

The Art of Scent

Littleton and Hennessy



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INTRODUCTION

THE ART OF SCENT

The study of art history necessarily emphasises the material at the expense of the immaterial. In China, this has resulted in the neglect of many significant aspects of her ancient culture, such as music and dance. Scent, the subject of this autumn's exhibition, is also an area that has hardly been studied, in spite of its numerous references in historical texts and literature.

The character *xiang* (香) has its prototype in oracle bone inscriptions more than 4000 years old and denotes a pleasant smell, referring specifically to the sweet smell of rice stalks with its associations of a bountiful harvest. Another character found on oracle bones, the prototype to the modern character *zi* (紫), is drawn as a man holding burning wood stalks. This is defined in the *Shuowen jiezi* as 'burning wood in sacrifice to heaven'. As far back as the Neolithic times, the smell from dried mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), which the ancients used to start fire, was supposed to have medicinal as well as purifying properties. Thus from the earliest records it can be seen that scent was used in China for worship, medicine and pleasure.

Some of the earliest incense excavated in China is a resin-based fragrant substance in a red-lacquer box found in the tomb of the King of Nanyue (approx. 130 BCE?)¹. It was also during the Han dynasty that works of art associated with scent begin to be made. Many of the small but valuable lacquer, bronze or jade boxes were probably used to contain the precious perfume (see cat. no. 1). However, in this period, perhaps the most significant development in our story was the appearance of the incense burner.

These burners were often designed as mountain peaks surmounted by elongated fabulous beasts, further enhanced with abstracted swirling clouds. This design was known as the *boshanlu* or 'universal mountain brazier' and was based on Daoist ideas of a many peaked, island paradise. With the incense smoke emanating from between the peaks, it was possible for the viewer to imagine himself floating above these mysterious islands, which were said to dissolve into mist as mortals approached.

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¹ Possibly frankincense, see *Xihan Nanyuewang Mu*, Beijing Wenwu Chubanshe, 1991, p. 135.

The use of a Daoist design in the burner was probably not accidental. The early Han period saw a proliferation of studies on medicinal herbs and substances as Han Wudi was fascinated with Daoist elixirs. With expanded foreign contacts and increasing trade, many new fragrant spices were introduced to the Chinese.

As a design, the *boshanlu* represented a break from any previous works in bronze. The radical novelty of the design of the *boshanlu* also had to do with Han Wudi's pioneering spirit, which is evident on a magnificent gilt-bronze example excavated in a Han tomb in Shaanxi, dated to the fourth year of Jianyuan (135 BCE), the fifth year after Han Wudi ascended the throne. It bears the inscription *Neizhe Weiyang Shangwo*, 'in the care of the Bed Keeper of Weiyang Palace'. The Weiyang Palace was Wudi's study, so this burner was clearly intended for his personal use. Raised on an imitation-bamboo stem and decorated with four strident dragons around undulating mountain peaks, this censer exemplifies the innovative style favoured by this legendary ruler.

In spite of its Daoist origins, by the 5th century the *boshanlu* became closely associated with Buddhism, a foreign religion imported from India through Central Asia. It appears carved as a votive offering at the base of Buddhist steles dating to the Northern Wei period (fig. 1). Curiously, they are absent from otherwise similar sculptures of the preceding 16 kingdoms period (fig. 2), suggesting that the use of incense in Buddhist ceremonies was first promulgated in China by the Central Asian Toba Wei aristocracy.

The increasing popularity of Buddhism during the following Sui and Tang dynasties saw the increase in the use of incense, evident from examples on Buddhist paintings and sculpture of the period. Ever expanding trade and prosperity created fertile ground for new styles and innovations, the very rare hand-held incense burner (cat. no. 3) being one such example, combining a confident exuberance with an unexpected practicality.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

Not surprisingly, the decorative motifs used on the censers moved away from Daoist imagery and towards a new Buddhist vocabulary. The conical mountain transformed into a lotus bud, while the mythical animals of Daoism were replaced by Buddhist lions. The latter, a guardian of Buddhist teaching, appears on the hand-held censer as well as a cover for the later white-glazed censer from the Five Dynasties (cat. no. 6). Here, the design is especially artful, the lion animated by the breath-like smoke emanating from its mouth.

The cities of the Tang dynasty also saw an expansion of the types of fragrant substances used in China. Plant extracts like camphor and turmeric were in great demand, and were said to have been used in the Tang court to scent the palaces of the concubines before the emperor spent the night there.² Exotic fragrant flowers such as patchouli and jasmine were also imported for their scent. Jia Sixie, writing in the 6th century, noted patchouli as an ingredient for making 'face oil', a type of facial moisturiser³ a practice reflected in the making of ceramic boxes designed especially to contain these precious oils (cat. no. 4).

Since both foreign spice traders and Buddhist missionaries came from the west, it is little wonder that Luohans are often depicted with incense. In the famous Tang painting of luohans by *Lu lengjia* (fig. 18), the gift of the Central Asian worshipper has often been interpreted to be a rock. However, it is equally likely to be a piece of scented wood. Similarly, in the portrait of a young *luohan* (cat. no. 5) in the current exhibition, the gnarled tree bark standing in the drum shaped censer probably represents a treasured piece of *chenxiangmu* (agar).

However, it was during the Song dynasty that the use of incense reached a zenith. In the *Song Shi* (History of Song Dynasty), it is recorded that:

In the Song economy, apart from tea, salt and alum, *xiang* is the most profitable, therefore its market is controlled by the government⁴.

² Su E, *Duyang Zhibian*, juan III

³ Jia Sixie, *Qimin Yaoshu*, juan 5.

⁴ *Song Shi*, juan 185.

The tax revenue from the trade of *xiang liao* increased almost four-fold from the beginning of Northern Song to the beginning of Southern Song, a testament to the demand and popularity of this commodity. With such large volumes, the court had to set up an official bureau, *Shibosi*, to regulate the trade, a precursor to the modern day customs office. Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the import of *xiang liao* directly resulted in the establishment of the customs office in China.

Although incense was still associated with Buddhism, as seen in the *wan*-symbol decorated stone censer dating from the Northern Song period (cat. no. 7), it also would have been used in the type of ancestor worship rituals seen in Li Gonglin's depiction of sacrifice to heaven (fig. 3). Moreover the rise of Neo-Confucianism, with its emphasis on self-cultivation, popularised scholarly activities such as music and calligraphy, the experience of which was enhanced by the use of incense.

For example, the poet Lu You (1125-1210), describes his intimate relationship with incense in the following lines:

The window is bright, the desk is clear;
Leisurely I trace a Tang calligraphy
with incense deep in the precious burner.

Similarly, in the famous painting "listening to the zither" by the Emperor Song Huizong (fig. 5), incense is used to accompany the playing of the qin.

Another poet, Chen Yiyu (1090-1138), delighted in his solitude with no one but the company of burning incense:

Unversed in officialdom others tease me,
Socialising rarely, I am able to hide myself.
When clouds shift I hold on to a walking stick,
Sitting in leisure, only with the incense burning.

Another aspect of Northern Song Neo-Confucianism was the use of antiquity as the standard in identifying and defining things Chinese. The rediscovery and collection of archaic ritual bronzes such as the *ding*, *li* and *gui* also led to their creative reuse, as in fig. 5, where a *li* is used as a plant container. Before long these bronze forms would become inextricably linked to incense as burners. The publication



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

of illustrated catalogues of ancient bronzes in Imperial and private collections such as *Kaogu Tu* and *Xuanhe Bogu Tu*, provided the pattern books for contemporary craftsmen, and copies of these forms in ceramics, jade and bronze soon appeared. The very rare large bronze tripod censer in the current exhibition (cat. no. 8), reflects this newfound taste, and is a very close copy of an example in the *Kaogu Tu*. Although a censer of such large size would undoubtedly have been used in a large temple or important ancestral shrine, it must have been primarily admired for its air of antiquity, regardless of the context and ceremonies in which it was used, and without overt Buddhist or Daoist motifs.

