

THE BARAKAT GALLERY

Chinese Art

Song Dynasty
960 AD - 1279 AD
Yuan Dynasty
1271 AD - 1368 AD



Song Dynasty

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 Northern 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. Intellectually the greatest achievement was the development of Neo-Confucianism- a philosophical movement heavily influenced by Buddhist teachings. Although 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.

Large Sculpture of a Recumbent Ram



H.o40
Origin: China
Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Granite
Location: United States

This stone sculpture depicts a kneeling ram slightly lifted by its fore legs. The animal kneels on a square slab mount with a protruding mound beneath its belly. The curved horns follow the line of the jaw and neck tucked between pulled ears. A delicately carved face reveals the realistic aspects of the animal as well as its gentle and docile attributes.

Chinese stone spirit road statuary represents a strong and ancient branch of monumental sculpture based on beliefs connected with ancestor worship and the importance of tombs. The tradition had existed since the Han Dynasty although the belief in the inherent power of an image to bring about that which it represented or symbolized predates Han stone statuary. This belief that an image could influence both the material and spiritual worlds was magnified through the association of stone with immortality. The Song differed from their predecessors by producing images of animals for purely symbolic reasons. Sheep (or rams) and tigers appear in their ancient traditional form derived from Bronze Age figurines--the kneeling sheep symbolizing filial piety; the tiger, martial valor. - (H.o40)

Marble Sculpture of a Seated Sage



H.042

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions: 26.25" (66.7cm) high x
15" (38.1cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Marble

Location: United States

Shown seated on a throne, this figure clasps his hands beneath the long folds of a flowing robe, seemingly holding an emblem or offering. The tips of his shoes appear beneath the hems of layered clothing which is accompanied by a hanging sash and square chest plate. The figure is portrayed with a strong jawbone, broad facial features, pendulant earlobes, and complacent expression. His thick combed hair is neatly tucked under a triangular shaped crown adorned with a gem studded band and an image of a meditating Buddha on a lotus throne. Though it is unclear whether this figure represents a Taoist deity, Confucian dignitary, or Buddhist figure, it is probable that he possesses admirable virtues or extraordinary ability that make him a worthy subject for stone work. Since stone was associated with the cult of immortality, only the heroic and sagacious were chosen for this medium. - (H.042)

Stone Sculpture of a Head



H.043

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions: 9.5" (24.1cm) high x
6.5" (16.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Stone

Location: United States

The menacing expression of this figure is magnified by a tensed browline, narrow inset eyes, flaring nostrils, and a pronounced beard and mouth. The exaggerated features are achieved through the technique of the sculptor, whose bold cuts into the stone enhance the three dimensionality and thus release the vitality of the subject. Stylistic changes in the portrayal of military men and protective deities are evidenced in this head as a result of the penchant toward civil life--the rounded face implies suppleness and the banded headdress with large floral motif in the front center suggests a trend toward blending the martial and civil traditions using Taoist and Confucian symbolism. The tacit association of stone with immortality created a situation in which only virtuous subjects, such as heroes and sages, were represented with serious restrictions on how their virtues could be portrayed. It is likely that this stone head once topped a goliath figure which either represented a historical personage memorialized in stone or a conventional martial image that belonged to a larger constellation of characters that aligned the spirit road. - (H.043)

Large Sculpture Of A Rat



H.525

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions: 19.25" (48.9cm) high

Catalogue: V17

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Granite

Location: United States

This mounted stone carving of a rat is representative of the craftsmanship of Song Dynasty carvers as production for certain auspicious animals, guardians, and Buddhas increased in tandem with the trend to aggrandize places of worship or memorial halls. With the massiveness of stone slabs, artisans could create awe-inspiring dragons and guardians to stand at the entrances of tomb complexes, palaces and temples. The preference for a rock medium is also tied to the belief that rock contains a positive energy that could be transferred to the carved formation endowing it with a strong life force. Crouched with legs bent and tail stretched out, the rat's face projects over one end of the mount. Its ears stand up, and its gently carved features give a countenance of solemnity. The rat is the first of the twelve animals that makes up the Twelve Terrestrial Branches, and is an emblem of timidity and meanness. It is also regarded as a symbol of industry and prosperity on account of its ability for locating, acquiring and hoarding abundant supplies of food. Among the various structures that were adorned with large stone carvings, tombs attracted special categories of sculpture: pillars at the entrance and large carvings of animals and men. Stone pieces from the Song Dynasty tended to depict the real world. It is likely that this carving of rat could have been placed near a tomb complex. - (H.525)

Song Stone Head of Buddha



H.551

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions: 10" (25.4cm) high x
6.75" (17.1cm) wide

