

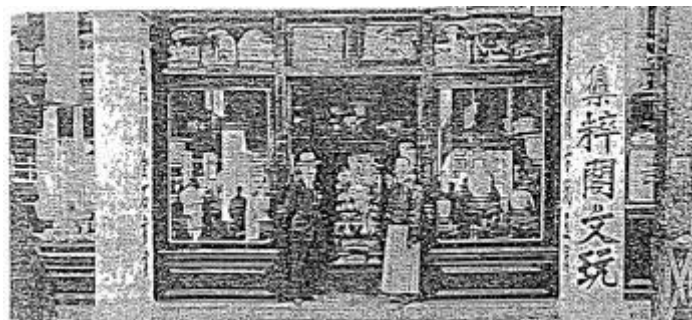
Eternal Peace

Han Dynasty Ceramics, Jades & Bronzes for the Afterlife in the Burrell Collection

CHINESE ART MAKING ITS MARK ON LONDON ART MARKET

Western comprehension of ancient Chinese culture emerged slowly and rather grudgingly during the 19th and early 20th centuries. However by the late 1930's - 1940's the horizon was broadening for Asian Art in London. Interestingly as Sir William Burrell never travelled to Asia to purchase Chinese art, his acquisitions were therefore undoubtedly very much influenced by the trends and interests within the London art market during the early Twentieth Century. However I believe he genuinely knew what he was, looking for and had excellent judgement.

It was in Sir William Burrell's later years of life particularly between the years 1945-1949 that he became particularly interested in Ancient China in particular Chinese ceramics, jades and bronzes, as he believed these aspects of the collection needed building up in order to make it more comprehensive. Around 95% of the entire Han Dynasty Collection of Chinese Art was purchased between 1945-1949 from individuals with whom he had been doing business with for years namely: Bluett and Sons, Frank Partridge and Sons, Sydney Moss and John Sparks.



This is John Sparks outside his Shanghai shop in 1930's

At the end of 1948 Burrell concluded that the Chinese section of the collection was almost complete, he had succeeded in forming one of the greatest collections of Chinese Art in Britain. The bronzes, jades and ceramics on display in The Burrell Collection reflect the society of ancient China and the values and beliefs that influenced the art through the Chinese belief in the Afterlife 2000 years ago. This collection is invaluable as these objects provide us with material evidence of what life and society was like during one of the longest dynasties that ruled China for around 400 years.

WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN CHINA 2000 YEARS AGO?

QIN DYNASTY

There was a period of great unrest in China, the six powerful Warring States were conquered and China was unified under Qin Shi Huang Di also known as the 'First Emperor' in 221 B.C. The Qin dynasty became the first Chinese imperial dynasty. The Qin Dynasty was very short lived, only 14 years of rule from 220 B.C-206 B.C. It was during the Qin dynasty that existing sections of the Great Wall were joined together and scripts, currency, weights and measures were standardized throughout China. However it was Qin Shi Huang Di's particular quest for Immortality that is particularly interesting, he was a strong believer in Taoism. I think it is important to mention Qin

Shi Huang to the public and the terracotta warriors because the public will be able to associate themselves with the Han Dynasty objects. Qin Shi Huang was forever seeking through Taoist practitioners the secret of immortality, the search for elixir that was to be found on Mount P'englai in the Eastern Sea. Qin Shi Huang died on a mission to the Eastern Sea in 210 B.C. After his death, the peasant leader Liu Bing overthrew the Qin after only a few decades and became the First Han Emperor, his ruling name was Gaozu.

HAN DYNASTY

The history of the Han dynasty can be subdivided into two main periods namely the Western Han and the Eastern Han period, so titled in accordance with the location of the capital cities. The first capital of the Han Dynasty, was established by Emperor Gaozu in 202 B.C. near the Wei river valley present day Xian in the heart of China. His capital was located in the heartland of the former Qin dynasty and named Chang'an literally meaning 'eternal peace'. However all peace was ended with the tragic destruction of the Western-Han capital in A.D 25. The capital was moved to Luoyang in Eastern China and ruled China until A.D 220.

See below a map of the Han Empire.



