

THE BARAKAT GALLERY

Chinese Art

Zhou Dynasty
1046 BC - 256 BC
Warring States Period
480 BCE to 221 BCE



Zhou Dynasty

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.

Thus began the second period, the Eastern Zhou Dynasty, also known as the Spring and Autumn Period, a name taken from one of the oldest histories of China which was recorded by season. Along the road to Chengzhou, the Zhou relied upon the aid of the powerful Qin and Jin states to secure their escape. Yet, once the Eastern Zhou was established, infighting and succession struggles plagued the house and the Zhou were never able to recapture their ancient dominance, merely ruling in name alone. Instead, a coalition of powerful states, including the Qi and Chu in addition to the Qin and Jin, ruled ancient China. However, by the 5th Century B.C., internal quarrels began to shake the foundations of these independent states and the peace that characterized most of their coexistence began to rapidly disintegrate, culminating in the brutal defeat of the Qi, an event that ushered in the appropriately named Warring States Period.

Eastern Zhou Bronze Yan Steamer



H.654

Origin: China

Circa: 771 BC to 256 BC

Dimensions: 15.25" (38.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Style: Eastern Zhou Dynasty

Medium: Bronze

Location: United States

This two-part bronze steamer (alternately known as a Yan or Xian) was discovered buried inside the tomb of an elite member of the Zhou Dynasty. The raised four-legged vessel at the bottom (individually known as a Li) would have been filled with water and placed over a fire. As the water boiled, the steam would rise upwards through the grated opening of the upper vessel, where it would cook the food contained within. No doubt, modern culinary techniques have altered little from this ancient device.

However, this work is remarkable not so much for the sophisticated culinary culture of the Zhou, as much as for the beauty and sophistication of the design. The shape of the rare four-legged Li appears to be fairly zoomorphic, similar to a quadruped with thick, stout legs, such as an elephant. Likewise, the small loop handles could then be interpreted as curling tails. Furthermore, the exterior sides of the flaring food container have been elegantly decorated in low relief with abstract swirling patterns divided into two bands. Such decorative elements are typical of the Zhou period.

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.654)

Eastern Zhou Bronze Ding with Lid



H.1098

Origin: China

Circa: 770 BC to 475 BC

Dimensions:

19" (48.3cm) high x 17.5" (44.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Bronze

Location: Great Britain

A ding is essentially a tripod vessel with two raised handles. Originally, the ding was utilized for cooking meats, hung over a fire by its handles. Later, the function of the ding would evolve from the preparation of foods to the presentation and serving of foods at certain rites and festivals. Dings with inscription were primarily used for offering sacrifices to the gods. Their sheer size and stately proportions convey an impression of confidence and majesty, symbolizing both wealth and statehood. - (H. 1098)

Eastern Zhou/Western Han Inlaid Bronze Belt Hook



SP.604

Origin: China

Circa:

4 th Century BC to 2 nd Century BC

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Bronze

Location: United States

Warring States Period

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.

Western Han Bronze Bian Hu



FZ.343

Origin: China

Circa: 270 BC to 9 AD

Dimensions:

11" (27.9cm) high x 12" (30.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Bronze

Location: UAE

This oval shaped Bian Hu bronze vessel is decorated with a Taotie ring holder mask chain- linked to lid through the mouth of a two-ended dragon. Due to the tumultuous times, the exact date of this vessel is hard to determine but influences from the Late Warring State/Qin transitional period and vestiges of the tradition of ritual practice is evident in the workmanship. Bronze was an especially valued material during the Warring States period for its sturdy, solid attributes to be used in casting ritual vessels and weaponry. With the victory of so-called barbarian Qin, the primary goal for the new rulers continued to be military conquest and consolidation. They introduced a new system of politics based on the ethical doctrines of Legalism which taught frugality in mortuary practices as well as in life. Thus, the hint of simplicity in this ritual vessel reflects the conservative and utilitarian thrust that emerged as a result of conversion to a new dynastic order. Used as an offering vessel in ancestral mourning and worshipping ceremonies, the Bian Hu represented one of the many styles of Hu vessels. Its simplistic beauty and symbolic representations of the dragon, a creature of power and royalty, and the Taotie, a mysterious animal-like motif common in all Chinese ancient art, must still generate reactions of awe and veneration for those who behold its essence as holy. - (FZ.343)

