

Chinese
Archaeological
Discoveries

Edited by Zhang Dongxia



THE VANISHED ANCIENT LIANGZHU KINGDOM

A recount of the past and a revealing of the secrets

CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

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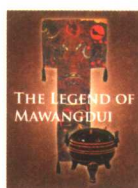
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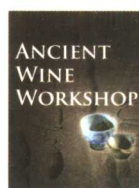
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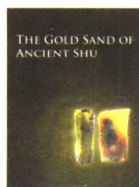
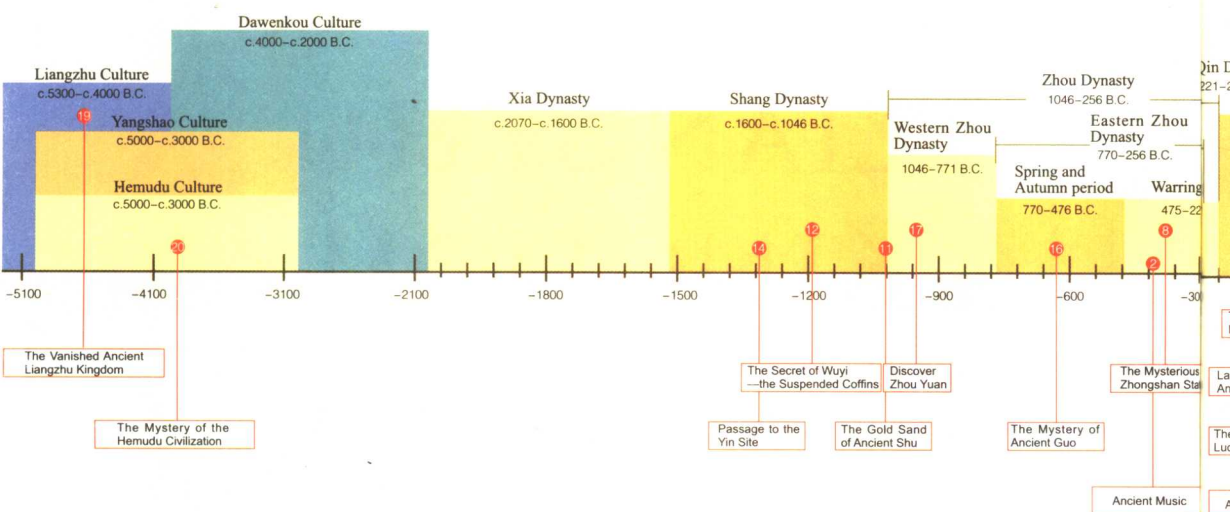
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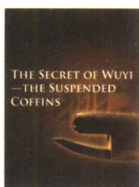
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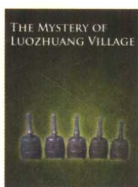
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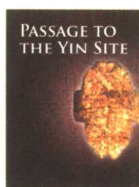
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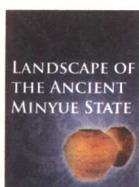
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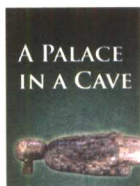
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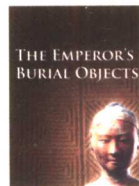
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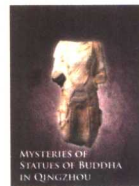
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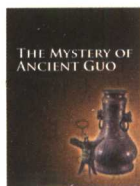
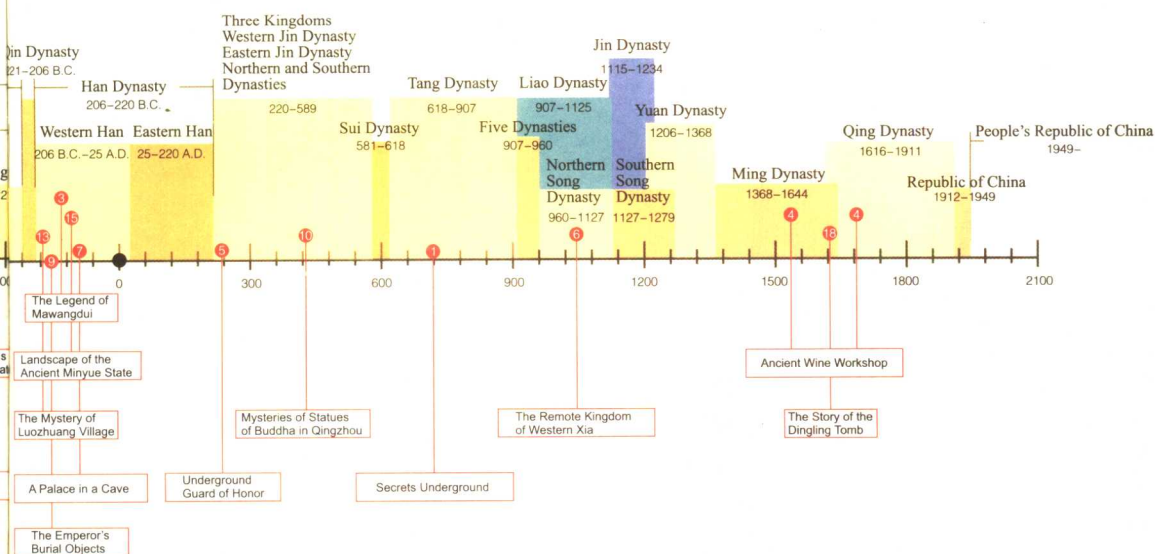
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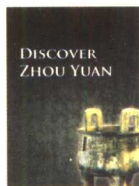
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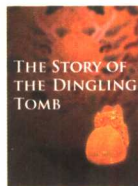
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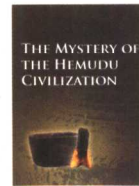
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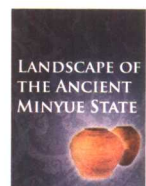
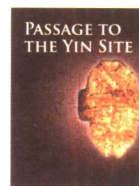
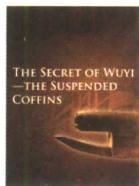
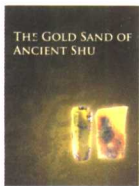


