

1. From Neolithic to Song Dynasty– Introduction

The country we know as China today covers a large geographic area and many different types of people. We will be looking at some of the Art and accomplishments of the early civilizations of Inner China, as well as its movement to more integrated societies.

After the Han Dynasty we will study the Calligraphy and brush painting which is so highly regarded in China and very different from Western style painting.

2. Neolithic Pottery & Jade

Left: Basin with design of dancers Neolithic, (4700 – 4400 BCE)
Majiyao Culture, Qinghai Province

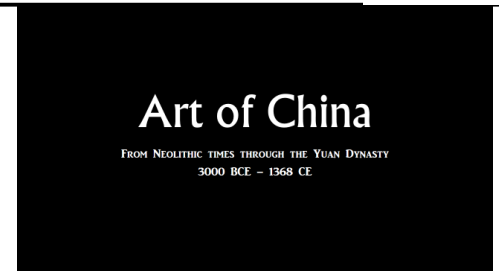
Mid: Jade piece 5 cm diameter Neolithic, (4700-4400 BCE)
Shijiahe Culture

Right: Jade cong with head of an immortal, Neolithic,
(5300-4200 BCE) Liangzhu Culture

Left piece is made from fine red clay with a restrained mouth, rolled lip and slightly convex belly tapering to a small circular base. It has been decorated with black paint. The outside has a simple design of three lines, but on the inside similar **lines** frame a painting of three groups of dancers. Each group comprises five figures holding hands. Their hair is braided and the braid and decoration fall on different sides of each figure, giving a sense of **movement** to the group. The outer arm of the outer two figures of each group is painted with two lines, perhaps to express the swaying of their arms during the dance. When this bowl is full of water, the ripples of the water imbue the painted figures with a sense of **movement**, so they appear to be dancing.

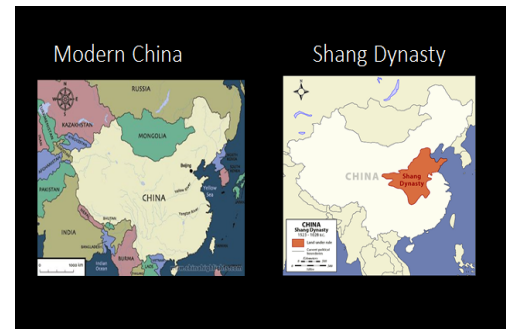
Middle piece is a Jade Phoenix, legend holds that when this bird dies it collapses in flames and is reborn from its ashes, a powerful symbol for the Chinese afterlife. **Stylized** features – jade is a very hard stone – carved by using an abrasive paste that is rubbed on the stone to wear away a pattern or image, until the bronze age when the jade could be etched and sculpted. Jade is a symbol of wealth, virtue and honor.

Right piece - Jade cong with head of an immortal, In form, a cong is a tube with a circular inner section and squarish outer section, so it is a hollow cylinder embedded in a rectangular or square block. Proportions vary - a cong may be squat or taller than it is wide. The outer faces are sometimes decorated with mask-like faces, which may be related to the *taotie* designs found on later bronze vessels. Although generally considered to be a ritual object of some sort, the original function and meaning of the cong are unknown. Later writings speak of the cong as symbolizing the earth, while the bi represents the heavens. The square represents the earth and a circle represents the heavens.



3. Map Comparison - Modern China and Shang Dynasty

The left Map gives current borders and surrounding nations as we know today. During the Neolithic times the earliest Chinese civilizations developed around the Huang He or Yellow River valleys. Leading to what many consider the first dynasty the Xia (roughly 2070-1600 BCE, but with no written histories little is still known. As a people they were mainly an agricultural based society, but did create early bronze vessel and plates around 1700 BCE and fairly sophisticated pottery and stoneware. Pottery was watered before removing from kiln leading to mainly black or gray color, but were often decorated with beautiful patterns in rope,, feather or nailing patterns. The Shang Dynasty is known for the first Chinese script, earliest surviving literature (1000BCE) the beginnings of urban life and sophistication of bronze work and eventually iron work around 650 BCE.



4. Shang Dynasty 1600- 1046 BCE

(L SF Museum of Art, R: Beijing Museum)

Right: L 22.5 cm, W 19 cm

Excavated from Yinxu, Anyang, Henan Province

Since ancient times, people have discovered strange looking bones with cracks and writing on them and were often thought to be dragon bones and ground up for medicines. In the 19th C scholars realized these were the oldest forms of Chinese writing dating back 3500 years or more.

Oracle bones are inscribed turtle plastrons (shells) and animal bones. The inscriptions recorded the divination of the Shang kings and nobles and reveal aspects of politics, economics, military affairs, culture and society and make them a valuable historical source for customs and concerns of the people who lived in that time. They were found in the site of the last capital of the Shang dynasty, Yinxu, near Anyang in Henan Province. Shang priests would take bones, write questions on them, and heat a metal needle against back of bone. Cracks developed which would be interpreted as answers. Those answers were then written on the bones. The nearly 10,000 oracle bones that have been discovered provide a wonderful record of Shang life since rulers as well as commoners used this type of divination.

