# THE ARTISTIC TRADITIONS OF NON-EUROPEAN CULTURES
# VOL 2

edited by Bogna Łakomska

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# REDAKCYJNA

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# Introduction

This is another volume devoted to issues of non-European cultures prepared by art historians and experts of related disciplines from Poland, Taiwan, France and Russia. It consists of eleven essays divided on four main parts.

The first part dedicated to Chinese art and its international connections includes texts on connoisseurship and artistic crafts in ancient China as well as text on philosophic problems concerning perspective in Chinese and European painting. The second part concerning Indian art consists of two articles on ancient art of India and eighteen-century painting on subjects connected with Indian woman. The third part regarding traditional and folk art introduces subjects dedicated to contemporary artistic craft in Ural and contemporary votive painting in Mexico. And, the fourth part dedicated to art of XX and XXI century presents articles on painting and Buddhist illustrations in China of early XX century; Taiwan's contemporary art with a focus on feminist art as well as artistic creation connected with cartoons, and the last article on video art.

Each of the issues is the result of studies concerning problems usually hitherto hardly known and therefore includes unpublished materials.

The article of Bogna Łakomska introduces new regions of artistic traditions in ancient culture of China. This is the second part of the topic analysed by the author, but this time in connection with items made of bronze.

The second article by Amelia Macioszek touches Chinese ceramic – celadon from the Tang dynasty and the Five Dynasties discovered today by archaeologists in the north of Africa. The author makes a precise analysis of the historical material showing an incredible once influence of Chinese celadon on Egyptian ceramic.

In Jean Yves Heurtebise's article on perspective in Chinese and European painting has been introduced interesting hypothesis, namely that the perspective in both artistic traditions depends on the way of perceiving time and its recording – especially in the Chinese language.

The article of Agnieszka Staszczyk, in turn, brings us to India in 5th century. The author presented the comparative analysis of three ancient philars of India.

The study is devoted to iconography and religious or cult purposes of such pieces in culture of Southern Asia.

Subject of India also relates to an article by Dorota Kamińska, although it is associated with a much later period, namely with the mid-eighteen century. The text discusses rarely encountered in study on art and culture the problem of painting, which the main theme of are the Indian woman (*bibi*) living in relationship with foreigners.

Natalia Shabalina presented a study of the contemporary craft masters of Russian Urals. The author goes back to the examples of 18th and 19th century, indicating a continuation of the tradition in the art of today's craft artists. Items referred to by the author are works of outstanding artistic quality and aesthetic.

Article by Marta Skwirowska is about contemporary Mexican votive paintings. It shows esthetical and cultural issues of this painting. Most observations come from the personal author's meetings with Mexican artists.

Study of the Taiwanese art historian – Su-hsing Lin is devoted to small form painting as well as book prints promoting Buddism in early XX century. It presents the picture of contemporary Chinese society seeking new esthetical solutions connected with existing then religious and philosophical movement.

The next article also applies to a contemporary art. Its author Szu-hsien Li analyses creativity of the Taiwanese artist, regarding as a father of the esthetical cartons in Taiwan – Yan Mao Lin. The text introduces us with the work of the artist, in which appears Alice in Wonderland, although this time it is completely different type of character, then this to whom the reader of Lewis Carroll's book got used to.

Another Taiwanese author – Shu-ping Shih, basing on a collection from the Taiwanese Museum of Fine Arts created very interesting picture of women's creativity in Taiwan. The author captured primarily a problem of perception a woman by a woman and a way of these observations' illustrating through art, and especially through painting.

The volume closes an article on feminist creativity prepared by Magdalena Furmanik-Kowalska. Her study concerns video art of Israeli artist Sigalit Landau. The text leads to a deeper refection on the often cited in the world of art a compound of woman with water.

