



Chinese Masterpieces from Private Collections

Paris / Beijing, October 2023

Hong Kong, January – March 2024









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PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

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FOREWORD



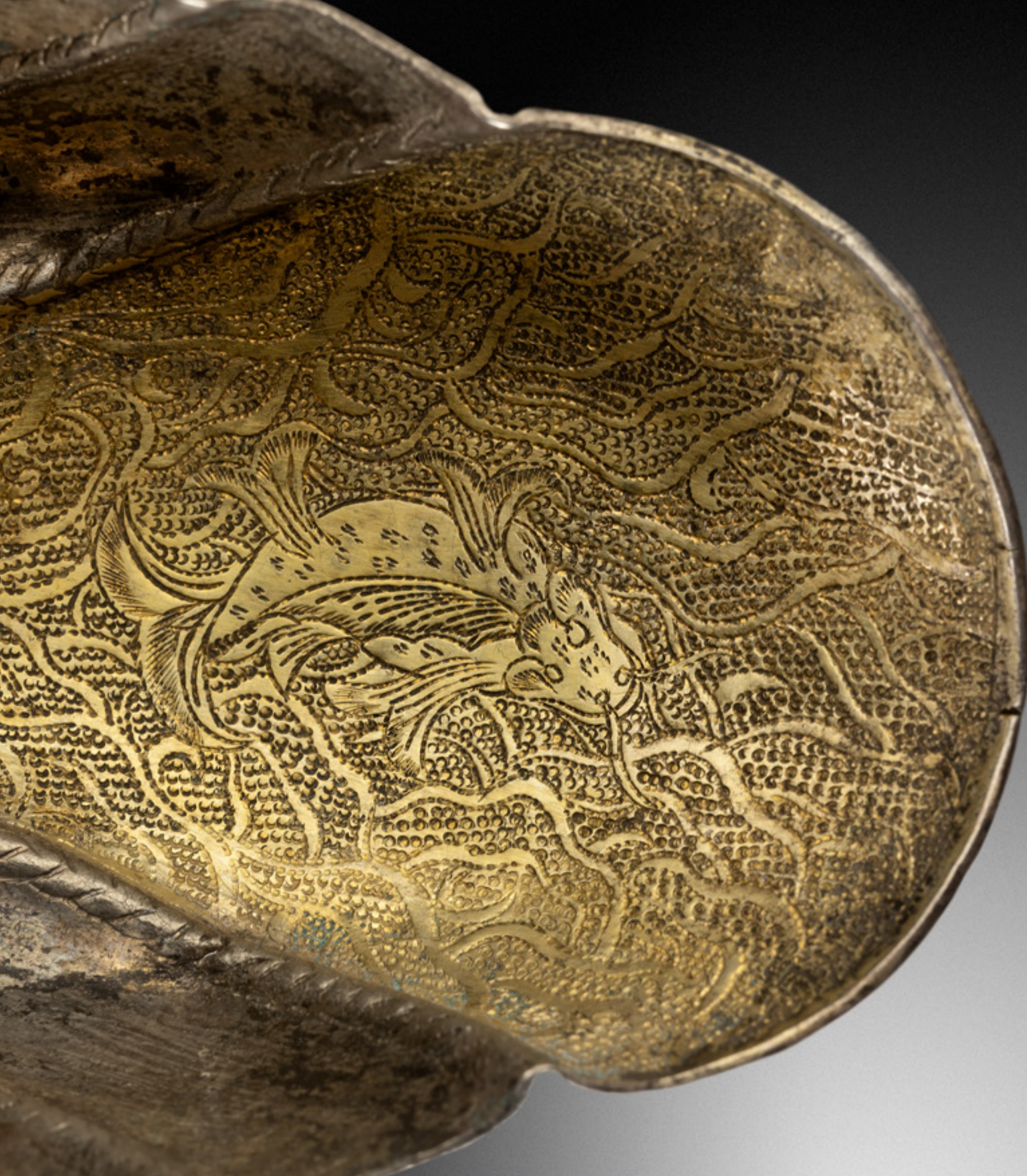
Foreword

Once again, I have the good fortune and privilege of bringing together for this new exhibition an exceptional group of works of Chinese art from various French and European private collections. This selection is the result of many years of research and collaboration with these collectors.

- Some objects deserve particular attention:
- The buffalo in terracotta with traces of red polychromy. Northern China, Neolithic period, Qijia culture 2050 – 1700 B.C.
 - The bronze ritual vase *jue*, from the Xia dynasty, 4th stratum of the Erlitou culture, circa 17th – 16th centuries B.C. This extremely rare vessel represents the oldest form of bronze vase to appear in ancient China.
 - The exceptional bronze ritual vessel *jiao* with cover, from the early Zhou dynasty, circa 12th – 11th centuries B.C.
 - The little amber glazed earthenware prancing horse. Southern China, Sichuan province, Han dynasty, 2nd century B.C. – 2nd century A.D.
 - The rare set of twelve earthenware zodiac figures. Tang Dynasty, 618 – 907.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who helped me throughout the various stages of producing this exhibition and catalogue. In particular, I would like to thank especially Stephanie Deydier who helped me in the selection of the objects for this exhibition, and who researched the cataloguing of these objects, Vincent Pradier for producing the catalogue and organising the presentation of the objects, Debby Fan, who coordinated the translations and the exhibition across time zones. I would also like to express my gratitude to Vincent Girier Dufournier for spending several days photographing these objects.

Christian Deydier



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1 – Buffalo

Earthenware with red pigments
North China, Neolithic period, Qijia Culture (2050 – 1700 B.C.)
Height: 15 cm
Length: 27.5 cm

Pottery figure of a standing buffalo. The animal is shown with an open mouth, with two pierced nostrils, two rounded holes as the eyes, small ears adorn each side of the head, powerful and important curled horns spring from each side of the skull. This earthenware buffalo is decorated with lines and motifs of red pigments.

Provenances

- Julius Eberhardt Collection, Vienna, Austria, 2009.
- Nagel auction.de, Stuttgart, Germany, 2013.
- Galerie Ch. Deydier, Paris, France, 2013, (2013-109 A/B).