MEN OF HAN

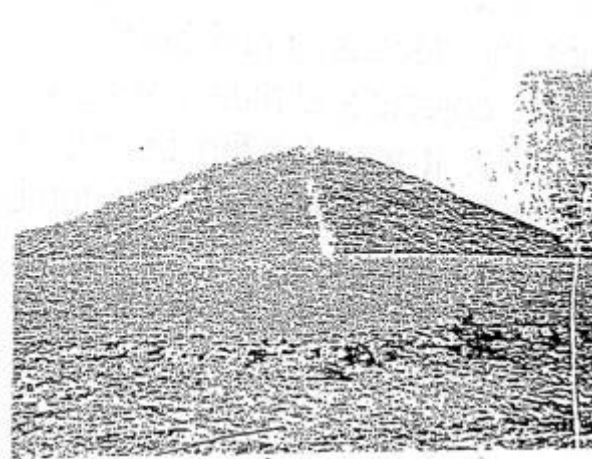
95% of modern day Chinese-mainlanders look back on the Han period of history with pride and call themselves 'Men of Han', for it was the Han Dynasty more than any other Chinese dynasty that was responsible for the continuity of Chinese civilization. The Han dynasty has become a modern identity for present day Chinese. The Han Dynasty during its 400 years of reign was a time of great achievements for example a man called Chang Chien found Chinese Silk near the border of India, horses were introduced from Ferghana into China which opened up trade routes to carry silk and lacquer to Rome, Egypt and Bactria. Buddhism was introduced to China during the Han dynasty and there was a revival of Confucian belief alongside a continual belief in Taosim. Han China was highly populous, prosperous and united.

HAN DYNASTY ART

During the 1930's and 1940's remains of the Han dynasty culture were being reported from almost every province in China and in amazing quantities. Objects were excavated from tombs. A traditional Han dynasty tomb was made of small fired bricks often constructed into multi chambered tombs with vaulted ceilings, see below. The exterior of the tomb was often in the form of a mound representing a mountain, which symbolized the home of the immortals see below.



This photograph illustrates Archaeologists Investigating in a Western Han Dynasty Tomb



This is Tumulus of Emperor Han Wudi of the Western Han Dynasty

What does Han Art tell us about Han society and social values that shaped it? The burial objects on display at The Burrell Collection shed light onto the Han society and the social values that shaped it. Han Dynasty art was conceptually very different from the Bronze Age culture of the Shang and Zhou dynasties.- The Tao Tie motif that decorated Chinese bronzes had a commanding symbolic power and reflected a hierarchy over the people, however Han art depicted human hopes and desires and the world of myth and magic. The world of gods was no longer a force that could dictate reality as it had been in primitive art, rather its force was of hope and imagination. The main subject matter of Han dynasty art was eternal life, immortality was the wish and goal. Han people loved life, viewed it optimistically and sought by all means to perpetuate it. The Han people believed the world of immortals was not some unreachable remote shore; rather it seemed to be not far from the world of reality.

BELIEF IN THE AFTERLIFE

Did the Chinese believe in the Afterlife?

Yes, absolutely, the concept of the Afterlife in China dominated the way of thought during the Han Dynasty. However, to some scholars the concept of the 'afterlife' was not believed to have occurred in China prior to the arrival of Buddhism, a theory held by Dr. Hu Shih and Dr. J. Needham. It was during the 1950's many Han tomb excavations proved otherwise, The Han dynasty tomb itself had become a 'house for the dead' a re-creation of the deceased's dwelling place, in ancient China the custom of serving the dead as if serving the living was observed' when someone with considerable social status died there were official rules about the objects to be buried with him in his tomb so that their quantity and variety were appropriate to his status. Land

