

Art and Archaeology of the Erligang Civilization

An international conference organized by the
P. Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for East Asian Art
at Princeton University

26–27 April 2008

Named after a type site discovered at Zhengzhou in 1951, the Erligang civilization arose in the Yellow River valley around the middle of the second millennium B.C.E. Shortly thereafter its distinctive elite material culture spread to a large part of China's central plain, in the south reaching as far as the banks of the Yangzi. Source of most of the cultural achievements familiarly associated with the more famous Anyang site, the Erligang culture is best known for the Zhengzhou remains, a smaller city at Panlongcheng in Hubei, and a large-scale bronze industry of remarkable artistic and technological sophistication. Bronzes are the hallmark of Erligang elite material culture. They are also the archaeologist's main evidence for understanding the transmission of bronze metallurgy to the cultures of southern China.

This conference brings together scholars from a variety of disciplines to explore what is known about the Erligang culture and its art, its spectacular bronze industry in particular. Participants will ask how the Erligang artistic and technological tradition was formed and how we should understand its legacy for the later cultures of north and south China. Comparison with other ancient civilizations will afford an important perspective.

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Saturday, 26 April 2008

101 McCormick Hall

Registration and coffee

8:30–9:30 am

Welcome

Jerome Silbergeld Director, Tang Center for East Asian Art and
P.Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Professor of Chinese Art History, Princeton University

Morning Session

9:30 am–12:30 pm

The Erligang Civilization

CHAIR: **Kyle Steinke**

Ph.D. Candidate, Princeton University

*Erligang Bronzes and the Discovery
of the Erligang Culture*

Robert Bagley Professor of Art and
Archaeology, Princeton University

Coffee Break

*Erligang Bronzes: A Perspective
from Panlongcheng*

Zhang Changping Deputy Director,
Hubei Provincial Museum

DISCUSSANT: **Alain Thote** Directeur
d'Etudes, Ecole Pratique des Hautes
Etudes, Paris

Discussion

Lunch

12:30–1:30 pm

Frist Campus Center

Afternoon Session

2:00–5:30 pm

**Erligang in Anthropological and
Comparative Perspective**

CHAIR: **Magnus Fiskesjö**

Assistant Professor of Anthropology,
Cornell University

*Erligang in Regional and
Diachronic Context*

Rod Campbell Visiting Research
Scholar, Institute for the Study of the
Ancient World, New York University

DISCUSSANT: **Li Yung-ti** Research
Fellow, Academia Sinica

Coffee Break

*China's First Empire? Interpreting the
Material Record of the Erligang Culture*

Wang Haicheng Postdoctoral Fellow,
Center for Chinese Studies, University
of California, Berkeley

DISCUSSANT: **John Baines** Professor
of Egyptology, University of Oxford

Discussion

Reception

5:30–7:00 pm

McCormick Hall

Sunday, 27 April 2008

101 McCormick Hall

Registration and coffee

8:30–9:30 am

Morning Session

9:30 am–12:30 pm

**The Artistic Legacy of the
Erligang Bronze Industry**

CHAIR: **Jay Xu**

Director, Asian Art Museum
of San Francisco

*Erligang and the Southern
Bronze Industries*

Kyle Steinke Ph.D. candidate,
Princeton University

DISCUSSANT: **Robin McNeal** Associate
Professor of Chinese History, Language,
and Literature, Cornell University

Coffee Break

Bronzes and the History of Chinese Art

Maggie Bickford Professor of the
History of Art and Architecture,
Brown University

Discussion

Closing Remarks

Jay Xu Asian Art Museum
of San Francisco

P.Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for East Asian Art
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Conference Participants

Robert Bagley is a professor in the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University. His recent publications include "Shang Archaeology," in Loewe and Shaughnessy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Ancient China* (1999); "Anyang Writing and the Origins of the Chinese Writing System," in Stephen Houston, ed., *The First Writing* (2004); and "The Prehistory of Chinese Music Theory," in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 130 (2005). His first published work, in the 1977 volume of *Artibus Asiae*, was an article on the Panlongcheng site.

John Baines is Professor of Egyptology at the University of Oxford. His principal publications are on Egyptian art, literature, and religion. He has also focused on the role of writing in Egyptian society and on high-cultural legitimations and concerns of elites. His publications include *Visual and Written Culture in Ancient Egypt* (2007) and *High Culture and Experience in Ancient Egypt* (in preparation for 2009/10).

Maggie Bickford is Professor of the History of Art and Architecture and Professor of East Asian Studies at Brown University. She is an historian of Chinese Art. She trained at Princeton, receiving her Ph.D. in Chinese Art and Archaeology in 1987. Primarily a scholar of Chinese painting of the Song and Yuan periods, she was drawn into the historiography of Chinese bronze studies in the course of preparing for her Princeton general exams a long time ago. Her book *Ink Plum: The Making of a Chinese Scholar-Painting Genre* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), won the Association for Asian Studies Joseph Levinson Prize for the best book of its year on pre-modern China. Her most recent book is a co-edited volume, *Emperor Huizong and Northern Song Culture: the Politics of Culture and the Culture of Politics*, published in the Harvard East Asian Monograph Series, Harvard University Press (2006).

