone-chimes. The most intriguing musical instrument was a complete set of sixty-four *bian*-bells and *fu*-bells which occupied the middle chamber. The frame on which the bells were hung was in the shape of the letter "L"; interesting figurines also acted as supports for the frame. The largest of these figurines weighed 650 pounds. The bells were arranged in groups of eight and arranged according to size and pitch.With six wooden hammers and two logs, each bell was struck in two separate places, the front and the side, for two different sounds. The largest bell was an astounding five feet tall and weighed 450 pounds. These bells formed part of an ensemble group for a ritual orchestra. The musical instruments in Marquis Yi's coffin chamber, on the other hand, may have been used for musical entertainment of a more informal type.

In addition to the spectacular bronze bell set was set of bronze wine vessels and a tray, called *zun* and *pan* in Chinese. What made these pieces fascinating were the decorations covering almost the entire surface of each piece; intricate, dense forms that curl in all

directions, seeming to twist around one another in a snake-like fashion. This revealed the use of lost-wax casting techniques over a base form that had been cast using the traditional ceramic piece mold process. The lost wax technique made use of models of soft wax, probably beeswax, rosin, and/or fat.

The bell-set and wine vessel and tray all reflect the advanced stages of science and technology during the Warring States period. The bells were cast in several sections making previous methods of casting bells in single molds a preliminary process. The extraordinary forms covering the vessel and tray, moreover, reveal that such a process as lost-wax casting must have already begin much at a much earlier time and not, as previously thought, brought from India with the spread of Buddhism. Clearly, this technology was already in use in China and attests to the advanced technology of the Warring States period.

A few of the cultural relics of Marquis Yi's tomb are relevant for their political significance. Inscriptions on the bronze ritual utensils, musical instruments, vessels, and other objects state: "Zeng Hou Yi Zuo Si" meaning "Made for the use of the Marquis Yi of Zeng State." These inscriptions are important for they attest to the existence of the previously unknown state of Zeng. Some scholars have hypothesized that Zeng was the same as Sui because the two areas existed in the same general vicinity. In addition, the *bian* and *fu* bells were given to the Prince of Zeng by the Prince of Chu, and scholars hypothesize that the prominent central position of the *fu*-bell amongst the *bian*-bells indicates the respect that Marquis Yi paid to the Prince of Chu and of the good relationship between the two states. The bells, therefore, as well as many of the other tomb objects are thought to reveal the influence of Chu culture.

Compare the shape of this tomb with that of Fu Hao's tomb, and Tomb no. 1001 from Anyang (slide no 9) Look at the bell in the Asian Art Museum collections (slide no. 14) Explore the connection between this bell, the Marquis Yi's set of bells, and the Chu state.

ANCIENT CHINA

Three tomb excavations

3. The Terracotta Army of the First Emperor, Qin Dynasty

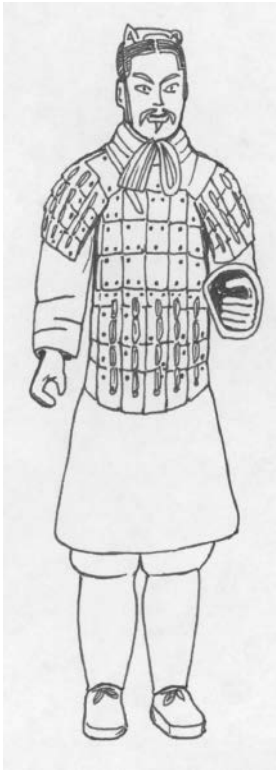
One of the greatest archaeological discoveries this century took place in March 1974, near the city of Xian, in the northcentral province of Shaanxi. While digging for water, an individual segment from a terracotta warrior was unearthed. This turned out to a section of the terracotta army of Qin Shihuangdi, the first Emperor of China.

During the Warring State's Period, (475–221 BCE), China was divided into a group of competing kingdoms. The dominant states were Han, Zhou, Wei, Chu, Yan, Qi and Qin. For over two hundred years, the boundaries and allegiances of the states shifted, but by 221 BCE, only one kingdom remained– the state of Qin. Its ruler, King Zheng, proclaimed himself the First Emperor – Qin Shihuangdi.

After unifying the country, Qin Shihuangdi standardized the currency, weights and measures, axle widths and reduced the written language to a single, approved script. He also consolidated several sections of the Great Wall in order to protect his empire on the northwestern frontier. The Emperor's regime unified and standardized certain aspects of China, but his emphasis on strict laws and severe punishments also lead to the empire's collapse.

One of Qin Shihuangdi's greatest projects was the construction of his personal mausoleum and the creation of a huge terracotta army, which would protect him in the afterlife. The tomb complex consisted of four pits (three of which are occupied by the terracotta army, while the fourth remained empty) and the Emperor's tomb itself, which to this day remains unexcavated. The mausoleum was started in 246 BCE., and continued several years after his death in 210 BCE. Shortly thereafter, the tomb complex was burned, inadvertently helping to preserve it by sealing the contents.

The building of the tomb complex was an ambitious one. According to the later Han historian Sima Qian, it took upwards of 700,000 people to build. A project of this magnitude showed the Emperor's organizational resourcefulness and control of various industries, from the kilns and labor needed, to the financial and natural resources necessary. The placement of so many soldiers also demonstrates the importance and significance of the military in Qin society.



The Qin state was well known for its strong,well organized army, and its tenacious grip on other Chinese kingdoms. In Qin society, the only way to be promoted was through the military. Even those born into a prestigious family had to prove their loyalty and courage through military campaigns. For example, bringing back heads from battle often resulted in promotions or pay raises. A person was expected to remain loyal to the Emperor, against all odds. Desertion meant that one's fellow warriors would be punished, as well as one's family.

The creation of the terracotta army was the largest ceramics project ever known. Each soldier had individual facial features. Body sections were taken from stock parts, with heads and hands created separately. Many figures were equipped with weapons, although most of these were taken during the initial disruption of the pits by the conquering forces of the Han shortly after their completion. When discovered, all the figures were disrupted and broken, but by painstaking efforts, many of the warriors have been put back together, and can be seen today standing in the ground as if they were waiting for the command to move forward. Of the more than 7,500 figures, more than 1200 warriors and over 80 horses have been reassembled at this time. (See slide # 15)

The terracotta army reveals a great deal about the nature of battle formations and hierarchy in Qin Shihuangdi's army. For example, generals wear long robes and pants. Officers are taller and bulkier and wear head gear. Frontline infantry do not wear armor in order to be more agile in combat. The figures also represent a departure from the long held

tradition of burying and sacrificing the king's retainers with their dead leader. It is known, however, that the childless wives of the king were buried along with the king, and that perhaps several members of the royal family may also have been buried in the mausoleum. It is speculated that a fourth pit, which remains empty, could have been designated for the sacrificial burial of the tomb workers–particularly prisoners who worked on the project. It is thought that their lives were spared due to the level of unrest in the country, and the need to utilize prisoners as warriors to protect the empire.

Perhaps as many as 5,000 terracotta warriors are still entombed within several pits. Because most of these statues have been intentionally broken or crushed by the structure's collapse in the fire, their restoration is very costly and time consuming. It may be many years before the work in the three pits is complete.

The First Emperor's tomb is a spectacular find, but many questions remain unanswered. Compare the contents of this tomb with those of the previous two excavations. Why was the First Emperor so obsessed with immortality and defence–even in death? What do you suppose lies in his tomb and why do you think the Chinese have not opened it yet? What effect did the creation of the First Emperor's terracotta army have on burial customs after his dynasty? Visit a store in Chinatown, and see if you can find replicas of the soldiers made in China. They are made of the same type of clay used for the original soldiers in the tomb.

The Importance of Rites

It is impossible to discuss Ancient China without emphasizing the importance of rites. Rites have been discussed elsewhere in this packet in terms of the production of jade and bronze objects. For example, we know from the inscriptions on some of the bronze vessels that they were cast to commemorate certain events in honor of the ancestors. But what exactly was the nature of these rites? How and where did they take place? This section includes a number of modern translations and explanations of rites and other rituals as they might have occurred in ancient China.

Li

The "Book of Rites" (*Liji*) and related texts were written down in the late Bronze Age by ritual specialists.The word for rites is *li* , but an exact translation is difficult because the word goes beyond simply an action or ceremony. It encompasses ceremonies, practices, social conventions, the ways in which leaders justify their position, and the use of ritual objects. Wu Hung has suggested that the history of ancient China should be called the Age of Ritual Art (*liqi*) because the use of rituals (*li*) together with special vessels or instruments (*qi*) is so essential to the period. (Wu Hung, 1995)

> "Of all things by which men live, *li* is the greatest. Without *li*, there would be no means of regulating the services paid to the spirits of heaven and earth; without *li*, there would be no means of distinguishing the positions of ruler and subject, superior and inferior, old and young; without *li*, there would be no means of maintaining the separate relations between men and women, father and son, elder and younger brothers, and of conducting the intercourse between families related in marriage, and the frequency and infrequency (of the reciprocities between friends)."
>
> "Thus (in our sacrifices) the dark liquor is offered in the inner chamber (of the temple); the vessels containing it are placed near the entrance; the reddish liquor is offered in the main hall; and the clear, in a place below. Animal victims are displayed, and the tripods and stands are prepared. The lutes and citherns are arranged in rows, with the flutes, sonorous stones, bells and drums. The prayers and benedictions are framed. All of these aim to bring down the Lord on High, as well as ancestral deities from above.
>
> The relation between the ruler and ministers is then rectified; generous feeling between father and son is maintained; elder and younger brothers are harmonized: the high and low find their own positions; and the proper relationship between husband and wife is established. This is what is called "securing the blessings of Heaven." (from "Book of Rites" translated by Legge, 1967)

It is clear from these passages that the practice of *li* had cosmological, political, social and moral implications, that particular vessels were essential to the performance of those rites, and that these rites took place in ancestral halls. Music is also mentioned as an important elements.

Oracle Bones

Ancient Chinese rites would have been applied to a number of activities, including political events, sacrificial offerings, prayers for good harvest, school examinations, decrees, military campaigns, the erection of buildings, as well as more local events such as marriages and funerals. There were six types of *li* mentioned in the ancient texts, but the most important of these were the rites associated with sacrifices to various earthly and heavenly entities. These entities included the gods in heaven, the sun, moon and other elements, the various gods of land, mountains and forests, and of course, the deceased emperor and other ancestors. The first records we have of such rituals is contained on oracle bones.