Left – Probably cattle bone/scapula - The fragment reads “The Gongfang will not go on a great campaign [against us]. We should order ‘Attack the Gongfang.’ We should not order ‘Attack the Gongfang.’ On the next day, it will perhaps rain.”

Right - The long inscription on both sides of this oracle bone consists of 170 characters, inscribed vertically and highlighted with cinnabar: the color remains vivid. The inscription records various matters including a kingly edict for a hunt by the feudal lords, celestial phenomenon and an invasion. It is an important source for the study of Shang society and the history of astronomy. (Han Fulin)



5. China's Bronze Age

Top: Ritual Wine Vessel (Gui) Ca. 1300 – 1050

Bottom L: Ritual Wine Vessel (Gui) (Ca. 1200 – 1050 BCE)

Bottom M: Ritual Food Vessel (Ding) Ca. 1200 – 1050 BCE

Bottom R: Ritual Food Vessel (Fangding) Ca. 1400-1300 BCE

Unlike early Greek and Roman art, humans are rarely portrayed on pottery or bronzes. The majority of pieces found are of ritual vessels for offerings of food or drink and were larger than those used for every day. They could be added to burial tombs so the dead could continue their worship in the afterlife. The more politically important or wealthy the individual or family the more bronze objects they could afford. In China, the greatest part of discovered and preserved bronze items was not forged into ploughs or swords but cast to sacrificial vessels. In China, the majority of discovered and preserved bronze items were not tools or swords but sacrificial vessels. Many weapons, including daggers and axes, had a sacrificial meaning symbolizing the heavenly power of the ruler.

The Chinese bronze artifacts generally are either utilitarian, like spear points or adze heads, or "ritual bronzes", which are more elaborate versions in precious materials of everyday vessels, as well as tools and weapons. Examples are the numerous large sacrificial tripods known as dings in Chinese; there are many other distinct shapes. Surviving identified Chinese ritual bronzes tend to be highly decorated, often with the *taotie* motif, which involves highly stylized animal face(s). These appear in three main motif types: those of demons, of symbolic animals, and of abstract symbols. Many large bronzes also bear cast inscriptions that are the great bulk of the surviving body of early Chinese writing and have helped historians and archaeologists piece together the history of China, especially during the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BC)



6. Chinese Bronze

Left: Dagger (Sackler object F1 953.62)

Shang ca. 1600 – 1050 BCE 23.6 cm x 6.8 cm.

This elaborately decorated dagger may have been ceremonial and likely belonged to a noble. The dragon was a popular Shang image as it represented power

Right: Animal face ax

Late Shang (1300–1046 BCE) 31.7 cm x 35.8 cm

Excavated in 1965 from Subuchun, Yidu (present-day Qingzhou),

The *taotie* is a motif commonly found on Chinese ritual bronze vessels from the Shang and Zhou Dynasty. The design typically consists of a zoomorphic mask, described as being frontal, bilaterally symmetrical, with a pair of raised eyes and typically no lower jaw area. Some argue that the design can be traced back to jade pieces found in Neolithic sites such as the Liangzhu culture (3310–2250 BCE).

7. Ceramics and Bronzes

How are these works similar? How are they different? The vessel on the left is made of ceramic and as an item used every day has a small amount of decoration. The vessel on the right is larger and decorated with elaborate **organic line** designs.

Pottery is an art form that predates metalworking. Glazed vessels were used in households for storage and cooking. Ceramic vessels are found in a variety of shapes that were later cast in bronze. Advances in pottery and glazing allowed Shang artisans to create molds in which they could cast elaborately decorated bronze vessels. Right image: - “This magnificent hu illustrates the remarkable skill of the royal Shang dynasty bronze foundries. Shang ritual bronzes were made in ceramic piece molds, drawing on centuries of Chinese experience in kiln technology. The caster began by making a clay model of the vessel, carving the design into its surface. The model was packed in another layer of clay, which was allowed to harden and then cut away in sections and fired. (These outer sections bore the imprint of the surface design.) The inner clay core was then pared down evenly on all sides and placed inside the outer mold. Molten bronze was poured into the gap and allowed to cool. After some final sanding and polishing, the vessel was complete. Shang ritual bronzes are decorated with majestic and witty zoomorphic motifs, with an emphasis on the eyes. On this hu, the widest band of decoration consists of a large *taotie* (composite animal) mask. Small dragons, looking backward, parade around the foot of the vessel, while the upper two registers seem to portray elephants (facing the center) and birds (facing the sides). The remaining band of decor, just above the large mask, can be read either as two mythological animals in profile or as a frontal mask. These puzzling designs may suggest the role of the animals consumed in ritual sacrifice, as creatures undergoing a transformation from one state to another, from the mundane to the supernatural world.”

