

# THE BARAKAT GALLERY

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Masterpieces of Chinese Art



Han Bronze Pou Wine Vessel  
Featuring a Lid Attached by a Chain

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FZ.348  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD  
Dimensions: 14" (35.6cm) high

Catalogue: V22  
Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Bronze  
Location: UAE



# Han Bronze Pou Wine Vessel Featuring a Lid Attached by a Chain

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own Dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deity remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called *mingqi*, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subject, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthy existence. Thus, quite logically, the things we require to sustain and nurture our bodies in this life would be just as necessary in our next life.

The Han Dynasty, like the Zhou before it, is divided into two distinct periods, the Western Han (206 B.C.-9 A.D.) and the Eastern Han (23-220 A.D.) with a brief interlude. Towards the end of the Western period, a series of weak emperors ruled the throne, controlled from behind the scenes by Wang Mang and Huo Guang, both relatives of empresses. They both exerted enormous influence over the government and when the last emperor suddenly passed away, Mang became ruling advisor, seizing this opportunity to declare his own Dynasty, the Xin, or “New.” However, another popular uprising began joined by the members of the Liu clan, the family that ruled the Han Dynasty, the Xin came to a quick end and the Eastern Han was established in its place with its capital at Loyang (Chang’an, the capital of the Western Han, was completely destroyed).

However, even as Chinese influence spread across Southeastern Asia into new lands, the Eastern Han Dynasty was unable to recreate the glories of the Western Period. In fact, this period can be characterized by a bitter power struggle amongst a group of five consortial clans. These families sought to control the young, weak emperors with their court influence. Yet, as the emperors became distrustful of the rising power of the clans, they relied upon their eunuchs to defend them, often eliminating entire families at a time. During the Western Han, the Emperor was viewed as the center of the universe. However, this philosophy slowly disintegrated under the weak, vulnerable rulers of the Eastern Han, leading many scholars and officials to abandon the court. Eventually, the power of the Han would completely erode, ending with its dissolution and the beginning of the period known as the “Three Kingdoms.”

This bronze *pou* urn, also known as a *lei*, is one of the types of vessels used for holding wine or water. The vessel steadily expands from its tapered base until the upper mid section where the rings are placed and contracts at the neck area. The neck is short, slightly flaring upward near the mouth which is rimmed with a flatten border that runs flush to the lid. The lid is attached to one of the holding rings by a chain link with one-inch interlocking chains. Earthen residue adheres to the vessel, patch worked with areas of discoloration from oxidization and changes in patina color and texture that occurs over time. The elegant shape of the vessel attests to the aesthetic value placed on ritual vessels that were used in ceremonies and buried in tombs during the Han Dynasty. - (FZ.348)

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Ming Bronze Sculpture of the Buddha  
Seated in the Dhyanasana Position



H.015

Origin: China

Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD

Dimensions:

16" (40.6cm) high x 9" (22.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Bronze

Location: UAE

# Ming Bronze Sculpture of the Buddha Seated in the Dhyanasana Position

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

Like the founders of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Hongwu was extremely suspicious of the educated courtiers that advised him and, fearful that they might attempt to overthrow him, he successfully consolidated control of all aspect of government. The strict authoritarian control Hongwu wielded over the affairs of the country was due in part to the centralized system of government he inherited from the Monguls and largely kept intact. However, Hongwu replaced the Mongul bureaucrats who had ruled the country for nearly a century with native Chinese administrators. He also reinstated the Confucian examination system that tested would-be civic officials on their knowledge of literature and philosophy. Unlike the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), which received most of its taxes from mercantile commerce, the Ming economy was based primarily on agriculture, reflecting both the peasant roots of its founder as well as the Confucian belief that trade was ignoble and parasitic.

Culturally, the greatest innovation of the Ming Dynasty was the introduction of the novel. Developed from the folk tales of traditional storytellers, these works were transcribed in the everyday vernacular language of the people. Advances in printmaking and the increasing population of urban dwellers largely contributed to the success of these books. Architecturally, the most famous monument of the Ming Dynasty is surely the complex of temples and palaces known as the Forbidden City that was constructed in Beijing after the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle, moved the capital there. Today, the Forbidden Palace remains one of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese architecture and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the vast nation.

This gorgeous bronze sculpture depicts the Buddha seated in the dhyanasana position (also called the padmasana position), the posture of meditation better known in the West as the lotus position upon a double lotus throne. With his right hand, he forms the bhumisparśa mudra, literally translated as the “gesture of touching the earth” in which the Buddha, when seated underneath the Bodhi tree, touches the ground in order to call on the earth to witness his enlightenment. This gesture is considered a symbol of unshakable faith and resolution. His other hand rests upon his leg, holding a small begging bowl. All Buddhist monks must possess a begging bowl in which they collect food offerings. They became a symbol of law, and therefore the Buddha himself. The origins of begging bowls are Indian, and they appear in Buddhist art as early as the Gandhara era.

During the Ming Dynasty, representations the Buddha displaying Tibetan influences were cast in bronze, such as this gorgeous example. A thick robe of many folds drapes over his left shoulder and swoops around the neck with graduated layered edges hanging over his right shoulder. His facial features are well modeled with a serene, content expression. His pendulous earlobes droop down, resulting from the heavy earring he used to wear during his royal youth. The Buddha's tightly curled coiffure is crowned by an ushnisa, or bump, which symbolizes his divine intellect. The creation of Buddha images, both large and small, highlights the devotional intent of Buddhist art. The pious hoped to gain merit in the next world by making and offering images of the Buddha. The images themselves were also didactic, conveying aspects of doctrine and belief. - (H.015)

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## Neolithic Marble Figure

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H.511

Origin: China

Circa: 3300 BC to 2050 BC

Dimensions:

13.25" (33.7cm) high x 6.75" (17.1cm) wide

Catalogue: V17

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Marble

Location: Great Britain

## Neolithic Marble Figure

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Many thousands of years ago, our earliest ancestors were nomadic tribes that survived by foraging the wild for food and shelter. During the Neolithic era, human groups first began to settle down permanently, establishing villages and communities. However, without new technological innovations, this sedentary culture would not have been possible. Foremost among these discoveries were agriculture and tool-making, both of which enabled humans to transform their natural environment into a sustainable society. Many thousands of years ago, the area presently covered by modern China was made up of distinct regions each with their own unique cultural identity. Archaeologists have been able to discern some of these cultures from each other based upon the burial styles, architecture, and pottery, perhaps the most immediate remnant of this age.

This marble carving of a human figure is one of the earliest examples of human images uncovered in China to date. Its origins are still shrouded in mystery, but it is likely that it represents an image of a female as the ancients believed the ritual practice of deference to fertility deities would ensure prosperity. Images of goddess figures suggest acknowledgment of the important role women played in the development of agriculture and animal domestication. This pillar shaped statue has a flat bottom and smooth surface with patches of earth attached in areas. Incised lines depict a person with arms extended over the chest, perhaps kneeling in a posture of reverence. The head is disproportionately large; lines above its squinted eyes represent hair. The bridge of the nose is long, characteristic of Northern cultures, and two bulges protrude from the sides of the face. A fine example of early man's belief in the power of reproduction reified in the body of women, this piece reminds us of our common belief in the origins of man. - (H.511)

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## Western Han Bronze Hu

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H.520  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD  
Dimensions: 17.5" (44.5cm) high  
Catalogue: V17

Collection: Chinese  
Style: Western Han Dynasty  
Medium: Bronze  
Location: United States



## Western Han Bronze Hu

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own Dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deity remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

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Used for holding wine or water, this bronze Hu is an outstanding specimen of Western Han bronze ritual vessels. The bronze industry flourished during this period as the state pursued policies to expand and develop the manufacture of bronze pieces. This vessel reveals the aesthetic qualities and ancient prescriptions placed on reproducing canonical forms of "the golden age". This Hu is adorned with three horizontal bands and two circular handles attached to the body and decorated in Taotie motif. Its body is full, contracting sharply at the base and gently at the neck where the short neck and slightly flared mouth is formed.

The origins and significance of the Taotie, an important mythical animal motif that has evolved from ancient times, still evades scholars who believe that the enlarged eyes of the beast represent its protective and propitious power. The belief that drinking from the ancient bronze wine vessels would bring auspicious fortune pervaded, adding to the mystery and sense of empowerment attached with collecting bronzes throughout the ages. Bronze wares were included among the items that were interred with the dead to comfort them in their afterlife. During the Han Dynasty, bronze Hu became a favored item in this practice as well as in other ritual sacrifices. This bronze Hu carries the charm and mystery of the Han who prized bronze for its ritualistic properties and confirmation of social status. We may only wonder whose hands it has passed. - (H. 520)

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# Song Granite Sculpture of a Celestial King

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H.523

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions: 63.75" (161.9cm) high

Catalogue: V17

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Granite

Location: United States

# Song Granite Sculpture of a Celestial King

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After the fall of the Tang Dynasty, a period of unrest and war ensued, finally ending with the establishment of the Song Dynasty. The Song era was considered a time of consolidation for Chinese culture. Traditional texts were reanalyzed and reinterpreted, bringing forth a revival of Confucianism peppered with new ideas. Once again, civil scholars became more influential than their military counterparts. This was an era of peace, where technology and innovation flourished. Trade now focused on the seas, since the Silk Road had since been cut off. The Song viewed themselves as the culmination of two thousand years of Chinese culture. However, splinters began to emerge among the various ethnic groups that had been unified under the Tang. As these ethnic rivalries began to grow, the government became fractured as officials began to oppose each other, allowing the Mongols from the north to invade and conquer.

Stone pieces from the Song Dynasty tend to depict the real world. Figures of civil and military officials were particularly important as some were recreated in stone on ceremonial occasions. Bearing an umbrella and dressed in battle ready gear, this king kneels with one fist pressed against his forward knee. His arched eyebrows, bulging eyes and menacing frown convey his grandeur and strength as well as his commitment to loyalty and righteousness.

In Chinese they are called tian wang, which means Celestial king. These intimidating figures guard heaven and earth, removing the forces of evil that wreck havoc in both realms. Spiritually and physically, they maintain peace throughout the universe. They also ensure perfect climate for agricultural growth that was a primary concern for rulers who wanted to remain ruling. The Mandate of Heaven that legitimizes a ruler could be justifiably taken away if disaster should strike the crops, since it was believed disaster only occurs out of the wrath of heaven to banish evil rule. These guardians also had the ability to regulate wind, rain, lightning and thunder; by doing so they could make a good person/country advance/bloom or destroy the bad and evil ones. Likewise, the Guardian Heaven became the choice of rulers and elites to be replicated in stone in tomb complexes, offering halls and temples. The names of four guardians (heavenly kings) are generally as follows (Sanskrit/Chinese): 1. In the East: "Dhritarastra 东方持国天王" Represents "Compassion" and ability to 'protect' a country. Usually the one holding a Pipa (a Chinese instrument), symbolizing the use of music to encourage sentient beings to seek refuge in Buddhism, protecting the east. 2. In the South: "Vidradhaka 南方增长天王" Generally means one who can encourage sentient beings to prolong their roots of kindness. He has a green color body, and uses a sword, protecting the south. 3. In the West: "Virapaksa 西方广目天王" Generally means one who can look very far and observe the world and protect the people. Usually has a red body and is the leader of the 4 kings. He carries a dragon, and when one sees it, they will believe in Buddhism. He also uses rope to catch believers and get them to see refuge in Buddhism. He was in charge of protecting the west. 4. In the North: "Vaisramana 北方多闻天王" (sometimes also known as "毗沙门 Pisamen") Generally means "one who knows a lot". Usually has a green body and carries an umbrella on his right hand and carries a magic mouse on his left hand. These were used to subdue the demons and protect and maintain people's wealth. Sometimes, he is also known as the God of prosperity in India. The four guardians of Buddhism are sometimes also known as the "4 heavenly kings 四大天王". They were actually the "4 Dharma Protectors 四大护法" (i.e. Protectors of Buddhist teaching) whose mission is to protect the world, advise sentient beings to do good and avoid evil, records the deeds of sentient beings etc. In Chinese Buddhist temples, you will often see the statues of these 4 deities in front of the gate/entrance to the temple. Sometimes, you can also see their paintings on the wooden door/gate of the temple. They were there to 'protect' the temple. In Buddhist cosmology, the universe was divided into 3 worlds: 1) the world of desire (欲界) 2) the world of form (色界) 3) the world of form-less (无色界) Most of sentient beings including humans are living in the world of desire, which has 6 levels of heaven known as "6 desire heavens 六欲天". The 1st level of heaven (known as "Xuer Mountain 须弥山") has a mountain known as "Jiantuolo Mountain 犍陀罗山". This is where the 4 heavenly kings live. The Jiantuolo Mountain has 4 peaks, each of which protected by the heavenly kings. - (H.523)

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## Sui Pair of Glazed Terracotta Military Officers



H.526  
Origin: China  
Circa: 581 AD to 618 AD  
Dimensions: 18.5" (47.0cm) high

Catalogue: V17  
Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracott  
Location: Great Britain

# Sui Pair of Glazed Terracotta Military Officers

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After almost four hundred years of civil war and division, Yang Jian succeeded in reunifying north and south under one authority, the Sui Dynasty. However, despite its brief duration, lasting for the rule of only two emperors, the Sui Dynasty paved the way for the cultural renaissance that would arise during the T'ang Dynasty. Reforms were introduced to wrest power out of the hands of the aristocracy, military, and Buddhist communities. The Confucianist system of selecting government officials from state schools, by means of rigorous examinations, was initiated. Perhaps their most significant program was the construction of the Great Canal, a project that facilitated the movement of people and goods across great distances, aiding in the reunification of China. However, the cost of the Canal bankrupted the empire and ultimately led to its dissolution, coupled with a failed campaign to conquer Korea. The rulers of the T'ang would capitalize on the infrastructure improvements of the Sui and establish one of the greatest empires in the history of China, following the footsteps of the Sui.

Sui Dynasty innovations ushered in the great flowering of tomb object, *mingqi*, production that lasted into the Tang Dynasty. With the reunification of the Chinese proper, Sui artisans were faced with an increased demand for elaborate pieces to furnish the interior compounds of a burial lay-out that began to look more like a landscape of surface society rather than a recreation of daily life which characterized the tombs of earlier periods.

Though guardian figurines became the hot product of the day, military figurines persisted to play an important role in the burial procession. These two figurines represent Sui military men, posed in a familiar stance with one arm cocked forward and the other drawn to the side grasping a weapon that no longer exists. Based on the sort of techniques and production methods available at the time, it is assumed that bright colors were applied onto a base of white-bodied ware. Detailed painted work can be seen on the trousers that appear to be blue and red decorative pads covering the knees. The soldiers are protected head to toe in armor consisting of pectoral plates, a headdress, and a shoulder cape. Their facial features are sculpted to the finest detail--their curved eyebrows and grimacing mouth express the tension of men ready to risk their life in battle.

In a realistic representation, these two military figurines exemplify the transformation of tomb objects, reflecting the strength, vigor, and wealth of the unified Sui Empire. Tomb figurines once again claim their superior position among Chinese classical sculptural forms. - (H.526)

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# Ming Stone Head of the Buddha

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H.527

Origin: China

Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD

Dimensions: 17.25" (43.8cm) high

Catalogue: V17

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Stone

Location: United States



# Ming Stone Head of the Buddha

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

Like the founders of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Hongwu was extremely suspicious of the educated courtiers that advised him and, fearful that they might attempt to overthrow him, he successfully consolidated control of all aspect of government. The strict authoritarian control Hongwu wielded over the affairs of the country was due in part to the centralized system of government he inherited from the Monguls and largely kept intact. However, Hongwu replaced the Mongul bureaucrats who had ruled the country for nearly a century with native Chinese administrators. He also reinstated the Confucian examination system that tested would-be civic officials on their knowledge of literature and philosophy. Unlike the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), which received most of its taxes from mercantile commerce, the Ming economy was based primarily on agriculture, reflecting both the peasant roots of its founder as well as the Confucian belief that trade was ignoble and parasitic.

Culturally, the greatest innovation of the Ming Dynasty was the introduction of the novel. Developed from the folk tales of traditional storytellers, these works were transcribed in the everyday vernacular language of the people. Advances in printmaking and the increasing population of urban dwellers largely contributed to the success of these books. Architecturally, the most famous monument of the Ming Dynasty is surely the complex of temples and palaces known as the Forbidden City that was constructed in Beijing after the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle, moved the capital there. Today, the Forbidden Palace remains one of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese architecture and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the vast nation.

Buddhist iconography of the Ming period is characterized by an attempt to syncretize elements of movement associated with Tibetan iconography and simplistic sculptural styles of China. It is likely that its body assumed a gentle pose or maintained the thematic simplicity apparent in the facial features. His hair is combed tightly over a square shaped head, dramatizing the length of his characteristically elongated ears. The eyebrows, eyes, nose, mouth, cheeks, and chin are carved with as little detail as possible to convey the transcendental nature of the Buddha from different stages of absorption. The creation of images, both large and small, highlights the devotional intent of Buddhist art. The pious hoped to gain merit into the next world by making an offering image of the Buddha and of Bodhisattvas, beings who have attained enlightenment but have elected to remain in the world in order to assist mankind. Images were also didactic, conveying aspects of doctrine and belief. In the Ming period imposing representations of many different Buddhist deities were made. The strong shape and bold face of this Buddha head give an impression of inward contemplation, and the power of the image lies in its static form. Slightly smiling, the Buddha reveals his inner disposition of benevolence and kindness, a trait the Buddha cherished in its full capacity. - (H.527)

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# Yuan Terracotta Relief Sculpture Depicting a Qilin

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H.528  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1279 AD to 1368 AD  
Dimensions: 16.25" (41.3cm) high  
Catalogue: V17

Collection: Chinese  
Style: Yuan Dynasty  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: UAE

# Yuan Terracotta Relief Sculpture Depicting a Qilin

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The Yuan Dynasty was established by Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, upon relocating the capital of his empire from Mongolia to Beijing. The Forbidden City was constructed, a relative oasis of Mongolian culture in the heart of China. While the Mongol elite retained their native language and customs, they did adapt the Chinese system of bureaucratic government and cemented the authoritarian rule of the emperor. Although they were unaffected by Chinese culture, the Yuan did little to stifle the native traditions and beliefs of their subjects. Buddhism continued to flourish, although the monasteries received little funding from the state. In fact, during the Yuan Dynasty, China first began to open up to foreigners. Christian and Hindu missionaries were established in Beijing and Marco Polo made his famous journey during the Yuan era. While the Chinese never accepted the Yuan as a legitimate dynasty, instead viewing them as foreign bandits, the Mongolians rebelled against the Beijing Khans for becoming, “too Chinese.” In the end, the Yuan Dynasty had the shortest duration of the major Chinese Dynasties, lasting little more than a hundred years.

In this Yuan relief, a mythical animal called a qilin (unicorn) frolics in a pasture composed of clouds, conch shells, and shrubs. Usually pictured alone, the unicorn is said to attain the age of one thousand years, and to be the noblest form of animal creation, the emblem of perfect goodness. It is regarded as a happy portent, on its alleged appearance, of the advent of good government or the birth of virtuous rulers. The unicorn envelops itself with benevolence, and crowns itself with rectitude. A fabulous creature of good omen, and the symbol of longevity, grandeur, felicity, illustrious offspring, and wise administration, the qilin became a popular motif in court clothing of high-ranking officials, paintings, chinaware and architectural reliefs.

This representation of a qilin reflects the common myth and lore regarding its appearance and adheres to iconographic standards for depicting a qilin. Because its footsteps bring good to those who cross over them, the qilin is pictured in light stride, all fours blessing the ground it touches, never inflicting harm to the grass or insects it encounters. Surrounded by either fire or clouds, it is also pictured with its head turned back and mouth wide open, from which the sound of bells and other musical instruments can be heard. The qilin possesses all the good qualities that are to be found among all hairy animals such as a kind disposition, discriminating mind, and brightly colored skin. It resembles a stag in its general form but combines the body of the musk deer with the tail of an ox, the forehead of a wolf, the hoofs of a horse, and a soft-tipped horn emblematic of its unique, gentle nature. The auspicious nature of the qilin emanates from this relief sculpture that is sure to inject positive energy into its surroundings. - (H.528)

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# Sui Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse

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H.530

Origin: China

Circa: 581 AD to 618 AD

Dimensions: 13.5" (34.3cm) high

Catalogue: V17

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Glazed Terracotta

Location: United States



# Sui Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse

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After almost four hundred years of civil war and division, Yang Jian succeeded in reunifying north and south under one authority, the Sui Dynasty. However, despite its brief duration, lasting for the rule of only two emperors, the Sui Dynasty paved the way for the cultural renaissance that would arise during the T'ang Dynasty. Reforms were introduced to wrest power out of the hands of the aristocracy, military, and Buddhist communities. The Confucianist system of selecting government officials from state schools, by means of rigorous examinations, was initiated. Perhaps their most significant program was the construction of the Great Canal, a project that facilitated the movement of people and goods across great distances, aiding in the reunification of China. However, the cost of the Canal bankrupted the empire and ultimately led to its dissolution, coupled with a failed campaign to conquer Korea. The rulers of the T'ang would capitalize on the infrastructure improvements of the Sui and establish one of the greatest empires in the history of China, following the footsteps of the Sui.

An emblem of speed and perseverance, the horse has always served a special role in Chinese life. This Sui representation attests to horse as a symbol of wealth and status among the aristocratic classes. Its long slender legs, hogged mane, streamline body and decorative saddle and bridle give it an air of prestige and elegance unsurpassed by earlier representations which emphasized brute force through a blockish body line. Its powerfully rounded neck, muscular throat-latch, and tuft of hair reaching between its standing ears enhance its confidence and serene composure. The details of its gear--studded bridle and leather straps of imperial regalia--indicate its use in ceremonial processions. After the unification of the empire under the Sui, tomb figurines came to reflect the sophisticated world of wealthy nobles from the north, accustomed to foreign contact, travel, and a luxurious lifestyle in the capital city as the tomb became a powerful political instrument to reinforce the might of the central government. Thus the underlying theme became status and mobility. Replacing the ox cart as a means to transport the deceased to the other world, a saddled horse occupied a privilege position in close proximity to the coffin or tomb tablet. This figurine of a horse not only reflects the artistic sensibilities and beliefs of the early Chinese, but contains the energy of the horse whose honorable duty was to facilitate the journey into the other world. - (H.530)

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# Tang Terracotta Sculpture of a Military Officer

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H.553

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Dimensions: 23" (58.4cm) high

Catalogue: V20

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: United States

# Tang Terracotta Sculpture of a Military Officer

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

Mingqi (spirit articles) were a prominent feature of Chinese mortuary pottery made for the nobility and distinguished men. Over time the subject matter changed to reflect current fashions, interests and concerns. Clay figures of military generals, included in tombs since the Western Han period, are particularly good illustrations of those permutations. Military successes ensured security and fostered expansiveness as maritime and overland trade routes, such as the Silk Road, extended the trading sphere from Japan to the Byzantine and Islamic empires, bringing foreign peoples to the capital. This cultural diversity is depicted in the costumes, facial features, occupations, and pastimes of mingqi figures that began to embrace realism in form and detail unusual in Chinese art.

This sculpture of a military officer captures the vitality of a gallant warrior as well as attests this flowering a cultural diversity. Foreigners were often depicted with more facial hair and prominent noses. This bearded warrior appears to combine Chinese and foreign attributes, accentuating the ferocity and tenacity of the soldier's spirit. The body is clad in heavy armor--the chest plates are divided into four sections with decorative motifs and the shoulder plates cover the upper arm which is protected by a second layer of clothing tied above the chain mail of the forearm. In typical T'ang fashion, the soft clothing and armor extend beyond the waist where it is cinched with a studded belt. The officer wears ballooned pants drawn at the ankles over leather boots and sports protective headgear that is characterized by a protuberance on the top of the helmet. His arms gesture as if he were grasping weapons in both hands as he stands in an attentive ready-to-strike position.

This sculpture is a magnificent example of the T'ang artisan's attempt to imbue the medium with the spirit and vitality of an actual person so that it could perform its duties to protect and guide the deceased in hospitable environments. - (H.553)

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# Song Granite Sculpture of a Celestial Guardian

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H.557

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions:

63.75" (161.9cm) high x 26.75" (67.9cm) wide

Catalogue: V20

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Granite

Location: United States

# Song Granite Sculpture of a Celestial Guardian

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After the fall of the T'ang Dynasty, a period of unrest and war ensued, finally ending with the establishment of the Song Dynasty. The Song era was considered a time of consolidation for Chinese culture. Traditional text were reanalyzed and reinterpreted, bringing forth a revival of Confucianism peppered with new ideas. Once again, civil scholars became more influential than their military counterparts. This was an era of peace, where technology and innovation flourished. Trade now focused on the seas, since the Silk Road had since been cut off. The Song viewed themselves as the culmination of two thousand years of Chinese culture. However, splinters began to emerge among the various ethnic groups that had been unified under the T'ang. As these ethnic rivalries began to grow, the government became fractured as officials began to oppose each other, allowing the Mongols from the north to invade and conquer.

Stone figures usually line the entrance of tomb complexes, offering halls, and temples to remove forces of evil and ensure harmonious ties between the spiritual and material worlds. This granite guardian, called a Heavenly King, exemplifies Song stylistic taste for realistic representation in stone figure art. The guardian's form resembles those of military officials whose sturdy, stout bodies convey strength, endurance, and determination--features commonly associated with cavalry horses. His arched eyebrows, bulging eyes and menacing frown frighten evil spirits and mortal wrongdoers. Holding a four stringed guitar in his hands, he is seated with one leg forward as an expression of loyalty to whom he serves. When played, the guitar emits a magical sound which is heard throughout the world, setting the camps of enemies on fire. Dressed in chain mail armor gathered at the waist with a belt bearing the emblem of a mythical animal, he attends to the responsibilities of maintaining justice and order in the universe through his power to regulate climate and fortune. Likewise, the Heavenly Guardians were a popular choice of figures to be cast in stone and placed near sites of great spiritual and ritual value. The names of four guardians (heavenly kings) are generally as follow (sanskrit/chinese): 1. In the East: "Dhritarastra 𑖔𑖜𑖛𑖞𑖟𑖠𑖡𑖢𑖣" Represents "Compassion" and ability to 'protect' a country. Usually the one holding a Pipa (a chinese instrument), symbolizing the use of music to encourage sentient beings to seek refuge in buddhism, protecting the east. 2. In the South: "Vidradhaka 𑖔𑖜𑖛𑖞𑖟𑖠𑖡𑖢𑖣" Generally means one who can encourage sentient beings to prolong their roots of kindness. He has green color body, and uses a sword, protecting the south. 3. In the West: "Virapaksa 𑖔𑖜𑖛𑖞𑖟𑖠𑖡𑖢𑖣" Generally means one who can look very far and observe the world and protect the people. Usually has a red body and is the leader of the 4 kings. He carries a dragon, and when one sees it, they will believe in buddhism. He also uses rope to catch believers and get them to see refuge in Buddhism. He was in charge of protecting the west. 4. In the North: "Vaisramana 𑖔𑖜𑖛𑖞𑖟𑖠𑖡𑖢𑖣" (sometimes also known as "Pisamen") Generally means "one who knows alot". Usually has a green body and carries an umbrella on his right hand and carries a magic mouse on his left hand. These were used to subdue the demons and protect and maintain people's wealth. Sometimes, he is also known as the God of prosperity in India. The four guardians of Buddhism are sometimes also known as the "4 heavenly kings 四大天王". They were actually the "4 Dharma Protectors 四大护法" (i.e. Protectors of Buddhist teaching) whose mission is to protect the world, advise sentient beings to do good and avoid evil, records the deeds of sentient beings etc. In chinese Buddhist temples, you will often see the statues of these 4 deities in front of the gate/entrance to the temple. Sometimes, you can also see their paintings on the wooden door/gate of the temple. They were there to 'protect' the temple. In Buddhist cosmology, the universe was divided into 3 worlds: 1) the world of desire (欲界) 2) the world of form (色界) 3) the world of form-less (无色界) Most of sentient beings including humans are living in the world of desire, which has 6 levels of heaven known as "6 desire heavens 六欲天". The 1st levels of heaven (known as "Xuer Mountain 须弥山") has a mountain known as "Jiantuolo Mountain 犍陀罗山". This is where the 4 heavenly kings live. The Jiantuolo Mountain has 4 peaks, each of which protected by the heavenly kings. - (H.557)

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# Qing Gilt Wooden Sculpture of Guanyin

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PF.2959

Origin: China

Circa:

17 th Century AD to 19 th Century AD

Dimensions: 69" (175.3cm) high

Catalogue: V22

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Wood

Location: United States



## Qing Gilt Wooden Sculpture of Guanyin

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Outstanding among Buddhist images is this Guanyin known as the Bodhisattva of Mercy and Compassion. The Guanyin makes helping others toward enlightenment her mission. Originally depicted as a male in early Chinese Buddhist forms, the Guanyin eventually became associated with a local Chinese Mother Goddess, "bringer of children," and also because the gentleness and compassion of the deity suggest feminine qualities. Thus, a child accompanies the goddess figure either in her embrace or at her side.

Wearing a lavish crown of jewels illuminated by the glow of her halo, she stands atop a dragon submerged by the water gushing out of the vase she controls with her foot. The head, erect and frontal, shows the calm serenity of one who, having overcome the suffering of this world, has found peace in the lotus of the good law. Raised in the abhaya mudra the hand indicates that the faithful should have no fear but should put their trust in her. She holds a mala, rosary, in one hand and draped over her raised forearm as she assumes an elegant pose, her body clothed in exquisite silken robes of lotus decor.

The feeling of serenity that emanates from this religious figure is sure to touch those who share her presence. Guanyin sculptures were often worshipped by local women who gave offerings to the goddess in exchange for her protection and guidance in domestic affairs. - (PF.2959)

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Tang Large Stone Sculpture  
Depicting the Head of a Civic Official

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PF.5475

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Dimensions:

33" (83.8cm) high x 15.5" (39.4cm) wide

Catalogue: V26

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Stone

Location: Great Britain

# Tang Large Stone Sculpture Depicting the Head of a Civic Official

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The Tang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. Tang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The Tang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

This large fragment of a head was once part of a much larger sculpture of a civic official. We can assume from the stature of this work that it likely stood outside as part of the spiritual road leading up to a mausoleum. Picture a procession of monumental civic officials, carved from stone, greeting the emperor as he makes his way inside. Such processional entranceways are well known in China and occur in the architecture of other cultures and civilizations such as the Ancient Egyptians. While it might seem odd to immortalize a government bureaucrat in stone, especially on such a grand scale, when we consider the importance of such civil officials in the daily life of the empire, their significance becomes clear. With over two million inhabitants in greater Chang'an, the cosmopolitan capital of the Tang, the governance of just this city alone would have demanded an extensive network of civic servants, not to mention the numerous distant provinces of that comprised the greater Empire. In order to remove power from the hands of wealthy aristocrats and warlords, the Tang created a class of scholar officials to govern their lands, enacting the will of the Imperial Court throughout China. Rigorous examinations ensured that only the most qualified individuals were able to serve this crucial position. The official wears a tall cap with a chinstrap that marks his status. Today, this monumental fragment is a stunning testament to the wealth and luxury of the Tang Dynasty, a golden age of Chinese culture made possible through the work of such officials. - (PF.5475)

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# Ming Gold-Splashed Kuei Bronze Censer



FZ.388

Origin: China

Circa:

16 th Century AD to 17 th Century AD

Dimensions:

2.75" (7.0cm) high x 5.125" (13.0cm) wide

Catalogue: V29

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Bronze

Location: UAE



# Ming Gold-Splashed Kuei Bronze Censer

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This striking bronze censer has a low compressed body, slightly everted rim, loop handles and a flat base. The underside of the base has a countersunk rectangular cartouche with a six-character reign mark reading 'Da Ming Xuande nian zhi' ('Made in the Xuande era of the Great Ming'). The form of the censer is one of the classic types produced during the Xuande period (1426-1435) of the Ming Dynasty. In 1428, according to the document 'Xuande yi qi tu pu' ('Illustrated Catalogue of the Ritual Vessels of the Xuande Period'), Emperor Xuande instructed the Ministry of Works to cast a large series of bronze vessels with copper sent as tribute by the Kingdom of Siam (Thailand). They were intended for use on the altars of the palace and beyond. It was customary to display such vessels in groups of five, a central censer, flanked by pairs of vases and candlesticks. Censers were also used in secular contexts, displayed in the studies of the literati and used to burn incense. Xuande apparently commissioned c. 20,000 vessels of 117 different types. The censers were one of the most popular forms and were widely reproduced in the later Ming and Qing eras. Known simply as 'Xuande censers' many of these later pieces also bore the Xuande mark. Original marks are distinguished by characters that are complete and smooth, set against a background that is the same colour and luster as the vessel itself. This piece may date to the later Ming period and is noteworthy for its fine casting and finish.

The gold-splash decorative technique is striking for its modern aesthetic. It was achieved by a process known as fire-gilding, now banned because of the poisonous fumes emitted during the procedure. A gold and mercury amalgam was applied to the surface and then the vessel was heated to drive off the mercury leaving behind an extremely thin film of gold. This process was sometimes repeated to build up thicker layers. In this case the splashes are charmingly irregular and densely spaced, adding to the beauty of this remarkable object.

## References:

Rose Kerr, *Later Chinese Bronzes*, (London, 1990), esp. p. 39.

Philip K. Hu, *Later Chinese Bronzes: The Saint Louis Art Museum and Robert E. Kresko Collection*, (2008), esp. pp. 137-141. - (FZ.388)

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# Tang Dynasty Gold Wine Cup

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FJ.6845  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 2.5" (6.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Gold  
Location: UAE

# Tang Dynasty Gold Wine Cup

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See the waters of the Yellow River leap down from Heaven,

Roll away to the deep sea and never turn again!

See at the mirror in the High Hall, Aged men bewailing white locks

In the morning, threads of silk, In the evening flakes of snow.

Snatch the joys of life as they come and use them to the fullest

Do not leave your gold cup idly glinting at the moon,

The things that Heaven made Man was meant to use.

