

**The Luxury of
Chinese Lacquer**
Littleton and Hennessy

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The European Fine Art Fair (TEFAF) 12th-21st March 2010

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Maastricht Exhibition and Congress Centre (MECC)
Forum 100
6229 GV Maastricht
The Netherlands

www.tefaf.com



INTRODUCTION

The Luxury of Chinese Lacquer

The creation of objects from the dried sap of lacquer trees (*Rhus verniciflua*), like silk and porcelain, was a medium invented by the Chinese people. From the dawn of their civilisation, dating back to Neolithic times, the Chinese used it to great effect, creating some of the most astonishing works of art in the history of mankind, and it is not until the first century B.C. do we find evidence of it being produced by other peoples. However, unlike silk or ceramics, producing lacquer wares was not only extremely labour intensive but also poisonous to the craftsmen (although the Chinese discovered antidotes to relieve this from very early on), therefore the scale of production was relatively small, and they were always highly valued luxury items. Lacquer's preciousness meant that unlike silk or ceramics, it was not widely exported but remained largely for local use.

Although lacquer itself is one of the most durable organic substances known to men – it is impenetrable by water and resistant to acid, insects or worms – the core materials that are necessary in the production of lacquer wares, often wood or fabric, are highly perishable once the lacquer surface is penetrated. This, combined with its small production, has resulted in an incomplete archaeological record. For example, although many tombs from the Warring States and Han period have produced extensive lacquer finds, up until this decade, only two examples of Yuan carved cinnabar lacquer wares have been excavated. In the case of Yuan mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer, only a single fragment has been found. When compared to the extensive finds of ceramics and jade it is not surprising that historical accounts of the development of lacquer are limited and sometimes contradictory.

Nevertheless, lacquer's high status in Chinese society is evident from many early records. Legalist Han Feizi writing in the late Warring States period (475–221B.C.) and Confucian scholar Huan Kuan in the Eastern Han (25–220) both voiced their opposition to the extravagance and wastefulness of using lacquer. This did not stop its popularity, and in the Han period, vessels decorated with finely executed paintings, like that found on the basin in the current exhibition (no. 1), were the preferred luxury objects for the court. The famous 4th century painting by Gu Kaizhi (345–406), *The Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies* (fig. 1), depicts a noble lady being coiffured next to mirror stands and storage boxes made of lacquer. Similarly, a painted lacquer dish (fig. 2, *Zhongguo Qiqi Quanji*, Warring States–Yuan, p. 12) excavated in the tomb dated



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

to the Eastern Wu (222–280) of Zhu Ran, a Strategist and Grand Secretary, in Anhui province, depicts court nobilities banqueting and merry-making, also amongst vessels and furniture made of lacquer, similar to those seen on the *Admonitions* scroll.

Between the Han and the Tang, the styles of decoration used in lacquer wares proliferated, encompassing ever more elaborate methods designed to show the virtuosity of the craftsman and the wealth of the owner. Among the most highly valued of these was carved lacquer, where the design is cut with a knife through layers of lacquer thickly built up around a core. Because lacquer can only dry in thin layers (if the coating is too thick only the surface will dry properly, leaving the lacquer underneath in liquid state), the best carved lacquer has up to two hundred layers to achieve the desired thickness. This normally takes up to half a year or more to prepare before carving can start.

There is still no concrete proof when carved lacquer first appeared – while the consensus deduced from literary accounts and some tenuous prototypes points to a Tang date, some suggest it could be as early as the Han dynasty, although no examples from controlled excavations can attest to these claims. The earliest true carved lacquer wares from dated excavations are from the Song dynasty, and the large black *tixi* lacquer dish in the current exhibition (no. 2) is an example of the sophisticated execution and design that existed by this period.

Carved lacquers achieved unparalleled excellence in the Yuan and early Ming period, when craftsmen from the Xitang area in Jiangsu created some of the most well known masterpieces in the art of lacquer. These pieces mainly depict flowers and birds or figures in landscape beside architectural structures. The former seem to have evolved from Song dynasty engraved silver (fig. 3a, b), while the latter clearly are related to academic paintings of palaces (fig. 4a, b). The floral pieces have a naturalistic style and harmonious compositions which gives a sense of space and depth, and are meticulously polished at the edges to give a rounded finish. The extremely rare sutra stand (no. 4) and crisply carved pen tray (no. 5) are wonderful examples of this type.

Between the Xuande and Jiajing reigns, very few lacquer pieces bear reign marks, probably indicating that the court reduced consumption of these costly pieces. Many that are dated to the mid-Ming period used in the Palace were probably commissioned from local craftsmen or might not originally be intended for the court. The Hongzhi marked box and cover in the British Museum, for example, was made in the Gansu area in West China, far away from the capital. Without a



Fig. 3a



Fig. 3b



Fig. 4a



Fig. 4b

substantial number of these dated pieces or excavated materials, stylistic analysis is used to date these pieces, and it can sometimes prove to be a difficult task, especially when it appears that a revival of the Yuan style became prevalent in the carved lacquer of this period.

In order to distinguish between these two groups it is necessary to carefully examine Chinese lacquers documented and preserved in Japan, which from the Tang period onwards had been sent as diplomatic gifts between the two countries or Buddhist temples. In these early pieces it is possible to observe the close correspondence of the lacquer landscapes to Chinese paintings, with the abstracted clouds, water and ground all correctly and logically placed (fig. 5a). However, although the pieces of the 16th century are still characterised by a certain freedom and freshness in execution, subtle changes in the ground pattern, and the details of the decorative schemes on these pieces often point to a later date (fig. 5b). This can be seen in the box and cover (no. 9), the oval tray (no. 11), and the tiered box (no. 7) in the current exhibition.

Another highly elaborate and time consuming technique that reached its maturity in the Yuan was ‘filled-in lacquer’, or *tianqi*, where the decoration is carved away from an existing lacquer ground and different colours filled in, creating a polychrome surface. In the early 17th century, Liu Tong comments that connoisseurs found carved lacquer and filled-in lacquer most desirable. However, because of its rarity, early examples of *tianqi* were many times more expensive than their carved lacquer counterparts.

The magnificent 15th century *tianqi* lacquer cabinet (no. 3), the largest and most complete of its type known, would undoubtedly have excited such connoisseurs. Superbly decorated in five different colours with vivid scenes of the Daoist paradise with the outlines picked out in gold dust, it recalls the legendary work of the early Yuan dynasty lacquer master Peng Junbao, who in the *Gegu Yaolun* of the early 15th century is recorded as making consummate gilded lacquers with landscapes, human figures, pavilions, flowers trees, birds and animals.

Given that *tianqi* was held in such high regard, it is not surprising that it was favoured by the imperial Ming court, as can be seen on the rare early 15th century offering tray (no. 6) and a magnificent cabinet of the Wanli period (no. 8). *Tianqi* lacquers used at court display a more formal ‘Imperial’ style, utilising symbols of imperial power like the dragon and phoenix combined with auspicious motifs or Buddhist and Daoist symbols in formal arrangements, with the motifs often highly

引言

蒼然瑩然，矜貴髹漆

漆如絲織品一般，為中國遠古獨有的珍貴產物，早於新石器時代就被利用。中國漆器製作源遠流長，有許多舉世傲人的珍品傳世，一直到西元前一世紀才有別的文化製作漆器的紀錄。與絲織品或陶瓷不同的是，製作漆器不僅耗工費時，且生漆具毒性，與皮膚接觸後會導致其過敏發炎，雖然中國匠人很早就發現螃蟹殼可以稍解其毒，但其產量比較下還是較少，傳布範圍也並不廣泛，僅限於東亞與東南亞一帶。

雖然生漆乾燥後非常堅固，防潮抗酸，又無虞蟲蛀，是有機物質中最耐久的一種材料，但是製作漆器所需用的胚胎，通常是木材布料一類，卻非常容易腐蝕殘壞，再加上產量本來就不大，使得漆器出土實物非常少。雖然戰國至漢朝的墓葬中有發掘了許多漆器，一直到最近，元代剔紅卻只有兩件出土物，嵌螺鈿器也只剩一件殘片。這與元朝瓷器或玉器出土物數量相比，簡直可說是鳳毛麟爪，使得我們對漆器的認識遠少於瓷器或是玉器。

儘管如此，漆器的珍貴性卻從早期的許多文獻資料中便能得到引證。戰國時的韓非子及西漢的桓寬均對製作漆器耗費人力財力而提出規諫，但王室貴族並未因此減少對漆器的喜愛。如此次所展出的西漢漆盆便是當時貴族偏愛的用器。顧愷之的仕女箴圖（圖1）其上的貴族婦女便是在漆製的鏡臺妝奩旁梳妝打扮。安徽馬鞍山東吳右軍師左大司馬朱然墓中所出土的漆盤上（圖2）也彩繪了貴族在漆製的器具旁行樂宴會的景象。

漢唐之間，有許多新的漆器裝飾出現，顯示匠人們高超的手藝。其中最突出的便是雕漆，以薄漆層層堆積再胚胎上到一定厚度，再用浮雕手法作裝飾。每層漆層若太厚，底下的漆便無法完全乾燥，故最好的雕漆有時便經過高達數十層至百層的髹塗，故通常要經過半年以上的準備才能開始動刀。

我們對漆器的認識尚有許多空白處。例如雕漆的起源，雖然文獻及一些稍具雛形的出土物均指唐朝為其濫觴，有些人卻認為其始要上推到漢代，但如今還未發現能證明這兩種說法的確證現今最早的出土雕漆為宋朝實物，而本次展覽中的南宋黑剔犀圓盤則是一件傳世精品，不論形制雕工均已十分成熟。

雕漆在元明之際達到高峰，嘉興西塘一帶高人輩出，留下許多不朽的傑作。這些作品通常以花鳥，人物，樓臺為題，並取材於同時期的繪畫冊頁。這時期自然的風格，均衡的構圖，精細的磨工是其特點。本次展出的元剔紅花鳥紋盤及元剔黑花卉紋經卷座均是這個黃金時期的代表作。

宣德後一直到嘉靖之間絕少有帶款的漆器，大概因為宮中對這些貴重品製作量銳減。許多現藏故宮斷為明中期的漆器可能皆由外地進貢，或本非為宮廷製作的產品。如大英博物館所藏的一件弘治款剔紅圓盒，便是由離京遙遠的西涼地區匠人所作。由於沒有帶款器，又缺少出土實物，我們只能依據風格排比來推斷年代。這項工作並非易事，尤其是明中期時的雕漆似乎有復古元代風格的傾向。

stylised. These contrasts sharply with the naturalism and freedom found in carved lacquers of the earlier period.

