Cultural Convergence in the Northern Qi Period: A Flamboyant Chinese Ceramic Container

a research monograph

Suzanne G. Valenstein

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Department of Asian Art
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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Cover illustration and frontispiece: Covered footed container (cover) and detail of large monster mask (frontispiece). Earthenware with relief decoration under creamy white slip. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). Total height: 15⅛ in. (38.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Stephen and Patricia Beckwith, 2002. 2002.143

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introduction

A flamboyant earthenware covered container recently given to The Metropolitan Museum of Art (figs. 1–2) is one of the most extraordinary Chinese ceramics to have entered the Museum's collection. Nothing remotely like this object appears to have been published to date, and a number of authorities have confirmed that it is unique in their experience.

This container has been attributed to the Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). A large,[1] cylindrical object with slightly slanting sides, it stands on four truncated legs with paw-shaped feet. The mouth is deeply recessed to accommodate a flat, snugly fitting lid with a pierced flattened knob at the center. The fine-grained, very soft, and porous dark gray earthenware body has been covered on the exterior with a creamy white thick slip, much of which has disappeared, revealing the body underneath. There are many areas of light brown earth encrustations, and a number of small black spots in one area. The container, which was fired at a very low temperature, is thickly potted and extremely heavy.

Most of the relief decoration is sprig-molded and was applied to the body before the object was covered with slip and fired. The assemblage of ornamental motifs is remarkable. There are two raised bands at the mouth rim and three raised horizontal bands about halfway down the body, which divide it in two. Four identical vertical relief ornaments, each with a row of small pointed lotus petals at the base, separate the upper section of the body into quadrants: this motif might be read as a foliate architectural column or possibly a tree. Directly below them, dividing the lower section into corresponding quadrants, are four similar vertical, but pendant, foliate columns or trees without lotus-petal bases. These are placed above rectangular plaques, each of which contains an identical frontal monster mask. Four large, square plaques, each filled with an identical frontal, grimacing horned monster mask with the character *ji* (auspicious) inscribed above it, are placed between the foliate columns or trees in the upper section. Below them, in the lower section, are four duplicate high-relief frontal bird

heads that, in turn, are set over high-relief stylized frontal feline heads surmounting the four shortened legs and paw-shaped feet.[2]

A lotus-medallion knob dominates the flat cover (fig. 3). It is pierced by a cylindrical perforation, approximately ½ in. (1.27 cm) in diameter, which has been cut completely through the lid. The knob is surrounded by four concentric, relief ornamental bands: a raised circle with eight punched beaded rings; and three appliqué bands consisting respectively of twenty five-petaled palmettes, eight beaded medallions alternating with eight bifurcated knobs, and twenty-nine larger five-petaled palmettes. The short, straight rim of the lid, edged above and below by two raised bands, is decorated in appliqué relief with eight duplicate pseudo-lotus flowers that alternate with eight identical frontal human heads surrounded by pearl beading.

This receptacle has been examined by the Metropolitan Museum's Objects Conservation Department. While a few patches of the original white slip remain on the lid, there is no evidence of any painted or gilded decoration. The earth encrustations have been identified as typical northern Chinese loess and the black spots as the type of manganese deposits that frequently appears on burial objects. Three samples submitted to Thermoluminescence analysis place the date of the container's last firing between 1100 and 1800 years ago,[3] which is consistent with the Northern Qi attribution given here.

Seeing a photograph, and without knowing its true medium, one might assume that this object was an example of Chinese Northern Dynasties (386–581) lavishly carved *hanbaiyu* (white marble). A fondness for elaborately ornamented stone in both art and architecture was characteristic of this period;[4] and in all probability this is a comparatively inexpensive earthenware version of a costlier sculpted white marble container. Although the piece might have been of relatively low cost to manufacture, the quality of this container, particularly the carefully articulated modeling of its various decorative elements, is impressive. Due to the extreme softness of the body, many of the appliqué-relief motifs were blurred during manufacture or in subsequent handling; others are caked with mud. Fortunately, the condition of at least one of each of the different elements is still good enough to read and to demonstrate the ceramic sculptor's skill.

Throughout this investigation, a particular effort has been made to explore every avenue of inquiry in the hope of placing the Museum's container in its proper historical setting. Study of this singular object has raised innumerable questions. Its precise use is uncertain. Extensive research has failed to decipher the meaning of its profuse decoration and complex iconography. Indeed, some of the principal imagery is exasperatingly ambiguous, and one of the lesser elements completely defies identification.

At the same time, a step-by-step examination of the container's various features has provided a great deal of information. As demonstrated in this study, the piece is closely related to a group of unusual Chinese ceramics with flamboyant ornamentation.

Inasmuch as there is documentary evidence that some of these flamboyant wares were found in sixth-century northern Chinese tombs, it is reasonable to assign a sixth-century date and a northern provenance to this piece. Furthermore, all the tombs in which the flamboyant wares were found belonged to people who were immediately connected to the Gao family, rulers of the Northern Qi dynasty. This would suggest that the Museum's container was produced for the tomb of a member of the Gao family or a member of one of the elite families centered around the Gao.

Some of the container's ornamental motifs can be traced in China from the Six Dynasties period (220–589) back to the metal, jade, and/or lacquer objects of the preceding Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) and those of the earlier Zhou (ca. 1046–ca. 256 BC) and Shang (ca. 1600–ca. 1046 BC) eras. In its shape and in one ornamental element, there are specific references to lacquerware produced in the southern state of Chu during the Warring States period (481–221 BC) of the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770–256 BC).

Many of the container's decorative motifs originated outside China. A number of motifs appear in the arts of ancient Egypt and Greece and eventually found their way to China by one of several different routes. Numerous connections to the arts of the early Eurasian nomads can be established. Many of the ornaments on this sixth-century container stem from the vocabulary of foreign motifs that arrived in China from the west with the trade and cultural interchange along the Silk Road that had begun centuries earlier. There is a remarkable relationship to a particular group of earthenwares from the site of Yotkan, near Khotan, in what is now China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Finally, many of the motifs can be associated with Buddhism, which came to northern China from India by way of Central Asia.

This research monograph is divided into six sections. The first section connects the Museum's container to a distinctive group of sixth-century northern Chinese ceramics with flamboyant decoration. As will be seen, these ornate ceramics provide valuable clues about the identity of the piece. In the second and third sections, the container's shape and individual ornamental motifs are viewed from two different perspectives. First, they are placed in their historical context. The various ways in which decorative motifs might be interpreted are explored, and the motifs are traced both chronologically and geographically to their origins. Next, the cultural influences reflected in the shape and the ornamental motifs are considered, and the principal sources from which they were derived—the Chinese Shang and Zhou dynasties, the early Eurasian nomads, the Eastern Zhou state of Chu, Khotanese earthenwares, and Buddhism—are examined. The fourth section documents the connection between this container and the Northern Qi dynasty's ruling Gao family. The fifth section addresses two of the numerous problems surrounding the identity of the piece, namely, its function and ownership. Some observations about this object comprise the final section.

notes

1 The container is 15⅛ in. (38.4 cm) high; the diameter of the body is 9¾ in. (24.8 cm) at the top and 9 in. (22.9 cm) at the bottom.

2 The feline heads, truncated legs, and paw-shaped feet have been molded as one unit.

3 Oxford Authentication Ltd., sample no. C198f51.

4 Stone had been commonly employed for all kinds of funerary monuments in China from the first century AD onward. For an extensive study of the symbolism of stone in early Chinese mortuary art and architecture, see Wu Hung 1995, 121–42.

chronology

Shang Dynasty	**ca. 1600–ca. 1046 BC**
Zhou Dynasty	**ca. 1046–ca. 256 BC**
Western Zhou	ca. 1046–771 BC
Eastern Zhou	770–256 BC
Spring & Autumn Period	770–481 BC
Warring States Period	481–221 BC
Qin Dynasty	**221–206 BC**
Han Dynasty	**206 BC–AD 220**
Western (Former) Han	206 BC–AD 9
Wang Mang Interregnum	AD 9–23
Eastern (Later) Han	AD 25–220
Six Dynasties	**AD 220–589**
Sui Dynasty	**581–619**
Tang Dynasty	**618–907**

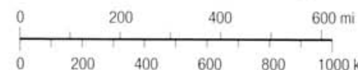
Six Dynasties (AD 220–589)

Three Kingdoms			**220–280**
Wu 222–280	Shu 221–263	Wei 220–265	

Western Jin	**265–316**

Eastern Jin	**317–420**	**Sixteen Kingdoms**			**304–439**
Southern Dynasties	**420–589**	**Northern Dynasties**			**386–581**
Song	420–479	Northern Wei			386–534
Southern Qi	479–502				
Liang	502–557	Western Wei	535–556	Eastern Wei	534–550
Chen	557–589	Northern Zhou	557–581	Northern Qi	550–577

China and the West



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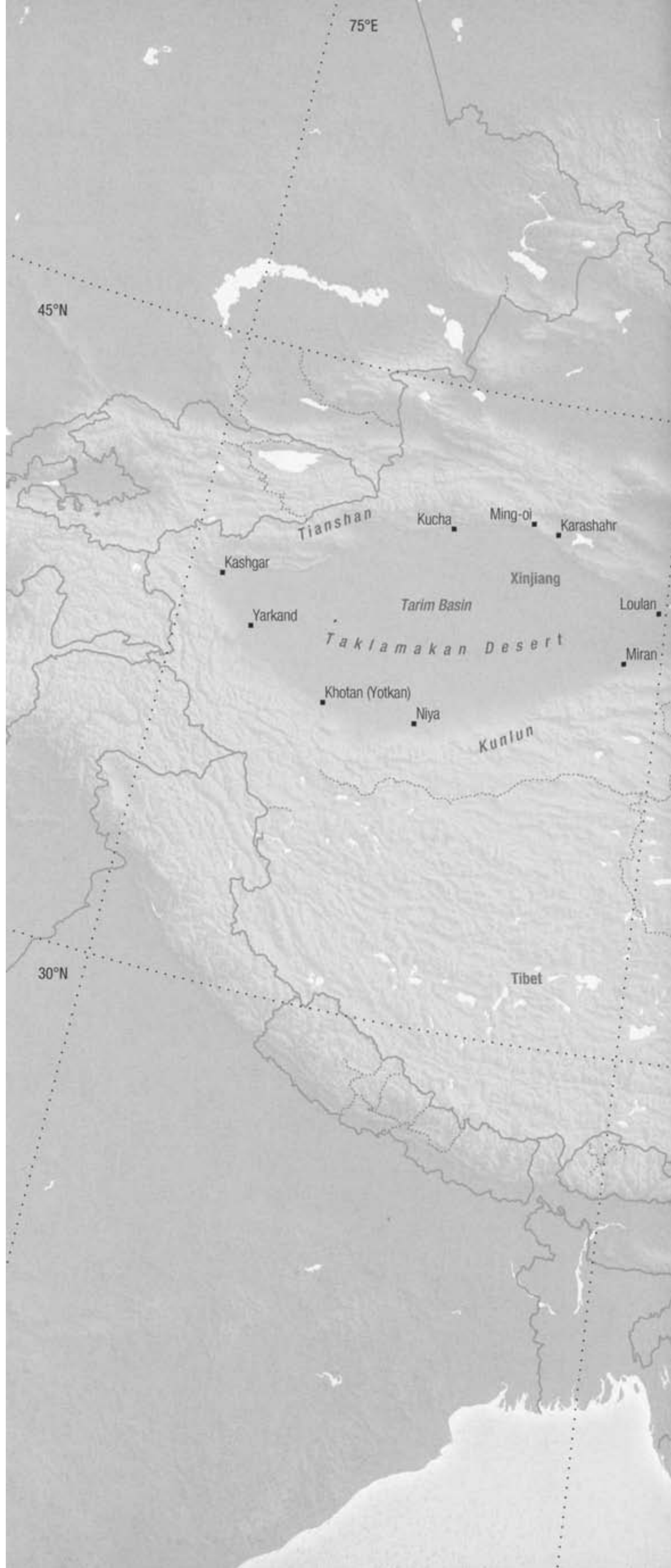
45°E
60°E
Filippovka
RUSSIA
Cherkassy
UKRAINE
Dnepropetrovsk
KAZAKHSTAN
Kherson
Crimea
Krasnodar
Kelermes
Theodosia
45°N
Aral Sea
Syr Darya
Black Sea
Caucasus
Vergina
UZBEKISTAN
Amu Darya
GREECE
Eretria
TURKEY
TAJIKISTAN
Athens
Caspian Sea
Tigris River
Aï Khanoum
Hindu Kush
Mediterranean Sea
Euphrates River
IRAQ
AFGHANISTAN
IRAN
PAKISTAN
30°N
EGYPT
Indus River
Nile River
Arabian Sea
15°N

75°E
90°E
Siberia
105°E
120°E
135°E
RUSSIA
Lake Baikal
Tuekta
Pazyryk
Bashadar
Altai
Lake Balkhash
MONGOLIA
Issyk
Gobi Desert
KYRGYZSTAN
Kucha
Ming-oi
Karashahr
Tianshan
Loulan
Tarim Basin
Dunhuang
Kashgar
Miran
Taklamakan Desert
Ordos Desert
Beijing
Yarkand
Khotan
Niya
Yellow River
Zibo
Kunlun
Anyang
Yellow Sea
CHINA
Xi'an
Luoyang
Karakoram
Nanjing
Shanghai
Chengdu
Hangzhou
Himalayas
Yangtze River
East China Sea
Ganges River
Irawaddy River
INDIA
Canton (Guangzhou)
Salween River
Pearl River
Mekong River
South China Sea
Bay of Bengal


75°E
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Tianshan
Kucha
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Karashahr
Kashgar
Xinjiang
Tarim Basin
Loulan
Yarkand
Taklamakan Desert
Miran
Khotan (Yotkan)
Niya
Kunlun
30°N
Tibet

90°E
105°E
120°E
135°E
Heilongjiang
Jilin
Inner Mongolia
Liaoning
Gobi Desert
Dunhuang
Hangjin Qi
Jungar Qi
Ejin-Horo Qi
Ordos
Desert
Shenmu xian
Datong
Beijing
Yixian
Mancheng
Pingshan xian
Hebei
Jingxian
Taiyuan
Shouyang xian
Zibo
Qingzhou
Gansu
Ningxia
Handan
Cixian
Linzhang xian
Shandong
Shanxi
Anyang
Qinghai
Yellow River
Houma
Luoyang
Shaanxi
Xi'an
Henan
Wei River
Yangtze River
Shouxian
Huai River
Dengxian
Nanjing
Jiangsu
Shanghai
Xinyang
Suixian
Anhui
Taihu
Hangzhou Bay
Hubei
Hangzhou
Jingmen
Yangtze River
Echeng
Jiangling
Chengdu
Zhejiang
Boyanghu
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Cultural Convergence in the Northern Qi Period

chapter one Ceramics with Flamboyant Ornamentation

The Metropolitan Museum's large and elaborate slip-coated earthenware container is closely related to a limited but pivotal family of Chinese ceramics with flamboyant ornamentation. These ceramics are either high-fired stonewares with celadon glazes or low-fired earthenwares with a range of glazes.[1] Like the Museum's container, virtually all of these distinctive objects are of considerable size, and all have sprig-molded, appliqué-relief decoration. Several of the ornamental motifs on this piece can be found on the other ceramics as well. The light brown earth encrustations on the Museum's container have been identified as typical northern Chinese loess, indicating that the piece most likely came from some northern Chinese locale. Archaeological and/or scientific evidence has shown that the other ceramics with flamboyant ornamentation also have a northern provenance. This family of stoneware and earthenware ceramics can be documented to the second half of the sixth century, at the end of the Northern Dynasties phase of the Six Dynasties period.[2] As seen throughout this study, because of their close relationship, this established group of ceramics furnishes important, albeit inferred, evidence concerning the identity of the Museum's mysterious piece.

celadon-glazed stonewares

The celadon-glazed stonewares in the above-mentioned group are all high-footed, long-necked *lianhua zun* (lotus wine jar). This type of jar is archaeologically documented by four examples, two of which have lids, found in the Feng family tomb complex in 1948 in Jingxian, Hebei Province (fig. 4).[3] Two of these jars are said to have been in the Northern Qi tomb of Feng Zihui (d. 565) and two in the tomb of a member of the Zu family.[4] The bodies and glazes of some of the celadons from the Feng family burials have been scientifically analyzed; their composition is discernibly different from that of the Six Dynasties Yue celadon wares of northern Zhejiang and southern Jiangsu provinces, and they are indigenous to northern kilns.[5] A very similar

large covered jar excavated from a tomb near Nanjing, Jiangsu, corresponds so closely to the Feng family examples that in all likelihood it came from the same northern kilns.[6] An interchange of diplomatic embassies between the Eastern Wei (534–550) and Northern Qi dynasties in the north and the Liang (502–557) and Chen (557–589) dynasties in the south, whose capital was Jiankang (modern-day Nanjing), is recorded in the dynastic histories. It is further recorded that agents went with these embassies to engage in trade.[7] The Nanjing jar could well have been carried from the north to Jiankang as a diplomatic gift or an item of commerce.

The Eastern Wei tomb of Ruru Princess Linhe (buried 550), which was excavated in 1978–79 in Cixian, Hebei,[8] had been previously robbed. However, it still contained a celadon *guan* (wide-mouthed globular jar), along with a celadon lid that is decorated with two rows of upright lotus petals.[9] This elaborate lid seems to be inappropriate for the rather modest *guan* with which it was paired after excavation. Inasmuch as it is very close to a lid on one of the Feng family jars, it is possible that this lid originally was the cover for a now-missing *lianhua zun* that was similar to the Feng examples.

Although there is no archaeological evidence to authenticate them, two other celadon *lianhua zun* parallel the Feng family examples so closely that they undoubtedly belong to the same group. One is in The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City (fig. 5), and the other in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (fig. 6).[10] Three other large flamboyant celadon *lianhua zun*, also belonging to the Feng family group, recently were sold at auction: the first (fig. 7), which is not as profusely ornamented as the preceding examples, was sold in New York in 2003;[11] the second in London in 2003;[12] and the third, a particularly elaborate example, in New York in 2006.[13] Two small, ornately decorated celadon jars (fig. 8) were found in 1980 in the Sui dynasty (581–619) tomb of Hulü Che (d. 595) in modern Taiyuan, Shanxi Province.[14] These miniature versions of the larger Feng family type jars cited above document the continuation of the late Northern Dynasties flamboyant *lianhua zun* into the Sui period.

A *lianhua zun* (fig. 9), discovered in 1982 in a tomb attributed to the late Northern Dynasties period near Zibo, Shandong Province, offers further documentation of sixth-century flamboyant celadon-glazed stonewares. This piece, which also is stylistically connected to the Feng family group of jars, has a glaze that is described in the archaeological reports as green with a yellow cast.[15]

low-fired glazed earthenwares

Flamboyant earthenwares with low-fired glazes have been excavated from three northern Chinese tombs. Seven covered jars with yellowish glazes (fig. 10) were found in 1973 in Shouyang xian, Shanxi, in the Northern Qi tomb of Kudi Huiluo (d. 562).[16] Tomb furniture from the Northern Qi tomb of Lou Rui (d. 570), which was excavated in 1979–81 in

Taiyuan, Shanxi,[17] included eleven very ornate objects with greenish yellow glazes: four lamps (fig. 11), two jars, one with a cover (fig. 12), and five chicken-head, dragon-handle ewers (fig. 13).[18] Finds from the Northern Qi tomb of Xu Xianxiu (d. 571), excavated in 2000–2002 in Taiyuan, included five ornate ceramics described in the archaeological report as low-fired with yellowish green glazes. There were four lamps (fig. 14) that are similar to those from the Lou Rui tomb (fig. 11) and a jar (fig. 15).[19] Another member of this elite group of wares is the Metropolitan Museum's green-glazed earthenware jar (fig. 16).[20] Comparison of its shape with that of the Xu Xianxiu jar (fig. 15) supports a Northern Qi attribution for this piece. Like the Museum's slip-covered container under discussion, this green-glazed jar is fashioned of fine, very soft earthenware and is quite heavy for its size.

An apparently undocumented jar of the *lianhua zun* type (fig. 17), in the collection of the Xibaolou Celadon Museum, Shenzhen, Guangdong Province,[21] is an important connection between the celadon-glazed stoneware *lianhua zun* and the low-fired glazed earthenwares with flamboyant ornamentation described above. Unlike the other *lianhua zun*, this jar is low-fired glazed earthenware with what is described as a light-colored *huang* (yellow) glaze with *lü* (green) splashes. Similar pale yellow glazes with copper-green splashes can be seen on Northern Qi earthenwares, such as the two globular jars found in 1958 in the tomb of Li Yun (d. 576) in Puyang, Henan Province.[22]

The two groups of sixth-century, northern, profusely decorated, celadon-glazed and low-fired glazed wares discussed above invite comparison. Not only do these wares share the appliqué-relief decorative technique, but some of the designs found on one group of ceramics appear on the other group as well:

SEGMENTATE LOTUS PETALS on the celadon-glazed *lianhua zun* (figs. 4–9) can be found on the low-fired glazed earthenware jar from the Kudi Huiluo tomb (fig. 10) as well as the lamps from the Lou Rui (fig. 11) and Xu Xianxiu (fig. 14) tombs.

BEADED MEDALLIONS on the celadon-glazed *lianhua zun* (figs. 4–6, 9) also appear on the Metropolitan Museum's green-glazed earthenware jar (fig. 16).[23]

TASSELED STREAMERS ISSUING FROM ORNAMENTAL DISKS on the celadon-glazed *lianhua zun* from the tomb near Zibo, Shandong (fig. 9), are repeated on the Museum's green-glazed earthenware jar (fig. 16).

Although celadon-glazed stonewares and/or low-fired glazed earthenwares have been discovered in a number of late Northern Dynasties tombs in Hebei, Henan, Shanxi, and Shandong provinces,[24] as of this writing, there is little firm archaeological evidence concerning the kilns that produced the two groups of elaborately decorated ceramics considered here. One source of celadon flamboyant jars is known to be the Zhaili kiln complex near

Zibo, in north central Shandong. According to the excavation report describing the ornate *lianhua zun* from the tomb near Zibo (fig. 9), the same type of material has been found at the nearby Zhaili kilns. Among the archaeological finds at these Northern Dynasties kilns is a fragment of a celadon jar with ornate appliqué-relief decoration.[25] Low-fired glazed earthenwares also were manufactured at Zhaili in the late Northern Dynasties period.[26] Celadon wares were excavated at the Xiangzhou kilns in the suburbs of modern Anyang, in northern Henan, not far from Ye, the capital of both the Eastern Wei and the Northern Qi dynasties. Some ceramics excavated from Northern Qi tombs in the area have been associated with these Xiangzhou kiln finds, and it is postulated that the kilns probably began production at least as early as the Northern Qi period.[27] One excavated ceramic of particular interest here is a biscuit-fired stand decorated with relief lotus petals (fig. 18); it is remarkably similar to the lotus-medallion knob on the lid of the Metropolitan Museum's earthenware container.[28] Still other discoveries at the Xing kiln complex in Neiqiu xian, Hebei, best known for Tang dynasty (618–907) white wares, suggest that they might be among the kilns that produced these two groups of elaborately decorated ceramics. Both high- and low-fired ceramics were found there, including celadons attributed to the Northern Dynasties period,[29] celadons and ceramics with yellow glazes assigned to the Sui dynasty,[30] and glazed *sancai* (three-color) wares of the Tang.[31]

ancillary ceramics

A jar in the Metropolitan Museum (fig. 19) represents a small group of celadon *guan* that are liberally embellished with appliqué-relief decoration.[32] While many of these globular jars, which are generally attributed to the second half of the sixth century, were manufactured in northern kilns, some apparently were produced in the Shouzhou kiln complex, just south of the Huai River in Anhui Province.[33] A particularly ornate example (fig. 20) was excavated in Shouxian, Anhui;[34] however, few particulars of this find have been published.

These celadon *guan* share many of the appliqué-relief ornamental elements of the celadon-glazed and low-fired glazed flamboyant wares produced in northern China in the second half of the sixth century discussed above:

TASSELED STREAMERS ISSUING FROM ORNAMENTAL DISKS can be found on the Museum's celadon *guan* (fig. 19) and on another celadon *guan* in a private Japanese collection.[35] This motif also occurs on the celadon *lianhua zun* (fig. 9) from the tomb near Zibo, Shandong, as well as on the Museum's green-glazed earthenware jar (fig. 16). Similar tasseled streamers can be found on the Northern Qi limestone head of a Bodhisattva from the southern Xiangtangshan Buddhist cave temples, now in the Metropolitan Museum (fig. 21).[36] Comparable streamers also can be seen on the elaborate headdresses of two Northern Dynasties stone Bodhisattvas found in 1996 at

the site of Longxing Temple at Qingzhou, Shandong.[37] Beaded streamers issuing from a rosette occur in the molded appliqué ornaments on unglazed earthenware vessels excavated at the site of Yotkan, near the oasis town of Khotan, Xinjiang (fig. 22).[38] In all probability, these earthenwares can be attributed to about the second to the fifth century.

FIVE-PETALED PALMETTES are among the motifs on the elaborate celadon *guan* that was excavated in Shouxian, Anhui (fig. 20).[39] A similar five-petaled palmette appears on the celadon *lianhua zun* in the Nelson-Atkins Museum (fig. 5) and the Ashmolean Museum (fig. 6), and the four ornate earthenware lamps from the Lou Rui tomb (fig. 11).[40]

MONSTER MASKS can be found mounted on a square plaque on a celadon *guan* in the Palace Museum, Beijing.[41] The motif also appears on the neck of the celadon *lianhua zun* in the Nelson-Atkins Museum (fig. 5) and on a jar in the Hebi City Museum, Henan.[42] The monster mask dominates the two earthenware jars with greenish yellow glazes (fig. 12) found in the Lou Rui tomb, as well as the jar from the tomb of Xu Xianxiu (fig. 15).[43]

STYLIZED PSEUDO-LOTUS FLOWERS occur on the opulent *guan* excavated in Shouxian (fig. 20). They are similar to those on the neck of the celadon *lianhua zun* in the Ashmolean Museum (fig. 6).[44]

notes

1 Kamei Meitoku thoroughly investigates this group of ceramics and related material in Kamei Meitoku 1998–99.

2 James C. Y. Watt discusses the convoluted history of north and south China during the several centuries of disunion known as the Six Dynasties period in Watt et al. 2004, xviii–xxii, 3–45.

3 One of these *lianhua zun* is illustrated in Zhang Ji 1957, pl. 9(1). The height of this jar, which was broken at the mouth, is given in this archaeological report as 23⅝ in. (60 cm). The piece with its repaired rim, which is now in the Palace Museum, Beijing, is reported to be 22 in. (55.8 cm) high (Kamei Meitoku 1998–99, fig. 2). The second Feng family jar, also in the Palace Museum, is 26⅛ in. (66.5 cm) high (ibid., fig. 3). Of the two jars from this find that have lids, one, in the Hebei Provincial Museum, is 24⅛ in. (61.2 cm) high (ibid., fig. 4); the other, in the National Museum of China, seen here in figure 4, is 25¹⁄₁₆ in. (63.6 cm) high.

4 Kamei Meitoku has suggested that the member of the Zu family was Feng Zihui's mother, who was buried about 531. He attributes the entire group of large *lianhua zun* to the second to fourth quarter of the sixth century and notes the relationship of their decoration to the motifs in several Buddhist cave temples. See Kamei Meitoku 1998–99.

5 Feng Xianming et al. 1982, 164–65.

6 Ibid., 164, color pl. 11. This jar, now in the Nanjing City Museum, is 31⅛ in. (79 cm) high.

7 Soper 1960, 85–86, citing the *Wei shu, Nan shi, Bei Qi shu,* and other dynastic histories. See also Bielenstein 1997, 107–24, quoting a number of dynastic histories.

8 Cixian is not far from the site of the Eastern Wei and the Northern Qi capital of Ye, in present-day Linzhang xian, southern Hebei (near modern Anyang, northern Henan Province).

9 Cixian 1984a, pl. 5(3).

10 Among this group of flamboyant celadon jars, these two resemble each other most closely. The Nelson-Atkins jar is 20½ in. (52.1 cm) high. Originally, the jar in the Ashmolean was missing its foot and measured 15⅛ in. (38.4 cm) high; the foot was later restored, and the present height is 19⅞ in. (50.5 cm).

11 Sotheby's 2003, lot no. 37. This jar is 25¼ in. (64.1 cm) high.

12 Christie's 2003, lot no. 9. This jar is 23¼ in. (59 cm) high.

13 Sotheby's 2006, lot no. 88. This jar is 22¾ in. (57.7 cm) high. The sets of floral sprays on the lower section of this celadon *lianhua zun* are remarkably similar to those on a celadon *guan* in a private Japanese collection illustrated in Kamei Meitoku 1998–99, figs. 14(a,b).

14 Shanxi and Taiyuan 1992, figs. 30–31. These jars are 7⅛ in. (18.2 cm) high.

15 Zibo and Zichuan 1984, figs. 2–3. The height of this piece is 23¼ in. (59 cm). The glaze on this jar has been called a celadon glaze in some publications and a low-fired lead glaze in others.

16 Wang Kelin 1979, pl. 4(5), fig. 12(8). These jars are 15⅝ in. (39.7 cm) high.

17 Although the city of Ye in southern Hebei was the official capital of the Northern Qi dynasty, Jinyang (modern Taiyuan) in Shanxi was, in effect, the alternate Northern Qi capital.

18 Shanxi and Taiyuan 1983, pl. 7, figs. 25–27. The lamps are 19¾ in. (50.2 cm) in height; the covered jar, 15⅝ in. (39.8 cm); and the chicken-head ewers, 19 in. (48.2 cm). According to Feng Xianming, these Lou Rui ceramics have low-fired lead glazes. See Feng Xianming 1983. Other authorities describe them as having high-fired celadon glazes.