- Excerpt from "Chiang Chin Chiu," by Li Pu

Li Pu, who lived and wrote during the T'ang Dynasty, is one of the great masters of Chinese poetry. A prolific writer, he composed in a romantic, lyrical style, concerning the glories of this brief life: nature, love, friends, solitude, and wine. He frequently mentions gold wine cups, presumably very similar to this one, as symbols of both wine induced happiness and luxury. Holding this cup in our hands, we are connected to the beauty of life Li Pu memorialized in his poetry. Although life is fleeting and beauty transient, mankind alone is able to transcend the ravages of time by creating artistic works of eternal beauty. The poetry of Li Pu is one such example; this gold wine cup is another. Both are distinct reflections of the culture and period in which they were made. Both reveal a sense of joy and longing, for even as the wine cup is full, we know it will soon be empty. This gold wine cup is more than an example of the extravagant wealth of the T'ang Dynasty, it is an eternal symbol of love, friends, and happiness, all too fleeting, as elegantly described in the works of Li Pu. - (FJ.6845)

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## Tang Sancai-Glazed Horse

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H.677  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 18.75" (47.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Sancai Terracotta  
Location: UAE



## Tang Sancai-Glazed Horse

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The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horses allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the defense of the borders from nomadic invaders as well as the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered. Furthermore, horses were believed to be relatives of the mythological dragon, reflecting their sacred status within society. This gorgeous brown horse is a splendid example of the T'ang Sancai glazed horse, one of the most beloved types of Chinese art. The horse is elegantly modeled and decorated with a painted orange saddle and spotted numnah and splendid green-glazed reigns and headstall, reflecting the luxurious regalia that horses were honored with. Overall, this sculpture is a testament to the revered status of the horse in Chinese culture, a love that reached new heights of expression during the T'ang Dynasty. - (H.677)

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# Tang Sancai-Glazed Tomb Guardian

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H.680  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 33" (83.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: UAE

## Tang Sancai-Glazed Tomb Guardian

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Originating during the Six Dynasties period (222-589 A.D.), this type of figure is known as a tomb guardian, for originally, a pair of such figures always stood guard at the tombs of Chinese rulers. Traditionally, both figures in the pair are mythological composite creatures, one always an amalgamation of various animals while the other combined of human and animal traits. These guardians are a general type of Chinese art known as mingqi. Mingqi were any of a variety of objects specifically created for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for the afterlife. These guardians were most likely interred in order to ward off potential tomb robbers or perhaps evil spirits in the next world that might try to infiltrate the tomb. This mythological beast combines the body of an ox, complete with hooves, with the head of a human. Wings emerge from his shoulders and flames crown his head. Despite the snarling human features of his face, this figure is adorned with large animal ears that appear almost like fish fins. Furthermore, a spiraling horn emerges from the forehead of this beast, reinforcing his frightful appearance. Although these works are supposed to be frightful, the masterfully delicate sculpting of their flaming heads and the gorgeous colors of their Sancai glaze prove more attractive than repelling. - (H.680)

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# Tang Sancai-Glazed Tomb Guardian

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H.681  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 29.25" (74.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: UAE



## Tang Sancai-Glazed Tomb Guardian

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Originating during the Six Dynasties period (222-589 A.D.), this type of figure is known as a tomb guardian, for originally, a pair of such figures always stood guard at the tombs of Chinese rulers. Traditionally, both figures in the pair are mythological composite creatures, one always an amalgamation of various animals while the other combined of human and animal traits. These guardians are a general type of Chinese art known as mingqi. Mingqi were any of a variety of objects specifically created for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for the afterlife. These guardians were most likely interred in order to ward off potential tomb robbers or perhaps evil spirits in the next world that might try to infiltrate the tomb. This mythological beast combines the body of an ox, complete with hooves, with the head of a lion. Wings emerge from his shoulders and flames crown his head. Furthermore, a pair of antlers rises from his head, framing the crest of flames and adding to his hostile appearance. The work is covered in a gorgeous tri-colored Sancai glaze that partially imitates the spotted and striped coat of various exotic beasts. Although these works are supposed to be frightful, the masterfully delicate sculpting of their flaming heads and the gorgeous colors of their Sancai glaze prove more attractive than repelling. - (H.681)

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# Tang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse and Female Rider



H.686  
Origin: China  
Circa: 600 AD to 700 AD  
Dimensions: 19" (48.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain

# Tang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse and Female Rider

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The Tang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. Tang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The Tang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horses allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the defense of the borders from nomadic invaders as well as the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered. Furthermore, horses were believed to be relatives of the mythological dragon, reflecting their sacred status within society.

This general type of Chinese burial art is known as mingqi. Mingqi were any of a variety of objects specifically created for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for the afterlife. This sculpture depicts a noble lady riding upon a fine steed, inscribed on its hind leg with the Chinese characters denoting, "official horse," suggesting her and the horse's elite status. Riding horses was a popular aristocratic tradition, as well as playing polo, illuminating the link between the upper crust of Tang society and horses. The early dating of this work is reflective of the stylization of the horse's head and legs that were characteristic of the preceding Sui Dynasty. Overall, this sculpture is a testament to the revered status of the horse in Chinese culture, a love that reached new heights of expression during the Tang Dynasty. - (H.686)

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# Tang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse and Foreign Rider

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H.687  
Origin: China  
Circa: 600 AD to 700 AD  
Dimensions: 19.5" (49.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain



# Tang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse and Foreign Rider

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

This general type of Chinese burial art is known as mingqi. Mingqi were any of a variety of objects specifically created for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for the afterlife. Many of these works reflect Chinese contact with a variety of foreigners including Jewish merchants, Persian traders, and various tribes from Central Asia who were essential for their supply of fine steeds. The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horses allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the defense of the borders from nomadic invaders as well as the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road.

The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered. Furthermore, horses were believed to be relatives of the mythological dragon, reflecting their sacred status within society. This sculpture depicts a fat foreigner, his swollen belly popping out of his open tunic, riding horseback. His large, hooked nose and beard reveal his foreign status and he was probably a Jewish merchant from Central Asia working the Silk Road. The early dating of this work is reflective of the stylization of the horses head and legs that were characteristic of the preceding Sui Dynasty. Overall, this sculpture is a testament to the revered status of the horse in Chinese culture, a love that reached new heights of expression during the T'ang Dynasty. - (H.687)

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## Tang Sancai-Glazed Horse

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H.676  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions: 18.5" (47.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: UAE

## Tang Sancai-Glazed Horse

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The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horses allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the defense of the borders from nomadic invaders as well as the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the native Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered. Furthermore, horses were believed to be relatives of the mythological dragon, reflecting their sacred status within society. This gorgeous white horse is a splendid example of the T'ang Sancai glazed horse, one of the most beloved types of Chinese art. The horse is elegantly modeled and decorated with a painted red saddle and striped numnah and splendid green-glazed reigns and headstall, reflecting the luxurious regalia that horses were honored with. Overall, this sculpture is a testament to the revered status of the horse in Chinese culture, a love that reached new heights of expression during the T'ang Dynasty. - (H.676)

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# Song Bronze Sculpture of a Taoist Immortal

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H.041

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions:

9.5" (24.1cm) high x 3.25" (8.3cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Bronze

Location: UAE



## Song Bronze Sculpture of a Taoist Immortal

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After the fall of the T'ang Dynasty, a period of unrest and war ensued, finally ending with the establishment of the Song Dynasty. The Song era was considered a time of consolidation for Chinese culture. Traditional texts were reanalyzed and reinterpreted, bringing forth a revival of Confucianism peppered with new ideas. Once again, civil scholars became more influential than their military counterparts. This was an era of peace, where technology and innovation flourished. Trade now focused on the seas, since the Silk Road had since been cut off. The Song viewed themselves as the culmination of two thousand years of Chinese culture. However, splinters began to emerge among the various ethnic groups that had been unified under the T'ang. As these ethnic rivalries began to grow, the government became fractured as officials began to oppose each other, allowing the Mongols from the north to invade and conquer.

The Taoist immortal has long been a favorite subject of Chinese statuary art. These legendary beings are said to have lived at various times and attained immortality through their studies of Nature's secrets. Their special powers include the ability to become invisible, raising the dead, changing tangible objects into gold, and transforming their appearance. Shown standing on a rectangular base, this figure wears a long crossover robe belted above the waist, high boots, and a squarish cap. The draping folds of the robe are exposed as the figure raises his arms, assuming a lively gesture that captures the movement of a walking figure. The position of the arms and evidence of holes in the hands implies the figure could have held a walking stick or emblematic object. The figure's jovial expression is conveyed through the well-modeled eyes, cheekbones, nose and beard that appears to sway with the sound of laughter. - (H.041)

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# Han Large Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse

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H.631

Origin: China

Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD

Dimensions:

50.5" (128.3cm) high x 42" (106.7cm) wide x 13" (33.0cm) depth

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: Great Britain

# Han Large Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse

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The over-extension of the labour force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deities remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called *mingqi*, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subjects, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthy existence. Thus, quite logically, the things we require to sustain and nurture our bodies in this life would be just as necessary in our next life.

The Han Dynasty is divided into two distinct periods, the Western Han (206 B.C.-9 A.D.) and the Eastern Han (23- 220 A.D.) with a brief interlude. Towards the end of the Western period, a series of weak emperors ruled the throne, controlled from behind the scenes by Wang Mang and Huo Guang, both relatives of empresses. They both exerted enormous influence over the government and when the last emperor suddenly passed away, Mang became ruling advisor, seizing this opportunity to declare his own Dynasty, the Xin, or “New.” However, another popular uprising began joined by the members of the Liu clan, the family that ruled the Han Dynasty, the Xin came to a quick end and the Eastern Han was established in its place with its capital at Loyang (Chang’an, the capital of the Western Han, was completely destroyed).

However, even as Chinese influence spread across Southeastern Asia into new lands, the Eastern Han Dynasty was unable to recreate the glories of the Western Period. In fact, this period can be characterized by a bitter power struggle amongst a group of five consortial clans. These families sought to control the young, weak emperors with their court influence. Yet, as the emperors became distrustful of the rising power of the clans, they relied upon their eunuchs to defend them, often eliminating entire families at a time. During the Western Han, the Emperor was viewed as the centre of the universe. However, this philosophy slowly disintegrated under the weak, vulnerable rulers of the Eastern Han, leading many scholars and officials to abandon the court. Eventually, the power of the Han would completely erode, ending with its dissolution and the beginning of the period known as the “Three Kingdoms.”

Expressively modeled in a firm pose, standing to attention with tail erect, this horse of the Han Dynasty depicts the power and grace of the new breed of horse from the west known as the "Heavenly Horse of China." This horse is tall and large, head bridled and torso saddled as if it were ready to engage in battle. Remarkably, the saddle still bears traces of the original red pigment that completed the decoration. It intimidates us with its open mouth, teeth showing, visible tongue, upright ears, and flared nostrils. This horse has a powerful rounded neck with hogged mane reaching up between the ears and head. Its torso, proportionately smaller than its chest and neck, is delicately sculptured, and its long legs appear to be mounted on block-like hooves. The exaggeration of the chest and neck area draw attention to the horse who is strenuously amassing energy to release a bellicose cry, while the shape of the hooves not only gives it a feeling of solidity, but indicates that it was created to maintain an upright position in the tomb of its master.

During the reign of Emperor Wu, in order to improve the breed of horses in central China and strengthen the cavalry, the so-called "heavenly horse" was imported from the western region (present-day Middle East). Most horse sculptures found in Han Dynasty tombs portray horses with great strength and vigour. The way the horse is depicted speaks of the great love the Chinese have for the mythology and form of the horse. - (H. 631)

# Han Large Terracotta Sculpture of a Sitting Dog

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H.642

Origin: China

Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD

Dimensions: 30.25" (76.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: United States



# Han Large Terracotta Sculpture of a Sitting Dog

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This terracotta dog is a splendid example of *mingqi*, literally translated as: “items for the next world.” During the Han Dynasty, the ancient Chinese believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, high-ranking members of the social hierarchy were buried in splendid tombs replete with replicas of their daily lives rendered in all media. It is not uncommon to find ornate dinner sets with elegantly painted utensils, wine vessels, and food storage containers. Sculpted replica of warriors and guardians provided protection as musicians and entertainers provided company. Likewise, herds of domesticated animals were interred alongside the deceased to serve as food sources in the afterlife.

Although it is possible that this dog was entombed for consumption in the next world, the studded collar and harness he wears suggests otherwise. More likely, this dog was a beloved companion who served his owner well both on earth and beyond. His ears stand upwards in attention, as if carefully guarding his master throughout eternity. The heavy folds of skin around the eyes, feet, and jowls and the curly tail, as well as the general size and stature, suggest that this dog may be an ancient Chinese Shar Pei, a breed noted for their wrinkled physique. Although similar works were meant to serve as food for the afterlife, the love and attention invested in the creation of this stunning work of art suggests that this dog is much more than food. Instead, this beloved pet sits faithfully by his master’s side throughout eternity. - (H.642)

# Han Bronze Juizhou with Twelve Bronze Wine Cups

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H.646  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD  
Dimensions:  
6.25" (15.9cm) high x 12.75" (32.4cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Style: Han Dynasty  
Medium: Bronze  
Location: United States

# Han Bronze Juizhou with Twelve Bronze Wine Cups

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Juizhous, bronze wine tables of this type, are extremely rare. While similar works in green-glazed ceramic, imitating bronze originals, are more frequent, they are often discovered only with a few of the cups surviving. To have a complete set, intact, in bronze is exceptional. This masterpiece, however, is exceptional even amongst other similar bronze examples. The legs, shaped like horse hooves, which support the table, are unusual. The vibrant red pigment that adorns the inside of the cups is phenomenal. The rich patinas that graze this set are quite varied due to their location. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this wine tasting set clearly played as important a role in the afterlife as it did in this world.

This set reveals as much about the sophisticated social customs of the Han Dynasty as it does about their spiritual beliefs. Clearly, the joys of life, including the enjoyment of wine, continue on into the next world. This set was not interred with its owner as a memorial to his wealth, but as a functional tool meant for use in the afterlife. In fact, this table and these cups were forged by a master to survive throughout eternity, as they seemingly have. While we gaze upon this set and hold the cups in our hands, raising them up to our lips, we are transported back in time. We repeat the same actions that occurred almost two millennia ago. Yet, the action of drinking would have continued into the afterlife and beyond. Thus we can hold these cups and imagine saying a toast, to the original owner of this set, who continues to treasure this remarkable work of art from the next world as we do in our own. - (H.646)



Ming Gilt and Painted Head  
of a Celestial Guardian



H.647  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 17.25" (43.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Stucco  
Location: United States



# Han Bronze Juizhou with Twelve Bronze Wine Cups

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

Like the founders of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Hongwu was extremely suspicious of the educated courtiers that advised him and, fearful that they might attempt to overthrow him, he successfully consolidated control of all aspect of government. The strict authoritarian control Hongwu wielded over the affairs of the country was due in part to the centralized system of government he inherited from the Monguls and largely kept intact. However, Hongwu replaced the Mongul bureaucrats who had ruled the country for nearly a century with native Chinese administrators. He also reinstated the Confucian examination system that tested would-be civic officials on their knowledge of literature and philosophy. Unlike the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), which received most of its taxes from mercantile commerce, the Ming economy was based primarily on agriculture, reflecting both the peasant roots of its founder as well as the Confucian belief that trade was ignoble and parasitic.

Culturally, the greatest innovation of the Ming Dynasty was the introduction of the novel. Developed from the folk tales of traditional storytellers, these works were transcribed in the everyday vernacular language of the people. Advances in printmaking and the increasing population of urban dwellers largely contributed to the success of these books. Architecturally, the most famous monument of the Ming Dynasty is surely the complex of temples and palaces known as the Forbidden City that was constructed in Beijing after the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle, moved the capital there. Today, the Forbidden Palace remains one of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese architecture and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the vast nation.

Large sculptures of celestial guardians usually line the entrance of tomb complexes, offering halls, and temples to remove forces of evil and ensure harmonious ties between the spiritual and material worlds. This bust of a guardian, called a Heavenly King, exemplifies the traditional aesthetic tastes for realistically represented sculptures. The religious and ceremonial significance of this work is reflected by the luxurious decorations that adorn it. The entire face of the figure has been gilt. Over the ages, the vibrant luster of the gold has faded into dark hues of brown; however, upon close inspection, one can still discern remnants of the former luminosity. The guardian is crowned with a headdress, painted blue and white, featuring two decorative panels depicting red and white flowers, perhaps orchids, on either side of his stern face.

The forceful expression of this guardian surely intimidated and commanded reverence from followers although it was meant to scare away evil spirits. Perhaps he would have discouraged non-believers from entering the hallowed ground he protected. The energy of his expression and the naturalism of the sculpture are both equally heightened by the inlaid glass pupils. The eyes appear eerily realistic, as the guardian almost seems to gaze back out at us. Surely, this guard would be pleased by what he sees. Although he has been transplanted from the temple or shrine he once protected, this statue continues to be revered and adored. Once he was appreciated for his spiritual and religious powers; yet now he is revered for his tremendous cultural, historical, and artistic significance. - (H.647)

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# Western Zhou Bronze Yi Water Vessel

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H.653  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1046 BC to 771 BC  
Dimensions: 6.5" (16.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Bronze  
Location: United States

# Western Zhou Bronze Yi Water Vessel

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In 1122 B.C., at the battle of Muye, the rebellious Zhou tribe defeated the imperial troops of the Shang Dynasty, China's first Imperial Dynasty. The Zhou Dynasty is itself composed of two periods that historians have dubbed Western (1122-771 B.C.) and Eastern (770-221 B.C.). During the Western period, the Zhou ruled from their capital Zongzhou (near modern X'ian). While the Zhou were highly influenced by the Shang, over time, they developed their own unique style of decorating bronze and terracotta vessels. Perhaps their most important artistic innovation was the creation of primitive glazes. However, ambitious campaigns to expand their territory westward failed, and in 771, nomadic invaders ransacked Zongzhou, forcing the Zhou to flee eastwards to the city of Chengzhou, which became their second capital.

China was perhaps the most civilized culture of the ancient world. Their science, philosophy, art, and technology were all years ahead of most other cultures. One gains an idea of their sophistication and wealth when viewing this stunning bronze Yi. Once, long ago, before sitting down to a ceremonial feast, nobility would have washed their hands with this vessel, thus beginning the structured ritual of dining. Both the beauty and luxury of this work implies that it would have been the possession of the King, or perhaps a close member of his royal entourage. Quite simply, few people but the king could afford such a treasure. By far, the most unique, and charming, feature of this vessel is the legs and feet. The legs are shaped as stylized dragons with incised details while the feet depict four naturally rendered squatting bovine figures. The dragon motif reoccurs on the openwork "handles" attached to the two sides while a frieze of swirling patterns typical of the Zhou style covers the body. The proper handle at the back of the vessel is surmounted by a stylized horned dragon head.

Discovered inside an ancient tomb, this Yi was treasured as much in life as in the afterworld. During this era, the Chinese believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, important people were often enshrined with their treasured possessions as well as works specifically commissioned to be interred. Although most Yi vessels of the rounded bottom type were created during the Eastern Zhou period, scholars believe that this form was introduced during the closure of the previous Western Zhou Dynasty, from when this vessel dates. Over the centuries, this work has acquired a fantastic and varied patina that only enhances the beauty and texture of the work. - (H.653)

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# Western Han Terracotta Sculpture of a Spotted Ox

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H.662  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD  
Dimensions: 15.25" (38.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Western Han Terracotta Sculpture of a Spotted Ox

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own Dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deity remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

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During the Han Dynasty, sculptural effigies of domesticated animals were often interred in the tombs of nobility and elite members of the social hierarchy. Created in all media, these sculptures accompanied the spirit of the deceased into the afterlife. This bovine sculpture is exceptional for two reasons. While similar examples exist, most were found harnessed to wagons and carts and were meant to function as beasts of burden. However, this sculpture was discovered buried as part of a herd, contained inside a pen with other domesticated animals, suggesting that this ox served as food. Besides its function, this sculpture is also remarkable for its massive size and exquisite state of preservation. The painted coat of white spots against a black background imitates the classic black and white pattern typical of bovines. Such delicate painted surfaces rarely survive the ravages of time and the stresses of excavation.

The Han culture believed that the afterlife was a continuation of our earthly existence. Thus, logically, as humans require food to nourish our bodies on earth, so too will we require food to nourish our souls in the afterlife. However, even in this incomplete state, the evocative nature of this sculpture is uncanny. The charming facial structure of this ox is so naturalistic that one feels the presence of the animal possessing this sculpture. Created to serve as food for the afterlife, this work is more than a mere sculpture; it is a gorgeous memorial to the religious and philosophical beliefs of the Han Dynasty. This ox effigy has served its eternal purpose well. Today, it continues to nourish our souls with its beauty and grace. - (H.662)

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Western Han Terracotta Sculpture  
of an Ox with Tail and Horns

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H.664  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD  
Dimensions: 17.5" (44.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: United States

# Western Han Terracotta Sculpture of an Ox with Tail and Horns

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# Warring States Bronze Bian Hu

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H.671

Origin: China

Circa: 4 th Century AD to 3 rd Century AD

Dimensions:

13" (33.0cm) high x 12.8" (32.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Bronze

Location: UAE



## Warring States Bronze Bian Hu

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Whereas before, war was characterized as a civilized contest between aristocratic armies, during the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.), war evolved into the chaotic conflict we know it as today. Kings and princes were replaced on the battlefield by infantries lead by military generals. Peasants were recruited to serve on the front lines. Warfare intensified, especially in terms of the duration of campaigns. New arms and armor were invented, including the halberd and crossbow. Chariots rode alongside archers outfitted in iron helmets and body armor. Defensive walls were erected in order to repel invaders. However, despite the turmoil of the times, the arts continued to thrive. Bronze casting was revolutionized by the introduction of the lost-wax technique, while the alterations of kiln structures enabled new firing techniques that resulted in fully developed glazes.

China was perhaps the most civilized culture of the ancient world. Their science, philosophy, art, and technology were all years ahead of most other cultures. One gains an idea of their sophistication and wealth when viewing this stunning bronze Bian Hu. Once, long ago, at ceremonial feasts held by the noble elite, this vessel would have been used to dispense fine wines. Both the beauty and luxury of this work implies that it would have been the possession of the King, or perhaps a close member of his royal entourage. Quite simply, few people but the king could afford such a treasure. By far, the most exquisite feature of this vessel is the stunning, intricate curvilinear designs incised throughout the body. Additionally, the sides contain two Tao Tieh masks depicting stylized dragon heads rendered in strong relief holding loose ring handles in their mouths.

A rare feature of this Bian Hu is the incised mouth, resembling a clove of garlic, and the lid which has been incised with decorative Tao Tieh masks. It is believed that this form was introduced in bronze during this chaotic period in Chinese history known as the Warring States that followed the demise of the Zhou Dynasty and precipitated the formation of the Han. Discovered inside an ancient tomb, this Bian Hu was treasured as much in life as in the afterworld. During this era, the Chinese believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, important people were often enshrined with their treasured possessions as well as works specifically commissioned to be interred. Over the centuries, this work has acquired a fantastic and varied patina that further enhances the beauty and texture of the work. - (H.671)

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# Warring States Gilt Bronze Juizhou



H.673

Origin: China

Circa: 5 th Century AD to 4 th Century AD

Dimensions: 7" (17.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Gilt Bronze

Location: United States

## Warring States Gilt Bronze Juizhou

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This luxurious wine table, called a Juizhou, reveals the unrivaled wealth and sophistication characteristic of the Warring States period in Chinese history. Surely the value of the gilt bronze alone suggests that this work was the treasured possession of a noble or elite member of the social hierarchy. However, when one considers the mastery of the artistry, including the incised decorations, this Juizhou becomes even more splendid. Originally, the gilt bronze pieces that survive would have been fitted onto a wooden table. The frame would fit around the edges of the table while the legs would have been inserted into carved slots. Although the wood has long since decomposed, an approximation of the original has been recreated in plastic to hold the pieces in their proper position. While the frame segments are smooth and unfinished, the legs, shaped like stylized horse legs, have been embellished with detailed incised depictions of dragons along the sides with abstract and curvilinear motifs adorning the top and “hooves.” Interestingly, the insides of the legs have not been gilt, nor the upper half of the insert tabs.

This gorgeous wine table was discovered buried inside the tomb of its owner. However, this Juizhou is more than a symbol of earthly wealth, for it was meant to be used in the next world. The early Chinese believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, when this work was first forged, it was expected to last for eternity, as it seemingly has. While this table hosted many sumptuous wine feasts on earth, it continued to be used in the heavenly celebrations and feasts of the afterlife. This extraordinary Juizhou represents the wealth and luxury of ancient China, simultaneously symbolizing their religious and philosophical beliefs. Today it is a masterpiece of art that astounds us with its beauty and history alike. Like a fine wine, the beauty of this table has been aged to perfection. - (H.673)

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# Tang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Foreign Groom

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H.698  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 17" (43.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Tang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Foreign Groom

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

Horses were among the most revered creatures in ancient China. The speed and strength of these majestic creatures was vital to the protection and expansion of the Chinese empire. While the local Mongol Pony was native to the region, larger and faster breeds were imported from Central Asia, eventually leading to the establishment of the Silk Road. This large sculpture of a groom might just represent one of the foreigners who imported such horses. Elegantly dressed in a colored tunic held in place with a black sash tied at his waist, his stature reveals the wealth that these creatures provided their owners and trainers with. His distinctive plump, round face, broad, flat nose, and large eyes reveal his foreign status.

During the T'ang Dynasty, it was not uncommon for foreigners to reside in the larger cosmopolitan centers of the empire. While this groom might have accompanied a prized steed on the long and arduous journey from Central Asia to its new owner inside China, it is just as likely that this expert groom lived and resided in China, tending to the needs of a royal stable of stallions. Clearly, this groom is no meager peasant, but a refined and respected foreigner who was memorialized in this sculpture. He holds his right arm in the air, as if reaching for the reins. We can easily picture him lovingly combing a horse and brushing its mane. This groom is no mere worker, but a talented and respected artist who brought out the full beauty of these revered creatures. - (H.698)

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# Tang Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse with a Painted Saddle

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H.694  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 24" (61.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

# Tang Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse with a Painted Saddle

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horse allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered. Horses were believed to be related to mythological dragons, reflecting their sacred status within society. During the T'ang Dynasty, the adoration of the horse can be seen through their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art.

This impressive, large sculpture of a horse still retains much of its original white pigment in tact. However, even more impressive, is the superb condition of the polychrome painted saddle blanket, featuring a delightful floral pattern painted in red, green, and black hues. The remarkable preservation of this saddle blanket reveals the love and admiration the Chinese had for these majestic creatures, embellishing them with the finest regalia to enhance their natural beauty. This horse steps forward, the muscles of the legs carefully defined. Both the proportions of this horse and its non-removable saddle suggest its origin near Xian (the modern name for the ancient T'ang capital known as Chang'an). This gorgeous sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for these marvelous creatures. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (H.694)

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T'ang Glazed Terracotta Sculpture  
of a Foreign Groom Featuring a Turquoise Lapel

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H.697  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 17" (43.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: UAE



# T'ang Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Foreign Groom Featuring a Turquoise Lapel

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

Horses were among the most revered creatures in ancient China. The speed and strength of these majestic creatures was vital to the protection and expansion of the Chinese empire. While the local Mongol Pony was native to the region, larger and faster breeds were imported from Central Asia, eventually leading to the establishment of the Silk Road. This sculpture of a groom might just represent one of the foreigners who imported or cared for such horses. Dressed in an elegantly glazed green coat featuring a turquoise lapel, this groom features an expressive and emotive face that reveals his foreign origins. While his mouth, held slightly ajar, is painted red and his distinctive hat is black, it is the turquoise lapel that is most unique. The rarest of all the colored glazes, turquoise is known to appear on a mere half a dozen sculptures during the T'ang era, this splendid example being one of them.

While this groom might have accompanied a prized steed on the long and arduous journey from Central Asia to its new owner inside China, it is just as likely that this expert groom lived and resided in China, tending to the needs of a royal stable of stallions. During the T'ang Dynasty, it was not uncommon for foreigners to reside in the larger cosmopolitan centers of the empire. Clearly, this groom is no meager peasant, but a refined and respected foreigner who was memorialized in this sculpture. He holds his arms aloft in the air, as if reaching for the reins to lead a horse. We can easily picture him lovingly combing a horse and brushing its mane. This groom is no mere worker, but a talented and respected artist who brought out the full beauty of these revered creatures. - (H.697)

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# T'ang Large Sancai-Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Lokapala

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H.701  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 56" (142.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain

# T'ang Large Sancai-Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Lokapala

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

Known as Lokapala and as the Devaraja, or Celestial King, this guardian figure is a more general type of Chinese art known as mingqi. Mingqi were any of a variety of objects specifically created for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for the afterlife. This guardian was most likely interred, always in pairs with a companion, in order to ward off potential tomb robbers or perhaps evil spirits in the next world that might try to infiltrate the tomb. Traditionally, this fierce, armored guardian stands upon a recumbent ox, symbolic of the Celestial King's authority; however, in this example, the guardian tramples on a fully modeled demon, complete with webbed feet and hands, who bites on the guardian's foot. Originally, this type of figure had its origins in Buddhist philosophy; however, over the ages, as society became more secularized, they began to fulfill the more generic role of tomb guardians. As society evolved, these figures lost their religious significance and became symbolic of the military might that protected the wealth of the T'ang from the nomadic barbarian invaders of the North.

Clearly, this imposing figure warded away the forces of evil and protected the deceased throughout eternity. Although this work was never meant to be viewed by the living, its refined artistry and sophisticated beauty amazes us. Especially pleasing is the delicate modeling of the spectacular bird headdress that crowns his head. With spread wings (bearing traces of green paint) and undulating neck, this gorgeous headdress is a fine example of the masterful artistry of T'ang sculptors. Also impressive is the stylized zoomorphic armor that decorated his shoulders. Appearing like some exotic elephant with arched trunk and tusks, the guardian's arms seems to emerge from the mouths of these creatures. While this Celestial King is supposed to frighten us with his stern glare and aggressive posture, originally he would have brandished a wooden spear or sword that has vanished over the ages, we are instead drawn to his overwhelming beauty and history. - (H.701)

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# T'ang Large Sancai-Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Lokapala

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H.702  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 51" (129.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Style: T'ang Dynasty  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain



# T'ang Large Sancai-Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Lokapala

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Clearly, this imposing figure warded away the forces of evil and protected the deceased throughout eternity. Although this work was never meant to be viewed by the living, its refined artistry and sophisticated beauty amazes us. His face is finely modeled. Red paint highlights his lips while remnants of black lines detailing his beard are visible as well. Especially pleasing is the delicate modeling of the stylized zoomorphic armor that decorated his shoulders. Appearing like some exotic sea creature with undulating ears and arched trunk, the guardian's arms seems to emerge from the mouths of these creatures. While this Celestial King is supposed to frighten us with his stern glare and aggressive posture, originally he would have brandished a wooden spear or sword that has vanished over the ages, we are instead drawn to his overwhelming beauty and history. - (H. 702)

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# Western Han Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse

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H.703  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD  
Dimensions: 26.5" (67.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

# Western Han Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own Dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deity remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called *mingqi*, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subject, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthy existence. Thus, quite logically, the things we require to sustain and nurture our bodies in this life would be just as necessary in our next life.

The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horse allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered. Horses were believed to be related to mythological dragons, reflecting their sacred status within society. During the unification of China under the Han Dynasty, bands of mounted nomadic warriors from the north threatened the country. In order to thwart their attacks, the Chinese sought to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the Mongol ponies used by the invaders), eventually leading to the creation of the Silk Road.

This highly unusual sculpture of a horse combines various features typical of regions from Shichuan to Gansu and Shangdong. Most unique is the brightly colored paint that decorates the head and body of the horse. Red, blue, white, and green lines and dots create lovely patterns that seem to represent the horse’s saddle and harness. Furthermore, the horse’s mouth, teeth, and ear are all highlighted in red, as are individual hairs of the stiff, arching mane. This sculpture also features an attached arching tail that fits into an iron mounting. The upright ears and tail give this creature an alert, attentive manner. This creature provided security and strength, allowing the empire to secure its borders and expand its influences across Central Asia. This remarkable sculpture is a creation of immense cultural and historical significance that attests to the critical role of the horse in ancient Chinese civilization. - (H.703)

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# T'ang Sancai-Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Caparisoned Horse

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H.705  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 20" (50.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: UAE



# T'ang Sancai-Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Caparisoned Horse

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

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During the T'ang Dynasty, the adoration of the horse can be seen through their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art. This gorgeous horse, caparisoned in a stunning array of elegant onion-shaped ornaments along his upper torso and head (including one resting on his nose) and a stunning saddle blanket, all painted in a three colored, or Sancai, glaze. The Sancai glazing technique was first introduced around this time, making this sculpture even more impressive for the early refinement of such a complex technique. Furthermore, the slightly turned posture of the horse's head and the open mouth are both features highly desired by collectors. Together, all these features combine to produce a work of art of stunning beauty and grace that successfully captures the admiration the T'ang Dynasty felt for this majestic creature. - (H.705)

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# T'ang Sancai-Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Caparisoned Horse

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H.704  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 20" (50.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: UAE

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# Sui Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Camel

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H.724  
Origin: China  
Circa: 581 AD to 618 AD  
Dimensions: 13.5" (34.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain



# Sui Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Camel

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After almost four hundred years of civil war and division, Yang Jian succeeded in reunifying north and south under one authority, the Sui Dynasty. However, despite its brief duration, lasting for the rule of only two emperors, the Sui Dynasty paved the way for the cultural renaissance that would arise during the T'ang Dynasty. Reforms were introduced to wrest power out of the hands of the aristocracy, military, and Buddhist communities. The Confucianist system of selecting government officials from state schools, by means of rigorous examinations, was initiated. Perhaps their most significant program was the construction of the Great Canal, a project that facilitated the movement of people and goods across great distances, aiding in the reunification of China. However, the cost of the Canal bankrupted the empire and ultimately led to its dissolution, coupled with a failed campaign to conquer Korea. The rulers of the T'ang would capitalize on the infrastructure improvements of the Sui and establish one of the greatest empires in the history of China, following the footsteps of the Sui.

The camel is an unusual domestic animal; it carries a saddle of flesh on its back; swiftly it dashes over the shifting sands; it manifests its merit in dangerous places; it has a secret understanding of springs and sources, subtle indeed is its knowledge.

--Guo Pu, 3rd Century AD

Camels symbolized commerce and its associated wealth, largely concentrated on profits through trading on the Silk Road. Trade across this extensive network of trails brought prosperity, foreign merchants, and exotic merchandise into the heart of China. However, the dusty trails of the Silk Road were an arduous journey through the rugged mountains and harsh desert of Central Asia that could only be traversed by the two humped Bactrian camel. The government kept vast herds of these invaluable creatures, presided over by civil officials, for hauling their precious commodities across the Silk Road. Camels were a common sight in the cosmopolitan cities of China, carrying both traders and their goods directly into the markets. Likewise, artists began to create charming representations of these prized creatures as mingqi in order to symbolize wealth and prosperity in the afterlife. Mingqi were works of art created in an ancient Chinese custom specifically for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for their needs in the afterlife. Some of the most beautiful works of Chinese art were excavated from such tombs, and this crème-glazed sculpture of a camel, loaded with a swollen bundle of goods, is a perfect example of the refined artistry dedicated to such works, despite the facts that they were not intended to be viewed by the living. Most remarkable, this work still retains some of its original painted pigment, including red highlights on his ears and mouth, which heighten the naturalism. This majestic sculpture reveals China's respect and admiration for this beast of burden, so essential to their prosperity. - (H.724)

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# Tang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Civic Official

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H.715  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 38" (96.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain

# Tang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Civic Official

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The Tang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The Tang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

This general type of Chinese burial art is known as mingqi. Mingqi were any of a variety of objects specifically created for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for the afterlife. This statue represents a civic official from the vast governmental bureaucracy of the Tang Empire. With over two million inhabitants in greater Chang'an, the cosmopolitan capital of the T'ang, the governance of just this city alone would have demanded an extensive network of civic servants, not to mention the numerous distant provinces of that comprised the greater Empire. In order to remove power from the hands of wealthy aristocrats and warlords, the Tang created a class of scholar officials to govern their lands, enacting the will of the Imperial Court throughout China. Rigorous examinations ensured that only the most qualified individuals were able to serve this crucial position.