The Shang kings worshipped *Shangdi*, and were connected to *Shangdi* through the first ancestor. Oracle bones were used to consult the ancestors about a range of questions and were then interpreted by the king. The divinations resulted in ritual ceremonies to the ancestors using the sacred bronze vessels. David Keightley, an authority on ancient oracle bones, has provided us with a description of what one of these ceremonies might have entailed:

> The sun's rays glint first on the mountains to the west, then, moments later, touch the thatched roofs of the temples and pit dwellings that follow the curve of the Huan. The river, still in shadow at the foot of the earthern cliff, winds to the southeast between clearings of sprouting millet, on its way to merge with the powerful Ho. The year is the eleventh of Wu Ding's reign, the season spring, the day xin-wen, eighth of the week.
>
> Filtering through the portal of the ancestral temple, the sunlight wakens the eyes of the monster mask, bulging with life on the garish bronze tripod. At the center of the temple stands the king, at the center of the four quarters, the center of the Shang world. Ripening millet glimpsed through the doorway shows his harvest rituals have found favor. Bronze cauldrons with their cooked meat offerings invite the presence of his ancestors, their bodies buried deep and safely across the river, but their spirits, some benevolent, some not, still reigning over the royal house and the king's person. One is angry, for the king's jaw ached all night, is aching now, on the eve of his departure to follow Zhi Guo on campaign against the Bafang.
>
> Five turtle shells lie on the rammed earth altar. The plastrons have been polished like jade, but are scarred on their inner side with rows of oval hollows, some already blackened by fire. Into one of the unburned

hollows, on the right side of the shell, the diviner Chue is thrusting a brand of flaming thorn. As he does so, he cries aloud, "The sick tooth is not due to Father Jia." Fanned by an assistant to keep the glowing tip intensely hot, the stick flames against the surface of the shell. Smoke rises. The seconds slowly pass. The stench of scorched bone mingles with the aroma of millet wine scattered in libation. And then, with a sharp, clear, puk-like sound, the turtle, most silent of creatures, speaks. A bu-shaped crack has formed in the hollow where the plastron was scorched. Once again the brand is thrust, now into a matching hollow on the left side of the shell: "It is due to Father Jia." More time passes...another crack forms in response. Moving to the next plastron, Chue repeats the charges: "It is not due to Father Jia." Puk. "It is due to Father Jia." He rams the brand into the hollows and cracks the second turtle shell, then the third, then the fourth.

The diviners consult. The congregation of kinsmen strains to catch their words, for the curse of a dead father may, in the king's eyes, be the work of a living son. Chue rubs wood ash from the fire into the new set of cracks and scrutinizes them once more. But the shell has given no indication. The charge must be divined again. Two more cracks are made in each of the five plastrons...and again there is no sign.

Another brand is plucked from the fire and the new charge is cried: "The sick tooth is not due to Father Geng. It is due to Father Geng." Father Geng, the king's senior uncle. This time, the indications are clear. His sons, the king's older cousins, turn away in dismay at the diviner's readings of the cracks. The spirit, their father, has been blamed. But still the work of the spiritual identification continues. "It is not due to Father Xin...It is due to Father Xin." Chue moves methodically down the row of five plastrons reciting the negative and positive charges and cracking each shell twice in this way. No judgement can be made. Once again, as for Father Jia, ten more cracks are burned. "Auspicious." Chue points to two cracks on the second and fourth shells. Father Xin is without blame, his descendents relieved.

Now the king speaks. Assistants drag two victims into the temple. There is the barking and bleating of animals in panic, then silence. Blood stains the earth floor. The king dismembers the victims as Chue proposes a new charge, "We sacrifice a dog to Father Geng, and butcher a sheep." The brand flames ...puk ...puk... puk...the plastrons crack in slow and stately sequence. Has the sacrifice mollified the dead uncle? Will the pain in the sick tooth depart? The king, his hands still sticky with blood, scans the cracks.

In such an atmosphere and in such ways, in a routine that must have consumed tens of thousands of hours during the Shang historical period, the Shang kings and their diviners sought to know and fix the future. As the ceremony ends, the diviners handed the five plastrons to scribes, who began the task of carving into the shell's smooth front a record of the charges proposed and the results observed.

Ancestral Temples and the Nine Sacred *Ding* Vessels

Passages from texts dating back to the Zhou dynasty refer to the importance of building the ancestral temple (*zongmiao*) as the first step in establishing a city or capital. "When a nobleman is about to engage in building, the ancestral temple should have his first attention, the stables and arsenal the next, and the residences the last". Furthermore, the prioritizing of duties also extended to ritual vessels. "When the head of a lineage is about to prepare things, the vessels of sacrifice should have the first place, the offerings the next, and the vessels for use at meals, the last." (both passages from "Book of Rites", transl. Legge, 1967).

The formation of the first ancestral temples by the Zhou established a fundamental pattern that would follow. The temple housed ancestral tablets, divided into several categories such as *yuanzu*, the distant ancestor and founder of the dynasty and *jinzu*, the recent ancestors leading up to the present king. The organization of the temple space, with the distant ancestor at the back and more recent ancestors near the front, suggested a chronological sequence from the present to the past. The past was reinforced as the foundation on which the present stood.

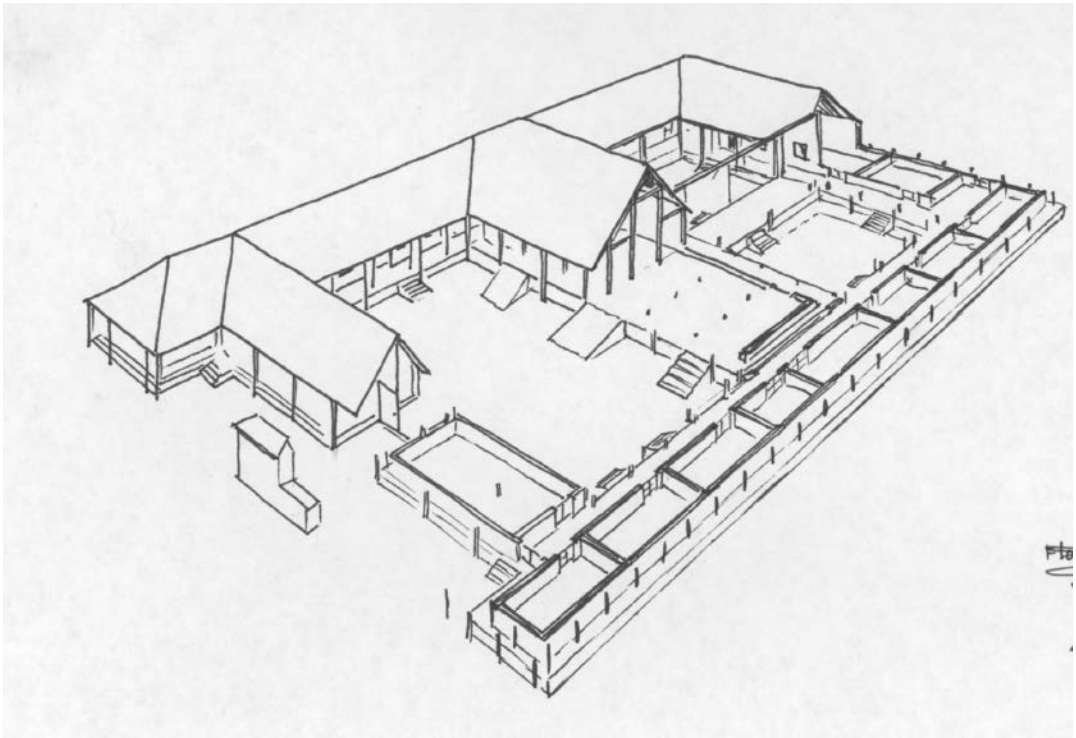
Ritual vessels in the ancestral temple symbolized continuity with the past and the rite to rule based on the Mandate of Heaven. Possession of the nine Sacred *Ding* vessels was essential to that mandate. During the Eastern Zhou, a lord of the Chu state (to the south) visited the Zhou capital at Luoyang and inquired after the weight of the sacred vessels –an expressing of his interest in acquiring them, or at least casting equivalent vessels. A message by the Zhou king's minister Wangsun Man to the Chu lord was later recorded as follows:

> "The tripods do not matter; virtue does. In the past when the Xia dynasty was distinguished for its virtue, the distant regions put their things (wu) into pictures and the nine provinces sent in copper as tribute. The Tripods were cast to present those things. One hundred different things were presented, so that people could distinguish divine from evil...Hereby a harmony was secured between the high and the low, and all enjoyed the blessing of Heaven.
>
> When the virtue of Jie (last king of the Xia) was all-obscured, the Tripods were transferred to the Shang dynasty, and for six hundred years the Shang enjoyed its ruling status. Finally King Zhou of the Shang proved cruel and oppressive, and the Tripods were transferred to the Zhou dynasty.
>
> When virtue is commendable and brilliant, those which are small will be heavy; when things come to be crafty and decrepit, those which are large will be light. Heaven blessed intelligent virtue, and on this its favor rests. King Cheng (of the Zhou) fixed the Tripods in the Zhou capital and divined that the Zhou dynasty should last for thirty reigns, over seven hundred years. This is the Zhou's mandate from Heaven. Though now the Zhou has lost its past glory, the decree of Heaven is not yet changed. The weight of the tripods cannot yet be inquired about!"
>
> (*Master Zuo's Commentaries on the Spring and Autumn Annals*, translated by Legge, 1871, quoted in Wu Hung, 1995)

Investiture Ceremonies

Modern scholar Wu Hung describes what might have happened in a Western Zhou investiture ceremony (*ceming*), designed to record a king's order:

> "...the king assumed his position in front of the Great Hall, between two stairways ascending from the courtyard. Wearing ritual attire and facing south, he stood before a screen decorated with patterns of ceremonial axes–symbols of royal power. A bin ceremonial usher, usually a prominent courtier, then led the receiver of the investiture through the temple gate and positioned him in the courtyard, to the left of the usher and facing the king. When the ceming ceremony began, an archivist (shi) standing above the east stairway to the Great Hall (ie to the king's left or east) presented the king with a ce document, which recorded the king's order (ming). The king then handed the document to another archivist to his right (or west) who read it in a loud voice. After listening to the order and receiving the king's gifts, the official being invested bowed, thanked the king, declared his loyalty, and proclaimed that he would make ritual bronzes for his own ancestors which would bear the king's order."
>
> (Wu Hung, 1995, quoting Chen Mengjia, 1956)



Zhou Temple

Public Virtue vs. Public Status

> When Heaven gave birth to the multitudes of people,
> There came images and words.
> Holding up ritual vessels (that bore them),
> People could appreciate fundamental virtue.
>
> (from "Book of Songs", translated by Liu Jie)

Observation of rites in ancient China extended beyond rulers to reflect fundamental human virtues. Over time, however, the display of public rites began to take on a more secular and ostentatious tone.

During the Eastern Zhou and later into the Han Dynasty, competing philosophies and belief systems emerged that recommended different practices concerning the needs of the dead and their ancestors. Some advocated extravagant measures. Others recommended simplicity. Bronze vessels previously confined to rites associated with the king began to be cast by noblemen and local rulers. As we have seen in the discussion of ritual bronze vessels (see Slide Descriptions), inscriptions on these bronzes indicate a change from simple clan marks to larger dedications honoring ancestors and the commemoration of important events. During the Zhou Dynasty, a transition between sacred and more secular use of ritual vessels occurred, indicating a change in the rites themselves.

Confucius stressed the importance of the observation of rites, but his goal was to uphold society through virtue. A harmonious relationship between rulers and heaven was reflected in the proper relationship between family members. " When your parents are alive, comply with the rites in serving them. When they die, comply with the rites in burying them; comply with the rites in sacrificing to them." Confucius wanted people to cultivate harmonious relations and *ren*– human heartedness and consideration of others. Education and proper conduct would ensure an orderly, virtuous society, exemplified by the 'superior man'. Education became a means by which one could rise in society, with leadership no longer confined to those with the proper ancestral connections.