Catalogue: V20

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Stone

Location: United States

This head of Buddha is an exquisite example of the trend toward simplistic renderings of Buddhist images as a result of the expansion of Ch'an school teachings during the Sung period. The face is rounded and carved with a sense of fluidity as the facial expressions convey the blissful, serene sensation of enlightenment. The lips of the mouth are upturned, giving the impression of a "smiling Buddha," and the eyes are half closed in meditation, accentuating the Buddha's transcendence of all states of existence. Elegantly arched eyebrows and the delicately sculpted nose create a fluid line that extends beyond both corners of the mouth to the undefined area of the chin, giving the face a rather supple feel. The hair is twisted into tight curls incised with spirals forming an usnisa, a swelling on the top of the head signifying the Buddha's enlightenment. Though the swelling is usually covered with hair, in this image, it is bare, boldly protruding from the summit of the head. The pendant earlobes curve upward at the tips, unadorned and rounded. Buddhist sculpture of the Sung period is characterized by sentimentalism, expressed through the grace and feminine refinements of the features. This sculpture captures the artistic as well as spiritual sentiments of the period. - (H.551)

Song Brown-Glazed Vase



PF.5334

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions: 17.25" (43.8cm) high x
10.5" (26.7cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: United States

Used to contain liquids, this vase is a T'ang archetype that is characterized by its high sloping shoulder and long rounded belly that tapers at the foot. A shiny, dark brown glaze has been applied to the surface with occasional pitting and mottled amber streaks more concentrated in the neck area. Though the glaze continues on the inner side of the neck, the beveled lip is left unglazed, displaying an appealing coarse texture illustrative of the transitional T'ang-Song Dynasty taste for unadorned, natural beauty. - (PF.5334)

Song Brown-Glazed Terracotta Vase



H.612
Origin: China
Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD
Dimensions: 8" (20.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed-Terracotta
Location: United States

This gorgeous vessel, covered in a dark brown glaze, features two twisted handles that connect the join of the bulbous neck and shoulders to the body. The classical shape is a type still seen today in rice-wine vases throughout China and Japan. Most likely, this vessel served the same function in its own day. The short-lived Song (also spelled Sung) Dynasty partially reunified the country after a period of turmoil following the fall of the T'ang. Historically, the Song are noted for their revival of the ancient Confucian beliefs, ushering a period known as Neo-Confucianism that would dominate Chinese (and later on Japanese) thought for the next several centuries. Although best known for their philosophical contributions, this vase attests to the rich artistic tradition that flourished under the enlightened rulers of the Song Dynasty. The rich brown glaze is astounding not for its uniformity, but for its subtle variations of hue. The beige of the clay seeps through in portions where the glaze settled more thinly appearing almost violet in color. The beauty of this vessel is timeless. A true classic, it would appear as equally striking resting on a table in a modern home or being passed around during a Song Dynasty ceremonial feast. This vase symbolizes the joys of life: drinking, celebrating with friends, art, and appreciation of beauty. More than a relic, this vase is a reminder of all we share with the past, reminding us that our modern culture is deeply rooted in the traditions and cultures of those who came before us. - (H.612)

Relief Panel Depicting an Attendant



H.657

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions: 16.75" (42.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: United States

The Sung (Song) Dynasty partially reunified China after a period of chaotic turmoil following the fall of the T'ang. Historically, the Sung are noted for their revival of the ancient Confucian beliefs, ushering a period known as Neo-Confucianism that would dominate Chinese (and later on Japanese) thought for the next several centuries. Although best known for their philosophical contributions, this relief panel attests to the rich artistic tradition that flourished under the enlightened rulers of the Sung Dynasty. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this gorgeous figurative panel, sculpted in high relief, depicts a beautiful female attendant patiently awaiting the command of her master. Her hair is elegantly modeled and she features a sweetly smiling visage that reveals the influence of T'ang statuary on the art of the Sung Dynasty. The woman is draped in a cloth robe that hangs down to her feet; the curved tips of her shoes are visible protruding at the bottom. She presents us with a tray of assorted foods that were meant for consumption in the afterlife. Thus this attendant would have continued to serve her master even after his earthly demise. That tradition of elaborate burial tombs containing treasures from life and sculpted replica of courtly entourages dates back to the earliest dynasties of China. By the time of the Han (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), this practice had become entrenched in Chinese culture. These elaborate burials reflect the ancient philosophical and religious beliefs that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. While this panel might have been interred more as a traditional custom than as an otherworldly servant, such work reveals the tremendous artistic heritage of China. This work is created out of an age-old tradition assuring that the deceased was welcomed into the next world and well provided for. With gorgeous surroundings such as this panel, what more could one ask for to be ushered into the afterlife? - (H.657)

Relief Panel Depicting an Attendant



H.658
Origin: China
Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD
Dimensions: 16.25" (41.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Terracotta
Location: United States

