History 170E
Geographic Setting and the Neolithic Era in China
Physical Relief of China
Rainfall in China
Loess (“Yellow Earth”) Landscape of Northwest China
Loess Landscape
in Upper Yellow River Valley
Neolithic (‘New Stone Age’) Revolution

- Defined in terms of technical criteria: (1) agriculture; (2) pottery; (3) polished stone tools
- Neolithic Revolution in East Asia dated to 7th-6th millennium BCE
Early Centers of Plant Domestication in East Asia
Early Neolithic Cultures of China
Ca. 7000-3500 BCE

- Yangshao 仰韶 (northwest): millet, soybeans, pig, chicken
- Hemudu 河姆渡 (eastern coast): rice, water buffalo
Reconstruction of Yangshao Village Site
Yangshao Pottery

- Painted pottery with geometric designs & human forms
- From Majiayao phase of Yangshao culture, 4th-3rd millennium BCE
Early Neolithic Cultures of China
Ca. 7000-3500 BCE

- Yangshao 仰韶
- Hemudu 河姆渡
- Dabenkeng 大坌坑 (southern coast & Taiwan)

--origin of Austronesian peoples of SE Asia & Pacific
Late Neolithic Cultures of China
Ca. 3200 BCE

- Longshan 龍山 (or Dawenkou 大汶口) culture developed on the North China Plain around 3200 BCE
Painted Pottery
Majiayao Phase of the Yangshao Culture

- 4th-3rd Millennium BCE
Longshan Pottery Types

- Glossy black surface (unpainted)
- Made on a potter’s wheel
- Both shapes and decoration differ markedly from painted Yangshao ceramics
Longshan “Town” at Taosi (Shanxi)

- Dated to 2600-2000 BCE
- Walled enclosure; elite residences
- Stratified society: over 1,000 graves, separated into 3 classes
- 90% of graves had no coffins or burial goods
Inventory of Burial Goods in Elite Grave
- Dawenkou phase of Longshan neolithic, 3rd millennium BCE
Ceramic Chalice

- Finely-wrought drinking vessel of this type are common in elite graves of the Longshan culture, but never in ordinary graves.
- The bowl of the chalice is as thin as an eggshell.
Ceramic Phalli
Longshan Culture
Evidence of Violence From Longshan Tombs

- Top: Human skeletons tossed into tomb (probably human sacrifices)
- Bottom: Scalped skulls from Longshan tombs
Late Neolithic Cultural Zone, Ca. 3200-2000 BCE

- Longshan culture spread from its original home around Dawenkou to all of the North China Plain, the lower Yangzi River valley, and the southeastern coast.