THE CERAMIC ARTS AND SCULPTURE OF CHINA

FROM PREHISTORIC TIMES THROUGH THE TENTH CENTURY, A.D.

Exhibition

from November 20, 1962

through January 18, 1963

in Low Memorial Library

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

To meet the needs of ritual and of secular function, man has exercised great ingenuity. His handling of stone, clay, wood, and bronze evolved from practical artisanship to breathtaking artistry.

This exhibition is a tribute to the creative gifts of man and to the particular genius of the Chinese people in the ceramic arts and sculpture. Its objectives, though manifold, relate both to The Collections of which they are a part and to the scholarly activities of the Fund for Eurasian Studies. Both aim to break new ground in the sciences as well as in the arts of archaeology and art history. The materials for such studies are presented here.

Great masterpieces stand side by side with the prosaic and uninspired output of artisans. The so-called "unique" piece can be compared with the typical or the characteristic object, as they mirror the work and the life of the men who made them. Duplications reflect early "mass production" techniques. Both the common, and some of the not-so-common objects created to meet the demands of an early but not primitive civilization are exhibited in the hope that they will help reveal in a clearer light how one society of man, in its own age, applied its skills and its talents.

For those who study these objects and this art, we hope this exhibition will provide three experiences:

An aesthetic experience--emotional and sensory.

An educational experience--intellectual and formative.

And the thrill of discovery.

The exhibition will have served part of its purpose if these experiences succeed in adding to our regard and respect for man--his skills, artistry, ingenuity, and genius. The ultimate success of both the exhibition and the program of which it is a part will be best measured by the numbers of young scholars who will be stimulated to use these materials in adventurous and imaginative probes into the dimension of time.

A.M.S.

THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY EXHIBITION

The Columbia University Exhibition of the Ceramic Arts and Sculpture of China from Prehistoric Times through the Tenth Century A.D., is the second in a program of study, research and publication devoted to Central Asia and related areas. The great resources of the University, including its libraries and laboratories, will be used in this work made possible by special grants. The objects assembled for the exhibition were selected from materials made available by the Sackler Collections.

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The Committee

Mrs. Grayson Kirk, Chairman
Dr. Arthur M. Sackler
Ralph S. Halford, Dean of the Graduate Faculties
John Lotz, Professor of Linguistics (on leave 1962-63)
Jane Gaston Mahler, Associate Professor of Art History and Archaeology
Edith Porada, Associate Professor of Art History and Archaeology
William Samolin, Assistant Professor of Altaic Studies
Ralph Solecki, Associate Professor of Anthropology

The text of the brochure was prepared by Jane Gaston Mahler, William Samolin, and Judith Triestman. The introduction was written by Arthur M. Sackler.

We are indebted to Chiang Yee, Associate Professor of Chinese, for the calligraphy on the cover, meaning "quiet beauty."

The Committee wishes to express its thanks for valuable guidance and assistance to:

Mr. Davidson Taylor, Director of the Arts Center Program
Miss Mari Hartell, Administrative Assistant to Mr. Taylor
Mr. Edward B. McMenamin, Secretary of the University
Mr. Frank Caro
Mrs. Miriam Kent
Mr. Benjamin Knotts, Metropolitan Museum of Art
Mr. Jean McCabe

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The Exhibition will be on view through January eighteenth.