The Sung (Song) Dynasty partially reunified China after a period of chaotic turmoil following the fall of the T'ang. Historically, the Sung are noted for their revival of the ancient Confucian beliefs, ushering a period known as Neo-Confucianism that would dominate Chinese (and later on Japanese) thought for the next several centuries. Although best known for their philosophical contributions, this relief panel attests to the rich artistic tradition that flourished under the enlightened rulers of the Sung Dynasty. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this gorgeous figurative panel, sculpted in high relief, depicts a beautiful female attendant patiently awaiting the command of her master. Her hair is elegantly modeled and she features a sweetly smiling visage that reveals the influence of T'ang statuary on the art of the Sung Dynasty. She presents us with a tray of round bun-like treats that were meant for consumption in the afterlife. Thus this attendant would have continued to serve her master even after his earthly demise. That tradition of elaborate burial tombs containing treasures from life and sculpted replica of courtly entourages dates back to the earliest dynasties of China. By the time of the Han (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), this practice had become entrenched in Chinese culture. These elaborate burials reflect the ancient philosophical and religious beliefs that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. While this panel might have been interred more as a traditional custom than as an otherworldly servant, such work reveals the tremendous artistic heritage of China. This work is created out of an age-old tradition assuring that the deceased was welcomed into the next world and well provided for. With gorgeous surroundings such as this panel, what more could one ask for to be ushered into the afterlife? - (H.658)

Painted Relief Panel Depicting a Chef



H.659

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions: 21" (53.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Stone

Location: United States

The Sung (Song) Dynasty partially reunified China after a period of chaotic turmoil following the fall of the T'ang. Historically, the Sung are noted for their revival of the ancient Confucian beliefs, ushering a period known as Neo-Confucianism that would dominate Chinese (and later on Japanese) thought for the next several centuries. Although best known for their philosophical contributions, this panel, rendered in low relief, attests to the rich artistic tradition that flourished under the enlightened rulers of the Sung Dynasty. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this gorgeous rectangular panel depicts an elegantly dressed chef presenting his latest dish fresh from the kitchen. The culinary arts of China are the oldest and most sophisticated in the world. Cooking was considered an art form as early as the 5th century B.C. when the earliest etiquette texts were written. The noble dress of this chef, including the black headdress and red tunic, reflects his honored position within the courtly entourage. He appears to be walking, as if caught in the act of delivering this meal to the table. We can almost imagine the fragrant aromas tantalizing our noses as our appetites are whetted. Although we cannot know who this chef was, we can assume that he worked on the staff of the noble elite, for only such high-ranking members of society could command such extravagant burial rites. Most likely, this stone panel was specifically commissioned for the sole purpose of accompanying the deceased into the afterlife, thereby reflecting both the wealth of the deceased as well as the familial piety of his ancestors. Thus, this divine meal was not meant for human consumption, but serves as a symbol of the celebratory feasts that await our spirits in heaven. - (H.659)

Painted Relief Panel Depicting an Attendant



H.660
Origin: China
Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD
Dimensions: 20.75" (52.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Stone
Location: United States

The Sung (Song) Dynasty partially reunified China after a period of chaotic turmoil following the fall of the T'ang. Historically, the Sung are noted for their revival of the ancient Confucian beliefs, ushering a period known as Neo-Confucianism that would dominate Chinese (and later on Japanese) thought for the next several centuries. Although best known for their philosophical contributions, this relief panel attests to the rich artistic tradition that flourished under the enlightened rulers of the Sung Dynasty. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this gorgeous rectangular panel, sculpted in low relief, depicts a beautiful female attendant patiently awaiting the command of her master. Her hair is elegantly styled and she wears a tunic, painted red, covering her long flowing robes. She carries a vessel of sorts in her two hands, perhaps a teapot, seemingly offering us a taste. However, this beverage is meant for consumption in the afterlife. Thus, this attendant would have continued to serve her master even after his earthly demise. The tradition of elaborate burial tombs containing treasured relics from life and sculpted replica of courtly entourages dates back to the earliest dynasties of China. By the time of the Han (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), this practice had become entrenched in Chinese culture. These elaborate burials reflect the ancient philosophical and religious belief that the afterlife was an extension of our earthly existence. This work is created out of an age-old tradition assuring that the deceased was welcomed into the next world and well provided for. With gorgeous surroundings such as this panel ushering one into the afterlife, heaven must be even more spectacular than ever imagined. - (H.660)

Painted Relief Panel Depicting a Chef



H.661
Origin: China
Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD
Dimensions: 21" (53.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Stone
Location: United States

The Sung (Song) Dynasty partially reunified China after a period of chaotic turmoil following the fall of the T'ang. Historically, the Sung are noted for their revival of the ancient Confucian beliefs, ushering a period known as Neo-Confucianism that would dominate Chinese (and later on Japanese) thought for the next several centuries. Although best known for their philosophical contributions, this relief panel attests to the rich artistic tradition that flourished under the enlightened rulers of the Sung Dynasty. Discovered buried inside a tomb, this gorgeous rectangular panel, sculpted in low relief, depicts an elegantly dressed chef bringing out his latest dish from the kitchen. The culinary arts of China are the oldest and most sophisticated in the world. Cooking was considered an art form as early as the 5th century B.C. when the first etiquette texts were written. The noble dress of this chef, including the black headdress and red cloak with white spots, reflects his honored position within the courtly entourage. He appears to step forward, as if caught in the act of delivering this meal to the table. We can imagine him pulling off the lid as the steamy aromas tantalize our nose and the colors tease our eyes. Although we cannot know who this chef was, we can assume that he worked on the staff of the noble elite, for only such high-ranking members of society could command such an extravagant burial. Most likely, this stone panel was specifically commissioned for the sole purpose of accompanying the deceased into the afterlife, thereby reflecting both the wealth of the deceased as well as the familial piety of his ancestors. Thus, this divine meal was not meant for human consumption, but spiritual. - (H.661)