Thus, scent and the life of the literati became inextricably intertwined from the Song dynasty onwards. It is therefore not surprising that the next golden age of incense was the 17th century, another period in which there was a revival of neo-Confucianism and the rise of the scholar-official.

In the interim, incense had continued to occupy an important place in worship. Important blue and white ceramic censers such as cat. no. 11, were created to be accompanied by matching pairs of candlesticks and vases, to make a set known as *wu gong* or the five offerings. These would grace the large altar tables that had become fashionable in the 15th century onwards, and which are copied in stone in royal tombs of the period (fig. 4).

However, it was during the 17th century, that we once again see an intimate connection between the use of incense and the scholar. In the *biji* and guides of taste of the day such as Wen Zhenghen's *Zhangwu zhi* (Notes on Superfluous Things), there are extensive references to incense and the types of censers that should be used. For example, he writes:

Ding vessels from the Three Dynasties, Qin and Han, as well as those from the *guan*, *ge*, Ding and Longquan kilns are all for appreciation, not to be used. Only use Xuande bronze censers - the larger ones are particularly suitable.⁵

Like the furniture favoured by the literati of the period, there is a marked fashion for austerity and archaism. The illustrated catalogue

⁵ *Zhangwu zhi*, juan 7.

Xuande Dingyi tulu (Illustrated Catalogue of Xuande Bronze Vessels) published in the late Ming shows the tastes in bronze censers in the 17th century, (rather those of the Xuande reign that it purports to date from). Quite unlike the Song and Yuan bronze examples, where the surfaces are heavily decorated in imitation of archaic pieces, the examples illustrated in this catalogue are usually undecorated, but of exquisite outline. These censers, made with high quality bronze alloy with high zinc content and supposedly copying Song ceramics, form a unique group amongst the cognoscenti of Chinese art as the simply termed *Xuanlu* – Xuande censers (cat. nos. 14, 15), even though few, if any, of these can be categorically dated to the Xuande period.

At the same period, there were also censers that were decorated with narrative scenes, such as the Chongzhen period blue and white porcelain censer in the current exhibition (cat. no. 20) which illustrates the *Peach Blossom Spring*, a text written by Tao Yuanming (365-427) in 421 AD as an allegory of a scholar-official's longing for utopia. This would have been especially meaningful given the political chaos of the day. Interestingly, many of these designs are modelled on designs taken from woodblock illustrations, reflecting the increasing availability of printed books.

The popularity of scent at this time is reflected in the proliferation of the forms in which incense was made as well as the accessories used in its burning. One new innovation was the incense stick and the accompanying bamboo parfumer (cat. no. 12). The latter formed from a section of bamboo, carved and reticulated so that smoke from the burning stick would emanate from within. Other novelties included the use of incense tools, such as shovels and chopsticks-like tongs, to flatten ash and to arrange pieces of incense or wood. These would be held in a small spill vase, which together with the incense box and censer, made up *lu, he, ping*, a tri-partite set that was essential for every scholar's desk.

With the return to a strong centralised government and the rise of imperial patronage at the beginning of the Qing dynasty, the intimate feeling of censers of the 17th century gave way to a much grander, more extravagant style. During the Qianlong and Jiaqing period, with the revival of philology and interests in archaeology, censers made in imitation of archaic bronzes again became popular. In the tradition of *Xuanhe Bogu tu*, the Qianlong Emperor compiled his own catalogue of archaic bronzes, the *Xiqing Gujian*.

Remarkably accurate Bronzes facsimiles of archaic prototypes were produced, but the Qing taste for rich finishes led to fanciful additions such as the gold-splashed highlights seen on the *gui* formed censer (cat. no. 22).

Other uses of scent other than incense are also known from this period. Fragrant woods such as sandalwood and aloeswood are used to make accessories for the study and home such as pillows (cat. no. 25) and brush-pots. Crushed and combined with lacquer, they were formed into hairpins and pendants that perfumed the wearer. The strange shapes of the scented wood was admired in themselves and used as decoration in the studio, in a manner similar to scholar's rocks (cat. no. 23). Scent filled pomanders perfumed wedding beds while fragrant *lingzhi* was grown as *penzai*, in order to scent and fumigate rooms.

Today, with the revival of scholarly taste among collectors of Chinese art, incense once again enlivens the gatherings of friends, and accompanies philosophical reflection. Although it is *chenxiang* that forms the basis of most modern Chinese incense, increasing knowledge about the fragrances of the past has led to experimentation among incense makers. As in the past, new forms of censers are introduced, including burners making use of electricity.

Thus, it can be seen that this aspect of Chinese culture is still evolving, continuing a tradition that began over 4000 years ago.

《宣和博古圖》等書的發行，使得此風延續，對後代影響深遠。本次展出的宋/元三足大香爐便仿造《考古圖》及《宣和博古圖》上所見的商乙毛鼎。雖然如此大的香爐當是為寺廟，祠堂或祭壇上所造的香具，但是它卻沒有任何與佛、道有關的紋飾，而是以其莊重的古趣發人幽思。

自宋代開始，香與文人的生活密不可分。不獨有偶地，理學與文人文化盛行的晚明成為香料史的另一個黃金時代。其間，香料與宗教的關係也不曾間斷，如此次展出的纏枝牡丹紋青花香爐，便可與成對燭台、花瓶一起，被供奉在大供桌上，稱為「五供」，是十五世紀後常見的形式，並有石製的同類五供被擺放在皇陵之中。

香與文人在晚明時再度有了親密的關係。文震亨的《長物志》便詳細地列出許多品種的香料、香具及其用法。例如他在卷七裡提及香爐時說：

三代秦漢鼎彝，及官、哥、定窯、龍泉、宣窯皆以備賞鑒，非日用所宜，惟宣銅彝爐稍大者，最為適用。

如晚明傢具一般，晚明的銅器極為簡練，近於當代極簡主義，與晚明時文人好雅的品味相符。晚明時所刊行的《宣德鼎彝圖錄》上所載遺事，也許並不見得是可靠的史實，其上的圖像，也不見得就是宣德年間所鑄造的銅器，但至少它讓我們瞭解晚明時文人所喜愛的銅爐形象。宋元的仿古風銅器逼近原物，紋飾繁複依舊；晚明的銅器則以宋瓷為典範，多樸素無文，以形見勝。這些以高質量的含錳黃銅所造的精美銅器，藏家統稱之為「宣爐」，深受喜愛。

除了簡練的宣爐以外，明末清初的香具還有以通景人物，山水或花鳥等裝飾的，這些文飾或可在版畫上找到對應，或取材於文學故事。本次展出的青花人物紋香爐，便是以陶淵明著名的《桃花源記》為題材，是文人心所嚮往的理想國寫照。因為香的種類增多，此時並有其它多樣的香具出現，如專門插線香的香筒，以及燒篆香用的整套香具，爐、瓶、盒。

乾嘉時期考據學盛行，文人多對考古金文多有心得，使復古風再度吹起。乾隆皇帝依照《宣和博古圖》舊例，敕命編纂《西清古鑒》紀錄宮中所藏青銅彝器，而這時期的銅器多有完全依古式仿造者，如此次所展出的簠式銅爐，將復古風尚推到極致，卻又不忘加上清中期特有點綴，銅上點金滿布，莊重之中帶著華貴，成為清中期香具的特徵之一。除此之外，香料木的功能更加多元化，可作成書房或室內的用具，如此次展出的檀香木枕及沉香木筆筒等；或作成髮簪，香佩等身上佩帶的飾物；亦或成為盆中供養的山子擺件。