Monday through Friday	9 to 5:30
Saturday	9 to 1:00

THE CERAMIC ARTS AND SCULPTURE OF CHINA

PREHISTORIC TIMES

The earliest appearance of Neolithic farmers in China remains a matter of question. The invention and evolution of an agricultural economy may have occurred once, or even twice, in environmentally favored regions. Perhaps the knowledge of crop domestication passed across Central Asia, stimulating food production wherever it was ecologically feasible. On the Central Plains of the Huangho, along the well-drained and fertile banks of the river, groups of farmers cleared the land and planted millet. They fished and hunted game and frequently moved their villages as the soil became exhausted or rainfall failed them. The regional differentiation which was to characterize China for thousands of years had its roots in these late prehistoric times. On the plains of the Middle Huangho there is a pattern of sedentary-village life, culturally and socially developing as it approaches the frontiers of Shang civilization. To the west in Shensi and Kansu, the agriculturalists adapted to conditions of primary loess deposition and built their villages on isolated "islands" or terraces hundreds of feet above the flood plain of the rivers. A distinctive cultural style emerged, possibly given impetus by continued contact with Western Asia, but also peculiarly conservative and persistent. The splendid "Pan Shan" urns in the present exhibit represent this culture, called Ma-chia-yao to distinguish it from the Yang-shao pottery tradition of the east. These vessels were produced as funerary furniture and placed in open graves along with jade jewelry and common utensils of stone and pottery. They are all hand-produced (although possibly a slow-turning device was used) and constructed of very fine hard red paste. They are painted with iron and manganese pigments producing combinations of red, black and brown. The ceremonial nature of the vessels can be inferred from their association with jade huang and pi rings, which are ritualistically interpreted as cosmic symbols. The curvilinear mode of the Pan-shan decoration is noteworthy in contrast to the linearity of the Ma-chang style. Chronologically both are subsumed under the Ma-chia-yao tradition and considered to be later than the eastern traditions of Pan-p'o and Miao-t'i Kuo.

SHANG DYNASTY (c1766-1122 B.C.)

Although the origins of bronze age civilization in China are not archaeologically documented, the stratigraphical extension of Shang chronology by major excavations at Cheng-chou (the ancient city of Ao) has provided a framework for interpreting material remains. The recent identification of 130 Shang sites demonstrates the expansion of bronze-age civilization over the entire Central Plain and into the Huai-Yangtze River valley, reaching into Szechwan and even as far south as Hunan. The regional interdependency which accompanied metallurgical specialization is evident in the incorporation of local Neolithic elements into Shang culture.
While the spectacular ritual development of bronze has eclipsed appreciation of the ceramic industry, it is in the pottery that the roots of Shang traditions are best seen. The utilitarian wares of Shang "city-centers"

parallels those used by largely contemporaneous peasant villages.

The major portion of pottery is Grey Ware, which ranges from finely levigated to coarse sand-tempered pastes. The imbibing process of saturating the kiln atmosphere during firing produced this characteristic ware, which was manufactured by the beater and anvil method or moulded. The decoration of these Grey Ware vessels appears to be a technical accident, resulting from the impressions made on the soft clay by the cord-wrapped beating-paddle or the mat lining of moulds. These pots were often finished on the wheel. The aesthetic emphasis of Shang pottery seems to lie in the arena of form rather than design elaboration. The basic shapes of cooking and libation vessels, bowls, jars, and beakers are ceramic in origin although they sometimes reduce bronze modifications into clay form. The famed White-Ware of the An-yang tombs borrows from bronze ceremonial decor but the Hard Geometric Impressed wares of the southeast coast may indicate an even earlier ceramic origin for design elements used on bronze vessels.

The development of Stoneware and invention of glaze is now certainly attributed to Shang ceramists, and indicates the high degree of industrial specialization which occurred in the centers of civilization. The Cheng-chou workshops and artisan quarters support the idea of an active, complex ceramic industry which is not merely engaged in imitating bronze manufactures.

CHOU DYNASTY (c1000-255 B.C.)

Chou dynastic histories moralize about the political conquest of the kingdom of Shang; Shang inscriptions and oracle sentences treat the Chou tribes as cultural barbarians. Recent archaeology is slowly revealing a picture of the Western Chou bronze-age culture which parallels and compliments the development of Shang to the east. In the Wei and Ching River Valleys of Kansu and Shensi, local and late-persisting chalcolithic farming communities were in contact with the semi-nomadic tribes that peopled the surrounding hills. A hybrid culture, strongly rooted in these traditions gradually expanded into the eastern river plains. It moved southward along the major streams, where it absorbed or supplanted that of the local tribes of the Upper and Middle Yangstze basin. Although relatively well-dated Western Chou sites have been excavated (Pin-hsien, Fu-feng and Sian in Shensi; Lo-yang and Cheng-chou in Honan) remains are still sparse. Large settlements testify to the intensification of argiculture, and it is from this period that such architectural innovations as the use of building tiles were made. Until the Sixth Century, B.C., no basic change occurred in burial customs; the Shang tomb style shows little variation in form from the types common to Shang.

