

PHOENIX KINGDOMS INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

New perspectives and discoveries on Bronze Age archaeology of the middle Yangzi River region

Sunday, July 21, 2024

8:30 AM: Doors open

8:50–9 AM: Welcome remarks and introduction of keynote speaker by **Dr. JAY XU**, The Barbara Bass Bakar Director and CEO, Asian Art Museum

9–9:50 AM: Keynote presented by **ROBERT BAGLEY**, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University

“The Tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng (d. 433 BC), Archaeology, and the Art of the South”

The tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng (d. 433 BC), source of many objects in the *Phoenix Kingdoms* exhibition, was excavated in 1978 and marks an epoch in the archaeology of the Warring States period. This talk will introduce its contents and ask what archaeology permits us to say about the material cultures of Zeng, Chu, and their contemporaries in north China. How do we generalize from a unique find?

10–10:25 AM: FANG QIN, Director of the Hubei Provincial Institute of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

“Exploration regarding the Ritual Vessel Systems of High-Ranking Nobility in Zeng and Chu”

In the past century, the archaeological excavations of a series of high-ranking Zeng and Chu state tombs have provided crucial material evidence for exploring the distinctive high-ranking aristocratic ritual vessel systems of Zeng and Chu. Analysis reveals that these ritual vessel systems, which persisted until the downfall of the Chu state, were established during the early Spring and Autumn period.

10:25–10:50 AM: ZHANG CHANGPING, Professor of Archaeology, Wuhan University

“Bronze Artistry of Zeng and Chu”

The most remarkable Chinese archaeological

discovery in recent years is the Wuwangdun Tomb No. 1 in Huainan, one chamber of which is filled with bronze ritual vessels. This tomb is believed to belong to one of the last two kings of the Chu state, which dominated the production and distribution of bronze resources during the Eastern Zhou period. Through the extensively decorated bronze artifacts of Chu and Zeng we can ascertain the continuation of Zhou ritual culture in the southern regions.

10:50–11 AM: Q&A

11:15–11:40 AM: COLIN MACKENZIE, former Curator of Chinese Art, Art Institute of Chicago

“The Chu-Zeng Jade Style: Reality or Myth?”

The ancient territories of the Chu and Zeng states have yielded some of the most spectacular bronzes and jades of the Eastern Zhou period. Whereas the Chu-Zeng bronze style is well recognized, the existence of a distinct Chu-Zeng jade style is less clear. This talk will consider archaeologically excavated jades as well as jades in museum collections that shed light on this intriguing question.

11:40 AM–12:05 PM: ZENG PAN, Director, Department of Exhibitions, Hubei Provincial Museum

“Re-investigating the Origin of Ancient Chinese Chromatic Pitch Series from New Archaeological Findings”

In recent years, sets of bells dating back to the Zhou dynasty have been discovered in Hubei; by studying their pitches, we can further understand the development of pitch series in pre-Qin China. Prior to the early Spring and Autumn period, the source of pitches mainly involved selecting intervals from the natural harmonic series; however, the subsequent emergence of string instruments facilitated the development of the pentatonic pitch series and a refined accuracy of interval relationships.

12:05–12:15 PM: Q&A

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2–2:25 PM: HAICHENG WANG, Professor of Art History, University of Washington

“Beautiful Writing in the First Civilizations”

In Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Maya cities, and China, writing seems to have been invented in various contexts of use — but in each place, it quickly came to serve the interests of the elite, for whom its display provided legitimation of power and hierarchy. This presentation will describe the rise of display writing and the forms it took in these four civilizations, with special attention to the inscriptions that have survived best from ancient China: those on bronze ritual vessels and bells.

2:25–2:50 PM: GUOLONG LAI, Professor of Liberal Arts, Westlake University

“What is the So-called ‘Tomb Guardian Figure’?”

Often perceived as a unique artistic and religious phenomenon of the Chu during the Warring States period, the so-called *zhenmushou* (the “tomb guardian figure” or “antler and tongue” motif) is a well-studied yet elusive and enigmatic work of early Chinese art. Based on a self-identifying inscription, excavated religious documents, a philological and phonological investigation, and a typological study, this talk proposes that this wooden or bronze figure is actually a phallus symbol representing the fecundity god in early China.

2:50–3 PM: Q&A

3:15–3:40 PM: ZHAO FENG, Dean of the School of Art and Archaeology, Zhejiang University

“Phoenix-themed Motifs and Patterns on Chu Silk”

Mr. Shen Congwen once summarized the major decorative patterns of the Warring States and the Qin-Han periods as the art of dragons and phoenixes. In the Chu territory, phoenix patterns were very common and more important than those of dragons. Since the 20th century, many exquisitely woven and embroidered silk textiles have been unearthed from Chu tombs, summarizing the classification, form, and arrangement of phoenix patterns of the time.

3:40–4:05 PM: FAN JEREMY ZHANG, Barbara and Gerson Bakar Curator of Chinese Art, Asian Art Museum

“Phoenix Rhapsody: Defining Characteristics of Chu Art as a Southern Legacy”

The rich archaeological finds of the past few decades have revealed several interesting characteristics of Chu art, famous for its naturalistic depictions and creative designs full of romantic imagination. Given the vast cultural and political dominance of the Chu state, to outline the Chu style is to define the features of a southern legacy and demonstrate the vital role of the middle Yangzi region in shaping Chinese art for the next two millennia.

4:05–4:15 PM: Q&A

4:15–4:30 PM: Concluding remarks by Fan Jeremy Zhang

5 PM: Symposium concludes