文房器物現時受到藏家的喜愛，而香文化也再度受到重視。在好友三兩促膝相聚，清談低迴之時，點上一爐香，泡上一壺茶，可消夜永，增添情趣。雖然沉香還是現今主流，隨著作香師傅對以往香料的認識增多，也調出了許多新奇的香方。就如前人對香爐不斷推陳出新，現在也有新的電香爐出籠，使得香的使用更加方便，讓這個延續了四千多年的老文化再度復興起來。



Fig. 5



1 A ROCK CRYSTAL CIRCULAR BOX AND COVER 水晶香盒

Han Dynasty 西漢

The cylindrical box and cover standing on a short foot ring, with sloping shoulders and straight sides. Finely carved on the cover with a central medallion of four spade-shaped lappets circling a central C-scroll stamen. The medallion encircled by raised bands and a band of dense C-scrolls is divided by four *taotie* masks. The shoulder is incised with twelve S-scrolls, above further dense C-scrolls on the sides. The box is carved with interlocking scrolls. The translucent stone with a fine, soft polish.

6 cm. diam.; 4 cm. high

Provenance:

Private UK collection purchased in London in the 1960's

Rock crystal has a hardness of 7 on the Mohs scale, much harder than nephrite (around 5 to 5.6) and is therefore a more difficult material to carve, which is probably why it is very rare to find carved crystal pieces attributable to the early periods of Chinese history. However, a large crystal cup now in the Hangzhou History Museum measuring 15.4 cm. high was excavated in a Warring States tomb in Shitang village near Hangzhou (fig. 6), proving that as early as the Zhou period the Chinese had already mastered the techniques to work this material.

The current box is very similar in design to a jade box dated to the Western Han period excavated in Chaohu, now in the Chaohu Municipal Museum (fig. 7), with a similar cross shaped floral element on the cover and the unusual unmatched borders on the sides. Boxes like these were found to store incense, such as the red-lacquer example from the tomb of the King of Nanyue, which contained granules of resin-based incense when excavated (resin-based incense found in the lacquer box in the western chamber of the tomb of King of Nanyue, fig. 8).

水晶莫氏硬度為7度，比軟玉（莫氏硬度5~5.6度）要硬許多，也因此更難琢磨成器，所以傳世出土的古水晶非常少見。1990年杭州石塘戰國墓中出土了一件水晶杯，現藏杭州歷史博物館，證明了古人已經有能治水晶的技術。

本盒與巢湖西漢墓中出土的一件玉盒紋飾非常相近，應是同時代的文物。南越王墓中的一件漆盒，也發現有乳香類的樹脂香料，證明這類盒子是盛裝香料的香盒。



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



2 A BRONZE CENSER, *BOSHANLU*
青銅博山爐

Han Dynasty 漢

The censer has a deep rounded bowl standing on a stem-foot issued from four spade-shaped petals above a circular drip dish. The high domed cover is pierced with scrolling clouds, below a bird-shaped finial. The bronze has an attractive malachite patina with areas of lapis encrustations.

20.5 cm. high

Fig. 9 A similar censer is in the collection of the Hakutsuru Museum, Kobe (fig. 9)







3 A GILT-BRONZE HAND-HELD CENSER, *QUEWEILU* 鎏金銅鵲尾香爐

7th Century, Sui-Early Tang Dynasty 隋/唐

The circular censer with a flat base and sharply up-turned, flaring sides. Is cast with two horned mythical beasts around the exterior and stands on a stem foot of lotus petals. Its long, flat handle is attached to the side of the censer with a circular stud, and curving around the outline, rejoins the censer at the base. The side joint of the handle and the censer applied with a pierced *ruyi*-shaped panel by two studs, and the end of the handle decorated with a counter weight in the shape of a lion on a lotus pedestal. The surface of the handle incised with a phoenix and a wild goose amongst floral scrolls and below clouds. The censer is gilt overall except for the interior.

43 cm. long; 12 cm. high



Fig. 10

Although *queweilu*, or 'magpie-tail censer', of this early form are often seen depicted on Buddhist sculptures and murals from the Northern Wei onwards, there are very few extant examples. An inlaid lacquered bronze example is in the Shosoin, Nara (fig. 15); while another bronze example is in the Hakutsuru Museum, Kobe (fig. 14); with a 3rd silver example excavated from the Famensi hoard (fig. 11). The current censer is more closely related to the Hakutsuru example, both sharing very similar proportions and design. The current censer probably originally had a liner, like the Hakutsuru example, which has now been lost.

However, several characteristics on the current censer suggest it is of an earlier date. The lion counter-weight on the current censer is modelled more softly, which is typical of Sui, rather than the pronounced musculature of the Tang pieces. The heart-shaped lotus petals with the raised central grooves also suggest an early date. Both these features can be seen on the bronze Buddha group in the Boston Museum of Art dated to the 6th century (fig. 12), and the gilt bronze group excavated in Dongbalicun outside Xi'an. The horned mythical beasts around the exterior are also comparable to the beasts found on the outer band of a bronze mirror dated to the Sui dynasty in the Hakutsuru Museum (fig. 10).

A very similar *queweilu* is carried by a Bodhisattva on a wall painting in cave 159 in Dunhuang (fig. 16); dating to the mid-Tang; and another example with a cover is depicted in cave 220 (fig. 13).

雖然此種器形的鸚尾香爐常在畫上出現，傳世或出土的例子都很少。目前所知只有三例，兩件銅製爐分別在日本奈良正倉院及神戶白鶴美術館，而一件銀製鸚尾爐則在何家村出土。本件與白鶴美術館藏最為相近，造型與比例都相似。不過本件在獅子及蓮花座的處理上都有隋朝遺風，可與波士頓美術館及西安外郊東八里村出土的兩件隋代鎏金銅上的獅子與蓮花相比較。另外本件爐身外的神獸也與白鶴美術館藏的一件隋朝銅鏡上的神獸相似。

敦煌159窟即220窟中的壁畫上都可見菩薩手中持著鸚尾香爐，證明此種香爐在唐代非常盛行。



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

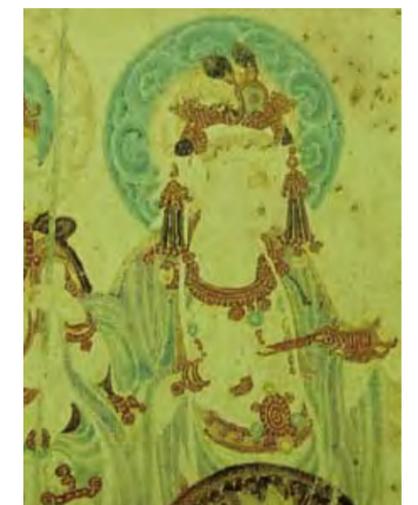


Fig. 16

4 A WHITE-GLAZED CIRCULAR OIL BOX AND COVER 白釉花形蓋盒

Five Dynasties 五代

The box and cover of cylindrical shape with sloping shoulders standing on a slightly convex base. The cover is gently lobed on the top, and covered all over with a translucent glaze on the exterior. The box is glazed overall except the base and the mouth rim, exposing the white stoneware body.

12.5 cm. diam.; 5.5 cm. high

Provenance:
Bluetts, London

The shape of the current box and cover suggests that it is copying a metalwork prototype. The inside rim of the box is probably reduced, as it would have curled further inwards to form a secure container for oil, so that the content does not spill in transport, as can be seen on a white-glazed box and cover in the Shijiazhuang Museum (fig. 17).