The prestige of lacquer is underscored by the large number of master craftsmen whose names are known to us today, and many of the best pieces are signed. This can be compared to the complete absence of famous potters and a general paucity of the names of craftsmen working in any other medium (excepting bamboo and rhinoceros horn carvings, although in both cases signed pieces appear much later in the 16th century). Under the Ming, new regulations were put in place allowing lacquer craftsmen to avoid drafted labour by electing and paying replacements to perform duty in their place. In this exhibition there are two signed works dating to the 17th century, the carved lacquer pouring cup by Yang Ming (no. 12), and the set of four lacquer hangings by Jiang Qianli (no. 16).

The latter specialised an elaborate technique of mother of pearl inlay where the thin inner layers of shells of varying hues were used, creating a delicate and nuanced appearance, with rich pure gold and silver metallic inlays adding to the sense of luxury as the glittering decoration catches light and shimmers lustrously against a black background. His work was so famous that it was compared to that of his contemporary and compatriot in Yangzhou, the famous painter Zha Shibiao (1655–1698). Looking at how skillfully he translates a series of album leaves using mother of pearl, gold, silver and copper inlays, it is easy to see why this was the case.

The beginning of the Qing dynasty saw the florescence of many different lacquer traditions. The Imperial style continued, the stylised patterns combining to create ever more complex and elaborate designs, such as those on the hexagonal jardinière (no. 26). The use of lacquer in conjunction with other precious materials, such as seen on the jade-inset ornament (no. 25) and the inlaid chest (no. 27) also became fashionable. However, we do still find lacquer pieces made outside the court displaying a restrained elegance. The *xipi* box (no. 13) shows how the elaborate and difficult technique of marbled lacquer could be used to produce an object of great purity suitable for the most severely neo-Confucian scholar. The set of bone-inlaid lacquer pieces (nos. 19–22) also displays an austere aesthetic, sparsely interposing the pale elements of bone on the dark background. Similarly, the pair of small polychrome dishes (no. 18), probably used as teacup stands, are painted with such charm and delicacy, as to turn the most mundane utensils into objects of delight and luxury.



Fig. 5a

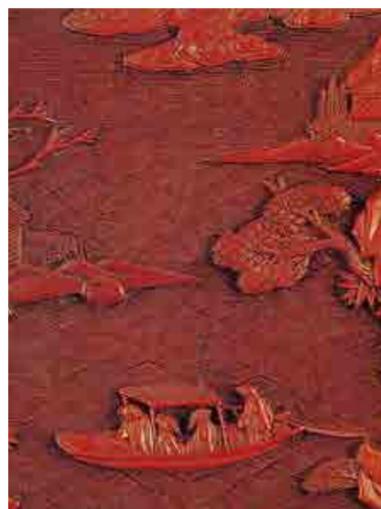


Fig. 5b



Fig. 2 Detail

要辨別這兩種漆器，我們需要對在日本保存下來的漆器作仔細的研究，唐朝以降，漆器常被用作這兩國或寺廟間答酬之贈禮，許多早期的漆器因而得以如此紀錄傳世下來，為漆器的研究提供了寶貴資料。這些早期的作品上可看出漆器與畫的密切關聯，雲彩的展現，天，水，地紋自然而邏輯的裝飾法均與圖畫相對應。雖然明中期的雕漆還保留了元代自然不矯飾的特質，如本次展出的松下弈棋圖蓋盒，伏虎羅漢圖盤，梅桂木蘭紋小瓶，及製作精美的人物紋三層提盒等例子，但是細部上的變化，如天、地、水紋的改變，構圖的瑣碎零散趨於平面化，刀法趨於深峻纖細，以至題材的取舍等，都是辨識這期雕漆的特點。

另一項耗工費時的裝飾手法便是[填漆]，所謂：‘填漆刻成花鳥，彩填稠漆，磨平如畫，久愈新也。’晚明時劉侗便記載剔紅與填漆是明末清初收藏家眼中最貴重的品種，其中又以填漆的數量稀少，形制富麗堂皇，價貴數倍於剔紅。既然填漆如此驕貴，不難理解宮廷對它的喜愛，本次展出的填漆纏枝八吉祥蓮紋托盤便是早期填漆的罕例，而另外一件十五世紀洞天福地紋大櫃及萬曆款填漆龍紋櫃，則是填漆櫃至今所見的兩件精品。填漆似乎只有在宮中盛行，而此次的三件展品都明顯有制式華麗的皇家風格，以龍鳳紋，吉祥紋飾及與佛道有關的紋飾等為題材，和較為自然流暢的早期雕漆風格迥異。

許多最好的漆器作品上有匠人留款，而許多漆工也因此流芳百世，陶瓷等其它項目則幾乎沒有名匠傳世，從這點上更可看出漆器在以往藏家心目中的地位（竹雕及犀角是例外，但其刻款風氣晚於漆器）。明朝時實行新的匠人法，匠人們得以合夥出資聘人代其服役，不必為此跋涉上京往返，因而節省下許多時間人力，從而可以在技藝上有發揮的餘力。此次展覽中有兩件帶款器，一是帶楊明款的剔紅把杯，另一件則是江千里的一套嵌螺鈿山水題詩紋掛屏。

江千里專長於‘軟螺鈿鑲嵌’，以光澤流麗的螺鈿細片加上金銀細片鑲在黑漆地上，熠熠閃爍，使得這些作品雖然產於民間，還是展現了一分淡雅的貴氣。他的作品享譽盛名，與同儕查士標的畫作並稱。

漆器在清朝一代開發了更多的裝飾手法。華麗的皇家風格從有明一代一直延續下來，裝飾傾向制式，各個紋飾簡化成花樣，形成了繁縟複雜的裝飾效果，如本次展出的剔彩六菱式花盆即是一例。以其它貴重材料與漆器並用的手法也非常盛行，如展出的鑲玉佩飾與嵌百寶官皮箱等。民間漆器則更與眾不同，和宮中大易其趣。如此次展出的犀皮漆箱，雖然製作程序複雜，其簡樸的形制卻最適用於心性高潔的儒者。幾件嵌骨黑漆器，黑地白章也非常儉約大方；而一對黑漆彩繪夏荷秋桂圖小茶托上生動精緻的畫意筆觸，使得兩件平凡的日常用品轉身化為矜貴賞心的把玩之物。



Fig. 6

1 A PAINTED BROWN LACQUER CIRCULAR BASIN
褐漆彩繪雙魚鳳凰紋盆

Han Dynasty 漢

The circular basin, the central medallion finely painted with two fish around a mythical bird, in red on a brown ground. The cavetto painted in dark brown and red with a geometric band. The rim covered in gilt-copper.

26.2 cm. diam.

Compare a similarly painted basin but decorated in black on red lacquer (fig. 6), illustrated in *Zhongguoqiqiwanji2 zhanguo-qin* pp. 128, no. 113. Sir Harry Garner describes this group of vessels with fine and fluent line paintings, instead of the wider brush strokes found on normal wares, as Imperial style wares made for the nobility of the time. These were mainly made in Imperial factories set up by the court, three of which, in Chengdu, Guanghan and Henan, were devoted to the manufacture of lacquer wares.





2 A BLACK *TIXI* LACQUER CIRCULAR DISH 黑剔犀圓盤

Southern Song Dynasty 南宋

The circular dish carved deeply through layers of black and red lacquer with two tiers of *ruyi* scrolls around a pair of confronting triangular tendrils. The reverse of the dish further decorated with a band of *ruyi* heads above a straight foot.

32 cm. diam.

Tixi lacquer wares were probably the first true carved lacquers developed by the Chinese. Although they were very popular both in China and Japan, and were made over a long period of time – from at least as early as the Song period to the end of Qing – their origins seem obscure. The earliest excavated examples are from the Southern Song period and already display highly sophisticated designs and execution, so it seems likely that there were even earlier prototypes. A curious *tixi* lacquer box and cover (fig. 7), published in *2000 years of Chinese Lacquer*, Chinese University of Hong Kong, no. 20, p. 55, from an unknown source is dated to the 5th century and has characteristics of Han period lacquer. If so, this box could be the earliest example we have of *tixi* lacquer.

The origin of the unusually shaped scrolls found on these pieces is still uncertain. However, it is very possible that they relate to the scrolls found on archaic jade pieces, such as those on Warring States jade discs (fig. 8, Jade bi, early Warring States period, Yang Boda, *Zhongguo yuqi quanji* (I) simplified Chinese version, Hebei, no. 178, p. 275.). The heart-shaped scrolls on the Hong Kong University box are reminiscent to some of the scrolls seen on the jade.

The scrolls found on the current dish are very similar to two other excavated Southern Song pieces. One is a black lacquer mirror box excavated in the Wujin county of Jiangsu (fig. 9) illustrated in *Zhongguo qiqi quanji 4 – Sanguo – Yuan*, Fujian, 1998, no. 124; the other is a red *tixi* box excavated in Fuzhou Chayuan Shan (fig. 10). Both have similar confronting triangular motif at the centre, the so-called *jianhuan* scroll described by Huang Cheng in his *Xiushilu*. *Jianhuan*, literally 'sword ring' has always been mistranslated as 'pommel' or sword-hilt in the West, but actually means 'sword guard' in classical Chinese, as the triangular scroll resembles a Chinese sword guard.

An identical black *tixi* lacquer dish is in the Hayashibara Art Museum in Okayama (fig. 11) illustrated in *Hyashibara Bijutsukan*, Okayama, no. 164, p. 148). Compare also a red *tixi* lacquer dish with identical pattern from the Nezu Museum illustrated in *The Colours and Forms of Song and Yuan China*, Tokyo, 2004, no. 68.