Stone Buddha Head



PF.5332
Origin: China
Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD
Dimensions: 16" (40.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Stone
Location: United States

A beautiful representation of Buddha with a tight-locked, swirl curl hairstyle, this piece exemplifies the rich iconographic world of Buddhism. Each curl contains a stylized version of the Buddhist symbol of the law 'which resembles a reversed swastika. The conical modeling of the head allows the elaborate display of repetitious hair locks which is considered to be a special mark of a Buddha signifying his superior spiritual knowledge and achievement. Though exhibiting other Buddha-like features, such as pendulant earlobes and lines at the chin and neck, the cranial protuberance of knowledge and enlightenment, ushnisha, appears absent; it is perhaps suggested, however, in the conical formation of the head.

Sung period sculpture is characterized by monumental, blocky forms which convey the essence of heaviness, figuratively relating to one's profundity and resolve. Depicted in a state of meditation, the figure is given a full face, half-crescent eyes, long arched eyebrows, high-bridged nose, and small mouth. The state of calm is clearly conveyed through the Buddha's expression and energy which were intended to instruct and inspire us toward the path of enlightenment. - (PF.5332)

Architectural Tile Featuring a Polo Player



H.707

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions: 11.25" (28.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Style: Song Dynasty

Medium: Painted Terracotta

Location: United States

Architectural Tile Featuring a Polo Player



H.710
Origin: China
Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD
Dimensions: 11" (27.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Style: Song Dynasty
Medium: Painted Terracotta
Location: United States

Architectural Tile Featuring a Polo Player



H.709

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions: 11.25" (28.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Painted Terracotta

Location: United States

Architectural Tile Featuring a Polo Player



H.708

Origin: China

Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD

Dimensions: 11.25" (28.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Painted Terracotta

Location: United States

Architectural Tile Featuring a Polo Player



H.711
Origin: China
Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD
Dimensions: 11.5" (29.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Painted Terracotta
Location: United States

Architectural Tile Featuring a Polo Player



H.712
Origin: China
Circa: 960 AD to 1279 AD
Dimensions: 11.5" (29.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Painted Terracotta
Location: United States

The Song (also spelled Sung) Dynasty partially reunified the country after a period of turmoil following the fall of the T'ang. Historically, the Song are noted for their revival of the ancient Confucian beliefs, ushering a period known as Neo-Confucianism that would dominate Chinese (and later on Japanese) thought for the next several centuries. Although best known for their philosophical contributions, this decorative architectural tile attests to the rich artistic tradition that flourished under the enlightened rulers of the Song Dynasty. Presumably, such tile decorated the tombs of the royal elite and perhaps once adorned their palace during their lifetime. The tile depicts a horse and rider engaged in a polo match colorfully painted with an impressive amount of the original pigment still intact. Polo was a popular aristocratic pastime associated with the royalty, reinforcing the assumption that this tile once decorated a luxurious palace. No doubt, this subject matter reflects the vital importance of the horse in the defense and expansion of the empire as well as in economic matters. The strength and speed of the horse would have aided communication between far away provinces that is an essential factor of maintaining stability in a centralized government. Horses have been fabled creatures throughout Chinese history. In fact, they were venerated as ancestors of the mythological dragon. Horses were vital to defending the borders against barbarian invaders from the north. The need to import stronger and swifter horses from Central Asia (as opposed to the local Mongol Pony) was the primary factor in the establishment of the Silk Road, the economic lifeline of the ancient world that united the Chinese with Mediterranean cultures as early as the Han Dynasty. Clearly, horses were honored throughout Chinese history, a fact most elegantly reflected in their tomb sculptures. This fine painted panel is no exception. Expertly depicting the speed and grace of this majestic creature, this panel is both a splendid work of decorative art as well as a fitting memorial to the revered horse. - (H.707) - (H.710) - (H.709) - (H.708) - (H.711) - (H.712)

Yuan Dynasty

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.