19 Shanxi and Taiyuan 2003, figs. 15(1–2), 78–79. The lamps are 18⅞ in. (48 cm) in height; the jar, 16⅜ in. (41.5 cm). In addition, there were seven relatively plain chicken-head, dragon-handle ewers that are quite similar in shape to the Lou Rui ewers, but lack the flamboyant ornamentation of the Lou Rui examples. These ewers are 19¾ in. (50 cm) high. Ibid., figs. 15(3), 77.

20 Metropolitan Museum 1996, 75; Valenstein 1997–98; Valenstein 2003–4, 7, figs. 10–12. This jar is 13⅞ in. (35.3 cm) high.

21 Zhao Wenbin 2000, color pl. p. 62. This jar is 18¼ in. (46.3 cm) high.

22 Zhou Dao 1964, pl. 10(3–5). For a discussion of the body and the glaze on these jars, see Wood 1999, 198.

23 Beaded medallions also appear on the Museum's Northern Qi slip-covered earthenware container under discussion.

24 Feng Xianming et al. 1982, 162–66, 171–73.

25 Zibo and Zichuan 1984, fig. 10; Shandong and Shandong 1984, fig. 3(1).

26 Feng Xianming et al. 1982, 171, 173.

27 Henan and Anyang 1977; Hong Kong and Henan 1997, 21.

28 Henan and Anyang 1977, fig. 23.

29 Neiqiu 1987, figs. 2(2–8, 10–12), 3.

30 Ibid., color pl. 1, top, pl. 2(1), fig. 10(1–3, 8, 10–11, 13, 17, 19–23).

31 Ibid., color pl. 1, bottom, pl. 2(4–5), fig. 17.

32 Kamei Meitoku 1998–99, figs. 12–17.

33 These Shouzhou kilns are reported in Hu Yueqian 1988. It is believed that these kilns began production in the late Six Dynasties period.

34 Hu Yueqian 1988, pl. 7(7), fig. 2(22); Su Xisheng and Li Ruipeng 1990, fig. 1; Kamei Meitoku 1998–99, fig. 15.

35 Kamei Meitoku 1998–99, figs. 14(a,c).

36 Zhang Lintang and Sun Di 2004, color pl. 6, figs. 18–19 on p. 193. The Northern Qi northern and southern Xiangtangshan cave temples are located near Handan, Hebei Province, near the site of the Eastern Wei and the Northern Qi capital of Ye.

37 Shandong 1998, color pl. 2, inside front cover, fig. 14.

38 The fragment of an appliqué from the Yotkan site illustrated here (fig. 22) is part of a collection assembled by a German-Swiss expedition to Central Asia under the leadership of Emil Trinkler; it was sold to the Metropolitan Museum in 1930. For examples now in The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, see Dyakonova and Sorokin 1960, pl. 43.

39 For a clear illustration, see Kamei Meitoku 1998–99, fig. 2(2), p. 90; Hu Yueqian 1988, fig. 2(16).

40 Five-petaled palmettes also appear on the Metropolitan Museum's Northern Qi earthenware container under discussion.

41 Kamei Meitoku 1998–99, fig. 17.

42 Zhao Qingyun 1993, pl. 11, no. 37.

43 Monster masks also appear on the Metropolitan Museum's earthenware container.

44 Pseudo-lotus flowers also appear on the Metropolitan Museum's earthenware container.

chapter two Historical Context: Research Notes

The shape of the Metropolitan Museum's Northern Qi earthenware container and its many ornamental motifs are examined in this study from two different perspectives. One line of inquiry, which is the subject of this section, concerns the history of the shape and the individual decorative elements. In the section that follows, the many dissimilar cultural influences that are reflected in the piece are explored.

shape

The shape of this covered cylindrical container, like the shapes of any number of Chinese ceramics, can be traced to earlier periods in Chinese history.[1] The prototype of the container is a small, black lacquer covered *zun* (ritual wine container) unearthed in 1975–76 from a tomb in the Warring States period southern state of Chu, at Yutaishan, Jiangling xian, Hubei Province (fig. 23).[2] This early lacquer *zun* bears a striking resemblance to the later earthenware container not only in its shape, including the circular knob on the flattened lid, but also in its bronze attachments, which consist of two relief monster mask handles on the sides of the body and three sculptural animal-head legs.

As of this writing, the shape has not been found in other sixth-century Chinese ceramics. However, there is a considerable amount of evidence to document its historical background. A gold-inlaid bronze cylindrical container on three hoof-shaped feet, now missing its lid (fig. 24), illustrates the shape in China in the fourth century. The inscription on the base describes this piece as a container for clay, which was used for sealing documents, and dates it in accordance with 369, during the Former Liang dynasty (314–376) of the Sixteen Kingdoms era (304–439). This bronze, which was collected in 1966 in modern Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, has bands of elaborate designs on its body, including dragons and tigers.[3]

Covered, tall, cylindrical, three-legged containers were produced during both the Eastern Han (25–220) and Western Han (206 BC–AD 9) periods. The

shape appears in Han green-glazed earthenware *mingqi* (brilliant artifacts),[4] as seen in a *lian* (lady's dressing case) excavated in 1959 in Mozuizi, Wuwei xian, Gansu Province, from a tomb attributed to the Eastern Han period.[5] The shape is seen again in a painted lacquer *zun* unearthed in 1978 from a tomb in Shuihudi, Yunmeng xian, Hubei, attributed to the Western Han era.[6] A number of Han lidded, cylindrical, three-legged containers, some with attached handles, were made of bronze. Two such bronzes, described as *lian*, were found at the site of the Western Han capital of Chang'an, in Xi'an.[7] The ancient *louhu* (water clock) is quite similar to the cylindrical bronze *lian*, but it has a spigot near the bottom. An example was found in 1968 in the Western Han rock-cut tomb of Liu Sheng (d. 113 BC), prince of the kingdom of Zhongshan, at Mancheng, Hebei.[8]

In addition to the prototypal black lacquer covered *zun* seen in figure 23, material excavated from two other Warring States tombs also illustrates the covered cylindrical container in that period. An ornate bronze cylindrical receptacle found during the 1974–78 excavations of the tomb of King Cuo (r. 327–313 BC) of the Zhongshan state in Pingshan xian, Hebei, is similar to the Museum's ceramic container in its shape as well as the relief monster mask handles on the sides, fully modeled animal-shaped feet, and horizontal band halfway down the body dividing it into two ornamental areas.[9] A much less elegant Warring States ceramic covered cylindrical *zun* also has relief monster mask handles at the sides; it has lightly modeled animal faces at the tops of the three legs. This *zun* was excavated in 1984 in Ankang xian, Shaanxi, from a tomb attributed to the middle to late Warring States period.[10]

Every Chinese cylindrical container examined during this research, whether ceramic, metal, lacquer, or jade, has had three legs. The four legs here would appear to be unique.[11] This raises several questions: Is there some significance in the number four? Was the fourth leg needed to support the extreme weight of the container, or was it intended merely to maintain symmetry?

motifs on the body

There are fourteen different ornamental elements on the Museum's sixth-century earthenware container. This section explores the historical background of the different motifs, as well as the possible interpretation of some of these decorative elements. Some motifs are indigenous to China. Others originated far beyond China's borders and can be followed as they traversed vast geographic distances and extensive spans of time before they finally appeared on this flamboyant Northern Qi piece.

foliate architectural column or tree

The most unusual and intriguing ornaments on this container are the four sets of upright and pendant vertical elements (figs. 1–2, 25). This motif, which appears to be unique to this object, can be read either as a foliate architectural column or as

an imaginary tree, resembling a palm tree. Whatever it was intended to represent, the design is likely to have been misinterpreted by the Chinese craftsman who modeled it. This is particularly interesting because virtually every other motif on the container can be readily identified and has been rendered with considerable accuracy.

This foliate architectural column, or tree, is composed of a capital, or head, of fanlike foliage similar to the stylized plant form known as the palmette and a ball-and-ring shaft, or trunk. A lotus-petal base supports the vertical ornament in the upper section. Each of these individual elements can be traced to a different prototype:

Fan-shaped foliage. Analogous conventionalized foliage can be seen in the molded appliqué ornaments on unglazed Khotanese earthenware vessels excavated at the site of Yotkan, Xinjiang (fig. 26).[12] Similar designs of leaves radiating in symmetrical curves from a principal stalk are found as early as the ancient Egyptians' representations of the real lotus and papyrus plants[13] and the artificial palmette. The history of these foliate motifs can be followed through the arts of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece.[14]

Ball-and-ring motif. Columns very similar to the ball-and-ring shaft, or trunk, portion of this motif occur among the scenes carved on a white marble house-shaped sarcophagus from the Sui dynasty tomb of Yu Hong (d. 592), discovered in 1999 in Taiyuan, Shanxi (fig. 27).[15] Comparable carved ball-and-ring moldings have been found among the wooden architectural fragments excavated from the sites of Niya and Loulan (fig. 28), on the edge of the Taklamakan Desert in Xinjiang.[16] Both of these ancient oasis towns, which are generally thought to have been buried by the desert sands around the third or fourth century, lay on the overland Silk Road that linked China and the west. Farther north, the ball-and-ring motif can be found in the art of the early non-Chinese nomadic tribes of Eurasia. It appears on material excavated from the royal tombs at Pazyryk, in the Altai Mountains region of southern Siberia, such as a carved wooden table leg found in 1929 in kurgan no. 1.[17] More elaborate versions of the motif are seen in wooden table legs excavated in 1947–49 from Pazyryk kurgans nos. 2 and 3 (fig. 29).[18] Recent scientific testing of wood from Pazyryk indicates that these tombs were constructed about 300–240 BC.[19]

Lotus-petal base. The base of broad, pointed lotus petals on the four vertical ornaments in the upper section of the container is derived from the Buddhist ornamental vocabulary. It can be compared with the lotus pedestal that is ubiquitous in sixth-century Chinese Buddhist art. Northern Qi examples are seen in the stands for Buddhist images found in the southern and northern Xiangtangshan Buddhist cave temples (fig. 30).[20] Among Northern Qi ceramics, Buddhist sculptural lotus pedestals were adapted to form the lower portions of some of the flamboyant celadon *lianhua zun* discussed earlier, including the four examples from the Feng family tombs (fig. 4).[21] The lotus petals on these celadon jars

are similar to those on the bases of the vertical ornaments in the upper section of the Museum's earthenware container (fig. 25).

FOLIATE ARCHITECTURAL COLUMN MOTIF. Trees do not have bases. Therefore, the lotus-petal base supporting the upper vertical ornament on this container suggests that this motif might be interpreted as a foliate architectural column.

Decorative architectural elements such as the column with an elaborate foliate capital can be traced westward from China to ancient Egypt. One example is a capital described as "Indo-Corinthian type" found among the wooden building fragments at the Loulan site in Xinjiang.[22] Fragments of unglazed earthenware ornaments depicting architectural settings with foliate columns have been found at Yotkan (fig. 31).[23] Corinthian pilasters were found on the sides of a stupa-shrine in remains attributed to the later Saka and Parthian periods at Sirkap (formerly Taxila), in what is now Pakistan.[24] Corinthian capitals have been excavated from the site of the city of Aï Khanoum in Afghanistan, the easternmost Greek city discovered so far;[25] these obviously refer to those found in ancient Greek architecture.[26] Foliate capitals can finally be followed back to ancient Egypt.[27]

The lotus-petal base supporting the upright vertical ornament on this container also suggests that, if they are considered as one integral unit, the upright and pendant segments together might be a misunderstood version of a type of lotus pillar.[28] This pillar is characterized by the band of erect and suspended lotus petals that girdles the center of the shaft, appearing to bisect it (pillars encircled by two bands of lotus petals occur as well). Examples of this girdled lotus pillar can be found on the white marble sarcophagus from the Yu Hong tomb (fig. 27);[29] in the southern Xiangtangshan Buddhist cave temples nos. 1, 2, 5, and 7 (fig. 32);[30] and on a gray limestone funerary couch in the Freer Gallery of Art, which was reportedly found near Zhangdefu, Henan.[31]

TREE MOTIF. If the ornament on the container was meant to depict a tree—as opposed to the foliate architectural column described above—there are a few possibilities as to what natural or symbolic tree it was meant to portray. The closest comparison to this motif would seem to be the real palm tree. The tropical palm is not indigenous to northern China, where this ceramic evidently was manufactured. Therefore, if this motif does represent an actual palm tree, it could well have been fabricated from the imagination of an artisan who had never seen a genuine example of that tree.

Palmlike trees occur occasionally in Chinese Six Dynasties art. Trees with long, curved fronds springing from a straight trunk appear in landscapes carved on the reverse of three Southern Dynasties (420–589) stone Buddhist steles unearthed in the 1950s at the site of Wanfo Temple in Chengdu, Sichuan Province.[32] These steles are inscribed with different *nianhao* (year title) of Xiao Yan, post-

humously known as Gaozu, the first emperor of the Liang dynasty (r. 502–49), and they document trees resembling palm trees in the sixth-century Buddhist decorative repertoire in western China.

Inasmuch as many of the ornaments on this container are directly or indirectly connected to early Chinese Buddhist art, it is not impossible that this motif is a Buddhist image representing the sacred *ashvattha* tree. In Buddhism, the *ashvattha* tree is the *bodhi* tree, or tree of enlightenment, associated with Buddha Shakyamuni, who sat under such a tree as he meditated and attained enlightenment.[33]

REFLECTED IMAGES. The two matching stone pillars that flank the spirit road leading to the sixth-century Jianling mausoleum of Emperor Wen of the Liang dynasty, near Nanjing, have been seen as forming a gate marking the boundary between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Each of these pillars bears a panel with identical inscriptions; however, the inscription on one of the panels is a reversed, mirror image of the other. This pair of inscriptions has been interpreted as signifying "the junction of these two worlds and the meeting point of two gazes projecting from the opposite sides of the gate."[34] According to the *Wei shu* (History of the Wei), in 516 "the [Northern Wei] court held discussions concerning the need to remodel the royal carriages for the imperial progress to the 'boundary sacrifice' ... in the southern suburb of the capital city [Luoyang, Henan] where offerings were made to spirits of ancient sages and ancestors." It is theorized that this "suburban locale, therefore, signified a boundary between the human world and the realm of ghosts and spirits."[35]

Analogous symbolism might been seen in the Museum's Northern Qi ceramic container. It is possible that the three raised horizontal bands dividing the body (figs. 1–2) represent the boundary between the world of the living and the world of the dead. If this were true, it would then seem to follow that the foliate architectural columns or trees in the section above these bands and what are essentially their reflected images in the section below might coexist in these two worlds.

Reflected images were used as a design device in China during the Eastern Zhou dynasty. Semicircular ceramic roof end-tiles found during the 1957–82 excavations at the site of Yanxiadu, the lower capital of the northern state of Yan during the Warring States period, near Yixian, Hebei, feature pairs of identical, highly stylized animals or birds set facing each other to form a classic *taotie* mask.[36] (This mirror-image *taotie* motif traces its ancestry to the monster head decorating numerous Western Zhou [ca. 1046–771 BC] and Shang dynasty ritual bronzes.) Many other end-tiles from Yanxiadu show reflected images of more realistically rendered animals or birds,[37] the origins of which may lie in the naturalistic zoomorphic motifs favored by the non-Chinese nomadic tribes living in the steppelands north of China. Reflected images were also used as a compositional device in southern China during the Warring States period. These include the

precise mirror imagery of highly stylized animals and birds on the sides of a lacquered wood inner coffin excavated in 1986–87 from Chu state tomb no. 2 at Baoshan, Jingmen, Hubei, which can be dated to 316 BC.[38] Similar mirror-image animals and birds are embroidered on a silk textile found in 1982 in Chu tomb no. 1 at Mashan, Jiangling xian, Hubei.[39]

Many of the early reflected images appear on objects associated with China's contact and cultural exchange with its nomadic neighbors to the north.[40] They appear on Warring States gold rectangular belt ornaments that have been excavated in northern China. Five such plaques, showing identical confronting animals, were found in tomb no. 30 at Xinzhuangtou, Yanxiadu, attributed to the late Warring States era.[41] It has been noted that although they were made in China, these ornaments are decorated with "distinctively northern subject matter."[42] Four very similar gold rectangular belt ornaments, which came from a tomb belonging to the nomadic Xiongnu people, were found in 1972 in the Ordos Desert region, at Aluchaideng, Hangjin Qi, in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.[43] It is theorized that these plaques were either imported from China or made by locally employed Chinese metalworkers.[44] Other gold plaques with mirror-image zoomorphic decoration were found during the 1979 excavation of three Xiongnu tombs in the Ordos region, at Xigoupan, Jungar Qi, Inner Mongolia.[45] The suggestion has been made that these plaques were made in China, in the state of Zhao, specifically as merchandise to be traded with the northern nomadic tribes.[46]

Reflected images as a compositional device frequently appear farther west, in the arts of other early Eurasian nomadic tribes. Designs with mirror-image animals are seen in Altai nomadic art, including a horn saddle plaque decorated with two elk heads facing outward, excavated from kurgan no. 3 at Pazyryk,[47] and two leather appliqués of confronting roosters from kurgan no. 1 at Pazyryk.[48] A cedar bridle ornament with two heraldically opposed elk heads in relief was excavated from kurgan no. 1 at Tuekta, in the same region.[49] Southwest of the Altai Mountains, paired images are found on the gold headdress ornaments and costume decorations of the so-called Golden Man, whose fifth- or fourth-century BC Sakian kurgan was excavated in 1969–70 at the Issyk burial site in southeast Kazakhstan.[50] Farther west still, opposed griffin heads form the pommel and cross guard of an elaborate iron and gold *akinakes* (dagger), found in kurgan no. 1 at Filippovka, a nomadic cemetery in the foothills of Russia's Ural Mountains, during excavations that took place between 1986 and 1990. This kurgan is thought to be that of an early fourth-century BC member of the Sarmatian tribal confederation.[51]

Paired images also appear on elaborate weapons discovered in Pontic Scythian kurgans in the northern Black Sea region. The ornamental motifs on many of these weapons tell of the influence of the ancient Near East on Pontic Scythian art. Examples include an Achaemenid-style Scythian gold sword handle with two addorsed animal heads, attributed to 500–400 BC, found in 1863 in the Dnepropetrovsk

region of modern Ukraine.[52] A gold-encased iron axe, with two addorsed recumbent animals and the ancient Near Eastern design of two upright rams flanking a sacred tree, was found in the Kelermes mounds, which are currently assigned to the mid-seventh century BC, in the Caucasus.[53] Finally, the practice of using reflected images in designs can be traced as far back as ancient Greece, where they appear in the decoration of Greek and Etruscan vases.[54]

Textiles excavated along the Silk Road occasionally are patterned with reflected images as well.[55] One of the most splendid examples is a red-and-yellow woolen robe with sets of paired animals, nude male figures, and trees, which is described as having combined Greco-Roman and Persian characteristics. This robe was worn by a mummy excavated in 1995 from tomb no. 15 at Yingpan, Yuli xian, Xinjiang. The find has been attributed to the Han to Eastern Jin periods (ca. third century BC–fifth century AD).[56]

monster mask

Two sets of monster masks appear on the Museum's container.[57] The larger mask (figs. 1–2, 33), which appears four times in the upper section of the piece, has bifurcated, ridged, curled horns, rounded protuberant eyes, and upswept heavy eyebrows; he bares his big clenched teeth and fangs. His trefoil, upturned snout appears to be a continuation of his curling upper lip. The character *ji* is inscribed on the plaque above the mask. While *ji* is usually translated as "auspicious," it can also be interpreted as connoting a spirit or supernatural creature. The smaller monster mask (figs. 1–2, 34), seen in the lower section below each of the four vertical pendant ornaments, has simpler curled horns and bushy eyebrows, and shows only his fangs.

APOTROPAIC ROLE OF MONSTER MASKS. It is possible that the two sets of grotesque masks on this sixth-century Chinese receptacle were intended to avert or turn aside evil. Monster masks appear in the decoration of fifth- and sixth-century Chinese tombs;[58] these masks often were located at the entrance to the main chamber, and in all likelihood they had an apotropaic purpose. Examples include a demonic mask, flanked by a pair of red birds, on the lunette above the doors to the Lou Rui tomb (fig. 35).[59] Another demonic mask, also flanked by a pair of red birds, appears on the lunette over the entrance to the Xu Xianxiu tomb (fig. 36).[60] A third grotesque monster head, with an apsara on either side, is on the horseshoe-shaped gateway to a Six Dynasties tomb excavated in 1958 in Dengxian, Henan (fig. 37),[61] which has been attributed to the late fifth or the early sixth century.[62] Relief monster masks that serve as supports for ring handles, or *pushou*, are carved on the stone doors of the Hulü Che tomb.[63] Over twenty relief *pushou* dominate the stone house-shaped sarcophagus in the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534) tomb of the governor of Youzhou, Song Shaozu (buried 477), which was excavated in 2000 at Datong, Shanxi (fig. 38).[64] As shown ahead, the

tradition of these *pushou* monster mask handles reaches back to Bronze Age China.

The monster mask on a distinctive type of sixth-century *mingqi* earthenware tomb figure may also have had an apotropaic function. This particular figure, which has been found in a number of northern Chinese tombs, is a standing, armor-clad warrior holding a long shield in his left hand;[65] the great majority of these shields are ornamented with relief monster heads. Typical examples are two warriors from the Kudi Huiluo tomb;[66] four found in the 1987–89 excavations of a very large tomb in Cixian, Hebei, possibly the tomb of Gao Yang (r. 550–59), the first emperor of the Northern Qi dynasty (fig. 39);[67] four discovered in the tomb of Ruru Princess Linhe;[68] and two from the Eastern Wei tomb of Lady Zhao Huren (buried 547), found in 1974 in Cixian.[69] It has been noted that although most Northern Qi (as well as Sui and Tang dynasty) tombs contained both large and small earthenware figures, "the armored warriors were usually the largest figurines within any tomb ... [and they were] normally placed near the entrance to the tomb chamber, as if to guard it."[70] This use of a guardian monster mask on warriors' shields seems to have been confined to sixth- and early seventh-century Chinese *mingqi*. During the early Tang dynasty, the shield disappeared and the demonic mask motif apparently was transferred to the saddlebags of glazed and unglazed earthenware camels, where it has been described as "an integral part of the apotropaic-protective iconography of the period."[71]

Masks on shields appear in Central Asian art as well, as illustrated by a fragment of a painted stucco relief showing a pearl-enclosed Gorgon head that had originally been attached to an armored warrior's shield. The fragment, part of the wall decoration of a Buddhist shrine, was found in Xinjiang, at the Ming-oi site near Karashahr, which was located on the northern branch of the Silk Road.[72] This concept of an ornamental mask on a shield can be traced as far back as ancient Greece. It occurs on a number of miniature painted earthenware shields—at least three decorated with the head of Medusa—found in the early Hellenistic "Macedonian" Tomb of the Erotes at Eretria.[73] The terrifying nature of a Gorgon head or the head of Medusa suggests that these masks were intended to add to the efficacy of the Central Asian and Greek protective shields they ornamented.

In addition to its use in Chinese fifth- and sixth-century tomb decoration and tomb sculpture, where it probably had an apotropaic purpose, the monster mask can also be found as an architectural ornament. Bricks and end-tiles depicting grotesque heads have been unearthed at a Northern Wei site in Luoyang, Henan;[74] other bricks and end-tiles with grotesque heads were found in the ruins of the main gate, Changhemen, at the site of the Northern Wei palace in Luoyang;[75] and several end-tiles with monster masks were found in the foundations of the late Northern Wei Buddhist Yongning Temple Pagoda in Luoyang (fig. 40).[76] These creatures may well have been intended to provide the same protection as their counterparts in the tomb.

MONSTER MASK MOTIF ON SIXTH-CENTURY CHINESE CERAMICS. Counterparts to the relief monster heads on the Museum's Northern Qi container are seen on a few contemporary high- and low-fired northern Chinese jars. Fearsome monster masks appear on some of the celadon *lianhua zun* mentioned earlier in the section on ceramics with flamboyant ornamentation:[77] on the neck of the jar in the Nelson-Atkins Museum (fig. 5); on the jar that was sold at auction in New York in 2003 (figs. 7, 41); and on a jar in the Hebi City Museum, Henan, which is probably missing its foot.[78] Relief monster masks mounted on a plaque—as are those on the container examined here—are on a celadon *guan* in the Palace Museum, Beijing.[79] *Pushou* monster masks with ring handles decorate the two earthenware jars with greenish yellow glazes (fig. 12) found in the Lou Rui tomb. Monster masks alternating with *pushou* ornament the body of the earthenware jar with a yellowish green glaze (fig. 15) from the Xu Xianxiu tomb.

The monster mask as an ornamental motif on ceramic vessels did not appear for the first time on these sixth-century Chinese wares. Grotesque heads can be found among the molded appliqué embellishments on the unglazed earthenwares excavated at Yotkan (fig. 42), attributed in this study to about the second to the fifth century.[80] It has been noted that the "grotesque head, which is found so frequently as an appliqué ornament on terra-cotta [earthenware] vases from Yotkan and other Khotan sites [was] directly derived from the model of the classical Gorgon's head."[81] The Greek Gorgon head, in turn, is reminiscent of the Egyptian deity Bes, an odd leonine god who is always depicted frontally, usually with a protruding tongue.

PROTOTYPAL MONSTER MASK MOTIF. In China, the history of the monster mask motif can be traced from the Six Dynasties period back to as early as the Bronze Age. A fragment of the base of a ceramic figure found during excavations of the late Northern Wei Yongning Temple Pagoda, in Luoyang, is decorated with several monster masks (fig. 43).[82] In addition, this fragment has five-petaled palmettes like those on the lid of the Museum's container (figs. 3, 55).

The monster mask appears occasionally in Six Dynasties northern Chinese Buddhist cave temples. Among the carvings at the late Northern Wei imperial Longmen caves near Luoyang, both single monster masks (in the Putai and Huoshao caves) and a series of monster heads holding the ends of swags in their clenched teeth (in the Guyang cave) are visible on the lintels above some niches (fig. 44).[83] A frontal monster mask is carved between two niches in the wall of the late Northern Wei cave no. 1 in the Gongxian caves, also near Luoyang.[84] In cave no. 3 at the Northern Wei imperial Yungang caves, near the first capital, Pingcheng (modern Datong, Shanxi), a grimacing monster mask adorns the headdress of an attending Bodhisattva.[85] Farther west, at Dunhuang, in Gansu, on the square central pillar of Northern Wei cave no. 248, a pair of relief horned monster masks flank a niche containing

the Buddha's statue.[86] Three grotesque heads are carved on a lintel above a niche in cave no. 133 at the Maijishan caves near Tianshui, Gansu, that are attributed to the Northern Wei period.[87]

A stylistic comparison can be made between some sixth-century stone sculptural monster masks from northern China and the larger monster head on the Metropolitan Museum's earthenware container (figs. 1–2, 33). For example, a grotesque monster mask clenching the end of a jeweled swag in its teeth (fig. 45), one of two carved on the canopy of the central pillar inside a limestone Buddhist pagoda sanctuary in the Museum's collection, shares with its ceramic counterpart the ridged, curled horns (which, however, are not bifurcated like the horns on the ceramic head), heavy eyebrows, bulging eyes, and exposed clenched teeth and fangs. This pagoda, which reportedly came from northern Henan, has been attributed to about 570–600 (late Northern Qi to Sui dynasty).[88] The swags clenched in the teeth of the monster masks on the pillar, as well as a different jeweled garland suspended from the mouth of a frontal humanlike head on another side of the canopy, connect these creatures to the swag-holding monster heads in the Guyang cave at Longmen (fig. 44). Prototypes of the Guyang mask-and-wreath motif, in turn, can be found on carved stone pillars in the Indian Buddhist cave temples at Ajanta.[89] Other comparisons with Six Dynasties Buddhist sculptural art can be made as well. The rounded protuberant eyes, big clenched teeth, and trefoil upturned snout characterizing the larger monster mask on the earthenware container (figs. 1–2, 33) is found again on a demon mask that forms part of the jewelry of a huge sandstone Bodhisattva in the Metropolitan Museum's collection (fig. 46), which is attributed to the Northern Qi period.[90]

The monster mask also appears as a motif in the sculptural arts of the Eastern Han period. High-relief monster heads, along with three of the Animals of the Four Directions,[91] embellish a pair of stone funerary pillars standing before the tomb of an official named Shen in Quxian, Sichuan; these pillars were probably carved in the second century.[92]

Discrete, elaborate relief monster masks serving as supports for ring handles (*pushou*), similar to the ones on the stone sarcophagus in the tomb of Song Shaozu at Datong (fig. 38), were an ornamental staple in all the crafts during the Han dynasty. For instance, among the Han painted or glazed earthenware *mingqi* containers, relief *pushou* are found on vessels that are replicas of contemporary bronzes, such as the *hu* (ritual wine vessel) and cylindrical tripodal jar. The Metropolitan Museum's green-glazed earthenware *hu* (fig. 47) is such a piece; the *pushou* monster mask handles on the body, as well as the vessel's shape, are clearly based on an Eastern Han bronze prototype.[93] The ornamental *pushou* can be traced back to Eastern Zhou bronzes and related ceramic bronze-casting material, and bronze attachments on lacquerware. *Pushou* are seen on two ritual bronzes, a *lei* (wine vessel) and a *jian* (water vessel), excavated in 1988 from a tomb near Taiyuan, Shanxi; this tomb is likely to be that of a

fifth-century BC minister Zhao, of the state of Jin.[94] Comparable ceramic mold and model fragments for ring-holder masks were found during the 1957–65 excavations of a major bronze foundry at the site of Xintian, near modern Houma, Shanxi.[95] Xintian was the last capital of the Spring and Autumn period (770–481 BC) state of Jin. In southern Chinese material, this mask-and-ring handle is exampled in the bronze attachments on the sides of the black lacquer covered *zun* unearthed from a Warring States period Chu state tomb in Hubei (fig. 23) and on a similar but shallow *zun* from another tomb in the same region.[96]

Ultimately, ferocious animal-like heads are found in Chinese art as early as the *taotie* mask motif on early Western Zhou and Shang dynasty bronzes. This imaginary *taotie* has been described as "a face that resembles but never captures the likeness of an animal."[97]

ji character

As noted above, the character *ji* inscribed on the plaque above the larger monster mask on this container is generally translated as "auspicious." However, as used here, it may be an abbreviated form of *jiguang* (auspicious light), a term applied in early times to *shenshou* (spirit or supernatural creatures).[98] This hypothesis is supported by the designs on a fragment of Chinese silk, attributed to the Northern Dynasties period, that was found in 1983 in Dulan xian, Qinghai Province. Among the textile's many motifs, taken from Greek, Indian, Persian, and Chinese cultures, are *ji* characters set close to monster masks.[99]

bird head

Four identical high-relief frontal bird heads appear in the lower portion of the container (figs. 1–2, 48). This bird has heavy, upswept curled eyebrows and sweeping plumage; its small hooked beak suggests that it represents a raptor, or bird of prey. The raptor motif does not seem to appear elsewhere in sixth-century Chinese art. However, the sculptural ceramic raptor's head here can be seen as part of a tradition of depicting predatory birds on religious and secular objects that can be traced from the early Six Dynasties period to as far back as the Bronze Age in China and to ancient Egypt.

