



Greek geometric pottery



Today we're headed to China. China has thousands of years of art history to cover, especially during the ancient times. In this lesson we're going to focus on art from the Bronze Age, from about 1700 BCE to about 200 BCE. Before we go into talk about our bronze vessels, which is going to be the main focus of the lesson today, I'm going to share with you a little bit of information about the artworks that came before so that you can get a better understanding of Ancient Chinese art as a whole.

The earliest art from the Neolithic Period in China was clay pots and pottery.



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These clay pots from the Neolithic time period had animal designs and human faces. They eventually ended up making those animals into more symmetrical, abstract shapes and we're going to see that transfer over to the art that we're going to talk about today.

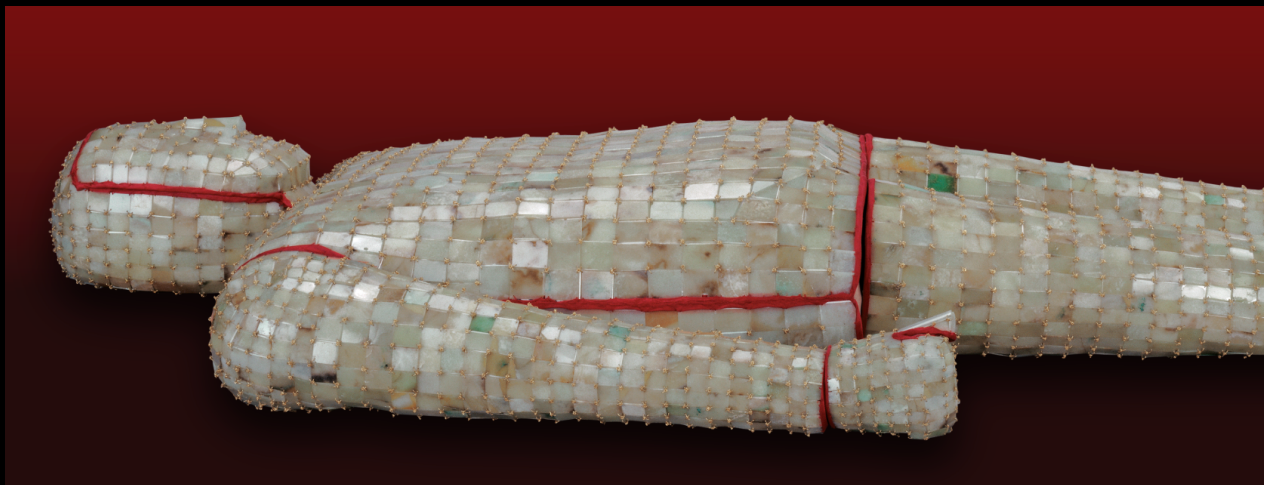




Photo Credit: Immanuel Giel

Jade in China comes from a mountaintop. When it falls down into the river it breaks open and reveals this beautiful green underneath. It's become really a signifier of Chinese art, even still today.



Amulet in the Form of a Seated Figure with Bovine Head, c. 4700-2920 BC
Northeast China, Neolithic period, probably Hongshan culture



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Another important art form from Ancient China that dates all the way back to 3,800 BCE is jade sculpture and ornaments. Out of jade, they made cylinders, discs, pendants, jewelry, hair ornaments, plaques, and sculpture.