[Source Portland Museum of Art site]



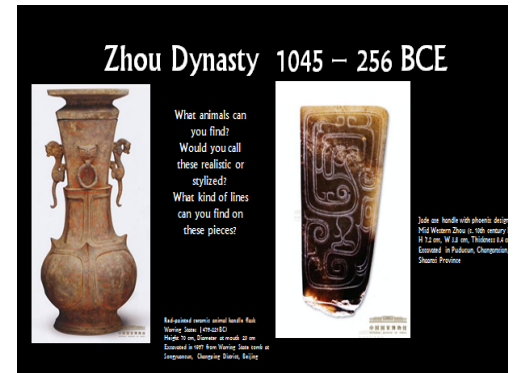
8. Zhou Dynasty 1045 – 256 BCE

Zhou (pronounced Jao)

The Shang excelled in war, and the ruling classes built up great wealth. But in time these very strengths helped to bring the end of the dynasty. Fighting so many wars eventually weakened the military power of the Shang. Also the later Shang kings and nobles spent enormous amounts of money on Palaces, clothing and tombs mostly on the work of the underclasses who lived in poverty. The final blow was the corruption of the final Shang king, who spent his time hunting instead of ruling. When a frontier state called Zhou rose up they caught Shang rulers unaware and defeated them. Legend says the last Shang king ran from the battlefield, put on all his jewelry, and threw himself into the flames of a fire as the Zhou rebels stormed his capital city.

Left: In the Late Zhou/Warring States and Qin periods, it became customary to bury the dead with pottery models of everyday objects. This led to a growth in pottery manufacture. The red painted animal handle flask found near Beijing, is an imitation of a contemporary bronze ritual vessel. The potter captured both the dignity of the bronze as well as its form and structure. Those who could not afford the bronze piece would covet a piece like this.

Right: Wearing jade and being buried with it became fashionable during the Western Zhou period. In the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, carrying ornamental jade weapons or wearing jade jewellery was a symbol of rank. Jade was also associated with morality, so being able to afford and wear jade items indicates a prevailing belief in the moral authority of the nobles.

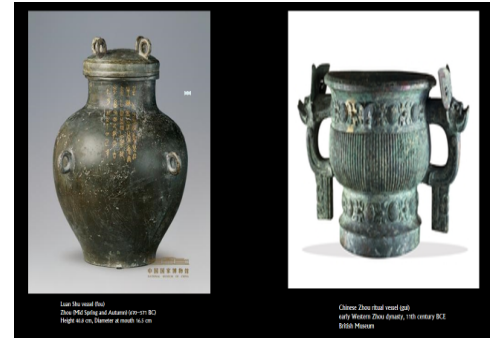


9. Bronze Vessels – Inscriptions

Left: Fou vessels are divided into zunfou and yufou, wine vessels and water vessels. This is one of the former, a wine vessel, and is in two parts, the body and the lid. The convex lid bears four ring knobs. The lid knobs and handles have a design of angular clouds. The body is unadorned. There is an inscription of 40 characters in five lines running from the neck to the shoulder. It records that this vessel was made for Luan Shu's descendants to offer sacrifices to their forbears. The inscription is inlaid with gold, as is typically seen on weapons but usually with fewer characters than here, making this a very rare piece. The gold sparkles, the characters are elegant, neatly written, reflecting the level of bronze making during the Spring and Autumn period of the Zhou Dynasty. (Su Qiang)

Right: -In 1050 BC, King Wu established the Zhou dynasty, having conquered the Shang dynasty. Long inscriptions in bronze vessels tell of this conquest and subsequent events. Such long inscriptions were cast rarely in bronzes during the Shang period, but this practice was greatly expanded by the Zhou. Inscriptions cast in bronzes served to communicate the political and social achievements of the vessels' owners. Today, they are vital historical documents.

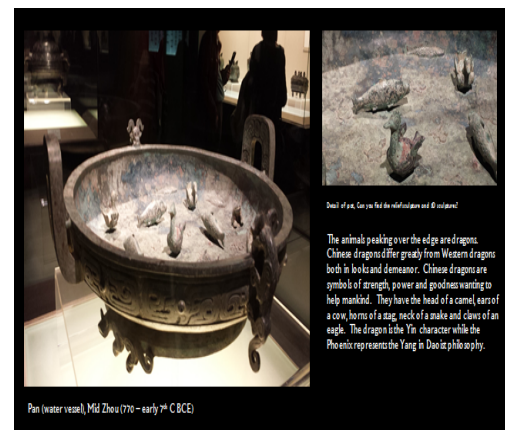
Right: The inscription inside this imposing vessel tells that King Wu's brother, Kang Hou (Duke of Kang) and Mei Situ were given territory in Wei (in Henan province) in recognition of their contributions. The inscription relates to a rebellion by remnants of the Shang, and its successful defeat by the Zhou, which helps us to date it.



10. Bronze Pan (water vessel) c. 770 – 690 BCE H: 18 cm D: 45 cm

This is a very unique vessel from the Mid Zhou era, because it has great detail and sculpting. The interior is decorated with many aquatic animals, both in relief and three-dimensional forms. The most extraordinary feature is that all the 3-d animals can be swiveled as all are stuck on vertical stems. This decorative technique was completely novel at the time. When the vessel is full of water, the fish, tortoises, frogs and birds move in the water as if alive. There are three tigers holding up the based, depicted as if they are carrying heavy loads

The animals peaking over the edge are dragons. Chinese dragons differ greatly from Western dragons both in looks and demeanor. Chinese dragons are symbols of strength, power and goodness wanting to help mankind. They have the head of a camel, ears of a cow, horns of a stag, neck of a snake and claws of an eagle. The dragon is the Yin character while the Phoenix represents the Yang in Daoist philosophy.



