



Complex Foragers in China. About 18,000 years ago, sea level was about 300 feet (100 m) lower than it is today because so much water was locked up in ice sheets near the poles. The lower sea level created vast tracts of low-lying, biologically diverse land. In what is now beneath the South China Sea, foragers were able to make a living by fishing, gathering, and hunting and still live in one place. Wild food resources were rich and predictable, and these foragers probably only worked about 20 hours a week to feed themselves. At one such site on the southern Chinese mainland, prolific and predictably-occurring food sources

allowed people to live off the land while staying in one place. Archaeologists recovered the remains of wild grapes, plums, bears, boars, deer, 27 species of birds, and 33 kinds of shellfish that were consumed by the site's inhabitants. Since it takes several days for a large clay pot to dry enough to be fired, the Paleolithic foragers who were fortunate enough to feed themselves and stay in one place for long periods had the stability to experiment with clay containers. At several sites in China, archaeologists have found that clay pot manufacture precedes plant domestication by several thousand years.