A Yue ware celadon vessel resembling a bird, with a high-relief raptor's head and incised plumage, was discovered in 1964 in a tomb near Nanjing datable to the late Western Jin dynasty (265–316).[100] Among the Han precedents are sculptural birds with small hooked beaks supporting strange-looking creatures on the legs of a bronze incense burner and on a pair of bronze fittings found in the Western Han tomb of Liu Sheng.[101] A bird with a short hooked beak dominates an elaborate bronze *zun* (the ferule at the end of a sword handle), which is inlaid with silver, gold, and turquoise, excavated in 1965 from a Western Han tomb at Sanlidun, Lianshui xian, Jiangsu.[102] The same tomb also yielded an archaic ritual jade *cong* (a rectangle enclosing a cylindrical tube) that had been set in

a gilded silver base supported by four full-relief eagles.[103] Four fully modeled birds with small hooked beaks are at the corners of a bronze vessel found in 1983 in the tomb of the king (d. ca. 122 BC) of the independent state of Nan Yue, which was contemporary with the Western Han, at Guangzhou, Guangdong.[104]

There are many Eastern Zhou precedents for the raptor motif on the Museum's container. Among the Warring States examples is a free-standing bird with a small hooked beak, which is inside a bronze basin found in the tomb of King Cuo of Zhongshan, in Pingshan xian, Hebei.[105] Eagles form the spouts of two bronze footed vessels found in 1993 in a late Warring States Qi state tomb at Shangwang, in Linzi, Zibo, Shandong.[106] Fully modeled birds with short hooked beaks form the legs of four painted earthenware facsimiles of a bronze *fang ding* (rectangular ritual vessel for cooking food) unearthed during excavations at the site of Yanxiadu, near Yixian, Hebei; these ceramics were in tomb no. 30 at Xinzhuangtou, which has been attributed to the late Warring States era.[107] Southern Chinese Warring States comparisons to the raptor's head on the Museum's ceramic piece include the three-dimensional, raptorlike bird heads on two painted lacquer and on two bronze footed cups unearthed from Chu state tomb no. 2 at Baoshan, Jingmen, Hubei.[108] A similar full-relief bird and two free-standing birds with outstretched wings support a painted lacquer twin-cylinder cup from the same tomb.[109]

Prototypes of the bird-of-prey motif on the Museum's ceramic container can also be found in the Spring and Autumn period of the Eastern Zhou dynasty. Raptorlike birds are represented on two bronze ritual wine vessels excavated from the tomb of Minister Zhao of the state of Jin, near Taiyuan, Shanxi. One is a bird-shaped *zun* and the other a full-relief bird-shaped lid on a *hu*; the handle on each of these vessels takes the form of a feline.[110] Similar sculptural heads of birds resembling a hawk or an eagle were found among the ceramic mold and model fragments at the site of the Xintian bronze foundry near Houma, Shanxi.[111] Cultural exchange between the Jin territory and the regions north of China's borders can be documented as early as the Shang period, and it has been suggested that these Jin bronze images of birds of prey show the influence of the non-Chinese northern nomads' art.[112]

The raptor was indeed a popular ornamental motif among the non-Chinese nomadic tribes who inhabited the Eurasian steppes from the shores of the Black Sea into Inner Mongolia.[113] Raptor images have been excavated at two sites in the Altai Mountains region of Siberia: four wooden eagle-shaped plaques were found in 1950 in kurgan no. 2 at Bashadar;[114] a gold eagle-shaped plaque was found in 1985 in kurgan no. 9 at Bashadar;[115] and a larch-wood eagle-shaped bridle ornament was excavated in 1954 from kurgan no. 1 at Tuekta.[116] All of these examples have been attributed to the sixth century BC. The raptor motif can also be found

even farther west in material excavated from Pontic Scythian kurgans in Ukraine. For example, a cast bronze scabbard ornament, or chape, in the form of a stylized eagle's head was discovered in 1974 in the Cherkassy region; this chape has been attributed to the late seventh to middle sixth century BC.[117]

The ancient Chinese also attached significance to the powers of birds of prey, as evidenced by some of the magnificent tomb furnishings discovered in 1976 near Anyang, Henan, in the late Shang dynasty tomb of Fu Hao, consort of King Wu Ding. Among the more notable burial effects are a pair of elaborate bronze vessels in the shape of owls and several owl-shaped carved jades.[118] Finally, the tradition of predatory birds on religious and secular objects can be traced outside China to the images of ancient Egypt's falcon-god Horus, which embodied the divine nature of the king.

feline head

Like the larger monster mask on the upper section of the piece, the high-relief frontal feline head topping each of the four truncated legs on the Museum's container (figs. 1–2, 48) has heavy back-swept eyebrows, carefully detailed bared teeth, and a trefoil, upturned snout that appears to be a continuation of the curling upper lip. This stylized animal head probably represents a tiger or a lion; however, the exact species of a creature being portrayed in early Chinese art can be quite difficult to determine. While early felinelike animals usually are called *hu* (tiger) or *shi* (lion) in Chinese archaeological reports, it must be remembered that without the tiger's distinctive stripes or the lion's shaggy mane and tufted tail as a guide, positive identification generally is not possible.

PROTOTYPAL FELINES. Prototypes of the feline image in Chinese art can be traced from the Six Dynasties period back to the Shang dynasty. An unmistakable, natural-looking striped tiger is painted on the wall of the Northern Qi tomb of Lou Rui.[119] Among Six Dynasties ceramics, sculptural felines can be found on an earthenware lamp with green and brown glazes (fig. 49) in the Metropolitan Museum's collection, which was probably produced during the second half of the sixth century. A celadon dish with a crisply rendered feline sprawled in spread-eagle position and head regardant (fig. 50), also in the Museum's collection, can be documented by comparison with a counterpart found in 1988 in what is described as a Northern Zhou (557–581) tomb near Xianyang, Shaanxi.[120] Other analogous Six Dynasties examples of felines include four stone heads that appear at the bases of two gateways in the Yongguling tomb of Empress Wenming (d. 490) of the Northern Wei dynasty, which was unearthed in 1976 near Datong, Shanxi.[121]

There are a number of instances of the feline image in Han art. These include five bronze stands, described as tigers, that were recovered from the Western Han tomb of Liu Sheng.[122] A conspicuously striped tiger-shaped inlaid bronze *jie* (tally) was found in the tomb of the king of Nan Yue at Guang-

zhou, Guangdong.[123] A jade figure of a crouching animal, described as a *bao* (leopard or panther), and two similar bronze *bao* were found during the 1994–95 excavations of the Western Han period tomb of a ruler of the Chu kingdom at Xuzhou, Jiangsu, which is thought to date to either 175 or 154 BC.[124] A solid gold weight in the shape of a crouching feline, possibly a leopard, was found in 1982 in a Western Han cache in Xuyi xian, Jiangsu.[125] It has been observed that the jade and gold felines cited here seem to be Chinese interpretations of Western Asian bronze weights that merchants from the west might have brought to China.[126]

Among the Eastern Zhou prototypes of the feline ornament, two fully modeled crouching felines are at the neck of a Warring States earthenware *fang hu* (square ritual wine vessel) found at the site of Yanxiadu, near Yixian, Hebei.[127] A second type of earthenware vessel with two crouching felines at the neck was found at the same site.[128] In the south, a wooden base in the form of a crouching animal, called a tiger in the archaeological report, was found in Chu state tomb no. 2 at Baoshan, Jingmen, Hubei.[129] In material dating to the Spring and Autumn period of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, examples of felines appear as handles on four bronzes: a *fang hu*, a bird-shaped *zun*, a *hu* with a full-relief bird-shaped lid, and a feline-headed *yi* (ritual vessel for washing). These bronzes were excavated from the tomb of the Jin state minister Zhao, near Taiyuan, Shanxi.[130] Sculptural felines were also found among the ceramic mold and model fragments at the site of the Xintian bronze foundry near Houma, Shanxi; some of these mold pieces show the tiger's stripes.[131]

Representations of felines dating to the Shang dynasty include two carved jade crouching animals, described as tigers in the archeological report, that were part of the tomb furnishings discovered in the Fu Hao tomb near Anyang, Henan.[132] Full-relief felines, also described as tigers in the report, appear atop the handles of a number of bronzes found in a late Shang tomb excavated in 1989 in Xingan xian, Jiangxi Province.[133] A fully modeled bronze feline, which has a small bird on its back, was found in the same tomb.[134]

Felines also are represented among the Six Dynasties and Han monumental stone sculptures that line the spirit roads approaching important Chinese tombs. Magnificent Six Dynasties creatures—successors to the Eastern Han fanciful felines referred to below—dominate the spirit roads leading to the imperial and royal Southern Dynasties tombs near Nanjing;[135] miniature versions of these fabulous beasts seated on lotus bases appear at the tops of fluted columns nearby.[136] The majority of extant feline spirit-road sculptures from the Eastern Han period are not easily identified.[137] Some of these stone felines, depicted with a beard, horns, and/or wings,[138] belong to a family of mythical beasts to which a variety of names, including *tianlu*, *bixie*, and *qilin*, have been applied since early times[139] and the designation *chimera* is often given today.[140] Finally, a tiger, readily recognized by

its stripes, was among the figures found on the tumulus of the Western Han general Huo Qubing (d. 117 BC), near the imperial Maoling mausoleum in Xingping xian, Shaanxi.[141]

The feline also was a popular motif in the art of the early non-Chinese nomadic tribes of Eurasia, and it can be followed westward from Inner Mongolia to southeastern Kazakhstan and possibly beyond. Cast silver ornaments depicting two felines were excavated in 1984 from tombs of the Xiongnu tribes in Shihuigou, Ejin-Horo Qi, in the Ordos Desert region of Inner Mongolia; these tombs were contemporary with the Warring States period in China.[142] Feline-shaped ornaments in both gold and silver were recovered in 1957 from a Warring States period tomb in Shenmu xian, northern Shaanxi, an area occupied by the Xiongnu during the Eastern Zhou era. It is believed that this tomb is that of a high-ranking Xiongnu official.[143]

Farther west, wooden legs in the form of felines, described as tigers in some publications, were found on two tables excavated from kurgan no. 2 at Pazyryk;[144] and naturalistic, wooden feline figurines and feline heads, carved in full relief, were part of the saddle and harness decorations discovered in kurgans nos. 2–5 at Pazyryk.[145] Lastly, a beautifully sculpted feline head caps either end of a gold torque worn by the so-called Golden Man at the Issyk burial site in Kazakhstan.[146]

THE LION AND ITS PROTOTYPES. It is possible that the stylized feline head on the Metropolitan Museum's ceramic container represents a lion.[147] With the firm establishment of Buddhism in China in the Six Dynasties period, lions, as well as the lotus, began to be used as a motif in a specifically Buddhist context. Paired animals that undoubtedly represent guardian lions are omnipresent in all manner of Six Dynasties Buddhist art, ranging from exquisite gilt bronze altars to the sculptures in the great northern Chinese cave temples. To cite but one documentary example, lions flank the Buddhas' thrones in the late Northern Wei caves nos. 1, 3, and 4 at Gongxian (fig. 51).[148] The style of some of these lions' heads, in particular their carefully detailed bared teeth, resembles that of the feline head on the Museum's Northern Qi earthenware container (figs. 1–2, 48). Some spirit-road stone feline sculptures from the Eastern Han period, such as one from a tomb in Lushan xian, Sichuan, have the full mane of a lion and presumably were meant to represent that animal.[149]

While lions are not native to the country, there is evidence that specimens had reached China by the Western Han period, perhaps as an outcome of Zhang Qian's expeditions in Central Asia and the activities of the Han armies in that region. According to the *Han shu* (History of the Han), lions were among the many exotic animals kept in the Han imperial parks.[150] The *Hou Han shu* (History of the Eastern Han) states that tribute gifts of lions were sent from the west to China from the Yuezhi, Parthia, and Kashgar during the Eastern Han period.[151]

Lions also appear as an ornamental motif on artifacts excavated from tombs belonging to early non-Chinese Eurasian nomadic tribes. Images of lions occur on two textiles discovered during the excavations of the kurgans at Pazyryk. The first, found in kurgan no. 5 and thought to have been imported into the Altai region from Achaemenid Persia (559–330 BC), is a strip of tapestry with a design of fifteen lions in procession, which had been mounted on felt and leather to form a horse's chest strap.[152] The other textile, a fragment of a locally made felt rug from Pazyryk kurgan no. 1, is decorated with appliqués of lions' heads shown in profile; inasmuch as the lion is unknown in the Altai region, it is presumed that its appearance here also shows an Achaemenid influence.[153]

Still farther to the west, the lion image is found in material from Pontic Scythian kurgans in Ukraine. A splendid gold, bronze, and enamel bracelet with lion head terminals, ascribed to about 350–300 BC, was found in 1965 in kurgan no. 1 in the Three Brothers group of kurgans in Crimea.[154] Two gold torques, one excavated in 1970 in the Kherson region and the other in 1990–91 in the Dnepropetrovsk region, both of which are attributed to the fourth century BC, have what appear to be recumbent lion finials.[155] The body of these torques is ornamented in the bead-and-reel motif, a pattern that originated in Greece and recalls the ball-and-ring section of the foliate column or tree on the Museum's Chinese earthenware container (figs. 1–2, 25). Another kurgan, discovered in 1961 in the Cherkassy region, yielded two Greek bronze vessels with lions' heads at the base of the handles, attributed to the fifth century BC.[156] Two bronze belt plaques showing mirror-image profile lion heads, assigned to the same period, were excavated in 1897 from a different kurgan in the Cherkassy region.[157]

bird with feline

The curious association of birds and felines in the ornamental motifs on the Museum's Northern Qi earthenware container is not unique. Although now reduced to a mere abbreviation of the original version, the arrangement of a sculptural bird head over a relief feline head (figs. 1–2, 48) appears to be ultimately derived from the bird-over-feline motif characteristic of the southern state of Chu in the Warring States period.

During the Warring States era, the theme of birds standing directly on felines apparently was confined to the Chu state. Three-dimensional representations of long-necked birds on felines appear frequently in carved and lacquered wood objects (fig. 52) and occasionally in ceramics excavated from Chu sites. Finds at Yutaishan, Jiangling xian, Hubei, include lacquered wood figures depicting birds astride crouching felines and the same two creatures in addorsed pairs functioning as racks for hanging drums.[158] Similar drum supports (always with the bird above and feline below) were also discovered in Jiangling xian at Wangshan in 1966,[159] Tianxingguan in 1978,[160] and in excavations at Jiudian in 1981–89.[161] An analogous wooden figure

of a bird on a feline and a bird-and-feline drum stand were found in Chu tomb no. 1 at Baoshan, Jingmen, Hubei.[162] Comparable bird-over-feline bases were also unearthed from two Chu tombs near Xinyang, in southern Henan.[163] Occasionally, ceramic copies of these carved and lacquered wood stands, such as those found in the 1958–78 excavations of the Chu tombs in the suburbs of Echeng, Hubei,[164] have been found. A less usual example of the bird-over-feline motif can be seen in a Chu reticulated lacquer quiver that was uncovered in 1966 at Shazhong, Jiangling xian, Hubei.[165] Numerous theories about the significance of this distinctive Chu motif have been advanced. While some authorities suggest that the position of the bird over the feline represents a victory in combat, others believe that these two creatures were intended to protect the soul of the deceased in the tomb.[166]

One important link bridging the design as it occurs on the Museum's sixth-century ceramic container and the motif as it is found in the Eastern Zhou dynasty is a turquoise-inlaid, gilt bronze double cup stand featuring a bird standing on a feline-type animal, discovered in the Western Han tomb of Dou Wan (d. ca. 2nd century BC), consort of Prince Liu Sheng of the kingdom of Zhongshan, at Mancheng, Hebei.[167] It has been suggested that this metal cup stand is strongly connected to the Chu bird-over-feline carved and lacquered wood objects described above, as well as to a painted lacquer twin-cylinder cup with sculptural birds of prey from Chu tomb no. 2 at Baoshan, Jingmen, Hubei.[168]

Eastern Zhou prototypes of birds associated with felines (but not placed over them) from northern China can also be cited. Among Warring States ceramics, a raptorlike bird forms the spout and a feline head surmounts each of the three legs of an earthenware *yi* found in 1964 at the Yan state site of Yanxiadu, near Yixian, Hebei.[169] The combination of birds and felines on two bronze ritual wine vessels excavated from the tomb of Minister Zhao of the state of Jin, near Taiyuan, Shanxi, has already been noted; on each of these vessels—a bird-shaped *zun* and a *hu* with a bird-shaped lid—the handle takes the form of a feline.[170] On a monumental bronze *fang hu* found in 1923 at Xinzheng, Henan, which has been attributed to the late seventh or the sixth century BC, a fully modeled crane and sets of large sculptural felines appear along with a host of fantastic animal forms.[171] Finally, this remarkable combination of zoomorphic motifs can be found in China as early as the late Shang period in a bronze feline with a small bird on its back, cast in the round, from Xingan xian, Jiangxi.[172]

Images of birds combined with felines also appear occasionally in the art of the Eurasian nomadic tribes. Two wooden bridle ornaments, described as depicting a frontal tiger head over profile heads of two raptors or griffins and attributed to the sixth century BC, were recovered from kurgan no. 1 at Tuekta, in the Altai Mountains region of Siberia. It has been theorized that "the ferocity of the tiger and the birds of prey [on his horse's harness] may have served an apotropaic function for the rider."[173]

SYMBOLISM: ANIMALS OF THE FOUR DIRECTIONS. As mentioned earlier, the four legs on the Museum's cylindrical ceramic container would appear to be unique. This suggests the possibility that these four legs represent the four cardinal points and that the animal symbols of these directional points are represented here by two of them, the Red Bird of the South and White Tiger of the West.[174]

The bird head (figs. 1–2, 48) closely resembles the painted images of forward-facing Red Birds found in the decoration of three northern Chinese sixth-century tombs. One (fig. 53) is over the southern entrance to what might be Gao Yang's tomb;[175] the second (fig. 54) over the southern entrance to the tomb of Ruru Princess Linhe;[176] and the third at the entrance to the Northern Qi tomb of Yao Jun (d. 566), excavated in 1975 in Cixian, Hebei.[177] Although it does not face forward, there is a Red Bird on a door lintel in the Kudi Huiluo tomb.[178] The Red Bird also appears, along with the other Animals of the Four Directions, on ornamental tiles excavated from the tomb in Dengxian, Henan, which has been attributed to the late fifth or the early sixth century,[179] and it can be found on sixth-century steles as well.[180]

The White Tiger of the West appears in the painted decoration of several important Six Dynasties tombs. It is seen on one of the doors to the Lou Rui tomb (fig. 35);[181] on the passageway walls of what might be Gao Yang's tomb;[182] in the passageway of Ruru Princess Linhe's tomb;[183] and over the entrance to the Kudi Huiluo tomb.[184] The White Tiger and Green Dragon originally had been carved on the doors at the entrance to the Xu Xianxiu tomb, but they subsequently were over-painted with red birdlike creatures.[185] As noted above, the White Tiger also appears on ornamental tiles in the Dengxian tomb.[186]

Examples of the complete set of the Animals of the Four Directions attributed to the Wang Mang Interregnum (AD 9–23) can be seen in the decoration of eave-tiles that were unearthed at the site of a ritual structure in the ruins of Chang'an, capital of the Western Han dynasty, near Xi'an, Shaanxi.[187] Pictorial representation of these four directional symbols apparently began as early as the Eastern Zhou period: drawings of the Green Dragon of the East and the White Tiger of the West appear on the lid of a lacquered wood clothing chest found in 1978 in the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng (ca. 433 BC) in Suixian, Hubei (Zeng was a small state on the northern border of the state of Chu).[188]

animal-head leg

The sculptured feline heads on the Museum's ceramic container were formed in one unit with the truncated legs and paw-shaped feet. The practice of placing relief animal heads at the junction of the body and the legs of an object can be observed in the early Six Dynasties period and traced back as far as the Eastern Zhou dynasty. Among Six Dynasties ceramics, examples can be found in the Yue celadon wares of Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces, such as the feline head atop each of the three legs of a basin

attributed to the Wu dynasty (222–280) that was excavated in Shaoxing, Zhejiang, in 1965.[189] Examples of animal heads at the top of an object's legs can be seen in some Warring States earthenwares that copy contemporary ritual bronze tripods, such as those from two locations at the site of Yanxiadu, near Yixian, Hebei.[190] Examples also occur among the ritual bronze tripods excavated from the tomb of Jin state minister Zhao, near Taiyuan, Shanxi.[191]

paw-shaped foot

Not only do the four legs on the Metropolitan Museum's cylindrical ceramic container appear to be unique, but there are only a few known sixth-century or earlier analogies to the animal-paw feet. Among them, ceramic comparisons from the Six Dynasties period can be seen in two earthenware *yan* (ink stone) with paw-shaped feet that were found in 1988 in the Northern Zhou tombs of Ruo Ganyun and Dugu Zang (both d. 578) near Xianyang, Shaanxi.[192] Paw-shaped feet occur occasionally in Eastern Zhou bronzes: a bronze *pan* (shallow basin) in the Musée Guimet, Paris, furnishes one interesting prototype. The three legs on this ritual vessel terminate in animals' feet with furled claws; furthermore, as on the present earthenware piece, there are animal heads where the legs join the body. The Guimet *pan*, attributed to the late sixth or early fifth century BC, was part of a hoard discovered in 1923 at Liyu cun, Hunyuan xian, Shanxi. It is thought that these Liyu bronzes were manufactured at the Jin state bronze foundry at Xintian, near Houma, Shanxi.[193] Paw-shaped feet became moderately popular after the Six Dynasties period. They were fashionable to a certain extent in the Tang dynasty, where they are found on some tripodal globular earthenware jars with *sancai* glazes, such as those excavated from Tang tombs in Henan and Liaoning provinces.[194]

motifs on the lid

In marked contrast to the spacious distribution of the relief figures on the body, the complex assortment of motifs on the lid of the Museum's ceramic covered container are crowded into a series of concentric rings (figs. 3, 55).

lotus-medallion knob

As noted earlier, the lotus-petal pedestal is ubiquitous in late Six Dynasties Chinese Buddhist art. The lotus-petal motif is found in the late Six Dynasties period in other contexts as well. For example, a counterpart of the pierced, domed lotus-medallion knob at the center of the earthenware lid here can be seen in the eight stone bases for architectural columns found in the Lou Rui tomb (fig. 56).[195] This knob can also be compared with a biscuit-fired ceramic stand decorated with relief lotus petals found at the Xiangzhou kilns, Anyang, Henan (fig. 18).

The cylindrical perforation that pierces this knob and penetrates the lid itself might be explained as the means by which a finial—possibly made of

some precious material—could be attached. At the same time, the possibility that this carefully formed opening has some symbolic meaning should not be discounted.

beaded ring

Eight small rings with a bead in the center encircle the central knob on the container's lid (figs. 3, 55). Rather than being molded and applied, as are most of the other ornaments on this piece, these rings have been impressed into a thick, ridged band of clay. Simple punched designs of this type are an easily executed ceramic decorative device: a hard instrument with an appropriately shaped point would be used to impress them into the clay body while it was still slightly damp.

Similar stamped circles occur occasionally throughout Chinese ceramic history. Punched beaded rings resembling the ones here appear as a border design on the olive-glazed stoneware *bian hu* (flattened jar) seen in figure 57 and on its brown-glazed counterpart,[196] both in the Metropolitan Museum's collection. The results of Thermoluminescence testing on these two hard-bodied jars were inconclusive; however, stylistic similarities to related examples recovered from dated contexts suggest a late sixth- or early seventh-century attribution.[197] Analogous stamped circles also are seen on a number of earthenware discs found in the tomb of the king of Nan Yue at Guangzhou, Guangdong.[198] These ceramic discs are inexpensive replicas of the ritual jade *bi* discs found in the same tomb; the plain punched rings replace the laboriously carved spiral motif on the jade originals. Of particular interest to this study is that fact that comparable impressed circles with a dot in the center can be found on a number of unglazed Khotanese earthenwares (e.g., fig. 26) that, like the Museum's container, are otherwise ornamented with a variety of appliqué-relief decoration.[199]

five-petaled palmette

There are two bands of relief five-petaled palmettes on the container's lid (figs. 3, 55). The inner row of twenty palmettes has a small bead set between each unit at the base; in the outer row of twenty-nine slightly larger palmettes, the beads appear between the heads.

While it is depicted in many different ways, the conventional ornament known as a palmette has radiating petals that generally spring from a base resembling a calyx. The palmette seen here consists of oppositely set curving petals flanking a long lyrate center; these are linked at the base by a pair of horizontal bands. This palmette closely resembles the typical fleur-de-lis ornament, with the obvious difference that it has five, rather than three, closely juxtaposed petals. This five-petaled palmette might be considered one of the hallmarks of sixth-century Chinese art. In ceramics, similar palmettes are part of the decoration on some flamboyant celadon *lianhua zun*, particularly those in the Nelson-Atkins Museum and the Ashmolean Museum (figs. 5–6). Palmettes resembling those on the Metropolitan

Museum's container appear on some of the ornate earthenware lamps and ewers with greenish yellow glazes from the Lou Rui tomb (figs. 11, 13). The motif also can be seen on several late sixth- to early seventh-century *bian hu*, where it is suspended over low-relief tableaux. Examples include the Museum's jar (fig. 57) and its brown-glazed counterpart, both of which are decorated with phoenixes prancing amid grapevines, as well as four caramel-glazed jars embellished with dancers and musicians (fig. 58), excavated in 1971 from the Northern Qi tomb of Fan Cui (d. 575) near Anyang, Henan.[200]

Five-petaled palmettes appear in a scene on the white marble sarcophagus from the Sui dynasty Yu Hong tomb (fig. 59).[201] Examples from the Six Dynasties era include two five-petaled palmettes decorating a bronze belt ornament found in the Northern Zhou tomb of An Jia (d. 579),[202] excavated in 2000 in the suburbs of Xi'an (fig. 60),[203] and those on the trappings of an ox painted on the wall of the Xu Xianxiu tomb (fig. 61).[204] Earlier, rather simple five-petaled palmettes occur in the leaf scrolls carved on four stone bases found in the Northern Wei tomb of Sima Jinlong (d. 484), which was discovered in 1965 at Datong, Shanxi.[205]

Five-petaled palmettes comparable to those on the lid of this container also appear in late Six Dynasties Buddhist art. Examples can be seen in northern Chinese Buddhist cave temples, such as the ceilings of cave no. 2 at the northern Xiangtangshan caves (fig. 62)[206] and of cave no. 1 at the Gongxian caves (fig. 63).[207] Analogous five-petaled palmettes are in the headdresses of two painted clay sculptures of attendant Bodhisattvas, one in cave no. 427 and the other in cave no. 244, at Dunhuang, Gansu. Both of these caves have been attributed to the Sui dynasty.[208] A fragment of the base of a ceramic figure found during the excavations of Yongning Temple Pagoda is decorated with several five-petaled palmettes; there are monster masks on this fragment as well (fig. 43). Five-petaled palmettes corresponding to those here also appear among the molded appliqué ornaments on unglazed earthenware vessels excavated at Yotkan (fig. 64)[209] and Akterek, in Xinjiang.[210]

The palmette ornament embellishes artifacts excavated from tombs belonging to the early Eurasian nomads. In the Altai Mountains region of southern Siberia, several sets of horses' bridles decorated with elegant wooden palmettes and palmette-like arrangements were discovered in the 1929 excavations of kurgan no. 1 at Pazyryk.[211] Palmettes can be found on material excavated from a number of Pontic Scythian kurgans in the northern Black Sea area. Nine palmettes are included in the ornamentation of a Scythian bronze cauldron, attributed to 375–325 BC, that was excavated in 1897 in the Dnepropetrovsk region of Ukraine.[212] Palmettes are prominent on a gold, bronze, and enamel bracelet with lion head terminals, ascribed to about 350–300 BC, found in kurgan no. 1 in the Three Brothers group of kurgans in Crimea.[213] A kurgan discovered in 1961 in the Cherkassy region contained two Greek bronze vessels, attributed to the fifth century

BC, with palmettes at the base of their handles.[214] The palmette was an ornamental staple on early Greek black-glazed and painted pottery, as well as jewelry and architecture; ultimately, this imitation flower can be traced back to ancient Egypt.[215]

beaded medallion

Occupying the zone between the two bands of five-petaled palmettes on the container's lid are eight beaded medallions, which have been placed approximately opposite the eight beaded rings closer to the axis, alternating with eight bifurcated knobs (figs. 3, 55). While the beaded medallion is a familiar motif, the bifurcated knob so far has defied identification.