11. Bianzhong – Chinese Bronze Bells

The Zhou Dynasty saw the height of popularity for Bianzhong. Bianzhong is an ancient Chinese musical instrument consisting of a set of bronze bells, played melodically. These sets of chime bells were used as polyphonic (multiple sound) musical instruments. They were hung in a wooden frame and struck with a mallet and were an important instrument for court and ritual music. The importance of discovery grows when we realize it took the West until the middle ages to develop the cathedral bell

They are shaped like cowbells but have no clapper. Each bell took great skill in the design and forging to create two tones 1/3 apart on the scale depending on where they are struck. But by the Middle of the Han Dynasty the tradition and skill had been lost. Even today music scholars are fascinated by the technical ability of the creators of the bells. Single or small sets of bell had been found from the Shang era, but one of the most important sets of Bianzhong discovered are a complete ceremonial set of 65 zhong bells, found in a near-perfect state of preservation during the excavation of the tomb of Marquis Yi, who died ca. 430 BCE. Yi was ruler of Zeng, one of the Warring States during the Zhou Dynasty.



12. QIN DYNASTY (221-206 BCE) (pronounced Chin) Terracotta Warriors

Prince Zheng of the Qin State came to power at age 13 through a combination of military might, spies, bribery and alliances he was able to conquer the rival 'warring states' and create a unified China larger than any previous dynasty. He thought his accomplishments so great he named himself Qin Shi Huang first Emperor of all China. Even before this time he began planning for a great tomb to include warriors, weapons, entertainers and all he would need to continue his great reign in the afterlife. Over 700,000 peasants were conscripted to build his tombs, palaces and temples and many of these workers died during this time. Emperor Qin also unified China's laws, writing and measuring systems and languages, connected and extended the North walls to be the Great Wall that we know today. This allowed for unprecedented growth and cohesion for the country and even today though he is acknowledged as a harsh leader, under whom the peasant class suffered greatly, but he is also well respected for his amazing accomplishments in such a short time.



13. Terracotta Archer

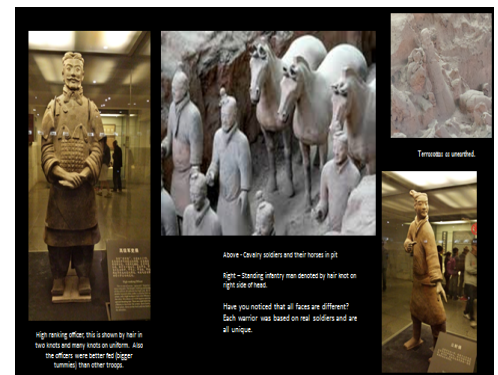
In 1974 three farmers while digging for a well came across a terracotta head and many unusual ceramic pieces. When government archaeologists came they discovered a vast burial pit filled with broken life-size terracotta warriors. The warriors were originally brightly painted blue and red, but after being exposed to the air they quickly deteriorated. Still today they have been unable to find a way to prevent this color loss and deterioration, so many pits at this vast tomb site are being left buried until they can find a way to preserve them. This Archer is the only warrior to be found fully intact. The Emperor's heirs did not have his strength of rule, so within a few years of his death the lower classes revolted. They plundered his burial tomb for weapons, broke up the figures and set the tomb's wooden roofs on fire.

The detail on his armor are amazing, you can still see a small bit of the original color on the back of the warrior.



14. Various Terracotta Warriors Xian City China

Over 8,000 warriors, horses and entertainers have been uncovered and each has a unique face. The ceramic skill to produce these hollow life-size figures is amazing. The upper right corner shows part of pit and the warriors as they were discovered.



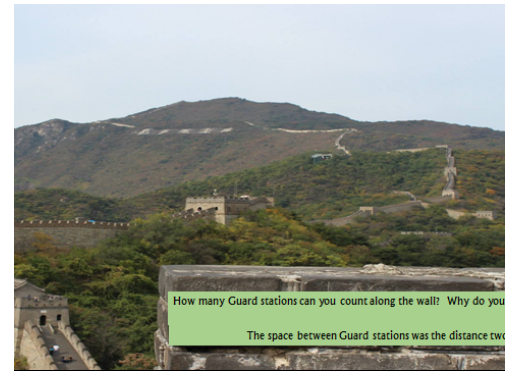
15. The Great Wall – Extended and fortified during Qin Dynasty

