





The majestic bronze on the cover is among four hundred works that dramatically illustrate the development of early Chinese art in the Museum's current exhibition, *The Arts of Ancient China*, on which this *Bulletin* is based. China's artistic traditions are as complex and sophisticated as they are unfamiliar, and the exhibition spans four thousand years to present the swirling patterns of grain jars made in neolithic villages, the subtle splendor of the early bronzes and jades, and the elegant naturalism of the cosmopolitan Han and T'ang courts.

The show's popularity reflects the current resurgence of interest in China and the Orient, which happily coincides with the Metropolitan's recent initiatives in strengthening the Department of Far Eastern Art. The curatorial staff has been expanded with specialists in each of the major traditions of this vast cultural area, which includes India, Japan, and southeast Asia as well as China, and a number of new programs – of collecting, exhibition, and publication – have been undertaken.

The Museum's collection of Far Eastern art is uneven, with impressive peaks but equally significant gaps. Our Chinese ceramics, for instance, are world-famous, thanks to gifts such as those of Benjamin Altman and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., but we lack even a single example of some of the most important early types. The collections of Japanese prints and Chinese stone sculpture are excellent, but the group of Chinese paintings was weak until the acquisition, just last fall, of twenty-five Sung and Yüan masterpieces, purchased with the help of The Dillon Fund.

The exhibitions that are being planned take the department's strengths and weaknesses into consideration. Major loan shows will complement the Museum's own holdings: one of the most exciting of these is scheduled for next year, when more than twenty dazzling Momoyama screens, sumptuously decorative works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, will come to the Metropolitan from Japan. The series of rotating smaller exhibitions will continue, to provide a continuous variety of objects and kinds of art.

Dozens of loans also make the current presentation of ancient Chinese art both rich and comprehensive. Important works have been lent from the collections of Arthur M. Sackler, M.D., Paul Singer, M.D., Mr. and Mrs. Ezekiel Schloss, Mr. and Mrs. Rafi Y. Mottahedeh, John M. Crawford, Jr., the late Joseph Heil, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morse, Ernest Erickson, Mr. and Mrs. Lester Wolfe, Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Bilfinger, Dr. and Mrs. Howard Balensweig, and Mr. and Mrs. David Spelman. The cooperation of private collectors is essential to the department, and the Museum is deeply grateful to these lenders for their generosity in sharing their works of art.

Thomas Hoving
Director

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THE ARTS OF ANCIENT CHINA

Maxwell Hearn Curatorial Assistant, Far Eastern Art

Wen Fong Special Consultant for Far Eastern Affairs



NEOLITHIC BEGINNINGS

Unlike the ancient civilizations of Egypt and the Near East, China's past remains a vital part of its modern identity. For over six millennia, Chinese culture—like the great rivers that run eastward across East Asia—has created its own course, swelled and modified by tributary influences, yet never interrupted in the continuous flow of its history and traditions.

This culture originates with the development of primitive agricultural settlements along the river valleys of the middle Yellow River and its tributaries around the fifth millennium B.C. The farmers of this Yang-shao or “painted pottery” culture manufactured several grades of gray or buff pottery, as well as a small percentage of finely burnished wares painted with black, geometric designs. By the third millennium B.C., painted pottery styles were regionally quite diverse. One advanced stage represented by finds at Pan-shan (in modern Kansu) shows buoyant swelling grain urns exuberantly painted with spirals or linear patterns in black and red (Figure 1). These jars were set into the soil for stability, which explains why the painted designs are particularly effective when viewed from above (Frontispiece).

The painted pottery of eastern China, however, differs both in form and ornament from western Chinese styles, and often includes starbursts or flowerlike motifs. It was in this eastern region that an advanced stage of neolithic culture appeared around the second millennium B.C. Called the Lung-shan or “black pottery” culture, it developed many of the characteristic features of historic Chinese civilization, including walled settlements, ceremonial objects and tools of polished jade, and the use of bones in divination.

During the classic stage of this culture, distinctive pottery tripods and pedestaled bowls were produced, the finest examples of which are wheel-made, thin-walled vessels with a burnished black surface that is almost metallic in appearance (Figure 2).

Along with certain of the coarser cooking vessel types such as the *li* tripod at right (Figure 3) — the contours of which recall a skin bag or goat's udder — many of the Lung-shan vessel shapes continue in both clay and bronze during the ensuing Shang dynasty.



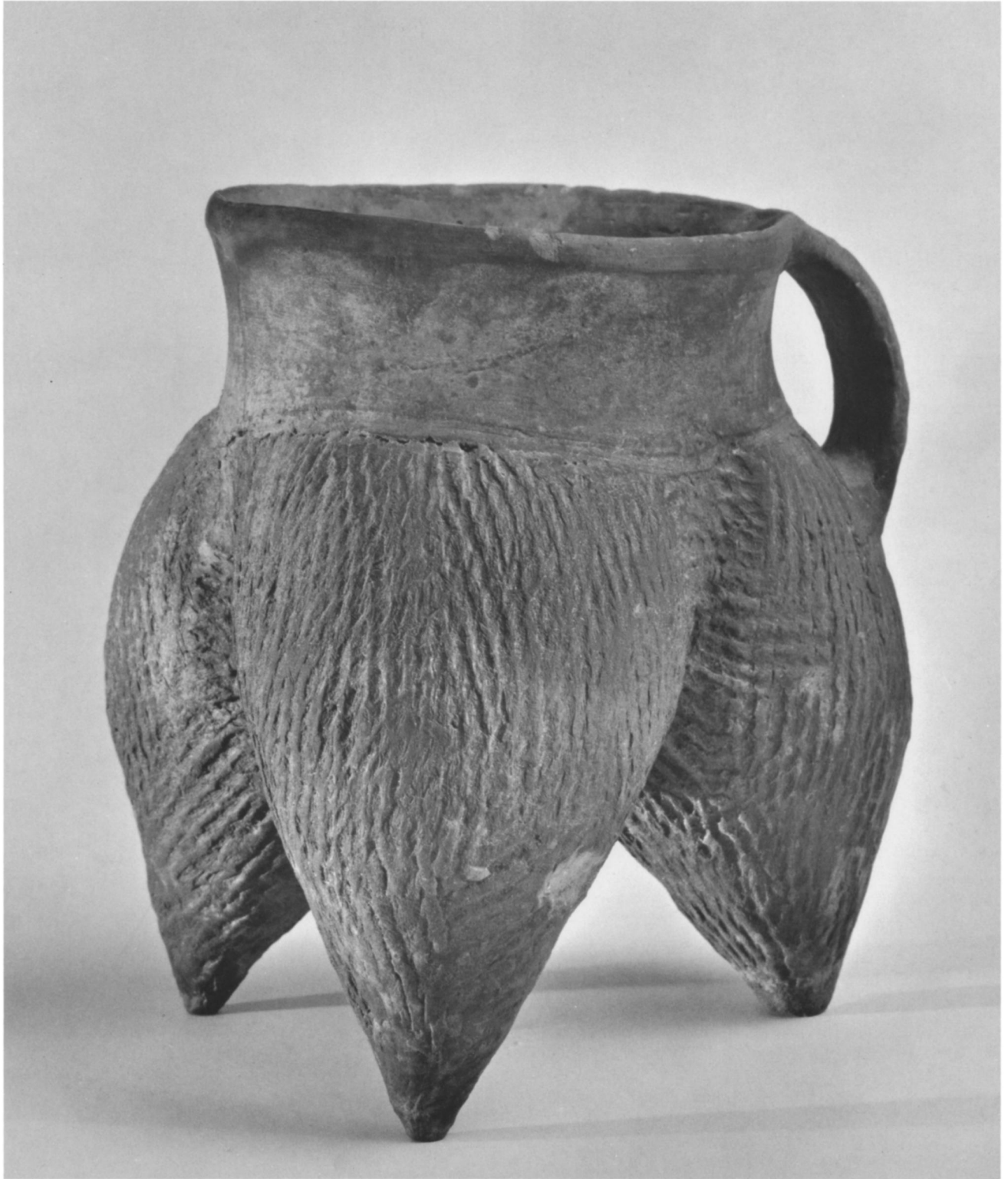
1 (overleaf). Two jars. Neolithic period, 3rd millennium B.C. Painted pottery, heights 14 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches (urn), 4 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches (jar). Lent by the Collections of Arthur M. Sackler, L 1973.72.8,9

2 (above). Stem of a vessel (*tou?*). Neolithic period, 2nd millennium B.C. Burnished pottery, height 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Lent by Dr. Paul Singer, L 1973.56.54

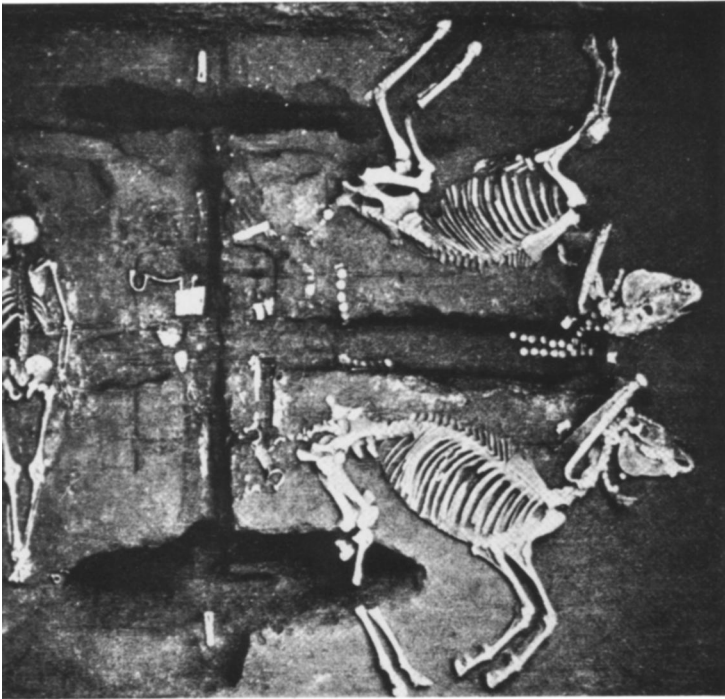
3 (right). Tripod cooking vessel (*li*). Neolithic period, 2nd millennium B.C. Pottery, height 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Lent by Dr. Paul Singer, L 1973.56.53

On the cover: Ritual wine vessel (*yu*), also shown in Figures 16-19. Shang or Western Chou dynasty, 11th century B.C. Bronze, inscribed, height 14 inches. Munsey Fund, 24.72.2

Frontispiece: Grain urn viewed from above. Neolithic period, 3rd millennium B.C. Painted pottery, diameter 15 inches. Lent by the Collections of Arthur M. Sackler, L 1973.72.8



THE AGE OF RITUAL: The Shang dynasty (about 1500-1028 B.C.)



