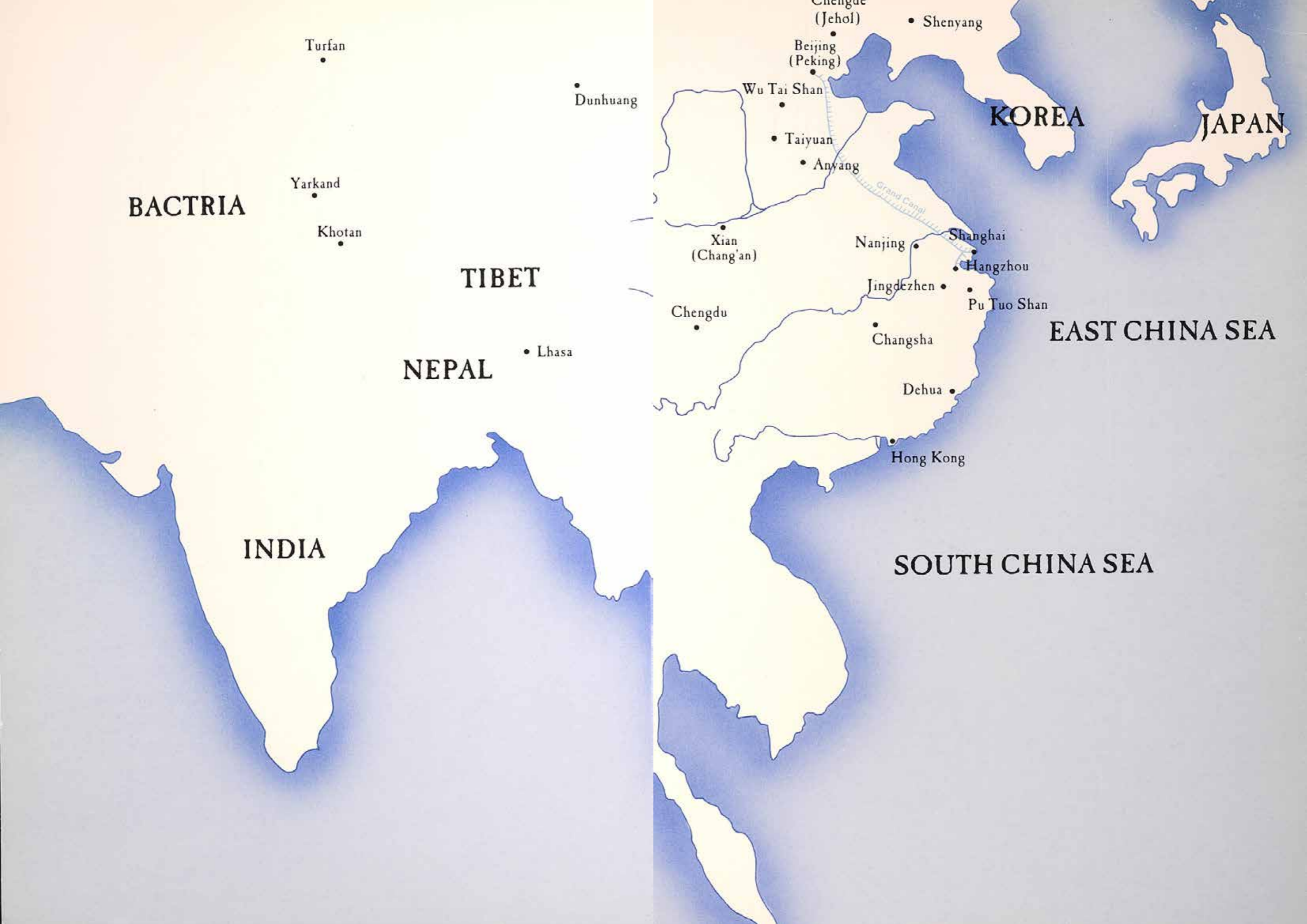


Chinese and Japanese Bronzes
A.D. 1100-1900



Michael Goedhuis



BACTRIA

Turfan

Yarkand

Khotan

TIBET

NEPAL

Lhasa

INDIA

Dunhuang

Wu Tai Shan

Taiyuan

Anyang

Xian
(Chang'an)

Chengdu

Nanjing

Jingdezhen

Changsha

Dehua

Hong Kong

Chengde
(Jehol)

Beijing
(Peking)

Shenyang

KOREA

JAPAN

Grand Canal

Shanghai

Hangzhou

Pu Tuo Shan

EAST CHINA SEA

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Chinese and Japanese Bronzes
A.D. 1100-1900

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Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to express our warmest thanks to all those who have contributed to this exhibition. In particular we are deeply indebted to Ulrich Hausmann who put aside work on his own major study of this field to write the catalogue. He also generously drew our attention to the designs published in "The Ten Bamboo Hall Writing Paper" some of which we have used in the chapter headings. We equally much appreciate the great effort made by Ann Hausmann to see the project through to its final stages.

Ulrich Hausmann joins us in thanking Dr Patrizia Jirka-Schmitz, Michiko MacIver and Mr Jin Ying very much for their help with reading inscriptions, and Doreen Stoneham for her work in furnishing us with the invaluable thermoluminescence results on some items.

Tim Hamilton has produced a beautiful design for the catalogue and our grateful thanks are also due to Barnes and Webster Ltd. and Pru Cuming for their excellent photographs.

Pressroom in Hong Kong made a special effort to provide the excellent printing and we extend our special thanks to Desirée Bucks who was in charge of the whole production effort.

Michael Goedhuis

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Foreword

The recent decades have seen the most exciting advances yet in our perception of Chinese culture. While officially organised excavations have brought to light the most astonishing evidence from the early periods of Chinese civilisation, a somewhat less spectacular effort by a few has given us a new dimension in our understanding of the later periods.

A series of pioneering exhibitions organised by a small group of experienced and enthusiastic dealers, encouraged by collectors and occasionally held in conjunction with museums, has brought us an entirely new understanding and appreciation of the cultural complexity, richness and sophistication of Chinese society in the later periods. It is quite ironic that this major change in perception was brought about by what is often referred to as "the minor arts".

Whereas other works of art, such as those fashioned in bamboo, wood, rhinoceros horn, soapstone and jade, have now been the focus of research for some time, the extensive field of later bronzes – Chinese as well as Japanese – has so far received little attention. The two exhibitions of bronze objects from the workshop of the late Ming metalworker, Hu Wenming, perhaps provided the first evidence for many years that the field of later bronzes must be taken seriously. Examples of handwarmers by leading metalworkers of the late Ming period show that artistic skills and technical expertise were not exclusively reserved for a few splendid vessels but were also applied to many other objects belonging to the world of the scholar – a point which was poignantly and convincingly made by two recent major exhibitions relating to the arts of the scholar.

The most persistent criticism of later bronzes is directed against the archaistic vessels, which, in the view of some, are merely weak offspring of their celebrated ancestors, displaying only misunderstood decorative elements copied from earlier periods and made up into new designs. I must admit that I have always had little time for such a criticism as I consider it to be perfectly legitimate – indeed essential – for any artist of a later era to combine, modify or even conceive forms and decorative elements freely according to his own perception, a perception which subtly conveys to us an interpretation and view of the past as seen through the eyes of that society. The unique importance of archaism in Chinese cultural life can hardly be overstated, and I for one find the study of these later freely-designed archaistic vessels fascinating and far from futile. Would these critics choose to dismiss the architecture of the Renaissance, the classicism of an architect like Adams and the buildings of today's Post-Modern style on the grounds that they incorporate inconsistent and untrue elements of the classical Greek and Roman periods?

After more than twenty years' involvement in collecting and studying later bronzes I still find this field intellectually and aesthetically rewarding. There is probably no other area in Chinese art which shows such diversity and richness as the field of later Chinese metalwork. Even now I am shown at least one object every month which is not only problematic to date but whose provenance is difficult to establish. There is no shortage of challenges in this field; for example: the problematic group of Xuande vessels, the Shisou group and the large group of archaistic vessels which, as I have mentioned previously elsewhere, are difficult yet most important.

When asked to catalogue the objects in this present major exhibition of later Chinese and Japanese bronzes, I was both apprehensive and enthusiastic:

apprehensive because it is difficult in a catalogue of this format to do justice to each object and to express an often complex argument in a few lines; enthusiastic because it gave me the unique chance to study in greater detail a large group of interesting and rare bronzes. It is difficult to single out any specific group, but the sculptural objects were of special interest to me, as was the impressive yet difficult group of archaic vessels inlaid with silver and gold, which, in this catalogue could not be discussed in the wider context it requires. The attractive group of Japanese flower vases gave me a rare opportunity to examine individual vessels closely and to propose a dating – a sometimes difficult task as there is little published material on these vessels, similar versions of which continued to be made over a considerable period of time.

The presentation of a catalogue bringing together objects of such diversity creates some obvious problems. Rather than pursuing the chronological approach I have opted for a grouping which relates the exhibits to their original function. This, I believe, apart from demonstrating the richness and variety of designs in a more directly comparable way, may help to provide a better insight into the cultural background of these objects. The length of the entry accompanying each exhibit does not always reflect the importance of the object. The text itself has largely departed from the customary meticulous description of each object, as it is hoped that the photographs will provide the more obvious information. Advice on condition of metalwork is notoriously difficult to give, largely because faults and repairs are not always easy to detect and partly because everyone has an individual understanding of the degree of severity of a flaw or repair. In the field of bronzes one has to accept that a perfect bronze cast is virtually non-existent and that even the very best will probably have required some repairs after casting. Where a comment on the condition of an exhibit has been given, it relates only to more obvious replacements. Any further more detailed advice on condition will be given on request.

We have endeavoured throughout this catalogue to use Pinyin, the official Chinese system of Romanisation, wherever possible.

It is hoped that this major exhibition will not only show that there is an area of new scope for the collector which has so far suffered neglect, but that it will also succeed in conveying to all that many of these later bronzes are beautiful, interesting and original works of art in their own right. What remains to be done in order to enjoy these bronzes is to cultivate one's appreciation and to sharpen one's senses. Perhaps this catalogue will make a small contribution to that end.

Ulrich Hausmann

Introduction

The field of post-classical Chinese and Japanese bronzes is possibly the last art-historical recess awaiting the full beam of modern scholarship in these two great cultures. Chinese "later" bronzes are, in Rose Kerr's apt phrase, the Cinderella of the Chinese arts and current connoisseurship is only now approaching the point that studies in ceramics had reached at the beginning of the century.

At first sight this neglect is perplexing when viewed in the context of an art-world which, at least in the last twenty-five years, has ardently exploited the most arcane back-waters of art-history. Moreover, bronzes had enjoyed a spectacular vogue in Europe throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. They were avidly acquired by gifted collectors and dealers in Paris as well as by some Western museums. The Victoria and Albert Museum, for example, owes its current extensive holdings, probably the largest in the world and shortly to be published, to purchases made from the French dealer Siegfried Bing in the 1870's. Illustrated sales catalogues of private collections published in France in the early 1900's give as much weight to later bronzes as to earlier works of art, ceramics, sculpture and lacquer. What can then be the reason for over half a century of indifference?

The early years of the twentieth century witnessed the excavation of the first archaic Chinese bronzes to reach the West. These magnificent works were quickly recognized as one of the greatest manifestations of man's cultural history. They were regarded with awe by Western scholars, who could hardly believe that such complex, mysterious and technically sophisticated artefacts could have been made as early as 1500 years before Christ. It is, therefore, probable that the sudden arrival of these glamorous discoveries simply overshadowed their often superficially similar, but infinitely more intimate descendants. Thus, the later examples were unceremoniously brushed aside as stale versions of the vital prototypes.

While oriental scholarship gathered pace throughout the twentieth century, later bronzes remained in an academic limbo, attracting little or no literature. Virtually no attempt has been made until recently to date and classify them or even to distinguish between those made in China and those in Japan. Now that attention is being directed to the field, there is irony in the growing recognition that this may be one of the most fertile, subtle and complex areas of contemporary scholarship.

In this catalogue, Ulrich Hausmann, who has published several articles on later bronzes and who is at present working on a comprehensive study of this subject, discusses the various exhibits and draws attention to some of the many elusive questions relating to this field.

The dogged theme of Chinese archaism has recently been examined by Ulrich Hausmann in "In Scholars' Taste" (London 1983) and by Tsang and Moss in "Arts from the Scholar's Studio" (Hong Kong, 1986). On the one hand, the tenacious Chinese reverence for their long past has nurtured a continuity of decorative motifs, while providing ample scope for the artist to develop his own creative and independent interpretation of it. On the other hand, the opposing current, which has not always been recognized as being emphatically different, is the conscious revival of classical models with no deviation intended. This pervasive ambiguity was often the catalyst for the classically

educated scholar to express his erudition through subtle allusions to the antique in ingenious readings of ancient forms. The rich variety of later bronzes provides persuasive testimony for the authority of the former over the latter.

Some scholars in this field have expressed strong reservations regarding attempts to establish a chronological order for these later bronzes according to standard stylistic criteria. They have taken the view that the entrenched continuity of Chinese art, the complexity of society and the huge scale of the country defy attempts at a hard-edged stylistic chronology. New ideas developed in one metropolitan area might take half a century or more to percolate out to another. Moreover, inscriptions on bronzes, unlike ceramics, are usually spurious and bear no relation to true date or maker. Tsang and Moss have defined recent scholarship on this problem, with particular reference to the ubiquitous Xuande and Shishou marks, in the publication cited above. The general blurring of outlines is not helped by the absence, except in the earlier Song and Yuan periods, of excavated material from datable tombs. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made in this exhibition to propose a more detailed chronological structure than has hitherto been available, which in many cases has benefited from the valuable extra confirmation given by the thermoluminescence tests carried out for us by Doreen Stoneham at the Oxford laboratory.

Bronzes designated as "later" are, for the purposes of this exhibition, considered to start in the Song period (960–1279 AD) in China and the Kamakura era (1185–1333) in Japan. The Song dynasty is for many critics the high point of Chinese culture and, by the late thirteenth century, when Marco Polo knew it, the country was certainly far richer, more productive, more populous, more advanced technologically and better governed than Europe. In cultural terms, a fairer parallel could be made with Renaissance Europe. There was an analogous diffusion of knowledge and a dramatic development of scientific discovery as well as a changed philosophy of the world. China had long before created its own unique version of the "Renaissance Man" but the Song period witnessed the final form of the scholar-official. He formed part of an élite civil-service, groomed not only to run the country but to embody the highest ideals of Chinese culture. Civilized conduct for the scholar, who had reached his position through a ferociously democratic series of state examinations, was inseparable from an aesthetic ethos associated with classical literature, art, music, connoisseurship – anything in fact which enhanced the "douceur de vivre". Generally it was this governing class that provided the inspired patronage over 700 years for the objects in this exhibition.

But for the purposes of understanding the evolution of later bronzes, the most important historical force was the renewed interest in the classical past stimulated by a series of archeological excavations at An-Yang and other sites. These discoveries sparked off a fashion for collecting and antiquarian research similar to the Renaissance quest for a new lease of life from antiquity. In contrast to Europe, however, a bronze object of daily use, like a flower vessel or censer, containing references to the antique, was not only savoured for its form, texture and colour, but for the train of poetic and intellectual associations it evoked.

Bronzes datable to the Song are often, as is the case of archaizing ceramics, quite remote from classical models (Nos. 41, 52 and 77). The audacious fusion of decorative ingredients, first seen at this time and freely developed throughout the following centuries, has now been established by excavated examples as well as by the group recovered from the Sinan wreck, the vessel

carrying merchandise from China that sank off the Korean coast in 1320. As Ulrich Hausmann pointed out some years ago, these show a completely different type of archaism to that published in the Song illustrated manuals of ancient bronzes. It was precisely this divergence from the prototype, the subtlety of allusion to the antique, that was appreciated by the literati who was flattered by the implication that he had to be cleverly erudite to extract its full import.

During the following Yuan period (1279–1368), though ostensibly showing little respect for the great classical traditions of China, the Mongols initiated no obvious stylistic rupture with the preceding dynasty. The new rulers did however, during their short reign, introduce two invigorating aesthetic currents. They espoused Tibetan Lamaism, whose majico-religious aspects attracted them, so that Buddhist temples and monasteries were built by Tibetans who also brought with them their highly skilled metalworkers. Secondly, they gave China's craftsmen exposure to other robust civilizations, particularly Islam, which enriched their repertoire of forms and designs (No. 51).

There has been a cloudy vacuum hitherto between the end of the Yuan (1368) and the emphatic arrival of a new generation of forms in the Ming Xuande era (1426–1435). We are fortunate, therefore, in being able to exhibit four examples whose allocation to this period has been supported by Oxford thermoluminescence results (Nos. 1, 79, 80, 81).

The early Ming dynasty was a time of energetic nationalism and a renewal of self-confidence. Both in art and manners there was a tendency to by-pass the sophistication of the Song in favour of inspiration from the vigour and realism of the earlier Tang. Tibetan influence retained its grip, however, particularly during the reign of the Emperor Yongle (1403–1424), under whom briefly bloomed a brilliant sculptural tradition incorporating hints of rhythms from distant India.

Politically these early years of the Ming saw the dynasty at its most powerful. By the late fifteenth century, however, international relations were restricted and the calibre of central government declined. The literati, often quick to seize any pretext to retire to their country-estates, generally drifted away from the centre of corrupt power and thus ushered in a golden age of great private collections, garden designing and connoisseurship. This re-vitalization of cultural life generated a new intellectual curiosity, a refreshing absence of conformism and renewed interest in Buddhism and Daoism. It was the complementary growth of patronage that has left us with valuable comparative material in works for the scholar's studio in other media much of which is dated or datable.

The enquiring temper of the times carries on into the Manchu period and blossoms with spectacular results, long admired in the West, during the reign of Kangxi (1662–1722), which is renowned for its brilliant porcelains. Kangxi's sponsorship of the arts was the overture to a happy period in the intellectual history of China – the eighteenth century. This became an antiquarian age, promoted by distinguished scholar-officials of vast erudition and subtle taste, whose patronage was poised between educated reverence for the antique and desire for provocative experimentation, yet always responsive to the new standards of meticulous workmanship (Nos. 15, 18, 49, 62 and 63).

It is now a commonplace to register the debt owed by Japan to the civilization of her more ancient neighbour. But one of the rewarding aspects in the study

of Japanese bronzes is to witness the evolution in aesthetics from respectful awe to audacious digression.

Access to Chinese civilization had always been easy for Japan, either through official commercial contacts when these were sanctioned or through a healthy traffic of piracy when they were not. In the Kamakura period, which spanned half the Song and the whole of the Yuan, a profound imprint was left on Japanese feudal society by the superiority of Chinese culture. Ch'an (Zen) monks, seeking refuge from the Mongol conquest, escaped to Japan and not only boosted the growing development of Zen but also brought with them ceramics and bronzes, both of which were preserved and copied. It became fashionable for warlords to introduce touches of Chinese refinement into their abrasive military lives and gradually they assumed a patina of civilized respectability by collecting Song paintings, bronzes and porcelains and building landscape gardens.

The influence of Zen grew throughout the fifteenth century, when official trade with China was revived to support the increasingly flamboyant life-style of the Shoguns. The priesthood's unqualified admiration for Chinese culture led to the acquisition of huge numbers of paintings and works of art. It was the refined simplicity of the Song that appealed to the Japanese taste for studied sobriety, beautifully expressed in architecture, gardens and accessories for the tea-ceremony (Nos. 41, 42, 43, 44).