Warring States/ Western Han Bronze Sculpture of a Mythological Beast



FZ.347

Origin: China

Circa:

3 rd Century BC to 2 nd Century BC

Dimensions: 5.5" (14.0cm) high

Catalogue: V22

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Bronze

Location: UAE

This anthropomorphic representation of a guardian beast conveys the embodiment of prowess and valor during the internecine war period of early China. As it lunges backward on its hind legs to amass strength, the animal roars ferociously intimidating us with its raised paw as if it were to tear an enemy into shreds with one swoop of its mighty foreleg. The chest is muscular and wide, its forelegs winged, and paws clawed revealing its awesome composition of the best attributes of the four classes of beasts. Lips curled back, it flashes its long fangs and flares its nostrils. Detailed eyebrows accentuate its bulging eyes that are said to have extraordinary vision to "see evil." The snout is flat and horns are tapered to its forehead. These fabulous creatures of West Asian inspiration often stood guard at royal mausoleums, performing an evil-averting function. They were also thought to serve as righteous guardians of justice and order. - (FZ.347)

Warring States Gilt Bronze Bowl



H.645
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 6" (15.2cm) wide

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Gilt Bronze
Location: United States

This gorgeous bowl is the epitome of luxury. Even during the tumultuous, chaotic times of the Warring States, wealthy nobles still sought to surround themselves with beauty, both in this world and the next. In this era of ancient China, the afterlife was viewed as an extension (and perfection) of our earthly existence. This belief resulted in the creation of mingqi, literally translated as: “objects for the next world.” Elite members of the social hierarchy were interred with elaborate imitations of their earthly dwellings. Architectural models, guardians and warriors, attendants and musicians, livestock, furniture, and cooking utensils rendered in all media are commonly discovered in such tombs. These various replicas served a variety of functions. They partly symbolized the wealth and class of the deceased, as well they attested to the familial piety of the descendants who arranged and commissioned (often to the point of financial uncertainty) the works.

However, the mingqi do not simply reflect the earthly wealth of the deceased and his family, for they also serve a vital function in the afterlife. Human figures provided company and security while herd of livestock provided food and sustenance throughout eternity. Stoves and utensils were entombed to prepare feasts and celebrations as well as wine and grain storage vessels. The courtly entourage and ceremonial hardware would accompany the deceased into the afterlife. This gilt bronze bowl is a splendid example of mingqi. It is possible too that this bowl was treasured in life and not specifically created to be buried (as most of the terracotta sculptures and utensils were). The fact that this bowl may have been valued as much in life as in the afterlife makes it that much more splendid. Such a bowl would have been likely used as a wine tasting cup, a required object for any proper feast or ceremony. Elegantly decorated with incised geometric and curvilinear motifs, this bowl was surely the much-admired centerpiece of ancient ceremonial rituals both in this world and in the next. - (H.645)

Warring States Terracotta Hu with Incised Decorations



H.672
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 15" (38.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Although the Warring States Period was marked by almost constant upheaval, it also represents a golden age of Chinese culture and thought. Needless to say, the arts continued to flourish as this exquisite terracotta Hu reveals. Such a vessel would have been used for storing, transporting, and serving fine wines. The neck has been divided into bands of various widths, some of which feature an incised pattern of subtle undulating lines that give the impression of the waves of the ocean. Meanwhile, the shoulder of the body has been decorated with an intricate incised panel. Groups of lovebirds roost close together among stylized foliate motifs. The texture of the birds' feathers has been replicated by a series of tiny dots that stand out against the smooth glaze of the vessel. This band is interrupted by two Tao Tieh mask handles, one on either side of the body. These masks are a common feature on such vessels and represent stylized dragon heads. Although the handles that emerge from their mouths are sometimes functional, they are generally decorative and reveal the influence previous bronze examples had on their terracotta replicas. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this Hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel 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 Ancient China, both in this world and the next. - (H.672)

Warring States Glazed Terracotta Vessel



H.806
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 11" (27.9cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Although the Warring States Period was marked by almost constant upheaval, it also represents a golden age of Chinese culture and thought. Needless to say, the arts continued to flourish as this exquisite terracotta vessel reveals. Such a container would have been used for storing, transporting, and serving fine wines or grains. The upper half of the body has been divided into sections by a series of ribbed bands. As well, the vessel features two Tao Tieh mask handles, one on either side of the body. These masks are a common feature on such vessels and represent stylized dragon heads. It is possible that a handle, fabricated in a material that decomposed over the centuries, was once connected to these handles. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine or grain storage container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this vessel would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel 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 Ancient China, both in this world and the next. - (H.806)