4. Shang sacrificial chariot burial with charioteer and horses. Excavated at Ta-ssu-k'ung-ts'un, near An-yang. From *Early Civilization in China* (New York, 1966) by William Watson

The metropolitan culture of the Shang aristocracy dramatically overshadowed the sea of neolithic villages out of which it arose. Within a few centuries after the Shang came to power, they had developed China's first written language, as well as a palatial style of architecture, the horse-drawn chariot (Figure 4), and a high art of bronze ritual vessels and stone sculpture that reached a peak of brilliance at the last Shang capital near the modern town of An-yang, Honan.

The most significant discovery made at An-yang was the Shang script inscribed on the tortoise shells and "oracle bones" (Figure 6) used in divination and on bronze weapons and ritual vessels. The inscribed bones usually recorded questions concerning the outcome of a hunt, crops, or the proper animal sacrifice for an ancestor. Over one-third of some 3,000 characters have been deciphered, and their direct relationship to modern Chinese writing marks an extraordinary epigraphic continuity of more than 3,000 years.

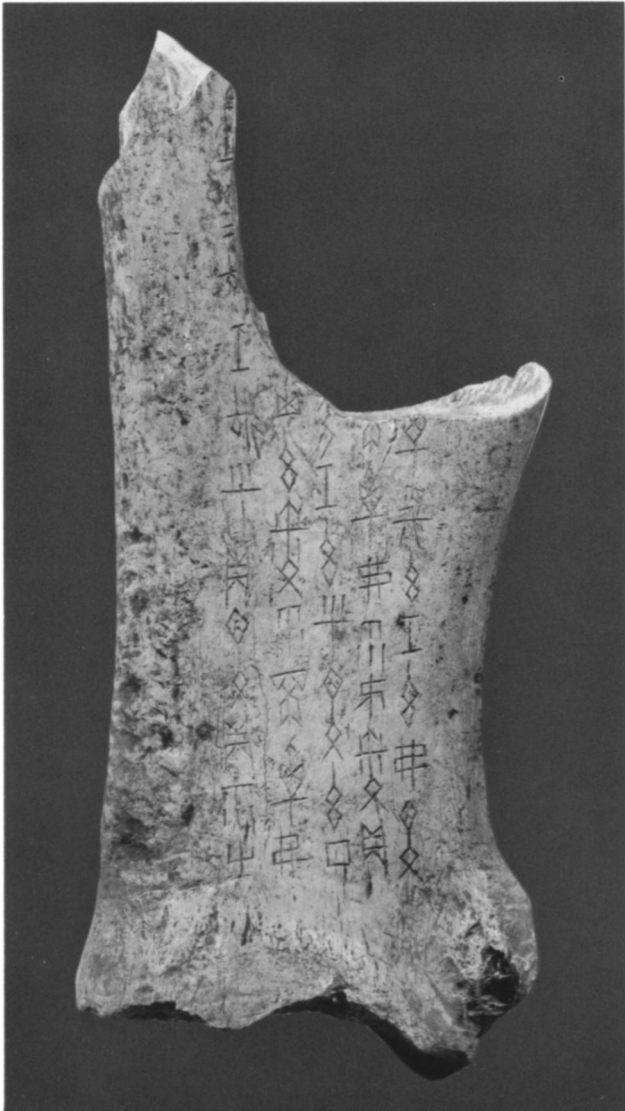
During the An-yang period (about 1300-1028 B.C.), every artistic medium was dominated by a decorative style epitomized by the intricate geometric patterns and zoomorphic designs of the finely cast bronze ritual vessels (Figures 9-15); this same ornament enlivened the carved surfaces of woodwork, ivory, bone, and jade, as well as a fine white pottery. A second style, which eschewed fully ornamented surfaces in favor of austere, simply articulated forms, is represented by the marble sculpture of a crouching bear illustrated here (Figure 7). The bear is conceived in flat planes that emphasize the profile and the massive quality of the animal. The thick legs and shoulders and the hunched-over neck and head suggest a compressed energy that is remarkably expressive of the nature of the bear.

Human depictions in Shang art are extremely rare. One example is the tiny fitting in the form of a human face illustrated at right (Figure 5). The frontal face with its large, jutting ears recalls the formal symmetry of design in Shang animal-mask motifs, yet other features are modeled with surprising sensitivity.

5. Human face. Shang dynasty, 12th-11th century B.C. Bronze, height 1 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches. Gift of Mrs. John Marriott, Mrs. John Barry Ryan, Gilbert W. Kahn, and Roger Wolfe Kahn, 49.136.2

6. Inscribed oracle bone. Shang dynasty, 13th-11th centuries B.C. Bone, length 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Gift of A. W. Babr, 23.23.5

7. Bear. Shang dynasty, 13th-11th centuries B.C. Marble, height 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Lent by Dr. Paul Singer, L 1973.56.48



THE AGE OF RITUAL

At the core of Shang culture was ancestor worship. Bronze ritual vessels in the form of food, wine, and water containers were used in its ceremonies. These vessels were frequently inscribed with the names of the ancestors to whom they were dedicated (Figure 10).

The earliest known stage of Shang bronze technology is represented by objects unearthed at Erh-li-t'ou, Honan, where a small number of simple bronze bells, weapons, and tools reflects a primitive metal industry, which nevertheless was already capable of creating the copper-tin alloy that constitutes bronze.

By the time the Shang capital had moved to Cheng-chou (about 1400 B.C.), pottery shapes began to be mimicked in bronze. Even at this early stage, bronze vessels such as the *tsun* below (Figure 8) emphasized the tinsel quality and tautness of metal. Planes converge in sharp, angular intersections and terminate in narrow edges that reveal the thinness of the vessel walls. The structural divisions of the body are emphasized by encircling bands of ornament that stand out against the

bare surfaces in thin raised lines, outlining stylized monster masks (*t'ao-t'ieh*) and dragon motifs. In a later style, illustrated by the *tsun* at right (Figure 9), the raised lines become recessed; the monster masks and dragon motifs are boldly delineated against a finely spiraled background. The vessel's form, clearly constructed in three parts, is stately and architectonic, with flanges giving crisp definition to the body and base, and incised blade motifs emphasizing the flaring curve of the mouth.

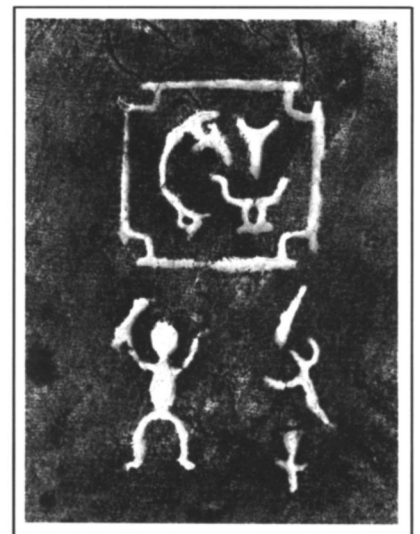
In the final phase of the An-yang development, the principal decorative motifs are plastically modeled. The *kuang* wine pitcher illustrated in Figure 11 is a remarkable example of this style. A menagerie of zoomorphic designs, including birds, coiled serpents, and various dragon and tiger motifs, are individually modeled, yet each animal form reinforces the shape and contours of the vessel. Such sculptured forms recall modeling in soft clay; in fact, the rapid development of bronze technology in Shang China seems to be directly related to the advanced art of the Chinese ceramic craftsman. Although bronze casting by the lost-wax method developed much earlier in Mesopotamia, the Shang bronze casters seem to have relied exclusively on the piece-mold technique for producing their fine ware. A clay matrix was built around a clay core; the decorative designs were then carved in the clay matrix, around which clay piece molds were built. Subsequently, the matrix was removed, creating the space to be filled by molten bronze. Thus, apart from the mastery of the metallurgical processes of bronze founding, the bronze caster's art depended to a large extent on his ceramic skill in fashioning the clay model and molds.

