

## China 4<sup>th</sup> Installment

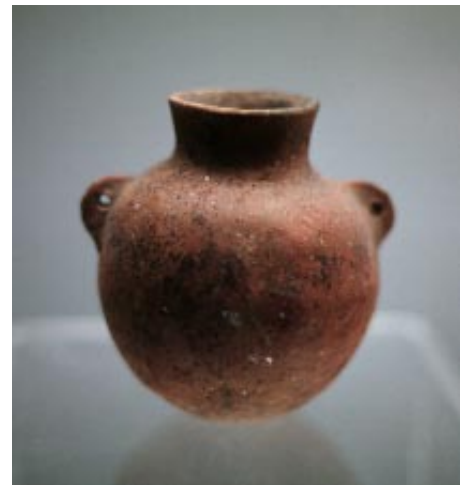
Thursday, May 27, 1999

Our seventh day in China was bright and clear. This was another traveling day and we had to have our bags out in the hall at 8:00 am so they would arrive in Wuhan before we did in the late afternoon. Virginia was quite pleased with herself for taking Sam Gamgee's advice, "What about a bit of rope? You'll want it, if you haven't got it." Now that we had Guan Gong to protect us, we needed a way to carry him around, and she used the bit of rope she had brought to make a handle for his box.

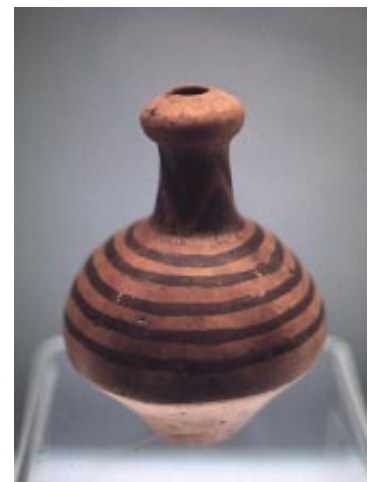
After breakfast we bused to the Zhejiang Provincial Museum on one of the islands in West Lake. Each province has its own museum, and the museum directs the archaeological efforts within the province. The most important excavation conducted by the Zhejiang Provincial Museum has been at Hemudu on the Ningbo Peninsula just south of Hangzhou where they have found the earliest example of rice cultivation in China. The museum also had examples of the development of pottery and kiln technology. Before we wandered off to see the exhibits, Jeff gave us a lecture in the foyer. The highlights:

By 5000 BC, the people of Hemudu had fully developed paddy technology with river damming and irrigation. They used steamers for cooking food. They used the shoulder blades of animals for hoes and scrapers. They also had stone tools. Bamboo and reeds were used for rope and weaving. Spindle whorls (possible indication of hemp or even silk cultivation), looms, loom knives, beaters, and needles have been found. They used ivory, bone, and jade for ornamentation and jade was also used as a symbol of social status. Trading for jade may have helped the spread of their culture.

At a time when North China was making coiled-rope pots with paint, the people of Hemudu used the pottery wheel and the shapes of their pots seem to foreshadow bronze vessels. Their pots had incised designs, patterns of leaves and other geometric designs, and animal shapes like the pig and sheep. Their pottery was painted with lacquer, which shows that they knew how to cultivate the lacquer tree.



Peiligang 6000-5200 BC



Yangshao 4800-3600 BC

While the South was cultivating rice, the North was growing millet and sorghum. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC, wheat appears. Its sudden appearance indicates that it arrived through trade, possibly from the Middle East. The people of Hemudu had domesticated the dog, pig, and water buffalo. The pig seems to have been very important in their culture. The pig also functioned as the Chinese scapegoat. The current Chinese character for “exile” includes the pig symbol.

The c. 3500 BC Majiabang culture on the shores of Lake Tai, west of Suzhou, showed refinement in carving of ivory, bone, and jade. Potters are more skilled. Pots begin to have “architecture” and symmetry. Pots have pedestals and legs, including the triangle-footed pots. They developed the sophisticated two-chamber kiln, which kept the fire away from the pots, and used venting to control the temperature.

The development of pottery in the Zhejiang province seems to reinforce the idea that much of Chinese culture was developed in the South and then moved north.



Songze Culture 3800-3200 BC, anticipating bronze styles



Boats for hire on West Lake, Hangzhou

The sun was still shining when we finished touring the Museum so we walked along causeway back to the hotel. The bus then took us to the Crown Plaza Hangzhou for lunch—two thumbs down. We then departed for the airport and a two-hour flight to Wuhan. Again to our pleasure, the airport and the airplane (737) were non-smoking.



