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ART & ANTIQUES

**The Fantastic Chinese
Stove-kettle of the Three Worlds
龙凤火壶**

China, Ming Dynasty
late 16th century, early 17th century



The Fantastic Chinese Stove-kettle of the Three Worlds

Long-Fenghuang Stove-Kettle 龙凤火壶

Formerly known as “Caquesseitão”

China, Ming Dynasty, late 16th century, early 17th century

Cast, beaten, repoussé, chased, engraved and burnished silver

Height 47 cm; weight 5,050 g

Provenance:

Collection of the 2nd Conde de Bertiandos (1818-1874), Palácio dos Biscaíno, Braga;

Marqueses de Alegrete;

Sotheby's, Paris, June 26, 2013, lot 242;

His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Abdullah Al Thani;

Sotheby's, Paris, Hôtel Lambert, *Une Collection Princièere, Volume II: Kunstkammer*, October 12, 2022, lot 310

Literature:

Reynaldo dos Santos and Irene Quilhó et al.: *Les Trésors du L'Orfèvrerie du Portugal*, Musée des Arts Decoratifs, Paris, November 1954 – January 1955, 43, cat. no. 99, pl. 47;

Reynaldo dos Santos et al. (eds). *Exposição de Ourivesaria Portuguesa e Francesca*, The Ricardo do Espirito Santo Silver Foundation, Lisbon, April-May 1955, 43, cat. no. 112, pl. 55;

Reynaldo dos Santos and Irene Quilhó: *Ourivesaria Portuguesa nas Coleccões Particulares*, Lisbon, 1974. Author's edition, 34: “Caquesseitão”.

Exhibition:

Les trésors de l'orfèvrerie du Portugal, Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, November 1954 – January 1955, no. 99;

Exposição de Ourivesaria Portuguesa e Francesca, The Ricardo do Espirito Santo Silver Foundation, Lisbon, April-May 1955, no. 112;

XVII Exposição de Arte Cultura e Ciência do Conselho da Europa, Casa dos Bicos, Lisbon, 1983, no. 9.

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CRITICAL ANALYSIS

One of the most abstruse problems European sinology in its origins had to tackle was the interpretation of Chinese mythology, extrapolating putative connections with Western mythology. This methodology proved misguided, as these traditions belonged to two worlds whose roots were practically incompatible, added to which there was the nature of the Chinese language itself, which in the vast area it covered and its linguistic nature, developed into the most complicated in human history. As such, when addressing the extraordinary complexity and dimensions of the “Long” myth (龍 lóng, which is also now transcribed as “Loong”), the creature was translated as Dragon, as understood by Western culture. Another problem arose when the “Fenghuang” (鳳凰) bird was translated as Phoenix, given there is no real connection between the two.

In Western mythology the dragon had various interpretations, including violence, aggression and destruction, but the period of interest to our study, by its context, is the Christian world, where the creature has had a largely diabolical meaning, in an apocalyptic struggle between good and evil. We find a range of religious figures, archangels or saints, killing the dragon, or the Virgin of the Apocalypse subjugating a dragon at her feet. On the other hand, in Chinese mythology the Long's symbolism is completely different, having a benign nature, a far cry from the Christian world, and of great richness in its different expressions.

With regard to the Phoenix, its ancient symbolism in the Greco-Roman world referred to death and rebirth, given it rises up from its own ashes or those of its predecessor. This myth was adopted by Christianity as a symbol of Christ's Resurrection.