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# The origins of collection in China Underground bronze treasures as a reflection of ancient collecting (Part II)[1]

Bronzes, just as jades, from the time when the first cast technology was developed, were treated as precious objects and were immediately used to make ceremonial vessels.[2] Furthermore, just as in the case of jades, they began to be collected for ritual, religious and political reasons.[3] Most ancient Chinese bronzes have been unearthed from the tombs of royal and aristocratic families, however, quite a large number were also stored in pits, which especially during times of anxiety and wars functioned as treasure repositories containing groups of bronzes which had been cast by families over several generations.[4]

The raeason why bronze as a material became so popular and was used more often than gold or silver probably lay in the interest in soft metals, which required hammering instead of grinding and polishing – techniques which were well known to the ancient Chinese working with jades.[5] Besides, through casting they could achieve beautiful and complicated shapes, which certainly were needed for aesthetic purposes. Despite the raw material, which certainly attracted amateurs, there

[1] The first part titled "The Origins of Collecting in China. The Underground Jade Treasures as a Reflection of Ancient Collecting" is published in Kaminska (2012: 15–50).

[2] Rawson, Bunker (1990: 17, 19).

[3] The Zhou rituals very clearly defined who could possess bronze vessels and how many, as well as what types of vessels these were to be. This is how the political hierarchy of the Zhou dynasty was visualised.

[4] Li (1980: 25).

[5] Rawson, Bunker (1990: 19).

were also other reasons for which bronzes were so desired. In certain particular cases they were the marks of an agreement between Heaven and the ruler,[6] as well as symbols of good fortune.[7] The older the bronze vessel was, the greater its value. Here "old" meant possessing a history that, thanks to the inscriptions, could be evoked and upheld once again. Usually bronzes with long inscriptions were not put into the graves as they were historical documents showing the ancestors' merits, and people rather displayed them in palaces or temples. However, such special treatment, combined with almost adoration, made bronzes magical objects whose power guaranteed prosperity and happiness for the whole family that stored them.

Yet these bronzes, accumulated in tombs, frequently formed other collector sets. They could have somehow reflected the owners' penchants for collecting as well as constituted the collections themselves. Nevertheless, before becoming "underground collections", in many cases they existed as ritual vessels for offering sacrifices or as items utilised by their owners during their lifetime.[8] Though some of them might have been made only for the purpose of the burial, the collections consisted of various goods to ensure a suitable afterlife. As the tradition of putting objects into the graves was based on strict rituals reaching back thousands of years, we can assume that one of the driving forces for the development of a collecting culture in ancient China was the idea and need of assembling items in tombs. However, we should also take into consideration the desire to possess antiquities, which was very often related to the cult of ancestors and, the same, to the desire to ensure an appropriate status during the earthly life.

Certainly from the beginning, as only bronzes began to be accumulated, which means around 3500 years ago until the period when collections of bronze antiquities and studies on ancient scripts appeared – in the Han dynasty (Xun Di 宣帝 Emperor's time (91–49 BC)),[9] bronze wares had to indicate aesthetic values. (Ill. 1) However, artistic significance always seemed to yield a place in ritual and historiographical principles. This is also noticeable during the Song dynasty, when the connoisseurship of art began to flourish and bronzes were valued especially for their antiquarian value, which in turn enabled, in many cases, the identification of ritual vessels used in court.[10]

The earliest and larger accumulations of bronzes that have been found until now are placed in Zhengzhou 郑州 (once a capital of the Shang dynasty, Henan)

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[6] Ledderose (1979: 34).
[7] Li (1980: 25).
[8] Li (1980: 25).
[9] One of the earliest authorities on bronze inscriptions is considered to be Zhang Chang 張敞 (d. 51 BC). Li (1980: 26); Shaughnessy (1991: 5–6).
[10] Harrist (1995: 241).

and Panlongcheng 盘龙城 (about 3500 years ago, Hubei).[11] They were hidden in the earth as the ruler's hoards or together with the deceased in tombs. For example, tomb no. 2 in Panlongcheng was furnished with twenty ritual vessels, among which there were bronzes: *ding* 鼎, *gui* 簋, *gu* 觚, *jia* 斝, jue 爵, *zun* 尊 and twenty-five pieces of weapons and tools. This was the richest and largest tomb in the cemetery, which means that, with high probability, it belonged to the ruler of this site. However, much more opulent Shang dynasty collections of bronzes were discovered at Xibeigang 西北岗 (near Anyang 安阳, Henan) where the kings of Yin 殷 were buried. Especially a group of bronze vessels from the tomb of Lady Fu Hao 妇好 near Xiaotun 小屯 palace could have evoked astonishment.[12] (Ills. 2, 3) Over two hundred ritual containers for food and wine, as well as one hundred and thirty pieces of weapons were included in this bronze collection.

