



CINA

ALLA CORTE DEGLI IMPERATORI
CAPOLAVORI MAI VISTI
DALLA TRADIZIONE HAN
ALL'ELEGANZA TANG (25-907)
淳風至唐韵

FIRENZE
PALAZZO STROZZI

7 MARZO
8 GIUGNO
2008

Press Release

From **7 March to 8 June 2008** Palazzo Strozzi will present over 200 masterpieces of Chinese art illustrating the splendour and the cosmopolitanism of the imperial courts from the the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220) to the Tang empire (617-907). The exhibition design carries the signature of world-renowned fashion designer Romeo Gigli.

As part of a cultural exchange between the Italian and the Chinese governments, the exhibition *China: at the Court of the Emperors. Unknown masterpieces from Han tradition to Tang elegance (25-907)* will bring, for the first time to Europe, masterpieces from this extraordinary period in Chinese history. The show celebrates the cultural renaissance begun during the so-called Chinese Middle Ages and the glorious Tang dynasty, which in the 7th century consolidated and expanded the empire, recently reunified, inaugurating a time of great artistic, social, economic and cultural splendour.

Promossa
e organizzata da
Fondazione
Palazzo Strozzi
Art Exhibitions
China

In collaborazione con
MondoMostre

Con il sostegno di
Regione Toscana
Provincia di Firenze
Comune di Firenze
Camera di Commercio
di Firenze
Associazione Partners
di Palazzo Strozzi

Why an exhibition about China in Florence? The Tang dynasty is considered the Golden Age of Chinese history: its art represents one of its cultural zeniths, comparable to the Florentine Renaissance. Both have their roots in the fortunate combination of great journeys and an openness to ideas from abroad. This exhibition introduces the visitor to the imperial courts in the three most important Chinese capital cities of the first millennium: Nanjing, the capital of the Southern Dynasties; Luoyang, first city of the Eastern Han and second of the Tang, when the main capital was Chang'an (today's Xi'an), then the biggest city in the world with two million inhabitants.

As a result of the synthesis between nomadic mobility and the great Chinese civilisation, Tang culture was refined and cosmopolitan. At that time China was fascinated with anything foreign and it harboured this attraction by importing goods from all around the world through the Silk Road and the maritime routes, thus putting the Tang empire at the centre of commercial and cultural exchanges from the Mediterranean to Japan. People from different countries, races, and religions influenced Chinese culture with their beliefs, practices and traditions. With regard to religions, besides Buddhism which flourished in an unprecedented way, Zoroastrianism, Nestorianism, Manicheism and Islamism were all professed. The synthesis of new and foreign elements created a vigorous artistic language which is considered one of the most innovative and important in the history of China. Splendid mural paintings, spectacular stone statues, exquisite gold and silver objects, glittering jewels, pottery figurines and exotic glassware lead us to the discovery of this new expression.

This exhibition is curated by Sabrina Rastelli in collaboration with Roderick Whitfield, Maurizio Scarpari, Felix Schoeber, Stefania Stafutti, I-man Lai and Gian Carlo Calza.

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Fact Sheet

Organised by:	Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Art Exhibitions China
In collaboration with	Mondo Mostre
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How to get there: By plane: Firenze Airport www.aeroporto.firenze.it
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By car: From north (Milan) A1 Bologna, Firenze, Firenze Nord exit, follow directions for city. From south (Rome) A1 Roma, Milano, Firenze Sud exit, follow directions for city .
By train: Nearest stations are Stazione di Santa Maria Novella, Piazza del Duomo, Via Tornabuoni

Access: Lifts and wheelchair access to all areas

It is produced and organised by Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi and Art Exhibitions China in collaboration with MondoMostre, and the support of Regione Toscana, Provincia di Firenze, Comune di Firenze, Camera di Commercio di Firenze and Associazione Partners di Palazzo Strozzi.

Following an ideal art-historical path, this exhibition continues the itinerary begun by *China. Birth of an Empire* (September 2006-February 2007), held in Rome at the Scuderie del Quirinale. That show presented the complex and splendid evolution of Chinese civilisation from the Zhou period (1045-256/221) to the Qin (221-206) and Western Han (206–23) dynasties. During those one thousand years, first great empire was shaped and consolidated and it created an administrative system that lasted for the next twenty-one centuries.

The Palazzo Strozzi exhibition examines the period from the Eastern Han (25-220) through the Tang dynasty (618-907), during which Chinese civilisation was radically transformed. In 220 the great Han empire fell under violent power struggles. During the following centuries (the Chinese equivalent of the Middle Ages), China was politically divided: the south was governed by Chinese dynasties, while the north was dominated by foreign regimes until 589, when the (northern) Sui Dynasty (581-618) reunified the Chinese territory and laid the foundations for a great and renewed empire. This was inherited by the Tang dynasty which ushered in the 'Golden Age', during which China became the cultural centre of Eastern Asia and the echo of its splendour even reached the Mediterranean.

The exhibition opens with some important works of art from the Eastern Han period, including a spectacular guard of honour of bronze chariots and horses found in the tomb of General Zhang at Leitai in Gansu province, and a powerful fantastic stone creature which used to watch over the eternal sleep of a nobleman from Luoyang (Henan).

A very important section is dedicated to the arrival of Buddhism in China. Initially seen as one of the many Daoist cults, Buddhism spread in China after the fall of the Han empire, deeply affecting its cultural values. The 27 magnificent sculptures in the exhibition (some are more than 2 metres high and have never left China before) date from the end of the fifth to the ninth centuries and come from important sites, such as the Maijishan caves in Gansu province, the Longmen caves and the Dahai temple in Henan province, and from the Da Anguo monastery in Shaanxi province; together they well illustrate the development of Chinese Buddhist sculpture.

The opulence of the Tang court features prominently in the exhibition. The finest gold and silver archaeological finds show the renewed contacts with the West, especially with Sasanid Persia. In this period, the Tang goldsmiths reached unequalled levels of refinement, as shown by the splendid treasures from the Dingmaoqiao hoard near Zhenjiang (Jiangsu province) and those found in the crypt of the pagoda of the Famen monastery in Shaanxi province.

The same superb skills are evident in the pottery figurines created to accompany the dead on their last journey that have been found in Tang aristocratic tombs. Among these are figurines representing men from different parts of the world with typical clothes and hairdos, big noses, long beards, often accompanied by magnificent horses and impressive camels.

These figures give us some indication of the sumptuous life of the nobility, characterised by a taste for the exotic and an enjoyment of the arts. The ladies are attractively dressed in foreign attire and with elaborate hairstyles, some riding a horse or dressed in men's clothes, thus showing the freedom women enjoyed during that time. Religious tolerance is also illustrated in the image of a Zoroastrian fire ritual with two priests represented as half bird-half man, on the lintel of the tomb of An Jia, a Sogdian official in Tongchuan, near the capital Chang'an.

The exhibition culminates with four fabulous mural paintings and four paintings on stone from the Tang period. Some of these were only recently discovered and have never been shown before in the West. They show the various aspects of traditions in Chinese society at that time such as the importance of foreigners in politics, fashions, the extreme complexity of the hairstyles as well as expressing the emotional language of Tang ink brush portrait painting

For the first time in Italy the multimedia technology "Bluetooth" developed by Vodafone allows visitors to listen to three audio messages to guide them through the exhibition on their mobile phones. Romeo Gigli describes how he developed his idea for the installation for the exhibition; an option for children gives a simple but engaging account of chosen pieces to make the visit more stimulating for younger visitors; and the Director of the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, James Bradburne, explains his innovative approach to the exhibition in English, making it more accessible to visitors from all over the world.

The exhibition catalogue, available in Italian and English, is published by Skirà editore

China. At the Court of the Emperors

Unknown masterpieces from Han tradition to Tang elegance (25-907)

Florence, Palazzo Strozzi, 7 march – 8 june 2008

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Daily 9.00 to 20.00

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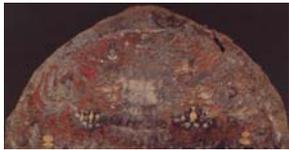
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The Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi's slogan is 'think global, act local' and it is committed to bringing cultural events of an international level to Florence. China: at the Court of the Emperors is a spectacular celebration of China's 'Golden Age'. The Tang dynasty (618–907) was a renaissance of the arts, crafts and literature, recognised to be a high point of Chinese civilisation. Li Bai and Du Fu worked during the Tang dynasty, composing some of the most famous verses in the history of Chinese literature and the culture of the period was cosmopolitan and refined. The Tang dynasty flourished due to an extraordinary openness to foreign ideas and influences: Buddhism had reached China from India in the first century, and the models for Tang Buddhist sculptures were Indian; Islamic influences and techniques from Persia were incorporated into Chinese craft. With its capital in Chang'an (present-day Xi'an), the eastern source of the Silk Road and largest city in the world, the Tang prospered due to their tolerance and a special appetite for foreign influences – actually, long before the current age of globalisation the Silk Road was a channel for new ideas and innovative technology. China: at the Court of the Emperors brings to Europe almost two hundred masterpieces, many of them never seen in the West before. One of the main objectives of this exhibition is to point out the central importance of tolerance in a cosmopolitan society – a message as important today as it was 1500 years ago. In addition to all the professionals who helped bring China: at the Court of the Emperors to Florence, the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi would especially like to thank the exhibition's public and private partners and sponsors, including the Regione Toscana, the Province of Florence, the City of Florence, the Florentine Chamber of Commercio and the Association of Private Partners of the Palazzo Strozzi, all of whom strongly supported the exhibition from the outset. It would also like to thank in particular, Aeroporto di Firenze, Saatchi & Saatchi, Target and Vodafone, who generously contributed to the exhibition's success. Finally we would like to express our gratitude to the entire Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi team – its Board of Trustees, its Advisory Board, its Director and its staff – for having worked so hard to create an event that that gives real meaning to the slogan 'think global, act local'.

Lorenzo Bini Smaghi
President, Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi

From Han Tradition to Tang Elegance

Sabrina Rastelli

This exhibition examines the vast period from the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220) through the Tang dynasty (618–907), during which Chinese civilisation underwent radical transformations.

The interval of time between the fall of the Eastern Han dynasty and China's reunification under the Sui dynasty (581–618) is traditionally considered as a 'dark' period of unrest in which the country was politically and culturally divided between north and south, east and west. Nevertheless, recent archaeological excavations and new studies are demonstrating that in reality this period of Chinese history was far from being a cultural desert and rather represented a moment of regeneration and flowering of the arts, stimulated by intercultural exchanges with Rome, Persia, India and Central Asia and culminating in the Tang cosmopolitan civilisation. In fact, the civil wars and the subsequent waves of conquests by foreign powers did not bring about only blood and devastation, but rather new and creatively stimulating ideas that were liberated from rigid Confucian ethics. The intense commercial exchanges over land and sea with other nations and among the various Chinese states further transformed China into a cultural melting pot, which, along with the integration of traditional Chinese culture (based on the principles of Confucianism and Daoism) brought about the great Renaissance of the seventh to eighth centuries.

The exhibition presents this new perspective with a selection of works that highlight the quality and vitality of culture from the period between the two great Han and Tang dynasties and which reveal how, from the traditionalism of the first empire – through the assimilation of influences in a politically turbulent historical moment, which was also intellectually fertile – the Golden Age of the Tang dynasty emerged, without ignoring the fundamental role of the aesthetic theories and of the arts that had been developed in southern China in the country's period of division.

Eastern Han (25–220)

The Han dynasty is historically divided into Western Han (206 BCE–23) and Eastern Han because the capital was moved from Xi'an to Luoyang (farther to the east) after the interruption caused by the enthronement of Wang Mang (9–23). Although of the same lineage, the two periods are vastly different and distinct in matters of politics and in their cultural expressions.

The Western Han dynasty brought about the completion of the long process of formation of Chinese civilisation that had begun many centuries earlier with the definitive transformation of the political and social system created by the First August emperor (r. 221–210 BCE). The old order, based on blood lineage, was replaced by the new, which was articulated on the subdivision of the territory into governorates and districts, led by imperially nominated officials.

Such a centralisation of power provided for a capillary control of the territory, thus facilitating the widespread diffusion of Confucianism, which was adopted as the official ideology. The officials charged with administering the governorates and districts into which the country was divided were not technicians, but today would rather be considered as essentially men of letters, educated at the Imperial University after years of studying the classical texts. In fact, Han political power was legitimised by means of the government in virtue of the shared ethical-religious principles elaborated during the first phase of Zhou dominion (1045–221 BCE) and celebrated in certain extremely precious manuals that were both sacred and ethical-political in nature. Since their compilation, these writings had formed the cornerstone of aristocratic education, and during the Han period from this corpus was formed the so-called Confucian Canon, upon which state officials and aspiring virtuosos based the models of their inspiration. Social and cosmic harmony, held as the absolute ideal, was attainable through the correct interpretation of hierarchical relationships and required the exercise of moral virtues and the suitable interpretation of the roles that each individual personified in the bosom of the social community – like a solemn rite, combined with ceremonial standards, it regulated the relationships among people and dictated that which was appropriate or inappropriate in the various circumstances. Educating oneself, the prerequisite and therefore

foundational aspect of political action, was based on the study and assiduous practice of poetry, music and calligraphy. It was therefore inevitable that Han Confucian culture would so deeply influence the arts in China. To be more exact, Confucianism permeated every aspect of life in the Middle Kingdom, and it was precisely in this context that the concept of 'Chinese tradition' was formed. Never determinately defined and thus remaining flexible, it was jealously conserved and handed down through the following centuries to the present day. Western Han art was characterised by the homogeneous language formulated during this period, shared by various expressive means and diffused in every region of the empire. Such coherence was certainly determined by the presence of a strong centralised state, but its intrinsic reason lies in the ideology of the period, according to which Heaven (the Sky), Earth and Man were elements of a unity, whose proper functioning was insured by the application of Confucian virtues. If men, beginning with the emperor, who was considered the mediator between Heaven and Earth, respect the Confucian ethical values, harmony is guaranteed. Every artistic manifestation expressed this metaphysical and cosmic interpretation of the universe. However, already in the first century BCE, attention slowly began to shift from an ornamental art, dominated by the fantastic, to a figurative art, focused on the real world. The transition was completed during the Eastern Han dynasty, when rationalistic philosophy began to dominate, according to which there was no correspondence between Heaven and Earth and man was seen to hold no special position in the universe.

The art of the Eastern Han period is dominated by certain recurring themes: the protection of the tomb, well illustrated by the monumental stone sculpture representing a fantastic animal serving to protect against evil spirits (cat. no. 1); the celebration of the life of the deceased with specific reference to his career, as demonstrated by the magnificent procession of bronze coaches and horses from Levitai (cat. no. 2); finally, wealth, indissolubly tied to the ownership of land, represented by complex terracotta models of habitations, watchtowers, well curbs, mills, granaries, pigsties, chicken coops, hen houses, etc. (cat. nos. 3–6), deposited in large quantities in the high-society tombs of Eastern Han, mainly composed of the large land-owning families.

Three Kingdoms (220–280) and Western Jin (265–316)

The intrigues and the disputes among the courts – comprising the faction of the great, rich and influential families from which the empresses heralded, and the eunuchs, progressively more powerful; the popular revolts that broke out in diverse regions of the country; and the pressure applied by the nomad populations on the northern borders were all factors contributing to the fall of the Eastern Han dynasty. The collapse of the empire in 220 did not have immediate repercussions in the field of the arts, as the lords of the three subsequent kingdoms – Wei, Wu and Shu – into which China was divided, considered themselves the legitimate heirs of the Han sovereigns and made all efforts to restore that glory. In 280 Sima Yan, who had sanctioned the end of the Wei dynasty (220–265), was successful in founding that of the Western Jin (265–316), although it only lasted for a short period of about thirty years. The images painted on the group of bricks (cat. no. 11) found in certain tombs discovered in the western Gansu province and dated from the period between the Wei and the Jin dynasties represent scenes from daily life – a farmer with his pitchfork, the slaughtering of a pig, the raising of Bactrian camels, an oxdrawn cart, entertainment, two men playing instruments, but also an immortal being transported by a fish. The incoherence of style probably reflects the social status of the deceased – some bricks show rapidly traced figures of a sketchlike nature, whereas others are much more detailed, featuring the same treatment of volumes and figures as can be seen in mural paintings (Fig. 1) or on the tiles of the Han tombs (cat. nos. 8–10). The colour is applied uniformly, without gradations, whereas the volumes are conveyed by modulations of the outlines that contain vibrant and expressive profiles. The background is never described, but the position of the figures almost always succeeds in suggesting the idea of space. The stylistic resemblance with Eastern Han painting could be due to the fact that Gansu, the region where the tiles were made, had become a sort of refuge for intellectuals escaping from the unhealthy climate of the political scene in the third century.