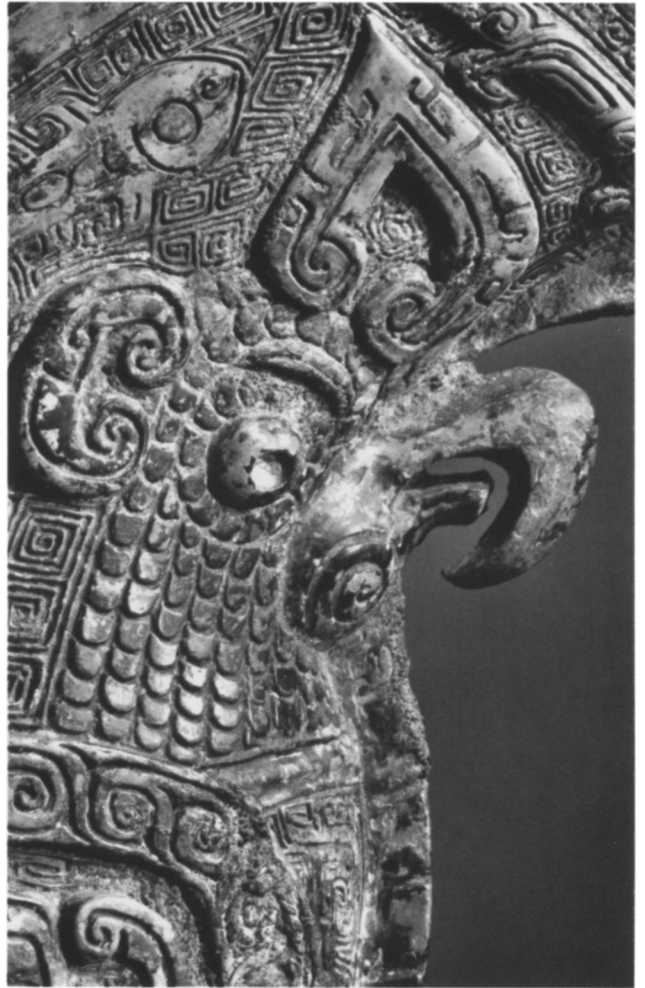


8 (left). Ritual wine vessel (*tsun*). Shang dynasty, 14th century B.C. Bronze, height 10 15/16 inches. Lent by the Collections of Arthur M. Sackler, L 1973.71.1

9 (right). Ritual wine vessel (*tsun*). Shang dynasty, 13th-11th centuries B.C. Bronze, inscribed, height 16 inches. Rogers Fund, 43.25.1

10. Ink rubbing of a typical Shang bronze inscription. Taken from a ritual food vessel (*kuei*) of the 12th-11th century B.C., lent by Lester Wolfe, L 1973.63.1





THE AGE OF RITUAL



11. Ritual wine pitcher (*kuang*). Shang dynasty, 12th-11th century B.C. Bronze, height 8½ inches. Rogers Fund, 43.25.4

Opposite page: details of Figure 11

12. A small dragon climbing up the bird-like body of the handle

13. The owl's head at the spout

14-15. Details of the dragon on the shoulder of the vessel







THE AGE OF RITUAL

An elaborate set of ritual wine vessels from the late Shang or early Chou period gives us some idea of the rich splendor of Shang and early Chou ritual ceremonies.

The set (Cover, Figures 16-17) was said to have come from a tomb uncovered in 1901 near Pao-chi-hsien, Shensi; shortly thereafter, it entered the collection of Viceroy Tuan Fang (Figures 18-19). As was often the case, the plunderers of the tomb site did not bother to record the original arrangement of the altar set in the tomb, and all evidence of the age or identity of the burial was destroyed.

The pieces of the set vary in style and execution. Although eleven of the vessels are inscribed, only two groups share identical inscriptions: the two *yu* buckets and the large *tsun* vase, and the small trumpet-shaped *ku* and one *chih* cup. A partial reconstruction of the set's arrangement in the tomb may be established, however, from corrosion outlines of the three principal vessels, the two *yu* flanking the central *tsun*, which were etched onto the surface of the altar table during burial. Figure 17 shows a hypothetical arrangement of the remaining vessels around the major pieces. If the assembly as it now exists is accepted as the original grouping, then the disparate inscriptions and vessel styles must still be explained. Created around the time of the Chou conquest, and clearly by different foundries, the set may represent the accumulated wealth of a family shrine.

16 (preceding pages). Altar table (*chin*) and ritual wine buckets (*yu*), also shown in Figure 17. Shang or Western Chou dynasty, 11th century B.C. Bronze, with identical inscriptions on both *yu*. Table length 35 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches, height 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches; large *yu* height 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches; small *yu* height 14 inches, with pedestal 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Munsey Fund, 24.72.1-3

17 (left). Set of ritual vessels and altar table. Shang or Western Chou dynasty, 11 century B.C. Bronze, with variously inscribed vessels. Munsey Fund, 24.72.1-14

18-19. Viceroy Tuan Fang and other Manchu officials with the altar set, about 1901. Photograph: Courtesy of Laurence Sickman



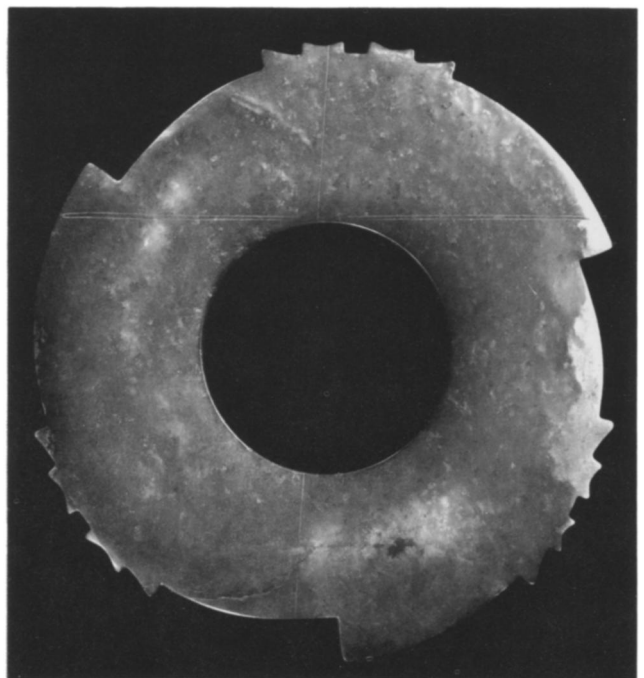
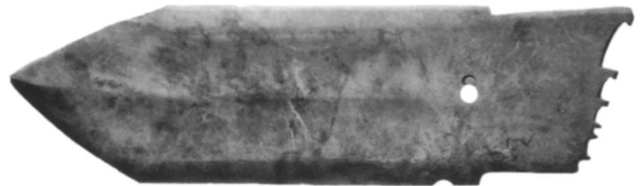
THE AGE OF RITUAL:

From neolithic times jade was valued for its rich variety of colors, its sonority when struck, and the soothing coolness of its surface to the touch. As there are no sources of true jade (nephrite) presently known within the area of ancient China, it is likely that jade pebbles were imported from the Central Asian regions of Khotan and Yarkand, over 2,000 miles distant from northern China.

Harder than steel, but too brittle to be used for functional implements, jade was sublimely impractical. It was painstakingly worked by the neolithic artisan into ceremonial objects by a slow process of abrasion using sand or quartz grit.

The Shang and Chou continued this lithic industry, creating axes, dagger-axes (Figure 21), and sickle-like blades, as well as discs (Figure 22) and tubes for use in rituals and burial. The precise functions of many of these objects, however, are not known. Later texts mentioned jade scepters and blades as tokens of rank, and perforated jade discs, which were frequently buried with the corpse, as symbols of heaven that presumably served as aids to the deceased in his or her celestial passage.

Jade ornaments carved in the likeness of animals or imaginary beasts were worn as pendants and were undoubtedly talismans. During the Shang period, three-dimensionally carved examples, such as the water buffalo at right (Figure 20), were frequently ornamented with raised spirals and meanders that recall bronze decorative motifs. The difficulty involved in producing this relief style, which called for the grinding down of all the unraised surfaces, shows the importance given these objects. By Chou times, this painstaking style disappeared; most Early Chou pendants are flatter and are incised with shallow, beveled lines that animate the surfaces of the animal forms with a suggestion of body contours and muscles (Figure 23, shown greatly enlarged).



20 (top). Water buffalo. Shang dynasty, 12th-11th century B.C. Jade, length 2½ inches. Lent by John M. Crawford, Jr., L 1973.67.2

21 (center). Ritual dagger-axe (ko). Shang dynasty, 13th-11th centuries B.C. Jade, length 8¼ inches. Fletcher Fund, 24.170.13

22 (below). Notched disc (hsüan-chi). Shang or Western Chou dynasty, 11th-10th century B.C. Jade, longest axis 6¼ inches. Rogers Fund, 27.15

23 (opposite page). Stag and doe. Shang or Western Chou dynasty, 11th-10th century B.C. Jade, heights 2⅞ inches (stag), 1⅞ inches (doe). Rogers Fund, 24.51.11,14



THE SECULARIZATION OF ART: The Western Chou (about 1027-771 B.C.) and Eastern Chou (771-256 B.C.) dynasties



24 (above). Ink rubbing of a typical Chou bronze inscription, taken from the Western Chou ritual food vessel (*kuei*) in Figure 26

25 (center, top). Ritual wine vessel (*fang-i*). Western Chou dynasty, 10th century B.C. Bronze, inscribed, height 11 inches. Rogers Fund, 43.24.5

26 (center). Ritual food vessel (*kuei*). Western Chou dynasty, 9th century B.C. Bronze, inscribed, height 9 inches. Lent by the Collections of Arthur M. Sackler, L 1973.72.1

27 (center, below). Ritual food vessel (*fu*). Eastern Chou dynasty, 7th-6th century B.C. Bronze, height 8½ inches. Lent by the Collections of Arthur M. Sackler, L 1973.71.2

28 (far right). Ritual food vessel (*tuo*). Eastern Chou dynasty, 6th-4th centuries B.C. Bronze, height 10½ inches. Rogers Fund, 25.20.2

The founding of the Chou dynasty did not undo the accomplishments of the Shang. The persistence of Shang traditions is particularly apparent in the early Chou bronze vessels, which evolved directly from the Shang shapes and decorative schemes of the An-yang period. Almost immediately, however, the Shang designs were subjected to new stylistic treatments. In the *fang-i* wine vessel illustrated here (Figure 25), the animated motifs have become more schematically rendered. The various features of the *t'ao-t'ieh* mask seem more playful: individual elements of eyebrows, nose, and nostrils have turned into sweeping patterns of curves and frilly hooks. This sumptuously decorative style of the early Chou suggests a secularization in the function of the ritual vessels, which seem to glorify the form more than the spirit of the rituals they celebrated.

Inscriptions on Chou bronzes also changed. Instead of monograms and short dedications, Chou inscriptions (Figure 24) are longer, often giving detailed accounts of the events that the vessels commemorated; thus ancestral piety was subtly transformed into a memorialization of the living.

A deterioration of casting quality paralleled the political decline of the Western Chou house, which after a series of weak rulers was forced to move its seat of government in 771 B.C. to the eastern capital of Lo-yang. On the *kuei* food vessel in Figure 26, the larger part of the body surface is covered by fluted bands, while the features of the *t'ao-t'ieh* mask have all but completely dissolved into hooks and decorative patterns. On the later *fu* food vessel (Figure 27), these curved patterns are revitalized as symmetrically opposed serpents, their convoluted movements creating a new tension against the severe, angular forms of the vessel.