However, the fact that Lady Hao possessed a large number of bronzes was not the sole determinant of her underground collection. It seems that the most important aspect was the idea based on the worship of ancestors that steered the creation of this whole set. Similarly as with the group of Fu Hao jades, her bronze assemblage also reflected a bond with antiquity. Yet, the concept of antiquity was related to "some" future which could bestow a new meaning on these ritual objects. On many of the interior walls of the bronze vessels the characters *fu hao* were inscribed.[13] This means that Fu Hao became an ancestor who had assigned a historical value to the bronzes, which since her death, by being hidden from the eyes of the living, might have been visible to the privileged spectators living in another world.

The cult of ancestors also had an equally important influence on collecting activities in other kingdoms, which despite their long distance from the core of the Shang domain, must somehow have been related to it. This refers primarily to the Shu 蜀Kingdom, which left behind a great treasure accumulated in two pits at Sanxingdui 三星堆. Over nine hundred bronze items were amassed in these depths. However, such storage was created, with high probability, as a result of some rite connected with the attempt to save the threatened kingdom, as it reflected a huge collection of bronzes which might have been previously gathered in the ancestral temple.[14]

Intriguing is the fact that most of the bronzes found in Sanxingdui are unlike anything so far discovered. Truly artistic bronze sculptures shaped in the forms of human figures, human heads, masks with protruding eyes (ills. 4, 5, 8), and animals (ill. 6) and plants originally could be used for nothing other than ritual-exhibition

[11] Lu,Yan (2005: 152); Yang (2004.2: 125).
[12] Wu (2010: 164).
[13] Lu, Yan (2005: 161).
[14] Wu, Zhu (2006: 7).

purposes. Most of the bronzes from the trove were very likely displayed for public view. Especially those of an over two-metre-high statue of a human (shaman?) (ill. 7), huge masks with protruding eyes, the "Divine Tree" and "Divine Altars", whose large size imposed the need for exposition.[15] Possibly stunning and frightening at the same time, the human head sculptures were also part of a "divine exhibition". Undoubtedly, however, the bronze vessels unearthed from the pits, such as *zun*, *lei*罍, *bu* 瓿 and *pan* 盘, created a group of utensils used in ceremonial rituals. Yet, these utensils were not common vessels, but an extraordinary apparatus serving to emphasise the ruler's power.

Though we know almost nothing about the Sanxingdui religious practices, on the basis of the discovered bronzes we can assume that the need for creating very spectacular rites which could be done in a particularly exposed space forced the Shu people to develop art in the form of bronze sculpture. Nevertheless, the definition of art did not exist in those ancient days, but its understanding was manifested in works created for the purpose of religion and the ruler's power.

The political as well as religious aspect of collecting bronzes was scrolled down for the next few hundred years. Yet the groups of bronzes belonging to the later Zhou dynasty's royal or aristocratic families usually consisted of ritual vessels (Ill. 9). And, though some of them were characterised by a very sculptural study (Ill. 10), they never achieved such inventive expression as the figures from the Shu Kingdom. They had served for ages as historical certificates of a clan's existence, whose power arose quite often from the individual successes and virtues of its members. Thus, the clans could boldly transfer a memory about them by using the best material they could – mainly the precious bronze in which long sentences were inscribed for posterity. Therefore, historical significance became a feature which dominated the collecting reasons. Groups of bronzes discovered in different hoards in the area of Fufeng county 扶风县 (around 95 km to the east of Baoji 宝鸡 Shaanxi) can give testimony to this.[16]

Two bronzes once having belonged to the aristocratic family of the Ke 克 clan.[17] Da Ke *ding* 大克鼎 and Xiao Ke *ding* 小克鼎 (perhaps from the time of King Xiao 小, r. 924–899 BC) were unearthed in 1890 in the same cache. They contain long inscriptions which end with a sentence expressing the will to treasure:

> For ten thousand years without end, may Ke's sons' sons and grandsons forever treasure and use this vessel.[18]

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[15] Rawson, Bunker (1990: 31).

[16] Lu, Yan (2005: 197).

[17] Rawson (2009: 18, 104, 129).