Panel Depicting a Scene of Immortality



H.027

Origin: China

Circa: 1279 AD to 1368 AD

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Stone

Location: United States

The illustrative compositions of this panel are arranged in three successive stages. In the lower stage, an oarsman steers a docking sailboat containing two passengers dressed in scholarly attire engaged in conversation. The spatial and temporal distance is collapsed, imbuing this pictorial scene with the quality of transcendence. The boat quickly arrives at the dock that is represented by stairs leading to the arched entrance of a walled community. Inside the community, which is depicted in the middle stage, ornate pagoda-like structures and gardens rise above the walls that are being protected by guards--one is captured in the position of drawing a bow and arrow. The face of a bearded man wearing a scholar cap can be seen through the window of a tiered structure. The upper stage of the panel appears to represent the heavenly realm of immortality. An energetic man riding a horse swings his arms high in the air grasping the reins of the horse in one hand and an emblem in the other. He is accompanied by an attendant to the rear holding an umbrella and another walking ahead carrying an offering. The panel is decorated with curled patterned borders representing foliage.

Throughout Chinese history, stone panels were created to commemorate the passing of rites or events, often commissioned by wealthy families and patrons. Many of these panels blended mythological Taoist ideas, Buddhist beliefs, and Confucian morality with events of actual life. They provide rich historical data regarding the practice and belief system of any given period in China. - (H.027)

Yuan Stone Panel



H.519

Origin: China

Circa: 1271 AD to 1368 AD

Dimensions: 23.5" (59.7cm) high

Catalogue: V17

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Stone

Location: United States

This stone panel depicts a scene at the "Glorious Pavilion", the inscription located at the center of the panel. A warrior, stylistically portrayed with an elongated neck, angular face and stocky body, is walking as if he is patrolling the pavilion grounds. He rests a sword-like weapon on a layered cape covering his shoulders, which touches the tips of his intricately feathered headdress. Back leg cocked and front leg forward, he seems to convey a sense of movement. His profile is dramatic, drawing attention to his exquisite forehead and nose and long neck. Behind him stands a woman poised in royal finery. Her exaggerated posture emphasizes her beautiful shape and the attractive shawl tied around her hip. She wears a high mid-riff protective garment decorated with various motifs and patterns, boots and an intricate headdress. A second layering of clothing hangs out of this outer layer as she grasps a two-pronged object in her hand. The warrior and woman are separated by a pillar with a young deer licking its coat at the base. The pillar supports the pavilion which looms above the heads of the two figures. Four rotund foundations dangle in the empty space occupied by the figures, seeming to delineate a spatial boundary between them and the pavilion. Luscious trees in bloom arch over the roof as the stele pierces through the treetops maintaining the symmetric balance of the structure. - (H.519)

Yuan Terracotta Relief Panel



H.552

Origin: China

Circa: 1279 AD to 1368 AD

Dimensions: 16" (40.6cm) high

Catalogue: V20

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: UAE

The Yuan developed vigorous depictions of pacing and often winged felines, which were placed in pairs to guard the sacred ways to the royal tombs--a widespread practice during the preceding Sung dynasty as well. In this relief, a lion is pictured crouching over an embroidered ball clenching in its mouth a long twine that is tangled beneath its feet. The lion is not an indigenous animal to China, but it was introduced later in connection with Buddhism, figuring as the defender of law and protector of buildings. It is an emblem of valor and energy that were considered essential to the cultivation of wisdom.

The Chinese lion, despite its big eyes and fierce countenance, is not treated as the supreme predatory animal--a position, rather, held by the tiger which flourishes in the northern hinterland and evokes fear in the hearts and imagination of Chinese people. Instead, the lion is often represented as a mythical beast playing with a ball or sacred gem amidst peony flowers and flexing its beautifully curled mane. This particular representation seems to blend mythical and playful characteristics, creating a scene that is not only awe-inspiring but informative of the animal innocent yet righteous nature. - (H.552)

Terracotta Relief Sculpture



PF.4360

Origin: China

Circa: 1279 AD to 1368 AD

Dimensions: 16.25" (41.3cm) high

Catalogue: V22

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Terracotta

Location: UAE

This panel depicts the encounter between the tiger and dragon, two powerful animals of Chinese cosmogony and legend. On the left side, the serpentine-bodied dragon slithers down from heaven, keeping its hind legs attached to the clouds and propelling itself on waves crashing against a rocky surface. This dragon is an amalgamation of beastly qualities, possessing the horns of a deer, scales of a carp, claws of hawk, palm of a tiger, torso of a snake and belly of a frog. The tiger rules in the terrain of dense forests and steep mountains, emerging from its lair to confront this celestial force. Its body is short and muscular, its forelegs and hind legs decorated in a spiral motif and stripes depicted by neatly aligned horizontal markings. Its protruding eyes, rounded face and stylistic nose give the tiger a human quality, as it growls in response to the dragon's fierce roar.

The fifth animal of the Twelve Terrestrial Branches, the dragon is an mythological creature that descends from heaven to lurk the waterways of the world, meting out the good from the evil and exerting beneficial influence on mankind. The dragon symbolizes vigilance, grandeur and worldly success as it is used as a motif in imperial regalia and official decorum. There are many representations of the dragon, each suggesting various meanings. The five-clawed dragon refers to the King, while the transformation of the carp into a dragon is a metaphor of scholarly achievement.