An important tomb, discovered just two years ago near Nanjing, probably belonging to a member of the royal family from the Wu Kingdom, provided a number of finds, including the group of standing figures and the *qin* player shown in this exhibition (cat. no. 108), which bear witness to the cultural continuity with respect to the Han dynasty, also showing peculiar elements, above all in the clothing and hairstyles – the ample gowns, embellished with draperies, the low-necked jackets with buttons in front, the long pants, the tunic and the uniquely gathered hair characterise a southern style that was not shared in the north.

Also from southern China come ceramics that manifest a break from earlier traditions. In the first period of the country's division, the vases from the kilns of Yue – distributed along the coast of the southern provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, famous for their production of ceramics fired at a high temperatures (stoneware) and covered with a green glaze (celadon) – finally freed ceramics from their role as a surrogate of precious materials, creating new forms with original functions. The *hunping* funeral urn (cat. no. 7) with its complex iconography, is distinctive of this period and bears witness to its religious syncretism (see Zacchetti in this catalogue, pp. 61–65). Used as the 'seat of the soul' in the funeral rituals typically practised in the area surrounding the lower course of the Yangzi River, and placed in the tomb to calm the spirit of the deceased, it also shows images depicting the Buddha, demonstrating the arrival of this religion in Southern China, perhaps from the north by land, or perhaps directly by sea.

The magnificent jar decorated with motifs painted beneath the glaze (cat. no. 70) is also quite unusual. The technique is an absolute novelty and the chosen subject is equally surprising: fantastic animals, unidentified flowers and feathered curls enclosed in circular medals and separated by intersecting components. The ornamental elements and their distribution evoke peculiar influences, which could indicate that, despite the complicated political situation, the China of the Three Kingdoms and of the Western Jin was not artistically static but on the contrary animated by new forces of innovation.

In this period it became evident that Confucian ideology, strongly ritualistic, was not capable of restoring or preserving the empire as it was conceived in the Han period. The disillusionment with Confucianism inevitably left a void, but it simultaneously stimulated an intense quest for spirituality. Some Daoist principles, particularly the profound sense of nature and spontaneity, immediately offered a valid alternative to the rigid socio-political schemes imposed by the traditional doctrine. Initially the young scholars reacted by organising a revisionist revolt in which they shunned society, its conventions and all political involvement in order to dedicate themselves to their individual pleasures. They often gathered in meeting places where they would compose verses, play instruments, converse and drink alcoholic beverages from elegant oval chalices with handles, such as the one shown here (cat. no. 72). The so-called 'pure conversations' were particularly dear to the educated gentlemen as they provided the occasion for expressing personal considerations on a wide range of topics in a spontaneous and free manner, always using a refined language revealing each participant's emotions and sensitivity. The most famous group of intellectuals of the third century, immortalised along the corridor of a tomb from the end of the fifth or early sixth century near Nanjing, is that of the 'Seven Sages of the Bambolo Grove', which boasted illustrious exponents such as Ruan Ji (210–263), Li Kang (223–262) and Liu Ling (221–300). They usually met in a grove near Luoyang, and when the capital was razed to the ground in 316 by the Xiongnu, a group of nomadic tribes that had been gradually penetrating into northern China since the first century (Di Cosmo in this catalogue, pp. 53–59), they moved to Nanjing where they continued to meet regularly.

The quest of the higher cultural class for a direct and intimate contact with nature had enormous repercussions on the literature and the arts that were beginning to emancipate themselves from the educational and moral function that had been imposed upon them by Confucianism, with the goal of becoming completely autonomous over time.

Eastern Jin (317–420) and the Sixteen Kingdoms (304–439)

The reunification of the empire by Sima Yan was short-lived— the lack of an institutional government and the struggle for hegemony among the powerful families devastated northern China, upsetting the economy and forcing the population to migrate to the south. The Western Jin dynasty, on the other hand, was conquered by the Xiongnu. In 304 they proclaimed the independence of Bingzhou, in what is now Shaanxi province, where they had been established for some time. In 311 they occupied the capital, Luoyang, and in 316 they conquered Chang'an as well, which in the mean time had become the refuge of the Jin court.

In order to better understand the situation, it is necessary to distinguish the historical events and the related artistic results that arose in the north and south of China. In 317 a member of the imperial family, Sima Rui, having fled to the south, proclaimed himself emperor of the Eastern Jin, establishing the capital at Jiankang (or presentday Nanjing). Today the regions of the lower course of the Yangzi River constitute what is economically the richest and most densely populated area of China; however, in the third century this was a scarcely populated zone, hardly touched by Chinese civilisation. In imperial China the cultural centre had always been in the north, around the capitals Chang'an and Luoyang. The retreat of the Jin court and above all the migration of hundreds of thousands people of all social classes from the north, devastated by civil wars and foreign invasions, to the south, immense and to a large extent still uncontaminated today, provoked the shifting of the cultural centre to the lower Yangzi basin. The peoples of the north maintained their customs, language and traditions even after having moved to the south, imposing themselves upon the indigenous population, and the southern court immediately proclaimed itself the legitimate heir of Chinese tradition (which, through the Western Jin and the Wei, had originated with the Han empire) in relation to the foreign conquerors from the north as well as to the native southern populations.

The mutated political, social and geographic conditions inevitably had repercussions on the cultural evolution. Politically, the Eastern Jin had never succeeded in consolidating their dominion, constantly threatened by intrigue in the palace and individualistic interests; however, they inaugurated a period of extreme cultural well-being. Two of the greatest artists in the history of China, the calligrapher Wang Xizhi (321–379) and the painter Gu Kaizhi (344 – c. 406) were both active right in Nanjing. After the shift, the Chinese intelligentsia continued to dedicate itself to the 'pure conversations' and the quest for a more intimate and deeply experienced relationship with nature; but they abandoned the antisocial behaviour that they had adopted following the fall of the Han dynasty and instead attempted to support the free expression of individual voices from within the society. Precisely in virtue of the newly established intellectual climate, painting was recognised as a form of art along with poetry and calligraphy; the figure of the artist as an individual emerged and there was a flowering of new theories inspired by the natural world, which provided the arts with innovative and original aesthetic and formal contents.

As in every antique civilisation, writing was the accomplishment of the few in China, but contrary to other countries, here it was recognised as a visual art even before painting, and for the Chinese today it is still undisputedly the most highly regarded form of art. By the end of the Eastern Han dynasty scholars had developed a style of writing for private use, simpler and more rapid, known as *caoshu*, literally meaning 'grass script', but commonly translated as 'cursive script'.

The simplification was made by eliminating certain strokes and by connecting the characters. Primarily used in correspondence among friends, *caoshu* provided a more spontaneous and subjective hand that revealed the author's emotions and personality. The recognition of writing as a form of art is tied to this very concept and to the conviction that the personal qualities of the individual are present in the realisation of an aesthetically valuable work. In the third century calligraphy was elevated to the level of poetry, an artistic expression suited to the educated gentleman who practised it as a hobby, the same way he composed verses. Yet this did not mean it was merely recreational – on the contrary it was an intellectual discipline, and to excel in it, it was necessary to possess the virtues of a gentleman and to practice assiduously, studying the masters of the past.

The most famous calligrapher of all times was Wang Xizhi, originally from an aristocratic family that was very influential in the Eastern Jin court. His fame became legendary during the Tang period – emperor Taizong (r. 626–649) had himself buried with Wang’s most celebrated work, the *Predace to the Orchid Pavilion* – but his writings were already appreciated and collected by his contemporaries. He created a new style known as ‘running script’ (*xingshu*), which ‘proceeds like a floating cloud and retreats like a frightened snake’ (Juliano 1996, p. 288). Unfortunately, no original work survives today – to admire his calligraphy we may only refer to later copies (Fig. 2). More or less contemporaneously with Wang Xizhi and just as famous was another aristocrat, Gu Kaizhi, who excelled in the execution of portraits and became the most renowned painter of the Eastern Jin dynasty. But critical literature mentions many other artists, demonstrating that already in the fourth century painting was considered a form of art unto itself, as respected as poetry and calligraphy in that, just like them, it was considered an appropriate means for expressing the superior personality and the emotions of the educated gentleman. Thus the figure of the painter-artist emerged, quite distinct from that of the painter-decorator who for centuries had decorated the walls of palaces, tombs and temples.

To express their feelings, the gentlemen-painters adopted new formats and materials. In this way the portable horizontal roll was born (Fig. 3), which was also used for calligraphy. It consisted of a strip of silk, and later of paper, of variable length upon which the artist painted his subject or wrote his characters. The work was mounted onto a paper support, to the left edge of which a cylindrical stick was added, and to the right of which was a semicircular rod. It was rolled up around the stick and observed one section at a time, without unrolling it completely, pulling out the right edge and reading it from right to left. Gu Kaizhi was also the author of critical writings, including the *Lun hua* (Essays on Painting), in which he examined works from the third and fourth centuries and explained the objective of portraiture – ‘to transmit the spirit’, or rather with a huge introspective capacity, to be able to capture not only the physical appearance but most importantly the subject’s spirit through postures, gestures and expressions. Unfortunately, none of Gu’s original works has survived to the present day, but an eighth-century copy of the *Admonitions of the instructress to the court ladies*, conserved in the British Museum, allows us the possibility of imagining how the great painter would have translated his theoretical principles onto silk. The huge horizontal roll (350 cm long) illustrates the literary text of the same name with a highly moral tone, composed by Zhang Hua (232–300) in the third century, in which a court instructress admonishes the ladies of the gynoeceium of the palace on the correct behaviour in delicate circumstances. The images are separated from the text they describe (Fig. 4) according to a compositional scheme that was typical of Han pictorial art; but the attempt to characterise the single figures is an absolute novelty. The stereotypical aspect of the Han figures (Fig. 1) is substituted by expressions, actions and poses that suggest internal contemplation and intellectual depth, thereby transforming the symbols into actual representations.

Perhaps it is not a coincidence that with the affirmation of his individuality the painter is also affirming the individualisation of his portraits, whereas the Confucian subject revealed that, despite the fact that the intelligentsia had already embraced Daoist theories, the observation of the correct code of behaviour continued to hold its deeply rooted place in Chinese aristocracy.

As can be observed in the tiles of the Han period (cat. no. 11), so in the *Admonitions of the instructress* the line of the horizon and the spatial depth are suggested merely by the position of the figures and the presence of some element of furnishing, but it seems that in other cases Gu himself used a different setting. In the *Nymph of the Luo River*, for example, of which we know only much later copies (Fig. 5), the episodes of the sad story between the divinity of the river and a young mortal, inspired by the literary work composed by Cao Zhi (192–232) at the beginning of the third century, are not separated from the text, nor from the individual elements, but they follow each other in uninterrupted succession. The protagonists appear each time the story requires it, according to the technique of continuous narration, inserted in the surrounding environment, thus introducing two great innovations in the art of painting: the repetition of the characters and the first appearance

of the landscape.

The human figures, emotionally characterised according to Gu's theories, are still the protagonists, whereas the landscape is exposed as a background, like a theatre set, with its stereotypical elements – rocks and hills are drawn with lines of uniform width, the proportions and the perspective are hardly respected. Nevertheless, the appearance of the landscape is revolutionary in any case and can be attributed to a combination of factors. On the one hand there is the essential role of nature in the Daoist philosophy, embraced by intellectuals since the third century, and on the other the imitation of the frescoes in the rock temples that describe the numerous Buddhist stories. Continuous narration, in fact, represented a novelty in fourth-century China, but not in India. In this extraordinary work even the subject is innovative, as its dominant theme is no longer feminine virtue – exalted in *Admonitions of the Instructress* – but instead feminine beauty inspiring strong emotions.

According to tradition, it has been constantly held that because of the distraught political situation in fourth-century China and the diverse cultural development of the two major geographical areas into which the country was divided, the relationship between the north and the south has consisted exclusively of armed conflict. Nevertheless, the discovery of certain artefacts, among which the drinking vessel of Roman glass in this exhibition (cat. no. 68) prove the contrary. The object in question was discovered in a tomb dated from around 322 near Nanjing, whereas another very similar example was found in a cemetery from the third or fourth century located near Lop Nor, along the Silk Road (An Jiayao 2004, pp. 210–11). Although in the south these new, revolutionary ferments stimulated cultural life, northern China fell into a state of absolute confusion. From the declaration of independence of the Xiongnu in Bingzhou in 304 to the unification of the north by the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534) in 439, sixteen kingdoms were established – hence the name of the period – founded by the elite of the various ethnic groups, originating from the northern steppe or from the western frontier (see Di Cosmo in this catalogue, pp. 53–59). The states were founded in the moment in which a league of nomadic tribes reclaimed the dominion of the territories that it had conquered by subordinating the local war lords and strongholds, often forcing at least a part of the local population to migrate to the conqueror's own homeland, with the inevitable consequences of ethnic contamination between Chinese and foreign groups.

The strongholds dated back to the end of the Eastern Han dynasty, when the social and political unrest had induced the large landowners to defend their properties by fortifying them and protecting them with the aid of private militia. From huge agricultural operations, sensitive to the demands of the market, the large farms proceeded to transform themselves into self-contained enclaves, within which lived dependent farmers, private militia, servants and slaves. This system was actually strengthened after the fall of the Han dynasty and was maintained throughout the following centuries. The sixteen states, lacking an institutional and economic system, proved themselves extremely ephemeral, even when they were able to extend their borders into all of the northern regions, as did the Former Qin (351–394) of the Di ethnic group, with their capital at Chang'an. In 383 they even attempted to conquer the south, but the army of the Eastern Jin, although smaller in number, drove back the attack in the memorable battle of the Fei River in Anhui. Two terracotta sculptures representing a southern soldier and a foreign one from the north respectively, discovered in two tombs near Nanjing, evoke this fateful historic event (cat. nos. 49 and 50).

The defeat was deleterious for the Former Qin and the north returned to be a theatre for continuous armed conflicts until the rise of the Northern Wei belonging to the Tuoba branch of the Xianbei confederation, an ethnic group originating in the steppe, which, along with other nomadic tribes of the same population, had established itself along the northern borders first of the Han empire and then of the Wei and Western Jin territories. In 338 the Tuoba Xianbei had founded the state of Dai – south-central Mongolia and northern Shanxi – establishing the capital at Shangle, in modern Horing, central Mongolia. In 376, during the Former Qin campaign for conquest, the Dai sovereign and his five yearold nephew, Tuoba Gui (371–409) were captured and taken to Chang'an, where Tuoba Gui received a typical Chinese education with strong Daoist influences. After

returning to his homeland in 386 Tuoba Gui changed the name of his kingdom from Dai to Wei and assumed the title of emperor the following year. From then on the Northern Wei took up arms against their rival states and completed the conquest of northern China in 439.

From the archaeological findings, unfortunately still quite few in number, it can be inferred that despite the political chaos and the military devastation, the funeral furnishings were still very elaborate. The two armoured horses (cat. no. 126), the court musicians (cat. no. 109) and the group on horseback (cat. no. 127) all originate from the same tomb, discovered in 2001 near Xianyang in Shaanxi province. It has not been possible to identify the proprietor of the tomb, but from its furnishings it can be deduced that he belonged to the high society of the Former Qin (351–394) or Later Qin (384–417). The complete layered horse armour, among the most antique examples discovered to date in China, created with meticulous care, reveals the prominent role of war in daily life during that period, and the stirrups, introduced to China no earlier than the end of the fourth century, bear witness to the influence of foreign populations – in this case the Murong branch of the Xianbei nomadic tribes (Watt et al. 2004, p. 14 and cat. no. 41). Nevertheless, in addition to war, there was also room for recreation, as demonstrated by the delightful group of seated entertainers, each intent on playing their respective instruments – a small drum, the *pipa* (a string instrument resembling the lute, originally from the Near East), the *qin* (with plucked strings, similar to a zither harp, considered ancient China's most prestigious musical instrument) and a wind instrument, similar to a pipe, judging by the position of the female musician's hands.