Exhibitions

- Julius Eberhardt Museum, Vienna, Austria, 2009 – 2013.
- Nagel auction.de, Stuttgart, Germany, November 2nd 2013, catalogue no. 3117.
- Deydier Ch., *Treasures from Ancient China – V – Les Merveilles du Néolithique*, Paris, September 2017, catalogue no. 11.

Published

- Nagel auction.de, Stuttgart, Germany, November 2nd 2013, catalogue no. 3117, p. 256-257.
- Deydier Ch., *Treasures from Ancient China – V – Les Merveilles du Néolithique*, Paris, September 2017, catalogue no. 11, p. 34-37.

Similar examples

- Similar buffalo are illustrated in *Chen Zheng/Qian Zi Qian: Huang He Cai Tao*, Taiwan 1994, p. 420 no. 432.



2 – Ritual bronze vessel *jue*

Xia Dynasty, 4th stratum of the Erlitou culture, circa 17th – 16th centuries B.C.
Height: 18 cm
Length: 20 cm

A tripod bronze vessel of the *jue* form used to receive and heat fermented beverages during ritual libations' ceremonies.

The body of the vase, with very thin walls, has an oval cross-section tapering to the central part. The vessel with a flat base is supported by three triangular feet.

The very long, narrow and cylindrical pouring spout is open at the top, and is diametrically opposed by a small pointed extension somewhat reminiscent of the shape of *jiao* vases.

A large semi-circular openwork handle is attached to one side of the vase.

The vase has a beautiful green patina.

Similar example

– A *jue* vessel, with a very similar body, now in the Shanghai Museum, is illustrated in *Zhongguo qingtongqi quanji, Vol. I, Xia – Shang*, Beijing 1996, p. 10 no. 10.

Notes

- The *jue* is the oldest and first bronze ritual vessel which appeared in ancient China.
- Bronze *jue* from this period are extremely rare.
- The present vase is probably a hybrid between the *jue* and the *jiao*.



3 – Ritual bronze vessel *jue*

Shang dynasty, Erligang period, 17th/16th – 14th centuries B.C.
Height: 15.5 cm
Length: 14.2 cm

Rare archaic wine vessel *jue*, supported on three thinly cast pointed triangular legs. The vessel's oval-shaped body is flat-bottomed and drawn in at its centre, which is cast with a single band of decoration featuring a central primitive *taotie* mask whose two ends wrap themselves around the sides of the vessel to encounter each other across a wide semi-circular handle that reaches from above them to the protruding waist of the vessel.

Two simple upright tendons emerge from the top of the vessel just above each side of the base of the vessel's long protruding spout.

The *jue* is covered with a grey, black and dark green patina.

Provenance

– French Private Collection.

Similar examples

- A same shaped-vessel *jue*, but with a slightly different *taotie* mask is illustrated in *Zhongguo qingtongqi quanji, Vol. I, Xia - Shang*, Beijing 1996, p. 64.
- A very similar *jue*, now in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada, is illustrated in Bagley R.W., *Shang Ritual Bronzes in the Arthur M. Sackler Collections*, Cambridge 1987, p. 78 no. 46.



4 – Ritual bronze vessel *jue*

China, Shang dynasty, early Erligang period 17th/16th – 14th centuries B.C.
Height: 16 cm

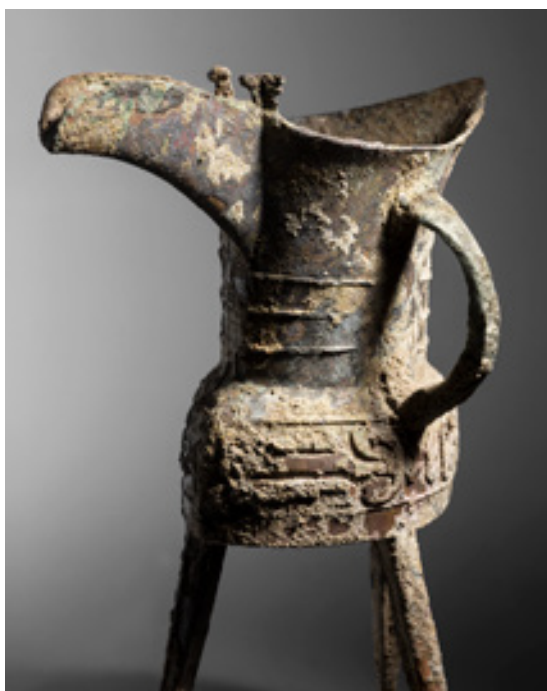
A ritual bronze tripod vessel *jue* used for warming fermented beverages.
The wide, rounded lower body of the oval, flat-bottomed vessel narrows in its centre before spreading outwards as it rises towards its top.
One side of the vessel is decorated on its upper part with three horizontal lines in light relief, and on the lower part, with a *taotie* mask.
On the other undecorated side, a wide semi-circular handle.
The vessel's long spout is embellished with a pair of upwardly protruding tendons just above the area where it extends from the oval-shaped body.
The vessel is supported by three triangular legs.
The vessel has a green patina.

Provenances

- Galerie Christian Deydier, Paris, France.
- French Private Collection.

Similar examples

- Three bronze *jue*, with the same body-shaped, are published in *Zhongguo qingtongqi quanji*, Vol. I, Xia – Shang, Beijing 1996, p. 69 to 71.



5 – Pair of ritual bronze vessel *gu*

Late Shang dynasty, 12th – 11th centuries B.C.
Height: 26 cm

Rare pair of archaic bronze vessels of *gu* used for fermented beverages. Their tall trumpet-like necks are decorated with four slender cicada blades in low relief and emerging from a lower frieze of spirals. The central section of each of the vessels is decorated with two low relief *taotie* masks on a *leiwen* background, divided down their centres and on their sides by shallow notched flanges. The vessels' splayed bases, with similar *taotie* masks and flanges, are supported by plain shallow cylindrical feet. The vessels have a green patina.





Inscription

– A two-character inscription inside the foot of the vessels reads “Zi Mei”.

Provenance

– Private Collection of Mr. L.R., Paris, France, before 1991 (those two vessels are mentioned in the inventory made by Mr Michel Beurdely in 1991).

Note

– Two others *gu* vessels with a similar inscription are published by Wu Zhengfeng 吳鎮烽, *Shang Zhou Qingtongqi Mingwen Ji Tuxiang Jicheng* 商周青銅器銘文暨圖像集成, Shanghai 2012, Vol. XVIII, no. 09313 and no. 09314, p. 78.

