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Allegories of Kingship: A Preliminary Study of a Western Central Asian Gold Ewer in the Royal Court of Tibet

Having patterned [the art of] handicrafts and arithmetic from the countries of China and Mi-nyag in the east, translated the word of Saddharma from the country of India in the south, made treasures of victuals and [other] luxuries of [material] enjoyment from the countries of Sogdiana and Nepal in the west, adopted [the art of] jurisdiction and labour from the countries of Mongolia and Uighuria in the north; in sum, by having control over and enjoying the four quarters, the [Tibetan] king ruled over half the world. (*The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies*, translated by Sørensen 1994: 180).

Between the 7th and 9th centuries of the Common Era, not only did the royal nomadic court of the Tibetan Empire rise to the stage in imperial history, but its members also became keen connoisseurs and great collectors of Asia. In the process of appropriating the arts and technologies from the cultures around them, the Tibetan elite never failed to adapt and transform these materials to their own tastes. In this way, by the middle of the 7th century, the royal *nouveaux riches* of Tibet fashioned their court in a manner befitting the grandeur of their rapid ascent to power over the lucrative territories of Central Asia. The passage above captures the spirit in which such collecting took place and shows the Tibetan king in light of his connoisseurial skill—a quality that, in many ways, set the model of Tibet's artistic development for the next thousand years.¹

¹ The above passage, translated from the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, represents a late conflation of history which unites elements of the author's own recent past with that of the old Tibetan Kings. The ethos of the passage, nonetheless, maintains a vision of the past kings in their special connoisseurial capacity and so as the great rulers and enjoyers of the world. In this way the text is a

Often times when looking at the material culture of Tibet, narratives coalesce around the Tibetan assimilation of Buddhism, which naturally lead to the study of art that came from India and Nepal. However, it is clear that in the process of forging an empire the Tibetan aristocracy creatively assimilated the best that the surrounding cultures had to offer. While this certainly included bringing Buddhism from India and craftsmen from Nepal, from China the Tibetan court adopted advanced methods of imperial administration, and out of the cosmopolitan oasis kingdoms of Central Asia doctors, scholars, artisans and entertainers were all invited to participate in the activities of the royal court. In addition, as will be emphasised presently, early Tibetan rulers adopted the royal motifs, practices and regalia of kingship from Sasanian Persia. As contended by Assadullah Souren Melikian-Chirvani (2011: 104) "the adoption of the Iranian royal wine banquet ceremonial reflects a broader trend that led early Tibet to borrow Iranian royal custom and paraphernalia." It is from this context therefore and by using kingship as heuristic device that a Gold Ewer in the Pritzker Collection can be more closely analysed and understood.

The Gold Ewer (Fig. 1 and 2) exemplifies the energy and spirit within the Tibetan royal court during its rise to power and is an extraordinary marker of the emergence of a distinctive toreutic style²

testament of Tibet's own awareness of that quality of the kings and of kingship in Tibet in general. For a further discussion of the passage see Sørensen (1994: n. 514).

² The field of Central Asian toreutics—the study of metalwork created through a process of repoussé, chasing and engraving—has been greatly advanced by

specifically catered to the Tibetan royal court—a synthesis of Sasanian, Central Asian, and Tang Chinese models. In the course of the paper I will develop an argument for the Sogdian craftsmanship of the ewer, as well as suggest a precise dating to the last quarter of the 7th century. In the process, the paper will elaborate on the cross-cultural aesthetic influences involved in the creation of the object, looking at how processes of transfer and translation informed its craftsmanship, type, form and decorative motifs.

THE MAKING OF THE GOLD EWER³

Various characteristics define the ewer as the work of a Sogdian artist as well as a distinctive Tibetan object, reflective of the socio-political and economic context from which it emerged during the early rise of the Tibetan imperial court. At 50 cm in height and weighing just over 2.4 kg, the Gold Ewer is the largest known of its kind. In regards to the process of its making, the vessel is skilfully assembled from four parts: the body, foot, handle, and finial. The ovoid body, which includes the neck and spout, is fashioned from a single sheet of metal. The metalsmith who made the ewer would have begun by working from the middle of the sheet that makes up the main body, hammering out the base and walls and expanding its diameter while thinning the metal. Eventually, having formed the widest point of the ewer, the craftsman would narrow the metal sheet, closing it in to form the neck and finally pulling out the wedged spout while continually annealing the metal throughout the whole processes.

The extraordinary skill of the metalsmith and the high degree of finishing on the object has left few markers of the formative stages of its fabrication. The vexing question still remains, therefore, as to how the forming of the large medallions on the body, created through a repoussé process, would have occurred. The driving force needed to raise the metal to the volume exhibited by the hybrid animals would not have been possible under the restraints of the ewer's long narrow neck. One explanation is that the metalsmith could have split the neck along its octagonal seams in order to render the décor. On close examination, however, no evidence of soldering of the

seams has been found—the beading on the exterior, which lines the octagonal shape, may disguise such seams. The surface on the interior of the neck similarly shows little evidence of soldering. It would seem, however, that the repoussé was not done solely by hammering from the back of the surface, since the highest points of the décor lie on the same plane, while the recessed backgrounds vary in depth, one speculation is that the figures were created both by working the front of the object and by sinking the background. Further research is necessary if these and other manufacturing mysteries are to be solved. The phenomenon of craftsmanship stands, therefore, as yet another tribute to the mastery of the metalsmith who created this sumptuous object.

After forming the body, the octagonal foot, also made of a single sheet of gold, was then soldered onto the base of the body. And finally the third and fourth parts of the ewer, the handle and peacock finial, were hammered out separately and then joined to the body. The beaded ridges of the ewer were then soldered on to pattern the octagonal design as well as hide seams and joints. For instance, there are places where it appears that a free edge had been sealed, covered with beads, and layered over with cold gold, as a kind of “on-lay” wrapped around the beads, which was then polished.

After the main forms of the décor were completed, the artist would have needed to continue refining the raised images of the animals and the floral motifs with additional hammering and burnishing. The figures would be further defined and decorated by chasing along their outlines with a small punch tool—each line of detail done with a dotting chisel and then smoothed, leaving almost no rough edges. Chasing was also used to make the decorative details of the animals and floral motifs. Finally, in completing the vessel, the artist used turquoise in many of the settings that pattern the ewer.