The essence of the tea-ceremony at this early stage, whose importance for the arts can hardly be exaggerated, was the provision of a retreat from the clamorous outside world where the Samurai could enjoy sympathetic surroundings and simple objects in rustic tranquillity. The aesthetic criteria associated with it, namely those of restraint, simplicity and intimacy with nature, determined the category of Chinese (or Japanese) bronze that became most cherished.

Even in the later Edo period (1615–1868), when traditional restraint was eschewed in favour of bolder, more decorative styles created by artists like Sōtatsu and Korin for a new class of nouveau-riche patron, bronze vases for the Tokonoma (or Alcove) always retained a haunting simplicity of form, however adventurous the overall design (Nos. 94, 95, 99 and 107).

A greater restlessness and experimentation is evident in these Edo bronzes compared to the measured assurance of their Chinese counterparts. It was this quality that preserved Japanese art from the decline that affected the arts in China during the nineteenth century.

Although, neither Chinese nor Japanese bronzes ever acquired the status of ceramics for Western collectors, they were collected in such quantity in the second half of the nineteenth century, that those in Western collections now possibly exceed what is to be found in their countries of origin. It was the political and social dislocation of China, and to a lesser extent Japan, that opened the doors to almost fifty years of ruthless Western acquisition from the date of the looting, by twenty thousand French and British troops, of the summer palace in 1860 to the Boxer rebellion of 1900. It was the latter that provided a fresh pretext for Europeans to annex large amounts of China's cultural heritage so that in some fields the extraordinarily rich institutional collections in the West probably contain more important objects than the collections in China.

Meantime in Meiji Japan (1868–1912), state policy, at least in the first years, incorporated a ham-fisted rejection of Buddhism which was to lead to the destruction of shrines, temples, sculpture and works of art. What was not

destroyed was indiscriminately sold off to foreigners. By the early 1870's, this panicky dismissal of traditional values in favour of a feverish admiration of all things Western, gave way to a period of reassessment in the 1880's. Ironically, subsequent Japanese exposure to European Art Nouveau, which itself had taken so much from Japan originally, may have contributed to this new pride in her past.

The haphazard nature of much of the collecting by Europeans and Americans at this time is clear from its very mixed quality. Nevertheless, the sudden discovery of oriental art acquired an astonishing "succès d'estime" at the series of great international exhibitions which began in London in 1851 and was to continue into the early years of the next century. Little effort was made to distinguish Chinese from Japanese and it was the evocative word "Japonisme" that symbolized the craze that swept through the West from the 1860's.

By this time, the classical canon of European art had lost its authority for the generation of the Impressionists. Artists and collectors came together in an unprecedented mutual response to the new idioms from the East. The fastidious critic Edmond de Goncourt goes so far as to suggest in 1884 that "the search for truth in literature, the resurrection of the art of the 18th century and the victory of Japonisme are the three great literary and artistic movements of the second half of the 19th century". This was no idle claim, as Edmond was to build up a vast collection of Japanese art under the tutelage of the great Japanese dealer Hayashi.

Meantime, Parisian connoisseurs were forming sizeable and diversified collections. The businessmen Clemence d'Ennery and Henri Cernuschi both endowed Paris with collections which exist as museums to this day. The Art Nouveau jeweller Henri Vever amassed a collection of Japanese prints, a quarter of which now constitutes the core of the Japanese National Collection. Vever also bought Japanese sword-guards which he ranked "greater than all the arts". The collectors Louis Gonse and Philippe Burty injected a measure of sober scholarship into the mounting current of enthusiasm for Orientalia by publishing on the subject (*l'Art Japonais* by Gonse, 1883) and organising exhibitions; and the dealer Siegfried Bing started his influential and elegant revue "le Japon Artistique" in 1888. Manet's portrait of Zola (1867) is almost a manifesto of the rage amongst artists for the fresh insights yielded by study of Japanese prints and the new provocative forms of ceramics, lacquers and bronzes. However, while nearly every major French artist, with the possible exception of Cézanne, was to some degree indebted to the Japanese vision, it was in the applied arts that the annexation of Japanese and Chinese designs is most uninhibited. It is through Gallé, Lalique, Tiffany and other Art Nouveau designers and architects that the momentum of western aesthetics is given a decisive direction by the art of the East.

Michael Goedhuis

Brief Notes on the Assistance to Dating Bronzes by Known Scientific Methods and by a Possible New Method

The scarcity of archaeological evidence in the field of later bronzes that can be safely dated has given special importance to scientific testing methods which might possibly assist us in dating.

So far, two main scientific approaches have been pursued: the analysis of the bronze alloy, and the testing of the ceramic core of the bronze by the thermoluminescence method.

Much hope has been centred on the scientific analysis of the bronze alloy. Many later bronzes have been and are being tested in this way, providing qualitative as well as quantitative results. However, in my view, the chances of this approach producing some useful – let alone conclusive – evidence which might assist us in dating or settling the question of provenance are very limited because of the early practice in China of recycling precious metals. Official restrictions were placed on the use of copper at various times; indeed, the resmelting of bronze objects was imposed periodically; the difficulties in introducing copper currency, which placed a great new demand on copper, are well documented and placed further strain on the resources of precious metals. All these factors testify to a chronic shortage of copper and no doubt encouraged a nationwide process of re-cycling and exchange of bronze alloys along the well-developed waterways. As many of the later cultural centres were sited close to these waterways, one can only assume that many of these later bronzes were made from an alloy of inconsistent composition. Any conclusions drawn from a metal analysis of this group would therefore be misleading. There are, however, areas where an analysis of the alloy could be useful: for example, in situations where one can assume that original ore was used (as was the case in the earlier history of bronze casting, and in later times in areas which were more remote, as Ulrich von Schroeder's analysis of later Tibetan bronzes has shown). The analysis of alloys may also be useful in a limited group of bronze vessels where special attention has been given to the alloy used.

The second approach is the testing of the ceramic core of the bronze by the thermoluminescence method. This method, originally developed for testing pottery, has been increasingly used for testing any remaining core material of bronzes. If carefully carried out these tests can provide useful information as to the probable date of manufacture of bronze vessels with a core. There are, however, limitations which ought to be better understood. To be reasonably certain of a date, a $\pm 20\%$ margin of error has to be allowed for, which often makes the time span of probable manufacture too great to be of any significant use in advancing the dating of certain groups of vessels. For instance, if the proposed date of the last firing of a bronze is given as three hundred years ago, then the time scale would be as follows: $300 \pm 20\%$ (margin for error) = 360 to 240 years ago. As the curve is very even, the date is almost equally as likely to be at the early extreme as it is in the middle or at the later extreme of the time scale. In the example given above, it could mean that the bronze belongs to the late Ming period and is as old as 1629 or that it belongs to the Qing period and is as old as 1747, results which may do little to advance our knowledge of dating certain groups. However, if carried out properly and enough attention is given to any possible factors which might influence the result, selective use of the thermoluminescence testing method may be a useful tool in dating and in settling the ever-worrying question of fakes. Several bronzes in this exhibition have been tested by this method, and although there have been some surprising results, most of them have been within expectations.

There may, however, be another third scientific method of testing which in the future could prove to be of great help in settling many arguments about dating and provenance. The original idea is briefly outlined and published here for the first time. Having been involved for some years in sculptural work and in casting, I am well aware of the particular importance of the bronze core in achieving a successful cast. There are many prerequisites for the core material which vary somewhat with the type and size of the planned cast. A variety of aspects have to be considered when selecting the core material for casting, these include:

- good plasticity for modelling which must provide good definition for surface details without sticking;
- compactability, to provide sufficient strength;
- drying properties prior to casting should not cause excessive distortion or cracking problems;
- insulating properties to keep extreme heat away from the core and to reduce heat loss of the liquid alloy;
- no emission of unwanted gases into the bronze alloy during the casting process;
- ease of removal after casting.

These are only some of the many factors which have to be taken into consideration. In an attempt to meet these various criteria, the bronze founder spent much time experimenting with materials before arriving at a particular formula – which then often became a well-kept secret. Because of the considerable quantities of core material needed in these foundries, one may reasonably assume that the soil which constituted the largest part of the core was taken from the vicinity. This carefully selected local soil (or soils) would then have been prepared (and possibly mixed with other materials such as ashes from organic waste, dung, etc.), according to the formula of the master-founder. As the core material – unlike metal – was not recycled, one may reasonably expect a high degree of consistency in the core material from a particular workshop. The length of time a particular core material was used obviously depended on many factors and will have varied considerably in different workshops, but it seems reasonable to assume that a certain type of core material was in use for a sufficiently long period of time to allow us to make a comparative study. If these assumptions are correct, then a qualitative as well as a quantitative mineralogical and chemical analysis of the core would provide us with a unique testing tool to identify vessels or sculpture as belonging to the same workshop, or to dismiss an assumed provenance. The core of a dated and/or signed object could also be compared to a stylistically related example for comparison. If they are closely matched this would imply that they come from the same workshop. This method may help to settle many old controversies: apart from assisting in establishing the date and provenance of a later Chinese bronze, this method could also be applied more universally to any cast object with core remnants. It could, for instance, help to settle the dispute as to whether a certain Renaissance sculpture was made in Florence, Bologna or Padua, or whether a certain Benin bronze head is genuine or not.

Initial analysis has provided encouraging results. It would suggest that a composition of the various soils is of such diversity that the possibility of finding a closely matching core sample in another workshop in a different area is almost as remote as finding a matching fingerprint. What now remains to be established is whether cast objects from the same workshop do indeed have a closely matching core.

CHRONOLOGY

CHINA

Shang	c.1600–1027 B.C.
Zhou	c.1027–221 B.C.
Qin	221–206 B.C.
Han	206 B.C.–220 A.D.
Six Dynasties	220–589
Sui Dynasty	581–618
Tang	618–907
Five Dynasties	907–960
Song	960–1279
Northern Song	960–1127
Southern Song	1127–1279
Liao	(Khitan) 916–1125
Jin	(Jurchen) 1115–1234
Yuan	(Mongol) 1279–1368

Ming Dynasty 1368–1644

Hongwu	1368–1398
Jianwen	1399–1402
Yongle	1403–1424
Hongxi	1424–1425
Xuande	1426–1435
Zhengtong	1436–1450
Jingtai	1451–1457
Tianxuan	1458–1465
Changhua	1465–1487
Hongzhi	1488–1505
Zhengde	1506–1521
Jiajing	1522–1566
Longqing	1567–1572
Wanli	1573–1619
Taiqiang	1619–1620
Tianqi	1620–1627
Zhongjien	1628–1643

Qing Dynasty 1644–1912

Shunxhi	1644–1662
Kangxi	1662–1723
Yongzheng	1723–1736
Qianlong	1737–1795
Jiaqing	1796–1820
Daoguang	1821–1850
Xianfeng	1851–1862
Tongzhi	1862–1875
Guangxu	1875–1908
Xuantong	1908–1911

JAPAN

Jōmon	c.8000–200 B.C.
Yayoi	c.200 B.C.–250 A.D.
Kofun	250–537
Asuka	538–644
Nara	645–781
Heian	782–1184
Kamakura	1185–1332
Nambokuchō	1333–1391
Muromachi	1392–1572
Momoyama	1573–1599
Edo (Tokugawa) 1600–1868	
Early period	1600–1704
Middle period	1704–1801
Late period	1801–1868
Meiji	1868–1912
Taishō	1912–1926
Shōwa	1926–1989



Sculpture and Sculptural
Bronzes for the
Scholar's Desk

熊九
十竹齋

1. A LARGE AND FINELY MODELLED BRONZE HEAD OF A LADY
China, Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368)

This bronze head belongs to a group of sculpture which deserves further study. Although stylistically the head still owes much to the preceding Tang and early Song dynasties the face has become more elongated. The sculptural treatment of the hair, the areas around the nostrils and mouth and the more serene expression would suggest a date not earlier than late Song and more probably a Yuan date. An early Ming date – although not entirely impossible – seems less likely. The head appears to have been modelled and cast separately and shows traces of gesso, colour pigments and gilding on a lacquer base. The head has now acquired a warm bronze patina.

Bronze heads of this size and date are very rare. Most large sculptural objects of similar date and dimension were made of dried mud, wood, stone or cast iron.

Size: height 26" (66 cm) with stand; head 15" (38 cm)

**Alan Priest discusses a similar head made of dried mud in the Metropolitan Museum of Art which he dates to the Song period. He makes the interesting suggestion that the head may represent a Bodhisattva which assumed the form of a Chinese dowager and that the sculpture may actually be a portrait. In the light of the recent excavation of the individualistically modelled army of terracotta soldiers discovered in the tomb of Qin Shi Huang Di, this is a most intriguing suggestion.*

Alan Priest: Chinese Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1944, plate CXXII.

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample 481i42



2. A GILT BRONZE FIGURE OF GUANDI, GOD OF LITERATURE

China, Ming Dynasty, 16th century

Guandi, here representing the god of literature, is in his various forms traditionally one of China's most popular gods. The seated figure is well-proportioned and beautifully relaxed in spite of the rather formal position. The sculptor has succeeded in conveying an air of refinement, mysticism and benevolence. The worn gilding which reveals the red lacquer coating of the bronze helps in this instance to attractively highlight many of the finely punched and incised designs of the garment. The throne, in contrast, does not appear to have been gilded.

Size: height 17½" (44.5 cm)



3. BRONZE SCULPTURE OF A SCHOLAR HOLDING A SCROLL, ON WOOD STAND

China, Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

This sculpture of a seated scholar – possibly representing the Daoist god of literature, Wen-Chang – is a fine example of the level of refinement employed by the sculptors who worked for the educated class of scholars and officials. Originally gilt on lacquer, it now has a warm bronze patina and only traces of the original gilding and colour pigments remain. The decoration consists of finely incised designs often set against a punched background. The small holes on either side of the nostrils and on the chin once held real hair.

Sculptural images of scholars, which are also found in other materials, were of obvious appeal to the educated classes and may have been given as presents on the occasion of passing an examination.

The size and the fine execution of this piece would suggest that it was to be viewed from a close distance and that it was probably placed on or near the scholar's writing table. The fine surface and the softness of the modelling almost give the impression that this sculpture has been made of a soft stone (such as soapstone) rather than metal.

Size: height with stand 8½" (21.6 cm)



4. A PAIR OF PERFORMING DANCERS

China, early Ming Dynasty, 14th/15th century

This rare pair of court dancers have been modelled with great sensitivity and were cast using the lost wax process. Capturing a scene in a dance, an atmosphere of elegance and refinement is conveyed. The swirling ribbons and scarves, the outstretched position of the arms – accentuated by the long and flowing sleeves of the dancers' costumes – and the poised legs all impart a sense of graceful rhythm and movement.

It would seem that the sculptures were designed as lamp- or candle-holders (the light being inserted into the lower upturned sleeve as well as into the small dish resting on the raised arm). What function the open rings at the front of the sculptures had is not clear. It is possible that the rings played a part in the original performance of the dance which may well have included the use of swirling ribbons.

Size: height 19¼" (49 cm)

A similar figure of a dancer (wearing the open ring at the back instead of the front) is illustrated on page 178 by Münsterberg: **Chinesische Kunstgeschichte, Band II, Esslingen, 1912, where he suggests the figures may have been used for a game involving the throwing of sticks.*

*See also the two **Flying Immortals**, handscroll (ink on paper) in "The Chinese Scholar's Studio", edited by Chu-Tsing Li, James C.Y. Watt, New York 1987, No. 23.*

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample 481g11



5. A DATED FIGURE OF LIU HAI XIAN STANDING ON HIS THREE-LEGGED TOAD

China, Qing Dynasty, Yongzheng period (1723-1736)

A rare and particularly happy sculpture of the immortal Liu Hai dancing for joy on his beloved toad, carrying a large cash coin and a gourd-shaped vase.

The sculpture is designed as an incense burner; the toad's hollow body holds the incense. The incense then escapes through the toad's mouth and goes upwards through Liu Hai's body, finally emerging through his mouth. (There may have been a further opening beneath his garment.)

The figure of Liu Hai can be detached from the toad. The round plate supporting him is held in place by a bayonet lock.

The representation of the cash coin is interesting as it incorporates a wave border and clearly shows the four directions, indicating the universal dimension of the Daoist spirit. It also resembles a Buddhist attribute, the "wheel of law".

There are many legends surrounding Liu Hai, most of which associate him with the clever use of money. He is reputed to have coaxed his rare three-legged toad out of a well by using money as bait. This made him one of the most popular symbols of financial acumen and success.

Dated non-Buddhist bronzes from the Qing dynasty are rare, and it is of special interest to find a dated sculpture of this nature, size and quality, as it would suggest that the Daoist element in sculpture – more readily associated with the preceding Ming dynasty – was still very much alive.

Size: height 31½" (80 cm)

Mark: Nine character mark integrally cast, written in Kaishu and dating the sculpture to the first year of the Yongzheng period.



6. GUANYIN WITH ATTENDANTS SEATED IN ROCKY LANDSCAPE

China, Ming Dynasty, c. 1600

This fine group showing Guanyin looking down with compassion from a rocky base onto the sorrows of the world, flanked by her two attendants, shows the typically Chinese talent of happily combining various philosophical schools. Whilst the representation of the Guanyin shows strong Buddhist tendencies, the setting is decidedly Daoist in feeling. The sculptor has emphasised this by careful and distinctive modelling: the figures and the kalasa bottle are smooth and flowing, whereas the landscape is sharp and craggy. The selective colouring and gilding on lacquer ground further highlight this contrast.

Size: height 18" (45.7 cm)

**See a similar blanc de chine figure of Guanyin bearing the date of 1629 in the British Museum.*

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample 466h87



7. AN IMPORTANT SIGNED SILVER INLAID FIGURE OF GUANYIN
STANDING ON A CLOUD-SCROLL BASE

China, Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

This very rare and elegant figure of Guanyin represents what belongs to the very best of its kind in the group of silver inlaid Guanyins. It can claim – unlike the vast majority of other similar sculptures of this type – to be of considerable age. Indeed it may be one of the prototypes which served for the many later inspirations and straightforward copies. The superbly modelled figure depends largely on its sculptural form for effect and is enhanced by the silver inlay which accentuates the flowing line of the garment with a fine lotus design. The cloud base, which has been separately cast and brazed and soldered onto the figure, is equally as superb in its modelling: shallow at the front, rising towards the back and full of twisting scrolls and curls it is as much alive as a net full of writhing eels. The object is foremost the work of a sculptor; the silver inlay plays a subtle yet subordinate role.

It comes as a surprise that the figure does not bear the signature of Shi Sou, who is associated with similar sculptures, but the signature of He Chaozong, a potter. This raises a number of questions and opens up an intriguing range of possibilities which can only be touched on here. Most may feel that the mark of the Dehua master-potter was only used in a commendatory way and does not therefore represent the name of the maker. This may be the case, but it raises the question as to why somebody capable of producing such a fine piece of sculpture did not use his own name. Why did he not use the Shi Sou signature, or leave the piece unsigned? We do not know. There are other possibilities. It may be that the signature on the bronze relates to the sculptor who modelled the master sculpture from which the bronzes were cast. Bearing in mind that the work and skill required for this task were not essentially different from the work required of a sculptor in the potteries, it is conceivable that He Chaozong may have started work in a foundry and that he later joined the lucrative business of porcelain production at the Dehua kilns. It is also possible that there were two sculptors with the name He Chaozong from one family but who lived at different times.