The beginnings of China's Iron Age coincides with the Eastern Chou period and the further diversification of culture. The pottery of this long period derives from a vast geographical expanse and reflects strong regional influences. There is emphasis on the imitation of bronze forms in

common utensils, and the beater and anvil method remains the prevalent technique of manufacture. Decorations are commonly incised or applied, and there are unusual moulded reliefs of figures and animals. Geometric stamping is employed, most often with the use of glazes. The possible southeastern origins of porcellaneous wares and glaze remains an intriguing problem, complicated by their presence in Shang times. They are common in Late Chou (Shou-chou in Anhui and Shao-hsing in Chekiang) where only the neck and shoulder of the vessels were made water-tight with a thin olive-green glaze.

Unlike the bronze age civilizations of the Near East, stone sculpture was not explored as an artistic medium by the ancient Chinese. This is probably the result of an entirely different architectural history and the absence of developed stone masonry.

HAN DYNASTY (205 B.C.-220 A.D.)

The mature Iron Age culture revealed by archaeological discoveries and Han dynastic histories is complex and considerably advanced over the Warring States period. The benefits of many agricultural and industrial innovations which took place in the southwestern regions accrued to the civilization of the Central Plains. On the basis of these, and the new economic and political patterns of organization which crystallized during the Ch'in phase, Chinese culture experienced a period of territorial expansion which opened avenues of interaction westwards as far as the Hellenistic world of Bactria, northwards into Korea and eventually Japan, south into the jungles of Indo-China and probably onto the high seas. Our knowledge of Han art therefore also derives from areas peripheral to the heartland of its culture and reflects the blending of different traditions. This is probably best illustrated by the famous regionalized tomb art of Szechwan.

Our interpretation of Han culture is most fortunately enriched by the funerary practice of creating miniature models (ming-ch'i) of the people, animals, and objects necessary to worldly existence and presumed necessary in after-life. These pieces, of pottery, wood, and bronze were also used as substitutes for the actual sacrifice of human retainers and animals which occurred in Shang-Chou times. Often precious objects were reproduced in baser materials.

The figurines of women attendants and kneeling officials were frequently fitted with wooden parts, such as musical instruments, and often had movable elements. The dog figurine recalls the Shang dog burials, as do the legless horses. The house models shed light on the architecture of the day, and inasmuch as there is regional variation, it is possible to trace historical diffusion in terms of geographical adaptations. Similarly, we can learn much from the farm and barnyard models and the well-head vessels. The substitution of pottery for bronze vessels is well displayed not only in the forms but also by the non-functional design elements and deterioration of symbols such as the t'ao-t'ieh.

The model watchtowers are tribute to the constant defensive warfare that took place on the north and northwest borders of the Han state. The use of moats surrounding such towers has recently been documented. Also noteworthy are the cross-bows held by the archers. These were probably the last great military invention prior to the invention of firearms. The continuing interplay between the nomadic cultures of the steppes and the intensive agriculturists of the Central Plains is evident in the emphasis upon animals and the hunt. The composite, or fantastic animal figures and the scenes of hunters chasing galloping prey are frequently represented in moulded pottery friezes. These are often combined with abstractions of philosophical themes as in the Hill-jar (po-shan-lu) symbolization of the Taoist Mountain Isles of the Blessed.

The historical importance of the rising states of the Yangtze Valley can be inferred from innovations in iron metallurgy and ceramic technology, lacquer work and painting. Earlier inventions of proto-porcelains and feldspathic glazes were developed by Ch'u and Yueh potters and became widespread during Han expansion.