Depicted with a stern, uncompromising expression, this civic official represents the role of the government in the life of the citizens, as significant to their well being as military might. The facial features of this figure, including his aquiline nose and serene expression, reveal his intellectual wisdom and calm restraint. Remnants of the original, brightly colored pigment that once covered this work are still visible, mostly along the lower section of his robe and the base and in his black hair. The most unique element of this sculpture is the remarkable tapering sleeves of his tunic that fan outwards like the fins of a fish. Buried underground, this official was interred in order to welcome the deceased into the afterlife and to ensure his comfort in the great beyond. - (H.715)

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# T'ang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Civic Official

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H.716  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 38" (96.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain



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This general type of Chinese burial art is known as mingqi. Mingqi were any of a variety of objects specifically created for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for the afterlife. This statue represents a civic official from the vast governmental bureaucracy of the T'ang Empire. With over two million inhabitants in greater Chang'an, the cosmopolitan capital of the T'ang, the governance of just this city alone would have demanded an extensive network of civic servants, not to mention the numerous distant provinces of that comprised the greater Empire. In order to remove power from the hands of wealthy aristocrats and warlords, the T'ang created a class of scholar officials to govern their lands, enacting the will of the Imperial Court throughout China. Rigorous examinations ensured that only the most qualified individuals were able to serve this crucial position.

Depicted with a stern, uncompromising expression, this civic official represents the role of the government in the life of the citizens, as significant to their well being as military might. The facial features of this figure, including his furled brow and piercing eyes, are quite similar to those of the guardian figures and no doubt likewise reveals his extraordinary powers. Remnants of the original pigment that once covered this work are still visible, mostly along the lower section of his robe. By far, the most spectacular element of this sculpture is his headdress that is decorated with a bird. Might this unique headdress be modeled after a real life counterpart? If so, it is possible that this sculpture, although idealized, might represent a specific individual official who served in the government bureaucracy of the province where this work was interred. Buried underground, this official was interred in order to welcome the deceased into the afterlife and to ensure his comfort in the great beyond. - (H.716)

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# T'ang Large Terracotta Sculpture of a Camel

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H.714  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 35.5" (90.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: United States

# T'ang Large Terracotta Sculpture of a Camel

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

During the T'ang Dynasty, the beloved status of the camel ranked second only to the revered horse. Camels symbolized commerce and its associated wealth, largely concentrated on profits through trading on the Silk Road. Trade across this extensive network of paths and trails brought prosperity, foreign merchants, and exotic merchandise into China. However, the dusty trails of the Silk Road were an arduous journey through the rugged mountains and harsh desert of Central Asia that could only be traversed by the two humped Bactrian camel. This remarkable beast was able to withstand the scorching heat of the desert and to maintain its own nutrients, surviving for months without fresh supplies of water. The government kept vast herds of these invaluable creatures, presided over by civil officials, for hauling their precious commodities across the Silk Road. These exotic creatures were a common sight in the cosmopolitan cities of T'ang China, carrying both traders and their goods directly into the markets.

Likewise, T'ang artists began to create charming representations of these prized creatures as mingqi in order to symbolize wealth and prosperity in the afterlife. Mingqi were works of art specifically created in an ancient Chinese custom for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for their afterlife. Some of the most beautiful works of Chinese art were excavated from such tombs, and this large sculpture of a camel is a perfect example of the refined artistry dedicated to such works even though they were never meant to be seen by the living. Standing with his head raised in the air and his mouth wide open, this camel is covered in thick tufts of furry hair along his head, neck, knees, and humps. Most remarkable, it features a removable saddle that may have even once supported an accompanying rider. This majestic sculpture reveals the T'ang Dynasty's respect and admiration for this beast of burden, so essential to the prosperity of ancient China. - (H.714)

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# T'ang Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse with a Detachable Saddle

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H.713  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 26.25" (66.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States



# T'ang Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse with a Detachable Saddle

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient unification of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. Their rapid mobility allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the native Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered, believed to be relatives of dragons, a theory reflecting their sacred status within society. During the T'ang Dynasty, the adoration of the horse can be seen through their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art.

This impressive, large sculpture of a horse still retains much of its original white pigment in tact. However, even more impressive, is the removable saddle that graces his back. Painted in bright orange, this textured saddle may have once supported a rider who is now lost to us. A hole in the rear would have once presumably been filled with real horsehair. Traces of polychrome are also visible inside the nose and along the mouth. The horse raises one leg in the air, his head is turned to the side and his mouth is slightly ajar. All these features are sought after by collectors. When one imagines this horse as it might have originally appeared, with vibrant hues, a similarly modeled rider, and tail of real horsehair, the illusion would have been uncanny. This gorgeous sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for this marvelous creatures. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (H.713)

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# Pair of T'ang Painted and Gilt Terracotta Warriors

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H.736  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 35.75" (90.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Style: T'ang Dynasty  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain

# T'ang Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse with a Detachable Saddle

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

During the Tang Dynasty, restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians - were buried with the dead. This pair of warriors bears a striking resemblance to the Buddhist warrior deities known as Lokapalas that have their origins as protectors of Buddhist temples but assumed a mortuary role in China. However, this pair of warrior does not stand in the traditional stance of the Lokapala, subduing a demon or triumphing over a recumbent beast. Although this pair is slightly different, we can assume their role in the afterlife would have been the same. These warriors are also striking for their lithe, elongated physiques. Perhaps the most important feature of these guardians is their remarkable state of preservation with an impressive amount of the original polychrome still in tact and, even more impressive, remnants of gilding.

According to one Chinese tradition explaining their origin, the emperor Taizong when ill was threatened by ghosts outside of his room screeching and throwing bricks and tiles. When his general Jin Shubao (Chin Shu-pao) and a fellow officer came to stand guard the activity of the ghosts ceased. The grateful emperor had portraits of the two men hung on either side of his palace gates, and thereafter their images became widespread as door-gods. Originally, they would have brandished weapons in their hands. Perhaps swords, these weapons were likely fabricated in a material such as wood that deteriorated over the centuries. - (H. 736)

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Tang Painted Terracotta Sculpture  
of a Camel with Removable Foreign Rider

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H.740  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 19.5" (49.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain



# Tang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Camel with Removable Foreign Rider

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The Tang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. Tang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The Tang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

The camel is an unusual domestic animal; it carries a saddle of flesh on its back; swiftly it dashes over the shifting sands; it manifests its merit in dangerous places; it has a secret understanding of springs and sources, subtle indeed is its knowledge.

--Guo Pu, 3rd Century AD

For the Chinese, camels symbolized commerce and its associated wealth, largely concentrated on profits though trading on the Silk Road. Trade across this extensive network of paths and trails brought prosperity, foreign merchants, and exotic merchandise into China. However, the dusty trails of the Silk Road were an arduous journey through the rugged mountains and harsh desert of Central Asia that could only be traversed by the two humped Bactrian camel. This remarkable beast was able to withstand the scorching heat of the desert and maintain its own nutrients, surviving for months without fresh supplies of water. The government kept vast herds of these invaluable creatures, presided over by civil officials, for hauling their precious commodities across the Silk Road. These exotic creatures were a common sight in the cosmopolitan cities of Tang China, carrying both traders and their goods directly into the markets. Likewise, Tang artists began to create charming representations of these prized creatures as *mingqi* in order to symbolize wealth and prosperity in the afterlife.

*Mingqi* were works of art specifically created in an ancient Chinese custom for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for their afterlife. Some of the most beautiful works of Chinese art were excavated from such tombs, and this sculpture of a camel and detachable rider is a perfect example of the refined artistry dedicated to such works despite the fact that they were never meant to be seen by the living. The distinct physiognomy of the rider reveals that he is of foreign descent, most likely a Turkic merchant from Central Asia. We can imagine him guiding a caravan of camels into the cities of Tang China, carrying his precious goods directly into the market. Both the camel and rider are elegantly painted in polychrome hues. Most charming are the individual hairs along the camel's neck and detailed eyes. The rider also wears red boots and sports a full beard. This sculpture reveals the Tang Dynasty's respect and admiration for this beast of burden, so essential to the prosperity of ancient China. - (H.740)

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Pair of T'ang Sancai-Glazed  
Terracotta Civic Officials

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H.745  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 27.5" (69.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: UAE

## Pair of T'ang Sancai-Glazed Terracotta Civic Officials

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

I spend the morning going through Government papers, I spend the evening going through Government papers.

--Bai Juyi, poet and official, writing while governor of Suzhou, 825 AD

This general type of Chinese burial art is known as mingqi. Mingqi were any of a variety of objects specifically created for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for the afterlife. This statue represents a civic official from the vast governmental bureaucracy of the T'ang Empire. With over two million inhabitants in greater Chang'an, the cosmopolitan capital of the T'ang, the governance of just this city alone would have demanded an extensive network of civic servants, not to mention the numerous distant provinces of that comprised the greater Empire. In order to remove power from the hands of wealthy aristocrats and warlords, the T'ang created a class of scholar officials to govern their lands, enacting the will of the Imperial Court throughout China. Rigorous examinations ensured that only the most qualified individuals were able to serve this crucial position.

These civic officials represented the role of the government in the life of the citizens, as significant to their well being as military might. The facial features of these figures, including their aquiline noses and serene expressions, reveal their intellectual wisdom and calm restraint. The gorgeous Sancai glaze covers their robes, and even parts of their faces. Buried underground, these officials were interred in order to welcome the deceased into the afterlife and to ensure his comfort in the great beyond. - (H.745)

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T'ang Painted Terracotta Procession Set  
Composed of Ten Horses and Riders

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H.773  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 14.5" (36.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States



# T'ang Painted Terracotta Procession Set Composed of Ten Horses and Riders

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

This general type of Chinese burial art is known as mingqi. Mingqi were any of a variety of objects specifically created for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for the afterlife. Here, we are witness to an elaborate procession. Perhaps even the funeral procession that carried the deceased into his tomb, where these painted terracotta figures were unearthed centuries later. Most likely, these works were dedicated to a member of the royal elite and we can imagine masses of citizenry lining up to catch a glimpse of this procession. Musicians play music, banging on drums and blowing flutes and horns (although there is no rider carrying a horn, one of them holds his hands in a posture indicating he once held this instrument). Other riders appear to be government officials, and still others, entertainers or family. One rider is accompanied by a monkey seated on the back of his horse. Another female rider holds a small bird in her hand. Perhaps the most charming rider gently carries a bundled baby in his arms. Both the horses themselves and the riders are colorfully painted in bright polychrome hues. While parades such as represented by this set were certainly not unknown in T'ang China, they must have been special occasions reserved for religious ceremonies or other such special circumstances. While this procession set may memorialize an event from jovial than funeral rites, their discovery inside a tomb reveals their connection with the afterlife. Perhaps this set was interred in order to welcome the deceased into the world beyond, where entertainers and musicians would greet him. - (H.773)

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Set of Four Sui Crème-Glazed  
Horses and Riders

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H.759  
Origin: China  
Circa: 581 AD to 618 AD  
Dimensions: 8.5" (21.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States

## Set of Four Sui Crème-Glazed Horses and Riders

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After almost four hundred years of civil war and division, Yang Jian succeeded in reunifying north and south under one authority, the Sui Dynasty. However, despite its brief duration, lasting for the rule of only two emperors, the Sui Dynasty paved the way for the cultural renaissance that would arise during the T'ang Dynasty. Reforms were introduced to wrest power out of the hands of the aristocracy, military, and Buddhist communities. The Confucianist system of selecting government officials from state schools, by means of rigorous examinations, was initiated. Perhaps their most significant program was the construction of the Great Canal, a project that facilitated the movement of people and goods across great distances, aiding in the reunification of China. However, the cost of the Canal bankrupted the empire and ultimately led to its dissolution, coupled with a failed campaign to conquer Korea. The rulers of the T'ang would capitalize on the infrastructure improvements of the Sui and establish one of the greatest empires in the history of China, following the footsteps of the Sui.

This charming set of four horse and rider sculptures, covered in a crème glaze characteristic of the Sui Dynasty, depicts a procession of musicians and attendants. One rider bangs a drum that hangs off the side of his steed. Another blows on a long arching horn he carries in his hands. We can imagine the rhythmic tones of their music rising over the nose of the horses' hooves hitting the ground. The other two riders appear to be attendants or court officials. This procession might have been a joyous occasion to entertain the crowd of onlookers while simultaneously demonstrating the resplendent wealth and power of the court. It is also possible that this procession was more somber occasion, leading to the burial place of a fallen leader. Discovered inside a tomb, this set clearly served an important purpose in the afterlife. We can imagine the deceased individual awaking in the next world to the tones of the musicians and the welcome of his official attendants. This gorgeous set of sculptures gives us a glimpse into the past, into the blossoming period of one of the great golden ages of human civilization. - (H.759)

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Ming Glazed Terracotta  
Sculptural Tile from a Temple

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H.742  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 29.5" (74.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Ming Glazed Terracotta Sculptural Tile from a Temple

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

Like the founders of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Hongwu was extremely suspicious of the educated courtiers that advised him and, fearful that they might attempt to overthrow him, he successfully consolidated control of all aspect of government. The strict authoritarian control Hongwu wielded over the affairs of the country was due in part to the centralized system of government he inherited from the Monguls and largely kept intact. However, Hongwu replaced the Mongul bureaucrats who had ruled the country for nearly a century with native Chinese administrators. He also reinstated the Confucian examination system that tested would-be civic officials on their knowledge of literature and philosophy. Unlike the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), which received most of its taxes from mercantile commerce, the Ming economy was based primarily on agriculture, reflecting both the peasant roots of its founder as well as the Confucian belief that trade was ignoble and parasitic.

Culturally, the greatest innovation of the Ming Dynasty was the introduction of the novel. Developed from the folk tales of traditional storytellers, these works were transcribed in the everyday vernacular language of the people. Advances in printmaking and the increasing population of urban dwellers largely contributed to the success of these books. Architecturally, the most famous monument of the Ming Dynasty is surely the complex of temples and palaces known as the Forbidden City that was constructed in Beijing after the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle, moved the capital there. Today, the Forbidden Palace remains one of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese architecture and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the vast nation.

Glazed sculptural tile are today considered one of the hallmarks of classical Chinese architecture. However, despite their popularity in modern times, they were relatively scarce until after the end of the T'ang Dynasty. Even then, during the Song and Yuan Dynasties, they were still infrequently used. It was not until the rise of the Ming Dynasty that glazed sculptural tiles became a popular decorative devise extensively employed in temples, altars, imperial palaces, and gardens. Beijing became the center of glazed architectural tile production during the Ming period, and colorfully decorated pagodas began to sprout up around this region. Eaves and entryways were decorated with vibrant sculptures that served both decorative and sometimes religious purposes.

This glazed terracotta tile would have been one of the centerpieces in the decorative schemes of a Ming Dynasty temple. Brilliantly colored in blue, green, and ochre hues, this tile depicts an armored figure standing with his hands clasped together in meditation. He may be standing upon a bridge, for waves of water appear to flow over rocks below. It is clear from the edges that this work would have been joined with others on either side that would have completed the image. The subject matter, although not apparent, is most likely Buddhist, considering the nature of the temple. When we imagine the entire temple structure covered in such tiles, from the walls to the roof, the glory of Ming Dynasty China becomes apparent. - (H.742)

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# T'ang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Lokapala

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H.754  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 17.75" (45.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

# T'ang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Lokapala

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

During the Tang Dynasty, restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians - were buried with the dead. Many of the objects reflect Tang China's extraordinary amount of contact with foreigners, bringing into China influences that were then adapted and absorbed into its culture. One of these influences is apparent in this figure that corresponds to Buddhist warrior deities that assume a mortuary role in China but also serve as protectors of Buddhist temples. Known as "Protector of the Burial Vault" or "Protector of the Burial Ground," the fierce, this guardian stands atop a grotesque demon. This stance symbolizes the heavenly king's authority and responsibility as protector of the tomb. He wears a suit of armor that retains a remarkable amount of its original orange and white pigment.

According to one Chinese tradition explaining their origin, the emperor Taizong when ill was threatened by ghosts outside of his room screeching and throwing bricks and tiles. When his general Jin Shubao (Chin Shu-pao) and a fellow officer came to stand guard the activity of the ghosts ceased. The grateful emperor had portraits of the two men hung on either side of his palace gates, and thereafter their images became widespread as door-gods. Originally, he would have brandished a weapon fabricated in a material such as wood that has deteriorated over the centuries. Looking unto his stern face and flaming hair and gazing into his fierce eyes, we understand why such works were intended to frighten away tomb robbers and evil spirits. Yet despite his intimidating nature, we are not repelled by him; instead, we are attracted to his artistic mastery and intriguing history. - (H.754)

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# Neolithic Yangshao Painted Terracotta Vessel

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H.778

Origin: China

Circa: 3000 BC to 1500 BC

Dimensions: 12.75" (32.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Painted Terracotta

Location: United States



# Neolithic Yangshao Painted Terracotta Vessel

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Many thousands of years ago, our earliest ancestors were nomadic tribes that survived by foraging the wild for food and shelter. During the Neolithic era, human groups first began to settle down permanently, establishing villages and communities. However, without new technological innovations, this sedentary culture would not have been possible. Foremost among these discoveries were agriculture and tool-making, both of which enabled humans to transform their natural environment into a sustainable society. Many thousands of years ago, the area presently covered by modern China was made up of distinct regions each with their own unique cultural identity. Archaeologists have been able to discern some of these cultures from each other based upon the burial styles, architecture, and pottery, perhaps the most immediate remnant of this age.

When Neolithic mankind began to settle in areas further removed from sources of water, transportation of this vital fluid became a foremost necessity. After unsuccessful attempts to create water resistant vessel from wicker baskets caked in mud, pottery was invented. The creation of pottery in China dates back as early as 6000 B.C. when villagers first realized that the earth around fires became hard and impervious to liquid. From this realization came the birth of pottery, fulfilling the practical necessity of water transportation and allowing civilization to expand. While pottery was created to answer a need, it soon progressed to be more than functional: it was also beautiful. While Neolithic vessels would have been used to carry water or to store grains, they are also spectacular artistic creations. The forms of the vessels, built up from coiled clay, are elegant and refined.

The generic name for the Neolithic culture that created these vessels is Yangshao (3000-1500 B.C.). They are thought to have been the first to harvest silk from the silkworm, initiating a tradition the Chinese are still famous for today. While few specifics are known about the Yangshao culture, information gathered from archaeological excavations of tombs and tribal villages has provided a rudimentary vision of life in prehistoric China. Furthermore, the geometric paintings that decorate Neolithic vessels represent some of the earliest evidence of the origins and evolution of calligraphic writing in China. While these designs are purely abstract and in no way constitute a written language, the patterns, motifs, and application of paint all serve to give us insight into the intellectual and aesthetic atmosphere that would eventually foster the creation of Chinese symbols.

As is typical of similar works, the upper half of this vessel is painted with abstract designs while the lower portion is left unfinished. The main motif of this vessel is a red circle filled with an “x” repeated across the upper shoulder. Black and red semicircles radiate outwards concentrically, intermittently interrupted by a vertical red line and a tower of red “x”s. Although this vessel was originally created to serve a practical purpose, today it is appreciated as a gorgeous work of art, treasured both for its beauty and history alike. - (H. 778)

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# Neolithic Yangshao Painted Terracotta Vessel

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H.805

Origin: China

Circa: 3000 BC to 1500 BC

Dimensions: 13.75" (34.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Painted Terracotta

Location: United States

# Neolithic Yangshao Painted Terracotta Vessel

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Many thousands of years ago, our earliest ancestors were nomadic tribes that survived by foraging the wild for food and shelter. During the Neolithic era, human groups first began to settle down permanently, establishing villages and communities. However, without new technological innovations, this sedentary culture would not have been possible. Foremost among these discoveries were agriculture and tool-making, both of which enabled humans to transform their natural environment into a sustainable society. Many thousands of years ago, the area presently covered by modern China was made up of distinct regions each with their own unique cultural identity. Archaeologists have been able to discern some of these cultures from each other based upon the burial styles, architecture, and pottery, perhaps the most immediate remnant of this age.

When Neolithic mankind began to settle in areas further removed from sources of water, transportation of this vital fluid became a foremost necessity. After unsuccessful attempts to create water resistant vessel from wicker baskets caked in mud, pottery was invented. The creation of pottery in China dates back as early as 6000 B.C. when villagers first realized that the earth around fires became hard and impervious to liquid. From this realization came the birth of pottery, fulfilling the practical necessity of water transportation and allowing civilization to expand. While pottery was created to answer a need, it soon progressed to be more than functional: it was also beautiful. While Neolithic vessels would have been used to carry water or to store grains, they are also spectacular artistic creations. The forms of the vessels, built up from coiled clay, are elegant and refined.

The generic name for the Neolithic culture that created these vessels is Yangshao (3000-1500 B.C.). They are thought to have been the first to harvest silk from the silkworm, initiating a tradition the Chinese are still famous for today. While few specifics are known about the Yangshao culture, information gathered from archaeological excavations of tombs and tribal villages has provided a rudimentary vision of life in prehistoric China. Furthermore, the geometric paintings that decorate Neolithic vessels represent some of the earliest evidence of the origins and evolution of calligraphic writing in China. While these designs are purely abstract and in no way constitute a written language, the patterns, motifs, and application of paint all serve to give us insight into the intellectual and aesthetic atmosphere that would eventually foster the creation of Chinese symbols.

As is typical of similar works, the upper half of this vessel is painted with abstract designs while the lower portion is left unfinished. While the decoration of this vessel is fairly simple compared to the complex spiral motifs of many others, the rhythmic interplay of the concentric arches creates a beauty that is quite pleasing to the eye. Four bands are filled by these arches, while the neck is adorned by two bands of black crenulated motifs. Although this vessel was originally created to serve a practical purpose, today it is appreciated as a gorgeous work of art, treasured both for its beauty and history alike. - (H.805)

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# Han Green-Glazed Terracotta Money Box

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H.829  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD  
Dimensions: 6.25" (15.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Han Green-Glazed Terracotta Money Box

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own Dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deity remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called *mingqi*, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subject, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthy existence. Thus, quite logically, the things we require to sustain and nurture our bodies in this life would be just as necessary in our next life.

The Han Dynasty, like the Zhou before it, is divided into two distinct periods, the Western Han (206 B.C.-9 A.D.) and the Eastern Han (23-220 A.D.) with a brief interlude. Towards the end of the Western period, a series of weak emperors ruled the throne, controlled from behind the scenes by Wang Mang and Huo Guang, both relatives of empresses. They both exerted enormous influence over the government and when the last emperor suddenly passed away, Mang became ruling advisor, seizing this opportunity to declare his own Dynasty, the Xin, or “New.” However, another popular uprising began joined by the members of the Liu clan, the family that ruled the Han Dynasty, the Xin came to a quick end and the Eastern Han was established in its place with its capital at Loyang (Chang’an, the capital of the Western Han, was completely destroyed).

However, even as Chinese influence spread across Southeastern Asia into new lands, the Eastern Han Dynasty was unable to recreate the glories of the Western Period. In fact, this period can be characterized by a bitter power struggle amongst a group of five consortial clans. These families sought to control the young, weak emperors with their court influence. Yet, as the emperors became distrustful of the rising power of the clans, they relied upon their eunuchs to defend them, often eliminating entire families at a time. During the Western Han, the Emperor was viewed as the center of the universe. However, this philosophy slowly disintegrated under the weak, vulnerable rulers of the Eastern Han, leading many scholars and officials to abandon the court. Eventually, the power of the Han would completely erode, ending with its dissolution and the beginning of the period known as the “Three Kingdoms.”

This Chinese money box dates from the Han Dynasty. Modern examples in wood testify that these ancient “piggy banks” have been part of Chinese culture for well over two thousand years. During the Han Dynasty, such chests would have likely been made out of wood, or in the rarest cases, for the wealthiest individuals, bronze. The gorgeous green glaze of this terracotta box recalls similar works in bronze, and the glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages. Commonly referred to as “silver frost,” this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl.

Perhaps the most charming feature of this box is also the most practical, a little removable lid, complete with handle and hinges rendered in low relief, that allows access to its precious contents. The surface is dotted with tiny bosses that probably imitate a feature of the real life chest this terracotta version imitates. Although this vessel would have functioned as a money box in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. Such a work might have originally been buried containing coins and jewels inside, to be used by the deceased in the afterlife. A symbol for the bounties of life, for timeless wealth and eternal prosperity, this ancient treasure chest would have represented the riches to be experienced in the afterlife. Today, this box is not only a gorgeous work of art, treasured for its history and rarity; but also a stunning reminder of the richness and luxury of the Han Dynasty, both in this world and the next. - (H.829)

# Yuan Painted Terracotta Head of the Buddha

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H.693

Origin: China

Circa: 1279 AD to 1368 AD

Dimensions: 13" (33.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Style: Yuan Dynasty

Medium: Painted Terracotta

Location: United States

# Yuan Painted Terracotta Head of the Buddha

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The Yuan Dynasty was established by Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, upon relocating the capital of his empire from Mongolia to Beijing. The Forbidden City was constructed, a relative oasis of Mongolian culture in the heart of China. While the Mongol elite retained their native language and customs, they did adapt the Chinese system of bureaucratic government and cemented the authoritarian rule of the emperor. Although they were unaffected by Chinese culture, the Yuan did little to stifle the native traditions and beliefs of their subjects. Buddhism continued to flourish, although the monasteries received little funding from the state. In fact, during the Yuan Dynasty, China first began to open up to foreigners. Christian and Hindu missionaries were established in Beijing and Marco Polo made his famous journey during the Yuan era. While the Chinese never accepted the Yuan as a legitimate dynasty, instead viewing them as foreign bandits, the Mongolians rebelled against the Beijing Khans for becoming, “too Chinese.” In the end, the Yuan Dynasty had the shortest duration of the major Chinese Dynasties, lasting little more than a hundred years.

The historical figure, Buddha Gautama Sakyamuni is the Buddha of compassion who, having achieved the highest evolutionary perfection, turns suffering into happiness for all living beings. Born around 560 B.C. somewhere between the hills of south Nepal and the Rapti river, his father was a Raja who ruled over the northeastern province of India, the district including the holy Ganges River. The young prince was married to Yashoda when he was about 17 years old and together they had a son named Rahula. At the age of 29, he left his life of luxury, feeling compelled to purify his body and make it an instrument of the mind by ridding himself of earthly impulses and temptations. Chinese Buddhist art is heavily influenced both by earlier Indian examples and the stylistic tendencies of the Central Asian cultures who brought the religion into China.

Here, the Buddha is portrayed as a youthful prince with a round, full face, suggestive of his spiritual fullness and inner self-satisfaction. An inner calm and complacency is visible on his face and in his sweet smile. Tight curls of hair cover his head and ushnisha, the symbol of his infinite wisdom. His elongated earlobes droop down, the sagging caused by wearing heavy earrings as an infant, reflecting his royal origins. The urna, or “third eye,” is represented by a small bump in between his eyebrows, is also symbolic of his nobility and enlightenment. This fragment of a head was most likely originally part of a full-figured sculpture that once revered inside a temple or shrine. He appears to look down upon us with his inlaid eyes, suggesting that the work might have been raised upon a pedestal structure. The mystical energy and divine wisdom of the Buddha radiates from within this sculpture. The contemplative wisdom of the Buddha shines through the stucco and warms our spirits. - (H.693)

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# T'ang Bronze Vase with Dragon Handles



H.856 (LSO)  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 17.75" (45.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Bronze  
Location: United States



# T'ang Bronze Vase with Dragon Handles

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This striking bronze vase was made during what many consider to be China's Golden Age, the T'ang Dynasty. It was at this point that China's outstanding technological and aesthetic achievements opened to external influences, resulting in the introduction of numerous new forms of self-expression, coupled with internal innovation and considerable social freedom. The T'ang dynasty also saw the birth of the printed novel, significant musical and theatrical heritage and many of China's best-known painters and artists.

The T'ang Dynasty was succeeded in 618 AD, when the Li family seized power from the last crumbling remnants of the preceding Sui Dynasty. This political and regal regime was long-lived, and lasted for almost 300 years. The imperial aspirations of the preceding periods and early T'ang leaders led to unprecedented wealth, resulting in considerable socioeconomic stability, the development of trade networks and vast urbanisation for China's exploding population (estimated at around 50 million people in the 8th century AD). The T'ang rulers took cues from earlier periods, maintaining many of their administrative structures and systems intact. Even when dynastic and governmental institutions withdrew from management of the empire towards the end of the period – their authority undermined by localised rebellions and regional governors known as *jiedushi* – the systems were so well-established that they continued to operate regardless.

The artworks created during this era are among China's greatest cultural achievements. It was the greatest age for Chinese poetry and painting, and sculpture also developed (although there was a notable decline in Buddhist sculptures following repression of the faith by pro-Taoism administrations later in the regime). It is disarming to note that the eventual decline of imperial power, followed by the official end of the dynasty on the 4th of June 907, hardly affected the great artistic turnover.

The current piece is a case in fact. While technically a utilitarian object, this vessel has been transformed into an artistic masterpiece by careful manipulation of the raw material combined with extravagantly imaginative design. The body of the vessel is cast in an amphoriform shape, with a plain flat base swelling gracefully to a globular midsection, nipped sharply in at the shoulders (where the second section is attached) and narrowing to a fine, constricted neck with an angular lipped rim. The handles are rendered as a pair of elongated, writhing dragons, their mouths biting the edge of the rim, arching their backs in a flurry of tails, crests and wings to re-attach themselves at the shoulders of the vessel. Their bodies are clad in tiny relief scales, with other details such as their talons also picked out in exquisite crispness. This is a perfect contrast of serenity and dynamism, which makes for a stirring and attractive composition.

The role of this vessel is uncertain. It was probably intended for wine, or just for decoration. As for its social status, the mode of construction and the decoration are in themselves indicative. Large bronze vessels were always prestige pieces, as they were difficult to make, and the raw materials were very expensive. The quality of the finish is also very high. The dragons, finally, imply a high level of importance for the vessel and – presumably – its intended owner, as these mythical beasts were the most important and prestigious symbol of imperial China. This is a truly outstanding piece of ancient Chinese art, a credit to any serious collection. - (H.856 (LSO))

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# T'ang Terracotta Sculpture of a Standing Ox

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H.878  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 8" (20.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain

# T'ang Terracotta Sculpture of a Standing Ox

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

During the T'ang Dynasty, sculptural effigies of domesticated animals were often interred in the tombs of nobility and elite members of the social hierarchy. Created in all media, these sculptures accompanied the spirit of the deceased into the afterlife. While similar examples exist, most were found harnessed to wagons and carts and were meant to function as beasts of burden. However, this sculpture was discovered buried as part of a herd, contained inside a sculpted miniature pen with other domesticated animals, suggesting that this ox served as nourishment. Besides its function, this sculpture is also remarkable for its size and exquisite state of preservation, horns and ears intact. Some of the original red pigment that once decorated the animal is also visible on its nose and mouth, as well as its hooves. During the T'ang Dynasty, the Chinese believed that the afterlife was a continuation of our earthly existence. Thus, logically, as we require food to nourish our bodies on earth, so too will we require food to nourish our souls in the afterlife. Created to serve as food for the afterlife, this work is more than a mere sculpture; it is a gorgeous memorial to the religious and philosophical beliefs of the T'ang Dynasty. This cow effigy has served its eternal purpose well. Today, it continues to nourish our souls with its beauty and grace. - (H.878)

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# Yuan Cizhou Ware Terracotta Vessel

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H.858  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1279 AD to 1368 AD  
Dimensions: 12.75" (32.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Yuan Cizhou Ware Terracotta Vessel

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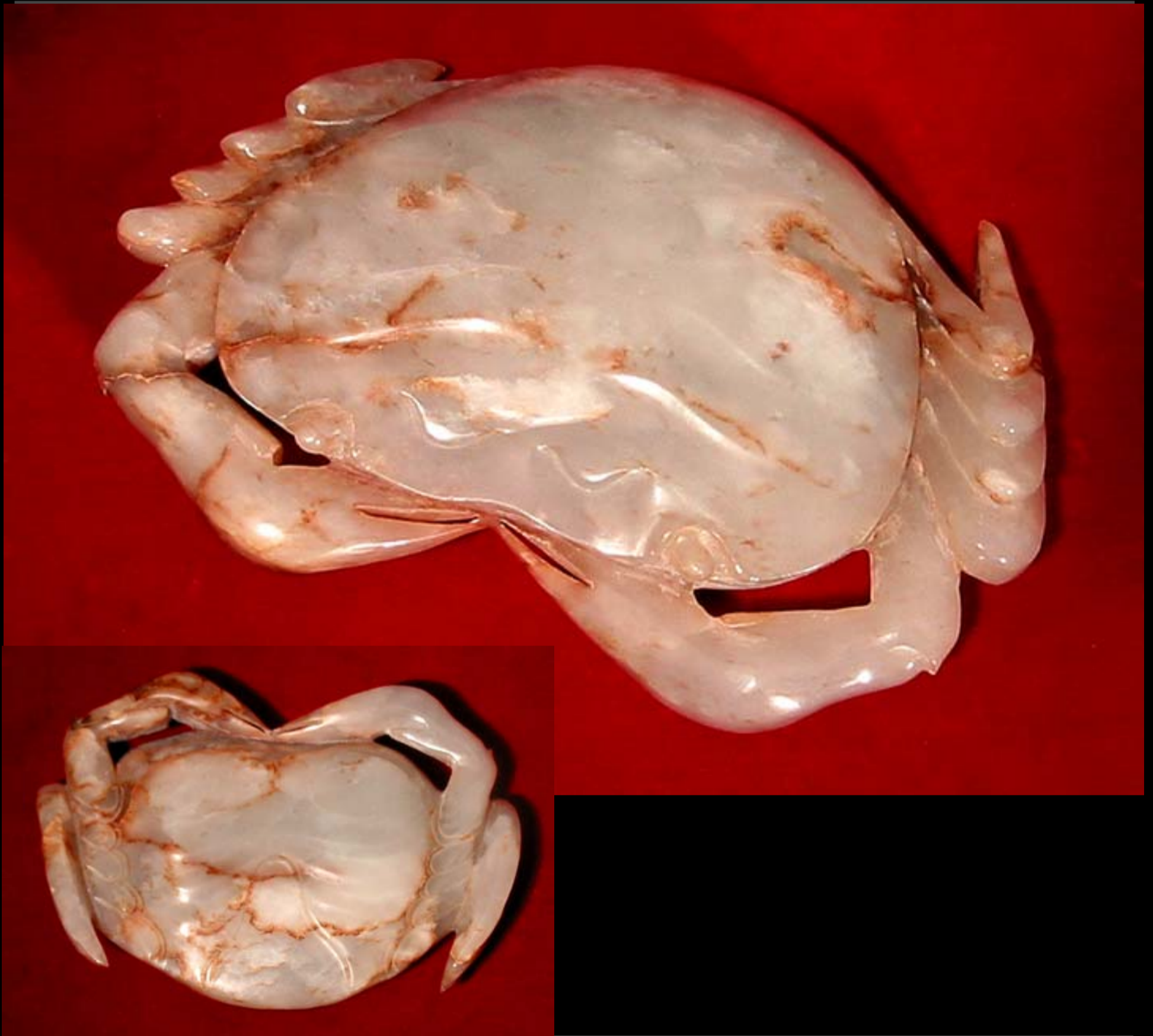
The Yuan Dynasty was established by Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, upon relocating the capital of his empire from Mongolia to Beijing. The Forbidden City was constructed, a relative oasis of Mongolian culture in the heart of China. While the Mongol elite retained their native language and customs, they did adapt the Chinese system of bureaucratic government and cemented the authoritarian rule of the emperor. Although they were unaffected by Chinese culture, the Yuan did little to stifle the native traditions and beliefs of their subjects. Buddhism continued to flourish, although the monasteries received little funding from the state. In fact, during the Yuan Dynasty, China first began to open up to foreigners. Christian and Hindu missionaries were established in Beijing and Marco Polo made his famous journey during the Yuan era. While the Chinese never accepted the Yuan as a legitimate dynasty, instead viewing them as foreign bandits, the Mongolians rebelled against the Beijing Khans for becoming, “too Chinese.” In the end, the Yuan Dynasty had the shortest duration of the major Chinese Dynasties, lasting little more than a hundred years.