The tiger, the third of the Twelve Terrestrial Branches, is supreme among animals of the real world that roam the earth. It is taken as the emblem of magisterial dignity and sternness, as the model for the courage and fierceness that should characterize a soldier, and its presence or roar is synonymous with danger and terror. In this scene, the dragon and tiger meet, symbolizing the confrontation between the two great forces of the universe: heaven and earth. - (PF.4360)

Gilt Stucco Head of Kuan-Yin



H.049
Origin: China
Circa: 960 AD to 1644 AD

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Gilt Stucco
Location: United States

Cast in exquisite detail, this sculpture of Kuan-Yin is applied with red and black lacquer and gilt in the face and black and blue pigment in the headdress. Her oval face, aquiline nose, pursed lips, and delicately shaped downcast eyes make up her benevolent expression. A circular impression on her forehead represents the urna, a Buddhist mark signifying spiritual enlightenment. Elongated earlobes, another Buddhist mark, symbolized overabundant generosity. Bodhisattvas and Kuan-Yin figures were often adorned with jeweled earrings and other dazzling adornments, as may have once been the case with this figure. A distinctive feature of Kuan-Yin is her elaborate headdress—in this piece depicted by a triangular-shaped tiara, centered on the image of Amitaba Buddha holding a bowl amongst foliate sprigs. The tiara is delicately constructed piece by piece, held together by wiring exposed in some areas. The hair is combed and tied up in a knot encircled by the large crown.

The Kuan-Yin is part of the Buddhist constellation of Bodhisattvas, devotees who have attained enlightenment but traverse the earth to promote the teachings of Buddha. Through divine example of guidance, the Bodhisattvas communicate with the people, helping them cope with the difficulties of life and attain some measure of spiritual cultivation. Thus, they have become popular subjects for representation, sometimes combining their attributes with characterizations of indigenous deities or religious beliefs. Kuan-Yin has a strong feminine presence in Chinese art as she is also referred to as the Goddess of Mercy, named after her attributes of compassion and pity. - (H. 049)

Yuan Painted Terracotta Head of a Lohan



H.832
Origin: China
Circa: 1264 AD to 1368 AD
Dimensions: 10.5" (26.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Painted Terracotta
Location: United States

Even today, when entering the main hall of a Buddhist temple in China, one will discover two rows of sculpted figures, traditionally numbering eighteen in total. These figures are known as the Eighteen Lohan. Lohan is the Chinese term, derived from the Sanskrit word Arhan, for a disciple or follower of Buddha who has reached a state of enlightenment. The Lohan had been a popular subject in Chinese art at least since the cultural flourishing of the T'ang Dynasty. Traditionally, they are always produced in sets of sixteen or eighteen. The numerical difference is a result of discrepancies in Buddhist texts. By the Song Dynasty, artists began to depict each Lohan with individualized facial features. The creases of this Lohan's face are clearly defined, revealing the years of his long life. A small mound rises from his wrinkled forehead, called an ushnisa, which is a symbol of his universal wisdom. His head is painted white, highlighted with pink for his lips and black for his pupils and eyebrows. - (H. 832)

Stone Panel with Sanskrit Inscription



LA.515A

Origin: China

Circa: 13 th Century AD to
14 th Century AD

Dimensions: 19" (48.3cm) high x 30" (76.2cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Stone

Location: Great Britain

Buddhism in China experienced a revival during the Yuan period, reversing centuries of decline and repression following the Great Persecution of 845 A.D. Unlike the native Chinese rulers of the later Tang period who viewed Buddhism as a corrupting foreign influence, the Yuan rulers, like most of their fellow Mongol Khanates, were much more tolerant of religious diversity. Under the Yuan, Tibetan Buddhism was declared an official religion of China and Tibetan lamas were invited to the royal courts. Texts were translated and elements of Buddhism were fused with native Taoist and Confucian traditions. However, this revival was short-lived, as once the Ming Dynasty overthrew the Yuan, they expelled the lamas from the court and denounced this form of Buddhism as unorthodox. - (LA.515A)

Yuan Dynasty Sandstone 'Lohan' head



DL.992
Origin: China
Circa: 1260 AD to 1368 AD
Dimensions: 10.25" (26.0cm) high x
6" (15.2cm) wide

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

Even today, when entering the main hall of a Buddhist temple in China, one will discover two rows of sculpted figures, traditionally numbering eighteen in total. These figures are known as the Eighteen Lohan. Lohan is the Chinese term, derived from the Sanskrit word Arhan, for a disciple or follower of Buddha who has reached a state of enlightenment. The Lohan had been a popular subject in Chinese art at least since the cultural flourishing of the Tang Dynasty. Traditionally, they are always produced in sets of sixteen or eighteen. The numerical difference is a result of discrepancies in Buddhist texts. By the Song Dynasty, artists began to depict each Lohan with individualized facial features. This superb example is distinctive for its long face and heavy eyebrows. A small mound, called an ushnisa, rises from the forehead symbolizing the Lohan's universal wisdom. The sculpture is in excellent condition and a superb testament to the piety of the Yuan era. (AM) - (DL.992)