Referring to the mythological Fenghuang bird, Lyujie Zu describes its nature as follows: “*The divine creature composited with several variant animals is of six-chi tall and having five colors for its plumages including black, red, green, white, and yellow. Fenghuang has its natural divinity of winds and social divinity representing power and value that five virtues can be seen in fenghuang as uprightness, humanity, virtue, honesty, and sincerity. Fenghuang has faced historical change of gender as from yang to yin (generally understood as from male to female) in Chinese connotation. In Confucius' time, fenghuang was mainly used to describe virtuous man, such as shi and king, and it was in the Han dynasty that fenghuang's gender was gradually distinguished, as the male feng with the female huang respectively, symbolizing everlasting love that represented the yin-yang balance. After the Ming-Qing period, the fenghuang was a major symbolization for the female, so that such transformation is unavoidably related to the monarchical power of Chinese empresses in indicating themselves by using fenghuang-elements.*”⁴⁶ As may be appreciated, the assimilation and simplification of the two mythologies, Long and Fenghuang, only goes to underline their absolute incompatibility and the distance between them.

On studying the bibliography referring to this silver Long-Fenghuang figure, we observe just how limited it is, and that the scholars have had to tackle serious complications. There are about ten known examples, eight of which are aquamaniles and one sole piece, the stove-kettle we are studying here, which used to belong to the former Portuguese collection of the Marquises of Alegrete. At first glance, and observing the similar manufacturing characteristics of each one of the pieces from this series, one would posit that they all came out of the same silver workshop, as none presents any stylistic peculiarity to set it apart from the rest. It should be highlighted that



the majority of similar pieces that have been found either are or have been linked to Portuguese collections. Portugal had an active presence in the south-east of China as early as the 16th century, and its intercontinental trade base in the region was the port of Macao, following an agreement with China signed in 1557 (Fig. 1).

It would be quite reasonable to imagine that these pieces were made in pairs, and in this case the distinctive symbol of the female is the fact that it is carrying its young in its mouth. On analysing this morphology, and without knowing about the benevolent nature of the Long in China, it was assumed that the fantastical creature was “eating” its prey, a conclusion at odds with the nature of these mythological figures (Fig. 2). It is highly likely that, over the years, these pairs were separated, and the female attribute of the baby was lost at some point or exchanged, which explains why one of the horned male specimens might have a bird chick in its mouth, having lost its initial symbolism.

It is worth postulating ancient Chinese origins in iconographic sources linking longs and birds. Their extensive symbolism illustrated the interrelation between the Long (yang 阳) and the Fenghuang (yin 阴), which were the respective attributes of the Emperor and Empress, the union of which established a balance between the two forces (Fig. 3). A lengthy and complex Chinese mythology has also developed referring to the Long and its young. In Chinese tradition, the Long is a highly auspicious figure, in stark contrast to Western symbolism, which has turned the mythological figure of the dragon into a diabolical beast.



Fig. 1 François Valentin, Leiden (Dordrecht, 1666 – 1727), *De Stad Macao* [View of Macao]; engraving on paper

The stove-kettle we have before us here has a provenance going back many years. It belonged to the 2nd Count of Bertandos (1818-1874), and was on display at the Palácio dos Biscaínhos in Braga, subsequently passing on to the collection of his descendants, the Marquises of Alegrete, as recorded in the technical file. In 1954 the piece was catalogued in the exhibition “Les Trésors de L’Orfèvrerie du Portugal”, as an “aquamanile turned into an incense burner” by the curators Reynaldo dos Santos and Irene Quilhó.¹⁴⁷ A few years later, in 1974, they changed their opinion, now calling the piece a *Caquesseitão* based on a brief paragraph by the traveller and adventurer Fernão Mendes Pinto (Portugal ca. 1510-1514 – 1583) referring to some fantastical creatures he had supposedly seen in the Sumatra region. We should bear in mind that while many of the episodes related by this chronicler are of great historical value, he also had a prodigious imagination, which he poured into his stories, which explains why in past centuries he was mentioned somewhat ironically as a teller of fables:

“We also saw here a new, strange type of animal, which the natives call Caquesseitão, with the size of a female duck, pitch black in colour, conch-shaped back, a row of thorns along the spine with the size of a quill pen, bat-like wings,



