

## RARE COLLECTION ILLUSTRATES CHINA'S NEW STONE AGE

By C. MARTIN WILBUR

CURATOR OF CHINESE ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNOLOGY

Contrary to popular belief, Chinese civilization is not so extremely ancient. It was decidedly later in starting than the civilizations which developed in the Nile valley, in Mesopotamia, and in India. Archaeologists can employ with confidence the

Before 1400 B. C. the Chinese, so far as we know, had a primitive culture comparable to the culture of the Indians in the north-eastern United States when white settlers found them. This phase of culture is called the "Neolithic" or New Stone Age. These primitive Chinese did not know how to make objects of metal, nor how to write, but they

Arrowheads and sling shots represent hunting, while a fragment of pottery that was impressed with a very coarse fabric is evidence of primitive weaving. An idea of one type of early Chinese village and of the principal domesticated animals and crops is conveyed on a special panel painted by Mr. Millard Rogers, a volunteer who also had an important part in planning the unusual layout.

The second new exhibit emphasizes the geographical and chronological aspects of China's prehistoric cultures. There were at least two variations of the basic Neolithic culture in North China. These variations are called the Painted Pottery Culture in the northwestern highlands and the Black Pottery Culture in the eastern lowlands.

Archaeologists have known about the Painted Pottery Culture for twenty years, since the first site, at Yang-shao in Honan province, was excavated by a Swedish explorer, J. G. Andersson. Since that time typical painted pottery has been found in about twenty different places in the northwestern part of China, but there have not been enough careful excavations or detailed reports so that we can generalize about the culture. A few details, however, stand out.

The Painted Pottery Culture (sometimes also called Yang-shao after the name of the place where it was discovered) seems to have begun a little earlier than the Black Pottery Culture. The Neolithic people who developed it made ordinary pottery of several sorts, but their most distinctive ware was an orange or reddish pottery, carefully smoothed and then painted with brown or red designs. The Neolithic people who made it lived by agriculture and pig-raising as well as by hunting and fishing, and used stone tools primarily. In the exhibition miniature painted jars are placed on a large map of China to show localities where this painted pottery has been found.

An absorbing question in regard to the painted pottery of northwestern China is whether or not it is related to similar painted pottery found in the Near East, southern Russia, and the Danube valley. As more and more exploration and excavation has been done, more sites with painted pottery have been found along the presumed routes by which it could have entered China from the west. An analysis of the designs also seems to indicate a generic relation between some of the western pottery and some of that found in China. There is no evidence, however, that the people who made the pottery in China migrated there from the west.

Chinese archaeologists deserve all the credit for having established the Black Pottery Culture as an entity. The great Chinese research organization, Academia Sinica, excavated the first black pottery site at Lung shan (or Ch'eng-tzu-yai) in Shantung province, in 1930 and 1931. Since then more than seventy sites belonging to



### NEOLITHIC CHINESE "DESIGN FOR LIVING"

Recently installed exhibit of material representing chief traits of the inhabitants of China during the New Stone Age. Employing "subjective display technique" now being extended through the Museum, this case shows, with a few specimens linked together in an integrated story, something of conditions before 1400 B.C.

date 2900-3000 B. C. for both Mesopotamia and Egypt, but the earliest date that can be mentioned with an equal degree of confidence for China is "about" 1400 B. C.—and this may be incorrect by a century. According to historical tradition it was about then that a ruler of the Shang dynasty moved his capital to a place now known as Anyang, in the province of Honan. Archaeology picks up the trail of the historical Chinese at Anyang where some of the palace area, the royal tombs, and certain archives have been scientifically excavated. Any date given for a site that was inhabited earlier is an estimate.

Field Museum has an unusual collection of Chinese prehistoric specimens collected during the past thirty-five years, but very few of them were scientifically excavated. Usually prehistoric material is not of itself very interesting to the average visitor. Therefore, in designing three new exhibits which have just been placed on view (Hall 24, Cases B, C, and 1), an important objective has been to give the specimens meaning and to draw attention to them by a colorful and attractive layout. One of the exhibits illustrates some general facts about the way people lived in China during the New Stone Age. Another shows the geographical distribution of early Chinese cultures and their chronological sequence.

made improved tools of stone, bone, and shell. They also made pottery and coarse cloth. Besides hunting and fishing and gathering wild plants, they grew millet and a few vegetables, and raised pigs and dogs. These accomplishments marked a great advance over the culture of the Old Stone Age, the Chinese phase of which is treated in an adjoining exhibit that was described in *FIELD MUSEUM NEWS* for November, 1942.

