



TWO-DAY AUCTION - Fine Chinese Art / 中國藝術集珍 / Buddhism & Hinduism (CA0321)

Sat, 6th Mar 2021

Lot 614

Starting price: €5000

Estimate: €10000

AN IMPORTANT AND LARGE KESI 'PEACH FESTIVAL' PANEL, QING DYNASTY 清代重要繅絲《蟠桃宴》壁挂

China, 1644-1912. Richly embroidered in bright colors with a lively scene depicting the legendary festival, with Xiwangmu, the Queen Mother of the West, descending from the sky astride her phoenix, flanked by two attendants, a crane in flight above. A pantheon of Daoist immortals and deities, including Shoulao, the Eight Immortals, Lui Hai, and Hehe Erxian, all holding ruyi-scepters, eagerly await her arrival on a garden terrace with lingzhi, pine and peach trees issuing from craggy rockwork.

Provenance: From an old British private collection, by repute formed in the first half of the 20th century.

Condition: Pristine condition with very bright and fresh colors, few loose threads to edges, very little minor soiling, and minimal tiny losses. Laid down on paper.

Dimensions: Size 175 x 89 cm

Expert's note: Large kesi panels depicting this subject or variations thereof commonly appear on the auction market, most with irrevocably faded colors and manifold other condition issues. The present panel is arguably **the best-preserved example on the market in a very long time:** The colors are virtually as fresh as new, the embroidery is extremely detailed, and the iridescent luster of the silk is almost hypnotic. Most likely it has been rolled up ever since it was mounted on paper, and therefore was never exposed to light before.

The Peach Festival is a popular Daoist theme associated with the birthday celebration of Xiwangmu, who has the sole authority to grant Peaches of Eternal Life and bestow celebrants of the festival with great fortune. According to legend, the festival is held at the Jade Palace in the Kunlun Mountains in the Western paradise and only takes place every 3000 years. Here, groups of Immortals are pictured waiting in anticipation for Xiwangmu, who gracefully arrives on a phoenix. The auspicious message of this theme made the present panel suitable for presentation at important festivities.

Kesi, which means 'cut silk', derives from the visual illusion of cut threads that is created by distinct, unblended areas of color, as the weft threads are woven into each color and then cut. The earliest surviving examples of kesi tapestries date to the Tang dynasty (618-907), although the technique was already used earlier in wool and became widely used only during the Song dynasty (1127-1379). The fragment of a kesi tapestry has been recovered in a tomb of a man and his wife

in Dulan, Qinghai province, who died in 633 and 688 respectively, and another also excavated in Dulan, was included in the exhibition “China, Dawn of a Golden Age” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2005, cat. no. 245.

During the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), kesi panels enjoyed a rise in popularity and thrived under the Qing emperors. Early in the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) official weaving workshops were established both in the Palace and in the cities of Jiangning, Suzhou and Hangzhou, in order to cater to the Court’s increasing demand for palace and temple furnishings, clothing and presentation silks for civil and military officials. Specialized centers of production soon developed around this area, such as the city of Wenzhou, Zhenjiang province, which became particularly famous for its luxurious kesi tapestries.

Literature comparison: A closely related silk kesi panel with a similar bright red sky in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing, is illustrated in Zhongguo Meishu Quanji - Gongyi Meishu Bian, vol. 7, Beijing, 1987, pl. 180, where it is dated to the Qing Dynasty. A slightly larger kesi panel depicting the Peach Festival, from the Liaoning Provincial Museum, Shenyang, was included in the Hong Kong Oriental Ceramic Society exhibition Heaven’s Embroidered Cloths, One Thousand Years of Chinese Textiles, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Hong Kong, 1995, cat. no. 119. Compare also a kesi panel depicting Xiwangmu being greeted by female Immortals in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, included in the exhibition Masterpieces of Chinese Silk Tapestry and Embroidery in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, 1998, cat. no. 21.

Auction result comparison: Compare with a closely related kesi panel, **depicting the same subject on a similar red ground**, at Christie’s New York in Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art on 22-23 March 2012, lot 1627, **sold for USD 40,000**, and another at Christie’s New York in Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art on 14-15 September 2017, lot 943, **sold for USD 56,250**. Compare also with a larger kesi textile, dated to the late Ming to early Qing dynasty, at Sotheby’s Hong Kong in Important Chinese Art on 11 July 2020, lot 3637, **sold for HKD 1,000,000**.

清代重要緯絲《蟠桃宴》壁掛

中國，1644-1912年。絲綫鮮艷，生動地描繪了傳說中的蟠桃盛會。西王母騎在鳳凰上從天而降，兩側是侍從，頭上仙鶴飛舞。壽老、八仙、劉海以及和合二仙都在露臺上急切地等待著西王母的到來，四周可見靈芝、松樹和桃花樹。

來源：英國私人老收藏，據說購於二十世紀上半葉。

品相：原始狀態，色彩依然非常鮮豔，邊緣絲綫輕微鬆動，輕微污漬，缺損極小，裱在紙上。

尺寸：175 x 89 厘米

專家注釋：描繪此主題的大型緯絲壁掛出現在拍賣市場上的，大多數帶有不可避免的褪色和其他各種問題。當前的壁掛可以說是很久一段時間以來市場上保存最完好的：顏色幾乎與新的一樣新鮮，刺繡非常細緻。自從將其裝裱在紙上以來，很可能是將其捲起，因此以前從未暴露在日光下。

緯絲，又稱刻絲，是中國傳統的一種絲織品，其特色是以緯織方式織造，緯線並不橫貫全幅，而僅在需要處與經線交織。尚存的最早的緯絲壁掛實例可追溯到唐朝（618-907），開始將此技法用於絲織品。南宋時期緯絲得到廣泛使用。緯絲壁掛曾在青海省都蘭墳墓中被發現。在紐約大都會博物館2005年的展

覽“China, Dawn of a Golden Age” 也曾展出過另一塊出土緯絲，目錄圖 245。

在明朝(1368-1644)，緯絲壁掛受歡迎程度不斷提高，並在清朝皇帝的統治下蓬勃發展。清朝初期(1644-1911年)，在皇宮以及江寧、蘇州和杭州等城市都建立了官方的織布作坊，以滿足宮廷和廟宇陳設、服裝和文職和軍事官員所用絲綢的日益增長的需求。很快就出現了特殊的生產中心，例如浙江溫州，以其豪華的緯絲掛毯而聞名。

文獻比較：一件清代相近紅地緯絲見北京故宮博物院見《中國美術全集》，工藝美術編，第7冊，北京，1987年，圖180。一件《蟠桃會》大型緯絲見遼寧省博物館的展品，見香港美術館 Hong Kong Oriental Ceramic Society exhibition Heaven's Embroidered Cloths, One Thousand Years of Chinese Textiles, 1995年，圖119。還有一件西王母緯絲見臺北故宮博物院 Masterpieces of Chinese Silk Tapestry and Embroidery 展覽，1998，圖21。

拍賣結果比較：一件相似紅地緯絲壁掛售于紐約佳士得 Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art 拍場2012年3月22-23日 lot 1627，售價USD 40,000，另一件售于紐約佳士得 Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art 拍場2017年9月14-15日 lot 943，售價USD 56,250。還有一件明末清初緯絲見香港蘇富比 Important Chinese Art 拍場2020年7月11日 lot 3637，售價HKD 1,000,000。