EWER TYPOLOGY

The Gold Ewer can be understood in its complexity as both emerging from the traditions of Sasanian craftsmanship and departing from those traditions with its innovative materials, shape and compositional structure. In her seminal article on the topic Martha L. Carter defines Central Sassanid, or Iranian ewers⁴ as:

having ovoid bodies, and high feet, with a convex band above the base and another at the shoulder. They have elongated fairly cylindrical necks and blunt wedge shaped spouts and vertical sides with

the work of the late Boris Marshak whose tutelage of this author has both inspired and influenced the present paper.

³ The findings presented in this section are based on a preliminary discussion with the conservation scientist John Twilley, who since that time has done a close technical examination of the ewer. A future joint paper that will include a detailed technical analysis of the Gold Ewer together with objects constructed during this period in Tibet. I would like to thank Mr. Twilley for his help, insight, and encouragement in the present publication.

⁴ For more on Iranian ewers and metalwork, see Gunter and Jett (1992).

small opening in the front.... The handles are attached near the widest point of the oval bodies, rise vertically in a high arcs almost to the top of the spouts, and then arch downward to attach to the upper edge of the body just below the neck torus. Details of the handles often include animal-headed finials and spherical thumb guards. (Carter 2003: 185).

Carter goes on to point out a distinction between the described ewer type—which can be applied to Persian ewers spanning the 5th through 7th century—and those “anomalous examples” which deviate from the standard type (described above) and with which I place the Gold Ewer. As discussed by Carter, these outliers are associated with the eastern territories of the Sasanian Empire, sharing many of the compositional and stylized features found in Sogdian textiles.⁵ Within Carter’s “anomalous examples” there is an exciting shift in the development of the classical Iranian ewer as the figural forms move away from representations of the cult of Dionysus, characteristic of the Iranian royal court, and towards images of mythical creatures within roundels and floral surrounds.

In order to facilitate an understanding of Carter’s anomalous ewers and their relationship to the Gold Ewer, I have created the line drawings (Diagram 1), representing a synthesis of the morphology of the Iranian ewer as it was adopted as a vessel type across eastern parts of the Sasanian territories and into Tibet during the 7th century. The innovative shifts in form and iconography found in these objects move away from the earlier Iranian typology as they reach the territories of western Central Asia and beyond to Tibet, Central Asia, and China. Vessels such as the “Ewer Depicting Senmurv and the Tree of Life” in the State Hermitage Museum (A) (Fig. 3 and 4), the “Silver-gilt Ewer with Bird Medallions” from a private collection (B) (Fig. 5), and the “Winged Camel Ewer”, also in the Hermitage (C) (Fig. 6 and 7), offer a useful context for a typological understanding of the Gold Ewer (D), the last in the diagram.⁶

Each of the ewers above exhibits features uncharacteristic of the classical iconography and/or shape of Iranian ewers. The “Ewer Depicting Senmurv” (A) is emblematic of the Iranian type in profile but not in composition. Nearly identical to many fine examples that exist from the Sasanian period ewer (A) aligns perfectly with Carter’s description of its shape. The iconography and décor, however, do not fit the norm



Diagram 1: Shift in ewer type from Greater Iran to Tibet in the 7th century

of Classical Persia, whose ewers typically contain female figures related to motifs of abundance and cults of fertility that draw from the repertory of Dionysiac imagery.⁷ Rather, the ewer’s central medallion, containing the composite creature of the Senmurv within a floral roundel, can more closely be related to Sasanian and later Sogdian silk designs than to any compositional type found on the courtly ewers of Iran.

The “Silver-gilt Ewer” (B), is an extraordinarily crafted object, whose irregular composition is similar to that of (A), containing two large bird roundels alternating with a “tree of life” motif. Now, however, we encounter the first anomaly in body shape. Carter (2003: 193) contends that the vessel is “larger and more bulbous in silhouette than others of its type”. Moreover, its tapered neck stands in contrast with the standard tubular necks typical of Iranian ewers exhibited by ewer (A). Each of these anomalies from the classical Iranian ewer—the iconography of (A) and (B), and shape of (B)—mark distinctive shifts in the design of the ewer during the late Sasanian or early post-Sasanian periods. These shifts coincide with the decline of Ancient Persia in the early part of the 7th century and the rise of strong West and Central Asian territories dominated by Sogdians, Turks, Tibetans, and Chinese.

The “Winged Camel Ewer” (C) displays this radical transformation. To begin with, the alteration, or rather complete redesign, of the handle and body, exhibits a clear departure from the Persian typology of Classical Antiquity.⁸ The tapered neck and bulbous body dis-

⁵ *Ibid.*: 187. For examples of early post-Sasanian silks see Otavsky (1998).

⁶ In addition to the core group outlined above, other objects such as the “Flask with Paired Lions” in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and the gold “Pitcher” in the Hermitage also provide further support for analysis.

⁷ See Gunter and Jett (1992: 191–201), and, in particular, image 36 and subsequent discussion on p. 200.

⁸ A further example of this departure is witnessed by a fourth ewer, simply labelled “Pitcher” also in the Hermitage collection (<https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/museums/gim/culturalex.html>). See Darkevich (1976: 12, fig. 1 and 2).

playing a large central roundel are reminiscent of that of the “Silver-gilt Ewer with Bird Medallions” (B), while its décor is consistent with the “Ewer Depicting Senmurv” (A). The composition of the “Winged Camel Ewer” further parallels the floral motifs that grow along the front and back of the other two ewers (A and B). However, other elements such as the rounding of the foot’s edge, the loss of the convex band atop the foot, and the complete reworking of the handle—which has lost its spherical thumb guard, has a wider arch, and a shift in positioning of its terminals—all become hallmarks of the later Central Asian ewer type, including those ceramic ewers produced within Tang China.⁹

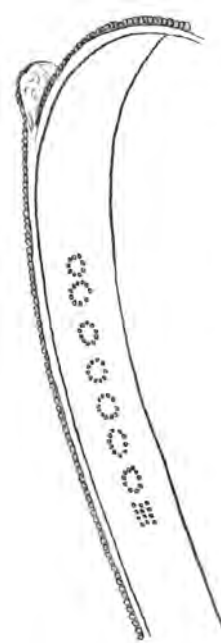
The Gold Ewer (D) further modifies the aesthetics of the “Winged Camel Ewer” (C). And although its large bulbous body, high foot, and tapered neck pay tribute to the earlier models of Western Asia, the vessel arguably belongs to a wholly different regional class—one distinctive of Tibetan patronage. The inclined wedged spout, yet another example of innovation, contrasts with the level form found throughout the classical type and replicated in the post-Sasanian vessels of (B) and (C). The lifted tilt of the spout augments and appropriately balances the energetic upward movement of the object as whole, which is created by the steeply rising octagonal foot and extra elongated neck. The silhouette of the Gold Ewer is further made all the more voluminous by the exaggerated arched handle that is joined just below the back edge of the spout, bowing slightly higher the handle than curves back down to terminate against the body. In addition, given the sheer size and weight of the object, the handle has been designed with a thumb brace which flips up along its arch, enabling a server to better stabilise the ewer while pouring.¹⁰ On the inside of the handle is a dot inscription (Drawing 1) comparable to those found elsewhere in early Tibetan metalwork¹¹ and, in all likelihood, indicates the weight in gold used to make the Ewer.¹²

⁹ For Chinese models in ceramic see two examples reproduced from the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum (1992: 58) and a the comparable ewer sold at Christie’s New York, 19 September 2014, lot 703.