The Chinese of the New Stone Age also had crude houses and lived in villages. In the northwest they dug caves for their homes, just as millions of Chinese farmers in that region do today. Others probably made their houses by digging large pits in the ground and covering them with slanting roofs, or by building crude huts of pounded earth. Almost nothing is known of the social life, religion, or language and customs of the Neolithic Chinese. When they began to write they left records which aid in understanding such intangible things.

The new exhibit features only a few Neolithic specimens which particularly bring out these statements. Stone axes, adzes, and chisels for working wood, a stone hoe and a grain-cutter for agriculture, a grain grinder, and an all-purpose stone knife show what the Neolithic people had for tools. Pottery is shown which was made for storing and cooking food, and for burial with the dead,

the Black Pottery Culture have been found and a number of them have been excavated.

The Black Pottery Culture (sometimes called Lung-shan after the name of its place of discovery) was developed by Neolithic farmers, who often surrounded their villages with walls of pounded earth and established them in clusters in river valleys. This culture belongs to the great plain of eastern China as shown by tiny black pots placed on the map where Black Pottery sites are known. These people had learned to use the potter's wheel and made a distinctive jet-black pottery, in addition to ordinary gray and brown wares. Usually they decorated their pottery only by incised lines. They specialized in making tools from shell, although they also made the more common stone and bone tools.

The Black Pottery Culture was closely related to the succeeding culture of the Bronze Age. Certain of the most distinctive habits of the Bronze Age Chinese were already practised in a simple form by the people who lived in the Black Pottery villages. One of these traits was building city walls of pounded earth. To make this type of wall wooden frames were put in position and earth was dumped between the frames and pounded down until it was exceedingly hard. Walls made by this method could be built quite high and sometimes endured for centuries. The wall at Ch'eng-tzu-yai can still be distinguished.

Another trait was fortune-telling. The Bronze Age Chinese predicted future events, or tried to learn the outcome of their plans by consulting their ancestors. To do so they inscribed a question on the shoulder bone of an ox or on a piece of tortoise-shell. Then they applied heat to the other side of the bone. This produced a crack upon the face. The direction in which the crack ran was believed to indicate a positive or negative answer to the query. It is due to this practice of divination, known as scapulimancy, that we know as much as we do about the Shang people at Anyang, because great piles of used oracle bones have been discovered and translated. Thus we know what the Shang people worried about, and what was foremost in their minds. The Black Pottery people also practiced scapulimancy in a primitive form. There are a number of other features that link the Black Pottery people and the Bronze Age people together.

When evidences of the Painted Pottery and Black Pottery variations of Neolithic culture have been found in the same excavated site with evidences of the Bronze Age the sequence always is: painted pottery near the bottom, black pottery next above, and bronze remains nearest the top. This proves that in those regions where the three cultures existed in sequence the Painted Pottery Culture was oldest, the Black Pottery came next, and the Bronze Age was the latest.

This chronological information is illustrated in the second exhibit by steps painted in different colors—green, aquamarine, gray, and salmon. On each step ancient pottery typical of the period is shown, with jars of the Basic Neolithic culture at the bottom, of the Painted Pottery Culture and of the Black Pottery Culture in order, and of the Bronze Age at the top.

Some of the painted pottery turned out by the Neolithic people of northwest China was decidedly handsome. Field Museum is fortunate in having recently acquired ten of these unusual jars, all presumably more than 3,500 years old, and they are exhibited in the third of the new installations. Since a spiral pattern is common on some of the best painted pottery, this motif was chosen for the layout. The jars are arranged against a large spiral of aquamarine color that was chosen to complement the orange cast of the pottery itself. Some visitors have considered the effect dramatic.