During the Eastern Chou period, the feudal kingdoms grew increasingly independent of the debilitated Chou sovereign. By the sixth century B.C., a high level of artistic achievement returned to bronze casting as the feudal lords vied with one another in their display of power and material splendor. Graceful vessel shapes such as the *tou* pedestaled bowl at the far right (Figure 28) superseded the cruder forms of earlier Eastern Chou works; a sophisticated overall decoration of interwoven patterns was developed and used in deliberate contrast to the nearly naturalistic, three-dimensional animal forms, here applied to the body of the vessel as handles.



THE SECULARIZATION OF ART: The Eastern Chou dynasty (771-256 B.C.)

The last centuries of the Chou dynasty produced a golden age in Chinese culture. While the powerless Chou court was perpetuated in an aura of ritual orthodoxy, the social, economic, and political diversity that existed among the competing feudal states stimulated philosophical speculation and artistic change. The ideas of Confucius (551-479 B.C.) epitomized the growing humanism of the age: he stressed moral superiority and education. At the other extreme of the philosophical spectrum was Taoism, which, in rejecting society's artificial standards, emphasized harmony with nature's eternal rhythms.

Improved agricultural yields through the use of iron tools, as well as increasing trade among the states, produced new wealth. The rich treatment, including the frequent use of precious metal and stone inlays, given to both ritual vessels (Figure 32) and such personal items as belt hooks, mirrors, weapons, and chariot gear (Figures 29-31) suggests that many of these objects were used primarily as status symbols. Belt hooks, devices for fastening belts adopted from the nomads, were treated as minutely worked sculptures or rugged pieces of jewelry (Figure 29), while the backs of thinly cast mirrors were frequently decorated with intricate patterns of intertwined dragons or geometric motifs (Figure 31). The mirror surfaces and backs were often given a black coating, created by some unexplained metallurgical process, which has protected many of them from corrosion for over 2,000 years.



29 (top). Belt hook (detail). Eastern Chou or Western Han dynasty, 3rd-2nd century B.C. Bronze with gold and silver overlay, total length 10½ inches. Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 65.170.2

30 (center). Shaft finial from a chariot. Eastern Chou dynasty, 4th-3rd century B.C. Bronze with gold and silver inlay, length 9 inches. Lent anonymously, L 65.42.5

31 (below). Mirror back. Eastern Chou dynasty, 4th-3rd century B.C. Bronze, diameter 6½ inches. Lent by the Collections of Arthur M. Sackler, L 66.2.250

32 (opposite page). Ritual wine vessel (hu). Eastern Chou dynasty, 5th-4th century B.C. Bronze with copper inlay, height 17¾ inches. Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, The H. O. Havemeyer Collection, 29.100.545





THE SECULARIZATION OF ART

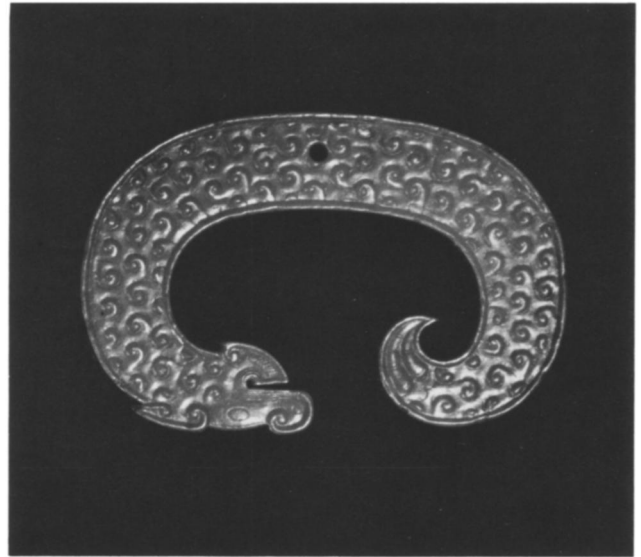
The artistic refinement and ingenuity of the late Chou is best seen in delicately carved jade amulets and girdle pendants. The introduction of new iron tools – possibly even the diamond point – enabled jade carvers to attain a new level of technical excellence, transforming even the thinnest cuts of stone into minutely decorated and lustrously polished masterpieces. Ritual objects and smaller personal ornaments alike became jewel-like creations. Except for the writhing forms of stylized, serpent-like dragons (Figure 33), most of the animal forms of the earlier Chou disappeared. Geometric shapes, such as the *pi* perforated disc or arcs that resembled stone chimes, became popular. From love poems of the period it is possible to imagine a variety of these translucent stones strung together in elaborate hanging arrangements, glistening and chiming delicately from a bride's girdle – a perfect metaphor of purity and harmony. For men, too, jade was a symbol of moral virtue and high position; carved discs such as the ring at the far right (Figure 35, shown greatly enlarged) frequently adorned the pommels of swords.

The delicate buckle of white jade at the lower right (Figure 34) carved with a *t'ao-t'ieh* mask and feline head is too fragile to have been used to fasten a belt or heavy garment. It probably served either as a ceremonial scabbard hook, or as a fastener for a headdress or sheer silk robe.

33 (top). Dragon pendant. Eastern Chou dynasty, 5th-3rd centuries B.C. Jade, length $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Lent by the Collections of Arthur M. Sackler, L 66.1.526

34 (below). Buckle. Eastern Chou dynasty, 5th-3rd centuries B.C. Jade, length $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Lent by Dr. Paul Singer, L 1973.56.24

35 (opposite page). Ring with griffin. Eastern Chou dynasty, 3rd century B.C. Jade, diameter $1\frac{7}{8}$ inches. Rogers Fund, 43.94.1







THE SECULARIZATION OF ART: The State of Ch'u



Distinct regional styles flourished during the late Chou period, one of the most influential of which was that of the southern state of Ch'u.

The significance of the Ch'u culture is perhaps magnified by the completeness of its archaeological record, most notably from discoveries in the region of Ch'ang-sha, Hunan. There, the moist soil along with the advanced techniques of Ch'u tomb construction have preserved even normally perishable substances, which now give us an intimate glimpse of the life of the Ch'u nobility who lived more than 2,000 years ago. A striking example is the lady's toilet box at left (Figure 36), complete with combs, whisk, hairpins, bamboo open-work hairpuff, and two hairpieces. Waterlogged during burial, its cover buckled and wrinkled from its rapid drying at the time of excavation; otherwise its contents and lustrous lacquer surface have retained their original pliancy and finish.

A small number of paintings on lacquer and silk from Ch'ang-sha are among the earliest examples of a narrative style of painting in China. Executed in thin outlines and using the same rhythmic, fluid lines found in lacquerware designs, they show fantastic visions of human and mythological personages and diagrammatic representations of the realms of heaven and earth, and the afterlife.

Directly related to such pictorial representations are the wooden human and demonic guardian figures placed in the Ch'u tombs. As substitutes for sacrificial human victims, large retinues of wooden retainers such as those on this page (Figure 37) were made to protect or serve the deceased in the afterworld. Although the figures are simply cut, they are animated by lively facial expressions and painted details.

36. Toilet box. Eastern Chou dynasty, 3rd century B.C.
Lacquered wood, diameter of lid $10\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Lent by Dr.
Paul Singer, L 1973.56.76

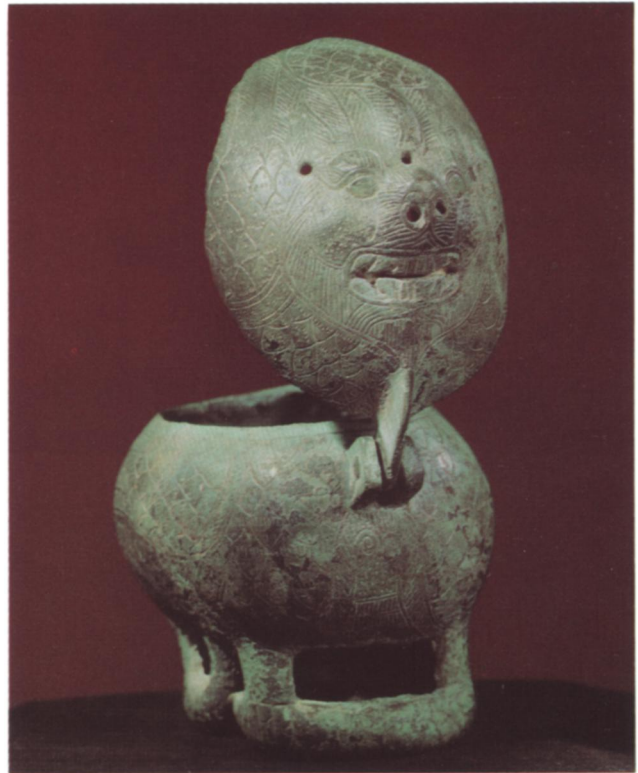
37. Two tomb figurines. Eastern Chou dynasty, 5th-3rd
centuries B.C. Painted wood, heights 23 and $15\frac{1}{4}$ inches.
Gift of Mathias Komor, 48.182.1,2

AN IMPERIAL ORDER: The Ch'in (221-206 B.C.) and Han (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) dynasties

With the forceful unification of the Chou feudal states by the western state of Ch'in, a new national consciousness was imposed upon China's differing regional cultures. Laws, weights and measures, and the written language were standardized, while the country was united by a network of highways and canals. The Han dynasty established after the downfall of the brief Ch'in rule successfully preserved this new national identity, expanding its influence over a vast empire. As they fortified their defenses against the "barbarians" around them, the Han came to view themselves as the "Middle Kingdom" of the world, and their emperor, the "Son of Heaven," traced his imperial mandate beyond the Chou and Shang kings to the legendary emperors of the remote past. The pride with which the Chinese view their achievements during the Han period is indicated by the fact that even today they refer to themselves as the "Han people."