The results of a thermoluminescence test carried out at Oxford on the core of this bronze invite further thought. The test result not only confirms our original view regarding the early date of the bronze but suggests an even earlier date between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. Although earlier representations of comparable Guanyins standing on clouds are known from woodcuts, we believe that at present there is little evidence to suggest a date earlier than the mid-Ming dynasty, in spite of the curious fact that the Xuande two character mark occasionally appears on porcelain sculpture signed by He Chaozong. It is, however, always wise to keep an open mind in this very difficult field.

Size: height 23½" (60 cm)

Mark: Silver inlaid mark in a square on the back, in seal script: He Chaozong
- Yin.

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample 466k62



8. A SEATED WATERMOON GUANYIN

China, Ming Dynasty, late 15th/early 16th century

This fine and rare sculpture of Guanyin seated in the position of meditation is of particular significance because of a lengthy inscription under the base which includes the maker's name. This is especially important because this representation of Guanyin is quite different from other known types which are usually silver inlaid or gilt on lacquer base. The figure shows an exquisite balance between the larger sculptural form and the finely worked details. There is a noticeably strong Buddhist influence, especially in the treatment of the general posture and the jewellery; the figure even has a secret chamber (the base plate of which is now missing) fitted in the same way as in other Buddhist sculptures. Further information given in the inscription states that the sculpture was made for the believer Jian Rong whilst burning incense and worshipping.

It would appear that the figure has been lightly cleaned to remove only the usual incense encrustation.

Size: height 12¾" (32.4 cm)

Mark: A seventeen character inscription in Kaishu under base stating that the figure was made by a certain Yang Sheng of Bixi (?) (Green Brook (?)) at the Plum Blossom and Snow Retreat for the believer Jiang Rong whilst burning incense and worshipping.

**This figure again raises the question of a possible connection between bronze sculpture and Dehua wares.*

For similar representations see the many printed and painted images of Guanyin such as the Watermoon Guanyin illustrated by William Cohn in "Chinese Painting", London, 1948, plate 109, ascribed to the Song dynasty.

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample 481g12



9. A SIGNED AND DATED CAST IRON FIGURE OF YAN WANG

China, Ming Dynasty, Zhengde period 1517

This tall figure of Yan Wang, the King of Hell, seated on his throne, was probably the centre piece of a small group of similar figures; it is possibly one of a group of three. The fact that this piece bears the detailed cast inscription would support the assumption that this figure was the most important one of the group.

The figure is thinly cast in one piece using sectional moulds. Typically, the head and the facial features are finely defined by the use of narrow raised lines. There are traces of original colour pigments.

The inscription gives the names of the donors, a certain Li Feng and Li Tianjing and identifies the deity represented here as Yan Wang. From the academic point of view it is most interesting to note that the inscription also informs us that the figure was made by a certain Piao Zhiyi in Shancheng Zhen in the county of Yangcheng (Shanxi Province).

Condition: There is an old replacement of one front support of the throne, possibly carried out immediately after casting. Short supporting struts at the back of the throne have been replaced.

Size: height 36½" (92.7 cm)

Mark: A lengthy and complete inscription in raised characters integrally cast in a square at the back of the throne dates the figure to the twelfth year of Zhengde, 1517.

**In view of the chronic shortage of copper, the importance of the early mastery of cast iron production in China can hardly be overestimated⁽¹⁾, and it is not widely appreciated that Chinese craftsmen also excelled in this field. As hardly any large bronze sculptures exist, the cast iron examples are most valuable as they provide us with often dated evidence of figural sculptures. The figure of Yan Wang is a typical example of the imposing almost monumental style of cast iron sculpture. A particular curiosity is that in this type of seated sculpture the head is proportionately too small for the body, which makes it appear more distant – rather like looking up at one of the large Buddhist sculptures hewn out of rock. Most of these cast iron objects display great sculptural clarity and expressiveness, brought out perfectly by changes in the light.*

For similar sculptures, see two iron heads in the "Avery Brundage Collection of Chinese, Korean and Japanese Sculpture", Tokyo, New York, San Francisco, 1974, page 313, plates 165 and 166.

A very similar undated figure of Yan Wang, almost certainly from the same workshop, was sold by the auction house, Hauswedell, Hamburg on 3rd December, 1960, lot no. 42.

⁽¹⁾ See: J. Needham: "The Development of Iron and Steel Technology in China", Newcomen Society, London, 1958.



10. BRONZE SCULPTURE OF AN ATTENDANT

China, early Ming Dynasty, 14th/15th century

It is again tempting to speculate as to whether this figure is one of a type or whether it is a sculpture of a once-living person. His arms folded, the wand placed in front of his mouth, he conveys the appropriate air of respect, attention and devotion expected by a master of his disciple.

There are traces of gesso and colour pigments on the body. The wand is probably a replacement.

Size: height 19" (48.3 cm)

**It is most interesting to note the similarity in sculptural treatment of this bronze figure to the preceding cast iron figure, as this would seem to lend credibility to the thesis that some of the cast iron sculptures were originally (possibly even at the same time) made in the more expensive bronze material. If this is the case, then the value of the dated cast iron sculpture is far greater than has been recognised, as this would suggest that the cast iron examples are evidence of a more widely accepted sculptural style.*



11. GILT BRONZE FIGURE OF AN ARHAT

China, later Ming/early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

An attractive sculpture of an Arhat, the Enlightened, lost in meditation. The long neatly-arranged hair is held in place by a diadem-like ring containing the Buddhist pearl surrounded by flames. The features of the ascetic are dramatically highlighted by setting the dark eye-brows, hair, beard and belt against the well preserved fire gilding.

Size: height 9½" (24.1 cm)

**See the gilt bronze ascetic seated on a plinth, dated to the early fourteenth century, in the Cleveland Museum of Art; illustrated by Lee in "Chinese Art under the Mongols: the Yuan dynasty", plate 14.*

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample 481g15



12. A FINE GILT BRONZE FIGURE OF MANJUSRI, SEATED ON LOTUS BASE

China, Ming Dynasty, Yongle mark and period (1403-1424)

A very fine representation of Manjusri, the presiding god of the sacred mountain Wu Tai Shan in Shansi Province, his legs crossed in dhyanasana, his hands touching in dharmacakra. On the right his sword emerges from a lotus flower; on his left rests the sacred Book of Wisdom.

This is a very fine example of sculpture of the early fifteenth century, a period in the field of later Chinese bronzes which in many ways represents the pinnacle of sensitive modelling and fine casting. Such intricacy can only be achieved by the lost wax process of casting which was already in use in China during the Warring States period (possibly even earlier). The arrival of Tibetan and Nepalese craftsmen at the beginning of the Yuan dynasty, who came to China to advise and assist in the production of Buddhist images, greatly stimulated the use of this old and well-known method of casting. Sculptures of the quality of this example were almost certainly made at official government workshops specialising in the production of images using the lost wax process.

The base plate, concealing the secret chamber, is still in place and shows the typical incised vajra design.

Size: height 6" (15.2 cm)

Mark: Engraved six character mark on top of lotus base in front of the figure, Da Ming Yongle Nian Shi (bestowed during the reign of Yongle in the great Ming period).

**For a similar example see the Yongle Manjusri illustrated in Ulrich von Schroeder's book "Indo-Tibetan Bronzes", Hong Kong, 1981, page 523, catalogue number 147E, and also the Yongle four-armed Sadaksari Bodhisattva illustrated by Heather Karmay in "Early Sino-Tibetan Art", Warminster, 1975, illustration 53.*



13. A RARE GILT BRONZE FIGURE OF A BUDDHA ADORNED WITH JEWELS, SEATED ON A LOTUS BASE

China, Ming Dynasty, Yongle mark and period (1403-1424)

This is another larger example of sculpture from this period, the gilding of which is particularly well preserved. It is difficult to identify this unusual representation with certainty. The fine figure no doubt represents Buddha seated in typical dhyanasana, his right arm pendent in bhumisparsha and the left arm pointing inwards in dhyanamudra. Unusually, though, the Buddha wears an elaborate necklace, a large diadem, earrings and celestial scarves, common attributes of Bodhisattvas. The figure probably shows Buddha as one of the seven celestial gods, possibly Akshobya. The hair shows traces of blue pigment. The base plate covering the secret chamber is still in place and is decorated with the typical vajra emblem.

Sculpturally, the large five-leaved diadem and the broader facial representation provide a balance for the large and intricate base and compensate for the absence of rising lotus flowers on either side of the figure.

Size: height 8" (20.3 cm)

Mark: Incised six character mark, Da Ming Yongle Nian Shi (bestowed during the reign of Yongle in the great Ming period).

**For a related example of this unusual representation see the seated Tara in Lee's "Chinese Art under the Mongols: The Yuan Dynasty", Cleveland Museum of Art, 1968, plate 16.*



14. A GILT BRONZE STAND SUPPORTED BY DRAGONS

China, Ming Dynasty, Yongle mark and period (1403-1424)

The exact purpose of this very rare stand is not clear. It may have served as a support for a cup, a flared bowl or a flat dish, the object possibly having been made of jade rather than bronze. There is also the possibility that the dragons, surrounded by clouds and chasing pearls, may have carried a large rock crystal "pearl" (sphere). The translucent rock crystal, which came from the Himalayan region, played an important role in Lamaist-Buddhist ritual life and was frequently incorporated in religious objects such as sutra containers and pagodas. That the stand supported a rock crystal sphere is a distinct possibility; this would certainly have allowed the mark to remain visible in a rather splendid way. The mark is well positioned – almost ostentatious, in a similar fashion to the marks on the bases of the Buddhist sculptural objects of that period.

Size: height 5¼" (13.3 cm)

Mark: Engraved six character mark in one line inside the support ring, Da Ming Yongle Nian Shi (bestowed during the reign of Yongle of the great Ming Dynasty).

**See a similar stand in cloisonné sold at Sotheby's on 7th June, 1988, lot no. 40.*



15A. A GILT BRONZE FIGURE OF AN ACOLYTE

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

A small sculpture of an Acolyte, his hands typically held in anjali, the gesture of adoration.

Size: height 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (7.9 cm)

15B. A GILT BRONZE FIGURE OF A WARRIOR

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

The warrior is shown in a threatening pose of almost theatrical quality. Lance missing.

Size: height 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (16.5 cm)

15C. A FINE SMALL GILT BRONZE FIGURE OF GUANDI SEATED ON A THRONE

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

This well-modelled sculpture is cast in one piece, and the chased designs bear all the hallmarks of being carefully finished by a goldsmith. The top of the platform shows a finely incised design of a dragon's mask, bearing the character "wang" (king) on its head.

Size: height 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (8.25 cm)

15D. A GILT BRONZE FIGURE OF AN ATTENDANT, STANDING ON A ROCKY BASE

China, Qing Dynasty, probably Kangxi period (1662-1723)

This is an attractive and unusually elaborate representation of an attendant making his offering. This sculpture would probably have been placed next to Guanyin (see plate 6 for integrated group). The high separate rocky base and the figure are finely modelled and chased; here again, the work is closely related to that of a gold- or silversmith.

Size: height 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (17.1 cm)



16. BRONZE CENSER IN THE FORM OF A RECUMBENT MYTHICAL ANIMAL

China, Ming Dynasty, 15th/16th century

This attractive and unusual censer is a fine example of the variety of sculptural expression in the field of later Chinese bronzes. The main body is well cast in one piece with a separately cast detachable head. The incense escapes through the open-work lotus scrolls of the animal's imitated saddle cloth and through its mouth.

Mythical animals always had – and still have – a special place in the hearts of the Chinese. What could be more suitable to induce the scholar's mind to wander off to distant parts and fly through time than watching incense escape and rise from objects such as these?

Size: height 5½" (14 cm); length 9" (22.9 cm)

**The subtle sculptural treatment of the animal, especially the sensitive modelling of the areas around the eyes, nostrils and mouth, bear a certain resemblance to carvings in jade.*



17. RESTING ELEPHANT ADORNED WITH FESTIVE JEWELLERY

China, Ming Dynasty, 16th century

This censer has typical Buddhist associations. The sacred elephant – often shown as the carrier of Buddha – is richly decorated with strings of beads incorporating semi-precious stones. The incense escapes, as in the preceding example, through the open-work lotus scrolls of the saddle cover. The censer has been cast in one piece by the lost wax process.

The lid and some semi-precious stones are later replacements.

Size: length 9" (22.9 cm)



18. RECUMBENT MYTHICAL ANIMAL WITH CUB

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

A delightful and fine sculpture designed for burning incense. Two small holes in the lid, one in front of the cub and one at the back, allow the incense to escape – the large animal following the swirling cloud with its eyes. The sculptor has beautifully conveyed the mutual affection of the animals and the playfulness of the cub. It is cast in one piece by the lost wax method. The lid carrying the cub is detachable.

Size: height 3½" (8.9 cm); length 6½" (16.5 cm)



19. BRONZE GUARDIAN LION

probably Japan, 18th century

This well cast and expressive bronze belongs to a group of sculptures which often present considerable problems, not only concerning dating but also with regard to their provenance (see also the Buddhist lion on plate 20). This may not come as a surprise as this type of sculpture has had a wide appeal throughout the eastern civilisations. There are many different sculptural expressions of this theme, often with distinct regional characteristics, which are worthy of further study.

An unusual feature of this sculpture is the special way in which the incense is inserted into it: a neat rectangular box containing the incense slides in and out of the back of the animal. The incense then escapes through the mouth.

Although it is not entirely impossible that the sculpture is of Chinese origin, it would seem, on balance, that the Japanese origin is more likely.

Size: height 13" (33 cm)



20. BUDDHIST LION PLAYING WITH A BROCADE BALL

probably Chinese, Qing Dynasty, 17th/18th century

This is one of the favourite themes of decorative sculpture: larger versions are sometimes seen outside entrances of important buildings, usually paired with the lioness playing with her cub. This example takes up an unusual manneristic pose, which departs from the mainstream of related sculpture. This raises the question as to whether this is simply an exception or whether there may be a non-Chinese influence detectable (possibly Japanese). An examination of the actual bronze itself, however, seems to favour a Chinese provenance. The bronze is well cast in one piece by the lost wax process. The separately cast head rests on the animal's shoulders and is detachable. The hollow body receives the incense, which escapes through the lion's mouth.

Size: height 9¼" (23.5 cm)



21A WATERDROPPER IN THE FORM OF A TOAD

Japan, probably 18th century

This naturalistically modelled toad, which no doubt served as a paper weight as well as a waterdropper, released the water through a small hole in its mouth. The flow of the water appears to have once been controlled by a small air vent which has now been filled in.

Size: height 1½" (3.8 cm)

**Toads are among the favourite small objects of Japanese sculptors. Few have conveyed more convincingly the very essence of these creatures.*

21B INCENSE BURNER IN THE FORM OF A CROWING COCKEREL

probably Chinese, late Ming/early Qing, 17th century

This is a rare and charming small sculpture of a cockerel. Although hens and chickens are quite frequently seen in paintings and on porcelain decoration they are rare in sculptural form, especially in bronze. The wings form a lid which can be conveniently lifted off by holding the one raised feather. The incense rises up behind the lid and also through the beak.

Size: height 4¾" (12 cm)



22. INCENSE BURNER IN THE FORM OF A RESTING ELEPHANT

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

This delightful sculpture of a resting elephant shows much of the wit, charm and humour sometimes to be found in later Chinese bronze sculpture.

Not for one moment could this elephant be mistaken for a fervent follower of Buddhist ideals in spite of the lotus scrolls on his back. He is obviously intent on enjoying life and is not ashamed of showing his sensuality. The appeal of this sculpture is only too obvious for many Chinese (and for some other people): basking in the sunshine, well satisfied after a good feed, the elephant savours a moment of bliss – a taste of heaven on earth.

The animal is cast in one piece; the open-work lid has been cast separately.

Size: length 5¾" (14.6 cm)



23. BRONZE CENSER IN THE FORM OF A SEATED HARE

Japan, Edo period, late 17th/early 18th century

This rare sculpture of a hare, shown here gazing longingly at the moon and seated on a round disc with cash design and open-work, plays a part in many legends. The hare is reputed to live for a thousand years and to draw its vital essence from the moon; the red hare is considered to be a supernatural and auspicious being as it only appears when virtuous rulers govern⁽¹⁾.

For the Daoist, of course, the hare is associated with that delightful legend in which it is seen in the moon pounding the elixir of life.

In this example the incense is inserted into the hollow body and escapes through the mouth. The body has been cast in one piece; the head has been cast separately.

Condition: The round disc on which the hare is seated is a later addition. One ear is possibly a later replacement.

Size: height 8" (20.3 cm); width 6½" (15.8 cm)

**See the seventeenth century underglaze blue Arita dish in the British Museum which shows the design of a hare and a moon inscribed "spring white hare" illustrated by S. Jenyns in "Japanese Porcelain", London, 1965, plate 6B.*

⁽¹⁾ Williams, C.A.S., "Encyclopaedia of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives", New York, 1960, pages 218/219.

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample 481g10



24. A VERY RARE SUSPENDED INCENSE VESSEL OF A DAOIST DEITY TRAVELLING IN A DRAGON BOAT

China, Yuan/early Ming Dynasty, 14th/15th century

This object is a real marvel of delicate modelling and intricate casting. The vessel has an interesting shape: it is sculpted in the form of a lotus petal (similar petals sometimes carried Guanyin across water). The lotus theme is picked up again in a more abstract form in the open-work scroll design of the deck. The railings leading from the dragon's head up to the figure act at the same time as reins.

The modelling of the benign figure seated at the stern, wearing a lotus leaf hat and holding an open book, is superb. The size of the head is smaller than a fingernail, yet the finest details are shown, and – more importantly – the tiny face is imbued with life.

The entire vessel (including the figure) is cast in one piece by the lost wax process; even the double s-shaped members of the original chain are cast in one.

Size: (without chains) height 5½" (14 cm); length 10" (25.4 cm)

**Although it is not clear who the figure represents, it almost certainly relates to the search for that legendary Daoist paradise, the "Isles of the Blessed", the reputed existence of which has occupied Daoist minds since the Han period. Lee⁽¹⁾, when discussing the somewhat similar silver raft cups of Chu Pi-Shan, made in the fourteenth century, expresses the view that the figure may well not be Chang Ch'ien, the celebrated Han explorer of the second century B.C. Referring to Yuan literature which mentions paintings that depict Daoist immortals travelling to the fairy islands in lotus boats and on rafts, Lee tentatively suggests that T'ai-I Chen-Jen, the important Daoist deity, may be represented.*

⁽¹⁾ Lee: "Chinese Art under the Mongols, The Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368)", Cleveland Museum of Art, 1968, entry 37.



25. A PARTIALLY GILT SEATED FIGURE OF LAOZI

China, late Ming/early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

This is a fine example of Daoist sculpture showing the founder of Daoism seated against his deer holding the peach of immortality. The object was originally the lid of a larger incense burner and has since been treasured for its sculptural quality and its associations with Daoism on a specially made wood stand. It is interesting to note the clearly defined areas of gilding, which form a distinctive feature.

Size: height (with stand) 10¼" (26 cm)

**The custom of elevating unusual objects and even fragments to a special status on the strength of one's own judgement and taste was common practice among scholars, whose taste in many ways was as diverse as the objects which surrounded them⁽¹⁾.*

⁽¹⁾ See the various entries in "Arts from the Scholar's Studio", Gerard Tsang and Hugh Moss, Hong Kong, 1986, and "The Chinese Scholar's Studio", Chu-Tsing Li and James C.Y. Watt, New York, 1987.