Camphor and juniper trees next to West Lake

When we got off the plane, we could smell the acrid smoke of grass burning. The farmers burn the winter wheat stubble and the rice fields, just like they do the grass seed fields in Oregon’s Willamette Valley. The sky was empty of clouds but full of smog. The weather was quite warm, but not as humid as Suzhou or Hangzhou. As usual,

Virginia was the only one that wasn’t bothered by the heat. There was a mix-up with CITS, the Chinese company running the tour, and we had to wait at the airport for an hour and a half before a local guide could be found and the bus arrived to take us into town to the hotel.



Street near our hotel in Wuhan

The road into town was lined with fan palms and large trees that Virginia thought looked like cottonwood. We saw fishermen in the river along side the road and rice paddies being worked with water buffalo. We also saw vegetable gardens, pine plantations, and peach orchards. They all looked well tended and healthy. As we got closer to Wuhan, we saw huge complexes of apartment buildings under construction or just newly built. Although the state owns all of the land, the people own the houses or apartments they live in. The new two-story farm houses, though architecturally uninspired—especially compared to the apartment and office buildings—seemed sturdy and quite spacious.



Making Noodles, on the street near our hotel in Wuhan

Wuhan is a combination of three boroughs, each separated from the others by the Yangzi or the Han Rivers. The Han borough is north of the Han and the Yangzi Rivers, Hanchang is between the Han and Yangzi Rivers on the west, and Hankou (mouth of the Han) is south of the Yangzi. Together they form the fourth largest city in China, with 7.2 million people. The area's history goes back 3000 years, but very little of the old remains. Like Shanghai, it is full of enormous high rise apartments and office buildings and there is new construction everywhere. Michael, our country guide, said that this is true of all of the cities of China. [Jeff would temper that by saying that most of the new prosperity is to be found along the coast and it is felt less and less as you move toward Western China.]

We arrived at the Jiangnan Hotel at around 5:30. It was the first 1<sup>st</sup> class hotel that wasn't spectacular. The one, tiny elevator was always jammed with passengers and luggage and there wasn't a hair dryer in the bathroom! Just down the street from the hotel was a block of small shops: small general stores and outdoor restaurants. I took my camera on a bottled water shopping expedition and wandered in and out of the shops and took some pictures.

The schedule for the evening and the next day was a lecture by Jeff on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese history at 6:30 followed by dinner at the hotel. Bags out again at 7:30 am to be taken to the boat while we toured Wuhan during the day.

Jeff's lecture:

Prior to the 1700s, China's material culture exceeded any in the world, but after that, it was surpassed first by Europe and then by Japan. Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch traders began arriving in China in the 1600s. The Portuguese established Macao, a colony on a peninsula at the mouth of the Zhu Jiang (Pearl River), in 1557. In 1759, China restricted trading to an artificial island near Canton. When the trading season was over, the traders had to move back down the Pearl River to Macao.

The trade was initially European silver for Chinese silk and porcelain. The tea trade began in 1684 with five chests. It quickly reached 23 million pounds a year. Silver flowed into China: going from 3 million ounces in 1760 to 16 million ounces a year by 1800. The Europeans considered this an imbalance of trade. They also did not like the trading restrictions. The British wanted to get closer to the tea growers and also to create a market for British goods. China didn't want anything that Britain made.

The Opium wars of 1840-1842 were the result of England trying to find a product that the Chinese would buy. Britain started growing opium in India and exporting it to China. As the trade and addiction started to increase, China outlawed the import and smoking of opium. This just drove the opium trade underground, with the British traders selling the opium to Chinese smugglers. Opium not only solved the trade



Painting of bird on silk, Zhu Oa 1626-1705 AD



Glazed polychrome life-sized pony, Tang 618-907 AD



Ancient lady and our guide Michael, Old Town, Wuhan

imbalance, but it impoverished the Qing dynasty when the flow of silver reversed.

In 1839, China persuaded the Portuguese to kick the British out of Macao. The British retaliated by blockading two Chinese ports. China capitulated, giving Britain Hong Kong, paying Britain's war costs, and also an indemnity of 6 million Mexican silver dollars. At home, the British were unsatisfied and demanded more. China conceded to even more outrageous terms, including the opening of the treaty ports and the legalization of the opium trade. The opening of the treaty ports had the unexpected effect of reducing the value of Hong Kong. Trade and the Europeans moved from Canton to Shanghai.

The concessions were a disaster, destabilizing Chinese society. The people became hostile to foreigners, particularly the Manchus of the Qing dynasty. China has a history of peasant revolutions that wash over the country and sweep away everything. [The current government's nervousness with regard to the Falun Gong sect seems to indicate that they believe that history might repeat itself.] The Taiping Rebellion (the Great Leveling) from 1850-1864 was the first major 19<sup>th</sup> century example.