[18] There is also another vessel called Da Yu *ding* 大盂鼎, presently in the National Museum in Beijing, which contains almost the same inscription as Xiao Ke *ding* appearing at the end of a long

Yet, a more extraordinary accumulation of bronzes is a group of one hundred and three pieces discovered in Zhuangbai 莊白village (also Fufeng county).[19] The uniqueness of this collection is based especially on the varied age of the items which belonged to at least four generations of the Wei 微 family. The earliest vessels seem to have belonged to a man whose name was Zhe 折, later articles were the property of a person called Feng 酆, and others, such as the vessel *Shi Qiang pan* 史墻盘, probably derive from the time of King Gong 共 (r. 922–900 BC) or later, and the newest items belonged to a man named Wei Bo Xing 微伯兴.[20] Among all of these vessels there were also musical instruments, precisely a set of twenty large bells and seven small ones fitted inside the larger ones – as indeed music served not only for simple pleasure, but was also a part of many ceremonies, and bells played a significant role in these.

The fact that entire groups of bronzes were hidden in the earth does not seem to be surprising. In times of uncertainty and constant clashes for power, it was rather normal to prevent the plundering and dispersal of a collection. In 771 BC the nobles of Zhou 周 were forced to run away from their sacred capital in Zhouyuan 周原 (located today in the north Guanzhong plain 关中 near Baoji) and to move to the west close to modern Xi'an.[21] Hoping to return, they hid their precious bronzes, for which they unfortunately never came back. Archaeologists, up until now, have found more than one hundred caches not associated with burials; seventy of them were in the Zhouyuan area.[22] Yet the question arises as to where these objects had been kept before. Two places appear to be especially appropriate, mainly a family ancestral temple or treasury.[23] The temple, in some measure, might have functioned as the "exhibition-space", within which the displayed objects could have been admired not only by the living members of the family, but also by the ancestors' spirits. The treasury, on the other hand, could have been a much more personal area to which access was somewhat restricted, thus it did not act as a "displaying chamber" but rather as a storeroom where the owners could conceal their treasures. The inclination to hide the objects made them more mysterious and precious. Li Xueqin, in his book, mentioned a collector from the middle Western Zhou peri-

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text dedicated in general to the eulogy of two kings, Wen and Wu, as well as in commemoration of the Yu 盂 family ancestors. See: Rawson (2009: 20–22).

[19] Li (1980: 29); Rawson (1999a: 374–376).

[20] Shaughnessy (1991: 1–4, 183–192, 261 n. 81); Rawson (1999 a.: 374); Lu, Yan (2005:198–199).

[21] Lu, Yan (2005: 185). According to *Shijing* 诗经 (Book of Songs) the Ancestral Temple in Zhouyuan bestowed a holy character on the town. See: Owen (1996: 16–19) [*Classic of Poetry* CCXXXVII "Spreading"].

[22] Lu, Yan (2005: 197).

[23] Rawson (1999a.: 374).

od who earnestly treasured a *ding* vessel and revealed it "only to a few privileged people".[24] We can merely assume that the reasons for such behaviour resulted from being aware of possessing something unique, something that required special treatment, knowledge and possibly taste too.

One of the Han's records gives us reasons to speculate that some of the bronze vessels might have been handed down from ancestors to descendants even for hundreds of years, however, not in a direct family line. The case refers to Zhong Shanfu's 仲山甫 *ding* vessel from the Western Zhou dynasty, which in some way went into the hands of the Xiongnu 匈奴 tribe, whose chief (*chanyu* 单于) in 90 AC returned it to the rightful descendants of Zhou when paying a tribute to the Han General Dou Xian 窦宪 (d. 92 AC.[25] The inscription on the bronze ends with a typical catchphrase, which is as follows:

> Zhong Shanfu makes (this) *ding*, may for ten thousand years his sons' sons and grandsons' grandsons eternally treasure and use it.[26]

Though the history of treasuring the Zhong Shanfu's *ding* is not known in detail, it is very probable that it was stolen and taken as loot during the ransacking of the Zhou capital by the Quanrong 犬戎 people. Apart from this complicated history of transferring the bronze from generation to generation, interesting is the fact that the *ding* was stored, with high probability, for almost nine hundred years somewhere above the ground.