The band of horsemen, on the other hand, plays a drum, similar to that of the first female musician, a long horn – unknown among the repertory of Chinese instruments – and the *paixiao*, a sort of pan-flute. Their music is not intended for entertainment but is rather a military march, in this case probably accompanying the funeral. The long horn and the facial traits of the mounted musicians betray their non-Chinese origin and testify to the juxtaposition of cultures in northern China in the fourth to fifth centuries, whereas the meticulous execution of all of the terracotta sculptures included in the tomb outfit reveal the interest of the craftsmen in realism, as demonstrated by the more static figures with respect to those of the Tang era. The funeral furnishings of the Xianyang tomb also included other objects, such as a number of small terracotta animals and a *huzi*, or vessel for liquids, quite common in the southern tombs from the third to the fifth centuries but found also in the north, demonstrating that in reality, the cultural boundaries between the two regions were less marked than the political ones and that the funerary equipment had maintained some of the characteristics inherited from the Han period. The fact that northern China was not culturally dead during this period, despite the torment of bloody wars, is also supported by the presence of monks, interpreters and translators of Buddhist texts of the calibre of Dharmarakṣa, of Yuezhi origin in Dunhuang, Fotudeng (d. c. 349) in Luoyang, Shi Daoan (312–385) and Kumarajiva (c. 350–410) in Chang'an (see Zacchetti in this catalogue, pp. 61–65). Unfortunately, the materials remaining from this period are scarce, but the literary production, the discovery of certain bronze statues (Fig. 6) dated from the fourth century, the caves of the Bingling monastery in Gansu, dated from c. 420 (see Whitfield in this catalogue, pp. 67–73) and the oldest caves of Mogao in Dunhuang, also in Gansu province, carved into the rock between c. 420 and 440, demonstrate that Buddhism had already set root in China and that the foreign sovereigns had chosen it as the ideological framework and element of social cohesion. Nevertheless, as far as can be determined by the works that have survived to the present day, the unprecedented diffusion of Buddhist art would not come until the reunification of the north by the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534) in 439.

Southern dynasties (420–589) and Northern dynasties (386–581)

At the beginning of the fifth century the division of China into two political and geographical entities was further consolidated.

In the south general Liu Yu (363–422), who had initially taken action to save the Eastern Jin from usurpers of the throne and revolts, finally proclaimed himself emperor of the new dynasty of the Liu Song 30 (420–479). Despite this, the struggles for power did not cease: in 479 the commander

of the imperial guards founded the dynasty of the Southern Qi (479–502), substituted by the Liang (502–557) and finally by the Chen (557–489). The brief duration of these dynasties was an indication of their weakness and their inability to impose themselves upon the great families. Court life was uncertain, if not outright dangerous, and violent death was one of the most common causes of the end of a bureaucratic career, with certain emperors falling prey to assassinations.

Nevertheless, the frequent changes of power did not greatly disturb society, guaranteeing a certain degree of continuity that was reinforced by the great families, originally from the north. In order to maintain their privileges, these had created a system of social classification based on the antiquity of the services that their own ancestors had provided the imperial administration.

A glimpse into the intellectual and cultural life of the period is provided by the images impressed upon the tiles that decorated the tombs of the southern nobility. Particularly famous are those discovered in 1958 at Dengxian, Henan province, four of which are shown in this exhibition (cat. no. 12). One of them wonderfully portrays the behaviour of 'Bohemian' gentlemen in a style reminiscent of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove. Four characters converse and play instruments, immersed in the nature of Mount Nan, considered by Daoists as the mountain of longevity. The second recalls a less idyllic aspect of life from this period – war – evoked here by two horses, one of which is clad in full armour, accompanied by their grooms. The third and fourth are more intimately tied to burial and the afterlife, illustrating an official guardian of the tomb who is wearing a Daoist hat and the Green Dragon – the divinity considered the guardian of the East – present in the burials since the Western Han dynasty (Lanciotti and Scarpari 2006, cat. nos. 107 and 108). Other scenes from the life of the southern elite are illustrated on the tiles recently discovered in a tomb near Nanjing (cat. no. 13), exhibited here to the public for the first time. The first describes three aristocratic women on foot, following an ox-drawn cart – the preferred vehicle of transportation for the higher classes – and accompanied by an attendant. The ladies wear high-waisted dresses and blouses with long and ample sleeves, quite fashionable in the sixth and early seventh centuries, whereas the servant wears a pair of long trousers tied beneath the knee (introduced by the Hu ethnic group which occupied the northern and northwestern territories) and a sort of tunic that was folded over the chest and tied around the waist with a band. The other two, in contrast, illustrate men riding magnificently caparisoned horses, preceded and followed by servants wearing the same clothing as the one in the previous example. The figurative tiles reveal that in the fifth and sixth centuries the favourite themes in the decoration of tombs were in reality very similar to those of the Eastern Han period – funeral ceremonies, processions, animals of the four directions, Confucian and Daoist subjects – whereas the pictorial language had changed, in light of the new preference for slender figures, linear rhythms and a vivacious energy. The production of manuals on aesthetics and literary critique continued to flourish at this time; the single work that most influenced painting in the centuries to come originated from this same period (sixth century), the *Classification of Ancient Painters* by Xie He (active c. 500–535). Both this text as well as its continuation by Yao Zui (535–602) presented a series of painters active from the third through the sixth century, according to the standards of evaluation that Xie He listed in his introduction. As a critical work, the text is not exceptional, but its criteria became 'the principles', whose interpretation has become a topic of discussion that continues to this day among scholars around the world. According to Xie He, in addition to respecting the exterior form, the colours and the composition of the subject, the painter also had to paint the *qi*, that is 'the essence', the intrinsic nature of the object being represented, using the brush in a constructive manner. He also recommended studying the historical masters by reproducing them – only in this way was it possible to assimilate the fundamental principles necessary to develop a personal style. It is interesting to note that, as far as critical terminology is concerned, Xie He and Yao Zui referred to poetry and calligraphy, and in their evaluation they related to the quality of the paintings and the personality of the artist. The landscape, first appearing as the background of narration in the fourth century, is liberated from this secondary and becomes an independent subject, perhaps encouraged by the birth of poetry of nature, celebrated by the immortal verses of Xie Lingyun (385–433) and

Tao Qian (365–427). Unfortunately no landscape painting has survived, but the publication of essays on this subject demonstrates that it had already become an established genre. Zong Bing (375–443), for example, in his *Introduction to Landscape Painting*, affirmed that the Dao, or cosmological element, is manifested through nature, and therefore landscape painting, capturing the essence of physical forms, had the sublime function of connecting the beneficiary with the cosmological element. A similar concept is expressed in *On Painting*, in which Wang Wei (415–443) explained that true painting reproduces both the exterior form of the visible and its intimate nature through a combination of symbols; based on the idea that nature is the microcosm in which the forces of the universe converge, he considered landscape painting the genre that best reflected the activity of the Dao. In the absence of contemporary painting 32 scrolls, the aesthetic principles professed at that time can only be experienced in the wall paintings of tombs, in the frescoes decorative Buddhist caves and in the images sculpted in stone or impressed upon tiles, which, however, are the work of specialised craftsmen rather than the masters of painting cited in the treatise. The new pictorial language that emerged in these years had nevertheless spread among the artisans hired to adorn the tombs of their aristocratic clients, probably because of the latter, as demonstrated by the previously cited tiles from Dengxian and Nanjing (cat. nos. 12 and 13). The one depicting four ‘Bohemian’ men on Mount Nan expresses the happy combination of the landscape with the protagonist of the story, whereas the ones decorated with gentlemen on horseback and their servants demonstrate the use of natural elements, in this case trees, to represent the surrounding environment and to articulate the narration. The emotional characterisation of the subjects is not exceedingly individualised, but considering that the works were produced in series by artisans, the final result can certainly be appreciated. In the fifth to sixth centuries Buddhism definitively completed its peaceful conquest of Chinese culture and society, both in the north and in the south, but unfortunately the southern traces are extremely rare. The dynastic stories and the religious literature describe Buddhist art as having flourished in Nanjing, particularly during the reign of emperor Wu (r. 502–549) of the Liang dynasty (502–557); but today only the sculptures discovered in Sichuan illustrate the more plastic, realistic and humanised southern style (Fig. 7) with respect to the hieratic figures of the north (Howard 2004, p. 93). The use of common terms in the southern and northern Buddhist texts of this period bears witness to the interaction among the religious centres of the two areas, whereas the formal sculptural languages remain distinct. The southern style was inspired by India and Southeast Asia; the northern style was influenced by Central Asia. In northern China, after 135 years of invasions, migrations of various ethnic groups and fleeting governments, the sovereigns of the Northern Wei dynasty were finally able to inaugurate a period of peace and to construct a strong state with an efficient institutional system on the Chinese model, a salaried bureaucracy, control over agricultural production and a valid fiscal system. To consolidate its own power, the new regime had to establish control of the land and of the upper classes. In order to resolve the problem of land, the Northern Wei introduced the ‘agrarian standardisation’, which later became the system upon which the Sui and Tang dynasties were founded. To tighten the reins on the aristocracy they promoted the political integration of the large Chinese families. To this end they classified them according to their antiquity and gave them access to public offices on the basis of their rank. The highest positions were however reserved for the Wei nobility, who on the other hand were forbidden to speak the language and practice the customs of the Tuoba in favour of those of China. Finally, for a better integration of the nobility, mixed marriages were encouraged among the families of the two ethnic groups. In politics, to impress a sense of continuity upon the new power, the Wei reintroduced the official cult of Confucius, and in order to promote the integration of the various ethnic groups they declared Buddhism the state religion. It is not a coincidence that the tendency to place institutional Buddhism under the direct control of the state, a practice also shared by the southern sovereigns, was instated in this period: this sometime resulted in destructive anti-Buddhist persecutions, such as the one launched by the Northern Wei in 446. Imperial patronage often signified the promotion and financing of monumental works, such as the construction of the rock temple of Yun’gang (Fig. 8), which began

in 460 near Datong in Shanxi, then the capital of the Wei empire. The colossal dimensions of the sculptures, some of them 15 metres high, and their imposing and massive forms express the power of Buddha and the overwhelming strength of his teachings, but also exalt the greatness of the Wei dynasty. In 494 the Wei decided to move the capital to a more central location within the empire, a city that had already served this function in the past – Luoyang in Henan province.

This decision coincided with the adoption of Chinese names for the Tuoba aristocracy and of the Han language, etiquette and formal clothing. The move also brought about the construction of new Buddhist temples, of which the most important is in Longmen (Fig. 9), 14 kilometres south of Luoyang. The work began in the last years of the fifth century and was not completed until the end of the eighth, with a total of 350 caves forming a complex of nearly one hundred

thousand statues. Two reliefs depicting Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future (cat. nos. 15 and 16), probably from the caves at Longmen, illustrate the style popular at the end of the fifth and beginning of the sixth century – slender and subtle bodies with narrow, sloping shoulders hidden beneath very ample Chinese robes, falling around them in folds and cascades.

The two representations of Maitreya reflect the Wei conversion to Chinese aesthetic values that favoured linear and two-dimensional forms. This appears even more evident in one of the most significant works included in the exhibition– the stela in the form of a pagoda originating from Shuiluo in Gansu province (cat. no. 14), sculpted on four sides with scenes referring to essential passages from Buddhist texts and episodes of the life of Sakyamuni in a blaze of images. The massive Sinisation of ethnic customs carried on by the Wei sovereigns, with the exclusion of the Tuoba from administrative functions, created strong dissent among the dominant aristocracy, which ultimately brought the country to a state of chaos once again in 534. The empire was divided into two rival dynasties – the Western Wei (535–557), under the leadership of a Xianbei general, Yuwen Tai, with its capital at Chang'an, and the Eastern Wei (534–550), led by the Chinese general Gao Huan, with its capital at Ye, on the modern border between the regions of Hebei and Henan.

Neither one of the dynasties survived the generals who founded them: in 550 the son of Gao Huan proclaimed himself emperor of the Northern Qi (550–557) and in 557 the son of Yuwen Tai founded the Northern Zhou dynasty (557–581). The conflicts between the two rival lineages only ended in 577 when the Northern Zhou conquered the empire of the Northern Qi. Just after his claiming of the throne, Yuwen Tai sponsored the realisation of a series of caves at the rock temple of Maijishan in Tianshui, Gansu province, whose construction started at the beginning of the fifth century. The unfired clay sculptures portraying the eldest disciple of Buddha, Kasyapa (cat. no. 18), and Maitreya (cat. no. 19), with their gentle features and more expressive faces, anticipate the changes that would occur around the middle of the sixth century. The plastic art of both the Northern Zhou and the Northern Qi reflected a new wave of Indian influences that translated into different styles in the two geographic areas, based on the itinerary they followed to reach them (Howard 2004, pp. 95–98). In fact, the sculpture of the Northern Zhou period resembles the southern style of Sichuan, annexed to the Zhou empire in 553. This is particularly evident in the abundance of jewels, scarves and ribbons that adorn the body of the Bodhisattva Padmapani 34 (cat. no. 20).

The contrast between the body's more ample volumes and the ornaments heightens the plastic effect and animates the entire sculpture. Bearing witness to the fact that the new artistic language coexisted with the regional styles is the stela of Zhao Anxiang (cat. no. 22). It takes on the style that was most popular at the end of the Northern Wei (386–534), characterised by elongated faces and sloping shoulders, whereas the nimbus of the Buddha, divided into two zones, anticipated a characteristic that would become typical of the Sui period (581–618). The five figures of Buddha in meditation against a background of flames, on the other hand, fall among the aureole of Buddhist images from the fifth and sixth century. Scholars disagree on the course of Indian influences on the Northern Qi style (Su Bai 2004, pp. 79–97; Howard 2004, pp. 89–99); however, whether they arrived directly from Gupta India (320–600) by sea through Southeast Asia or by land through the Turkic empire, which stretched from Mongolia to Central Asia – picking up Persian motifs along

the way – or even from southern China, they translated into a renewed sense of plasticity and a pronounced naturalism, above all in Shandong (Fig. 10). It is important to underline that during this period, despite the political instability and the frequent armed conflicts, the regimes that dominated northern China held close diplomatic and commercial relations with the neighbouring states, particularly with the Turkish empire (Di Cosmo in this catalogue, pp. 53–59). Princess Chanle of the Western Wei was given in marriage to the Turkic sovereign, and the wife of the last emperor of the Northern Zhou was a Turk. Extending from Mongolia to Central Asia, the Turkic empire controlled a part of the caravan routes by which all kinds of goods were transported in both directions. The Turks – and the populations dominated by them during their expansionistic campaigns, including the Sogdians – thus became the unifying element between China in the east and the Persian empire and the Roman orient in the west, favouring contacts and exchanges, as demonstrated by the gilt silver plate depicting Dionysus, found in Gansu (cat. no. 67). Created between the second and third centuries in a province of the Roman empire, it reached the Middle Kingdom through Sogdian and Bactrian hands. In the sixth century, Turks, Sogdians, Bactrians, Persians and Indians lived regularly in northern China, which is why the origins of cosmopolitanism that characterised the Tang dynasty (618–907) must be sought in this turbulent yet culturally stimulating period.

The large ceramic jar, richly decorated with lotus petals, medals and masks (cat. no. 75) is of Chinese origin but strongly influenced by the presence of Central Asian populations in China. The green glazing immediately recalls the southern kilns of Yue, specialising in this genre since the Shang dynasty (c. 1600–1045 BCE). However, this type of jar was made in the north, in Shandong and possibly in Hebei. The example shown here was uncovered in a tomb near Nanjing, but others have been found at northern sites, indicating that despite the difficulty of political relations between the north and the south, commercial exchanges in fact were not prohibited.

Another distinctive characteristic of the Tang empire was religious tolerance, but in reality foreigners residing in China had also been allowed the freedom to practice their faith in the preceding period, as testified by the tomb of An Jia, a Sogdian leader of the foreign community at Tongzhou in Shaanxi, deceased in 579. In this exhibition the lunette of the tomb's door (cat. no. 25) can be admired, magnificently decorated in relief with a Zoroastrian ritual scene and loaned by the Chinese authorities for the first time ever to an exhibition abroad.