19



20

CONTENTS



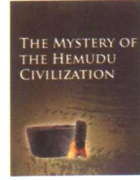
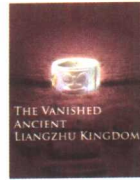
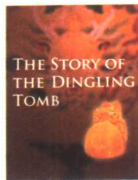
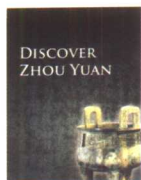
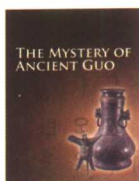
The Gold Sand of Ancient Shu.....6

The Secret of Wuyi—the Suspended Coffins.....26

The Mystery of Luozhuang Village.....44

Passage to the Yin Site.....68

Landscape of the Ancient Minyue State.....90



The Mystery of Ancient Guo.....108

Discover Zhou Yuan.....132

The Story of the Dingling Tomb.....152

The Vanished Ancient Liangzhu Kingdom.....172

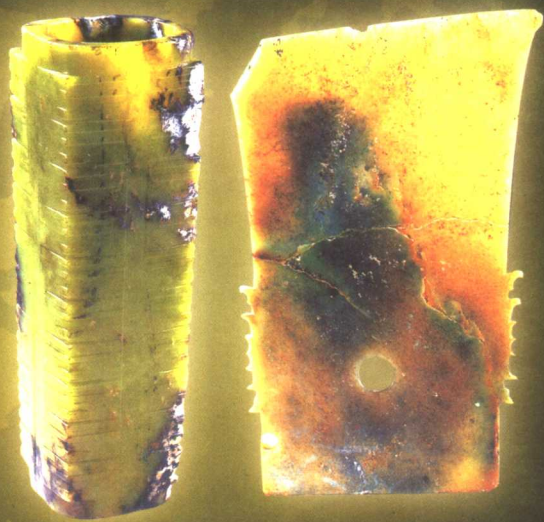
The Mystery of the Hemudu Civilization.....188

THE GOLD SAND OF ANCIENT SHU



It was the first year of the 21st century. At a construction site in the outskirts of Chengdu City, the excavators were busy with digging out the sleeping earth. Suddenly, something white was found. Then some assorted fragments of jade and pottery were dug out by the workers. What are these? Who had left them here?