Looking at the amount (over one thousand) as well as on the "antiquarian" content of the discovered bronzes from the central Shaanxi plain hoards, we can take for granted that during the collapse of the Western Zhou dynasty and the move of the capital to the east in 770 BC, most of the aristocracy decided to hide their bronze collections underground, perhaps hoping to recover them later. There were certainly cases, such as Zhong Shanfu's *ding* mentioned above, when the owners or heirs of the bronzes, unable to part with them, kept the vessels for as long as they could defend their property, and if they could not, the ancestral vessels were stolen – thus changing their possessors.

There were usually three ways to acquire bronzes during the Western Zhou dynasty – through private foundries producing items for the royal family and significant members of aristocracy, through treasuring, and through plundering. There was also the fourth possibility, i.e. mainly acquisition from antique dealers whose, with high probability, collections of mixed bronzes from different times were amassed in caches at Doujitai 斗鸡台 in Baoji (Shaanxi), Kazuo 喀左 in

[24] Li (1980: 28).
[25] Shaughnessy (1991: 5–6 n. 1).
[26] Quotation after Shaughnessy (1991: 6 n.1).

Liaoning or Baicaopo 百草坡 and in Lingtai 灵台 (Gansu 甘肃).[27] Yet, regardless of the obtaining method, the ancient Chinese generally had to obey certain rules related to the amount and types of possessed vessels, especially if they wanted them to be assembled in their tombs. The regulations imposed by the social system recorded in *Li ji* 礼记 (Book of Rites) were necessary to indicate the rank of the nobles.[28] Thus, the accumulation of burial bronzes in a tomb was not only the owner's personal decision but somewhat of a commitment to tradition and rituals, the respecting of which was a question of honour and gave hope for a good afterlife.

Possessing nine *dings* and eight *guis* was the privilege of the King; a set of seven *dings* and six *guis* of a Duke or head of the tributary country; five *dings* and four *guis*, in turn, was the mark of a Minister; three *dings* and two *guis* classified some lower social position; and the enjoyment of only one *ding* and only one *gui* was the right of the lowest officers. This strict distinction, however, did not exclude the possibility of assembling other bronze items in the tomb of the deceased, such as wine vessels, water containers or musical instruments (Ill. 11). As a result, the graves of the lords of Jin (Tianma-Qucun Village, Shanxi), dukes of Wei (Xincun Village, Henan) or lords of Yu (Rujiazhuang Baoji, Shaanxi) were full of various vessels, which besides emphasising the rank of the owners also indicated their wealth and power. However, this strict five-rank system was strongly violated during the Eastern Zhou period, when the number of *dings* designed only for the Zhou king was no longer restricted and the lords of the states willing to raise their social status easily adopted the king's bronze number for themselves (Ill. 12).[29] This change resulted from the development of private land ownership as well as from the declination of the royal house's power. The most opulent bronze underground collections from the early Eastern Zhou period are especially present in the tombs of the aristocracy in Jincun (near Luoyang) or in Shancunling上村岭 at Sanmenxia, where in one of the largest graves, M2009, more than two hundred bronzes among over three thousand other objects were found.[30]

It seems that as a result of the growing power of the local landlords, their confidence also increased in defining private needs connected with acquiring bronze vessels – not for ritual purposes but simply for themselves. If we look at the inscriptions from the Early Spring and Autumn Period, we will notice that some of the carved messages which appear on the walls of the bronzes are in fact proud information about the founders' commissions. For instance, the inscriptions on two bronzes: *fu* 父 and *ling* 醽, which once belonged to the rulers of Zeng 曾, are

[27] Li (1980: 35–37).
[28] Legge (1967.1: 214–115).
[29] Lu (2005: 204).
[30] Lu (2005: 225–227).

illustrious examples of this.[31] The first vessel was discovered in the Sujialong 苏家垅 tomb (Jingshan county 京山县) and the second one at Xiongjialaowan 熊家老湾 in Suizhou 随州. The text on the first one consists of eight characters and says: "*Fu* commissioned by Zeng Zhong You Fu for himself 曾仲斿父"; the text on the second one is a twelve-character inscription which in general means: "Zeng Bo Wen 曾伯文 commissioned this vessel for himself before going to the battle".[32] The inscriptions thus unveil a strong sense of pride resulting from the fact of possessing the bronze vessel which, used as a tool of self-commemoration, may also have been treated as a treasure kept for the owner's offspring "forever".