As with the palmette design, there are many types of beaded medallions. The somewhat simple roundels here have eight small beads, which are framed by raised ridges, encircling a larger central knob. Beaded medallions appear extensively in sixth-century Chinese art. Rather elaborate beaded roundels are found in the decoration on some of the flamboyant celadon *lianhua zun* discussed earlier, including two examples[216] from the Feng family tombs (fig. 4); the related jars in the Nelson-Atkins Museum and the Ashmolean Museum (figs. 5–6); and a jar found in the late Northern Dynasties tomb near Zibo, Shandong (fig. 9). Beaded medallions also occur just beneath the five-petaled palmettes in the aforementioned headdress of a Bodhisattva figure in cave no. 244 at Dunhuang.[217]

The beaded medallion on the Metropolitan Museum's ceramic container can also be compared with various kinds of beaded medallions found among the molded appliqué ornaments on the unglazed earthenwares excavated at Yotkan.[218] A clear connection between these distinctive Central Asian ceramics and the Museum's northern Chinese earthenware piece is established in the section ahead concerning cultural influences.

bifurcated knob

It has not yet been possible to classify the eight appliqué bifurcated knobs (figs. 3, 55). The great care with which this enigmatic ornament was fashioned indicates that it must have had some special significance: although it measures only ½ in. (1.27 cm) in diameter, this relief motif has two distinct oval lobes, separated by a prominent filament, and a thin round base.

The closest analogy to these bifurcated round knobs would seem to be the relief segmentate lotus petals seen on a number of sixth-century ceramics, including the celadon *lianhua zun* illustrated in figures 4–9 and the glazed earthenwares shown in figures 10–11, 14, 17. Here again are two distinct (but now elongated) lobes divided by a protrudent strand, mounted on a flattened base. A similar sculptural convention can also be seen in sixth-century Chinese Buddhist art. The bases of two standing Buddhas in the Binyang cave at the late Northern Wei Longmen cave temples near Luoyang have bifurcated lotus petals that again are divided with pronounced filaments (fig. 65).[219] Comparable lotus petals also are on the bases of standing

Buddhas in the Northern Qi northern Xiangtangshan caves near Handan, Hebei.[220]

pseudo-lotus flower

Two further remarkable motifs, each consisting of eight duplicate appliqués, alternate on the rim of the lid. The first is a highly stylized flower that presumably represents a lotus, the flower associated with Buddhism (figs. 1–3, 66). This composite blossom has a broad, out-curving calyx, which resembles a lotus leaf, supporting two facing semi-palmette leaves. These leaves, in turn, enclose three foliate elements, the largest of which, a sagittate leaf, probably belongs to the aquatic arrowhead, or sagittaria, plant.

While no exact comparisons have yet been found, this pseudo-lotus flower could well be related to a distinctive group of Northern Dynasties motifs that are based on the lotus theme and portrayed in essentially the same way. One variant of these lotus-based motifs can be seen in a pictorial wall-tile showing a figure emerging from a single lotus blossom, which was found in the tomb in Dengxian, Henan (fig. 67).[221] The motif has been described as "suggesting a kind of 'lotus birth' .... This reflects a purely Buddhist concept of new souls being reborn into the Buddhist paradise."[222] A similar "lotus birth" motif can be found in northern Chinese Buddhist cave temples, in particular on the square ornamental panels in the ceilings of cave nos. 1, 3, and 4 at the Gongxian caves (fig. 68).[223] Some of these panels also contain five-petaled palmettes and/or sagittaria leaves similar to the ones on the ceramic container being examined here. In another variant of the lotus-based group of designs, a plantlike element replaces the human figure. Square panels containing these completely floral motifs are interspersed with the "lotus birth" coffers in the ceilings of the Gongxian caves; some of these compositions also include five-petaled palmettes and/or sagittaria leaves (fig. 69).[224] Stylized pseudo-lotus flowers also appear among the profuse relief ornaments on a few sixth-century celadons, such as the *lianhua zun* in the Ashmolean Museum (fig. 6) and the opulent *guan* that was excavated in Shouxian, Anhui (fig. 20).

frontal head within pearl beading

Alternating with the pseudo-lotus flowers on the rim of the container's lid are eight identical appliqué-relief frontal human heads surrounded by pearl beading (figs. 1–3, 70). These heads have been carefully modeled to depict fleshy faces with high arched eyebrows, full cheeks, a prominent broad nose, and a wide mouth.

THE FRONTAL HEAD WITHIN PEARL BEADING IN CHINESE ART. The frontal human head encircled by a ring of pearls is a somewhat unusual subject in Chinese ceramic decoration. However, relief fleshy faces in pearl roundels similar to the motif here occur occasionally in sixth-century wares, such as those on a white porcelain rhyton in the British Museum.[225] Several glazed earthenwares decorated with comparable pearl-enclosed frontal human

heads also are known. One of the most surprising examples is a green-glazed ewer in the Meiyintang Collection (fig. 71); its globular body is literally paved with alternating rows of these heads and petaled flowers.

At least one documentary example of a relief frontal man's head within pearl beading on Northern Dynasties ceramics has been published. Archaeological finds at the Zhaili kiln complex near Zibo, Shandong, included celadons similar to the elaborate jar found in the late Northern Dynasties tomb near Zibo (fig. 9). Among these finds was the fragment of a celadon jar with ornate relief decoration, including a frontal man's head in a pearl roundel, not unlike the one on the Museum's slip-coated earthenware container.[226]

Frontal heads within pearl beading can be seen on Chinese sixth-century mortuary furniture, such as the lid of a stone sarcophagus with elaborate engraved designs that was found in 1964 in Sanyuan xian, Shaanxi, in the early Sui tomb of a Daoist, Li He (d. 582).[227] They also appear in tomb decoration: a series of frontal women's heads within rings of pearls form the edging of both the saddlecloth of a horse and the garment of a woman attendant painted on the wall of the Xu Xianxiu tomb (fig. 72).[228]

Frontal heads framed in a ring of pearls occur on northern Chinese sixth-century Buddhist sculpture as well. They appear on the quadrangular central pillar of the limestone pagoda sanctuary in the Metropolitan Museum, which has been attributed to the late Northern Qi to Sui dynasty. Buddhas seated on lotus thrones are on two of the three extant sides of the pillar, and Museum file photographs of the side that is now missing show another seated Buddha on a lotus throne. The stepped bases of the three lotus thrones contain different low-relief friezes of frontal human or demonic heads set in beaded medallions. As seen in a file photograph of the now-missing side of the pillar (fig. 73), the frieze includes two men's heads that resemble those on the Museum's earthenware container.[229] The frontal head in pearl beading can also be found as an architectural ornament in the late Six Dynasties period; as mentioned earlier, a ceramic end-tile with a pearl-enclosed grotesque head was found in the foundations of Yongning Temple Pagoda, in Luoyang (fig. 40).

WESTERN PROTOTYPES OF THE FRONTAL HEAD. A counterpart to the frontal head within pearl beading on the Museum's slip-covered earthenware container is seen in the Northern Qi green-glazed earthenware jar illustrated in figure 16, the most extraordinary feature of which is the four identical and explicitly modeled relief frontal heads of Central Asian men set within pearl roundels. The head on this jar (fig. 74), with its fleshy face, luxurious moustache, and goatee, clearly exhibits a Khotanese influence and can be compared with a remarkably similar ceramic head from Yotkan (fig. 75), attributed here to about the second to the fifth century.[230]

The same comparison can be made between the frontal head encircled by pearl beading on the lid of

the Museum's container and another ceramic appliqué from Yotkan (fig. 76), now in The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.[231] While the head on the Yotkan fragment is indistinct, it is still possible to recognize a similarity in the features. Pearl beading (or curls of hair arranged as pearl beading) encircles other Yotkan humanlike or animal heads, all of which are facing forward (fig. 77).[232]

The Khotanese potters, in turn, evidently took their frontal head motif from the classical ornamental lexicon. Relief frontal heads were used in Greek black-glazed pottery to decorate the handles and centers of bowls.[233] Frontal Gorgon heads, human heads, and lion heads—frequently surrounded by pearl beading—appear in Greek gold jewelry,[234] and they can be seen on Greek coins as well. Silver and bronze vessels embellished with exquisitely modeled relief frontal men's heads, attributed to 350–325 BC, were excavated in 1977 from Royal Tomb II at Vergina, in northern Greece.[235] Comparison of the decoration on these metal vessels with the ornaments on the Khotanese earthenwares suggests a probable, albeit belated, prototype for the latter. A splendid head of Silenus at the base of the handle of a silver jug from Vergina resembles the treatment of a man's head on a Yotkan Khotanese earthenware jar.[236] A medallion of a Silenic head surrounded by an ornamental wreath on the interior of a silver cup from the same tomb (fig. 78) could be an antecedent of some of the earthenware appliqué heads from Yotkan (fig. 79)[237] and ultimately the head on the Chinese green-glazed earthenware jar (figs. 16, 74).

It is also possible to connect the Grecian motif of a frontal Gorgon head surrounded by pearl beading with Grecian material that was manufactured for the early Eurasian Nomads. The motif appears on excavated metalwork made by Greek artisans for the Pontic Scythians, such as a gold plaque, attributed to the fourth to the third century BC, that was found in Theodosia (modern city of Caffa), in Crimea (fig. 80).[238] Frontal Gorgon heads without the encircling pearl beading appear on other material found in Pontic Scythian tombs. These include gold plaques with relief Gorgon heads, which had adorned a woman's headdress, found in a kurgan in the Dnepropetrovsk region;[239] these plaques have been attributed to around 350 BC. Some round silver plaques ornamented with Gorgon heads, intended to decorate the reins of a horse, were found in the same region; they have been attributed to around 350–300 BC.[240] A bronze breastplate of Greek workmanship, decorated with the head of Medusa, was found in a kurgan in the Krasnodar region; it has been attributed to the fifth century BC.[241]

Apparently, the Hellenistic influence had reached central western China by the end of the Han dynasty. It can be seen in five frontal classical heads within pearl beading that represent the bosses on the bridle of a large amber-glazed earthenware horse (figs. 81–82).[242] Stylistically, this unusual tomb figure is quite similar to several large unglazed horses found in cliff burials in the vicinity of Chengdu, Sichuan, which have been attributed to the late Eastern Han period.

In addition to the material from Yotkan, the motif of frontal heads surrounded by pearls can occasionally be found in other Central Asian art. Relief frontal human heads within pearl roundels are on the breastplate of a painted clay sculpture of a warrior from the site of Kucha, Xinjiang, on the northern branch of the Silk Road.[243] This figure, now in the Hermitage Museum, has been attributed to the sixth century. Another Central Asian example is the fragment of painted stucco relief showing a pearl-enclosed frontal Gorgon head, which had originally been attached to an armored warrior's shield, cited earlier. It was found by Aurel Stein at the Ming-oi site near Karashahr, Xinjiang, also on the northern branch of the Silk Road.[244] Stein observed that this Gorgon head certainly goes back in all details to a classical prototype.[245]

notes

1 For example, as illustrated in Valenstein 1997–98, figs. 1, 3(3), the Museum's Northern Qi earthenware jar with a green low-fired glaze seen in figure 16 here is very similar in shape to a jar with a green low-fired glaze found in an Eastern Han dynasty (25–220) tomb.

2 Hubei 1984, pl. 60(2), fig. 75(4). This *zun* was found in tomb no. 554, which is attributed to the middle Warring States period.

3 Qin Liexin 1972, pl. 3. For a discussion of this piece, see Watt et al. 2004, cat. no. 84.

4 Cary Liu translates the term *mingqi* as "brilliant artifacts" and gives an in-depth examination of the concept of *mingqi* in Liu 2005, 205–21. He writes, "In order to provide proper treatment and nourishment for [the spirit brilliance of the deceased] in this afterlife realm, therefore, *mingqi* are conceived as simulacra, extraordinary artifacts having the appearance and form of articles made for the living, but devoid of their use and function" (ibid., 210).

5 Gansu 1960, pl. 7(2).

6 Hubei and Xianggang 1994, cat. no. 54.

7 Zhongguo and Han Chang'an 1985, pl. 2(4–5), fig. 3(1, 7), where they are attributed to the Wang Mang Interregnum or Eastern Han period. Archaeological reports generally describe Han covered cylindrical containers—with or without handles or legs—as either *you* or *zun* (wine container) or *lian*.

8 Zhongguo and Hebei 1980, vol. 1, fig. 51(1); vol. 2, pl. 39(1).

9 Hebei 1995, vol. 1, fig. 46; vol. 2, color pl. 12, pl. 88.

10 Li Qiliang 1992, pl. 6(6), fig. 3(1).

11 What might be considered an exception can be seen in a type of earthenware cylindrical container with stepped domed lid, which is set on a square base with four short legs. Two such containers, described as *cang* (warehouse) in the archaeological report, were found in the excavations of what might be Gao Yang's tomb. See Zhongguo and Hebei 2003, pl. 48(1–2), fig. 96(1–2).

12 Dyakonova and Sorokin 1960, pls. 13, 43.

13 Jones 1856, 23–25, pl. 4.

14 Rawson 1984, 199–222.

15 Shanxi et al. 2001, figs. 33–35, 39; Zhang Qingjie and Jiang Boqin 2000, 30.

16 For the Niya examples, see Stein 1928, vol. 1, pp. 140–55; vol. 3, pl. 40. For the Loulan examples, see Stein 1921, vol. 1, pp. 369–449; vol. 4, pl. 33. These fragments are now in the British Museum. See also Xinjiang 1988 for recent excavations of the Loulan site and another ball-and-ring wooden fragment found there (ibid., fig. 43).

17 Rudenko 1970, pl. 51(a).

18 Ibid., kurgan no. 2, pl. 51(l); kurgan no. 3, pl. 51(b,c), fig. 18.

19 Dendrochronological analysis of the royal tombs of Pazyryk indicates that they were built over a period of about fifty years. Recently, the Radiocarbon Laboratory at Queen's University Belfast subjected a timber from Pazyryk kurgan no. 2 to high-precision radiocarbon dating, wiggle-matching, and the OxCal Calibration Program; the results indicate that the tombs were built about 300–240 BC. See Mallory et al. 2002.

20 Mizuno Seiichi and Nagahiro Toshio 1937, pls. 19(b), 26, 46(a); rubbings, pls. 65(e,f), 66(d–g). See also Zhang Lintang and Sun Di 2004, pls. on pp. 33, 107, 153.

21 Zhang Ji 1957, pl. 9(1); Kamei Meitoku 1998–99, figs. 1–4; Lovell 1975, figs. 3–4. Hin-cheung Lovell states that all the motifs on these Feng family jars "can be traced to counterparts on Chinese Buddhist sculpture of the Northern Wei, the Eastern Wei, and the Northern Ch'i" (Lovell 1975, 329).

22 Stein 1921, vol. 1, pp. 369–449; vol. 4, pl. 32 (upper right).

23 Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 93–127; vol. 4, pl. 1 (lower left). This piece is now in the British Museum. See also Dyakonova and Sorokin 1960, pl. 9.

24 In the opening years of the second century BC, the city of Taxila was moved to a new site and renamed Sirkap. See Marshall 1951, vol. 1, pp. 112, 137–78, esp. p. 163; vol. 3, pls. 28, 30(a).

25 Bernard et al. 1973, pls. 23, 37–38, 40, 52–53, 72.

26 Boardman et al. 1967, 21–22, figs. 15–18.

27 Jones 1856, 23, pls. 6, 6*.

28 The lotus pillar has been said to be peculiar to the Northern Qi period. See Scaglia 1958, 10. Nancy Steinhardt considers lotuses on columns, observing that "the motif is so frequent in art of the Northern Qi and Northern Zhou that it may be one of the few decorative details that should first be associated with the second half of the 6th century" (Steinhardt 2004, 58). She also notes that lotus petal decoration emerging from either side of a band on a column "probably came to the world of Chinese art from Buddhist India, whether directly or indirectly. Similar banded decoration is found on columns at Ajanta Cave No. 1 dated to the 5th century" (ibid., 59).

29 The pointed lotus petals on this carved marble pillar are very similar to those at the base of the upright vertical ornament on the Museum's ceramic container. The girdled lotus pillar on the white marble sarcophagus is set next to the ball-and-ring column mentioned earlier.

30 Mizuno Seiichi and Nagahiro Toshio 1937, pls. 6(b), 20, 21(c), figs. 10, 16, top (a panel now in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington); Handan and Beijing 1992, pl. 1(2), fig. 13; Meng Fanxing 1992, fig. 3; Zhong Xiaoqing 1992, figs. 3, 6, 11; Zhang Lintang and Sun Di 2004, p. 106; fig. 47, p. 152; fig. 52, p. 154; fig. 82, p. 168; fig. 83, p. 169; fig. 1, p. 185; color pl. 1.

31 Scaglia 1958, fig. 1; Freer Gallery of Art 1972, vol. 1, no. 76.

32 Yuan Shuguang 1991, figs. 2, 4, 6. Note should be taken of the use of lotus pedestals to support the Buddhist images on these steles. Alexander Soper considers several of these Wanfo Temple steles in Soper 1960, 91–92. In his discussion of two of these steles, he calls attention to "their stylistic similarities to northern works [that are] uniformly of later date" (ibid., 94).

33 Before he began to be shown in human form, a tree was the icon most frequently used to represent the Buddha in Indian Buddhist art.

34 Wu Hung 1994, 62.

35 Wang 2003, 119.

36 See, for example, Hebei 1996, vol. 2, color pls. 6, 10(1), 11(1), 41(2).

37 Ibid., vol. 2, color pls. 9(3), 10(2), 11(2).

38 Hubei 1991, vol. 1, fig. 45(a); vol. 2, color pl. 4(1), pl. 19.

39 Hubei 1985, color pls. 21–24, fig. 46.

40 For China's contact with her northern neighbors, see Jagchid and Symons 1989. See also So and Bunker 1995; Juliano and Lerner 2001a; Watt et al. 2004.

41 Hebei 1996, vol. 1, figs. 415(1), 416(1), 418(1, 3); vol. 2, color pls. 27–28, pl. 143(1–2).

42 Bunker 1995b, 58–59.

43 Tian Guangjin and Guo Suxin 1980, pl. 10(4–5), fig. 2.

44 Bunker 1995b, 58.

45 Yikezhao and Neimenggu 1980, pls. 2(4), 3(4), figs. 3(5), 4(5).

46 Bunker 1995b, 61.

47 Metropolitan Museum and Los Angeles County Museum 1975, color pl. 25, cat. no. 140.

48 Aruz et al. 2000, cat. nos. 187–88.

49 Ibid., cat. no. 183, where it is attributed to the sixth century BC.

50 Basilov 1989, 24–26, 28–29, 32.

51 Aruz et al. 2000, cat. no. 6.

52 Ibid., cat. no. 163.

53 Artamonov 1969, pls. 9, 13, 17–19; Metropolitan Museum and Los Angeles County Museum 1975, color pl. 7.

54 Jones 1856, pls. 18(1–4, 8, 20–21), 19(2).

55 In the case of woven textiles, however, it is sometimes difficult to say whether this mirror imagery was employed as a deliberate ornamental device or merely used because duplicating a design in reverse is an expeditious way to set up a loom. (I thank Joyce Denney for this information.)

56 Ma Chengyuan and Yue Feng 1998, cat. no. 134.

57 The term "monster" is used in this study to specify an imaginary creature, as opposed to "animal," which describes a real, identifiable, living creature.

58 The horned monster mask as an apotropaic object is discussed in Bower 2002, 51–52. Although they are outside the scope of this examination, full-length monster figures also appear in sixth-century Chinese tomb furnishings and Buddhist cave temples. It has been suggested that the function of these figures was apotropaic and that they looked back to Han funerary art, where both monster masks and figures presumably had a protective function (Bush 1974; Bush 1975).

59 Shanxi and Taiyuan 1983, pl. 2(1).

60 Shanxi and Taiyuan 2003, figs. 4, 23. A seven-petaled palmette comparable to the five-petaled palmettes on the lid of the Museum's container is above this monster mask.

61 Henan 1958, color pl. 1; Juliano 1980, fig. 56. For a complete account of this tomb, see Juliano 1980.

62 Juliano 1980, 74.

63 These stone masks are now missing their metal handles. See Shanxi and Taiyuan 1992, fig. 3.

64 Shanxi and Datong 2001, figs. 7–8; Liu Junxi and Li Li 2002, figs. 2a, 2b.

65 This warrior type is discussed by Virginia Bower in Thorp and Bower 1982, 49; Bower 2002, 41.

66 Wang Kelin 1979, pl. 7(1).

67 Zhongguo and Hebei 2003, color pl. 6, figs. 15–16. Jennifer Holmgren gives a detailed account of Gao Yang's life in Holmgren 1981.

68 Cixian 1984a, fig. 3(1).

69 Cixian 1977, pl. 8(3), fig. 3(8).

70 Virginia Bower in Thorp and Bower 1982, 49.

71 Knauer 1998, 129.

72 Stein 1921, vol. 3, pp. 1183–1223; vol. 4, pl. 135, top right.

73 National Gallery et al., 1980, cat. nos. 96–98, where they are attributed "probably early third century BC."

74 Zhongguo Luoyang 1973, pl. 1(3), fig. 2(2).

75 Zhongguo Luoyang 2003, pl. 10(3–6), fig. 9(4, 6–7, 12).

76 Zhongguo 1996, pl. 113(1–3).

77 These jars are documented by the examples from the Feng family tombs in Jingxian, Hebei.

78 Zhao Qingyun 1993, pl. 11, no. 37.

79 Kamei Meitoku 1998–99, fig. 17.

80 Dyakonova and Sorokin 1960, pl. 19, upper left and right.

81 Stein 1921, vol. 3, p. 1193.

82 Zhongguo 1996, color pl. 31(1), pl. 109(2), fig. 89(1).

83 Longmen and Beijing 1991. The single monster masks in the Putai and Huoshao caves are illustrated in vol. 1, pls. 78, 184. The multiple masks in the Guyang cave are in vol. 1, pls. 147, 162–63, 170, 173–75, 177. For an investigation of these Longmen cave temples, see Ch'en 1972, 170–77.

84 Henan 1983, pls. 46, 49.

85 Yungang 1989, vol. 1, pl. 22. For a study of these Yungang cave temples, see Ch'en 1972, 165–70.

86 Dunhuang 1980–82, vol. 1, pl. 79.

87 Two of these heads still remain. See Tianshui Maijishan 1998, pl. 90.

88 Metropolitan Museum 1991, 91–92. This pagoda, generally known as the Trubner pagoda, is discussed at some length and illustrated in Ho Wai-kam 1968–69, figs. 19, 21, 27.

89 Ho Wai-kam 1968–69, 26–27, figs. 27–28.

90 Leidy 1998, figs. 2, 2b.

91 The White Tiger of the West, Green Dragon of the East, and Red Bird of the South, which are placed in their appropriate directions.

92 Laurence Sickman in Sickman and Soper 1968, 26–27, pl. 14(a,b).

93 Compare two bronze *hu* vessels found in 1980 in the ruins of the old city of Zuocheng, in Cangshan xian, Shandong; one of these bronzes carries an inscription dated in accordance with AD 87. See Liu Xinjian and Liu Ziqiang 1983, figs. 8, 12.

94 Shanxi et al. 1996. The *lei*, which has two different types of *pushou*, is illustrated in color pl. 7, pls. 46, 47(1), fig. 29(a,c). The *jian* is in pl. 44, fig. 28(1).

95 Shanxi 1996, nos. 132–59.

96 Hubei 1984, pl. 60(1–2), fig. 75(4–5). These two lacquer *zun* were found in tombs that are attributed to the middle Warring States period.

97 Rawson 1992, 58. The name *taotie* can be found in a third-century BC Chinese text, where it was applied to a creature "which has a head but is bodiless. It tries to devour a man, but before it can swallow him, his own body is destroyed" (Chang Kwang-chih 1983, 57).

98 *Hanyu dacidian* 1987–95, vol. 3, p. 92. I thank Victor Mair for the translation of *jiguang*.

99 Zhao Feng 1996, fig. 4; Zhongguo Wenwu Jinghua 1997, color pl. 120.

100 Nanjing 1965, pl. 3(3), fig. 11(6).

101 Zhongguo and Hebei 1980. The incense burner is illustrated in vol. 1, fig. 46(3); vol. 2, pl. 31. The fittings are in vol. 1, fig. 64(3); vol. 2, pl. 54(1).

102 Nanjing 1973, fig. 4(2).

103 Ibid., fig. 3(2).

104 Guangzhou et al. 1991, vol. 1, fig. 195; vol. 2, color pl. 27(1), pl. 184(3).

105 Hebei 1995, vol. 1, fig. 47; vol. 2, color pl. 13(1), pl. 89(1–2).

106 Zibo and Qigucheng 1997, color pl. 7(1), fig. 14(5).

107 Hebei 1996, vol. 1, fig. 400(4); vol. 2, color pl. 21(2), pl. 134(6).

108 Hubei 1991. The lacquer cups are illustrated in vol. 1, figs. 86–87; vol. 2, color pl. 6(4–5), pl. 43(1–2). One bronze cup is in vol. 1, fig. 122(1); vol. 2, color pl. 11(3), pl. 56(4).

109 Ibid., vol. 1, fig. 85(a–d); vol. 2, color pl. 6(2–3), pl. 42.

110 Shanxi et al. 1996. The *zun* is illustrated in color pl. 5, pl. 41, figs. 26(a,b,d,f). The *hu* is in pls. 39–40, figs. 25(a,b).

111 Shanxi 1996, nos. 765–79. Jessica Rawson has suggested that features of Iranian, Scythian, and Siberian gold work were incorporated into the motifs of these Houma bronzes. See Rawson 1999, 21.

112 Shanxi 1996, 84. See also Rawson 1999, 21–30.

113 For a discussion of hunting with birds of prey by the nomadic peoples of Eurasia, see Kurylëv, Pavlinskaya, and Simakov 1989, 149–51.

114 British Museum 1978, cat. no. 64.

115 Aruz et al. 2000, cat. no. 175.

116 Ibid., cat. no. 179.

117 Reeder 1999a, cat. no. 8.

118 Zhongguo 1980. The two bronze owl vessels are illustrated in color pl. 7, pl. 24, figs. 23(5), 36. Two of the jade owls are in color pl. 31(1), pl. 137(3), fig. 85(9). The owl, as well as other raptors, also appears as a decorative motif on a number of other bronzes and jades from the Fu Hao tomb.

119 Shanxi and Taiyuan 1983, pl. 3(2).

120 Xianyang 1998, color pl., inside front cover. This probably is the same dish as the one from the Northern Zhou tomb of Dugu Zang (d. 578) near Xianyang. See Yun Anzhi 1992, 76–93, 208–9, pl. 210, fig. 179. The low-relief felines and various encircling motifs on these celadon dishes demonstrate the influence of western metalwork on Chinese ceramics in the sixth century. For example, compare the motifs on a silver dish in the Alice and Pierre Uldry collection; see Museum Rietberg 1994, no. 128; Valenstein 2003–4, figs. 18–19. Although the Uldry silver dish reflects the dynamic cultural exchange between China and the west in the Six Dynasties period, its exact date and place of manufacture are uncertain.

121 Datong and Shanxi 1978, fig. 16; National Museum of Chinese History 1997, vol. 2, pl. 340.

122 Zhongguo and Hebei 1980, vol. 1, fig. 64(4); vol. 2, pl. 55(1).

123 Guangzhou et al. 1991, vol. 1, fig. 59; vol. 2, color pl. 20, pl. 43.

124 Shizishan 1998. The jade figure is illustrated on the cover. The bronzes are in fig. 24. See also Rawson 1998.

125 Zhongguo Meishu Quanji 1987, figs. 26–27; China Cultural Relics 1992, no. 269.

126 Rawson 1998, 45; Rawson 1999, 51.

127 Hebei 1996, vol. 1, fig. 402(4); vol. 2, pl. 136(4).

128 Ibid., vol. 1, fig. 437; vol. 2, color pl. 39, pl. 162(3).

129 Hubei 1991, vol. 1, fig. 171; vol. 2, color pl. 14(2), pl. 84(4).

130 Shanxi et al. 1996. The *fang hu* is illustrated in color pl. 3, pls. 35, 36(2), fig. 22(a). The bird-shaped *zun* is in color pl. 5, pl. 41, figs. 26(a,b,e). The *hu* with a bird-shaped lid is in pls. 39, 40(2), fig. 25(a). The feline-headed *yi* is in color pl. 6(2), pls. 48, 49(1), fig. 30(a).

131 Shanxi 1996, nos. 672–748 (described as "tigers and leopards").

132 Zhongguo 1980, color pl. 26(2), pl. 135(2), fig. 82(6, 8).

133 Jiangxi et al. 1997, color pls. 5–6, 8–9, pls. 5, 6(1–3), 9(1), 10, figs. 9–12, 13(2), 15, 16(1), 20(a), 21, 22(a), 22(d–1).