As we saw in the Marquis of Zeng burial (see "Three Tomb Excavations") from the Warring States Period, extravagant burial goods were commissioned by local rulers and the nobility. This extended into the Han Dynasty with the proliferation of ceramic goods (*mingqi*) and other objects designed for burial, to the point where new laws had to be introduced to curb excessive expenditures and even family bankrupcies.

A more personal dimension to rites and the use of ritual objects is expressed through an inscription on the Wangsun Yizhe zhong (bronze bell) as interpreted by Shirakawa Shizuka:

> "It was the first month, chuji (beginning auspiciousness=first quater) ding hai (Day 24) that the king's grandson, Yizhe, selected his fine metal, and on his own initiative made (this) harmonizing bell. (Its tone) is both sonorous and resounding, and its fine sound is ever so grand. (I) will use (it) to make sacrificial offerings and thereby show filial devotion to our august ancestors and refined deceased father and will use (it) to pray for longevous old age. I am mild and respectful and am at ease and composed;

cautiously standing in awe. (I) am reverent, wise, sagacious, and valiant. Being kind in (my) administrative demeanor and being proper in (my) sense of decorum, (my) strategies and plans are greatly prudent. Loud and strong is this harmonizing bell. (I) will use (it) in feasting to rejoice and use (it) to please honored guests, elders and elder brothers, together with our associates and friends. I make responsible my heart and make far-reaching and constant my deportment, and (I) harmonize and settle the people. I am omnipresent in the state. Brilliantly and extensively, for ten thousand years without end, with generations numbering in ten thousands (may) grandsons and sons eternally safeguard and strike it (ie this bell)."

(quoted in Shaughnessy, 1997)

Slide Descriptions

These slides are of objects in the Asian Art Museum collections. All come originally from mainland China and are part of the Avery Brundage collection, unless otherwise noted. Slides of excavations are primarily from Chinese sources. Before viewing them, teachers are recommended to review the section marked 'Introduction-Studying Ancient China' and discuss some basic terms with the students in the activity sheet, "define these terms". Classes will find it helpful to review the list of major periods and dates on the time chart.

SLIDE NO.1

Bottle with mushroom-shaped mouth
Buff earthenware, painted dark red.
Banpo phase of Yangshao culture,
(4,800 BCE–3,600 BCE) Neolithic period
Shaanxi province.
Gift of Hanni Forrester. 1992.2

What is this object? Where does it come from?

This is a small ceramic bottle, found as part of an excavation of an ancient site along the banks of the Yellow river in Shaanxi province in north-central China. The north-central plains have revealed remains of some of the oldest settlements in China. Being over 5,000 years old makes this bottle one of the oldest objects in the museum's collections.

What was it used for?

The bottle comes from a gravesite. Pottery jars and other items made of bone and stone were often buried with the dead and are the most frequent type of object to turn up in a dig of this kind. Possibly, it was used during the owner's life, although we don't know for sure. It might have been made specifically for the person's burial, or it could have been the one of the occupant's favorite possessions, perhaps it carried medicine or a special drink. Its small size suggests it was for personal use, rather than for utilitarian purposes.

What was life like back then?

This bottle comes from a small villages, where people lived for a short time, practicing some farming mixed with hunting and gathering. The villagers had domesticated dogs and pigs. The staple food was millet grain. Simple weaving made of hemp would have been produced, and cord marks on pots suggest a lot of basketry was used. Families lived in egalitarian arrangements, without much differentiation of gender roles–meaning that the archaeological record gives little indication of one group dominating the other –and without much indication of social stratification. Housing remains suggest the villagers lived in clusters, possibly clans. Dwellings were partially sunken in the ground, with simple, raised platforms that may have been used for sitting and sleeping. Graves were found

beyond the perimeter of the village. Some children were found buried in urns under the houses or within the walls of the dwellings.

How was the bottle made?

The bottle was handmade of local earthenware (a type of clay) and fired at a low temperature. The bottle has a flat base, a mushroom-shaped mouth and fans out in the middle of the body. It was painted dark red with geometric patterns around the body and neck of the bottle.

Why is this piece important?

This bottle provides direct evidence of early 'painted pottery' cultures–so-called because of the characteristic painting of designs on ochre-colored earthenware jars and bottles. The general group of cultures throughout central China during the early Neolithic period are called Yangshao, after the name of the original site that was found. Banpo refers to the specific phase (in time) and it is also the name of the site, which can still be seen outside the modern city of Xian. The bottle also shows how long ago, Chinese potters took an interest in forming vessels with interesting patterns on them, an early harbinger of the centuries of ceramic traditions to come.

SLIDE NO.2

Goblet
Black pottery
Longshan culture (ca. 2750–2000 BCE)
Neolithic period
North-eastern China
Anonymous gift. 1998.30

What is this object? Where does it come from?

This delicate drinking goblet comes from the east coast of China, probably Shandong province. It is dated to the later Neolithic period, making it just over 4,000 years old.

What was it used for?

On first glance, this is obviously some sort of drinking vessel, but the walls of the cup are extremely thin, similar to the thickness of egg shell. Such a cup was probably not for everyday use. The whole vessel has been designed with an interest in form, rather than function. Only the top portion could be used to hold liquids. Vessels like this were buried next to the bodies of tomb occupants along with jade items. This suggests that very delicate cups like this were prized objects, or objects of symbolic value.

What was life like back then?

Longshan cultures were more advanced in terms of lifestyle and technology than the Yangshao cultures associated with slide no. 1. They lived a more settled existence in larger villages. They had begun to make use of the potter's wheel. Copper and jade products were beginning to appear. Some people in the settlements were buried with noticeable more grave goods, indicating greater social stratification. The production and accumulation of more specialized goods required a more advanced state of local economy and agriculture at that time. Delicate objects like this goblet were probably a luxury item.

How was it made?

Dark vessels like this are typical of Dawenkou and Longshan cultures from the east. The dark, greyish color was achieved by sealing the kiln to provide a reducing atmosphere (meaning less oxygen) in the firing process. Using a potter's wheel with water, allowed the potter to shape a more slender vessel out of clay than by using hand-coiling techniques.

Compare and contrast...

Compare this vessel with Slide # 1. How do the shapes differ? Which do you think is more attractive? Why? How much information about each culture can you extract from the object itself? Look at the student activity sheet marked, "Interpret a Burial" to see how ceramics were found in a similar gravesite.

SLIDE NO.3

***Cong* tube**
nephrite
Liangzhu culture, Neolithic period
3,100–2,200 BCE
Zhejiang province
B60 J603

What is this object? Where does it come from?

Cong (pronounced 'tsong') are unusual jade objects found among the graves of the Liangzhu culture in the eastern province of Jiangsu, around Lake Tai, near present-day Shanghai. *Cong* are tube-shaped objects consisting of a circular tube shape with protruding square corners. They appear in short segments (like this piece) or in longer pieces with decorative sections along the length of the object (see Slide # 4).

What was it used for?

Cong tubes, along with the *bi* discs that are often found with the *cong*, are some of the most enigmatic objects in ancient Chinese culture. They are the principle jade objects found in Liangzhu culture sites. Many interpretations have been given. Later Zhou and Han texts refer to the ritual use of *cong* and *bi* representing the earth and the heavens, but we can't assume this was their original meaning. Some scholars have suggested that the round/square shape may have developed from a bracelet shape. While it is unclear what their function is, *cong* are found in the tombs of people who must have held some important position or rank within the society (see slide # 4).

Cong often carry minutely incised decorations showing mask-like faces. In this case, there is a small face on the corner of the *cong*, made up of two round eyes and a curved, oval shape suggesting a nose or mouth. Above the face are two rows of incised lines. (See also section on 'Ceramics, Jades and Bronzes' in this packet). Some scholars have suggested that these split-face designs might have influenced the later design of *taotie* masks on the bronzes from the Shang dynasty.

How was it made?

Jade is extremely hard and cannot be carved. It must be worn away with using drills or saws. Jades such as this would have taken a long time to create. Some scholars have suggested that these jades were heated, in order to be worked with such fine lines. Others have suggested they were ritually burned as part of the burial process. Burning or heating might account for the lighter color of some jade *cong*.

Compare and contrast

Look at some of the other jade pieces on display at the Asian Art Museum. Can you find other jades used as burial objects? How are they decorated? Locate the two large *bi* discs on display. Look at the delicate designs on each. What do you think the *cong* and *bi* discs were made for?

SLIDE NO.4

Excavation Photo: Tomb No 3 at Sidun
Liangzhu culture (ca. 2,500 BCE)
Jiangsu Province
Courtesy China Pictorial Service, Beijing

What is the subject of this photo?

This is an excavation photo, published in 1990, of an unearthed burial site of the Liangzhu culture in Jiangsu province in the central-eastern part of China, near present-day Shanghai. This burial site was unusual for the arrangement and number of *bi* and *cong* jades (see Sslide # 3), which can be seen here as they were found surrounding the remains of the body.

Who and what was found here?

The tomb contained the remains of a young adult male about 20 years old, 4 pottery vessels, 14 stone and jade implements, 49 jade ornaments, 24 *bi* discs, 33 jade *cong* tubes, and 3 jade axes or *yue*. The largest *bi* discs were placed on the chest of the dead person; the rest were placed above the head, beneath the feet and under the body. The largest of the *cong* tubes consisted of up to 15 segments or levels, each level being marked on the jade by two parallel bands.

What was the significance of so many jades?

The large number of jades at this site points to the importance of jade in this culture. A later Zhou text, the *Book of Rites*, mentions that the Chinese elite of ancient times "arranged the *cong* and *bi* to shroud the corpse" (quoted in Huang Zimei, 1996). The meaning, however is unclear, since it is possible that later cultures incorporated and interpreted *bi* and *cong* into their own religious concepts. Probably the individual buried here held some important position or rank within Liangzhu society. Either he controlled the use of these jades in lifetime rituals or ceremonies, or was able to commission such an impressive array of jades as result of his status. One interesting discovery was that the burial site appears to

have been burned and a number of pieces broken before entombment. Perhaps a fire ceremony was held to ensure safe passage to another world, or was a way of 'activating' the efficacy of the jades. We will never be sure of the exact significance of this find, nor the function of ancient *cong* and *bi* discs.

Compare and contrast

How was jade used in other burials? (see Section on the Excavation of the tomb of Fu Hao, for example) Compare the use of *cong* and *bi* with the use of the cicada in slide # 18.

What other clues would you look for if you were trying to interpret a site like this?

SLIDE NO.5

Taotie **Mask**
Bronze
Late Shang Dynasty
13th –11th century BCE,
B60 B647

What is this object?

This bronze mask was probably placed on the brow or chest of a horse that pulled chariots during the Shang dynasty. Horses and chariot were buried along with the owner in a tomb. The bronze mask survived, whereas other parts of the chariot disintegrated after burial.

Who were the Shang?

The Shang was the first major dynasty to rule central China during the Bronze Age. The Bronze Age is so-named because of the widespread use of bronze for ritual vessels, weapons (including chariot fittings) and objects of status. The focus of Shang society was the king, who was part of a family clan linked by a common ancestor. The Shang maintained their rule through military conquest, and by claiming the rite to rule through hereditary links to the first ancestor.