The fact of possessing bronze items was not, however, the only determinant of collecting. From the Warring State Period, taste and ingenuity started to play an increasingly important role. Yet Mozi 墨子 (470–391 BC) condemned people who were looking for rare or unusual articles by saying that "in the end [it] contributes to nothing"[33], though it seems that wealthy lords hardly ever took heed of this. Their tombs, for at least the next four hundred years, contained such extraordinary objects that their originality not only certifies the progressive improvement of technology, but in particular the development of taste (Ill.13). Martin Powers describes it as "taste for ingenuity".[34] Bronze material was used more often for shaping new forms which rather did not belong to the usual repertoire of ritual vessels. These new bronze types were sometimes based on lacquer wares, such as the vessel *dou* 豆 as well as new wares inlaid with gold decoration, which also followed the luminosity of lacquer.[35] Among these new exquisite bronze items there were incense burners, lamps, animal sculptures in the shapes of horses, birds or tigers, as well as mirrors. Most of them were private luxurious possessions without a strong connection to rituals, however, mirrors seemed to attract attention exactly because of their religious and spiritual purpose, which they had acquired only during the early Eastern Zhou.[36]

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[31] Zhang, Yang, Li (2008: 84–8, 90–91).

[32] Zhang, Yang, Li (2008: 85, 90).

[33] Powers (2004.1: 291); Watson (1963: 62–64) – there is a section about "Moderation in Expenditure", where Mozi asks questions about the purpose of making cloths, building houses, weapons, boats and carts as well as the reasons for collecting jewels, birds, beasts, dogs and horses. He says that: "What is merely decorative and does not contribute to these ends should be avoided". The reason is that all extraordinary things, according to Mozi, add nothing to the material welfare of the nation – on the contrary, they only distract rulers and make them incapable of reigning.

[34] Powers (2004. 1: 291).

[35] Rawson, Bunker (1990: 51–53).

[36] Rawson, Bunker (1990: 55–56). Until the end of Western Zhou, mirrors did not seem to be much valued, only later did they become increasingly more appreciated and regarded as symbols of good fortune and immortality after death.

Together with the increasing wealth of the underground bronze vessels, a new tendency appeared to present them as if they belonged to the "palace equipment".[37] This is especially noticeable during the period of the Warring States, where the tombs of the Marquis of Yi of Zeng 曾侯乙 or Cuo Mu 墓 strived to reflect – through the layout and exposure of the objects – the idea of earthly palaces which had once belonged to their owners.[38] However, just as in real palaces ancestral temples or ceremonial halls had existed, thus also underground sacred rooms existed to expose the holy bronzes. These "chambers" were indicated through a symbolical layout of the main bronze ritual vessels or bronze bells.[39] Yet, between the mid 5th and 4th centuries BC, a tendency towards commercialisation of the sacred vessels appeared.[40] The decreasing role of ancestral sacrifices and, at the same time, the increasing opportunities of bronze vessel acquisition seemed to be the main reasons for which ritual vessels had ceased to be fascinating.[41] They were still accumulated because of their ritual meaning, but it seems that they had lost their previous importance, which was emphasised through the sumptuous decorations or large numbers of pieces creating the opulent sets. Yet it seems that the antique meaning still played a significant role. The "underground collection" from Zhujiaji 朱家集 in Shouxian 寿县 county (Anhui), probably belonging to Prince You 幽 of Chu 楚 (died in 228 BC), can serve as such an example where two different types of bronzes, i.e. simple and plain vessels[42] from the late Warring States Period and antiques once inherited from the earlier generation of Chu princes, were assembled.[43]

The reason for which the antiqueness of bronzes was incessantly desirable lay in the general conviction that ancient sacred vessels, marked with time, gave not only spiritual power, but also a natural claim for dominion. The case of the emperor Qin Shihuang 秦始皇, who at any price, albeit faintly, tried to recover one of the nine

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[37] Rawson, Bunker (1990: 46).

[38] Rawson, Bunker (1990: 46); Hebei (1995.1: 图二九).

[39] Zhang, Yang, Li (2008: 100–103).

[40] Hsu, Lindulf (1988: 317); Rawson, Bunker (1990: 49).

[41] As a result of unceasing wars during this time, many family clans were eliminated from the political game and only a few forceful lords managed to concentrate their power. They existed once the family's obligations had expired and the new oaths that bound the lords with other rulers had been taken. As these men were not obliged to serve the family anymore but a new landlord, involvement in ancestors' sacrificial practices diminished. At the same time, the rapid development of bronze production led to a commercialisation of the bronze market. Rawson, Bunker (1990: 49).