¹⁰ The stabilising thumb brace is witnessed only slightly in the “Winged Camel Ewer”, however, it can be seen to have become a popular design feature that was readily repeated in later Central Asian ewers. See for example Marshak (1971): T11, T21, and T41.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of dot inscriptions on metalwork from the Tibetan Empire see Amy Heller (2013b).

¹² There are clear parallels to the handle design which exist not only in Ewer (C) and (D), but also in later Central Asian designs. There are a number of examples such as Smirnov (1961) no. 65 and 124, Marshak (1971) no. T13 and T11, and recently the Deydier Ewer (Fig. 6).



Drawing 1

CRAFTSMANSHIP

While the level of craftsmanship, figural motifs, floral patterns, and roundels of the Gold Ewer all point to an origin in post-Sasanian Western Central Asia, the heavy use of gold coupled with turquoise and the strong commitment to full-bodied animal imagery are important indications of Tibetan tastes and patronage. In short, the innovative design, iconographic composition, and use of material are a tour de force in the synthesis of the period’s multicultural ambience and the various aesthetic and visual languages across Asia. The result is a particular blend that is distinctively Tibetan. In addition, the mastery of craftsmanship and design is of singular quality and beauty, emblematic of the unique period in Tibet’s history before the dominance of Buddhism, when the rise of the imperial royal court coincided with the twilight and artistic brilliance of Late Antiquity.

The skill in artistic and technical execution of the sort demonstrated in the Gold Ewer is not readily seen elsewhere in Tibet or Central Asia but shows the craftsman’s close connection to the Sasanian period toreutic schools, including and particularly those con-

¹³ See Deydier (2008: 19), Christie’s (2008: lot 513).

Similarly, the peacock seen at the summit of the Gold Ewer, bridging the back edge of the spout with the handle, is a distinctive shift from the animal face finial observed on the “Winged Camel Ewer” and is one that is repeated later in Tibet and China.¹³ Finally, while (C) and (D) more clearly resemble one another, (D) has retained the convex band above the foot, a feature that is more akin to the Sasanian typology of (A) and (B) but lost in (C) in what appears to be an archaïcising nod to the classical Iranian form. All four ewers exhibit a common thread in their overall composition: large central roundels on the body with heavenly composite animals contained within, while a “tree of life” or sumptuous foliage motif grows from the foot to the spout of each ewer. In the Gold Ewer, however, the further innovations of the steep octagonal foot and neck together with its more complex iconographic scheme of eight roundels containing various mythic creatures marks a dramatic crescendo in post-Sasanian metalware.

nected to Sogdiana. Boris Marshak was one of the first to attempt a mapping of the relationship between what he viewed to be different schools of Central Asian toreutics.¹⁴ In the large foldout contained in his inspiring and formative *Sogdian Silver*, Marshak lays out three stylistic groups that define Central Asian metalwork: those closely related to the art of Sasanian Iran (column A), those with stronger associations to Tang China (column C), and those objects which are not so easily distinguished but perhaps more representative of the semi-autonomous regions along the Silk Road (column B).¹⁵ While some of Marshak's conclusions are perhaps overly essentialised, there is great value in them and the ideas and arguments that he has put forth have yet to reach their full potential, particularly when applied to the study of early Tibetan silver and gold.

Marshak's grouping of the "Winged Camel Ewer" (C) together with a similar gold "Pitcher"¹⁶ in the earliest part of Column A (those objects closely related to the art of Sasanian Iran), invites a similar placement of our Gold Ewer. Of equal importance, the Tang beaded octagonal cup¹⁷ provides a clear link to the beaded octagonal foot and neck on the Gold Ewer and is consistent in dating with the "Winged Camel Ewer." As stated earlier, however, it is important not to read this placement as the influence of Tang silver on Tibetan toreutics but rather as an important trend that was adopted by China in the late 7th and early 8th century. In this regard the beading around the foot of the gold "Pitcher" (T8) corresponds to that found on the cup (T14), our Gold Ewer, and on subsequent objects seen later in all three groups.¹⁸

In addition to understanding the Gold Ewer within the larger context provided by Marshak's regional and chronological toreutic styles, the object may be analysed according to the artistic skill of its execution. In a fashion similar to the aesthetic execution of Sasanian silver

masterpieces and post-Sasanian Sogdian objects,¹⁹ the artist of the Gold Ewer, unafraid of empty space and without *horror vacui*, relies on simplicity of form, thinness of line, and subtle detailing to create a plasticity that enlivens the subjects and gives a sense of levity to the object as a whole. Each animal figure is superbly modelled and positioned with believable naturalism. The use of repoussé energetically ornaments and gives texture to the surface of polished gold, which is enhanced when paired with the bright blue turquoise stones. The highly fluid and robustly expressed patterning of the roundels and floral motifs establishes the metalsmith's intimate knowledge of the forms and their movement. Finally, because the work was rendered without the use of embossing dies, every aspect of the ewer's décor contains idiosyncrasies that individualise and give character to the overall composition.



Drawing 2

Despite the fantastical nature of the winged unicorn on the ewer (Drawing 2), the clarity that the artist brings to its composite parts, achieved through minimal detailing, results in an incredibly zoomorphic animal. The simplicity of form calls attention to the energetic lightness of the trotting pose, making it appear as though the animal were showing off. The subtle

use of chasing to define the leg muscles and facial features adds definition to the figure and imbues it with a supple expression of joy and grace. The finely spaced hatched shading along the divine creature's mane, chest, hind side and tail further lend a soft tactile quality that is tangible even to the eyes.