How was the chariot used in the Shang dynasty?

Entire chariots and their horses have been found near or adjacent to Shang tombs, meaning that they were important possessions at that time. Tomb owners felt that the placement of chariots and other weapons in the tomb would protect them in the afterlife. Human sacrifices were also included in Shang burials.

Chariots were the principle war weapon of the Shang elite. Each chariot would have carried three soldiers: a driver, an archer, and a soldier carrying a weapon called a *ko*. Chariots would have allowed the ruling elite to survey a battle from a more commanding position than the ordinary foot soldier, as well as display their rank and position. Bronze fittings

added to the appearance of the chariot, and also may have served to ward off evil from the owner. Other bronze chariot pieces found in tombs include axles, rattles and other ornamental fittings.

What is the importance of the design on this mask?

The mask is in the shape of a face with bulging eyes and very pronounced eyebrows. It is not the face of any recognizable human or animal, but a composite monster-like face referred to as *taotie*. Variations of this mask design can be seen on Shang ritual bronze vessels (see Slides # 6 and # 7) and are a common motif that help us to identify works from this time period. There are many interpretations given of these mask designs. The *taotie* mask may have served as a protective device, or it may have been part of an overall clan emblem, or a symbol that associated the Shang with a mythical animal beast.

Compare and contrast

Compare the mask designs on this piece with the *taotie* mask designs in Slides # 6 and # 7. At the museum, look for a case of weapons and other utilitarian objects made of bronze.

SLIDE NO.6

Liding
Ritual Food vessel
Bronze
Late Shang dynasty, 13th –11th century BCE
B60 B1030

What is this object?

Liding is the name of a type of bronze vessel used in rituals by the ancient Chinese ruling elite. The *liding* is a vessel based on two forms–the li and the *ding*, both originally ceramic vessels. This *liding* consists of two handles, a bowl like center -portion, and three legs.

How was it used?

Bronze ritual vessels were used during the Shang in banquets connecting the Shang elite with their ancestors. Ancestors were believed to exert continuing influence on the fate of the living, therefore it was felt that offerings had to be made to the ancestors. There is an inscription inside the rim of the vessel that reads simply, "Father I".

Ding were food vessels used from the Shang through the Han dynasties. Based on surviving texts from after the Shang dynasty, they were considered very important vessels. Possession of a special set of nine large *ding* vessels legitimized the rite to rule, and were believed to have been passed from ruling dynasty to ruling dynasty.

How was it made?

Ritual bronze vessels from the Shang and Zhou dynasties were made using ceramic piece molds. Molten bronze was poured into the space between the various mold pieces. The decoration seen on the vessel was either incised on a ceramic model or on the individual piece molds (or a combination of both) which then appeared on the final cast vessel. (For a fuller description of this process, refer to the section on "Ceramics, Jades and Bronzes") The raised tripod shape of the vessel probably had its origin in vessels that were meant to be heated underneath by hot coals.

What is the significance of the designs on the *liding*?

The main body of the vessel is decorated with designs typical of the late Shang period. The main feature is the *taotie* or monster mask that appears on the corner above each of the legs. Beneath the *taotie* shape is a spiral decorative pattern known as *leiwen* or thunder pattern. There are small circles on the neck of the vessel. It is not known for sure what the meaning of these designs is. Some scholars believe that they are purely decorative, determined by the individual piece molds that made the vessel. Other scholars have suggested that the mask-like faces and other animal designs have mythological or religious significance. Still others have suggested that the mask may represent death or the spirits that are awakened through ceremonies evoking the world of the ancestors. We may never know the exact meaning of the designs, only that they are distinctive and intriguing features of ancient bronzes, and that they show a high level of craftsmanship and artistry in ancient potters and metal-workers.

SLIDE NO.7

Fangyi
Ritual wine vessel
Bronze
Late Shang dynasty,
13th–11th century BCE.
B60 B997

What is this object?

Fangyi is another type of bronze vessel used by the Shang in their ritual ceremonies. The vessel is a small rectangular box used for holding wine ("fang" means square). Such vessels were in use from the Shang through the middle of the Western Zhou dynasty.

How was it used?

Like the *liding* in Slide # 6, *fangyi* were also used in ritual offerings. Shang kings made sacrifices to the ancestors to sustain good fortune and avert evil. *Fangyi* have been found in the tomb of Fu Hao (see separate article) indicating that they were in use during the late Shang period at Anyang. Bronzes in Fu Hao's tomb appear to have been used, so we can assume that bronzes such as these served both ritual functions in life as well as in burials. The roof-shaped lid on this vessel is removable. There has been some debate about whether this vessel was used for wine or food, the prevailing view seems to be the former.

How was it made?

Fangyi were made with ceramic piece molds (see section on "Ceramics, Jade and Bronze"). The simple square shape of the *fangyi* with its four corners has suggested to many observers that the flanges (ridges that rise above the surface of the vessel) mask the area where the ceramic piece molds were connected. Some scholars have argued against this interpretation in favor of the idea that the flanges were created to accentuate discreet areas of the vessel and compartmentalize the design.

The *taotie* mask design—also seen on the vessel in slide # 6—is clearly visible on the front of this vessel. The face is split down the middle and spreads out on either side of the nose

to the corners of the vessel. The face appears to have no lower jaw. Above the main mask are two sets of opposing *kui* , or dragon-like figures that accentuate the main face like eyebrows. The decorative patterns continue on the surface of the lid.

SLIDE NO.8

Yayi Jia
Ritual wine vessel
Late Shang dynasty,
13th–11th century BCE.
B61 B11+

What is this object?

This is a tripod vessel used to hold wine for ritual ceremonies of the Shang rulers. *Yayi* is a reading of the graph that appears inside the vessel, possibly a clan mark. *Jia* (jee-ah) refers to the vessel type. *Jia* are cup-shaped vessels with three blade-like legs, a handle and several small posts above the rim. *Jia* appear from the early Shang but disappear after the middle Western Zhou period.

How was it used?

The large size of this *jia* is quite impressive. Bright and shiny when it was first cast, it must have been a proud possession. *Jia* were usually pouring or drinking vessels, but the immense size and weight of this vessel suggests that it was used more for display purposes, or perhaps carried in some way. The tripod shape is based on ceramic prototypes that allows heating of the vessel's contents.

The two posts at the top of the vessel are a bit of a mystery. Possibly they were used to help carry the vessel, or simply decorative, similar to the stumped horn shapes on animal heads of animals (see *gong* vessel in slide # 10, for example). Another theory is that they held netting to keep the contents of the vessel unadulterated.

What is the significance of the designs on this vessel?

The surface of the *jia* is completely covered with designs. This style helps to identify the vessel as Anyang period (late Shang). The style is typified by a set of dominant design motifs that are raised above the background designs, creating a rich surface texture. While the *taotie* mask face assumes the central position in the body of the vessel, other interesting

features emerge such as the intricate lines along the sides of the legs, the central flanges that are echoed along the length of the legs, and the interplay between two animal forms, one with large horns devouring the other, that make up the handle (see separate illustration elsewhere in this packet).

Compare and contrast

Read about the Fu Hao tomb and compare the square shaped *jia* with this one. Which do you think is more attractive? Compare the bronze *jia* shape with a similarly shaped jade object in one of the cases in the Jade gallery at the Asian Art Museum. Notice how the same form has been used in another media centuries later.

SLIDE NO.9

Excavation photo: Tomb No.1001 at Anyang
Late Shang Dynasty, ca. 1,200 BCE.
Henan province
Courtesy Academia Sinica, Republic of Taiwan

What is the subject of this photo?

This is an excavation photograph of work on tomb # 1001 at Anyang in the northern part of Henan province. The work was undertaken between the fall of 1934 and the spring of 1935 by the Academia Sinica, now located in Taiwan. Numerous tombs were dug up in this area, revealing substantial evidence of the late Shang dynasty period when the capital was located at Yin, near the modern town of Anyang.

Who and what was found here?

Archaeolgists discovered a large pit laid out in a cruciform plan, containing the scattered grave goods of a Shang king from the early Anyang period. Two ends of the cross formed long ramps leading down to the bottom of the pit, where the remains of a wooden structure were found. The pit was more than 300 feet long and 60 feet deep. Originally the site of the king's sarcophagus, the grave had been robbed and the most valuable treasures stolen. Even the king's bones had been scattered. Nevertheless, a number of stone and bone carvings, white-clay pottery, jades and bronze vessels were found. One particularly interesting object found was a hair brush used for painting.

The most startling find was the extensive number of human skeletons interred with the king, 164 altogether. 90 of these were given either proper coffins or some ornaments, but the remaining 74 were human sacrifices–mutilated in some way, either beheaded or cut in two and laid out along the southern ramp in different groups according to age. Inscriptions on oracle bones found at Anyang refer to sacrifices of enemy prisoners of war.

What are oracle bones?

Oracle bones were used to foretell the future. The Shang kings were the first to write questions (and sometimes the answers) on bones concerning matters of state as well as personal questions. Cracks were produced on the bones of cattle and turtles from the application of heated rods. These could be interpreted positively or negatively. Some of the first oracle bones to turn up came from the area where this excavation took place and helped guide archaeologists to the sites that they excavated. The writings on the oracle bones were detailed enough to chronicle many Shang rulers and events; these writings are combined with other archaeological finds (such as the inscriptions on bronze vessels) to write the history of the Shang dynasty.

Compare and contrast

The excavation shown here is similar to that of Fu Hao's tomb, but quite different from the Marquis of Zeng's tomb shown in Slide # 13 and that of the First Emperor's army shown in Slide # 15. How does the layout of each tomb differ? What were the most important grave goods uncovered at each site?

SLIDE NO.10

Gong
Ritual wine vessel
Bronze
Early Western Zhou dynasty
Mid 11th –10th century BCE
B60 B1004

What is this object?

The *gong* is a wine vessel used in ritual ceremonies from the late Shang to the middle of the western Zhou period. It is shaped like a gravy boat with a lid and handle, the entire vessel decorated with animal forms.

What was it used for?

The *gong* has no immediate precedent in the archaeological record. It is found in the late Shang tomb of Fu Hao, but not before. Where other ritual bronze shapes develop from ceramic prototypes, the *gong* appears to have developed as a unique form in bronze. The curved lid and strong handle suggest a pouring action, so the *gong* was most likely a wine pourer. An inscription on the inside cover and base reads: "Second son Qi X made for esteemed and accomplished Father ding (this) sacrificial vessel." (X is an undecipherable character.) Therefore, this *gong* was used for ancestral offerings.

Who were the Zhou?

The Zhou (pronounced 'joe') formed the second major dynasty of ancient China. They emerged as a powerful group from the west during the late Shang dynasty, eventually conquering the Shang and claiming the 'mandate of heaven' or rite to rule. For a brief period, during the early Western Zhou, birds became a popular form of decoration. Birds had appeared on Shang bronzes, but became the major decorative motif at the time this vessel was made, complete with long tails and plumes. The profusion of plumed birds on this vessel, therefore, helps to date it to the early Western Zhou period.

What are all the animal forms on this vessel?