6 – Archaic bronze vessel *ding*

Shang dynasty, Yinxu period, 14th – 12th centuries B.C.
Height: 24 cm
Diameter: 20.7 cm

Archaic bronze ritual vessel *ding* used for cooking. The round bowl-shaped body, supported on three columnar legs, is cast in high relief with three large *taotie* masks on a *leiwen* background. Each mask, composed of two confronted dragons with C-shaped horns, protruding eyes, and hooked talons, is centred on a vertical flange and divided from the other by further flanges.

Two semi-circular handles are set on the vessel's thin lip.

Each leg is decorated with a triangular stylized cicada pattern.

The vessel has a dark reddish-green patina.

Inscription

– A two-character inscription inside the vessel reads: “*Father Gui*”.





Provenances

- Mahé-Michon Collection, Paris, France.
- Moreau-Gobard Collection, Paris, France.
- Oriental Bronzes Ltd, London, U.K., 1984.
- French Private Collection.

Similar examples

- A similar *ding* excavated from tomb 907, in the south area of Limingtun is illustrated in *Zhongguo qingtongqi quanji*, Vol. II, Shang, Beijing 1997, p. 16 no. 16.
- Another *ding*, founded in the tomb 1, in the west area of Houjiazhuang, at Anyang, is published in *Zhongguo qingtongqi quanji*, Vol. II, Shang, Beijing 1997, p. 19 no. 19.

7 – Ritual bronze vessel *bu*

Late Shang dynasty, 12th – 11th centuries B.C.
Height: 26 cm
Diameter: 33 cm

Ritual bronze vessel *pou*. The compressed globular body with a short neck is supported by a splayed foot. The neck is ornated with a low relief horizontal line. The shoulder of the vase is decorated by a frieze three pair kui dragons, shown on profile, confronting each other over a high relief bovine-shaped mask, all on a *leiwen* background. The central part of the vessel is ornated with three large *taotie* masks on a *leiwen* background and centred on a narrow flange in low relief. The foot has a nice band of *kui* dragon, shown on profile, on a *leiwen* background. The vessel has a nice dark-green patina.

Provenances

- Sotheby's New York, December 7th, 1983, lot 49.
- Christie's New York, June 4th, 1992, lot 179.
- Sotheby's New York, March 20th, 2002, lot 18.

Similar examples

- A similar *bu* from the Count & Countess Paul Lippens Collection is published by Deydier Ch., *The Lippens' Collection of Ancient Chinese Bronzes*, Paris 2019, p. 88-89 no. 24.
- Another *bu*, from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, is published by Hayashi M., *In Shu Jidai seidoki soran no kenkyu (In Shu seidoki sorani chi) – Conspectus of Yin and Zhou Bronzes*, Tokyo 1984, Vol. I, volume plates, p. 313 no. 43.
- Another is illustrated in *Zhongguo qin tongqi quanji, Vol. IV – Shang*, Beijing 1998, p. 102 no. 105.

Note

- The name of this form of vase is *bu*, but the old pronunciation was “*pou*”.





8 – Exceptional ritual bronze wine vessel *jiao*

Early Zhou dynasty, circa 12th – 11th centuries B.C.
Height: 36.5 cm

An exceptional and may be unique archaic bronze wine vessel *jiao* with cover, supported by three triangular-shaped legs.
Each side of the vessel's round-shaped body is cast in low relief with large interlocking T-shaped motifs on a *leiwen* background.
The vessel's two horn-like pointed sides are decorated on their undersides with a motif of a snake's head with two bodies, inside a large triangular pattern bordered on it outside by a frieze of small circles. The snakes' bodies are covered with square motifs and surrounded by bosses' motifs.
The outside of each triangular leg, is decorated with a long snake, in high relief on a *leiwen* background. The snake's body is covered with square motifs. The inner part of each leg is decorated with a kind of scales' incised motif.
A semi-circular handle cast on one side of the vessel is topped by a high relief buffalo head.
The cover is ornated on each side with a frieze of high relief two-bodied snake joining at each side of the head. Each snake's body is decorated with square motifs. Each side of the frieze is bordered with a band of small circles. The cover is topped by an arched handle.
The vessel and the cover have a pleasant green patina.





Inscription

- A three-character inscription under the handle and the reads: “*Guan zi ri*” meaning “Grant (as gift from a superior to one lower in hierarchy) from the son of the Sun (the Sun was in old time a name for the King)”.
- The same three-character inscription under the handle and inside of the cover can be reads according the Chinese archaeologists: “*Zhang zi kou*”.

Notes on the inscription

- This inscription appears on a group of bronzes excavated, in 1997, from an Early Western Zhou dynasty tomb in Taiqinggong, county of Luyi, Henan province. In this tomb, the archaeologists found only the covers and legs of two *jiao* as their bodies were completely destroyed. The decor of those covers and of the legs are similar to the present *jiao*. (See *Kaogu* 2000 no. 9 and *Taiqinggong Changzikou Tomb in Luyi*, Zhenzhou 2000).
- The aera of Taiqinggong, Luyi County, Henan province, is part of the Chinese National Heritage, and is known as the place of birth of Laozi.
- According the Chinese archaeologists, Changzikou was a leader of the Chang clan and had a very high social status. The Chang family was very famous under the Shang dynasty as the family was known as one of the suppliers of tortoise shell used during the divination ceremonies. It seems that the Chang pledged loyalty to the Zhou after they over throne the Shang.
- A bronze vessel *jue*, bearing the inscription “*Zi Kou*” was sold in auction by Sotheby’s in London, June 12th, 1990, lot no. 9.

Provenance

- Japanese Private Collection.

Notes

- The snake for ancient Chinese was a symbol of transformation and re-birth. It was linked to the world of spirits and deceased, as well as to that of the living.
- In oracle bone inscription, *jiaguwen*, from the Shang dynasty, the snake appears among the group of pictograms relating either to illness or to the death by sacrifice.