Yuan Dynasty Sandstone 'Bodhisattva' Head



DL.993
Origin: China
Circa: 1260 AD to 1368 AD
Dimensions: 10" (25.4cm) high x
6.75" (17.1cm) wide

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

In the Buddhist religion bodhisattvas are souls who have attained enlightenment and no longer need to reincarnate. Despite this freedom, they choose to forsake nirvana and return to the earthly sphere in order to alleviate the suffering of others. This beautiful Yuan Dynasty sandstone 'bodhisattva' head is from a temple in the 'Sichuan Province'. It is likely that this fragment was once attached to a body, the whole of which probably stood in a niche in the temple. The head is crowned in a magnificent, complex headdress that reveals the figure's prestigious social stature. The full face, half-open eyes and gentle smile are endearing and remind us of the sacrifice this bodhisattva has made to assist others. (AM) - (DL.993)

Yuan Dynasty Sandstone 'Buddha' Head



DL.994

Origin: China

Circa: 1260 AD to 1368 AD

Dimensions: 7.50" (19.1cm) high x
6.10" (15.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Sandstone

Condition: Extra Fine

Location: UAE

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 exceptional sandstone head is from a temple in Sichuan Province. The Buddha has a round, full face suggestive of his spiritual fulfillment. An inner calm and complacency is visible on his face, in his closed eyelids and in his sweet smile. His elongated right earlobe droops down, the sagging caused by wearing heavy earrings as an infant, reflecting his royal origins. His left earlobe is concealed by the remains of a hand placed against the side of the head. This fragment was most likely originally part of a full-figure sculpture once revered inside a temple or shrine. The mystical energy and divine wisdom of the Buddha radiates from within this sculpture. (AM) - (DL.994)

Yuan Dynasty Sandstone 'Lohan' Head



DL.996
Origin: China
Circa: 1260 AD to 1368 AD
Dimensions: 8.46" (21.5cm) high x
7" (17.8cm) wide

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

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Yuan Cizhou Ware Wine Jar



PF.5518
Origin: China
Circa: 1350 AD to 1450 AD
Dimensions: 26.25" (66.7cm) high

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

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.

Formed with a rolled rim to the cylindrical neck and an elongated ovoid body tapering inward above the flat base, the tan fabric covered with a colorless glaze over white slip painted in iron brown pigments with a wide feathery leaf band beneath narrower wavy line, bands above and below inscriptions on the shoulder. - (PF.5518)

Yuan Dynasty Stucco Buddha Head



AM.0129

Origin: China

Circa: 1260 AD to 1368 AD

Dimensions: 25" (63.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Stucco

Location: Great Britain

The first evidence of the development of Buddhism in China dates to the early period of the Han Dynasty in the 2nd Century BC. It was the trade conducted along the myriad of caravan routes, usually referred to collectively as the 'Silk Road', that helped to transmit this faith from India to China. Progress was gradual as Buddhism had to contend with the indigenous belief systems, Daoism and Confucianism. By the period of the Tang Dynasty (618-906 AD) however it was firmly established and Chinese artists had developed a sophisticated range of styles and forms to deal with the demand for images.

This large stucco Buddha head was produced during the Yuan Dynasty, probably dating to the fourteenth century. It is exceptional for its size and polychromy. The face and elongated ears (a reference to the heavy jewellery that the Buddha used to wear before enlightenment) have been gilded in gold. The red undercoat that was placed beneath the gilding to add to the warmth to the gold is now visible in many places. Although unintentional, the effect is dramatic especially given the contrast with the blue pointed curls that adorn the head. The conventional protuberance, or ushnisha, is clearly visible at the top. The pupils of the downcast eyes are inlaid with a black stone and there are traces of black paint on the eyebrows and moustache. The head is in excellent condition with only minor repairs to some of the pointed curls on the reverse. It would make a striking and colourful addition to any collection. - (AM.0129)

Buddhist Reliquary with Sanskrit Inscriptions



SF.226
Origin: China
Circa: 1200 AD to 1400 AD
Dimensions: 9" (22.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art
Medium: Terracotta
Location: Great Britain