To the Chinese, the Great Wall is known as “Wan Li Chang Cheng” (万里长城), or literally, “Long Wall of Ten Thousand Li” (“li” being a measure of distance about 500m or about a third of a mile). But of course, that’s not the actual length of the wall, but just an ancient way of “a majorly long’ wall.” Originally built mainly of stone and earth by connecting and reinforcing shorter previous walls, the Qin Emperor used more than 500,000 peasants and slaves to build the wall. Many of them died doing this work so it was also referred to as the longest burial tomb in the world. These images and most of what we have today came from a 100 year rebuild during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE)



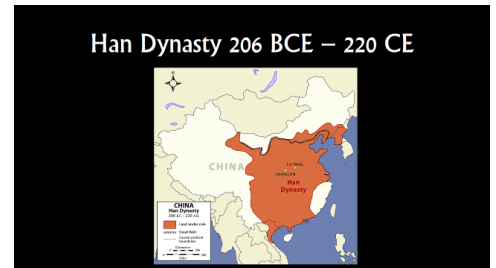
16. The Great Wall – Mutianyu section near Beijing

This section of wall is approximately 90 minutes outside Beijing. The characters on the hillside below the wall is a tribute to Chairman Mao the leader of the Cultural Revolution. Though mostly connected during Qin dynasty to prevent Northern tribes from attacking inner China, we then fast forward to the 15th and 16th centuries. The most impressive “modern” sections of the Great Wall were all re-constructed during [the Ming Dynasty](#) (1388-1644 CE). The insular Ming emperors didn’t just fortify parts of the wall...we’re talking about over a 100-year effort to completely rebuild and reinforce the wall using modern brick and mortar construction (and you thought your kitchen renovation project was a never-ending money pit).



17. Han Dynasty 206 BCE – 220 CE

Military expansion, political centralization, and cultural achievements made this the first of China's four greatest dynasties. The Han invented paper and lead-glazed ceramics, and greatly improved silk-weaving techniques. Their quest for alliances with foreign powers prompted them to establish an extensive trade route that extended to the Roman Empire and would become known as the Silk Road. An emphasis on funerary art is evident in tombs artfully decorated with figures and geometric shapes; these images provide clues to Han costumes, architecture, and aristocratic pastimes.



18. Han Dynasty (c. 113 BCE) – Jade Burial Suits

Archaeologists had known of the existence of jade burial suits from texts, but the two suits found at Mancheng are the earliest and most complete examples ever discovered. During the Han, jade funerary suits were used exclusively for the highest ranking nobles and were sewn with gold, silver, or bronze wire according to rank. Preserving the body for entry into the afterlife and having the worldly goods to use after death was important to the ancient Chinese. The practice was discontinued after the Han.

For many years, many archaeologists believed that jade burial suits did not really exist and were only myths. The discovery in 1968 of two complete jade suits in the tombs of Liu Sheng and his wife Dou Wan in Mancheng Hebei (died 113 BCE), finally proved their existence. The jade suits of Liu Sheng consisted of 2,498 plates of solid jade connected with two and a half pounds of gold wires. Although their coffins had collapsed, Prince Liu Sheng and Dou Wan (his wife) were each found in a well-preserved jade suit. Liu Sheng's was made of 2498 pieces of jade, sewn together (Cont...) with two and a half pounds of gold wire (Dou Wan's was smaller).

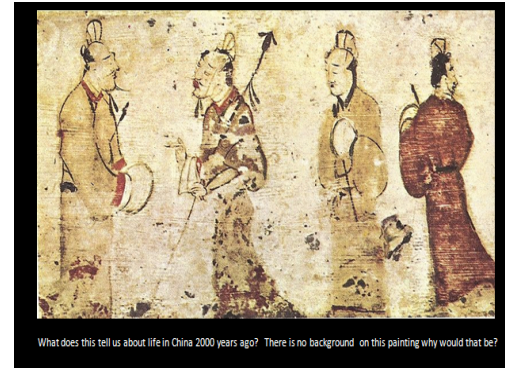
Each suit consists of 12 sections: face, head, front, and back parts of tunic, arms, gloves, leggings, and feet. It has been estimated that a suit such as Liu Sheng's would have taken ten years to fashion. Along with the jade suits, Liu Sheng and Dou Wan each had a gilt bronze headrest inlaid with jade and held jade crescents in their hands.

What beliefs about the soul and the afterlife are reflected in the practice of wearing jade burial suits?

19. Painted Ceramic Tile - (25-220 CE)

Anonymous Chinese artist

Two gentlemen engrossed in conversation while two others look on, a Chinese painting on a ceramic tile from a tomb near Luoyang, Henan province, dated to the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 AD) Current location Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
This early painting shows the type of clothing worn during the Han as well as hair styles and pieces as well as a type of staff used by the people of that time. We note that there is little background, and heavy black **line** to give detail and dimension to image.

