

THE GAME OF POLO

BY BERTHOLD LAUFER

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Many Museum visitors viewing the exhibit of four Chinese clay figures of women on horseback engaged in a polo match, exclaim in surprise, "We never knew polo was played in China, and that Chinese women indulged in athletic sports." Yet polo has had a long and honorable history in China, and has been a favorite subject of many illustrious painters and sculptors.

The clay figures in question, which were buried with sport-loving noblemen in the eighth century of our era, are the earliest monuments to polo now extant. The first great polo match on record was played in A.D. 709, at the imperial court of Ch'ang-an, between Chinese princes and Tibetan ambassadors who had arrived from Lhasa to receive a daughter of the Chinese emperor who was to marry the king of Tibet.

Polo was first played about the beginning of our era by Iranian tribes of nomadic horsemen inhabiting Central Asia, and from this center both the polo horses and the game were transmitted to Persia and China. In its origin it was not a game, but rather an exercise in preparation for war, and a trial of skill and endurance, on a par with archery.

In China polo was vigorously cultivated by several emperors of the T'ang dynasty, and also under the Sung dynasty, during which it was adopted as an exercise in the army. Under the Manchu dynasty the game became extinct.

There is a story of an old general, who used to place a pile of ten coins in the polo court, and galloping his horse strike one off with his club each time he passed, knocking the coin up seventy to eighty feet in the air.

The polo sticks are described as terminating in a point like the crescent moon, and are therefore styled "moon sticks." In Chinese paintings they appear provided with a scoop or ladle, exactly as in Persia. The balls were of an elastic vermilion painted wood, but leather balls are also mentioned. The players formed two teams and contended for the same ball. The goal was set up at the south end of the course and consisted of two stakes connected by a board on top, making an open gate, in which was suspended a net to receive the ball. The side able to strike the ball into the net was the winner. The horses were gorgeously adorned with pheasant feathers, tassels, bells,

and metal mirrors. Once tossed into the air, the ball was not allowed to fall to the ground, and the highest ambition was to keep it spinning in the air, so that it never became detached from the stick.

It is a singular fact that in China donkeys and mules as well as horses were trained for polo. From ancient times Shantung Province has been celebrated for its enormous



Polo Player

Chinese mortuary clay figure of woman polo player. One of a pair presented by David Weber.

donkeys, and it was there that the initiative was taken to train them for the game. In the year 826 an official of Shantung sent a present of polo donkeys to the imperial court and four renowned players who performed before the emperor. The prince of Ting-siang under the T'ang taught his ladies to play polo on donkey-back. The Museum owns several Chinese paintings representing women on donkeys playing polo.

Bird Collecting Expedition

Staff Taxidermist Ashley Hine was dispatched to California toward the end of last month to conduct an expedition which will make collections of important birds needed for addition to the Museum's North American ornithological series. A special effort will be made to obtain specimens of many small birds which are to be found in the middle and southern parts of the state during the next few months.

NEW MEMBERS

The following persons were elected to membership in Field Museum during the period from January 17 to February 17:

Non-Resident Life Members

W. C. Stephens

Associate Members

Arthur L. Allais, Dr. Nathaniel Allison, Mrs. Clay Baird, David Degen, Robert J. Dunham, Howard Elting, Edward George Felsenthal, James D. Grant, Michael Karpen, John A. McGarry, Edward Mohr, Professor Claude Irwin Palmer, Miss Jessie H. Rankin, William J. Rathje, Charles W. Stiger, Sr., J. W. Watzek, Jr., Samuel W. Weiss.

Annual Members

Robert Leslie Alton, Mrs. Howard Ames, Mrs. Gallus J. Bader, Mrs. Harold Osborne Barnes, Dr. E. V. L. Brown, Mrs. J. F. Brown, William Jerome Byrnes, Robert B. Chittenden, Dr. Friend R. Eccles, Mrs. M. A. Eiler, Dewey A. Ericsson, Mrs. Henry Frenzel, Edward Gledhill, William B. Greenlee, Charles F. Harding, Jr., Ralph Horween, Mrs. James B. Keogh, Mrs. Calvin P. King, Frank J. Koepke, William J. Larkin, Mrs. Robert Leitz, Miss Alma J. Lovett, Mrs. Hays MacFarland, Charles S. MacFerran, I. S. Martin, Edwin W. C. Mayer, Alexander J. McCarthy, L. McFall, Charles R. McKay, Suijori Ogawa, Mrs. Christen Olsen, Thomas M. O'Shea, Frank A. Randall, Mrs. Frank D. Reed, Mrs. Charles H. Requa, Mrs. John Ritchie, Rev. George L. Robinson, Lester Rockwell, I. Rosenberg,

MARCH GUIDE-LECTURE TOURS

Following is the schedule of conducted tours of the exhibits during March:

Week beginning March 2—Monday: 11 A.M., Life in the Far North, 3 P.M., Horses; Tuesday: 11 A.M., South American Indians, 3 P.M., Cereals and Spices; Wednesday: 11 A.M., Users of Horn, Bone and Ivory, 3 P.M., Reptiles, Past and Present; Thursday: 11 A.M. and 3 P.M., General Tours; Friday: 11 A.M., Horned and Hoofed Animals, 3 P.M., Chinese Ethnology.

