



TWO-DAY AUCTION - Fine Chinese Art / 中國藝術集珍 / Buddhism & Hinduism (CA1021)

Fri, 15th Oct 2021

Viewing:

You may view objects in this auction in our gallery from October 4 to October 14, 2021. We are open Monday to Friday from 10 AM to 6 PM CET, as well as by appointment.

Lot 70

Starting price: €500

Estimate: €1000

A PAIR OF ALTERED SERPENTINE ARCHAISTIC 'TIGER' TALLIES, HU-FU, QING DYNASTY OR EARLIER 清代或更早一對蛇紋石虎符

China, 1644-1912 or earlier. Each composed of two halves precisely carved in mirror-image as a tiger standing foursquare and facing forwards, with curved tail, incised claws, and pierced mouth, the body incised with archaistic characters. The flat interiors with two shaped bosses or recesses, one accurately fitting into the other.

Provenance: Kwok Gallery, Singapore, March 1999. Collection of David Widdicombe QC, acquired from the above and thence by descent within the same family. Copies of two letters from Patrick K. M. Kwok, director of Kwok Gallery, to David Widdicombe, offering the tallies and stating a purchase price of GBP 950 for each (approx. GBP 2,888 today after inflation for both together), accompany this lot. David Graham Widdicombe (1924-2019) was a British Queen's Counsel and political activist. He studied at Cambridge before being called up to serve in the British Army for the remainder of World War II. While at Cambridge, he became friends with Lee Kuan Yew, the long-serving prime minister and founding father of Singapore.

Condition: Excellent condition with old wear, shallow surface scratches and other traces of handling, weathering, some erosion mostly to edges, and few minuscule nicks. The tip of the tail of one half with an old repair.

Weight: 110.0 g and 113.7 g
Dimensions: Length 11 cm and 10.6 cm

The serpentine originally of a deep sea-green color, now almost completely altered to grayish-green and buff color with patches of russet. Some areas with distinct speckles, characteristic of this mineral. Note that serpentine of exactly this color was already in use for archaic carvings during the Han dynasty. See Sotheby's, 10 September 2019, for a related serpentine carving of a small figure, sold for USD 4,000 (lot 115).

Tallies were made since the Eastern Zhou dynasty in bronze, jade and various hardstones, such as the present lot, often in the form of a tiger. Two-piece tiger tallies (hu-fu) were used to verify troop deployment orders from the central government. Left pieces were issued to local commanders, and right pieces were retained by the central command.

Government orders were deemed to be authentic if they were accompanied by the right piece matching the recipient's left piece. The word hu-fu first appears in the biography of Lord Xinling in the Records of the Grand Historian, where a stolen tiger tally is used to relieve the state of Zhao.

Literature comparison: Compare a related tiger tally, also dated to the Qing dynasty, in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art, accession number F1916.697a-b.

Auction result comparison: Compare a related tiger tally, dated to the Ming dynasty and of considerably smaller size (5.1 cm long), at Christie's New York in Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art on 19 September 2014, lot 1223, **sold for USD 17,500.**

清代或更早一對蛇紋石虎符

中國，1644-1912年或更早。各由兩部分精雕而成，如虎四足着地，面朝前，尾巴彎曲，張爪，開口似咆哮狀，虎符上刻古文。平坦的內部分別有凸起或凹槽，兩部分準確閉合。

來源：新加坡Kwok Gallery藝廊，1999年3月。David Widdicombe QC收藏，購於上述藝廊，在同一家族保存至今。隨附兩封Kwok Gallery藝廊經理Patrick K. M. Kwok和David Widdicombe的通信，出價 950 英鎊（今天兩者加在一起，加上通貨膨脹，價格應為2,888 英鎊）。David Graham Widdicombe (1924-2019) 是英國女王的法律顧問和政治活動家。他曾就讀於劍橋大學，之後被徵召在英國軍隊服役，直到二戰結束。在劍橋期間，他與後來的新加坡開國元勳及總理李光耀成為了親密的朋友。

品相：狀況良好，舊時磨損，表面淺劃痕，有其他處理痕跡，風化，一些侵蝕，主要是邊緣有微小刻痕。尾尖的一半曾經修補過。

重量：分別為110.0 克與113.7 克

尺寸：長11 厘米與10.6 厘米

拍賣結果比較：比較一件相近明代虎符，尺寸稍小（長5.1 厘米），見紐約佳士得 Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art 2014年9月19日 lot 1223, **售價USD 17,500。**