Fig. 2 *Long-Fenghuang Aquamanile*, China, 17th century; Silver, H 54 cm, L 51 cm. Grand Palais, Le Musée de la Renaissance, Château d’Écouen, Paris

*snake-like neck, cocks-purs-like claw on the front of the head, a very long tail tinted green and black as the native-born lizards. These flying, jumping animals, hunt monkeys and other animals [that live] on the top of the trees, from which they subsist.*¹⁴⁸

It is clear that this is a fantastical description of the big frugivorous Sumatran bat, known as the Large Flying Fox (*Pteropus vampyrus*), which is most certainly not carnivorous, showing how the author mixed in either fantastical or invented stories to add spice to his narrative.

Moving on to the piece’s wings, and following in the same vein as the two aforementioned authors who described its morphology, the suggestion is that they represent bat’s wings. If one observes the wings of said mammal, one clearly notices that they are made up of membranes of skin stretched between the fingers and arms, which act like support ribs in each wing. Birds’ wings, on the other hand, have a different composition, with superimposed layers of feathers of varying morphologies, known as coverts, whose quills emerge from each of the bony, jointed sections of the wing. Those depicted in the piece we are studying here are a precise representation of a wing made up of superimposed feathers, as we can clearly observe (Fig. 4). The feathers are basically divided into groups: primary covert, middle covert, lesser covert and scapular, with certain subdivisions depending on species. In conclusion, this design rules out any attribution that might connect it with bats or mythologies relating to marine animals.



Fig. 3 *Panel with Long (dragon), Fenghuang (phoenix) and peonies*, China, Ming dynasty, 16th century; silk and metallic thread tapestry weave (kesi), 36.8×60.3 cm. (A. N. 32.111.1), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Fig. 4 Long-Fenghuang Stove-Kettle, China, late 16th century, early 17th century (detail of the wing)

CHINESE CULTURAL MEANINGS

To get a better idea of the symbolism of the Chinese Long or Loong, which is difficult to understand for anyone not immersed in the culture, we have turned to the in-depth analysis of two scholars, Xu Wen and Chuanhong Chen, who shed light on a range of fundamental concepts relating to this mythology. China was one of the five regions in the history of humanity that gave birth to agriculture, thereby developing an ancient farming culture with its corresponding values. The two authors summarise these Chinese characteristics thus: “Agricultural civilization shows the spirit of “no pains no gains”, and cultivates unity, independence, love of peace, self-improvement, collectiveness, respect for the elderly, love for children, diligence and bravery. The Chinese regard the loong as the god of rain, which represents peace and harmony between beings and nature. This worldview of the loong is of positive qualities, such as being hardworking, energetic, brave, wise, and so on. Thus, these worldviews in the cultural cognition of the Chinese are represented by metaphorical meanings of the loong in Chinese as well... The first worldview (called ‘harmony but difference’), is the most ancient and profound concept in the spirit of the Chinese nation, which plays an important role in the solidarity and unity of the multi-ethnic groups of China. As early as the Western Zhou Dynasty, [ca. 1050–771 B.C.] the Chinese formed the concept of ‘harmony but difference’ and took it as the guiding principle of life. The loong is an imaginary animal that combines different parts of many animals into a magic and powerful whole, which manifests the Chinese worldview of ‘harmony but difference’.

“In China, the loong, which is supremely sacred, is endowed



Fig. 5 Long-Fenghuang Stove-Kettle, China, late 16th century, early 17th century (detail of the head)

with most of the traits considered positive by Chinese people. It usually symbolizes God, a legend, success, spiritual nobility, good fortune and an emperor, it also serves as an emblem of nationalism. The different symbolic/metaphorical meanings of the loong are not only manifested in the literary works, folktales, artworks, legends, but also in our [Chinese] linguistic expressions.”¹⁴⁹

