China Level 1

Gallery Search Important Facts

Research and Cooperation

Find the reconstruction of a 17th C. Chinese imperial building.

A crew of Chinese artisans from the National Museum of Chinese Architecture in Beijing assembled the life-sized architectural fragment and painted and gilded it in a traditional style.

What colours were used in decorating the palace and why?

_____

_____

_____

Silk Road

Find this glazed ceramic statue of a merchant on a camel, A.D. 550-648.

Glazed ceramic statuary of this type was a standard accoutrement of burial during the Tang Dynasty. Ancient Chinese texts refer to camels' strength and endurance. They were used to supply the Chinese army as well as to carry trade goods across the Silk Road.

Why would camels be placed in burials?

_____

_____

Look around the gallery and list goods and ideas that travelled along the Silk Road.

_____

_____

_____

Chinese Spirituality

Find Yanluo, the King of Hell, A.D. 1523.

The Figure of Yanluo, the King of Hell is made of glazed ceramic and dates to A.D. 1523. A concept of hell was brought by Buddhist missionaries from India into China beginning in the Eastern Han Period (A.D 25 - 220). Souls are tortured in hell to atone for their crimes and are then reincarnated. Yanluo and his generals oversaw the judgement of the deceased and commanded a demon army who carried out the sentence.

Describe Yanluo. What is the artist trying to convey to the observer?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Look at the scenes of hell on the wall. What are some of the tortures awaiting the deceased? _____

_____

Find the oracle written on an ox scapula, 1250-1192

Oracle bones demonstrate the ancient Chinese belief that a spirit could reside in bones, and that this spirit could foretell the future. When a divination was performed, heat was applied to the bone, causing it to crack. The bones used for divination had to be treated in a special manner so that they would crack when heat was applied. This process was kept secret from ordinary people. Recent experiments have shown that the direction of the crack can be controlled.

Why do you think the method of preparing the bones was kept secret from ordinary people?

_____

_____

_____

Why is it significant that the pattern of cracking can be controlled?

_____.

At least 100,000 pieces of inscribed bone have been found dating from this period

The inscription on this bone is an obvious example of an erroneous prediction. It reads as follows: "[Will all go well if] Shi is called upon to inspect the army at Youshi? The king read the omen and said, 'The older, the wiser. There will be no obstacle on the road.'" However, the oracle records that twenty-eight days into the expedition, Shi died.