Fluted Ring with Dragon Head (Huan)
475-221 B



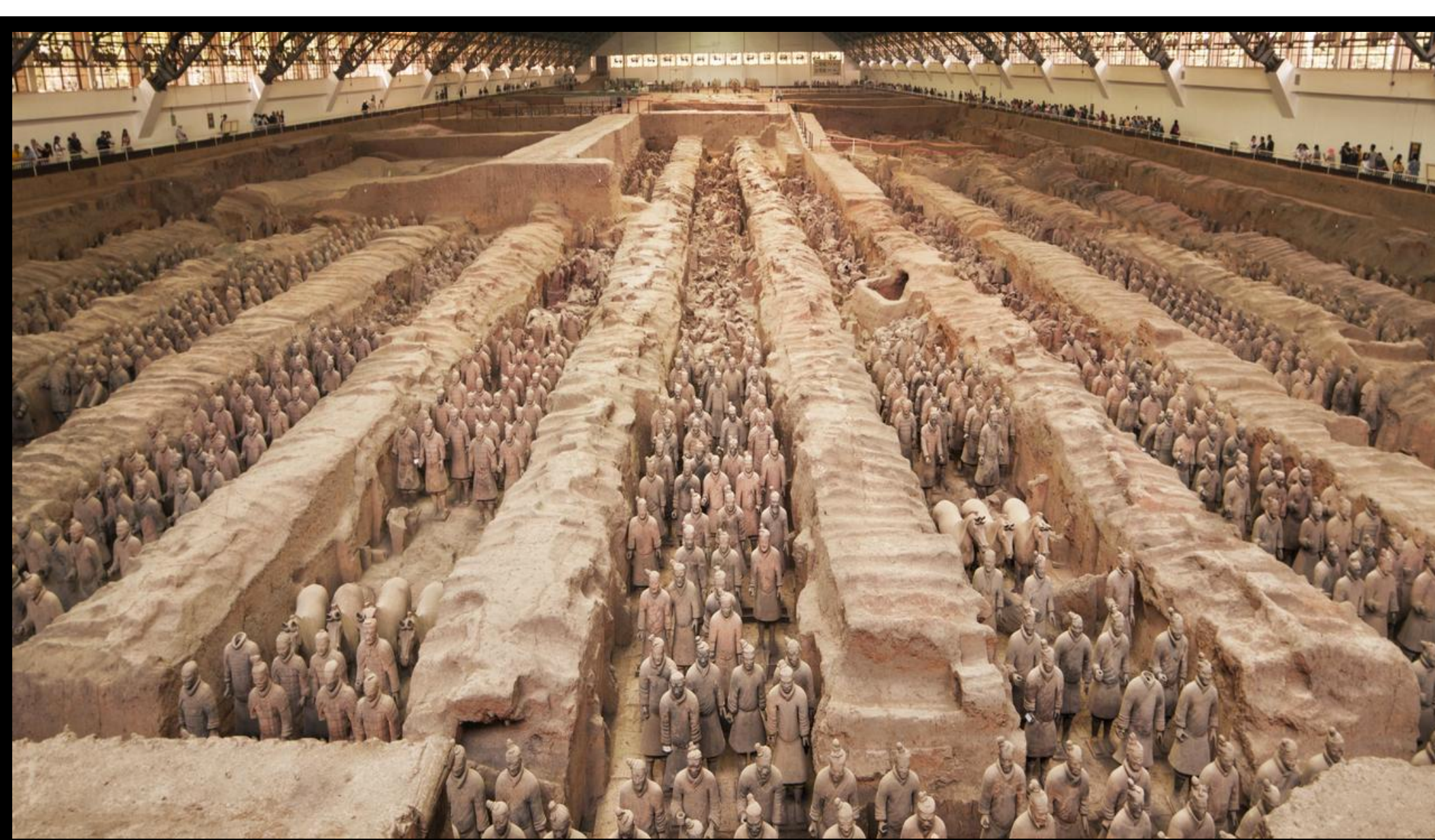
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These vessels are more than just to serve and store food. These vessels have a very sacred and spiritual purpose. An important person might own a bronze vessel and they use that bronze vessel in rituals to celebrate and to honor his or her ancestors. Then, when that owner of that vessel passes on, the vessel then is included in the tomb of that important person.



The first emperor of the Qin dynasty, the Emperor Qin, is considered the first emperor of China — so much that the name of China, China, comes from Qin. Qin, China. In 1974, they discovered the tomb of the Emperor Qin and it is unlike anything you could ever imagine. I haven't been there, but it's unlike anything I can ever imagine.

221 BC - 206 BC



The tomb of **Emperor Qin** is a burial mound. Underground are over 8000 life size clay sculptures. The tomb is 20 sq. miles of land.



I just find it so exciting. It's a total bucket list item for me to go see these sculptures. I don't think anyone can truly imagine the scale of that experience and of that place. To me, it's more than just looking at these amazing works of art, but it's thinking about putting myself in the mindset of Emperor Qin. How does a person fathom and come up with this idea that they need 8,000 soldiers in the afterlife underground with him? I just don't know. I just find it fascinating to think about that. It's crazy, but so cool.

That's a brief overview of Ancient Chinese art. China has so much art and so much beauty to share with the world, so I look forward to sharing more Chinese art with you in the future courses as we progress out of the ancient time periods and into our modern societies. Stay tuned.<http://la>



They were all buried underground. So far they've dug up three pits of land filled with sculpture and they found a fourth pit that's empty, which makes historians believe that this might not have ever been finished even though it's the largest burial complex in the world.



What's even more exciting is that each one of those 8,000 sculptures is different. They have different facial features and different expressions on their faces. They've studied them intensely to figure out that there are 10 basic face shapes, but once they have those face shapes, they then changed them to make them each unique, so that each sculpture is different. They vary in height and they vary in what they're wearing as well.