There is no question here that the artist had intricate knowledge of his subject matter. In contrast, when compared to a similar figure, like that of the silver bridle pieces first published by Heller (2003: 59), the loss of skill can be seen in the rendering of the silver winged horse in the set (reproduced in large detail in the essay by Frantz

¹⁴ Much of this paper is indebted to Boris Marshak, who was one of the first people to recognise a distinctly Tibetan Central Asian aesthetic when others were unable or unwilling to give such an attribution. His enthusiasm and willingness to share his daily discoveries while staying and studying at our family home in Chicago in 1998 has in many ways inspired the present paper. His contribution to the field of Early Tibetan Toreutics will not be forgotten and will continue to be a source of insight for years to come.

¹⁵ See Marshak (1971) "Large Fold Out." <http://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/museums/shm/marshak/foldout.jpg>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 1971: T7 & T8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 1971: T14.

¹⁸ At the time that Marshak wrote *Sogdian Silver* there was almost no known metalware of the Tibetan Empire. Future research would benefit building off of Marshak's fold out by including a fourth column: those objects with stronger association to Tibet. In this way the field of post-Sasanian toreutic styles would be made all the more robust.

¹⁹ For examples of the use of animal imagery and the use of empty space in Sasanian silver masterpieces, see Gunter and Jett (1992: 36–37). For examples in art from Sogdiana, see the exhibition catalogue *Expedition Silk Road: Journey to the West: treasures from the hermitage* (2014), such as "Battle Between a Deity and Beast of Prey" (p. 202), "Dish with a Lion Attacking a Deer" (p. 209), and "Cup with a Gazelle" (p. 207).

Grenet in this volume, figure 12). The artist of the silver bridle piece creates the same composite creature as found on the Gold Ewer, yet while energetic in posture the creature appears static. The elegant linear forms found on the Gold Ewer are now replaced by overly complex and nonsensical ornamentation: a wave-patterned underbelly, varied and confused detailing on the rump, and an indistinguishable wing and mane, to name just a few. In addition, the silver horse is rendered in an unconvincing anatomical position, its head and neck stiffly upright even as it is leaping forwards. The contrast between the two figures represents the difference between direct knowledge of the classical forms and how to execute them in metal (as witnessed in the Gold Ewer), and the indirect knowledge of the subject matter, most likely based on secondary sources, and a loss in craftsmanship (as exhibited in the silver bridle piece.) This single comparison in the creation of these two creatures adds further clues necessary for the process of dating and attributing relative craftsmanship, for “elements representing expressiveness of the image,” as Marshak contends, “become gradually mere decorative motifs, adorning the item, do not help and even hinder the understanding of the subject” (Marshak 1971: 116).

Indeed, the quasi-baroque and chaotic noise that comes from the overcrowded detailing of the silver winged horse is a feature that can be regularly pointed to in the silver and gold objects of the late Imperial Period in Tibet, from the middle of the 8th through the 9th century.²⁰ The Gold Ewer does not suffer from this problem. Rather, the field of décor possesses a spacious levity that enhances the minimal detailing and fineness of line. A feature that one may say is more indicative of an earlier Sassanid and Sogdian visual aesthetic, and in contrast to the ornate patterning found in Tang silver, or the exaggerated baroque detailing of later Tibetan ceremonial wares.

Further evidence of a distinct regional Tibetan ewer type and its continuation in Tibet may be observed in another ewer (Fig. 8) that was exhibited by Christian Deydier during the 2008 Paris Biennale des Antiquaires, and which most likely dates to the late 8th/9th century. As there are not many available ewers from the early Tibetan tradition, the Deydier Ewer offers a useful reference against which to compare the Gold Ewer from the 7th century. While the basic features of the Deydier Ewer are similar to those of the Gold Ewer, the technical execution and patterning of the décor are more representative of later Central Asian craftsmanship in Tibet,²¹ which derived its pat-

terns from earlier Sogdian models but had already lost direct contact and knowledge of the Sasanian and Sogdian forms and techniques. In the process of replication rather than innovation, a slow erosion of understanding occurred, the unavoidable result of copy errors. Such deterioration in both craftsmanship and aesthetic understanding gave way to unnecessary complexities in design which, once again, muddled the understanding of the figural forms and composition that define an earlier work such as the Gold Ewer. Indeed, the Deydier Ewer is indicative of the shift from direct to indirect knowledge in craftsmanship that occurred in Tibet in the late 8th and 9th century, providing further evidence of the existence of a Tibetan ewer type that was maintained throughout its Imperial Period, and within which the Gold Ewer represents a height of the importation of Sogdian craftsmanship.

ICONOGRAPHY AND MEANING

The décor of the ewer can be divided into four sections: the stem (or foot), the body, the neck and the spout. The octagonal structure of the foot and neck is reflected in the body of the ewer by eight roundels, each of which contains a fantastical creature. The smooth ovoid body is framed by the octagonal composition of the foot and neck, and the roundels within the body break what would otherwise be continuous ridges running along the whole of the object.

The body of the ewer consists of two juxtaposed series of four roundel medallions, with figural forms raised against an empty background. In turn their outer edges form a network of tricuspid triangles that seemingly diffuse the empty background within the roundels. The overall effect creates a sense of lightness, as if the medallions and figural forms were floating in space. In the lower register, two sets of alternating hybrid animals are depicted. On either side of the vessel, within stylised scrolled roundels, are the profiles of winged unicorns, left foreleg raised, with the neck of a phoenix and the bushy upturned tail of a yak (Drawing 2).²² Alternating with the heavenly equines are the snarling faces of horned lions rendered with carefully hatched leonine ruffs and within a blossoming laurel wreath (Drawing 3). Both animals are heroic symbols. While the former can be associated as a symbolic image of a noble woman, the

understanding the shorter more squat shape of the Deydier Ewer and provide further indication of the later dating of the vessel.

²² The compositional parts of a phoenix vary over space and time. Typically it appears in Tibet with the neck of a snake (or dragon), which is indicated by the horizontal lines along the surface.

²⁰ See for example the vase and other like objects published here by Frantz Grenet.

²¹ Central Asian ewers such as Marshak's T11 and T22 are good examples for

latter has associations with concepts of royalty, martial agility, and perhaps most importantly protection and guardianship (to which I will return momentarily).