The architecture and art of the Han tombs, known from Shantung, Honan and Szechwan provide many beautiful examples of stone sculpture and relief work. The free-standing pillars may represent lookout towers, guarding the tomb approaches. The stone slabs and the hollow clay tiles are decorated with reliefs that apparently derive from mural art that has long since perished. They contribute much to our awareness of the early beginnings of landscape art.

J.T.

THE POST-HAN PERIOD

The post-Han period was marked by a breakdown of central authority, invasion of North China by barbarian tribes, and disunity among the native rulers who established capitals in the south. The ceramic arts and sculpture reflect political change.

The supernatural spirits evoked in former times were superseded by images associated with physical power, such as armed guards. From the Fourth Century A.D., hordes of nomads controlled the lands north of the Yangtze River, the most powerful of whom, the T'o-pa, were called the Northern Wei (386-535 A.D.).

Before settling down in China they had been in touch with the people of Central and Western Asia, where influences from Sassanian Persia (226-642 A.D.) and India under the Gupta dynasty (320-470 A.D.) mingled with local arts. In fabrics, fashions, arms, and armor, horse accoutrements, and ceramics, Iranian ideas prevailed, while in the spiritual realm, it was Indian Buddhism that gave rise to new art and architecture in all of the neighboring countries.

Under the Northern Wei in China the great cave-temples for Buddhist worship were hollowed out of hillsides in Yun-kang near the Great Wall, Lung-men near Lo-yang, Tun-huang near the Jade Gate where caravans set out for the deserts beyond Kansu province, and other sites. Figures of the Buddha, ranging in scale from a few inches in height to the colossal, were cut in the living rock. Members of the ruling house, monks, nuns, laymen, and craftsmen all gained merit by contributing funds, or by taking part in the work of carving and painting the chapels. Single stele or memorial stones were dedicated by family groups for the repose of the souls of the departed.

The rules for making Buddhist images had been formulated in India. Proportions, poses, gestures, and symbolic attribues were based on Indian aesthetic principles incorporated into texts that were given to monks and missionaries. For China the coming of Buddhism meant a reluctant acceptance of ideas quite alien to her own culture and art.

The Bodhisattva, symbol of grace, mercy, compassion, and wisdom, represents spiritual energy. In choosing an earthly model the sculptors of India and Gandhara depicted the historical Buddha before he renounced his position as a prince in Nepal, the ideal embodiment of nobility. The young rajah, Prince Siddhartha Sakyamuni Gautama of the Sixth Century B.C,, was shown clad in filmy dhoti cloth and scarves, with jewelled turban, necklaces, armlets, anklets and rings.

After giving up his life of royal ease, he set out upon a solitary quest for an answer to the problems and causes of suffering of mankind. Following years of wandering and meditation the answers came in the Great Illumination beneath the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya. From that time on he wore the simple garment of a monk. His hair, cut off at the time he left his

palace in Nepal, is shown as ringlets that cover the protuberance (ushnisha) at the crown of his head. This, and the urna (circular mark above the eyebrows) were features present at the time of his birth, and both indicate unusual qualities of mind and soul. As prince he had worn heavy earrings or earplugs; he discarded them with other emblems of rank, but the 8— distended ear lobes remained as a reminder of his rejection of power and luxury, a symbol of unselfishness.

The gradual adjustment of the Chinese to the iconographic requirements of Buddhist art may be traced in the sculpture on display. A Bodhisattva of the Sixth Century A.D., in polychromed white marble, shown against a pointed nimbus, reflects the Confucian taste for simple elegance. A crown of stiffened lotus petals replaces the turban; a flat black band is worn instead of a bead necklace. Scarves almost conceal the body, for the Chinese found nude sculpture distasteful, and they refused to emphasize the physical aspect of a spiritual agent. The result is an ethereal serenity and detachment in this rare example of marble from Chihli province.