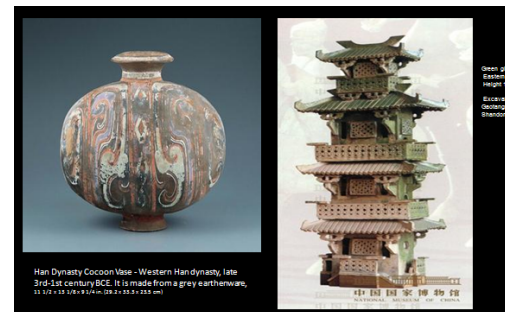


20. Han Earthenware

Left - Han Dynasty Cocoon Vase - Western Han dynasty, late 3rd-1st century BCE right - Green glazed house, Eastern Han (25-220 CE)

This handsome jar would have served as a mortuary object (mingqi), placed in a tomb as a substitute for the more valuable bronze and lacquer vessels used in daily life. Along with a variety of other funerary earthenware objects, attendant figures, and animals, richly decorated vessels of this kind were intended to serve the spirit of the deceased in the afterlife. The silk industry, dating back to the third millennium B.C., was a principal source of wealth for the Chinese economy during the Han dynasty. The distinctive, plump ovoid form of this jar imitates the silkworm's cocoon. The drifting cloud-scroll (yunwen) motif, which flanks a central vertical panel of diamond-shaped lozenges, is evocative of the celestial realms of a Taoist immortal paradise. During the reign of the Han emperor Wudi (140–87 B.C.), fascination with the idea of the celestial journey and the Taoist search for immortality reached a climax and gave tangible definition to the ethereal decoration of painted earthenware vessels such as this.

The Han began to use colorful low-fire glazes for decorations. The detail on the house is beautiful and intricate and stands close to 5ft tall. The Han also saw beautiful green glazes being used which eventually led to the famous Chinese celadon green earthenware and porcelain



21. Silk Funeral Banner – Tomb of Lady Dai (Xin Zhui)

Mawangdui, Hunan province, ink and colours on silk, c. 168 bc, Western Han dynasty; in the Hunan Provincial Museum, Changsha, China.

According to Chinese tradition, the history of silk began in the 27th century BCE. Its use was confined to China until the Silk Road extended into Central Asia and southern Europe at some point during the latter half of the first millennium BCE. China maintained its virtual monopoly over silk for another thousand years. Not confined to clothing, silk was also used for a number of other applications such as writing and painting

On the T-shaped flying garment, the uppermost horizontal section of the T represents heaven. The bottom of the vertical section of the T represents the underworld. The middle (the top of the vertical) represents earth. In heaven we can see Chinese deities such as *Nuwa* and *Chang'e*, as well as Daoist symbols such as cranes (representing immortality). Between heaven and earth we can see heavenly messengers sent to bring Lady Dai to heaven. Underneath this are Lady Dai's family offering sacrifices to help her journey to heaven. Underneath them is the underworld - two giant sea serpents intertwined. Red is one of the primary **colors** in China symbolizing good fortune and joy. It is still very popular in decorations today.

The caskets were made of large cypress planks. The outside of the tombs were layered with white clay and charcoal which seemed to have helped keep the moisture level constant and prevented the decay of the corpse and other tomb contents. The tombs contained 3 nested lacquered coffins, which was another early important Chinese innovation. The corpse of Lady Dai was so well preserved they could do an autopsy and determine how she died, her blood type (A) and that she ate melon before she died 2100 years ago!



22. Chinese Calligraphy & Brush Painting

Chinese calligraphy is considered supreme among the visual arts in China, and it also sets the standard by which Chinese painting is judged. In addition, calligraphy has also led to the development of many other forms of arts in East Asia, including seal carving, ornate paperweights, and inkstones. Chinese characters began as pictographs (word drawings representing the word they looked like and stood for). Over time these evolved and 'radicals' (symbols which would give clues to the nature of the word) were used in combination with the symbol to represent words or language.

The process of abbreviating and adapting seal script to form a new one known as "clerical" was finalized, thereby creating a universal script in the Han dynasty. In the trend towards abbreviation and brevity in (Cont...)

writing, clerical script continued to evolve and eventually led to the formation of 3 main styles still used today;- "standard or clerical", "cursive," and "running or semi-cursive,". Since changes in writing did not take place overnight, several transitional styles and mixed scripts appeared in the chaotic post-Han period, but these transformations eventually led to established forms for brush strokes and characters.

Chinese painting is one of the oldest continuous artistic traditions in the world.

Painting in the traditional style is known today in Chinese as guó huà (国画), meaning 'national' or 'native painting', as opposed to Western styles of art which became popular in China in the 20th century. Traditional painting involves essentially the same techniques as calligraphy and is done with a brush dipped in black or colored ink; oils are not used. As with calligraphy, the most popular materials on which paintings are made of are paper and silk. The finished work can be mounted on scrolls, such as hanging scrolls or hand scrolls. Traditional painting can also be done on album sheets, walls, lacquer ware, folding screens, and other media.

Left: Zhang Zhong, Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368 CE) Ink/color on paper
Zhang Zhong specialized in landscape and flower-and-bird painting. This painting depicts the happy conjugal life of a pair of mandarin ducks on a lotus pond, gilt by the setting autumn sun. The mandarin duck is noted for its fidelity to its spouse and takes only one mate in its life. It is therefore considered a symbol of love and family life. "He", meaning lotus, and "he" meaning harmony are homophones in Chinese. The artist puts a pair of mandarin ducks in a lotus pond to wish the recipient of the painting a harmonious, happy family life. In a development of the Song tradition of drawing flowers and birds from life, the artist uses a variety of brushwork to convey a strong sense of texture, but never loses the vivid portrayal of objects.