THE GOLD SAND OF ANCIENT SHU





This place is located in the west of Chengdu City, Sichuan Province. It has an attractive name: Gold Sand Village. Generations of peasants here hadn't thought about how this fanciful name came. Only a few experts find in documents that the name was given because the peasants here could often pick up soft golden fragments at the riverbank. What can be confirmed is that at least in the Five Dynasty period of over one thousand years ago, the name Gold Sand had appeared and is still used today.

On February 8, 2001, the colleagues of Chengdu Archaeology Research Institute were holding a project meeting in Mianyang City, more than 120km from Chengdu. During the meeting, the head of the institute Wang Yi received a call.



Wang Yi

Director of Chengdu Archaeological Institute

Suddenly my family told me that there were things like elephant tusks and jade slices, which seem related to Sanxingdui site.

Wang Yi immediately sent his best archaeologists in the institute to Chengdu. Zhu Zhangyi was one of the three who came back to Chengdu that night. He had no clear idea about the exact location of Gold Sand. The only thing he knew was that the place where the historical relics found was a construction site of a real estate project.



Zhu Zhangyi

Director of Archaeological Office of Jinsha Site

The second morning, the fog was so thick that we could see only four or five meters around. When we arrived there, we saw two ditches, one was to be a road and the other a drain for rain. We found many jade wares and a great number of tusk dregs in one ditch and on the section of the other we saw three or four spots of tusks.



They took back the earth to have a further study. The result shocked them greatly.

Wang Yi

Director of Chengdu Archaeological Institute

We had never imagined that in the earth there would be so many jade wares and important historical relics. Usually if we found in a grave a few jade wares, gold wares and bronze wares, we would be very excited. But here, there were plenty of jade wares and the tusks could be measured in tons.

According to statistics, there are more than 1,000 pieces of precious historical relics, not including the tusk fragments which cannot be calculated. This can fully show that the discovery here is of great archaeological value.

Wang Yi:

I think, to archaeologists, this kind of discovery is enormously exciting. It took place in 2001, so it must be the first important archaeological discovery of China in the 21st century. We were so excited that we made such a great discovery.

What kind of site is it? Who have left such precious relics here?

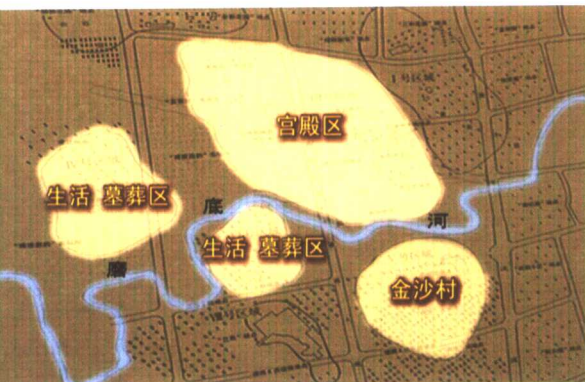
At the beginning of the excavation of Gold Sand site, the archaeologists associated it with a place called Huangzhong Village near Gold Sand, where some sites of big houses and many ancient graves were found. People were puzzled by these sites, so no final conclusion was made.

The appearance of Gold Sand site urged the archaeologists to look closely at the earlier archaeological discoveries around Gold Sand again. In the earlier months of 2001, Chengdu archaeologist team carried out an excavation around Gold Sand site. The surface area of exploration was 4 square km and the excavation covered an area of over 100,000 square km. The result showed that Gold Sand site had more unbound secrets.