Warring States Glazed Terracotta Vessel



H.807

Origin: China

Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC

Dimensions: 12.5" (31.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese

Style: Warring States

Medium: Glazed Terracotta

Location: United States

Although the Warring States Period was marked by almost constant upheaval, it also represents a golden age of Chinese culture and thought. Needless to say, the arts continued to flourish as this exquisite terracotta vessel reveals. Such a container would have been used for storing, transporting, and serving fine wines or grains. Almost the entire exterior of this wide vessel has been covered in a gorgeous incised pattern of closely grouped vertical lines. These groups have been arranged in a grid-like pattern that creates a rhythmic flow across the surface. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine or grain storage container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this vessel would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel 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 Ancient China, both in this world and the next. - (H.807)

Warring States Glazed Terracotta Hu



H.808
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 17.5" (44.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Although the Warring States Period was marked by almost constant upheaval, it also represents a golden age of Chinese culture and thought. Needless to say, the arts continued to flourish as this exquisite terracotta Hu reveals. Such a vessel would have been used for storing, transporting, and serving fine wines. The gently flaring neck has been decorated with two bands of incised undulating lines that give the impression of the waves of the ocean. This pattern has been repeated along the shoulder and upper half of the body. The lower half of the vessel has been left unadorned and unglazed as is typical for this period. Two small handles have been attached, emerge from either side and are almost purely decorative, imitating functional handles seen on bronze examples. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this Hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel 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 Ancient China, both in this world and the next. - (H. 808)

Warring States Glazed Terracotta Hu



H.809
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 17.75" (45.1cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Although the Warring States Period was marked by almost constant upheaval, it also represents a golden age of Chinese culture and thought. Needless to say, the arts continued to flourish as this exquisite terracotta Hu reveals. Such a vessel would have been used for storing, transporting, and serving fine wines. The sharply flaring neck has been decorated with two bands featuring an incised pattern of undulating lines that give the impression of the waves of the ocean. Meanwhile, the shoulder and upper half of the body have been adorned with an intricate incised abstracted foliate patterns and ribbed rings that slightly protrude from the vessel's surface. Two small handles emerge from either side and are most likely decorative, imitating functional handles seen on bronze examples. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this Hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel 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 Ancient China, both in this world and the next. - (H.809)

Warring States Glazed Terracotta Hu



H.810
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 14.25" (36.2cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Glazed Terracotta
Location: United States

Although the Warring States Period was marked by almost constant upheaval, it also represents a golden age of Chinese culture and thought. Needless to say, the arts continued to flourish as this exquisite terracotta Hu reveals. Such a vessel would have been used for storing, transporting, and serving fine wines. The flaring neck has been decorated with two bands featuring an incised pattern of undulating lines that give the impression of the waves of the ocean. The body has been decorated with a series of three ribbed bands that slightly protrude from the surface of the vessel. Two small handles emerge from either side and are most likely decorative, imitating functional handles seen on bronze examples. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this Hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel 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 Ancient China, both in this world and the next. - (H.810)

Warring States Bronze Fang Hu with Lid



H.1012
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 13.5" (34.3cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

The angular contours of this vessel distinguish it from other vessels used to hold liquids for ceremonial use. Its large voluminous shape with a protruding belly and tapered neck make it suitable for storage as well. As opposed to the common hu, this vessel comes equipped with a decorative lid mounted with highly stylized “s”-shaped images of animals, possibly of a snake or swan. This refined fang hu is essentially unadorned, save for two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles that have been attached to the swelling body. These stylized animals represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation demonstrates, as well as the incised patterns, the influence of previous styles such as the Zhou Dynasty.

Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of green hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to this otherwise sparsely adorned vessel. Bronze vessels served an important role in the world of rites and ritual as well as in the realm of men who longed for expensive bronze ware to demonstrate their power and prestige. Although this vessel would have served as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this fang hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel 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 Warring States Period, both in this world and the next. - (H.1012)

Warring States Bronze Hu



H.1011
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 18.25" (46.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

Warring States Bronze Hu



H.1010
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 18.25" (46.4cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

This bronze hu would have functioned as a ritual container for the storage and transport of sumptuous wines. The surface of the body has been divided by three groups of horizontal bands. Two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles have been attached to the lower shoulder of the hu. These stylized animal heads depict a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation demonstrates the influence of previous styles such as the Zhou Dynasty. Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of alternating green and turquoise hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to this otherwise sparsely adorned vessel.