From just a few years later is the stela dated 583 by its inscription (cat. no. 24). It represents the divinized Laozi, the legendary founder of Daoist thought and the author of the *Daodejing*, which was the basis from which the sect of the Heavenly Masters arose in the second century, one of the most antique currents of religious Daoism (Zacchetti in this catalogue, pp. 61–65). Daoism, whose principles catered to the intellectuals disillusioned with Confucianism, began to organise itself as a religious movement precisely in the second century. In the fourth century Buddhism was already the dominant religion, also common among foreigners from Central Asia; however, it was not the only one, and this stela demonstrates that during this period, although influenced by Buddhism in its monastic discipline and dedicatory language, Daoism had many champions.

If Buddhist sculptural expression followed different paths in the north and the south during the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties, painting manifested common characteristics, thus proving that the aesthetic theories had also spread to the north and therefore that the cultural boundary between north and south was less marked than the political one – and certainly less so than Chinese tradition would have led us to believe. The mural paintings decorating the tomb of Lou Rui – a high-ranking aristocrat in the court of the Northern Qi (550–577), whose aunt had been given in marriage to the founder of the Eastern Wei dynasty – who deceased in 570 and was buried near Taiyuan in Shaanxi province, are evidence that the southern pictorial style was also shared by the artists of the north. A detail of the procession painted on one of the walls of the tomb's access corridor (Fig. 11) is emblematic – two men riding side by side, partially hidden. The gentleman farthest away from the viewer is portrayed at three-quarters, whereas the other is seen in profile with his back hunched and his head lowered; the horses are both drawn in profile, the one towards

the interior with its head turned slightly to the right and the other with its head turned behind as if called by his rider. The composition is very clever because of the contrasting pose of the two horse-and-rider pairs, one being tense and the other relaxed. The animals' hooves, depicted in different positions, are juxtaposed, suggesting the idea of movement and depth. The characteristic oval faces of the women are painted with fine and delicate lines and the colour is applied without gradations within the areas delineated by the regular contours. It is difficult to imagine that the artist was not a great master: only the absence of the landscape is puzzling, as it is shown as a background to the stories derived from Buddhist texts and illustrated on the walls of their caves. From fifth- and sixth-century tombs many earthenware sculptures have emerged depicting soldiers, musicians, various aspects of court life, women performing domestic tasks and even foreigners, made to accompany the deceased on his last journey. The selection from the tomb of Yuan Shao – nephew of emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–499) – died in 528, is an excellent example of the fictile subjects and sculptural style of that period (cat. nos. 51, 61, 110 and 116): a fantastic creature for guarding the tomb with the body of an animal and the face of a human, an official guardian of the door with his ceremonial sword, a horseman, a horse-drum for beating the rhythm of the funeral march, a soldier with his shield, a military attendant, a servant, two seated musicians and a woman with a child in her arms. The figures, independently of the subjects they represent, reveal a new conception of volumes, with more rotund bodies, fuller faces and more natural expressions; the profiles are sharp and precise. Because the entire funeral procession 36 of the tomb of Yuan Shao – 115 elements – is not available to the exhibition, the choice was made to display the specimens according to a thematic criterion in order to best emphasise the stylistic development of clay sculptures.

Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907)

In 581 Yang Jian usurped the throne of the Northern Zhou, proclaiming himself emperor of the Sui dynasty, and to celebrate the event he commissioned the leading architect of the period, Yuwen Kai, to redesign the capital still at Chang'an, but centred around an area to the south-west of the former one. Having diplomatically resolved the relations with the Turkic empire, he dedicated himself to conquering the south, which he completed with no great effort in 589 with the total destruction of the capital, Nanjing and the elimination of the last southern dynasty of the Chen (557–589). The arduous task of providing for the integration of the south, having developed both politically and culturally in an autonomous manner for almost three centuries, was placed upon his son, Yang Guan, a sincere admirer of the southern civilisation. He had a new capital built in present-day Yangzhou in Jiangsu province, and he was concerned with establishing good relations with Buddhist and Daoist churches. In addition, he surrounded himself with the most illustrious intellectuals of the period. When he replaced his father on the throne of the great Sui empire in 604, he ordered the realisation of a colossal engineering project – the Grand Canal, connecting Hangzhou to Peking by way of Yangzhou and Louyang for a total of 2,500 kilometres of navigable waterways. Furthermore, he had a second northern capital constructed at Luoyang. In foreign politics he diplomatically attempted to contain the Turks, whereas he decided to attack the kingdom of Koguryo. None of the three expeditions conducted between 612 and 614 was successful, and this failure, coupled with the terrible flooding of the Yellow River, the revolt of the Turks, a series of internal rebellions and, finally, the assassination of the emperor in 618 marked the end of the dynasty. Precisely because of its brevity, the Sui dynasty could be considered as one of the fleeting regimes to arise in the north after the fall of the Northern Wei dynasty in 534; but in reality certain factors significantly set it apart from the others, first and foremost the reunification of the country and the restoration of a strong centralised government. It is true that the Northern Zhou had also been able to unify the north in 577, and that only four years later they were replaced by the Sui: but the latter immediately demonstrated a more far-sighted behaviour. The construction of the Grand Canal allowed for the effective unification of the country, in addition to becoming a great propagandistic work. Furthermore, the Sui sovereigns realised that the military reunification would not have been sufficient to hold the empire together, and that an effective national ideology based

on the principles of the Confucian doctrine, such as that of the Han, would be just as necessary. The various dynasties of the period of division had attempted to reinstate the elements of Confucian tradition, but without resolve. The Sui, with this understanding, proposed a doctrine that included elements of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. From the Confucian tradition they adopted the ritualistic symbolism, the social order based on moral virtues, the study of the classics and the system of examinations for selecting state officials; but the Confucian principles alone, although they reflected the ideal model applied by the glorious Han dynasty, would not have been sufficient to legitimatise imperial power because, in the meantime, other religion had been established that were organised with consolidated concepts that had already transformed Chinese civilisation. Therefore, the first Sui emperor proposed himself as the paladin of Buddhist faith, bestowing upon himself certain religious titles and personally indemnifying the monasteries damaged by the anti-Buddhist persecutions of the Northern Zhou in 574. The close relation between the second emperor and the founder of the Tiantai Buddhist sect, Zhiyi, was a determining factor for the political and cultural unification of the country. Nevertheless, although to a lesser extent, both sovereigns also supported the Daoist church – as is revealed in the stela on exhibit (cat. no. 24) with the effigy of the divinised Laozi, commissioned in 583 by the Daoist Bai Xianjing on behalf of his ancestors of seven generations, of the young and old members of his family for the purpose of wishing good health to the emperor, peace to men, prosperity to the country and the collective comprehension of the Dao, the universal principle, by all sentient beings (translated from Chinese by R. Whitfield).

After the assassination of the emperor the throne was occupied by Li Yuan (posthumous name Gaozu, r. 618–626), a general originally from an important aristocratic family of the north-west, of Xianbei descent, that had served under the Northern Wei (386–534) and the Northern Zhou (557–581). His mother was a noble Turk, whose sister had been married to the first Sui emperor. Just after the founding of the Tang dynasty – unanimously considered the Golden Age of Chinese history, as the Middle Kingdom reached the height of its power in this period – Li Yuan dedicated himself to the pacification of the empire, defeating scores of rebel forces and military leaders aspiring to the throne. However, the most highly acclaimed among the Tang rulers, taken as a model for all successive eras, was the son of Gaozu, Li Shimin (posthumous name Taizong, r. 626–649), despite his enthronement as emperor having been obtained only after the assassination of two of his 38 brothers. He proved himself an illuminated emperor, capable of finally redeeming China's role as the greatest power on the Asian continent, not only from a military perspective but also from a cultural one. Chinese historiography was not as clement with Wu Zetian, foreseeably vituperated for having proclaimed herself empress (r. 690–705) – the only one in China's entire history – and for having effectively ruled for approximately twenty years. Her methods were not always agreeable (she tended to eliminate her rivals by having them assassinated or forcing them into suicide) but she was without a doubt a competent ruler, aware of her role, who attempted to free herself from the strong aristocracy of the northwest by moving the capital to Luoyang and promoting the system of imperial examinations, the reason for which academic titles became very prestigious. Despite her good intentions, conflicts between rival factions in the court forced her to abdicate in 705. After two weak kingdoms, the throne was filled by emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–755), under whose command Tang China reached the apex of its splendour with the pacification of the borders and the implementation of great institutional, fiscal, juridical and military reforms. Unfortunately, he was also unable to heal the conflict within the government between the state-appointed officials and the members of the old north-western aristocracy. This inevitably led to the weakening of central power and, in 755, to the revolt of An Lushan, a general half Turkic and half Sogdian, leading an army of 150 thousand men stationed in the north-eastern regions. It took eight years to definitively quell the rebellion, but the power of the central state was never restored. Economically the empire continued to flourish, especially in the south, which became the driving power behind the country now that the northern regions were under the control of military rulers and the north-western territories, conquered at the beginning of the dynasty, had been abandoned. From 821 the efforts of the Tang emperors to maintain imperial unity and centralised power were

annihilated by internal dissent and social contrasts that sanctioned the fall of the dynasty. On the ideological level, the Tangs inherited Sui syncretism; however, they attributed more importance to the Confucian principles and to history as an instrument of legitimatisation and of moral teaching. In 629 Taizong instituted the Historiographic Office, destined to become a permanent organ of the governments of all successive dynasties. This office was charged with the difficult responsibility of compiling the history of the dynasties of the period of division and of recording contemporary history. Despite the fact that truth was the moral and legal foundation of the historiographic documentation, the scholars who created the documents were not always objective, and they seemed to ignore, for example, the coup d'état carried out by Taizong to conquer the throne, while they bitterly condemned Wu Zetian's usurping of power. Between the two organised religions, the Tang rulers favoured Daoism – the imperial family claimed to be direct descendants of Laozi – sustaining the construction of temples in every district, the inclusion of *Daodejing* among the required texts for state examinations and the celebration of solemn sacrifices by the emperor. However, this did not mean that Buddhism was opposed; it was sustained in so far as it did not interfere with politics. Consequently, the realisation of large temples was promoted throughout the entire country and Taizong funded the immense work of translating Buddhist texts by the monk Xuanzang (602–664) after his return from a long pilgrimage in India. However, restrictive measures were frequently launched against the Buddhist church, intended more to limit its power and wealth than for actual religious reasons. Only during the reign of Wu Zetian, consort of the third emperor, Gaozong, was Buddhism elevated to the rank of an official imperial doctrine. A faithful devotee, the empress also turned to Buddhism to legitimatise her power, as the Confucian doctrine prohibited it outright. According to the *Great Cloud Sutra*, the future Buddha Maitreya would be reincarnated as a female ruler to maintain peace and order in the world; therefore, as soon as she gained the throne, Wu Zetian ordered the edification of a Great Cloud Temple in every district – the precious set of reliquaries in this exhibition (cat. no. 42) comes from the one in present-day Jingchuanxian in Gansu province. The empress intended to found a universal Buddhist empire, with China at its centre as a model for all other populations of the faith; but in 705 she was forced to abandon her ambitions. At the beginning of the ninth century the Confucians launched a campaign to exalt the ancient traditions and values of Chinese civilisation against all that which was foreign, perhaps as a reaction to the decline of the imperial institutions and to the empire's growing economic difficulty. A violent persecution was triggered in 845, from which Chinese Buddhism has never recovered. In foreign politics the Tang rulers attempted to extend and consolidate the empire's borders. In 630, taking advantage of the internal conflicts among the Eastern Turks, they established their dominion over the regions of Ordos and inner Mongolia; between 640 and 649 they conquered the kingdom of Karakhoja, near present-day Turfan, and the oases of Karashahr and Kucha, thereby extending their control to the Tarim basin and the Issyk-Kul region. When the western Turkic empire rose again, the Chinese army reduced it into two rival federations, tributaries of the Tang. In addition, to contain the aggressive power of Tibet they alternated between diplomacy and resorting to arms. On the other hand, their relations with the Uighurs, emerged from the ruins of the confederation of the Eastern Turks, were always good. Among the tributary populations numbered the Tuyuhun, who occupied the region of Lake Kokonor, the Turkic tribe Xueyantuo, the Guligans of central Siberia and the Kirghiz. The geographical and cultural centrality of the Tang is cleverly illustrated by a silver box with parcel gilding, so-called 'of the seven countries' (cat. no. 94), whose lid depicts China surrounded by six foreign countries. The borders of the Tang empire changed a number of times in the course of the dynasty, but the dominion over an immense territory that extended from Korea to Persia favoured the passage of goods and foreign peoples with an unprecedented intensity. Many Chinese cities were transformed into international metropolises, first among them the capital, Chang'an. Here, delegations arrived from all of Asia, most notably from Persia. Prince Firuz, emissary and son of the last Sasanid Persian sovereign (226–651), seeking support against the Arab expansion, was actually allowed to establish a Persian court in exile. In 643 a delegation of King Fulin of Syria arrived and in 650 the first Muslim legation was received.

In addition to Buddhism and Daoism, Zoroastrianism was also practised in China during the Tang dynasty – professed primarily by the Sogdians – along with Manicheism, Nestorianism, Judaism and, slightly later, Islam. Each religion had its places of worship and in Chang’an there were two imperial temples, 38 small family shrines, 111 Buddhist monasteries, 41 Daoist, four Zoroastrian and three Nestorian temples and an uncertain number of Manichean churches, synagogues and mosques. The Silk Road, with its variations, had for centuries allowed for trade between China and Persia, but the traffic was never as frequent and intense as it was during the Tang period, when the borders of the Chinese empire extended beyond the Tarim Basin. Just as dynamic were the maritime routes that connected the large southern ports of Suzhou, Yangzhou and Guangzhou, present-day Canton, to Persia and to Arabia. The centralisation of power and the cosmopolitanism of Tang China were magnificently reflected in the imperial capital, Chang’an (present-day Xi’an), planned by the Sui and extended by their successors. A massive city wall (36.7 kilometres long), interrupted by three gates on each of its southern, eastern and western sides, surrounded the city, which was oriented on a north-south axis, protecting it with its watchtowers. Inside, eleven vertical avenues intersected fourteen horizontal ones, subdividing the city into quarters that were each surrounded by walls (Fig. 12). The principal artery was that which connected the central 40 southern gate with the entrance to the imperial city and which, passing by the palace, reached the central gates on the eastern and western sides. The imperial city, delineated by a wall, occupied all of the northern section – approximately one third – of the entire capital and was in turn subdivided into an ‘official’ part (where the government offices were located along with the Ancestral Temple and the Altar of the Earth) and a residential one, reserved for the imperial family. To the north, beyond the wall, was the imperial park with a few orchards, a vineyard, athletic fields for playing polo – one of the favourite pastimes of the Tang aristocracy – and the Palace of the Great Light, which became the residence of the emperor and his family in 660 and for some years has been the central focus of the work of archaeologists. The residents of Chang’an, who numbered more than one million in the eighth century, including the tens of thousands of Turks, Uigurs, Tokhars, Sogdians, Persians, Arabs, Chams, Khmers, Javanese and Chingalese, lived in the 108 quarters enclosed by walls, closed each night and reopened the following morning at the sound of the gong and drum that signalled the hours of activity and the beginning of the curfew. Goods from all of China and imported from all over the world were sold in the city’s two large specialty markets. One in the west and the other in the east, they extended across nine quarters, one of which, in the centre, was reserved for government officials for the inspection of commerce, transactions and service. Not far from the Eastern Market was also the pleasure quarter, which served to satisfy clients from all social classes. The urbanistic model of Chang’an was also adopted in the construction of the second capital, Luoyang, and was exported throughout Eastern Asia, whereas the echoes of its cultural greatness reached as far as Constantinople. The circulation of peoples, goods, ideas and religion and the tolerance granted by a strongly centralised and stable government stimulated creativity, pushing arts and literature to new heights. It has been pointed out repeatedly that the relations between the north and the south and contact with other countries were already frequent during the period of division, therefore certain elements of the Tang artistic and poetic language can be traced in the preceding expressions; however, the peculiar Tang style is unique and unmistakable. Poetry flourished as it never had before, as demonstrated by the *Complete Tang Poetry*, compiled in 1707 under the auspices of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). It contains fifty thousand poems by two thousand different authors with a thematic variety that indicates the absolute freedom that writers were granted by the state. Among these are enumerated some of the most famous poets in Chinese history. The Buddhist Wang Wei (699–759), also very famous as a landscape painter, was inspired by nature; the Daoist Li Bai (701–762) praised feminine beauty and good wine; the Confucian Du Fu favoured civil duty and justice; Bai Juyi (772–846) celebrated the tragic love between emperor Xuanzong and the ‘precious consort’ Yang, whereas Li He (790–816) evoked spectral suggestions. In art, the practice of compiling critical essays, inaugurated in the fourth century, continued. The most important work was *Lidai Minghua Ji* (Notes on Famous Paintings through History), in which

Zhang Yanyuan, active in the ninth century, examined artists and works from the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220) to the Tang dynasty, including biographies and critical analyses of the paintings. It was he who consecrated Wang Xizhi as the greatest calligrapher of all times and Gu Kaizhi as the father of true portraiture. Among contemporary painters he exalted Yan Liben (d. 673), Zhang Xuan (active 713–742), Han Gan (active 740–760) and Zhou Fang (active 780–810), none of whom have left us any surviving works – only later copies exist that were created between the tenth and twelfth centuries. The Tang painting style is nevertheless easily inferred by the numerous wall paintings that have been discovered in the tombs of the nobility from that period. Guarding the entrance to the tomb of the ‘precious consort’ Wei in Zhaoling towers an official over two metres high (cat. no. 106) with a crown-shaped hat and a ceremonial sword. The figure is simply and effectively depicted by a line of uniform width that defines the forms and suggests the volumes. There is no colour, except for the red lips that add an exquisite chromatic detail. Continuing along the corridor of the tomb of the ‘precious consort’ Wei, two grooms are encountered who are barely able to detain a saddled, white war horse (cat. no. 132), ready to be mounted by his master, famous for her gifts as a horsewoman. This fragment of mural painting well represents the stupefying quality reached during the Tang period.