deeds were also buried alongside the dead to ensure the gods below that your burial ground had been rightfully purchased. In China burial objects were an important way of signalling the status of the deceased an individual's official rank was 'determined by the size, number, material and quality of his grave goods.' Funerary objects of pottery such as daily utensils, chariots, horses, poultry and other animals, towers, pavilions, attendants and slaves; were all to be in possession of the deceased as they had been during his lifetime. By 400 B.C the Han Chinese believed that in death the soul separated into two parts, namely the Hun and. the Po, together the two souls combined and created a harmony, they became associated with the Ying and Yang which underlined the importance of each. At death, the Hun, the 'airy' soul departed the body.. The Po soul remained with the body in the tomb. The spirit soul required amulets and protectors to help with its journey and the earth soul need to be provided with all the possessions the deceased had been used to in life. At a funeral: food, drink, clothing and every day use objects and ritual objects were offered and foodstuffs were consumed by the earthly soul Po. It was for the benefit of the Po that the tomb was furnished with the essentials for further existence. The tomb was filled with objects as well as symbols of sustenance-for example models of stores, granaries and wells were always included in pottery replicas. If insufficient foods were offered a 'hungry ghost' would be the unhappy consequence of a burial. In Hong Kong the Chinese Citizens feed the 'Hungry ghosts' every night, food offerings of left over food from restaurants as well as piles of rubbish are offered to the hungry ghosts. If not cared for the hungry ghosts can become malevolent evil beings which can cause chaos and disturbing consequences.

RELIGION DURING THE HAN DYNASTY

Our view of religion during the Han dynasty has been aided with the analysis of burial objects, murals and bas-reliefs excavated from Han Dynasty chambers as these indicate the nature of their religious beliefs.

During the Han Dynasty the Chinese borders were expanded and Chinese influence was extended into Central Asia and to the South. Trade and commerce flourished and foreign ideas spread along the trade routes. Buddhism was introduced and there was also a revival of Confucian values and an emphasis on education. However Buddhism did not yet acquire a prominent position in China during the Han period, it was when the empire split into a number of independent states that it extended and flourished throughout Chinese territory. The Han Imperial court has often been referred to as being strongly Confucian in court with strong Taoist beliefs-out of court. Han Emperors often sent out groups of people who searched the Taoist Hills of the Blessed in search of Ling Chin the spirit fungus which was believed to be the elixir of life. The Taoist believed that Mount Kunlun was the central axis of the World and Home of the Immortals, the Queen Mother of the West resided there in the West of Mouth Penglai. The Queen Mother of the West is a goddess of death yet it is from her that one gets the herb of immortality.

JADE

Up to 1945 there are only three jades entered into Sir William Burrell's. purchase books. It was not until the late 1940's that Sir William Burrell became extremely interested in Chinese jade. The two main categories of Jade carving within this collection are for personal adornments and for sacrificial ceremonies.

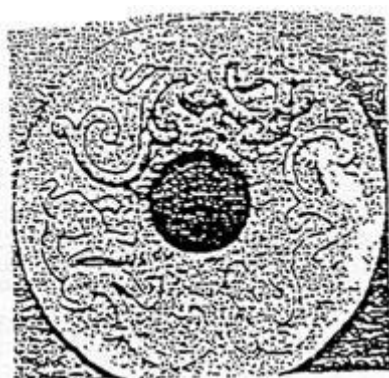
Jade in the Han Dynasty was a ritual object of noble rank and status, and the common belief was that: "one that carries jade will maintain purity in life and will be at peace in death".

During the Han Dynasty the vast majority of nephrite jade was mined to supply the constant demand for ceremonial and decorative carvings from the desert in the far west of China at the foot of the Western Kunlun mountains, During the Han Dynasty the Kingdom of Khotan near the far west of China was for the first time brought under Chinese jurisdiction, the Chinese had direct access to this source of plentiful jade. White jade from Khotan was symbolic of the Queen Mother

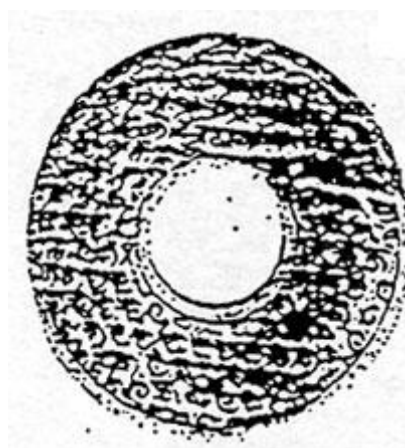
of the West. The jade was collected from two rivers, the Kara- Kash and the Yurung- Kash; Black jade river and white jade river. With the introduction of iron tools and perhaps more efficient abrasives such as corundum made the Han carver's task less laborious and capable of far greater precision a wide variety of utilitarian household utensils were carved such as tableware, ornaments, scabbard fittings, belt hooks. Jade amulets were also carved and were believed to have protective properties which would protect the owner when carved in the form of some auspicious or mystical animal or object. The decorative patterns on Han Dynasty jade carvings are illustrative of the worldviews, perceptions of life and death and concepts and values during the Han dynasty. The symbol of the cicada was a popular theme, it represented rebirth, eternal youth, immortality, happiness and purity, Jade cicada amulets were placed in the mouth of a corpse in the Han period to ensure these benefits and to prevent decomposition, however it may have also been worn as an amulet pendant, (see below), The ancient Han Chinese believed that jade had special properties, Alchemists prescribed jade to be eaten as a means of attaining longevity and immortality.