134 Ibid., color pl. 38, pl. 49(1), fig. 69(a,b).

135 Paludan 1991, 60–72, figs. 47–72, 74–82.

136 Ibid., 73–76, figs. 83, 91.

137 Ibid., 40–44.

138 Ibid., figs. 25, 27, 32–33, 36, 38–39.

139 Ibid., 42–44.

140 Till 1980.

141 Paludan 1991, fig. 12.

142 Zhongguo Wenwu Jinghua 1993, pls. 105–106.

143 Dai Yingxin and Sun Jiaxiang 1983, pls. 4(3), 5(5), figs. 2(4–5), 3, 11.

144 Aruz et al. 2000, cat. no. 192; Rudenko 1970, pls. 50, 51(g–k).

145 Rudenko 1970, pls. 93(a,b), 102(e–g), 111(b,c,e,g), 117(a,b,d,e), fig. 84.

146 Basilov 1989, 36.

147 For accounts of the lion in Chinese art, see Rawson 1984, 110–14; Michaelson 1999, 122–23.

148 Henan 1983, color pl. 9, pls. 75–76, 85, 118, 128, 132, 156.

149 Paludan 1991, 41–42, figs. 34–35.

150 Schafer 1968, 329.

151 Fong 1991, 184.

152 Metropolitan Museum and Los Angeles County Museum 1975, cat. no. 116. This piece of cloth is discussed in Rudenko 1970, 298. See also Rubinson 1990, 54–55, fig. 13; Marsadolov 2000, 51.

153 Metropolitan Museum and Los Angeles County Museum 1975, color pl. 23, cat. no. 115; Aruz et al. 2000, cat. no. 189. See also Rubinson 1990, 60, fig. 19.

154 Reeder 1999a, cat. no. 97.

155 Ibid., cat. nos. 125, 157.

156 Ibid., cat. nos. 85–86.

157 Ibid., cat. no. 12.
158 Hubei 1984. The figures are illustrated in pl. 66, fig. 90. The drum racks are in fig. 82.
159 Hubei 1996, pl. 31, fig. 62.
160 Hubei 1982, fig. 21.
161 Hubei 1995, pl. 4(4).
162 Hubei 1991. The figure is illustrated in vol. 1, fig. 25(a–d); vol. 2, color pl. 2(2), pl. 13(2). The drum stand is in vol. 1, fig. 17; vol. 2, color pl. 2(1), pl. 9(4).
163 Henan 1986, color pl. 10, pls. 19(5), 90, figs. 26, 67.
164 Hubei 1983, fig. 17.
165 Hubei 1996, color pl. 7, pl. 103, figs. 119–20.
166 Mackenzie 1987, 90–92.
167 Zhongguo and Hebei 1980, vol. 1, fig. 179; vol. 2, color pl. 25, pl. 182.
168 Rawson 1989, 92–93. For the connection between the state of Chu of the Warring States period and the Western Han dynasty, see Rawson 1999, 20.
169 Hebei and Wenwu 1980, pl. 126.
170 Shanxi et al. 1996. The *zun* is illustrated in color pl. 5, pl. 41, figs. 26(a,b,d,f). The *hu* is in pls. 39–40, figs. 25(a,b).
171 Fong Wen 1980, cat. no. 67.
172 Jiangxi et al. 1997, color pl. 38, pl. 49(1), figs. 69(a,b).
173 Aruz et al. 2000, cat. no. 180. See also Metropolitan Museum and Los Angeles County Museum 1975, color pl. 24, cat. no. 100.
174 The Animals of the Four Directions are frequently referred to as *sishen* (Four Spirits) or *silingshou* (Four Divine Beasts). They are the Black Warrior of the North (a tortoise with a snake coiled around its body), Green Dragon of the East, Red Bird of the South, and White Tiger of the West. For an account of these four directional symbols, see Juliano 1980, 35–43; Rawson 1984, 90–93.
175 Zhongguo and Hebei 2003, color pl. 62, figs. 9a, 117.
176 Tang Chi 1984, color pl., fig. 1, pl. 2(2), fig. 5.
177 Cixian 1984b, fig. 3.
178 Wang Kelin 1979, pl. 12(1).
179 Henan 1958, fig. 39; Juliano 1980, 38–40, fig. 16.
180 Juliano 1980, fig. 100.
181 The Green Dragon of the East appears on the other door.
182 Zhongguo and Hebei 2003, color pl. 48(1), fig. 116. The Green Dragon also appears in these tomb paintings.
183 Tang Chi 1984, pl. 1(2), fig. 2. The Green Dragon also appears in these tomb paintings.
184 Wang Kelin 1979, pl. 12(2). The Green Dragon is also painted over the tomb entrance.
185 Shanxi and Taiyuan 2003, figs. 5, 24–26.
186 Henan 1958, fig. 37; Juliano 1980, 40–42, fig. 17.
187 Wang Zhongshu 1982, 10, figs. 33–36.
188 Hubei 1989, vol. 1, fig. 216; vol. 2, color pl. 13, pl. 121.
189 Shanghai 1981, pl. 33.
190 Hebei 1996, vol. 1, figs. 397–98, 433–34; vol. 2, pls. 134(1–2), 161(1).
191 Shanxi et al. 1996, color pl. 2, pls. 6–12, 14–15, 53(1, 3), figs. 4(a,b-3), 5(a,b-2), 6(a), 7(2), 8(4), 34.
192 Yun Anzhi 1992, pls. 166, 203, figs. 142, 174.
193 So 1995, 329–30, 425, fig. 65(1).
194 Wu Zhefu and Tong Yihua 1995, vol. 1, color pls. 73–76.
195 Shanxi and Taiyuan 1983, pl. 6(4–5).
196 For an illustration of the latter piece, see Mowry 1995, cat. no. 2.
197 Ibid., 84.
198 Guangzhou et al. 1991, vol. 1, figs. 113, 183(7); vol. 2, pls. 107(8), 170(3–4).
199 Montell 1935, pls. 1, 2(1), 3(2), 4(1), 5(3).
200 Henan 1972, color pl. 7.
201 Shanxi et al. 2001, fig. 16; Zhang Qingjie 2001, fig. 4; Jiang Boqin 2001, fig. 10.
202 Also romanized as An Qie.
203 Shaanxi 2001, color pl., inside front cover.
204 Shanxi and Taiyuan 2003, figs. 20, 34.
205 Shanxi and Shanxi 1972, pl. 14(4), fig. 6, back cover.
206 Zhongguo Meishu Quanji 1989, pls. 110, 115; Zhang Lintang and Sun Di 2004, pl. on p. 109.

207 Henan 1983, pls. 93–94, fig. 14.

208 Akiyama Terukazu and Matsubara Saburo 1969, pls. 28–29, 37–38.

209 Stein 1921, vol. 1, pp. 93–127; vol. 4, pl. 3 (two fragments, lower left corner).

210 Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 133–53; vol. 4, pl. 4 (A.T.040).

211 Rudenko 1970, pls. 77, 79(a), 80, 82(a).

212 Aruz et al. 2000, cat. no. 168.

213 Reeder 1999a, cat. no. 97.

214 Ibid., cat. nos. 87–88.

215 Rawson 1984, 199–222.

216 Kamei Meitoku 1998–99, figs. 1, 3.

217 Akiyama Terukazu and Matsubara Saburo 1969, pls. 37–38. The same juxtaposition of the five-petaled palmette and beaded medallion motifs is repeated on the Metropolitan Museum's earthenware container, as well as the Nelson-Atkins and Ashmolean celadon jars.

218 Stein 1928, vol. 1, pp. 99–111; vol. 3, pl. 1 (Yo.034, Yo.023, Yo.05, Yo.030).

219 Longmen and Beijing 1991, vol. 1, pls. 17, 19.

220 Zhang Lintang and Sun Di 2004, pl. on p. 19.

221 Henan 1958, fig. 50(1), right.

222 Juliano 1980, 33–34, fig. 12, right. The appliqué medallion of Buddha on a lotus pedestal seen on the neck of the large celadon jar illustrated in the present study (figs. 7, 41) is somewhat reminiscent of the Dengxian "lotus birth" wall-tile.

223 Henan 1983, cave no. 1, pls. 93–94, fig. 14; cave no. 3, color pl. 19, fig. 26; cave no. 4, color pl. 23, pls. 177–78, fig. 27.

224 Ibid.

225 Vainker 1991, fig. 46. Based on comparisons with archaeological material and the nature of the ceramic body, the British Museum has changed the attribution of this rhyton to "Northern Qi–Sui dynasty, sixth century."

226 Zibo and Zichuan 1984, fig. 10; Shandong and Shandong 1984, fig. 3(1).

227 Shaanxi 1966, fig. 39. Patricia Karetzky studies the iconographic connotations of these and other inhabited pearled roundels in Karetzky 1986. She also investigates the inhabited pearled roundel in Sasanian Persian, Central Asian, and Chinese art in Karetzky 2001, 359–67.

228 Shanxi and Taiyuan 2003, inside front cover, figs. 31–34. In his discussion of the large pearl roundels used on some seventh-century excavated textiles, Zhao Feng cites this sixth-century tomb mural as proof that the pearl roundel motif must have occurred on textiles before the seventh century. See Zhao Feng 2004, 73–75.

229 There is also some resemblance between the beaded pilasters dividing these medallions and the ball-and-ring section of the foliate column or tree motif on the container (see fig. 25 in the present study).

230 Valenstein 1997–98, figs. 13, 15.

231 Dyakonova and Sorokin 1960, pl. 17, no. 473.

232 Ibid., pls. 16–19.

233 Sparkes and Talcott 1970, part 1, 22, 121–22; part 2, pl. 7, no. 137, pl. 28, nos. 693–95.

234 Williams and Ogden 1994, cat. nos. 8, 39, 45, 59, 74, 91–92, 183, 187.

235 National Gallery et al., 1980, cat. nos. 163–66.

236 Valenstein 1997–98, figs. 20, 11.

237 Ibid., figs. 21, 16.

238 Reeder 1999a, cat. no. 73. The motif was probably derived from Greek coinage.

239 Ibid., cat. no. 16.

240 Ibid., cat. no. 152.

241 Metropolitan Museum and Los Angeles County Museum 1975, cat. no. 85.

242 Valenstein 1997–98, figs. 22–23. Although the use of frontal human heads as bridle ornaments on this Han earthenware horse might be unusual, two precedents to this practice can be cited. Silver or silver-plated bronze bridle ornaments displaying the frontal heads of gods or other mythological creatures have been found in several Pontic Scythian kurgans. Among them are four silver roundels (phalerae), attributed to about 350–300 BC, that were

found *in situ* on a horse's skull in Babyna Mohyla kurgan, in the Dnepropetrovsk region of Ukraine (Reeder 1999a, figs. 1, 12 on pp. 93, 54, cat. nos. 137–40). Five wooden cut-outs in the form of frontal, bearded men's heads decorate a bridle found in kurgan no. 1 at Pazyryk (Rudenko 1970, pls. 91–92). It has been suggested that these heads were manufactured locally and that they copied the Egyptian god Bes, who was also popular in Achaemenid art. See Rubinson 1990, 58–59, figs. 16–17.

243 Tokyo and Osaka 1985, cat. no. 106.

244 Stein 1921, vol. 3, pp. 1183–1223; vol. 4, pl. 135, top right.

245 Ibid., vol. 3, p. 1193.

chapter three Cultural Influences

As set forth in the preceding section, there is much evidence to document the chronological and the geographical background of the shape and the individual ornamental elements on the Metropolitan Museum's Northern Qi earthenware covered container. In this section it will be seen that some of the same evidence is germane in the determination of the many divergent cultural influences that are reflected in the container's shape and motifs.

Prototypes of some of the motifs can be found in the Chinese Shang and Zhou dynasties of northern China. A number of motifs appear in the arts of the early Eurasian nomads. The shape and one particular ornament can be traced to the southern state of Chu during the Warring States period. Perhaps the two most outstanding influences, which are intimately related, are those from the kingdom of Khotan and from Buddhism. As demonstrated in this section, the container's shape and ornamental motifs were passed along a large and complex system of cultural interaction and exchange that can be traced from ancient Egypt and Greece to sixth-century northern China, where they finally converged on this extraordinary object.

shang and zhou dynasties

The Shang and Zhou dynasties, which were based in northern China, are the first influence on the Museum's earthenware container to be considered. Three of the ornamental motifs on the container's body—the monster mask (figs. 1–2, 33–34), raptor (figs. 1–2, 48), and feline (figs. 1–2, 48), as well as the use of reflected images as a design device (figs. 1–2, 25), can be traced to these early Chinese dynasties.

As previously documented, the monster mask used as an ornamental ring holder, or *pushou*, can be found in Eastern Zhou bronzes and related ceramic bronze-casting material. Ultimately, ferocious animal-like heads are found in northern Chinese art as early as the *taotie* mask motif on early Western Zhou and Shang bronzes. Prototypes

of the container's raptor motif occur in northern bronzes and related ceramic bronze-casting material, and earthenwares dating to the Eastern Zhou; birds of prey also appear in late Shang bronzes and jades. Similarly, prototypes of the feline ornament can be seen in northern bronzes and related ceramic bronze-casting material, and earthenwares attributable to the Eastern Zhou; the feline is also found in late Shang bronzes and jades. Reflected images appear in Warring States architectural ceramics, as well as metalwork associated with China's contact and cultural exchange with its non-Chinese nomadic neighbors to the north.

Inasmuch as the Shang and Zhou cultures were gradually infused with outside influences from the Eurasian nomads north of China's borders (cultural exchange between China and the nomads can be documented as early as the Shang dynasty),[1] the precise origin of the raptor and feline motifs, as well as reflected images, which also appear in nomadic art, is somewhat uncertain.

eurasian nomads

Another influence contributing to the presence of certain ornamental motifs on this container lies in the enormous stretch of deserts, grasslands, foothills, and mountains of Eurasia that extend eastward from the shores of the Black Sea into Inner Mongolia. This vast expanse of land, broadly referred to as the Eurasian steppes, was home to numerous non-Chinese hunting and herding nomadic tribes whose style of art, while varying considerably from area to area and over different periods of time, exhibits a common denominator in its strong emphasis on zoomorphic imagery.[2]

The ball-and-ring (figs. 1–2, 25), bird of prey, feline, bird with feline (figs. 1–2, 48), frontal head (figs. 1–3, 70), and palmette (figs. 3, 55) motifs, as well as the use of the reflected image as a compositional device (figs. 1–2, 25), relate the Museum's sixth-century Chinese ceramic container to the art of these early Eurasian nomads. Archaeological evidence documents the employment of one or more of these ornamental motifs in a series of sites that begins in the northern Black Sea region and can be traced eastward to the foothills of Russia's Ural mountains, then to Kazakhstan, to the Altai Mountains area of southern Siberia, and finally to the Ordos Desert region of Inner Mongolia.

The bird of prey, feline, reflected image, palmette, and frontal head are represented in material that has been excavated in Ukraine from Pontic Scythian kurgans. These Scythians were a nomadic people who had originated in the Altai Mountains but later migrated westward until they finally settled, some time around the seventh century BC, in a new homeland in the steppes to the north of the Black Sea. It follows that many parallels exist between the material recovered from Pontic Scythian graves and the artifacts discovered in Altai burials; and, as has been observed, "one of the most persuasive links between the cultures of these widely

separated areas is the presence in both artistic traditions of the motifs of the bird, feline, and deer."[3]

At the same time that the Pontic Scythians' art evidences their Altai heritage, it also shows several other influences. The Scythians had passed through the ancient Near East during their westward migration, and, consequently, some elements of their art also exhibit the mark of Assyria and Achaemenid Persia.[4] However, it is the effect of the Pontic Scythians' contact with their Greek colonist neighbors on the northern coast of the Black Sea that is particularly relevant to this investigation.[5] The Scythians supplied grain and other commodities to the Greek world in exchange for olive oil, wine, and luxury items that conformed to Scythian tastes. The latter included Greek metalwork—vessels, weapons, and jewelry (especially a wealth of elaborate gold material, such as the plaque illustrated in figure 80)—which frequently was embellished with designs taken from a lexicon of Greek motifs.[6] These Grecian-*cum*-Scythian motifs could possibly be a remote connection between some of the motifs on the Museum's sixth-century Chinese ceramic container and their ultimate Egyptian-Grecian sources.

The reflected image is seen on material found in a kurgan at Filippovka, thought to be that of a member of the Sarmatian tribal confederation. Both the feline motif and the reflected image appear on objects in the so-called Golden Man kurgan at the Issyk burial site in Kazakhstan. The ball-and-ring, bird of prey, feline, bird with feline, frontal head, and palmette motifs, as well as the use of the mirror image, can be found on artifacts excavated in the Altai Mountains region (not far from where modern Kazakhstan, Russia, Mongolia, and China meet), an area that includes Tuekta, Bashadar, and Pazyryk. The feline motif and the reflected image are seen on articles recovered from tombs of the Xiongnu tribes in the Ordos Desert region of Inner Mongolia.

It is significant that the raptor, feline, bird with feline, and reflected image also were part of the ornamental vocabulary of the southern state of Chu, which will be discussed ahead. Telling evidence of a connection between the northern nomads and the southern Chu people can be seen in fragments of imported Chinese woven or embroidered silk found in kurgans nos. 3 and 5 at Pazyryk. These textiles have been correlated with similar fabrics discovered in Chu state tombs in Hubei and Hunan provinces.[7]

FROM GREECE EASTWARD VIA THE EURASIAN NOMADS (THE STEPPE ROUTE). The odyssey of certain ornamental motifs—notably, the raptor, feline, frontal head, palmette, and mirror image—from the ancient Mediterranean world to northern China might have followed a course that sometimes is referred to as the Steppe Route or Fur Route. This was a complicated trading network that began in southeastern Europe and has been described as then running "in an eastward direction north of the fiftieth parallel from the Caspian Sea to southern Siberia, and then southward to ancient China and its border areas via the Amur Valley."[8]

Trade on the Steppe Route parallels the well-documented commerce from one fixed trading point to the next on the later, but better known, Silk Road farther to the south. However, the details of how goods were exchanged along this northern Steppe Route are not as well substantiated and are subject to speculation. It is known that Herodotus, in describing the steppe tribes, noted that goods from the Far East were passed many times from one group to a neighboring group before they finally arrived in Greece.[9] Furthermore, as has been observed, "from an archaeological perspective we do know that the Eurasian steppelands were a vast area of transit and exchange during the last millennium BC. A recurring package of high-status cultural traits found across the entire steppe—weapons, horse harnesses, 'animal style' art, cauldrons, mirrors, stone stelae, burial under kurgans (mounds)—attests to this intercommunication."[10]

The northern nomads appropriated some of their decorative designs from foreign luxury goods that came their way.[11] They could have acquired this foreign material from the trade caravans that passed through their territories along the Steppe Route, either as booty from nomadic raiding parties on the caravans or as payment for protection against nomadic raids. Foreign merchandise also could have reached the northern nomads by barter for commensurate goods in direct exchange with other tribes.

FROM THE EURASIAN NOMADS TO CHINA. In turn, there was a reciprocal relationship between the non-Chinese hunting and herding nomadic tribes living in the region north of China's borders and the Chinese;[12] this is evidenced by excavated cultural artifacts dating to as early as the Shang period.[13] There is also documentation of considerable interchange between the Chinese and their nomadic neighbors during the Warring States period.[14] All manner of goods changed hands during the exchanges between the sedentary, agricultural Chinese and their nonagrarian nomadic neighbors. In particular, the Chinese obtained furs, hides, wool, jade, precious metals, and domestic animals (particularly horses), while the nomads acquired essential grain, as well as silk fabrics and a variety of other Chinese manufactured goods.

In the second century BC, the Western Han dynasty established a policy with the leaders of the Xiongnu northern nomadic tribes, the Chinese guaranteeing the Xiongnu certain fixed annual payments, including a Chinese imperial princess in marriage. If these payments were not met, the nomads would then raid the Chinese frontier to acquire the commodities they needed.[15] Direct commerce between China and the nomads was established during the Han dynasty, or perhaps even earlier, when frontier markets where merchandise could be exchanged were established.[16] There was also a considerable amount of interaction between the Eastern Han Chinese and the Xianbei tribes, who succeeded the Xiongnu.[17] Archaeological finds in Inner Mongolia provide evidence of commercial connections between the Toba branch of the

Xianbei and China during the Eastern Han and Western Jin periods.[18]

state of chu

The southern state of Chu is the source of the shape of the Museum's Northern Qi earthenware container, as well as of one exceptional ornamental element. The container's tall, cylindrical form (figs. 1–2) can be found in lacquerware produced there during the Warring States period. In particular, the shape, including the circular knob on the flattened lid, shows a singular resemblance to that of the black lacquer covered *zun* excavated from a Chu tomb at Yutaishan, Jiangling xian, Hubei (fig. 23).

With very few exceptions, the convention of placing birds directly over felines seen on the sixth-century ceramic here (figs. 1–2, 48) was a device that earlier had been used exclusively in carved and lacquered wood objects and a few ceramics produced throughout the state of Chu. While the shape and the bird-over-feline element on the container appear to be cultural contributions unique to Chu, other motifs appearing on the piece also are found in Chu art. The lacquer *zun* illustrated in figure 23 has two bronze *pushou* monster mask handles and three bronze sculptural animal-head legs. These metal attachments, as well as the same ornaments on a shallower lacquer *zun* from another Chu tomb in the same region, are similar to ornaments on the present ceramic. Other Chu motifs reappearing on the container include the discrete three-dimensional raptorlike bird head and the independent feline (figs. 1–2, 48); the reflected image as an ornamental device also can be observed in Chu art.

INTERMEDIATE CONNECTIONS: QIN AND HAN DYNASTIES. It has been observed that the types of objects and the decorative elements used by the southern state of Chu were particularly favored by the later, northern-based Qin (221–206 BC) and Han dynasty courts.[19] Regarding the Museum's earthenware container, it is significant that many of the Chu vessel types that originally were made of lacquer, such as the cylindrical *zun* (fig. 23), were produced in the following Qin and Han periods in a wide range of materials, including silver, gilt bronze, jade, lacquer, and ceramic.[20] Han examples of covered, tall cylindrical footed containers made of earthenware, lacquer, and bronze were detailed earlier in this study, as were the Chu *pushou* monster mask handle, bird head, and bird-over-feline motifs that reappear in several kinds of Han wares.

The connection between the Chu, Qin, and Han has been explained as follows: "Qin's fourth- and third-century BC military campaigns culminated in conquest of Chu areas in present-day Hubei and Hunan provinces. Chu was driven eastwards and Qin assumed much of the territory; in so doing Qin took over some Chu customs and objects. With Chu now established further east, people in parts of present-day Anhui and Jiangsu provinces also took on many aspects of Chu culture. These eastern Chu practices

became integral to the Han-period Chu state in this same area. The founder of the Han dynasty, Liu Bang, came from present-day Xuzhou in Jiangsu province, in what was to be the Han kingdom of Chu. Hence Liu Bang brought to the court at Xi'an customs of the south, and also many eastern practices and beliefs."[21] It is further explained, "Political unification gave the Qin and the Han emperors an opportunity to assimilate systematically practices and beliefs from many parts of the area we today call China, but which, in the fourth and third centuries BC, had been parts of independent political entities."[22] In particular, contributions from the southern state of Chu became a very important part of the Qin and Han cultures.[23]

khotanese earthenwares

Many comparisons can be made between the Museum's Northern Qi unglazed earthenware container and the distinctive unglazed earthenware vessels, appliqué ornaments, and figurines found at the site of Yotkan, Xinjiang. Yotkan is situated a few miles from the present oasis town of Khotan, or Hetian, on the southern rim of the Taklamakan Desert and northeast of the Kashmir border.

The similarities between the earthenware receptacle considered here and the material from Yotkan are extraordinary. First and foremost is the concept of a low-fired, unglazed ceramic object that is profusely decorated with a wide variety of sprig-molded, appliqué-relief ornaments (fig. 83).[24] Another connection is the mutual use of a limited amount of impressed decoration in conjunction with these appliqué ornaments;[25] in particular, the impressed beaded rings on the lid of the Museum's container (figs. 3, 55) appear on a number of Khotanese earthenwares as well (fig. 26).[26]

Other decorative elements on the container can be traced to analogous motifs on the Khotanese earthenwares. The conventionalized fan-shaped foliage capping the upright and pendant vertical ornaments (figs. 1, 2, 25) can be compared with a similar motif from Yotkan (fig. 26). If this ornament is indeed a foliate architectural column, there are prototypes at Yotkan (fig. 31). The use of the monster mask on the container (figs. 1–2, 33–34) is paralleled by grotesque monster masks found at Yotkan (fig. 42). The five-petaled palmette, very similar to those on the container's lid (figs. 3, 55), appears among the earthenware appliqués from Yotkan (fig. 64) and from the ruins of Akterek nearby, as do beaded medallions. There is a noteworthy resemblance between the frontal human head encircled by pearl beading on the container (figs. 1–3, 70) and a ceramic appliqué from Yotkan (fig. 76); and pearl beading—or curls of hair arranged as pearl beading—encircles other Yotkan humanlike or animal heads, all of which are facing forward (fig. 77).

Yotkan has been identified as the site of the ancient capital of the kingdom of Khotan, known in the past as Yutian.[27] Yutian is mentioned in Chinese writings as early as the *Han shu*;[28] it, along with

the entire Tarim River Basin, was under Chinese rule during periods of the Western and Eastern Han dynasties. In addition to being a major Buddhist center,[29] Khotan was an all-important relay station on the southern branch of the overland Silk Road. It also was the center of silk production in the Tarim Basin and a major supplier of jade (nephrite) to China.

Yotkan has been investigated many times; one of the most thoroughly reported visits was that made by Sir Aurel Stein in 1900–01.[30] In his exhaustive account, Stein described what he called the "culture-strata of Yotkan" as containing the capital's debris accumulations of at least a thousand years.[31] The periodic, unofficial diggings underway at Yotkan in Stein's time had started in the late 1860s, when local villagers began to pan for relics, including flakes of the gold leaf that originally decorated the capital's Buddhist buildings and sacred objects. Stein was unable to carry out any actual excavations at Yotkan and was limited to purchasing antiques recently unearthed by the local residents. His acquisitions included many old coins, the latest in date being six that had been minted in the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), including one from the Chongning period (1102–06). From these coins, Stein concluded that the site of the ancient Khotanese capital had been continuously occupied down to the beginning of the twelfth century.

Among the artifacts Stein bought were a number of unglazed, fine-textured, reddish or buff colored earthenware (frequently referred to as "terra-cotta") vessels, molded appliqué ornaments that had become detached from these vessels, and figurines.[32] Some of the Stein collection is now in The British Museum;[33] a large portion of the material is in the National Museum of India.[34] Because the same molded ornament was duplicated many times in the Khotanese earthenwares, corresponding material, purchased by archaeologists and collectors at the Yotkan site or in nearby Khotan, can be found in a number of museums throughout the world.[35] Among them, one of the most fully published collections is that of the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.[36] Kilns producing this type of earthenware were found during excavations in 1977 and 1979 at the Mailikeawati site in the vicinity of Khotan. According to the archaeological report, these kilns can be dated to the Han dynasty.[37]

The Yotkan site has never been scientifically excavated; consequently, there are differing opinions about the date of the material found there. The distinctive unglazed earthenwares with appliqué-relief decoration have been attributed to periods ranging from the first to the third century to as late as the eighth century.[38] The attribution given in this study is about the second to the fifth century. The consistent uniformity of the Khotanese appliqués seems to indicate that this material was produced during a relatively short period within that time frame.

If they in fact predate the manufacture of the Metropolitan Museum's container, it is not inconceivable that these Khotanese ceramics from Yotkan might have influenced, directly or indirectly, its

design. However, it must be mentioned that as of this writing, there seems to be no published archaeological evidence documenting the presence of any of these Khotanese earthenwares in northeastern China.[39]

FROM GREECE TO INDIA TO KHOTAN. Aurel Stein suggested that many of the earthenwares he obtained from Yotkan show a relationship to the traditions of Greek and Gandharan art.[40] As demonstrated in this study, the Khotanese potters did indeed take many of their motifs from the classical ornamental vocabulary. The conventionalized fan-shaped foliage, foliate architectural column, palmette, monster mask, and frontal head in pearl beading found on the Yotkan earthenwares can be traced to ancient Greece (most of these Grecian motifs, in turn, have Egyptian origins). Two earthenware figures found at Yotkan in 1910 seem to substantiate the Egyptian-*cum*-Grecian-*cum*-Khotanese connection. One portrays Harpocrates, originally the Egyptian god Horus, with Serapis, the Egyptian god Osiris; the other figure probably represents a baby Heracles. Both of these images apparently were cast in molds, and it is believed that either the figures or the molds from which they were cast were probably imported from the west, most likely Egypt.[41]

There is evidence to document the connection between the classical prototypes and the decoration on the Khotanese ceramics. The Hellenic motifs could have traveled eastward from Greece with Alexander the Great (r. 336–323 BC), whose farthest conquests reached into the northwest frontier provinces of India. There—particularly in the historic region of Gandhara, in modern Pakistan—the Greek culture that Alexander carried with him had a profound influence on Indian religion and art. Hellenistic influences on countries to the east were to persist after Alexander, as commerce continued between Greece and the many lands he had conquered. This influence can be seen, for example, in the Corinthian capitals[42] and fragments of ceramics showing frontal classical heads[43] excavated at the site of the city of Aï Khanoum in Afghanistan, the easternmost Greek city discovered so far.

Ceramics found by Sir John Marshall at Taxila,[44] Pakistan, suggest one possible link between the frontal head motif on Grecian material and the similar ornament found on the earthenwares at Yotkan. Fragments of Greek-type black wares were discovered in levels attributed by Marshall to the fourth to the second century BC; he was uncertain whether this material was imported or made at Taxila. Among these fragments is the lower half of a handle adorned at the base with a frontal head of Heracles.[45] Some earthenware appliqués of frontal lion masks from the sides of vessels (fig. 84) were excavated from the Dharmarajika site near Sirkap;[46] Marshall noted that they imitate Hellenistic prototypes. He attributed these lion masks to the time that Sirkap was under Parthian rule (ca. first century AD). One of the molds from which they were struck was found with them, suggesting that the masks were manufactured locally. At the same

time that they imitate Hellenistic prototypes, these lion masks also resemble some of the molded earthenware appliqué animal heads from Yotkan (fig. 85).[47] As will be seen ahead, the Hellenistic influences evident in ceramic material at Taxila probably were transmitted to Yotkan with the expansion of Buddhism.

buddhism

A review of the ornamental elements on the Metropolitan Museum's container reveals that many of them are directly or indirectly connected to early Chinese Buddhist art.[48] The Buddhist religion originated in India, and this Indian ancestry is evident in some of the motifs on the Museum's container. Buddhism, which most likely reached China during the Eastern Han dynasty, probably in the first century AD,[49] gained extensive popularity in the succeeding Six Dynasties period.[50] As it became widespread, Buddhism, with its new system of beliefs and iconography, was to leave its indelible imprint on virtually every facet of Chinese life.