The rebellion was led by Hong Xiuquan, who styled himself the "younger brother of Christ." He mixed visions with a reactionary reading of Christian Missionary tracts to create a strict (very much against opium and the evil foreigners) but egalitarian philosophy that included the equality of women. He raised an army and captured Wuchang (just south of Wuhan) giving him control of the middle Yangzi. The rebels then sailed down the Yangzi and defeated a Manchu army at Nanjing. The Manchus retired to Beijing and let the rebellion run its course, hoping that the rebels and the foreigners would destroy each other. The rebels twice, in 1860 and 1862, tried to take Shanghai but were repulsed by the Europeans. The Manchus finally sent a second army against the rebels after they had gained control of 16 provinces. This time the Manchus succeeded, quashing the Taiping Rebellion in 1864. The rebellion had destroyed over 600 cities and left 20 million people dead.



Breakfast to order, in Old Town, Wuhan

China finally woke up to the power of Japan when they were defeated in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. Japan had modernized while China had stagnated. Japan had taken European technology, learned it, and then turned it against the Europeans. China wouldn't adopt European technology until the 20<sup>th</sup> century and then they learned it from the Japanese.

The last 19<sup>th</sup> century, grassroots attempt to rid China of foreigners was the Boxer Rebellion. The Boxers were a secret society (the Yihequan, Righteous and Harmonious Fists) that combined traditional martial arts with shamanistic beliefs and xenophobia. They didn't like the Manchus very much, but they especially hated the Christian missionaries. In 1898 they started destroying the properties of missionaries and convents. Again, the Manchus picked the wrong tactics, secretly supporting the Boxers in their efforts to rid China of the evil foreigners. When the Boxers, with a little too obvious help from the government, started attacking the embassies in Beijing, 20,000 foreign troops came to the rescue and, in the process, sacked Beijing. This time China was required to pay an indemnity of 450 million ounces of silver, plus interest, over a 40-year period.



Kids carrying dragon costume, Old Town, Wuhan

Friday May 28, 1999, our 8<sup>th</sup> day in China:

After breakfast we went to one of the remaining older parts of town. It didn't look that much different from the shopping street by the hotel. We walked up and down a four-block area that was lined with two story houses, small shops, and more outdoor restaurants. The streets were filled with families cooking, eating, and selling. We saw some children, usually watched over by two or three adults. On the whole tour we only saw two pregnant women. Clothing was hanging out of second story windows to dry.

We walked down an alley with Michael, the country guide, and he started talking to people sitting on their stoops. They said that they would be moving into new apartments as soon as the government purchased their houses. They hated to lose the neighborhood community to urban renewal, but they were looking forward to having running water and other modern conveniences.

While we were waiting for the bus to pick us up, a group of brightly dressed kindergartners carrying a long dragon costume came down the street. They were in red and yellow shirts, pants, and dresses and the little girls had white face makeup and painted red lips. We were told that they were getting ready to go to a park and compete in a dragon festival.



Little dragon ladies, Old Town, Wuhan

Our next stop was the Hubei Provincial Museum. It houses the fabulous collection of 65 bronze bells and other artifacts found in the tomb of the Marquis Yi of Zeng (d. 433 BC). He ruled a very minor province in the State of Chu—something that you would never believe given the richness of his tomb. The tomb was an underground replica of his earthly home in the shape of a cross with four wings. His casket was in the East (yang, male) chamber with eight concubines. There were thirteen more concubines in the West (yin, female) chamber—possibly the musicians. The North chamber contained war weapons and the South (reception and entertaining) chamber contained the bells and several other different kinds of musical instruments. The middle chamber contained a huge number of bronze ritual vessels and other objects.

The tomb was excavated in 1978. It was inside a mound on a military base in Suixian that the military decided to level. As soon as the soldiers started digging, they discovered the layers of stone, charcoal, and waterproofed matting that protected the tomb from the elements. A team of archaeologists was immediately called in. The only thing that the builders of the tomb had not prepared for was the rising of the ground water level over the last two thousand years.

The tour of the museum started with a wonderful musical demonstration, using copies of the bells, and some more modern instruments. The bells



Demonstration of the bells of the Marquis Ye of Zeng, Wuhan

are so finely cast that each one rings two tones depending upon whether the bell is struck on the side or the front. The larger bells are struck with the end of a long pole, the smaller with a mallet. Surprisingly, the bells are tuned to the Western harmonic scale. They span five and one half octaves, with the bells in the middle three octaves ringing complete sets of twelve semi-tones. Each bell has an inscription, the sum of which was a complete musical treatise on the harmonic scale. There is no record of the music itself. We do not know the melodies, the rhythms, or the relationships of the different instruments. This may have been because the melodies were passed from master musicians to their apprentices as they learned their craft. We do know that dance and song were part of the musical experience. Lyrics exist for 300 hundred songs, 120 of which are love songs.