Cicada



The circular jade Bi disk the symbol of heaven and was often laid on the stomach of the dead in burial or under the skull of the dead when the corpse was facing North.



Jade bi 'grain patterned' disks sometimes decorated the exterior of the coffin symbolic of the ascent to heaven.



This Carved bi disk in the form of a coiled dragon would have been placed under the skull or hung as a pendant on the chest of the deceased.

HAN CERAMICS AND LEAD GLAZING

The-Han Dynasty was a key period of major importance in the development of Chinese Ceramics and glazing. There are two types of burial ceramics,, everyday pots which had been used by the deceased and models of anything relevant to daily life, stoves, well heads, granaries have been excavated in large numbers. These types can be grouped further into either painted or lead glazed ceramics.

The development of lead glazing was the principal technological achievement of the Han Dynasty. .It has been suggested by scholars that perhaps the arrival of lead glaze is closely associated with bronze casting technology. During the 4th Century B.C it became a common practice to add metallic lead to molten bronze to increase its fluidity. During the Han Dynasty the official Kilns for the production of lead glazed funerary wares were located near the capitals in Shaanxi Province and Henan Province. Han lead glaze was intended as a ritual accessory for burials, there was no need for the clay to be rinsed. As a result the clay body is coarse and has a high sand content, items of daily use have -not been identified. Han lead glaze was probably made by combining lead residue and clay in equal proportions, Lead glazes were then coloured with copper oxide to give green glaze and ferric oxide to give a yellow brown glaze.

The lead glaze was applied to the raw clay and fired at between 850 and 950 degrees Celsius. At these temperature the iron content in the clay would oxidize to produce an orange-red colour, and absorption of this redness then resulted in the clay body turning a brick red colour. A silvery iridescence now remains on a large proportion of the Han Dynasty burial objects as water was absorbed by the clay in burial and dissolved the lead glaze. The patinas high metallic lead content causes it to give of an iridescent reflection under the light, rather like mother of pearl.

WHAT IS A FELDSPATHIC GLAZE?

Feldspar is one of the constituents of porcelain.

Feldspar is a group of hard rock forming minerals consisting of aluminium silicates of potassium, sodium, calcium, the principle constituents of igneous rocks. Feldspar fuses into a kind of glass under a sufficiently high temperature about 1450 Degree Celsius. Feldspathic glazes are highly fired this jar may well be in the early stages of development of using feldspar glazes.



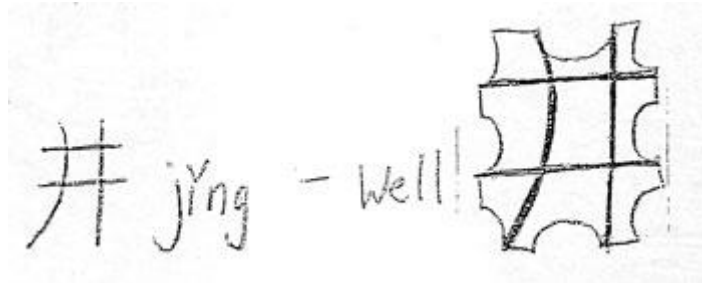
BO SHAN LU

This object was purchased from the former Eumorphoplous collection, (see picture below). Bo shan literally means 'vast territory' vast mountains, basically representing the idea that the mountain was believed to be where the spirits dwell, the home of the Immortals. Three bears support the cylindrical jar and lid. The function of this type of vessel was- originally for burning incense however this object was non-functional as no serrations have been cut into the lid which is in the form of mountainous hills. This hill jar was decorated with a moulded decorative band in which there are scenes of animals, birds and human figures and often hunters (see below). This hill jar is connected with the concepts of the isles of the Blessed in the Eastern Sea and the home of the immortals and with the five sacred mountains of China. Animals are depicted chasing each other around the mountainous landscape. This is the Mountain where the Queen Mother of the West dwells, Mount Penglai, the Eastern Home of the Immortals. A tiger is featured face on moulded in relief the tiger is a symbol of the west in Chinese cosmology and was regarded as the king of beasts whose season was autumn and element was metal.