The term, “Cizhou,” denotes a particular type of ceramics ware. Named after the Cizhou province where examples were first unearthed, there have also been ruins of related kilns discovered in the Hebei and Henan provinces. While Cizhou ware was first created during the Five Dynasties, it only became popular during the Song and Yuan Dynasties, after which point production ceased. Cizhou wares are celebrated for their great variety of decorative motifs characterized by bold, expressive patterns with painterly qualities that can almost be called calligraphic. The free, expressive nature of Cizhou ware might be a reflection of the fact that they were created for the public and not intended for court consumption where tastes tended to be more refined. While the production of Cizhou ware was short-lived, its emphasis on decoration would affect the course of future ceramic production in China.

This gorgeous, wide-bodied vase is a perfect example of the Cizhou style. While the shape of the vessel itself is quite pleasing, it is not what is emphasized. Instead, our eyes are attracted to the beautiful painted motifs that adorn this vase. The majority of the painted decoration is composed of three circular-framed areas. One is filled with a blossoming flower painted with the same freedom of brushstroke normally reserved for calligraphy and scroll painting. The other two areas depict scenes of philosopher-types contemplating the beauty of nature. No doubt the vivacity of the decoration, typical of Cizhou ware, was influenced by the constant fluctuation of nature and the changing seasons. - (H.858)

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## Song Agate Sculpture of a Crab



PF.6213

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions:

1.25" (3.2cm) high x 5.625" (14.3cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Agate

Location: United States

## Song Agate Sculpture of a Crab

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After the fall of the T'ang Dynasty, a period of unrest and war ensued, finally ending with the establishment of the Song Dynasty. The Song era was considered a time of consolidation for Chinese culture. Traditional text were reanalyzed and reinterpreted, bringing forth a revival of Confucianism peppered with new ideas. Once again, civil scholars became more influential than their military counterparts. This was an era of peace, where technology and innovation flourished. Trade now focused on the seas, since the Silk Road had since been cut off. The Song viewed themselves as the culmination of two thousand years of Chinese culture. However, splinters began to emerge among the various ethnic groups that had been unified under the T'ang. As these ethnic rivalries began to grow, the government became fractured as officials began to oppose each other, allowing the Mongols from the north to invade and conquer.

Although best known for their philosophical contributions, this sculpture of a crab attests to the rich artistic tradition that flourished under the enlightened rulers of the Song Dynasty. Carved from precious agate, this crab holds its claws up to its mouth as if nibbling on its latest catch. Each of the multiple legs is individually articulate, contributing to the illusion that this creature might scatter away, sideways of course. With beady, round eyes, the crab stares back at us unsure whether to run and hide or continue eating. We can picture this sculpture once decorating the imperial palace of Song Dynasty. Clearly the stunning artistry of the carving would have awed all who saw it. Likewise, finding this effigy of a sea creature inside the royal residence would have delighted the onlooker. Such a work, treasured both for its form as well as its material, would have been a luxury only afforded by the royals themselves or high-ranking officials within the court. Today, it continues to inspire us with its beauty and history that only increase with time. - (PF.6213)

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# Western Han Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse and Carriage



H.717  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD  
Dimensions: 38.5" (97.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Western Han Terracotta Sculpture of a Horse and Carriage

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own Dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deity remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called *mingqi*, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subject, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthy existence. Thus, quite logically, the things we require to sustain and nurture our bodies in this life would be just as necessary in our next life.

Expressively modeled in a firm pose standing at attention with tail erect, this horse of the Han Dynasty depicts the power and grace of the new breed of horse from the west known as the "Heavenly Horse of China." This horse is caparisoned with an arrangement of ornamental harnesses and decorative bridal. Its mouth is held slightly ajar, teeth showing, and with upright ears and flared nostrils combine to imbue this work with the spirit of the steed. While the size and beauty of this horse are enough alone to impress, even more stunning is the complete carriage that this horse hauls behind him, comprised of two delicately modeled wheels, an axel rod, the carriage, and the neck yoke and poles.

Considering that this sculpture was discovered buried in a tomb alongside the deceased, we can assume that the individual for who this work was created was likely carried by horse and carriage during his life as he would continue to be in the afterlife, thanks to this terracotta effigy. It is fascinating to think that this device, a horse drawn carriage, here over two-thousand years old, continued to be the major means of transportation up until the 20th century; in some parts of the world, they still are. During the reign of Emperor Wu, in order to improve the breed of horses in central China and strengthen the cavalry, the so-called "heavenly horse" was imported from the western region (present-day Middle East). Most horse sculptures found in Han Dynasty tombs portray horses with great strength and vigor. The way the horse is depicted speaks of the great love the Chinese have for the mythology and form of the horse. This horse is an expression of that affection. - (H.717)

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Pair of Sui Glazed and Painted Terracotta  
Spirit Guardians

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H.948  
Origin: China  
Circa: 581 AD to 618 AD  
Dimensions: 10.5" (26.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain

## Pair of Sui Glazed and Painted Terracotta Spirit Guardians

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After almost four hundred years of civil war and division, Yang Jian succeeded in reunifying north and south under one authority, the Sui Dynasty. However, despite its brief duration, lasting for the rule of only two emperors, the Sui Dynasty paved the way for the cultural renaissance that would arise during the T'ang Dynasty. Reforms were introduced to wrest power out of the hands of the aristocracy, military, and Buddhist communities. The Confucianist system of selecting government officials from state schools, by means of rigorous examinations, was initiated. Perhaps their most significant program was the construction of the Great Canal, a project that facilitated the movement of people and goods across great distances, aiding in the reunification of China. However, the cost of the Canal bankrupted the empire and ultimately led to its dissolution, coupled with a failed campaign to conquer Korea. The rulers of the T'ang would capitalize on the infrastructure improvements of the Sui and establish one of the greatest empires in the history of China, following the footsteps of the Sui.

Originating during the Six Dynasties period (222-589 A.D.), these types of figures are known as spirit guardians, for originally, a pair of such figures always stood guard at the tombs of Chinese rulers. Traditionally, both figures are mythological composite creatures, one always an amalgamation of various animals while the other a combination of human and animal traits. These guardians are a general type of Chinese art known as mingqi. Mingqi were any variety of objects specifically created for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for their afterlife. These guardians were most likely interred in order to ward off potential tomb robbers or evil spirits in the next world that might try to infiltrate the tomb. This pair of spirit guardians have been decorated with an elegant crème glaze and then highlighted with red and black pigments. Both appear to have the bodies and hooved legs of horses while one bears a human visage and the other, the fanged head of a dragon. A large spiraling horn emerges from the head of the composite dragon beast in between his ears. Black stripes along their legs enhance the animal nature of these creatures. This pair, although intending to repel us, instead attracts our gaze with their reserved, yet charming, decorations. - (H.948)

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# T'ang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Zebu Bull

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H.945  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 7.75" (19.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain



# T'ang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Zebu Bull

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

During the T'ang Dynasty, sculptural effigies of domesticated animals were often interred in the tombs of nobility and elite members of the social hierarchy. Created in all media, these sculptures accompanied the spirit of the deceased into the afterlife. While similar examples exist, most were found harnessed to wagons and carts and were meant to function as beasts of burden. However, this sculpture was discovered buried with other domesticated animals, suggesting that this zebu bull served as nourishment. Besides its function, this sculpture is also remarkable for its exquisite state of preservation with much of its original yellow pigment still intact. Such delicate decoration rarely survives the ravages of time and the stresses of excavation. Some of the original red pigment that also once adorned the animal is also visible on its nose. During the T'ang Dynasty, the Chinese believed that the afterlife was a continuation of our earthly existence. Thus, logically, as we require food to nourish our bodies on earth, so too will we require food to nourish our souls in the afterlife. Created to serve as food for the afterlife, this work is more than a mere sculpture; it is a gorgeous memorial to the religious and philosophical beliefs of the T'ang Dynasty. This bull effigy has served its eternal purpose well. Today, it continues to nourish our souls with its beauty and grace. - (H.945)

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# Ming Fifty Piece Painted Terracotta Processional Set



H.962  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 15" (38.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

# Ming Fifty Piece Painted Terracotta Processional Set

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

Like the founders of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Hongwu was extremely suspicious of the educated courtiers that advised him and, fearful that they might attempt to overthrow him, he successfully consolidated control of all aspect of government. The strict authoritarian control Hongwu wielded over the affairs of the country was due in part to the centralized system of government he inherited from the Monguls and largely kept intact. However, Hongwu replaced the Mongul bureaucrats who had ruled the country for nearly a century with native Chinese administrators. He also reinstated the Confucian examination system that tested would-be civic officials on their knowledge of literature and philosophy. Unlike the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), which received most of its taxes from mercantile commerce, the Ming economy was based primarily on agriculture, reflecting both the peasant roots of its founder as well as the Confucian belief that trade was ignoble and parasitic.

Culturally, the greatest innovation of the Ming Dynasty was the introduction of the novel. Developed from the folk tales of traditional storytellers, these works were transcribed in the everyday vernacular language of the people. Advances in printmaking and the increasing population of urban dwellers largely contributed to the success of these books. Architecturally, the most famous monument of the Ming Dynasty is surely the complex of temples and palaces known as the Forbidden City that was constructed in Beijing after the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle, moved the capital there. Today, the Forbidden Palace remains one of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese architecture and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the vast nation.

Ming statuette art reflects the attempt to restore purely “Chinese” artistic genres with a healthy injection of Confucian aesthetic, political, and moral standards. Realistic depictions of daily life became popular themes among artists who were often patronized by the court. Under Xuande's reign (1426-35), the art industry flourished, producing many exquisite porcelain and ceramic pieces. This glazed set is a product of the artistic revival that occurred throughout the Ming. This Ming set of glazed figurines depicts an aspect of Chinese political and social life. Tributary processions were common protocol at this time, the emperor requiring provincial lords to pay tribute and tax on a regular basis. Processions were also held for funerals, marriages, and rituals differing in grandeur depending on the status of the individuals involved and nature of the ceremony. The palanquin served as the primary form of transportation for the elite who often traveled with several attendants.

This extraordinary tomb find consists of ten horse and rider sculptures, thirty-eight individual attendants, and two palanquins. The horse march forward, followed by a retinue of attendants, both male and female, presenting a range of presents. Finally, the procession would culminate with the palanquins that were once held aloft on wooden poles, carried on the shoulders of the attendants, which have long since deteriorated. The palanquins are naturally empty, for they were meant to carry the deceased nobility alongside whom they were buried into the afterlife. As Chinese statuette art prescribes, the faces are created individually with uniquely painted features, owing to their distinctive expressions. The pieces still retain much of their original polychrome paint, remarkable considering the stresses of excavation and the delicate nature of the pigment. Evidence of gilding is still visible on a large plate carried by one of the ladies in waiting. One of the riders wears a stunning yellow and black tunic that appear to have been made from the hide of a tiger. This astounding set is a masterpiece of Ming art, not just for the size of the procession and the diversity of the poses and gestures, but also for the remarkable preservation of the original details and the beauty of each piece as an individual work of art and united together as masterpiece. - (H.962)



# Han Terracotta Mythological Beast

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H.917  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD  
Dimensions: 10" (25.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Han Terracotta Mythological Beast

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own Dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deity remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called *mingqi*, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subject, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthy existence. Thus, quite logically, the things we require to sustain and nurture our bodies in this life would be just as necessary in our next life.

The Han Dynasty, like the Zhou before it, is divided into two distinct periods, the Western Han (206 B.C.-9 A.D.) and the Eastern Han (23-220 A.D.) with a brief interlude. Towards the end of the Western period, a series of weak emperors ruled the throne, controlled from behind the scenes by Wang Mang and Huo Guang, both relatives of empresses. They both exerted enormous influence over the government and when the last emperor suddenly passed away, Mang became ruling advisor, seizing this opportunity to declare his own Dynasty, the Xin, or “New.” However, another popular uprising began joined by the members of the Liu clan, the family that ruled the Han Dynasty, the Xin came to a quick end and the Eastern Han was established in its place with its capital at Loyang (Chang’an, the capital of the Western Han, was completely destroyed).

However, even as Chinese influence spread across Southeastern Asia into new lands, the Eastern Han Dynasty was unable to recreate the glories of the Western Period. In fact, this period can be characterized by a bitter power struggle amongst a group of five consortial clans. These families sought to control the young, weak emperors with their court influence. Yet, as the emperors became distrustful of the rising power of the clans, they relied upon their eunuchs to defend them, often eliminating entire families at a time. During the Western Han, the Emperor was viewed as the center of the universe. However, this philosophy slowly disintegrated under the weak, vulnerable rulers of the Eastern Han, leading many scholars and officials to abandon the court. Eventually, the power of the Han would completely erode, ending with its dissolution and the beginning of the period known as the “Three Kingdoms.”

Striding forward on powerful haunches, this mythological beast is a composite of several different animals. He bears the hooped legs and muscular body of a bull with a distinctively bovine head. Bosses rise from his body, following his spinal chord, and culminate in two pointed horns that protrude from the top of his neck. His arched tail, held up over his back, appears to be more canine than bovine or equestrian. Might this beast be a fanciful depiction of a dragon? Certainly the horns and head suggest so. Clearly, this is a fierce, untamed beast. With its head lowered, he appears to charge forward like a bull, thrusting his horns forward into whatever obstacle might block his path. His ribcage is visible along his torso, imbuing the work with energy and vitality. This magnificent sculpture is an insightful glimpse into the fantastic mythology of ancient China.

- (H.917)

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# T'ang Gilt and Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Lokapala

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H.925  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 23" (58.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States

# T'ang Gilt and Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Lokapala

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

During the Tang Dynasty, restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians - were buried with the dead. Many of the objects reflect Tang China's extraordinary amount of contact with foreigners, bringing into China influences that were then adapted and absorbed into its culture. One of these influences is apparent in this figure that corresponds to Buddhist warrior deities that assume a mortuary role in China but also serve as protectors of Buddhist temples. Known as "Protector of the Burial Vault" or "Protector of the Burial Ground," the fierce, this armored guardian stands atop a grotesque demon. This stance symbolizes the heavenly king's authority and responsibility as protector of the tomb.

A remarkable amount of this sculpture's original pigment has survived the ravages of time intact, perhaps most visible in the spectacular vibrant red, orange, and green floral decorations that adorn his armor. Traces of the gilding are also visible, attesting to the luxurious nature of this sculpture. According to one Chinese tradition explaining their origin, Emperor Taizong, when ill, was threatened by ghosts outside of his room screeching and throwing bricks and tiles. When his general Jin Shubao (Chin Shu-pao) and a fellow officer came to stand guard the activity of the ghosts ceased. The grateful emperor had portraits of the two men hung on either side of his palace gates, and thereafter their images became widespread as door-gods. Originally, he would have brandished a weapon fabricated in a material such as wood that has deteriorated over the centuries. Looking unto his stern face and flaming hair and gazing into his fierce eyes, we understand why such works were intended to frighten away tomb robbers and evil spirits. Yet despite his intimidating nature, he does not repel us; instead, we are attracted to his artistic mastery and intriguing history. - (H.925)

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# T'ang Painted Terracotta Sculpture of a Lady-in-Waiting

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H.997  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 20" (50.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: UAE



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During the Tang Dynasty, restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings, known as mingqi, have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians - were buried with the dead in order to provide for the afterlife. Of the various types of mingqi, there is perhaps none more beautiful or charming than the sculptures of elegant female courtiers. These gorgeous sculptures represent the idealized woman of T'ang Dynasty China. This sculpture representing such a sophisticated lady is remarkable for its size, nearly twice as large as the standard type. She provided eternal companionship for her lord throughout the afterlife. We can imagine her gracefully dancing or singing a poetical song, two very popular customs for ladies during the T'ang Dynasty, considered a golden age of Chinese culture. Such courtiers are described in the numerous love poems written during this era, likely the greatest outpouring of poetry in Chinese history.

She wears her hair in an elegant coiffure featuring two buns that appears almost like the alert ears of a startled dog. This elaborate hairstyle is matched by her sumptuous orange robe. Much of the original pigment that once decorated this work remains intact, most noticeable in her dress, her vibrant red lips, and her soft, rosy cheeks. Such women may represent wives, princesses, or attendants. She carries what appears to be a flower-shaped loaf of bread or some pastry treat, pointing to it with her other hand as she proudly presents it to us. Their beauty inspires us as we are transported back to another time. This large terracotta effigy of an ancient courtier has been to the next world and returned to our modern era to tell us her tale. She speaks of the enormous wealth and sophisticated culture of the T'ang Dynasty, one of the greatest periods of artistic creation in human history. Although she speaks of the past, this lady in waiting continues to amaze us in the present with her unmatched beauty and sculptural refinement. - (H.997)

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Ming Glazed Terracotta Tile  
From a Temple Roof

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H.1004  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 17" (43.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States

# Ming Glazed Terracotta Tile From a Temple Roof

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

Like the founders of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Hongwu was extremely suspicious of the educated courtiers that advised him and, fearful that they might attempt to overthrow him, he successfully consolidated control of all aspect of government. The strict authoritarian control Hongwu wielded over the affairs of the country was due in part to the centralized system of government he inherited from the Monguls and largely kept intact. However, Hongwu replaced the Mongul bureaucrats who had ruled the country for nearly a century with native Chinese administrators. He also reinstated the Confucian examination system that tested would-be civic officials on their knowledge of literature and philosophy. Unlike the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), which received most of its taxes from mercantile commerce, the Ming economy was based primarily on agriculture, reflecting both the peasant roots of its founder as well as the Confucian belief that trade was ignoble and parasitic.

Culturally, the greatest innovation of the Ming Dynasty was the introduction of the novel. Developed from the folk tales of traditional storytellers, these works were transcribed in the everyday vernacular language of the people. Advances in printmaking and the increasing population of urban dwellers largely contributed to the success of these books. Architecturally, the most famous monument of the Ming Dynasty is surely the complex of temples and palaces known as the Forbidden City that was constructed in Beijing after the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle, moved the capital there. Today, the Forbidden Palace remains one of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese architecture and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the vast nation.

Glazed sculptural tile are today considered one of the hallmarks of classical Chinese architecture. However, despite their popularity in modern times, they were relatively scarce until after the end of the T'ang Dynasty. Even then, during the Song and Yuan Dynasties, they were still infrequently used. It was not until the rise of the Ming Dynasty that glazed sculptural tiles became a popular decorative devise extensively employed in temples, altars, imperial palaces, and gardens. Beijing became the center of glazed architectural tile production during the Ming period, and colorfully decorated pagodas began to sprout up around this region. Eaves and entryways were decorated with vibrant sculptures that served both decorative and sometimes religious purposes.

Chinese architecture is one of the more distinct styles of building throughout the world. Perhaps the most characteristic element is the pagoda roofs that end in dramatic curves. This sculptural tile would have been situated on that curved edge of a Ming Dynasty temple. Depicting a figure lunging forward on the tile, this work was placed on the roof in order to frighten away any evil spirits that might attempt to infiltrate the sacred space. The exposed flesh of the bald man is covered in an ochre glaze; otherwise, he is covered in a blue and white skirt that gathers in undulating folds in between his spread legs. He has his fists clenched together, held in front of his body as if a boxer. Holes in his hands reveal that he would have once held objects likely made out of wood that have deteriorated over the centuries. Who does this figure represent? A fighter? A spiritual leader? A deity? While we may never know his true identity, we can assume that he was an important individual to be memorialized in such a way. When one considers that this remarkable architectural sculpture is just the tip of the temple, the beauty of the completed temple must be truly astounding. - (H.1004)



Tang Painted Terracotta Horse  
with Removable Saddle and Lady Rider



H.1016  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 17.75" (45.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Tang Painted Terracotta Horse with Removable Saddle and Lady Rider

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The T'ang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a semi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. T'ang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The T'ang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

During the T'ang Dynasty, horses were revered, considered relatives of the mythical dragon. This veneration was well earned, for the speed and stamina of these majestic animals ensured the protection of the northern borders against barbarian invaders as well as enhancing communication capabilities between far away provinces, thereby aiding in the expansion of the empire. The need to import horses from Central Asia influenced the creation of the Silk Road. Thus, they were also prized for their rarity. Naturally then, horses became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian pastimes became popular. This sculpture, depicting a lady-in-waiting riding on the back of a horse, reveals this connection between nobility and the horse. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of this work is the removable saddle and rider that detach from the body of the horse in one piece. A striking amount of the original polychrome still remains intact, clearly visible in the lady's red dress and lips. We can imagine this lady prancing around on this horse, perhaps taking part in an important ceremony. She wears a long-sleeved dress, a type of which was used in a popular dance where the lady swirls the excess fabric around in the air. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this work was supposed to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for interment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (H.1016)

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# Tang Terracotta Camel and Foreign Groom

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H.981  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 19" (48.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Style: Tang Dynasty  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: United States

# Tang Terracotta Camel and Foreign Groom

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For the Chinese, camels symbolized commerce and its associated wealth, largely concentrated on profits through trading on the Silk Road. Trade across this extensive network of paths and trails brought prosperity, foreign merchants, and exotic merchandise into China. However, the dusty trails of the Silk Road were an arduous journey through the rugged mountains and harsh deserts of Central Asia that could only be traversed by the two humped Bactrian camel. This remarkable beast was able to withstand the scorching heat of the desert and maintain its own nutrients, surviving for months without fresh supplies of water. The government kept vast herds of these invaluable creatures, presided over by civil officials, for hauling their precious commodities across the Silk Road. These exotic creatures were a common sight in the cosmopolitan cities of T'ang China, carrying both traders and their goods directly into the markets. Likewise, T'ang artists began to create charming representations of these prized creatures as mingqi in order to symbolize wealth and prosperity in the afterlife.

Mingqi were works of art specifically created in an ancient Chinese custom for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for their afterlife. Some of the most beautiful works of Chinese art were excavated from such tombs, and this sculpture of a camel and an accompanying groom is a perfect example of the refined artistry dedicated to such works despite the fact that they were never meant to be seen by the living. The distinct physiognomy of the groom, with deep-set eyes and a full beard, reveals that he is of foreign descent, most likely from Central Asia. We can imagine him tending to the vast herds of these invaluable beasts that were maintained by the government. He holds his arm in the air as if leading the camel; we can almost see the reins. Thick tufts of furry hair cover the camel along his head, neck, and knees. A removable saddle bulging with exotic goods and merchandise, including an easily discernable flask, has been placed between the two humps. This sculpture reveals the T'ang Dynasty's respect and admiration for this beast of burden, so essential to the prosperity of ancient China. - (H.981)

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Ming Glazed Terracotta Guardian  
Dragon Incense Burner

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H.976  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 40.5" (102.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Ming Glazed Terracotta Guardian Dragon Incense Burner

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

Like the founders of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Hongwu was extremely suspicious of the educated courtiers that advised him and, fearful that they might attempt to overthrow him, he successfully consolidated control of all aspect of government. The strict authoritarian control Hongwu wielded over the affairs of the country was due in part to the centralized system of government he inherited from the Monguls and largely kept intact. However, Hongwu replaced the Mongul bureaucrats who had ruled the country for nearly a century with native Chinese administrators. He also reinstated the Confucian examination system that tested would-be civic officials on their knowledge of literature and philosophy. Unlike the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), which received most of its taxes from mercantile commerce, the Ming economy was based primarily on agriculture, reflecting both the peasant roots of its founder as well as the Confucian belief that trade was ignoble and parasitic.

Culturally, the greatest innovation of the Ming Dynasty was the introduction of the novel. Developed from the folk tales of traditional storytellers, these works were transcribed in the everyday vernacular language of the people. Advances in printmaking and the increasing population of urban dwellers largely contributed to the success of these books. Architecturally, the most famous monument of the Ming Dynasty is surely the complex of temples and palaces known as the Forbidden City that was constructed in Beijing after the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle, moved the capital there. Today, the Forbidden Palace remains one of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese architecture and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the vast nation.

Glazed sculptural tile are today considered one of the hallmarks of classical Chinese architecture. However, despite their popularity in modern times, they were relatively scarce until after the end of the T'ang Dynasty. Even then, during the Song and Yuan Dynasties, they were still infrequently used. It was not until the rise of the Ming Dynasty that glazed sculptural tiles became a popular decorative devise extensively employed in temples, altars, imperial palaces, and gardens. Beijing became the center of glazed architectural tile production during the Ming period, and colorfully decorated pagodas began to sprout up around this region. Eaves and entryways were decorated with vibrant sculptures that served both decorative and sometimes religious purposes. On temples and palaces, representations of mounted warriors and snarling dragons were meant to ward off evildoers, of both the physical and spiritual kind. Later, during the Qing Dynasty, dragons would be replaced by stone lions and Fu dogs as the main choice of guardian creatures.

During the height of the Ming Dynasty, large sculptures of dragons, called guardian dragons, were placed outside the main entrance of the imperial palace and the mansions of wealthy magistrates. Later, during the Qing Dynasty, dragons would be replaced by stone lions and Fu dogs as the main choice of guardian creatures. However, dragons continue to be revered, as they were during the Ming era, for their infinite protective qualities. This large glazed terracotta sculpture is composed of two separate pieces. The base takes the form of a snarling dragon and a warrior in full armor that struggles to control this beast. The second smaller piece is a blossoming green lotus bud that rests atop the dragon's back. Glazed colors cover the whole of the work. Brilliant yellows, lush greens, and earthy browns all decorate the sculpture and bring a sense of life and vibrancy to the piece. Considering that the work is divided into two parts, with access to inside of the dragon's body, it is possible that this piece might have been an incense burner. One can imagine the dramatic effect of the fragrant smoke pouring out of the open mouth of the guardian dragon. This gorgeous work is a stunning testament to the wealth and luxury of the Ming Dynasty. - (H.976)

Ming Glazed Terracotta Sculptural Tile  
From a Temple Roof

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H.1023  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 24.25" (61.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States

# Ming Glazed Terracotta Guardian Dragon Incense Burner

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This gorgeous tile features a warrior riding atop a dragon covered in a brilliant blue glaze. It is known that such glazed works were most frequently employed on the roofs and along the doorways of imperial or sacred structures. Judging from the shape of the base, it is almost certain that this large sculptural tile was originally employed along the curved roof of a Ming Dynasty temple or pagoda. One can imagine a structure elaborately decorated with such tiles prominently displayed along the corners of the sloping roof. Holes in the warriors hands reveal that he would have likely once held a pair of weapons, perhaps swords or spears, fabricated from wood that have deteriorated over the centuries. The dragon, however, appears more like a horse, reinforcing the Chinese belief that dragons were related to horses. While the body is remarkably equine, the head is clearly more mythological in nature. Clouds swirl below the body of the dragon, implying that this warrior is riding over the heavens, perched high atop the temple roof. When we imagine the entire temple structure covered in such tiles, from the walls to the roof, the glory of Ming Dynasty China becomes apparent. - (H.1023)

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# Han Frosted Green-Glazed Terracotta Dog



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H.1037  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD  
Dimensions: 12" (30.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Han Frosted Green-Glazed Terracotta Dog

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own Dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deity remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called *mingqi*, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subject, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthy existence. Thus, quite logically, the things we require to sustain and nurture our bodies in this life would be just as necessary in our next life.

The Han Dynasty, like the Zhou before it, is divided into two distinct periods, the Western Han (206 B.C.-9 A.D.) and the Eastern Han (23-220 A.D.) with a brief interlude. Towards the end of the Western period, a series of weak emperors ruled the throne, controlled from behind the scenes by Wang Mang and Huo Guang, both relatives of empresses. They both exerted enormous influence over the government and when the last emperor suddenly passed away, Mang became ruling advisor, seizing this opportunity to declare his own Dynasty, the Xin, or “New.” However, another popular uprising began joined by the members of the Liu clan, the family that ruled the Han Dynasty, the Xin came to a quick end and the Eastern Han was established in its place with its capital at Loyang (Chang’an, the capital of the Western Han, was completely destroyed).

However, even as Chinese influence spread across Southeastern Asia into new lands, the Eastern Han Dynasty was unable to recreate the glories of the Western Period. In fact, this period can be characterized by a bitter power struggle amongst a group of five consortial clans. These families sought to control the young, weak emperors with their court influence. Yet, as the emperors became distrustful of the rising power of the clans, they relied upon their eunuchs to defend them, often eliminating entire families at a time. During the Western Han, the Emperor was viewed as the center of the universe. However, this philosophy slowly disintegrated under the weak, vulnerable rulers of the Eastern Han, leading many scholars and officials to abandon the court. Eventually, the power of the Han would completely erode, ending with its dissolution and the beginning of the period known as the “Three Kingdoms.”

This green-glazed terracotta dog is a splendid example of *mingqi*, literally translated as: “items for the next world.” During the Han Dynasty, the Chinese believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus high-ranking members of the social hierarchy were buried in splendid tombs replete with replicas of their daily lives rendered in all media. It is not uncommon to find ornate dinner sets with elegantly painted utensils, wine vessels, and food storage containers. Sculpted replica of warriors and guardians provided protection while musicians and entertainers provided company. Likewise, herds of domesticated animals were interred alongside the deceased to serve as food sources in the afterlife. Although it is possible that this dog was entombed for consumption in the next world, he wears a studded collar and harness that join together in a loop, ready to be hooked onto a leash. More likely, this dog was a beloved companion who served his owner well both on earth and beyond.

Standing at attention, the dog’s ears are curled over and his mouth is held wide open, as if barking, with his tongue sticking slightly out, a charming feature. The gorgeous green glaze has acquired a beautiful, soft iridescent patina over the ages. Commonly referred to as “silver frost,” this iridescence is the result of wet and dry periods in a tomb whereby the clay dissolves the lead glaze and redeposits it on the surface, where it hardens. A testament of age, this patina is also admired by collectors for its charming aesthetic qualities, similar in effect to mother of pearl. Although similar works were meant to serve as food for the afterlife, the love and attention dedicated to the creation of this stunning work of art suggests that this dog is much more than food. Instead, this beloved pet stands faithfully by his master’s side throughout eternity. If we listen carefully, we can almost hear him barking, alerting his lost master to our presence. - (H.1037)

# Ming Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Fu Dog

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H.1054  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 16.5" (41.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States

# Han Frosted Green-Glazed Terracotta Dog

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

Like the founders of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Hongwu was extremely suspicious of the educated courtiers that advised him and, fearful that they might attempt to overthrow him, he successfully consolidated control of all aspect of government. The strict authoritarian control Hongwu wielded over the affairs of the country was due in part to the centralized system of government he inherited from the Monguls and largely kept intact. However, Hongwu replaced the Mongul bureaucrats who had ruled the country for nearly a century with native Chinese administrators. He also reinstated the Confucian examination system that tested would-be civic officials on their knowledge of literature and philosophy. Unlike the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), which received most of its taxes from mercantile commerce, the Ming economy was based primarily on agriculture, reflecting both the peasant roots of its founder as well as the Confucian belief that trade was ignoble and parasitic.

Culturally, the greatest innovation of the Ming Dynasty was the introduction of the novel. Developed from the folk tales of traditional storytellers, these works were transcribed in the everyday vernacular language of the people. Advances in printmaking and the increasing population of urban dwellers largely contributed to the success of these books. Architecturally, the most famous monument of the Ming Dynasty is surely the complex of temples and palaces known as the Forbidden City that was constructed in Beijing after the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle, moved the capital there. Today, the Forbidden Palace remains one of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese architecture and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the vast nation.

The Fu Dog, or Fu Lion as it is also known, is a ubiquitous symbol that has been employed repeatedly throughout the history of China. Sometimes referred to as the “Dog of Happiness” or the “Celestial Dog,” the earliest traces of the Fu Dog in China date to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). Then it disappeared from Chinese art until it was resurrected during the cultural revival experienced during the T’ang Dynasty (618-906 A.D.). While lions are not native to China, works of art with lion imagery from other civilizations were imported into China as gifts for the Emperor. The Fu Lion was brought into China with the arrival of Buddhism, where it became associated with the more familiar dog during assimilation. The lion is a sacred creature in the Buddhist pantheon, and the Fu Lion was believed to be a companion of the Buddha.

While sculptures of Fu Dogs such as this outstanding blue and green-glazed example originally stood guard outside of Buddhist temples, by the time of the Ming Dynasty, when this work was created, the Dogs had lost most of their religious significance and were placed outside the entrances to homes and palaces out of custom. Even today, many monumental public buildings are decorated with lion figures standing guard at the base of the stairway. Traditionally the Fu Dog is depicted with one of his front paws resting on a globe (or occasionally a demon). This gesture symbolizes the Dog’s authority and power over the evil spirits that might have tried to infiltrate the temple or palace. Today, Fu Dogs continue to be a popular symbol of luck and happiness. - (H.1054)

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# Ming Glazed Terracotta Sculpture of a Fu Dog

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H.1055  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 18.5" (47.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Style: Ming Dynasty  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Han Frosted Green-Glazed Terracotta Dog

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

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# Ming Glazed Terracotta Architectural Sculpture of a Dragon

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H.1048

Origin: China

Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD

Dimensions:

27.5" (69.9cm) high x 40.25" (102.2cm) depth

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Glazed Terracotta

Location: United States

# Ming Glazed Terracotta Architectural Sculpture of a Dragon

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

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Glazed sculptural tile are today considered one of the hallmarks of classical Chinese architecture. However, despite their popularity in modern times, they were relatively scarce until after the end of the T'ang Dynasty. Even then, during the Song and Yuan Dynasties, they were still infrequently used. It was not until the rise of the Ming Dynasty that glazed sculptural tiles became a popular decorative devise extensively employed in temples, altars, imperial palaces, and gardens. Beijing became the center of glazed architectural tile production during the Ming period, and colorfully decorated pagodas began to sprout up around this region. Eaves and entryways were decorated with vibrant sculptures that served both decorative and sometimes religious purposes. On temples and palaces, representations of mounted warriors and snarling dragons were meant to ward off evildoers, of both the physical and spiritual kind.

