



DAY 2 - TWO-DAY AUCTION - Fine Chinese Art / 中國藝術集珍 / Buddhism & Hinduism (CA0322-2)

Fri, 11th Mar 2022

Viewing:

You may view objects in this auction in our gallery from 28 February to 9 March 2022. We are open Monday to Friday from 10 AM to 6 PM CET, as well as by appointment.

Lot 352

Starting price: €15000

Estimate: €30000

AN IMPORTANT AND RARE BRONZE RITUAL TRIPOD WINE VESSEL, JUE, SHANG DYNASTY 商代重要青銅三足酒器爵

China, 13th century BC. The vessel is raised on tall, graceful, blade-shaped legs with sharp edges and cast with a band of taotie masks with raised bosses and indented flanges, one mask centered by a flange, the other by the handle and a two-character clan mark, cast on the body beneath. Above is a band of neatly incised short blades and two longer blades, one on the underside of the spout and one on the flared collar. A pair of capped posts with engraved scroll rises from the rim.

Inscriptions: Two-character clan mark

Provenance: Bluett & Sons, London, circa 1960 or earlier. A private collector in London, acquired from the above and thence by descent. The present lot is listed in an inventory dated March 1977 which was compiled for insurance purposes. Copies of two pages from this inventory, each listing the jue vessel as a "Chueh", one showing a value of GBP 2,500 (approx. GBP 40,000-60,000 today after inflation), the highest price for any item on either page, accompany this lot. A copy of a signed **letter from Brian Morgan of Bluett & Sons, dated 22nd March 1977**, accompanies this lot. Morgan replies to the owner of the Jue who requests "an up-to-date valuation for insurance purposes" from Bluett, stating that he "cannot remember [the present lot] well enough after the lapse of years" and asks for it to be brought in again. This indicates that the purchase must have taken place at least 10-15 years before 1977, pointing to an acquisition date of c. 1960.

Bluett & Sons was an important dealer of Chinese works of art, founded by brothers Leonard and Edgar Bluett and later continued by Leonard's son Roger Bluett, who was president of the British Antique Dealers' Association, of which his father and uncle were founding members in 1919. Brian Morgan joined Bluett & Sons in 1954, where he became a director of the company.

Condition: Excellent condition, commensurate with age. Minuscule nicks to edges and small dents. Few minor signs of erosion. Soil encrustations. Superb, naturally grown patina with various tones of malachite and cuprite. **The crisply cast decorations are extremely well-preserved**, which makes this one of the most attractive examples of its kind. In such pristine condition, it must be considered exceedingly rare.

Weight: 722.3 g
Dimensions: Height 19.2 cm

The present jue's shape is particularly elegant. The tall, slightly curved, blade-shaped legs are longer in proportion to the body than usual, thereby creating a sense of lightness. The vessel itself is also rather unusual, with a shallow, rounded lower body below the taotie band with pronounced upper and lower edges, which combined with the flanges create a distinct, slightly angular profile.

Jue appear to have been essential to Shang dynasty rituals, as they are one of the most numerous vessels found in Shang tombs. Their shape implies that they were used for the heating and pouring of ritual wines, and possibly for drinking the wine.

Expert's note: The present lot belongs to a distinct group of jue which is one of the earliest and largest types. It differs from later groups in that there is a clan mark, the decorations are particularly crisp, the undersides of the spout and collar are decorated with palm blades, the capped posts are incised, and the blade-shaped legs are taller and sharper. In general, later types are usually smaller and significantly less elaborate than the present lot. The discovery of comparable vessels in Fu Hao's tomb argues for a date at the end of the first century of the Anyang period (1300-1050 BC). See Robert W. Bagley, *Shang Ritual Bronzes in the Arthur M. Sackler Collections*, vol. 1, The Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1987, page 182, figure 12.1, and page 185, number 13. This type of jue appears to be extremely rare compared to later types, with not a single example as well-preserved sold at auction by Christie's or Sotheby's after 2000.

Literature comparison: A near-identical jue is illustrated by Robert W. Bagley, *Shang Ritual Bronzes in the Arthur M. Sackler Collections*, vol. 1, The Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1987, p. 184-185, no. 13, which is dated 13th century BC.