剔犀可能是最早的雕漆品種。雖然它流傳廣泛，歷史悠久，但是我們對它的起源所知甚少。現今最早的出土實物是宋朝作品，但已經形制完備，雕工精緻，故推論應有更早的雛形。香港大學曾展出一件剔犀圓蓋盒，有漢朝漆器的特徵。果真如此，則此器是目前所知最早的剔犀漆器。

剔犀上所見的裝飾非常獨特，其來處不甚明確。它們很有可能是從古玉上的穀文，乳丁紋，卷紋等演變而來。如戰國玉器上所見的紋飾與香港大學漆盒上所見便有共通之處。

本盤上所見紋飾與兩見南宋出土實物非常類似可資比較。另外日本林原美術館有一件同類的黑剔犀漆盤。



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

3 A MAGNIFICENT *TIANQI* LACQUER 'DAOIST PARADISE' CABINET

填漆戩金洞天福地紋大櫃

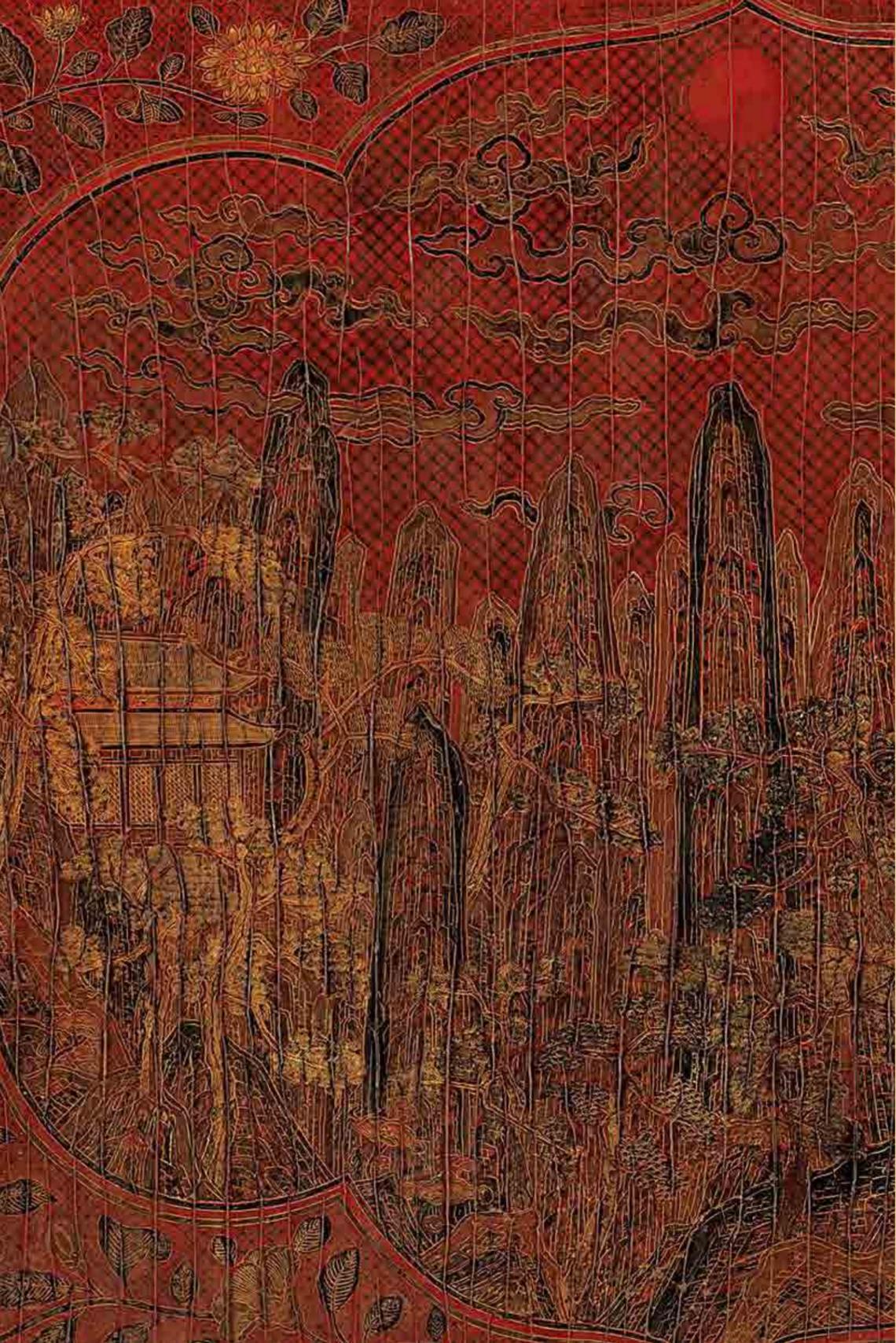
15th Century 十五世紀

The cabinet of rectangular shape, decorated with filled-in lacquer of black, green, red, brown and yellow, incised and gilt on each side with a large lobed panel depicting elaborate palace style buildings set in heavenly mountainous landscapes: at the front with a majestic palace compound, its main building surrounded by vaporous *ruyi*-shaped clouds ascending to the sky; at the top with multi-peaked sacred mountains flanked by buildings and under the sun; at the back with roaring waves crashing against the rocks and inhabited by auspicious animals such as cranes, phoenixes and deer; and at the sides with processions of immortal figures as if paying tribute. The panels are surrounded by sprays of chrysanthemum, camellia and peony, and reserved on a trellis ground embellished with *wan* symbol. The front panel opens to reveal ten drawers in the interior of different sizes, each similarly decorated with various plants in landscapes.

64 cm. high x 82 cm. wide x 59 cm. deep

Provenance: Manno Collection, Osaka







This magnificent cabinet represents the Daoist paradise, with fantastical landscapes and palace buildings inhabited by auspicious animals and immortals including the Queen Mother of the West and the Eight Daoist Immortals. It is curious to note that apart from the immortals on either side of the cabinet, the front, the top and the back are devoid of any divine figures. It is very possible that these represent the residences of the three highest ranking Daoist deities, the Three Purities (San Qing): TaishangLaojun (Great Highest Elder Lord; Laozi), YuanshiTianzun (Celestial Worthy of Primordial Beginning) and LingbaoTianzun (Celestial Worthy of Spiritual Treasure). It is recorded in the Ming novel *FengshenYanyi* (The Investiture of the Gods) that TaishangLaojun's residence is the Bajing Palace in the Xuandu Cavern of DaluoParadise, while YuanshiTianzun lives in the Kunlun Mountains, and LingbaoTianzun resides on the Jin'ao Island. These are represented by the elaborate palace compound on the front, the majestic mountains on the top, and the island in the turbulent waves on the back of the current chest.

It is possible that the recipient of the chest sees himself as the God residing in the palace, with the immortals gathering to pay tribute to him. As the Eight Daoist Immortals and Queen Mother of the West are often related to birthday celebrations and longevity, it is very also possible that this chest was made for the recipient's birthday.

Compare an example bearing the mark of Xuande, and probably of the period, also depicting Daoist paradises in the Yamagata Provincial Museum, Japan (fig. 12 illustrated *Chinese Art in Overseas Collections – Lacquerware*, National Palace Museum, 1987, no. 136, p. 139). An even earlier depiction of this popular scene can be found on a *kesi* panel dated to the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127) in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei (fig. 13, illustrated *When Silk Was Gold*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1997, fig. 14, p. 57).

此櫃上之裝飾特殊，除了櫃兩旁有八仙及西王母等神仙外，櫃前，頂，後，並無神仙蹤跡。前飾一壯偉宮殿，櫃頂飾高山峻嶺，後則有波濤環繞一島嶼。這似乎表現了道教理想中的三清境界。三清為道教中地位最高的三位神祇，分別是太上老君，元始天尊及靈寶天尊（通天教主）。在明代小說封神演義中，三位的居所分別是：大羅天玄都洞八景宮（太上老君），崑崙山玉虛宮（元始天尊），及金鰲島碧遊宮（靈寶天尊），與本櫃裝飾相對應。

故此櫃前的宮殿不但可看作是太上老君的八景宮，更是櫃子主人自己的宮殿，而他自己則是長居此宮中的不死帝君，眾位神仙都要來朝拜。再，八仙與西王母均是與慶生長壽有關的神祇，故此櫃很可能是為慶生所作。

日本山形縣博物館藏有一件帶宣德款的明初填漆櫃，也飾有道教題材。另外台北故宮所藏一件北宋繅絲也有此題材，是更早的例子。



Fig. 12

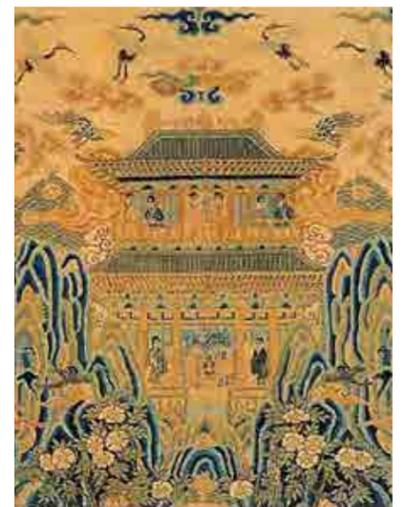


Fig. 13

4 A CARVED BLACK LACQUER REVERSIBLE SUTRA STAND
剔黑花卉紋經卷座

Yuan Dynasty 元

The stand has a single groove along the length of one side for display, and a double groove on the other for reading. The single side is decorated in the groove with three peony blooms on leafy stems, above lotus petals around the neck. The sides are variously decorated with chrysanthemum, gardenia, camellia and prunus. The double groove is decorated with meandering camellia and further peony blooms, all against a red background.

38 cm. long x 8 cm. wide x 5 cm. high







This rare sutra stand is a beautiful work of art as well as an ingenious piece of design. The rolled-up sutra scroll can be placed on the single-groove side while not in use, and reverently placed on an altar. When the sutra is unfolded and read, it can be placed on the double-groove side to mark the place of last reading, should the reader be disrupted and need to stop, as sutras are normally of considerable length and often take a few sessions of reading to complete.

The carving on the current stand is very typical of Yuan lacquer carving. Very similar treatment of floral scrolls can be found on the side of a carved cinnabar lacquer box and cover signed by Zhang Cheng in the Hong Kong Museum of Art (fig. 14 illustrated in *Zhongguo qiqi quanji* 4, no. 160, p. 176). The treatment of gardenia and the chrysanthemum is remarkably similar on both pieces.

此經卷座作工精良，形制特別，是美觀又實用的一件雕漆精品。經卷收捲起來時可置於單槽一面，供於佛案之上。念經時，若中途休息，可把經卷攤開至念到之處，置於雙槽一面，待下次念經時繼續。

本經卷座上之花卉雕法為典型的元朝風格。相似的花卉紋可見於香港藝術館所藏的一件剔紅圓盒的外圍。



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

5 A CARVED CINNABAR LACQUER TRAY 剔紅花鳥紋方盤

Early Yuan Dynasty 元

The tray is of rectangular shape with slightly canted corners. It is carved in the interior with two long-tailed birds in mutual pursuit amongst a dense ground of blossoming peonies borne on leafy branches. The edge of the rim is embellished with trellis pattern, and the reverse with a composite floral scroll.

34 cm. wide

This type of carved lacquer, finely carved on a relatively thin ground, with widely spaced sprays of leaves and flowers, showing very little overlap and turning of the leaves and petals, illustrates how ideas regarding early carved lacquers have changed over the last few decades.