With a calligraphic, continuous and elegant line the painter has delineated the figures and has then added a few wider brushstrokes to exalt certain elements and details. The same line and caricatured face are found in the figures of the eunuchs, one of which is on exhibit here (cat. no. 107), originating from the tomb of emperor Taizong’s nephew, Duan Jianbi. In the tombs from this period, as the crypt is gradually approached, the themes of the wall paintings become more intimate – the eunuchs were the only men allowed in the areas of the palace inhabited by women – and there were more and more paintings of women showing great realism. The young lady and the goose (cat. no. 123), a fragment originating from the tomb of Li Zhen – a trusted official of emperor Taizong, who was therefore buried in his funeral park, the Zhaoling – represents a variety of the painting genre, ‘feminine beauties’, also known as ‘beauties in leisure’. In fact, the woman is portrayed as she plays with a goose and, although her surroundings are nondescript, the idea of movement is knowingly suggested by the bird’s wings unfolding behind it, parallel to the left arm of the attendant, and by the interruption of the regular vertical flow of the white and red stripes of the gown.

The feminine beauties painted on the stone panels Yang Hui’s sarcophagus, on the other hand, four of which are on display here, are more statuesque (cat. no. 122). They represent the idea of feminine beauty as it was conceived in the eighth century, which saw plump women who plucked and redrew their eyebrows into ‘moth wings’ shapes, coloured their lips with a vigorous ‘rosebud’ red, and wore ample gowns that draped softly, even when worn as men’s clothing. In fact, during the Tang dynasty the representations of women dressed as men were frequent and suggest the liberty that the fairer sex enjoyed during that period. Such independence was partially inherited from the clothing of the nomadic populations, which had dominated northern China from the beginning of the fourth century and was strengthened by new influences from Central Asia.

The same ideal of feminine beauty was also represented in terracotta sculptures. For example, the three women on exhibit here (cat. no. 118) show the same dress and the same postures as in the painted panels, but the hairstyles are more complex, as determined by a single or double chignon. The female figure from Mu Tai’s tomb in Gansu (cat. no. 117), in contrast, wears clothing of a distinctly Central Asian style: a shirt with a very low-cut neck and broad sleeves worn beneath a long, high-waisted dress, which emphasised her breasts, and a coat of medium length is worn quite naturally here over her shoulders.

Another group (cat. nos. 119–21) shows three female figures on horseback, an activity that was frequently practised by women in the Tang period, bearing witness to the freedom mentioned regarding men’s clothing. Out of practicality they had to wear shirts with tight sleeves, their regular, high-waisted, long dress and a small jacket with short sleeves; on their heads they wore various hats, all of the same foreign origin.

Even the preferred music of the Tang period was of Central Asian or Persian origins. On more than one occasion, the shah of Persia honoured the court with highly talented musicians and dancers. An area of the imperial palace at Chang'an was reserved for the preparation of foreign and Chinese entertainers. Furthermore, there was a quarter in the capital that was famous for its acclaimed musicians and dancers, and a part of the city near the Eastern Market specialised in the sale of foreign musical instruments. Music and dance were integral parts of daily life, and not only in the court. The wonderful group of four dancers on exhibit here (cat. no. 112), two wearing boots and two wearing 'cloud' shoes, seems to be performing a 'foreign whirling' dance, imported from Western Asia in the sixth century and widely appreciated in the Tang period. The great poet Bai Juyi describes them beautifully in one of his works: 'the heart of the *huxuan* dancers responds to the lute, the hands to the drums, they circle a thousand and ten-thousand times without stopping', just like the dancer on the incense container from the Famen temple (cat. no. 45). These terracotta sculptures, with others representing dancers, musicians, foreigners, servants, merchants, military and civil officers – the couple on display here (cat. no. 104) is truly extraordinary – and horses, camels and tomb guardians, known collectively in Chinese by the name *mingqi*, along with the wall paintings, furnished the noble tombs and accompanied the deceased on his last journey.

The practice of burying reproductions, initially of human beings and then also of animals and things, dates back to the fifth century BCE and was maintained over time with variations on chosen themes and quantities. For example, it has been seen that during the Eastern Han dynasty models of dwellings, towers, deposits, pavilions, pigsties, chicken coops, wells and stoves were preferred, whereas in the period of the divided empire, soldiers and armoured horses, players of military and funeral marches and also handmaids and musicians were frequently seen. In the Tang period sumptuary laws established the dimensions and the quantities of funeral objects based on the rank of the deceased, but the frequency with which they were promulgated indicates that they were often disregarded. And, in fact, the furnishings of the period are truly exceptional. Independently of the subject, the painted or glazed pottery sculptures are striking in their naturalness, three-dimensionality, elegance and vivacity. Although they were produced in large quantities with the use of moulds, some details – such as postures, gestures and chromatic details – express the sensitivity of the artisans who manufactured them. A comparison between the two handmaids from the Xianyang tomb, referenced earlier, dating to the end of the fourth century and the woman from Mu Tai's tomb, dated to 730, makes the transformation of the sculptural style evident. They are all standing portraits with great attention to details; but, whereas the first two are two-dimensional and immobile, the third is three-dimensional and the curved pleats oriented towards the left foot convey a sense of movement. The same observations can be extended to the comparison between the armoured horses from the Xianyang tomb and those of the Tang period from the tomb of Qi Biming: although they are static, the second ones are charged with a tension that gives them life and vibrancy. It is very likely that the naturalism of the *mingqi* was derived from that which characterised Buddhist sculpture from the Sui and Tang periods. The fact that Tang ideology favoured Daoism did not mean that Buddhism was weakened, as it was widely supported by the imperial house. In this period it reached its culmination as an organised religion, definitively integrating itself into Chinese tradition and enriching itself with new doctrinal content imported from India but re-elaborated in China to adapt itself to the Chinese context. The esoteric school constituted the most emblematic example of this.

The essays in this catalogue by Zacchetti, Whitfield and I-Man Lai, respectively dedicated to Buddhism, the art of Buddhist rock temples and the esoteric art, handle the subject exhaustively; therefore, in this context I will only discuss the principal characteristics of Tang Buddhist sculpture. Around the middle of the sixth century the linear and two-dimensional forms that had been favoured during the Northern Wei period (386–534) made way for a rounder and more harmonious figure. This renewed sense of plasticity was inherited and accentuated in the Sui period (581–618), as evident in the statue from Gansu depicting Guanyin (cat. no. 23). The pose is still fixed, but the body's forms are more gracious, the drapery softer and the facial expression sweeter.

The increasing naturalism traceable in Sui works reached its full maturity in the Tang sculpture of the seventh and eighth centuries. The clay statues from cave number three at Tiantishan in Gansu illustrates the perfect equilibrium between full forms and the clothing that covers them in a natural manner. The greatness of the Buddha, of his teachings and of the ruling dynasty are no longer expressed by exaggerating the bodily masses, but rather through the perfect balance of the sculptures as a whole.

The Buddha of Medicine (Bhaishajyaguru, cat. no. 27) and the Buddha of the Future (Maitreya, cat. no. 26), discovered in the southern cave of Leigutai in Longmen, are over two metres tall, yet it is not their bulk that dominates in this case, but rather a sense of balance and serenity.

The Bodhisattva Dashizhi (Mahasthamaprapta) found in the Fengxian monastery (cat. no. 28), seated upon a throne with one leg hanging and his turgid hand resting upon his knee, is even sensual, with his fleshy forms embellished with jewels. The group of five sculptures from the esoteric temple of Da Anguo in Chang'an (cat. nos. 35–39) is pervaded by a strong naturalism and sense of equilibrium, even in the figure of the so-called 'wrathful kings', whose rage causes the surfaces to vibrate intensely; yet they do not lose their composure with excessive gestures. The two Bodhisattvas from the Dahai monastery in Henan (cat. nos. 33 and 34), dated from around 821, are also very fleshy, but their sensuality is transformed into languor. It therefore seems possible to deduce that until the end of the eighth century Buddhist sculpture had reflected the vigorous and well-balanced power of the imperial dynasty, whereas from the ninth century the statues became more languid and melancholy, interpreting the altered political climate that was less energetic and more insecure. In the field of decorative arts, Tang gold and Silver ware and ceramics wonderfully reflect the opulence of the court, its taste for the exotic, but also the elaboration of a new style, closer to Chinese taste. The archaeological discoveries from the last fifty years reveal an unprecedented use of gold and silver tableware. Some of the sites from the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries have uncovered artefacts of gilt bronze, silver and gold in a style that is clearly not Chinese, created in far-away regions, such as the already mentioned plate decorated with Dionysus transported by a lion (cat. no. 67), actually originating from the Roman world.

Before the advent of the Tang dynasty these finds were rare and in any case imported. The emblematic materials of aristocracy and power in the Middle Kingdom were jade and bronze, whereas gold and silver were favoured in the countries of Central and Western Asia and in the Roman empire.

The discovery of such objects in Chinese sites demonstrates the appreciation of exotic objects by the non-Han elite, who dominated northern China, and the frequent exchanges with foreign populations. In the Tang period, the quantity of precious tableware rose to a staggering level, not because it was imported in larger quantities – it was not a commercial commodity like the others – but rather because it was sent as gifts from rulers of other countries by their delegations or offered by the foreign communities residing in China. From the end of the seventh century the working techniques, the forms and the decorations were still inspired by foreign models, primarily Persian, but local manufacture had commenced and the decorative language began to reveal a re-elaboration of the motifs according to Chinese taste. The form of the lobed cup with handle found in Xi'an (cat. no. 96) and the decorative subject of men hunting, for example, are of Sogdian origin, whereas the motif of ladies in the garden is certainly Chinese. The same concept is true of the silver cup with parcel gilding uncovered in Luoyang (cat. no. 95), while the magnificent silver box with parcel gilding that was part of the deposit at Dingmaoqiao in Jiangsu province is embellished with a typically Chinese motif – a pair of phoenixes flying among floral scrolls with a flower in their beaks, the symbol of good governance (cat. no. 88). From the same site comes the extraordinary and unique receptacle in the form of a turtle containing a parlour game that requires the consumption of alcoholic beverages by its participants (cat. no. 86). The game, which immediately evokes personalities such as the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, the citations from the Confucian *Dialogues* and the turalé itself could not be more exquisitely Chinese in style. The southern elegance is also evident in the other finds discovered at Dingmaoqiao (cat. nos. 89–92),

perhaps because from the second half of the eighth century the south became the leading producer of silver objects with five specialised areas: that's how the elaboration of the two precious metals reached extraordinary levels. The diffusion of gold and silver tableware in this period can probably be traced to the affirmation of a new practice in which the officials would send precious tributes to certain regions of the empire. The gold and silver objects from the Tang period that have survived to date only rarely come from tombs. More commonly they were found in 'deposits' – locations in which gold and silver ware was hidden, probably to save it from wars and raids. Such is the case of Dingmaoqiao, where all of 950 artefacts were conserved, and of Hejiacun, near the airport of Xi'an in Shaanxi, from which just as many were uncovered. This rule was imposed by the law; however, it was not always respected, as in the case of the plate decorated with fish motifs discovered in Luoyang (cat. no. 93). Normally, gold and silver ware from the Tang period is considered to pertain only to the private sphere of the aristocracy and to the opulence of the court, but in reality it was also used in the religious sector, as demonstrated by the magnificent set of reliquaries from the Great Cloud Temple at Jingchuanxian in Gansu (cat. no. 42) – including also one stone and one gilt bronze casket plus a small glass container – and the inestimable treasure discovered in the crypt of the pagoda of the Famen temple in Shaanxi. The external caskets in stone and gilt bronze are rectangular in form, as was the rule since the fifth century, whereas the successive ones in silver and gold evoke the shape of the typical Tang sarcophagus, thus demonstrating the close ties between religion and secular life.

The form of the handle-less *arghya* silver pitcher from the Famen temple (cat. no. 43) is of Indian origin, as is the decorative motif, symbol of esoteric Buddhism; at the same time, the technique of parcel gilding originates in Western Asia. This technique is applied to the incense container (cat. no. 45), exquisitely decorated with golden foreign dancers and floral scrolls against a dotted background, whereas the lotus flower (cat. no. 44) is a marvellous, realistic reproduction of the true flower. Many objects from the Famen treasure bear the mark *wensi yuan* – the workshop in the imperial palace that also produced the tableware for the court. Bronze, the precious metal *par excellence* in Chinese civilisation, was frequently used in the Tang period, not only for the creation of Buddhist sculptures but also to produce magnificent mirrors, whose reverse sides were embellished with typically Chinese subjects, such as the one inspired by Daoist content (cat. no. 97), or motifs imported from foreign countries, such as bunches of grapes that form the background in another with the twelve animals of the zodiac (cat. no. 98). The mirror from the tomb of Li Chui (cat. no. 99), on the other hand, shows a technical innovation adopted by Tang artisans – precious applications of mother-of-pearl depicting birds in flight and floral elements that compose an extremely elegant decoration. The Tang period is particularly important for the development of Chinese ceramics – for its acquired status as a precious material alongside silk, jade, lacquer, bronze, Silver and gold – in virtue of the sophisticated techniques applied by the most advanced kilns. The beauty of white and green ceramics was even immortalised in the verses of excellent poets such as Du Fu, who considered white bowls superior to frost and snow (Michaelson 1999, p. 102). Some forms and decorations imitated examples in gold, silver and lacquer, and their quality could compete with the precious materials; in fact, certain genres were even appreciated by the court. This is well demonstrated by the extremely elegant white plate distinguished by the 'official' mark (cat. no. 100), and by the cup with green glazing (cat. no. 101) on display here. The plate, a reproduction of a form in Silver or lacquer, is made of a new and very special material – this is in fact porcelain, a type of ceramic fired at high temperature like stoneware, but characterised by a white and translucent body invented at the Xing kilns in Hebei and at Gongxian in Henan province between the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh centuries; porcelain was produced in Europe only from the beginning of the eighteenth century. The meaning of the mark is not clear, but it undoubtedly links it to the court's system of tributes. Not all white objects were porcelain, as some were prepared with impure materials, causing the body to be less than perfectly white. To get around this shortcoming, the potters would cover them with white slip before applying the transparent glaze. The vigorous vase with two dragon-shaped handles (cat. no. 76) proves that the

effect was excellent in any case.

The technical and artistic evolution of the most antique kilns producing ceramics fired at high temperatures, situated in southern China and active since the Shang dynasty is well documented by the artefacts in this exhibition, the most impressive of which are the already cited *hunping* funeral urn (cat. no. 7) and the pitcher with dragon-shaped handle (cat. no. 74), anticipating a style that would become widely spread after the unification of the country in 589. In the eighth century these kilns, collectively known by the name Yue, radically renewed their production, perfecting the quality of green glazing (cat. no. 101) to such a degree that in the ninth century ceramics were included in the system of tributes presented by the prefectures and by the court officials (Rastelli 2004, p. 148). Literary sources beginning in the Tang period refer to a particular type of Yue ceramics called *miseci* or 'secret-coloured', identified only in 1987 during the excavation of the crypt of the pagoda of the Famen temple, which uncovered fourteen wonderful and extremely rare examples. Their quality is truly exceptional and the Chinese authorities have in fact refused to lend them (Fig. 13). In Tang tombs, in addition to pottery sculptures, many types of vessels and objects covered with brilliant, monochrome and polychrome lead glazes have been uncovered.