Later figures, such as the dark gray limestone Bodhisattva from Lung-men, and the sandstone statutes from T'ien-lung-shan, are nearer to the Indian models of the Gupta period. The many beads and delicate scarves emphasize, rather than hide, the body. Broad shoulders, narrow waist, relaxed pose, arms lifted or separated from the body, the rounded, fuller modelling of the torso, and the lines of the throat reflect this. Suppleness and grace in the late Sixth and early Seventh Centuries replaced the hieratic frontality of earlier years.

Changes may be seen in the pottery made for burial purposes as "mass production" techniques allowed a duplication of the ming-ch'i. Small unglazed figurines, usually of dark gray clay ornamented with unfired pigments, such as the footsoldiers and equestrians, were typical of the Northern Wei. They were parts of sets that numbered as many as sixty for a single tomb. The heads and bodies were made in moulds; hands, staffs, weapons, and the legs of the horses were added later. There is no individuality of expression or pose.

Some figures, however, such as the angry camel, were modelled directly and are remarkable for their vitality. With more active trade between China and the West, caravans stopping in Afghanistan and goods coming in from Iran, new currents flowed East. The realism of clay figures, such as those from Hadda where Greco-Roman tradition persisted, and from Persia where traditional pottery shapes were revived, stimulated Chinese craftsmen to experiment.

In Yueh-chou (modern Shao-hsing) a particular gray-green glaze was developed that later influenced the celadon wares of China and Korea. Different stages in the experiment may be seen here in household utensils, such as the vases with bulbous bodies and small necks in Persian style, and the brush washers in the form of toads that were made for scholars and calligraphers. A miniature steamer, though a model of a cooking pot, was probably

intended to be put in the tomb; this type of vessel, ancestor of our modern double-boilers, had been used by the Chinese since prehistoric times.

An unusual jar has been designated as a Soul House. The Taoists, who were adept at magic, are said to have been able to capture souls and change them from one body to another. Between changes the souls were kept in jars that had an opening, or openings, in the side and a lid like a roof or a stopper.

By 535 A.D. the T'o-pa (Northern Wei) dynasty split into two branches ruling the north of China. They, in turn, were taken over by the Northern Ch'i (550-577) and the Northern Chou (557-581) and subsequently consolidated by an energetic minister who founded a new dynasty, the Sui, in 589. After being divided for two hundred and seventy-one years, China was united as it had been in Han times. The soldiers of the opposing armies were, literally, the models for tomb guardians. In full armor with tiger head helmet, or helmet with earflaps, animal masks on shoulders and knees, or tiger-skin kneepads, they are realistic military men, with a certain exaggeration of face and pose to make them awe-inspiring. Cast in moulds, covered with clear glaze touched up with unfired pigments (dark red, cinnabar, pink, green, black, and touches of gold), they give a good idea of Tatars and Turks in battle dress of the Sixth Century A.D.

THE T'ANG PERIOD

The T'ang Period (618-907) was a time of glory for China. In the Seventh Century A.D., Persia had fallen to the forces of Islam, and India had been weakened by invasions of the White Huns, but China's prestige was high. A military power, a leader in learning, with students coming to her universities from Korea, Japan, and other neighboring countries, a center of the arts, a consumer of goods brought in from all parts of Asia, she was truly the Middle Kingdom, the heart of an empire.

Prosperity and the worldliness of court life are represented by the fat lady, the goods brought in by merchants of all nationalities by the Semitic peddler, and three camels of a caravan group.

Gifts sent to the emperor were regarded as tribute from insignificant rulers to the Son of Heaven. Carpets, perfumes, jewels, dancing girls, and many unusual animals, such as the Afghan hound, came in from distant lands. The most highly prized of the tribute offerings from the Western Turks and the people of Ferghana were horses.

China needed sturdy war chargers for the cavalry that patrolled the Western Regions, and spirited saddlehorses were needed for pageants and imperial cavalcades. Some of the latter were trained to perform to music as part of palace entertainment, when foreign orchestras and dancers amused the court.