- A *jiao* with a similar T-shaped motif from the Hakutsuru Art Museum, Kobe, Japan, is illustrated in Hayashi M., 林巳奈夫, *In Shu Jidai Seidoki no Kenkyu (In Shu Seidoki Soran Ichi), Conspectus of Yin and Zhou Bronzes*, Vol. I – plates, Tokyo 1984, 《殷周時代青銅器の研究: 殷周青銅器綜覽 (一) 圖版》東京1984年版, p. 192 no. 25.
- This two-bodies-snake’s motif is quite rare. It can be found on some broken vessels from the tomb of “Chang zikou”, and at least, on nine *Fangding*, one *ding*, two *you* and one *zun*, from the late Shang and Early Western Zhou dynasties excavated from others tombs or in some Chinese, English or American Museums. Those pieces are:
 - *Fangding*, Carly Western Zhou dynasty, known as “Fu Xin Fangding” excavated in 1975 in Shaanxi, is illustrated in *Shaanxi chutu Shang Zhou qingtongqi*, Beijing 1980, Vol. III, no. 190 and by Hayashi M., 林巳奈夫, *In Shu Jidai Seidoki no Kenkyu (In Shu Seidoki Soran Ichi), Conspectus of Yin and Zhou Bronzes*, Vol. I – plates, Tokyo 1984, 《殷周時代青銅器の研究: 殷周青銅器綜覽 (一) 圖版》東京1984年版, p. 41 no. 49.
 - *Fangding*, Early Western Zhou dynasty, now in the Arthur M. Sackler Collection and illustrated by Hayashi M., 林巳奈夫, *In Shu Jidai Seidoki no Kenkyu (In Shu Seidoki Soran Ichi), Conspectus of Yin and Zhou Bronzes*, Vol. I – plates, Tokyo 1984, 《殷周時代青銅器の研究: 殷周青銅器綜覽 (一) 圖版》東京1984年版, p. 41 no. 48.
 - *Fangding*, second half of Early Western Zhou dynasty, now in the Arthur M. Sackler Collection and illustrated by Rawson J., *Western Zhou Ritual Bronzes from the Arthur M. Sackler Collections*, Vol. IIB, Harvard University, Cambridge 1990, p. 241 no. 7.
 - *Fangding*, Shang dynasty, known as “Yin Guang Fangding”, now in the British Museum (no. 1981-5-30.1), and published by Rawson J., *Western Zhou Ritual Bronzes from the Arthur M. Sackler Collections*, Vol. IIB, Harvard University, Cambridge 1990, p. 237, fig. 6.5.
 - *Fangding*, late Shang or Early Western Zhou dynasty, known as “Ya Chou Fu Bing Fangding”, published by Rawson J., *Western Zhou Ritual Bronzes from the Arthur M. Sackler Collections*, Vol. IIB, Harvard University, Cambridge 1990, p. 238, fig. 6.6.





- *Fangding*, Early Western Zhou dynasty, known as “Zuo Ce Da Fangding”, from the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. (no. 50.7), illustrated by Pope J. A., Gettens R. J., Cahill J., Barnard N., *The Freer Chinese Bronzes, Vol. I, Catalogue*, Washington 1967, p. 190-195 no. 34.
- *Fangding*, Early Western Zhou dynasty, excavated in Bailongcun, Fufeng, Shaanxi province, known as “Si Mu Kang Fangding”, and published *Shaanxi chutu Shang Zhou qingtongqi*, Vol. I, Beijing 1979, no. 5.
- *Fangding*, Early Western Zhou dynasty, excavated in Licun, Qishan, Shaanxi province, known as “Wang Fangding”, published *Shaanxi chutu Shang Zhou qingtongqi*, Vol. I, Beijing 1979, no. 137.
- *Fangding*, Early Western Zhou dynasty, known as “Huo Fu Gui Fangding”, now in the Shanghai Museum, published in *Shanghai Bowuguan cang qingtongqi*, Shanghai 1964, no. 30.
- *Ding*, Early Western Zhou dynasty, excavated in Liulihe, Fangshan, Beijing, known as “Yu Fangding”, published in *Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo chutu wenwu xuan*, Beijing 1976, no. 22.
- *You*, Early Western Zhou dynasty, now in the Shanghai Museum, published in *Ancient Chinese Bronzes in the Collection of the Shanghai Museum Exhibited at the Hong Kong Museum of Art*, Hong Kong 1983, no. 27, and by Chen Peifen, *Xia Shang Zhou Qingtongqi Yanjiu*, Shanghai Bowuguan Cangpin, Xi Zhou Bian, Shanghai 2004, p. 155-157 no. 262.
- *You*, Early Western Zhou dynasty, now in the Palace Museum, Beijing, and published by Rawson J., *Western Zhou Ritual Bronzes from the Arthur M. Sackler Collections*, Vol. IIB, Harvard University, Cambridge 1990, p. 536, fig. 76.1.
- *Zun*, Early Western Zhou dynasty, now in the Arthur M. Sackler Collection and illustrated by Rawson J., *Western Zhou Ritual Bronzes from the Arthur M. Sackler Collections*, Vol IIB, Harvard University, Cambridge 1990, p. 534 no. 76.

9 – Ritual bronze vessel *zhi*

Early Western Zhou dynasty, circa 12th/11th century – 770 B.C.
Height: 14 cm

Archaic bronze ritual vessel of *zhi* form used for drinking fermented beverages. Its curved body is supported by a high ring foot. The vessel is decorated with three horizontal friezes. The frieze at the level of the section flaring out from the neck is decorated with four triangular motifs of stylised cicadas. Immediately below, the second frieze at the base of the neck is decorated with long-tailed birds, clashing in pairs, on a *leiwen* background. The belly of the vessel is decorated with four large long-tailed birds with impressive plumage, clashing in pairs, all on a *leiwen* background. The vessel has a dark brown patina.

Inscription

– A three-character inscription on the inside of the vessel reads: “*X (Che or Chi = name) Father Yi*”.





Provenance

– French Private Collection.

Similar example

– A similar *zhi* in the Shanghai Museum is published by Chen Peifen, *Xia Shang Zhou Qingtongqi Yanjiu - Shanghai Bowuguan Cangping - Xi Zhou bian -shang-Shanghai undated*, p. 131-132 no. 252; and by Hayashi M., *In Shu Jidai Seidoki no Kenkyu (In Shu Seidoki Soran Ichi), Conspectus of Yin and Zhou Bronzes*, Vol. I - plates, Tokyo 1984, p. 347 no. 113.