## CONSERVATION BRIEFS

### IV. Plants

BY PAUL C. STANDLEY  
CURATOR OF THE HERBARIUM

Despite gasoline rationing, thousands of people will somehow go to and tramp through the countryside of the Chicago region during the next few weeks to enjoy the perennial miracle of the procession of spring flowers. The thickets of dogwood and crabapples, the fields of buttercups, dandelions, Indian paint brushes, and mustard, and in the woods the more delicate but no less brilliant colonies of violets, wake robins, Dutchman's breeches, spring beauty, bluebells, lady's slippers, hepaticas, and bloodroot, with dozens of others, afford a display of fresh and beautiful color such as scarcely is surpassed anywhere.

Fortunate is the Chicago region to retain, in spite of its situation in one of the most intensively cultivated districts of the United States, such areas as the Cook County Forest Preserves and the Indiana State Park, where native plants still flourish in abundance. Equally fine displays may be seen in woodlands under private ownership. Especially noteworthy are the shores of Lake Michigan near Waukegan, an area unique in Illinois. The only threat to permanent preservation and increase of these features that add so much beauty to a prairie region lies in the destruction of wild flowers and decorative shrubs by thoughtless travelers in the country.

The loveliness of the early flowers is a constant temptation to lay hands upon them. Those people who appreciate natural beauty are mostly persons of good manners, and it is only through thoughtlessness that they sometimes cause great damage.

Most of the spring flowers wilt quickly

when picked, and never revive even when placed in water. Left alone they will continue to adorn the woodlands, where their beauty finds its natural and best setting. Leave the dogwood and crabapple, the hawthorn, and especially the more delicate and rare woodland plants where you may enjoy them again next year. Thus they will be able to spread by their roots or by seeds. If you must pick flowers, gather only blue violets, dandelions, mustards, etc.

Protected by an intelligent and appreciative public, our present very extensive native vegetation, whose beauty began to be appreciated only when on the verge of extinction, will undoubtedly expand itself.

Our native plants have yielded many products of importance to Man—to the aboriginal Indians, to the early settlers, and even to us of the present day. They include fruits like the crabapple and sand cherry, nuts such as beech and hickory nuts and walnuts, pot herbs or salad plants like curly dock, dandelion, and pusley. Perhaps among them there yet may be found some that will provide wartime substitutes for plant products which the country now urgently needs. A near relative of our dandelion is said to be providing the Soviet Republics with some of their sorely needed rubber. Other Illinois plants might well furnish fibers or paper material. If our native plants can supply some of these needs, the most ardent conservationist will be happy to see even our rarer plants mobilized to help defeat our enemies.

(Next issue:—*Conservation of Reptiles.*)

### NEW MEMBERS

The following persons became Members of Field Museum during the period from April 1 to May 10:

#### Associate Members

Miss Maud F. Back, Marvin H. Coleman, Anthony S. Holub, Michael L. Layden, Justus L. Schlichting, Robert J. Speer, Herman Spertus.

#### Annual Members

Dr. Bernard Auerbach, Miss Mary Breckinridge, Charles Borin, Harry M. Brostoff, Robert C. Brown, Jr., Harry J. Cogswell, C. T. Collett, Dr. T. J. Coogan, Dr. Beulah Cushman, Edward Decker, Lawrence D. Dibble, David Gordon, Walter C. Green, Mrs. Emil J. Gutgsell, G. C. Hass, Miss Lily Heffernan, Stuart Hertz, Mrs. Joseph Huska, Walter J. Jarratt, John B. Jarrett, S. E. Johanigman, Carl Ray Latham, Charles C. Livingston, R. R. Lusk, Frederick Mayer, Dr. Gertrude McKeever, Karl B. Miller, Ernest E. Moll, Dr. E. M. Moore, Nelson S. Moore, Dr. Marguerite Oliver, Arno H. Phillips, Louis S. Platt, Mrs. J. A. O. Preus, Edwin G. Rellihi, George J. Renaldi, Mrs. Bartlett Richards, Mrs. Oscar J. Ruh, William R. Sachse, Wallace B. Shlopach, Harry Silverman, Dr. Charles G. Spirrisson, Ray Snyder, Jan Taeyaerts, Dr. Edward C. Wach, Mrs. Marshall A. Waters, Frank D. Weber, H. J. Weber, Arthur A. Wolf.



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