

**Ancient Chinese Bronze Vessels,  
Gilt Bronzes  
and Early Ceramics**



Oriental Bronzes Ltd  
Christian Deydier

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By appointment

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1

**EARTHENWARE TRIPOD VESSEL (*LI*)**

Neolithic Period, Gansu Province

Late Yangshao Culture

Xindian type, 1800 - 1400 BC

Height: 8.8 cm.

Painted pottery *li* formed by three hollow mammiform lobes, each ending in a teated foot and surmounted by a small handle.

The neck and the three handles have red and black horizontal and vertical painted lines. Each lobe is decorated with alternating red and black lines in a double loop converging on the base of the handle and above inverted V's.

**Similar example:**

— Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, illustrated in *BMFEA*, Stockholm, 1943, volume 15, plate 172-1.



2

**EARTHENWARE TWIN-JAR**

Neolithic Period, Gansu Province

Late Yangshao Culture

Height: 7.5 cm.

Length: 21 cm.

Jar comprising two small bracketed vessels joined together by crossed handles and painted with horizontal and vertical lines in black.



3

**EARTHENWARE STORAGE JAR**

Neolithic Period, Gansu Province

Yangshao Culture

Banshan type, 2nd half 3rd millennium BC

Height: 27 cm.

Flat based ovoid jar set with two loop handles beneath the shoulders, the tall cylindrical neck with two small comb-edged protrusions beneath the mouth rim.

The decoration, painted in black and red pigments, is divided into three zones. The neck has a saw-tooth pattern and cross-hatched lines. On the shoulder are narrow parallel horizontal lines and two bands of saw-tooth pattern. The midsection is decorated with a broad band of S-spirals, circles and triangles.



4

**EARTHENWARE STORAGE JAR (GUAN)**

Neolithic Period, Gansu Province

Yangshao Culture

Banshan type, 2nd half 3rd millennium BC

Height: 41.5 cm.

This flat based ovoid jar has a slightly flaring cylindrical neck with two protrusions near the mouth. The body is set at the widest part with a pair of small loop handles. The main decoration, restricted to the upper half of the body, consists of four whorled spirals, drawn with a narrow red band and a wide black band with a serrated edge, converging on large circles, each decorated with wave designs.



5

**ARCHAIC BRONZE VESSEL (JIA)**

Shang Dynasty, Anyang Period, 14th - 12th century BC

Height: 47.5 cm.

Archaic bronze wine vessel supported on three massive, splayed legs of triangular cross-section, each with a slight vertical ridge on the outer surface and with slits on the inner surface.

The body is finely cast with three bands of decoration. The lower and central bands are each decorated with three large *taotie* masks in graduated relief, against a ground of *leiwen*, and divided by notched flanges. The upper band has sixteen triangular blades of stylized cicada patterns on a ground of *leiwen*.

The vessel has a very simple loop handle. The bevelled rim is set with two tall waisted finials supported on solid rectangular stems, each cast with blades and S-scroll borders, the top with an incised whorl.

The vessel has an extraordinarily pleasing green patina.

A pictogram is engraved in the centre of the vessel.

**Published:**

— 'Asiatic Art in Japanese Collections, Chinese Archaic Bronzes', *Asahi Shimbun*, Tokyo, 1969, volume 5, plate number 20.

— Chen Mengjia, *Yin Zhou Qingtongqi Fenlei Tulu (A Corpus of Chinese Bronzes in American Collections)*, Tokyo, 1977, volume II, number A 305.

— Minao Hayashi, *Conspectus of Yin and Zhou Bronzes*, Tokyo, 1984, volume I, plate page 196, number 59.





6

**ARCHAIC BRONZE VESSEL (YOU)**

Late Shang Dynasty

Height: 15.5 cm.

This archaic bronze wine vessel and cover has a rectangular section. The body and the shallow domed cover are cast with a similar band of *kui*-dragons. The splayed foot is decorated with two raised lines, the swing handle with dragon head terminals.

The vessel has a light sea-green patina.

The interiors of both the vessel and cover are inscribed with a similar single glyph *yaxing*, a family name.



7

**ARCHAIC BRONZE VESSEL (LI-DING)**

Late Shang Dynasty/Early Western Zhou Dynasty  
Height: 23.5 cm.

Archaic bronze food vessel supported on three cylindrical legs. The round bowl body is cast in three shallow lobes, each decorated with a large dissolved *taotie* mask in high relief on a background of black inlaid *leiwen*. The everted rim is set with two upright loop handles.

The vessel has a light green patina.

The inscription inside the bowl reads *Shi Bo Chi zuo Fu Gui yi* (Count Shi of Chi had this vessel made for Father Gui).