Vessels like this box were made to contain fragrant oils for the lady's dressing table and were essential for the elaborate coiffures of the Court Ladies of the period.

In Jia Sixie's *Qimin Yaoshu* (Essential Techniques for the Peasantry) written in the 6th century, records a recipe for facial moisturiser in the fifth *juan*:

“Use cow marrow (if short, mix with some cow fat; or if lacking, use cow fat alone); soak cloves and patchouli in warm wine (use same method as when soaking orchids), cook as if making water-plantain soup, also add mugworts for colour; pass through cotton, and store in ceramic or lacquer vessels.”

It is noted by Tang Shenwei in his *Zhenglei Bencao* (Classified Materia Medica) that:

Jasmine...its smell is spicy and not poisonous, steam it with oil to obtain its essence, and use it as moisturiser for face or hair, can cure dryness and scent the skin.

此盒的器形應是仿造同類的金屬盒而作。盒的內部口緣本來應該更高並向內彎曲，現已殘缺。這類的盒子是為了盛裝香料油而作，高口緣可以防止油在移動時溢出。石家莊博物館所藏一件白釉盒也有類似的設計。

賈思勰在《齊民要術》卷五中記載了‘面脂’的做法：

用牛髓(牛髓少者，用牛脂和之。若無髓，用脂亦得也)，溫酒浸丁香、藿香二種(浸法如煎澤方)，煎法一同合澤，亦著青蒿以發色，綿濾著瓷，漆蓋中令凝。

唐慎微的《證類本草》也記載：

茉莉花氣味辛熱無毒，蒸油取液作面脂，頭澤長髮，潤燥香肌，亦入茗湯。

本件蓋盒是用以盛裝這種香料油最好的器皿。



Fig. 17





5 LUOHAN AND INCENSE WOOD
羅漢沉香

Song Dynasty 宋

Ink on silk 水墨絹本

Two collector's seals: *Xishi Zhi Bao; Junsheng Xinshang*

20.5 cm. x 20.5 cm. / 48.5 cm. x 31.5 cm. with frame

收藏印二：希世之寶；俊生心賞

Provenance:

The Del Drago collection, lot 138, Christies London, 16th Dec 1958
(as Kun Can)



Fig. 18

The painting is part of a larger hand-scroll. It depicts a *luohan* seated on a mat of animal skin in royal ease with his left leg raised and right leg resting on the floor. His left arm is holding a plate of fruit and his right arm is held in *pran mudra*, the *mudra* of increased vitality. His wispy hair is gathered behind a diadem, and he is wearing a loose robe above his foreign attire, with fitted sleeves and heeled shoes. His face is gently shaded to suggest shadow and light. Curiously, in front of him is a circular drum-shaped vessel with a domed base, in which a large piece of dried wood is standing.

The painting is in archaic style, recalling that of Tang period figural paintings, especially with its use of shading on the facial features, such as that seen on the hand-scroll painting *Six Hermits* in the Palace Museum, Beijing, attributed to Lu Yao of the Tang dynasty. However, whereas in wall paintings of the Tang period the shading is applied as a wash, here the shading is done with very fine lines.

The drum-shaped vessel in the painting is of Song style, very similar to the drum-shaped censer dated to Southern Song period excavated in Canton (fig. 19). Similarly, the vessel in the his hand is similar in proportion to the ceramics of the Northern Song.

It is likely that this is a Song version of an earlier painting, where the figures have been faithfully copied, while the accompanying elements are given a contemporary flavour, as is often the case in later copies of earlier paintings. Another painting in the Palace Museum, attributed to Lu Lengjia of the Tang dynasty, shows a foreigner carrying a piece of rock-like object to offer to a *luohan* (fig. 18). Traditionally this object has been called a *qishi*, or 'fantastic rock', but with the Buddhist theme of the painting, it seems equally likely to be a piece of incense wood, as is represented in the current painting.

The use of *chenxiangmu* as not only incense but something to appreciate visually is recorded in literature from as early as the Northern Song period. Su Shi, for example, gave a *chenxiang* mountain to his brother Su Che as a birthday present, accompanied by a composition *An Ode to a Chenxiang Mountain* to console him, who was in exile in Leizhou at the time (in modern day Guangdong province). Su Shi himself was in exile in Danzhou (on modern day Hainan Island), which in the Song dynasty was one of the places that produced *chenxiang*. He wrote in the prose:



Fig. 19

...this little swell of a mountain, like an island so pleasant,
Like Qinling and Huashan touching the sky
It resembles the Lone Peak piercing the clouds.
Sent to celebrate your birthday,
It carries my stubborn sincerity.
You might feel the days are wasting away;
But see it as retiring home to a rice paddy.
I hope you place this on your desk,
And steep your kerchiefs with its scent.
Maybe not always so strong and forceful,
Its lingering smell lasts evermore!

The subtle yet everlasting scent of the '*chenxiang*' mountain, its solidity and unyielding natural form, were for Su Shi qualities that were worthy of praise. At the low ebb of his brother's life and career, he hoped the incense would bolster Su Che's morale, and encourage him to be unwavering and retain his integrity. In the same way jade was bestowed with five virtues in the Confucian tradition, Su Shi not only enjoyed the scent of *chenxiang*, but delighted in the visual and allegorical connotations it provided.

本畫是手卷的一部份。畫上羅漢盤坐，旁有一鼓式香爐，中立一塊枯木。畫風古樸，有唐畫遺風，可與故宮所藏陸曜所畫六逸圖相比較。但是畫中鼓式爐卻是宋代器物，可比較廣州出土的一件南宋鼓式香爐。此畫無疑是一張宋人仿唐畫，香爐中所立枯木則應是一塊沈香木。

沉香不但可以入香，形奇者還可供擺設，不但香氣氤氳又賞心悅目，在宋代時就已有成例。蘇轍被謫於雷州，意志消沈之際，蘇軾就曾送他的弟弟一件沈香山子以為生日賀禮，並賦詩一首以慰之，其中寫道：

...宛彼小山，嶼然可欣；如秦華之倚天，象小孤之插雲。
往壽子之生朝，以寫我之老慙。
子方面壁以終日，豈亦歸田而自耘？
幸置此於几席，養幽芳於幌帕。
無一往之發烈，有無窮之氤氳。

蘇軾認為沈香堅硬溫潤，纖細而沉重，形象小而氣象豪，又加之香氣淡雅不凡，這種種物性皆是可以為勉勵人內心節操品格的。他希望蘇轍能藉這塊沈香山子，提醒自己在困難之中堅持自己，不受挫敗影響。就如儒家賦五德於玉，蘇軾不但欣賞沈香的香氣，還能在它身上見到種種美德，反應出他自身高超的情操。

6 A WHITE-GLAZED LION-FORM CENSER AND COVER
With associated contemporary bronze stand

白瓷獅子香爐

Five Dynasties 五代

The censer is formed by an open lotus flower with three registers of overlapping petals and stands on a high, domed stem-base. The cover is shaped as a lion seated on its haunches, its left leg resting on a brocade ball. Its head looks straight ahead with mouth agape exposing its teeth, and wearing a tassled band around its neck. The censer is glazed overall in a translucent glaze except for the base and the interior, exposing the white stoneware body. The contemporary bronze stand has a lobed top and six cabriole legs joined by shaped aprons and crossing stretchers.

