
Title of Object

Wedding Procession, 1368-1644

Photo of Object (optional)



Object Information

Artist: Unknown

Culture: China (Ming Dynasty)

Date of Object: 1368-1644

Country: China

Accession Number: 89.60.1

File Created: 10/2/2016

Material/Medium: Carved and molded earthenware with yellow and green glaze and pigments

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Tour Topics

Highlights of World Art: about 1600-1850, Celebration, funerary/afterlife, ritual/ceremony, Confucianism, ceramics, wedding/bride, Group 2, Highlights 1600-1850, Ceremonies, women, stories/storytelling, life cycle, gender roles, entertainment/music, architecture, symbolism, dragon

Questions and Activities (list 3 to 4 sample questions here):

1. What's going on in this display? (A wedding procession). What do you see that makes you say that?
2. Let's look more closely and see what we can learn about traditional Chinese marriage preparation in Ming times. Can you describe the feast laid out in the courtyard? The processional party of musicians and equestrian figures? What do you think the five chests are for? What is the purpose of the screen inside the main door?

3. How do you think this wedding procession shows Confucian values of family unity and continuity? What else can you say about it?
4. What do you think this set is made of? (Glazed clay) What might its purpose be? (Ming Chi burial items) Who might it be buried with? The bride? The groom?
5. Think of a wedding you have perhaps been to recently or remember fondly – what were some of the important features to the celebration? Flowers, food, dancing music, bridal dress, family...

Key Points (Form: subject matter, medium and techniques of manufacture, style, etc.)

1. A ceramic wedding procession of **tomb objects** consisting of : a courtyard style home of the bride with “sprit-blocking screen” inside the main door, a nine course wedding banquet is visible in the courtyard (plates included are what look like: pig’s head, fish, yellow & green cake/bread, fish, melons, squash, peaches, loquats, eggplants, wine cup), almost 30 musicians (with bells, cymbals, clappers, horns and drums), brides family and relatives, the five chests holding the dowry, equestrian figures, palanquin bearers with the bride seated inside.
2. **Glazed earthenware** figures made by hand out of clay. Highly colored, glazed ceramic use greatly expanded during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) to include relatively inexpensive ceramic objects intended for burials. This ceramic tilework was commercial in nature and lacked the technical refinement of fine Ming (blue & white) porcelain. Ceramics were mass-produced in workshops and factories.
3. This retinue is remarkable as it provides valuable insight into **Ming-period lifestyles**, representing the actual architecture, household effects and domesticated animals of everyday life. (The roof-ridge finials shown in the display case above the procession are the largest and most elaborate roof tile ornament which appeared on temple and palace roof ridges during Ming. Intended to ward off evil, they symbolically protected everything in the building below. These ceramic figures of mythical animals were placed opposite one another at each end of the roof top. These two are decorated with dragons and phoenixes, regulated imperial symbols, that suggest they were made for a court sponsored building.) Note the use of the dragon motif on the palanquin also, to keep the bride safe from harm.

Key Points (Context: use, history, cultural information, artist bio, etc.)

1. **Ming Chi**: Burial tomb figures would have been displayed to the public only once, when they were paraded through the streets as part of an actual funeral procession before burial. Once in the tomb, they took up their unchanging positions around the sarcophagus, where they were intended to remain for eternity. The Ming viewed the afterlife as an extension of earthly life and believed they needed to furnish their tombs with all the necessary items essential to life everlasting. Large tombs came back in style during the Ming.
2. **Neo-Confucianism**: A secularized version of the system of ethics, education, and statesmanship taught by Confucius and his disciples, which governed individuals’ public life, stressing love for humanity, ancestor worship, reverence for parents, and harmony in thought and conduct. The main focus was on family and the continuity of family values which is shown here in the wedding procession.
3. **Ming dynasty (1368-1644)**: The founder of the Ming came from a family of poor uneducated peasants. Once he had driven the Mongols from Beijing, he grew to distrust intellectuals and

became ruthless. Civil service exams were reinstated and Neo-Confucianism became popular but scholars remained alienated from the government they were trained to serve.

4. **Ming wedding processions:** This is about a wedding day and tells us about the traditions/practices for a wedding at this time. The artists would only have made those things they would have considered most important for the burial. So the key aspects of the wedding have been replicated such as the banquet, the dowry, the bride's family and entourage leaving their home heading for the groom's home. The elaborate details on these figures were meant to show respect to the ancestors as well as showing off ones social status.

Current Mia Label Information (optional)

The Chinese considered weddings to be joyous and auspicious occasions. Marriage was central to the strong Confucian values of family unity and continuity. Within a well-furnished tomb, a ceramic procession such as this would replicate an important and festive occasion for the deceased in their afterlife.

The procession is shown formed up at the bride's house preparing to leave with the wedding party and the loud accompaniment of musicians to join the groom at his parents' home. Several aspects of a traditional Chinese marriage are described in extraordinary detail. Included are the courtyard home of the bride with "spirit blocking screen" inside the main door, behind which is a nine-course wedding banquet. Outside the home the bride's dowry is indicated by the five chests. Next are shown the bride's relatives with litter bearers carrying her in a large dragon-decorated palanquin in the middle of the procession. The party is accompanied by nearly thirty musicians playing drums, horns, cymbals, and clappers. Leading the parade are equestrian musicians.

Sources of Information and/or Prop Ideas (photos/videos)

"Made in China" TPT videos (all showcasing Mia's Chinese art collection, narrated by former curator Robert Jacobsen). Subterranean Palaces:

<http://www.mnvideovault.org/mvvPlayer/customPlaylist2.php?>

Stokstad, v. 5, pp 797-804: Ming dynasty.

O'Riley, Art Beyond the West, 3rd edition, pp 134-136: Ming dynasty ceramics

Prop ideas:

Ceramic glazed tile

Photos of Ming tomb and wedding chests