Among the Buddhist motifs on this container are the band of lotus petals at the base of the four vertical ornaments in the upper section (figs. 1–2, 25) and the stylized lotus-medallion knob on the lid (figs. 3, 55). As a symbol of reawakening, rebirth, and renewal, the lotus flower was important in Indian Buddhism.[51] It can be found as a sacred image in Chinese Eastern Han stone carvings, a concept derived from Indian Buddhist art,[52] and is omnipresent in sixth-century Chinese Buddhist art. If the upright and pendant vertical ornaments on the container were intended to depict trees, then this ornament might represent the *asvattha* tree, the *bodhi* tree or tree of enlightenment, associated with Buddha Shakyamuni, who sat under such a tree as he meditated and attained enlightenment.

The monster mask (figs. 1–2, 33–34) also occurs in early Chinese Buddhist art; it appears occasionally in Six Dynasties northern Chinese Buddhist cave temples. For example, in the Guyang cave at Longmen, a series of monster heads holding the ends of swags in their clenched teeth are visible on the lintels above some niches (fig. 44). In the preceding section of this study, a stylistic comparison was made between the larger monster head on the Museum's earthenware container (figs. 1–2, 33) and the two grotesque monster masks clenching the ends of jeweled swags in their teeth (fig. 45) that are carved on the canopy of the central pillar inside a limestone Buddhist pagoda sanctuary in the Museum's collection. These masks can be connected to the swag-holding monster heads at Guyang; prototypes of the mask-and-wreath motif found at Guyang can, in turn, be seen on the carved stone pillars in the Indian Buddhist cave temples at Ajanta.

There is a possibility that the feline on this container (figs. 1–2, 48) represents a lion. With the firm establishment of Buddhism in China in the Six Dynasties period, lions, regarded as guardians of the faith and the Buddhist law, began to be used

in a specifically Buddhist context. Paired guardian lions are ubiquitous in all manner of Six Dynasties Buddhist art, ranging from exquisite gilt bronze altars to sculptures in the great northern Chinese cave temples, such as those flanking the Buddhas' thrones in the caves at Gongxian (fig. 51).

The five-petaled palmette, comparable to those on the lid of the container (figs. 3, 55), appears with some frequency in Chinese Buddhist art. Analogous palmettes are in the headdresses of two painted clay sculptures of attendant Bodhisattvas at two caves at Dunhuang, attributed to the Sui dynasty. The five-petaled palmette is also found in the decoration of northern Chinese Buddhist cave temples: Northern Qi examples can be seen in northern Xiangtangshan cave no. 2 (fig. 62), and others are in the late Northern Wei Gongxian caves (fig. 63). A fragment of the base of a ceramic figure found during the excavations of Yongning Temple Pagoda (fig. 43) is decorated with several five-petaled palmettes (there are monster masks on this fragment as well).

It is likely that the highly stylized pseudo-lotus flower on the container's cover (figs. 1–3, 66) also has Buddhist connections. As was seen in the preceding section, it can be related to similar ornamental motifs in the Gongxian caves (fig. 68). Additionally, as also noted previously, the frontal head framed in a ring of pearls (figs. 1–3, 70) occasionally occurs in northern Chinese Buddhist sculpture, such as those on the central pillar of the Museum's limestone pagoda (fig. 73).[53]

Buddhist iconography—indeed representations of the Buddha himself—is not unknown on Chinese ceramics. There are two relief medallions of the Buddha seated on a lotus pedestal and flanked by *apsaras* (fig. 41) on the neck of a Northern Qi flamboyant celadon *lianhua zun* (fig. 7). Two carefully modeled Buddhas seated on composite lion-and-lotus pedestals embellish an early Six Dynasties covered jar now in the Nanjing Museum.[54] Twenty molded images of the Buddha seated in the *dhyana* posture decorate the striking Western Jin funerary urn in the Metropolitan Museum's collection (fig. 86).[55] This jar belongs to a series of profusely decorated celadon funerary urns that were produced from the second half of the third into the early fourth century in the Yue kiln complexes.[56] The name *hunping* (urn of the soul) has been applied to these vessels by some authorities; they believe that the urns were used to provide a symbolic repository for the soul in a type of ritual burial without the body, *zhaohunzang* (burial of the summoned soul).[57]

In all likelihood the Museum's earthenware container, which probably was made in imitation of carved white marble, was intended to be placed in a tomb or a temple.[58] The earliest Chinese use of stone in a mortuary context appears to have coincided with China's territorial expansion across Central Asia during the Western Han dynasty. It has been hypothesized that the Western Han imperial rock-cut tombs[59] and stone sculptures[60] may have been based on accounts of Buddhist rock-cut sanctuaries and stone carvings that were brought back from India.[61] When Indian Buddhism was introduced

to China, most likely during the early Eastern Han era, its attendant sacred symbols, art, and architecture became familiar as well. Probably based on Indian prototypes, stone was now used extensively for all sorts of funerary monuments, which frequently were decorated with Buddhist motifs.[62]

BUDDHISM FROM INDIA TO KHOTAN. In the middle of the third century BC, Buddhism began to expand from the confines of the Ganges Valley into the Gandhara and Kashmir regions of northwest India. In the first centuries BC and AD, the Buddhist faith and its art spread rapidly northward from Gandhara and Kashmir—and with the Buddhist art went the Hellenistic motifs that had by then been incorporated into the Indian Buddhist ornamental vocabulary. Buddhist missionaries set out from northwest India to propagate their religion in such places as Parthia, Sogdiana, Kucha, and Khotan in Central Asia;[63] one of the most important places they reached was Khotan.[64] Data compiled from several literary sources indicate that the founding of Buddhist monasteries in Khotan took place around this time.[65] Buddhist imagery, including the seated Buddhas in figure 87, can be seen in the fragments of unglazed earthenware appliqué ornaments and figurines excavated at Yotkan,[66] site of the capital of the kingdom of Khotan, which, as mentioned above, are closely related to the Metropolitan Museum's Northern Qi ceramic receptacle.

BUDDHISM AND THE NORTHERN NOMADS. The acceptance of Buddhism extended to the various non-Chinese nomadic tribes living north of China's borders. It has been explained that during the early years of the chaotic Six Dynasties era, "Buddhist monks sought patronage from nomadic rulers who perceived the monks as a new type of shaman with superior magical powers. In exchange for the monks' services as magicians and as political, military, and diplomatic advisors, Buddhism gained powerful new nomadic patrons willing to support image making and translation centers."[67]

cultural influences from the west to the east

The ornamental motifs derived from Buddhism and/or Khotanese earthenwares that are intermingled on this sixth-century Chinese earthenware container could have been transported to China with the expansion of Buddhism, by way of diplomatic embassies, or through trade (these are closely related and sometimes inseparable).[68] According to a widely accepted theory, the Buddhist iconography and style prevalent in Chinese Six Dynasties art most likely was transmitted from the west "in fragments, so to speak, by means of small, easily portable images and paintings, iconographic pattern books, and the vague descriptions of travelers."[69] The icons, paintings, and pattern books might have been the property of pilgrims returning to China from India or among the effects of Buddhist translators or missionaries. For example, missionary-monks said to be Sinhalese and a monk from Kashgar are recorded in the Wei

history as bringing Buddhist images to the Northern Wei capital of Pingcheng in the fifth century.[70] It also has been suggested that Buddhist iconography and style could have reached China in the form of Buddhist images and objects that were brought by envoys as tribute from flourishing Central Asian Buddhist centers, such as Khotan, Kashgar, Kucha, and Karashahr, to the Northern Wei court.[71]

Khotanese earthenware vessels could have found their way along the overland Silk Road to China as part of the inventory of merchants. However, the many striking similarities between this unique group of Central Asian wares and the Museum's container, as well as the special family of flamboyantly decorated sixth-century northern Chinese ceramics described earlier, suggests the possibility of a direct link between the kingdom of Khotan and northern China in the Northern Dynasties period.[72] This connection might have taken the form of diplomatic interchange: nine embassies are listed in the dynastic histories as having been sent from Yutian (Yotkan) to the Northern Wei court between 457 and 513.[73] While the Khotanese earthenwares in themselves probably would not have been sumptuous enough to qualify as gifts to the imperial Chinese court,[74] their uncommon decoration (and possibly age) might have made them curios and perhaps worthy containers for other, more precious, offerings. Once they had reached northern China, their novel ornate style and decorative motifs could have been admired and appropriated by the Chinese potters for their own ornamental repertoire. Yet, as already mentioned, no examples of Khotanese earthenwares seem to have been excavated from northern Chinese sites to document this or any other hypothetical relationship.

SILK ROAD. However they were conveyed, the Buddhist and Khotanese motifs probably would have followed much the same itinerary on their journey. Their primary course would have been the main west-east trans-Asian overland caravan route that was part of the vast network of trade roads connecting India and the Mediterranean world to China, known in modern times as the Silk Road.[75] The extent of this ancient international commercial thoroughfare, which was established in the first centuries BC, is impressive. For example, the distance between the eastern Mediterranean port of Beirut and Luoyang is 4,280 miles, as the crow flies,[76] but the turnings of the caravan paths would have made the actual distance traveled much longer. According to one estimate, it could have taken as long as one year for trade goods to be conveyed from one end of the Silk Road to the other.[77] Generally, this merchandise was passed from one merchant to another many times along the way; relay stations, where trade caravans could rest and merchants could buy or exchange goods, were located at key positions. It was principally over this Silk Road that foreign art, ideas, and religions flowed into China from the west for many centuries.

The segment of the Silk Road over which the Buddhist and Khotanese motifs most likely would

have passed started in Kashgar, on the western edge of the Taklamakan Desert. At this point, a caravan could take either a northern or a southern main road in order to avoid the perils of this intimidating desert. The southern road, on which these motifs probably would have traveled, passed through Yarkand and the Buddhist centers of Khotan, Niya, and Miran.[78] It rejoined the northern road near Dunhuang, in Gansu, and then moved east to the Chinese terminus at Luoyang, Henan.

Buddhist paraphernalia, and possibly Khotanese earthenwares, were only part of a very large consignment of all types of western material, both religious and secular, that was introduced to China from countries along the entire length and breadth of the Silk Road.[79] Quantities of exotic luxuries, such as Central Asian gold and silverwork, were imported from the west in the late Six Dynasties period. Many new vessel types, as well as distinctive shapes and ornamental motifs, were taken from these foreign wares and incorporated by the Chinese into their own arts.[80]

Western commodities were presented as tribute by the numerous diplomatic embassies sent by foreign countries to both the southern and northern Chinese courts.[81] Envoys and trade missions from powers to the west, such as Ferghana, Kashmir, Persia, and the Hephthalites, are recorded as reaching Pingcheng in the fifth century; there also are descriptions of diplomatic and commercial relations between Persia, the Hephthalites, Kashmir, and Gandhara and Luoyang in the early sixth century.[82] According to one account, "foreign traders and merchants came hurrying in through the passes [to Luoyang] every day"; these outsiders sold their foreign wares in the Four Directions Market in the city's southern suburb.[83] The Northern Dynasties capital cities had large resident foreign populations in addition to these short-term visitors from the west. In the Northern Wei city of Luoyang, the Yongming monastery alone is said to have housed over 3,000 monks from many foreign countries.[84] The southern suburb of that city contained a ghetto for foreigners; in addition to four hostels for visitors, there were four wards for permanent residents.[85]

The Metropolitan Museum's Northern Qi green-glazed *bian hu* (fig. 88) demonstrates the fascination with western exotics evident at this time.[86] The same scene, enclosed in a pearl-beaded, foliate frame, is depicted on both sides: a dancer, balancing on one foot with one arm flung above his head, surrounded by six musicians. Certain particulars of the men's clothing, such as the turned-back lapels of the dancer's jacket, identify them as Central Asians. The dancer probably is performing a Central Asian dance that has been identified as a *huteng wu*,[87] or *huxuan wu*,[88] for which there have been several different translations, including "nomadic whirl" and "Sogdian whirl." The six musicians accompanying the dancer include a harpist, lutanist, and flautist.[89] Many types of music and dances from Central Asia are mentioned in the *Sui shu* (History of the Sui); the same history also mentions the great popularity of

Central Asian music in China during the Northern Qi Heqing era (562–65).[90]

SEA ROUTES. In addition to the overland commercial routes—the Steppe or Fur Route and the Silk Road—there were numerous sea arteries connecting the west and southern China.[91] Once they had reached China's shores, the artistic influences carried over these sea routes could have proceeded overland and eventually arrive in northern China. It is not inconceivable that some of the western motifs on the Metropolitan Museum's sixth-century earthenware receptacle reached an as-yet-unidentified northern Chinese kiln complex by the same sea and land course.

SOGDIANS. Much of the western merchandise was transported to China by the Sogdians, a Central Asian Iranian people who dominated commerce on the Silk Road;[92] indeed, Sogdian was the *lingua franca* of Central Asian commerce until the thirteenth century.[93] These people were centered in a region that encompasses today's Uzbekistan and part of Tajikistan, an area where the early Chinese, Indian, and Persian civilizations converged. The Sogdians were renowned merchants, and, wherever they traded, they also settled. Current research indicates that Sogdians were living in the Central Asian oasis town of Khotan. In northern China, Sogdians resided in the Eastern Han capital of Luoyang; during the Northern Dynasties period, Sogdian merchants were active in the Northern Wei capitals of Pingcheng and Luoyang and the Northern Qi capital of Ye.[94]

The Northern Zhou tomb of An Jia is an example of an important Westerner being buried in a Chinese city.[95] An, who is believed to have been a Sogdian, was a native of Guzang, one of the regions in China where people from the west resided during the Northern and Southern Dynasties. He was a *sabao*, an official appointed by the Chinese government to administer the political and religious affairs of Central Asian residents,[96] and Area Commander-in-Chief. His tomb contained a sumptuous stone couch surrounded on three sides by an ornate stone screen with illustrated panels showing Westerners in various settings, including a trade caravan.

notes

1 So 1995a, esp. 35–37. See also Rawson 1999, 21–30.

2 For the historical background of these Eurasian nomads, see Barfield 1989; Golden 1992. For accounts of the nomads and their art, see Bunker, Chatwin, and Farkas 1970; Metropolitan Museum and Los Angeles County Museum 1975; Basilov 1989; So and Bunker 1995; Reeder 1999a; Aruz et al. 2000; Juliano and Lerner 2001a; Watt et al. 2004.

3 Reeder 1999b, 38.

4 Ibid., 48–50.

5 This interaction between the Scythians and the Greeks is well covered in Reeder 1999a.

6 Reeder 1999b, 50–55.

7 Rubinson 1990, 54, fig. 7; Bunker 1991, 21–22, figs. 19–22. The embroidered piece of Chinese silk, which had been mounted on felt to make a saddle blanket, is also illustrated in Metropolitan Museum and Los Angeles County Museum 1975, color pl. 23, cat. no. 117.

8 Bunker 1993, 31.

9 Bunker et al. 1991, 5.

10 Mallory and Mair 2000, 45. See also Davis-Kimball 1998.

11 For example, Karen Rubinson examines how foreign artistic motifs were adopted and adapted in the material found at Pazyryk in Rubinson 1990.

12 For an extensive analysis of the trade relationship between early China and the nomads to the north, see Jagchid and Symons 1989, 13–16, 24–39, 52–69, 114–21, 141–47, 165–67, 169–71. A thorough study of the interaction between the early Chinese and their northern nomadic neighbors also is found in Barfield 1989. See also So and Bunker 1995; Juliano 2001a; Dien 2001a. Victor Mair uses the term "north(west)ern peoples" to encompass early China's immediately adjacent northern nomadic neighbors and those peoples living to the northwest and west. It is his hypothesis that the histories of China and of the north(west)ern peoples are intimately interwoven, and that these north(west)ern peoples were key to the origins and development of the Chinese state. See Mair 2004.

13 So 1995a, esp. 35–37.

14 Juliano 1991; Bunker 1995a, 24–25; Juliano 2001a, 52.

15 Barfield 1989, 45–48, 51–60 passim; Jagchid and Symons 1989, 26–27, 55, 116–17; Bunker 1995a, 26.

16 Barfield 1989, 45–48; Jagchid and Symons 1989, 28; Bunker 1995a, 25–26; Juliano 2001a, 52.

17 Barfield 1989, 86–87; Jagchid and Symons 1989, 32–36.

18 Yang Hong 2002, 29–30.

19 Rawson 1999.

20 Ibid., 31.

21 Ibid., 20.

22 Ibid., 7.

23 Ibid., 20, 30–49.

24 For example, Dyakonova and Sorokin 1960, pls. 1–3.

25 Montell 1935, 159–60.

26 Montell 1935, pls. 1, 2(1), 3(2), 4(1), 5(3); Dyakonova and Sorokin 1960, pl. 13, nos. 295, 299, 302.

27 For a history of Khotan, see Montell 1935, 145–50; Mallory and Mair 2000, 77–81.

28 Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu 1985, 10.

29 For an extensive study of Buddhism and Buddhist art in Khotan, see Rhie 1999, 257–322.

30 Stein 1907. For an account of other early visitors to Khotan, see Montell 1935, 150–55.

31 Stein 1907, vol. 1, p. 202.

32 Ibid., vol. 2, pls. 43–47.

33 Whitfield 1985.

34 The collection in the National Museum of India is catalogued, but not illustrated, in Andrews 1935, 43–56. See also Bhattacharya 1972.

35 The fragments brought from Yotkan by Emil Trinkler and acquired by the Metropolitan Museum in 1930 are listed in Gropp 1974, 380.

36 Dyakonova and Sorokin 1960.

37 Li Yuchun 1981. This dating is based largely on the discovery of Western Han *wuzhu* coins at the site.

38 In addition to the Han dynasty date given in Li Yuchun 1981, the various dates that have been given to the Yotkan earthenwares are enumerated in Valenstein 1997–98, n. 41.

39 A group of earthenware appliqué ornaments and figurines that appear to be identical to the material from Yotkan were discovered by Japanese scholars in the early 1900s at the Kumutula caves, near Kucha, on the northern rim of the Taklamakan Desert. See Kagawa Mokushiki, 1999, color pl. 4, where they are attributed to the Tang dynasty. Similar finds from Hetian [Khotan], pls. 2, 3(3), are also attributed to the Tang period.

40 Stein 1907, vol. 1, pp. 207–8. Gösta Montell gives a lengthy stylistic analysis of a representative group of the Yotkan Khotanese earthenwares in which she documents the

reliance of this material on both classical and early Indian art. See Montell 1935, 160–92, pls.

41 Rhie 1999, 265–66, figs. 4.6a, 4.6b.

42 Bernard et al. 1973, pls. 23, 37–38, 40, 52–53, 72.

43 Guillaume and Rougeulle 1987, pls. 19–20, pl. xvii.

44 Alexander the Great entered Taxila in 326 BC.

45 Marshall 1951, vol. 2, pp. 401, 432–33; vol. 3, pl. 130(f).

46 Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 401, 436–37; vol. 3, pl. 131(k,l,m).

47 The fragment of an appliqué from the Yotkan site illustrated here (fig. 85) is part of the Trinkler collection sold to the Metropolitan Museum in 1930. Compare also the earthenware appliqué from Yotkan in the Hermitage Museum illustrated in Dyakonova and Sorokin 1960, pl. 19, no. 688. For Greek gold prototypes of these lion masks, see Williams and Ogden 1994, cat. nos. 8, 39, 187.

48 For Buddhist influences on early Chinese art, see Wu Hung 1986.

49 The exact date that Buddhism reached China varies from author to author. For a thorough study of the introduction of Buddhism into China and its early development during the Han dynasty, see Ch'en 1972, 21–53.

50 Ibid., 57–209.

51 The lotus flower was depicted in Egyptian art as early as the third millennium BC. See Rawson 1984, 200–202. However, its more immediate association with Buddhism is of importance here.

52 Wu Hung 1986, 270–71, figs. 13–14.

53 Annette Juliano points out that independent pearl borders, edging, and pearling also were part of the Buddhist ornamental lexicon during the Six Dynasties era. See Juliano and Lerner 2001a, 84, 175.

54 This jar, painted with brownish black designs under a brownish yellow glaze, was found in Nanjing in 1983 during the excavation of a group of five tombs attributed in the archaeological report to the end of the Wu or beginning of the Western Jin dynasty. See Yi Jiasheng 1988, color pl., figs. 1–3.

55 For the significance of these Buddhas, see Wu Hung 1986, 289–90; Abe 2002, 97–101.

56 He Yunao et al. 1993, pls. 55–106; Shanghai 1981, pls. 26, 36, 57, 63, 96.

57 Ho Wai-kam 1961; Wu Hung 1986, 283–91. Albert Dien gives a more recent, in-depth examination of this series of urns in Dien 2001b. He calls this type of object a *duisuguan* (figured jar) and investigates various suggestions that have been made concerning the *duisuguan*, concluding that they "may well all be relevant because this was a potent symbol that could bear many layers of significance and associations" (ibid., 535).

58 Jessica Rawson notes the interrelationship between the decoration of some post-Han tombs and that of Buddhist cave temples in Rawson 2000.

59 For example, the Western Han tombs of Liu Sheng and his consort, Dou Wan. See Zhongguo and Hebei 1980.

60 For example, the statuary found on the tumulus of the Western Han general Huo Qubing in Xingping xian, Shaanxi. See Paludan 1991, 17–27, figs. 8–21.

61 Wu Hung has explored this premise at some length in Wu Hung 1995, 121–42, esp. 126–33.

62 Ibid., 121–42, esp. 133–42.

63 Ch'en 1972, 16–18.

64 Rhie 1999, 257–322.

65 Ibid., 259.

66 Dyakonova and Sorokin 1960, pls. 38–41, 44–48.

67 Juliano 2001b, 125. See also Juliano and Lerner 2001b, 15–16.

68 The social, political, and multicultural connections between Buddhist monks and merchants (as well as nomads) in northwest China between the fourth and seventh century are detailed in Juliano and Lerner 2001a.

69 Soper 1960, 56. Literary evidence for the importation of Buddhist art into China is presented in Soper 1949 and Soper 1959.

70 Soper 1960, 56–57.

71 Ch'en 1972, 166.

72 It should be remembered that jade

was exported from the area that would later become the kingdom of Khotan to the Central Plain region as early as the Shang dynasty: the vast majority of the tested jade objects from the Fu Hao tomb near Anyang, Henan, were made of Khotanese jade. See Zhongguo 1980, 114–15.

73 Bielenstein 1997, 103–4, quoting the *Liang shu*, *Nan shi*, *Wei shu*, *Zhou shu*, and *Bei shi*.

74 It is recorded that Yutian presented precious stones in 519 and a foreign carved jade Buddha in 541 to Southern Dynasties courts. See Bielenstein 1997, 84, quoting the *Liang shu* and *Nan shi*. For a list of the magnificent presents brought to the Southern Dynasties courts from various foreign states, see ibid., 83–84, quoting a number of dynastic histories.

75 For discussions of the Silk Road, see Boulnois 1966; Klimburg 1982; Whitfield 1999; Juliano and Lerner 2001c; Tucker 2003; Boulnois 2004; Whitfield 2004.

76 As per satellite imagery. I thank Anandaroop Roy for this information.

77 Klimburg 1982, 27.

78 All of these sites are in present-day Xinjiang.

79 For an extensive survey of recent archaeological finds attesting to west-east trade at sites along the various Silk Roads, see Xu Pingfang 1995.

80 Information particularly applicable to the present study is found in Rawson 1991.

81 These embassies to China have been thoroughly documented in Bielenstein 1997, 80–107.

82 Soper 1960, 56, 81.

83 Jenner 1981, 110, 220.

84 Ibid., 249.

85 Ibid., 110, 218–20, map 1.

86 An almost identical flask, excavated in 1986 in Guyuan xian, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, is illustrated in Ma Donghai 1988.

87 Ma Donghai 1988.

88 Fontein and Wu Tung 1973, 149, cat. no. 71; Juliano and Lerner 2001a, cat. no. 81(a,b).

89 Figures of musicians, including three harpists and a flautist, have been found among the ornaments decorating a Khotanese earthenware vessel. See Montell 1935, 167–68, pl. 3(1), fig. 10.

90 Fontein and Wu Tung 1973, 149, cat. no. 71.

91 Some authorities include the maritime trade routes between China and the west as part of the Silk Road. For example, Luce Boulnois describes the Silk Road as "not a single road but a network of routes, over both land and sea, which, starting from around the time of Roman expansion towards the Middle East in the 1st century BC, linked the Mediterranean world with China, as well as all the countries located between these two farthest points of the Eurasian continent. These were trade connections that operated not directly between these two extremities, but rather between partners at close hand: by land across the entire continent; and by sea through the ports of the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, India, South-East Asia and China" (Boulnois 2004, 14). See also ibid., 122–25.

92 Lerner 2001; Marshak 2001; Luo Feng 2001.

93 Schafer 1963, 12, 281.

94 Cheng Yue 1996. See also Rong Xinjiang 2000.

95 Shaanxi 2001; Yin Shenping et al. 2000.

96 For a study of the *sabao* office, see Luo Feng 2000.

chapter four The Gao Family and the Northern Qi Dynasty

The Metropolitan Museum's earthenware container has been attributed to the Northern Qi dynasty because of its very close affinities with comparable documentary ceramics found in five northern Chinese sixth-century tombs. Each of these tombs belonged to a person who was directly associated with the ruling non-Chinese Gao family and its Northern Qi Chinese court. This is critical evidence concerning the possible identity of the owner of this mysterious ceramic.

xianbei

The Gao family, in all probability, descended from the Xianbei nomads. The Xianbei were a confederation of a number of nomadic tribes who in ancient times inhabited what is now northern China and Inner Mongolia.[1] In the first century AD, one of the Xianbei tribes, the Toba (also known as Tuoba or Tabgatch), started to migrate southward into the steppelands, where they became nomadic pastoralists; in time, they pushed into northern China. It was these Toba Xianbei who succeeded in uniting northern China and establishing the Northern Wei dynasty in 386.[2] Subsequently, the formerly nomadic Toba Xianbei became partially sinicized, many of them adopting Han Chinese dress, language, surnames, and customs. Indeed, in reform measures of 494, 495, and 496, the Northern Wei emperor, Toba Hong, known posthumously as Gaozu or Xiaowen (r. 471–99), banned the wearing of Xianbei clothing, prohibited the use of northern (i.e., non-Han) languages at court, and changed the royal family surname from Toba to Yuan.[3] At the same time, the Toba still maintained many facets of their nomadic identity, and elements of their nomadic culture were absorbed by the Han Chinese whom they now ruled.[4]

The Toba Xianbei taste for ostentation is well known. It has been said of the Toba residing in their second Northern Wei capital, Luoyang, that "In this one magnificent generation, in the heart of the ancient Chinese home-land, the Toba lords

squandered their way down the road to ruin that Chinese moralists had so often described before them: building, decorating, laying out great gardens with artificial lakes and hills, amassing huge households, employing troupes of musicians and dancers and acrobats, collecting expensive curios and fine horses, dining and drinking and wenching—and in the process, supporting Buddhist monasteries with the same recklessness that they showed everywhere else."[5] The Xianbei preference for elaborate decoration can be seen today in the imperially commissioned northern Chinese Buddhist cave temples, some of which were mentioned in previous sections. It is also apparent in the sumptuous engraving on some stone sarcophagi and epitaph tablets from the tombs, which date to the 520s and a little later, of several late Northern Wei nobles near Luoyang.[6] Many of the deceased were members of the Yuan family, the surname adopted by the Toba royal family in 496. The subject matter on this funerary paraphernalia includes the symbols of the four directions, extraordinary creatures and monsters, and scenes of filial piety. Late Northern Wei imperial carriages were likewise quite grand. According to the *Wei shu*, in 520 the court's classification of chariot design decreed that when the empresses made their ritual excursions to the suburban ancestral temples, the celestial-image chariot they used should feature all manner of images, including mountains, forests, people, dragons, phoenixes, and the symbols of the four directions.[7] It has been noted that later on, in the Northern Qi period, "it was stipulated that officials of the first rank could decorate their ox-drawn carriages with gold or pure silver, officials of the second and third ranks could have bronze ornaments, and officials higher than the seventh rank could decorate their vehicles with copper."[8]

A distinctive Chinese sixth-century earthenware standing tomb figure (fig. 89) illustrates the Xianbei presence in northern China. This figure wears a characteristic rounded, puffed-out headdress and a long, closed-collar overgarment with the sleeves hanging empty at the sides.[9] Inasmuch as such attire does not appear to have been worn by other groups, especially the Han Chinese, these figures are generally identified as Xianbei officials.[10] This type of tomb figure has been found in a number of tombs, including several belonging to people who were linked to the Northern Qi's ruling Gao family.[11]

Trees occasionally appear in the genealogical mythology of the Toba Xianbei. For example, according to the *Wei shu*, trees crop up miraculously in some accounts: "[during] the ceremony performed at the ancestral temple under the orders of Emperor Shih-tsu in the middle of the fifth century ... the Northern Wei party felled a birch and planted it upright in the soil. Later, a whole forest sprang up in that spot and people worshipped there."[12] In other stories, "an elm tree sprouts miraculously from T'o-pa I-i's vomit," and "the wood of Shih-i-chien's coffin sprouts miraculously, eventually producing a whole forest, and a complete forest of elms comes up from the place where Lady Ho-lan

gives birth to T'o-pa Kuei."[13] As will be seen in the section ahead concerning the ownership of the Metropolitan Museum's covered container, these Toba ancestral legends involving trees might be relevant to the determination of the identity of the person for whom it was made.

gao family history

The precise genealogy of Gao Huan (496–547), who controlled the Eastern Wei dynasty and founded the succeeding Northern Qi dynasty, is uncertain; however, there are very strong indications that Gao's ancestors were Xianbei.[14] It is known that Gao Huan rose—through a number of Machiavellian tactics—from an obscure northern-frontier general to the founder of a new northern Chinese dynasty, with a posthumous imperial rank.[15] Gao Huan's first wife was a member of the house of Lou, a Xianbei family that had changed its original surname to Lou at the end of the fifth century.[16] Through subsequent marriages, Gao managed to connect his own family to the Toba Xianbei royal family. It has been explained that "all women who entered Kao Huan's harem between 530 and 534 had been previously married to members of the T'o-pa elite. This was their major asset ... Kao Huan's marriages ... [to these ladies] provided an avenue for the fulfillment of his ambition to link the Kao name with that of the Northern Wei [Toba] royal family."[17] Furthermore, several of Gao Huan's sons and daughters were married to members of the Toba royal house, including his sixth son, Gao Yan (r. 560–61), whose Toba wife became empress when he took the throne in 560.[18]

gao family connections

As noted above, documentary ceramics that are fundamental to the attribution of the Museum's flamboyant earthenware container have been found in tombs belonging to Hulü Che, Lou Rui, Xu Xianxiu, Feng Zihui,[19] and Kudi Huiluo, all of whom were directly associated with the Gao family.[20]

Hulü Che belonged to a prominent military family who originally were Gaoche, a major northern steppe tribe.[21] His grandfather, Hulü Guang (d. 572), was Chief Minister of the Left to Gao Wei (r. 565–77), the fifth Northern Qi emperor. Hulü Guang's daughter was Gao Wei's principal wife, and she took the title of empress when he was enthroned. Another Hulü Guang daughter had been married to the heir apparent of the third Northern Qi emperor, Gao Yan, and three princesses from the Gao family had married into the Hulü family.

