

## ANNUAL REPORT: YANGGUANZHAI 2014 FIELD SCHOOL

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The idea of learning by doing is central to the IFR Yangguanzhai field school project. This year, the five-week IFR Field School at Yangguanzhai (YGZ), China, took place between June 22<sup>nd</sup> and July 26<sup>th</sup>. It started with a first week of classroom lectures at Xibei University. The lectures began with Professor von Falkenhausen on the history of Chinese archaeology, followed by lectures given by Xibei University professors on Neolithic culture in Northern China. The topics included settlement archaeology, agriculture, animal domestication, and sedentary villages in the Wei River valley, where our site is located. Wang Weilin, the chief archaeologist of the YGZ project from the Shaanxi Provincial Archaeological Academy (SPAA), and Dr. Ye Wa lectured on the YGZ project and the field work of the IFR field school over the past four seasons, with an emphasis on its current research development. Richard Ehrich, a PhD student from UCLA, discussed theory and methodology by focusing on the YGZ project; and Mathew Fox, a former IFR student now in the graduate program at the University of Arizona, presented his master thesis on “A micromorphological analysis of Miaodigou refuse at YGZ,” research done in 2012 at YGZ.

The first week’s activities also included museum visits in the ancient city of Xi’an, a routine program we have had since 2010. The museum at the well-known Banpo Neolithic site provides students a clear view of what a Neolithic village looked like in the Wei River valley; and the Shaanxi Historic Museum displays chronologically of what we know about the Shaanxi past based primarily on archaeological finds. With special focus on its outstanding bronze collection, Professor von Falkenhausen led an onsite lecture, which detailed the function of the bronze vessels and their casting techniques. IFR students also visited the museum at Xibei University and the SPAA, where the displays closely relate to the institutes’ archaeological research projects. The highlight of the first week of museum visits was the Museum of Terracotta Warriors and Horses in the mausoleum of China’s first emperor.

This year, the IFR team was joined by four returning students from 2010-13 with their specific research agendas, and international students of SPAA from Xibei University, University College London, also students from Australia and United States during the following four weeks of field work. The team, including also senior staff and field technicians from the SPAA, totaling of 27 persons at its peak, worked continually on the five 5 x 5 previously opened trenches and a new one from this year.

Our daily routine of excavation started at 7:15 AM and ended 7:00 PM in the evening, with a break for lunch during the hottest hours of the day. Activities associated with excavation included sieving, on-site recording, drawing, photo taking (preparing a photo board and filling photo log), bagging artifacts, and taking sediment samples. Post-excavation tasks included: pottery washing, sorting (based on the YGZ ceramic classification) and registration (weight, number, and % of each type of ceramic), bone cleaning, and flotation. All students were required to perform all tasks.

In addition to teaching the basic field methods, e.g., laying squares, identifying stratigraphic layers, describing soil and sediment (including using Munsell color chart), students this year also learnt how micromorphological samples were taken, and their implications in the research of site formation.

The five trenches under excavation this season all yielded ample environmental assemblages, including charred grains, mammal bones, and shells. The majority of them were found in the refuse pits of the Miaodigou phase, and the rest from disturbed layers of deposit. Among other finds of pottery sherds and wasters, slag (most likely associated with pottery kilns), were large amounts of building materials of daub. In one pit, students excavated a ceramic assemblage in situ buried with daub: a whole jar, a broken amphora, a small jar, and a lid, all lined along one wall, and nearby was a small unfired pottery object of a human face and animal bones. This small object with a human face is a recurrent motif at the site, similar to the spindle found last year by our students and a pot with a cut out face, which has become the iconic image of the Yangganzhai site.

Forty archeobotany and 10 micromorphology samples, and ceramic sherds sampled from 12 stratigraphic layers, all from pit H85 are back to the labs in Toronto University, University of Arizona, UCLA, and Xibei University. Four graduate students will continue their research on the materials. Meanwhile, several research projects have been proposed in collaboration with the SPAA. The projects are all closely related to the excavations by IFR field school and the institute. Use ware analysis of a possible tool, which we believe was used for making ceramic rings (tens of thousands have been found in the Yangshao Culture sites) has been done; Prof. Li Liu of Stanford University confirmed our hypothesis that it is a tool. Going forward, experimental works will take place on the replicas of the tool.

The program will hold a study session next year.