A box and cover in the Victoria and Albert museum along with a flower-pot (*zha dou*) in the Beijing Palace Museum (fig. 15), both with Yuan dynasty Yang Mao marks, were consigned to the 16th century by Sir Harry Garner in the 1970's primarily on the basis of the relatively thin ground and flat carving when compared to late 14th and early 15th century imperially marked lacquers. However, since then, a dated Yuan carved lacquer table in Gansu was excavated, it's thin ground and open floral sprays being very similar to the Palace Museum and Victoria and Albert pieces (fig. 16). The two pieces are now acknowledged to be masterpieces of Yuan carved lacquer by Yang Mao.

Our understanding of the evolution of carved lacquer has also been substantially advanced by the recent publication and exhibition of early lacquers (many from Japanese temple collections) by the Nezu Institute of Fine Arts. A black box and cover with a *feng* and *huang* (male and female phoenix) amidst floral sprays dating to the southern Song dynasty shows no overlap in the design, and large open areas of yellow background (fig. 17). Another dish dated to the late Song/early Yuan has two birds amidst floral sprays (fig. 18), and is closely comparable to our tray, in both the design and the details of the execution, although this tray is even more finely and neatly carved.

Thus it is possible to suggest a chronology where carved lacquers evolved from thinner ground pieces with simpler, flatter designs, which by the late Yuan had become thicker and more complex. This is followed in the early Ming with the thickest and most complex pieces, which however had lost a little of the freedom of composition that is evident in the earlier pieces.

此類雕工精細，漆層較薄，紋飾疏朗，少有重疊轉折的雕漆，近年來使我們對早期雕漆的看法有所改變。

維多利亞亞伯特博物館所藏一剔紅漆盒，與北京故宮的一件剔紅渣斗，兩者皆帶楊茂款，而在70年代時被Harry Garner爵士斷代為十六世紀。他的論點是，比較元末明初的雕漆器，兩者漆層都嫌薄，且雕工單調。自從甘肅出土一件有紀年的剔紅桌，與此二件漆器比較下，雕工漆質非常相近，才重新確認這兩件是楊茂所作的名品。

我們對漆器的瞭解也在根津博物館的宋元漆器展覽後有了重新的認識。其中一件南宋剔黑穿花鳳凰紋圓盒也未見花葉重疊手法，紋飾非常疏朗。另外一件宋/元雕漆花鳥紋盤上有與本盤非常相近，但更顯細膩的花鳥紋。

因此我們可以推論雕漆由早期薄層而較單調的紋飾，演變至後期漆質厚且多層的裝飾，進而發展到早明時期漆層更厚，構圖也更複雜的形態。



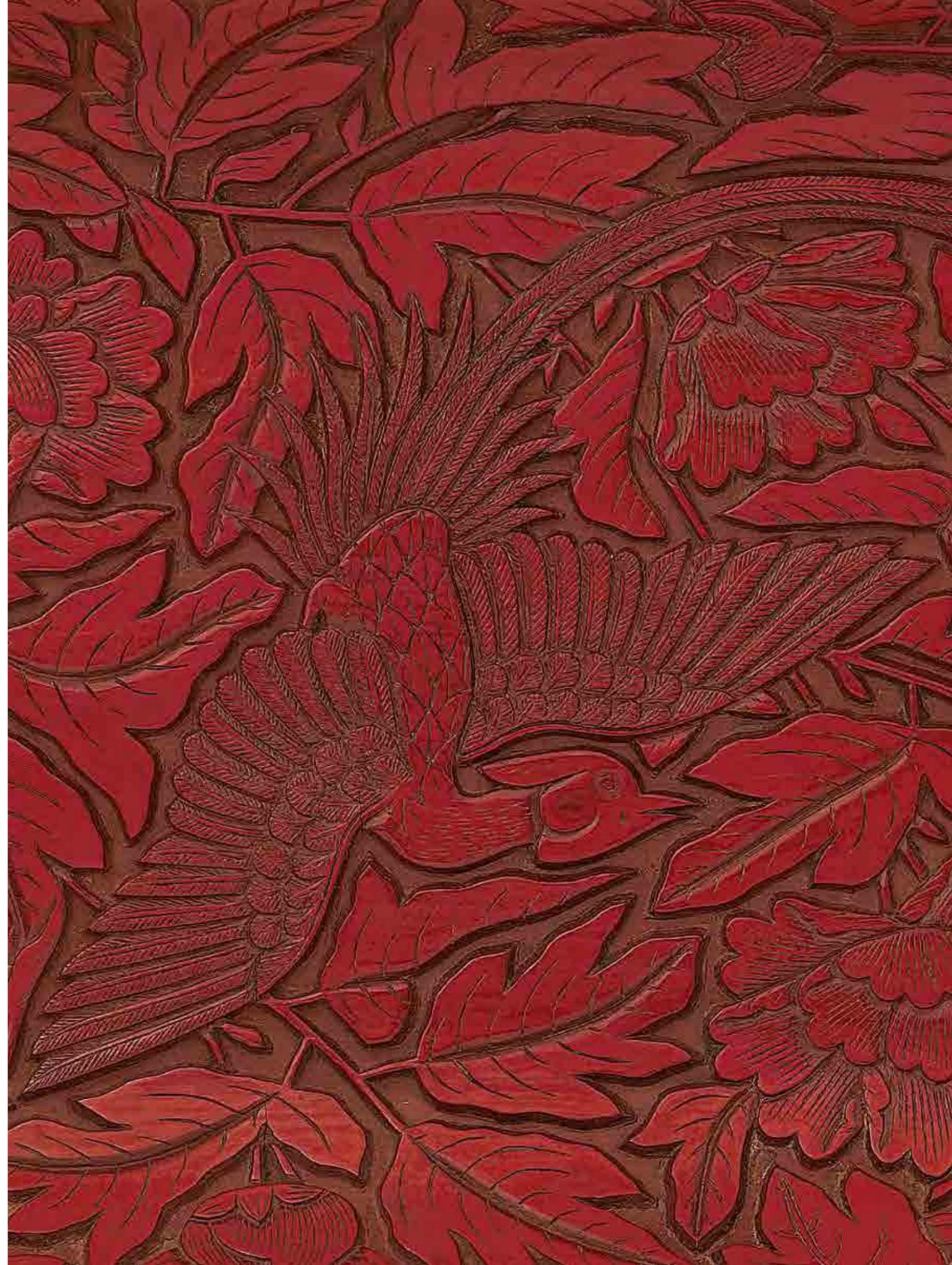
Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18







**6 A TIANQI LACQUER OFFERING TRAY AND COVER,
WITH THREE ASSOCIATED STEM BOWLS**
填漆餞金纏枝八吉祥蓮紋帶蓋托盤

The Tray Yongle Period or Earlier, The Bowls Kangxi
永樂或更早

The tray and cover of rectangular shape, decorated with filled-in lacquer and gilt on the cover with six blossoming lotuses in profile centering on two full-frontal lotuses, each colored in vermillion bearing one of Eight Buddhist Emblems in yellow. The blooms are borne on curled leafy tendrils decorated in yellow, vermillion and two tones of green, all against a dark brown background. The sides of the box are decorated with twenty further smaller blooms on curled stems. The similarly arranged lotuses on the tray are all full-frontal, with the outer six each enclosing a circular aperture. The foot of the tray is pierced with eight *ruyi*-shaped apertures between two parallel lotus scrolls.

14.7 cm. high x 43.7 cm. wide x 29 cm. deep

In late Ming writer Liu Tong's (circa 1593–1636) *DijingjingwuLue* (Brief Accounts of Scenes in the Imperial Capital), it is recorded that:

Tianqi - carved with flowers and birds, filled with coloured and unctuous lacquer, polished flat like a painting. The longer time passes, the newer it appears... its archaic colours are dark and lustrous, and very few examples have been passed down, so they are many times more expensive than carved cinnabar lacquers. (*juan4*)

GaoShiqi (1645–1704) of the early Qing in his *Jiniao tuishi biji* (Retirement Notes at the Golden Tortoise Bridge) goes on to say:

Both (filled-in and carved cinnabar lacquer) are called *changzhi* (made by Guoyuanchang), and are much treasured through generations, although difficult to acquire. (*juan II*)



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25

Guoyuanchang was the Imperial lacquer workshop set up during the Yongle period to manufacture lacquer pieces for the court. Only two types of lacquer were apparently made in this workshop – carved cinnabar lacquer and filled-in lacquer, the former being the majority. This rare tray, probably used in a Buddhist temple as an altar offering-tray, can be stylistically dated to the early 15th century, so it was highly likely made in the Guoyuanchang. Only one other piece of *tianqi* lacquer dated to the early 15th century, a cabinet decorated with dragon and phoenix in the Victoria and Albert Museum, is recorded, and it has comparable lotus scrolls around the central panel (fig. 19 Sir Harry Garner, *Chinese lacquer*, London, 1979, Col. Pl. F, p. 162). However, the more simplistic treatment of leaves on the current tray is probably more closely associated to that seen on a Yuan dynasty quilt cover excavated from Dove Cave in Hebei (fig. 20 illustrated by Sheila Vainker in *Chinese Silk: A Cultural History*, Rutberg University Press, New Jersey, 2004, pl. 90, p. 139.)

Similar multi-layered lotuses with the distinctive curled petals can be seen on the back slat of the carved lacquer chair, also in the Victoria and Albert Museum (fig. 21 Sir Harry Garner, *Chinese lacquer*, London, 1979, fig. 86, p. 143.) See also the carved lacquer box (fig. 22 *Zhongguo qiqi quanji*, Fujian, 1995, no. 45, pp. 66) with a Yongle mark in the Palace Museum, Beijing, which features lotuses with the eight Buddhist treasures emanating from the centres around a full frontal lotus. Full-frontal lotuses are very uncommon, unlike peonies which are often depicted full-frontal on Yuan blue and white pieces, although a box and cover in the Seattle Art Museum (fig. 23 *East Asian Lacquer*, London, 1992, Seattle, no. 7, p. 12) is carved with a full-frontal lotus in the centre of its cover, surrounded by lotuses carrying the Eight Buddhist Emblems.

The circular openings would have been made for inserting stem bowls, made of either lacquer or porcelain. There are several tables dated to the Ming period with these openings in the Palace Museum, Beijing (fig. 24 illustrated in *Furniture of the Ming and Qing Dynasties (I) – The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum – 53*, Hong Kong, 2002, no. 103, p. 120–121). The current tray was acquired with three stem bowls, made later in the Kangxi period to replace the lost originals. They compare closely with two covered boxes of the Kangxi period in the palace museum illustrated in Qing Long. *The Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum – 46*, Hong Kong, 2006, no. 72, p. 104 (fig. 25). Many of the incomplete furniture pieces in the Palace have Kangxi replacements, an indication that large-scale restoration works were carried out during this period.