During the early Han period, the old ritual vessels diminished in importance, becoming largely utilitarian or ornamental; a new variety of everyday objects, inspired by occult Taoism and animated with the forms of symbolic animals and fabulous beasts, were emphasized. Often, the creatures relate in some way to the object's function or shape. The sea deity on this page (Figure 38) transforms burning incense into fuming vapors and shrouding mist, while the kneeling ram as a lamp on the opposite page (Figures 40-41) makes a pun—the word *yang*, or ram, has the same sound as *yang* for sun or light. The use of these items as mortuary objects suggests another level of meaning: both the magic vapors of the censer and the symbolic light that the ram brings to the darkness of the tomb suggest eternal life in the hereafter.

The liveliness of Han pictorial representation derives less from naturalistic modeling than from a dramatic reduction of forms into quintessential linear expressions. On the sword blade at upper right (Figure 39), a wild boar and a deer leap across a space filled with swirling cloud scrolls and conventionalized mountain silhouettes. The energized lines, whether representing nature or ornament, never fail to suggest life and motion. This emphasis on rhythmic vitality, rather than physical verisimilitude, became an important aesthetic principle that prevailed throughout the rest of the history of Chinese painting.



38 (above). Incense burner in the form of a sea deity. Western Han dynasty, 2nd-1st century B.C. Bronze, length 3¼ inches. Lent anonymously, L 1973.119

39. Sword blade (detail). Western Han dynasty, 2nd-1st century B.C. Bronze, maximum width 1¼ inches. Gift of Florence Waterbury, 65.741

40-41. Kneeling ram lamp. Western Han dynasty, 2nd-1st century B.C. Bronze, height 3⅞ inches (closed), 5¼ inches (open). Lent by Dr. Paul Singer, L 1973.56.66

42. Kneeling stag container. Western Han dynasty, 2nd-1st century B.C. Bronze, height 2⅞ inches. Gift of Mrs. John Marriott, Mrs. John Barry Ryan, Gilbert W. Kahn, and Roger Wolfe Kahn, 49.136.3



AN IMPERIAL ORDER

The surviving examples of Han representational art are for the most part mortuary objects. Nevertheless, these tomb sculptures and wall paintings, many of the highest quality, afford us some exciting views of the Han visual world.

Though produced from a mold, the austere silhouette and crisp lines of a fabled “blood-sweating” horse at the upper right (Figure 43) convey with fierce directness the fiery spirit of this Central Asian breed. A prize for the Han warrior, these powerful, deep-chested steeds also became a favorite subject of the Han artist. In the tomb tile at right (Figures 44-45), two rows of prancing horses and strutting birds fill a decorative frieze. The designs are pressed into the clay with a stamp. By repeating the stamped motif the artist is able to create a sense of continuous movement in an almost cinematic fashion.

While most of Han art from northern China is comparatively formal and severe, a greater sense of realism and spontaneity is often seen in examples from the southern regions of Ch’u and Shu (Szechwan). The pert watchdog from Ch’ang-sha illustrated on the opposite page (Figure 46) exhibits the same simplification of forms as the northern sculptures, but the masterful modeling enlivened by an obvious sense of humor makes the work one of the most appealing examples of Han mortuary art.



43. Head of a horse. Han dynasty. Painted pottery, length $8\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Lent by Dr. Paul Singer, L 1973.56.69

44-45. Tomb tile. Western Han dynasty, about 200 B.C. Painted pottery, length $46\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Rogers Fund, 51.127.1

46. Reclining dog. Han dynasty. Pottery, height $13\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Bilfinger, L 1973.66



AN IMPERIAL ORDER

The superb clay statuette of an attendant girl at right (Figure 47) gives us an idea of the high achievement of Han figural art. The sensitively modeled face of the girl is almost a portrait; the simple wadded robe, trousered legs, and slippered feet suggest her humble origins, and the whole work evinces the artist's knowledge of and sympathy for the subject.

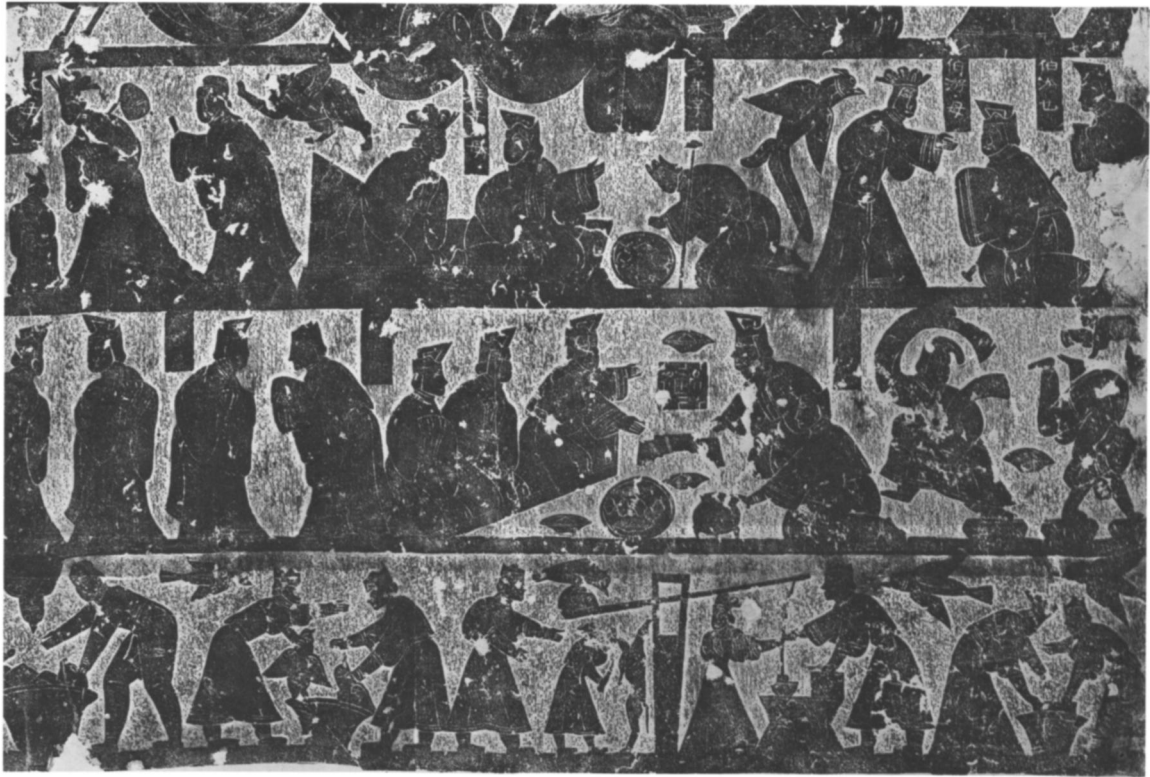
Elaborate paintings illustrating mythology, history, and man's heroic deeds once decorated Han palaces and ceremonial halls. As public art, these served a didactic and propagandistic function. A reflection of the style and content of these murals is preserved in low reliefs that decorate funerary shrines such as those of the Wu family in Shantung. In these shrines, mythological figures as heavenly beings are placed on ceilings and gabled areas under the roof, followed by superimposed rows of legendary and historical rulers and scenes representing historical events. In the detail illustrated on the opposite page (Figure 48), the central scene in the top register depicts the story of Lao-lai-tzu, a paragon of filial piety who although an aging man himself acts young to entertain his old parents. Below this, feasting lords are entertained by performers who dance and leap on drums. A similar group of entertainers in pottery form is seen in Figure 49. Although these figures are mold-made, they possess a vivid sense of animation that seems typical of all Han representations.

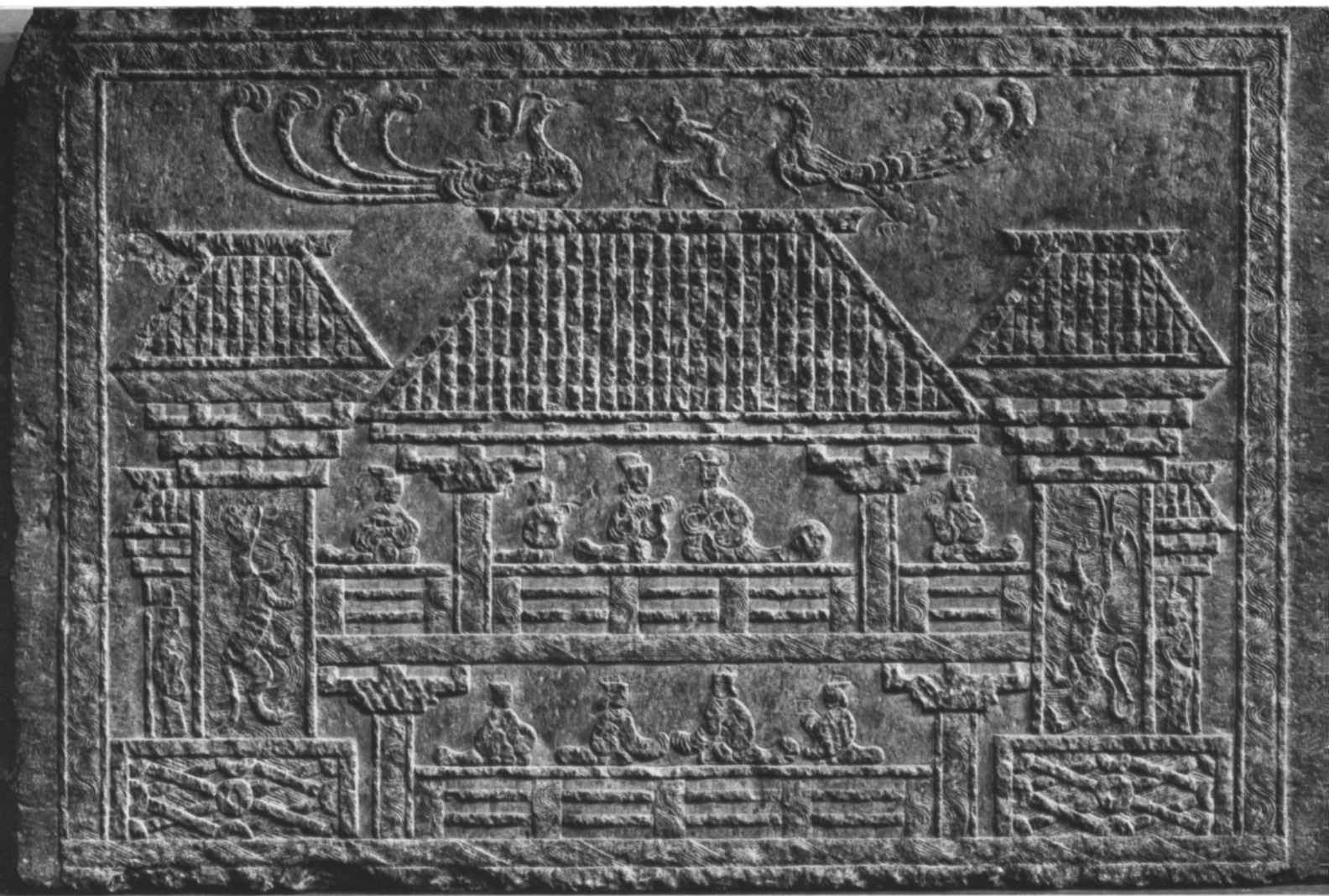


47. *Female attendant. Western Han dynasty, 3rd-1st centuries B.C. Painted pottery, height 22¾ inches. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Ezekiel Schloss, L 1973.77.23*