Drawing 3 and 4

On the upper register, wrapping around the front and back of the ewer, are four confronted phoenixes, each within somewhat larger roundels of a Central Asian wisped cloud motif (Drawing 4). The composite bird can be identified by the tri-lobed crest feathers, curling tail plumage, and often by the most noticeable of their composite features: the snake-scutes on their neck (a characteristic that is also seen on winged horse). Interestingly, the rendering here does not conform to standard Central Asian or Tang period models. In both regions, the wings are almost always splayed upwards, the Chinese rendering emphasising a more delicate and refined physique, a characteristic of the intricate decorative fluency for which Tang art is famous.²³ Rather, on the Gold Ewer the bird's forceful body posture—wing tips faced down—is more reminiscent of a raptor readied to dive than that of a phoenix soaring or swirling in the heavens.²⁴ The strength of expression would have perhaps appealed more to the early nomadic culture of the Tibetan royal court, in which raptors and carrion birds played an important role in hunts, burials, and the daily life on the high plateau. The powerful rendering of these phoenixes is further augmented by the birds' exaggerated thick tail plumage that billows up and fills the allotted space within the roundel, again in stark contrast to the Tang model. To my knowledge, comparable examples exist only in the earliest Tibetan metalwork,²⁵ and cannot

²³ See, for example, the dancing phoenix on the square Tang Mirror in the Freer Collection: F1949.17 (see <http://www.asia.si.edu>).

²⁴ See, for example, the swirling pair on the decanter in the Cleveland Museum set.

²⁵ See, for example, Huo Wei (2013) on the phoenixes in the Mengdiexuan Collection.

be found in Central Asia or Tang China whether in metal or silk. Interestingly enough, one of the closest examples of a similar rendering can be found among the gold metalwork of the Scythians, whose similar commitment to animal motifs, as well as the combination of gold and turquoise is strikingly analogous to that of the early Tibetans.

By the 7th and 8th centuries the phoenix had been well incorporated into the visual language of Mahayana Buddhism and is present in many early paintings and temples of the Nara period Japan (710–794), Tang China and Tibet. Connected with the heavenly sphere or the celestial abodes of the Buddhas, the bird was associated with rebirth in the heavenly realms and the afterlife,²⁶ a connection that was heightened by depicting the bird atop a blossoming lotus flower (see Heller 2006). In both China and Japan a further significance developed that associated the mythical bird with that of the empress—a symbolic reflection of her power and of a properly ruled empire. The phoenix was therefore used as a heraldic image in crowns and other regalia, as well as in the tombs of noblewomen. In Sasanian and Sogdian tradition, the bird was similarly used as symbol of royal power or as Marshak contends, “le charme royal” (Marshak 2001: 254). While we do not yet have sufficient evidence with regard to Tibet, it is not unreasonable to think that similar meanings were adopted, through the mutual influences that transferred and transformed the country at the time.

The meaning of these incredibly engaging hybrid creatures is uncommonly complex and only a rare few have substantial textual reference from which we may begin to deconstruct their multifaceted meanings. The winged horned lion is of a particularly Gordian significance. Deeply rooted in antiquity the celebrated creature finds various avenues into the visual culture across Eurasia. In Asia, in particular, spanning from Persia to China, India, Nepal and Tibet, the striking likeness in the horned hybrid's features as well as meaning is difficult to dismiss. For this reason a brief digression into the topic seems necessary.

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From the early Hellenistic and Achaemenid Empires, the motif of a winged horned lion travelled to the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE)²⁷

²⁶ A relevant example with a brief discussion on the use of the phoenix in Pure Land imagery can be seen in the late 6th century sculpture of Buddha Amitābha in Sukhāvātī at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, published in Leidy (2010: 14–15).

²⁷ For a discussion on the transference of the horned-lion to Han China see Zhang Wen *et. al.* (2013).

where it proliferated on silk, bronze, and stone as the *qilin*, a central protective motif closely connected to tomb burials. In South Asia the horned-lion, referred to in Sanskrit as *kālamukha*, *kīrtimukha*, and *siṃhamukha* (Face of Time/Death, Face of Glory, Lion Face) (Slusser 2010: 212), is a regular feature in the well-known architectural “gates” found at the entrance to Indian and Nepalese Buddhist structures. The Indian freestanding *torāṇa* exemplified by those at Bhārhut and Sāñcī are later seen, though in a different form, on the facade of temples and shrines in Nepal. In both cases, the didactic nature of the figural motif is similar and the prominent motif of the horned hybrid consistently functions in its role as guardian and protector of the celestial realm. Slusser (2010), paraphrasing Snodgrass (1985), writes that the horned leonine face “is at once the mask of destruction and creation, death and life, darkness and solar radiance.” (*ibid.*: 214). By the 7th and 8th centuries, the Nepalese *kīrtimukha* becomes the destroyer of the once malevolent water serpents and can be seen depicted clutching them in his claws and devouring them in his open maw (transforming later into an image of *garuḍa*; Tib. *khyung*).²⁸

Parallels in the function of both the Chinese *qilin* and South Asian *kīrtimukha* can be pointed to in early Tibetan descriptions of the horned animal as both apotropaic guardian in this life as well as psychopomp guide in death. In his work on early Tibetan burial rituals, John Bellezza presents one of the few textual sources from which we may glean the function of the horned animal motif in old Tibet. The author points out that within the archaic funerary text collection known as *Mu cho’i khrom ’dur* that the “*sgra-bla* of the sky led by the horned-lion (*hor-mu*, a Zhang zhung word) and the *sgra bla* of the earth led by the dragon, as types of funerary deities that subdue the *klu*, *’dre*, *srin*, and *bdud*, elemental spirits believed to interfere with the passage of the deceased to the afterlife.”²⁹

The power of horned animals as protectors is further attested to in the actual practice of using horns and antlers in rituals surrounding sickness and death, such as among the nomadic steppe cultures where antlered masks worn by sacrificial horses have been seen in the Pazyryk tombs. In addition, as Slusser points out, in India a similar instance occurs in “which a hornless creature is transformed into a supernatural one with horns” (Slusser 2010: 218), as can be seen on the figures of the lions with antlers affixed as part of their mask like bridles on the western gateway at Sāñcī. Identifi-

cal imagery of horned helmets, particular to the steppe tradition, is found on an early Tibetan gold gilt plaque in a private collection, depicting two sacrificial horses in full armour and donning a horned helmet. We may therefore understand that the horned animals are found throughout old Tibetan metalware in their protective function. The horned lion, in particular, holds a special position in its role of guardianship and its role in carrying the soul to the next life.

For this reason the horned animal motifs often emblazon the doors or wall of a tomb or are placed at the foot and/or head panels of coffins as protectors of the deceased, as well as to function as psychopomp guides to the afterlife.³⁰ One such example of a similar depiction of a horned-animal can be found in the recently excavated Mongolian tomb that has been presented in the paper by Erdenebold Lkhagvasuren.