[42] Wu Hung develops an interesting theory about spirit bronze vessels *mingqi* 明器, which were made to "honor the spirit of the dead" during the burial and only had to resemble real objects. According to this theory, one of the features distinguishing bronzes for ghosts from bronzes made for the living was the tendency to leave a surface of the vessel plain. What is more, depriving the vessel of decoration went hand in hand with making the spirit bronze article dysfunctional and unusable. See: Wu (2010: 89, 95).

[43] Li (1980: 41).

legendary brazen tripods is a good illustration of the struggles which a person eager to possess antiquity and legitimacy to his throne had to go through.[44] However, reference to antiquity and its artefacts was not the ruler's only idea to demonstrate power. Sculpture in general became a means of visualising Qin Shihuandi's authority as well as one of the ways to attract the immortals.[45] For, the ruler who pleased the spiritual beings by making their sculpted depictions on daily instruments could enjoy different privileges.[46] However, Chinese sculpture had then already achieved a great position, though it was rather not regarded as art but as artistry. The reason for this is that through a close association with officialdom, craftsmen – who should be understood as authors of the designs and not those executing them in bronze – enjoyed a free status, yet they could not entirely express their individual artistic charisma, but merely the ideas that were imposed upon them by morality and the public policy.[47] Only independent ingenious work, free from "external influences", could attain the flavour of art.[48] Thus, a huge project in the form of twelve gigantic figures made of melted weapons, collected from the whole empire at the behest of the First Emperor,[49] might have been a very skilful and unique achievement, though with high probability, limited in its creative freedom due to expected top-down results.

Yet there is no trace of these figures, though we can imagine how outstanding they must have been, for we know of other bronze sculptures discovered around the tomb of Qin Shihuandi. For example, the bronze head regarded as a decorative

[44] Pingqiu (2008.1.: 35); Fairbank, Goldman (2006: il. 2 (between pages 106–107)); Shambaugh Elliott (2005: 5–8).

[45] Paludan (2007: 75, 144).

[46] Paludan (2007: 144); Rawson (1999 b.: 12, 17) – the author writes that "such images [presenting features of invisible beings] were understood to bring to their owners and makers the effects of their counterparts in the spirit world", and "what is more the figures were an effective means by which a desired effect, the presence of the spirits, could be achieved."

[47] Paludan (2007: 147); Powers (2004: 289). See also (Acker 1979: 63 n.1, 108) – for there is a passage from Huainanzi 淮南子 warning against any sort of ingenuity which might be a great danger. The passage runs as follows: "Of old when Ts'ang Chieh [Cangjie 仓颉] originated writing, Heaven rained down grain and the demons howled at night: when Po I [Bo Yi 伯益] made a well, a dragon mounted aloft upon a dark cloud and its spirit perched upon the K'un-lun [Kunlun 昆仑] peak. But as arts 能 increase in number, moral power 德 [de] grows thinner. Therefore when (the skill artisan) Shui was represented upon the Chou tripod, he was shown holding his fingers in his mouth in order to show clearly that great ingenuity ought not to be practiced". Thus, we see that going in the direction of ingenuity – irrelevant in which circle of "arts" (which literally means "ability" – *neng* 能) – was perceived as dangerous. The reason for such a statement might have stemmed from the conviction that inventiveness – as it was believed – gave unrestrained power and enabled magical control over original things that had been reflected in images. Thus, if the skilful artisan used his intellectual abilities to create something that was beyond the expected outlines he might have possessed a power not intended for him.

[48] Powers (2004. 1: 292).

[49] Watson (1993.1: 12); Paludan (2007: 75–76); Rawson (2007: 129).

finial for a bell stand, belonging to a collection of the Xianyang 咸阳 Museum, presents such an amazingly naturalistic masterpiece, which with a high degree of probability can pass for a real portrait of a person.[50] There are many more examples that deserve special attention – particularly the objects displayed in Pit K0007 located three kilometres to the northeast of the emperor's mound.[51] The reason for this interest lies in an extraordinary "underground exhibition" created by a group of forty-six realistic bronze water birds lined up in order along an artificial watercourse (Ill. 14). This unusual collection of twenty swans, six cranes and twenty geese performing a dance for some hardly defined spirits is an impressive picture of the emperor's desire to rule the entire universe, where even nature is at the ruler's service. In this case it seems that both the design and the execution reached a level of excellence. This whole arrangement is in fact in the form of an exhibition prepared for an audience that is out of this world.