26. A GILT BRONZE WINE CUP WITH DRAGON HANDLES

China, late Ming/early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

This rare and attractive gilt bronze wine cup is of a type more commonly found in jade. The theme of the dragons climbing up the outside of the vessel, looking into the pond-like hollow, is a delightful one and one especially suitable for drinking cups. Cups of this design were often used in ceremonies such as weddings⁽¹⁾. The elegantly shaped cup is undecorated except for a small border of finely incised continuous scrolling on the inside of the vessel near the rim. The powerfully curved bodies of the stylised dragons showing their tensed rib cages display flame-like markings. The dragons are soldered onto the cup.

The dating of this piece presents some difficulties. At first one is inclined to accept a Song or possibly Yuan date for the cup. The shape of the cup and the fine free-flowing scrolling on the inside would support an early date. The two stylised dragons initially also seem not to be incompatible with such an early date. Close examination of the actual object itself would, however, question this early date. There are several small yet important features, many of which relate to the construction and finish of the two dragons, which are inconsistent and very unusual for objects of a Song or Yuan date. A somewhat later date, perhaps towards the end of the Ming dynasty or possibly even the beginning of the Qing dynasty, would seem to be more likely.

Size: height 2½" (6.4 cm); width 4½" (11.4 cm)

**For related examples, see the various cups illustrated in the exhibition catalogue "Chinese Jade throughout the Ages", held by the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Oriental Ceramic Society, London, 1975.*

For an early cup attributed to the Song or Yuan period, see page 97, exhibit 311.

For a thirteenth to fifteenth century example, see page 98, exhibit 315.

For a later vessel dated to the seventeenth century, see page 115, exhibit 384.

⁽¹⁾ See the exhibition catalogue "Chinese Jade throughout the Ages", J. Rawson and J. Ayers, London, 1975, page 115.



27A A PAPERWEIGHT IN THE FORM OF A RECUMBENT GOAT

China, probably late Ming Dynasty, 16th/17th century

This solidly cast and well modelled paperweight belongs to a large and diverse group of small sculpture made for the scholar's table. Most of these are representations of animals, often of a mythical nature, but many objects made of a variety of substances have at times been used as paperweights. Many of the objects had a variety of functions, limited only by the imagination and by the convention of the individual scholar using them⁽¹⁾.

Size: length 2½" (6.35 cm)

**The increasing demand for these small sculptural objects for the scholar's table towards the latter part of the Ming dynasty brought a new sense of freedom and individuality with it which no doubt was a great liberating force for the sculptors of the time. In this field many charming objects can be found, although the dating at times is very difficult. Sadly, some of these objects are now being increasingly faked.*

For similar solidly cast paperweights see illustrations 194 and 195 in "Arts from the Scholar's Studio", Gerard Tsang and Hugh Moss, Hong Kong, 1986.

⁽¹⁾ See entries 194 and 195 on page 214 of "Arts from the Scholar's Studio", Gerard Tsang and Hugh Moss, Hong Kong, 1986.

27B SEATED MYTHICAL ANIMAL

China, Ming Dynasty, probably 15th/16th century

Another delightful paperweight, again solidly cast. The modelling shows great sensitivity and imparts a strength and mysticism surprising for such a small object. This example, like the preceding one, has been well used and has no doubt been handled often.

Size: length 2¾" (7 cm)

**It is interesting to compare these small bronze sculptures to the large related group of animal carvings in jade⁽¹⁾.*

⁽¹⁾ See the exhibition catalogue "Chinese Jade through the Ages", J. Rawson and J. Ayers, London, 1975.



28A RECUMBENT MYTHICAL ANIMAL

China, probably late Ming/early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

This is another small sculpture for the scholar's desk, full of spirited movement. Solidly cast and primarily a paperweight, it was almost certainly used as a brushrest – the animal turning its head indignantly at the thought of having a brush placed on its back.

Size: length 3" (7.6 cm)

28B SEATED BUDDHIST LION

China, probably early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

A lively sculpture of a lion-like animal wearing a bell and tassels round its neck. Originally used as a paperweight.

Size: length 2¼" (5.7 cm)



29. BRONZE LION-DOG

China, Ming Dynasty, probably 16th century

This lion-like animal is more often seen carrying a Bodhisattva on its back seated sideways in the position of lalitasana ("the royal ease"). The animal here looks characteristically submissive and may indeed have had its use as a large brushrest as well as being a trustworthy guardian of paper. The heavy bronze is cast in one piece and through being well used has acquired a fine and smooth patina.

Size: length 6½" (16.5 cm)

**See "The Crucible of Compassion and Wisdom", special exhibition catalogue of the Buddhist bronzes from the Nitta Group Collection, Taipei, 1987, p. 199, plate 199, for a similar example dated to the Song Dynasty of a lion-dog carrying a Manjusri Bodhisattva.*



30. BRUSHREST IN THE FORM OF MOUNTAIN PEAKS

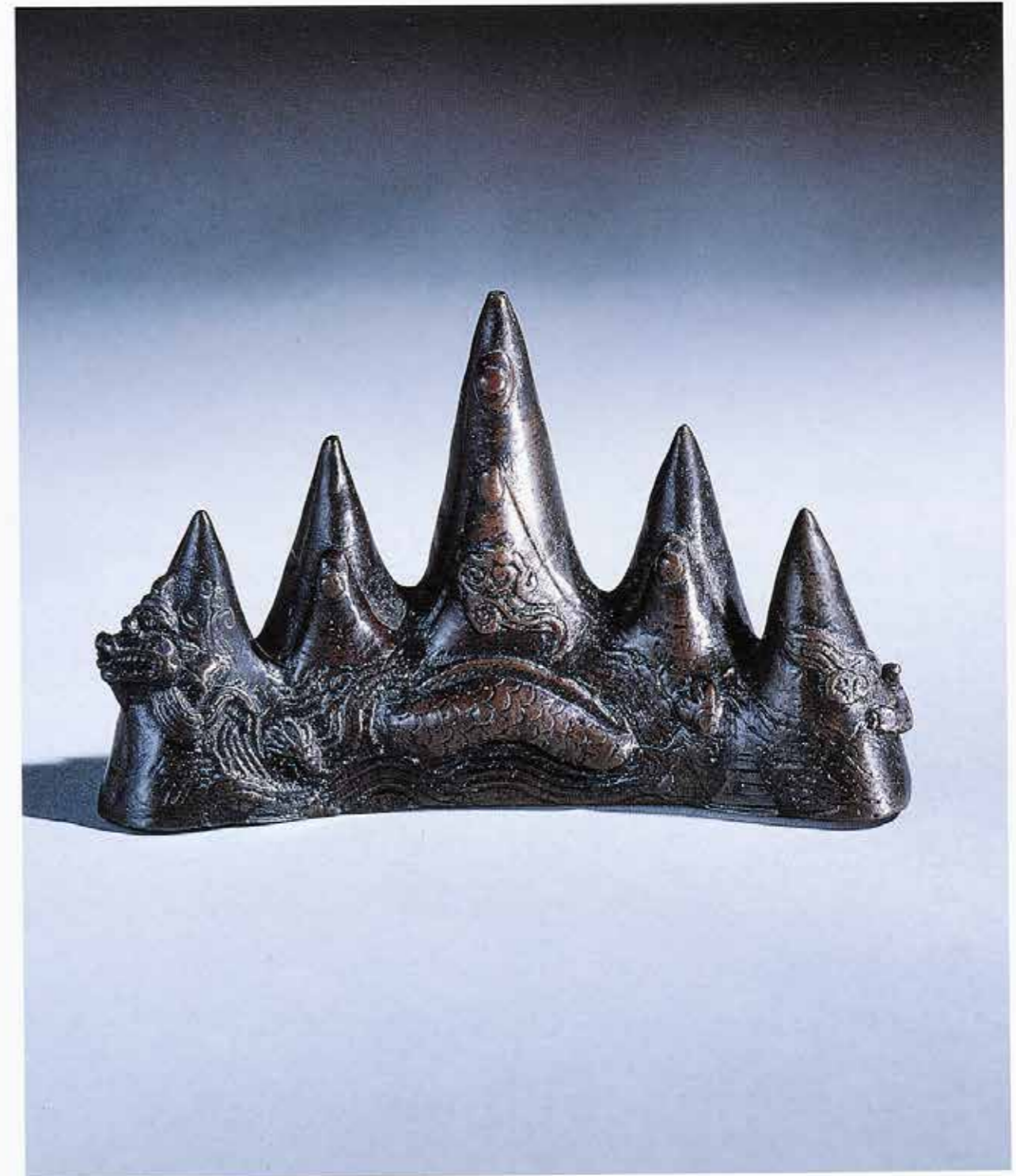
China, Ming Dynasty, 16th century

The gently curved brushrest, hollow inside, was originally modelled in wax and then cast by the lost wax method. It belongs to a small but distinct group of bronze objects which illustrate scenes from rural life. Such a scene can be seen in this example on the back of the brushrest (not shown on the photograph). On the front side a dragon hides in the lower regions of the mountain, the peaks becoming its exaggerated backbone. The entire bronze becomes a magical miniature landscape – a small “penjing” arrangement. To enhance this atmosphere, incense sticks can be inserted in a small hole at the back, and more incense can escape from the dragon’s mouth on the side.

Size: width 6" (15.2 cm); height 4" (11.6 cm)

**Mountain peaks have been amongst the favourite subjects for brushrests. Apart from being practical, they evoke endless associations and bring back memories of journeys to sacred regions. This illustrated example with five peaks probably represents the Wu Tai Shan, the mountain range in Shanxi.*

See the various examples in porcelain such as the underglaze blue five-peak brushrest of the Zhengde period (1506-1521), formerly in the Frederick M. Mayer Collection, sold at Christie's on 24/25th June 1974, lot no. 102.



31. LIONESSE WITH TWO PLAYFUL CUBS

China, probably late Ming/early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

This charming small sculpture was no doubt used as a brushrest as well as a paperweight – both cubs are looking with amazement in anticipation of the brush about to be placed on their mother's back. The solidly cast bronze has been well used; the worn parts highlight the sculptural details.

Size: height 1¼" (3.2 cm); width 2¾" (7 cm)



32. SCHOLAR RIDING ON A QILIN

China, Ming Dynasty, 16th century

This well-cast sculpture of a qilin probably also had a dual purpose, serving as a brushrest as well as a paperweight. The bronze is finely modelled, and the animal is full of movement, kneeling down for the convenience of its rider. Cast in the lost wax process leaving the sculpture hollow underneath, it is still sufficiently heavy to be functional as a brushrest.

Size: height 4¼" (10.8 cm); length 5½" (14 cm)

**The qilin is regarded with the greatest respect as it belongs to the four mythical animals of China, in company with the dragon, phoenix and tortoise. Being able to fly through the sky and to ride across water, it is swift by nature and gentle by disposition. It is regarded as an auspicious animal and is associated with longevity and wise administration. This example could hardly fit the Chinese description of "dragon-horse"⁽¹⁾ better: energetic and wild, yet submissive and benevolent.*

There is another attractive association⁽²⁾ for the scholar: according to a legend, the dragon-horse emerged from the Yellow River bearing a mystical map on his back which he presented to Fu Xi, the first legendary emperor. The written language is said to have evolved from this map.

⁽¹⁾ and ⁽²⁾ See: C.A.S. Williams, "Encyclopaedia of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives", New York, 1960, page 410.



33. FLYING QILIN

China, Ming Dynasty, 15th/16th century

Waterdropper, brushrest, paperweight, work of art, this is indeed a masterly sculpted animal: captured at the moment of landing after flying through the skies, mane and tail still showing the direction of fall, its body still full of adrenalin. What an auspicious visit to the scholar's table!

Cast in one piece by the lost wax method, the body is hollow to take the water, which escapes through the qilin's mouth. The flow of the water is controlled by an air vent, carefully placed out of sight towards the back of the animal.

Size: height 5¼" (13.3 cm)



34. COILED MYTHICAL ANIMAL HOLDING AN EAR-CUP

China, Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644

This rare tiger-like animal forms a harmonious sculptural unit with the ear-cup, making it an ideal and compact paperweight as well as a waterdropper and brushwasher. The water is drawn out of the animal's body by a long narrow tube (now missing). In spite of the cavity inside the body the object is still heavy enough not to move about whilst being used as a brushwasher.

Size: length 4" (10.1 cm)

**The sculptural treatment of the animal is interestingly angular and stylised, almost as if it has been carved from stone. The superelliptical ear-cup contrasts beautifully with the more angular body of the animal.*

See the chimera-shaped waterdropper/brushwasher in the Shanghai Museum also holding an ear-cup in its mouth dated to the 4th-6th century A.D. in "The Chinese Scholar's Studio", Chu-Tsing Li and James C.Y. Watt, New York, 1987, plate 86.



35. BRONZE WATERDROPPER IN THE FORM OF A RESTING CAMEL

China, Song Dynasty, possibly 13th century

The subtle sculptural treatment of this fine waterdropper which probably represents a camel serves as an example of the artistic quality to be found even among more commonplace objects. The sense of proportion and the softness of the modelling in this piece are quite remarkable. A long and intimate study of living animals would have been necessary to be able to convey so convincingly the nature of this animal. It was cast by the lost wax process. The water is released through the nostrils.

Size: height 2" (5.2 cm); length 3½" (8.9 cm)

**Waterdroppers in the shape of animals have been popular for a long time in many parts of Asia. The dating of these is very difficult and requires some experience as many later versions look very similar to the earlier ones. Quite a number of them are even of Japanese origin.*



36. RECUMBENT QILIN

China, Ming Dynasty, probably 15th/16th century

An attractive study of a male qilin looking back over his shoulder. The sensitively modelled waterdropper, entirely undecorated, is cast in one piece. The water is drawn out of the body by inserting a tube (now missing) into the hole in the animal's back. The oval opening under the base is closed up with a plate (probably added later) bearing a silver inlaid Shisou mark.

Size: height 4" (10.2 cm); width 5" (12.7 cm)

Mark: A two character seal mark, Shisou, flanked by dragons, inlaid in silver in the oval plate under the base.

**It would appear that the base plate bearing the Shisou mark is a later replacement and that the mark was added as a mark of quality. The object does not fall easily into the repertoire of Shisou – as far as can be judged from the little concrete evidence we have of his work⁽¹⁾. The qilin may therefore be a little earlier than the life dates of Shisou, who reputedly worked during the late Ming period.*

⁽¹⁾ See entry 157, illustration 157 on page 179 of "Arts from the Scholar's Studio", Gerard Tsang and Hugh Moss, Hong Kong, 1986, for a dated example of Shisou's work.



37. GOLD AND SILVER INLAID BRONZE WATERDROPPER IN THE FORM OF A CROUCHING MYTHICAL ANIMAL

China, Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

This fine waterdropper is reminiscent of the larger stone sculpture of the fifth and sixth centuries, although it is rather more relaxed and benign than its earlier often ferocious-looking companions. Like these early sculptures, the upper muscular part of the front and hind legs are emphasised by designs of scrolls, the head receiving additional attention. These areas, apart from being modelled in relief, are further graphically enhanced by a design of long and narrow strips of inlay which complement the sense of movement. The remaining area of the animal's body is smooth and shows an inlay design of a different nature, relying much more on the thin lines of silver wire for effect. The overall effect is varied and lively. Cast in one piece, the water escapes through the animal's mouth and is controlled by an air vent on its back. The base is unfinished and plugged with a large separate piece of bronze.

Size: height 1 7/8" (4.9 cm); length 2 1/2" (6.6 cm)

**An interesting feature here is the use of copper-backed gold foil which – as Tsang and Moss⁽¹⁾ believe – may have been used either to improve the colour, save on gold or to improve the bond. Quite possibly a combination of all three factors led to its use. Copper-backed gold foil is certainly more durable and seems particularly suitable for long narrow strips. (See also the gui censer in this catalogue, plate 78.)*

⁽¹⁾ See entry 208 on page 224 in "Arts from the Scholar's Studio", Gerard Tsang and Hugh Moss, Hong Kong, 1986.



38. INLAID TORTOISE WATERDROPPER

China, early Qing period, 17th/18th century

The distinct relief modelling of this silver inlaid tortoise of archaic inspiration forms the basis for the different silver inlays which finely accentuate the sculptural delineations. The circular insets are not made from gold sheet but from gilt copper sheet. The object is cast in one piece and is quite heavy. The water escapes through the mouth and is controlled by an air vent on the top of the animal's back.

Size: length 4" (10.2 cm)

**Few animals have enjoyed such popularity in China as the tortoise. One of the four mythical animals, symbols of the universe and known for its legendary longevity, the tortoise can frequently be seen carrying tall memorial tablets on its back. Representing the northern quadrant, it symbolises winter; its capacity for surviving cold winters by hibernating reinforces the idea of the tortoise being almost indestructible.*



39. GOLD AND SILVER INLAID WATERDROPPER IN THE FORM OF
A MYTHICAL BIRD

China, Qing Dynasty, probably 18th century

This small sculpture most likely represents a phoenix, the "Emperor of all Birds" and representative of the southern quadrant. The chest, the tail and the top of the lid are finely inlaid with thin silver wire.

Designed to be a waterdropper, the cast is heavy. The water is drawn out of the animal's back.

Size: length 2¾" (7 cm)

**This waterdropper is in many ways similar to the larger silver and gold inlaid birds which usually carry a vase on their backs. See plate 82 in this catalogue and the example in the Victoria & Albert Museum, which will be included in a forthcoming publication.*



40. BRONZE HANDWARMER DECORATED WITH LANDSCAPE SCENES

China, Ming Dynasty, probably first half 17th century

This small handwarmer of superelliptical form unfolds a continuous landscape of exquisite beauty: conversing scholars, one followed by a boy carrying a "qin", walk through a rocky landscape amongst houses shaded by gnarled pine trees and surrounded by water. The diversity of the sculptural and graphic detail is superb. The raised bronze body is finely worked in silversmith fashion; certain features are dramatically defined by individual gilding, which forms a strong contrast against the darker background giving an almost three-dimensional appearance. The finely designed lid is a well-matched but later replacement – in itself a manifestation of the esteem in which the original bronze was held.

Size: height 2¼" (5.7 cm); width 4½" (11.4 cm)

**It is somewhat unusual to find metalwork of this type and quality unsigned, and it is highly unlikely that the original lid ever bore a signature. While many features relate closely to work by Hu Wenming (see plates 59 and 60 in this catalogue for examples from his workshop), there are certain details which indicate that the handwarmer may have come from a different workshop. The fact that this handwarmer does not seem to have had a mark may further lend support to this view as virtually all Hu Wenming bronzes of this class carry a mark. It is possible that this handwarmer comes from the workshop of the other great metalworker, Li Qi Yun⁽¹⁾, in spite of the fact that the one known example of his work has no star diaper background.*

The present example is further proof that other objects for the use of the scholar such as handwarmers⁽²⁾ – although more commonplace – received the same attention from the masters of metalwork as incense or flower vessels.

⁽¹⁾ See: "The Literati Mode", Sydney L. Moss Ltd., 1986, page 294, illustration 148, for an example of Li Qi Yun's work.

⁽²⁾ See: Ulrich Hausmann's essay in "The Literati Mode", Sydney L. Moss Ltd., 1986, entitled "Keeping Warm in a Cold Study: The Warmer", pages 311-315.