Judging from the shape of the base of this imposing dragon tile, it is likely that it once rested along the eaves of a roof or on the top a wall surrounding the grounds of a Ming Dynasty temple or palace. As an architectural ornament, this sculpture is a masterpiece. Surely the building that this work once adorned must have been quite spectacular. The dragon sits upon a swirling cloud, head held upwards, mouth ajar, as if poised to release a breath of fire. Spiky horns decorate the dragon's head and spine that themselves appear like miniature flames. When we imagine the entire temple structure covered in such tiles, from the walls to the roof, the glory of Ming Dynasty China becomes apparent. - (H.1048)

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# Ming Glazed Terracotta Architectural Sculpture of a Dragon

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H.1047

Origin: China

Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD

Dimensions:

26.5" (67.3cm) high x 41" (104.1cm) depth

Collection: Chinese

Style: Ming Dynasty

Medium: Glazed Terracotta

Condition: Very Fine

Location: United States



# Ming Glazed Terracotta Architectural Sculpture of a Dragon

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# Ming Glazed Terracotta Architectural Sculpture of a Dragon Fish

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H.1066  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 35.5" (90.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Style: Ming Dynasty  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States

# Ming Glazed Terracotta Architectural Sculpture of a Dragon Fish

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

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This stunning sculpture of a dragon fish would have originally decorated the sloping eaves of a Ming Dynasty structure, likely along the part that overhangs the building. Dragon fish are one of the more peculiar mythological composite creatures. Gorgeously glazed in vibrant green and blue hues (blue being one of the rarer colors of glaze), this work appears more charming than intimidating, even though its presumed purpose was to frighten infiltrators. The glazes have acquired a silver frosted patina that is a testament to their age. With undulating tails and fins, open mouth, bulbous noses, and scaly body, these dragon fish delight our eyes with their exotic beauty. When we imagine the entire temple structure covered in such tiles, from the walls to the roof, the glory of Ming Dynasty China becomes apparent. - (H.1066)

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# Ming Glazed Terracotta Architectural Sculpture of a Dragon Fish

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H.1067  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 35.25" (89.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Ming Glazed Terracotta Architectural Sculpture of a Dragon Fish

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# Ming Glazed Terracotta Architectural Sculpture of a Dragon Fish

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H.1068  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 35.25" (89.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States

# Ming Glazed Terracotta Architectural Sculpture of a Dragon Fish

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

Like the founders of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Hongwu was extremely suspicious of the educated courtiers that advised him and, fearful that they might attempt to overthrow him, he successfully consolidated control of all aspect of government. The strict authoritarian control Hongwu wielded over the affairs of the country was due in part to the centralized system of government he inherited from the Monguls and largely kept intact. However, Hongwu replaced the Mongul bureaucrats who had ruled the country for nearly a century with native Chinese administrators. He also reinstated the Confucian examination system that tested would-be civic officials on their knowledge of literature and philosophy. Unlike the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), which received most of its taxes from mercantile commerce, the Ming economy was based primarily on agriculture, reflecting both the peasant roots of its founder as well as the Confucian belief that trade was ignoble and parasitic.

Culturally, the greatest innovation of the Ming Dynasty was the introduction of the novel. Developed from the folk tales of traditional storytellers, these works were transcribed in the everyday vernacular language of the people. Advances in printmaking and the increasing population of urban dwellers largely contributed to the success of these books. Architecturally, the most famous monument of the Ming Dynasty is surely the complex of temples and palaces known as the Forbidden City that was constructed in Beijing after the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle, moved the capital there. Today, the Forbidden Palace remains one of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese architecture and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the vast nation.

Glazed sculptural tile are today considered one of the hallmarks of classical Chinese architecture. However, despite their popularity in modern times, they were relatively scarce until after the then end of the T'ang Dynasty. Even then, during the Song and Yuan Dynasties, they were still infrequently used. It was not until the rise of the Ming Dynasty that glazed sculptural tiles became a popular decorative devise extensively employed in temples, altars, imperials palaces, and gardens. Beijing became the center of glazed architectural tile production during the Ming period, and colorfully decorated pagodas began to sprout up around this region. Eaves and entryways were decorated with vibrant sculptures that served both decorative and sometimes religious purposes. On temples and palaces, representations of mounted warriors and snarling dragons were meant to ward off evildoers, of both the physical and spiritual kind.

This stunning sculpture of a dragon fish would have originally decorated the sloping eaves of a Ming Dynasty structure, likely along the part that overhangs the building. Dragon fish are one of the more peculiar mythological composite creatures. Gorgeously glazed in vibrant green and blue hues (blue being one of the rarer colors of glaze), this work appears more charming than intimidating, even though its presumed purpose was to frighten infiltrators. The glazes have acquired a silver frosted patina that is a testament to their age. With undulating tails and fins, open mouth, bulbous noses, and scaly body, these dragon fish delight our eyes with their exotic beauty. When we imagine the entire temple structure covered in such tiles, from the walls to the roof, the glory of Ming Dynasty China becomes apparent. - (H.1068)

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# Ming Glazed Terracotta Architectural Sculpture of a Dragon Fish

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H.1069  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 35.5" (90.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Ming Glazed Terracotta Architectural Sculpture of a Dragon Fish

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# Tang Creme-Glazed Vase with Dragon Handles

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H.1070

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD

Dimensions:

16.75" (42.5cm) high x 8" (20.3cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Terracotta

Location: United States

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# Tang Creme-Glazed Vase with Dragon Handles

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The T'ang Dynasty was a golden age of Chinese culture. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulership. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China on the backs of camels, carrying exotic luxury items from distant lands. Foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers of the T'ang China, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern X'ian), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. The T'ang Dynasty was a relatively stable period of great prosperity representing one of the greatest cultural flourishings in human history.

The legacy of the T'ang survives foremost in their tremendous artistic creations. This stunning terracotta vase is a testament to the artistic mastery of Chinese potters. The gently bulging body is refined in its smooth curves. Modeled after bronze examples, this vessel, covered in a delicate crème glaze, would have provided a more affordable alternative to its bronze counterparts. Although the body is unadorned, the handles take the form of stylized dragons. They bite down on the rim of the vase with their pointed mouths as if attempting to drink the precious contents of this container (most probably wine). This gorgeous vase reveals the refinement and luxury of the T'ang era, where sumptuous wines were enjoyed as much as the beautiful forms of the vessel that contained them. - (H.1070)

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# Set of One Hundred Western Han Painted Terracotta Warriors

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H.1072  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 9 AD  
Dimensions: 20" (50.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Location: United States



# Set of One Hundred Western Han Painted Terracotta Warriors

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own Dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deity remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called *mingqi*, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subject, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthy existence. Thus, quite logically, the things we require to sustain and nurture our bodies in this life would be just as necessary in our next life.

This remarkable set, composed of one hundred individually modeled and painted warriors, is a type of work known as *mingqi*, literally translated as, “items for the next world.” This army of sculpted warriors was discovered buried in the tomb of an elite member of the upper strata of Western Han society. Discovered outside of modern X’ian, the site of the ancient capital of China, Chang’an, this tomb find recalls the famous tomb of Emperor Shihuangdi. While much smaller in scale, both in regards to the number of figures and their size, this set still invokes the marvel and majesty of Ancient China. Each warrior is individually hand painted with a slightly different expression: some feature smooth faces, others have wispy moustaches. Each warrior wears a unique outfit. Some feature certain emblems that are thought to signify rank. Other warriors sport quivers on their back, suggesting that they were archers. Most of the figures have holes in their hands, implying that they once carried weapons, such as a spear or a bow, that have since disappeared. Most likely, these weapons were made out of wood and deteriorated over the centuries. Considering how damaging time and the natural elements can be to a work of art, the condition of this set is outstanding. Much of the original pigment remains intact. Beautiful red, blues, greens, and grays decorate their uniforms and provide insight into the fashions of Ancient China. This set was created specifically to be buried alongside the deceased to protect his soul throughout the afterlife. Today, this set of a hundred painted warriors is a monument to the cultural glories of Han Dynasty, one of the most impressive ages of artistic creation in the history of human civilization. - (H.1072)

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Set of Four Ming Glazed Terracotta  
Temple Wall Tiles Depicting a Dragon

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X.0277  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Condition: Very Fine  
Location: Great Britain

# Set of Four Ming Glazed Terracotta Temple Wall Tiles Depicting a Dragon

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

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Culturally, the greatest innovation of the Ming Dynasty was the introduction of the novel. Developed from the folk tales of traditional storytellers, these works were transcribed in the everyday vernacular language of the people. Advances in printmaking and the increasing population of urban dwellers largely contributed to the success of these books. Architecturally, the most famous monument of the Ming Dynasty is surely the complex of temples and palaces known as the Forbidden City that was constructed in Beijing after the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle, moved the capital there. Today, the Forbidden Palace remains one of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese architecture and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the vast nation.

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This group of glazed terracotta tiles would have been one of the centerpieces in the decorative scheme of a Ming Dynasty temple. Brilliantly colored in rich green and yellow ochre hues, these tiles depict a ferocious undulating dragon against a background of flowers and foliage. With its open mouth, sharp fangs, and beady eyes, this dragon was clearly meant to frighten away any potential evildoers, be they human or otherworldly, which might try to infiltrate the building it once adorned. This group of four tiles is but one part of a larger frieze of glazed tiles that would have once decorated the interior or exterior of the temple structure. When we imagine the entire temple structure covered in such tiles, from the walls to the roof, the glory of Ming Dynasty China becomes apparent. - (X.0277)

## Pair of Han Terracotta Goat Sculptures

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X.0413

Origin: China

Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD

Dimensions:

11.75" (29.8cm) high x 15.375" (39.1cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: Great Britain



## Pair of Han Terracotta Goat Sculptures

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During the Han Dynasty, sculptural effigies of domesticated animals were often interred in the tombs of nobility and elite members of the social hierarchy. Primarily fashioned from terracotta, these sculptures accompanied the spirit of the deceased into the afterlife. Beasts of burden and animals reared for food were both interred to provide for the needs of the deceased. This incredibly naturalistic pair of goats would originally have been arranged in a pen or enclosure with other domesticated animals. The modelling is simple but exquisite with each goat featuring a small beard, upright tail and pointed ears. Between the ears are two small holes designed to support a pair of horns probably fashioned from a perishable material such as wood. The eye-sockets are raised and the nostrils are formed from two curved indentations. The surface has been painted with a brown pigment with slightly darker areas around the hooves. The head of the one of the pair is tilted slightly to the viewer's left. Today, we are drawn to these sculptures as beautiful works of art. However, they also reflect the religious and philosophical beliefs of the ancient Chinese and are therefore of tremendous cultural and historical significance. - (X.0413)

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# Chinese Ming Wooden Sculpture of the Laughing Buddha

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X.0420  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 28.75" (73.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Wood  
Location: Great Britain

# Chinese Ming Wooden Sculpture of the Laughing Buddha

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The historical figure, Buddha Gautama Sakyamuni is the Buddha of compassion who, having achieved the highest evolutionary perfection, turns suffering into happiness for all living beings. Born around 560 B.C. somewhere between the hills of south Nepal and the Rapti river, his father was a Raja who ruled over the northeastern province of India, the district including the holy Ganges River. The young prince was married to Yashoda when he was about 17 years old and together they had a son named Rahula. At the age of 29, he left his life of luxury, feeling compelled to purify his body and make it an instrument of the mind by ridding himself of earthly impulses and temptations. Chinese Buddhist art is heavily influenced both by earlier Indian examples and the stylistic tendencies of the Central Asian cultures who brought the religion into China.

This depiction of the Buddha does not actually represent the historical figure of the Sakyamuni, but one of his disciples known as Pu-Tai. Pu-Tai was a fat wandering Zen monk who was considered a man of good and loving character. His large belly distinguished him from the other ascetics. When Buddhism was introduced into Japan, the figure of Pu-Tai was melded with the Shinto god of luck Hotei. From then on, this type of figure commonly referred to as the Laughing Buddha became a symbol of good luck, happiness, and prosperity throughout China and Japan. Today, the tradition persists that rubbing the prominent belly of the Laughing Buddha brings good luck and longevity. - (X.0420)

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Pair of Sancai Glazed Roof Tiles  
in the form of Standing Warriors

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LA.521  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 17.25" (43.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain



## Cast Iron Recumbent Ox

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X.0518

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 1100 AD

Dimensions:

33" (83.8cm) high x 56" (142.2cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Bronze

Location: Great Britain

# Cast Iron Recumbent Ox

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Iron is a material that does not figure prominently in Chinese art, although it has always been considered a symbol of strength, determination and integrity and justice and widely used in military and agriculture. Iron was known and utilised since the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE in China, although the technique of casting was not mastered until the 5th century BCE. It was only later on, with the invention of double cylinders bellows furnaces by the 4th c. BCE, that the technique advanced and iron tools replaced stone, bone and wooden ones in agriculture.

But cast iron continued to be a brittle alloy of iron with a carbon content ranging from 1.5 to 5 per cent. Its melting point stood at about 1150 degrees centigrades which means that it could not be forged but only cast directly into the desired form. Yet its special qualities were hardness and resistance to corrosion.

Later on, during the Six Dynasties period, a sizeable number of cast-iron Buddhist images began to be produced. By the Tang and Song periods, large sized statues and bells were cast and placed mainly outdoors. The Jiu Tangshu (Old History of the Tang Dynasty) and the Xin Tangshu (New History of the Tang) both recorded the endeavour of Empress Wu Zetian, whose large metallurgical projects have not survived to this day, nevertheless attest the level of effort and time expenditure placed in the creation of iron structures.

The recumbent ox here illustrated is covered with a thin brown patina and the surface is rather coarse, with some cracks and small holes caused mainly by cold shuts. Prominent casting seams are evenly distributed over the whole body. In between the horizontal seams are vertical seams and they all would have originally been covered up with gesso and then painted or lacquered. The rectangular partitions outlined by the seams suggest that the outer clay mould of this iron ox was made out of rectangular tassels. The whole process of creation would have taken quite some time: first a model of the ox with all his details was made of clay over an armature of wood or metal. Once the model dried, another layer of clay was applied to make the outer mould. This outer mould was then cut up in sections with tenons and mortises, numbered and subsequently dried. Iron nails were driven then into the clay model and used as measure, while the model was trimmed down to create the desired space between the outer and inner mould. When the mould sections were reassembled for the casting process, these nails would have also functioned as spacers to hold the outer mould at an equal distance from the core. Due to the complexity of shape to be cast and the amount of melted iron to be used, the casting was done in several steps. First the outer mould was assembled from the legs to the belly; earth was then piled against it and wooden braces installed to stabilise the outer mould and maintain the temperature of the molten iron. Subsequently the mould sections were assembled and the statue cast layer by layer. Throughout the interior and exterior of the ox there are traces of cold shuts formed by molten iron poured by this open-casting method. When the time between two subsequent castings became too long, the molten iron started to solidify before the next pouring, hence causing cold shuts to appear.

This was the casting method utilised throughout the Song period for the production of various outdoor statues, the few extant examples being mostly connected with temple architectures in Henan and Shanxi provinces. The iron oxen found at the site of Pujin bridge near Puzhou city, in Yongji county, Shanxi province, seemed to have served a different purpose, as they were used at the four sides of a bridge to secure the iron chains of the bridge. However, such figures were indeed cast in solid iron, to support the stress, while our ox was cast hollow.

Traditionally, Chinese believed that a statue contained the power to influence its surroundings, and by making a statue, one would be able to bring into existence not only the actual powers of the subject but also its symbolic powers. Faithful to this ideology, since earliest times, oxen were associated with water and came to symbolise water control. An ox (Chin. niu) was the most powerful beast at man's disposal; its strength was invaluable in maintaining clear the water canals system for irrigating and thus preventing floodings.

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According to the legend, after the Great Yu controlled the waters, he set up an iron ox to tranquilize the waters and repel evil spirits. But these powers were enjoyed not only by oxen, but by all forms of niu – oxen, buffalo (Chin. shui niu) and rhinoceros (Chin. xi niu). Belief in the powers of these so-called “control-the-waters- oxen” (Chin. zhi shui niu) was strengthened by reference to the ancient Five Elements theory. Originally developed in the 4th-3rd c. BCE and refined during the Han period (206 BC-220 CE), this theory explained natural phenomena by the cyclical and mutual interaction of five natural elements. Within this theory, in the Mutual Production Order, metal produced and thus controlled water. This belief in the mutual interaction of water and iron encouraged the production of iron statues for controlling water.

Hence statues of oxen were placed on the banks of lakes and rivers to prevent floodings, or, as possibly in the case of our ox, on a pedestal in front of a Daoist temple associated with water deities. This tradition persisted throughout the centuries. A typical example is the hollow ox at Shanhua temple in Datong, Shanxi province. The inscription gives details of casting date and manufacturer, yet in the local histories it is referred to as one of the seven 'zhi shui niu' originally placed on the west bank of the Yu river.

Our outstanding iron ox stands now placidly recumbent with his tail bent on the right hindquarter, a long - now scrubbed off- inscription on one side, the horns projecting straight from a highly ornate head, reminding us of his past aura, his imposing figure imbued with great somberness, his supernatural symbolism still lingering all around us, searching for waters to placate.

For comparable examples see: Fan Wangli and Li Maolin, “Tang tie niu yu Pujin qiao”, *Kaogu yu Wenwu* 1991.1: 52-55.

Paludan, Ann, “ The Tang Dynasty Iron Oxen at Pujin Bridge”, *Oriental Art* 1994.5: 61-68.

Barry Till and Paula Swart, “Cast Iron Statuary in China”, *Oriental Art* 1993.8: 40-45. - (X.0518)

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## Wooden Sculpture of the Vairocana Buddha

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X.0707 (LSO)

Origin: China

Circa: 15 th Century to 17 th Century AD

Dimensions:

39" (99.1cm) high x 32" (81.3cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Wood

Location: Great Britain



## Wooden Sculpture of the Vairocana Buddha

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This imposing Buddha dates from the dynamic period surrounding the second half then collapse of the M'ing Dynasty, and the rise of the Q'ing. This period spans the 15th to 17th centuries AD, and saw many of the most important developments in Chinese culture. The M'ing, founded in 1368 under the peasant emperor Hong Wu, was a militarily oriented socio-political entity much given to radical interpretations of Confucianism and with a very strong defensive ethos (the Great Wall dates to this period). However by the 17th century cracks had started to appear, young male heirs being manipulated as puppets by the ruling families, and the court became rotten with intrigue. To compound matters, the Manchurian Chinese cities were being attacked by local groups – dubbed the Manchus – who eventually invaded China and deposed the old regime. The last M'ing emperor, Chongzhen, hanged himself on Coal Hill overlooking the Forbidden City, bringing an end to his line and ushering in the Q'ing dynasty.

The Q'ing had been founded by Nurhaci in the early 17th century, and persisted until the collapse of imperial China in 1912 with the hapless Pu-Yi, the last emperor of China. Their isolationist policies, social control (all men required to shave their heads, wear queues, and wear Manchu rather than traditional Chinese dress) introspection and cultural conservatism was at odds with their liberality in certain social issues – such as forbidding the binding of women's feet (later withdrawn due to social pressure from the populace). However, this cultural inflexibility – which grew as the emperors grew increasingly unaware of the world outside their palace walls, much less the country's borders – was a difficult stance to maintain in the shadow of the European thalassocracies, and it may have been this which helped hasten the demise of the Imperial system.

The M'ing and the Q'ing dynasties were highly creative times, seeing the appearance of the first novels written in the vernacular, considerable development in the visual arts and outstanding craftsmanship in all fields. The present sculpture is a case in fact, and it is perhaps somewhat disarming to reflect that this peaceful figure dates from a period of such spectacular turmoil.

The Buddha represented is the Vairocana variant – that is, the divine universal aspect of Sakiamuni Buddha. He is seated in yogic posture, his legs folded in padmasanam (lotus position), the left hand resting flat on the knee (unusually) and the right hand raised in vitarka mudra (gesture of debate with the forefinger tip touching the thumb). The face has been beautifully carved into a mask of imperturbable serenity and reflection, framed by the long earlobes and the hair, which has been gathered into small, serrated spikes that cover the head like a helmet. The only part exposed is the supracranial eminence traditionally associated with Buddha's wisdom and sagacity. The drapery is simple, and robustly carved. It comprises a tunic tied at the waist with a long flowing robe that hangs to the waist and is gathered to cover the legs. The chest is bare. The Buddha is otherwise unadorned, which is appropriate given his penchant for simplicity and purity, and at odds with the more decorated Bodhisattva sculptures. The impact of the piece is boosted by its large size (38" tall), which gives it a powerful and magisterial presence. This is a true sculptural gem that deserves pride of place in a serious collection, or in any context where its beauty can be fully appreciated. - (X.0707 (LSO))

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## Wooden Sculpture of the Vairocana Buddha

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X.0708

Origin: China

Circa: 15 th Century to 17 th Century AD

Dimensions:

39" (99.1cm) high x 28.75" (73.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Wood

Location: Great Britain

## Wooden Sculpture of the Vairocana Buddha

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This imposing Buddha dates from the dynamic period surrounding the second half then collapse of the Ming Dynasty, and the rise of the Qing. This period spans the 15th to 17th centuries AD, and saw many of the most important developments in Chinese culture. The Ming, founded in 1368 under the peasant emperor Hong Wu, was a militarily oriented socio-political entity much given to radical interpretations of Confucianism and with a very strong defensive ethos (the Great Wall dates to this period). However by the 17th century cracks had started to appear, young male heirs being manipulated as puppets by the ruling families, and the court became rotten with intrigue. To compound matters, the Manchurian Chinese cities were being attacked by local groups dubbed the Manchus who eventually invaded China and deposed the old regime. The last Ming emperor, Chongzhen, hanged himself on Coal Hill overlooking the Forbidden City, bringing an end to his line and ushering in the Qing dynasty. The Qing was founded by Nurhaci in the early 17th century, and persisted until the collapse of imperial China in 1912 with the hapless Pu-Yi, the last emperor of China. Their isolationist policies, social control (all men required to shave their heads, wear queues, and wear Manchu rather than traditional Chinese dress) introspection and cultural conservatism was at odds with their liberality in certain social issues such as forbidding the binding of womens feet (later withdrawn due to social pressure from the populace). However, this cultural inflexibility which grew as the emperors grew increasingly unaware of the world outside their palace walls, much less the countrys borders was a difficult stance to maintain in the shadow of the European thalassocracies, and it may have been this which helped hasten the demise of the Imperial system. The Ming and the Qing dynasties were highly creative times, seeing the appearance of the first novels written in the vernacular, considerable development in the visual arts and outstanding craftsmanship in all fields. The present sculpture is a case in fact, and it is perhaps somewhat disarming to reflect that this peaceful figure dates from a period of such spectacular turmoil. This superb sculpture admirably portrays the Vairocana Buddhas poise and serenity. He rests in padmasanam (lotus) position, his hands folded together in a palms-up position known as dhyana mudra. The face is exquisitely carved, the features carefully measured and harmoniously expressed. The face is framed by pendulous earlobes and hair pulled into a helmet-like arrangement of tiny, serrated knobs. The drapery is extremely competent in its execution, describing a roll of curved pleats running from the shoulders to the lap, the tunic-like garment encasing the arms down to the wrist and concealing the legs. The patina is perfect, and the piece is in extremely good condition. The Buddha in sharp contradistinction from the more ornate Bodhisattva figures is plain and unadorned, reflecting the simplicity and purity of the Vairocana Buddhas character. Indeed, the lack of ornamental detailing increases the sensual impact and clean lines of this remarkable carving. This is a truly wonderful piece of ancient sculpture. - (X.0708)

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Shang Dynasty Bronze Yan Steamer  
with Inscription

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H.1093  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1250 BC to 1100 BC  
Dimensions: 16.75" (42.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Bronze  
Location: Great Britain



# Shang Dynasty Bronze Yan Steamer with Inscription

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Bronze working is believed to have developed in China without the influence of outside cultures around 2000 B.C. Although there were initially numerous centers of bronze technology, the area in contemporary Henan Province along the banks of the Yellow River eventually advanced to become the most important and influential cultural center of early Bronze Age China. An alloy of copper and tin, bronze was used to create weapons, horse bits and chariot parts, and ritual vessels. China was the only Bronze Age culture in the world to utilize the piece-mold casting method. The advantage of this technique, which involved the use of terracotta molds that were broken into smaller pieces before firing and then reassembled before casting, was that it allowed sculptors to achieve more intricate designs that were more sharply defined.

The Shang Dynasty is the first recorded kingdom in Chinese history. While no major texts have survived, examples of their pictogram writing have been found engraved on bronze vessels and oracle bones. According to legend, the dynasty was founded by a rebel hero who overthrew the last ruler of the corrupt Xia Dynasty. The Shang kings ruled over much of northern China and were engaged in frequent battles with nomadic tribesmen that roamed the steppes and other neighboring tribes. Their society was based primarily upon agriculture, supplemented by hunting and animal husbandry. The Dynasty switched capitals a number of times, although the city Jin, near modern-day Anyang, became the largest and most important.

This glorious utensil surely would have been a treasured possession. However, this yan was not interred with its owner as a sign of wealth. Instead, this steamer was expected to continue cooking meals in the afterlife. The Ancient Chinese believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, it seems logical to reason that as we require food to nourish our bodies on earth, we will require food to nourish our souls in the afterlife. This Yan was created to steam eternally, ushering the deceased into the next world. The bountiful feast that this yan symbolizes continues throughout eternity. Today, we marvel at this work both for its historical and cultural significance as well for its overwhelming beauty. - (H.1093)

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# Ming Painted Terracotta Civic Official

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H.1094

Origin: China

Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD

Dimensions:

34" (86.4cm) high x 13.5" (34.3cm) wide x 11.25" (28.6cm) depth

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Painted Terracotta

Location: Great Britain

# Ming Painted Terracotta Civic Official

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very realistic threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realized that a strong military was essential to Chinese prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered. During the Ming Dynasty, China proper was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

Like the founders of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- 220 A.D.), Hongwu was extremely suspicious of the educated courtiers that advised him and, fearful that they might attempt to overthrow him, he successfully consolidated control of all aspect of government. The strict authoritarian control Hongwu wielded over the affairs of the country was due in part to the centralized system of government he inherited from the Monguls and largely kept intact. However, Hongwu replaced the Mongul bureaucrats who had ruled the country for nearly a century with native Chinese administrators. He also reinstated the Confucian examination system that tested would-be civic officials on their knowledge of literature and philosophy. Unlike the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.), which received most of its taxes from mercantile commerce, the Ming economy was based primarily on agriculture, reflecting both the peasant roots of its founder as well as the Confucian belief that trade was ignoble and parasitic.

Traditionally in Chinese art, representations of civic officials symbolized the order of government. However, this gorgeous sculpture of a civic official, created during the Ming Dynasty, symbolizes more than mere government, it symbolizes the return of the ethnic Chinese to power. Aesthetically, the work recalls similar depictions of civic officials created during the T'ang Dynasty, a golden age of Chinese culture. Surely this visual link to the glories of the past is not unintentional. This official stands upon a substantial base, revealing his revered position within society. He is no mere administrator; he is the embodiment of the will of the Emperor. An elegant robe with long overflowing sleeves frames his body. The tall cap with a chinstrap marks his official status. His facial features and groomed goatee reveal his native Chinese ethnic origins. Remnants of the original pigment that once covered this work are still visible, including orange highlights on the robe and black on his facial hair, cap, and shoes. - (H.1094)

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# Ordos Bronze Plaque

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LO.616

Origin: Northern China

Circa: 500 BC to 200 AD

Dimensions:

3.25" (8.3cm) high x 5.4" (13.7cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Bronze

Location: Great Britain



## Ordos Bronze Plaque

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The Ordos culture refers to groups of nomadic peoples that inhabited the southern Mongolian Plateau as early as the Shang Dynasty. Though they lived along the western and northern perimeters of the main Han Dynasty settlements, they retained a distinctive culture more aligned with the Scythian peoples of the Steppes than their Chinese neighbors. They are known primarily through their metalwork. Many of the belt plaques, horse gear, and weapons that have been found depict scenes of animals in combat. Such themes are linked to the ancient Near Eastern tradition. During the Han Dynasty, the Chinese formulated peace treaties with the Xiongnu peoples who were the dominant force of the Ordos region at this time. Xiongnu tombs have been excavated in Mongolia that contained Chinese luxury goods such as silk and bronze mirrors next to their own bronze works. This bronze belt plaque is a perfect example of the Ordos style. A scene depicting a pair of animals in combat decorates the front. A mythological beast that may well be a dragon attacks what appears to be a ram, biting it on the neck. It is likely that this work was originally gilt, though the surface now has a lovely patina that testifies to its age. - (LO.616)

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# Liao Bronze Funerary Mask

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LA.512  
Origin: China  
Circa: 918 AD to 1125 AD  
Dimensions: 8.75" (22.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Bronze  
Location: Great Britain

# Liao Bronze Funerary Mask

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The Liao Dynasty was founded by nomadic Qidan tribesmen, possibly an offspring of the 5th century Xianbei people, in 907 A.D. At its height, Liao territory comprised much of modern Manchuria, Mongolia and the northeastern corner of China. After the establishment of the Song Dynasty in 960 A.D., a border war between the two dynasties ensued. After a series of decisive victories, the Liao armies began to approach the Song capital when a compromise was reached recognizing the authority of the Liao in parts of northern China. An annual tribute to the Liao was agreed upon and a period of peace and stability between the two Dynasties followed. Commercial and cultural links forged during this year exposed the Liao to many influential Chinese customs. However, the Liao maintained many of their native traditions. The Liao Dynasty came to an end after one of their subjects, the Juchen tribe, rose up with the aid of the Song, overthrew their masters and established the Jin Dynasty in 1125 A.D.

Preservation of the physical remains of the deceased was a central focus of the funerary rites of the Liao. The corpse served as a sanctuary for the spirit of the dead and was carefully preserved for post-mortem immortality in the afterlife. To achieve this goal, the tomb's occupant was encased in a metal-mesh vest, his feet covered with metal boots and his face covered with a metal sheet mask, which according to the rank, could range from bronze to silver and gold. Indeed, the same custom of placing a face mask over the dead represented a long-standing tradition among the nomadic tribes inhabiting the borderland of northern China, since the Bronze Age period, influenced by similar practices in ethnic groups from north and north-east Asia such as the Scythians, and was later enriched with Daoist and Buddhist religious connotations.

One of the richest tombs yielding beautiful gold masks, similar to the one here illustrated, belonged to Princess Chen and her consort. One of the fewest unspoiled Liao burials to date, Princess Chen's tomb was unearthed in 1986 at Qinglongshan, Naiman Qi in Inner Mongolia. It was indeed a very elaborate burial that could have only been afforded by the wealthy elite. Still it provides an unparalleled account on Qidan burial practice. According to Qidan customs, the deceased was placed in the rear chamber on a painted brick pedestal (*guanchuang*) without a coffin, the top of the pedestal paved with cypress slips and covered by a canopied textile curtain. The wooden interior of the rear chamber probably imitated the traditional felt yurt of the Qidan people, while the masks and silver-meshes covered the corpse, further ornamented with jades, ambers and beautiful silk *kesi* textiles.

Our mask, instead, was made of thin bronze metal sheet, repoussed into shape, and later gilded, and possibly belonged to an official of middle rank. The facial features of the mask are simple yet hauntingly evocative: prominent arched brows meet at the bridge of the inverted T-shaped nose. The eyes are narrow, as if squinting, the mouth rigid and tense. Judging from the archaeological evidence, also this mask –like those found in Princess Chen's tomb- would have been placed on the face of the deceased and ornamented further with colourful fabrics and personal accessories, now lost forever.

Reference: Gold face mask belonging to Princess Chen, Tomb 3 at Qinglongshan, Naiman Qi, Inner Mongolia in Yang Xiaoneng, *Chinese archaeology in the Twentieth Century*, Yale University press, 2004: pp. 459-461. And Nei Menggu Kaogu Yanjiusuo, *Liao Chenguo gongzhu fuma hezang mu fajue jianbao*, Wenwu 1987.11: 4-24 And *Liao Chenguo Gongzhu Mu*, 1993. - (LA.512)

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# Painted Terracotta Model of a House

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LA.516

Origin: China

Circa: 1 st Century AD to 3 rd Century AD

Dimensions: 41" (104.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art

Style: Eastern Han

Location: Great Britain



## Painted Terracotta Model of a House

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The earliest depiction of houses, going back to the Neolithic period, were modelled in ceramic. Before the Han period, such models more often consisted of a single cylindrical chamber with a roof, but during the Han dynasty designs of much more complex architectural complexes appeared throughout the country. Especially from the 1st century AD, tomb mingqi production expanded to include new types of artefacts, ranging from everyday tools to figures of domestic animals and architectural models. Tombs in Henan, Shanxi, Shaanxi and Gansu provinces have yielded a large quantity of architectural models featuring multi-storey buildings with overhanging roofs, brackets, pillars, ornamental balustrades, latticework windows and hinged doors. The majority was lead-glazed in sparkling colours including green, yellow, brownish and black, but unglazed painted examples are also known, especially in Sichuan.

Such models and other miniature or non-functional objects are collectively known as 'mingqi' (spirit articles) and have been traditionally interpreted as surrogates for objects of value placed in the tomb. Yet recent archaeological evidence have highlighted that these objects might have instead constituted an integral part of the strategy to recreate the earthly dwelling of the deceased. The replication of the living world and its constituents within the tomb might have been induced by various ideological factors, including a new religious trend emphasising the separation of the dead from the living and other material manifestations of different philosophical ideas, but also possibly by the effort to reproduce a self-sustaining version of the world- a fictive and efficacious comprehensive replica, made up of both real sacrificed humans and animals (the 'presented') and elements such as the multi-storey house (the 're-presented').

Daily life has thus been vividly 'reproduced' by capturing in a still image the various figurines peaking out from the house balconies and doors: look at the matron hieratically standing at the entrance door, holding a fan and looking towards his labourers to her right, either washing, holding a winnowing fan or a sickle, or again, at the archer perilously leaning outward on the balustrade of the third floor, shooting to the sky. Traces of the original red paint are also visible under the roof and on the brackets, suggesting that the entire house must have once been colourfully decorated with draperies, providing a vivid picture of what a wealthy abode must have looked like during the Han period. Furthermore, this house is composed of three storeys, a combination rarely encountered on domestic architecture of the period (usually made of one or two storeys) and more often employed in the depiction of military outposts such as watchtowers. Its architectural details, including lattice windows and bracketed pillars are extremely well preserved, as well as the upturned tiles on the overhanging roof, thus providing an indelible picture of this long-gone archaeological past.

TL tested. - (LA.516)

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# Liao Basalt Torso of a Standing Guanyin

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LA.541  
Origin: China  
Circa:  
10 th Century AD to 12 th Century AD  
Dimensions: 69" (175.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Basalt  
Location: Great Britain

# Liao Basalt Torso of a Standing Guanyin

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An exquisitely sculpted grey basalt torso of a Bodhisattva ('enlightened being') standing frontally with legs joined on a low pedestal. He holds a jar with lotus buds between his palms at chest level. The outer robe, known as the sanghati, covers both shoulders and descends in delicate folds. The monumental scale of the statue allowed the sculptor to carve the drapery and scarves in fine detail.