Of all the ritual bronze vessel types, the *gong* contains a multitude of animal forms covering the entire vessel. The vessel can be read from a number of different angles. Aside from the plumed birds already mentioned, there are *taotie* masks on the front and back. The face on the front of the lid is baring its teeth. Its head is crowned with bottle horns. On the back, another face rises above a bird with spiky projections. Its main feature is two curved horns that resemble flat ears, best seen from the back of the vessel. *Kui* dragons and *leiwen* patterns can be found throughout.

Compare and contrast

A similar Shang vessel from the Asian Art Museum's collections is also on display. Compare the decoration and use of animal forms on each vessel. Compare the handle decoration on this *gong* to the handle on the large *jia,* seen in Slide # 8.

SLIDE NO.11

Gui
Ritual food vessel
Bronze
Late Western Zhou dynasty
Late 9th–early 8th century BCE.
B60 B1056

What is this object?

The *gui* is a food container used in ritual ceremonies during the Shang and Zhou dynasties. It is a deep circular vessel shaped like a basin. During the Shang, a similar vessel without handles called a *yu* was used. From the late Shang on, and especially at the beginning of the Zhou, *gui* developed handles and bases.

How was it used?

Based on several finds, *gui* were used to store cooked rice, millet and other grains. Some have survived with lids. The lengthy (60 character) inscription inside this vessel gives a complete description of its use: "Jui, who revered Su Xi, attended with great care to her funeral. The emperor bestowed many bounties upon Jui. Jui made so bold as to extol the emperor by using (his favors) to make for his august forefathers this sacred *gui*. (It should be) used for memorial sacrifices to (these) late accomplished men and beg for longevity, eternal life, loyal service to the emperor, and a good death. May Jui's sons and grandsons for ten thousand years treasure (it) and use (it)." This vessel was clearly intended for ceremonial ancestor worship, but a note of personal pride seems to enter in here, as if Jui was intentionally making an heirloom that would honor him as a future ancestor. *Gui*, along with *ding*, became important objects indicating status during the Zhou. The maximum number of *ding* (nine) and *gui* (eight) used in burials was restricted to heads of state.

What is the significance of the designs on this vessel?

In contrast to the profusion of images on the *gong*, the decorations on this *gui* seem orderly and evenly spread among the base, several bands in the middle of the vessel, and on the handles. The *taotie* mask of earlier times has been reduced to an eye. Around each eye coils an animal shape in broad bands that looks like a transition between a dragon and the bird shape on the *gong*. Handles on *gui* from the Zhou period are quite strong and pronounced and give the vessel a strong sillouette. These handles are formed from twisting dragons with bottle horns. Decoration on vessels such as this *gui* indicate an abstraction of earlier animal forms.

SLIDE NO.12

Hu
Ritual wine vessel
Bronze
Mid to Late Western Zhou
First half of 9th century BCE.
B60 B972

What is this object?

Hu were ceremonial vessels used for holding wine that became popular during the Zhou dynasty. Their shape is typically slender near the top of the vessel, sagging towards the middle. They include a lid, two handles and a base. It is possible that the *hu* vessel was based on the earlier *you* vessel.

How was it used?

Like the previous example (Slide # 11), the inscription inside the lid and neck of this vessel gives direct evidence of its intended use: " On the *chi-mao* day, the first day of the tenth month of the twenty-sixth year, Fan Chuseng cast this wedding hu to be used as a wedding present for his eldest child, Meng Feiguai. May his sons and grandsons treasure it forever." This vessel was created to be part of a dowry. Once again, this indicates a shift away from the strictly religious use of bronzes towards a more secularized use for personal reasons. It also reminds us of the expectations that fathers placed on sons–Confucian principles that stressed respectful, dutiful relationships.

What is the significance of the designs on this vessel?

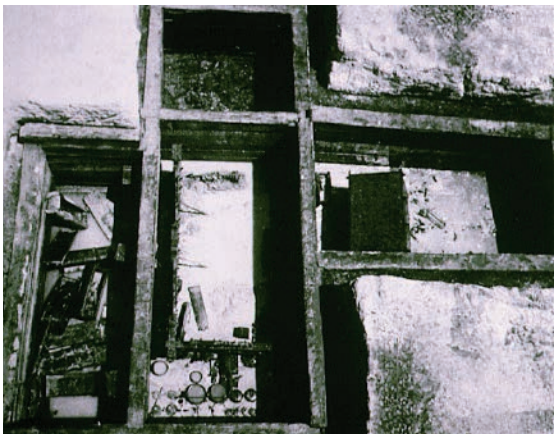
The designs on this vessel are based on previous models, but show a clear move towards abstraction. Two *taotie*-like eyes, seen near the widest part of body of the vessel, have become isolated circular shapes. Whereas the split face had previously been divided by the nose, there is no clear break, and arching wave-like bands become the dominant design. The background has been simplified to thin lines, giving depth to the foreground without distraction. The design seems to move more freely around the shape of the vessel, less

hemmed in by box-like divisions or projecting flanges. The curvilinear patterns of the wave motif are reflected in the twisted horns of animal-shaped handles and the delicate lines on the rings.

Compare and contrast

Compare the shape of this vessel to the earlier Shang *you* vessel on display at the Asian Art Museum. Which is the more appealing form, and why? Describe the advantages and disadvantages of the two different handle designs.

SLIDE NO.13



Excavation photo: Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng
Warring States period, 475–221 BCE.
Leigudun, Hubei Province
Courtesy Hubei Provincial Museum

What is the subject of this photo?

This is an aerial view of the partially excavated tomb of Zeng Hou Yi, Marquis of the state of Zeng, taken in 1978. The tomb dates from ca. 433 BCE. during the Warring States period. The tomb chambers were located beneath large stone slabs and contained with wooden beams. In the photo the top beams have been removed revealing four chambers. The chamber on the right contained the large lacquered coffins of the Marquis. The one on the left contained the jumbled caskets and bodies of thirteen young women. The chamber in the upper portion of the photo contained weaponry. The central, and largest chamber held a magnificent set of bronze bells and other musical instruments. They were found still hanging from the lacquered wooden frame –seen to the left side of the central chamber.

What was the Warring States period?

As the influence of the Zhou dynasty diminished, various states emerged as contestants between the fourth and third centuries BCE. The period is considered part of the Eastern Zhou, because the Zhou were still, in name at least, the ruling dynasty. Despite this, several other states became powerful, among them the southern state of Chu and the western state of Qin. During the time when this tomb was made, Zeng was in alliance with Chu, however later on they were defeated by Chu. We know about the connection between Zeng and Chu because of later historical texts, and from inscriptions on a dedicatory bell inside this tomb, as well as designs on the objects that show influences from other regions.

What is the significance of this find?

The discovery of this tomb and another one from the same time period added to our understanding of Warring States history, as well as confirming the existence of the Zeng state, and demonstrating the cultural influence of the Chu state. We know about these objects and the identification of the tomb occupant from inscriptions on the bronzes. Elaborate bronzes located in the tomb revealed the extensive use of lost-wax technique in addition to the ceramic piece mold technique used in earlier bronzes. Lacquer was used to protect the coffins and covered many of the household furnishings. By far the most important find was the musical instruments, including the largest assemblage of bronze bells ever found. These instruments formed a complete orchestra of ancient Chinese music, revealing the sophisticated use and enjoyment of music as well as improving our understanding of ancient Chinese musical principles. (See next slide, and the extended article in the section, "Three Tomb Excavations" in this packet).

Compare and contrast

Contrast this tomb site with those illustrated in Slides # 4, 9 and 15. What are the differences and similarities in terms of tomb construction? What objects were most important in burial?

SLIDE NO.14

***Wangsun Yizhe Yongzhong* Bell**
Bronze
Eastern Zhou dynasty, Spring and Autumn period,
771–475 BCE.
B60 S552

What is this object?

This is a musical instrument– a bronze bell. *Yong* means the bell shaft; *zhong* means bell. The 113-character inscription on the bell indicates that it was cast on behalf of *Wangsun Yizhe*, a member of the ruling family of the Chu kingdom. The inscription has been linked to a similar inscription on a set of bells from a Chu tomb dating from the mid–sixth century BCE. It would seem likely that this bell was part of a set, although bells could also be solo instruments.(see discussion of Chu and other states in the previous slide description) The bell is decorated with a pattern of relief hooks derived from animal forms but fully abstracted by this point in time.

What did music sound like at this time?

Bells like these, and sets of bells like those found in the tomb of Marquis Yi (about a century later than this bell) can still emit tones. The bell would have been suspended from a cord and hung on an angle. Bells resounded by being struck, rather than by the use of a clapper inside. Bells with elliptical cross sections produced two tones, one when struck on the lip (bottom edge) near the outside, and the other struck near the center of the lip. An orchestra of 65 bells would have produced twice as many tones. By the time Marquis Yi's bell set was produced, musicians could play twelve tone scales as well as the same number of keys or pitches. This is indicated by inscriptions on the bells indicating their pitch. The nine bosses (*mei*) on each section of this bell are significant. Not only were they believed to aid the resonance of the bell, but the number nine was cosmologically significant (as in nine sacred *ding* vessels, etc). The ancient Chinese felt that universal harmony was linked to mathematical relationships. Similarly, musical harmonies require precise intervals. The artisans who cast these bells must have perfected their craft in order to produce such minute variations.

What function did this music serve?

Harmonies produced by the relationships of musical intervals produced sensations of harmony in the listener, therefore music was useful in adding solemnity to a ritual ceremony. The fact that Marquis Yi's tomb contained two sets of musical instruments suggests that he enjoyed both formal music in a public setting (the kind played on the bells) and more informal music probably for personal enjoyment. Bells such as this were most likely used for ancestral banquets, courtly events and to honor important visitors.

SLIDE NO.15

Excavation photo: Terra Cotta Army of the First Emperor
Qin Dynasty, 221–210 BCE.
Litong, Shaanxi Province
Courtesy Hamilton Photography, Seattle

What is the subject of this photo?

Here you can see an army of soldiers unearthed just east of the modern city of Xian. Discovered first in 1974, the work continues on three pits containing over 7,000 model soldiers. The army was buried within a framework of wooden pillars just east of the large tumulus containing the tomb of the First Emperor. The lifesize soldiers are made of terra cotta, each one an individual portrait reflecting the diversity of men drawn from all across the new empire. They would have originally been brightly painted. Body parts were mass produced from a variety of molds, with heads and limbs added separately before firing. Soldiers carried real weapons including swords, spears and halberds. The pits also included chariots and model horses. It was a massive undertaking, certainly the largest ceramic project ever undertaken anywhere.

Who was the First Emperor?

The First Emperor was born in 259 BCE in the state of Qin, during the Warring States period (see Slide # 13). He assumed the throne at age 13 as King Zheng of Qin, inheriting a warlike state that was influenced by Legalist beliefs. Legalism believed that men were inherently weak and needed to be controlled through fear and strict laws. By mobilizing a huge army, Qin was able to defeat rival states over a nine–year period. In 221 BCE, Zheng declared himself the First Emperor (*Qin Shihuangdi*). He continued to centralize the administration and unite the country by measures designed to standardize currencies, weights, axle widths and the written language. His conquest and harsh laws, however, and the huge conscription of men used to work on massive building projects such as the Great Wall, his palace and tomb, produced bitter resentment. After his death, his son was unable to stay in power, and the dynasty came to an end in 207 BCE.

