

Hong Kong Museum of History works intensively for “The Ancient Civilisation of the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties in Henan Province” exhibition (with photos)

The Hong Kong Museum of History (HKMH) will launch the first large-scale exhibition of the General History of China Exhibition Series in collaboration with the Chinese Culture Promotion Office, "The Hong Kong Jockey Club Series: The Ancient Civilisation of the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties in Henan Province" exhibition on April 3, to showcase over 150 sets of cultural relics including large and complete sets of bronze ware, jade ware, potteries, bone ware and oracle bones, from the collections of the Henan Museum, as well as a dozen other museums and cultural institutions in the province, allowing members of the public to know more about the ancient civilisation and history of China. Admission to the exhibition is free. The exhibition period will run until July 8. The invaluable cultural relics have arrived in Hong Kong and experts from Henan and the curatorial team in Hong Kong are working intensively for the exhibition.

Through showcasing precious cultural relics of the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties, this exhibition introduces traces of important cities' remains in Henan Province and the political, social, rituals and etiquette, and cultural landscapes of the three dynasties.

The HKMH team went to Henan Province to check and receive the cultural relics with experts from Henan earlier. As the cultural relics to be showcased are age-old while some of them are relatively large and heavy, precise calculation is needed for the arrangement for transportation and load-bearing showcases.

One of the highlight exhibits, grade-one national treasure "Wang Zi Wu" ding, is from a collection of the Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology from the Spring and Autumn Period of ancient China. Wang Zi Wu is a son of King Zhuang of Chu, one of the Five Hegemons of the Spring and Autumn period. Around the belly of the ding, there are six kui-dragons climbing and biting the rim as if they are searching for water. The vivid and lifelike depiction showcases the unique style of Chu bronzes. The "Wang Zi Wu" ding weighs 75 kilograms and is the heaviest single-item exhibit of this exhibition. The museum team has done meticulous calculation, risk mitigation and control, from opening the crate to moving the artefact to its showcase and optimising the viewing angle, so that the artefact can be displayed in its best and safe condition.

As the exhibits of this exhibition are of various shapes and forms,

tailor-made showcases with stand supports are required for some of them so that visitors can appreciate them from all angles. Another grade-one national treasure, a jade face cover dated to Western Zhou, is from a collection of the Henan Museum. The face cover comprises 58 jade pieces, arranged based on the facial structure of a person, for sewing onto silk fabrics and being placed over the face of the deceased during burial, as ancient people believed that jade could prevent the body from decaying.

"Xiao Chen Tuo Jian" jade cong (tube) from a collection of the Guo State Museum of Sanmenxia is a Shang object also unearthed from a tomb of Western Zhou. Round on the inside and square on the outside, the jade cong was a ritual object used to worship the earth and communicate with spirits and deities. When looking closely, visitors could see an inscription on the flat surface of the cong that reads "Xiao Chen Tuo Jian", indicating that it was a tribute offered to the Shang king by his minister Tuo. In order to draw the attention of the visitors to the inscription on the flat surface of the cong, the museum team has specially added an image for illustration purpose.

This is the first exhibition of the General History of China Exhibition Series, launched by the Chinese Culture Promotion Office in collaboration with the HKMH. Subsequently, the HKMH will stage exhibitions every year on historical relics of significant periods in chronological order. The series will conclude in 2029 with an exhibition celebrating the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The Leisure and Cultural Services Department has long been promoting Chinese history and culture through organising an array of programmes and activities to enable the public to learn more about the broad and profound Chinese culture. For more information, please visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/ccpo/index.html.

The HKMH will organise fringe programmes during the exhibition period, including music performance and sharing by the Huaxia Ancient Music Orchestra of the Henan Museum. Members of the public can learn about the Chinese musical instruments and enhance their understanding of the ancient music culture of the Central Plains under the guidance of orchestra players. In addition, a forum and a lecture series will be organised to lead members of the public to explore the latest archaeological discoveries of the Shang dynasty in Henan Province and the world of ancient Chinese bronzes.

This exhibition is jointly presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Henan Provincial Administration of Cultural Heritage, jointly organised by the HKMH and the Henan Museum, and solely sponsored by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust.