Gold Sand site is a level, rivered alluvial plain with a total area of over 3 square km. It is separated into south and north halves by Modi River, which flows eastward. The area where the tusks and jades were found is in Gold Sand Village at the south riverbank of Modi River. To the west and northwest of this area, some sites of houses, pottery kilns, ash pits and graves were found. This area was judged as a living area and as a small grave area. As Huangzhong site is situated at the north riverbank of Modi River, it was probably a palace area.



The Excavation Spot of Gold Sand



The Layout of Gold Sand Site

Obviously, Gold Sand site was once an inhabited region of ancient people which is well-designed and strictly-distributed. Therefore, is it a capital of an ancient empire? And who built it?

As the amount of historical relics unearthed in other areas was limited, people put hope in the central area of Gold Sand Village. Since the surface dust excavated was full of treasures, there must be more in the deeper earth.

After clearing up the surface dust, the archaeologists carefully dug exploratory squares on the basis of formal archaeological procedures.

The first pit was crowded with various gold wares, jade wares, bronze wares and ivories. The relics were crowded but not disorderly. They were displayed in a certain order.

Then, accumulated pits were found one

after another. Some were full of stone caves and some were filled with wild boar buckteeth, deerhorns and a small amount of ivories, jade wares, pottery wares, and so on. Was it an ancient garbage yard?

However, no bones of other parts of animal bodies were found besides buckteeth and horns. It showed that these bones were not refuse but utensils of special use.

**Sun Hua**

Professor of Peking University

These look like raw materials or semifinished products. Take ivories for example, some are sawed into pieces which are to be processed. Pig teeth and deerhorns are put into different categories. This seems to be a storehouse, a raw material storehouse.

a woman:

A folio-shaping technique was found in the jade wares of Gold Sand site. Two pieces of jade wares are made at the same time, then separated into two. This is a sample of a material object. We can see it hasn't been cut in the middle. This jade ware is the best data for us to learn the method of jade processing of ancient people.

Sun Hua:

All the evidence shows that this is likely a processing place for valuable wares and a handicraft workshop of the ruling class.



Disagreeing people pointed out that if it was an area of handicraft workshops, why were no processing tools found?

Zhu Zhangyi

Director of Archaeological Office of Jinsha Site

We have reasons for saying it is a sacrificial area. One is that the wild boar buckteeth are identified as the two teeth of the lower gum, which were chosen. Another reason is that jade wares and ivories, which were very precious at that time, are put here. Usually they will not be placed randomly.

A discovery later brought new evidence for the hypothesis of sacrificial pits. In the central area of Gold Sand site, 19 tortoise shells were found. They are not ordinary. On every tortoise shell, there are scalded holes. These tortoise shells are very much like the ones found in Yinxu, though no characters are seen. But it is enough to

show that they are divining tortoise shells.

In ancient times, wizards scalded on the tortoise shells with heated metal bars to foretell the future according to the fissures around the holes. The sizes of the tortoise shells usually represented the power of the rulers.

One of the Gold Sand tortoise shells has a length of 59cm. It is regarded as the biggest divining tortoise shell ever found. This does not simply mean that the wizard had a very high position such as an emperor, but also powerfully shows that the central part of the site was a large sacrificial area.

Another phenomenon is that the accumulation is 3m in thickness and separated in layers. Why?



Gold Sand Relic Site

People guess that in the long history, these mysterious people frequently held special sacrificial rites. At every site, they sacrificed holy articles and covered a layer of earth on them after the rite in order that next time they could hold another rite there. Layers of relics bring infinite shock to people thousands of years later.

There are still debates on the use of the sacrificial pits. However, these pits are the most important treasure storehouses of Gold Sand site, through which we can realize the technique and wisdom of the ancient people and learn more about the conditions of antique times.

According to the models of the pottery wares, the archaeologists initially judged that the time of Gold Sand site was perhaps

late Shang dynasty to early Western Zhou dynasty, over three thousand years ago.

People today are still accustomed to call Sichuan “Shu” for short. People believe the existence of ancient Shu Empire, but the history of it is still uncertain.