Known by the term *sancai* or 'three colours', they effectively convey the dynamism, exuberance and cosmopolitanism of the period. Because the lead used in the glazing of *sancai* ceramics made them toxic, it had always been believed that they were intended exclusively for burial; however, their unbridled beauty makes it difficult to believe that they were not also used on a daily basis. The marbled plate discovered in Jiangsu (cat. no. 82) was created with an extremely complex and expensive technique that supports the belief that *sancai* ceramics were not only used for burial. The same is true of the magnificent pitcher with the neck in the form of a phoenix head (cat. no. 79) and the flask decorated with a circus scene (cat. no. 80). Additionally, numerous examples of this kind have emerged from archaeological sites in the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia and Japan along with white and green ceramics, demonstrating the high level at which they were regarded. The Chinese import of goods during the Tang dynasty is frequently discussed, and when export is mentioned, that of silk is primarily highlighted; however, ceramics also played an important role. This is supported by the discovery of sunken ships in the seas of Southeast Asia, loaded with thousands of ceramic objects destined for foreign markets. Tang art, independent of its expressive medium, is characterised by a uniform style and a distinct interest in realism that grows from the extraordinary synthesis of previous artistic languages and new experiences. The Tang dynasty inaugurated a glorious period, not coincidentally defined as the 'Golden Age', during which China became the cultural centre of Eastern Asia with echoes that reached as far as the Mediterranean. The adjective that best describes it is 'cosmopolitan'. During this period China was fascinated by all things foreign, and it fed this attraction for the exotic by importing an infinite variety of goods from all over the world via the Silk Road, which connected the Far East with Persia, and via maritime routes, that placed the empire at the centre of commercial and cultural exchanges from Arabia to Japan. Along with goods, people from different countries, races and religions flocked to the Middle Kingdom with beliefs, practices and characteristic customs that spread throughout the tolerant Chinese society, becoming an integral and indissoluble part of it.

On 7 March 2008 the exhibition China: at the Court of the Emperors. Unknown Masterpieces from Han Tradition to Tang Elegance (25–907), co-organised by Art Exhibitions China, MondoMostre and the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi finally opens to the Italian public after more than a year's preparation. This is another great cultural event and follows the show Cina. Nascita di un Impero held in Rome in 2006. This time the exhibits range from the end of the Eastern Han dynasty to the Tang dynasty, offering a prosecution of the last exhibition, when visitors were given a coherent historical view of ancient China from the Western Zhou dynasty to the enthronement of emperor Qin Shihuang.

The 183 sets of exhibits come from thirty-two museums and institutes in Shaanxi, Henan, Gansu and Jiangsu provinces. The exhibits contributed by Gansu are masterpieces representing the peak of the arts during the Northern Dynasties period, including the clay figures and stone sculptures from the Maijishan caves, gold and silver wares with Central Asian features, as well as artefacts reflecting the prosperous cultural exchanges and interactions on the Silk Road and the spread of the culture of central China in the Hexi area from the late Han to the Tang period. Among the exhibits from Jiangsu province, the striking celadon from the Six Dynasties period manifests the exquisite craftsmanship of the potters in the South, while the glassware excavated in the Jiangnan area demonstrates how the border trade and the marine trade bonded the Southern Dynasties with the rest of the world.

Exhibits from Henan province mainly focus on the metropolitan culture (represented by Luoyang city) from the Northern Dynasties to the Tang period. The group of stone sculptures from the Longmen caves are worthy of mention as they are gathered together to be shown in Europe for the first time. Most pieces come from Shaanxi: the exhibits range from murals, gold wares, silver wares and jade artefacts to three-colour pottery figures and stone sculptures. They are various in form and rich in beauty, showing that the brilliant art styles which were given birth in the late Northern Dynasties developed and matured during the Sui and Tang eras. In recent years, the international academic community has paid special attention to the social development of China from the third to the sixth century, interpreting it in a positive light. New archaeological finds have gradually changed common attitudes towards that period. This exhibition tries to explain that the four hundred years that separate the Han and the Tang represent a transitional period, during which the prosperous Qin and Han civilisations were transformed into the more splendid Sui and Tang culture. Many ethnic groups formerly inhabiting the border area had by then moved into central China, causing an unprecedented national integration. On the other hand, it is also the peak period of the cultural interaction between China and the rest of the world. Many foreign cultures and arts deeply influenced that of the Sui and Tang dynasties and even the following centuries.

All these are well represented in this exhibition and constitute the most prominent and eye-catching points. Florence is a city boasting a long history, and her present brilliance is undoubtedly rooted in its magnificent past. It is a glorious city that always reminds Chinese people of the great Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Dante, Galileo and so on, and it is renowned as the birthplace of European Renaissance. We are honoured to have an exhibition on the ancient arts of China, a country also enjoying a long, splendid and time-honoured history staged here, and I believe it will do much to raise the interest of the Italian public in our culture. I sincerely wish this exhibition every success.

Luo Bojian
Director, Art Exhibitions China

China: at the court of the Emperors. Unknown masterpieces from Han tradition to Tang elegance (25-907)

Palazzo Strozzi, Florence 7 March to 8 June 2008

Exhibition Walkthrough

China: at the Court of the Emperors is a spectacular celebration of China's Golden Age. The Tang dynasty (618–907) was a renaissance of the arts, crafts and literature, recognised to be a high point of Chinese civilisation. Li Bai (701-762) and Du Fu (712-770), composed some of the most famous verses in the history of Chinese literature, and the Tang culture was cosmopolitan and refined due to its extraordinary openness to foreign ideas and influences. Buddhism arrived in China from India in the first century and the models for Tang Buddhist sculptures were Indian. Influences and techniques from Central Asia were incorporated into Chinese craft. With its capital in Chang'an (today's Xi'an), the eastern source of the Silk Road and largest city in the world, the Tang dynasty prospered due to tolerance and an appetite for foreign ideas. However this process of assimilation had began centuries earlier, with the fall of the Han Empire, the failure of Confucian theories, the invasion of foreign armies and the introduction of a new religion, Buddhism.

The exhibition *China: at the Court of the Emperors* brings to Europe over 200 masterpieces dating from the first to the ninth century, many of which have never been seen before in the West. With texts in Italian, English and Chinese, the exhibition underlines the central importance of tolerance in a cosmopolitan society – a message as important today as it was 1,500 years ago.

When visitors arrive they are confronted in the Palazzo Strozzi's magnificent courtyard with a colossal statue of Maitreya the Buddha of the Future, 240 cm high, the carving of which is directly linked to the only female sovereign in Chinese history, the formidable Wu Zetian (r. 690-705). This is Tang style at its maximum balance and elegance, illustrating why this was considered China's Golden Age.

The exhibition opens with a spectacular guard of honour of bronze chariots and horses, representing the cavalcade of a regional governor at the end of the Han period (3rd century). This stunning installation captures the classical style of the late Han dynasty – the evolution of Chinese art can be attributed to the great cosmopolitanism of the Tang era.

In the second room, the visitor is confronted with a series of late fifth and sixth century sculptures, showing the development of Buddhist statuary in that period and religious tolerance. One of the most important works is a huge stone obelisk that towers over 2 metres high. It is here that the visitor begins to see the conversion to the Chinese aesthetic values characterized by bidimensional and linear forms, while the lunette on the lintel of the tomb door of the Sogdian official An Jia, which is beautifully decorated with a Zoroastrian ritual scene, testifies to an openness towards other faiths. The Chinese authorities have generously allowed it to be shown abroad for the first time.

The third room, one of the Palazzo's largest, is devoted to Buddhist Tang sculpture, including a spectacular Buddha of Medicine coming from the Longmen caves and two extraordinary Bodhisattvas from the Tiantishan caves that are perfect examples of the powerful and refined artistic language of the Tang period.

The fourth room, smaller and more intimate than the previous galleries, focuses special attention on Esoteric Buddhism with a group of deities – some still with traces of polychrome and gold – from the ruins of the Da Anguo monastery in Shaanxi, a gilded bronze eleven-headed Guanyin

(Ekadasamukha) from the Shuiyue temple at Tianshui (Gansu) and an exquisite small marble stupa with esoteric divinities. In contrast with the sculptures is a group of extremely precious gold and silver wares dedicated by the imperial family to honour the Buddha's relics buried in the crypt of the pagoda of the Famen monastery in Shaanxi province. This section of the exhibition also includes a set of five reliquaries, originally nested inside each other, from the Great Cloud temple at Jingchuan (Gansu), built under the instructions of the empress Wu Zetian, and a monk's staff found in the crypt of a pagoda at the Qingshan monastery in Lintong (Shaanxi).

The fifth and sixth rooms bring home the most important message of the exhibition: the Tang dynasty was the Golden Age of Chinese history due to an unprecedented openness to foreign influences, and an unparalleled capacity to assimilate them into a unique and quintessentially Chinese style. At the height of the Tang dynasty in the eighth century, the capital Chang'an was the world's largest city, with a population estimated at over 2 million (Florence's population at the same time was less than 50,000). Here the visitor can find a vast variety of works that show the presence of foreigners in the Tang dynasty. Among the most important is a set of five painted earthenware tomb figures, dated 730, each of which has a different foreign physiognomy, often a caricature, revealing the skills of the ceramists-sculptors and their sense of humour. Foreigners are also the guardian kings of the tombs with their threatening expressions and their aggressive gestures. Ceramic and glass vases, whether imported or made in China, reveal a growing taste for the exotic in Chinese society beginning in the third century and culminating in the Tang dynasty.

In the last two rooms, the visitor will encounter more of the exhibition's treasures, illustrating various aspects of court life, such as a monumental wall fresco of the presentation of a fiery-tempered central-asian horse, found in the tomb of "precious consort" Wei, one of emperor Taizong's wives. Such horses – another foreign import – were highly valued by the Tang aristocracy who had the exclusive privilege of riding them; on certain occasions groups of Arab horses were donated as a gift to the Emperor. Other frescoes show the stunning beauty of the ladies of the Tang court, dressed in immodest court attire and glowing with a special Tang dynasty beauty, their faces 'round as a pearl, and moist as jade' in the words of a Chinese saying. Here too are artefacts that speak of the elegance of the court, such as the magnificent silver box decorated with pairs of flying phoenix or the intricately worked silver container poised on the back of a turtle intended to hold long silver sticks on which are carved quotations from Confucius *Analects*: the participants of this elegant drinking game had to take a stick, read the quotation and drink a prescribed quantity of liquor.

The visitor leaves the exhibition with a new appreciation of Chinese art, having witnessed the birth of a new style, a new civilisation and a new classicism. From the formal style of the Han guard of honour in the first room, through the assimilation of foreign influences, foreign religions and foreign styles, the visitor to the exhibition can see a new and vital style being forged, a style that would come to be seen as the high water mark of Chinese culture – the style of the Tang dynasty, China's Golden Age.

The exhibition installation is the work of the Italian designer Romeo Gigli, which sets the works in a soft landscape of ochre-coloured dunes, recalling the archaeological sites in which they were originally discovered.

Contamination, identity, art and culture.

by Romeo Gigli

I come from a family of antiquarian booksellers, and for a long time I thought that that would be my path. Then the experiences I made in life changed those plans. At 18 years of age I found myself rearranging the outlines of my existence from scratch, and a very specific *fil rouge* imposed itself as the absolute companion on the path of my personal and later of my professional and artistic life: travelling. In 1967, after finishing high school, I spent four months in India, a country that greatly enriched me. It was there that a kind of culture shock opened me up to a thousand stimuli, from there I brought back an increasingly avid curiosity towards cultures and civilisations different from my own. This is when I decided that I would be a “traveller”.

After that profound inner experience I began to realise that I was strongly steeped in my culture of origin and, maybe in opposition, I felt an extremely strong urge to gain an in-depth knowledge and understanding of other countries, cultures and civilisations. In fact, I increasingly perceived the importance of trying to keep one’s identity free, an identity that, in my opinion, precisely for this reason must not limit itself to being the rigid result of a passive absorption of the standards, values and customs of its social group of origin, but must open itself to glimmers of novelty and diversity, heralds of ever new revelations, budding artistic, creative and expressive projects. I am now convinced, effectively, that when we constrict our thought within the closed confines of our own vital world we lose all freedom; the risk is that we can no longer construe a potential forthcoming desire, there can no longer be a contemporary project, and consequently the “narration” becomes complex.

The task of a creative person is to sense the next desire and turn it into a project. I have always found my solutions and my inspiration in my travels, and so I envision my work as the realisation of a story, of an aesthetic voyage.

During my travels I visited the Americas, India, Tibet, London and, not least, China. I tried to seize the evocative dimensions of those places without ever forgetting my roots. When I travel I do not follow a planned route, but I let myself be guided by odours, by sensations ... for me, nature represents freedom, which is the most important thing. This is the reason, for example, why I hate synthetic colours: colour must have its origin in nature, it gives me a lightness that I could never give up.

There are those that use fabrics, ornaments, far-away atmospheres as souvenirs of a world they have never known. For me, staying in a place different from our Western cradle becomes an opportunity to open my horizons and mind: to immerse myself in an epoch, in a culture.

Thus enriched by contacts with different civilisations, gotten to know from close up during my long travels on the paths of the Orient, my artistic story has reached the search for exotic contaminations and synchronies of different cultures. Contamination: this can possibly be considered the keyword of my creations. A design that succeeds in having different epochs, ethnic groups, microcosms live together, which find their expression in clothes and artistic projects.

I travelled across China twice in the eighties, and the fascination for that country, its art, its spaces, its colour has remained in my heart.

It is there that I found confirmation again and again that sensuality is a way of being, of looking, a gesture ...

When I was asked to design the set-up of an exhibition of Tang Dynasty art at Palazzo Strozzi, I asked myself how I could harmoniously combine Renaissance Italy with art works that are older by more than eight centuries, the result of a more rigid, more calligraphic, more imperial view of the world, unfamiliar with individual creative inspiration but ready to contaminate itself with foreign influences at the same time the Silk Road was established. Once again the challenge of a cultural-artistic comparison. The important thing for me was to preserve the Palazzo's true identity, its structure and décor, the great windows, the doors, the stone fireplaces, without allowing such an important frame to pollute the dream of an exhibition set-up that would transport me to China to the court of the Tang Dynasty and let me attentively study the exhibited works of art. In short, Palazzo Strozzi and the Tang Dynasty would have to coexist in the sublime language of art.

Chinese painting of that period is often emphasised by ochre backgrounds, the colour that dominates the landscape everywhere throughout China. I have therefore created great mounds of earth that isolate the works and lift them up to their full magnificence in the spaces of the Palazzo; they are emphasised by iron-coloured signs that underline their shape. Light descends subtly and envelops each object to make it stand out.

Each room tells a story, a moment of that historical period so important for China, because it was finally open to influences of other oriental countries, while the Palazzo, with its spaces and volumes, its succession of windows, its plastic play of fullness and emptiness, remains intact: a museum space, yes, but respected in all its majesty and role as protagonist.