48. *Rubbing from the front shrine of the Wu family. Eastern Han dynasty, about 168. Rogers Fund, 20.111.18*

49. *Musicians and performers. Eastern Han dynasty, 25-220. Painted pottery, height of dancer 4½ inches. Fletcher Fund, 36.12.1-5,7,11-12,14*





AN IMPERIAL ORDER

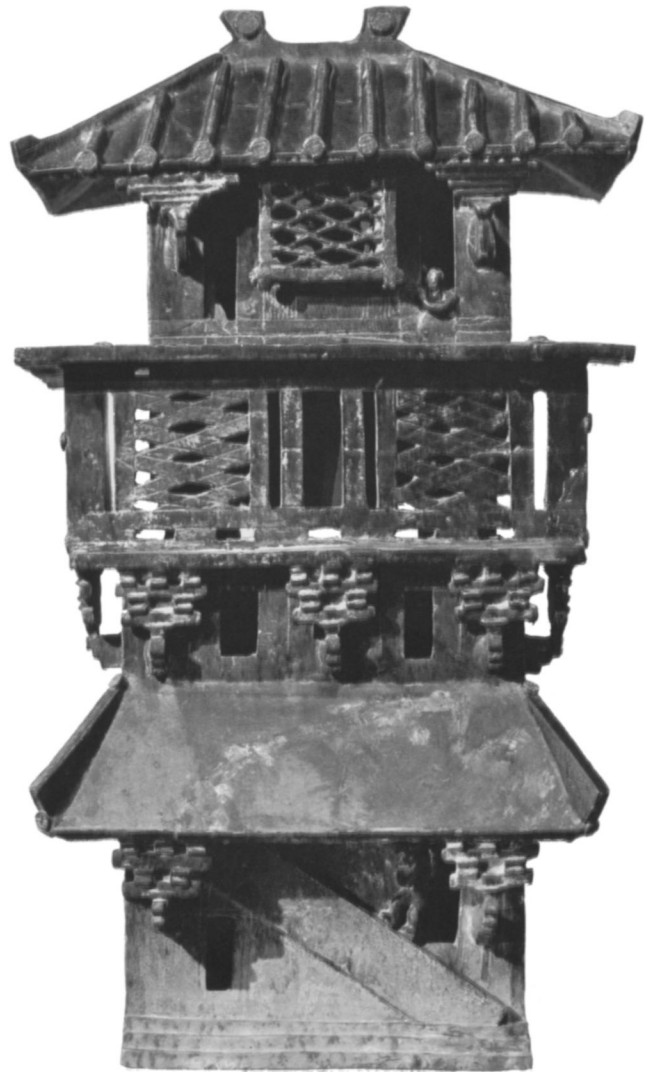
The most important manifestation of the new imperial order was architecture. Vast palatial complexes, towered gateways, and city walls were built as symbols of national power and prestige as well as for defensive purposes.

The glazed ceramic tower at right (Figure 52) shows all the essential features of Han architecture. The basic unit is an enclosure defined by four corner piers with elaborately carved wooden brackets, the whole crowned by a widely overhanging tiled roof. In monumental architecture, several of these units were superimposed to form a towered structure. Indeed, the most distinctive feature of Han imperial architecture was a pair of towers known as *kuan*, which served as either defensive watchtowers or observatories.

In the funerary stone relief at the left (Figures 50-51), which shows an enshrined couple, the two-storied building in the center is flanked by four towered structures. These towers represent gateways at the four cardinal directions, with the white tiger on the left signifying the West and the blue dragon on the right representing the East, while the two heraldically placed red phoenixes on the top of the central building emphasize its southerly orientation. This schematic representation summarizes Han palace architecture, which was laid out as a cosmic diagram.

50-51 (left). Funerary wall slab, and detail showing the mythical red bird of the South. Eastern Han dynasty, about 114. Limestone, height 31¼ inches. Rogers Fund, 20.99

52. Model of a house. Eastern Han dynasty, 25-220. Glazed pottery, height 40½ inches. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Ezekiel Schloss, L 1973.77.16



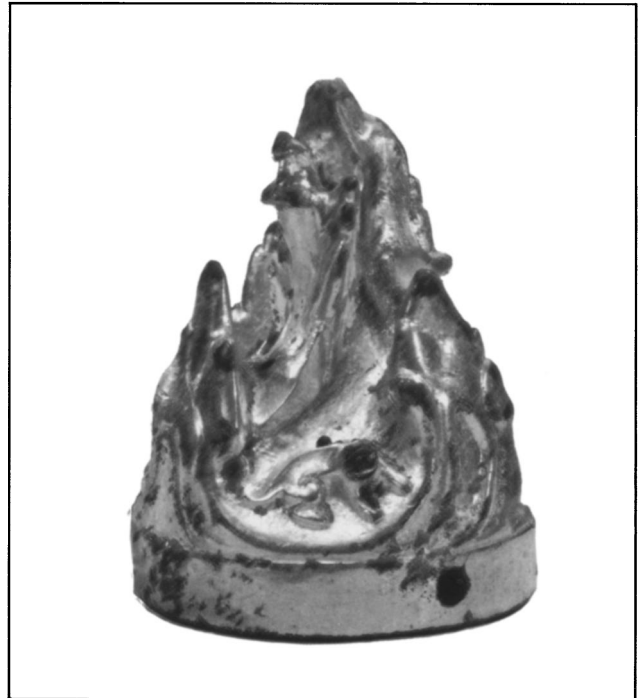


AN IMPERIAL ORDER

Han cosmology is best represented by the diagram that decorates the back of the “TLV” mirror at left (Figure 53). The T, L, and V forms for which TLV mirrors are named are also seen on the playing board of a popular game of chance called sixes (*liu-po*). The other principal forms of the diagram – the circle and the square – represent the dynamic opposites of the universe, yang and yin, heaven and earth. At the center of the square earth the mirror’s round boss symbolizes Mount K’un-lun, the center of the universe. Also within the terrestrial realm are the twelve symbols known as the earthly branches that are basic to the computation of the lunar calendar. Beyond the earth are the circular heavens, in turn ringed by the stylized waves of the universal ocean. The cosmic animals of the four directions along with sprites and other creatures move within this space, while the T, L, and V forms perhaps represent the mountains and gates of the universe. Thus the Han world encompasses all the variables of auspicious symbols, numerology, and a game of chance.

A second cosmic image is the *po-shan-lu*, “magic mountain censer,” illustrated at right (Figure 54). Popular Taoist theories of the time supposed that the immortal spirits resided on Mount P’eng-lai, floating in the Eastern Sea at the furthest reaches of the earth. In this representation of that magic isle, mythical creatures roam through a wild landscape of upswept peaks resembling the giant waves of the cosmic sea. Incense rising through holes behind the peaks would appear like the vaporous cloud-breath of the mountain itself, completing the image of a supernatural habitat. The bold modeling of the mountain forms and the rounded body of the reclining tiger in the foreground suggest that the censer dates perhaps slightly later than the end of the Han dynasty.

The increasing popularity of occult Taoism toward the end of the Han dynasty, with its indulgence in flights of fancy and yearnings for a return to nature, mirrors the growing disorder of late Han society. During the 400 years that followed the collapse of the Han, a fragmented China was governed by a succession of petty dynasties and nomad invaders. Buddhism, a foreign religion imported from India and Central Asia, became a dominant popular and intellectual force during this troubled time.



53. Mirror back. Eastern Han dynasty, 25-220. Bronze, diameter $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Rogers Fund, 17.118.42

54. Incense-burner lid in the form of a magic mountain. Eastern Han dynasty or later, 3rd-4th century. Gilt bronze, height $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Rogers Fund, 15.161.1



BUDDHISM: **The Northern Wei dynasty (386-535)**

The propagation of the Buddhist faith in China represents the only time before this century that a foreign ideology thoroughly permeated Chinese culture.

During the late fifth and early sixth centuries imported Buddhist styles were assimilated. The great Northern Wei gilt-bronze standing Buddha at the left (Figure 55), the largest of its kind now extant, represented in its day a dramatic image of a foreign sage from the distant Land of the West: the cranial protuberance and the long earlobes are supernatural signs; the toga-like robe as well as the well-defined body revealed by the clinging drapery follow Indian and Central Asian prototypes. In working in the imported styles, however, the Chinese artist shows a typical predilection for linear patterns; the supple Indian drapery style has turned into sharp pleats with flat, flame-like tongues. This hybrid style is echoed by the late-fifth-century colossal stone images at the cave temples of Yun-kang, in northern Shansi, created under the auspices of the Northern Wei rulers.