MODEL OF A WELLHEAD

On this wellhead (see below) there is no pulley or cross member shown, so how then do we know that this architectural model is a well? One may say that the form and structure of this model is reminiscent of a well. Ok, there is one other thing, the shape of the ledge is actually in the form of the Chinese Character for 'well', the character for 'well' has been used in a purely decorative manner.



WATCH DOG

Was this dog domesticated in order to provide meat for sacrifices? Perhaps, in ancient Mexico dogs were fattened up and eaten in feast. In northern Chinese folk tales it is the dog that brings rice to mankind, there are many tales associated with dogs another is that a dog will protect its masters belongings until it dies. Therefore the dog that if is on display here is both the protector of burial items and a symbol of the continuing sustenance to be provided to the deceased i.e. the dog is the bringer of rice.

INCENSE BURNER

Incense in China was and still continues to this day. to be burnt as part of the act of worship. This incense burner with a sleeping bird resting on top of the lotus bud is a really wonderful example of the influence of Buddhism in early Chinese Art. Symbols such a the sacred goose or hamsa and the lotus would have been prominent with the arrival of Buddhism in latter half of the Han Dynasty. The lotus was imported to China from India by Buddhist apostles

and pilgrims in the early centuries A.D. The lotus bud is a Buddhist symbol 'lian hua' a lotus bloom with a leaf and a bud indicates 'complete union'.

In the display case opposite alongside the Tang Dynasty burial, objects there is a lovely example of a servant carrying a censer with two hands. This was likely to be functional incense burner unlike the Bo Shan Lu which does not have serrations in the lid of the cylindrical jar. Is the bird a mandarin duck or a goose? the goose is a symbol of married bliss in China, the goose takes one partner for life, therefore a gift with a goose featured would make an ideal engagement gift. The mandarin duck has one mate for life, natural symbol of marital happiness, when two mandarin ducks are depicted one with a lotus blossom in its beak and the other with a lotus fruit, this expresses the wish that marriage will be blessed with sons. Therefore I believe the bird sleeping on top of the incense burner perhaps is symbolic of a recently married couple, one of which has died before giving birth to a child. There is no glaze in the interior of this incense burner is characteristic of vessels from Xian, Shaanxi province. This vessel was glazed when it was fired upside down.



This is an earthenware model of a lady holding a very similar incense burner.

IS THIS MORE THAN A STOREHOUSE?



Yes I believe it is, the sheer size and scale reflects great architectural power upon the Han Dynasty system of Architecture and also reflects the prestige of the tomb occupant. This tower has two highly detailed roofs with bracketing and circular end tiles, the upper roof has two cockerels perched. There is a single figure 'gazing into the distance' is this the owner of the grand tower? During the Western and Eastern Han Dynasty the power of the great families became increasingly important in Chinese society. Common farmers had a very difficult task in producing enough food, on their lands to support and supply their own needs for taxes. Farming families many were forced into bankruptcy, sometimes continuing to live on the land as tenant farmers or hired laborers serving great families of the neighbourhood. This storehouse is an outstanding example of an Eastern Han Dynasty funerary ceramic ware and gives us some of the earliest evidence for traditional Chinese architecture.

The tower was normally placed in front of the side burial chamber, the tower was a component of the compounds of the Eastern Han Dynasty. Where was the tower placed within the Eastern Han dynasty compound? It was usually located in the North Eastern corner of the estate and served as a watchtower was often found next to the armoury- well stocked with weapons. This model is most likely an identical copy of the original storehouse. There is a marked difference between the architectural models from the North and South of China. In general, models from South China are only one or two stories high with a courtyard complex. The Southern-Chinese Architectural models are frequently made of unglazed red earthenware, sometimes with added pigments. The architectural models in Northern China tend to avoid the courtyard arrangement and represent single tall towers. A very large proportion, of Eastern Han tombs are equipped with tall pottery towers.