**Exhibited:**

— 'The Arts of China, a Retrospective', CW Post Art Gallery, Long Island University, New York, 4 February - 27 March 1977, catalogue number 7.

**Published:**

— *The Arts of China, a Retrospective*, Long Island University, New York, 1977, catalogue number 7.

**Similar example:**

— Mino Hayashi, *Conspectus of Yin and Zhou Bronzes*, Tokyo, 1984, volume I, plate page 57, *li-ding* number 76.



8

**ARCHAIC BRONZE VESSEL (DING)**

Late Western Zhou Dynasty, 8th century BC

Height: 11.3 cm.

Archaic bronze food vessel supported on three legs, each decorated with a flanged *taotie* mask. The bowl is cast in two main bands, the upper one interlocking stylized dragons, and the lower an undulating double ribbon. The rim is set by two upright rectangular loop handles.

The vessel has a light green patina.

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**Similar examples:**

— *Wenwu*, 1972, number 2, page 52, figure 6.

— Idemitsu Museum of Art, Tokyo, illustrated in *Idemitsu 15th Anniversary Catalogue*, Tokyo, 1981, page 235, number 1014.

1943, volume 15, plate 172-1.



**BRONZE WATER BUFFALO**

Middle Zhou Period, 8th century BC  
Length: 27 cm.

Rare bronze figure of a water buffalo, standing with head turned to the left. The heavy body is stylized and decorated with a pattern of inverted S-shaped grooves. The buffalo has a green patina with black areas and patches of malachite.  
From various catalogues we know of at least seven similar examples.

**Provenance:**

- Peter O'Toole Collection, London.
- John Sparks Ltd, London.

**Similar examples:**

- Stoclet Collection, Brussels. Illustrated: H. d'Ardenne De Tizac, *Les Animaux dans l'Art Chinois*, Paris, 1923, plate 1; Osvald Siren, *Kinas Konst under Tre Artusenden*, Stockholm, 1942-3, plate 1, figure 4; H.F.E Visser, *Asiatic Art in Private Collections in Holland and Belgium*, Amsterdam, 1948, plate 17, number 22; Eskenazi Ltd, *Ancient Chinese Bronzes from the Stoclet and Wessen Collections*, London, 1975, catalogue number 6; Christian Deydier, *Les Bronzes Chinois*, Fribourg, 1980, page 225, number 62; Robert L. Thorp and Virginia Bower, *Spirit and Ritual, The Morse Collection of Ancient Chinese Art*, New York, 1982, number 22.
- Tch'ou To-yi, *Bronzes Antiques de la Chine appartenant à C.T. Loo et Cie*, Paris, 1924, plate 19.
- 'Exhibition of Early Chinese Bronzes', *BMFEA*, Stockholm, 1934, volume 6, from the Kunstindustrimuseum, Copenhagen, plate XX.
- Sueji Umehara, *A Selection of Ancient Chinese Bronzes in European and American Collections*, Osaka, 1935, volume VI, number 1.
- Huang Chun, *Bronzes from the Tsun-ku Studio*, Peking 1936, volume III, page 24a.
- Bernhard Karlgren, *Catalogue of Chinese Bronzes in the Alfred F. Pillsbury Collection*, Minneapolis, 1952, plate 105, number 90.
- William Watson, *Handbook to the Collections of Early Chinese Antiquities in the British Museum*, London, 1963, figure 14b.
- H.F. Jayne, *A Handbook of the Chinese Collections in the Norton Gallery and School of Art*, Florida, plate 15.



10

**ARCHAIC BRONZE COSMETIC BOX (LIAN)**

Han Dynasty, 2nd century BC - 2nd century AD  
Height: 22 cm.

This large cylindrical cosmetic box is supported by three feet in the shape of striding animals. The domed cover is decorated with three recumbent rams. Two ring handles are suspended from the looped *taotie* masks.

The vessel has a yellowish-green patina with large areas of azurite and malachite.

**Provenance:**

- reported to have come from Changsha.
- Dr Natanael Wessen Collection, Stockholm.
- Eskenazi Ltd, London.

**Exhibited:**

- Eskenazi Ltd, 'Ancient Chinese Bronzes and Gilt Bronzes from the Wessen and Other Collections', London, 11 - 25 July 1980, catalogue number 9.

**Published:**

- Bernhard Karlgren, 'Bronzes in the Wessen Collection', *BMFEA*, Stockholm, 1958, volume 30, plates 29 and 30.
- Bernhard Karlgren and Jan Wirgin, *Chinese Bronzes, The Natanael Wessen Collection, the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities Monograph Series*, Stockholm, 1969, volume 1, number 30, colour plate 7, plate 42.
- Eskenazi Ltd, *Ancient Chinese Bronzes and Gilt Bronzes from the Wessen and Other Collections*, London, 1980, catalogue number 9.