After the removal of the Wei capital southward to Lo-yang in 495, a distinctly Chinese Buddhist style appeared in a new group of cave temples at Lung-men, Honan, as well as in a second series of caves at Yun-kang. The figure from Yun-kang on the right (Figure 56) represents the Buddha Maitreya, who as the messianic Buddha of the Future was extremely popular at this time. In contrast to the well-defined body of the earlier work, the presence of anatomical features is denied by the flat, overlapping folds of Maitreya's robes; the criss-cross, V-shaped patterns of these pleated folds and the falling scarves are boldly reinforced by the figure's crossed legs, creating a geometric frontality that seems to heighten the spirituality of the image. This statue originally gazed down from the face of the cliff: the viewer's eyes are drawn upward, from the fluttering edge of the skirt, over the flat body and sloping shoulders, to rest finally at the mystically smiling face. As devotional images, these early-sixth-century figures effectively guided the worshiper's mind from the material to the immaterial.



55 (left). *Standing Buddha. Northern Wei dynasty, last quarter of the 5th century. Gilt bronze, height 55¼ inches. John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 26.123*

56 (right). *Maitreya. Northern Wei dynasty, 500-535, from Yun-kang. Sandstone, height 57½ inches. Rogers Fund, 22.134*

BUDDHISM



The superb gilt-bronze altar group on the opposite page (Figure 59), dated 524, shows a Northern Wei vision of Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, in his full glory. The compassionate Maitreya had vowed not to enter nirvana until there is universal salvation for all sentient beings, and his rebirth as the Messiah was eagerly anticipated during the Wei dynasty. Here he is portrayed in his glorious return, accompanied by a hierarchy of attendant worshipers and deities—regal lions, threatening guardian figures, alms-bearing kings, saintly Bodhisattvas, and celestial musicians. The typical early-sixth-century pleated drapery style is here developed to special advantage by the bronze caster: by making the boldly sculpted planes of the drapery pleats intersect in sharp edges, he creates a dramatic effect of glittering reflections and crisply cast shadows.

The five-figured group of the smaller altarpiece (Figures 57-58) embodies the doctrine of unity between the two fundamental schools of Buddhist thought. The Hinayana sect—suggested by the two monks or ascetics—followed the rigorous path established by the historic Buddha Shakyamuni; it emphasized individual enlightenment through contemplation and self-denial. The Mahayana sect—represented by the two haloed Bodhisattva figures—believed in universal salvation; the Bodhisattvas were the “enlightened ones” who had achieved spiritual perfection, but who postponed their own nirvana to await the salvation of all sentient beings.

A story from the historical Buddha’s life is represented by the two figures in the stupa (pagoda) above the central figure’s mandorla (Figure 58). As Shakyamuni was about to preach the Buddhist Law to the multitude, Prabhutaratna (the Buddha of the Past) appeared in the sky as witness. Shakyamuni ascended to join him, thus symbolizing the continuity of the Law throughout time.



57 (upper left). Maitreya or Shakyamuni altar group. Northern Wei dynasty, about 525. Gilt bronze, height 23¼ inches. Rogers Fund, 38.158.2

58 (lower left). Detail of Figure 57: the stupa at the top of the Buddha’s mandorla (halo), in which Shakyamuni is seated with Prabhutaratna, the Buddha of the Past

59 (right). Maitreya altar group. Northern Wei dynasty, dated by inscription to 524. Gilt bronze, height 30¼ inches. Rogers Fund, 38.158.1



BUDDHISM: The Northern Ch'i (550-577) and Sui (581-618) dynasties



Around the middle of the sixth century a new style of Buddhist sculpture emerged in northern China as the Eastern Wei kingdom was supplanted by the Northern Ch'i. In the headless Bodhisattva figure on the far left (Figure 60), we see an early statement of this new, columnar style. The break from the two-dimensional linear style of the Northern Wei is almost total. It is as if the sculptor, having exhausted the flaming intensity of the earlier linear rhythms, now turned to the other extreme of emphasizing solely the cylindrical mass of the body by suppressing virtually all linear movements. In this figure, the drapery lines do not have an assertive quality of their own; they are merely the contours of the slightly raised pleats, which in hanging vertically reinforce the columnar quality of the body. The long strings of jewels are treated simply, but three-dimensionally; a restrained series of curving drapery folds at the skirt's edge represents the only vestige of the older Northern Wei style.

A slightly more relaxed pose is seen in a late-sixth-century Bodhisattva in the center (Figure 61). The artist tries to enhance the plasticity of the figure by adding elaborately carved jewelry and encircling scarves; yet underneath such details the body remains essentially columnar and undifferentiated. Finally, in the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (Kuan-yin) at the far right (Figure 62), we see a suggestion of greater physicality in the bent knee and slightly outthrust hip. Like the previous statue, however, the figure is essentially columnar, embellished with a profusion of plastically modeled ornament.

Beginning in the seventh century, the cult of Avalokiteshvara became increasingly popular. It was part of the so-called Pure Land sect of Buddhism, which taught that merely by invoking the name of Avalokiteshvara, the faithful could expect to be reborn in the paradise of the Amitabha Buddha. The figure of Avalokiteshvara is usually identified by a small image of Amitabha in his crown.

60 (left). *Bodhisattva*. Northern Ch'i dynasty, 550-577. Limestone, height 40½ inches. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. D. Herbert Beskind, 56.209

61 (center). *Bodhisattva*. Northern Ch'i or Sui dynasty, late 6th century. Limestone, height with base 73 inches. Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 42.25.3

62 (right). *Avalokiteshvara (Kuan-yin)*. Sui dynasty, 581-618. Limestone, height with base 39¾ inches. Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, The H. O. Havemeyer Collection, 29.100.32





BUDDHISM: The T'ang dynasty (618-906)



Buddhist art during the seventh and early eighth centuries achieved a sublime balance between naturalistic representation and supernatural abstraction. In spite of a newly acquired sense of sensual beauty and worldly richness, early T'ang sculpture radiates a spiritual power unmatched by works of later periods.

A deep meditative absorption suffuses the dry-lacquer seated Buddha at the far left (Figure 63). The downcast eyes and pursed lips give a look of deep concentration to the gentle face. Unlike the earlier Buddhist representations, the figure seems intensely human. The sculptor has succeeded in showing physical beauty in harmony with spiritual repose.

The T'ang sculptors' mastery of figural representation is clearly seen in the subtly modeled stone head from T'ien-lung-shan at the upper left (Figure 64). The head is slightly turned to one side; the facial features are beautifully articulated with a clear understanding of the bone structure underneath. Compared to the schematic conventions of the eyes and mouth of the early-sixth-century figure from Yun-kang in Figure 56, the modeling of the fleshy eyelids and lips here suggests the sensuous qualities of the muscle and skin.

Despite its small size, the brilliant gilt-bronze statuette of the Shakyamuni Buddha at the lower left (Figure 65) sums up the T'ang achievement in conveying a sense of monumentality and supernatural presence. The Buddha's hands form the *dharmacakra* mudra, a mystical gesture that signifies the "turning of the wheel of the Law." The statue's elegantly authoritative features, its rich robe, glittering gold surface, as well as the superb workmanship, all are manifestations of a powerful Buddhist church, which, until its persecution in 845 in China, saw its deity as the Buddha Triumphant.



63 (opposite page). Seated Buddha. Early T'ang dynasty, 7th century. Dry lacquer on cloth and wood with paint and gilt, height 38 inches. Rogers Fund, 19.186

64 (top). Head of a Bodhisattva. T'ang dynasty, 8th century, from T'ien-lung-shan. Sandstone, height 15¾ inches. Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 42.25.12

65 (below). Seated Buddha. T'ang dynasty, 8th century. Gilt bronze, height 8 inches. Rogers Fund, 43.24.3

AN INTERNATIONAL CULTURE: The T'ang dynasty (618-906)



China under the T'ang experienced an era of political and cultural expansion unparalleled since the imperial age of Han. At its height, T'ang suzerainty extended across Central Asia to Samarkand, eastward to Korea, and southward as far as the kingdoms of Champa and Funan. The T'ang capital of Ch'ang-an was then the greatest metropolis on earth. The walled city, oriented according to the four cardinal directions, was laid out in a grid over six miles on each side. Along its broad avenues passed foreign traders, priests, musicians, and performing troupes, who enriched the imperial court with exotic goods and influenced the styles of music, art, and fashion.

The fine metalwork and rich decorative arts of the period offer a particularly vivid picture of the wealth and international taste of the T'ang aristocracy. The beaten silver cup in Figure 81 is directly modeled after a Sasanian chalice, while imported decorative motifs, such as heraldic animals and floral or vine scrolls with birds in them, regularly appeared on T'ang mirrors (Back Cover), furnishings, and textiles.

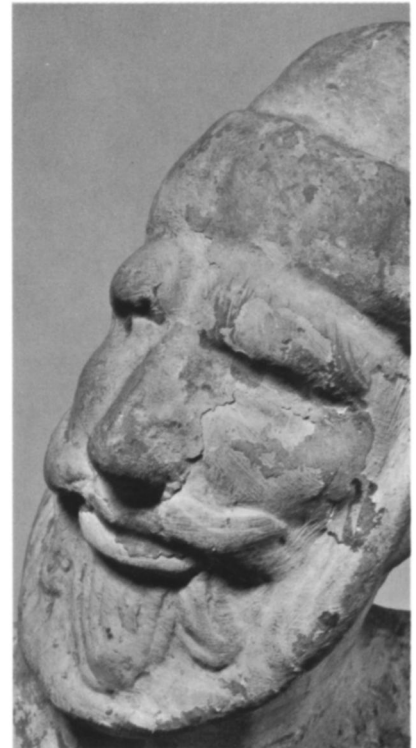
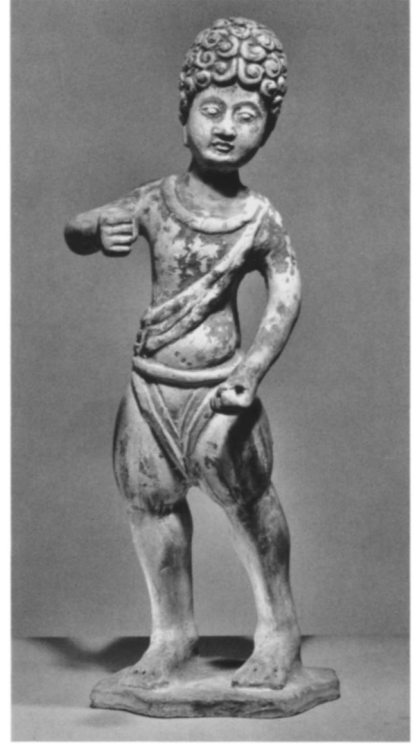
With new styles came new demands on the level of craftsmanship. One masterpiece of the jeweler's art is the intricate hair ornament in the form of a Chinese phoenix illustrated in Figure 80. Fashioned from gold sheet, wire, and granules and set atop a long pin, the phoenix would have trembled and glittered in the coiffure of a palace lady.