For a long time, the archaeological circles had thought that while the people in Central Plains were living an abundant and civilized life, it was still a deserted area here and the people living here were still in an uncivilized state.

The discoveries of Gold Sand can show us the living conditions of people thousands of years ago more accurately and vividly.



Tortoise Shells Found in Gold Sand Site



The amount of ivories unearthed in Gold Sand is astonishing. Using ivories so luxuriously has never happened elsewhere in ancient China.

Since the ivories have been buried under the earth for so long, as soon as they meet the air, they are dehydrated and easily effloresced. To prevent the ivories from being destroyed in shipment, the archaeologists invented a unique method. They consolidated them with gypsum before moving ivories. Then they cleared the gypsum and wash carefully. The cleaned ivories were put into pre-made wood cases, which were later filled carefully with liquid silica gel.

The sizes of Gold Sand ivories are larger than that of the present existing elephants in China or even Asia. Therefore, where did these elephants come from? Were they local or from somewhere faraway?

According to historical geography, in Shang dynasty of over three thousand years ago, there were elephants in the Central Plains. There is a record of the Shang Emperor hunting elephants. Some elephant bones were also found in Yinxu. So it is not surprising that in Sichuan, which is in the south, elephants existed.

Usually elephants live in warm areas. If it is true that three thousand years ago many elephants existed there, then does it mean that at that time, the climate of



The Ivories Unearthed

Sichuan Basin was greatly different from today?

Sun Hua

Professor of Peking University

The climate of China became cold from Western Zhou dynasty. However, Sichuan was encircled by mountains and the cold air passed by without affecting it. So I think in Western Zhou dynasty, there were still many elephants in Sichuan. They didn't move southward until many of them were hunted and killed as the human activity in Sichuan Basin became more frequent and day-by-day.

More and more discoveries provided similar evidences. In Gold Sand site, there is a huge body of an ancient tree. Huge trees like this are hardly seen today. Modern people could not find a vehicle to carry it at one time. It had to be sawed into pieces and the weight of each piece being about 3 tons.

Zhu Zhangyi

Director of Archaeological Office of Jinsha Site

The time of its death is 6,500 years

ago according to charcoal numerical value determination. The lifespan of it is, we think, over 1,000 years. So from its birth to now, it is about 8,000 years. It is fine-grained and very heavy. Till now, the middle piece still weighs over 10 tons. The biggest diameter of it is 2.1m and the length of it is 27 m. What species is it? Actually it is a kind of fragrant fruit tree. Fragrant fruit trees cannot be found in Chengdu Plain today, but there are still some in the high mountains near Chengdu. However, they have become bushes. Environmental changes can greatly affect trees. This is from 6,000 years ago. In Gold Sand, there are others from over 3,000 years ago and in Chuanguan 2,000 years ago.

In 2000, people found an ancient grave site on a construction site in the downtown area of Chengdu City. It is about 2,500 years ago from today, a little bit later than Gold Sand.

There are 17 coffins in this grave. Every coffin is made of an entire Phoebe nanmu. Among these coffins, the diameter of the thickest trunk is 1.7 m and the longest is 20 m. We can imagine how big the nanmu trees were at that time.

According to the information accumulated through the discoveries, people can vaguely imagine the living environment of the ancient people who lived in Sichuan Basin more than three thousand years ago. Crowds of animals lived among dense forests. Ferocious and big animals like tigers and elephants were the subjects ancient people revered. If an



The Coffins Made of Phoebe Nanmu

elephant was killed, it must be the result of cooperation. A day when an elephant was caught would be a festival. People presented the tusks to the emperor or used them as sacrificial offerings or decorations.

On this jade ware from Gold Sand are carved two persons. In their hands are elephant tusks.

However, hunting was not the principal way of living in this primeval nation. Evidence shows that the ancient people of Gold Sand knew how to produce grains. They were at the status of an advanced agricultural civilization.

This was found in Gold Sand site in 2002, which is very surprising. The shape is much like a shovel today. It is made of a whole piece of wood. Some people think it is an agricultural tool named Si, which was used to turn over the earth in rice agriculture.