Chinese Flower Vessels

喜齋
十竹齋寫

41. BRONZE VASE OF *HU*-SHAPE WITH ELEPHANT HANDLES

China, Song Dynasty, probably 12th century

This rare flower vase – probably one of a pair – shows an interesting variety of designs of a type of Song archaism which departs entirely from some scholars' perception of archaism. It is further evidence that the long-standing theory put forward with great insistence by some that the later metalworker slavishly copied from woodcut illustrations contained in the various published bronze catalogues⁽¹⁾ is ill-conceived and should be regarded as untenable⁽²⁾.

The various surface designs on this vessel are neatly separated by strong rows of horizontal ribbing; the large stylised taotie masks on the bulbous part are well emphasised through the plain surface which is further differentiated by thin recessed grooving. The high plain foot rim is carefully balanced by a similar band at the top of the vessel which splays outwards very gently. The almost stylised elephant handles probably once held rings. The vessel is finely cast in one piece by the lost wax method, possibly together with the handles. The base is set in.

Size: height 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (26 cm)

**See the round hu vase with similar surface decoration recently discovered in the Victoria and Albert Museum's store which bears an incised inscription dating it to A.D. 1173. This vase was first discussed by Rose Kerr in her article "Metalwork of Song Design: a bronze vase inscribed in 1173", Oriental Art, summer 1986, Vol. XXXV, No. 2, pp. 161-176.*

⁽¹⁾ *This school of thought continues to argue that any free use of the archaic design repertoire and the introduction of a more abstract design is indicative of a later date since the published bronze catalogues lost more and more detail with every reprint. According to this theory, the object illustrated here would – until very recently – have been regarded as an incompetent fake or of eighteenth or nineteenth century date.*

⁽²⁾ *For a more detailed discussion of this question see "Notes on the Problem of Archaism" in an essay by Ulrich Hausmann entitled "In Search of later Bronzes", in the Sydney L. Moss exhibition catalogue "In Scholars' Taste", 1983, pp. 233-235. See also entry 103 on p. 134 in "Arts from the Scholar's Studio" by G. Tsang and H. Moss, Hong Kong, 1986.*



42. PEAR-SHAPED VASE ON HIGH FOOT

China, Song/Yuan Dynasty, 13th/14th century

This unusual and attractive flower vessel – again probably one of a pair – shows an even denser horizontal division than the previous example. The height of each section of design has been sensitively chosen and shows careful consideration of the overall shape of the vessel. It is worth noting the high and distinct band which shows a lozenge design enclosing the swastika motif – visually this ties the vessel together at the point where the inward running curve of the profile opens up outwards. The spirited surface design owes much to contemporary designs used for ceramics, notably in porcelains of the yingching, where fine shallow moulding can also be found. The theme of the decoration consists largely of floral designs, swastikas and flying phoenix and incorporates, quite characteristically, Buddhist and Daoist motifs. The vessel, which has a fine patina, is cast in one piece using the lost wax process. The base is set in.

Size: height 8¼" (21 cm)



43. BRONZE VASE WITH DRAGON HANDLES

China, Song/Yuan Dynasty, 13th/14th century

This fine vessel has acquired a smooth warm patina which would suggest that it has not been excavated. The very shallow surface designs are most delicate and match the sensitive modelling of the dragon heads. The vase was probably one of a pair of temple vases and once had rings.

Size: height 11" (28 cm)

**For a vase with similar dragon handles see the vessel dated to the Yuan dynasty in the Victoria and Albert Museum illustrated by Rose Kerr in "The Evolution of Bronze Style in the Jin, Yuan and early Ming Dynasties", Oriental Art, summer 1982, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2, p. 151.*



45. PARTIALLY GILT GU-SHAPED FLOWER VESSEL

China, Ming/early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

This attractive tall *gu* vase reflects the high standard of metalwork of the late Ming/early Qing period. The design of the surface area, although sumptuous, retains a cool elegance and does not detract from the fine lines of the vessel. The gilding is reserved for the incised raised areas which portray dragons and taotie masks. These show up strongly against the bronze-coloured leiwen background. The remaining part of the body of the heavy *gu* which is entirely plain with an attractive warm patina acts as an even more distant background for the clearly defined decorated areas.

Size: height 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (32.4 cm)

**Although this gu bears a certain resemblance to the work of Hu Wenming there are certain features that would suggest that this vase most probably comes from another workshop. The absence of gilding around the foot and in the areas above and below the central bulbous part, the differing background and the distinct design of the flat raised areas lend further support to this view.*

See the partially gilt gu-shaped vase by Hu Wenming illustrated by Tsang and Moss in what must be regarded as the œuvre catalogue of Hu Wenming: "Chinese Metalwork of the Hu Wenming Group" by G. Tsang and H. Moss in the catalogue of the International Asian Antiques Fair, Hong Kong, 1984, p. 53, illustration 27.



46A SMALL GU BEAKER VASE

China, late Ming/early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

An unassuming yet pleasing flower vessel, the central flanged part accentuated by narrow "bow string" lines.

Size: height 7¼" (18.4 cm)

46B BRONZE VASE OF FLOWER-SHAPED FORM

China, Qing Dynasty, 17th/18th century

This is an elegant vase, the central part adorned with a coiling dragon clinging in lizard-like fashion to the wall of the vessel. The foliate design of the flaring top is extended right down to the foot rim. Even the central decoration with its wavy line relates to this theme. The dragon shows traces of gilding.

Size: height 10¼" (26 cm)

**A vessel like this would no doubt have attracted the attention of westerners such as Monsieur Bing in Paris. Indeed, it would have been a most appropriate vessel for this man, who coined the term "l'art nouveau".*

46C TALL GU WITH ARCHAISTIC DESIGN

China, late Ming, 16th/17th century

This well cast vessel of Shang inspiration, no doubt once one of a pair, belongs to a large group of religious archaistic vessels which were made over a considerable period of time. This example probably dates from the latter part of the Ming dynasty.

Size: height 13¼" (33.7 cm)

**For a similar though probably slightly later example, see the gu in the Victoria and Albert Museum's collection illustrated by Rose Kerr in "A Preliminary Note on some Qing Bronze Types", *Oriental Art*, winter 1980/81, N.S., Vol. XXVI, no. 4, p. 450, figure 3.*



47. BRONZE FLOWER VESSEL WITH CICADA DESIGN

China, Qing Dynasty, 17th/18th century

This rare *fang gu* vase of archaic inspiration has acquired a fine patina over a period of time. The elongated decorated panels stop just short of the base and the top of the vessel so as not to interfere with the entity of the sculptural form. The well-cast design inside the panels is unusual and incorporates cicada-like motifs which show up well against the otherwise plain vessel.

Size: height 10¼" (26 cm)



48. BRONZE VASE OF *HU* FORM AND LOZENGE SECTION

China, early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

This rare and finely cast vessel stands out amongst bronzes of this period. Unusual in the pronounced deep relief modelling of the four mythical animals and its archaic patination, this vessel is also intriguing because of its ingenious form. Looking at the vase from different angles, one is immediately drawn to it by the swiftly changing perception of its shape which at one moment appears to be square in section and at the next to be of lozenge shape. Only on closer inspection can it be seen that the vessel is not square in shape but of a quite acute lozenge section which, if photographed by a single-lens camera lacking spatial perception, is impossible to show from the frontal view. The vessel is cast in one piece. The two individually modelled dragons are riveted onto the main body of the vessel.

Size: height 14½" (36.8 cm)



49. ARCHAISTIC BRONZE *LEI* WITH LID BEARING MYTHICAL BIRDS

China, probably Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

This imposing vessel, with well cast bands of archaizing designs deliberately obscured by artificial encrustations and patination, belongs to a group of vessels which are extremely difficult to date. Over a long period of time there seems to have been a considerable demand for vessels of this nature which follows more closely the design of their ancient predecessors. A more detailed discussion of the possible reasons for this phenomenon goes beyond the scope of this exhibition catalogue, but one of the main factors appears to have been the persisting Confucian influence which made continual references to the past when, according to Confucian thought, "proper rites" were carried out and the values of the people were less corrupt.

Size: height 16" (40.6 cm)



50. TALL GOLD SPLASH VASE WITH AUSPICIOUS SYMBOLS AND DRAGON HANDLES

China, Qing Dynasty, probably late 18th century

This is an imposing vase of gently flowing shape evenly covered with large and small gold splashes. Raised shou (long life) characters, executed in different styles of writing, embellish all six sides of the vessel. The dragon handles form a harmonious unit with the vessel; the curvature of their spines corresponds well with the overall outline of the vase. The gold splash design, though densely distributed, does not detract from the shape of the vessel.

Size: height 18½" (47 cm)

Mark: Raised four character mark in seal script in rectangular panel beneath base: Yu Tang Qing Wan (pure object [to enjoy] from the Jade Hall).

**In the past gold splash pieces have unfortunately been given an almost summary dating, the most common date given for this type of vessel being seventeenth or eighteenth century. It may be appropriate to consider extending the scale of dating in both directions and to give a substantial group of vessels hitherto dated to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a more cautious eighteenth/nineteenth century date.*





Miscellaneous Bronzes

達旦
十竹齋

51. BRONZE MONK'S CAP EWER (*SENG MAO-HU*)

China, Ming Dynasty, probably 14th/15th century

This fine bronze pouring vessel is very rare. Its shape is best known from the similar though usually smaller porcelain ewers of the Yongle period, which, according to Brankston⁽¹⁾, were almost certainly used in Buddhist ceremonies. This bronze example is of great strength and of a sculptural quality of almost architectural character. The modelling of the inside of the ewer is quite ingenious as it allowed the liquid to be poured when the lid – now missing – was in place on the top of the vessel. A narrow pin was inserted immediately above the handle and ran through the lid coming out on the opposite side through the rim, thus firmly securing the lid. An inspection of the vessel reveals that the lid must have been missing for a considerable period of time as the inside of the rim, where the lid once rested, and the entire inside of the ewer show almost the same rich mottled patina as the outside of the vessel. The ewer is cast in one piece; an oblong casting seam is clearly visible under the base.

Size: height 12½" (31.8 cm)

**Although certain features, especially the high waisted foot rim and the overall size of this vessel, differ from the porcelain counterparts, there can be little doubt that this piece is early and quite probably contemporary with the porcelain ewers, if not somewhat earlier. As the general shape was originally a metal form, one wonders whether this or a similar bronze monk's cap ewer may have been the prototype for the smaller and squatter porcelain versions.*

⁽¹⁾ Brankston illustrates a Yongle monk's cap ewer in porcelain with incised decoration in "Early Ming Wares of Chingtechen", Peking, 1938, plate 2b.



52. AN EXTREMELY RARE DATED BRONZE BOTTLE OF COCOON SHAPE

China, Song Dynasty, AD 1241

This highly original vessel stands out as a unique bronze. The main body of the bottle recalls many shapes – the cocoon shape which we know better from the many painted earlier pottery wares of the Han period being perhaps the most obvious association. One might also see a resemblance to the shape of a lingam stone in the horizontal body which rests firmly on the low foot rim of superelliptical shape. The cylindrical neck contrasts with the more organic body, an impression further accentuated by the neat circular row of petals at the base of the neck. In spite of the visual division, the bottle is cast in one piece; only the foot rim was possibly soldered onto the body. The surface is smooth and has acquired a very fine patina. There is some evidence of old lacquer repairs.

Size: height 8" (20.3 cm)

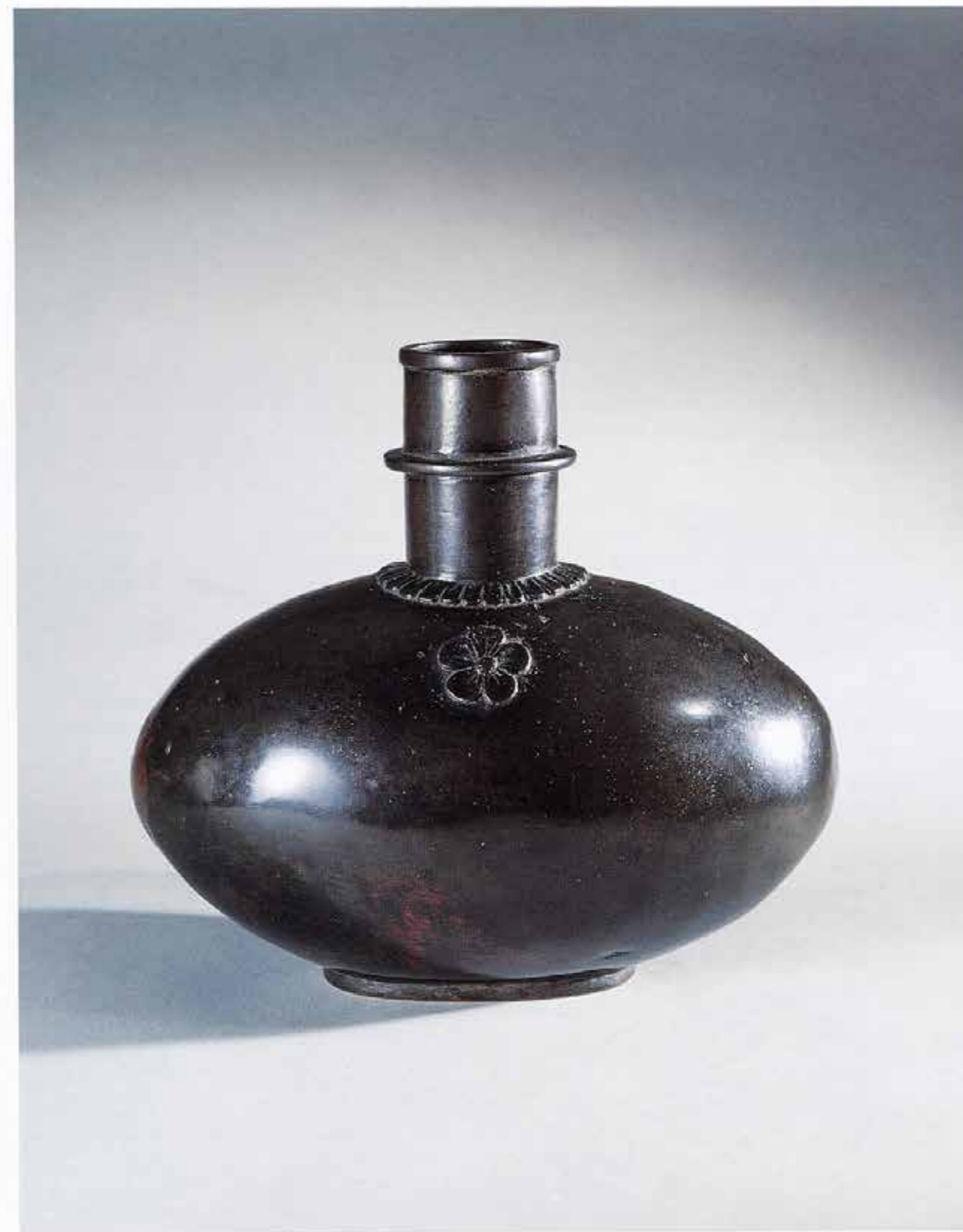
Mark: Integrally cast five character mark in one line on the underside of one rounded end of the body of the vessel: Shun Yu yuan nian zao (made in the first year of the Shun Yu period [Southern Song AD 1241]).

**There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the inscription as it is integrally cast with the wall of the thin vessel. Since the discovery of this bottle the existence of the mark on a vessel of such an unusual shape has raised a number of questions as to the possible purpose it may have served. Paul Moss in his discussion of this piece⁽¹⁾ notes some similarity to earlier Japanese vessels used in temples and suggests a possible Buddhist inspiration. There may be a northern connection as the vessel also bears some resemblance to the water bottles of the nomadic northern tribes, into which skins serving as the main water container were often incorporated⁽²⁾. This bronze bottle may indeed have been a gift presented by a Chinese delegation on the occasion of a friendly visit to one of the northern kingdoms, and it seems quite possible that this bottle may have been unique or one of a very few bottles of this type. Whatever the explanation may be, it would seem that this fine bronze is at the present time the only known vessel of Southern Song date with an authentic cast mark⁽³⁾.*

⁽¹⁾ Paul Moss: "In Scholars' Taste", Sydney L. Moss exhibition catalogue, 1983, p. 212.

⁽²⁾ See exhibition catalogue "Ceramics in the Liao Dynasty", M. Yutaka, China Institute in America Exhibition, New York, 1973.

⁽³⁾ See S. Riddell, "Dated Chinese Antiquities: 600-1650", London, 1979, p. 131.



53. TALL BRONZE ARROW VASE OF HEXAGONAL SECTION

China, Ming Dynasty, 16th century

This heavy vase, incorporating archaic design as well as mythical scenes, was probably once used in a game involving the throwing of arrows. What no doubt started originally as an entertaining pastime, in which players tried to score as many points as possible by throwing arrows up in the air in a steep ballistical curve in an attempt to land them in one of the three vertical tubes, soon developed into a social ritual of great complexity, which is well described by Tsang and Moss⁽¹⁾: "the game is more concerned with accuracy of ritual and etiquette than accuracy of eye and arrow, and has survived for so long intact because it is ultimately, like Zen archery, a game aimed directly at self-cultivation through ritual."

Size: height 21" (53.3 cm)

**This vase is interesting because of the distinct use of a sculptural style portraying mythical scenes together with a well developed archaic design of a more graphic quality, features which provide a subtle reference to the long history of the game.*

For a very similar arrow vase, see the example from the Laufer Collection, Chicago, illustrated by O. Münsterberg in "Chinesische Kunstgeschichte", Esslingen, 1912, Vol. II, p. 136, illustration 219.

For another very similar arrow vase, see the example from the Shanghai Museum illustrated in "The Chinese Scholar's Studio", by Chu-Tsing Li and James C.Y. Watt, exhibit 63.

⁽¹⁾ See "Arts from the Scholar's Studio" by G. Tsang and H. Moss, p. 268, entry 264.



54. BRONZE CANDLESTICK OF TRIPOD FORM

China, late Ming Dynasty, 16th/17th century

Although cast in one piece, this candlestick can be visually separated into smaller sculptural units which build up to form one harmonious ensemble. The lower section consists of a strong and weighty support modelled as three dragon heads devouring their own tails. These rest on small lotus-shaped pads. On this base a miniature altar table is placed which in turn bears a vase with an arrangement of lotus flowers from which the central pricket emerges.

Size: height 6¼" (41.3 cm)

**For a similar example see O. Münsterberg, "Chinesische Kunstgeschichte", Esslingen, 1912, Vol. II, p. 145, illustration 243b.*

Candlesticks of this type were used in pairs as part of a formal arrangement in worship and were placed on either side of a central incense burner.



55. BRONZE CANDLESTICK OF TALL SLENDER FORM

Japan, Edo period, 18th century

This fine candlestick – originally one of a pair – shows a higher degree of stylisation than the previous example. Well cast and carefully finished it combines bamboo-like sections with sections displaying the lotus theme – the drip pan, the central lotus bulb (reminiscent of certain lotus bases for Buddhas) and the row of stylised lotus petals near the tripod base all reflect the overall purpose: to serve in the worship of Buddha. In this very heavy candlestick the various individually cast sections are held together by a central rod.