The censer 18 cm. high

Provenance:

The censer

Carl Kempe Collection, Sweden, sold Sotheby's London, 14 May 2008, lot 210

Exhibited:

The censer

Chinese Gold, Silver and Porcelain. The Kempe Collection, Asia House Gallery, New York, 1971, cat. No. 90, and exhibition touring United States and Shown also at nine other museums

Literature:

The censer

Bo Gyllensvärd, *Chinese Ceramics in the Carl Kempe Collection*, Stockholm, 1964, pl. 346

The World's Great Collections. Oriental Ceramics, vol. 8, Tokyo, 1982, pl. 64

Chinese Ceramics in the Carl Kempe Collection, The Museum of Art and Far Eastern Antiquities in Ulricehamn, Ulricehamn, 2002, pl. 550



Fig. 20





Fig. 21



Fig. 22

The censer can be compared to two earlier pottery lion censers dated to the late Tang with similar treatments to the lions, one excavated in the Huangbaoyao kilns (fig. 20); the other in the collection of Gongyao Ceramics Museum (fig. 21). The facial features of the Gongyao example, with its pricked ears, upright snout and a tassled band around its neck, are especially close to those on this lion censer.

Most depictions of lion censers show them displayed on elaborate stands with cabriole legs. Although this bronze stand may not originally have been used for this purpose, its construction and proportions allow us to visualise how this piece was originally presented. The grouping closely resembles the lion censer with a very similar lotus base depicted sitting on a stand, in the Song painting *Weimo Yanjiao Tu* (The Disourse of Vimalarkirti) in the collection of Palace Museum, Beijing (fig. 22).

7 A CYLINDRICAL TRIPOD STONE CENSER AND COVER 石雕卍字文筒式蓋爐

Northern Song Dynasty 北宋

The censer and cover of perfectly cylindrical shape, and carved from a single piece of grey stone. The censer is standing on three short bracket feet, and the cover pierced with a *wan* symbol.

9.3 cm. diam.; 7.3 cm. high

This charming censer is skilfully carved so that when the cover is placed properly the natural patterns in the stone align perfectly. An identical censer excavated from a Northern Song tomb in Shaanxi, Lantian (fig. 23). From the inscription tablet found in the tomb, we know that it belong to the Lü family, one of whose members, Lü Dalin, was the author of the illustrated catalogue of archaic bronzes, *Kaogu tu*. It is evident then, that censers like this would have adorned the desks of a scholar. Apart from Lü Dalin, Song poet Chen Yuyi for example, also used a stone censer in his studio to accompany him in the cold winter days:

The many ideals I had in my youth,
Have all but vanished with age.
Shutting myself in on the Winter Solstice,
I add prayer beads as the day lengthens.
The northerly wind takes no holiday
In chasing the wild geese south.
How lucky then is my official's hat,
To get a seven-day vigil in the hut!
Deep in the stone censer incense burns,
As I finger messily through a desk of books.
All I can do is to entertain myself;
I am too embarrassed to write to Zhang Fu*!

*Zhang Fu was an official in the Three Kingdoms period, who worked so hard he never took time off to see his family. He was chastised by his superior, Su Xuan, for not setting a good example to the people in leading a balanced work and family life.

此香爐蓋與爐身為一塊石料刻成，爐蓋置放得宜時與爐身石文密絲縫合，雕工似簡而精。

如此類的石香爐頗受文人喜愛。宋朝詩人陳與義便以石爐為伴度過寒冬，他在詩中寫到：

少年多意氣，老去一分無；
閉戶了冬至，日長添數珠。
北風不貸節，鴻雁天南驅；
烏帽亦何幸，七日守屋廬。
石爐深炷火，撩亂一榻書；
只可自怡悅，不堪寄張扶。



Fig. 23





8 A LARGE BRONZE TRIPOD CENSER

銅鼎式三足大香爐

Song/Yuan Dynasty, 12-14th Century, The Wood Stand And Cover 18th Century 宋/元

The censer has a deep rounded bowl rising from three conical legs to a flat rim and two upright bracket handles. It is decorated with a band of *taotie* masks with central flanges; followed by a band of archaic dragons and downward blades. The legs are cast with vertical flanges above two raised bands and cold worked with *taotie* masks. The bronze has a deep dark brown patina. The censer is fitted with an elaborate wood stand carved with a dragon emerging from clouds, and a cover with further clouds and bats.

The censer 30 cm. diam.; 41.5 cm. high

The form and design of this impressive bronze censer follow fairly closely an archaic prototype, a Shang dynasty tripod bronze *dǐng*, illustrated both in the *Kaogu tu* (fig. 25), compiled by Lü Dalin in 1092, and in *Xuanhe Bogu Tu* (fig. 24), compiled in 1123 by Wang Fu under the command of the Emperor Huizong. When it was illustrated in the *Kaogu Tu*, it was in a private collection (Wen family of Henan), and was reportedly excavated in Zhanjia of Pujun (at the border of Henan and Shandong provinces). It had a two-character inscription, but only the first character, *yǐ*, was deciphered, therefore it was called *Yiding*. The Emperor Huizong must have known this piece and thought it of sufficient importance, to acquire it for the Imperial collection. When it was illustrated again in the *Xuanhe Bogu Tu*, the author was able to read the second character of the inscription, *mao*, and it was given the name *Yimaoding*.

It is highly likely that the making of the current censer was influenced by the publication of these two works, and it was made to copy this important archaic bronze example. The shape and decoration of the two are very close, only that the current censer is much larger in size (the *Yimaoding* being around 15 cm. high). To commission such a large bronze would have been extremely expensive, and only possible by a very wealthy individual, a temple or by official command. Although the use of incense proliferated during the Song period, bronze censers, especially when of such large size, rarely survive, as the metal was often recycled for other uses. In the mid 12th century, for example, China experienced a metal shortage and high inflation, and many bronzes vessels were melted down to meet the high demand of coinage both domestic and abroad. Casting of copper and bronze was prohibited, and in 1154 the emperor himself sent 1,500 bronze objects from the Palace to the imperial mint to meet the demand. Only certain items were spared, including those for temple use.

Today, ceramic censers from the Song and Yuan period are held in higher regard than their bronze counterparts by collectors, but they were much cheaper to produce during their time, and were much more common. Bronze examples not only were more suitable for burning incense, a censer made after the design of an archaic example would have been more in keeping with a Confucian scholar's ideal, satisfying his pursuit of antiquity.

The dating of the current censer is consistent with the thermoluminescence test, with two samples taken from the core material inside the legs, certificate no. C110j84.

本件大銅爐的形制及紋飾均與一件商青銅鼎非常相近，且《考古圖》及《宣和博古圖》均著錄了這件商鼎。當呂大臨收錄此件銅鼎在《考古圖》時，它還在私人藏家河南文氏手中，並紀錄它的出處為濮郡宜甲，而它的二字銘文只有第一字‘乙’被解讀，故名之‘商乙鼎’；而當王黼受宋徽宗飭命編造《宣和博古圖》時，這件鼎已經進入宮廷，並且銘文被解讀為‘乙毛’二字，故更名為‘商乙毛鼎’。宋徽宗一定早就得知此鼎，並看出它的重要性，才將它收入宮中。

本件銅爐的鑄造應是受到這兩本圖錄的刊行所影響，仿造這件青銅重器。雖然這兩件的形制及紋飾都非常相近，但本件銅鼎的尺寸卻大了許多。如此大的銅爐所費不貲，只有寺廟、官家或顯貴才有能力鑄造。雖然香的使用在宋元時期非常普遍，但如此大的香爐卻少有傳世品，蓋因銅器常被熔為它用。南宋紹興年間，銅幣外流，通貨膨脹，硬貨短缺，許多銅製器皿被熔作貨幣之用，以因應海內外的短缺，銅器的製造被禁止。南宋高宗在紹興23年還從宮中送了1500件銅器到銅錢坊熔作銅幣，只有某些在寺廟中的銅器倖免於難。

雖然今日宋元瓷器比銅器更受收藏家青睞，但是瓷器在當時要比銅器製作更加容易，也更普遍。銅爐不但比瓷爐更加適合焚香之用，一件仿照古青銅器的銅爐更加符合儒家心中崇遠尚古的理想。

本爐的斷代符合釋熱光測驗結果。



Fig. 24



Fig. 25





9 A CELADON AND GREY JADE CENSER, *GUI* 青灰玉簋式爐

Early Ming Dynasty 早明

The censer is shaped as a rounded bowl standing on a short foot ring and has two C scroll handles sprouting from dragon heads. The bowl is carved with ribs below a raised band and between key-frets around the mouth and foot rims. The softly polished pale green stone turns grey around the lower part of the body and is mottled with light brown inclusions.