How does this tomb differ from others?

The First Emperor's army and mausoleum were part of a grand scheme to recreate the entire world of the court below ground. The pits containing the soldiers also included charioteers and stables. The emperor's tomb itself (yet to be unearthed) is supposed to contain a working model of the entire palace compound, set with traps to ward off looters. The First Emperor was obsessed with immortality during his reign, so his tomb was provisioned with all that was important to him on his journey to the next world. Obviously, his army was extremely important, as it was through military conquest that he built his empire. The tomb also signalled a direction towards the use of ceramic models as stand-ins for sacrificial victims, a process that had begun earlier, but reached gigantic proportions here. The use of ceramic models of soldier armies continued into the Han. Tombs continued to be filled with objects representing real things, and the ability to prepare such a tomb would, in the Han dynasty, become the dream of an increasingly broader segment of society.

SLIDE NO.16

Covered *Hu* vessel
Grey stoneware with molded low-relief and painted decoration
Western Han
206 BCE–8 CE.
Central Plains
B60 P2391

What is this object?

This is a large, painted storage jar that would have been placed in a tomb in north-central China during the Western Han dynasty. It is based on the *hu* bronze wine vessel shape, particularly inlaid bronzes from the late Shang dynasty through the Warring States (472–221 BCE.) periods. The shape of the *hu* may have been based on the vegetable gourd. This is an unglazed vessel with painted decoration. Like the bronzes, it has horizontal bands that divide up the decorative sections, a removable lid, and two handles in the form of a monster mask.

How was it made?

The grey color on this vessel was achieved by firing the vessel in a smoke-infused kiln, the smoke produced by burning a lot of green wood and other organic material. The surface decoration was then painted on using mineral pigments. The design consists of swirling cloud shapes. Surface designs like this are very fragile, as they are not protected by a glaze.

What were the burial customs and beliefs at the time this was made?

During the Han, a variety of cults and belief systems existed. Some systems aimed to prolong life, others to provide for continued life in the tomb, still others assumed the presence of immortal kingdoms to which the soul was transported. Not everyone could afford inlaid bronzes and decorative lacquers for their tombs, so ceramic models imitated these forms and their decorations, and were placed in tombs.

What is the significance of the surface decorations on this vessel?

The designs on this vessel were undoutedly influenced by those on bronze vessels and lacquerware. The cloud motif (*yun wen*) on the surface decoration can be interpreted in several ways. It can be seen as an auspicious symbol, protecting the spirit of the deceased. Clouds can depict the land of the immortals, a place often associated with mountains where clouds would gather. They can also depict sky constellations and astrological beliefs. White clouds could also represent vital energy (*qi*) or cloud breath (*yunqi*), substances that would be important to a soul seeking immortality.

During the Han, the Chinese distinguised two different elements of the soul–*hun* and *po*. During life, *hun* was the intellectual or spiritual soul. *Po* dealt with the physical body's movement and energy. After death, the two would separate. *Po* stayed with the body, therefore it needed to be given all the material comforts of real life. *Hun* journeyed off to immortal realms in what many feared was a perilous journey. Many variations on this theme occurred and are reflected in various burial practices and tomb imagery. The vessel depicted here, along with the objects depicted in the remaining Slides # 17, 18, 19 show various responses to the search for immortality.

SLIDE NO.17

Storehouse
Earthenware with molded decoration and uneven lead glaze
Eastern Han dynasty, 25–220 CE.
Hubei province
B60 P130+

What is this object?

This is a ceramic model of a granary barn or storehouse, made as a burial object (*mingqi*) during the Eastern Han dynasty. This particular house is tall and rectangular. One worker carries a sack of grain up the stairs while another awaits his approach. Two bears are positioned on the ground floor as guardian figures.

How was it made?

Mingqi were made in response to the growing demand for burial objects in various workshops throughout China during the Han dynasty. They were made of earthenware and either grey or lead-glazed. It is not known exactly when and how lead-glazes were introduced. Daoist alchemists may have influenced potters by experimenting with the chemical properties of metals in a search for the elixir of immortality. Ironically, lead was poisonous, and was therefore only used on burial items. The body of the vessel would have been reddish in color. Green was produced by adding glaze containing copper oxide. The vessel was fired twice in the kiln. Brown glazes were popular in the western Han, whereas green lead-glazes became popular in the eastern Han.

How does this object reflect society at that time?

Burial objects such as this are plentiful from this period. The Asian Art Museum collections from this time include other farm scenes, well-heads, animals, cookware, stoves, houses, jars, incense burners and a rare set of gate pillars. There are entertainers and a figure of an exorcist. A flour mill in the collection attests to the introduction of the millstone, and other agricultural innovations during the Han that produced a booming economy. The major grains at this time would have been millet and rice, wheat and barley,

depending on the region. In addition to grains, and whatever meats could be eaten, the staple dish was geng, a thick soup or meat broth. Meals were served on low platters (as people were not yet sitting in chairs). Tablewares of wealthier families would have been lacquered. Model buildings like this provide excellent information on early Chinese architecture. Some can be disassembled to view component parts. Watchtower models and house models allow us to see construction techniques and room arrangements. This model, along with others, allows us to glimpse at aspects of grain harvest and storage.

What was the purpose of these models?

Models of real-life objects were placed in tombs to provide for the deceased's soul, which needed real-life provisions in the afterlife, for sustenance and reassurance. This was not the life-sized world of the scale created by the First Emperor, but a facsimile version produced for a growing population wanting to enjoy the burial privileges of the aristocratic elite.

SLIDE NO.18

Cicada
Green Nephrite
Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE)
B60J583

What is this object?

This is a jade object in the form of a cicada (*tsan*) used for burial purposes in the Han dynasty. Specifically, this jade was meant to be placed on the tongue, and was part of a set of jade plugs or coverings for the body. The cicada has been partly abstracted to emphasize its form, a wide head near the top and long, pointed wings.

How did this practice begin?

As we saw in slide # 4, burials with jades can be traced to Neolithic cultures. The practice of using pieces of jade to cover parts of the body probably began in the middle of the Western Zhou dynasty, when major changes were taking place in the types of bronze vessels being cast. At first, pieces of jade covered different parts of the head and were attached to a veil or fabric of some sort. This practice evolved into more complex sets of jades, including pendants and necklaces covering the upper part of the body. It was during the Han dynasty that full jade suits or jade casings covering the whole body were introduced–the most famous of these being the suits found in the tomb of Liu Sheng and his consort. Items such as this cicada were included with the suit covering, as plugs to go in the various bodily orifices: the nostrils, ears, mouth, and so on. There were even jade pigs placed in the hands or armpits.

What purpose did jade fulfill in Han burial customs?

Jade was associated with many things, but in a burial context, was associated with immortality. The search for immortality became the focus of a number of cults in the later Han, among them Daoism. Daoist practioners advocated the use of jade as a means to preserve the body and protect against decomposition. The qualities of jade were like those

wished for by the dead: purity, beauty, immortality. The cicada had been used as a symbol of immortality since the Shang. The observation of cicadas emerging from the ground as a beetle and transforming themselves into winged insects must have appealed to the ancient Chinese as a symbol of resurrection and immortality.

What is Daoism?

Daoism is a complex term describing one of the three main 'religions' of traditional China. Daoism was originally a philosophy based on several texts that expressed a belief in the universal *Dao* or formless essence underlying all things. Rather than rely on human institutions and laws, Daoism stressed living in harmony with nature, achieved through the complementary forces of *yin* and *yang*, *yin* being female, winter, cool, etc; *yang* being male, summer, heat, etc.–all of which arose from the *Dao*. During the later Han, Daoism was not yet an organized religion per se, but a set of practices and beliefs, including alchemy, and the realms of the immortals. These popular beliefs lie behind the development of jade coverings such as the cicada and the heavenly realms depicted on the money tree in the next slide.

SLIDE NO.19 and 20 (detail)

Money tree
Bronze with yellow-glazed pottery base
Eastern Han dynasty
2nd–3rd century CE.
Gift of Connoisseurs Council 1995.79

What is this object?

This unusual object is a money tree (*yaoqianshu*), an object placed in tombs during the Eastern Han dynasty, especially in Sichuan province. The 'tree' consists of a ceramic base topped with 20 branches made of bronze, on which can be seen images of Han dynasty coins (round with a square hole in the middle) and a host of mythological figures symbolizing wealth and immortality.

Why did people put money trees in their tomb?

During the Han dynasty, there was a tremendous interest in furnishing tombs in ways that would support different beliefs in the afterlife, in preserving the body, and in assisting the soul on its way to the land of the immortals. This tree combines various beliefs including the desire for eternal wealth and the promise of immortal life in a heavenly realm.

What do all the details represent?

The ceramic base is shaped like a mountain with three levels. Here are lively images of hunting scenes, deer, a phoenix bird, and a ewe suckling on a winged animal. At the top of the base, a rider appears to be holding the stem-like shaft of the tree. The base represents the earth, supporting life and fertility, but also shaped like a mountain that points upward to the sky.

The tree itself is composed of branches facing in the four cardinal directions. On each branch are coins (*wuzhu*) that appear to eminate rays or feathers. The idea of coins growing on branches may have been inspired by the actual technique of casting coins in stacks, so that the caster could produce many coins at once. The rays could be a reference to the

illumination of supernatural light or the light caused by alchemy (the bronze tree would have been quite shiny when it was new). More likely, the tendrils represent feathers, a reference to the land of mythological or immortal figures known as *xian*. A variety of these figures prance along the upper portions of the branches, indicating that by ascending the tree, the soul of the dead person will reach the land of the immortals. Coiling up the center of the bronze stem are a set of dragons with gaping mouths.

Perched near the top of the tree (see Slide # 20) is an assemblage of various creatures–a green dragon (representing the east), a white tiger (representing the west), a mythical red bird (representing the south), and a tortoise wrapped with a snake, more often a warrior (representing the north). At the center of these four directions sits *Xiwangmu*, the Queen Mother of the West.

Who was *Xiwangmu*? (pronounced 'she-wang-mu')

There are many references to the Queen Mother of the West, some dating back to the Shang and Zhou dynasties. During the Han dynasty, she was worshipped as a major deity. She may have originated as a symbol of *yin* or the female half of the cosmic balance *yin* and *yang*. In Sichuan, it was believed that she lived on Mount Kunlun (in the west) dispensing the elixir of immortality for all who managed to reach her lofty realm. Xiwangmu was given a variety of identifying attributes, including an ornament (*sheng*) in her hair, and various attendant creatures such as the dragon and the tiger, as well as the dancing toad (symbolizing the moon), the nine-tailed fox and the elixir-producing hare (both symbols of longevity). Her image appeared not only on money trees but also on bronze mirrors and stone carvings.

Who is the small figure sitting slightly below *Xiwangmu*?

Seen near the bottom of Slide # 20 (in the center) is a small figure that may represent an early image of the Buddha. Buddhism was slowly entering China at this time, and figures of the Buddha were beginning to appear among existing local traditions. The image of the Buddha would have blended well with the devotional image of Xiwangmu, her heavenly realms incorporating all entities and belief systems.

What does the money tree mean?