10 – Archaic bronze bell *zhong*

Eastern Zhou dynasty, 5th century B.C.
Height: 25 cm

Very fine archaic bronze bell *zhong*.

The upper section of each side of the vessel's oval-shaped body divided its centre into two sections by a plain wide vertical panel flanked on each side by three wide horizontal panels, each containing three bosses cast in high relief in the form of outwardly coiling dragons and separated from each other by two narrower horizontal bands of small, sharply cast interlaced stylized dragons framed above and below by plain raised lines.

The lower part of each side of the bell is decorated with a very elaborate *taotie* mask cast with intricate details in low relief and flanked by hooked and plumed stylized dragons.

The bell's flat top is cast all over with interlaced stylized dragon motifs.

The bell's handle is elaborately cast in the form of a pair of confronting tigers.

The bronze bell has a green patina.

Provenances

- Christie's London, 24th June 1968, lot 168.
- Dr Wou Kiuan Collection (1910 – 1997).
- Wou Lien-Pai Museum, 1968, coll. no. E.8.38.

Exhibition

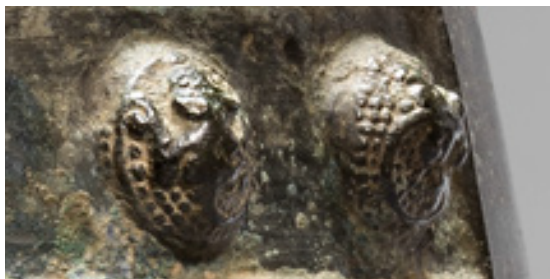
- Wou Lien-Pai Museum, 1968, coll. no. E.8.38.

Publication

- Rose Kerr and al., *Chinese Antiquities from the Wou Kiuan Collection*. Wou Lien-Pai Museum, Hong Kong 2011, plate 27.

Similar examples

- Bells with very similar decoration but in different sizes, are illustrated in *Marco Polo Seventh Centenary Exhibition*, Venice 1954, catalogue no. 75; Weber G. W., *The Ornaments of Late Chou Bronzes*, New Jersey 1973, plate 66; *Exhibition of Chinese Ritual Bronzes*, Detroit Institute of Art, 1940, catalogue plate XXV no. 45; Lefebvre-d'Argencé R.Y., *Ancient Chinese Bronzes in the Avery Brundage Collection*, Berkeley 1966, plate XLVI B.





11 – Lacquer earcup *bei*

Eastern Zhou dynasty, late Warring States period, 3rd century B.C.
Length: 19 cm

Large wooden lacquer earcup of oval shape. The exterior is covered with dark-brown or black lacquer, while the interior is covered with a reddish lacquer. The upper part of the interior and exterior of the cup as well as the “ears” are decorated with a band of geometric patterns: triangles, scrolls, etc., all of which are painted in red, yellow and black.

Provenances

- Christian Deydier/Oriental Bronzes Ltd, London, U.K., 1998.
- Private Collection, France.

Exhibited

- Deydier Ch./Oriental Bronzes Ltd, *L'Art et la Matière*, Paris, October 2nd – November 14th, 1998, catalogue no. 23.

Published

- Deydier Ch., *L'Art et la Matière*, Paris 1998, catalogue no. 23.

Note

- The deep shape of the cup, the raised “ears”, the decorative motifs and the use of a wooden core are all characteristics of lacquerware of the Warring States period.



12 – Prancing horse

Amber glazed earthenware

Southern China, Sichuan province, Han Dynasty, 2nd century B.C. – 2nd century A.D.

Height: 23 cm

Length: 32 cm

Exceptional terracotta horse covered with a beautiful amber glaze. The animal is represented with its front right leg slightly raised and its back legs bent. Its head, surmounted by two straight ears, is slightly turned to the right. Its mouth is wide open, showing fleshy lips. A large tuft of hair adorns the animal's forehead.

Provenance

– Levi Muresianu Collection, Paris, France.





13 – Limestone Seated Buddha

Limestone with traces of polychromy
China, Eastern Wei or Northern Qi dynasty, mid-6th century
Height: 48.5 cm

Limestone Buddha seated in the lotus position. The left hand is lowered, palm open in the *varada-mudra* gesture symbolizing offering, welcoming, charity and compassion (*mudra* of the fulfilment of the vow to dedicate oneself to the salvation of humans). The right hand is raised in the gesture of fearlessness or *abhaya mudra*. His head is slightly lowered, his eyes closed and he is smiling slightly. The cranial protuberance, *usnisa*, sign of his holiness, is clearly visible. The Buddha is dressed in a double monastic robe, which covers the shoulders, and whose folds are represented by long curves incised on the arms and chest.

Provenance

– Private collection, Mechelen, Belgium.

Similar example

– A Buddha from the same region or cave is illustrated by Eskenazi, *Kurland Collection I*, London 2017, catalogue no. 28. Both pieces were acquired at the same time by the Belgium collector.



14 – Buddha torso

Grey limestone
China, Tang dynasty, early 7th century
Height: 154 cm

Exceptional torso of a standing Buddha in grey limestone. The sculpture rests on a round base whose exterior is decorated with lotus leaves/petals in slight relief. The Buddha wears two robes that elegantly mould to his body. The lower robe is long and reaches down to the ankles, leaving the feet visible. The upper robe is a thin monastic robe that falls in a beautiful gradation of folds in light relief. The arms of the Buddha are folded, the left arm at chest level, the right arm at waist level. The hands are missing but were probably in the *varada-mudra* position.

Provenances

- Private collection, France.
- Galerie Christian Deydier, Paris, France, 2017.

Similar piece

- A similar bust of Buddha, housed in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, USA, is listed as a representation of Sakyamuni Buddha, and is dated circa 600–620.

Note

- The lotus leaves/petals, adorning a base, with the tip folding outward. Is a characteristic of the sculptures of the Buddhist caves of Longmen.



15 – Oblong polylobed cup

Parcel gilt silver
Early Tang dynasty, 618 – 907
Height: 3.8 cm
Length: 15.6 cm

This polylobed silver oblong cup is parcel gilded.
The gilt inside of the two lateral lobes are decorated with a stylized flower on a punched ground. The inside of the central part of the cup, entirely gilt, is decorated with two fish on aquatic plants, all on a punched ground.

