

"GEOGRAPHY OF WEALTH," JULY 13, 8 P.M., ON NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL

**INSIDE
FREE MAP
THE TWO KOREAS**

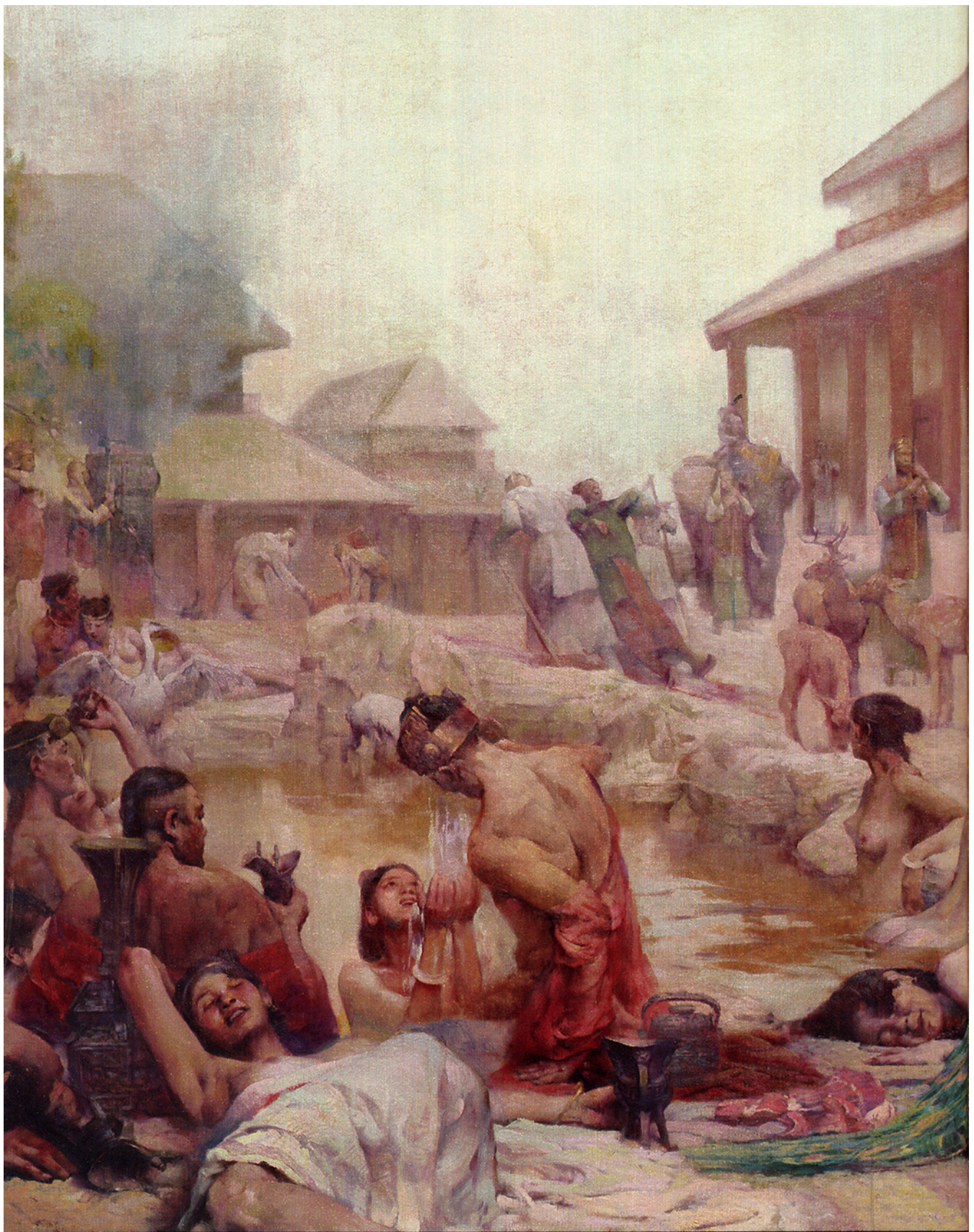
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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

DIVIDED KOREA

**FACE-OFF
ALONG
THE DMZ**

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In a final drunken daze the Shang disappeared from history with more bang than whimper. The 29th and final king, Di Xin, offering a refill at far right, indulged his appetites with abandon, hosting orgiastic parties where revelers cavorted in a palace pool filled with wine. Those who displeased the king were dragged away, background, to be executed. But are these tales true? They come from the subsequent



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Zhou and Han dynasties, whose scholars portrayed the Shang's demise as the inevitable price of vice. A Zhou axiom—the Mandate of Heaven—declares that corrupt rulers are always deposed, replaced by a new king, noble and wise. Long before scientific excavations, the area around the last Shang capital, near modern Anyang, was called Yinxi, “ruins of Yin,” another name given the Shang.



The great mystery of Sanxingdui concerns hundreds of artifacts that were burned or broken and then buried in two pits around 1200 B.C. Scholars speculate that creations like a spirit tree—its curved bronze arms adorned with flowers, birds, and dragons—were ritual offerings. Or perhaps an enemy was closing in, and people hid their gold masks, bronze statues, and elephant tusks rather than



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surrender them. Or maybe an invading horde sacked the city. Finding these distinct treasures in Sichuan Province, so far south of the Shang, buried the old story of China's origins. In nearby Jinsha, similar artifacts came to light in 2001. "What is certain at the moment," writes Robert Bagley of Princeton University, "is only that early Bronze Age China was a more complicated place than we used to suppose."