劉侗的帝京景物略卷四記載：

填漆刻成花鳥，彩填稠漆，磨平如畫，久愈新也…其古色蒼然瑩然，其器傳絕少，故數倍貴於剔紅。

高士奇的金齋退食筆記下卷也記載：

剔紅填漆二種…皆稱廠製，世甚珍重之而不可多得。

果園廠是永樂年間設置，專作宮廷用漆器的御用作坊。依文獻記載，似乎只製作剔紅填漆兩種漆器。本托盤的形制應是十五世紀早期的作品，故非常有可能是永樂年間果園廠的作品。現今所知只有一件明早期填漆作品傳世，現藏倫敦維多利亞亞伯特博物館的龍鳳紋櫃，其上的蓮紋可與本品比較。其它還有幾件明早期的剔紅器上也雕了相似的蓮紋（見圖）。

此托盤飾有八吉祥紋，應是供於寺廟的案上，而圓形開口是為了安置高足杯所作。故宮現藏了幾件漆案，上也有類似的圓形開口。本托盤有三件康熙後配的高足杯，應是康熙帝修繕寺廟時為此托盤補缺。







7 A CARVED CINNABAR LACQUER THREE-TIERED BOX AND STAND
剔紅人物紋三層提盒

Mid-Ming Period, Second Half 15th Century 明中期

The box of quatrefoil section and carved on the cover with a scholar and two attendants between rockworks and below a pine tree, the sides are variously carved with peach blooms, peony, chrysanthemum and gardenia. The stand has an arched bracket frame terminating in large *ruyi* shaped panels, carved all over in a profusion of flowering peonies.

23.5 cm. high x 17 cm. wide

Provenance: Manno Collection, Osaka



Fig. 26

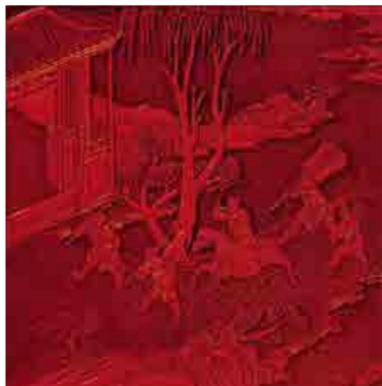


Fig. 27

This beautifully carved tiered box is a fine example of mid-Ming lacquer work, and is particularly rare for the elaborate original stand, which has survived in remarkable condition. The carving on the current tiered box, although very much in keeping with the Yuan style, displays various idiosyncrasies when compared to Yuan examples. Firstly, the sky/water pattern on the cover have been simplified to a trellis ground, instead of the parallel scrolls seen on Yuan pieces, which requires much more skill. Secondly, the arrangement of floral scrolls on the sides and the stand has lost the more naturalistic sensitivity of earlier pieces, and appears a profusion of scattered motifs. A rectangular dish carved with a scholar and his attendant gathering herbs in the Palace Museum, Beijing (fig. 26 *Zhongguo qiqi quanji*, vol. 5, no. 81, p. 81) also has similar trellis for the sky. A similar arrangement of scattered floral motifs can be seen in the panels of a square dish, also in the Palace Museum, Beijing (fig. 27 *Zhongguo qiqi quanji*, vol. 5, no. 76, p. 76). A remarkably similar quatrefoil carved lacquer box (without its carrying stand) can be seen in the 16th century Painter Du Jin's masterpiece "Ladies in the Palace" (Frontispiece) illustrated in 'Shimao Fengqing—Highlights of Ancient Chinese Figure Painting in the Liaoning Provincial Museum and The Shanghai Museum', vol. 1, pp. 51, shows how this box might have been used to contain scholarly ephemera during an outdoor literary gathering.

此三層提盒雕工精良，品相良好，又搭配原裝座子，是明中期剔紅佳作。雖然此盒裝飾風格有元朝遺風，但是細看之下卻有許多不同之處。第一，盒蓋上錦地已經失去元朝天、地、水紋一絲不苟的呈現，而僅以單調的錦紋涵蓋。第二，花卉紋的佈置顯得散漫零碎，不似元朝作品井井有條，繁而不亂。雖然如此，此盒大方穩重，形制特別，依然算是剔紅佳作，難能可貴。







8 A *TIANQI* LACQUER 'DRAGON' CABINET
填漆戩金龍紋櫃

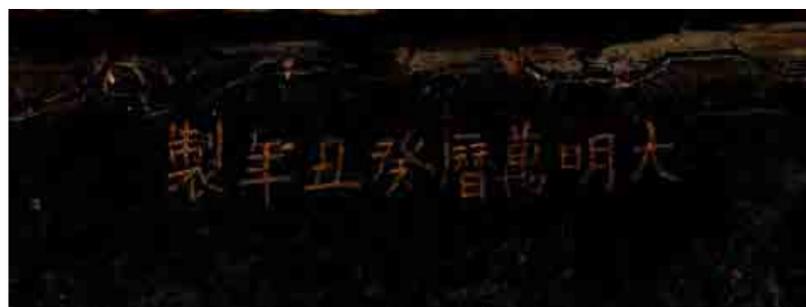
Lacquered Six-Character, And Incised Six-Character Wanli Marks And Of The Period
萬曆 [大明萬曆年製] 款

The cabinet is of rectangular shape divided into two sections and standing on an integral base. The upper part has a hinged top cover opening to reveal a shallow storage compartment. The lower section has a removable front panel concealing four drawers. The top, back, two sides and the removable panel are similarly decorated with pairs of confronting dragons rising from waves and three mountains below, flanking two millet sprays and a sword plunged into a further mountain borne on clouds. The front of the storage compartment and the four drawers are decorated with pairs of horizontal dragons. All are reserved on a red ground of *wan*-symbol trellis, apart from the edges and the base with camellia scrolls or waves on a yellow ground. The interior and the base is lacquered black. The *tianqi* lacquer mark is in the upper centre on the back, while the incised mark is on the base.

71.5 cm. high x 53.5 cm. wide x 52.5 cm. deep



Mark



Mark



Fig. 28

This *tianqi* lacquer cabinet is one of the most impressive 16th century filled-in lacquer wares, and only one other example of similar quality and size is known in the Musée Guimet in Paris, although it appears to be unpublished. A cabinet decorated in mother-of-pearl inlay on black ground with very similar decoration and unusual metal fittings is in the Palace Museum, Beijing, illustrated in *Zhongguo qiqi quanji*, vol. 5, p. 163, no. 154 (fig. 28). The motif of sword and millet on the current cabinet is very unusual. The wan-symbol and the sharp (*li*) sword combine to make Wanli – the name of the emperor's reign name, while the millet (*he*) is a synonym to peace, beside its connotation of a bumper harvest. It could therefore be read as a good wish for peace and prosperity for the Emperor's reign.

此櫃形制碩大，裝飾精美，是萬曆填漆中的重器。北京故宮有一件紋飾尺寸相似的黑漆嵌螺鈿龍紋櫃。法國吉美博物館也有一件可比較的填漆櫃，但似未曾出版過圖片。

本櫃上所裝飾的利劍禾穗紋非常獨特，因全櫃滿飾卍字錦紋，故合為「萬曆（利）歲和（穗禾）」的吉語，有頌聖之意。









9 A CARVED CINNABAR LACQUER CIRCULAR BOX AND COVER
剔紅松下弈棋圖蓋盒

Mid-Ming Period 明中期

The box and cover is of circular shape. The cover is decorated with two scholars playing chess under a pine tree, being watched by an elder holding a staff and two attendants, one carrying a back sack, the other holding a *qin*. The box is decorated with a deer and a crane in flight beside a pine tree and amongst other vegetation and rockworks.

10.5 cm. diam.

10 A CARVED CINNABAR LACQUER BRUSH AND COVER 剔紅人物紋筆

Ming Dynasty, 16th Century 明十六世紀

The cover is carved with a bearded elderly figure, Dongfangshuo, carrying a branch laden with peaches on his shoulders. The top of the cover is carved with a *shou* character. The brush is decorated with an official standing under a large fan held by a young attendant, beside a pine tree and against a ground of honeycomb pattern.

26 cm. long

11 A CARVED CINNABAR LACQUER OVAL DISH 剔紅伏虎羅漢紋盤

Mid-Ming Period 明中期

The dish is of oval shape with a flat base and upturned sides. It is carved in the centre within an octafoil panel depicting the Tiger-taming Luohan seated on a mat, his right hand raised and holding a circular implement, wearing loose flowing robes gathered in folds above the splayed legs. He is confronted by a subjugated tiger, and surrounded by five boys in a rocky landscape dominated by a pine tree. The interior rim is carved with key pattern, and the exterior with ribboned precious objects.

21.8 cm. wide

This is another fine example of mid-Ming carved lacquer which displays characteristics of Yuan style. The use of shaped panel is very much popular during the Yuan period, and the treatment of figures and rockwork is reminiscent of that on 14th century pieces. However, the ground pattern has been simplified to a single type of trellis, and the precious objects on the reverse have all but dissolved into almost abstract patterns - features that point to a later dating.

Compare a mother-of-pearl inlaid dish depicting a very similar Tiger-taming Luohan in the Simon Kwan Collection (fig. 29, illustrated in *Chinese mother-of-pearl, Muwentang Collection*, series no. 13, no. 59, p. 176). Note that the Kwan example also has a mixture of Daoist and Buddhist precious objects on the reverse, a sign that the amalgamation of Buddhism and Daoism which began in the Yuan period is now deeply rooted in the popular consciousness.

本盤也是明中期剔紅器帶元朝風格的一例。雖然人物及山石處理均仿元式，但全盤只著一種錦地，且反面的吉祥紋稍嫌散漫，磨工也未及元朝細緻。

關善明所藏一件嵌螺鈿盤有相似的伏虎羅漢題材，可資比較。兩件背後同樣有八寶八吉祥參雜的情況出現，說明了從元朝開始的佛道融合風氣在明朝時已深植人心。



Fig. 29





12 A SMALL CARVED CINNABAR LACQUER POURING CUP 剔紅花鳥紋把杯 [西塘楊明造] 款

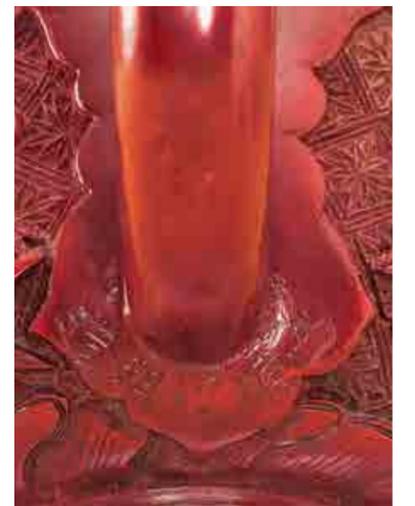
Signed *Xitang Yangming Zao*, 16th Century 明十六世紀

The cup is of oval section with a wide pouring mouth. It is carved around one side with a bird perching on blossoming camellia branches, on the other with a further bird on prunus branches above bamboo. The handle is carved with a *chilong* head terminating in a *ruyi*-shaped panel containing the signature.