**Similar examples:**

- Yoshito Harada and Kyosako Yashira, *Shukan-icho: Relics of Han and Pre-Han Dynasties*, Tokyo, 1932, plate LXV.
- Sueji Umehara, *Nihon Shucho Shina Kodo Seikwa, (A Selection of Ancient Chinese Bronzes in Japanese Collections)*, Osaka, 1964, volume VI, plate CCCCLXXXI.
- Max Loehr, *Ritual Vessels of Bronze Age China*, Asia House, New York, 1968, number 80.



11

**GILT BRONZE TAOTIE MASK**

Late Zhou Dynasty, Early Han Dynasty, 3rd - 2nd century BC

Length: 9.5 cm.

Gilt bronze *taotie* mask strongly modelled and cast with a long snout curved down and back. The two bulging eyes are beneath long curved eyelids. Two lion's paws modelled in high relief flank a central peak on the forehead. The mask, with strong and extensive gilding, is decorated with scales and small crosses.



12

**GILT BRONZE BODHISATTVA AVALOKITESVARA PADMAPANI (GUANYIN)**

Northern Wei Dynasty, 6th century

Dated 511 AD

Height: 29 cm.

Gilt bronze figure of Avalokitesvara Padmapani, standing on a lotus pedestal. The figure, cast in high relief against a mandorla, holds a lotus stem in the left hand and a scarf in the right. The leaf-shaped mandorla is etched with a border of finely incised flames; the pedestal is supported by a high square plinth with four legs.

A partially decipherable inscription on the plinth reads: "Yongping, 4th year, 6th month, 12th day..." Yongping is the third *nianhao* of Xuanwudi of the Northern Wei Dynasty and the fourth year corresponds to 511.

**Similar example:**

— 'Chinese Buddhist Bronzes', loan exhibition at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, April - May 1950, number 4.



13

**GILT BRONZE BODHISATTVA AVALOKITESVARA (GUANYIN)**

Northern Zhou Dynasty, 6th century

Dated 572 AD

Height: 14.5 cm.

Gilt bronze figure of Avalokitesvara standing on a double lotus pedestal. The figure holds an *amrita* in the left hand, a lotus stem in the right hand and is adorned with elaborate jewellery.

The inscription on the pedestal gives the date: "Tianhe, 7th year, 2nd month, 15th day..." Tianhe is the second *nianhao* of Wudi, the seventh year corresponds to 572.





14

**GILT BRONZE BODHISATTVA AVALOKITESVARA (GUANYIN)**

Tang Dynasty, 8th century

Height: 12 cm.

Gilt bronze figure of Avalokitesvara standing in a *tribhanga* posture. The figure, covered with jewels, holds a lotus stem in the left hand and an *amrita* in the right. The headdress contains a tiny image of the Jina Amitabha.



15

**GILT BRONZE LOKAPALA**

Tang Dynasty, 8th - 9th century

Height: 18.2 cm.

Gilt bronze standing figure of a Lokapala, or guardian, in the full elaborate armour of a Chinese warrior decorated with scales and high relief patterns, his right hand resting on his left hand in front. Loose knee breeches are visible under his protective three-quarter suit and his belt is decorated with a bat in high relief. His hair is braided, with a chignon on the top.



16

**EARTHENWARE TRIPOD JAR**

Tang Dynasty, 8th century  
Height: 18.5 cm.

*Sancai* globular tripod jar supported on three modelled lion's paws. The shoulder is decorated with an ivory glaze splashed with ochre on a brilliant deep blue falling in streaks. The wide flaring neck, part of the lower body and feet are covered with a rich ochre glaze.

**Similar example:**

— British Museum no. 1947-7-12.20, illustrated in *The World's Great Collections: Oriental Ceramics*, The British Museum, London, 1974, volume 5, colour plate 11.



17

**EARTHENWARE DUCK**

Tang Dynasty, 8th century  
Height: 17.5 cm.

*Sancai* pottery figure of a duck, standing on a hollow base. The body has moulded wing feathers and is covered with blue and splashes of ivory glazes. Some amber glaze appears on the feet, the neck and the lower part of the bill.

**Similar examples:**

- *The Arts of the Tang Dynasty*, Los Angeles, 1957, catalogue number 173.
- *Toji Taikei*, Tokyo, 1977, volume 35, number 102.



18

**EARTHENWARE GROOM**

Tang Dynasty, 8th century

Height: 61 cm.

Finely modelled figure of a foreign groom standing with both arms raised and the body turned slightly to the right. He wears a long crisply moulded tunic glazed predominantly in chestnut with some splashes of green. He has a cloth bag tied around the back and knotted on top of the apron. His face has foreign features with prominent eyes and a slender curled moustache and on his head is a cap tied about the crown and gathered in two topknots.