Stone Panel with Sanskrit Inscription



LA.515B

Origin: China

Circa: 13 th Century AD to
14 th Century AD

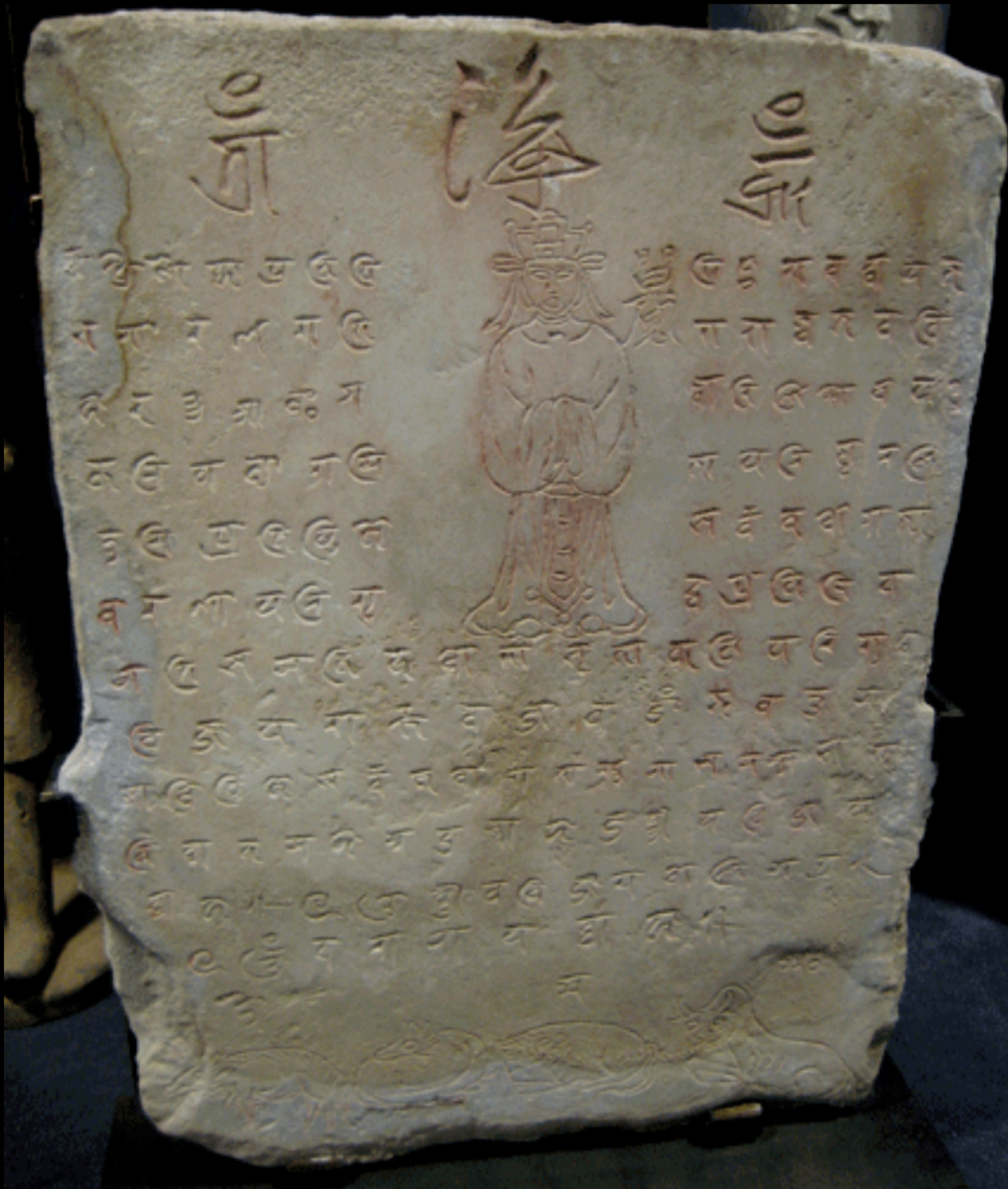
Dimensions: 19.2" (48.8cm) high x 30.5" (77.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Stone

Location: Great Britain

Stone Panel with Sanskrit Inscription



LA.515C

Origin: China

Circa: 13 th Century AD to
14 th Century AD

Dimensions: 23.75" (60.3cm) high x 17" (43.2cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Stone

Location: Great Britain

Stone Panel with Sanskrit Inscription



LA.515E

Origin: China

Circa: 13 th Century AD to
14 th Century AD

Dimensions: 23" (58.4cm) high x 18.2" (46.2cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Stone

Location: Great Britain

Buddhism in China experienced a revival during the Yuan period, reversing centuries of decline and repression following the Great Persecution of 845 A.D. Unlike the native Chinese rulers of the later Tang period who viewed Buddhism as a corrupting foreign influence, the Yuan rulers, like most of their fellow Mongol Khanates, were much more tolerant of religious diversity. Under the Yuan, Tibetan Buddhism was declared an official religion of China and Tibetan lamas were invited to the royal courts. Texts were translated and elements of Buddhism were fused with native Taoist and Confucian traditions. However, this revival was short-lived, as once the Ming Dynasty overthrew the Yuan, they expelled the lamas from the court and denounced this form of Buddhism as unorthodox. - (SF.226) - (LA.515B) - (LA.515C) - (LA.515E)

Stone Panel with Sanskrit Inscription



LA.515D

Origin: China

Circa: 13 th Century AD to
14 th Century AD

Dimensions: 23.5" (59.7cm) high x
19.5" (49.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Style: Yuan Dynasty

Medium: Stone

Location: Great Britain

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