10.5 cm. wide

Yang Ming was a late Ming lacquer craftsman from the Xitang area. He was obviously also a learned man as he annotated Huang Cheng's *Xiushilu*, one of the most comprehensive records of lacquer production in the Ming period. No other carved lacquer pieces with Yang Ming's signature appears to have been published, although an oval lacquer dish signed *Yang Ming zuo* (Made by Yang Ming) from the Plesch Collection was sold in Christie's London, 3 November 2009, lot 178.

楊明是晚明西塘地區的漆工，並且曾為黃成的《髹飾錄》作注，應是個能文之人。目前帶楊明款的真品還未曾見，但此杯為明晚期作品無疑，極有可能是楊明作品，待考。



Mark

13 A XIPI LACQUER BOX AND COVER
犀皮漆箱

17/18th Century 十七/ 十八世紀

The box is of rectangular shape. Lacquered all over with mixed layers of red, yellow, brown, green and black lacquer to create a marbled effect, and fitted with original *baitong* clasps and hinges.

15 cm. high x 47 cm. wide x 27 cm. deep





The term *xipi*, literally 'rhinoceros skin', describes a type of lacquer where the pattern was made by applying successive layers of different colours on a base of raised moulded lacquer, and then polished flat to reveal the pattern. It is relatively uncommon and seems to have been made after the 16th century. The Ming examples usually have spiral scrolls, while the Qing examples have irregular pattern, like the current box. Compare a lacquered table of similar surface, formerly in the E. T. Chow Collection, sold Sotheby's Hong Kong, 3rd May 1994, lot 297.

犀皮乃指一種堆塗不同色漆，使其顏色相雜，再磨平成紋的工藝，製作過程頗為繁複，而傳世不多。明朝犀皮通常有螺旋紋理，而清朝則成不規則紋路，如此盒上所見。仇炎之舊藏一件犀皮炕桌也有相似紋理，售於香港蘇富比1994年5月3日，拍品297號。

14 A CARVED CINNABAR AND BLACK LACQUER
MINIATURE STAND
剔彩茶花紋小几

Ming Period, 16th Century 明十六世紀

The stand has a square top and incurved leg terminating on a square stretcher base with ruyi-shaped feet. It is carved on the top through the cinnabar lacquer to a black-lacquer ground with blossoming camellia. The same decoration is repeated around the lobed apron and the legs between bands of key pattern and trellis around the rim, waist and base.

9 cm. high

15 A CARVED CINNABAR LACQUER MINIATURE ROULEAU
VASE
剔紅花卉紋小瓶

Mid-Ming Dynasty, Second Half 15th Century 明中期

The cylindrical vase has a slightly flaring neck. It is carved around the exterior with branches of flowering magnolia, osmanthus and prunus against a ground of trailing water pattern below a band of key-pattern around the rim.

11 cm. high

The design and carving of this charming vase is reminiscent of a brushpot carved with prunus in the Palace Museum, Beijing (fig. 30 illustrated in *Zhongguo qiqi quanji*, Fujian, 1995, no. 54, p. 55). However, the dating of the current vase could be slightly earlier, as it retains the trailing water pattern typically found on 14th century carved lacquer dishes, such as that on the 'feet-washing' dish formerly in the Lee Family Collection, sold in Christie's Hong Kong, 1st December 1020, lot 1811.



Fig. 30





16 A SET OF FOUR MOTHER-OF-PEARL INLAID PANELS
黑漆嵌螺鈿開光山水題詩紋掛屏一套四件 [千里]款

Signed *Jiang Qianli*, Late Ming/Early Qing Period, 17th Century
明末清初，十七世紀

The panels are of rectangular shape, each finely inlaid in mother-of-pearl and gold. Each are decorated variously with panels containing butterflies, birds, deer or poetic inscriptions.

Each 80 cm. high x 47 cm. wide



Fig. 31

It is recorded in *Jiaqingchongxiuyangzhoufuzhi* (Gazetteer of Yangzhou Prefecture Revised in the Jiaqing Reign) that:

In the Kangxi period, there was a scholar in Weiyang named ZhaErzhan (Shibiao), who excelled in painting level-field landscapes and Mi-Family style paintings. If one could obtain even a small piece of his work, it was considered a treasure. There was also Jiang Qiushui (Qianli), whose mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer wares were most refined and delicate, and no one's table is without them. There was a saying: Cups and dishes everywhere are by Jiang Qiushui; Scrolls and hangings in all households from ZhaErzhan.

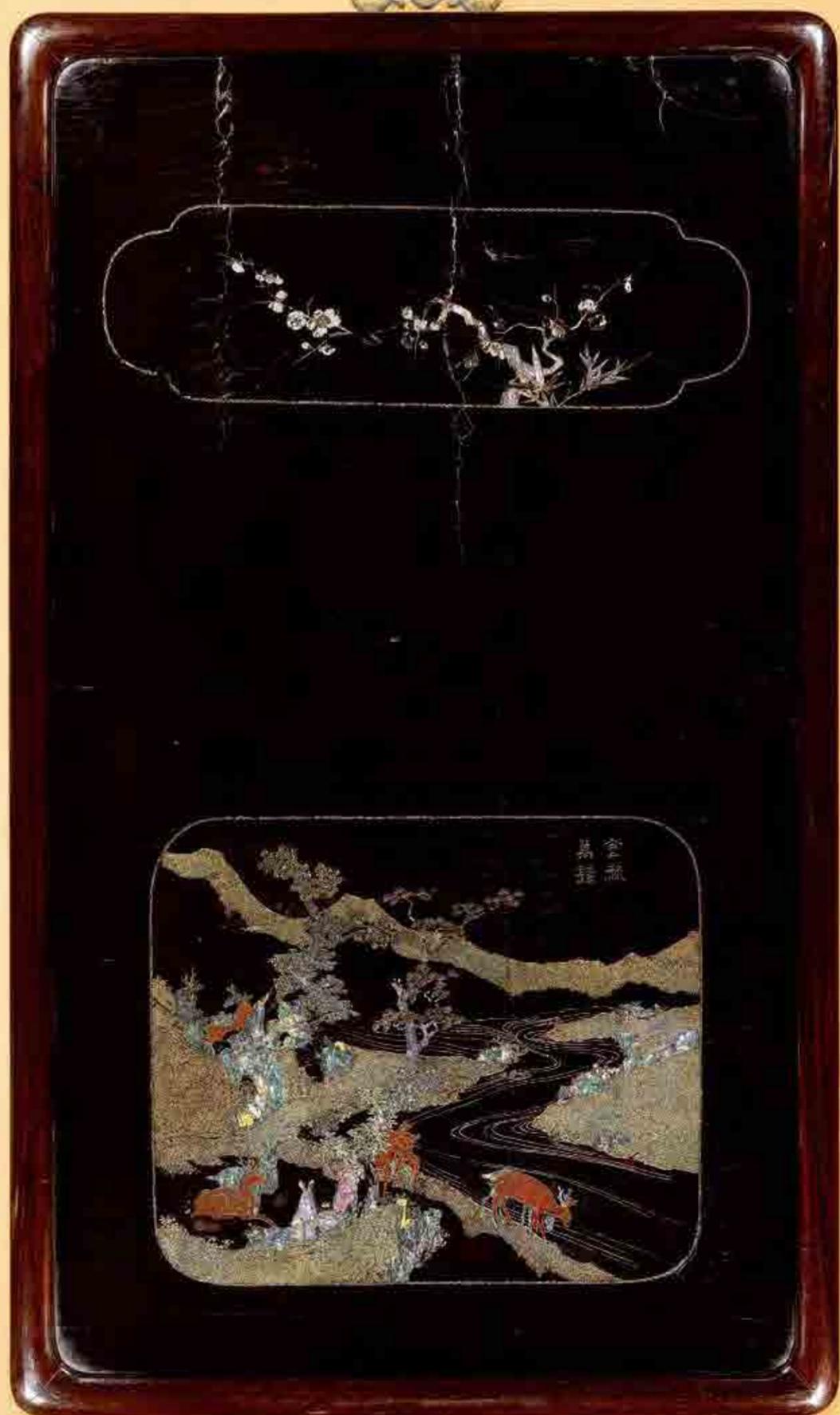
Jiang Qianli's popularity was such that a proliferation of pieces that bears his mark were made, even well into the 19th century, however, few of these are by him. A ewer in the former Chinese History Museum and a set of five panels in the Hebei Provincial Cultural Bureau (fig. 31, *ibid*, no. 189, p. 204) are generally considered his work. The use of gold and silver inlays alongside mother-of-pearl on the Hebei panels is reminiscent of those on the current panels, as well as the style of inlay work. Furthermore, one of the current panels bears the name of Duo Lun (year unknown), an official of the Kangxi reign. His daughter married one of Kangxi's grandsons, Prince Yong Xiang, and he went on to become the Right Vice Minister of The Board of Rites in 1756.

[嘉慶重修揚州府志] 記載：

康熙初，維揚有士人查二瞻，工平遠山水及米家畫。人得寸紙尺縑以為重。
又有江秋水，以螺鈿器皿最為精工巧細，席間無不用之。時有一聯云：杯盤處處江秋水，卷軸家家查二瞻。

江千里盛名如此，帶千里款的漆器也一時充盈市肆，一直到清末還有製作，但少有真品。前歷史博物館藏一嵌螺鈿執壺，與河北文物局藏一套五件屏風，可以說是現藏最有可能是江千里真品的。本套掛屏上的嵌螺鈿手法，以及金箔銀箔的使用法，均與河北套屏類似。再來本屏上見有題詩，署名多綸，乃是康熙大皇子胤緹的親家，故可信其年代應在康熙前後無疑，可以說相當可能便是江千里作品。







涼風拂玉過山香
 叶留身感吉神一聖
 清歌香暖夜雨暗香
 信動清林暮之知紅
 疑若高言不似清陰
 院翠人臥友晚陽佳
 好倚以心香散憶紅
 溪

蘇東坡詩
 吳承貞





17 A MOTHER-OF-PEARL INLAID CHEST
黑漆嵌螺鈿庭園仕女嬰戲圖官皮箱

Kangxi Period 康熙

The chest has a hinged top cover, double doors and stands on an integral stand. The front is inlaid in fine pieces of mother-of-pearl and gold foil with ladies and boys engaging in leisure pursuits in a courtyard garden between two large pavilions. The sides are inlaid with further boys at play, and the back with flowering plants.