The Khitan were an ancient nomadic tribe that lived in north-eastern China. The name 'Liao' comes from the valley of the Liao river where they originally lived. They were brought under Chinese rule during the Tang dynasty. In 907 AD when the Tang collapsed, a Khitan chieftain established the empire of Liao. They ruled north-eastern China contemporaneously with the Five Dynasties and later with the Northern Song. The Liao were important patrons of Buddhism. The pacifism of Buddhism and the assimilation of Chinese wealth and cultural elements gradually weakened the Liao's once-military character. In 1125 AD the Song army annihilated the Liao. - (LA.541)

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Pair of Lacquered Wooden Sculptures  
of Bodhisattvas



LA.559

Origin: China

Circa: 1500 AD to 1800 AD

Dimensions:

60" (152.4cm) high x 14.5" (36.8cm) wide x 19.5" (49.5cm) depth

Collection: Chinese Art

Style: Late Ming/Qing Dynasty

Medium: Lacquered Wood

Location: Great Britain



## Pair of Lacquered Wooden Sculptures of Bodhisattvas

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Pair of sculptural standing Avalokitesvara bodhisattvas, the high mukuta crowns, each bejewelled with either a small Amithaba icon, or the sacred bottle, one hand raised in vitarka mudra, the other one softly opened with palm up, the bodies slightly bent in tribanga pose, the bare chests with an ornate necklace, flowing garments reaching the feet and partly covering them. Traces of the original lacquered pigmentation remain.

The confession of the Great Vehicle, Mahayana (chin.: Dasheng), spread from Kashmir, Gandhara, Sogdia and Inner Asia into China, and further to Korea and Japan. It teaches that salvation is possible to all sentient beings because they possess the Buddha nature in them and hence all have the potentiality of being enlightened. Enlightenment is simply achieved by faith and devotion to Buddha and the religious ideal, the Bodhisattva (chin.: Pusa), Pratyekabuddha (chin.: Pizhifo) or Arhat (chin.: Aluohan, short: Luohan). These beings, though qualified to enter nirvana, delay their final entry in order to bring every sentient being across the sea of misery to the calm shores of enlightenment.

Avalokitesvara ("Observing the Sounds of the World", chin.: Guanshiyin, short: Guanyin, or Guanzizai), the Bodhisattva of Compassion, is one of the most venerated icon of the Buddhist Pantheon. In this case, the two mirror images would have been placed to the side of the main Buddha as his flanking attendants, in the main temple hall. - (LA.559)

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## Pair of Stone Sculptures of Children at Play



LA.560  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1500 AD to 1800 AD  
Dimensions: 33" (83.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: stone  
Location: Great Britain

## Pair of Stone Sculptures of Children at Play

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Pair of playful children (Chin. wa-wa) standing in their gowns and trowsers loosely worn, one holding a small finger citron that stands for plenty, the other a lidded bottle, perhaps reminiscent of a Buddhist ailment jar. Traces of the original pigments remain between the folds of the clothing and on the faces.

Wa-wa, children at play, was a theme usually associated with prosperity and joyfulness and often appeared in traditional paintings, lacquers and ceramics from the Ming period onwards. The two figures here illustrated are recognisable by their young hairstyle, one having the hair tied up into two lateral knobs, the other with two bows on the sides, above the ears.

Children depictions were often used for nianhua (New Year) paintings and auspicious prints and ceramics, possibly because of the word pun implicit in their Chinese name. As an ancient saying goes: "All senior officials are called 'zi' which is homonymous with 'zi', meaning 'son' or 'child'. So to have many 'zi' (sons) signifies many ministers or high officials in the family. All these epitomize the yearning of the people of ancient times for a happy life. Note: 'zi' was an ancient title of respect for a learned or virtuous man. - (LA. 560)

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## A Pair of Ordos Bronze Belt Buckle Plaques

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LO.1052

Origin: Northern China

Circa: 300 BC to 100 BC

Dimensions:

1.675" (4.3cm) high x 2.125" (5.4cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Style: Ordos

Medium: Gilt Bronze

Location: Great Britain



## A Pair of Ordos Bronze Belt Buckle Plaques

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These plaques can be safely attributed to the Xiongnu people. Although the early history of the Xiongnu is still blurred, we know that by the 3rd century BC they already formed a vast steppe confederacy stretching throughout the Eastern Eurasian steppes. The artefacts most commonly associated with the Xiongnu are the belt buckles formed either by a pair of solid cast plaques or a pair of openwork plaques cast in mirror image, comparable to the ones here illustrated. In fact many single plaques, like this one, originally would have been produced in pairs.

Each plaque depicts in mirror image the profile of a standing ox. All four legs of the ox are shown, with its head in three-quarter view, and its tail curving between its hind legs. The modelled border of each plaque forms a herringbone pattern, embedded with malachite green corrosion on the front. Together the two plaques form one complete set. The wearer's left hand plaque has a ring that projects sideways on the right as part of the fastening system and two small vertical loops on the reverse side opposite the ring. The other plaque also has two small vertical loops. The way in which the loops are made, confirms that each plaque was cast by the lost wax process. These artefacts were often produced by Han craftsmen, as most have been indeed found in Western Han tombs, suggesting that they were made for Chinese patrons with exotic taste or for the Xiongnu as a gift or a trade item.

Plaques like these are found in both northern China and Inner Mongolia and other examples appear in many collections worldwide. Yet it is very uncommon to have the complete buckle, as sets were often divided up for profit, dealers not understanding that these plaques function together. A plaque depicting a bovine image in the same kind of frame was also excavated from a tomb in Chengdu, Sichuan province, with coins dating the tomb to the late 3rd-2nd century BC. One other example was found in Tongxin xian Daodunzi, Ningxia province.

Reference: E. Bunker, *Ancient Bronzes of the Eastern Eurasian Steppes*, A.M. Sackler Foundation, 1997: pl. 218, p. 257. Tian and Guo eds. *E'erdusishi qingtongqi*, Beijing 1986. Hu Changyu, "Chengdu shuyang Xi Han muguomu" *Kaogu yu wenwu* 1983.2; pp.26-7. Duan Shu'an, *Beifang Minzu*, Beijing, 1995. - (LO.1052)

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# Pair of Qing Dynasty Inscribed Funerary Stelae



LA.574 (LSO)  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1644 AD to 1912 AD  
Dimensions: 72" (182.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Location: Great Britain

## Pair of Qing Dynasty Inscribed Funerary Stelae

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These impressive columns are funerary stelae, pertaining to the burial place of an elite member of society during the Qing dynasty. They are made of discrete moulded vertical funnel blocks, stacked upon each other and a base in the shape of a Fu-dog (lion). Each bears a line in cursive script which reads as follows: "there are flowers and lights that at night (would) light themselves (...), spring would often stay with no moon or bird". They would originally have supported a lintel with an additional inscription, acting as a gateway into the tomb.

The Qing Dynasty was founded in Manchuria in 1644, following the decline of the M'ing Dynasty. The rulers of the Manchu Dynasty – as it became known – were not indigenous Chinese, but were descended from the Jurchens, natives of eastern Russia and the steppe region. The formation of the Qing was preceded by a grey area known as the Later Jin period, as a minor leader named Nurhaci escalated a series of minor tribal squabbles into unification and eventually all-out war with the then rulers of the Chinese state. He moved his capital to be closer to the Mongols, with whom he formed alliances; he thus protected himself from attack on that border, exploited their superb archers, and further expanded his power base against the M'ing. His son (Hung Taiji) succeeded him as Khan, and following a rather erratic start monopolised on his father's successes to crush Ming forces in a series of battles from 1640 to 1642 for the territories of Songshan and Jingzhou. He died in 1643, passing the new title of emperor to his 5-year-old son, Fulin. The last M'ing emperor – Chongzhen – committed suicide as Beijing fell to rebel forces, which then fought the Qing for control. Fulin – renamed emperor Shunzhi – was placed on the throne as the Son of Heaven, although it was not until the 1680's that all of China was united under the Manchu banner.

The Manchu Dynasty lasted for about 350 years, and only crumbled with the definitive end of imperial China and the hands of the Xinhai revolution in 1912. During this time, China became highly internalised, with notable stratification of social classes and suppression of ethnic diversity (including the forced wearing of a queue). The arts of this period are among the most ornate and studied of China's long history, and artists were a major part of court life. They were particularly well known for their naturalistic painting, calligraphy, printing and reissuing of (censored) works by classical authors. The influence of western art – brought by traders – infiltrated various areas of Qing art in the 18th century, especially in painting and architecture (i.e. the Summer Palace). Ceramics for export – notably at the Jingdezhen porcelain kilns – became a major avenue of expression in the later periods, and were the main source of Europe's 18th century mania for Chinoiserie. Imperial and court arts are perhaps the most valuable and rare, however. Art was used to configure one's status within the court environment, and this applied in death as well as life. Pieces such as this would have been extortionately expensive at the time, and would have been made for a very prominent member of a royal court. They are an imposing reminder of China's imperial might, and would be a superb addition to any discerning collection.

- (LA.574 (LSO))

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# Ming Lacquered Wood Sculpture of Guanyin

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X.0732

Origin: China

Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD

Collection: Chinese art

Medium: wood

Location: Great Britain



# Ming Lacquered Wood Sculpture of Guanyin

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Bodhisattvas are enlightened beings who have put off entering paradise in order to help others attain enlightenment. There are many different Bodhisattvas, but the most famous in China is Avalokitesvara, known in Chinese as Guanyin. Early depictions of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara demonstrate male characteristics, but this tradition subsequently became less rigid. By the end of the Yuan Dynasty (AD 1367/8), the majority of these figures were depicted as young women, often bearing a vase of holy water to cleanse the souls of those she was bound to protect. According to legend, Guanyin was born on the nineteenth of the second lunar month, achieved enlightenment on the nineteenth of the sixth lunar month and achieved nirvana on the nineteenth of the ninth lunar month. It is said that s/he is the top Bodhisattva beside Shakyamuni Buddha, and an assistant Bodhisattva beside Amitabha Buddha in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss. It is believed that any sentient being who recites his/her name during a disaster would be heard and saved, which can explain why his/her importance to Chinese Buddhism. "Guanyin" literally means "observing the sounds", which refers to the belief that the Guanyin would observe all the sounds in the world, particularly listening for requests from worshippers. The M'ing dynasty was one of the most important in China's long history. It saw the toppling of the Y'uan Mongol empire under Hong Wu, the third of only three peasants ever to become emperor in China. The leader of the peasants' revolt that ushered in the M'ing dynasty, Hong Wu was an extremely brutal, ruthless dictator, whose creed was one of rabid Neo-Confucianism combined with a militaristic sense of China's destiny and organisation. The one aspect of Confucius' learning that he ignored was that declaring military institutions to be inferior to intellectual elites, and that the former should be under the latter's thrall. A great deal was therefore spent on expanding the army, consolidating defences against attack by the Mongols and neighbouring groups, and in major defensive architecture – notably the Great Wall. The economy also came under scrutiny. Perhaps reflecting Hong Wu's own humble origins, the economy came to emphasise agriculture over trade (which was deemed to be vulgar and parasitical by Confucianism), and provided safeguards for peasants. Negative outcomes included enormous inflation and devaluation of money and resultant social unrest. However, this period also saw enormous cultural strides, including the development of the novel, the introduction of duotone blue/white ceramics and a plethora of artistic and religious developments that is excellently embodied by the current sculpture. This sculpture of a Guanyin is unusually posed, almost lounging back on the left arm against a low seat while casually resting the right arm on the right knee, The left leg is pressed down, parallel with the floor. This contrasts with the haughty facial expression and regal mien of the upper body. The Guanyin is dressed in long, flowing robes that hang in pleats below the level of the figure's base, as well as an additional garment (possibly a dhoti) tied off around the waist. The hands protrude rather languidly from long sleeves, and are arranged in meditative positions. The figure is also wearing an ornate necklace. The face is exquisitely carved and conveys a decidedly aristocratic expression, with half-closed eyes beneath elevated eyebrows, a small, pursed mouth and rounded cheeks. This effect is heightened by the ornate rolled hair around the top of the forehead and down to the shoulders, and the high, extravagantly decorated crown of floral and other organic motifs that almost doubles the total height of the head. This is a highly accomplished and impressive piece of ancient art. - (X.0732)

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Ming Lacquered Wood Sculpture  
of a Seated Buddha

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X.0729  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 41" (104.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Lacquered Wood  
Location: United States

## Ming Lacquered Wood Sculpture of a Seated Buddha

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The M'ing dynasty was one of the most important in China's long history. It saw the toppling of the Y'uan Mongol empire under Hong Wu, the third of only three peasants ever to become emperor in China. The leader of the peasants' revolt that ushered in the M'ing dynasty, Hong Wu was an extremely brutal, ruthless dictator, whose creed was one of rabid Neo-Confucianism combined with a militaristic sense of China's destiny and organisation. The one aspect of Confucius' learning that he ignored was that declaring military institutions to be inferior to intellectual elites, and that the former should be under the latter's thrall. A great deal was therefore spent on expanding the army, consolidating defences against attack by the Mongols and neighbouring groups, and in major defensive architecture – notably the Great Wall. The economy also came under scrutiny. Perhaps reflecting Hong Wu's own humble origins, the economy came to emphasise agriculture over trade (which was deemed to be vulgar and parasitical by Confucianism), and provided safeguards for peasants. Negative outcomes included enormous inflation and devaluation of money and resultant social unrest. However, this period also saw enormous cultural strides, including the development of the novel, the introduction of duotone blue/white ceramics and a plethora of artistic and religious developments that is excellently embodied by the current sculpture.

Standing 41" high, this Buddha is of exceptional quality and poise. Sat in a lotus position with hands resting on the lap and the right knee, the Buddha is wearing pantaloons and a loose tunic that leaves the chest and forearms bare and which runs down to a loose gather of pleats along the lower limbs and between the legs. The tunic is tied at the waist with a thong, drawn tight and tied in a bow. Each sleeve displays a pleated gathering of cloth just above the elbow, and a large, plain bracelet adorns each wrist. The face has assumed an expression of studied tranquillity, with slightly pursed lips, lowered eyes under arched brows, and smooth, rounded cheeks. This is framed by highly textured hair, which reaches its apex at the supracranial eminence that is believed to reflect Buddha's sagacity and wisdom, and elongated earlobes. The centre of the chest is decorated with a prayer wheel design. The quality and condition of this Buddha are stunning. In terms of aesthetic and social value, this is a truly exceptional specimen that would be the star of any context into which it were placed. - (X.0729)

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# Sculpture of the Thousand Arms Guanyin

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X.0730

Origin: China

Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD

Dimensions:

32" (81.3cm) high x 42.5" (108.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese art

Medium: Lacquered Wood

Location: United States



# Sculpture of the Thousand Arms Guanyin

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongol rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very real threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realised that a strong military was essential to Chinese safety and prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered, and effectively polarised. During the Ming Dynasty, China was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

Like the founders of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. -220 A.D.), Hongwu was extremely suspicious of the educated courtiers who advised him and, fearful that they might attempt to overthrow him. To prevent this, he successfully consolidated control of all aspect of government. The strict authoritarian control Hongwu wielded over the affairs of the country was due in part to the centralised system of government he inherited from the Mongols, a system that was effectively perpetuated. This was to be an all-Chinese affair, however: Hongwu replaced all the high-ranking Mongol bureaucrats with native Chinese administrators. He also reinstated the Confucian examination system that tested would-be civic officials on their knowledge of literature and philosophy. Unlike the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) which received most of its taxes from mercantile commerce, the Ming economy was based primarily on agriculture, reflecting both the peasant roots of its founder as well as the Confucian belief that trade was ignoble and parasitic.

Culturally, the greatest innovation of the Ming Dynasty was the introduction of the novel. Developed from the folk tales of traditional storytellers, these works were transcribed in the everyday vernacular language of the people. Advances in printmaking and the increasing population of urban dwellers largely contributed to the success of these books. Architecturally, the most famous monument of the Ming Dynasty is surely the complex of temples and palaces in Beijing. Known as the Forbidden City, this architectural behemoth was constructed after the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty (Emperor Yongle) moved the capital there in c.1421.

The current sculpture dates from this fascinating and turbulent period. Guanyin is an ancient Boddhisattva, who was noted for her kindness. Boddhisattvas are beings who have attained enlightenment and therefore their right to enter Nirvana, but who choose to remain upon the mortal plane to assist others in their attainment of similarly elevated spiritual states. These benevolent Boddhisattvas minister eternally to relieve the sufferings of all creatures, rather in the general mould of Christian archangels. The artist who created this sculpture captures a beautiful image of tender serenity, unmarred by the otherworldliness of her 'thousand arms'. Masterful woodworking has provided her with a superbly detailed garment and precisely- modelled arms and hands, which form a fluid yet cohesive whole. Each of her many hands contains a different cosmic symbol, or alternatively expresses a specific ritual position, or mudra. Her cupped hands often form the Yoni Mudra, symbolizing the womb as the door for entry to this world. Traces of paint still remain, serving to heighten the general impact that this exceptional sculpture possesses. This is a truly remarkable work of art, both aesthetically and spiritually. - (X.0730)

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# Ming Dynasty Lacquered Wood Sculpture of Guanyin

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X.0731  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 39" (99.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Lacquered Wood  
Location: Great Britain

# Ming Dynasty Lacquered Wood Sculpture of Guanyin

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongol rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Due to the very real threat still posed by the Mongols, Hongwu realised that a strong military was essential to Chinese safety and prosperity. Thus, the orthodox Confucian view that the military was an inferior class to be ruled over by an elite class of scholars was reconsidered, and effectively polarised. During the Ming Dynasty, China was reunited after centuries of foreign incursion and occupation. Ming troops controlled Manchuria, and the Korean Joseon Dynasty respected the authority of the Ming rulers, at least nominally.

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The current sculpture dates from this fascinating and turbulent period. Bodhisattvas are enlightened beings who have put off entering paradise in order to help others attain enlightenment. There are many different Bodhisattvas, but the most famous in China is Avalokitesvara, known in Chinese as Guanyin. Early depictions of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara displayed male characteristics, but this tradition subsequently became less rigid. By the end of the Yuan Dynasty (AD 1367/8), most Guanyin sculptures depicted the beings as young women, often bearing a vase of holy water to cleanse the souls of those they were bound to protect. According to legend, Guanyin was born on the nineteenth of the second lunar month, achieved enlightenment on the nineteenth of the sixth lunar month and achieved nirvana on the nineteenth of the ninth lunar month. It is said that s/he is the top Bodhisattva beside Shakyamuni Buddha, and an assistant Bodhisattva beside Amitabha Buddha in the Western World of Ultimate Bliss. It is believed that any sentient being who recites his/her name during a disaster would be heard and saved, which can explain why his/her importance to Chinese Buddhism. "Guanyin" literally means "observing the sounds", which refers to the belief that the Guanyin would observe all the sounds in the world, particularly listening for requests from worshippers. The current example is female, and stands 39" tall on an incorporated base. The pose is somewhat languorous, with the weight shifted onto the right leg while the left is slightly bent. The left hand hangs by the side, holding some implement or piece of drapery. The right hand is raised, and appears to be an object of contemplation by Guanyin. The head is carved in a mood of reflective serenity, and is inclined slightly to the right. The sculpture is topped with a tall, ornate crown of generally floral aspect, with plume-like eminences arranged in vertically-oriented bunches. The underlying hair has been gathered up underneath the crown, leaving a halo of hair around its perimeter. A loose tunic-like garment (dhoti) envelops the lower half of the body, and further drapery (scarves) is casually wrapped over the shoulders. The complexity of the drapery and the care with which it has been carved is stunning - the individual folds and creases are all cleanly and deftly rendered, and contrast with the smooth texture of the skin. The figure additionally wears two bracelets on the left wrist, as well as a necklace and pendant arrangement in the chest area. This is a superb and important sculpture that would grace any collection of Eastern art. - (X.0731)

## Bronze Buckle Plaque

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LO.1223

Origin: Northern China

Circa: 3 rd Century BC to 1 st Century BC

Dimensions:

4.5" (11.4cm) high x 2.75" (7.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: bronze

Location: Great Britain



## Bronze Buckle Plaque

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This plaque can be safely attributed to the Xiongnu people. Although the early history of the Xiongnu is still blurred, we know that by the 3rd century BC they already formed a vast steppe confederacy stretching throughout the Eastern Eurasian steppes. The artefacts most commonly associated with the Xiongnu are the belt buckles formed either by a pair of solid cast plaques or a pair of openwork plaques cast in mirror image, comparable to the one here illustrated. In fact many single plaques, like this one, originally would have been produced in pairs; in each pair the plaque worn on the left side would carry a small hook for fastening on the front border of the right plaque, while the attachment of the belt was accomplished through the perforations in the openwork design.

Our openwork plaque, shaped like a horizontal B, without the defining border, features a mythological raptor (sometimes identified as a gryphon) in combat with a tiger. The raptor is a fantastic creature distinguished from the eagle by its almond-shaped animal eye. Both creatures are shown in profile but their appendages; both of the raptor's wings are shown as are all the four paws of the tigers. The wings and tail of the bird shows cell-like depressions reflecting the inlay technique common in contemporary golden plaques. The back of the plaque is slightly concave with no attachment loops.

A mirror-image version of this plaque was excavated at Xifeng xian Xichagou in Liaoning province with wuzhu coins dating to the reigns of emperors Wen (175 BC), Jin, Wu (140-87 BC) and Zhao. Another version of the same was also found at Urbium in southern Siberia, while a similar composition was found in a Qin-period tomb at Zaomiao, Tongchuan, Shaanxi province. The plaque is also closely related to several gold buckles in the Treasure of Peter the Great in the State Hermitage Museum in St. Peterburg.

Reference: E. Bunker, *Ancient Bronzes of the Eastern Eurasian Steppes*, A.M. Sackler Foundation, 1997: pl. 222, p. 260. Sun Shoudao, "Xiongnu Xichaogou wenhua gumuqun de faxian", *Wenwu* 1960.8-9: pp.25-35, figs. 2-19 and pls. 1-21. Devlet, Marianna. *Sibirskie poyasnye azhurnye plastinki*, II v. do N.E- IV N.E., Akademia Nauka: Moscow, 1980. *Kaogu yu Wenwu* 1986.2: p.10. Gryaznov, M.P., *The Ancient Civilizations of Southern Siberia*, New York, 1969. - (LO.1223)

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# Ming Glazed Sculptures of a Fu Dogs

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H.1054/5  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions: 19" (48.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Glazed Terracotta  
Location: United States

## Ming Glazed Sculptures of a Fu Dogs

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The Fu Dog, or Fu Lion as it is also known, is a ubiquitous symbol that has been employed repeatedly throughout the history of China. Sometimes referred to as the “Dog of Happiness” or the “Celestial Dog,” the earliest traces of the Fu Dog in China date to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). Then it disappeared from Chinese art until it was resurrected during the cultural revival experienced during the T’ang Dynasty (618-906 A.D.). While lions are not native to China, works of art with lion imagery from other civilizations were imported into China as gifts for the Emperor. The Fu Lion was brought into China with the arrival of Buddhism, where it became associated with the more familiar dog during assimilation. The lion is a sacred creature in the Buddhist pantheon, and the Fu Lion was believed to be a companion of the Buddha.

While sculptures of Fu Dogs such as these outstanding blue and green-glazed example originally stood guard outside of Buddhist temples, by the time of the Ming Dynasty, when this work was created, the Dogs had lost most of their religious significance and were placed outside the entrances to homes and palaces out of custom. Even today, many monumental public buildings are decorated with lion figures standing guard at the base of the stairway. Traditionally one Fu Dog is depicted with one of his front paws resting on a globe and its mate resting atop a demon. This gesture symbolizes the Dog’s authority and power over the evil spirits that might have tried to infiltrate the temple or palace. Today, Fu Dogs continue to be a popular symbol of luck and happiness.

- (H.1054/5)

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# Northern Wei Marble Sculpture of a Bodhisattva

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LO.1310 (AM)  
Origin: China  
Circa: 386 AD to 534 AD  
Dimensions: 11.5" (29.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Marble  
Location: Great Britain



## Northern Wei Marble Sculpture of a Bodhisattva

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This marble stele depicts a bodhisattva carved in high relief against a leaf-shaped mandorla. It dates to a time of unprecedented artistic development that surrounded the period of China's unification in 439 AD, under the Northern Wei (or Tuoba Wei). The rulers of the dynasty seem to have originated from the Tuoba clan of the non-Han Xianbei tribe, and later renamed themselves the Yuans.

Standing on a lotus pedestal, the figure wears a tall headdress and a flowing outer robe which runs beneath the pedestal onto the rectangular plinth. In his right hand he holds a lotus bud and in his left a heart-shaped fan. These attributes are common amongst bodhisattvas of the Northern Wei period. The fan motif first appears in a similar context in Gandharan Buddhist art of the 1st century AD and was used to honour high-ranking persons. In Chinese examples it is always shown pointing downwards. Two sets of concentric curves have been carved in low relief to frame the bodhisattva. Delicate features are one of the hallmarks of Northern Wei figurative sculpture, reflected here in the slender arms and body. The face and clothing are likewise finely carved, with a long robe and tunic surmounted by a flamboyant piece of headwear that frames the face with two "wings".

Buddhism was first introduced to China from the Indian subcontinent along the trade routes of Central Asia during the early years of the Han dynasty. However it faced two powerful competing ideologies, Confucianism and Daoism, which initially impeded its progress. When the Northern Wei, a foreign nomadic people, conquered parts of China in the late fourth century Buddhism was flourishing. Bodhisattvas were often depicted in pairs around a central image of the Buddha. These enlightened beings choose to delay their entry into Nirvana in order to help others attain enlightenment. Although Buddhist texts do not specify their gender, Chinese examples are generally depicted as male until the end of the Song Dynasty (1279), when they begin to assume a feminine appearance. Bodhisattvas can usually be differentiated from Buddha figures on the basis of their decorative appearance; Buddhas are invariably depicted in plainer raiment that reflects their ascetic lifestyle.

The size of this piece suggests that it may have functioned in a domestic setting as an aid to devotional reflection. Although there is no remaining trace of colour, it was probably polychromed and gilded in its original state. At this early date bodhisattvas tended not to be venerated in isolation from images of the Buddha, so it is not inconceivable that this piece was once part of a group of free-standing sculptures. The choice of material is also worthy of mention: marble is uncommon, as the majority of Buddhist art that survives from this period is carved from limestone. The small, intimate scale of this piece and the delicacy of the carving make it a truly desirable object. (AM) - (LO.1310 (AM))

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# Tang Dynasty Terracotta Fat Lady

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LO.1413 (LSO)  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD  
Dimensions: 17.7" (45.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: Great Britain

# Tang Dynasty Terracotta Fat Lady

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This outstanding ceramic attendant was made during what many consider to be China's Golden Age, the T'ang Dynasty. It was at this point that China's outstanding technological and aesthetic achievements opened to external influences, resulting in the introduction of numerous new forms of self-expression, coupled with internal innovation and considerable social freedom. The T'ang dynasty also saw the birth of the printed novel, significant musical and theatrical heritage and many of China's best-known painters and artists.

The T'ang Dynasty took control in 618 AD, when the Li family seized power from the last crumbling remnants of the preceding Sui Dynasty. This political and regal regime was long-lived, and lasted for almost 300 years. The imperial aspirations of the preceding periods and early T'ang leaders led to unprecedented wealth, resulting in considerable socioeconomic stability, the development of trade networks and vast urbanisation for China's exploding population (estimated at around 50 million people in the 8th century AD). The T'ang rulers took cues from earlier periods, maintaining many of their administrative structures and systems intact. Even when dynastic and governmental institutions withdrew from management of the empire towards the end of the period – their authority undermined by localised rebellions and regional governors known as *jiedushi* – the systems were so well-established that they continued to operate regardless.

The artworks created during this era are among China's greatest cultural achievements. It was the greatest age for Chinese poetry and painting, and sculpture also developed (although there was a notable decline in Buddhist sculptures following repression of the faith by pro-Taoism administrations later in the regime).

During the Tang Dynasty, restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings – known as *mingqi* – have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures – representing warriors, animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians and every other necessary category of assistant – were buried with the dead in order to provide for the afterlife. Warriors (*lokapala*) were put in place to defend the dead, while horses/ camels were provided for transport, and officials to run his estate in the hereafter. Of all the various types of *mingqi*, however, there are none more elegant or charming than the sculptures of sophisticated female courtiers, known – rather unfairly – as “fat ladies”. These wonderfully expressionistic sculptures represent the idealized beauty of T'ang Dynasty China, while also demonstrating sculptural mastery in exaggerating characteristics for effect, and for sheer elegance of execution.

The current sculpture is a perfect example of the genre. She stands, draped from neck to foot in a loose-fitting white dress and jacket (?), leaning her weight back slightly on one foot, while bringing the forefingers on her tiny hands together as if in awkward enquiry. The dress is rendered simply yet effectively, with creases incised around the hem and the waist, and a low-cut sash below the hips, and large, loose sleeves. Her skin tone is pale – a traditional measure of social elites, who did not expose themselves to the sun's rays – which contrasts strongly with her red lips, dark eyebrows and small, enquiring eyes and retrousse nose. She is undoubtedly well-nourished, another marker of social class, and her rounded jawline and cheeks run smoothly with the loose contours of her body. Her hair is gathered up into an ornate fan-like design with a tie, the bun carefully folded and manoeuvred into four distinct lozenges; this style, which is associated with aristocratic and court circles, is known from written, sculptural and painted sources. This piece offers a narrative of courtly life over a thousand years ago, in superbly delicate and carefully-rendered detail. This is a stunning piece of ancient art and a credit to any collection of Chinese masterpieces. - (LO.1413 (LSO))

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Tang Dynasty Sancai Glazed Pottery Camel  
with Ghost Mask Saddle



DL.999

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Dimensions:

23.82" (60.5cm) high x 13.19" (33.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terra Cotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE



## Tang Dynasty Sancai Glazed Pottery Camel with Ghost Mask Saddle

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During the Tang Dynasty the beloved status of the camel ranked second only to the revered horse. Camels symbolized commerce and its associated wealth, largely concentrated on profits through trading on the Silk Road. Trade across this extensive network of paths and trails brought prosperity, foreign merchants and exotic merchandise into China. However, this arduous journey through the jagged mountains and rugged deserts of Central Asia could only be undertaken by the two-humped Bactrian camel. The animal was able to withstand the scorching heat of the desert and to maintain its own nutrients, surviving for months without fresh supplies of water. The government kept vast herds of these invaluable creatures, presided over by civil officials, for hauling their precious silk supplies across the Silk Road. These exotic creatures were a common sight in the cosmopolitan cities of Tang China, carrying both traders and their goods directly into the markets. Likewise, Tang artists began to create charming representations of these prized creatures as mingqi in order to symbolize wealth and prosperity in the afterlife. Mingqi were works of art specifically created in an ancient Chinese custom for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for their afterlife. Some of the most beautiful works of Chinese art were excavated from such tombs, and this Sancai glazed sculpture of a camel is a perfect example of the refined artistry dedicated to such works even though they were never meant to be seen by the living. Featuring a splendid saddle in the form of a stylized mask of a snarling creature, this gorgeous sculpture reveals the Tang Dynasty's respect and admiration for this magnificent creature. - (DL.999)

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Han Dynasty Painted Pottery  
Pair of 'Sichuan' Sitting Dogs

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DL.1000  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD  
Dimensions: 32.28" (82.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## Han Dynasty Painted Pottery Pair of 'Sichuan' Sitting Dogs

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth, pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road, initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called *mingqi*, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subjects, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthy existence.

This fabulous pair of sitting dogs was excavated in Sichuan Province. Although it is possible they were meant to serve as a source of food, their elaborate collars and harnesses suggest otherwise. Most probably their function was to stand guard over the tomb of their master for eternity. Traces of light blue pigment can be found on both animals who seem to be taking their duties seriously. One can almost see their ever-alert ears twitching and hear their deep gnarl, as they attentively stand ready for their master's every command. These sculpted canines express most ardently an ancient peoples' extreme regard for, and intimate relationship with the natural world that surrounded them. Today, the spirit of these dogs endures ever so proudly, one need only to gaze at their faces to experience their age-old guardian powers. - (DL.1000)

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# Ming Dynasty Painted Female Lion



DL.1001  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions:  
12.2" (31.0cm) high x 11.8" (30.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Style: Ming  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine



## Ming Dynasty Painted Female Lion

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The Fu Lion, or Fu Dog as it is also known, is a ubiquitous symbol that has been employed repeatedly throughout the history of China. Sometimes referred to as the “Dog of Happiness” or the “Celestial Dog,” the earliest traces of the Fu Dog in China date to the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). Then it disappeared from Chinese art until it was resurrected during the cultural revival experienced during the Tang Dynasty (618-906 A.D.). While lions are not native to China, works of art with lion imagery from other civilizations were imported into China as gifts for the Emperor. The Fu Lion was brought into China with the arrival of Buddhism, where it became associated with the more familiar dog during assimilation. The lion is a sacred creature in the Buddhist pantheon and the Fu Lion was believed to be a companion of the Buddha.

While sculptures of Fu Lions originally stood guard outside Buddhist temples, by the time of the Ming Dynasty, when this work was created, the lions had lost most of their religious significance and were placed outside the entrances to homes and palaces out of custom. Even today, many monumental public buildings are decorated with lion figures standing guard at the base of the stairway. This female lion uses her front paw to trample a demon. This traditional gesture symbolizes the lion’s authority over evil spirits that might have tried to infiltrate the temple or palace. The delicate colouring, in tones of red, blue and yellow is particularly fine. The lion’s wide open mouth and protruding tongue have been expertly sculpted. The care lavished on this magnificent creation is also apparent in the swirling motifs, achieved through the use of incised lines, that decorate the plinth. - (DL.1001)

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# Han Dynasty Painted Pottery 'Sichuan' Chef

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DL.1003

Origin: Sichuan Province China

Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD

Dimensions:

24.8" (63.0cm) high x 10.63" (27.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

# Han Dynasty Painted Pottery

## 'Sichuan' Lady Dancer



DL.1004

Origin: China

Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD

Dimensions:

28.3" (71.9cm) high x 13.78" (35.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

## Han Dynasty Painted Pottery 'Sichuan' Lady Dancer

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A type of work known as mingqi, literally translated as, “items for the next world,” this sculpture was specifically commissioned by the family of the deceased to be buried alongside their departed relative, both as a symbol of their wealth and familial piety. However, only elite members of the social hierarchy could afford to be honored with such elaborate burials. During the Han era, the ancient Chinese believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existences. Thus, the tombs of nobles and high-ranking officials were filled with sculpted renditions of their earthly entourage. Musicians, chefs, attendants, and guardians were placed alongside pots, vessels, cooking utensils, and herds of livestock. All these mingqi were expected to perform their functions continually throughout the afterlife. The guards would watch over the soul of the deceased, while the chef prepared meals, utilizing the meats of the livestock, and the musicians performed songs to nourish the spirit throughout eternity.