Size: height 23½" (60 cm)



56. LARGE BRONZE WARMER WITH SIMULATED CLOTH COVER

Japan, late Edo period, 19th century

This tall warmer, in shape reminiscent of a drum or of a Chinese garden seat, most probably copies a storage jar, the top being typically concealed by a simulated cloth cover through which the hot air rises. The simulated cover was made separately and is riveted onto the body; a small section of the cover is hinged and can be lifted up for access.

**This type of warmer was probably used as a general means of heating, unlike the smaller handwarmers and footwarmers, which have a different shape and size.*





Chinese and Japanese Incense Vessels

陶潛

青山烟歛瞑扶筇
一醉歸 十竹齋

57. GOLD SPLASH CENSER SUPPORTED BY ELEPHANT HEADS

China, early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

This well-cast vessel of attractive bowl shape is sparingly but evenly decorated with large and small gold splashes which contrast well with the warm bronze patina. The finely modelled open-work handles most likely simulate an elaborate tied bow, although – as is often the case – this part of the vessel could be interpreted in different ways and may also be seen as a headrest or as stylised toads.

Size: height 5½" (14 cm)

Mark: Six character mark in regular script in rectangle beneath base: Da Ming Xuande nian zhi (made during the reign of Xuande of the great Ming Dynasty).

Condition: One supporting elephant head is a later replacement.



58A. GLOBULAR GOLD SPLASH INCENSE BURNER ON TRIPOD FEET

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

The gold splashes of varying sizes and shapes look particularly attractive on this well modelled rounded form. The gold splashes are set against a richly patinated surface of uneven texture. The vessel is cast in one piece.

Size: height with stand 9" (22.9 cm)

Mark: Two character mark in seal script in square beneath base: Xuande (Xuande).

58B. GOLD SPLASH INCENSE BURNER WITH LION HEAD HANDLES

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

The handles of this vessel are most unusual. They are typically ambiguous in appearance and may be seen as a lion's head or as a monster mask with an almost human expression. The gold splashes are very prominent and are irregular in size and shape.

Size: height 3½" (8.9 cm)

Mark: Four character mark in seal script in rectangle beneath base: Xuande nian zhi (made in the reign of Xuande).



59. PARTIALLY GILT BRONZE INCENSE BURNER WITH DRAGON HANDLES

China, late Ming, first half 17th century

This bronze *gui* from the Hu Wenming workshop is cast in one piece and incorporates a favourite design showing mythical animals emerging from the sea surrounded by flying phoenix. The raised scenes are highlighted by gilding and are set against a carefully punched bronze background. The remaining dividing lines as well as the foot rim and the lid are enhanced by gilding, giving the vessel a splendid appearance.

Size: height 3½" (8.9 cm)

Mark: Six character mark in seal script in intaglio in gilt rectangle beneath base: Yun Jian Hu Wen Ming zhi (made by Hu Wenming of Yun Jian).

**The work of Hu Wenming, one of the most highly regarded metalworkers of the late Ming period, is extensively discussed in two publications⁽¹⁾ which also show examples by the master himself and by his workshop. Hu Wenming, whose known active period was between 1583 and 1613, lived in Yun Jian in that culturally fertile area near Lake Tai, about thirty kilometres to the south-west of present day Shanghai.*

⁽¹⁾ See article by Ulrich Hausmann "In Search of Later Bronzes", pp. 230-238 published in "In Scholars' Taste", Sydney L. Moss exhibition catalogue, 1983, and the article "Chinese Metalwork of the Hu Wenming Group" by G. Tsang and H. Moss in the exhibition catalogue of the International Asian Antiques Fair, Hong Kong, 1984.



60. PARTIALLY GILT COPPER INCENSE BURNER OF *GUI* SHAPE

China, late Ming, first half 17th century

This vessel, similar in decoration to the previous Hu Wenming example apart from the continuous interlocking scrolling beneath the rim, is not cast but raised from a single sheet of copper in the fashion of silversmith work. The handles are cast separately in bronze and are riveted to the main body. The incense burner has acquired a fine warm patina and has obviously been in use for a considerable period of time as the gilding is rather worn in places.

Size: height 4¼" (10.8 cm)

Mark: Six character mark in seal script in intaglio in gilt rectangle beneath base: Yun Jian Hu Wen Ming zhi (made by Hu Wenming of Yun Jian).

**For a similar example in beaten copper, see exhibition catalogue of Sydney L. Moss "In Scholars' Taste" 1983, p. 229, entry 161.*



61. GILT BRONZE *GUI* WITH ARCHAISTIC DESIGN

China, Ming Dynasty, 15th/16th century

This small and well cast *gui*, probably once entirely gilded, shows a rather abstract design of an innovative and unconstrained nature. The dragon handles with their fine incised lines form a subtle contrast to the pronounced relief modelling on the main body.

Size: height 2¾" (7 cm)



62. PARTIALLY GILT BRONZE CENSER WITH ELEPHANT HANDLES

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

The most striking and dominating feature of this rare censer is the splendid large mask which stares straight out at the onlooker from the front of the vessel. The gilding further emphasises the sun god-like appearance of this highly unusual monster mask which would not look out of place in renaissance Europe or indeed in some Latin American cultural contexts. The mask and the various insects, which include butterflies and dragonflies, are all gilt and contrast well with the bronze-coloured punched background. The heavy vessel and the handles are cast in one piece. The base is cast separately and has been set in. Although the mark is concealed beneath the base its extravagant design shows the same sumptuous sense of splendour as the overall design of the vessel and has almost become an artistic feature in its own right. The gilt dragons treasure the precious nian-hao (mark) of that most celebrated period of later bronze casting: the Xuande period.

Size: height 4½" (11.4 cm)

Mark: Six character mark in gilt rectangle beneath base surrounded by two writhing gilt dragons: Da Ming Xuande nian zhi (made during the reign of Xuande of the great Ming Dynasty).



63. LARGE INCENSE BURNER SUPPORTED BY ELEPHANT HANDLES

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century, possibly Yongzheng period or earlier

This rare vessel combines sculptural strength with great refinement, giving it a cool and elegant note. This air is enhanced by the lengthy inscription in seal script inside the basin which is presented in an unusual way and is obviously an important feature of the vessel. The basin is solidly cast in one piece and has on its sides two lion masks of unusual strength and expressiveness. The three elephant feet are equal in quality and well match the heavy vessel, which in worn places reveals the fine alloy showing the crystalline structure of the bronze.

Size: height 7" (17.8 cm); width 18½" (47 cm)

Marks: Four character mark in seal script in rectangle beneath base: Xuande nian zhi (made in the Xuande period).

Thirty-two character inscription in seal script inside basin accompanied by a five character inscription in regular script. The five character inscription reads: Chen Wu Bang Zuo zao⁽¹⁾ (made by the minister [or official] Wu Bang Zuo).

**Attempts to identify the lengthy inscription which obviously has a special significance for the vessel proved difficult until a very similar inscription was found in the "Li Dai Zhong Ding Yi Qi Kuan Shi". The inscription was taken from a ding of Zhou date named: Zhong Cheng Fu Ding. This vessel was then found to be illustrated in the "Xuanhe Bo Gu Tu Lu" catalogue, vol. 3 pp. 16-17. The inscription refers to a successful expedition to the southern Huai from which metal was brought back to make a precious tripod which was to be used for ten thousand years. What a well chosen inscription for this more recent ding, also made from a fine alloy, to express once again the wish that this precious tripod should remain in use for ten thousand years.*

⁽¹⁾ A Wu Bang Zuo was reputedly involved in casting vessels in the Xuande period. Several dated vessels are known with a Xuande mark which includes his name.



64. LARGE CENSER WITH RARE OPEN-WORK COVER

China, early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

This rare and attractive censer of fine quality is dominated by the dome-shaped open-work lid which has a beautiful design of scrolling lotus flowers and a naturalistic lotus seed pod as a finial. The lid rests on the shouldered basin of solid appearance; the basin itself stands on low feet of floral scroll design. The restrained continuous leiwen design and the plain shoulder are a perfect setting for the lively design of the lid. Two dragons rise from the lower shaded curved part of the vessel as if reaching upwards towards the light, just as the lotus flower emerges from dark muddy waters to open up, pure white, in the bright light.

Size: height 7¼" (18.4 cm); width: 20¼" (51.4 cm)

**The exceptional attention paid to the design of the lid would suggest that the vessel was placed in a low position, either on the ground or on a small stand, so that the incense clouds could be seen rising through the scrolling lotus lid.*



65. ARCHAISTIC BRONZE CENSER OF *LIDING* SHAPE

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

An interesting vessel with traces of partial gilding, the design typically repeated on each of the three lobed sections above each leg. The lobed shape is further emphasised by dividing bands which meet in the centre underneath the vessel. The pronounced raised design of dragons and taotie masks contrasts well with the restrained classic leiwen background. The fitted wood cover has an open-work jade finial.

Size: height with wood stand 11" (27.9 cm)



66. LARGE PARTIALLY GILT BRONZE INCENSE BURNER OF LI SHAPE

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

This is an unusual and splendid incense burner of archaic inspiration. The stylised taotie masks are well defined and form a harmonious unit with the legs, an impression which is further emphasised by the continuous gilding. The shallow band below the rim, decorated with stylised dragons, provides a fine contrast to the unusually pronounced relief modelling of the taotie masks. The vessel is cast in one piece.

Size: height 10" (25.4 cm)

**The emphasised modelling of the masks is not without classic precedent. There is a lid of late Shang date in the Avery Brundage collection⁽¹⁾ which shows how deep relief modelling accentuates the individual parts of the mask to the extent of turning them into almost separate decorative features.*

⁽¹⁾ See: "Bronze Vessels of Ancient China in the Avery Brundage Collection", René-Yvon Lefebvre d'Argencé, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 1977, exhibit no. VII opposite p. 30.



67. LARGE BRONZE INCENSE BURNER OF *DING* SHAPE

China, late Ming Dynasty, 16th/17th century

This impressive censer with dark patination is powerfully sculpted and well proportioned. The lion masks, from which the stout feet emerge, are full of life and vigour and together with the feet provide a solid base for this large censer. The vessel is cast in one piece as is the lid which shows a fo-dog playing with its brocade ball, flanked by two of the eight diagrams, the ba gua. The incense escapes through an opening in the lid and through the animal's mouth.

Size: height 20½" (52.1 cm)

**One rarely sees a vessel of this type with its original lid. The importance of lids may well be greater than is often believed as not infrequently they provide helpful clues as to the character of the vessel⁽¹⁾.*

The meaning of the two ba gua symbols is interesting: the first one "li" (visible on the photograph) represents fire and is more generally associated with brightness and elegance. The second symbol "qian" represents heaven and suggests untiring strength and power.

For a very similar example (without a lid) see O. Münsterberg, Chinesische Kunstgeschichte, Esslingen, 1912, Vol. II, p. 147, illustration 245.

⁽¹⁾ See also entry 64 in this catalogue



68. INSCRIBED BRONZE TRIPOD CENSER

Japan, Edo period, probably 1726

This finely cast and partially gilt incense burner is particularly interesting because of its engraved Japanese inscription which carries the date 1726. This vessel, which shows strong Chinese influence, would no doubt be considered to be of Chinese origin were it not for the Japanese inscription. As the inscription is engraved, it is not in itself conclusive evidence either of provenance or date; indeed, there are vessels known bearing dated Japanese inscriptions which are of Chinese origin. On closer examination of this censer, certain features would support the assumption that it is Japanese in origin: the wave design on the upper part of the vessel is incoherent and too stylised, and the unusual modelling of the feet and the brocade ball would further suggest that the censer – in all probability – was made in Japan. The incense escapes through the eight ba gua symbols and through the mouth of the fo-dog.

Size: height 10" (25.4 cm)

Mark: Engraved twenty six-character inscription running around the underside of the rim of the lid, stating that it was donated by Ibuki for Shakumi Myokei on the fourteenth day of the fourth month in 1726.

**It would be most useful to know how soon after manufacture the vessel was incised. If one assumes – as seems reasonable – that in most cases the time gap was negligible, then this vessel is most interesting as it would suggest that even at this relatively late date in Japanese cultural history Chinese-style bronzes of good quality were made and were of obvious appeal to some Japanese.*



69. BRONZE TRIPOD CENSER WITH OPEN-WORK LID

Japan, Edo period, first half 18th century

This attractive and well cast vessel with its sharp angled handles touching the thin disc-like rim is most interesting as it incorporates many Chinese motifs of the early Ming period. The well cast lid is most original in concept, using a chrysanthemum flower as the finial supported by a network of hexagonal openings; the narrow leiwen rim of the lid subtly recalls the theme of the wider band on the upper part of the main body.

Size: height 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (22.2 cm)

**The abstract design running around the bulbous part of the censer shows a striking similarity to the decorative band on a bronze bottle of unusual shape considered by Rose Kerr to be of Chinese origin and of Yuan/early Ming date⁽¹⁾.*

⁽¹⁾ See Rose Kerr: "The Evolution of Bronze Style in the Jin, Yuan and Early Ming Dynasties", *Oriental Art*, summer 1982, Vol. XXVIII, no. 2, p. 153, fig. 15.



70. GAMA SENNIN SEATED ON HIS THREE-LEGGED TOAD

Japan, Meiji period, c. 1880

The charm of this highly original and well cast censer, so unmistakably Japanese in character, is largely derived from the humorous and witty disregard of proportion, the seated Gama Sennin being reduced almost to the size of a finial on the detachable lid. The puckered skin of the toad is well imitated and contrasts strongly to the smooth and polished treatment of the Gama Sennin.

Size: height 7½" (19 cm)

Mark: Two raised character mark in rectangular recess beneath base: Gizo.

**See also the dated Chinese Liu Hai Xian in this catalogue, entry 5.*



71. LARGE DATED CHINESE INCENSE BURNER

China, Qing Dynasty, Yongzheng period (1723)

A rare and well cast dated censer, the sculptural concept of architectural quality, well suited to the setting where a censer of this type would have been placed.

Size: height 18³/₄" (47.6 cm)

Mark: Raised seven character mark in one line below rim: Da Qing Yongzheng nian zhi (made in the first year of the reign of Yongzheng of the great Qing dynasty).

**Large censers of this type can often be found sited outside, placed on sculpted stone bases. Similar dings can be seen on terraces or lining approaches leading to important buildings such as the Temple of Heaven.*



72. LARGE IMPERIAL BRONZE DING

China, Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period (1737-1795)

The sculptural treatment of the decoration of this large tripod censer is strongly reminiscent of the many large tiled walls and screens which play such an important part in the architectural decoration of the former imperial compound, the Forbidden City in Beijing. The theme is imperial: five-clawed dragons flying through the clouds chasing the pearl and flanking the rectangle containing the nianhao. The heavy vessel is supported by boldly sculpted dragon heads, the facial features of which may at the same time also be interpreted as butterflies. The vessel is cast in one piece, the handles are cast separately and are riveted onto the main body. The decoration was chased after casting.

Size: height 18" (45.7 cm)

Mark: Raised six character inscription in one line below rim: Da Qing Qianlong nian zhi (made in the reign of Qianlong of the great Qing dynasty).

**It would appear that large censers of this type never had proper lids but carried large open-work pagoda-like superstructures almost twice the size of the censer; many of these were stored separately and were used only in special ceremonies.*

A very similar censer, also of Qianlong date, is in the collection of the British Museum in London.



73. LARGE INCENSE BURNER WITH ARCHAISTIC DECORATION

probably China, Qing Dynasty, 17th/18th century, possibly Japanese

This is a very well cast censer of a rare type. The handles and the well spaced, neatly cast decorative bands around the body and lid are unusually crisp and original in design. The censer has a rich dark patina which reinforces the cool elegance of the vessel.

Size: height 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (35.9 cm)

**It is not easy to establish the date or the provenance of a censer of such an original design. It is most unfortunate that this large fine vessel bears no inscription of any kind. On balance, a Chinese origin and a date during the reign of Kangxi or Yongzhen seem more probable, although the possibility that this vessel is Japanese cannot entirely be discounted.*



74. GILT BRONZE CENSER WITH CHASED DECORATION

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

This rectangular censer is elaborately decorated using techniques employed by skilled silversmiths. Engraved floral designs provide the setting for the window-like reserves showing magical garden scenes with birds perched on flowering branches. This decoration is well executed in undercut relief-work and is set against a finely punched background.

Size: height 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (17.5 cm)



75. BRONZE INCENSE BURNER OF *DING* SHAPE

China, Qing Dynasty, late 17th/early 18th century

This incense burner with its dark patination, its well modelled fo-dog as finial and its elaborate woodstand would have taken pride of place in any bronze collection at the turn of the century. The well cast vessel is rather restrained in its decoration; the distinctly defined decorated band of archaic inspiration provides a subtle reference to the illustrious past on a vessel which otherwise follows a more contemporary design.

Size: height with woodstand 14" (35.6 cm)



76. BRONZE INCENSE VESSEL WITH RELIEF DECORATION

China, Qing Dynasty, late 18th century

The decoration of this casket-like incense burner shows a great similarity to tile design. The panels, which display dragons amongst waves and clouds, give an almost three-dimensional effect through their different depth; this is attractively emphasised – as in sculpted tiles – by the change of light and shade. The design of the open-work lid with its central coiled dragon surrounded by clouds provides a most appropriate outlet for the rising incense.

Size: height 7" (17.8 cm)

Mark: Raised six character mark in regular script in rectangle beneath base:
Da Ming Xuande nian zhi (made during the reign of Xuande of the great Ming Dynasty).





Gold and Silver Inlaid
Vessels and Related Bronzes

著書
十竹齋寫

77. BRONZE VASE OF HU FORM INLAID WITH GOLD AND SILVER

China, Song Dynasty, 12th/13th century

This fine and well proportioned vessel is attractively inlaid with an abstract geometric design of archaic inspiration. The shape of the bronze, though showing some influence of vessels from the late Zhou period, has the same softness of form which is so beautifully displayed by contemporary ceramics. The sparingly inlaid foot rim almost acts as a stand and sets off the more lively inlaid design of the main body to great advantage.

Size: height 6" (15.2 cm)

Condition: A small area below the rim shows signs of an old repair, probably carried out immediately after casting.

**An inlaid vessel of Song date with a very similar shape is in the British Museum in London, and is illustrated in "Chinese Art: The Minor Arts", by R. Soame Jenyns and W. Watson, New York, 1963, p. 128, plate 56.*



78. AN INLAID GUI OF ARCHAISTIC INSPIRATION

China, late Ming/early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

The silver inlay of this attractive vessel, which consists of fine lines as well as foil-covered areas, provides a particularly pleasing contrast to the bright narrow gilt copper bands⁽¹⁾. The background of leiwen design carefully follows the outline of the raised sections. The vessel is cast in one piece and has acquired a warm patina.

Size: height 4" (10.2 cm)

Mark: Three character cast archaistic mark in seal script: zuo bao yong (made to be treasured).

**The dating of this type of vessel presents certain problems. On balance, it would seem that a late Ming/early Qing date is most probable, although it is conceivable that bronzes of this type may have been made as late as the eighteenth century.*

⁽¹⁾ This is another example of the use of gilt copper sheet instead of gold foil (see also entry 37 in this catalogue).



79. BRONZE RITUAL WINE VESSEL INLAID WITH SILVER AND GOLD

China, Song Dynasty, 12th/13th century

This rare and fine pouring vessel in the shape of a goose is most original – a type of vessel which has acted as the inspiration for many later metalworkers. The design of the inlay is drawn by a very confident hand and is finely executed. The bold yet refined inlay is applied only in certain clearly defined areas and contrasts quite strikingly with the dark brown bronze patina of the vessel. Rather than serving as an overall decorative design, the inlay is used selectively to emphasise only certain features of the bird.