The money tree is an object loaded with imagery, coming from a time when there were many evolving and competing ideas about the afterlife and immortality. It incorporates images of earth and heaven, and the desire for prosperity and entry into the land of the immortals. The verticality of the money tree helps move the eye upward, from the ceramic base to the much lighter branches filled with the denizens of heaven, a potent expression of the soul's journey from earthly existence to the land of the immortals.

Contrast and compare

Compare different ideas about immortality, as seen in the jade burial (Slide # 4), the tomb of the Anyang king (Slide # 9) , Marquis of Yi (Slide # 13), the First Emperor's army (Slide # 15) and the previous slide of the jade cicada. How did these different ideas affect what objects were made for burial purposes? How did burial objects change over time to allow for the non-ruling classes to participate?

Timeline: Ancient China and World Cultures

PERIODS			CHINA	WORLD
Neolithic Period	5000 BCE		Banpo painted pottery	Mesopotamia painted pottery
	4000 BCE			Mesopotamia picture writing (c. 3500 BCE)
	3000 BCE		Silkworm cocoon (c. 3000 BCE) Longshan black pottery Liangzhu burial at Sidu (c. 2500 BCE)	Pyramids at Giza (2570-2500 BCE) Cities of Harrappa, Mohenjodaro, Indus Valley
	2000 BCE			Papyrus used in Egypt
Erlitou Period (Xia Dynasty?)	1750 BCE	BRONZE AGE		Stonehenge, England (c. 1650 BCE)
	1500 BCE			
Shang Dynasty	1500 BCE		Shang capital at Zhengzhou	Tutankhamun (1323 BCE)
	1050 BCE		Shang capital at Anyang; Fu Hao tomb (c. 1200 BCE)	Liongate, Mycenae, Greece (c. 1250 BCE) Olmec culture of Mexico
Western Zhou Dynasty	1050 BCE		Defeat of Shang by Zhou	Nubian kingdom of Kush
	771 BCE			
Eastern Zhou Dynasty	771 BCE	Spring/ Autumn Period		Traditional date of founding of Rome (c. 753 BCE)
	422 BCE		Confucius (551-479 BCE)	Siddartha Gautama (Buddha) (563-483 BCE) Parthenon, Greece (448-432 BCE)
		Warring States Period	Marquis Yi of Zeng burial (c. 433 BCE)	Death of Socrates (399 BCE)
	221 BCE			Reign of Ashoka, India (c. 272- 231 BCE) Dead Sea Scrolls (c. 250 BCE)
Qin Dynasty	206 BCE		First Emperor (246-210 BCE)	Rosetta Stone, Egypt (c. 196 BCE)
Han Dynasty	206 BCE	Western Han	"Shiji" first history of China written by Sima Qian (c. 145 - 90 BCE)	Jesus Christ (c. 4 BCE - 30 CE) Burial of Pompeii (79 CE)
	8 - 25 CE	(Xin)		
		Eastern Han	Introduction of Buddhism into China (c. 100 CE)	Pantheon, Rome(118-128 CE)
	220 CE		Bronze money tree	

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Student Activities: Imagine life in Ancient China

Compare with other ancient cultures–If you are studying other ancient cultures, have them compare common features. For example, many ancient cultures shared certain concerns, such as the need for survival, for kinship, for meaning, and to be remembered after death. Make a chart showing how the ancient Chinese and one other culture responded to these concerns.

What modern conveniences were missing in ancient times? Have student come up with a list, including such things as modern communications, medicine, access to education, refrigeration, transportation and so on. How do these modern things make life different today?

How did people in ancient China feel about their life and their identity? The average Chinese person of several thousand years ago did not think of himself as 'Chinese'. He did not have a sense of individual liberty as we do today. One was born into a heavily prescribed situation in life. Life was a constant struggle for survival. The state did not look after you. Most worked for a local landlord or ruler. Rulers affirmed their position through whatever means necessary–through war, conquest, displays of wealth, public ceremony, and occasionally through harsh justice.

What was an ancient Chinese person's view of the world? This would have depended on one's position. For most, frames of reference were extremely local. Life was centered on the village, on one's extended family. Education was not yet an institution outside the home. Most were illiterate. Those in charge, either at the local or regional level, gathered and protected precious resources, their trade and dispensation. They might have travelled and come into contact with neighboring groups or cultures.

What was daily life like? Life was short, and full of dangers. Life was lived by the season, and by the will of local rulers and one's elders. One could not choose to eat whatever one liked, from wherever. Food was a constant preoccupation, since almost everyone was tied to agriculture. People rose with the sun, and worked till sunset.

What did people eat? One ate what was locally produced. The principal food items were grains, supplemented by the meat of animals and fish. Domesticated animals lived in close proximity to humans (as they still do in many parts of the world even today). Luxuries were few and far between–perhaps a precious ornament, a special bowl.

What did people believe in? Food was essential, therefore people were bound to nature. Nature had to be appeased, otherwise it might cause terrible calamities. Forces of good and evil abounded, and those who came before–the ancestors–could intercede on behalf of the living to ensure good fortune. Natural disasters such as drought or flooding were a constant threat. As society expanded, rulers assumed the responsibility for predicting and controlling the forces of the cosmos that interacted with people's lives. Rulers became the intermediaries between the gods, nature and the rest of toiling humanity. Precious objects made of special materials such as jade and bronze assumed a crucial role in the exercise of these beliefs and the powers associated with them. These are ritual objects one sees in the museum

Student Activities: Poetry Readings

"Peasant Song" (Anonymous)

At sunup, to work,
Sundown to rest
Drinking from a well I dug,
Eating off the fields I plow–
The Emperor and his might–what are they to me?

"Rich is the Year with Much Millet and Rice" (Hymn for the ancestral temple)

Rich is the year with much millet and rice
and we have tall granaries
with hundreds and thousands of millions of sheaves,
We make wine and sweet spirits
to offer to ancestor and ancestress,
thus to fulfill the hundred rites
and bring down blessings in abundance.

(from the Book of Odes, #279, transl. Watson)

"Hymn to the fallen"

We hold our flat shields, we wear our
jerkins of hide;
The axles of our chariots touch, our
short swords meet.
Standards darken the sun, the foe roll on
like clouds;
Arrows fall thick, the warriors
press forward

They have overrun our ranks, they have
crossed our line;
The trace-horse on the left is dead,
the one on the right is wounded.
The fallen horses block our wheels,
our chariot is held fast;
We grasp our jade drum-sticks, we beat
the rolling drums.

(4th century BCE? transl. Waley.)

From "Songs of the South" (*Chu Ci*)

O soul, come back! return to your old
abode.
Hear while I describe for you your quiet
and reposeful home.
High halls and deep chambers, with
railings and tiered balconies;
Stepped terraces, storeyed pavilions,
whose tops look on the high
mountains;
Lattice doors with scarlet interstices,
and carving on the square lintels;
Draughtless rooms for winter; galleries
cool in summer;...
The chambers of polished stone, with
kingfisher hangings on jasper hooks;
Bedspreads of kingfisher seeded with
pearls, all dazzling in brightness;
Arras of fine silk covers the walls;
damask canopies stretch
overhead...
Bright candles of orchid-perfumed fat
light up flower-like faces that await
you;
Twice eight handmaidens to serve your
bed, alternating each night in duty,
The lovely daughters of noble families,
far excelling common maidens...
O soul,come back!

(transl. Hawkes)

Poem without a Category (Liu Cheng, d.217)

Office work: a wearisome jumble;
ink drafts: a crosshatch of deletions and smears.
Racing the writing brush, no time to eat,
sun slanting down but never a break;
swamped and muddled in records and reports,
head spinning till it's senseless and numb—
I leave off and go west of the wall,
climb the height and let my eyes roam:
square embankments hold back the clear water,
wild ducks and geese at rest in the middle—
Where can I get a pair of whirring wings
so I can join you to bob on the waves?

Questions:

- What sort of person is reciting each of these poems? What do they do? What sort of life do they lead?

- How has the poet created an image or setting for each of these poems? What words are most effective? What image stands out from each poem? Can you draw that thing or place?

- What feelings are conveyed in each of the poems?

- Choose an object from the slides in this packet that relates to one of the poems. Discuss what you think the connections are.

- Write your own poem to accompany one of the objects featured in this packet. Choose a speaker or point of view–are they a ruler, an ancestor, a soldier,a peasant, a merchant, an artist?

Student Activities– Shang and Zhou Ritual Bronzes

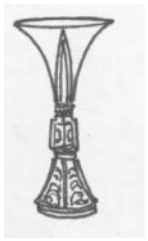
Illustrated here are different types of ritual bronzes from the Shang and Zhou dynasties of ancient China. Most are wine and food vessels. Put a circle around those vessels you think are used for wine. Put a square around those you think are used for food. When you visit the museum, see if you guessed correctly. Note: two of these are vessels for holding or pouring water.


















Student Activities–Match these terms

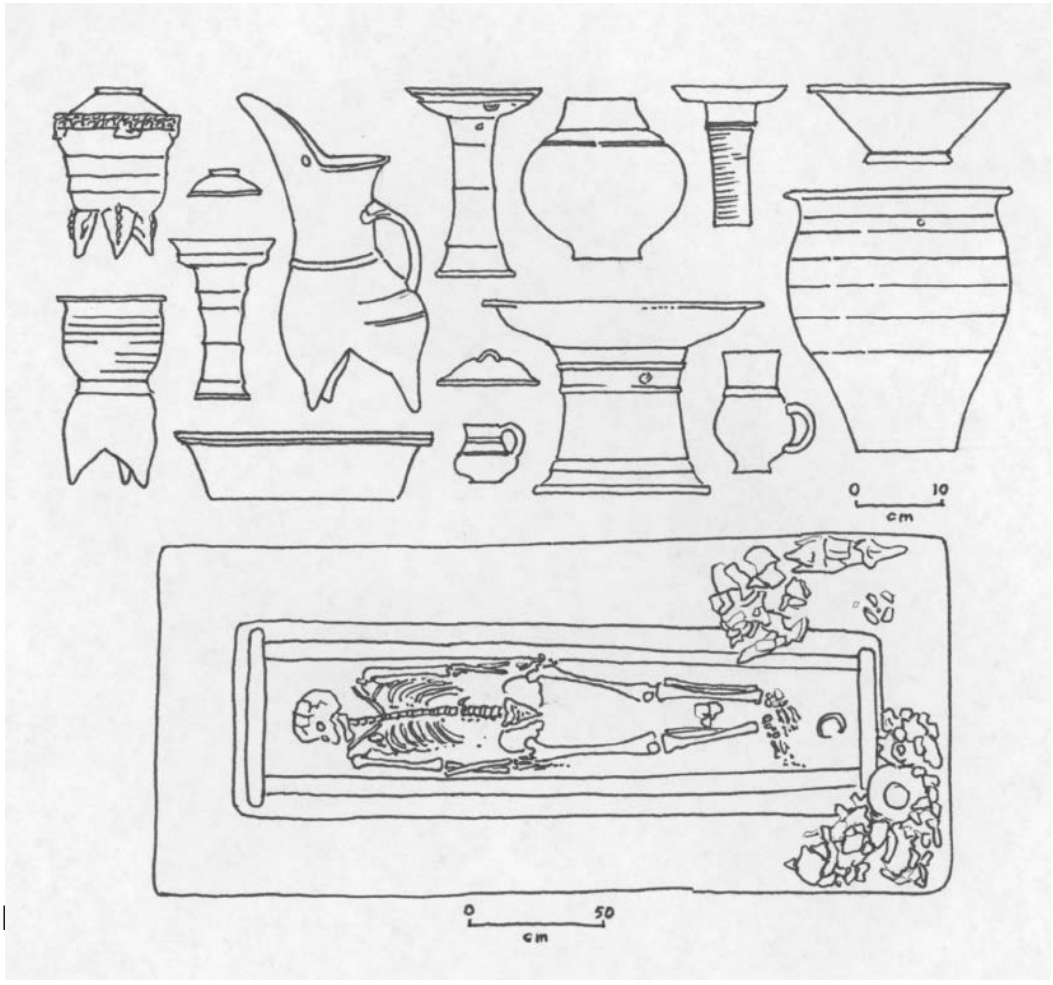
Join the word on the left with its correct definition on the right.