The smile that graces the face of this wonderful dancer is typical of the happy entertainers from the Sichuan Province. She wears an elaborate robe and a fantastic headdress featuring three flowers. The elegant posture of her legs, placed either side of a stool or pot, reflects the movement and action of the dance. A reflection of the wealth and sophistication of ancient China, this sculpture intrigues us with its vast historical and cultural insights. Furthermore, this work is a gorgeous symbol of the philosophical and religious belief of the Han. The eternal warmth and joy embodied by this ancient dancer brings a smile to our own faces. - (DL.1004)

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Han Dynasty Painted Pottery  
'Sichuan' Seated Musician



DL.1005  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD  
Dimensions:  
23.23" (59cm) high x 11.42" (29cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terra Cotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## Han Dynasty Painted Pottery 'Sichuan' Seated Musician

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A type of work known as mingqi, literally translated as, “items for the next world,” this sculpture was specifically commissioned by the family of the deceased to be buried alongside their departed relative, both as a symbol of their wealth and familial piety. However, only elite members of the social hierarchy could afford to be honored with such elaborate burials. During the Han era, the ancient Chinese believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, the tombs of nobles and high-ranking officials were filled with sculpted renditions of their earthly entourage. Musicians, chefs, attendants, and guardians were placed alongside pots, vessels, cooking utensils, and herds of livestock. All these mingqi were expected to perform their functions continually throughout the afterlife.

The smile that graces the face of this wonderful musician is typical of the happy entertainers from the Sichuan Province. Dressed in a long robe and a short cap, he kneels with his hands lightly placed around the instrument. The artist, perhaps because he was portraying someone it was not appropriate to idealize or deify, captured the intimacy, vibrancy, and intensity of an actual man. Locked in this bit of clay, a smile, a laugh, and a will to entertain are still apparent to a modern audience centuries after its creation. - (DL.1005)

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Han Dynasty Painted Pottery  
'Sichuan' Lady Holding a Mirror



DL.1006  
Origin: China  
Circa: 202 BC to 220 AD  
Dimensions:  
23.62" (60.0cm) high x 12.2" (31.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Style: Han  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## Han Dynasty Painted Pottery 'Sichuan' Lady Holding a Mirror

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A type of work known as mingqi, literally translated as, “items for the next world,” this sculpture was specifically commissioned by the family of the deceased to be buried alongside their departed relative, both as a symbol of their wealth and familial piety. However, only elite members of the social hierarchy could afford to be honored with such elaborate burials. During the Han era, the ancient Chinese believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, the tombs of nobles and high-ranking officials were filled with sculpted renditions of their earthly entourage. Musicians, chefs, attendants, and guardians were placed alongside pots, vessels, cooking utensils, and herds of livestock. All these mingqi were expected to perform their functions continually throughout the afterlife.

The smile that graces the face of this delightful female attendant is typical of this genre of clay figurines produced in the Sichuan Province. The woman holds a mirror in her left hand, whilst her right hand rests upon her knee. She is seated on the ground with her legs tucked beneath her. Her hair has been arranged in an elaborate coiffure and is further adorned with three large medallions or stylized flowers. The artist, perhaps because he was portraying someone it was not appropriate to idealize or deify, captured the intimacy, vibrancy, and intensity of an actual woman. Locked in this bit of clay, a smile, a laugh, and a will to entertain are still apparent to a modern audience centuries after its creation. - (DL.1006)

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# Han Dynasty Painted Pottery

## 'Sichuan' Flute Player



DL.1007

Origin: China

Circa: 202 BC to 220 AD

Dimensions:

22.44" (57.0cm) high x 10.63" (27.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

## Han Dynasty Painted Pottery 'Sichuan' Flute Player

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A type of work known as mingqi, literally translated as, “items for the next world,” this sculpture was specifically commissioned by the family of the deceased to be buried alongside their departed relative, both as a symbol of their wealth and familial piety. However, only elite members of the social hierarchy could afford to be honored with such elaborate burials. During the Han era, the ancient Chinese believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existences. Thus, the tombs of nobles and high-ranking officials were filled with sculpted renditions of their earthly entourage. Musicians, chefs, attendants, and guardians were placed alongside pots, vessels, cooking utensils, and herds of livestock. All these mingqi were expected to perform their functions continually throughout the afterlife.

The smile that graces the face of this wonderful flute player is typical of the happy entertainers from the Sichuan Province. Dressed in a long robe and a short cap, he kneels with his hands lightly placed around the instrument. The artist, perhaps because he was portraying someone it was not appropriate to idealize or deify, captured the intimacy, vibrancy, and intensity of an actual man. Locked in this bit of clay, a smile, a laugh, and a will to entertain are still apparent to a modern audience centuries after its creation. - (DL.1007)

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# Han Dynasty Painted Pottery Bull Cart



DL.2064

Origin: China

Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD

Dimensions:

9" (22.9cm) high x 17" (43.2cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Style: Han

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

# Han Dynasty Painted Pottery Bull Cart

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During the Han Dynasty sculptural effigies of domesticated animals were often interred in the tombs of nobility and elite members of the social hierarchy. Created in all media, these sculptures accompanied the spirit of the deceased into the afterlife. Similar examples of oxen exist, discovered buried as part of a herd, contained inside a sculpted miniature pen with other domesticated animals, suggesting that they served as nourishment. However, this bull, pulling a cart behind him, clearly functioned as a beast of burden that was to perform onerous chores throughout eternity. Besides its function, this sculpture is also remarkable for its exquisite state of preservation. Remnants of the original paint that once decorated the work are visible on the sides of the cart and the animal's face. Such delicate pigments rarely survive the ravages of time and the stresses of excavation. The cart is a masterpiece unto itself, composed of three separate pieces: the cart structure and two wheels with spokes. During the Han Dynasty, the Chinese believed that the afterlife was a continuation of our earthly existence. Thus, this bull and cart was entombed in place of the real thing in order to provide for the transport needs of the deceased as he journeys through the afterlife. This work is more than a mere sculpture; it is a gorgeous memorial to the religious and philosophical beliefs of the Han Dynasty. - (DL.2064)

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# Tang Dynasty Painted Pottery Fat Lady



DL.2066  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions: 15.5" (39.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Location: UAE

# Tang Dynasty Painted Pottery Fat Lady

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During the Tang Dynasty restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings, known as mingqi, have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians - were buried with the dead in order to provide for the afterlife. Of the various types of mingqi, there is perhaps none more charming than the beautiful sculptures of elegant female courtiers, sometimes known as "Fat Ladies" for their fleshy faces. These gorgeous women reflect the appreciation of the female form during the Tang Dynasty.

This sophisticated woman provided eternal companionship for her lord throughout the afterlife. We can imagine her gracefully dancing or singing a poetical song, two popular customs for ladies during the Tang Dynasty. Such courtiers are described in the numerous love poems written during this era, considered a golden age of Chinese culture. This stunning lady wears her hair in an elegant coiffure arranged in a lopsided bun that crowns her head. Her sumptuous long sleeved dress equals the beauty of her sophisticated hairstyle. Traces of a floral motif that decorated her costume remain intact, as does the pigment on her red lips. Such women may represent wives, princesses, or attendants. Their beauty inspires us as we are transported back to another time. This gorgeous sculpture has been to the next world and returned to our modern era to tell us her tale. She speaks of the enormous wealth and sophisticated culture of the Tang Dynasty, one of the greatest periods of artistic creation in human history. - (DL.2066)

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# Tang Dynasty Painted Pottery Seated Camel with Detachable Rider



DL.2067  
Origin: Shaanxi Province - 'Xi'an'  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions:  
19.5" (49.5cm) high x 23.6" (59.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

# Tang Dynasty Painted Pottery Seated Camel with Detachable Rider

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“The camel is an unusual domestic animal; it carries a saddle of flesh on its back; swiftly it dashes over the shifting sands; it manifests its merit in dangerous places; it has a secret understanding of springs and sources, subtle indeed is its knowledge.”

This quote by Guo Pu dates to the 3rd Century A.D. and reveals the extent to which the Chinese adulated camels. These creatures symbolized the wealth and luxury that resulted from trading on the Silk Road. Commerce across this extensive network of paths and trails brought prosperity, foreign merchants, and exotic merchandise into China. However, the dusty trails of the Silk Road were an arduous journey through the rugged mountains and harsh deserts of Central Asia that could only be traversed by the two humped Bactrian camel. This remarkable beast was able to withstand the scorching heat of the desert and maintain its own nutrients, surviving for months without fresh supplies of water. The government kept vast herds of these invaluable creatures, presided over by civil officials, for hauling their precious commodities across the Silk Road. These exotic creatures were a common sight in the cosmopolitan cities of Tang China, carrying both traders and their goods directly into the markets. Likewise, Tang artists began to create charming representations of these prized creatures as *mingqi* in order to symbolize continued wealth and prosperity throughout the afterlife.

This seated camel with a detachable rider is a particularly fine example of this genre. The animal raises its head in protest as the rider commands it to continue on its arduous journey. The rider would have once held a whip or similar item, probably fashioned from a more perishable material which explains its disappearance. The original polychromy remains largely intact and is especially apparent on the rider's flushed cheeks. Great care has been lavished on the details of his costume, particularly the peaked cap, and the hairs of his full beard are precisely defined with incised lines. This sculpture reveals the Tang Dynasty's respect and admiration for this beast of burden, so essential to the prosperity of ancient China. - (DL.2067)

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A Pair of Han Dynasty Painted Pottery Seated  
Horses with Detachable Riders



DL.2068  
Origin: Shandong Province  
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD  
Dimensions:  
9" (22.9cm) high x 10.6" (26.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## A Pair of Han Dynasty Painted Pottery Seated Horses with Detachable Riders

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The impact of the horse on the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient unification and expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to this majestic creature. Their rapid mobility enabled quick correspondence between far away provinces, allowing the establishment of a centralized power. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The influence of the horse on the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. Believed to be relatives of mythological dragons, a theory reflecting their sacred status, horses were glorified and revered in sculpture, painting, and literature. During the unification of China under the Han Dynasty, bands of mounted nomadic warriors from the north threatened the country. In order to thwart their attacks, the Chinese imported stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the native Mongol ponies) eventually leading to the creation of the Silk Road. During the Han Dynasty, the horse was rendered in miniature sculptural form specifically in order to be interred with the dead. It was believed that the sculpted version could assume the powers of its living counterpart in the afterlife and assist the deceased in the dangerous journey to the next world. This custom catered to the needs of a particular belief system regarding life after death and the spiritual world.

This pair of polychromed horses are remarkable for the survival of their detachable riders. The horses themselves are adorned with white reins and an elegant purple ribbon-like motif. The figures retain much of their original colouring and their facial features are clearly distinguishable. Although the hands have been lost, the riders are in excellent overall condition. The care lavished on this charming pair reminds us of the respect that these animals commanded during the Han Dynasty. - (DL.2068)

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# Early Tang Painted Pottery Seated Camel with Detachable Saddle



DL.2069

Origin: Shaanxi Province - 'Xi'an'

Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Dimensions:

6.1" (15.5cm) high x 11" (27.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

## Early Tang Painted Pottery Seated Camel with Detachable Saddle

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“The camel is an unusual domestic animal; it carries a saddle of flesh on its back; swiftly it dashes over the shifting sands; it manifests its merit in dangerous places; it has a secret understanding of springs and sources, subtle indeed is its knowledge.”

This quote by Guo Pu dates to the 3rd Century A.D. and reveals the extent to which the Chinese adulated camels. For the Chinese, these creatures symbolized the wealth and luxury that resulted from trading on the Silk Road. Commerce across this extensive network of paths and trails brought prosperity, foreign merchants, and exotic merchandise into China. However, the dusty trails of the Silk Road were an arduous journey through the rugged mountains and harsh deserts of Central Asia that could only be traversed by the two humped Bactrian camel. This remarkable beast was able to withstand the scorching heat of the desert and maintain its own nutrients, surviving for months without fresh supplies of water. The government kept vast herds of these invaluable creatures, presided over by civil officials, for hauling their precious commodities across the Silk Road. These exotic creatures were a common sight in the cosmopolitan cities of Tang China, carrying both traders and their goods directly into the markets. Likewise, Tang artists began to create charming representations of these prized creatures as *mingqi* in order to symbolize continued wealth and prosperity throughout the afterlife.

During the Tang Dynasty restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians, etc. - were buried with the dead in order to provide for the afterlife. This sculpture of a camel is a gorgeous example of the refined artistry of works that they were never meant to be seen by the living. This recumbent camel has paused for a moment before returning to its arduous journey. The fully detachable saddle is packed high with goods including rolled carpets possibly from Central Asia. A fur blanket with engraved tufts of hair tops the bundle. The camel's head is held high in the air, as if getting ready to stand. This sculpture reveals the Tang Dynasty's respect and admiration for this beast of burden, so essential to the prosperity of Ancient China. This fine unglazed example would date back to the early Tang period, i.e. 7th century AD, when unglazed pottery figurines were still preferred to the later *sancai* glazed earthenware. - (DL.2069)

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# A Ming Dynasty Painted Stucco Couple



DL.2070  
Origin: Shaanxi Province - 'Xi'an'  
Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD  
Dimensions:  
28.5" (72.4cm) high x 28" (71.1cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art  
Style: Ming  
Medium: Stucco  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## A Ming Dynasty Painted Stucco Couple

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Upon leading a victorious rebellion against the foreign Mongul rulers of the Yuan Dynasty, a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang seized control of China and founded the Ming Dynasty in 1368. As emperor, he founded his capital at Nanjing and adopted the name Hongwu as his reign title. Hongwu, literally meaning “vast military,” reflects the increased prestige of the army during the Ming Dynasty. Culturally, the greatest innovation of the Ming Dynasty was the introduction of the novel. Developed from the folk tales of traditional storytellers, these works were transcribed in the everyday vernacular language of the people. Advances in printmaking and the increasing population of urban dwellers largely contributed to the success of these books. Architecturally, the most famous monument of the Ming Dynasty is surely the complex of temples and palaces known as the Forbidden City that was constructed in Beijing after the third ruler of the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle, moved the capital there. Today, the Forbidden Palace remains one of the hallmarks of traditional Chinese architecture and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the vast nation.

This delightful couple are an important testament to the artistic achievements of the Ming Dynasty. Standing on two sculpted bases, both figures perform the same gestures, with one hand raised and the other hidden within the sleeve of their long gowns. A small round object survives between the thumb and forefinger of the female and it is likely that the man once held a similar item. Considerable traces of the original polychromy remain and remind us that these figures would once have been alive with colour. The outer robes were dark blue, worn over a red undergarment. The hairstyles are traditional and the attention to detail is nowhere more apparent than in the expertly fashioned hairpin worn by the female. The deep furrows on the man’s forehead suggest wisdom and old age, while the female has a more youthful appearance. - (DL.2070)

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Sui Dynasty Painted Pottery Horse  
with Long Saddle



DL.2071  
Origin: Shaanxi Province - 'Xi'an'  
Circa: 581 AD to 618 AD  
Dimensions:  
9.8" (24.9cm) high x 10.6" (26.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## Sui Dynasty Painted Pottery Horse with Long Saddle

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Despite its brief duration, lasting for the rule of only two emperors, the Sui Dynasty paved the way for the golden age attained during the Tang Dynasty. Perhaps their most significant project was the construction of the Great Canal, an enterprise that facilitated the movement of people and goods across great distances, leading to the reunification of China. However, the cost of the Canal bankrupted the empire and ultimately led to its dissolution. The rulers of the Tang would capitalize on the infrastructure improvements of the Sui and establish one of the greatest empires in the history of China, following the footsteps of the Sui.

The important influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. Considerable efforts were expended in importing faster, stronger breeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol Pony), crucial to the survival of the empire. In sculpture, painting and literature, horses were frequently glorified as distant relatives of sacred, mythological dragons. The adoration of the horse is most evident in the burial art which adorned the tombs of wealthy members of the social elite. This charming example of a white painted pottery horse with red highlights probably represents the prized possession of a noble aristocrat. It is exceptional for the care lavished on the unusually long saddle and the ornaments which hang from its trappings. The large eyes and downcast head suggest that this is a gentle animal which served its owner loyally. Surely this horse, crafted with loving care and attention to detail, was admired as much in life as it is today in its sculptural form. - (DL.2071)

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# A Pair of Ming Dynasty Glazed Dragon Temple Tiles



DL.2078A

Origin: Temple in 'Shanxi Province'

Circa: 1368 AD to 1644 AD

Dimensions:

47.6" (120.9cm) high x 32.2" (81.8cm) wide x 9.8" (24.9cm) depth

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Ceramic

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE



## A Pair of Ming Dynasty Glazed Dragon Temple Tiles

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Glazed sculptural tiles are today considered one of the hallmarks of classical Chinese architecture. However, despite their popularity in modern times, they were relatively scarce until after the end of the Tang Dynasty. Even then, during the Song and Yuan Dynasties, they were still infrequently used. It was not until the rise of the Ming Dynasty that glazed sculptural tiles became a popular decorative device extensively employed in temples, altars, imperial palaces, and gardens. Beijing became the center of glazed architectural tile production during the Ming period, and colorfully decorated pagodas began to sprout up around this region. Eaves and entryways were decorated with vibrant sculptures that served both decorative and sometimes religious purposes. On temples and palaces, representations of mounted warriors and snarling dragons were meant to ward off evildoers, of both the physical and spiritual kind.

This fantastic pair would have been one of the centerpieces in the decorative scheme of a Ming Dynasty temple. Brilliantly colored in emerald green, turquoise and ochre hues, the tiles each depict two snarling dragons against a background of swirling foliage. The shape of the tiles suggests that they would have been situated on the curved edge of a temple roof. With their open mouths, sharp fangs and beady eyes these dragons would surely have been most effective at guarding the sacred space from evil spirits. This pair is but one part of a larger scheme that would once have decorated the temple structure. When we imagine the entire edifice covered with such tiles, from the walls to the roof, the glory of Ming Dynasty China becomes apparent. - (DL.2078A)

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# Tang Dynasty Painted Pottery Walking Camel



DL.2072

Origin: Shaanxi Province - 'Xi'an'

Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Dimensions:

17.38" (44.1cm) high x 13.38" (34.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Very Fine

Location: UAE

# Tang Dynasty Painted Pottery Walking Camel

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'The camel is an unusual domestic animal; it carries a saddle of flesh on its back; swiftly it dashes over the shifting sands; it manifests its merit in dangerous places; it has a secret understanding of springs and sources, subtle indeed is its knowledge.' --Guo Pu, 3rd Century AD

For the Chinese, camels symbolized commerce and its associated wealth, largely concentrated on profits through trading on the Silk Road. Trade across this extensive network of paths and trails brought prosperity, foreign merchants, and exotic merchandise into China. However, the dusty trails of the Silk Road were an arduous journey through the rugged mountains and harsh desert of Central Asia that could only be traversed by the two humped Bactrian camel. This remarkable beast was able to withstand the scorching heat of the desert and maintain its own nutrients, surviving for months without fresh supplies of water. The government kept vast herds of these invaluable creatures, presided over by civil officials, for hauling their precious commodities across the Silk Road. These exotic creatures were a common sight in the cosmopolitan cities of Tang China, carrying both traders and their goods directly into the markets. Likewise, Tang artists began to create charming representations of these prized creatures as mingqi in order to symbolize wealth and prosperity in the afterlife.

Mingqi were works of art specifically created in an ancient Chinese custom for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for their afterlife. Some of the most beautiful works of Chinese art were excavated from such tombs, and this sculpture of a camel is a perfect example of the refined artistry dedicated to such works despite the fact that they were never meant to be seen by the living. Traces of original polychromy survive on this friendly looking animal, fashioned with large eyes and a raised head. This sculpture reveals the Tang Dynasty's respect and admiration for this beast of burden, so essential to the prosperity of ancient China. - (DL.2072)

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Early Tang Painted Pottery Walking Camel  
with Detachable Rider



DL.2073  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions:  
22" (55.9cm) high x 18.5" (47.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## Early Tang Painted Pottery Walking Camel with Detachable Rider

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Mingqi were works of art specifically created in an ancient Chinese custom for interment in the tombs of elite individuals in order to provide for their afterlife. Some of the most beautiful works of Chinese art were excavated from such tombs, and this sculpture of a camel and detachable rider is a perfect example of the refined artistry dedicated to such works despite the fact that they were never meant to be seen by the living. The distinct physiognomy of the rider reveals that he is of foreign descent, most likely a Turkic merchant from Central Asia. We can imagine him guiding a caravan into the cities of Tang China, carrying his precious goods directly into the market. Traces of polychromy survive on both the camel and the rider. The animal's head is raised, teeth visible in its open mouth, perhaps in protest at its long journey. The hairs on its neck are expertly modelled as are the details of the rider's clothing. He wears boots and a peaked cap and sports a full beard. He probably held a whip of some kind in his left hand which has since been lost. This sculpture reveals the Tang Dynasty's respect and admiration for this beast of burden, so essential to the prosperity of ancient China. - (DL.2073)

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# Tang Dynasty Painted White Pottery Prancing Horses



DL.2074  
Origin: Shaanxi Province - 'Xi'an'  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions:  
21" (53.3cm) high x 21.6" (54.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE



Early Tang Painted Pottery Horse  
with Detachable Saddle



DL.998  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions:  
22.64" (57.5cm) high x 22.83" (58.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE



# T'ang Dynasty Painted Terracotta Fat Lady



DL.2075  
Origin: Shaanxi Province - 'Xi'an'  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions: 12" (30.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Painted Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

# T'ang Dynasty Painted Terracotta Fat Lady

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During the Tang Dynasty, restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings, known as mingqi, have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians - were buried with the dead in order to provide for the afterlife. Of the various types of mingqi, there is perhaps none more charming than the beautiful sculptures of elegant female courtiers, sometimes known as "Fat Ladies" for their fleshy faces. These gorgeous women reflect the appreciation of the female form during the Tang Dynasty.

This sophisticated woman provided eternal companionship for her lord throughout the afterlife. We can imagine her gracefully dancing or singing a poetical song, two popular customs for ladies during the Tang Dynasty. Such courtiers are described in the numerous love poems written during this era, considered a golden age of Chinese culture. She has her hair styled in a sophisticated coiffure that crown her heads while she wears an elegant long-sleeved robe typical of the time period. A remarkable amount of the original pigment that once decorated the work remains intact, most noticeable on the floral motifs that decorate the dress as well as her rosy cheeks and lips. Such women may represent wives, princesses, or attendants. Her beauty inspires us as we are transported back to another time. This gorgeous sculpture has been to the next world and returned to our modern era to tell us her tale. They speak of the enormous wealth and sophisticated culture of the Tang Dynasty, one of the greatest periods of artistic creation in human history. - (DL.2075)

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Eastern Wei Painted Pottery  
Warrior Carrying a Shield

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DL.2076  
Origin: Hebei Province  
Circa: 534 AD to 550 AD  
Dimensions: 30.31" (77.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## Eastern Wei Painted Pottery Warrior Carrying a Shield

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This spectacular terracotta figure of a standing warrior belongs to a class of objects known as ‘mingqi,’ literally ‘spirit goods.’ These were items buried with the dead to ensure that all their social and material needs would be met in the afterlife. Originally mingqi were fashioned from expensive materials such as bronze or jade but from the third century BC burial sculptures of fired ceramic became more common. This was a trend that lasted until the demise of the Tang Dynasty when burial customs changed and offerings were burnt in the belief that the smoke would carry the essence of the goods to the next world. The production of ceramic grave goods created new opportunities for sculptors to produce increasingly naturalistic and detailed works of art.

This heavily armoured warrior was produced to guard the deceased for eternity. Standing on a plinth, he wears pointed boots and a helmet with protective neck and ear flaps. A shield, embellished with an animal mask and dancing creatures, is supported in his left hand. His right is positioned to hold a lance or spear that would have been fashioned from a perishable material such as wood. The facial features are striking, especially the thick eyebrows and upturned moustache. Modeled in the round, the detail of the armour is equally impressive on both sides.

Considerable traces of the original red pigment survive. Decorated with a technique known as ‘cold painting’, the warrior would have been embellished with mineral pigments after firing. These were applied over a white ground which is now partly visible. In contrast to glazing, this technique produced a more delicate and naturalistic effect and the range of colours available was more varied. The head of the warrior was made separately and is removable. Although never intended to be viewed by the living, this piece is a supreme example of the potter’s skill during the Eastern Wei period. (AM)

For a comparable example see, V. L. Bower, ‘From Court to Caravan: Chinese Tomb Sculptures from the Collection of Anthony M. Solomon,’ (New Haven and London, 2002), p. 93, no. 20. - (DL.2076)

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# Tang Fat Lady

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DL.2077  
Origin: Shaanxi Province - 'Xi'an'  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions: 15.89" (40.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

# Tang Fat Lady

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During the Tang Dynasty, restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings, known as mingqi, have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians - were buried with the dead in order to provide for the afterlife. Of the various types of mingqi, there is perhaps none more charming than the beautiful sculptures of elegant female courtiers, sometimes known as "Fat Ladies" for their fleshy faces. These gorgeous women reflect the appreciation of the female form during the Tang Dynasty.

This sophisticated woman provided eternal companionship for her lord throughout the afterlife. We can imagine her gracefully dancing or singing a poetical song, two popular customs for ladies during the Tang Dynasty. Such courtiers are described in the numerous love poems written during this era, considered a golden age of Chinese culture. This stunning lady wears her hair in an elegant coiffure arranged into a large fan-shaped bun that crowns her head. Her sumptuous long sleeved dress matches the beauty of her sophisticated hairstyle. Remnants of the original pigment that once decorated this work remain intact, most noticeably on her rosy cheeks and red lips. Such women may represent wives, princesses, or attendants. Their beauty inspires us as we are transported back to another time. This gorgeous sculpture has been to the next world and returned to our modern era to tell us her tale. She speaks of the enormous wealth and sophisticated culture of the Tang Dynasty, one of the greatest periods of artistic creation in human history. - (DL.2077)

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# Northern Qi Painted Pottery Bull with Medallions

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DL.2079

Origin: Hebei Province

Circa: 550 AD to 577 AD

Dimensions:

12.89" (32.7cm) high x 13.58" (34.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

## Northern Qi Painted Pottery Bull with Medallions

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As implied by its short duration, the Northern Qi Dynasty was a turbulent time in the vast history of China. Locusts plagued the lands, ruining the crops. Hunger and ethnic feuding ravaged the population. Despite this unrest the arts continued to flourish, as witnessed by this extraordinary powerful representation of a bull. The animal's stance is assertive, with its four legs positioned firmly on the corners of the integral rectangular plinth. The head is raised, with the mouth slightly ajar, as if warning off a potential aggressor. The figurine is in excellent condition with considerable traces of the original red polychromy. The expertly modeled horns create a striking silhouette, contrasting with the sheer bulk of the bull's body. There is considerable attention to detail in the modelling. Particularly striking is the elaborate harness with medallions, used to shackle this powerful animal.

During this period sculptural effigies of domesticated animals were often interred in the tombs of the nobility and elite members of the social hierarchy. Created in all media, these sculptures accompanied the spirit of the deceased into the afterlife. This bull effigy has served its eternal purpose well. Today, it continues to nourish our souls with its beauty and grace. - (DL.2079)

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# Northern Qi Painted Pottery Bull

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DL.2080

Origin: Hebei Province

Circa: 550 AD to 577 AD

Dimensions:

13.7" (34.8cm) high x 14.9" (37.8cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Style: Qi

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

# Northern Qi Painted Pottery Bull

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As implied by its short duration, the Northern Qi Dynasty was a turbulent time in the vast history of China. Locusts plagued the lands, ruining the crops. Hunger and ethnic feuding ravaged the population. Despite this unrest the arts continued to flourish, as witnessed by this extraordinary powerful representation of a bull. The animal's stance is assertive, with its four legs positioned firmly on the corners of the integral rectangular plinth. The head is raised, with the mouth slightly ajar, as if warning off a potential aggressor. The figurine is in excellent condition with traces of the original red polychromy in the mouth, nostrils and ears. The expertly modeled horns create a striking silhouette, contrasting with the sheer bulk of the bull's body. There is considerable attention to detail in the modelling, especially the incised lines which add to the texture of the tail.

During this period sculptural effigies of domesticated animals were often interred in the tombs of the nobility and elite members of the social hierarchy. Created in all media, these sculptures accompanied the spirit of the deceased into the afterlife. Thus, logically, as we require food to nourish our bodies on earth, so too will we require food to nourish our souls in the afterlife. This work is more than a mere sculpture; it is a gorgeous memorial to the religious and philosophical beliefs of its time. This bull effigy has served its eternal purpose well. Today, it continues to nourish our souls with its beauty and grace. - (DL.2080)

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# A Pair of Han Dynasty White Painted Pottery Seated Horses

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DL.2081  
Origin: China  
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD  
Dimensions:  
9.94" (25.2cm) high x 13" (33.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## A Pair of Han Dynasty White Painted Pottery Seated Horses

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This fabulous pair of pottery seated horses retain much of their original polychromy. The harnesses are carefully outlined in black and orange hues against their white bodies. The saddles are boldly depicted, but the most charming detail is the elaborate purple scrollwork that ripples over the figurines. The mouths of these magnificent creatures are slightly ajar and it is clear from their finery that they represent the prized possessions of a member of the elite of Han society.

Valued for their speed, strength and beauty, horses were one of the most admired animals in China. The horse has enabled man to swiftly transport massive armies into distant and neighboring territories in order to secure vast wealth and land. According to Chinese tradition, there existed a horse so powerful and beautiful that it was believed to be bequeathed from heaven. In early China, owning a horse required wealth and status, eventually becoming a sign of one's social standing. Equestrian activities only encouraged the indulgence of the wealthy few who owned horses. Naturally in Chinese art, the horse became a favorite subject of artists who tried to create visual representations of the animal that captured both its vitality and presence. During the Han Dynasty, the horse was rendered in miniature sculptural form to be interred with the dead. It was believed that the animal could assume its earthly powers and assist the deceased in the dangerous journey to the other world. This custom answered to the needs of a particular belief system regarding life after death and the spiritual world. - (DL.2081)

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# A Han Dynasty Painted Pottery 'Fang-Hu'



DL.2082

Origin: China

Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD

Dimensions:

16.7" (42.4cm) high x 7.4" (18.8cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

# A Han Dynasty Painted Pottery 'Fang-Hu'

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was firmly established. The vast lands of China came under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth, pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road, initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called *mingqi*, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subjects, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence.

The term “Fang” is a prefix used to describe a squared-off or faceted variation of a normally rounded form, in this case the Hu wine storage vessel. The extensive polychrome painting that decorates the sides and the lid of this vessel, depicting scrolls and geometric motifs, is quite rare. Seldom do more than traces of pigments survive intact and in this example they retain much of their original brilliance. The patterns may have been inspired by contemporary embroidery and textile patterns, in tune with the fashion of the time. The beautiful Tao Tieh masks, depicting stylized dragons holding handles in their mouths, are noteworthy for their fine relief details and painted highlights. This wine vessel was found interred alongside an elite member of the Han social hierarchy. During the Han Dynasty, it was believed that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, logically, if we require food and drink to nourish our bodies on earth, we require the same to nourish our souls in the next world. The wine once contained within this Fang Hu has vanished, perhaps consumed during the celestial feasts of the afterlife. While this vessel represents the sophisticated artistic and culinary traditions of the Han, it also symbolizes their religious and philosophical beliefs. - (DL. 2082)

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A Pair of Han Dynasty White Painted  
Seated Horses and a 'Fang-Hu'

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DL.2083  
Origin: Shandong Province  
Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## A Pair of Han Dynasty White Painted Seated Horses and a 'Fang-Hu'

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The Han era witnessed one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth, pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road, initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called mingqi, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subjects, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence.

This stunning set of two seated horses and a ‘Fang-Hu’ encapsulate many of the best qualities of Han Dynasty ceramics. The term “Fang” is a prefix used to describe a squared-off or faceted variation of a normally rounded form, in this case the Hu wine storage vessel. The extensive polychrome painting that decorates the sides and the lid of this vessel, depicting scrolls and geometric motifs, is quite rare. Seldom do more than traces of pigments survive in tact and in this example they retain much of their original brilliance. The patterns may have been inspired by contemporary embroidery and textile patterns, in tune with the fashion of the time. The beautiful Tao Tieh masks, depicting stylized dragons holding handles in their mouths, are noteworthy for their fine relief details and painted highlights. The fabulous pair of pottery seated horses also retain much of their original polychromy. The harnesses are carefully outlined in black and orange hues against their white bodies. The saddles are boldly depicted, but the most charming detail is the elaborate purple scrollwork that ripples over the figurines. The mouths of these magnificent creatures are slightly ajar and it is clear from their finery that they represent the prized possessions of a member of the elite of Han society. - (DL.2083)

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# Tang Dynasty White Painted Pottery

## Prancing Horse

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DL.2085

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Dimensions:

12.5" (31.8cm) high x 13.3" (33.8cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

# Tang Dynasty White Painted Pottery Prancing Horse

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The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient unification of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. Their rapid mobility allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the native Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered, believed to be relatives of dragons, a theory reflecting their sacred status within society. During the Tang Dynasty, the adoration of the horse can be seen through their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art.

This gorgeous example still retains much of its original white paint. It may once have had a detachable saddle which is now lost to us. The horse raises one leg in the air as he turns his head to the side. Both these features are sought after by collectors. This elegant sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for these marvelous creatures. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (DL. 2085)

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# A Tang Dynasty Red Painted Pottery Prancing Horse

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DL.2086

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Dimensions:

12.89" (32.7cm) high x 13.77" (35.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

## A Tang Dynasty Red Painted Pottery Prancing Horse

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The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient unification of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. Their rapid mobility allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the native Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered, believed to be relatives of dragons, a theory reflecting their sacred status within society. During the Tang Dynasty, the adoration of the horse can be seen through their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art.

This gorgeous example still retains much of its original red polychromy and the white saddle is delicately incised. The horse raises one leg in the air as he turns his head to the side. Both these features are sought after by collectors. This elegant sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for these marvelous creatures. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (DL.2086)

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# Early Tang Painted Pottery Horse with Detachable Saddle

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DL.2087  
Origin: Shanxi Province  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions:  
15.3" (38.9cm) high x 13.7" (34.8cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Very Fine  
Location: UAE

## Early Tang Painted Pottery Horse with Detachable Saddle

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The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient unification of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. Their rapid mobility allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the native Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered, believed to be relatives of dragons, a theory reflecting their sacred status within society. During the Tang Dynasty, the adoration of the horse can be seen through their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art.

This charming sculpture of a horse still retains much of its original white pigment intact. The orange painted saddle has been carefully incised to create a more realistic texture. Equally impressive is the fact that the saddle has been separately crafted; it may once have supported a rider who is now lost to us. The animal's large eyes and friendly countenance have been expertly captured by the sculptor. This gorgeous horse is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for these marvelous creatures. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defence of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture - (DL.2087)

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# Early Tang Painted Pottery Horse with Detachable Saddle

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DL.2088  
Origin: Shanxi Province  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions:  
12" (30.5cm) high x 12" (30.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Style: Tang  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Very Fine  
Location: UAE

## Early Tang Painted Pottery Horse with Detachable Saddle

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The great influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient unification of the Chinese Empire was due in large part to the horse. Their rapid mobility allowed for quick communication between far away provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses aided in the conquest and submission of distant lands. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the native Mongol pony) led to the creation of the Silk Road. The importance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting, and literature, horses were glorified and revered, believed to be relatives of dragons, a theory reflecting their sacred status within society. During the Tang Dynasty, the adoration of the horse can be seen through their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most splendid and easily recognizable works of Chinese art.