The same impression appears in the case of the owner of the tomb at Leitai 雷台(around 220 BC, ancient Wuwei 武威 today Liangzhu 良渚 city, Gansu), who was buried together with thirty-eight bronze horses, one ox, fourteen carts, seventeen knights and twenty-nine slaves creating a guard of honour.[52] The group – arranged as if it was a performance – presents a very high level of artistry, especially one horse widely known as "The Galloping Horse Stepping on a Flying Swallow" (Ill. 15). This sculpture appears today as an extraordinary piece of art, clearly distinguishing itself on the background of other sculptures of that time. However, we should consider the question whether "The Galloping Horse" existed as a work of art with its contemporaries or whether it was merely a representative piece with a symbolic meaning behind it, although made in a masterly way. The answer to this problem is associated with artistic taste and being aware of its existence at that time in China.

According to Ann Paludan, sculpture in ancient China was treated more as a symbolic means of expressing attitudes and ideas sanctioned by tradition rather than a three-dimensional work presenting aesthetic principles.[52] In general, this statement is true, but there are some individual cases which indicate exceptions to this rule. An example, as mentioned by Zhuangzi 庄子 (369–286 BC.?), is the marvellous bell stand carved by the woodworker Qing (around 569 BC).[53] We do not know exactly what it looked like, though we know it was perceived to be almost the work of the spirits. The reason for this admiration resulted from the

[50] Rawson (2007: 128–129; 218 cat. no. 98).
[51] Duan (2007: 192–193, 201).
[52] E Jun (2006: 164–177). The inscription on one of the horses is about Zhang Jun 张君 (*jun* means monarch, sovereign), thus scholars suspect that the owner of this tomb was called Zhang.
[53] Paludan (2007: 151).

fact that master Qing had applied certain innovative solutions which required "special mental and emotional preparation" from him.[54] This, in turn, means that the woodcarver was not forced to respond to any demands but enjoyed "professional autonomy", thanks to which he could express his temperament and could create something exceptional and unique – an object of artistic taste. Martin Powers, in his article about the origins of taste in China, wrote that:

> Unique invention requires of the artist a strong sense of internal standards and sense of his own worth. This uniqueness was itself to become the object of artistic taste and the status conferred upon those who owned uniquely crafted objects.[55]

Thus, coming back to "The Galloping Horse Stepping on a Flying Swallow", we can definitely say that the person who made this ingenious sculpture design must have been conscious of the uniqueness of his concept – based on a horse gallop movement so lively reflected in the sculpture – and he certainly desired to impress others with his mastery. Therefore, he created a stunning piece that surpassed almost everything that had appeared in bronze sculpture of that time. However, the "bronze horse" would not have materialised itself if not for the patron's will, whose penchant to possess an unusual object was tangible proof of his special taste.

William Acker, in his book about "Tang and Pre-Tang texts on Chinese Paintings", brings up six factors "by which works of art [in China] are called into being".[56] As the first he listed "magic", then "religion", "propaganda", "display of wealth", and finally "display of [artistic] skill", and "[artist] self expression" as the last reasons. He explained that for patrons who ordered bronze items the most important motives were the first four factors, as "the expressions of an artist's personality" was rather meaningless if not dangerous.[57] Thus this unusual group of bronze horses, with the leading one who is "stepping on a flying swallow", belonging to the underground collection of Zhang Jun 张君(?), must have shown the extraordinary sensitivity of its owner to ingenious artistic solutions. Certainly, it also expressed his wish to rule over a real cavalry or at least to watch his beloved horses in the afterlife, thus he had ordered a truly magical image of them. However, the bronze team does not seem to be a fighting group, but rather a guard of honour having to commemorate the glorious life of the tomb's owner and his family.[58]

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[54] Watson (1996: 126–127).
[55] Powers (2004. 1: 292).
[56] Powers (2004. 1: 292).
[57] Acker (1979: IX-X).
[58] Acker (1979: X).