Rod Campbell received a M.A. in Early Chinese Paleography from the University of British Columbia in 2001 and a Ph.D. in Anthropology and East Asian Languages and Civilizations from Harvard in 2007. Between 2004 and 2007 he was a visiting student first in the Department of Archaeology at Peking University and then at the Institute of Archaeology in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. His dissertation is a re-examination of the Anyang polity from the vantage point of its practices of kinship and violence and their role in constituting authority. He is currently a visiting researcher at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University.

Magnus Fiskesjö is an anthropologist, archaeologist and sinologist educated in Sweden, in China, and at the University of Chicago where he received a joint Ph.D. in Anthropology and East Asian Languages and Civilizations in 2000. His dissertation, *The Fate of Sacrifice and the Making of Wa History*, was based on ethnographic and historical research on the relations between China and its "barbarian" others. From 2000 to 2005 Fiskesjö was the Director of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, in Stockholm. Since 2005, he has been teaching at Cornell University. He has published on Shang hunting rituals in early Chinese state formation and on other topics, and continues to be engaged in the global debates about looting, the antiquities trade, and related issues.

Li Yung-ti is an affiliated researcher at the Institute of History and Philology (IHP), Academia Sinica, where he works on the archaeology of Anyang and the Chinese Bronze Age. Li received his Ph.D. in anthropology from Harvard University in 2003. His dissertation, *The Anyang Bronze Foundries: Archaeological Remains, Casting Technology, and Production Organization*, focused on craft production in state-level societies, with particular attention to section-mold casting technology. His current projects include investigating relations between Anyang and the contemporaneous polities in northern and southern China and publication of the early twentieth-century archaeological excavations conducted by the IHP.

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Robin McNeal, associate professor in the Department of Asian Studies at Cornell University, earned a Ph.D. from the University of Washington's Department of History in 2000. He works on the intellectual history of early China. His book *Conquer and Govern: Early Chinese Military Texts from the Yi Zhou Shu* (forthcoming, University of Hawai'i Press) is a study of the discourse on the civil and martial realms of state power from the fifth through first centuries BCE. He is currently working on a book-length study of early Chinese myth, and has a long-standing interest in the archaeology of Hunan province during the Bronze Age.

Kyle Steinke is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of East Asian Studies at Princeton University. He is writing a dissertation on the inscribed bronzes of the Western Zhou. His article "Script Change in Bronze Age China" will appear in Stephen Houston ed., *Shape of the Script: How Writing Systems Change and Why* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research, forthcoming). His research interests include the early history of Chinese calligraphy and the early bronze industries of the Yangzi region.

Alain Thote, a specialist of Bronze Age China, is Professor of Chinese Archaeology and Art History at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, where he has taught since 2001. He obtained his Ph.D. in Far Eastern Studies in 1985 and worked at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) as a Research Fellow from 1986 to 2001. In 2000, he began a collaborative project with Wuhan University and the Archaeological Institute of Henan Province for the excavation of a Bronze Age settlement in central China at Gongying, near Nanyang in Henan province. The team, composed of Chinese and French archaeologists, has already completed fieldwork and is now preparing the final report to be published in 2009. He is director of the Research Center on Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan Civilizations, Paris.

Wang Haicheng earned his M.A. at Peking University (2000) and Ph.D. at Princeton (2007). He is currently a postdoctoral fellow in the Center for Chinese Studies at UC Berkeley. His research interests focus on comparative studies between Bronze Age China and other early civilizations; he is also interested in the art and archaeology of the Silk Routes. His dissertation is a cross-cultural study of the uses to which writing was put by early states in China, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Central Mexico, and the Maya region, with the Andean states included for comparative purposes. His archaeological fieldwork experience includes both excavations and surveys at Neolithic and historical sites on the Silk Routes. In August 2008 he will begin his teaching career as an assistant professor in the School of Art at the University of Washington, Seattle.

Jay Xu has recently accepted the directorship of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. He leaves the Art Institute of Chicago where he has been Pritzker Curator and Chairman of the Department of Asian and Ancient Art (2003–2008). He previously served as curator of Chinese art at the Seattle Art Museum (1996–2003). He began his curatorial career at the Shanghai Museum in 1983 and came to the United States in 1990 for graduate studies at Princeton University (MA 1993; Ph.D. candidacy). In 2001 he organized the landmark exhibition *Treasures From a Lost Civilization: Ancient Chinese Art From Sichuan*, which toured North American museums including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. His research interests primarily focus on archaeology and bronzes of ancient China.

Zhang Changping is deputy director of the Hubei Provincial Museum. He received his Ph.D. from the Department of Archaeology at Peking University. Since 1986 he has worked as an archaeologist in the Hubei Provincial Institute for Archaeological Research. His primary research interest is the archaeology of southern China during the Bronze Age. He edited the excavation report on the Han tombs and inscribed bamboo and wooden strips found at Kongjiapo, in Suizhou county, Hubei province (2006) and co-edited the Hubei volume of the *Comprehensive Catalogue of Jades Unearthed in China* (2005). His most recent publication is *Bronzes of the State of Zeng* (2007).