Ethnic variety as well as foreign costumes also became a familiar part of the cosmopolitan scene. T'ang poets frequently celebrated the exotic charms of *hu* or "barbarian" courtesans and entertainers. Along with demure ladies in traditional court costumes (Figure 66), T'ang tomb sculptures also show female attendants dressed in the heavy skirts and headdresses of Central Asia (Figure 67). The drapery of these two attendant figures, recalling some late Gothic German sculptures, is surprisingly bold and dramatic, yet the clay paste and creamy glaze identify them unmistakably as early T'ang.

66 (left). Court lady. T'ang dynasty, 7th-8th century. Glazed pottery, height 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Lent by the Collections of Arthur M. Sackler, L 1973.71.9

67 (right). Female attendants. Early T'ang dynasty, 7th century. Glazed pottery, heights 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Rogers Fund, 23.180.8-9





AN INTERNATIONAL CULTURE

Among tomb sculptures, the depiction of foreigners with their camels and horses forms a special genre. The strange physiognomies of the foreigners – the large noses, bulging eyes, curly hair, thick beards, as well as the unfamiliar colors of their eyes and complexion – became a source of endless fascination for the Chinese artist. Characterized by acute observation and humor, deft modeling, and a bold use of colors, some of these works are truly masterpieces of ceramic sculpture. They form, moreover, a veritable record of T'ang cosmopolitan life.

Opposite page:

68-70 (top row). *Merchant and two grooms. T'ang dynasty, 7th-8th century. Left and right: painted pottery, heights 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ and 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches; center (detail): glazed pottery, height overall 23 inches. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Ezekiel Schloss, L 1973.77.3,4,7*

71, 73 (bottom row). *Details of Figures 74 and 68*

72 (bottom row). *Seated merchant with wine sack in the form of a goose. T'ang dynasty, 7th-8th century. Glazed pottery, height 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. David Spelman, L 1973.65.1*

74 (below). *Camel and groom. T'ang dynasty, 7th-8th century. Painted and glazed pottery. Camel: height 27 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches; lent by Mrs. Rafi Y. Mottabedeh, L 1973.64.7. Groom: height 16 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches; lent by Mr. and Mrs. Ezekiel Schloss, L 1973.77.1*





AN INTERNATIONAL CULTURE



More closely related to the ritual aspect of burial are the guardian figures, both human and mythological, placed in the tomb. Drawing inspiration from foreign facial types and Buddhist sculptural styles, these representations proliferated during the Wei and T'ang periods. Although mortuary art, they are more fantastic and whimsical than grim and morbid. They speak well for the essentially optimistic nature of the Chinese view of the afterlife.

Modern scholars see the fall of T'ang as a great divide in Chinese social and cultural history: the rule by an ancient hereditary aristocracy was replaced by that of a bureaucratic scholar-official class during the Sung period. Art historically, the great traditions in figural art ended with the T'ang. After this period, a new dominant art form – the landscape paintings of the Sung scholar-artists – superseded the official, religious, and funerary art of ancient China.

75 (far left, top). Double-headed chimera tomb guardian. Sui or T'ang dynasty, 7th century. Painted pottery, length 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Ezekiel Schloss, L 1973.77.11

76, 77 (far left, center and below). Chimera tomb guardians. Northern Wei dynasty, 6th century. Painted pottery, lengths 11 $\frac{5}{8}$ and 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Ezekiel Schloss, L 1973.77.9-10

78 (center). Guardian warrior. Northern Wei dynasty, 6th century. Painted pottery, height 20 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Lent by Howard and Carolyn W. Balensweig, L 1973.70

79 (near left). Chimera tomb guardian. T'ang dynasty, 7th-8th century. Glazed and painted pottery, height 19 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Lent by Mrs. Rafi Y. Mottabedeh, L 1973.64.3

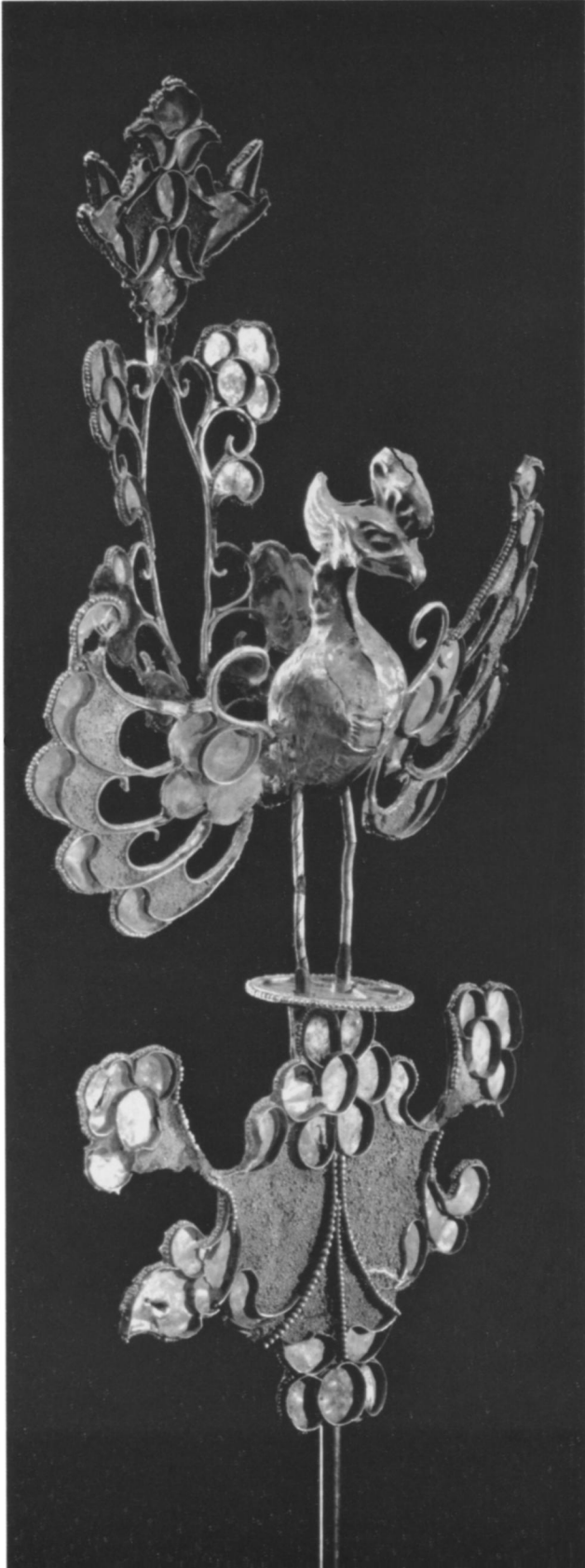
Overleaf:

80. Hair ornament in the form of a mythical bird (feng-buang). T'ang dynasty, 7th-8th century. Gold sheet, wire, and granules, height 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Rogers Fund, 24.32.5

81. Cup. T'ang dynasty, 7th-8th century. Silver with gold overlay, height 3 inches. Rogers Fund, 21.46

Back cover: Mirror back. T'ang dynasty, 7th-8th century. Bronze, diameter 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Rogers Fund, 25.20.3

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The Arts of Ancient China exhibition has been enhanced by loans from many of New York's private collections. The elegant silver box on this page, from the Dr. Paul Singer collection, epitomizes the refined taste of the T'ang aristocracy. Gold designs of curving vines and lush floral motifs encircle two humorously rendered mandarin ducks, creating a subtle play between linear pattern and realistic depiction.

The *t'ao-t'ieh* (monster) mask on the following page, from the Collections of Arthur M. Sackler, reflects a similar ability to interweave realistic images and abstract decorative designs: the mask's feline qualities are suggested through a composite of purely geometric forms. The *t'ao-t'ieh* motif dominated the decoration of Shang ritual bronzes and continued to be used ornamentally during Chou times, in this example as part of a ring handle for a wooden casket. Revived by Sung dynasty antiquarians, the *t'ao-t'ieh* has remained the consummate symbol of China's ancient past.

Box. T'ang dynasty, 7th-8th century. Cast silver with chased and gilded designs, width 4 inches. Lent by Dr. Paul Singer, L 1973.56.87





Ring handle with a t'ao-t'ieh mask. Eastern Chou dynasty, 5th-3rd centuries B.C., width 4¾ inches. Lent by the Collections of Arthur M. Sackler, L 1973.71.3



Tun-huang

Yellow River

Yun-kang

PEKING

HOPEI

SHANSI

SHANSI

Hsiang-t'ang-shan

SHANTUNG

Lung-shan

T'ien-lung-shan

An-yang

Hui-hsien

Ping-ling-ssu

Yang-shao

Erh-li-t'ou

Cheng-chou

Pan-shan

Pao-chi-hsien

Lo-yang

Lung-men

KANSU

Mai-chi-shan

Ch'ang-an (SIAN)

Pan-p'o

HONAN

Huan River

ANHUI

KIANGSU

Ch'ing-lien-kang

NANKING

SZECHWAN

Ch'eng-tu

HUPEI

Han River

SHANGHAI

Yangtze River

CHEKIANG

Ch'ang-sha

KIANGSI

HUNAN

Shih-chai-shan

YUNNAN

CANTON

ANCIENT CHINA