34.7 cm. high

The style of inlay work on the current chest is very close to that of a large mother-of-pearl inlaid painting table in the Palace Museum, Beijing. Both are influenced by the works of master craftsman Jiang Qianli, who pioneered the 'scattered-shell' technique, where pieces of minute shells are used en masse to create texture, as well as the use of gold foil alongside fine mother-of-pearl inlays. The treatment of rockwork, floral design, and the use of panels on a fine trellis ground on both pieces are also very similar. The Palace table is dated to the xinwei year of Kangxi, corresponding to 1691, and it can be assumed that the current chest was also made in the similar period.





18 A PAIR OF BLACK-GROUND POLYCHROME PAINTED
LACQUER CIRCULAR DISHES
黑漆彩繪夏荷秋桂紋茶托一對

Early 18th Century, Probably Yongzheng Period
十八世紀早期（可能雍正時期）

The dishes have slightly everted rims and flat bases. One is painted in the centre in green, yellow, silver, red, brown and gilt with two frogs amongst flowering lotuses, all against a black ground; the other is similarly painted with two rabbits beside a flowering osmanthus tree below the full moon.

14 cm. diam.

These dishes were probably used as teacup stands. Compare a painted lacquer teacup plate of ink-stone form from the Yongzheng period in the Palace Museum, Beijing (fig. 32 illustrated in *Qing Lacquer Wares, Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum*, no. 155, p. 205). There are no carved cinnabar lacquer pieces dated to the Yongzheng period in the Palace, while records show that the Yongzheng emperor had a preference to painted lacquer. The refined modeling and delicate painting found on the current dishes are in keeping with the Yongzheng style and could have been made in his reign.

此對茶托畫工細緻，精巧可愛，頗有雍正時期風格。故宮中帶雍正款的剔紅器還未見，可見他對雕漆並不是特別喜愛，但他似乎對彩繪漆器情有獨鍾，有許多帶款實物傳世，如北京故宮所藏雙連環茶托便是一例。



Fig. 32

19 A BONE-INLAID BLACK LACQUER DOCUMENT BOX 黑漆嵌骨拜友圖盒

18th Century 十八世紀

The box is of rectangular shape and inlaid at the top in bone with a panel depicting the meeting of two officials, the visitor with attendants bearing various gifts for the host, all set in a landscaped garden. The sides are decorated with floral sprays.

34 cm. long x 18.5 cm. wide x 6 cm. high

Compare a very similar document box in the Palace Museum, Beijing (*Zhongguoqiqianji – Qing*, no. 250, p. 203). Although this box is in the Imperial collection, it is unlikely that boxes of this type were made for the court, as the subjects commonly found on these pieces – normally involving officials or dignitaries meeting each other bearing gifts – were of a more popular nature. The combination of pale coloured bone against a black-lacquer ground is very effective, however, and since the decorations are normally fairly sparsely arranged, these pieces normally appear restrained and elegant.

北京故宮藏有一件形制非常類似的漆盒。雖然宮中有相似例子，但此類漆盒應非宮廷作品，因為其上的裝飾往往是官員拜會贈禮之類題材。但是這類漆器淡色嵌骨應視在黑漆地上，疏落有致，允稱大方。

20 A BONE-INLAID BLACK LACQUER CHEST 黑漆嵌骨描金嬰戲圖小櫃

18th Century 十八世紀

The chest is of rectangular shape standing on an integral base. It is inlaid in bone and highlighted in gilt and ink on the front with a group of seven boys playing in a courtyard garden below a phoenix in flight and watched by a scholar and his wife; the sides and top are similarly decorated with boys and figures.

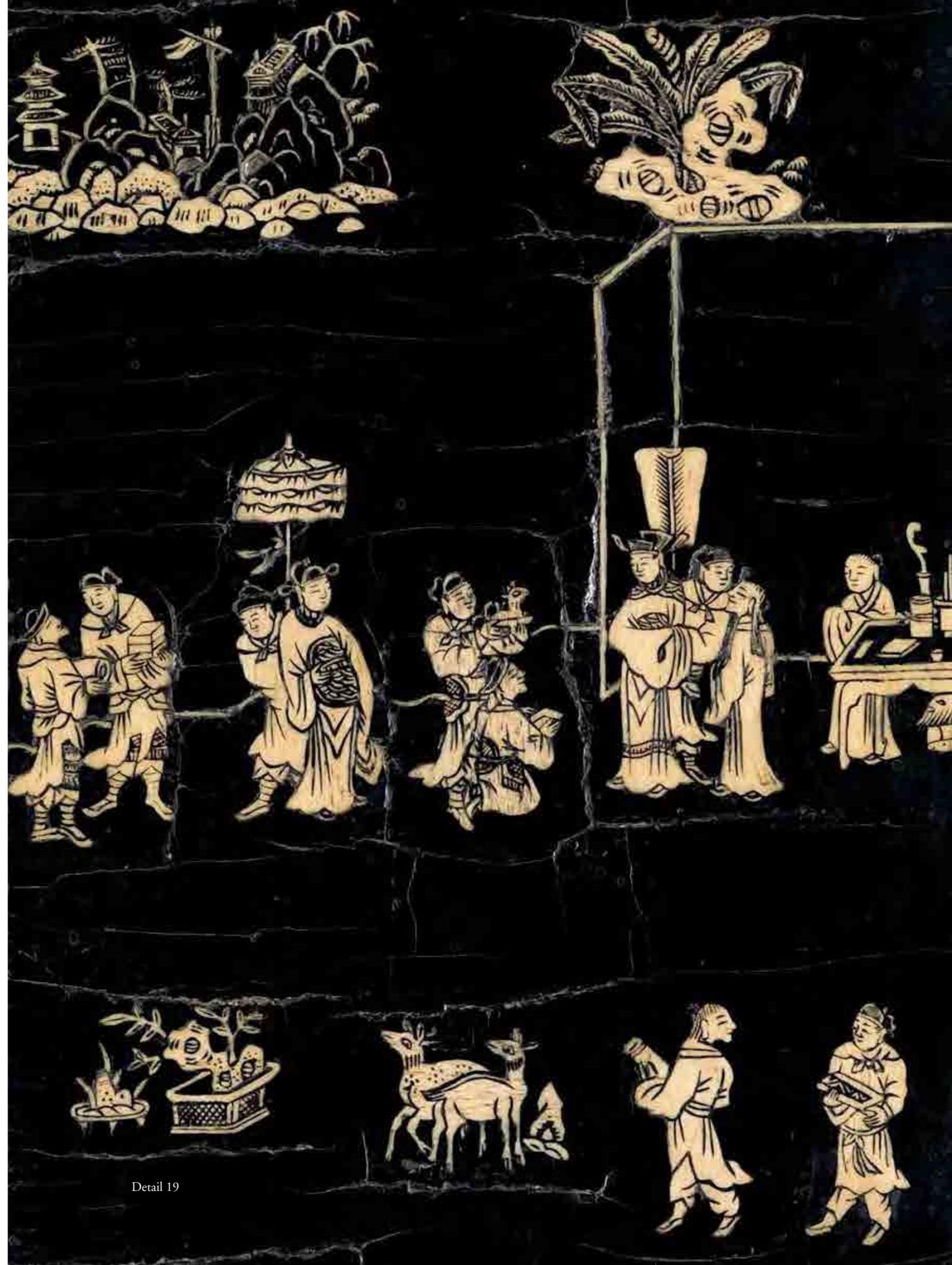
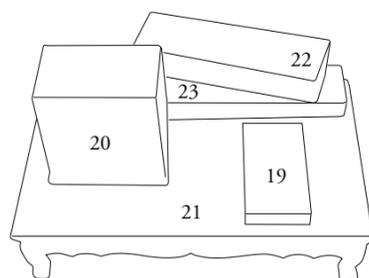
35 cm. high x 35 cm. wide x 23 cm. deep

21 A BONE-INLAID BLACK LACQUER KANG TABLE 黑漆嵌骨拜會圖炕桌

18th Century 十八世紀

The table of rectangular shape with short cabriole legs and shaped aprons, inlaid in bone on the top with a procession led by a dignitary being greeted by four kneeling figures offering tributes, all set in a landscape. The sides, aprons and legs decorated with floral sprays, butterflies, auspicious objects and *chilong*.

101 cm. wide x 63.5 cm. deep x 26 cm. high

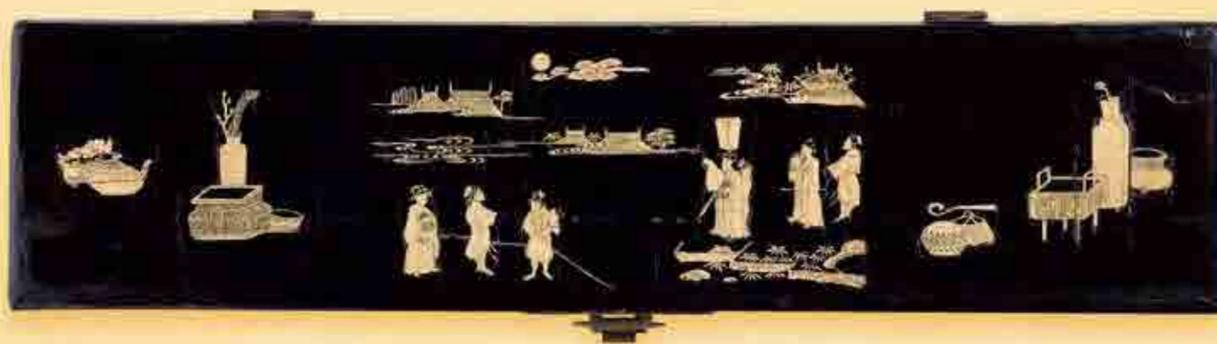


Detail 19





Detail 22



Detail 23

22 A BONE-INLAID BLACK LACQUER BOX 黑漆嵌骨拜會圖箱

18th Century 十八世紀

The box of rectangular shape inlaid in bone on the top with a panel depicting young officials paying a visit to their superior, all set in a landscaped garden. The sides with various antique objects and prunus blossoms.

57.5 cm. wide x 17.5 cm. deep x 11 cm. high

23 A BONE-INLAID BLACK LACQUER STEPPED BOX 黑漆嵌骨文武官圖箱

18th Century 十八世紀

The box is of squat 'T'-shape. It is inlaid in bone on the top with official and martial figures next to pavilions obscured by clouds below the moon, between antique objects. The front and sides are similarly decorated with antique objects and prunus blossoms.