Lou Rui was Prince of Dongan. He had a number of military, provincial, and court titles, and at his death was honored as Grand Minister of War. A Xianbei tribesman from the north, he was the nephew of the Northern Qi Empress Dowager, who was of Xianbei stock (née Lou), and a cousin of several Northern Qi emperors. He was connected by marriage to other highly placed families.

Xu Xianxiu, whose grandfather and father held official posts in the Northern Wei border defense commands,[22] had affiliated with Gao Huan and held progressively important official posts during the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi periods. At the time of his death, along with many other titles bestowed on him by Gao family emperors, he carried the designations Defender-in-Chief (one of the top-echelon court titles), Grand Guardian, Director of the Department of State Affairs, and Prince of Wuan.[23]

Feng Zihui belonged to a powerful family of high-ranking officials from Bohai in Hebei. According to excavated tomb epitaphs, the Feng family tombs can be dated from the Northern Wei to the Sui dynasty.[24] Feng Zihui's epitaph states that at his death he held the titles Right Vice Director of the Department of State Affairs and Regional Inspector of Jizhou. He served Gao Huan in many military campaigns, for which he was given several titles, and was awarded many more honors under several of the Gao family emperors.[25]

Kudi Huiluo was a warrior from the far north who gave allegiance to Gao Huan at a judicious time. At his death he carried the titles Governor of Dingzhou, Grand Chief of Armies, and Prince Kudi of Shunyang. His first wife, with whom he was buried, was a member of the Hulü family.

Tombs of two other people who were connected to the Gao family—Ruru Princess Linhe and Yu Hong—have yielded documentary evidence other than ceramics that also is germane to this study. Ruru Princess Linhe died at the age of thirteen.[26] She was a granddaughter of the chieftain of the nomadic Ruru (also known as Juan-juan) people.[27] She had been married at the age of five to eight-year-old Gao Zhan, the ninth son of Gao Huan, who eventually became the fourth Northern Qi emperor (r. 561–65). Yu Hong is an example of a Westerner who was an official in the Northern Qi court and was buried in a Chinese city.[28] A native of the state of Yu, Yu Hong was sent by the Ruru chieftain to serve as ambassador to Persia and several other western countries, and finally to the Northern Qi court. Afterward, he became an official in the Northern Qi, Northern Zhou, and Sui dynasty governments; during the Northern Zhou, he held the official title of Acting Administrator of the Office of *Sabao.*

notes

1 For a history of the Xianbei, see Barfield 1989, 85–90, 105–14, 118–27; Jagchid and Symons 1989, 32–37, 67. See also Golden 1992, 69–72; Dien 1991. For early Xianbei remains in northern China and Inner Mongolia, see Su Bai 1979. For an extensive survey of the history and art of the Murong and Toba Xianbei tribes, see James C. Y. Watt in Watt et al. 2004.

2 Translations of relevant Chinese

texts along with historical information about the Toba Xianbei is found in Soper 1959, 94–114. For the background of the Toba Xianbei, see also Barfield 1989, 118–27; Dien 1991; Juliano 1992; Golden 1992, 73–76; Yang Hong 2002; Xiong 2003, 31–47, 78–79; James C. Y. Watt in Watt et al. 2004. W. J. F. Jenner discusses the Toba's Northern Wei capitals of Pingcheng and Luoyang in Jenner 1981, part 1.

3 Jenner 1981, 58, quoting the *Wei shu*.

4 As Albert Dien has noted, "The edict of 495, then, may be seen as an accommodation between the two social systems, bringing the T'o-pa system into closer accord with the Chinese, but at the same time altering the Chinese system so as to ensure T'o-pa control of that system. At one level, the accommodation gave the Hsien-pei the appearance of merging with their Chinese subjects: their names were changed to Chinese forms, their clothing and customs altered, and their language was forbidden at court. But as these outward manifestations of difference and possible areas of friction were reduced, the social-political structure was being manipulated to give the T'o-pa a greater presence in the civil offices of the government" (Dien 1976, 86).

Victor Mair has challenged "the myth of complete sinicization" of the Toba, or Tabgatch, people: "Cultural interchange is not a unidirectional phenomenon: surely the non-Han peoples who controlled China for a substantial portion of its history and who have been trading continuously with the Chinese for millennia must have influenced the development of Chinese civilization. We ought to give at least as much attention to how the non-Han peoples changed China as we do to how China changed them. For instance, it is more legitimate to speak of the partial tabgatchization of China than it is to declare the utter sinicization of the Tabgatch" (Mair 1992, 358).

Jessica Rawson discusses the evidence of cultural and artistic exchange seen in fifth- and sixth-century tombs in northern central China in Rawson 2001. She concludes that "they [the Xianbei] did not select an entirely new lifestyle. We have just examined the ways in which these foreigners perpetuated some of their own customs, furnishings and vessels. What they seem to have done is to have maintained large elements of their day-to-day lives, but to have taken over certain fundamental Chinese practices and perspectives on the afterlife and the universe in which that afterlife was situated" (ibid., 141).

5 Soper 1959, 103.

6 Bush 1974; Bush 1975; Wang 1999; Wang 2003.

7 Wang 1999, 59.

8 Liu Panxiu 2000, 277.

9 For a discussion of this coat with false sleeves, see Watt et al. 2004, cat. no. 131.

10 Dien 1991, 51–52. Slightly different clothes that also have been associated with the Xianbei are seen on earthenware tomb figures excavated from Northern Wei and Northern Zhou tombs farther to the west, in Ningxia. See Juliano and Lerner 2001a, cat. nos. 24(a,b), 39(a–d).

11 Twenty-three of these figures are from the Feng family tombs, some possibly from the Northern Qi tomb of Feng Zihui. See Zhang Ji 1957, pl. 12(5); Akiyama Terukazu et al. 1968, pl. 344. Three hundred forty-two such figures were excavated from what might be Gao Yang's tomb. See Zhongguo and Hebei 2003, color pls. 14(2), 15(1), pls. 21–23, figs. 36–37. Two hundred one very similar hooded figures were discovered in the tomb of Ruru Princess Linhe. See Cixian 1984a, pl. 3(5), fig. 4(2); Dien 1991, 51.

12 Holmgren 1982b, 80, n. 7.

13 Ibid.

14 Jennifer Holmgren examines the origins and early history of the Gao lineage in Holmgren 1982a, 2–12. She remarks that "evidence shows quite clearly that Kao Huan's sons saw themselves and were seen by others as Hsien-pi" (ibid., 10).

She further observes that "Kao Huan's sons were compelled—at least before their Hsien-pi followers—to deny all links with their 'Chinese' past and to become more Hsien-pi than their immediate forefathers had ever been" (ibid., 11–12). See also Holmgren 1981, 87–90.

Among other problems in determining the histories of many fifth- and sixth-century northern families, there is substantial indication of lineage falsification among both Han Chinese and Xianbei families whose origins had been embarrassingly humble. Furthermore, Xianbei family names frequently were changed, and there was much intermarriage between members of the Han Chinese and the Xianbei elite.

15 Jennifer Holmgren discusses Gao Huan's ruthless rise to power in detail in Holmgren 1982a. See also Holmgren 1981, 87–90, 93–94.

16 Holmgren 1982a, 12, quoting the *Wei shu*. For the Lou family, see ibid., 12–16.

17 Ibid., 36.

18 Ibid., 21, quoting the *Bei Qi shu* and the *Bei shi*.

19 The Feng family finding was not a controlled excavation. This group of tombs had been honored for centuries by farmers in the area, who even held services for the dead. However, in 1948 some farmers dug up four of the tombs and took the material they found to their own homes. These artifacts were eventually collected by the authorities and today are in several Chinese museums. See Akiyama Terukazu et al. 1968, 237, comments regarding pl. 346.

20 The Hulü Che, Lou Rui, and Kudi Huiluo family connections given in this study have been compiled from Holmgren 1982a; Holmgren 1990; Dien 1991; Fong 1991.

21 The history of the Hulü family is detailed in Holmgren 1990. The Gaoche are mentioned in Barfield 1989, 120, 123, 132.

22 Shanxi and Taiyuan 2003, 37.

23 Ibid., 37–39.

24 Zhang Ji 1957.

25 Ibid., 35–36.

26 Ruru Princess Linhe's family connections given here have been compiled from Holmgren 1982a; Cixian 1984a; Holmgren 1990; Dien 1991; Fong 1991.

27 For an account of the nomadic Ruru people from the north, particularly their relationship with the Chinese Wei dynasties, see Barfield 1989, 120–26; Jagchid and Symons 1989, 67–68, 144–46, 170–71. See also Kwanten 1979, 18–21; Sinor 1990; Golden 1992, 76–79; Christian 1998, 235–38.

28 Zhang Qingjie and Jiang Boqin 2000; Shanxi et al. 2001; Zhang Qingjie 2001; Jiang Boqin 2001.

chapter five Questions

function

When this covered container was examined in the Metropolitan Museum's Objects Conservation Department, it was determined that the contents had been removed and the interior wiped clean, thus obliterating any clues to the container's intended function. The piece was fired at a very low temperature, and the gray earthenware body is so soft that many of the appliqué-relief decorative motifs were blurred during manufacture or in subsequent handling. The soft and porous body, as well as the extremely fugitive nature of the slip covering, would have made this receptacle impractical for everyday use. Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that the container could have only been intended for ritual use, in a temple or a tomb. The container's inner dimensions are ample: the body measures 10¼ in. (26 cm) from the bottom to the recessed mouth and 11½ in. (29.2 cm) from the bottom to the edge of the mouth rim; the inside diameter at the mouth rim is 7½ in. (19.1 cm), about 8 in. (20.3 cm) at the midsection, and 7½ in. (19.1 cm) at the bottom. Consequently, it could accommodate a variety of contents. While its exact function has not yet been determined, several possibilities present themselves, and these are explored below.

CONTAINER FOR A BUDDHIST RELIQUARY DEPOSIT. Several scholars have suggested that the container might have been used to hold a reliquary deposit in a Buddhist temple. Archaeological discoveries of stone reliquary containers include a large Northern Wei stone chest, dated by inscription in accordance with 481, found in 1964 in the foundations of a Buddhist pagoda in Dingxian, Hebei.[1] This casket contained 5,657 items, including agate and glass beads, Chinese and Sasanian coins, gilt bronze seals, and personal ornaments. Glass objects were also found, among them five very small bottles of a type used frequently as the innermost containers for the Buddhist relics. Stone caskets dating to the Sui dynasty are exampled by finds at another site in Dingxian.[2] Tang dynasty stone outer containers for successive

inner reliquary caskets of bronze, silver, gold, or other precious material that house Buddhist relics also can be documented.[3] Probably the most familiar of these stone containers is the square, painted white marble stupa, which held a gilt bronze stupa, in turn containing a silver gilt coffin-shaped reliquary enshrining the Buddha's finger-bone relic, found in 1987 in the crypt of Famen Temple near Xi'an, Shaanxi.[4]

The striking resemblance of the Museum's white-slipped earthenware container to carved white marble—particularly as it must have appeared in its original condition before the slip almost disappeared—suggests that this is a comparatively inexpensive ceramic substitute for a more costly object made of white stone. If this is the case, then this faux-marble container, like the real stone caskets cited above, could have been designed to be a container for a Buddhist reliquary deposit. However, this theory can be readily challenged with the question: Why would a container for reliquaries, which invariably are made of more valuable materials, have been fashioned of such a humble material as earthenware?

REPOSITORY FOR BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPTS. Five earthenware globular jars and twenty-six earthenware fragments, all carrying dedicatory inscriptions in the Gandharan language, which was written in Kharosthi script, and a collection of twenty-nine birch bark scrolls with texts in Kharosthi script, were acquired in 1994 by the British Library's Oriental and India Office Collections.[5] It is presumed that the scrolls originally had been stored in one of the ceramic jars.[6] The scrolls, virtually all of which contain Buddhist religious texts, are believed to be the oldest Buddhist manuscripts discovered to date. They are thought to represent a ritual burial of worn or damaged, discarded manuscripts, dating to about the first century AD, from a Buddhist monastery in eastern Afghanistan. Buddhist manuscripts written in Sanskrit, which are of a slightly later date, have also been found in earthenware containers.[7] All of this evidence suggests that, alternately, the Metropolitan Museum's Chinese earthenware container could possibly have been intended to contain the ritual deposit of Buddhist texts.

MINGQI GRANARY. The shape of the Museum's Northern Qi container resembles some Han dynasty tall, cylindrical *mingqi* models of granaries, a number of which stand on three animal-shaped legs. These Han earthenwares were used to store various grains in the tomb. Excavated granaries occasionally carry inscriptions identifying their contents, and some of these contents have been found intact. The remains of three green-glazed containers found in 1962 in Xi'an, Shaanxi, have ink inscriptions on the lids describing them as *qun* (a round granary) for polished rice, wheat, and millet.[8]

However, the shape of the typical sixth-century *mingqi* models of storage buildings is somewhat different: the distinctive roof is domed and stepped. This can be seen in a number of examples, such as

the warehouse found in 1975 in Cixian, Hebei, in the Northern Qi tomb of Gao Run, who was reburied in 576;[9] the two found in what might be Gao Yang's tomb;[10] and the one found in the tomb of Lady Zhao Huren in Cixian.[11] These models, usually called *cang* (warehouse) in the archaeological reports, have little in common with the sixth-century container under consideration.

TOMB FURNITURE. It is most likely that this elaborately decorated container was placed in a tomb, perhaps en suite with several other matching vessels, to store some of the personal effects that the deceased would require there. As has been seen, this piece is related to a small group of celadon-glazed stonewares and low-fired glazed earthenwares with flamboyant, appliqué-relief ornamentation excavated from Northern Qi and Sui dynasty tombs. Whenever they have been found, there generally were two or more examples of each type of object. While the celadons could have been used by the tomb occupant during his or her lifetime, the earthenwares probably would have been manufactured exclusively for burial.

These ornate ceramics constituted only a small part of the tomb's total ceramic inventory; in every case, the other ceramic vessels in the tomb were rather plain. Among the thirty-five celadons from the Feng family tombs, only four were jars with extravagant ornamentation (fig. 4),[12] and there were just two small, ornately decorated celadon jars (fig. 8) out of thirty-three ceramics found in the Hulü Che tomb.[13] Eleven elaborate objects (figs. 11–13) were among the seventy-six earthenwares removed from the Lou Rui tomb.[14] Among the two hundred earthenwares recovered from the tomb of Xu Xianxiu, there were just five ornate pieces (figs. 14–15).[15] The seven covered jars with lavish decoration (fig. 10) from the Kudi Huiluo tomb were part of a group of thirty-three earthenwares.[16]

The considerable size of these stonewares and earthenwares also is remarkable; with the exception of the two small celadon jars from the Hulü Che tomb, all of these ornate ceramics are larger than most of the other vessels excavated from the same burial. It is quite likely, therefore, that these large flamboyant wares, which were more expensive to produce than the plainer and smaller ceramics, would have had some special importance. If the Metropolitan Museum's sizeable earthenware container was intended to be used as tomb furniture, its close relationship to this elite family of large flamboyant ceramics would imply that it, too, had the same kind of importance.

ownership

The suggestions about the function of the Museum's earthenware covered container made above indicate that the piece was intended for use either in a temple or in a tomb. The next question to be addressed is the identity of the temple or the person for which or whom it was made.

TEMPLE. While it is possible that this object was intended for Buddhist ritual purposes, there is no verifiable evidence concerning which of the many sixth-century northern Chinese Buddhist temple-monasteries might have housed it. A number of extant Buddhist cave temples, some of which have been mentioned above, can be dated to the Six Dynasties period. The surviving statues, carvings, and paintings in these cave temples provide an excellent documentary description of Six Dynasties Buddhist art and architecture, but there does not appear to be any *in situ* evidence of the portable liturgical vessels that might have been used there.

TOMB: THE GAO FAMILY ASSOCIATIONS. If, on the other hand, this container was intended to be placed in a tomb, the identity of the person for whom it was made is an intriguing question. All available evidence indicates that the container would have been produced for the tomb of a member of the ruling non-Chinese Gao family or a member of one of the elite families centered around the Gao and its Northern Qi Chinese court.

Several significant particulars support this theory. First, its extraordinarily lavish ornamentation relates the piece to a pivotal family of flamboyant ceramics with bold appliqué-relief decoration that were made in northern China in the second half of the sixth century. Along with the Museum's container, these flamboyant ceramics would appear to echo a fondness for ostentatious decoration that is quite evident in material produced for the Xianbei people from the late Northern Wei through the Northern Qi dynasty. There are very strong indications that the Gao family's ancestors were Xianbei, and the Gao themselves were directly connected to the Toba Xianbei royal house. Second, its extremely high quality clearly indicates that it would have been produced for a very important burial. The relationship of this container to the documentary examples of flamboyant ceramics from five northern Chinese tombs has been demonstrated; all of these tombs belonged to people who were connected to the Gao royal family. It is reasonable to deduce that the owner of this piece, too, was connected to the Gao court. The third connection between the Museum's container and the Gao family is the fact that many of the decorative motifs on the container can be correlated with counterparts in the Buddhist ornamental vocabulary. It has been observed that "Under the Northern Ch'i Buddhism enjoyed a kind of silver age."[17] The first emperor of the Northern Qi, Gao Yang, who is said to have been an ardent Buddhist, was a patron of the Xiangtangshan Buddhist cave temples. A twelfth-century stele at the site states that Gao Yang had three caves excavated and Buddhist images carved there.[18] The fourth point connecting the container and the Northern Qi court is the fact that trees figured in the genealogical mythology of the Toba Xianbei tribe. Both Gao Huan and his children were married to Toba people.[19] It is not beyond the realm of possibility, therefore, that if the mysterious upright and pendant vertical ornament on this container represents a tree, it was meant to depict a

tree in a Toba legend, as ordered by a Toba patron who was linked to the Gao family.

Finally, the container itself might be seen as reflecting the cultural ambivalence of the Gao family and its Toba relations. The shape and some ornamental elements indicate the influence of "Han Chinese" art.[20] By the end of the fifth century, the Toba Xianbei had lost a certain part of their own nomadic identity and adopted many of the cultural mannerisms of the Chinese people they had conquered earlier. At the same time, some of the ornamental elements on this container had also been used by the early Eurasian nomads. This might be viewed as a reflection of the Gao family's probable Xianbei nomadic origins, and the nomadic origins of the Toba Xianbei families closely related to it.

notes

1 Hebei 1966, pls. 5–7; Whitfield 1989, 133.

2 Whitfield 1989, 133–34.

3 Ibid., 134–35.

4 Shaanxi 1988, color pl. 1(1). Three roundels of frontal human heads, a decorative element on the Museum's container, embellish each side of this stupa.

5 Salomon 1999.

6 The jar measures 13¾ in. (34.8 cm) in height and 12¼ in. (31.1 cm) in diameter. The original width of the preponderance of these scrolls apparently ranged from about 5½ in. (14 cm) to 9¾ in. (25 cm).

7 Salomon 1999, 84–85.

8 Polished rice was still in one granary, which is so labeled. See Xi'an 1963.

9 Cixian 1979, fig. 7(18).

10 Zhongguo and Hebei 2003, pl. 48(1–2), fig. 96(1–2).

11 Cixian 1977, fig. 9(13).

12 Zhang Ji 1957.

13 Shanxi and Taiyuan 1992.

14 Shanxi and Taiyuan 1983.

15 Shanxi and Taiyuan 2003.

16 Wang Kelin 1979.

17 Soper 1966, 262.

18 Ibid., 259–60.

19 Gao Yan's Toba wife became empress when he was enthroned in 560.

20 It must be remembered, however, that by the sixth century this "Han Chinese" art in itself reflects an accumulation of influences from any number of foreign cultures.

chapter six Observations

There are many obvious lacunae in the information concerning the Metropolitan Museum's container. In particular, analogous documentary excavated ceramic material that can provide a frame of reference is extremely sparse. While plain-surfaced high-fired glazed stonewares and low-fired glazed earthenwares have been found in a number of sixth-century Chinese tombs, comparable stonewares and earthenwares with elaborate appliqué-relief decoration have been discovered in very few of them. More to the point, no documentary slip-coated earthenware object with flamboyant appliqué-relief embellishment appears to have been published to date.

The remarkable motif characterized here as either a foliate column or a tree sets this covered container apart from any published Chinese ceramic. So, too, do the four (rather than three) truncated legs with paw-shaped feet, as well as the sculptural birds-over-felines that surmount them, and the enigmatic bifurcated knob. Furthermore, the employment of reflected images as a decorative device is seldom seen in Chinese ceramics.

Extensive research into this piece has raised more questions than it has answered. Among the most interesting of these questions are those concerning the iconography of the unusual imagery. Why were these particular motifs used here, and what does each of them represent? Is there any special significance to the intermixing of these very dissimilar motifs on the same ceramic canvas? Why are there four, rather than the standard three, legs? Could there be some relationship to the symbols of the four directions? Other questions remain as well. As has been demonstrated, there is an undeniable relationship between the presumably earlier Khotanese earthenwares and this container. Therefore, why have no examples of the Khotanese material that would document this connection been excavated in northern China?

These questions notwithstanding, some conclusions about this very strange object can be reached:

First, documentary comparative material has provided evidence that it was produced in northern

China in the late Six Dynasties period, during the Northern Qi era.

Second, in today's parlance, the decorative technique used was labor-intensive. At least fifteen different clay molds for the various ornamental elements had to be carved and fired. Over 150 bits of clay had to be individually pressed into these molds, released, and applied to the container's surface. Furthermore, firing a ceramic of this size would have required considerable technical skill. It is self-evident, therefore, that this extravagantly ornate container—although not as costly to produce as the white marble object it probably is imitating—would have been relatively expensive to produce. Consequently, it must have been a special commission.

Third, although other possibilities were suggested in this analysis, substantial evidence indicates that the container was produced for the tomb of a member the ruling non-Chinese Gao family or a member of one of the elite families centered around the Gao and its Northern Qi Chinese court.

Fourth, this fascinating earthenware covered container epitomizes the convergence of domestic culture and foreign influences that is characteristic of sixth-century northern Chinese art. Its decorative motifs were taken from a repertoire of subjects that reaches back for many centuries in both China and the outside world. Some of its ornaments can be traced in China from the Six Dynasties period through the preceding Han and Zhou dynasties to as early as the Shang era. Some of its motifs originated in ancient Egypt and Greece and eventually found their way to China by way of the Eurasian steppes. Some Egyptian-*cum*-Grecian motifs made their way to India, were merged with Indian Buddhist iconography and then moved on to Khotan, where the Greco-Indian imagery left its mark on local earthenwares. In due course, the Egyptian-*cum*-Grecian-*cum*-Indian Buddhist-*cum*-Khotanese art forms joined the great caravan of other western influences traveling eastward along the Silk Road to China. By the sixth century, these foreign motifs had been adapted and absorbed into the native Chinese idiom to become the polyglot assortment of ornamentation seen here.

Illustrations

1. Covered footed container. Earthenware with relief decoration under creamy white slip. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). Total height: 15⅛ in. (38.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Stephen and Patricia Beckwith, 2002. 2002.143

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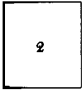

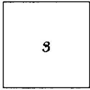

2. Covered footed container in fig. 1, second view

3. Lid of container in figs. 1–2

4. Covered jar. Stoneware with relief decoration under celadon glaze. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). From the Feng family tomb complex, Jingxian, Hebei. Height: 25 1/16 in. (63.6 cm). National Museum of China

5. Jar. Stoneware with relief decoration under celadon glaze. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). Height: 20½ in. (52.1 cm). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: Nelson Trust, 40-3/3

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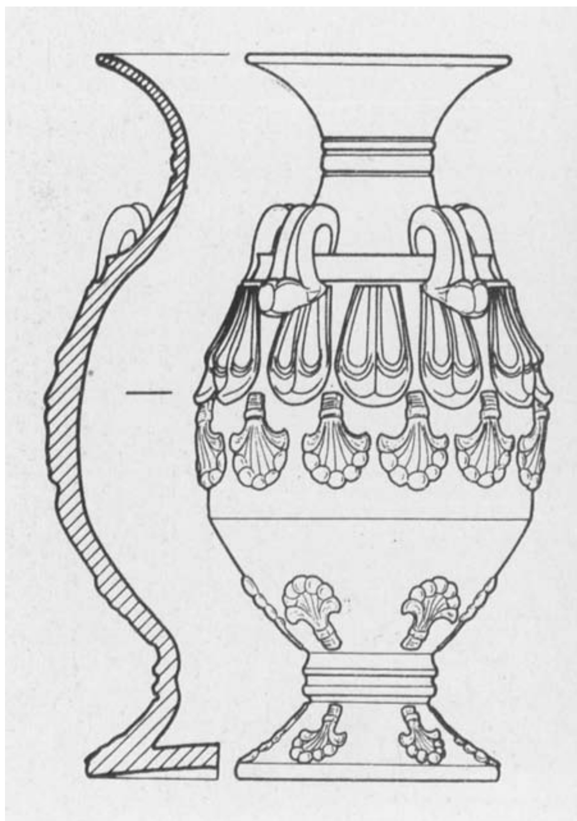
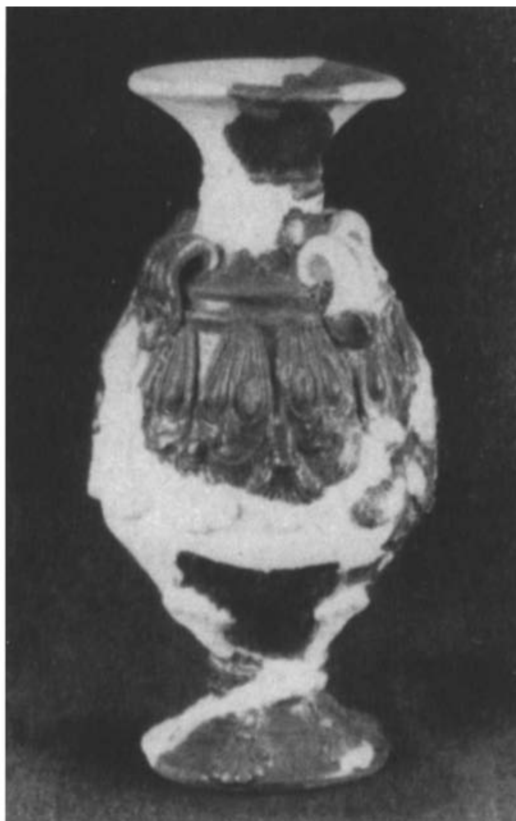
6. Jar. Stoneware with relief decoration under celadon glaze. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). Height with restored foot: 19⅞ in. (50.5 cm). Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

7. Jar. Stoneware with relief decoration under celadon glaze. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). Height: 25¼ in. (64.1 cm)

8. Jar. Stoneware with relief decoration under celadon glaze. From the Sui dynasty tomb of Hulü Che (d. 595), Taiyuan, Shanxi. Height: 7⅛ in. (18.2 cm)



