

China: Longshan Horizon

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- During the last centuries of the Regional Neolithic and for several centuries after (roughly 3500 to 2500 BC), long-term trends towards increasing complexity continued
 - as we saw last time, various cultures in different regions developed high-status elites, elaborate burial mound complexes, special-purpose ceremonial sites, etc.
 - such as the Dawenkou and Hongshan cultures
- One of these more complex cultures of the terminal Regional Neolithic was the Liangzhu culture (Liang-chu in Wade-Giles orthography) (3500 - 2200 BC)
 - Appeared about 500 years before the end of the Regional Neolithic
 - and lasted until about 2200 BC
 - Not in the Yellow River area, where we have been focussing, but rather to the south, on the coastal plain around the lower Yangtze river
 - clearly developed out of the local Regional Neolithic culture there
 - villages were still small, maybe even smaller than the contemporary Yangshao villages
 - the Liangzhu culture is another example of the Regional Neolithic trend towards very elaborate burials for some high-status people
 - some very rich graves, often spatially segregated from poorer burials in the same cemetery
 - especially in the later stages of the Liangzhu culture
 - examples:
 - a rich burial at Ssu-tun
 - a young adult male
 - 4 ceramic vessels, 14 stone and jade implements, 49 jade ornaments
 - 24 jade rings and 33 jade cong tubes (written ts'ung in Wade-Giles orthography)
 - cong tubes are apparently ritual objects, usually jade, that are rectangular blocks with faces carved on the outside and a large round hole through the center
 - the rings are also probably ritual, votive, etc.; they are not finger rings or personal ornaments
 - suggesting that this person was heavily involved in ritual activities, either as a ritual specialist himself or a patron of specialists
 - the jades were very well made in very hard stone, implying a lot of wealth
 - some of the jades and the male's femora (thigh bones) were partially burned, suggesting some kind of burial ritual involving fire
 - burial mound at Sidun, 20 meters high (65 feet!)
 - burial of a young man
 - with over 100 jade artifacts
 - body and jades were partly burned
 - other burned burials around the mound are thought to be sacrifices
 - square dirt platform at Yaoshan
 - containing rich burials
 - burials with "extra" crania at Chang-ling-shan

- one burial with over 40 items plus three human crania
 - another with two "extra" crania and numerous "extra" limb bones
- clearly a powerful, wealthy elite was emerging in this basically rural society
- plus a new style of pottery
 - black, highly polished, very finely made
 - very thin walls, often with bamboo-like ring or ridge designs, cutouts in ring bases
 - some made on a true, fast potter's wheel
 - suggests craft specialization
- This style of black pottery went on to become popular over a wide area of China
 - indicating an increased amount of interaction and shared ideas over a large area
 - and serving as a convenient marker for a period of time called the "Longshan horizon"
- The Longshan horizon (Lung-shan), started around 3500 BC with Liangzhu culture, became widespread by 2500 BC; lasted until about 1500 BC
 - also written Longshan or Longshan
 - a "horizon" that spread across northern China
 - a "horizon" is the extension of a style (usually of pottery) over a very wide area
 - horizons make convenient time markers
 - because sites that contain objects in the horizon style must be roughly contemporary with each other
 - horizon styles allow us to correlate what was happening in many different places at that same time
 - but since a horizon style may take a while to spread, appearance of the style in different places may not actually happen at the same moment
 - a horizon typically starts somewhere, and gets to its periphery later
 - horizons are also interesting because they imply widely shared ideas, probably beyond the pottery style that marks them
 - the Longshan horizon apparently started on the lower Yangtze river, in the Liangzhu culture, as early as 3500 BC
 - and for whatever reason, spread from there to the rest of an area of interacting cultures called the Neolithic "Chinese interaction sphere"
 - markers of the Longshan horizon
 - wheel-made, thin-walled black ceramics
 - pedestal vases with cutouts in pedestal (tou)
 - tripod pots (ting)
 - certain axe types
 - jade cong tubes (square outside with faces; large round hole inside)
 - scapulamancy (oracle bones)
 - this increasing similarity in ceramics and other goods was apparently not due to conquest, but to increasing interaction
 - because in each region there was a gradual local development towards the shared style
 - (probably like the trend towards Kot Dijian pottery in the Indus, had we looked at that)
 - some items, like the cong tubes and oracle bones, probably reflect increasingly widespread, shared ideology or religious ideas