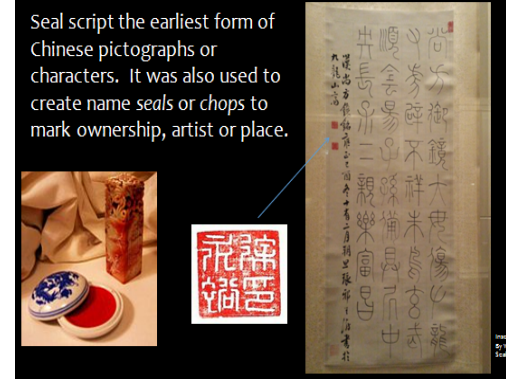
Right: Song Dynasty (960-1279 C) ink and color on silk
In a corner of a garden on a winter day the bamboos are still green and the white plum blossoms are in full bloom. Bright red blossoms break out on an early blooming camellia. Sister and brother are absorbed in playing with a kitten. The sister teases the cat with a colorful flag while protecting the brother with her other hand. The kitten pounces and romps. The painting exudes harmony and happiness. The hair of the two children is quaintly done and their dark eyes sparkle. This vivid picture was probably commissioned as a portrait of the children.

23. Seal Script

Much of the brushwork appears round and blunt, the dots and hooked strokes not revealing the tip of the brush. The characters are even and balanced, revealing a straightforward elegance and introverted harmony. The Qianlong Emperor (reigned 1735-1796) in the Qing dynasty especially prized this work, praising it as "The one and only; a masterpiece for all time (天下無雙，古今鮮對).

As an art of calligraphy, seal script has been used frequently as artists' seals or chops (the red stamps seen on art). On the other hand, its rich visual elements have endowed new life to seal script, the earliest systematic calligraphy form in China, in the fields of modern advertising, and icon and pattern designing.

Right: The earliest systematic calligraphy form in China, seal script is characterized by flat elongated characters worked in rounded strokes.



24. Clerical or Standard Script

"Modern" Chinese writing is thought to have begun with the Han. During this period clerical script superseded seal script as the normal script for general documents and went through a radical reform. By creating character elements, or radicals, and by reorganizing characters with the newly developed elements, the last pictographic vestige in seal script was eliminated - the design of Chinese written language was finalized. An overwhelming majority of clerical characters have continued into modern times. To this day, the Chinese still refer to their characters as "han zi", or Han characters.

Regular script is also known as "Clerical Script" and "True/Standard Script". "Regular" means model, namely, this type of script can be deemed as a model or standard script. There was a saying about calligraphy learning in ancient times, "Regular script is a must when learning calligraphy". This is because regular script is easy to write due to its square form and structure as well as straight strokes. Accordingly, since the date it was created, regular script has served as an official script in China over thousands of years.

Left: Later Han period saw many stone steles. A Stele was originally a monolith in front of Zhou's ancestral temples. Han adopted Zhou's patriarchal clan system, and the use of stele was expanded to record events, declare official merits, as epitaph tablets, and preserve the canons of Confucian and Taoist texts. These steles were inscribed in clerical script. Finalized clerical script was formal in composition, regular in stroke placement, and dignified in expression.

Right: Zhou Yi is a book on divination. This is one of the earliest copies of Zhou Yi still in existence. Written in the formalized Han clerical script, it might be a copy transcribed in the early years of the reign of the Han Emperor Wendi.

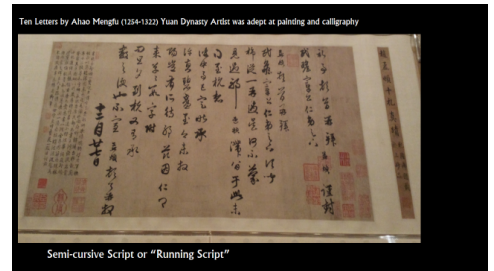


25. Semi-Cursive or Running Script

Ten Letters by Ahao Mengfu (1254-1322) Yuan Dynasty Artist was adept at painting and calligraphy

The Semi-cursive Script (also called "Running Script") is a calligraphy style with free movements, between the Regular Script and the Cursive Script. It still maintains the order of brush strokes which is important to the writing of Chinese character. Running Script was created in the late Eastern Han Dynasty to make up for the slow-speed writing of the Regular Script and the difficulty in reading the Cursive Script.

The most striking features of the Semi-cursive Script are stroke connection and omission, the inclusion of few or no cursive characters and the retaining of easily-readable structures of the Regular Script. Thus, the Semi-cursive Script is a practical style that can be quickly written and read with ease. The Semi-cursive Script is romantic and aesthetic and characterized by smoothness with no scribbles and regularity with no restriction.