72 cm. wide x 17 cm. wide x 11.5 cm. high

The unusual shape of this box suggest that it was used over the poles of a sedan chair. A similarly shaped box (illustrated in *Chinese Lacquer*, London, 1979, fig. 198, fig. 33) is in the Royal Ontario Museum, Canada.

此箱形狀奇特，當是轎中用箱，上方突出處可置放轎槓之上。加拿大安大略博物館藏有一件形制相似之轎箱。



Fig. 33



No. 24 (Reverse)



Fig. 34

24 A MOTHER-OF-PEARL INLAID BLACK LACQUER TABLE SCREEN

黑漆嵌螺鈿拷紅圖硯屏

Kangxi Period 康熙

The screen is of rectangular shape, finely inlaid in shades of thin mother-of-pearl on one side with a maid kneeling in front of her mistress, and an attendant holding a cane, inside a courtyard house with verdant trees, rocks and vine-strewn trellis in the garden. The reverse is inlaid with inscription.

23 cm. high x 12.2 cm. wide

The inscription is taken from the *Tale of the West Chamber*, and can be translated:

Oh Mistress, if you could let it be, then let it be. Why dwell in such triviality? It is said: when a daughter has grown up, she is hard to keep!

The kneeling figure in the image is Hong Niang, the maid of the heroine of the tale, Cui Yingying, who is being questioned by Madame Cui for her part in the matchmaking of her young mistress and the scholar Zhang Sheng. It is one of the most popular scenes in the story, popularised by the opera *Kao Hong* (The Interrogation of Hong Niang).

Table screens like these are popular in the early 18th century. Often they are decorated with popular tales such as the current screen, but sometimes also depict more elegant scenes, such as the pair of screens in the Hong Kong Museum exhibition *2000 years of Chinese Lacquer* (fig. 34 Hong Kong, no. 94, p. 181) decorated with landscapes.

此屏圖案為西廂記拷紅一幕，描述崔鶯鶯與張生東窗事發，紅娘被崔夫人審問一段情事。背面題字為：夫人得好休，便好休，這其間何必苦追求？常言道：女大不中留！

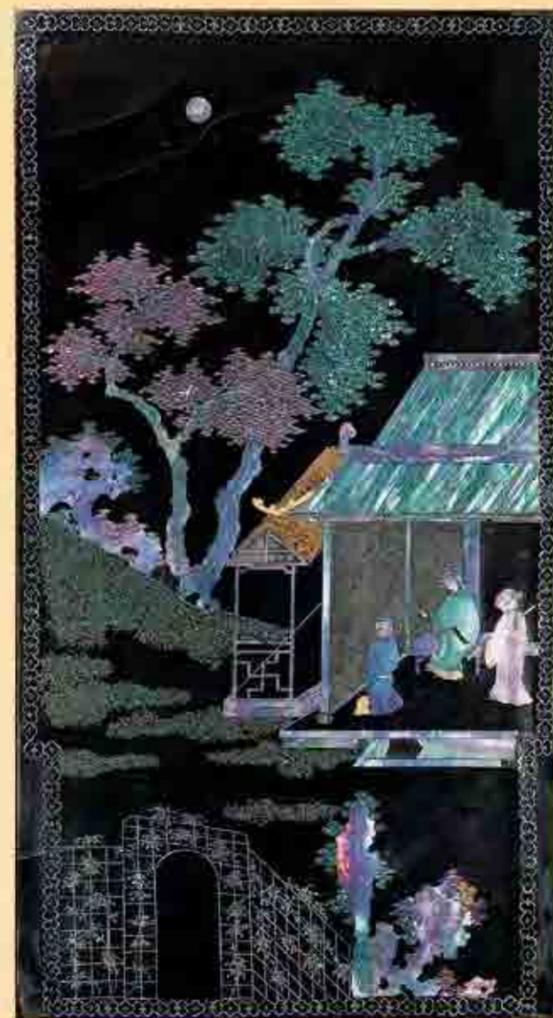
25 A MOTHER-OF-PEARL INLAID LACQUER AND JADE-INSET ORNAMENT

黑漆嵌螺鈿鑲玉花籃式佩飾

18th Century 十八世紀

The ornament is shaped as a flower basket, finely inlaid in thin mother-of-pearl on a black lacquer ground with various trellis and floral designs. The interior is inlaid with two white jade plaques, carved in shallow relief with narcissus and *lingzhi* issuing from wicker work.

9.2 cm. long





26 A CARVED THREE-COLOURED LACQUER HEXAFOIL
JARDINIÈRE
剔彩六菱式花盆

Qianlong 乾隆

The jardinière stands on six *ruyi*-shaped feet and flares to an everted rim. It is carved around the outside through cinnabar and yellow to reveal the black ground with six panels, each enclosing a scholar and his attendant gathering herbs in mountainous landscape. The panels are surrounded by dense lotus scrolls and below a band of key pattern around the rim.

24 cm. wide

The Qianlong emperor was very fond of carved lacquer, but it would appear that the complex techniques and craftsmanship required to produce it have not been passed down to the lacquer workers in the palace workshops. This is evident in the fact that ivory and bamboo carver Feng Qi was ordered by the emperor to attempt carving lacquer in the 3rd year of Qianlong, without much success; and in the 45th year of Qianlong, three pieces of carved lacquer with minor damage was sent for repair in Suzhou, because 'craftsmen in the capital were not able to fix them'. Suzhou seems to be the main production centre for carved lacquer in the 18th century, as records show that many of the carved lacquer in the Palace were made in this area. This jardiniere was probably also made in Suzhou, as the style of carving can be compared to many of the pieces in the Qing Court collection, such as that on the 'Paulownia-washing' box in the Palace Museum, Beijing (illustrated in *Complete Collection of Treasures of the Palace Museum - Qing Lacquer*, no. 8, p. 14) or the 'Strolling under the moon' box, also in the Palace Museum, Beijing (illustrated *ibid.*, no. 26, p. 43).





27 AN INLAID BLACK LACQUER CHEST
黑漆嵌百寶官皮箱

18th Century 十八世紀

The chest is of rectangular shape with canted corners on the top and standing on an integral base. It is inlaid in moth-of-pearl, bone and various semi-precious stones at the top with stylised floral sprays enclosed within a border of linked archaic scrolls and *ruyi* heads, on the sides with bats above floral sprays, and on the front doors with two quatrefoil panels each containing antique objects. The doors open to reveal various sized drawers, each decorated with floral sprays.

41 cm. high x 39 cm. wide x 32 cm. deep

The combination of lacquer and other precious materials, although not a new invention, reached a zenith in the 18th century. Contrary to carved lacquer, the majority of which appears to have been made in Suzhou, the inlaid lacquer pieces seem to have mainly been produced in the Yangzhou area. The current cabinet is a very good example of this new style, combining the delicate soft mother-of-pearl inlays with hardstones to create contrast. Although no other identical examples appear to have been published, a tiered box in the Palace Museum, Beijing, is decorated with similar cloud scrolls and bats in hard mother-of-pearl inlays. (illustrated *ibid*, no. 181, p. 242).



THE CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA

中國歷代年表

新石器時代 NEOLITHIC PERIOD
c.6500-1700 BC

夏 XIA DYNASTY c.2100-1600 BC

商 SHANG DYNASTY c.1600-1100 BC

周 ZHOU DYNASTY c.1100-256 BC

西周 Western Zhou c.1100-771 BC

東周 Eastern Zhou 770-256 BC

春秋 Spring and Autumn Period
770-476 BC

戰國 Warring States Period
475-221 BC

秦 QIN DYNASTY 221-206 BC

漢 HAN DYNASTY

206 BC-AD 220

西漢 Western Han 206 BC-AD 8

新王莽 Xin (Wang Mang Interregnum)
AD 9-23

東漢 Eastern Han AD 25-220

三國 THREE KINGDOMS 220-265

魏 Wei 220-265

蜀漢 Shu Han 221-263

吳 Wu 222-263

晉 JIN DYNASTY 265-420

西晉 Western Jin 265-317

十六國 Sixteen Kingdoms 304-439

東晉 Eastern Jin 317-420

南朝 SOUTHERN DYNASTIES

北朝 NORTHERN DYNASTIES
420-589

南朝 Southern Dynasties

劉宋 Liu Song 420-479

南齊 Southern Qi 479-502

梁 Liang 502-557

陳 Chen 557-589

北朝 Northern Dynasties

北魏 Northern Wei 386-534

東魏 Eastern Wei 534-550

西魏 Western Wei 535-556

北齊 Northern Qi 550-577

北周 Northern Zhou 557-581

隋 SUI DYNASTY 581-618

唐 TANG DYNASTY 618-907

五代 FIVE DYNASTIES 907-960

後梁 Later Liang 907-923

後唐 Later Tang 923-936

後晉 Later Jin 936-946

後漢 Later Han 947-950

後周 Later Zhou 951-960

遼 LIAO DYNASTY 907-1125

宋 SONG DYNASTY 960-1279

北宋 Northern Song 960-1127

南宋 Southern Song 1127-1279

金 JIN DYNASTY 1115-1234

元 YUAN DYNASTY 1279-1368

明 MING DYNASTY 1368-1644

洪武 Hongwu 1368-1398

建文 Jianwen 1399-1402

永樂 Yongle 1403-1425

洪熙 Hongxi 1425

宣德 Xuande 1426-1435

正統 Zhengtong 1436-1449

景泰 Jingtai 1450-1456

天順 Tianshun 1457-1464

成化 Chenghua 1465-1487

弘治 Hongzhi 1488-1505

正德 Zhengde 1506-1521

嘉靖 Jiajing 1522-1566

隆慶 Longqing 1567-1572

萬曆 Wanli 1573-1619

泰昌 Taichang 1620

天啟 Tianqi 1621-1627

崇禎 Chongzhen 1628-1644

清 QING DYNASTY 1644-1911

順治 Shunzhi 1644-1661

康熙 Kangxi 1662-1722

雍正 Yongzheng 1723-1735

乾隆 Qianlong 1736-1795

嘉慶 Jiaqing 1796-1820

道光 Daoguang 1821-1850

咸豐 Xianfeng 1851-1861

同治 Tongzhi 1862-1874

光緒 Guangxu 1875-1908

宣統 Xuantong 1909-1911

中華民國 REPUBLIC OF CHINA
1912-

洪憲 HONGXIAN (YUAN SHIKAI)
1915-1916

中華人民共和國
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
1949-