Provenance

– Y. B. Collection, Paris, France.

Notes

- Extremely common in Sogdian and Sassanid arts, this kind of polylobed cup, with may have different number of lobes according the piece, has sometime on a foot.
- This type of oblong cup was introduced in China by Persian's goldsmith when they emigrated to China during the conquest of Persia by the muslim.
- During the Tang dynasty, this cup sinized and, by the end of the period, it became an elliptical cup supported by a high foot.



16 – A Rare Earthenware set of 12 Zodiac Figures

Tang Dynasty, 618–907 A.D.
Height: between 30 cm and 32 cm

This very rare set, represents the 12 '*Shengxiao*' or animals of the Chinese zodiac: the rat, buffalo, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, chicken, dog, pig, each of which is associated with one year in the successive cycles of twelve years into which the Chinese calendar is divided.

Each of the zodiac figures in this set of twelve is depicted with a realistically modelled animal head on a human body which is standing in a dignified manner with its hands joined in front over its chest and covered by the ample sleeves of the long robe in which it is clothed. Such a robe, consisting of a sort of long-sleeved knee-length tunic crossing over in front and worn over a long narrower skirt, was the normal attire of government officials of the Tang dynasty.

Provenance

– Stephanie Deydier Collection, Paris, France.

Similar pieces

- A complete set now in the History Museum of Xi'an, Shaanxi is published in *Xiaoneng Yan, The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology*, Washington 1999, no. 172 p. 498-499.
- Another set is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art de New York, USA.

Notes

- The History of the Zodiac in China
 - In the earliest times, the Chinese followed a 60-year cyclic calendar with each year designated by a pair of characters consisting of a combination of one character from what are called the 10 'heavenly stems' and one from the 12 'earthly branches'. This traditional designation of dates was used in oracle inscriptions on bone and tortoise shells dating from as early as the Shang dynasty (circa 17th/16th – 12th/11th centuries B.C.).
 - In the Han dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.), each earthly branch began to be associated with an animal, a certain hour of the day and a year, and each animal of the zodiac began to take its place in an order determined by the order of the earthly branch by which it was designated: rat, buffalo, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, chicken, dog and pig.
 - During the Northern Wei Dynasty (386 – 534 A.D.) that terracotta figurines with human bodies and animal heads representing the 12 signs of the zodiac began to be used as funerary objects to accompany the dead in the afterlife.
 - In the Sui (581 – 618 A.D.) and Tang (618 – 907 A.D.) dynasties the animals of the zodiac became a popular decorative motif on mirrors, gold and silver objects for daily use. As funerary objects, the zodiac animals appeared in the following three figural forms:
 - a zodiac animal held in the arms of a person born during the zodiac year which the animal represented;
 - a zodiac animal's head on a human body;
 - a zodiac animal placed on the head or hat of a person.
 - Generally, in a standing position, and rarely kneeling, the above figures were usually made of unfired terracotta, with or without polychrome, and very rarely glazed.







– Legends and Roles of the Animals of the Zodiac

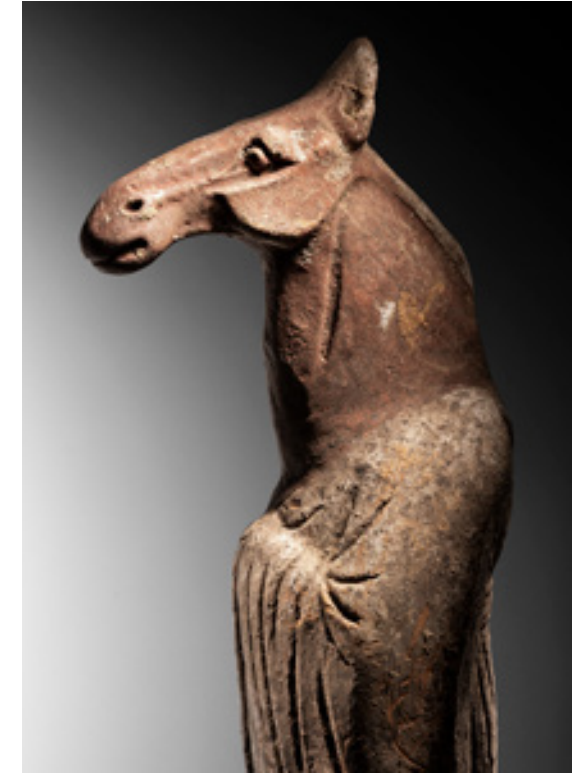
- A 4th Century Daoist text mention the divine nature of the 12 zodiac animals and their ability to transform themselves at will from human form to animal form and vice versa.
- In Chinese legends, the animals of the zodiac possess the power to ward off evil spirits, while promoting perfect harmony between the cosmic order and the realm of human beings.

– Symbolic and Chinese Astrology

- The Rat
The rat, the first animal of the Chinese zodiac, is charming, hardworking and thrifty.
- The Buffalo/Ox
Symbol of the spring and agricultural work, the buffalo/ox is hard worker and tenacious.
- The Tiger
The tiger is the king of animals, the symbol of power and courage inspires fear and terror. The tiger is passionate, impulsive and faithful to his word. Risks and challenges merely spur him or her on. He like to be always in charge of the situation.
- The Hare
The hare, the fourth animal in the Chinese zodiac, symbolizes longevity and, above all, fertility. The hare is a pleasant companion, since he is prudent and calm. However, the hare can also be egotistical and a spendthrift to boot.
- The Dragon
God of the rain and symbol of spiritual and physical power, the dragon represents the male principal 'the *Yang*' in Chinese metaphysics.
From the Han dynasty onward the dragon was the symbol of the emperor. The dragon is lucky, proud and loyal. He loves to be heard.
- The Snake
The symbol of cunning and spitefulness, the snake is crafty and wicked. Distinguished looking and sensual, those born in the year of the snake are sometimes enigmatic.