**Similar examples:**

—a groom of the same model was excavated from a tomb at Guanlin and is illustrated in *Tang Luoyang Sancai*, plate 83.

—Matsuoka Museum of Art, catalogue 1983, number 17.

—Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, illustrated in *Silk Roads, China Ships*, 1983, catalogue page 178.



19

**EARTHENWARE COURT LADY**

Tang Dynasty, 8th century

Height: 40 cm.

*Sancai* pottery figure of a court lady wearing a short jacket with cream and green glazes and a long brown-glazed skirt. She stands with her hands clasped before her and covered by a green-glazed scarf which falls from her shoulders. Her feet are encased in upturned shoes glazed in cream and green. Her unglazed head bears traces of original black and red pigments.

**Similar examples:**

— Jane Gaston Mahler, *The Westerners among the Figurines of the Tang Dynasty of China*, Rome, 1959, plate VIII.

— *Toji Taikei*, Tokyo, 1972, volume 34, plate 66.

— *Sekai Toji Zenshu*, Tokyo, 1976, volume 11, page 228, plate 189.



20

**EARTHENWARE EQUESTRIENNE**

Tang Dynasty, 8th century

Height: 44.5 cm.

*Sancai* pottery figure of an equestrienne, the horse standing on a rectangular base. The lady is modelled with her arms held low as if holding reins. She wears a long-sleeved green-glazed robe with amber sleeves and a cream scarf which hangs over her shoulders. She has a high-peaked helmet covered with traces of black pigment. The horse, standing with head turned to the left, has a rich chestnut glaze. Parts of the head, ears and tail and the saddle-cloth are cream-glazed.

**Similar example:**

— Idemitsu Museum of Art, Tokyo, illustrated in *Idemitsu 15th Anniversary Catalogue*, Tokyo, 1981, page 163.



21

**EARTHENWARE HORSE**

Tang Dynasty, 8th century  
Height: 59.5 cm.

Large glazed pottery figure of a harnessed horse standing on a rectangular base, with head turned to the left. The pale yellow glaze of the body is decorated with green and chestnut glaze falling in streaks. The hogged mane and muzzle are covered with a chestnut glaze. The elaborate trappings have green tooled straps and chestnut tassles. The saddle and blanket are both mottled with yellow and green glaze.

**Similar example:**

— Idemitsu Museum of Art, Tokyo, illustrated in *Ancient Chinese Works of Art*, catalogue number 187.





22

**EARTHENWARE CAMEL WITH FOREIGN RIDER**

Tang Dynasty, 8th century

Height: 60 cm.

Length: 45 cm.

Unusual *sancai* pottery figure of a camel with a foreign rider. The man is snugly seated between the humps with his right arm raised, the left resting on his hip. His upper torso is twisted to the left. He wears a blue-green-glazed tunic and brown-glazed leather boots. On his head is a tall painted felt cap, similar to one from eastern Iran. His face is very well modelled with full foreign features and an impressive nose. The camel is shown standing foursquare on a rectangular base. Its head, with nostrils flared, is turned to the left. The body, covered with a yellow-brown glaze, is realistically modelled with the tail curled up. The neck fur, mane, humps and shoulders have roughly incised cream-glazed tufts.

Similar example:

- a very similar piece, but unglazed, is illustrated in *Zhongguo Gudai Taosu Yishu (The Art of Ancient Chinese Pottery Sculpture)*, Beijing, 1957, plate 39.



23

**EARTHENWARE MONKEY**

Tang Dynasty, early 8th century  
Height: 20.5 cm.

Important and apparently unique *sancai* and blue-glazed wine ewer, moulded as an amused monkey crouching on a waisted cylindrical stool. He is hugging a wineskin decorated in line relief with foliate tendrils.

The pottery is covered with an extraordinarily rich *sancai* glaze of splashed brilliant dark and pale blues, apple- and spinach-green and rich tones of amber and chestnut with some splashes of ivory.

**Provenance:**

- Mrs. Eric Mayell Collection, Palo Alto.
- Mathias Komor Collection, New York.
- Georges de Batz Collection, New York.

**Exhibited:**

- Mills College Art Gallery, Portland Art Museum, 'Early Chinese Pottery', April - June 1941, catalogue number 123.
- Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 'Exhibition of Chinese Ceramics and European Drawings', 1953, catalogue number 42.

**Published:**

- Mills College Art Gallery, Portland Art Museum, *Early Chinese Pottery*, 1941, catalogue number 123.
- Boston Museum of Fine Arts, *Exhibition of Chinese Ceramics and European Drawings*, 1953, catalogue number 42.