Neolithic	objects made for burial purposes in Han dynasty
ceramics	social group descended from a common ancestor; larger than a family
archaeology	dynasty that replaced Shang
Qin Shihuang Di	type of jade worked by the ancient Chinese
Zhou ('joe')	monster mask design seen on many ancient vessels
clan	formal ceremony/practice that expresses a belief
bronze	systematic study of human past through its material remains
ritual	First Emperor (of China)
mingqi ('ming-chee')	metal alloy of copper, tin and/or lead
tao tie	clay objects made hard by firing; pottery
nephrite	New Stone Age–period before the Bronze Age

Student Activities: Interpret a Burial

This is a copy of an actual drawing of a Neolithic burial site from China. The drawing depicts the ceramic vessels that were found in the grave, and what these looked like in position near the skeleton in the ground before removal.

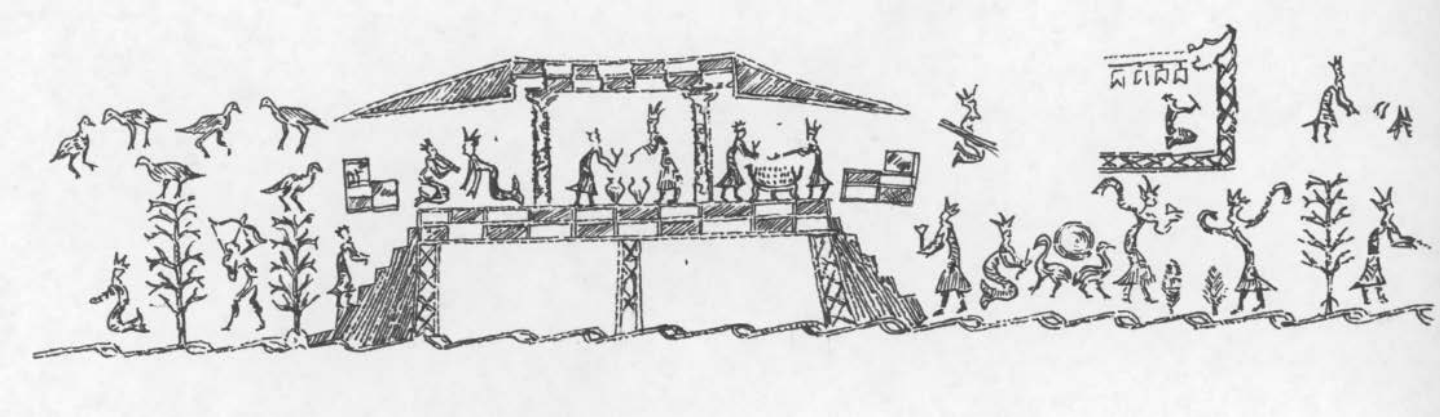
- Looking at the skeleton and objects, write a list of things you might be able to say about this person's life.
- What sort of things couldn't you say about this person's life?
- What other clues would you look for to help you interpret the environment from the time that this person lived?
- What other things might have been buried with this person, that have since disappeared?
- Find an object among the slides in this packet that might be related to one from this burial. How are the objects similar or different?



Student Activities: Interpret a Rubbing

Sometimes, rubbings are made of pictures on bronzes and other objects to see them more clearly. This is a scene found on a bronze at the Shanghai Museum in China. It is hard to tell exactly what is going on here. What do you think?

- List all the objects and things going on in the picture.
- How is the picture meant to be read? Is it the same people repeated several times, or different people? What are the various people doing?
- What is going on in the main building? What might be the relationship of the vessel that this rubbing came from and the scene depicted here?
- What might be the significance of the birds?



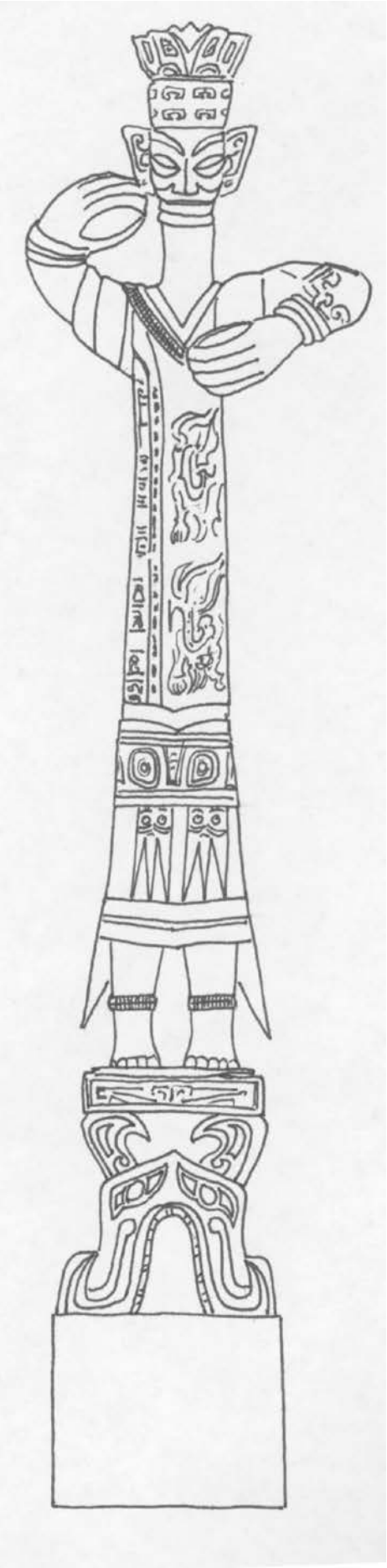
Student Activities: Cross-cultural comparison

Sometimes, without knowing anything about the culture that an object came from, we can interpret things about that object from its form, its appearance, and what qualities it shows.
Below are three sculptures of the human form, one from ancient China (Sanxingdui), one from Africa, and the other from ancient Greece.

- What parts of the body have been emphasized in each sculpture? Why do you think the sculptor wanted to draw attention to these parts?
- Do you think these sculptures represented real people that lived, or types of people or ideal persons? How can you tell?
- Discuss the terms naturalistic and abstract in terms of these statues.
- How do these figures make you feel?

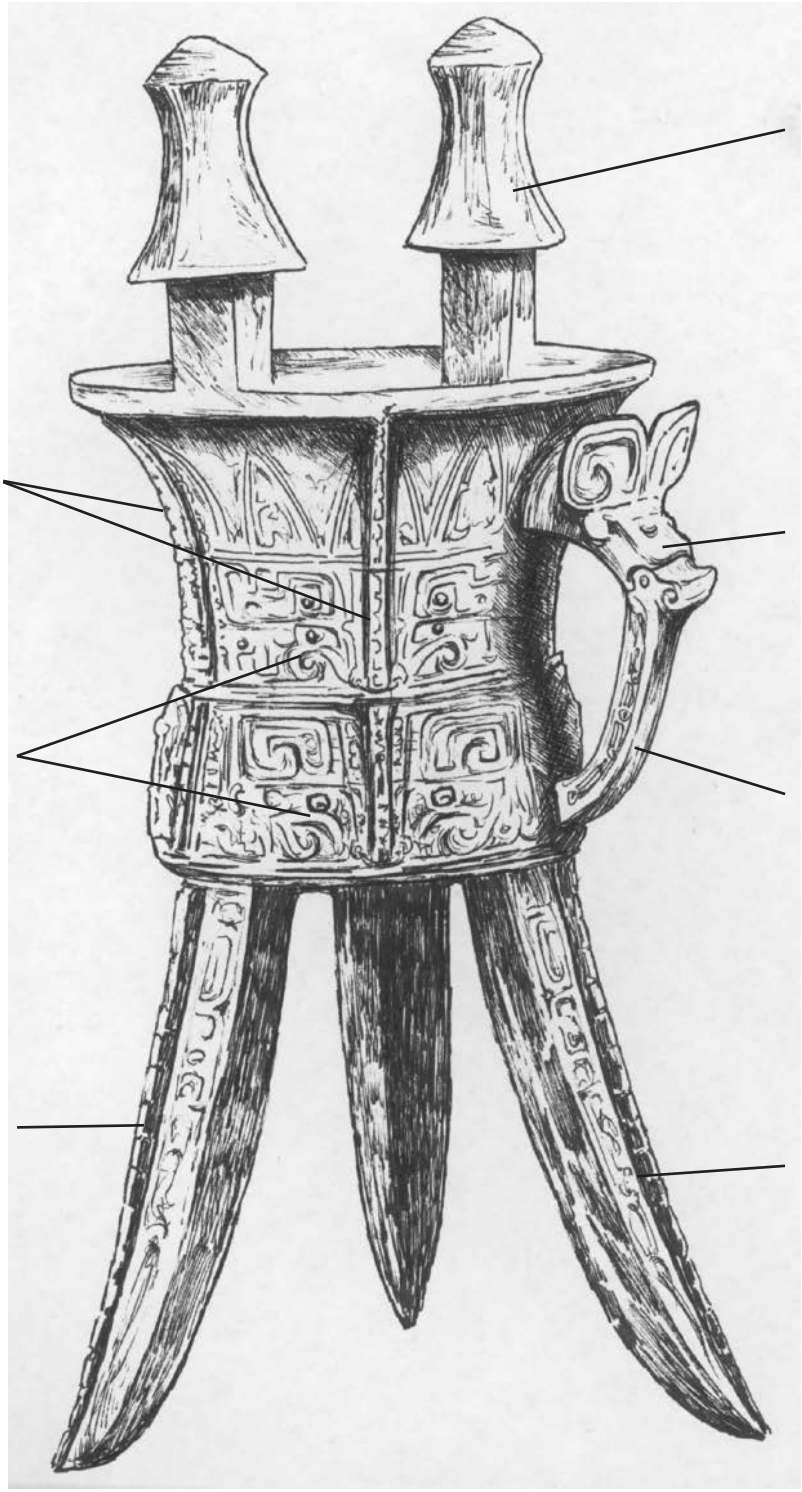
African Sculpture

Greek Sculpture



Sanxingdi
(Chinese) statue

Looking at a Ritual Bronze Vessel



Yayi Jia, Ritual Wine Vessel
Late Shang dynasty, 13th–11th century BCE
Asian Art Museum, B61B11+