- **The Horse**
The horse is the symbol of speed and perseverance. A person born in the year of the horse is happy, passionate, curious about everything but also stubborn and sometime hot-tempered.
- **The Sheep/Ram**
The ram symbolizes virility and the lamb symbolizes filial piety.
- **The Monkey**
The monkey is the most whimsical animal of the zodiac. This mischievous being has a great thirst for knowledge. He can nonetheless be untruthful, frivolous and unstable.
- **The Cock/Chicken**
Courageous and belligerent, the cock/chicken symbolizes pomp, merit and glory. People born in the year of the cock/chicken are frank and honest and love to shine.
- **The Dog**
The dog symbolizes fidelity and loyalty. In ancient China, the dog played an important role as guardian and defender of the dead from evil spirits. People born in the year of the dog are often anxious and pessimistic and need to be loved.
- **The Pig**
The last animal of the zodiac, the pig is a symbol of fertility. Those born in the year of the pig are strict and hardworking individuals who detest intolerance and injustice.

17 – Two wood standing figures

Wood with traces of polychrome
China, Tang dynasty, 8th century A.D.
Height: - 17 a: 30.2 cm
- 17 b: 29.5 cm

Rare wooden standing figures with traces of red, black and white polychrome. They are dressed in the traditional costume of grooms and stablemen from the western reaches of the Silk Road, the man wears a long buttonless coat topped by a wide turned-down collar and drawn together over the right side of his body and held in place by a belt fastened around his waist. Long trouser legs emerging from below the man's robe extend to the very tops of his booted feet. A small pouch or purse hangs from the right side of the figure's belt. Their beautifully modeled face still bears traces of polychrome, with black pigment enhancing their eyebrows and the pupils of their eyes, and red pigment enhancing their delicately carved lips. The hair of one of the figure are drawn up in a double-looped bun at the top of his head and held in place by a net tied at the back of his head. Traces of black polychrome enhance this typical Tang hairstyle. The second figure wear a *putou*. The quality of the patches of polychrome that now remain on this wooden figure gives us a hint of the magnificence of the colour and design that once graced this rare statuette. The collar, the border and the sleeves of the robe are entirely decorated with white scrolls and spirals edged in dashes of bright orange-red pigment and the rest of the garment is bathed in bright red pigment and the legs of the figure's trousers are covered in white and orange pigment. Such decorative motifs and colour schemes were commonly used in Central Asia and can still be seen today in the numerous Buddhist grottoes that dot the ancient Silk Road.





Provenances

- European Collection, according to oral tradition, those wooden figures of a woman were given to the collector's parents by Professor Paul Pelliot.
- Galerie Christian Deydier, Paris, France, 2012.
- Private collection, Paris, France.

Exhibition

- Galerie Christian Deydier, *XXVI^e Biennale des Antiquaires*, Paris, September 14th – 23rd 2012, catalogue no. 13 (17b), catalogue no. 14 (17a).

Publication

- Galerie Christian Deydier, *XXVI^e Biennale des Antiquaires*, Paris, September 14th – 23rd 2012, catalogue no. 13, p. 78-81, and no. 14, p. 82-85.

Similar examples

Because of the perishable nature of the material, wooden figures from the Tang dynasty are extremely rare, only very few examples are known and recorded:

- An exceptional painted wooden bust of a Court Lady, now in Cernuschi Museum, Paris, is illustrated by Deydier Ch., *Treasures from Ancient China II*, Paris and New York 2012, catalogue p. 24-27. The lady wears an incredible hairstyle known among the Tang dynasty's aristocracy as “a chignon half folded in the shape of a sword blade” (*dandao banfanji*), which is covered with gold foil delicately decorated with floral motifs in black and red.
- A pair of Court ladies in wood with traces of polychromies, now in the Nelson Atkins Museum in Kansas City, USA., is illustrated in Jenkins D., *Masterworks in Wood: China and Japan*, no. 8.
- A wooden ‘fat lady’ discovered at Qingbai, is illustrated in *A Selection of the Treasure of Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China*, 1987, no. 376.
- A group of wooden Buddhist figures discovered in Dunhuang by Paul Pelliot at the beginning of the 20th century, now in Guimet Museum, Paris, is illustrated by Denes F., *Catalogue raisonné des objets en bois provenant de Dunhuang*, and in the catalogue of the exhibition: *La Route de la Soie, Les arts de l'Asie centrale ancienne dans les collections publiques françaises*, Grand Palais, Paris 1976, p. 69-73.

18 – Exceptional jar with cover

Glazed earthenware
Tang Dynasty, 618–907
Height: 33 cm
Diameter: 26 cm

Very important and exceptional earthenware jar, the body of ovoid in shape, and topped with a lid.

The jar is entirely covered with a beautiful light brown glaze, and decorated with numerous medallions in high relief in *sancai* and blue glaze. These medallions are of two types, the larger ones in the form of a stylised heart surrounded by foliage, the smaller ones representing a kind of vase containing a flower and foliage.

The lid is decorated with four medallions in relief, enamelled three colours (*sancai*) and blue.



19 – *Sancai* glazed earthenware lion

China, Tang dynasty, end of the first part of the 8th century
Height: 20 cm

Exceptional three colors glazed pottery figure of a lion. The wild animal is represented seated on a high rockwork base. The lion is shown seated on his back legs, front legs stretched and placed on the ground. Its right back leg is raised. The head lowered and turned to the right allowing the lion to bite its right hind leg. His powerful body twisted in an elegant curve reveals the rich fleece of his mane. The cream-colored earthenware body of the lion and the base have parts glazed in green and amber. The mane is glazed in green.







Provenance

– French Private Collection.

Similar examples

- A similar seating lion from the Rietberg Museum in Zurich, is published by Brinker H., *Treasures from the Rietberg Museum*, New York 1980, p. 121, fig. 44.
- Another similar lion from the Meiyintang collection is published by Krahl R., *Chinese Ceramics from the Meiyintang Collection*, Vol. Three (I), London 2006, p. 178, no. 1187.
- Three similar lions from the ancient collection of T.T. Tsui are published in *The Tsui Museum of Art, Chinese Ceramics I*, Hong Kong 1993, no. 98, 99, 100.

Notes

- Lions did not live in Tang China.
- Emperor Taizung (626 – 649) received a lion as a gift in 635. He was so impressed by the animal that he asked to write a poem and calligraphy to honour the animal.
- In Buddhism, the lion symbolises the authority of the Buddha and the Law.
- Lions were a source of inspiration for Buddhist paintings.