- the cultures that adopted this style formed the Neolithic “Chinese interaction sphere”, which was most pronounced from 2500 - 1500 BC
- several cultures in different regions were involved
 - don't worry about keeping track of these subdivisions; I only separate them here because this might help you make sense of the readings
 - Longshan in the coastal Yangtze River area: Liangzhu culture (3500-2200 BC)
 - already mentioned above; an early development of Longshan traits
 - Longshan in the coastal Yellow River area (Shantung area): Shantung Longshan (2700-1500 BC)
 - arose out of Dawenkou culture, the terminal Regional Neolithic culture in this area
 - Longshan in the Middle Yellow River Valley
 - arose out of Yangshao culture
 - plus Longshan cultures in various other areas
- subsistence continued as before, but probably more permanent and intensive
 - millet in pits and vessels
 - lots of pig bone, some cattle and dog
 - in some areas, cattle, water buffalo, and sheep were domesticated
- craft specialization apparently increased
 - pottery making probably required specialists
 - was made on a fast potter's wheel
 - kilns were more advanced
 - minor use of bronze for small objects probably implies specialist metalworkers
- settlements grew larger and many were walled
 - house styles did not change much for most people, like those of Yangshao, with storage pits, etc.
 - similar organization, with clusters of houses around a central “long house”
 - but many sites were larger than Yangshao villages
 - possibly more permanent (longer occupations)
 - may suggest a gradual shift from slash-and-burn towards more intensive, permanent, fallow agriculture
- numerous settlements had massive rammed-earth walls
 - at least two in the coastal Shantung area, several in the middle Yellow River area
 - these are the first major defensive works in Chinese prehistory
 - in fact, the first "public" works of any kind requiring significant labor to build
 - prior to this, only some special burials even approached this investment
 - rammed-earth is also called “tamped earth”, “stamped earth”, “hangtu”
 - made of 12-14 cm thick layers of loess soil
 - very regular, selected clean soil with aggregate stones
 - pounded into wide, shallow molds
 - each layer 3 cm narrower than the one below, forming a slight taper
- at Chengziyai (a town in the coastal Shantung area), the wall was 9 m (29 feet) thick, estimated 6 m (20 feet) high
 - the face was like a wall, but it was as massive as a whole solid building

- encloses an area of 450 X 390 m (about 1/4 mile on each side)
- about 18 hectares
- could contain over 16 football fields
- my rough estimate of population within the wall: probably between 500 and 3600 people
 - based on Yangshao density of 100 houses/5 ha, probably 20 to 100 people/ha, and guessing that Chengziyai could have been up to twice as densely occupied
 - would have been a medium to large town, but probably not really city sized
- yet an enormous labor investment in the wall
 - implies control of a lot of workers, agricultural surplus, etc.
 - extracting a huge amount of labor from the villagers, or maybe also drawing upon people living outside the walls -- implying power over a surrounding hinterland
- another example of a walled village: Pingliangtai (middle Yellow River area)
 - rectangular rammed-earth wall 185 m (600 feet) on a side all around the town (illustrated in Barnes reading)
 - wall is 13 m (42 feet) wide at base, remains still stand 3 m (10 feet) tall over 4000 years later!
 - two entrances (north and south), one with gatehouses
 - underground drains of pottery tubes go under this gate
 - 3.4 hectares (comparable to Jericho)
 - much smaller than Chengziyai i; illustrates considerable variation over this large region
 - inside are rectangular buildings of mud brick, up to several rooms, with storage pits
 - some on raised platforms, suggesting special status
 - craft production areas inside the wall (ceramic kilns and manufacture of stone artifacts)
- there were also much smaller walled compounds
 - both inside walled towns, and out in the countryside
 - square, 6 m (18 feet) on a side
 - on low rammed earth platforms (30 cm high)
 - although they don't look like much to us, these platforms would represent a lot of labor and would have been recognized as a privilege of wealth
 - especially since the platforms often contained sacrificial burials, and people would have known that
 - these would be high-status houses, like fortified villas
 - residences of powerful leaders of largely rural people?
- several towns were around 17 hectares, still pretty small for "cities" in the western sense
 - but maybe a lot of people lived outside the walled area?
- warfare and violence escalated dramatically
 - town walls suggest fear of attack
- big increase in spear points and arrow points in the coastal Shantung area
 - the points make up a much higher percentage of all bone and stone artifacts than in earlier periods
 - since the people presumably were farming more than before and hunting less, the rise in points may be for weapons rather than hunting