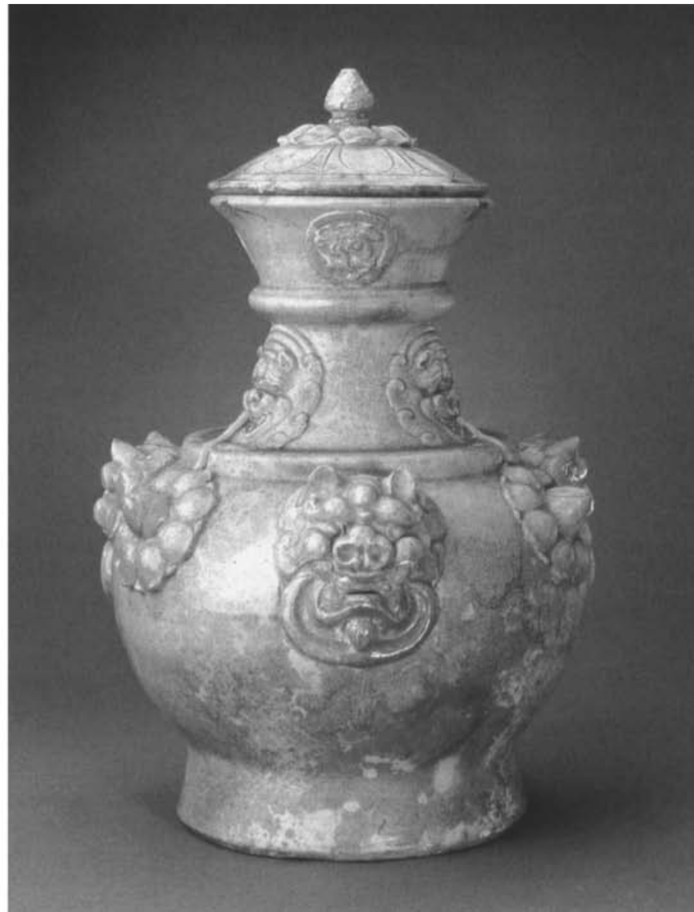


9. Jar. Stoneware with relief decoration under celadon glaze. From a late Northern Dynasties (386–581) tomb near Zibo, Shandong. Height: 23¼ in. (59 cm)

10. Covered jar. Earthenware with relief decoration under yellowish glaze. From the Northern Qi dynasty tomb of Kudi Huiluo (d. 562), Shouyang xian, Shanxi. Height: 15⅝ in. (39.7 cm). Shanxi Institute of Archaeology

11. Lamp. Earthenware with relief decoration under greenish yellow glaze. From the Northern Qi dynasty tomb of Lou Rui (d. 570), Taiyuan, Shanxi. Height: 19¾ in. (50.2 cm). Shanxi Institute of Archaeology

12. Covered jar. Earthenware with relief decoration under greenish yellow glaze. From the Northern Qi dynasty tomb of Lou Rui (d. 570), Taiyuan, Shanxi. Height: 15⅝ in. (39.8 cm). Shanxi Institute of Archaeology



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13. Ewer. Earthenware with relief decoration under greenish yellow glaze. From the Northern Qi dynasty tomb of Lou Rui (d. 570), Taiyuan, Shanxi. Height: 19 in. (48.2 cm). Shanxi Institute of Archaeology

14. Lamp. Earthenware with relief decoration under yellowish green glaze. From the Northern Qi dynasty tomb of Xu Xianxiu (d. 571), Taiyuan, Shanxi. Height: 18⅞ in. (48 cm)

15. Jar. Earthenware with relief decoration under yellowish green glaze. From the Northern Qi dynasty tomb of Xu Xianxiu (d. 571), Taiyuan, Shanxi. Height: 16⅜ in. (41.5 cm)

16. Jar. Earthenware with relief decoration under green glaze. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). Height: 13⅞ in. (35.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, Stanley Herzman Gift, 1996. 1996.15

17 18

17. Jar. Earthenware with relief decoration under green-splashed yellow glaze. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). Height: 18¼ in. (46.3 cm). Xibaolou Celadon Museum, Shenzhen, Guangdong

18. Biscuit-fired stand. Possibly Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). From the Xiangzhou kilns, Anyang, Henan. Diameter of base: 5½ in. (14 cm)

19. Jar. Stoneware with relief decoration under celadon glaze. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). Height: 7 in. (17.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Walter Kay, 2002. 2002.268

20. Jar. Stoneware with relief decoration under celadon glaze. Sui dynasty (581–619). Shouzhou ware, from Shouxian, Anhui. Height: 8⅞ in. (22.5 cm)

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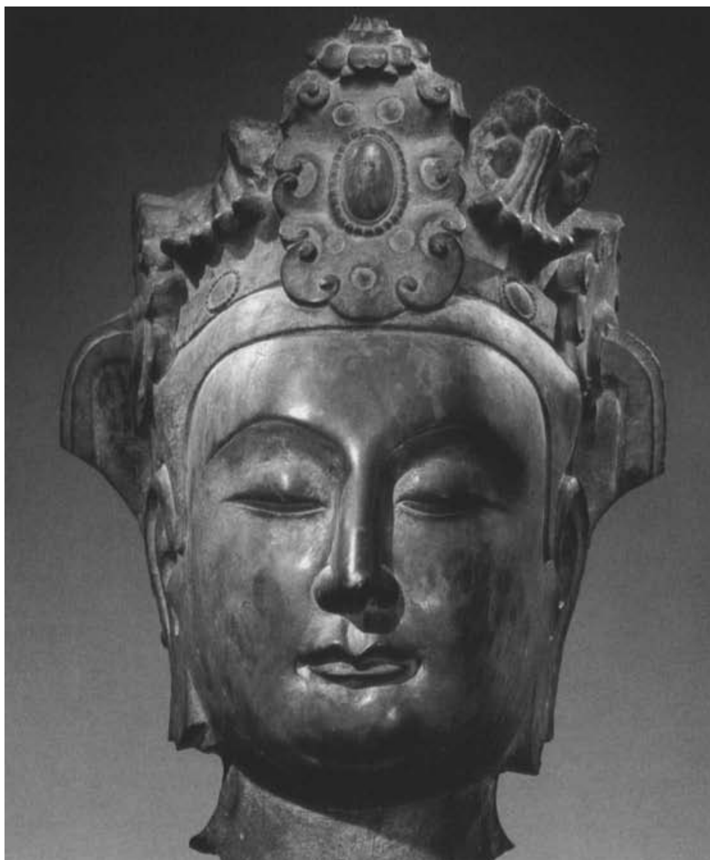
21. Head of a Bodhisattva. Limestone. From the Northern Qi dynasty (550–577), southern Xiangtangshan caves, Handan, Hebei. Height: 15 in. (38.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Rogers Fund, 1914. 14.50

22. Molded appliqué ornament. Khotanese earthenware. Ca. 2nd–5th century. Length: 2¾ in. (7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Rogers Fund, 1930. 30.32.55



23. Covered footed container. Black lacquer with bronze fittings. Eastern Zhou dynasty, Warring States period (481–221 BC). From a Chu state tomb, Yutaishan, Jiangling xian, Hubei. Height: 6⅞ in. (17.4 cm)

24. Seal-clay container. Bronze inlaid with gold. Sixteen Kingdoms, Former Liang dynasty, dated in accordance with 369. Height: 4⅝ in. (11.7 cm). Shaanxi History Museum

25. Detail of container in figs. 1–2: upright and pendant vertical motifs

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26. Molded appliqué ornament. Khotanese earthenware. Ca. 2nd–5th century. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

27. Detail of sarcophagus panel. White marble. From the Sui dynasty tomb of Yu Hong (d. 592), Taiyuan, Shanxi. Jinyuan Bureau of Cultural Properties and Tourism

28. Architectural fragments. Wood. From the site of Loulan, Xinjiang (ca. 3rd or 4th century). The British Museum

29. Drawing of carved wooden table. From kurgan no. 3, Pazyryk (ca. 300–240 BC), Altai Mountains, southern Siberia

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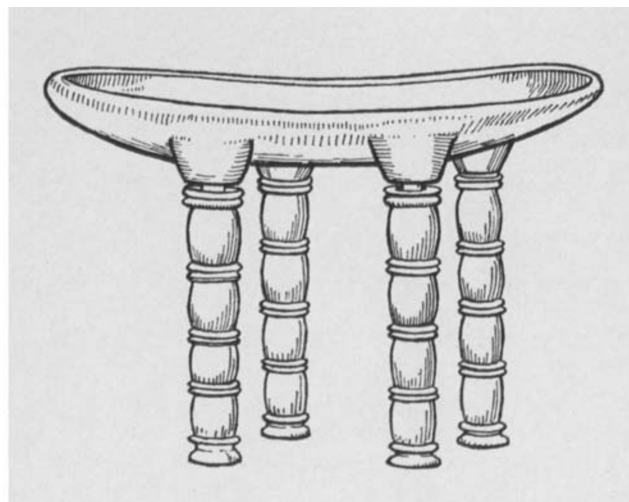

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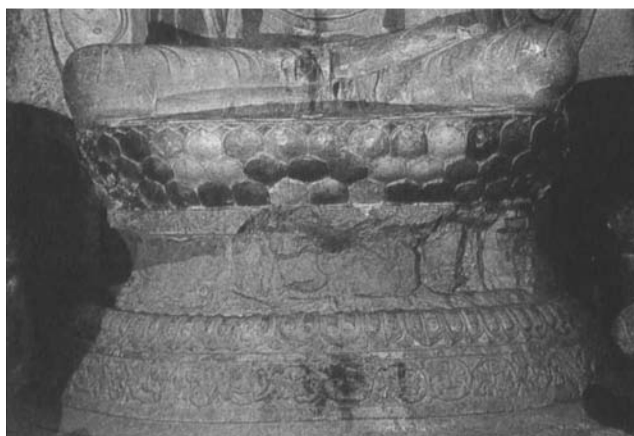
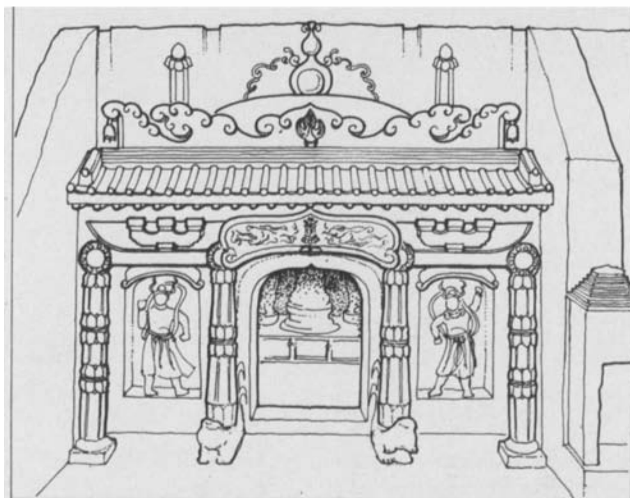
30. Stand for a Buddhist image. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577), northern Xiangtangshan caves, Handan, Hebei

31. Molded appliqué ornaments. Khotanese earthenware. Ca. 2nd–5th century. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

32. Drawing of entrance to Northern Qi dynasty (550–577), southern Xiangtangshan cave no. 7, Handan, Hebei





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33. Detail of container in figs. 1–2: large monster mask

34. Detail of container in figs. 1–2: small monster mask

35. Entrance to Northern Qi dynasty tomb of Lou Rui (d. 570), Taiyuan, Shanxi

36. Lunette over the entrance to Northern Qi dynasty tomb of Xu Xianxiu (d. 571), Taiyuan, Shanxi

37. Gateway to tomb, Dengxian, Henan, ca. late 5th–early 6th century

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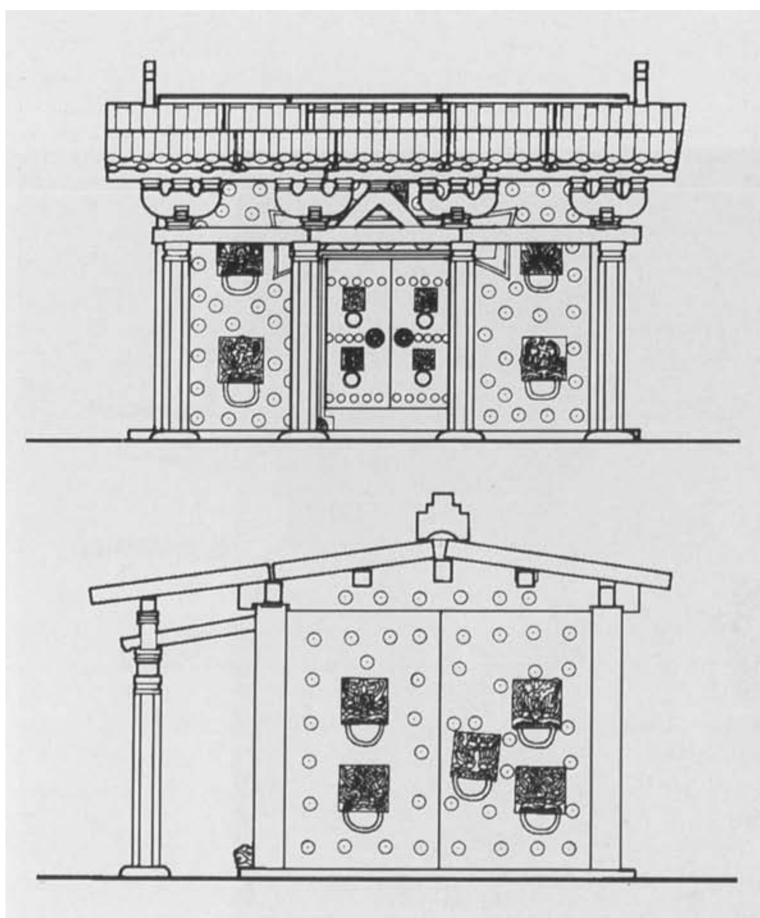
38. Drawing of stone sarcophagus. Northern Wei dynasty tomb of Song Shaozu (buried 477), Datong, Shanxi

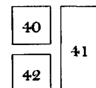
39. Armor-clad warrior. Earthenware. From a tomb in Cixian, Hebei, possibly that of Northern Qi dynasty emperor Gao Yang (r. 550–59)



40. End-tile. From the pagoda of the late Northern Wei dynasty (ca. 494–534) Buddhist Yongning Temple, Luoyang, Henan

41. Detail of jar in fig. 7: monster mask and Buddha

42. Molded appliqué ornament. Khotanese earthenware. Ca. 2nd–5th century. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg



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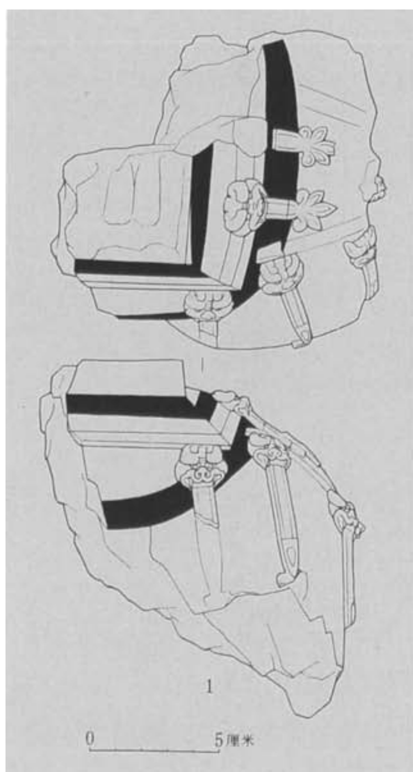
43. Drawing of fragment, base of a ceramic figure. From the pagoda of the late Northern Wei dynasty (ca. 494–534) Buddhist Yongning Temple, Luoyang, Henan

44. Detail of lintel above a niche. Late Northern Wei dynasty (ca. 494–534), Guyang cave, Longmen caves, Henan



45. Detail of central pillar-altar, Buddhist pagoda sanctuary. Limestone. Late Northern Qi to Sui dynasty, ca. 570–600. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Henry and Ruth Trubner, in memory of Gertrude Trubner and Edgar Worch, and Purchase, The Astor Foundation Gift, 1988. 1988.303

46. Detail of jewelry of a Bodhisattva. Sandstone with pigments. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, The Sackler Fund, 1965. 65.29.4

47. Jar. Earthenware with relief decoration under green glaze. Eastern Han dynasty (25–220). Height: 15½ in. (39.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929, H. O. Havemeyer Collection. 29.100.160

48. Detail of container in figs. 1–2: bird head, feline head, and paw-shaped foot

49. Lamp. Earthenware with relief decoration under green and brown glazes. Late Northern Dynasties, ca. 550–580. Height: 11¾ in. (29.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Fletcher Fund, 1927. 27.46

50. Dish. Stoneware with relief and impressed decoration under celadon glaze. Northern Zhou dynasty (557–581). Diameter: 5⅛ in. (13 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, Stanley Herzman Gift, 1998. 1998.335

51. Seated Buddha. Late Northern Wei dynasty (ca. 494–534), Gongxian cave no. 3, Gongxian, Henan

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52. Drum rack. Lacquered wood. Eastern Zhou dynasty, Warring States period (481–221 BC). From a Chu state tomb, Tianxingguan, Jiangling xian, Hubei

53. Drawing of painting above southern entrance to a tomb in Cixian, Hebei, possibly that of Northern Qi dynasty emperor Gao Yang (r. 550–59)

54. Painting above southern entrance to the Eastern Wei dynasty tomb of Ruru Princess Linhe (buried 550), Cixian, Hebei

55 56 57 58

55. Detail of lid, container in figs. 1–3: lotus-medallion knob, beaded ring, five-petaled palmette, beaded medallion, and bifurcated knob

56. Base for an architectural column. Stone. From the Northern Qi dynasty tomb of Lou Rui (d. 570), Taiyuan, Shanxi

57. Flattened jar. Stoneware with relief decoration under olive yellow glaze. Sui to early Tang dynasty, ca. late 6th–early 7th century. Height: 8⅞ in. (22.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, Rogers Fund, 1916. 16.165

58. Flattened jar. Earthenware with relief decoration under caramel-colored glaze. From the Northern Qi dynasty tomb of Fan Cui (d. 575), Anyang, Henan. National Museum of China

59. Detail of sarcophagus panel. White marble. From the Sui dynasty tomb of Yu Hong (d. 592), Taiyuan, Shanxi. Jinyuan Bureau of Cultural Properties and Tourism

60. Belt ornaments. Bronze. From the Northern Zhou dynasty tomb of An Jia (d. 579), Xi'an, Shaanxi

61. Detail of wall painting. Northern Qi dynasty tomb of Xu Xianxiu (d. 571), Taiyuan, Shanxi

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64	65

62. Detail of ceiling. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577), northern Xiangtangshan cave no. 2, Handan, Hebei

63. Detail of ceiling. Late Northern Wei dynasty (ca. 494–534), Gongxian cave no. 1, Gongxian, Henan

64. Molded appliqué ornament. Khotanese earthenware. Ca. 2nd–5th century. Length: 2¼ in. (5.7 cm). The British Museum

65. Base of a standing Buddha. Late Northern Wei dynasty (ca. 494–534), Binyang cave, Longmen caves, Henan

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66. Detail of lid, container in figs. 1–3: pseudo-lotus flower

67. Pictorial wall-tile. From a tomb, Dengxian, Henan, ca. late 5th–early 6th century

68. Detail of ceiling. Late Northern Wei dynasty (ca. 494–534), Gongxian cave no. 4, Gongxian, Henan

69. Detail of ceiling. Late Northern Wei dynasty (ca. 494–534), Gongxian cave no. 1, Gongxian, Henan

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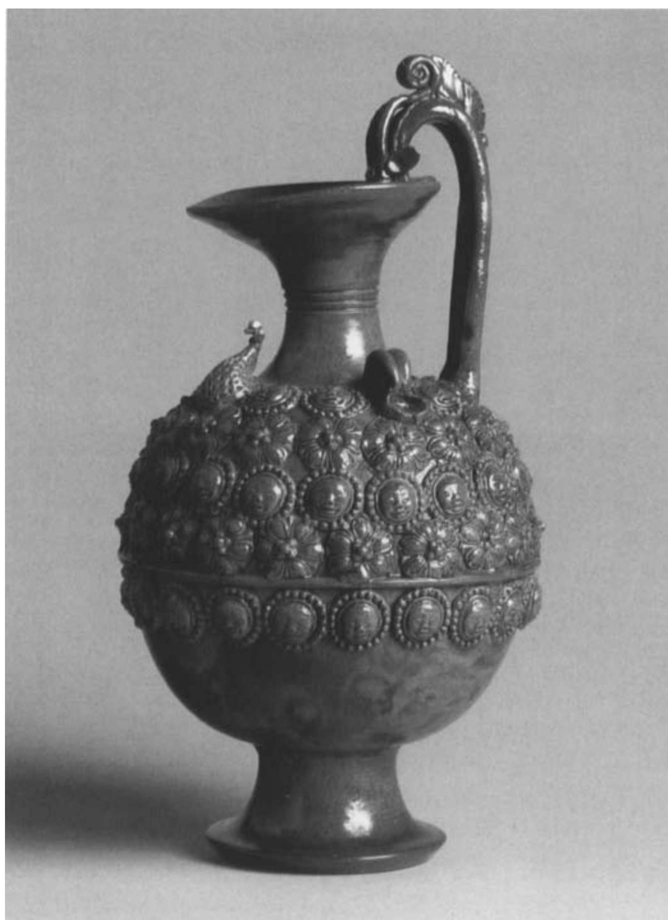
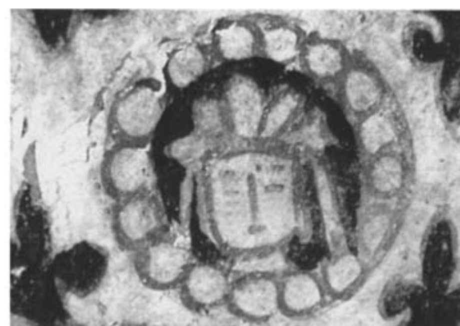
70. Detail of lid, container in figs. 1–3: frontal head surrounded by pearl beading

71. Ewer. Earthenware with appliqué-relief decoration under green glaze. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). Height: 13⅜ in. (34 cm). The Meiyintang Collection

72. Detail of wall painting. Northern Qi dynasty tomb of Xu Xianxiu (d. 571), Taiyuan, Shanxi

73. Detail of side (now missing) of central pillar-altar, Buddhist pagoda sanctuary. Limestone. Late Northern Qi to Sui dynasty, ca. 570–600. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988.303





74. Detail of jar in fig. 16: frontal head

75. Molded appliqué ornament. Khotanese earthenware. Ca. 2nd–5th century. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

76. Molded appliqué ornament. Khotanese earthenware. Ca. 2nd–5th century. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

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77. Molded appliqué ornaments. Khotanese earthenware. Ca. 2nd–5th century. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

78. Medallion, interior of a silver cup. 350–325 BC. From Royal Tomb II at Vergina, Greece. Archaeological Museum of Thessalonike

79. Molded appliqué ornaments. Khotanese earthenware. Ca. 2nd–5th century. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

80. Gold plaque. 4th–3rd century BC. Found in Theodosia, Crimea. Museum of Historical Treasures of Ukraine

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81–82. Head of a horse. Earthenware with amber glaze. Late Eastern Han dynasty (25–220). Overall height of horse: 48 in. (121.9 cm). Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museums. Gift of R. H. Ellsworth, Ltd., in memory of Phyllis and C. Douglas Dillon. 2004.211.a–e

83. Jar. Khotanese earthenware. Ca. 2nd–5th century. Height: 9½ in. (24 cm). The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

84. Molded appliqué ornament. Earthenware. From the Dharmarajika site (ca. 1st century) near Sirkap, Pakistan

85. Molded appliqué ornament. Khotanese earthenware. Ca. 2nd–5th century. Diameter: 2 in. (5.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Rogers Fund, 1930. 30.32.65

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86. Funerary urn. Stoneware with celadon glaze. Yue ware. Western Jin dynasty (265–316). Height: 17⅞ in. (45.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Charlotte C. and John C. Weber Collection, Gift of Charlotte C. and John C. Weber, 1992. 1992.165.21

87. Molded appliqué ornaments. Khotanese earthenware. Ca. 2nd–5th century. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

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88 89

88. Flattened jar. Earthenware with relief decoration under olive green glaze. Northern Qi dynasty (550–577). Height: 4¾ in. (12.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. William P. Frankenhoff and Mrs. Richard E. Linburn Gifts, 2001. 2001.629

89. Xianbei figure. Earthenware. From a tomb in Cixian, Hebei, possibly that of Northern Qi dynasty emperor Gao Yang (r. 550–59)

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Figs. 4, 10, 12–13, 24, 58: Hu Chui, The Palace Museum, Beijing.

Figs. 7, 41: *Fine Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art* (New York: Sotheby's, March 27, 2003), no. 37.

Fig. 8: Shanxi and Taiyuan 1992, figs. 30–31.

Fig. 9: *Daikoga bunmei no nagare: Santō-shō bunbutsuten* (Tokyo, 1986), no. 88.

Fig. 11: *Bei Qi Lou Rui mu* (Beijing, 2004), fig. 59.

Figs. 14–15: Shanxi and Taiyuan 2003, figs. 79–78.

Fig. 17: Zhao Wenbin 2000, color pl. p. 62.

Fig. 18: Henan and Anyang 1977, fig. 23.

Fig. 19: *Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art: Recent Acquisitions* (New York: Chinese Porcelain Company, Spring 2002), no. 11.

Fig. 20: *Anhui Sheng Bowuguan cang ci* (Beijing, 2002), fig. 19.

Figs. 23, 52: *Lacquer Wares of the Chu Kingdom* (Hong Kong, 1992), pls. 27, 46.

Figs. 26, 31, 42, 75, 77, 79, 83, 87: Dyakonova and Sorokin 1960, pls. 13, 9, 19, 25, 16, 2, 38.

Figs. 27, 59: Oi-Cheong Lee, The Photograph Studio, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fig. 28: Whitfield 1985, vol. 3, fig. 27.

Fig. 29: Rudenko 1970, fig. 18.

Fig. 30: Zhang Lintang and Sun Di 2004, p. 107.

Fig. 32: Zhong Xiaoqing 1992, fig. 3.

Figs. 35, 56: Shanxi and Taiyuan 1983, pls. 2(1), 6(5).

Figs. 36, 61, 72: Shanxi and Taiyuan 2003, figs. 23, 34, inside front cover.

Figs. 37, 67: Henan 1958, color pl., fig. 50(1).

Fig. 38: Shanxi and Datong 2001, fig. 8.

Figs. 39, 53, 89: Zhongguo and Hebei 2003, color pl. 6, fig. 117, color pl. 14.

Figs. 40, 43: Zhongguo 1996, pl. 113(3), fig. 89(1).

Figs. 44, 65: Longmen and Beijing 1991, vol. 1, pls. 163, 17.

Figs. 51, 63, 68, 69: Henan 1983, pls. 118, 93, 23, 93.

Fig. 54: Cixian 1984a, pl. 2(2).

Fig. 60: Shaanxi 2001, inside front cover.

Fig. 62: Zhongguo Meishu Quanji 1989, pl. 115.

Fig. 64: Stein 1921, vol. 4, pl. 3.

Fig. 78: National Gallery of Art 1980, color pl. 33.

Fig. 80: Reeder 1999a, no. 73.

Fig. 84: Marshall 1951, vol. 3, pl. 131(1).

Fig. 88: *The Falk Collection I* (New York: Christie's, September 20, 2001), no. 7.

glossary

ceramic terminology

Appliqué-relief decoration. Attached ceramic ornaments, or appliqués, are formed in single clay molds, known as sprig molds. To produce an appliqué, clay is pressed into the intaglio design of the pre-fired mold; an impression from the design produces an image in relief in the clay. The appliqué is released from the mold, the back is lightly scored and painted with a little slip, and it is pressed onto an area of the unfired ceramic object that has also been scored and slipped. The piece is generally, but not always, glazed, and it is then fired.

Celadon. A high-fired green glaze that takes its color from small amounts of iron, and, usually, titanium, oxides; it is fired in a reducing atmosphere, a low-oxygen, smoky atmosphere in the kiln that affects the color of the body and glaze.

Earthenware. A low-fired ceramic made from common clay to which a proportion of other materials may be added to achieve good working and firing properties. Earthenware, usually fired between about 600° c. and 1100° c., is porous and permeable; it ranges in color from light buff to tan, red, brown, or black, depending on the clay and firing conditions.

Glaze. A glassy coating on the surface of a ceramic that serves to seal the clay body and to decorate the object. Most glazes are predominantly made of silica, with other materials, known as fluxes, added to the silica, primarily to lower its melting point.

Slip. A mixture of clay and water. A coating of slip is used to camouflage the clay body in the manufacture of many kinds of ceramics.

Stoneware. A vitrified, high-fired ceramic made of clay to which a proportion of other materials may be added to achieve good working and firing properties. Stoneware, which is fired in excess of about 1200° c., is dense, hard, resonant when struck, and impervious to liquid; it may be light or dark in color, but it is not translucent.

capital cities

Chang'an (modern Xi'an), Shaanxi Province. Capital of the Western Han, Western Wei, and Northern Zhou dynasties.

Jinyang (modern Taiyuan), Shanxi Province. The alternate capital of the Northern Qi dynasty.

Luoyang, Henan Province. Capital of the Eastern Han dynasty and, after 494, the second capital of the Northern Wei dynasty.

Pingcheng (modern Datong), Shanxi. The first capital of the Northern Wei dynasty.

Ye. The capital of the Eastern Wei dynasty and the official capital of the Northern Qi dynasty. The site of Ye was recently found in present Linzhang xian, southern Hebei Province, near modern Anyang, northern Henan.

cave temples

Gongxian. Late Northern Wei Buddhist cave temples, located near Luoyang, Henan, the second capital of the Northern Wei dynasty.

Guyang. A cave at the late Northern Wei imperial Longmen Buddhist cave temples, located near Luoyang, Henan.

Longmen. Late Northern Wei imperial Buddhist cave temples, located near Luoyang, Henan.

Xiangtangshan (northern and southern). Northern Qi Buddhist cave temples, located near Handan, Hebei, and near the site of Ye, capital of the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi dynasties.

Yungang. Imperial Northern Wei Buddhist cave temples, located near the first Northern Wei capital, Pingcheng (modern Datong), Shanxi.

tombs

Dengxian, Henan. Site of a Six Dynasties tomb attributed to the late fifth or the early sixth century. The tomb, excavated in 1958, is noted for its mold-impressed ornamental tomb-tiles. EXCAVATION REPORT: Henan 1958

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