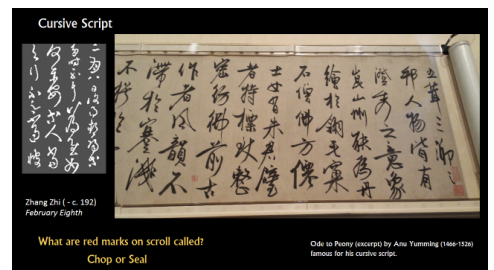


26. Cursive Script

Left: inscription on Stele C. 192 CE

Right: Ode to Peony (excerpt) by Anu Yumming (1466-1526)

Cursive script emerged in the early years of the Han dynasty, because it was a more convenient way to write. Its basic characteristics can be summed up as: an impression of vigorous and unrestrained drawing and its spirit is revealed in the rhythmic and fast movement of brushes. It allows for more individual artistic expression than previous character styles.



27. Brush Painting Scroll – *Nymph of the Luo River*
By Gu Kaizhi (10.6 in x 21 ft)

Nymph of the Luo River is a painting by Gu Kaizhi that illustrates a poem written by [Cao Zhi](#) (192-232). It survives in three copies dating to the Song Dynasty. This is a copy from the Song Dynasty (960 – 1269 CE). It is Ink painted on silk. This painting is said to be Gu Kaizhi's signature work, drawing its subject matter from a prose-poem by the poet and prince Cao Zhi of the Three Kingdoms period and dedicated to his deceased love whom he met by the Luo River in a dream. In the painting the prince and his love never seem able to touch each other, resigned to longing for and adoring each other from afar. The figures, objects, rocks and mountains, trees and river are depicted with fine and forceful brushstrokes, with no texturing because the technique of creating three-dimensionality with light-ink texturing strokes had not yet been invented. In order to put the spotlight on the figures, the mountains and trees in the foreground are made disproportionately small in relation to the figures. After colors are added, some three-dimensionality comes through.



28. Left: Court ladies adorning their hair with flowers(detail)
Tang Dynasty (618-906 CE) Zhou Fang
Ink and color on silk
Right: Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies
Attributed to Gu Kahzi (345-406),
Hand scroll, ink and colors on silk (British Museum)

We learn much about Chinese society and fashions through the paintings that have survived from early dynasties. The left painting by Zhou Fang, who specialized in figure painting, was counted by Mi Fu in his "History of Painting" as one of the Four Masters of Figure Painting of the Jin and Tang periods, and compared to the great artist Gu Kahzi. This painting depicts five court ladies and one maid servant, some looking at flowers, some strolling, and some playing with a crane or a dog, with the maid servant waiting on them holding a long-handled fan. Feminine beauty in the Tang dynasty consists in plumpness, painting eyebrows into butterfly wings, adorning one's high-pile hairdo with peony or lotus flowers. Trims on their dresses are sheer as cicada wings, mainly in red, ocher or white, in a reflection of the esthetic taste and the state of the textile industry of the time.

Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies on right illustrates a political parody written by Zhang Hua (ca.232-300). The parody takes a moralizing tone, attacking the excessive behavior of an empress. The protagonist is the court instructress who guides the ladies of the imperial harem on correct behavior. In total, nine scenes were depicted on this scroll, but it is now incomplete; the first two scenes are missing, as well as the text to the first scene. (cont..)

This painting has been executed in a fine linear style that is typical of fourth-century figure painting. Similar pictorial motifs have been discovered in contemporary tombs. Texts describe Gu Kaizhi as having painted in this manner. The inscriptions and seals on this scroll date back to the eighth century, when this copy of Gu Kaizhi's original was probably painted.

Before its arrival at the British Museum in 1903, the scroll passed through many hands. The history of the painting can be ascertained through the seals and inscriptions, beginning with the eighth-century seal of the Hongwen Guan, a division of the Hanlin Academy.

The painting was subsequently in the collections of well-known connoisseurs who added their own seals and inscriptions, before ending up in the imperial collection during the reign of the Qianlong emperor (r.1735-96). In 1860, during the Second Opium War, the painting was looted by British troops from the Old Summer Palace and eventually came to the collection of the British Museum.

29. Poet on a Mountaintop (杖藜遠眺)

Shen Zhou, (1427-1509) Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

Album leaf, ink on paper, 38.7 x 60.3 cm,

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri

Shen Zhou exemplified literati painting (painting by nobles or gentlemen) - with his blending of poetry and painting, the art of words and images. Many of Shen Zhou's paintings include poems of his own - many also include poems composed by friends.

The painting above is one of Shen Zhou's most famous. The scholar alone in nature seems to be looking out not over a chasm of rocks and clouds, but directly at the poem that Shen Zhou has placed before him. The poem reads as follows:

**White clouds sash-like
wrap mountain waists,
The rock terrace flies in space
distant, a narrow path.
Leaning on a bramble staff
far and free I gaze,
To the warble of valley brook
I will reply, whistling.**



30. Hands-On Bamboo Brush Painting

Left: Ke Jiusi-Twin Bamboo painted during the Yuan Dynasty
Right: Bamboo Poem Artist: Yuan Bo
2008 Size: 35" X 15"

Watch You tube instructional video