Such a work, forged from bronze, would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the social hierarchy. Quite simply, only a court nobility of wealthy merchants could afford such a luxury. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel 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 ancient China, both in this world and the next. - (H.1011) - (H.1010)

Warring States Bronze Hu



H.985
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 12.5" (31.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: UAE

This bronze hu would have functioned as a ritual container for the storage and transport of sumptuous wines. The surface of the body and base has been divided into horizontal bands that are decorated with intricate incised designs of abstract swirling forms. The neck features similar decoration, however divided into elongated triangular frames. Two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles have been attached to the lower shoulder of the hu. These stylized animals represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation demonstrates, as well as the incised patterns, the influence of previous styles such as the Zhou Dynasty. A lid caps this hu, embellished with similar incised motif and crowned by three stylized representations of zoomorphic horned creatures that might represent oxen or dragons.

Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of alternating green and turquoise hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to this otherwise sparsely adorned vessel. Such a work, forged from bronze, would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the social hierarchy. Quite simply, only a court noble or wealthy merchant could afford such a luxury. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel 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 ancient China, both in this world and the next. - (H.985)

Warring States Bronze Hu



H.984
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 12" (30.5cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: UAE

This bronze hu would have functioned as a ritual container for the storage and transport of sumptuous wines. The surface of the body and base has been divided into horizontal bands that are decorated with intricate incised designs of abstract swirling forms. The neck features similar decoration, however divided into elongated triangular frames. Two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles have been attached to the lower shoulder of the hu. These stylized animals represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation reveals the influence of previous styles such as the Zhou Dynasty. Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of alternating green and turquoise hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures.

Such a work, forged from bronze, would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the social hierarchy. Quite simply, only a court noble or wealthy merchant could afford such a luxury. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel 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 ancient China, both in this world and the next. - (H.984)

Warring States Bronze Fang Hu with Lid



H.983
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 12.5" (31.8cm) high

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

The angular contours of this vessel distinguish it from other vessels used to hold liquids for ceremonial use. Its large voluminous shape with a protruding belly and tapered neck make it suitable for storage as well. This refined fang hu is essentially unadorned, save for two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles that have been attached to the swelling body. These stylized animals represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation demonstrates, as well as the incised patterns, the influence of previous styles such as the Zhou Dynasty. This vessel also comes equipped with a decorative lid mounted with highly stylized “s”-shaped images of animals, possibly of a snake or swan.

Over the ages, the bronze has acquired a fabulous patina of rich green hues, adding both delightful colors and pleasing textures to this otherwise sparsely adorned vessel. Bronze vessels served an important role in the world of rites and ritual as well as in the realm of men who longed for expensive bronze ware to demonstrate their power and prestige. Although this vessel would have served as a wine container, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this fang hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel 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 Warring States that flourished in spite of the chaotic nature of the times. - (H.983)

Warring States Bronze Spear Head



X.0226

Origin: China

Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC

Dimensions:

11.375" (28.9cm) high x 3.125" (7.9cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Bronze

Location: United States

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. Although this period was marked by almost constant upheaval, the Warring States also represents a golden age of Chinese culture and thought. This magnificent bronze spearhead is a perfect symbol of both the battles and the beauty of the age. Although the wooden shaft has long since disappeared, ravaged by the forces of time, we can still imagine this weapon being wielded in the hands of ancient Chinese warrior. The blade of the spear head features an openwork motif that is both decorative as well as functional, since it decreases the weight of the bronze, making the spear cheaper to produce and lighter to throw. - (X.0226)

Carving of Zoomorphic Animal



SP.165
Origin: China
Circa:
5 th Century BCE to 4 th Century BCE
Dimensions: 5.75" (14.6cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art
Medium: Jade/ Nephrite
Location: United States

Chinese Jade Axe Head



SP.568

Origin: China

Circa:

5 th Century BCE to 1 st Century BCE

Dimensions: 5.5" (14.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Jade

Location: United States

Warring States Glazed Terracotta Vessel



SP.577
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 9.25" (23.5cm) high

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

Warring States Bronze Fang Hu



TF.023

Origin: China

Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC

Dimensions:

14" (35.6cm) high x 7.75" (19.7cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Bronze

Location: Great Britain

Warring States/Han Dynasty Gilt Bronze Horse



PF.4502
Origin: China
Circa:
4 th Century BC to 1 st Century BC

Collection: Chinese Art
Medium: Gilt Bronze
Location: United States

This stunning horse, wrought in bronze and plated in gold, is a thrilling example of Warring- States era craftsmanship at its finest. The Mongolian horse, native to China, stands in proud repose- its sturdy legs firmed into the ground, its neck arching into its diamond shaped face. His hind legs, bulging with muscle, are set far apart, giving him a truly regal bearing. To the Chinese, the horse was everything. A symbol of prosperity, a beast of burden, a steed of war, and a prized show-animal all in one race. The glorious musculature and expression of this piece are a testament to Chinese worksmanship and creativity. Truly the beast immortalized in this piece was worthy of the cautious hands of its artist. Looking at it, we almost expect to hear a metallic clink of hooves, and a rattling whicker coming from its delicate form. It continues to charm us with its presence today, a vibrant example of how the appreciation of the ancients, and that of our own, can sometimes be so very similar. - (MR.010/pf.4502)

Warring States Bronze Hu Vessel



H.1099
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 13.25" (33.7cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art
Medium: Bronze
Location: UAE

This bronze hu would have functioned as a ritual container for the storage and transport of sumptuous wines. The surface of the body has been divided into horizontal bands that are decorated with designs of zigzagging lines rendered in low relief. The neck features a row of triangular indentations below the lip. Two decorative Tao Tieh mask handles have been attached to the lower shoulder of the hu. These stylized animals represent a type of dragon found in Chinese mythology. Their abstracted representation reveals the influence of previous styles such as the Zhou Dynasty. Such a work, forged from bronze, would have been the treasured possession of an elite member of the social hierarchy. Although this vessel would have functioned as a wine container in life, it was found discovered buried in a tomb. A symbol for the bountiful pleasures of life, for drinking and feasting, this hu would have represented the joys to be experienced in the afterlife and the feasts and celebrations yet to come. Today, this vessel 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 ancient China, both in this world and the next. - (H.1099)

Silver Gilt Winged Ram



OS.104

Origin: China

Circa: 500 BC to 400 BC

Dimensions:

1.15" (2.9cm) high x 3.75" (9.5cm) wide

Collection: Chinese Art

Medium: Silver Gilt

Location: Great Britain

Warring States Period Bronze Zoomorphic
Figure



AM.143 (LSO)
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions:
4" (10.2cm) high x 4.6" (11.7cm) wide

Collection: Chinese
Medium: Bronze
Location: United States

This snarling creature – with dog, dragon and felid characteristics – dates to a fascinating stage in Chinese history known as the Warring States period. The preceding Zhou Dynasty ran alongside for some time, although it was in its death throes by this point. The Warring States were characterised by local warlords' tendency to invade and hold neighbouring states, leading to the development of seven enormous polities. As they were not halted, they rose above their station as “dukes” and began to call themselves kings (between 325 and 299 BC), thus technically equal to the Zhou king himself. This moment saw the end of the Zhou dynasty. All the main states were riddled by internal intrigue and power struggles as coalition after coalition failed to stabilise the growing state of anarchy.

It was the comparatively minor state of Qin, which had been internally reformed in 359 BC, that started to emerge as a clear leader. By the time the other states had stopped squabbling, the Qin had become so powerful that even their united strength could not overcome it. A string of battles ensued throughout the third century BC, and although the Qin's status as most powerful state was assured by 260 BC, it took them until 221 BC to bring about the unification of China under a single yoke. Although they were vulnerable at many points, they were able to consolidate their win thanks to the fact that, even in this situation, the remaining minor states – now reduced to ciphers – were still skirmishing with each other.