A second example can be pointed out on the backboard of an 8th century Tibetan coffin recently published by Amy Heller (Fig. 9).³¹ The similarity between the horned lion on the Gold Ewer and the one on the coffin panel is remarkable, as is the resemblance between the vertical juxtaposition of the phoenix atop the face of the horned lion present on the Gold Ewer and the iconographic pairing found on the contemporaneous Tibetan coffin. Heller has pointed out that the animals on the coffin are part “of the Chinese mythological group of creatures called the ‘Four Divine Beasts’...revered as protective deities,” and “well-known...on Chinese coffins and tombs of the Warring States period (ca. 450–220 B.C.).”³² While seemingly inspired by the “Four Divine Beasts,” the Tibetan emphasis on the winged hybrid is a clear differentiation that disrupts the Chinese model and suggests closer influence from western Central Asia. In the case of the Gold Ewer we might rule out the possibility that the juxtaposition is a specific reference to the “Four Divine Beast” due to further differences in iconography. On the coffin panel, for example, the phoenix is shown atop a blossoming lotus, an image closely connecting to the Buddha realms and enlightenment (as discussed earlier), and it is carefully depicted riding the winged horned lion in the animal’s function as a psychopomp. In contrast, the mythical bird on the Gold Ewer is rendered among clouds and so not closely associated to a Buddhist context. We might therefore understand the bird motif within

²⁸ For a detailed discussion of the motif in Nepal see *ibid.*: 207–26.

²⁹ Bellezza (2013: 36, n. 56). For a detailed discussion on the use of horns and horned allies by funerary priests in Tibet, see Bellezza (2008: 442–47).

³⁰ For more on the role of psychopomps in Tibet and the Himalayas see Ramble (2015: 499–528).

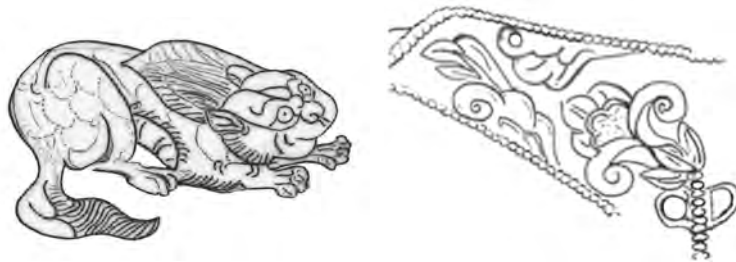
³¹ See Heller (2013a: fig. 1, 148). The same duo is further witnessed on a coffin panel in the Collection of Shelly and Don Rubin.

³² *Ibid.*: 121.

its protective and heraldic connection to the empress, as discussed earlier in the paper.

* * *

Returning to the iconography of the Gold Ewer, at the base of the octagonal foot are four pairs of lions and deer. Two pairs of confronted horned deer are crouched with their heads turned inwards in a resting position, and are sequenced with back-to-back doe-eyed lions. The lions are shown in a ready-to-pounce position, with the deer seemingly unaware of their presence (Drawing 5). Each pair is embedded within an involute floral motif that climbs from the foot of the ewer up through the neck. This "tree of life" motif reaches its zenith and flowers at the widest point of the spout (Drawing 6).³³ The high foot leads to a convex band on which the body of the ewer rests; here too a floral decoration exhibits a patterned series of inlaid open-faced flowers.



Drawing 5 and 6

The small beading that lines the ewer's octagonal structure plays an integral role in the overall décor of the vessel. At a glance, the ridged seams provide the basic decorative shape of the foot and the neck. What is less noticeable is that the beading also functions as the stem, or trunk, to a stylized "tree of life" floral pattern, from which spring delicately incised leaves, buds and blossoms. The same creative design is replicated on the arched handle, the bottom terminal of which is decorated once again with the face of the horned lion. The floral imagery is highly stylised but closely resembles a similar motif found in Iran on the relief patterns of the iwan of Khusrav II (591–628) at Taq-i-Bustan (Fig. 10), imagery further replicated on the late Sasanian ewers discussed earlier.

The base of the tapered neck is separated from the body through

³³ The stylized tri-lobed blossom is ubiquitous throughout Central Asia. It has been described by some as resembling a tulip, or a lotus, and can be found in silk, stone, metal, and painting from the 6th–9th centuries.

a series of arches containing a classic floral heart motif. This form of patterning can be found throughout Eurasia since Early Antiquity and exists in both Sasanian wall carvings and Bactrian gold objects.³⁴ Perched along these arches and among the foliage decorating the ewer are eight back-to-back mandarin ducks, some still containing turquoise inlay (Drawing 7).



Drawing 7

Each bird has been intricately detailed through cross-hatched lines and parallel shading, once again showing off the skill of the metalsmith. While the appearance of the mandarin ducks may be attributed to the influence of Tang China, where that species is indigenous, the bird was regularly incorporated into Central Asian visual language early on and, together with other stylised duck motifs from Persia, can be readily seen in painting, metalwork, and textiles from throughout the region. The duck would therefore have been familiar to both Tibetan and Sogdian

artists and patrons alike. The meaning of the mandarin duck as representative of lifelong partnership remains consistent both throughout the period of its use and across geographic locations, finding appropriate depiction on marriage cups and other similar ceremonial wares.³⁵

Finally, atop the handle rests a now headless peacock whose tail feathers perhaps would have once cascaded along a similarly hammered lid. The peacock, a bird associated with wealth and rank, was often used decoratively on clothing, brooches, crowns and other royal regalia across different regions of Asia. The bird finial is found on many of the ewers from this time, such as the Deydier Ewer and a Tang period jug offered by Christie's in March of 2008, to name just two.³⁶ The bird is also symbolic within tantric Buddhism for its ability to turn poison into nectar, the tail feathers having converted dark

³⁴ Often associated as representative of the wine leaf (cf. the Bactrian sword handle).

³⁵ See for example on the Tibetan decanters in the collections of the Cleveland Museum, the Ashmolean, and the Pritzker Collection.

³⁶ Christie's "Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art: Wednesday 19 March 2008," sale number 1976, lot 513 (<http://www.christies.com/lotfinder>). Also see n. 9.

poison into a multitude of vibrant colours. Indeed, the use of the peacock's tail feathers to ritually transform can be readily pointed to throughout Asian religions, in this way, as well as in its connotations of royalty, the peacock is a fitting and appropriate creature to summit the ewer, with the tail plumes draping into the wine vessel in a quasi ritual blessing and transmutation of the wine into an elixir of life.

The Tibetan commitment to animal motifs on their ceremonial objects exhibits great specificity in the use of visual language. Both the artists and the patrons of Tibetan metalwork use the placement, posture, and demeanour of figural forms to communicate particular narratives. Whether depicted in full gallop, prancing or seated, upright roaring or falling prey to the arrow of a hunter, dancing across meadows or soaring in the sky, each animal motif is carefully and deliberately placed according to the type, function and owner of the object. The specificity of such imagery provides a context for the use of allegory within the iconographic composition of the Gold Ewer.