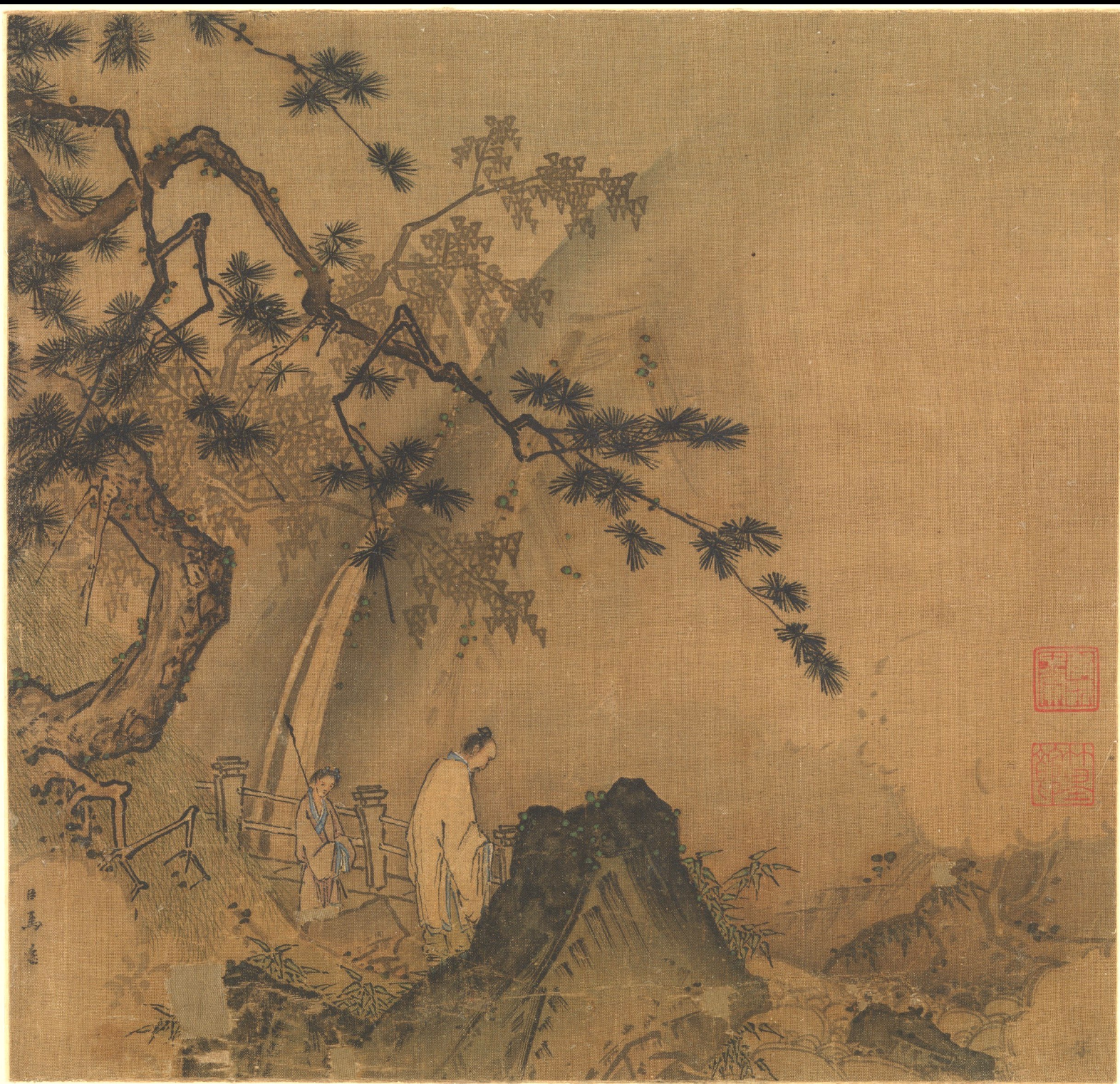


Instead of the artists crafting one soldier at a time, they created them in more of an assembly-line process. They know that based on inscriptions made on different pieces. They could see which workshop worked on which piece and, in addition to the thousands of terracotta sculptures, there are over 40,000 items of weaponry, from crossbows to axes to swords, and these adorn the terracotta sculptures.



Certain higher rank officials might have different hairstyles, different hats, different armor than the lower-ranked soldiers did. They were originally brightly painted but, when they were excavated, the paint instantly flaked away which is why now, today, we see them as just this clay, terracotta color.

The tomb of Emperor Qin, which is there, has not yet been opened because they're afraid that once they do open it that what is inside will be destroyed.



Scholar
Viewing a Waterfall
12th–early 13th century
Ma Yuan Chinese



劉晨阮肇剡縣人也家世業儒
尤留意於醫嘗飄然有霞表
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