- Site of Chien-kou (middle Yellow River area)
 - surrounded by a circular town wall
 - within a house, six human skulls with signs of blows and scalping
 - two water wells that were stuffed with five layers of human bodies
 - male and female, all ages
 - some decapitated, some without feet
- KC Chang sees this period as the beginning of “institutionalized violence”
 - between walled settlements: raids or warfare
 - within settlements
 - construction and burial sacrifices indicate ritual “peacetime” violence
 - carried out for rituals associated with high-status people
- ritual practices became more elaborate, specialized, and associated with the elite
 - oracle bones: “scapulamancy” became widespread
 - deer, ox, sheep scapulae
 - depressions carved into one side of the bone; a hot poker placed in the depression; cracks form that were apparently used to tell the future
 - but without any signs of writing yet
 - suggests rise of specialized shamans
 - animal “masks” or faces on pottery and jade artifacts are thought to have ritual significance
 - infant burials under house posts, under walls, or in walls
 - thought to be sacrifices for house-building rituals
 - some sites have rammed-earth house platforms that contain pits filled with layers of rammed earth and up to 7 burials between the layers
 - including both adults and children
 - thought to be ritual sacrifices associated with construction
 - sacrifice had shifted from animals to people
 - suggests increased power of elites, literally over life and death
- burials have much more drastic variation in grave wealth than seen before
 - burials at Chengziyai indicate much more marked status and wealth hierarchy than in previous periods
 - this was the cemetery of the coastal Shantung Longshan walled town we looked at earlier, Cheng-tzu-yai
 - four categories, from poorest to richest:
 - narrow pit (54, or 62%)
 - body only, no goods or casket
 - small without ledge (17, or 20%)
 - no caskets, few goods
 - smaller with ledge (11, or 13%)
 - some caskets, many grave goods
 - sometimes including a thin cup on high stem, pig mandible
 - large with ledge (5 of these, or 6%)
 - wooden caskets, many grave goods

- a thin cup on high stem, pig mandible
- these graves were clustered in three groups, each group had most types of graves
 - suggests “stratified lineage” structure of historical China
 - that is, three lineages, each with its own hierarchy
 - this seems to continue the emphasis on separate lineages that we saw in the Regional Neolithic, especially in Yangshao villages and cemeteries
- huge cemetery of T’ao-ssu, over 1000 burials excavated, thousands more thought to remain
 - three categories of graves, from poorest to richest:
 - small, shallow graves (87%)
 - over 610 so far
 - most have no goods
 - medium graves (11%)
 - about 80 so far
 - two different pit styles, shallow and wide, or deep and narrow
 - 2.5 x 1.5 m, “shallow”
 - 2.2-2.5 x .8-1.0 m, 2-3.5 m deep
 - segregated in separate areas of the cemetery - different social groups?
 - wooden coffins with red cinnabar powder spread inside
 - goods include headdresses, rings, ornaments, sets of ceramic vessels, axes, jade cong tubes, pig mandibles
 - most of the medium graves seem to cluster around large graves
 - but they aren't apparently sacrifices
 - maybe these people were associated with the very high status individuals buried in the big graves
 - large graves (1%)
 - 9 so far
 - 3 m X 2-2.75 m pit
 - all preserved skeletons are male
 - wooden coffins with red cinnabar powder spread inside
 - 100-200 items
 - wooden table, ceramics, jade rings, axes, whole pigs
 - five of the nine large graves had a “music set”:
 - wooden drum covered with crocodile skin
 - “musical stone” (chime)
 - pottery tubes thought to be drums
 - this set of items symbolizes royalty in later Chinese texts
 - arranged in at least two separate clusters, each with all three types
 - the same pattern we have seen before, suggesting separate lineages with internal hierarchy
- overall, a drastic new stratification of wealth and power
 - implied by the huge, labor-intensive rammed-earth wall projects
 - indicated by variation in dwellings

- on platforms or not
- with sacrificed burials under them or in walls, or not
- especially visible in burials
 - size and shape of burial pit (plain, ledge, log chamber, etc.)
 - huge variation in quantity and quality of goods
 - certain goods restricted to most elite burials (thin cup on high stem, pig mandible, "music set") suggesting a top class with special privileges
 - division of cemeteries into groups, possibly by descent (clan membership), each with its own internal hierarchy of status
- increasing use of jade, ivory, turtle shells in ritual associated with elites
 - implies that they got these exotic goods by long-distance exchange, probably controlling traders, surplus, craft production for exchange, etc.
 - stratification is also implied by the elites' evident power to conduct sacrifices
- this extreme stratification and widespread pottery style also associated with drastic rise in raids or warfare, as well as internal violence of sacrifices
- was this civilization?
 - compared to the other cases, it has an interesting mix of characteristics
 - lots of social stratification, craft specialization, and warfare
 - but limited urbanism, and still no writing