An interesting interpretive methodology that can be applied to the Gold Ewer's iconography and its meaning was first suggested by Marshak while working on similar objects from the High Plateau and Central Asia. Marshak showed that, despite the strong commitment in Tibetan toreutics to animal imagery over that of figural or textual scenes (as was common in Sasanian art), there is an enormous amount of allegorical narrative imbued within the animal and floral imagery which has been freely adapted to meet the tastes of the royal Tibetan patrons. As pointed out by Marshak, the animal figures not only work in concert with each other: interacting, playing, dancing, chasing each other, and so forth, but are also individually filled with emotive meanings, the combination of which can often result in significant allegorical narratives.³⁷

As in the art of the Sasanian Empire, where the pictorial display of kingship through hunts, banquets and investiture scenes is filled with motifs and topoi central to the culture's ideas of power and divinity, so does the animal imagery in Tibetan toreutics convey its culturally specific significance. The composition of the Gold Ewer is original, but one can find parallels in Tang China and Central Asia, which in turn were partly inherited from the ancient Near Eastern cultures. The iconographic programme exhibits motifs of royalty,

fidelity, guardianship, and the heavenly afterlife. The animals and motifs that decorate the ewer convey ideas of enlightenment and playfulness, power and meek serenity. The images act in concert with each other and are in effect a group of talismans, each with their own as well as with combined meanings. The artist has depicted an allegorical narrative, which begins from the foot and carries on through the neck and spout, and is further supplemented by individual roundels on the body of the vessel.

At the base, we find a playful courtship between the crouched lion and cool deer, with the crafty smile on the former indicating his intentions. The idea of the courtship is expanded further in the image of the mandarin duck, representative of the life-long faithfulness of husband and wife. The allegory finds fertile fruition in the blossoming lotus depicted on the spout, the stem of which has entangled the previous figures. Symbolic of enlightenment and the afterlife, the narrative is imbued with a lushness of life that should carry through into death. We might further glean heraldic symbolism in the winged unicorn and phoenix, both representations of a noblewoman and the latter specifically associated to the empress; evidence perhaps of the patron or recipient of the vessel, a topic I will return to presently.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONCLUSION

During the 7th century Tibet rose to the stage of history as a new contender for control over the lucrative trade routes of Central Asia. In the first quarter of that century, under the rule of gNam ri slon mtshan (late 6th to early 7th century), minor principalities and kingdoms in the central plateau banded together either through alliance or conquest to form a new polity under the rule of the Yar lung Kingdom. By the second quarter of the 7th century, under the rule of Srong btsan sgam po (618?–649) the coalition around Central Tibet was reaffirmed and Tibet's greater imperial conquests began in earnest.³⁸

Expanding rapidly in all directions, the Tibetan imperial court first consolidated the territories of the plateau. In a strategic manoeuvring of, and eventual victory over, the powerful 'A zha (Tuyuhun) kingdom in the north-east, Tibet won tribute and a matrimonial alliance in about 640–641 from the great imperial court of Tang China. Soon after that, having trounced the ancient kingdom of Zhang zhung in the west, the military gained control of the kingdoms of

³⁷ Marshak, forthcoming (the work which was a rough draft of an exhibition catalogue written by Boris Marshak on "Ancient Tibetan Metalwork in the Pritzker Collection") is currently being edited by this writer with the intention of its publication to coincide with an exhibition of the material.

³⁸ For a detailed overview of the rise of the Yar lung Kingdom and the subsequent development of the Tibetan Empire, see Dotson (2009: 16–21).

Little Bolor and the Wakhan at the crossroads of the Karakorum and Pamir ranges. In the third quarter of that century Central Asia was to experience the power and martial agility of the Tibetan warriors in perhaps its greatest expansion to date. The Tibetan Empire, to the loss of the Turkish Qaghanate and the Tang Dynasty (618–907), took over the oasis kingdom of Khotan, the western gate of the Silk Road. From this base, in the spring of 670, Tibet invaded, conquered and held the remaining territories in the western Tarim Basin, forcing the Chinese to retreat and relinquish their control of the four garrisons of Anxi (circa 676). At this point, in the last quarter of the 7th century, there was no doubt that Tibet had arrived as the major power of Central Asia.³⁹

Among the important tasks that went into building an empire were certain rites and rituals adopted to define and mark great occasions which underpinned the authority of the *btsan po* and the royal court. Matrimonial alliances, gift giving, banquets, and royal hunts, were all among the panoply of the court. Royal hunts, for example, were not simply a means of food collection but rather a display of one's martial agility within a complex coordination of troops.⁴⁰ Banquets similarly functioned as a display of wealth and power, as well as a time to renew allegiances and reaffirm legitimacy. Both the hunt and the banquet, as with coronations and burials, offered occasions to ceremonially cement the foundations of the empire; it is for such events that a deluxe material culture emerged and it is in this environment that we may better understand the social and cultural ambiance within which the Gold Ewer was created.

Considering the trajectory of Tibet's rise to power in the 7th century, one may glean that a height of wealth and courtly grandeur would have come about around the life of Khri Mang slon Mang rtsan (r. 649–667). As the grandson of Srong btsan sgam po, the young emperor would have been bestowed an enormous amount of wealth in the form of royal treasures—heirlooms of Tibet's greatest king. Moreover, under the tutelage of the great minister mGar sTong rtsan (circa 646–668), Mang slon Mang rtsan surely experienced an apex in courtly life as Tibet's imperial domain and power over Central Asia grew to new heights.⁴¹

³⁹ On the military and economic history of the Tibetan Empire, see Beckwith (1993).

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the royal hunt in Tibet, see Dotson (2013: 61–85), Pritzker lecture for Asian Art, Brussels (<http://vimeo.com/86810850>). Also for a great discussion of the Royal Hunt in general, see Allsen 2006.

⁴¹ The second high point coinciding with the military victories of Khri Srong lde btsan (r.756–797).

A momentous occasion in the year 675–676 is illustrative of this highpoint of empire. *The Old Tibetan Annals* records:

It fell on the year of the pig. In the spring the Btsan-po departed to Zhe-shing. Princess Khri-mo-lan gave a great banquet. 'Bon Da-rgyal Khri-zung bestowed great gold and copper, and in the summer [the Btsan-po] resided in Bal-po. Minister [Mgar] Btsan-snya carried out the administration of Zhang-zhung at Gu-ran in Zhims. [He] went to [Western] Turkestan (Dru-gu-yul) for plunder (?). In the winter the Btsan-pho resided in Sna-bo in 'On. So one year. (Dotson 2009: 91).

