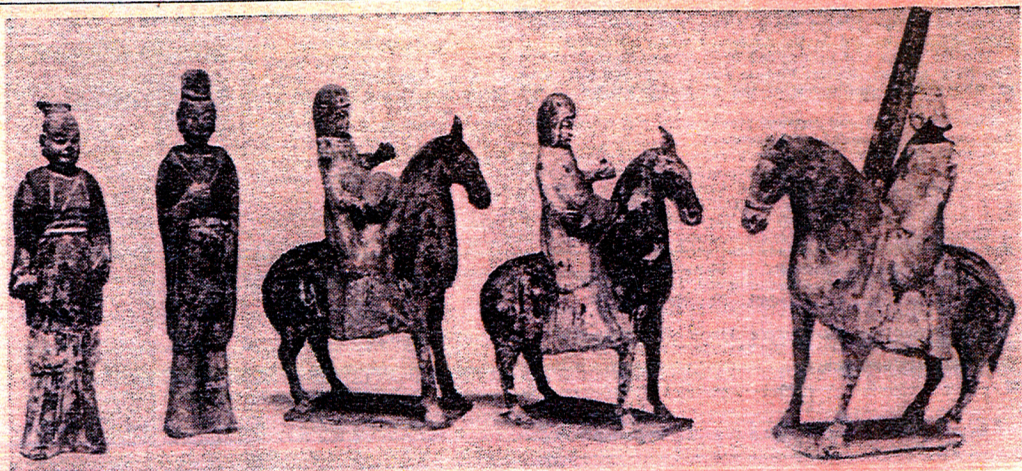


# Chinese Culture in Spotlight on Campus and Broadway



These figures from the Six Dynasties period are among artifacts currently on view in Chinese exhibit at Columbia University

## Oriental Artifacts Displayed at Columbia

By Dorothy Adlow

New York

Chinese culture of the remote past has captured the interest and enthusiasm of many American connoisseurs and collectors. Should we take an inventory of the amount of treasure owned either privately or by public museums, we would be surprised and justifiably proud.

Some of the collections were made before there was a world-wide awareness of the tremendous aesthetic significance of the ancient artifacts. Often American collectors were better informed than the Chinese themselves concerning their native heritage.

there are incised decorations, and molded figures and animals.

Han culture (205 B.C.-220 A.D.) is revealed in one way through the custom of including in burials little models of people, animals, and various utilitarian objects of daily life.

Here is an informing revelation of current fashions and practices. The figurines were produced in quantity, and they represent a kind of popular art in which clay objects frequently substituted for bronze. The examples on show are charming; many are familiar to us, for such items are sought by many collectors, and reproductions are mass produced today for trade. Here are vessels,

of ritual shape, animal shapes, a dog, a boar, a bull, a farm yard, a well-head, a pig pen, and some model watchtowers. Han art includes free standing pillars, stone slabs, and hollow clay tiles decorated with reliefs.

The Tang period (618-907) was a golden age. Potters fabricated models of circus horses and polo ponies for tombs. Some were cast in molds. Some were glazed in a cream tone, and others were decorated with three-color drip glaze. It was a matter of status to include larger figures in burials. There are some large pottery figures of dignitaries in court dress. Sculpture and pottery com-

bine in much of the Columbia exhibition, but there are several purely sculptural works of great beauty and significance. There is a huge stone head of Buddha, once part of a gigantic figure. There is a handsome standing Buddha carved in white marble. There is one of the flying Apsaras.

With characteristic modesty the faculty committee at Columbia declares the attributions are made tentatively in accordance "with the present state of knowledge." A layman may gain immeasurable enjoyment even if the labels seem foreign and puzzling.

The exhibits come from the Sackler Collections.

The vast rotunda of Columbia University's Low Memorial Library has been installed with an extensive exhibition, the title of which is "Ceramic Arts and Sculpture of China from Prehistoric Times to the Tenth Century A.D." If that title sounds pedantic or stuffy, do not be deceived, for this is a fascinating exhibition which can be viewed either in archaeological perspective, or through revealing analogies to art of our own time.

Often, alas, our contemporaries do not come off too well in the comparison. It is a pleasure to see groups of students listening while experts hold forth on one phase or another of the arts of the potter, the bronze caster, the carver. Immediate contact with originals is worth a dozen books and a thousand photographs; and the sooner young students enjoy the direct impact of the original, the more deeply ingrained his grasp of significance.

Also what a welcome refuge this is from our overexercised handicrafts of today in which performers struggle to master quickly what took centuries to perfect in the way of shape, texture, glaze.

The rotunda is encircled with showcases and free-standing pieces arranged in chronological order. The display begins with vessels and jars produced about the third millennium B.C. Painted with red, black, and brown pigments, they served in a ritual way as funerary accessories.

Potteries of the Shang era are mainly gray wares, some finished on the wheel, and attractive for shape rather than decoration. Ceramists of this early epoch (about 1766-1122) developed stoneware and invented the glaze. Pottery may at first have provided an imitation of bronze ritual vessels, but soon it became a self-contained craft. In Chou potteries