The largest bell in Yi's collection was given to him by his most powerful relative, Hui the King of Chu. The inscription on the bell says that King Hui had the bell cast in order to repay the State of Sui (now the province of Zeng) for refusing to turn his father, King Zhao, over to the Wu army after he fled the destruction of his capital city. King Zhao had fled before the army of King Heliu and his advisor Wu Zixu.



Copy of the Deer-Crane from Marquis Yi of Zeng's tomb

One of the most interesting objects from the tomb was a four-foot high bronze crane with deer antlers. This auspicious creature embodied the luckiness and goodwill of the deer with the longevity of the crane. Jeff told us that one of the early religious beliefs was that the simple creatures that exist today represented the devolution (not evolution) from more complex and powerful composite creatures that existed before. Along with the protection that Guan Gong was to give our house, we decided that we could use some luck, goodwill, and longevity and bought a ten-inch high copy of the deer-crane.

Jeff said that there was a raging philosophical debate in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC over the country's burial customs. Daoist intellectuals argued that everyone should be equal in the after life and therefore so should they be in the burials that are preparation for it. A subtle subtext to the argument was the Daoist belief that everyone should be equal in this life as well as the after life. The Confucians argued that one's place in society was fixed (and that was good) and they should remain so in the after life. A less subtle issue was the disastrous effect that pouring so much wealth into the ground was having on the economy. The result of the debate was a very strict set of rules for how much bronze could be buried with someone at each level in society. Jeff said that Marquis Yi's tomb was way over the top.

The bus ride to and from the museum was the closest thing we experienced to Los Angeles freeway stop and go traffic. We were told later that the reason for the congestion was that the President of China had just arrived in town and was planning to visit the museum tomorrow. If he had come one day earlier (or we a day later) we would not have been able to tour the museum. Our rides from place to place in Wuhan had taken us over two of the newest bridges over the Yangzi, one of which crossed the river near the place where Mao took his famous Yangzi River swim to prove that he was still healthy and virile.

We had lunch at the Chu Tour Palace. The restaurant had an elevated stage where a woman played one of the traditional string instruments while we ate. Virginia had been looking forward to eating some of the spicier food that the Wuhan area was famous for, but was disappointed when we received what seemed to be the typical Chinese tourist meal with too much food and too many courses. (The overwhelming quantity made it possible for me to pass on most of the dishes that were mainly bones and still eat too much.)



Yellow Crane Tower

After lunch we went to the Yellow Crane Tower. The complex is on the site where a military watch tower was constructed in ~200 AD. The pagoda was rebuilt in 1984. Virginia and I climbed to the top of the pagoda and wandered through the exhibits on each floor. There were beautifully carved scale models of buildings and royal sailing ships. The entrance courtyard had large tablets with poems written in many different styles of calligraphy. The whole, very large, complex has been beautifully restored.

In a building next to the parking lot, we were offered the most entertaining shopping opportunity of the trip, in the form of a lesson in how to serve Chinese tea. One of the cutest young women in China kept up a stream of chatter that would have made a carney barker proud while she, and an assistant, pored boiling water into tea pots and passed the different teas out to us in the audience to taste. Over and over she said, “Now you do not have to buy any of this tea,” as we (including Virginia) attempted to force money on her. The experience was just delightful.

The last tour of the afternoon was to the Guiyan Buddhist Monastery. At this point Virginia and I were pretty Buddhist-temple-ed-out. I discovered that the trash cans in the monastery had the same shape as the ornaments on the temple’s stair railing and took a picture. They were both in the form of Chinese lions. Visualize a large, stylized Pekinese dog. We don’t think that the Chinese have seen a lion in the last thousand years, so they substituted the next most common thing. While I was investigating the trash cans, Virginia wandered off to the Friendship Store next door.

We were then taken to the new Wuhan Holiday Inn, for dinner in the Crane Palace dining room. From our table we could see the Regal China Cruise’s Princess Jeannie at the Holiday Inn’s dock. We boarded the ship just before 7:00, to the music of an all-girl brass band made up of members of Princess Jeannie’s crew. Our room was number 317. The Yangzi cruise began at 7:30. At 8:30 we were given an orientation by the ship’s crew: life vests are under the bed; the front desk is on the second level; all decks are blacked-out, except deck five, in the evening so the pilot can see to navigate; and breakfast is served on deck three starting at 8 am.



Chinese Tea Ceremony sales-ladies



Guiyan Buddhist Monastery, with lion motif



Princess Jeannie at dock