As this is one of the few instances in the *Annals* that expressly refers to metalware and that of a great banquet, could this be the purpose for which the ewer was created? The date is correct in terms of the typological analysis and the timing is right for direct contact with Sogdian artist in western Central Asia.

Whether in the form of temples, statues, or ceremonial regalia it is often the powerful women in Tibetan history who play an essential role in the patronage of deluxe material culture. Khri mo lan (d.712), more commonly referred to as Khri ma lod, was one such person in Tibet's history. As the wife of the Khri Mang slon Mang rtsan, she played an important role in the royal court (as evinced by the passage above). Further, in the years following the death of her husband, Khri ma lod became a powerful dowager empress of Tibet. As such, we might presume that she would have been central to the extensive three-year burial of her husband and would have been directly involved in the creation and selection of the deluxe material that was to be deposited inside the tomb. Though the activities of Khri ma lod are not documented during the burial of her husband, Khri Mang slon Mang rtsan, and the subsequent childhood of their son, once the boy was of age to ascend the throne, the dowager empress re-emerges in *The Annals* as the central authority of the royal court.⁴² We might understand therefore that Khri ma lod was an enormously skilled diplomat and highly articulate in the complexities of the pomp and circumstance of the court life. The important position she held must have already been obtained within the court as again witnessed by her hosting the great banquet. Based on this

⁴² A great power struggle led by the mGar clan embroiled Tibet for many years. Consequentially there is no more mention of Khri ma lod in *The Annals*, at least not until her son, Khri 'Dus srong, was able to reconsolidate the power of the *btsan po* at the demise of the mGar clan. At this time Khri ma lod re-emerges as one of the most powerful women in Tibet's history. And it is with her that the *btsan po* leaves the governance of the royal court—a strong indication of her acumen for manoeuvring the complexities of the court.

circumstantial evidence, it is my own supposition that Khri ma lod was the owner/patron of the Gold Ewer.

Reconsidering the relative dating of the Gold Ewer to the end of the 7th century and beginning of the 8th (based on the typological and stylistic analysis), we may hone this date to the second half of the 7th and even possibly to *circa* 676, the date of Khri ma lod's great banquet and of the subsequent burial of Khri Mang slon Mang rtsan. Further clues that support this hypothesis can be found in the iconographic composition of the Gold Ewer and the allegorical meanings found within it. The phoenix, a heraldic image of the empress, is complemented by the winged horse, a symbol of the noble lady. The horned lion, a protector in this life and the next, may function both above and below ground, and the courtship scene followed by images of fidelity and a life well lived in the mandarin duck is elevated by the sumptuous "tree of life motif" which blossoms at the wedge of the spout. The whole might be understood by the viewer as a show of power by the empress as well as homage to her partnership with the powerful *btsan po* Khri Mang slon Mang rtsan in this life and the next.

* * *

Defining the early toreutic art of Imperial Tibet is not a clear-cut task. Due to the paucity of textual material, little is known of the social atmosphere, or rather the "social life of things" as the cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai puts it, which we are now beginning to discover. Furthermore, because the objects have long been dislocated from their place of origin there are few contextual clues for understanding their history.⁴³ In addition, the direct and indirect knowledge of the subject matter by the craftsmen responsible for the works creates further difficulties in the process of dating and analysing the objects (see, for example, those objects analysed by Professor Grenet in this volume). Pioneering work by a few scholars has mapped out the general contours of toreutic studies,⁴⁴ which has led to the development of broader interests and further insights in

⁴³ Objects from the imperial period, silk, gold, silver, etc., have circulated throughout Tibet and Central Asia for more than a thousand years and, while they might have at one point constituted burial deposits, many of the Old Tibetan tombs were unearthed in droves shortly after they were built, with the collapse of the empire. Since then many of the objects have remained hidden in private collections or simply unrecognised until modern scholarship became aware of them.

⁴⁴ On Tibetan toreutics in particular see: Denwood (1973), Carter (1998), Heller (2002, 2003 and 2013b), and Tong (2008). For more on the general topic of Tibetan, Central Asian, and Iranian toreutics and Tibetan silver objects in particular see the full bibliography below.

the field,⁴⁵ nonetheless, the subject matter remains in its infancy. Fortunately, over the past few decades an increasing amount of material has been recognised in public and private collections. In addition, an increased effort in research around the high plateau has proven a continual source of new material. At the time that this conference was convened in 2013, there were literally hundreds of objects available for study ranging from jewellery, horse trappings, ceremonial banquet wares, and other features of regalia and courtly decorative arts. And while the body of material ranges in media, and includes silk and painting, the large majority of it is silver and gold.

Through a close and exhaustive study of form, function, technical execution, iconography, and patterns of décor, particular trends in stylistic schools will become much clearer. Seemingly disparate objects may then begin to take on more precise attributions with regard to craftsmanship, origin, patronage, iconography, and relative dating. In order to push the field forward it seems worthwhile, therefore, to expand the tools of deduction and allow for new hypotheses to be tested against the whole. It is in this spirit that this preliminary study is offered, hoping to provoke further conversations on the rich material culture of the Royal Court of Tibet.

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⁴⁵ See for example: Huo Wei (2013), Melikian-Chirvani (2010), and Martin (2014).

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Fig. 1-2: Gold ewer with turquoise inlay. Pritzker Collection, Chicago. H. 50 cm.



Fig. 3: Ewer depicting senmurv in the Hermitage Museum. St. Petersburg. H. 33 cm.

Fig. 4: Ewer depicting senmurv in the Hermitage Museum. St. Petersburg. H. 33 cm (after Smirnov 1909: no. 83).



Fig. 5: Silver-gilt ewer with bird medallions. Private collection, Japan (after M. Carter 2003). H. 48.8 cm.



Fig. 6: Winged camel ewer in the Hermitage Museum. St. Petersburg. H. 39.5 cm.

Fig. 7: Winged camel ewer in the Hermitage Museum. St. Petersburg. H. 39.5 cm (after Smirnov 1909: no. 84).

Fig. 8: Silver-gilt ewer.
Exhibited by Christian Deydier 2008. H. 28.5 cm.





Fig. 9: Back panel of coffin. Private collection.

Fig. 10: "Tree of life" motif. Taq-i-Bustan, Iran
(after Fukai and Horiuchi 1969).