Week beginning March 9—Monday: 11 A.M., Armor and Weapons, 3 P.M., Economic Fibers; Tuesday: 11 A.M., Prehistoric Animals, 3 P.M., Costumes; Wednesday: 11 A.M., Indians of the Southwest, 3 P.M., Musical Instruments; Thursday: 11 A.M. and 3 P.M., General Tours; Friday: 11 A.M., Egypt, 3 P.M., Trees of the Chicago Area.

Week beginning March 16—Monday: 11 A.M., Birds of March, 3 P.M., Crystals and Gems; Tuesday: 11 A.M., Fishes, 3 P.M., Polynesia; Wednesday: 11 A.M., Animal Life of the Seas, 3 P.M., Basketry; Thursday: 11 A.M. and 3 P.M., General Tours; Friday: 11 A.M., Skeletons, 3 P.M., The Story of Man.

Week beginning March 23—Monday: 11 A.M., Economic Minerals, 3 P.M., The Mound Builders; Tuesday: 11 A.M., North American Game Animals, 3 P.M., Roman Archaeology; Wednesday: 11 A.M., Carl Akeley Hall, 3 P.M., Jewelry of Many Lands; Thursday: 11 A.M. and 3 P.M., General Tours; Friday: 11 A.M., Mummies, 3 P.M., Plant Families.

Week beginning March 30—Monday: 11 A.M., Africa and Madagascar, 3 P.M., Physical Geology; Tuesday: 11 A.M., Animals of the Plains; 3 P.M., Peoples of the Pacific.

Persons wishing to participate should apply at North Entrance. Tours are free and no gratuities are to be proffered. A new schedule will appear each month in FIELD MUSEUM NEWS. Guide-lecturers' services for special tours by parties of ten or more are available free of charge by arrangement with the Director a week in advance.

An Important Plant Collection

Field Museum has received in exchange from the Royal Museum of Stockholm, through Dr. Gunnar Samuelsson, a valuable collection of 1,336 specimens of plants for the Herbarium. The sending consists in part of 450 specimens collected in the State of Paraná, Brazil, by the late Per Dusén. These include many rare species not represented previously in the Museum Herbarium, and they are the more desirable because of the extreme care used in their preparation.

An equally desirable portion of the sending consists of 640 plants collected in Cuba by Dr. Erik L. Ekman.

Museum hours in March: Daily, 9 A.M. to 5 P.M.

Chancellor Collection Arrives

A collection of some 400 fishes, and numerous corals and other marine invertebrates, collected by the recently returned Chancellor-Stuart-Field Museum Expedition to Aitutaki, Cook Islands, was received at the Museum last month. Among the fishes are many remarkable for their curious forms and their beautiful coloration, and these will make excellent subjects for exhibits which are to be prepared in the near future. Material for addition to the study collections was also received.

Philip M. Chancellor, who sponsored and led this expedition and the previous Chancellor-Stuart-Field Museum Expedition to the South Pacific in 1929-30, is now engaged in supervising the making of a motion picture film, "The Dragon Lizard of Komodo." Part of this film, which will have sound effects, was made on the first expedition, and some scenes were taken at Field Museum as a result of the exhibition here of the Komodo lizard reproduction made from one of the specimens Mr. Chancellor collected.

Clifford A. Rowley, Joseph P. Savage, Mrs. George J. Schmitt, Mrs. Charles R. Simmons, Charles H. Smart, Harold E. Stembridge, Mrs. Louis L. Thurstone, Mrs. Mary Tuma, Irving M. Tuteur, Mrs. Gerard VanDyke, Fred VanO'Linda, Frederick W. Vodoz, Miss Mary D. Weir, Elmer J. Whitty, Gerhard C. Wolterding, Ferdinand H. Young.

MEMBERSHIP IN FIELD MUSEUM

Field Museum has several classes of Members. Benefactors give or devise \$100,000 or more. Contributors give or devise \$5,000 to \$100,000. Life Members give \$500; Non-Resident (Life) and Associate Members pay \$100; Non-Resident Associate Members pay \$50. All the above classes are exempt from dues. Sustaining Members contribute \$25 annually. After six years they become Associate Members. Annual Members contribute \$10 annually. Other memberships are Corporate, Honorary, Patron, and Corresponding, additions under these classifications being made by special action of the Board of Trustees.

Each Member, in all classes, is entitled to free admission to the Museum for himself, his family and house guests, and to two reserved seats for Museum lectures provided for Members. Subscription to FIELD MUSEUM NEWS is included with all memberships. The courtesies of every museum of note in the United States and Canada are extended to all Members of Field Museum. A Member may give his personal card to non-residents of Chicago, upon presentation of which they will be admitted to the Museum without charge. Further information about memberships will be sent on request.



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