18.5 cm. wide; 7.5 cm. high

Although jade censers of this type are often dated to the late Ming, the balanced proportion, meticulous carving and fine polish on the current censer suggests it can be attributed to an earlier date. Compare an early Ming jade cup in the Palace Museum, Beijing, with a very similar dragon handle to this censer (fig. 26); and another jade gui censer dated to the Ming period, also in the Palace Collection (fig. 27).

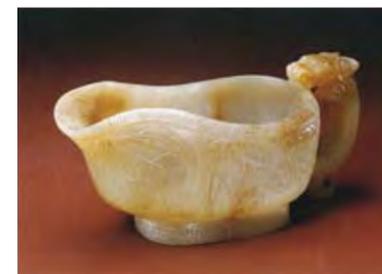


Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28

10 A BRONZE INCENSE-STICK HOLDER 鑄銅八仙過海紋香插

Yuan Dynasty, 14th Century 元

The cylindrical parfumier has four cabriole legs and is raised on an elaborate drum-shaped stand. It has two *chilong* handles on either side of the mouth rim, and is pierced around the body with four *ruyi*-shaped panels, each applied with a Daoist Immortal riding on an attribute amidst breaking waves.

22 cm. high

This incense-stick holder was probably one of a pair, which combines to illustrate the story *Baxian guohai*, 'The Eight Daoist Immortals Crossing the Sea'. Compare an incense-stick holder from the Clague Collection (fig. 28) dated to the Song/Yuan dynasty which shares similar basic shape to the current example. However, the more fanciful design and the subject matter, popularised by Yuan *zaju* dramas, point to a later, Yuan, dating for the current piece.





11 A BLUE AND WHITE CYLINDRICAL TRIPOD CENSER
青花纏枝牡丹花紋三足爐

Ming Dynasty, Second Half 15th Century 明十五世紀後半

The cylindrical censer stands on three short cabriole legs and has slightly flaring sides. It is painted around the exterior in a soft blue tone with peony blooms borne on curled leafy stems, below a raised band and floral scrolls.

27 cm. diam.; 20 cm. high

Provenance:
Okano Shigezou collection

Literature:
Mingchu Taoci Tujian, Tokyo, 1948, no. 24

The form of the current censer derives from an archaic bronze prototype, *lian*. Compare a blue and white bowl in the Topkapi Museum, Istanbul, which has similar peony scrolls (fig. 29) painted around the exterior.



Fig. 29



Fig. 30

12 A CARVED BAMBOO PARFUMIER 竹雕仕女圖香筒

Ming Dynasty, 16th Century 明十六世紀

The parfumier finely pierced and carved around the body with a lady holding a mirror on a terraced garden beside two boy attendants, one holding a *ruyi* sceptre, the other a set of *sheng* pipes, below a gnarled pine tree and perforated rockwork. The bamboo has a dark honey tone with some charred areas; the ends with horn stoppers.

17.5 cm. high

Parfumiers are made to contain stick incense, and seem to have been popular from the Ming period onwards. The carving on the current censer recalls the style of a bamboo brushpot in the Shanghai Museum (fig. 30) made by the late Ming carver Shen Dasheng.





13 AN OBLONG COPPER HAND WARMER 銅胎提梁耳手爐 [張鳴歧製]篆書款

Engraved *Zhang Mingqi Zhi* Four-Character Mark, Late Ming/Early Qing Dynasty 明末清初

The hand warmer has gently rounded sides rising from a recessed base and is fitted with an over-head bracket handle. Its slightly domed cover is finely pierced with seven hexafoil floral motifs amidst a honeycomb lattice ground. The metal has a reddish brown tone. The four-character mark is engraved in the centre of the base.

14.5 cm. wide; 11 cm. deep; 8.5 cm. high

Zhang Mingqi was famed for making hand warmers, and was active in the late Ming/early Qing period. Much like Jiang Qianli's lacquer or Hu Wenming's bronze censers, many later pieces are inscribed with Zhang's name. The meticulously pierced cover and its pleasing, gentle form, however, dates the current warmer stylistically to the 16th/17th century, and is very possibly made by Zhang Mingqi.

Hand warmers were not only used for warming hands; sometimes incense was also added in them for a quick air-freshening effect. In *Dream of the Red Chamber*, Jia Baoyu paid a surprise visit to his maid Xiren at her parents' house. She was embarrassed at the unkempt surroundings in her house so she quickly put two pieces of 'prunus blossom' incense in her hand warmer and handed it to Baoyu.

張鳴歧是明末清初作手爐的名匠。此爐形制古樸，爐蓋鑿工精美，是明末清初作品無疑，很有可能便是張鳴歧所作。

手爐除了暖手外，還可當作便捷的香爐使用。如紅樓夢第十九回賈寶玉到襲人家中探望她時，她嫌自己家裡又髒又亂：

一面將自己的坐褥拿了鋪在一個枕上，寶玉坐了，用自己的腳爐墊了腳，向荷包內取出兩個梅花香餅兒來，又將自己的手爐掀開焚上，仍蓋好，放與寶玉懷內。

14 A BRONZE TRIPOD CENSER

雪花銅三足 [玉堂清玩]款

Cast Yutang *Qingwan* Mark, 17th Century 十七世紀

The censer has a shallow rounded bowl and rises from three conical feet to a straight rim. It is cast with two scroll handles to the sides. The bronze has a golden brown tone with 'snowflake' speckles. The seal-script mark is cold-worked in the centre of the base in a square.

10.5 cm. diam.; 8 cm. high



Fig. 31

A very similar censer but with loose rings attached to the handles is illustrated in the *Xuande Yiqi Tupu* (fig. 31)

15 A BRONZE FOLIATE-FORM TRIPOD CENSER

銅花式三足爐 [宣德年製]篆書款

Cast Xuande Four-Character Mark, 16th Century 明十六世紀

The censer has a shallow rounded bowl cast in nine lobes and stands on three splayed feet. Its waisted neck is cast with two upright lug handles. The bronze has an attractive dark brown tone with speckles of induced oxidization. The seal-script mark is cast in the centre of the base in a rectangle.

19.5 cm. wide; 12.5 cm. high



Fig. 32

A very similar censer is illustrated in the *Xuande Yiqi Tupu*, and is called an 'orange segment censer' (fig. 32), because the lobed design resemble those of orange segments. The mark on the current censer is especially crisply and finely cast. Bronze censers like the current censer and no. 14 in the exhibition are normally called *Xuanlu*, Xuande censers, because they take their designs from one of the examples illustrated in *Xuande Yiqi Tupu*, and often carry a Xuande mark. It is alleged in this text that in the 3rd year of Xuande reign the Emperor received a tribute of 39,000 *jin* of high quality molten bronze from the King of Siam, and he ordered to have 3,000 bronze incense burners cast from this material in the form of archaic bronzes as well as Song ceramics from the Ru, *ge*, *guan* and *Chai* kilns. The text claims Lü Zhen, a minister in the Xuande period, as its author, and is written in the manner of an official document. It was not published until after 1600, the text claims, because it was meant for the Imperial eye only, not for public consumption. However, many scholars have questioned the authenticity of this text. Firstly, no records of such significant tribute can be found in the official documents. Secondly, although the text clearly documents the intended locations of these censers in the Palace, none of the 3,000 can be located, all having vanished without trace. Some other discrepancies in the text, all in all, lead to some scholars pondering whether the text is a clever late Ming fabrication. Still, many collectors believe it to be genuine, and throughout the generations have collected these unquestionably fine and elegant bronzes, which were made with high quality *huangtong*, 'yellow bronze', a copper alloy containing between 29–35% of zinc, giving it a characteristic yellowish colour.