HAH DYNASTY BRONZES

THE ARRIVAL OF THE LOST WAX TECHNIQUE

Piece mold casting was the principal method used for more than- a millennium during the Shang and Zhou times. The cire perdue technique was common in ancient civilizations but emerged in China rather late. It may be called the model-melting method. A replica model of the object to be cast was made of wax and then coated on all surfaces with layers of processed clay until an appropriate thickness was reached, these becoming the clay mould. After the clay mould had been fired to a semi-pottery stage, the wax model would have melted and flowed out of the mould. Molten bronze was then poured into the channel left open for it, and once cooled and the mould removed, the casting was complete. The earliest example of China using the lost wax technique was during the Warring States. Examination of actual objects shows that it was not until the Sui and the Tang dynasties that all bronze casting was by the lost wax method.

CROSSBOW LOCK GOLD AND SILVER INLAY

Crossbow lock the inscription (see below) when translated reads 'Made by the Shang Fang on the first day of the 8th Month in the first year of the Chien-ho period' which might correspond to either A.D 147 or 400 A.D. The crossbow was an everyday object , the additional inlay raises the aesthetic appreciation and hierarchy of the object. It was no longer placed in the tomb in the context of a crossbow, rather it appeared as a separate entity. This object remains to the present day as an object of importance, once functional and now it has become an aesthetic and commemorative. The surface, has been incised with an inscription, the inscription would have been applied to the cold surface and filled in with gold and silver inlay.



BRONZE LIAN

This storage vessel is extremely rare. The "Lian" translated literally means a domestic storage vessel for mirrors-and toiletries. However many Lian when excavated were discovered to be filled to the brim with cowrie shells. This storage jar is supported on three feet four inches high, in the form of squatting men. Are the figures Chinese or Western Barbarians? Are they slaves? The

container was cast in two separate sections, I believe that this storage vessel was thinly cast because the hammering of metal in China was not part of the Chinese tradition. Four standardized ring handles have been unusually attached to the lian not directly opposite each other, perhaps they were not functional and instead merely aesthetic, the Tao tie masks are typical of the Han Dynasty and are attached five inches below the lip, the lid is missing. Thirteen concentric bands of decoration encircle the container in low relief. Four registers in low relief are each filled with Leiwen zigzag square spiral patterns. The upper of the two middle registers shows a frieze of a type of bird the lower register of the central zone shows a double frieze of birds and deer, both facing in anti-clock wise direction. The deer encircle the bronze drum in an anticlockwise direction and they are arranged male female, some of the markings are different on the deer. The birds are perhaps Hornbill, The Sacred Vermillion bird of the mountain people of the border between China and South East Asia or perhaps Pelicans.



Bronze Lian



This is a small jade carving, I think the characteristics of this man are similar to the bronze kneeling figures supporting the bronze lian.



This is a Han Dynasty stone carving depicting a couple sitting on a rug being entertained by acrobats and dancers, two kneeling men playing musical instruments are sitting beside two large containers. I think the larger container is similar to the form of our bronze drum and the smaller vessel also balanced on three feet is perhaps a Bo Shan Lu hill jar similar to the one in our collection.

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ENGLISH -MANDARIN CHINESE

Relevant Vocabulary for the Han Burial Objects with the correct phonetic pronunciation in Mandarin Chinese

English	Chinese (pinyin system)	Pronunciation
Mushroom of Immortality	Ling chih	Ling ch
Cong	Cong	song
Bi	Bi	Bee
Hu	Hu	Who
Bo shan lu	Bo shan lu	Po shan loo
Queen Mother of the West	Xi Wang Mu	See Wang Moo
Lotus	Lian hua	Leigh ann wha
Lian	Lian	Leigh-ann
Shang fang	Shang fang	Shang feng
Jade	Yu	You eh
Bronze	Qingtong	Ching tong
Granary	Gu cang	Goo W Tsang
Bracketing	Dougong	Dough gong
Soul- Airy soul	Hun	Hun
Soul- Earthly Soul	Po	Bow
Grave goods	Mingqi	Ming chee
Spirit	Jingshen	Jing shin

There are four tones in the Mandarin Chinese Language therefore every word you pronounce could have up to four meanings, therefore the correct pronunciation is vital, the above pronunciations are as close as I can get, enjoy!