Auction result comparison: Compare a pair of closely related jue, 19.8 cm high, dated 13th-12th century BC, at Christie's New York in *Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art* on 25 September 2020, lot 1503, **sold for USD 118,750**. Note that the Christie's pair of jue are less well-preserved than the present lot, and thus this auction result does not adequately reflect the value of the present lot. Compare a related jue, 22.8 cm high, dated 13th-12th century BC, of slightly different form with a bovine mask above the handle and elongated capped posts, at Christie's New York in *Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art* on 21 March 2014, lot 2017, **sold for USD 112,500**.

商代重要青銅三足酒器爵

中國，公元前十三世紀。圓腹，一側的口部前端有流——倒酒的流槽，後部尖狀尾，流與口之間有立柱，腹部一旁有把手，杯腹一側有鑿，呈獸頭銜環狀，下有三個錐狀長足。三足高大細長外撇，刀狀。頸部蕉葉紋，流下雷紋地蕉葉紋，腹部鑿夔紋，把手一側的腹部有兩個字符，可能為家族標記，整體器形線條流暢。

款識：X己

來源：倫敦Bluett & Sons藝廊，約 1960 年或更早。倫敦私人收藏，購於上述藝廊，保存至今。此拍品可在1977年3月的一份保

險文件找到。隨附一份兩頁的清單副本，當時寫著“Chueh”，價格為 GBP 2,500 (相當於現在的 GBP 40,000-60,000)，單子上都寫著藏品的最高價格。隨附一份 Bluett & Sons 藝廊的 Brian Morgan 寫的信，時間為 1977 年 3 月 22 日。Morgan 回復爵的持有人關於保險最新估價，“cannot remember [the present lot] well enough after the lapse of years” (多年後記不清) 並問是否可以買回來。這表明購買應該是在 1977 年之前至少 10-15 年前進行的，表明購買日期為 1960 年前後。

Bluett & Sons 是中國藝術品的重要經銷商，藝廊由 Leonard 與 Edgar Bluett 兄弟共同創立，後來由 Leonard 的兒子 Roger Bluett 繼承，他是英國古董商協會的主席，他的父親和叔叔是該協會 1919 年的創始成員。Brian Morgan 於 1954 年加入 Bluett & Sons，並擔任公司董事。

品相：狀況極佳，與年齡相符。邊緣有微小的刻痕和凹痕。少量有輕微的侵蝕跡象。佈滿了青綠色的銅鏽，紋飾保存得非常好，十分珍貴。

重量：722.3 克

尺寸：高 19.2 厘米

整體器形線條流暢，高而略彎曲的刀狀腿比通常的更長，張弛有度，下腹淺且圓，素面無紋，上下邊緣明顯。

爵在商朝儀式中至關重要，它們是商墓中發現的數量最多的器皿之一，用於加熱和倒酒，也可能用於飲用酒。

專家注釋：本拍品是一件很獨特的爵。與後世的不同之處在於有氏族印記，紋飾清晰，流和頸部下飾有蕉葉紋，刀形腿更高更鋒利。一般來說，後來的類型通常比此拍品更小，而且精緻得多。在婦好墓中發現了類似的器皿，表明其時間為安陽時代 (公元前 1300-1050 年) 末。見 Robert W. Bagley, *Shang Ritual Bronzes in the Arthur M. Sackler Collections*, 第 1 冊, The Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1987, 第 182 頁, 圖 12.1, 以及第 185 頁, 圖 13. 此類爵相比于後來的如佳士得或蘇富比 2000 年之後的拍品，保存完好，十分珍貴。

文獻比較：一件幾乎一模一樣的爵，見 Robert W. Bagley, *Shang Ritual Bronzes*, Arthur M. Sackler 收藏, 第 1 冊, 華盛頓 The Arthur M. Sackler Foundation 基金會, 1987 年, 第 184-185 頁, 圖 13, 公元前十三世紀。

拍賣結果比較：比較一對相似的爵，高 19.8 厘米，公元前十三至十二世紀，見紐約佳士得 *Important Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art* 2020 年 9 月 25 日 lot 1503, 售價 USD 118,750。注意佳士得的一對爵保存得沒有這麼好，因此，該拍賣結果並不能充分反映當前拍品的價值。比較一件相近的爵，高 22.8 厘米，公元前十三至十二世紀，形狀略有不同，手柄上方有一個牛面紋和加長的柱，見紐約佳士得 *Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art* 2014 年 3 月 21 日 lot 2017, 售價 USD 112,500。