Size: height 12" (30.5 cm)

**A very similar bronze vessel is illustrated in the "Xiqing xu jian jia bian" (the Supplement to the Bronze Catalogue of the Bronze Collection of the Qianlong Emperor), chapter 6, p. 10.*

A Ju ware porcelain vessel of this shape is illustrated in the album of the collector Xiang Yuan Bian (figure 34), where it is stated that it was originally copied from an illustration in the Xuanhe Bo Gu Tu Lu.

A similar example is in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, and will be published soon.

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample no. 466k67



80. A SILVER AND GOLD INLAID VESSEL IN THE FORM OF A SACRIFICIAL ANIMAL

China, Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368)

This imposing and rare sculpture belongs to a small group of inlaid wine vessels of animal form which can claim an early date. Strongly modelled and decorated with bold yet subtle inlay, it conveys an air of elegance and refinement different in nature to that of its archaic predecessors. This animal is more stylised in perception, especially in the sculptural treatment of the body. The design of the inlay emphasises the more stylised appearance of the animal. The more archaic-looking inlay of the head is well balanced by the lightness of the ribbon-like spirals on the body which end on the lower leg in a playful curl. The lid, in the form of a stylised bird (reminiscent of some archaic sleeve weights), well matches the general character of the vessel.

Size: height 7⁷/₈" (20 cm)

**These wine vessels, which have a securely hinged cover and a small opening in the animal's mouth, appear to have been used in ancestral worship. There is an interesting passage in Xiang Yuan Bian's Album, figure 33, accompanying an illustration of a similar celadon vessel attributed to the Song dynasty. In this passage, a reference is made to vessels of this shape made from porcelain which, though beautiful, were not considered to be worthy of use for ceremonial purposes.*

For a similar vessel see "Xiqing gu jian", chapter 9, p. 34.

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample no. 466j42



81. IMPORTANT BRONZE RITUAL WINE VESSEL INLAID WITH SILVER AND GOLD

China, Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368)

This superb and rare wine vessel representing a sacrificial animal is of exceptional quality and is in fine condition. In the creation of this vessel no attempt has been made to deny the inspiration of the past, but every attempt has been made to acknowledge it – conveying the continuity of Chinese civilisation as well as the subtle changes that had taken place in its perception. The design of the silver and gold inlay on the head, collar and lid of this vessel bears a close resemblance to the preceding *zun*, but in contrast the animal's body in this example is entirely covered with an irregular design of silver and gold inlay, giving it a highly ornamental quality.

Size: height 10½" (26.7 cm)

**It is fascinating to be able to study two rare wine vessels which almost certainly come from the same workshop. A close examination of the objects themselves, as well as stylistic evidence, would strongly support this view. Interestingly, the two thermoluminescence tests, which were carried out independently, gave an almost identical result for each of these vessels.*



82. BIRD ZUN WITH SILVER AND GOLD INLAY

China, Qing Dynasty, late 17th/early 18th century

This elaborately inlaid vessel, which probably represents a phoenix, belongs to a small but distinct group of bronze animal sculptures which carry vases on their backs. The inlay in this example is most ornate, especially in the rendering of the fan-like silver-inlaid feather design. The cool silver-coloured areas stand in strong contrast to the bronze patina and to the design of the wing and tail feathers, which are attractively enhanced by the gold inlay. The sculpture is very heavy and is cast in two parts (the bird itself and the vase).

Size: height 10 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (27 cm)

**Vessels of this type are often ascribed to the Song dynasty, although there is enough evidence to suggest that this striking design was the inspiration for many later metalworkers. This example shows great fluidity of design and a coherent sculptural form, especially in the unusual tail (which is tucked right under the body) and in the join between the head feathers and the vase.*

See the related examples in the "Xiqing gu jian", chap. 11, pp. 27-28, attributed by the compiler to the Han period.

A similar vessel, probably dating from the Ming dynasty, belongs to the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and is illustrated by Professor Watson in "Chinese Art: The Minor Arts", New York, 1963, p. 104, where he dates it to the Song dynasty (12th/13th century).

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample no. 466k69



83. BRONZE WINE VESSEL DAMASCENED WITH SILVER AND GOLD

probably China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

This attractive *hu* belongs to a most intriguing small group of vessels. The lids of these *hu*, often reminiscent of archaic *gong* vessels, are fastened to the main body in a most original way, which secures the lid when wine is being poured. When the vessel is tilted a small hinged flap in the cover swings forward to release the wine. The elegant shape of the vessel is subtly enhanced by the restrained application of decorative designs damascened in gold and silver. Curious monster masks with their penetrating golden eyes peer over the circular reinforcing ring, which is finely decorated with a geometric T-design. The decoration of the lower part of the vessel suggests an almost mirror-like impression of the design above it. A fine and elegant design of chains of beads with pendant tassels adorn the neck and lead visually to the expressively sculpted and decorated head.

Size: height 15" (38.1 cm)

**The dating of this group is most difficult and even the provenance might be unclear. Three related vessels attributed to the Han period are illustrated in the "Xiqing gu jian" – all apparently plain, undecorated bronze vessels with the exception of one, which has a small cast mask. All vessels of this type so far examined were either undecorated or damascened, rather than inlaid. Whereas most of these vessels appear to be of Chinese origin there are some which show features which may link them to Japan or even Korea. There are certain features in the design of this hu and in the way it has been constructed which would suggest that the possibility of a Japanese provenance may not be entirely ruled out.*



84. ARCHAISTIC BRONZE VESSEL INLAID WITH SILVER AND GOLD

China, early Qing Dynasty, probably late 17th century

This well proportioned vessel is decorated with attractive archaistic designs. The well defined silver and gold inlaid raised areas, set against a classic leiwen background, are – with the exception of the roundels – not modelled in relief but have an even flat surface. The restrained pendant lappets of archaistic design are not inlaid and provide, together with the plain bronze background, a subtle contrast to the inlaid bands of the vessel, giving it a note of distinction and refinement.

Size: height 10¼" (26 cm)

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample no. 466k63



85. BRONZE *ZUN* INLAID WITH SILVER AND GOLD

China, late Ming/early Qing Dynasty, 17th century

This bold and attractive vessel of very heavy cast succeeds well in conveying some of the mysticism which surrounded the ancient archaic periods. The antique character of the *zun* is further emphasised by the application of artificial patination, which shows up well on the darker bronze patina of the vessel and on the decorated area that it partly obscures. The inlay makes little use of silver wire and consists mainly of narrow bands of foil which are set against a background of rounded leiwen decoration. A particular feature of this inlay seems to be the unusual way in which the large C-shaped areas of foil end in a hook-like design inlaid with wire.

Size: height 13¼" (33.7 cm)

Condition: A small section of the protruding vertical open-work T-design has been repaired (or possibly replaced).



86. LARGE ARCHAISTIC *JUE* DAMASCENED WITH GOLD
probably China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

This rare and elegant *jue* shows an archaistic design of great originality. The dominating taotie mask and the C-scrolls are most effectively outlined by bands of gold, the raised smooth areas contrasting well with the intricate background of leiwen design. The interplay of the various surfaces and the harmony of the colours are visually most satisfying and give this vessel an air of elegance and cultured refinement.

Size: height 15¼" (38.7 cm)

**Jues of the later period of comparable size and quality are rare even though this type of vessel has the longest history of any known Chinese ritual bronze vessel. Because of the long tradition it had in sacrificial ceremonies, the jue has played an important part in ancestral worship. For the scholars it was a most attractive and subtle reminder of the ancient past and the unbroken continuity of their civilisation.*

This jue is unusual and departs from the better-known eighteenth century jues of archaistic design, which are not inlaid or damascened and which often bear a dated Yongzheng or Qianlong mark. The fan-shaped decoration below the rim of this vessel is of a rare design. There is also a certain similarity between this jue and the damascened wine vessel in this catalogue (plate 83), which might again raise the question of provenance. The problem is that our understanding of early Qing bronzes is still almost as limited as our understanding of Japanese metalwork in the Chinese style and that of Chinese metalwork possibly made for the Japanese market. On balance, however, a Chinese provenance would seem more likely, and a date possibly in the early part of the eighteenth century would not be unreasonable. However, the possibility of a Japanese provenance in cases such as this should at least be considered until we have firmer evidence.



87. ARCHAISTIC BRONZE HU INLAID WITH SILVER AND GOLD

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century (or earlier)

This impressive bronze *hu*, inspired by archaic vessels of the Zhou dynasty, has a lively central design of intertwined snake-like dragons inlaid with silver and gold. The inlaid areas, which are all raised, stand in marked contrast to the plain background of the bronze body.

Size: height 12½" (31.8 cm)

Mark: A lengthy archaic inscription cast in a rectangular block can be found inside the rim of the vessel.

Condition: One handle is probably an old replacement.

**The dating of this fine piece is problematic. The hu is of very high quality in every respect and gives an overall impression of a strength and vigour and a certain compactness more commonly associated with the Ming dynasty. The patina of the vessel would also not be inconsistent with such a dating. On close examination, however, certain features of the inlay and the shape of the hu itself may point to a slightly later date. The result of the thermoluminescence test since carried out, however, was somewhat surprising, as it suggested that the vessel was made as late as the late part of the eighteenth century or the first half of the nineteenth century. Should this result be correct it would further support the view that there is increasing evidence that the great majority of these archaistic vessels inlaid with silver and gold are of Qing rather than Ming or Song date. If vessels of this quality should indeed be as late as the late eighteenth century – or even later – the question arises as to how we should date the many other vessels which have a more obvious eighteenth century appearance. We may have to accept that the variety of styles, the differences in workmanship and even the range of expressiveness in the Qing dynasty were far greater than hitherto believed. This hu may be one of the best examples of a small group of vessels which were made in a more orthodox antiquarian taste. However, on the basis of present evidence it is still difficult to accept that this vessel should be quite as late as the thermoluminescence test suggests, and it may be advisable for the time being to postpone a more definite judgement.*

For a very similar vessel of Zhou date, also bearing a lengthy inscription, see the illustration in "Xuanhe Bo Gu Tu Lu", vol. 6, p. 43.

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample no. 466k68



88. LARGE BRONZE *HU* INLAID IN SILVER AND GOLD WITH
ARROW VASE HANDLES

China, Qing Dynasty, late 17th/early 18th century

An imposing and fine vessel of a most original design, the expressive and unusual taotie mask well set against a finely cast and lively relief background. The design of the raised areas and of the inlay responds very well to the shape of the vessel. The extension of the taotie mask around the sides of the *hu* greatly enhances the sculptural effect and adds more strength to the bulbous part of the vessel. Geometric bands of leiwen design around the foot and the neck contain the vigorous middle section of the *hu*. Whilst providing a strong contrast to the intricate background design, the entirely undecorated flaring section at the top may also have acted as a neutral zone between the vessel and the floral arrangement it may have held.

Size: height 16¼" (41.3 cm)

**For a similar example from The Cernuschi collection see: M. Paléologue, "L'Art Chinois", Paris, 1887, p.25.*

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample no. 466m86



89. LARGE ARCHAISTIC *HU* INLAID WITH SILVER AND GOLD

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century, or earlier

This finely inlaid and patinated *hu* shows a bold design which is well suited to the strong form of the vessel. Its pear-shaped body, resting on its rounded rectangular foot rim, gives the vessel a solid – almost monumental – appearance which is further emphasised by the large expressive handles in the form of a dragon pursuing a phoenix. The inlaid lid, when removed and turned over, serves as a dish for the vessel.

Size: height 15½" (39.4 cm)

Marks: Archaistic inscriptions inside the lid and inside the rim of the vessel.

**The inlay of this hu is well executed and on close inspection is rather unusual, especially in its use of a long scrolling wire. Careful comparative study of inlays is most important if more knowledge about this group is to be acquired. Tsang and Moss⁽¹⁾ rightly suggest that drawings of inlays, showing differentiation in the use of silver and gold inlay, might provide a useful basis for such a detailed study.*

⁽¹⁾ See: "Arts from the Scholar's Studio", G. Tsang and H. Moss, Hong Kong, 1986, p. 224, entry 208.



90. LARGE BRONZE *HU* WITH DAMASCENED GOLD AND SILVER DECORATION

China, Qing Dynasty, late 18th century

The elegant form and decoration of this well-cast archaistic vessel is unmistakably Qing in taste. The archaistic design of the pendant lappets is finely modelled and cast and, together with the entirely plain bronze-coloured interspaces, provides a good contrast to the more colourful decorative bands damascened in silver and gold. The striking design of the phoenix handles is highlighted by selective gilding.

Size: height 18" (45.7 cm)

**The archaistic design of this hu shows a great similarity to safely datable archaistic bronzes of the jue-type, which sometimes bear a Qianlong mark.*



91. LARGE INLAID BRONZE GUI

China, Qing Dynasty, 18th century

A bold and attractive vessel of sculptural quality, inlaid in wide channels with a composite paste which includes turquoise and mother-of-pearl. The highly stylised archaistic decoration shows a strong geometric tendency – the angular and round shapes recall the squareness of the base and the rounded form of the vessel above. The colours of the inlay harmonise well with the warm rich tones of the “antique” patina.

Size: height 10³/₄" (27.3 cm)

Condition: A section of the base has been repaired.

**The inlay of this vessel is intriguing, and it would appear that it never attempted to imitate silver inlay. There is a closer relationship to early lacquer inlays, and it may well be that this gui was inspired by an early lacquer vessel.*

This gui would again seem to belong to the small group of fine quality eighteenth century vessels of a more orthodox type, carefully fashioned in the antique style⁽¹⁾.

See also the gui of similar type illustrated in the "Bo gu tu lu", vol. 8, p. 20.

⁽¹⁾ *There is an interesting archaic sculpture of a bull in the Victoria and Albert Museum which is decorated in champlevé enamels and bears the mark: Qianlong fang gu (Qianlong in imitation of the antique).*

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample no. 466L84





Japanese Flower Vessels

十竹齋珍藏

92. BRONZE ALTAR VASE WITH CURLED DRAGON HANDLES

Japan, early Edo period, first half 17th century

This rare early Japanese flower vessel still shows strong Chinese influence, typical of vessels of the early Japanese periods. Some of these early Japanese vessels are exceedingly difficult to distinguish from their Chinese prototypes, and often only slight differences are noticeable. The dragon handles in this example, though still visually emerging from the vessel, show a strong inward movement, the lower part of the handles only just touching the main body. This feature becomes even more pronounced in later Japanese vessels, to such an extent that the handles become circular and visually separate from the main body of the vessel.

This vase has a rich dark lacquer-like patina.

Size: height 10" (25.4 cm)

**For the earlier Chinese prototypes see two similar bronzes in the Victoria & Albert Museum dated to the Jin and Jin/Yuan periods respectively, published in the article "The Evolution of Bronze Style in the Jin, Yuan and early Ming Dynasties" by Rose Kerr in Oriental Art, Volume XXVIII No. 2, page 148, figures 4 and 5, summer 1982.*

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample 466k64



93. LARGE BRONZE VASE WITH DRAGON HANDLES

Japan, late Edo period, probably late 18th century

This elegant vessel shows in many ways a development from the preceding example. The dragon handles are even more inwardly curved, and the main body of the vessel has become squatter and wider and has overall a more fluent outline without the many horizontal divisions of the earlier example. The wide mouth, the large volume of water the vase can hold and the low centre of gravity make it a perfect vessel for the tall and heavy formal Rikkwa arrangements.

Size: height 12³/₄" (31.8 cm)



94. AN IMPORTANT EARLY FLUTED VASE WITH COILED DRAGON HANDLES

Japan, mid Edo period, late 17th/early 18th century

This superbly modelled and cast vessel with equally fine patination is a rare and early example of a type which has since become a classic for the formal Rikkwa arrangement. The vessel's fine coiled dragons (note the individuality of each design) were cast by the lost wax process and were riveted onto the body of the vessel. The fine proportion of the vase can be properly appreciated only when one imagines it filled with that typically strong and tall arrangement of flowers and flowering branches for which it was designed. It is of great importance to bear in mind when passing any judgement on Japanese flower vessels that for any connoisseur the flower arrangement becomes an integral part of the vessel and vice versa.

Size: height 12" (30.5 cm)

Condition: A front paw of one dragon is missing (apparently replaced once and lost again); the other dragon has lost one claw on its hind leg (old damage).

**The handles, which in earlier examples were still an integral part of the main body of the vessel, have now become an almost separate formal element. Whereas the main body of vessels of a similar type often remain virtually unchanged, the handles may differ – the choice of handles now becomes an expression of one's own taste and personal preference.*

A similar example is illustrated in Rikka jo-nan emaki, dated 1776 (Handscroll of Flower Arrangements).

See also A. Koehn: "The Way of Japanese Flower Arrangement", Tokyo, 1935. Koehn illustrates on page 10 a scene from the late eighteenth century "Miyako rin sen meishozue", which shows visitors at the Rokkaku Temple in Kyoto admiring a Rikkwa arrangement in a similar vessel made by the Headmaster of the Ikenobo.

These exhibitions are still held in the temple, using vases of the same type.

Thermoluminescence Test, Oxford: Sample 466L82



95. A RARE BRONZE FLOWER VASE WITH LION-HEAD HANDLES

Japan, Edo period, late 17th/early 18th century

Much of the attraction of this early vessel lies in the interaction and the transition of the round to the square. This tall vase attractively combines strength with refinement and has a distinct sculptural quality perfectly suited to the tall and heavy formal Rikkwa arrangements.

Size: height 12½" (31.8 cm); width 16" (40.6 cm)



96. BRONZE VASE WITH DRAGON HANDLES

Japan, late Edo period, late 18th/early 19th century

The body of the vessel, although bearing some resemblance to the vase illustrated on plate 93 of this catalogue, is squatter, and the upper section is more curved. The dragon handles, hugging the curves of the vessel, are cast separately and are detachable; they are slotted onto protruding L-shaped hooks.

Size: height 13½" (34.3 cm); width 13" (33 cm)

**For an earlier example of similar form but with different dragon handles see the vessel illustrated in: Rikka jo-nan emaki (Handscroll of Flower Arrangement), dated 1776.*



97. BRONZE VASE WITH DRAGON-FISH HANDLES

Japan, late Edo period, probably 19th century

The handles of this tall vase become even more of a feature in their own right. Held by rivets and barely touching the main body of the vessel, the dragon-fish handles exaggerate the strong curvature of the vase.

Size: height 13" (33 cm)

**A similar example with different dragon-fish handles is illustrated in Binka yodu shu, dated 1797 (Instructions on Flower Arrangements).*



98. BRONZE VASE WITH ELEPHANT HANDLES

Japan, Edo period, late 17th/early 18th century

A superb early flower vessel of great strength and sculptural quality. The sense of proportion and the sequence of curves are exquisite, as can be seen in the treatment of the upper part of the vessel which curves slightly inwards at the rim to balance the weighty visual impact of the elephant handles. The slight inward curve at the rim gives the vessel the structural strength and the extra visual tension required for the tall and heavy Rikkwa arrangements.

The well cast decorative band, separated from the bulbous part of the vessel by a narrow strip, recalls the texture of woven material and greatly adds to the subtle sophistication of the vessel.