This work is remarkable for the amount of the original pigment that has survived the ravages of time, specifically apparent on the orange saddle and black reins. Equally impressive is the fact that the saddle has been separately crafted; it may once have supported a rider who is now lost to us. This gorgeous sculpture is a testament to the admiration and adoration the Chinese had for these marvelous creatures. Although they were an integral part in the expansion and defense of the empire, they were equally regarded for their beauty and grace as revealed by this sculpture. - (DL.2088)

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# Large Han Dynasty Painted Pottery Bull

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DL.2090

Origin: Shaanxi Province, Xi'an

Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD

Dimensions:

15.7" (39.9cm) high x 27.5" (69.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

# Large Han Dynasty Painted Pottery Bull

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deity remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth, pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road, initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called *mingqi*, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subject, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. Thus, quite logically, the things we require to sustain and nurture our bodies in this life would be just as necessary in our next life.

During the Han Dynasty, sculptural effigies of animals were often interred in the tombs of elite members of the social hierarchy. These sculptures were intended to accompany the spirit of the deceased. This sculpture of a bull is remarkable for its massive size. The Han culture believed that the afterlife was a continuation of our earthly existence. Thus, logically, as humans require food to nourish our bodies on earth, so too will we require food to nourish our souls in the afterlife. Originally, this sculpture featured removable horns and a tail that, unfortunately, have been lost to us over time. However, even in this incomplete state, the evocative nature of this sculpture is uncanny. The charming facial structure of this bull is so naturalistic that one feels the presence of the animal possessing this sculpture. Created to serve as food for the afterlife, this work is more than a mere sculpture; it is a gorgeous memorial to the religious and philosophical beliefs of the Han Dynasty. - (DL.2090)

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# A Pair of Tang Dynasty Painted Pottery Fat Ladies on Horses

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DL.2093  
Origin: Shaanxi Province, Xi'an  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## A Pair of Tang Dynasty Painted Pottery Fat Ladies on Horses

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During the Tang Dynasty, restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings, known as mingqi, have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians - were buried with the dead in order to provide for the afterlife. Of the various types of mingqi, there is perhaps none more charming than the beautiful sculptures of elegant female courtiers, sometimes known as "Fat Ladies" for their fleshy faces. These gorgeous women reflect the appreciation of the female form during the Tang Dynasty. Such courtiers are described in the numerous love poems written during this era, considered a golden age of Chinese culture.

In these examples, the ladies-in-waiting are depicted on horseback. Considerable traces of the original polychromy survive, in particular a dark pigment has been used to indicate the saddle and the reins. The high status of the riders is indicated by the delicate floral motifs which adorn their long-sleeved dresses. Their hair is fashionably arranged in two different styles. Such women may represent wives, princesses, or attendants. Their beauty inspires us as we are transported back to another time. These gorgeous sculptures have been to the next world and returned to our modern era to tell us their tale. They speak of the enormous wealth and sophisticated culture of the Tang Dynasty, one of the greatest periods of artistic creation in human history. - (DL.2093)

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3 Piece Set of Early Tang Painted Pottery  
Horses with Detachable Lady Riders

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DL.2095  
Origin: Shaanxi Province, Xi'an  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## 3 Piece Set of Early Tang Painted Pottery Horses with Detachable Lady Riders

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The important influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be over-estimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in a large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horses allowed for enhanced communication between distant provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses facilitated the conquest and submission of other lands as well as securing the borders against barbarian invaders. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol pony) contributed to the creation of trading routes along what became known as the Silk Road. The significance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting and literature, horses are frequently glorified and revered as distant relatives of sacred, mythological dragons.

During the Tang dynasty the adoration of the horse is evident in their burial art. Horse models excavated from mausoleums of the period are among the most celebrated and splendid works of Chinese art. Naturally, owing to their rarity, horses became a status symbol for the aristocratic elite. Polo and other equestrian pastimes became popular. These sculptures depicting three ladies-in-waiting on horseback are remarkable for several reasons. Firstly, in each case, the lady and saddle detach from the body of the horse in one piece. Small traces of the original polychromy remain, most visibly on the ladies' red lips. They each wear a long sleeved dress, a type of which was used in a popular dance where the excess of fabric was swirled around in the air. Unusually, each horse is depicted with its head raised, ears upright, and nostrils flaring. They intimidate us with their open mouths and visible teeth. Remarkably, the women seem unaffected by whatever has startled their steeds and they retain their dignified pose. - (DL.2095)

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Early Tang Painted Pottery  
Horse with Detachable Rider

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DL.2096  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions:  
15" (38.1cm) high x 12.5" (31.8cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Very Fine  
Location: UAE

## Early Tang Painted Pottery Horse with Detachable Rider

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The important influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in a large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horses allowed for enhanced communication between distant provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses facilitated the conquest and submission of other lands as well as securing the borders against barbarian invaders. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol pony) contributed to the creation of trading routes along what became known as the Silk Road. The significance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting and literature, horses are frequently glorified and revered as distant relatives of sacred, mythological dragons.

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The majority of Tang horses were produced to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive considering that it was created specifically for internment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (DL.2096)

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Early Tang Painted Pottery Horse  
with Detachable Lady Rider



DL.2097  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions:  
13.7" (34.8cm) high x 12.5" (31.8cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Very Fine  
Location: UAE

## Early Tang Painted Pottery Horse with Detachable Lady Rider

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The important influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in a large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horses allowed for enhanced communication between distant provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses facilitated the conquest and submission of other lands as well as securing the borders against barbarian invaders. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol pony) contributed to the creation of trading routes along what became known as the Silk Road. The significance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilization. In sculpture, painting and literature, horses are frequently glorified and revered as distant relatives of sacred, mythological dragons.

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The majority of Tang horses were produced to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive considering that it was created specifically for internment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (DL.2097)

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Early Tang Painted Pottery  
Horse with Detachable Rider

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DL.2098  
Origin: China  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions:  
14.3" (36.3cm) high x 12.5" (31.8cm) wide

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Extra Fine  
Location: UAE

## Early Tang Painted Pottery Horse with Detachable Rider

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The important influence of the horse throughout the history of China cannot be underestimated. In fact, the ancient expansion of the Chinese Empire was due in a large part to the horse. The rapid mobility of horses allowed for enhanced communication between distant provinces. Likewise, the military role of horses facilitated the conquest and submission of other lands as well as securing the borders against barbarian invaders. The need to import stronger, faster steeds from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol pony) contributed to the creation of trading routes along what became known as the Silk Road. The significance of the horse in the history and culture of China can be viewed, in part, through the artistic legacy of this great civilisation. In sculpture, painting and literature, horses are frequently glorified and revered as distant relatives of sacred, mythological dragons.

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The majority of Tang horses were produced to accompany the deceased throughout the afterlife. The striking beauty of this work is even more impressive, considering that it was created specifically for internment and was not supposed to be seen by the living. Today, we marvel in the beauty of this sculpture as much as its tremendous history and intriguing legacy. - (DL.2098)

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# Shang Dynasty Bronze Jue

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AM.145 (LSO)

Origin: China

Circa: 1250 BC to 1100 BC

Dimensions:

7.5" (19.1cm) high x 6.7" (17.0cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Bronze

Location: UAE

# Shang Dynasty Bronze Jue

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This elegant bronze vessel was made during arguably one of the most important dynasties in Chinese history. The Shang (or Yin) was based in northern China, lasted for over 500 years, and ended in 1046 BC. The first non-mythical dynasty, it was preceded by the semi-legendary Xia dynasty (2100-1600 BC), and followed by the Zhou dynasty. It is highly important to historians of ancient China for the large amount of historical information recorded on “oracle bones”, although more recent dynasties also recorded a great deal about it. It was in this period that real cultural coalescence was reached, with considerable achievements in politics, economy, culture, religion, geography, astronomy, calendar, art and medicine.

The comparatively small amount of information available in written documents – especially compared with that of later dynasties – makes social interpretations difficult; even the existence of the dynasty itself was in question until written records proving it were uncovered at Anyang. What is apparent is that the Bronze-Age politics of the time were highly warlike, with considerable defence architecture as well as monumental architecture and social complexity/stratification indicated through varying grave wealth.

One of the most important industries of the time was that of bronze casting, as Chinese craftsmen were unchallenged world leaders in the manipulation of this valuable metal. At this time, only the most socially elevated and wealthy of citizens – usually the royal court – could afford such luxuries, although its use spread until the army too was plentifully equipped with bronze weaponry and accessories such as chariot-fittings. While Xia bronzes do exist, the quality, complexity and decoration did not compare to the bronzes of the Shang dynasty, which were cast in a dazzling array of forms and stages of decoration.

The Jue is one of numerous metal vessel forms that were produced; it was designed to be used for wine, although for a more ritual than secular function. The jue is noted for its delicacy and elegance, and ancient examples were already highly prized by collectors during the Song dynasty (10th to 13th centuries AD). There are of course numerous versions of the jue, but this one is unusually complex in terms of construction, and frivolous decoration has been kept to a minimum in order to accentuate the form of the piece.

The jue stands on tripod legs formed like broad blades, stemming from the lower one third of an approximately egg-shaped vessel. There is a single handle that leads into the leg with the greatest angular disparity from the pouring spouts (see below). The form of the body narrows superiorly, giving rise to an elaborate double spouted apex that broadens to a flat dished spatulate surface on one side, and a deeper, semi-concentric pouring spout on the other. The neck where the latter spout joins the body of the vessel is surmounted by an ornate double-coned decoration. Other than a triple band of detail at the vessel's narrowest point, the surface of the bronze is unadorned except for the stunning multitone patina that testifies to the piece's great age.

The ancient Chinese who made and saw this piece would have viewed it as magical. While we may not have this regard, it can certainly be described as a beautifully conceived and executed piece of ancient art. - (AM. 145 (LSO))

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# Ming Dynasty Blue and White Vase

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AM.0095 (LSO)  
Origin: China  
Circa: 1400 AD to 1600 AD  
Dimensions: 23.5" (59.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Style: Ming  
Medium: Porcelain, Silver  
Location: Great Britain



## Ming Dynasty Blue and White Vase

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This beautiful blue-and-white prestige porcelain vessel dates from the Ming Dynasty, which ruled China between the mid 14th and mid 17th centuries AD and is widely believed to be one of the most definitive and important in China's long history. This is partially due to the fact that it was the last indigenous (Han) dynasty before the country fell into the hands of the Manchu-led Qing Dynasty, and partly because it was led by one of only three peasants ever to rise to Chinese imperial pre-eminence. Hong Wu, the leader of the peasant revolt, founded the dynasty on the destruction of the Yuan Mongol Empire. His background and the manner in which he seized power made him almost pathologically cautious and even paranoid. His intention, influenced by Confucianism, was to create a bureaucracy-free set of agriculturally-based communities that eschewed commercial trade – which was abhorred by Confucius. Confucian perspectives on the avoidance of military development went unheeded, however. In addition to accelerating agricultural production – again, perhaps a reflection of his own experience – he increased the standing army to over one million, imposed what approximated to martial law on his people and spent a fortune building defences, notably the Great Wall of China. He also founded the Forbidden City, from which he governed China's burgeoning population of around 200 million. Because of economic spin-offs of his agricultural policy (which provided major surpluses) untold wealth started to appear, and with it a new elite of merchant families who went on to constitute China's first Middle Class. The arts and sciences also benefited from this largesse, as did political and – inevitably – bureaucratic policy. In many respects it was the strongest period in Chinese history, and it only collapsed because of a series of natural and economic disasters – namely the undermining of the economy by Japanese trade withdrawal, a series of crop failures and the appearance of the “Little Ice Age”. The eventual collapse of the Ming Dynasty was brought about by ultra-conservative Manchurian nomads (Manchu) who founded the Qing dynasty in 1644.

Arts and sciences flourished in the Ming Dynasty, though this was more to do with the flow of unexpected wealth from agricultural surpluses than any particular enlightenment on the part of Hong Wu or his descendents. Painters proliferated, and were very well-paid for their works; Qiu Ying was once paid 2.8 kg (100 oz) of silver to paint a long scroll. Advances were also made in wood/ivory carving, jade-working, lacquerwork, and duotone (blue-white) ceramic design and decoration. The most prestigious pieces were presented as diplomatic gifts to Europe, Japan and SE Asia; lesser works flooded the market as trade goods, giving rise to a global obsession with chinoiserie. The major production centers for porcelain items in the Ming Dynasty were Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province and Dehua in Fujian province. The Dehua porcelain factories catered to European tastes by creating Chinese export porcelain by the 16th century, often painting designs direct from bookplates, paintings or other illustrations, in order to appeal to a wider European audience. The best items remained prestige and diplomatic goods, however, as is the case with the current piece. Just as the Ming potters reformatted their wares for the European market, so they changed them for other parts of the world.

The shape approximates to that of an hourglass, with a rounded square lower section cinched at the waist to provide an altogether more sinuous pear-like upper part, tapering to a long, slim neck. The design follows this shape, with white bands at the base of the vessel, a double band at the waist, and another at the top of the neck where the floral scrollwork gives way to a cameo pattern containing a flower. The whole is decorated with floral scrollwork patterns. It is topped off with a bell-shaped silver cap with perforated, arched design. It is ambiguous in terms of cultural assignation, if one analyses it as a whole. The appearance is essentially that of a minaret, yet the painting is clearly Chinese in origin. The metal mount is Islamic in appearance. The lack of representationalist figurative design is indicative of Islamic trends, but there again this trait is not necessarily unique and there are myriad painting forms within the Chinese repertoire. It is also possible that the piece was made by an Islamic potter under the influence of early Ming pieces; the Iznik potters of Turkey are known to have done this in the late 16th century. However when one considers the nature of contemporary naval trade and relations, and also the fact that the silverware seems to be an add-on (partly obscuring the cameo design on the neck), it would seem very likely that this was a prestige piece made for the Islamic (probably Turkish) market, which was then adapted upon arrival. This is therefore a socially-important and historically significant piece of porcelain and silver. As diplomatic pieces are usually c.30cm in height, its large size makes it yet more exceptional. The preservation and colouring are perfect. This is the finest such piece that we have ever seen. - (AM.0095 (LSO))

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## Song Stone Head of a Buddha

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AM.0157

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions: 15" (38.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Stone

## Song Stone Head of a Buddha

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After the collapse of the Tang Dynasty (906 AD), there was a succession of short-lived governments (known as the Five Dynasties). This period of unrest came to an end with the establishment of the Song Dynasty in 960 AD. Renewed political stability helped to usher in a period of economic prosperity and a massive rise in population. Amongst the many cultural achievements of the Song Dynasty, the re- invigoration of the examination system and the invention of movable type rank highly. It was also the period which witnessed the development of Neo-Confucianism- a philosophical movement heavily influenced by Buddhist teachings. Although there is evidence that Buddhism had reached China from India during the Han Dynasty, it took time for the new faith to make progress. This was partly because it had to compete with native ideologies, namely Confucianism and Daoism. It was possible, however, to find common ground between these belief systems and by the Tang Dynasty Buddhism was experiencing a golden age in China.

It is extremely rare to find such an early and well-preserved Buddha head on the market. The head is a fragment from an over life-size sculpture that would probably have depicted the Buddha in a seated position. The hair consists of small, finely carved, spiral curls which are arranged in regular horizontal tiers above the forehead, rising up into a mound that denotes the Buddha's spiritual wisdom. The eyes are downcast with heavy, deeply cut eyelids. The expression is one of calm serenity and a meditative state. The elongated earlobes reference the historical Buddha's life of luxury (the elongation was caused by wearing heavy earrings), before he set out of the path to enlightenment. This sculpture is a unique object that recalls the piety of early Buddhists as well as the refined sensibilities of the Song era. (AM) - (AM.0157)

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# Tang Dynasty Painted Pottery Fat Nobleman



DK.108  
Origin: Shaanxi Province - Xi'an  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 BC  
Dimensions: 28" (71.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Very Fine  
Location: UAE



## Tang Dynasty Painted Pottery Fat Nobleman

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A pair of magnificent museum quality pottery fat nobleman from the T'ang Dynasty . Each painted with red flower pattern on their robe. - (DK.108)

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# A Pair of Northern Qi Painted Pottery Officials

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DK.113  
Origin: China  
Circa: 550 AD to 577 AD  
Dimensions: 47" (119.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Very Fine  
Location: UAE

## Garlic-Headed Vessel

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SF.070  
Origin: China  
Circa: 500 BC to 200 BC  
Dimensions: 4" (10.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese  
Medium: Gilt Bronze  
Location: Great Britain



# Fossilised Horse Head

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TF.012

Origin: China

Dimensions:

13.50" (34.3cm) x 18.25" (46.4cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Bone

Condition: Very Fine

Additional Information:

over 30 million years old

Location: Great Britain

# Tang Dynasty White Marble 'Bodhisvatta' Torso

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DK.117a  
Origin: Shaanxi Province - 'Xi'an'  
Circa: 618 AD to 907 AD  
Dimensions: 59" (149.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art  
Medium: Terracotta  
Condition: Very Fine  
Location: United States

# Tang Dynasty Painted Pottery Fat Nobleman

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These outstanding sculptural panels are Song Dynasty representations of the Lotus Sutra, which was compiled in the first century AD and is one of the most important texts in Buddhism. The pieces concern a series of parables that are being outlined by Buddha, who sits to the right surrounded by his followers. His words are recorded in the columns of text on each side of the pieces, and are represented pictorially in the centre. There are seven parables in the Lotus Sutra, all embodying the essence of Mahayana Buddhism and the attainment of Buddhahood. They concern humble people who rely upon the guidance and wisdom of an older, paternal figure, and in so doing learn the path of righteousness and thus attain equilibrium with the cosmos. These examples date to the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD), which is often referred to as the Third Great Flowering of Chinese Culture.

The Lotus Sutra, also known as the Sutra on the White Lotus of the Sublime Dharma is one of the most influential Mahayana sutra in East Asia, and was compiled in Kashmir in the first century AD. It represents an address made by Buddha in his later life, and which was then stored away for half a millennium in the realm of the dragons until humankind would be able to comprehend it. It was first translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in c.209 AD. It made several landmarks in Buddhism, notably the concept of the Buddha's eternal nature, its skilful use of parable, and the fact that it is one of the first sutras to employ Mahâyâna ("Great Vehicle") Buddhism. Buddha is seen to be a father, essentially immortal in the sense of continuing influence and power even after his earthly demise. It repudiates emptiness (úûnyatâ) as the ultimate vision, and states Buddhist Wisdom to be a transcendental, bliss-bestowing state. The tenets of full Buddha-hood are the understanding of truths expressed in the Lotus Sutra, and thus a more fundamental understanding of the cosmological order that results in the elevation of lesser beings to full Buddha status. It is highly significant in that it also implies that all religious paths may lead to this enlightened state, thus opposing doctrinal confrontation.

Representations of the parables follow certain conventions for the placement and representation of the most important elements – especially the appearance and positioning of the Buddha, the text and the parable story. It is thus not possible to identify the parables in all cases. The seven parables are described below:

- 1) The carts and the burning house: The rich man entices his children from a burning house by offering them carts laden with objects with which to play. When they emerged unscathed, they were greeted with carts laden with objects far beyond their expectations.
- 2) The wealthy man and the poor son: A son deserts his father to wander abroad. Many years later he returns, not recognising the wealthy man his father has become. The latter, realising that his son is unable to act as a reliable heir, disguises himself and builds up his son's confidence through giving him increasing responsibility and kindness, thus making him worthy and upstanding.
- 3) The medicinal herbs: All growing things – be they trees, grasses or herbs – differ in size, name and form, yet they benefit from the same rain and grow in the same soil, yet when they fruit or blossom all are different.
- 4) The gem and the magic city: A leader led people along a dangerous road to the place of treasures; only he knew the proper route. The people following became weary and wanted to return, upon which he conjured up a magic city and promised them rest there. Once they had rested, it vanished, and he took them onwards to the true place of treasures.
- 5) The gem in the jacket: A beggar visits an old friend who takes pity on him and attached a priceless gem to his jacket while he sleeps. The beggar, unaware, leaves the next day and for years travels the road, homeless and weary. His friend meets him and scolds him for having been so blind to his potential wealth.



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6) The brilliant gem in the king's topknot: A great king demanded the obedience of other, warring states, which disobeyed his orders. He went in and suppressed them, but was much taken by the fierce and loyal fighting his foes displayed. He gave them presents and gifts, excepting a jewel he kept hidden within his hair. This he kept, and only gave it up to those who accepted his dominion.

7) The excellent physician: The physician's children ate poison in his absence, and begged him to cure them on his return. He made an elixir to cure them, and the rational ones took it at once and thus were saved. The irrational ones, however, refused to believe its benefit and did not take it. He found it necessary to trick them, and left the medicine with an exhortation to take it. He went away, and sent a messenger to state that he had died. His children, bereft, were so saddened they remembered his parting wish, obeyed it, and thus were cured.

All of these illustrate the avuncular/paternal nature of Buddha and the efforts – and even trickery – to which he goes to save his children/mortals. He is also the cloud which waters the earth and all in it, great and small. In all cases, the righteous receive rewards, which are inevitably the enlightenment of Buddha-hood.

This Song Dynasty example is a masterful rendering of this important theme. This period saw enormous social change under comparatively enlightened monarchs, who introduced sweeping reforms of social and administrative bodies, instituting examinations and abolishing hereditary and aristocratic rights, and introduced a standing navy. Corruption was essentially halted, paving the way for the world's first paper money, producing a stable climate for scientific and artistic advances – notably the world's first astronomical clock tower, the refinement of woodblock printing, the invention of movable type, and advances in cartography, engineering, philosophy and mathematics.

This remarkable pair of panels would have once adorned a major building or the tomb of a very prominent personage. They constitute a remarkable survival and a superb reminder of the grandeur of ancient China.

- (AM.0346 (LSO))

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# A Pair of Green-Glazed Han Dynasty Figures

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SK.004

Origin: China

Circa: 206 BC to 220 AD

Dimensions:

36.5" (92.7cm) high x 12" (30.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Glazed Terracotta

Location: UAE

# Tang Dynasty Painted Pottery Fat Nobleman

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The overextension of the labor force during the Qin Dynasty would result in a popular uprising against the empire. In 206 B.C., Liu Bang, a Qin official, led an army composed of peasants and some lower nobility to victory and established his own Dynasty in place, the Han. However, unlike the Qin, the Han would unify China and rule virtually uncontested for over four hundred years. It is during this time that much of what is now considered to be Chinese culture was first actualized. The bureaucracy started under the Qin was now firmly established. The vast lands of China were now under the firm grip of a central authority. Confucianism became the state ideology although the worship of Taoist deity remained widespread, both among the peasants and the aristocracy. Ancient histories and texts were analyzed and rewritten to be more objective while new legendary myths and cultural epics were transcribed.

The Han era can also be characterized as one of the greatest artistic outpourings in Chinese history, easily on par with the glories of their Western contemporaries, Greece and Rome. Wealth pouring into China from trade along the Silk Road initiated a period of unprecedented luxury. Stunning bronze vessels were created, decorated with elegant inlaid gold and silver motifs. Jade carvings reached a new level of technical brilliance. But perhaps the artistic revival of the Han Dynasty is nowhere better represented than in their sculptures and vessels that were interred with deceased nobles. Called *mingqi*, literally meaning “spirit articles,” these works depicted a vast array of subject, from warriors and horses to ovens and livestock, which were buried alongside the dead for use in the next world, reflecting the Chinese belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthy existence. Thus, quite logically, the things we require to sustain and nurture our bodies in this life would be just as necessary in our next life. - (SK.004)

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# Ming Dynasty Blue and White Vase

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SK.041

Origin: China

Circa: 1500 AD to 1600 AD

Dimensions: 10" (25.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Porcelain, Silver

Condition: Fine

Location: UAE

## Ming Dynasty Blue and White Vase

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This beautiful blue-and-white prestige porcelain vessel dates from the Ming Dynasty, yet also bears the classic markers of the Islamic Empire. This duality is explained by the important trade that flourished between these two groups during the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, and the diplomatic exercises that allowed the networks to develop in the first instance. The vessel is designed in an intriguing and pleasing set of styles. The main form is globular, with a defined band at the neck to a long, tapering spout. The base is slightly everted. The design is floral, with light and dark blue flowers all endlessly linked by stalks and foliate tracery. It proceeds across the vessel and only halts at the base of the neck and at the white-rimmed base. The porcelain is very high glaze, and the surface is flawless. The mouth of the vessel is partially covered by a socketed fixture and a very ornate scrollwork-design silver cap resembling an Islamic dome, surmounted by a slender spire.

It is ambiguous in terms of cultural assignation, if one analyses it as a whole. The appearance is essentially that of a minaret, yet the painting is clearly Chinese in origin. The metal mount is Islamic in appearance. The lack of representationalist figurative design is indicative of Islamic trends, but there again this trait is not necessarily unique and there are myriad painting forms within the Chinese repertoire. It is also possible that the piece was made by an Islamic potter under the influence of early Ming pieces; the Iznik potters of Turkey are known to have done this in the late 16th century. However when one considers the nature of contemporary naval trade and relations, and also the fact that the silverware seems to be an add-on (partly obscuring the cameo design on the neck), it would seem very likely that this was a prestige piece made for the Islamic (probably Turkish) market, which was then adapted upon arrival.

The Ming Dynasty, which ruled China between the mid 14th and mid 17th centuries AD, is widely believed to be one of the most definitive and important in China's long history. It is also remarkable for the fact that it was the last indigenous (Han) dynasty before the country fell into the hands of the Manchu-led Qing Dynasty, and also because it was led by one of only three peasants ever to rise to Chinese imperial pre-eminence. Hong Wu, the leader of the peasant revolt, founded the dynasty on the destruction of the Yuan Mongol Empire. His background and the manner in which he seized power made him almost pathologically cautious and even paranoid. In addition to accelerating agricultural production, he increased the standing army to over one million, imposed what approximated to martial law on his people and spent a fortune building defences, notably the Great Wall of China. He also founded the Forbidden City, from which he governed China's burgeoning population of around 200 million. Because of economic spin-offs of his agricultural policy (which provided major surpluses) untold wealth started to appear, and with it a new elite of merchant families who went on to constitute China's first Middle Class.

Arts and sciences flourished in the Ming Dynasty. Painters proliferated, and were very well-paid for their works. Advances were also made in wood/ivory carving, jade-working, lacquerwork, and duotone (blue-white) ceramic design and decoration. The most prestigious pieces were presented as diplomatic gifts to Europe, Japan and SE Asia; lesser works flooded the market as trade goods, giving rise to a global obsession with chinoiserie. The major production centers for porcelain items in the Ming Dynasty were Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province and Dehua in Fujian province. The Dehua porcelain factories catered to European tastes by creating Chinese export porcelain by the 16th century, often painting designs direct from bookplates, paintings or other illustrations, in order to appeal to a wider European audience. The best items remained prestige and diplomatic goods, however, as is the case with the current piece. Just as the Ming potters reformatted their wares for the European market, so they changed them for other parts of the world. Figurative designs may have been banned under Islamic law, but it would seem from other sources that floral patterning was less frowned upon.

This is a socially-important and historically significant piece of porcelain and silver. The preservation and colouring are perfect. This is an extremely fine piece.



Pair of Late Southern Song Lidded Funerary  
Urns (Ping) with Cranes and Dragons



CK.0149

Origin: Jiangxi Province, China

Circa: 1200 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions:

35.25" (89.5cm) high x 6.5" (16.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Glazed Terracotta

Location: United States



## Pair of Late Southern Song Lidded Funerary Urns (Ping) with Cranes and Dragons

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This dynamic pair of matched vases is a supreme masterwork from the Southern Song dynasty. They are very tall and graceful, with the widest section in the bottom one third of their total height. They then taper progressively to the top one third, where they flare again to a rather wider apex, crowned with extremely ornate lids, each bearing a crane with outstretched wings. The bottom third is banded with fine lines above a small, plain pedestal base. A ring of roped beading separates this from a line of standing court officials, interspersed with animals such as deer. Above this is a taller section, liberally decorated with floral motifs and featuring a long and highly complex dragon – and an accompanying lotus flower (?) – rendered in very high relief. The entirety is decorated with transparent glaze over a cream/yellow slip.

The Song Dynasty was founded after the fall of the Tang Dynasty and a period of major social unrest. Perhaps because of this, it is viewed as a Golden Age for Chinese civilization. It was also highly complex, as different areas of China were ruled by different dynasties and traditions. The Northern Song was founded in 960 AD, and quickly developed art styles and social changes that were remarkable for their liberalism. Many of China's greatest landscape painters, sculptors and ceramicists worked during their supremacy, while literary achievements – notably translation of ancient texts and a revival of Confucianism – also benefitted from enlightened leadership. Foreign trade also flourished, leading to major networks of luxury goods running to and from China. However, the stability was threatened by the invasion – in 1125 AD – of Northern China by the Jurchen, a semi-nomadic people from the steppe area. They validated their leadership by founding the Jin Dynasty, although the Song court – who had fled to Hangzhou in the South – continued to govern their area for another 120 years. The Southern Song eventually collapsed due to a combination of internal intrigue and invasion by the Mongols in 1279 AD.

The Song Dynasty is considered to be the golden age of Chinese ceramics, for mass production was perfected, leading to an explosion of different styles and traditions. The elite ceramicists became ever more adventurous, producing remarkable creations for a native class of aristocrats, the ruling elite, high-ranking government officials and wealthy merchants. Technical innovations led to breakthroughs in the fields of glazing and firing, culminating in the first true porcelain to be produced in any significant quantity.

Known as Qingbai ware (also called Yingqing ware), this distinctive, blue-glazed, thinly wheel-thrown stoneware with moulded and applied decoration was produced mainly in Jiangxi province at Jingdezhen and in the Hebei province. Qingbai ware continued to be made well into the Ming Dynasty, with Jingdezhen remaining as an important production centre.

This outstanding pair of vessels was made towards the end of the Song Dynasty, in retreat in to the South, and is a major masterwork of ancient China.

- (CK.0149)

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# Large Tang Terracotta Sculpture of a Kneeling Camel

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CK.0559

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD

Dimensions:

31" (78.7cm) high x 11" (27.9cm) wide x 42" (106.7cm) depth

Collection: Chinese Art

Style: Tang Dynasty

Medium: Terracotta

# Large Tang Terracotta Sculpture of a Kneeling Camel

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The Tang Dynasty was an era of unrivalled wealth and luxury. The country was successfully reunified and the borders were expanded, pushing Chinese influence into new lands. Confucianism became a quasi-religious instrument of the state; yet Buddhism continued to flourish, spreading into Korea and Japan. The arts reached new levels of sophistication. Poetry and literature flourished under the enlightened rulers. The Silk Road brought fortunes into China. Precious treasures were imported on the backs of camels from far away lands and bartered for Chinese silk, medicinal herbs, and pungent spices. Tang China was a multicultural empire where foreign merchants from across Central Asia and the Middle East settled in the urban centers, foremost among them the thriving capital of Chang'an (modern Xi'an), a bustling cosmopolitan center of over two million inhabitants. Foreign traders lived next to native artisans and both thrived. New ideas and exotic artistic forms followed alongside. The Tang Dynasty was a cultural renaissance where many of the forms and objects we now associate with China were first created. Moreover, this period represents one of the greatest cultural outpourings in human history.

During the Tang Dynasty, restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings, known as mingqi, have been excavated. Entire retinues of ceramic figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians, etc. - were buried with the dead in order to provide for the afterlife. Some of the most beautiful works of Chinese art were excavated from tombs and never meant to be seen by the living.

“The camel is an unusual domestic animal; it carries a saddle of flesh on its back; swiftly it dashes over the shifting sands; it manifests its merit in dangerous places; it has a secret understanding of springs and sources, subtle indeed is its knowledge.”

This quote by Guo Pu dates to the 3rd Century A.D. and reveals the extent to which the Chinese adulated camels. For the Chinese, these creatures symbolized the wealth and luxury that resulted from trading on the Silk Road. Commerce across this extensive network of paths and trails brought prosperity, foreign merchants, and exotic merchandise into China. However, the dusty trails of the Silk Road were an arduous journey through the rugged mountains and harsh deserts of Central Asia that could only be traversed by the two humped Bactrian camel. This remarkable beast was able to withstand the scorching heat of the desert and maintain its own nutrients, surviving for months without fresh supplies of water. The government kept vast herds of these invaluable creatures, presided over by civil officials, for hauling their precious commodities across the Silk Road. These exotic creatures were a common sight in the cosmopolitan cities of T'ang China, carrying both traders and their goods directly into the markets. Likewise, T'ang artists began to create charming representations of these prized creatures as mingqi in order to symbolize continued wealth and prosperity throughout the afterlife.

This magnificent camel has been represented kneeling down on its front legs, as if preparing to be laden with bundles of merchandise for a journey along the Silk Road. This is the largest example of a Tang Dynasty camel that we know of, and certainly the largest in this rare posture. - (CK.0559)

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Early Tang Painted Pottery  
Seated Camel with Detachable Saddle

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RP.157

Origin: China

Circa: 618 AD to 906 AD

Dimensions: 10" (25.4cm) high x 17.5" (44.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Terracotta

Location: UAE

## Early Tang Painted Pottery Seated Camel with Detachable Saddle

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During the Tang Dynasty, the status of the beloved camel ranked second only to the revered horse. Camels symbolized commerce and its associated wealth, profits made possible primarily through the legendary Silk Road. Trade across this extensive network of paths and trails brought prosperity, foreigner merchants, and exotic merchandise into China, connecting the Mediterranean world with the Far East. However, this arduous journey through the jagged mountains and rugged deserts of Central Asia could only be undertaken by the two-humped Bactrian camel, a beast able to withstand the scorching heat of the desert and to maintain its own nutrients, surviving for months without fresh supplies of water. The government kept vast herds of these invaluable creatures, presided over by civil officials, for hauling their precious silk supplies across the Silk Road. These exotic creatures were a common sight in the cosmopolitan cities of Tang China, carrying both traders and their goods directly into the markets. Likewise, T'ang artist began to create charming representations of these prized creatures as mingqi wealth and prosperity to come in the afterlife. An ancient Chinese custom, mingqi were works of art specifically created to be interred in the tombs of the elite classes in order to provide for the afterlife. Some of the most beautiful works of Chinese art were excavated from such tombs, and this glazed sculpture of a camel is a perfect example of the refined artistry dedicated to such works, despite the fact that they were never meant to be seen by the living. - (RP.157)

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Pair of Song Dynasty Panels  
Featuring Scenes from the Life of the Buddha



AM.0346 (LSO)

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1276 AD

Dimensions:

18.1" (46.0cm) high x 51.18" (130.0cm) wide x 5.12" (13.0cm) depth

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Stone

Location: Great Britain



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