《宣德彝器圖譜》著錄一件形制非常相近的銅爐，稱作「橘囊爐」，蓋因其花式爐身有如橘囊一般故名。其款鑄工特別清晰工整，精美可見一斑。本爐及下面的一件[玉堂清玩]款的三足爐通常被稱作「宣爐」，因為它們的形制著錄於《宣德彝器圖譜》，並常帶宣德款，卻並不一定就是宣德年間遺物。此書宣稱宣德三年時暹羅國進貢三萬九千斤的風磨銅，於是上諭以此精銅仿古彝器及宋汝、官、哥、柴等個窯器鑄作銅爐以供宮廷之需。書署名禮部尚書呂震，並以官樣文章寫就。此書當時未見，到晚明年間才刊行，時人以此書為官用，並非為一般人所作，故書成後兩百年才得行世。然許多學者對此書的真偽提出疑問：其一，明史中未曾提及暹羅貢銅及上諭鑄銅器等記載；其二，雖然書中表明了每個銅器的件數及其在宮中所擺放的位置，但是這3000多件銅器卻如煙消霧散，了無蹤跡，無一得以倖免傳世。其它文章中存在的一些舛誤終令學者推測其為晚明好事之人所作的偽書。然而，許多收藏家還是認為此書所言真有其事，並以此為收集明代銅爐的圭臬。姑不論此書真假，這批被稱為宣爐的銅器中，儘有質精形美，用含鋅量達百分之29–35之間的黃銅鑄造，頗值得珍藏的佳器。

16 A CYLINDRICAL BRONZE CENSER AND STAND

筒式雙耳銅爐連座 [春住樓]款

Chunzhu Lou Mark, 18th Century 十八世紀

The cylindrical censer stands on a short foot ring and is cast with two F-shaped handles to the sides. It has an original circular bronze tripod stand with low flat feet and beaded aprons. The bronze is heavily cast and has an even brown patina. The mark is cold-worked in the centre of the base in a rectangle.

16.3 cm. wide; 7 cm. high







17 AN IVORY TOOL VASE 牙雕花口小香具瓶

Late Ming Period 晚明

Carved from a whole piece of ivory, the vase has an elongated mallet shape rising from a recessed base to a slender straight neck. It has a cross section composed of three bracket lobes. The ivory of a warm honey-coloured patina with attractive dark and brown crackles.

10 cm. high

The vase would have formed a set with a censer and a box, and held tools like a small shovel and a spoon, designed for *zhuaxiang* incense, or 'seal incense'. *Zhuaxiang* is a type of composite incense that comes in powder form, contained in the incense box. The user first of all prepares the incense burner with fine ash, patting it flat with the shovel. He then places an incense mould – like a stencil – on top of the ash, and spoons the incense in the mould to form a continuous shape, often in seal-script characters. When the mould is lifted the seal-impression-like incense is ready for burning.

18 A BLUE AND WHITE CYLINDRICAL TRIPOD CENSER
青花雁鳧紋三足香爐

Ming Dynasty, Second Half 15th Century 明十五世紀後半

The censer has slightly bulbous body standing on three short cabriole legs. It is freely painted around the exterior with egrets and geese amongst water reeds, below a band of *ruyi*-heads around the mouth rim. The glaze has a bluish tinge stopping around the base exposing the orange-burned body.

9 cm. diam.; 7 cm. high

Provenance:
Edith & Brodie Lodge Collection

Exhibited:
Ming Blue and White, Oriental Ceramics Society, London, 1946, no. 80





19 AN ARCHAISTIC BRONZE CENSER, ZUN 仿古饕餮紋尊式爐 [胡文明製] 四字篆書款

Late Ming Period, 17th Century, Incised 'Hu Wenming Zhi' Mark 十七世紀

The censer formed as a deep rounded bowl standing on a slightly spreading foot ring. It is cast and cold worked with two mask handles and with a band of dissolved *taotie* masks around the exterior centring on two vertical flanges, the gently flaring neck is decoated with two animal masks, each flanked by two *kui* dragons, all reserved on a ring-punched ground. The bronze has a reddish-brown tone.

8.5 cm. high

Hu Wenming is perhaps the most famous bronze caster in the late Ming period, who was active in the Huating area in Zhejiang in the Jiajing and Wanli period. His bronze vessels more commonly feature highly decorated surfaces through casting, hammering, parcel-gilding and inlaying. Their fanciful nature has caused Wen Zhenheng to declare them vulgar and not suitable for a scholar's studio. However, this elegant censer is remarkably restrained in its aesthetic and its air of antiquity conforms perfectly to a scholar's taste, which would have undoubtedly met the approval of even the most fastidious of scholars such as Wen Zhenheng himself.

胡文明是晚明嘉萬間最負盛名的銅匠，活動在江蘇雲間（今華亭）一帶。他的銅器以裝飾性強的鎏金、包金、金銀鑲嵌等聞名，其繁瑣的風格，使得文震亨在長物志中談到香爐時說，「尤忌雲間潘胡銅所鑄，八吉祥倭景百釘諸俗式」。此尊的造型紋古樸脫俗，不用繁複的裝飾手法，一反其風，是胡銅中少見的雅器，該令文震亨這樣挑剔的文士也得三緘其口了。



Mark

20 A BULBOUS BLUE AND WHITE CENSER 青花桃花源記圖香爐

Chongzhen/Shunzhi Period, Circa 1640 崇禎/ 順治 約1640年

The censer has deep rounded sides rising from a short foot ring to a slightly flaring rim. It is painted around the exterior in shades of bright cobalt blue with a fisherman in conversation with an elderly man holding a walking staff, the two being observed by a matriarch and two ladies behind doors slightly ajar and surrounded by little boys, while his fishing boat is moored on the riverbank, carrying a boy attendant. The landscape is decorated with craggy rockworks and mountains, dotted with blossoming trees, and divided on one side with vaporous clouds.

21.5 cm. diam.

Provenance:

C. and G. Wingfield Digby Collection

S. Marchant and Son, London

Literature:

Exhibitions of Blue and White: Wan-li to K'ang-Hsi, S. Marchant and Son, London, no. 14, July 1980

The Peach Blossom Spring was composed by the poet Tao Yuanming in 421 AD. It recounts the story of a fisherman who, when fishing one day, lost his bearing and passed through a forest of blossoming peach trees to discover a utopia. He later tried to return to it via the same route but could not find it again. It became one of the most well known allegorical works in Chinese literature and inspired countless poems and paintings.

Compare a censer of the same form painted with *The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove*, illustrated by Julia Curtis in *Chinese Porcelains of the Seventeenth Century* (fig. 33). The style of painting on the *Seven Sages* censer is very close to the current censer, and is probably by the same hand.