The martial atmosphere of the period saw a massive acceleration in army technology, especially characterised by the increased use of iron, replacing bronze as the main material of choice. Chariots persisted for some time, but were largely overshadowed by the development of fast-moving cavalry units that were of greater use in the skirmishing tactics that characterised the period. For the same reason, crossbows and dagger-axes were very popular, as were trousers, which made their first appearance in China in about 307 BC. Philosophy of the Dao tradition became widespread, and, perhaps unsurprisingly in light of the spirit of the times, the philosophy of warfare became a highly developed tradition; Sun Tzu's “The Art of War” is still viewed as the ultimate in the genre. There was less emphasis on artistic developments in this restless and uncertain time, but instead a stylistic reiteration of traditional forms, especially those linked with the iconography of war and other martial matters. As many of the battalions and armies used icons to represent themselves, items such as this would have been much in demand.

The animal is portrayed stretching its long, sinewy figure, curling up its head and tail and arching its back sensuously. It is perhaps most doglike, but is evocative of various animals that would have had significance for the person who commissioned the sculpture from a professional artist. The quality of the workmanship is superb. The limbs are rendered as muscular masses that are flawlessly integrated into the trunk of the creature. While not unanatomical, the flow and ebb of the figure's lines lend a sinuous and expressionistic quality that heightens the languid power of the animal and the delicacy of the portrayal. The curl at the back of the head counterbalances the spiral of the arched tail, and the entirety of the portrayal is completed by the irregular patina with the high quality bronze beneath.

The function of this piece is uncertain, but it may have been mounted as a talisman, or carried, in order that its perceived qualities could assist the owner with whatever mission he was embarked upon. This is a remarkable piece from a turbulent and uncertain time in world history. - (AM.143 (LSO))

Warring States Small Bronze Ding



CK.0057

Origin: China

Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC

Dimensions:

3.875" (9.8cm) high x 5.25" (13.3cm) wide

Collection: Chinese

Medium: Bronze

Location: United States

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. Although this period was marked by almost constant upheaval, the Warring States also represents a golden age of Chinese culture and thought.

A ding is essentially a tripod vessel with two raised handles. Originally, the ding was utilized for cooking meats, hung over a fire by its handles. Later, the function of the ding would evolve from the preparation of foods to the presentation and serving of foods at certain rites and festivals. Dings with inscription were primarily used for offering sacrifices to the gods. The diminutive scale of this particular ding suggests that it must have been created for ritual, not practical, purposes. The funerary arts evolved over the ages in China to provide the deceased for all their potential needs in the afterlife. Presumably, this ding would have offered sustenance throughout eternity. - (CK.0057)

Pair of Warring States Bronze Ornaments



LK.181
Origin: China
Circa: 475 BC to 221 BC
Dimensions: 24" (61.0cm) high

Collection: Chinese Art
Medium: Bronze
Location: Great Britain

These large and impressive bronze pieces date to a fascinating stage in Chinese history known as the Warring States period, which ran from 475 to 221 BC. They are a pair of mounts/handles, which were designed to be mounted on either a chariot, or – more likely, given their large size – the door of an elite house. They are essentially identical. Each comprises a scone decorated with floral and zoomorphic scrollwork in the general form of a dragon's or lion's head. The centre is reinforced to provide support for the arched handle that protrudes from the base of the piece. This arcs around so that the far end is contained within a separate ring, decorated with snakes and floral motifs. The patina is deep and comprehensive, and has been assessed as genuine by our restorers.

The Warring States were characterised by local warlords' tendency to invade and hold neighbouring states, leading to the development of seven enormous polities. The leaders of each group adopted the title of king, thus spelling the end of the faltering Zhou dynasty. All the main states were riddled by internal intrigue and power struggles as coalition after coalition failed to stabilise the growing state of anarchy. It was the comparatively minor state of Qin that emerged as a clear leader. By the time the other states had stopped squabbling, the Qin had become so powerful that even their united strength could not overcome it. Although the Qin's status as most powerful state was assured by 260 BC, it took them until 221 BC to bring about the unification of China under a single yoke.

The martial atmosphere of the period saw a massive acceleration in army technology. Iron replaced bronze as the main material of choice. Chariots became overshadowed by the development of fast-moving cavalry units, and crossbows and dagger-axes became very popular, as were trousers, which made their first appearance in about 307 BC. Daoism became widespread, and the philosophy of warfare became a highly developed tradition; Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" is still viewed as the ultimate in the genre. Artistically, there was innovation for the emerging aristocracy, although many stylistic traditions persisted. Regalia for warfare and martial leaders were particularly notable.

These outstanding objects would have graced the property of a very important member of the elite who ruled during these troubled times. They are a dynamic and decorative piece of ancient Chinese art. - (LK.181)

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