Size: height 12¾" (32.5 cm)

**A very similar vessel is illustrated in Daiju-iu's Arrangements, 1678.*



99. BRONZE VASE WITH FLYING HANDLES

Japan, Edo period, probably early 18th century

This elegant vessel shows sophistication and refinement without losing its sculptural strength. Rising from a round base, the body becomes square in section only to extend again to the round. The strong eye-like spirals give the vessel an almost neolithic touch.

The particularly fine patina is a dark tea-dust colour.

Size: height 12½" (31.8 cm)

**For a similar example see a vessel illustrated in Rikkano shido Kyu-ju-san bin ari, mid seventeenth century (93 flower arrangements probably compiled by Senko II).*



100. A SILVER INLAID VASE WITH FLYING HANDLES

Japan, late Edo period, c. 1800

The four panels in the shape of lotus petals and the top part of the bulbous section are finely inlaid with an abstract design of taotie masks and a bird flying through cloud scrolls.

It is most unusual to find a vase of this type inlaid with silver.

Size: height 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (32.4 cm)

Mark: A three character incised mark on base reading: Echigo-kami (Feudal Lord of Echigo).



101. SPITTOON-SHAPED IKEBANA VESSEL

Japan, Edo period, probably late 18th/early 19th century

This vessel belongs to a type which is often difficult to date. The predecessors of this shape had a much more utilitarian purpose and date back to the Sui period (or even earlier). Beautifully suited for displaying flowers, it is hardly surprising that these vessels became so popular. The water, which would be filled to the rim of the vase, represents the earth, out of which the arrangement grows. The large visible area of water, together with the arrangement, suggest a miniature landscape imbuing an air of tranquillity.

Size: height 5½" (14 cm); diameter 9¾" (24.8 cm)



102. BRONZE FLOWER VESSEL WITH FLAT CIRCULAR TOP

Japan, late Edo period, late 18th/early 19th century

The surface design of this vase relates to some Chinese bronzes of the Yuan and early Ming dynasties. Borrowed from some of these Chinese vessels, the wave design was to become a favourite motif of later Japanese metalwork, often making it difficult to distinguish between the Chinese and the Japanese versions. The neatly executed design of rows of circular nipple-like protrusions, as can be seen on this vessel, plays an important part in the decoration of Japanese bronzes. In this example the larger row of these circular protrusions around the lower bulbous part of the vessel strikes a good balance with the string of smaller ones around the narrow circular band at the top.

Size: height 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (17.1 cm)



103. BRONZE FLOWER VASE WITH TRUMPET-SHAPED FLARE

Japan, Edo period, probably late 17th/early 18th century

This attractive vase is quite unusual in its design. The tall stem, which carries the bulbous part of the vessel, shows strong Chinese influence with its wave patterns and lion masks. The upper flared part is finely modelled, rising gently from the rim towards the centre before slowly descending into the opening.

Size: height 8¼" (21 cm)

Condition: The lion mask rings are later replacements.



104. BRONZE FLOWER VASE WITH ARROW TUBES

Japan, Edo period, 18th century

This fine and unusual vessel has some features reminiscent of the Chinese arrow vases which, in this example, have been developed into a highly original shape. The base, which almost looks like a separate stand, is surprisingly an integral part of the bronze vessel. The clearly defined middle section, decorated with a wave design, forms a pleasing contrast to the otherwise plain vessel and provides a good balance to the wide flared opening. The overall effect of the vase is attractive and well-proportioned.

Size: height 10" (25.4 cm); width 9¾" (24.8 cm)



105. VASE OF *GU* SHAPE ENGRAVED WITH TOKUGAWA MON AND FLORAL DESIGNS

Japan, Edo period, 18th century

Vessels of this type with finely engraved designs often set against a punched background form a distinct group amongst Japanese vessels – a group with a faint yet detectable Tang influence. Although it can never be established with absolute certainty with larger vessels of this kind, this vase was most probably part of a traditional altar set of three vessels. The vase is heavy and well cast, and the base plate has been secured with notches hammered out of the foot rim in the fashion of some Buddhist sculpture.

Size: height 12¼" (31.1 cm)



106. ENGRAVED GILT BRONZE STEM-CUP ON LOW FOOT

Japan, Edo period, 18th century

This attractive stem-cup is even more reminiscent of the Tang period. Apart from the fine design of scrolling peonies set against the neatly punched background, the deep shape of the bowl shows strong Tang influence. The design along the rim has a fine band of shippo-tsunagi which is well balanced by the band of kikko-hanabishi encircling the foot rim.

Size: height 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (16.8 cm)

**For a similar stem-cup see the catalogue of the "Shogun" exhibition, Munich, 1984, p. 229, illustration 235, where it is stated that vessels of this type were part of the dowry of rich ladies.*



107. SIGNED DOUBLE GOURD FLOWER VESSEL WITH SCROLL HANDLES

Japan, Edo period, late 18th/early 19th century

Arresting because of its sensual form and its apparent instability, this vessel is unmistakably Japanese in character. In spite of the use of unorthodox individual features the sculptor succeeds surprisingly well in creating an attractive if slightly eccentric entity demanding an equally informal floral arrangement which would stand out quite dramatically against the fine imitated archaic patination.

Size: height 11½" (29.2 cm)

Mark: Incised signature of maker on base: Mitsuhiro.



108. LARGE FLOWER VASE WITH STYLISED WAVE DESIGN

Japan, Edo/Meiji period, 19th century

An unusually tall vase relying entirely on its dark patination and its strong sculptural form for effect, the central fluted section emerging from waves whipped up by the sea, culminating in a flower-like opening.

Size: height 23" (58.4 cm)

Mark: Six character mark in square panel beneath base: Toto Hidemitsu kansei (supervised and made by Hidemitsu of the eastern capital [Tokyo]).

**For a detailed discussion on the wave design and its influence on European art, see "Japonisme", by Siegfried Wichmann, Herrsching, 1980, pp. 126-137, where Hokusai's famous woodcut "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" is also illustrated.*



109. BRONZE FLOWER VESSEL WITH SIMULATED SILK COVER AND CORD

Japan, late Edo period, c. 1800

An original and attractive vessel, the imitated sharply pointed cloth with its finely cast design forms a striking contrast to the smooth curves of the vessel it covers. Although one might be tempted to think that this vessel may originally have been used as a precious container and that it once had a lid, there are strong indications that it was originally designed and was always used as a flower vessel and that it probably had no lid⁽¹⁾.

Size: height 12" (30.5 cm)

Mark: Incised four character mark on base: Echigo kami saku (made by the Feudal Lord of Echigo).

⁽¹⁾ See illustration in *Shinsen bink zui* (1698), *Illustrated Series of Flower Vases*.



110. BRONZE FLOWER VESSEL IN THE FORM OF A SILK WINDER

Japan, Edo/Meiji period, 19th century

This vessel, designed almost certainly as a flower vessel rather than an incense burner, is a good example of a distinctive trend which gained popularity towards the end of the Edo period. Bronze vessels increasingly began to borrow their form from objects made from other materials (often common domestic utensils), which were then copied in bronze with the greatest technical virtuosity and attention to detail. The recessed lip of the top of the vessel would suggest that it once held an inset similar to the existing more recent one.

Size: height 9" (22.9 cm)

Mark: Four character mark cast in relief in a rectangle beneath base: To un shu (cast by Toun), and followed by his kakihan (signature).

**Three generations of the Toun family worked as metalworkers in Tokyo over a period of one hundred years, covering the entire nineteenth century. Examples of their work bearing similar marks to the one on this vessel can be found in the Museum fuer Kunst und Gewerbe, in Hamburg, and in the Musée Cernuschi, in Paris. It would seem that towards the second half of the nineteenth century the masters of the Toun family became fond of imitating basketry work and that this example almost certainly dates from this period.*



111. A PAIR OF *HU* SHAPED VASES WITH SQUARE SECTION

Japan, Edo/Meiji period, 19th century

These finely cast flower vessels are strongly reminiscent of the shape and design of earlier Chinese vessels of the Song/Yuan periods. The neatly separated surface areas are cast with a very fine design of diapers in relief against which the taotie masks and the "cicada blades" are most effectively set.

Size: height 9½" (24.1 cm)

Mark: Raised nine character mark in a frame beneath base: Dai Nippon Bunsei nen Seimin (made by Seimin during the Bunsei period [1818-1830]).

**These vases belong to a small but distinct group of vessels which are so strongly influenced by the earlier Chinese types that it can be difficult for the less experienced to be certain of their provenance if they do not bear a Japanese mark. Looking at Seimin's work it would appear that because of their quality and popularity some of his bronzes were cast once again at some time after his death, probably c. 1880 – this pair of vessels quite possibly falls into this category.*



112. COMMEMORATIVE FLOWER VESSEL OF BEAKER SHAPE

Japan, late Edo period, c. 1800

This elegant and rare vase, the form of which is accentuated by a central band showing dragons in flight pursuing the auspicious symbols of good luck, long life and everlasting happiness, most successfully conveys a festive and semi-formal air so appropriate for the occasion for which it was made, to mark the inauguration of the Rui-sei (appearance of the dragon) School. The subtle background design of the central band, which was probably achieved by sprinkling sand into the mould, acts as a perfect foil for the well-raised dragons and characters in seal script, thereby further endorsing the auspicious message.

Size: height 11¼" (28.6 cm)

Mark: The beautiful inscription on the base in raised seal script translates as follows: "Ikenobu in commemoration of the inauguration of the Rui-sei (appearance of the dragon) School, presented by Mi-ka co, artist: Bunzan".



113. A FLARED BRONZE FLOWER VESSEL WITH MOTTLED PATINATION

Japan, Edo/Meiji period, 19th century

This is a small yet refined vessel of a type which had a great influence on the newly emerging art nouveau style; indeed, this elegant form is later to be found in other types of material such as glass, silver and pewter and was popular with many European workshops. The prominent artificial patination imitating an archaic patina (as can be seen in this example) is a subtle reference to ancient bronze vessels as well as being a medium for creating an original abstract design of cloud-like patterns of differing shades of colour, giving each vessel a highly individualistic note. The deceptively simple form of this vessel has some sophisticated features: the base rests firmly on the sharp-edged foot rim which contrasts well with the soft rounded lip of the flared top.

Size: height 6" (15.2 cm)

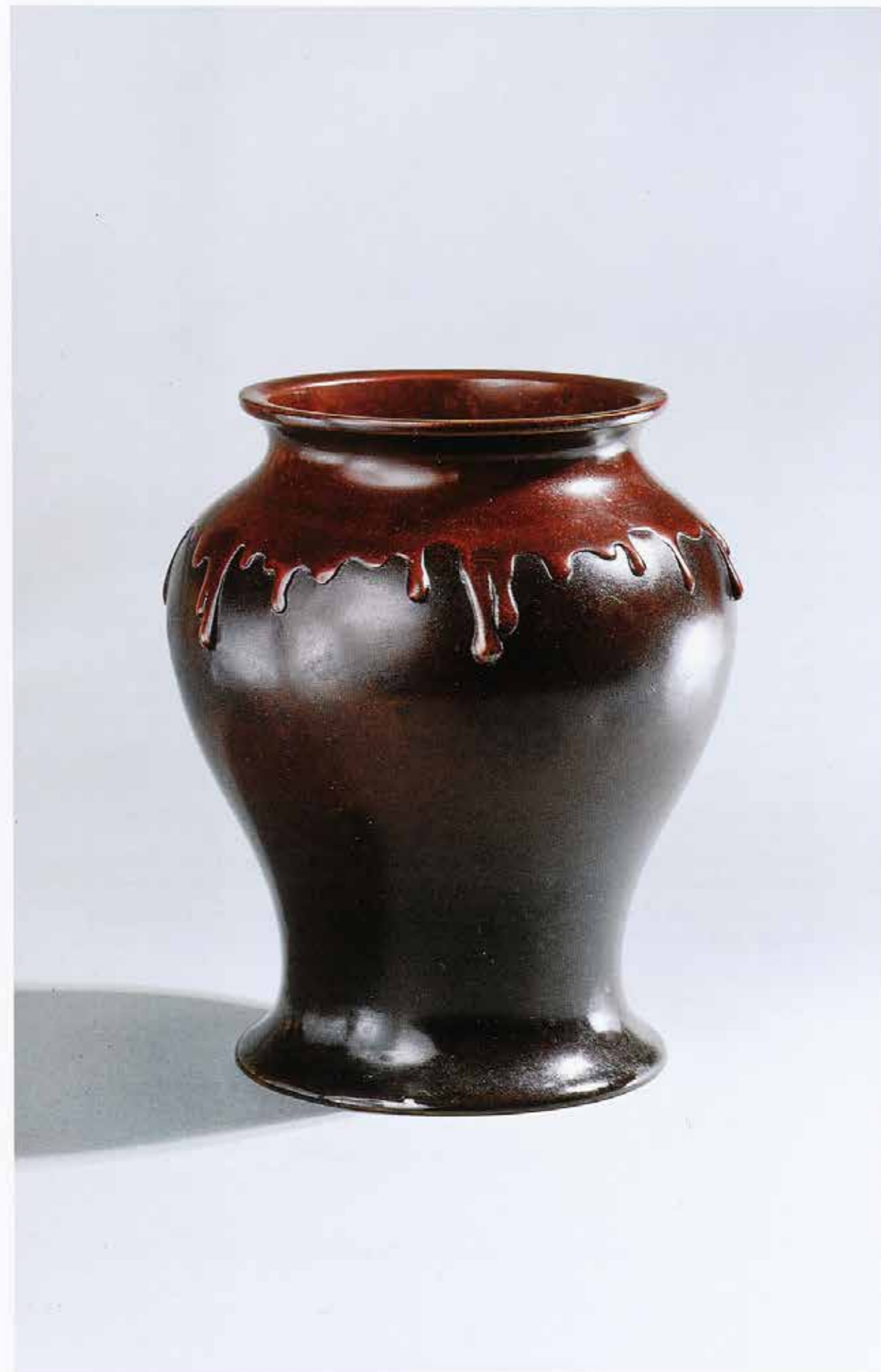


114. BRONZE VASE IN THE FORM OF A CERAMIC VASE

Japan, Meiji period (1868-1912)

This skilful imitation of a ceramic vase with thick treacle-like overglaze – reminiscent of the pronounced “tear-drops” on the well-known temmoku teabowls – is a further example of the popularity of imitating other materials in bronze (see also entry 110 in this catalogue). In addition to the shape, the differing patination of the two “glazed” areas perfect the image of a ceramic vase.

Size: height 8½" (21 cm)



115. A SQUAT FACETED JAR WITH ABSTRACT DESIGN OF RED SPLASHES

Japan, Meiji/Taisho period, late 19th/early 20th century

An attractive refined flower vessel full of strength and vigour. Although divided into several sections, the vase shows a delightful softness of modelling; the curves are full of organic tension; the shape is strongly reminiscent of fruit capsules such as those of the Chinese lantern plant (*physalis alkekengi*), popular in gardens in the Far East. The use of irregular splashes of colour, set against a skin-like background patination and contrasting well with the regular form of the vessel, is bold and confident.

Size: height 6" (15.2 cm)

Mark: Small cast two character mark in oval recess beneath base: Ryō un.

**It is little wonder that objects of this artistic quality gained the respect and admiration of many and became the inspiration of numerous European artists and craftsmen.*

This vessel should convince those who believe art ends at a certain point in time that art and antiquity, although sometimes seen together, are not essential partners.



Marks and Inscriptions



Plate 5



Plate 7



Plate 50



Plate 52



Plate 57



Plate 58a



Plate 58b



Plate 59



Plate 60



Plate 76



Plate 78



Plate 100



Plate 107



Plate 108



Plate 109



Plate 111



Plate 8



Plate 9



Plate 12



Plate 13



Plate 62



Plate 63



Plate 63



Plate 68



Plate 70



Plate 110



Plate 112



Plate 115

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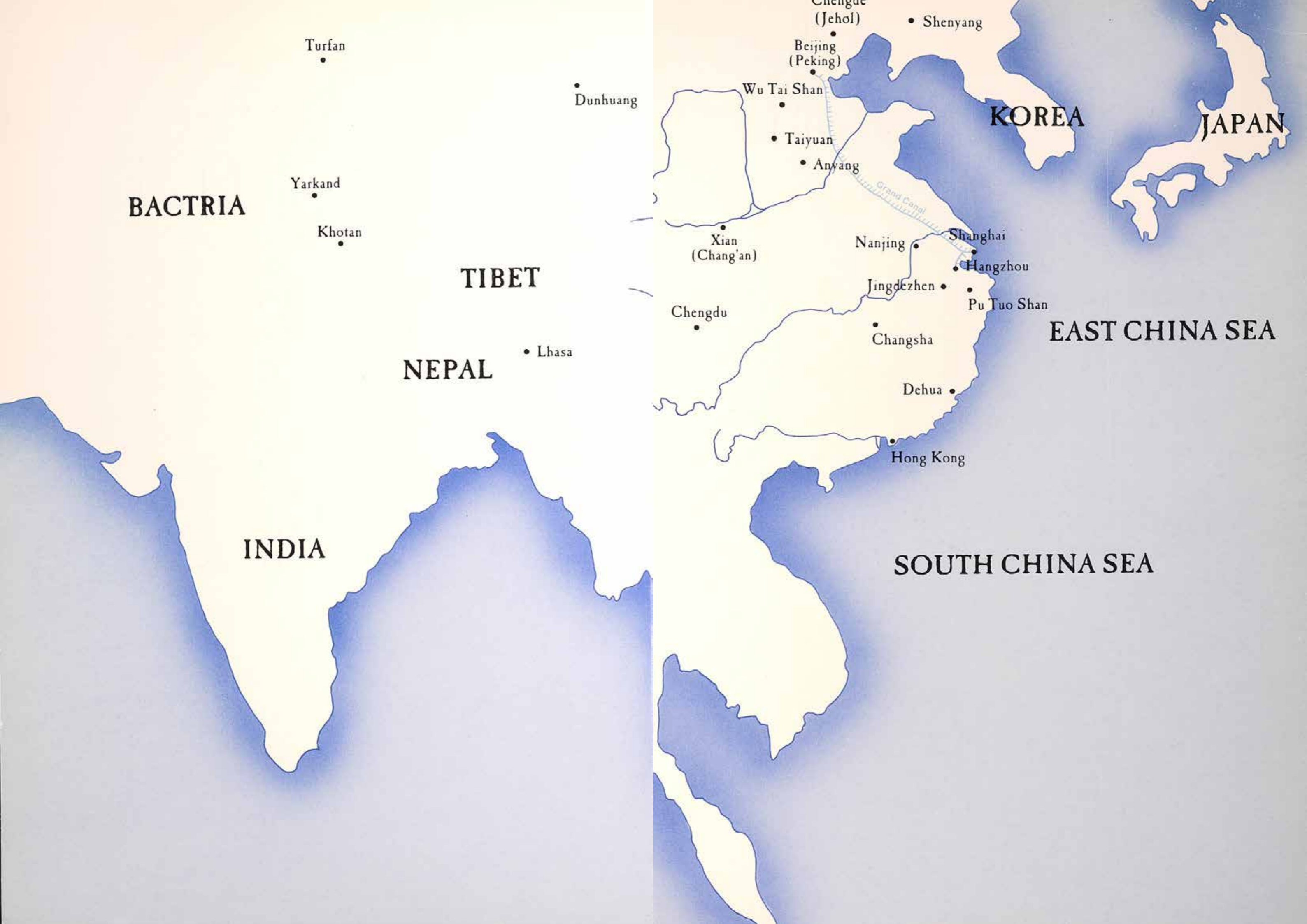
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