20 – *Sancai* glazed earthenware figure of a seated man

Tang dynasty, 618–907 A.D.
Height: 39 cm

Sancai glazed earthenware figure of a seated man holding an animal in his right arm. He sits on a stool with his right leg bent, his right foot at left knee. He wears a long tunic falling down. The animal hold in his mouth. The figure and the animal are glazed with splashed of green, brown and white.

Provenances

- Japanese Private Collection.
- European Private Collection.



21 – *Sancai* and blue glazed earthenware figure of a seated lady

Tang dynasty, 618–907 A.D.
Height: 27 cm

Sancai and blue glazed pottery figure of a seated lady on a hazel stool. She wears a long dress falling to the floor, but showing the tip of her shoes. Her dress is decorated with bands of blue, green and brown glaze, and with splashes of cream color. Her hands are emerging from the long green glazed sleeves, holding a chestnut glazed scarf covering her shoulders and falling to the front side of her. Her beautifully modelled face is highlighted by an elaborate headdress formed of two lateral chignons. Her neck is decorated with a neckless in low relief. She sits on a brown glazed stool.

Similar pieces

- A *sancai* earthenware seated lady from the Shaanxi Museum is illustrated in *Zhongguo taoci quanji* 7, *Tang sancai*, Shanghai 1983, plate 102.
- Another very similar piece was published by Deydier Ch., *L'Art et la Matière*, Paris 1998, p. 74-75 no. 39.







Previous Exhibitions

December	1985	<i>Chinese Gold, Silver and Gilt Bronze up to the Tang Dynasty</i> , London
June	1986	<i>Ancient Chinese Bronze Vessels, Gilt Bronzes and Early Ceramics</i> , London
December	1987	<i>Opening Exhibition</i> , London
June	1989	<i>Archaic Chinese Bronzes from Shang to Zhou Dynasties</i> , London
June	1990	<i>Imperial Gold from Ancient China</i> , London
June	1991	<i>Imperial Gold from Ancient China, Part II, Grosvenor House</i> , London
June	1991	<i>The Art of the Warring States and Han Periods</i> , London
September	1992	<i>XVI^e Biennale des Antiquaires</i> , Paris
December	1992	<i>An Exceptional Horse from the Han Dynasty</i> , London
November	1994	<i>L' Or des Qin, XVII^e Biennale des Antiquaires</i> , Paris
December	1995	<i>Le Banquet des Dieux, Ritual Bronzes of Ancient China</i> , London
January	1996	<i>Le Banquet des Dieux, Bronzes Rituels de la Chine Ancienne</i> , Paris
September	1996	<i>XVIII^e Biennale des Antiquaires</i> , Paris
February	1997	<i>Arts de la Chine et de l'Himalaya, XIV^e siècle avant J.-C. – XV^e siècle après J.-C.</i> , Paris
January	1998	<i>L' Immortalité de l'Âme chez les Han</i> , Paris
March	1998	<i>Timeless China</i> , New York
October	1998	<i>L'Art et la Matière</i> , Paris
October	1999	<i>Caravanes sur la Route de la Soie</i> , Paris
September	2000	<i>XX^e Biennale des Antiquaires</i> , Paris
October	2000	<i>Twentieth Anniversary</i> , Paris/London
October	2001	<i>Rituels pour l'Éternité</i> , Paris/London
September	2002	<i>XXI^e Biennale des Antiquaires</i> , Paris
September	2004	<i>L' Or des Qidan, XXII^e Biennale des Antiquaires</i> , Paris
September	2006	<i>XXIII^e Biennale des Antiquaires</i> , Paris
April/May	2007	<i>L' Inde Sensuelle : Terres cuites de l'époque Gupta, IV^e – VI^e siècle</i> , Paris
February	2008	<i>Exposition Inaugurale</i> , Paris
September	2008	<i>XXIV^e Biennale des Antiquaires</i> , Paris
March/April	2009	<i>Treasures from Ancient China I</i> , New York/Paris
February/March	2010	<i>Treasures from Ancient China II</i> , Paris/New York
September	2010	<i>XXV^e Biennale des Antiquaires</i> , Paris
March/April	2011	<i>Treasures from Ancient China III</i> , Paris/New York
September	2011	<i>Bestaire extraordinaire de la Chine ancienne</i> , Paris
October	2011	<i>The Frank Arts Collection</i> , Fine Art Asia Fair, Hong Kong
March	2012	<i>Treasures from Ancient China IV</i> , The Gerbe Collection, New York
September	2012	<i>XXVI^e Biennale des Antiquaires</i> , Paris
October	2012	<i>Archaic Bronze Vessels from Private Collections</i> , Fine Art Asia Fair, Hong Kong
October	2013	<i>Ancient Chinese Ritual Bronze Vessels</i> , Fine Art Asia Fair, Hong Kong
May	2014	<i>Ancient Chinese Ritual Bronze Vessels</i> , International Antiques Fair, Hong Kong
September	2014	<i>XXVII^e Biennale des Antiquaires</i> , Paris
October	2014	<i>A Masterpiece of the Inlaid Art of Ancient China</i> , I.A.F, Hong Kong
May/June	2015	<i>International Antiques Fair</i> , Hong Kong
September	2015	<i>Terre Cuite Haniwa : L' Art funéraire au Japon</i> , Paris
May	2016	<i>The 'Oeder' Gui</i> , International Antiques Fair, Hong Kong
May	2016	<i>The Honolulu jia</i> , International Antiques Fair, Hong Kong
September	2016	<i>La Soie : Trésor des sables d'Asie Centrale</i> , Le Rendez-vous, Paris
May	2017	<i>The Niaozhuan Hu</i> , International Antiques Fair, Hong Kong
September	2017	<i>Treasures From Ancient China V – Les Merveilles du Néolithique</i> , Paris
October/Dec.	2020	<i>Chinese Masterpieces from a French Collection</i> , Paris/Hong Kong
May/June	2021	<i>Exceptionnel chariot attelé et son palefrenier</i> , Paris
Spring/Autumn	2022	<i>Chinese Masterpieces from Private Collections</i> , Hong Kong/Paris
March/May	2023	<i>Textiles Énigmatiques sur la Route de la Soie</i> , Paris/Hong Kong



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