此壺身上所畫為陶淵明所作桃花源記，敘述一漁夫迷途於桃花林中，循溪而上，誤入世外桃源，後欲再返而不得其路之故事。是儒家士大夫心中所嚮往的理想國寫照。



Fig. 33





21 A WOOD TOOL VASE
木隨形香具瓶

Qing Dynasty 清

Carved from a whole piece of fragrant wood to resemble a section of gnarled tree trunk, with burls and corruptions naturally rendered, with a recessed base and a conforming cavity. The heavy wood densely striated with areas of dark resin.

12 cm. high

22 A GILT-SPLASHED BRONZE CENSER, *GUI*
銅灑金簋式爐 [宣德二年周義段脩篁主人製] 篆書款

Twelve-Character Seal Mark, 18th Century 清中期

Based on an archaic prototype, the deeply rounded censer standing on a high, stepped base, cast with two animal-head scroll handles to the sides. Crisply decorated on the front and back with two large *taotie* masks, their eyebrows reserved on a band of fine *leiwen* ground, and above with a band of dragon scrolls reserved on *leiwen* around the base. The bronze with a brown patina and embellished around the exterior and on the base with irregular splashes of brilliant gold. The mark cold-worked in the centre of the base in a square, reading, *Xuande Ernian Zhou Xijia Xiuhuang Zhuren Zhi*, 'made by Zhou Xijia, the Master of Slender Bamboos, in the second year of the Xuande reign'.

43 cm. wide; 23.5 cm. high

Provenance:

Formerly in a private English Collection, Hereford





Fig. 34



Fig. 35



Fig. 36

An identical example to the present censer and with the same inscription at the base, possibly its pair, was sold in Christie's New York, 22 March 1999, lot 76 (fig. 36). Compare also the example in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (fig. 35), which is smaller and without the gilt-splash decoration, but with essentially the same design. All three of these censers follow very closely an archaic prototype, very probably the piece illustrated in the *Xiqing Gujian* (fig. 34), an illustrated catalogue of archaic bronzes in the Imperial collection compiled under the command of the Qianlong Emperor. The base of the current censer was fitted after the casting, a feature frequently found on 18th century bronzes.

參見佳士得紐約1999年3月22日拍品76號，與本壚形制，紋飾及銘紋完全相同，應該本來成對。另外倫敦維多利亞亞伯特博物館收藏一件銅簠式壚，雖然尺寸較小又沒有灑金，但與此二壚形制紋飾也相同。此三件壚應都是仿造《西清古鑒》中所著錄的周伯彝所造。

23 A NATURALLY FORMED SECTION OF PENGLAIXIANG 蓬萊香擺件

The impressively sized incense wood of an irregular, tree-fungus-like shape. On one side it has the dull natural skin of a decayed tree, while on the other, the amber-coloured wood is striated with dark resin, and the surface is dramatically undulating like a volcanic rock, radiating from the centre and exuding a subtle but distinctive spicy aroma.

28 cm. high

Penglaixiang is one of the most prized varieties amongst the many members of the *chenxiang* family. Fan Chengda (1126–1193), a well-known connoisseur of incense, wrote in his *Guihai Yuheng zhi* (Accounts on the Landscapes of Guihai) a chapter discussing various types of *chenxiang*. One of the varieties he mentioned was *Penglaixiang*:

Penglaixiang is also produced in Hainan. It is basically *chenxiang* that has not completely formed. Normally it comes in pieces like a small straw hat or a large mushroom, sometimes reaching to one or two *chi* in diameter, and is very firm and solid. Its colour and appearance are all similar to *chenxiang*, but it floats in water. Remove the wooden skin on its back, then it will sink.

The appearance of the current *chengxiang* section fits the description perfectly, and is no doubt what Fan referred to as *Penglaixiang*, one of the most popular type of *chengxiang* for Song scholars.

蓬萊香是沈香中最名貴的一種，也是宋人所珍愛的香料。北宋品香高手范成大在他的《桂海虞衡志》中就紀錄了蓬萊香：

蓬萊香亦出海南，即沈水香結未成者。多成片，如小笠及大菌之狀。有徑一二尺者，極堅實，色狀皆似沈香，惟入水則浮，割去其背帶木處，亦多沈水。

本片沈香與范成大所述一無二致，無疑便是宋朝文人最鍾愛的香料之一，蓬萊香。





24 A BRONZE TRIPOD CENSER
冲天耳團龍紋三足銅爐 [大明宣德年製] 款

Six-Character Xuande Mark, 17th/18th Century 十七 / 十八世紀

The censer has a deep rounded bowl and stands on three cabriole legs, below two upright lug handles on the rim. It is decorated around the exterior with five dragon roundels. The legs are decorated with *ruyi* lappets. The bronze has a dark brown patina. The mark is cold-worked in the centre of the base within a rectangle.

24 cm. wide; 24.5 cm. high

25 A SANDAL WOOD PILLOW
檀香木枕

Qing Dynasty 清

The pillow is of curved cylindrical shape, and is carved on the base with a long inscription in *zhuanshu*, above an oblong panel with a further inscription in *kaishu*.

29 cm. high

Provenance:
The William Lipton Collection

The inscription on the current pillow is a copy of that on the Han dynasty Dafengge Stele, now in Peixian in Jiangsu province. *Dafengge* (The ode to the Great Wind) was supposed to be the song Liu Bang composed on his way back to Chang'an after he defeated the King of Huainan, Ying Bu. The stele is now missing its bottom half, but a Yuan copy was made in 1306, and the two steles are now displayed side by side.





26 A *GUAN*-TYPE-GLAZED TRIPOD CENSER
仿官釉三足香爐

19th Century 十九世紀

The censer has a shallow rounded body standing on three conical feet and two upright lug handles. It is covered overall in a bluish beige glaze profusely crackled in dark and golden crackles except around the base, exposing the orange-burned porcelain body.

12 cm. wide; 8 cm. high

27 AN AUBERGINE-GLAZED TRIPOD CENSER
茄皮紫釉三足鬲式爐

18th Century 十八世紀

The censer has a rounded body standing on three short conical legs, rising to a short neck and an everted, flat rim. The base of the censer has three indentation lines meeting at the centre, dividing the base into three sections, following a bronze *li* prototype. It is glazed overall in a deep aubergine colour except the tip of the legs, exposing the orange-burnt porcelain body.

15 cm. wide; 8.5 cm. high

28 A *BAITONG* HAND WARMER
白銅手爐 [裕源興製] 款

18th/19th Century, Four-Character *Yuyuanxing Zhi* Seal Mark
十八 / 十九世紀

The oval-shaped hand warmer with rounded sides and an overhead bracket handle in imitation of bamboo. Its cover meticulously pierced to imitate wicker work. The metal with an attractive silver patina.

12 cm. diam.; 8 cm. high





29 A GILT-COPPER CIRCULAR INCENSE BOX AND COVER
鑲金銅三足 [玉堂清玩] 款

18th Century 十八世紀

The cover has a domed shape and is decorated on the top with a foliate panel enclosing two magpies and a blossoming prunus tree against a ring-punched ground, all surrounded by scrolling foliage. The box stands on a foot ring and is similarly decorated with scrolling foliage. Both the box and the cover are covered overall in rich gilding.

6 cm. diam.

30 A CIRCULAR CARVED CINNABAR LACQUER BOX AND COVER

剔紅會友圖小蓋盒 四字楷書刻款

Qianlong Period, Incised Four-Character Mark 乾隆

The circular box and cover are of a gently domed shape. Finely carved, when put side by side, to depict a continuous scene of two scholars having a picnic under a blossoming peach tree, both looking towards to their left at a young boy attendant kneeling beside rockworks and under trailing clouds and the sun in the sky above.

The interior lacquered black with a partially defaced reign mark incised on the inside of the cover.

4 cm. diam.



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-