Models of circus horses, polo ponies for women as well as men, and

cavalry mounts were made by the potters who supplied the tomb figurines. Bodies, heads, and legs were cast in moulds and assembled; silver ornaments and real hair were added to the finest examples. Some were glazed in a creamy tint and details added by the brush, others were covered in the three-color drip glaze that was a favorite in the Eighth Century.

10— Grooms, such as our tall man, have arms lifted to hold the halter of a horse or camel. His warm tunic with open lapels, the pointed cap with flaps turned up in front and back, and his big boots, are the characteristic dress of men from the mountainous country east of Iran. The face, with prominent nose and deepset eyes, is that of a man of Persian stock.

The technique of lead-glazing in three colors (san-tsai) may be seen in different stages of development in the exhibition. The miniature stove a few inches high, the ovoid jar on lion feet, the equestrians, and the tall court officials almost life-size give a good idea of the problems of varied sizes and shapes. Though the glaze colors seem to run freely, on close examination, it is obvious that patterns were created deliberately as on the ovid jar, that colors were held within particular areas, and even within incised lines. One may compare the monochrome camels with the colorful equestrian, or the monochrome stove with the san-tsai stove to realize what changes had come, in taste and technique, from the Seventh to the Eighth Centuries.

The tomb figures were as popular in T'ang China as they are today. The status of a family demanded that more and larger ming-ch'i be placed in the tomb, until regulations had to be passed limiting the number and size according to the rank of the deceased.

In the early T'ang period the legal standard was one foot in height, with ninety pieces allowed for a high official. During the Yuan-ho era (806-820) the ninety pieces might include four divinities (guardians of the Four Directions, the Lokapala of Indian origin) and twelve hour-symbols. The latter are the Zodiac statues with the head of a horse, or a rat, monkey, tiger, hare, dog, and so forth, set on a human body. The animal symbols, adopted by the Chinese from Central Asian nomads, were guardians of the sequences of two hours within the cycle of twenty-four. Our figurine covered with white pigment is as dignified as a courtier, but the spectral color and composite form clearly indicate that it is a supernatural being.

The military leader was allowed ten large figures: two dignitaries to help his spirit in a civilian capacity, two Lokapalas to guard the tomb with two earth-spirits, two horses and two camels as mounts. Dancing girls, musicians, and other attendants often were included. The official records bewail the fact that people would not abide by the rules.

The tall Dignitaries came from the tomb of a person of great importance. The technical skills required to fire such large pieces, to control the glaze, and to add brushwork of such high quality signify someone as patron who was high in court circles. These figures of officials in court

dress and caps stand in the proper Confucian attitude of respect, though, interestingly enough, they are non-Chinese in ethnic type.

China was filled with foreigners from all parts of Asia. They were allowed to worship in their own temples or synagogues or churches, and they added color to the streets of the great cities. They served in the court, or were hucksters and artisans in the market places. One of them, An Lu-shan, who had come as a Turkish stableboy, became a favorite of Emperor Ming-huang (Hsuan-tsung, 713-755). He was appointed governor of Fan-yang, and from there directed a rebellion against his royal patron. He laid siege to the eastern capital, Lo-yang, and marched on the western capital, Ch'ang-an. The emperor and his entourage fled in 756 before the capture of the city. Troops were called in from oasis outposts, and foreign allies rushed to the aid of the Son of Heaven. The dynasty was saved, but its glory was fading.

Civil war, economic and social crises weakened the country which was so divided that central power dissolved by the early Tenth Century, and anarchy ensued. The great age came to an end.

We still can glimpse its splendor in the work of its potters and sculptors. The large head of the Buddha, weighing half a ton, once looked down upon the pilgrims who came to worship in the cave-temples at Lung-men. It embodies the grandeur of a doctrine, and of a nation. Though we see but a fragment of the whole meditating figure, we recognize in it a beauty that has been unchanged for more than a thousand years after it was carved in the cliffs near Lo-yang. It is a magnificent part of the spiritual and artistic heritage that has come to us from China.

J.G.M.