LIST OF THE WORKS

Section	Title	Material and measurements	Lending institution
I.01	Mythical animal Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220)	Stone Sculpture: 108 x 168 x 43 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum From the excavation at Luoyang
I.02	Horse Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220)	Terracotta Sculpture: 113 x 68 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province From the Han Dynasty tomb at Pengshan, Sichuan
I.04	Chariots and mounted guards (10 pieces) Eastern Han Dynasty, early third century	Bronze height: max 58 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum From the excavation at Leitai, Wuwei, Gansu, in 1969
I.03A	Model of tower Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220)	Polychrome terracotta height: 142.5 cm	Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province From the excavation at Shifan Daxue, Chang'an, Shaanxi, in 2002
I.03D	Model of granary Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220)	Polychrome terracotta Sculpture: 136 x 52.5 x 44.5 cm	Jiaozuo City Museum, Jiaozuo, Henan Excavated in 1984 at Baizhuang
I.03B	Model of pavilion Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220)	Terracotta Sculpture: 63.5 x 38 x 15.2 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province From the excavation at Xuzhou, 1964
I.03C	Pig-sty and latrine Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220)	Terracotta Sculpture: 29 x 21.7 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province From the excavation at Shilipu, Xuzhou, 1964
I.05	Urn of the soul Western Jin Dynasty (265-317)	Stoneware and celadon height: 48.2 cm; diameter: base 16.5 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1996 during excavation of the Western Jin tomb at Nanjing, Yuhuatai

I.06	Large hollow brick with impressed decoration (I) Eastern Han Dynasty	Decorated terracotta height: 134 cm; width: 51 cm; diameter: 16 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province
I.07	Large hollow brick with impressed decoration (II) Eastern Han Dynasty	Decorated terracotta height: 133.5 cm; width: 53 cm; diameter: 15.3 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province
I.08	Hollow brick with impressed relief decoration of a long animated sequence Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220)	Terracotta Sculpture: 34 x 122 x 7 cm	Henan Museum Purchased in 1984 in Fanjixiang, Xinyexian, Henan
I.09	Group of eight painted tiles - Tomb M7 (VIII) Wei (220-265)-Western Jin (265-316) Dynasties	Painted terracotta height: 35 cm; width: 17 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 1972-73 at Xincheng, Jiayuguan, Gansu
I.10	Tile with a relief decoration (IV from a group of 4) Southern Dynasties (420-589)	Decorated and painted terracotta Sculpture: 19 x 38 x 6 cm	Henan Museum From the excavation at Xuezhuang, Dengxian, Henan, 1958
I.11	Three tiles with relief decorations (II) Southern Dynasties (420-589)	Terracotta Sculpture: 34 x 14.6 x 4.1 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 2006 in Tomb M84 at Huaweigongdi, Yuhuataiqu, Nanjing, Jiangsu
II.01	Pagoda-shaped stele Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534), 6 th century	Stone Sculpture: 218 x 44 x 44 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum From the excavation at Zhuanglang, Shuiluo, Xujianian, Gansu, 1976

II.05	Stele of Zhao Anxiang Northern Zhou Dynasty (386-581)	Stone Sculpture: 95 x 55.5 x 6 cm	Henan Museum Discovered in 1981 in the vicinity of Zhuanglang, Shuiluo, Xujianian, Gansu
II.11	Seated Maitreya Buddha Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534)	Stone Sculpture: 50 x 27 x 12 cm	Longmen Caves Research Institute
II.12	Pensive Bodhisattva Maitreya Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534)	Stone Sculpture: 60 x 39 x 18 cm	Longmen Caves Research Institute
II.04	Kasyapa (disciple of Buddha) Late Northern Wei Dynasty (386-535)	Clay height: 107 cm	Maijishan Art Research Institute, Tianshui, Gansu Discovered in 1978 in cave 87 of the excavations at Maijishan, Tianshui, Gansu
II.10	Part of a stele with seated Buddha and Ananda Western Wei Dynasty (535-557)	Stone height: 88 cm; width: 45 cm; depth: 17 cm	Maijishan Art Research Institute, Tianshui, Gansu Discovered in 1978 in cave 117 of the excavations at Maijishan, Tianshui, Gansu
II.02	Seated Buddha Northern Zhou Dynasty (557-581)	Clay height: 84 cm	Maijishan Art Research Institute, Tianshui, Gansu From the excavation at Maijishan, cave 135
II.06	Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara or Padmapani Northern Zhou Dynasty (557-581)	Stone with pigment height: 142 cm	Maijishan Art Research Institute, Tianshui, Gansu Discovered in 1978 in cave 47 of the excavations at Maijishan, Tianshui, Gansu
II.08	Stele of Wang Lingwei Northern Zhou Dynasty (557-581), 573	Stone Sculpture: 113 x 42 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum From the excavations at Zhangjiahui, Gansu
II.09	Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara Sui Dynasty (581-617)	Stone Sculpture: 132 x 38 x 15 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 1980 at Qin'anxian, Gansu

III.02	Triad with seated Buddha and two Bodhisattvas Tang Dynasty	Clay height: Bodhisattva I 182 cm; height: Bodhisattva II 184 cm; Sculpture: Buddha 108 x 70 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum From the excavations at Tiantishan, cave 3
III.03	Bodhisattva Dashiji Tang Dynasty (618-907), c. 710	Stone height: 83 cm	Longmen Caves Research Institute Discovered in 2003 at Fengxiansi (Monastery of Offering to the Ancestors), Longmen Caves, Henan
III.01	Guardian Tang Dynasty, late 7 th –early 8 th century	Limestone Sculpture: 114 x 55 x 28 cm	Longmen Caves Research Institute Discovered in 1955 in the Leigutai Cave at the Longmen Caves, Henan
III.05	Standing Buddha, probably Bhaishajyaguru Tang Dynasty, first half 8 th century	Limestone Sculpture: 214 x 60 x 57 cm	Longmen Caves Research Institute Discovered in 1982 in the Southern Leigutai Cave at the Longmen Caves, Henan
Courtyard	Vairocana Buddha Tang Dynasty, c. 700	Limestone Sculpture: without base 240 x 170 x 110 cm	Longmen Caves Research Institute From the Southern Leigutai Cave
III.07	Bust from a statue of Bodhisattva Tang Dynasty, mid 8 th century	Limestone height: 64 cm	Longmen Caves Research Institute From the excavations of the Fengxiang temple, Longmen Caves, Henan, 2003
III.04	Bodhisattva of the Gold Topknot Tang Dynasty, c. 821	Stone height: 170 cm	Zhengzhou City Museum, Henan Province Discovered in 1976 at Dahaisi (Monastery of the Great Sea) in Xingyang, Henan
III.06	Bodhisattva of the Radiant Face (Guangxiang) Tang Dynasty, c. 821	Stone height: 220 cm	Zhengzhou City Museum, Henan Province Discovered in 1976 at Dahaisi (Monastery of the Great Sea) in Xingyang, Henan

IV.15	Ekadasamukha Tang Dynasty (618-907), 8 th -9 th century	Gilded bronze Sculpture: 77 x 32 x 26 cm	Tianshui Museum, Gansu Province From the Temple of Shuiyue at Qincheng, Tianshui, Gansu, 1968
IV.07	White marble stupa with decorated with illustrations of esoteric deities Tang Dynasty	Marble height: 40 cm	Chang'an Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1997 at the Xiangji Temple in Dunduzhen, Chang'anqu, Shaanxi
IV.05	Headless Buddha Ratnasambhava Tang Dynasty, 8 th century	Marble with traces of polychrome and gilding height: 67.5 cm	Beilin Museum, Shaanxi Province From the ruins of the Temple of Anguo, Xi'an, Shaanxi, 1959
IV.06	Seated Manjusri Tang Dynasty, 8 th century	Marble with traces of polychrome and gilding height: 75 cm	Beilin Museum, Shaanxi Province From the ruins of the Temple of Anguo, Xi'an, Shaanxi, 1959
IV.01	Three esoteric deities - Acala	Stone height: 55 cm	Beilin Museum, Shaanxi Province From the ruins of the Temple of Anguo
IV.03	Three esoteric deities -Vajrapani	Stone height: 71 cm	Beilin Museum, Shaanxi Province From the ruins of the Temple of Anguo
IV.02	Three esoteric deities	Stone height: 52 cm	Beilin Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1959 in the ruins of the Temple of Anguo, Xi'an, Shaanxi
IV.14	Monk's staff Tang Dynasty, early 8 th century	Gilded bronze height: 32 cm	Lintong Museum, Shaanxi Province From the Temple of Qingshan, Xinfengzhen, Lintongxian, 1985

IV.11	Series of reliquaries Tang Dynasty, 694	Stone, gilded bronze, silver, gold, glass Sculpture: stone 28.3 x 50.5 cm; Sculpture: gilded bronze 12.3 cm; Sculpture: silver 9.3 x 10.7 x 8.4 cm; Sculpture: gold 6 x 7.5 x 5.4 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum From the excavation of the Temple of Dayang at Jingchuan, Gansu, 1964
IV.12	Ewer Tang Dynasty (618-907)	Silver with gilding height: 19.8 cm; Diameter: 13 cm	Famensi Museum, Shaanxi Province From the Pagoda of the Famen Monastery at Fufeng, Shaanxi, 1988
IV.13	Lotus flower Tang Dynasty (618-907)	Silver height: 41 cm; width: 45 cm	Famensi Museum, Shaanxi Province From the Pagoda of the of the Famen Monastery at Fufeng, Shaanxi, 1988
IV.08	Jug decorated with foreign faces 7 th –8 th century	Bronze height: 29.5 cm; width: 14 cm	Lintong Museum, Shaanxi Province Probably originating from northern India. Discovered at the site of the Temple of Qingshan, Xinfengzhen, Lintongxian, Shaanxi 1985
IV.04	<i>Kundika</i> bottle Tang Dynasty (618-907)	White porcelain height: 21 cm; diameter mouth: 1.5 cm; diameter base: 6 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum From the Xiangshan Temple at Longmen, Luoyang
IV.10	Container for incense Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Gilded silver height: 11.7 cm; diameter: 6.3 cm	Famensi Museum, Shaanxi Province From the Pagoda of the of the Famen Monastery at Fufeng, Shaanxi, 1988
II.13	Lunette from the door of the Tomb of An Jia Northern Zhou Dynasty (557-581), 579	Stone Sculpture: 66 x 128 cm	Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province
VI.11	Group of five foreign musicians Sui Dynasty (581-618)	Granite with traces of pigment and gilding height: c. 33 cm	Tianshui Museum, Gansu Province Discovered in a tomb at Tianshui, Gansu

VI.12	Crouching camel with groom Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Painted terracotta Sculpture: camel 48.5 x 82.5 x 36 cm; Sculpture: groom 55 x 32.5 cm	Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province From the Tomb of Li Xian at Sanhecun, Sanhexiang, Puchengxian, Shaanxi, 2000
VI.13	Camel and camel-driver Tang Dynasty (618-907)	<i>Sancai</i> glaze terracotta height: camel 88 cm; height: camel-driver 62 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum Discovered in 1971 at Guanling, Luoyang
VIII.04	Armoured horse (II) Late Western Jin Dynasty (265 - 317) to Former Qin (351 - 394)	Painted terracotta height: 44.3 cm; width: 40.5 cm	Xianyang Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province, from the excavations at Pinglingxiang, Qinduqu, Xianyangshi, Shaanxi
VIII.04	Armoured horse (I) Late Western Jin Dynasty (265 - 317) to Former Qin (351 - 394)	Glazed terracotta height: 46 cm; width: 43 cm	Xianyang Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province, from the excavations at Pinglingxiang, Qinduqu, Xianyangshi, Shaanxi, 2001
VI.05	Three horsemen Northern Zhou Dynasty, 557 - 581	Painted terracotta height: c. 20 cm; length: c. 20 cm; depth: 8 cm	Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province, from the excavations at Xianyang International Airport, Xianyang, Shaanxi
VI.06	Two grooms from the procession from the tomb of Yuan Shao Northern Wei Dynasty, 386 - 534	Painted terracotta height: 24 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum Discovered in 1964 in the Tomb of Yuan Shao, Luoyang, Henan
VI.07	Figure of foreigner (group of two) Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), 730	Painted terracotta height: 35 cm (I)	Henan Museum
VI.08	Group of four figures of foreigners (I) Tang Dynasty (618-907), 730	Painted terracotta Height: 41- 54 cm ca.	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 2001 in the Tomb of Mu Tai at Qingchengxian, Qingchengzhen, Gansu
V.04/5	Pair of guardian kings Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Painted and gilded terracotta height: 121 cm (I); height: 129 cm (II)	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1972 in the Tomb of Li Xian at Xinglingcun, Liquanxian, Shaanxi

V.02/3	Pair of guardian kings Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Painted and gilded terracotta height: 86 cm (I); height: 89 cm (II)	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1990 in the Tomb of the imperial concubine Wei at Lingguangcun, Liquanxian, Shaanxi
V.01	Two-headed animal guardian Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Painted and gilded terracotta Sculpture: c. 51 x 47 cm	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1990 in the Tomb of the imperial concubine Wei at Lingguangcun, Liquanxian, Shaanxi
V.06	Tomb guardian animal (group of two) Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Painted terracotta height: 129.8 cm (II)	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 1965 at Yejiabao, Qin'anxian, Gansu
VI.23	Plate with figure of Dionysius II-III century	Gilded silver diameter: 31 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum From the excavations at Beitan, Jingyuan, Gansu, in 1970
VI.20	Cup c. 4 th century	Glass height: 10.4 cm; diameter upper section: 9.4 cm ; diameter base: 3 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1970 at the site of the Wang family cemetery, Xiangshan, Nanjing
VI.21	Blue dish Tang Dynasty (618-907), 9 th century	Glass diameter: 23.8 cm	Famensi Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1987 in the Pagoda of the Famen Monastery at Fufeng
VI.28	Jar with painted decoration under the glaze Three Kingdoms, Wu (222-280)	Glazed terracotta height: 28.5 cm; diameter mouth: 20 cm; diameter base: 18 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 2004 at Huangcejiayuan, Xianhejie, Nanjing, Jiangsu
VI.16	Jug with spout in the form of hen's head and handle in the shape of a dragon Southern Dynasties (420 - 589)	Green-glazed ceramic height: 47.2 cm; diameter mouth: 10.5 cm; diameter foot: 16.5 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1958

VI.14	Jar with appliqué decorations of palmettes and lotus petals Northern dynasties (386 - 581), 6 th century	Green-glazed ceramic height: 85 cm; diameter mouth: 21 cm; diameter base: 20.8 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in the Lingshan Tomb at Nanjing, Jiangsu
VI.17	Vase with two handles in the shape of dragons Tang Dynasty (618-907)	White-glazed ceramic height: 51 cm; diameter base: 10 cm	Zhengzhou City Museum, Henan Province
VI.25	Ewer with phoenix head Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Lead-glazed terracotta height: 31 cm; diameter: 14.5 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum
VI.24	<i>Rhyton</i> cup Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Lead-glazed terracotta width: 13 cm; diameter mouth: 6.4 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum
VI.19	Flask with circus scenes Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Lead-glazed terracotta	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum Discovered in 1997 at the Luoyang Telephone Equipment Factory, Luoyang, Henan
VI.22	Marbled plate Tang Dynasty	Lead-glazed terracotta height: 4.2 cm; diameter: 21.6 cm	Zhenjiang Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1973 at Hanjiang, Jiangsu
VI.27	Candlestick with stand in the form of a human figure on an elephant Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Porcelain height: c. 15 cm	Chang'an Museum, Shaanxi Province
VI.18	Funerary urn Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Painted terracotta height: 60- 70 cm	Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1995 in the Tomb of Li Chongjun, Prince Jiemin, at Fupingxian, Shaanxi
V.13	Roofing element in the form of a dragon's head eating a fish Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Stone Sculpture: 45 x 70 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum Discovered in the 1970s at the site of the Sui-Tang Imperial capital at Luoyang

VIII.07	Presentation of the horses Tang Dynasty (618-907), 666	Wall painting height: 146 cm; width: 154 cm	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1990 in the Tomb of the imperial concubine Wei at Lingguangcun, Liqianxian, Shaanxi
VIII.01	Two foreign horses Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Lead-glazed terracotta Sculpture: 64.5 x 58 cm (I); Sculpture: 70 x 66 cm (II)	Xianyang City Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1973 in the Tomb of Qi Xinming at Yaowangdongcun, Guduxiang, Xianyang, Shaanxi
VIII.03	Horse Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Painted terracotta height horse: 50 cm	Henan Museum
VIII.02	<i>Sancai</i> horse and groom Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Lead-glazed terracotta Height horse: 85 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum
VII.15	Eunuch Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Wall painting height: 167 cm; width: 67 cm	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province From the Tomb of Duan Jianbi at Zhaoling, Liqian, Shaanxi, 1978
V.10/11	Pair of officials Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), 712-718	Painted terracotta height: 112 cm (I); height: 113 cm (II)	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province From the Tomb of Li Zhen in Xinglingcun, Liqian, 1971
V.09	Prostrate official Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 20 x 61 x 33 cm	Sanyuanxian Museum, Shaanxi Discovered at Sanyuanxian, Shaanxi, in 1985
VII.20,24,25,26	Four stone panels painted with figures Tang Dynasty (618-907)	Stone and pigment height: 120 cm; width: 71 cm; diameter: 9 cm	Jinbian Wenguansuo, Shaanxi Province From Jianbian, Shaanxi
VII.18	Two female figures (I) Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420)	Painted terracotta height: 36.2 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1953 at Xishanqiao, Nanjing, Jiangsu
VII.19	Three fat female figures Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), 8 th century	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 75 x 23 cm	Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 2000 at Sanhecun, Sanhexiang, Puchengxian

VI.10	Two figures offering tribute Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), 8 th century	Lead-glazed terracotta Sculpture: 33 x 10 x 8 cm; Sculpture: 33 x 10.5 x 7 cm	Gongyi Museum, Henan Province Discovered at Gongyi, Henan
VIII.05	Female courtier on horseback (III) Tang Dynasty (618-907), late 7 th century	Painted or lead-glazed terracotta Sculpture: 35 x 28.5 cm	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1972 in the Tomb of Li Zhen at Xinglingcun, Yanxiazhen, Liquanxian, Shaanxi
VII.23	Group of five entertainers Three Kingdoms - Wu (222 - 280)	Green-glazed terracotta height: 17.2 cm; height: 17.8 cm; height: 13.5 cm; height: 17.8 cm; height: 19.6 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province From the excavations at Nanjing, Jiangningqu, in 2005
VII.21	Two standing female figures Late Western Jin Dynasty (265-317) to Former Qin (351-394), 4 th century	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 36.7 x 11.7 x 8.7 cm	Xianyang Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 2001 at Pinglingxiang, Qinduqu, Xianyangshi, Shaanxi
VII.21	Group of four female musicians Late Western Jin Dynasty (265-317) to Former Qin (351-394), 4 th century	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 28 x 14.1 x 11.1 cm (I); Sculpture: 27.8 x 15.8 x 10.6 cm (II); Sculpture: 27.8 x 15.3 x 10.9 cm (III); Sculpture: 27.9 x 14.5 x 10.6 cm (IV)	Xianyang Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province From the excavations at Pinglingxiang, Qinduqu, Xianyangshi, Shaanxi, 2001
VI.09	Group of three musicians on horseback Late Western Jin Dynasty (265-317) to Former Qin (351-394), 4 th century	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 39.5 x 33 x 12 cm (I); Sculpture: 45 x 33.3 x 12 cm (II); Sculpture: 39.5 x 32.8 x 12 cm (III)	Xianyang Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province From the excavations at Pinglingxiang, Qinduqu, Xianyangshi, Shaanxi, 2001
VII.17	Dancer Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), 668	Painted terracotta height: 36,2 cm	Chang'an Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1985 in the Tomb of Zhang Chenhe at Duncun, Zaoyuanxiang, Changwuxian, Shaanxi 1985

VII.22	Group of four dancers Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Painted terracotta maximum height: 32 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1955 at the Nanjing Library
VII.10	Container for citations from the Dialogues of Confucius Tang Dynasty (618-907)	Gilded silver height: 34.2 cm; length of tortoise: 24.6 cm	Zhenjiang Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1982 at Dingmaoqiao, Dantuxian, Jiangsu
VII.09	Large plate with <i>Makara</i> motif Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Gilded silver height: 7.3 cm; diameter: 34.5 cm	Zhenjiang Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1982 at Dingmaoqiao, Dantuxian, Jiangsu
VII.08	Large container with lid Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Gilded silver height: 26 cm; diameter: 31 cm	Zhenjiang Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1982 at Dingmaoqiao, Dantuxian, Jiangsu
VII.07	Laminated bowl with decorative motif of parrots Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Gilded Silver height: 11.5 cm; diameter foot: 21.3 cm	Zhenjiang Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1982 at Dingmaoqiao, Dantuxian, Jiangsu
VII.06	Lid in the form of lotus flower Tang Dynasty (618-907)	Gilded silver height: 4 cm; diameter: 25,6 cm	Zhenjiang Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1982 at Dingmaoqiao, Dantuxian, Jiangsu
VII.01	Box with images of foreigners Tang Dynasty (618-907)	Gilded silver height: 5 cm; diameter: 7.5 cm	Xi'an Institute of Archaeology and Preservation, Shaanxi Province Discovered at the Jiaotong University in Xi'an, Shaanxi, 1979
VII.11	Ten-lobed stemmed goblet with floral motifs Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Silver with traces of gilding height: 5.7 cm; diameter: 7.4 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum
VII.04	Plate and bowl decorated with fish design Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), 9 th century	Gilded silver height plate: 20.2 cm; diameter plate: 14.5 cm; height bowl: 14 cm; diameter bowl: 8 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum From the excavations of the Tomb of ?, Henan, in 1991

VII.03	Pendant Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), 669	Jade, crystal and bronze Length: c. 50 cm	Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi province From the Tomb of Liu Zhi and his consort at Gaoyangyuan, Chang'anxian, Xi'an, Shaanxi
VII.13	Mirror with Daoist motifs Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Bronze diameter: 16 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province
VII.30	Mirror with animals and grape motifs Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Bronze diameter: 19.8 cm	Xingping City Museum
VII.31	Mirror with flower and bird design Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), 736	Bronze with inlay of mother-of-pearl, turquoise, coral and malachite under glazed surface diameter: 24.5 cm	Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province Discovered in the Tomb of Li Chui at Qujiang, Chang'anxian, Xi'an, Shaanxi, 2002
VII.32	Bowl Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Ceramic and green-glazed Yue ceramic diameter: 19.7 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum Discovered in 1953 in the Tang Tomb at Luoyang, Henan
VII.02	Small dish marked <i>guan</i> Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Porcelain height: 3.4 cm; diameter: 13.5 cm	Xi'an Institute of Archaeology and Preservation, Shaanxi Province From the excavations at Huoshaobi, northern suburb of Xi'an, in 1985
I.12	Hollow brick with impressed relief decoration Eastern Han Dynasty (25 - 220)	Terracotta Sculpture: 105 x 47 x 15 cm	Henan Museum Discovered in 1963 in a tomb at Erligang, Zhengzhou, Henan
II.07	Daoist stele commissioned by Bai Xianjing 583 – Sui Dynasty (581-618)	Limestone Sculpture: 43 x 17 cm	Beilin Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1958 at Binxian, Shaanxi
VI.04	Guardian animal from the Tomb of Yuan Shao Northern Wei Dynasty, 386 - 534	Painted terracotta height: 25 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum Discovered in 1964 in the Tomb of Yuan Shao, Luoyang, Henan

VII.14	Woman with child from the Tomb of Yuan Shao Northern Wei Dynasty, 386 - 534	Painted terracotta height: 11,8 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum Discovered in 1964 in the Tomb of Yuan Shao, Luoyang, Henan
VI.06	Two attendants from the procession from the Tomb of Yuan Shao Northern Wei Dynasty, 386 - 534	Painted terracotta height: 18 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum Discovered in 1964 in the Tomb of Yuan Shao, Luoyang, Henan
VI.06	Soldier with shield from the procession from the Tomb of Yuan Shao Northern Wei Dynasty, 386 - 534	Painted terracotta height: 19 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum Discovered in 1964 in the Tomb of Yuan Shao, Luoyang, Henan
VI.03	Soldier from the procession from the Tomb of Yuan Shao Northern Wei Dynasty, 386 - 534	Painted terracotta height: 30 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum Discovered in 1964 in the Tomb of Yuan Shao, Luoyang, Henan
VII.14	Musician from the procession from the Tomb of Yuan Shao Northern Wei Dynasty, 386 - 534	Painted terracotta height: 12.6 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum Discovered in 1964 in the Tomb of Yuan Shao, Luoyang, Henan
VII.14	Musician from the procession from the Tomb of Yuan Shao Northern Wei Dynasty, 386 - 534	Painted terracotta height: 12 cm	Luoyang Ancient Art Museum Discovered in 1964 in the Tomb of Yuan Shao, Luoyang, Henan
VIII.03	Groom Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Painted terracotta height: 51 cm	Henan Museum
V.08	Guardian of the gate Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Wall painting measurements with frame: 211.5 x 74.3 x 4.3 cm	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1990 in the Tomb of the imperial concubine Wei at Lingguangcun, Liquanxian, Shaanxi

VII.16	Woman playing with a duck Tang Dynasty (618-907),	Wall painting measurements without frame: 129 x 99 cm	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1973 in the Tomb of Li... at Zhaoling, Liquanxian, Shaanxi
VIII.05	Female courtier on horseback (II) Tang Dynasty (618-907), late 7 th century	Painted or lead-glazed terracotta Sculpture: 34 x 26 cm	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1971 in the Tomb of Zhang Shigui at Mazhaicun, Yanxiazhen,
VIII.05	Female courtier on horseback (I) Tang Dynasty (618-907), late 7 th century	Painted or lead-glazed terracotta Sculpture: 36 x 25 cm	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1971 in the Tomb of Zheng Rentai at Xiercun, Yanxiazhen, Liquanxian, Shaanxi
VII.05	Small cup with hunting scene Tang Dynasty (618-907)	Silver height: 5,7 cm; diameter: 7,4 cm	Xianyang Cultural Relics Conservation Centre, Shaanxi Discovered in 1983 at Maqizhai, Xi'an, Shaanxi
I.10	Tile with relief decoration (I of a group of 4) Southern Dynasties (420-589)	Decorated and painted terracotta Sculpture: 19 x 38 x 6 cm	Henan Museum From the excavation at Xuezhuang, Dengxian, Henan, 1958
I.10	Tile with relief decoration (II of a group of 4) Southern Dynasties (420-589)	Decorated and painted terracotta Sculpture: 19 x 39 x 6.5 cm	Henan Museum From the excavation at Xuezhuang, Dengxian, Henan, 1958
I.10	Tile with relief decoration (III of a group of 4) Southern Dynasties (420-589)	Decorated and painted terracotta Sculpture: 19 x 37.5 x 6 cm	Henan Museum From the excavation at Xuezhuang, Dengxian, Henan, 1958
I.11	Three tiles with relief decorations (I) Southern Dynasties (420-589)	Terracotta Sculpture: 34.6 x 14.5 x 4 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 2006 in Tomb M84 at Huaweigongdi, Yuhuataiqu, Nanjing, Jiangsu

I.11	Three tiles with relief decorations (III) Southern Dynasties (420-589)	Terracotta Sculpture: 34.5 x 14.4 x 4.1 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 2006 in Tomb M84 at Huaweigongdi, Yuhuataiqu, Nanjing, Jiangsu
VI.01	Southern soldier with shield Eastern Jin Dynasty (317 - 420)	Terracotta Sculpture: 63 x 13.5 x 8.5 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1957 at Liangjiashan, Nanjing, Jiangsu
VI.02	Northern soldier Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420)	Terracotta height: 35.6 cm; width: c. 10 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1997 at Fuguishan, Nanjing, Jiangsu
VI.07	Figure of foreigner (group of two) Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), 730	Painted terracotta height: 52 cm (II)	Henan Museum
VI.29	White cup Tang Dynasty	White-glazed ceramic height: 9.5 cm; diameter: 13 cm	Gongyi Museum, Henan Province Discovered in 1980 in the district of Xiaohuangzhi in the city of Gongyi, Henan
VII.19	Three fat female figures Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), 8 th century	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 74.5 x 24 cm	Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 2000 at Sanhecun, Sanhexiang, Puchengxian
VII.19	Three fat female figures Tang Dynasty (618 - 907), 8 th century	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 74.5 x 22 cm	Shaanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 2000 at Sanhecun, Sanhexiang, Puchengxian
VII.33	Small box decorated with fish Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Gilded silver height: 5 cm; width: 5.5 cm	Zhenjiang Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1982 at Dingmaoqiao, Jiangsu
VII.34	Small box in the shape of a butterfly Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Gilded silver height: 5 cm; width: 9 cm; diameter: 5.5 cm	Zhenjiang Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1982 at Dingmaoqiao, Jiangsu

VIII.8	Horse Eastern Jin Dynasty	Terracotta Sculpture: 34.5 x 38.5 x 18 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1970 at site M7 in Xiangshan, Nanjing, Jiangsu
VIII.06	Musician on horseback (group of two) Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Lead-glazed terracotta Sculpture: 32.5 x 28 x 10 cm (I)	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1971 in Tomb M2 at Guanglingcun, Liquanxian, Shaanxi
VIII.06	Musician on horseback (group of two) Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Lead-glazed terracotta Sculpture: 32.5 x 29 x 11 cm (II)	Zhaoling Museum, Shaanxi Province Discovered in 1971 in Tomb M2 at Guanglingcun, Liquanxian, Shaanxi
V.14	Guardian of the Tomb Tang Dynasty	Painted terracotta Sculpture: c. 29 x 29 x 14 cm	Gongyi Museum, Henan Province Discovered in 1995 at the second paper mill in Gongyi, Henan
VI.26	Recipient in the form of a tiger Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420)	Glazed terracotta height: 19.5 cm; width: 23 cm; Depth: 14 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province
VI.15	Set of cups Western Jin Dynasty (265 - 317)	Glazed terracotta height cup: 2.8 cm; width cup: 7.8 cm; depth cup: 6 cm; diameter saucer: 16.3 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1962 at Ganjiaxiang, Nanjing, Jiangsu
VI.30	Candlestick with dragon Western Jin Dynasty (265 - 317)	Terracotta height: 15.5 cm; diameter top: 9.9 cm; diameter base: 11.2 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1995 at Dingqiangcun, Nanjing, Jiangsu
VI.31	Set of nine cups Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	<i>Sancai</i> glaze ceramic height: 6 cm; diameter saucer: 25 cm	Gongyi Museum, Henan Province Discovered in 1995 at the second paper mill in the city of Gongyi, Henan
VI.32	White urn in the form of pagoda Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	height: 41 cm; diameter base: 15,5 cm	Gongyi Museum, Henan Province Discovered in 1987 at the printworks of the city of Gongyi, Henan

VI.08	Woman in foreign costume Tang Dynasty (618-907), 730	Painted terracotta height: 54 cm max	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 2001 in the Tomb of Mu Tai at Qingchengxian, Qingchengzhen, Gansu
V.07	Tomb guardian animal (group of two) Tang Dynasty (618 - 907)	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 130.2 x 48.8 x 45 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 1965 at Yejiabao, Qin'anxian, Gansu
I.09	Group of eight painted bricks (VII) Wei Dynasties (220-265)-Western Jin (265-316)	Painted terracotta height: 21 cm; width: 42.5 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 1972-73 at Xincheng, Jiayuguan, Gansu
I.09	Group of eight painted bricks (VI) Wei Dynasties (220-265)-Western Jin (265-316)	Painted terracotta height: 20 cm; width: 35 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 1972-73 at Xincheng, Jiayuguan, Gansu
I.09	Group of eight painted bricks (V) Wei Dynasties (220-265)-Western Jin (265-316)	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 20 x 43 x 46.5 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 1972-73 at Xincheng, Jiayuguan, Gansu
I.09	Group of eight painted bricks - Tomb M5 (II) Wei Dynasties (220-265)-Western Jin (265-316)	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 17 x 35 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 1972-73 at Xincheng, Jiayuguan, Gansu
I.09	Group of eight painted bricks - Tomb M5 (IV) Wei Dynasties (220-265)-Western Jin (265-316)	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 17 x 35 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 1972-73 at Xincheng, Jiayuguan, Gansu

I.09	Group of eight painted bricks - Tomb M1 (III) Wei Dynasties (220-265)-Western Jin (265-316)	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 17 x 35 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 1972-73 at Xincheng, Jiayuguan, Gansu
I.09	Group of eight painted bricks - Tomb M4 (I) Wei Dynasties (220-265)-Western Jin (265-316)	Painted terracotta Sculpture: 16 x 34 x 4.8 cm	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 1972-73 at Xincheng, Jiayuguan, Gansu
VII.18	Two female figures (II) Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420)	Painted terracotta height: 33 cm	Nanjing Museum, Jiangsu Province Discovered in 1955 at Mufushan, Nanjing, Jiangsu
VI.08	Group of four figures of foreigners (II) Tang Dynasty (618-907), 730	Painted terracotta height: 41- 54 cm ca.	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 2001 in the Tomb of Mu Tai at Qingchengxian, Qingchengzhen, Gansu
VI.08	Group of four figures of foreigners (III) Tang Dynasty (618-907), 730	Painted terracotta height: 41- 54 cm ca.	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 2001 in the Tomb of Mu Tai at Qingchengxian, Qingchengzhen, Gansu
VI.08	Group of four figures of foreigners (IV) Tang Dynasty (618-907), 730	Painted terracotta height: 41- 54 cm ca.	Gansu Provincial Museum Discovered in 2001 in the Tomb of Mu Tai at Qingchengxian, Qingchengzhen, Gansu