One characteristic of the Chinese mythology of the Long is its divinity and “worship worthiness”. For the Western world it is difficult to understand that the Chinese created their own representations of the Loong in accordance with their desires, aspirations and yearnings. As such, when analysing the morphology of the silver Long-Fenghuang we are studying here, we can appreciate the Chinese symbolism of some of its attributes: its head (Fig. 5), with its wide and raised brow symbolises wisdom: its bull’s ears (almond-shaped) represent authority: its tiger’s eyes (tigers have extremely distinctive



Fig. 6 Long-Fenghuang Stove-Kettle, China, late 16th century, early 17th century (detail of the head)

eyes, with ample fixed white eyelids and round pupils) symbolise majesty: its (stumpy) lion’s nose (wider than that of a tiger, which is longer and thinner) represents health, and its stylised tail, like a goldfish, symbolises flexibility.¹⁵⁰

In the *Shuowen jiezi* 说文解字 treatise (1st or 2nd century AD: “An Explication of Written Characters”), references to the symbolism of the Fenghuang’s morphology include certain symbolic motifs present in the representation of the stove-kettle. It presents the neck of a serpent, the chest of a goose and the tail of a fish. It also presents the marks of a Long in its body, probably represented by the row of spurs running along the perimeter of its body, in allusion to both depictions.¹⁵¹ The Fenghuang also attacks snakes using its talons and with its wings unfurled. These two characteristics tally with the reinforced feet of the stove-kettle and, we should note, provide an explanation of the system of hinges that makes it possible to keep the wings open (Fig. 6).

TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

The body of the stove-kettle presents the large, winged figure of a Long (or Loong) associated with a Fenghuang, standing firmly on its two anisodactyl feet, made up of four toes the first one of which, the hallux, is pointing backwards. The nails are thick and short, the opposite of those of birds of prey. Its legs have no joints, and the artist has devised a grooved or corrugated section in the union with the body, taking the form of a muscle that bolsters the support of the body. It is thus that both legs culminate in a flat, globe-shaped muscle with little scales that widen toward the upper section.

The head, which is of a fantastical design, corresponds to the morphology of a Chinese Long. It has two curved horns along a vertical axis, suggesting it is a male. The upper, larger horn is of a flamboyant (or flame-like) style, while the lower one is hook-shaped, curving downwards. Towards the back there are two lenticular cavities featuring moulded borders and smooth inner surfaces, which serve as ears. It has large, wide-open almond-shaped tiger's eyes which are wide open, surrounded by fat eyelids and an upper border of stylised feathers. Its snout is not extensive, consisting of a short and striated nasal chamber with plain, pointed gadrooning. The half-open mouth displays large, flamboyant teeth, with surfaces that are alternately burnished or decorated with "picado de lustre" (punchwork a pockmarked effect of burin-engraved dots). Behind, there is a wall with punchwork out of which a fat tongue is seen to emerge, adorned with little engraved scales, curved edges and a retracted tip, to indicate that the creature is drinking. Under the tongue, a cylindrical tube serves as a spout from which to pour the liquid kept inside the main body of the vessel. The head has circular superimposed scales, with borders, chased with straight striations at the bottom and a round dot stamped at the top, some in beautiful bunches.

Out of the middle of the base of the nose a thick tooth-shaped moulding emerges in the form of blunted and curved spikes that go around the entire longitudinal perimeter of the middle of the body, culminating in the lower part of the mouth. They increase and decrease in size as they go round, thereby generating an ornamental equilibrium, at certain points becoming spikes and spurs of greater dimension.

The ornamental motif of the scales is present throughout the whole body, even the wings, consistently alternating between plain scales and those decorated with punchwork markings.

The body has the morphology of a bird, with the broad chest of a goose, evolving into a thick ophidic curled-up tail at the other end. This transformation is executed with a balanced design and to beautiful effect. At the top of the tail there is a round orifice with a border rim into which a thick trefoil lid has been perpendicularly

inserted. The latter's two outside leaves are curved, and the decoration intercalates shiny sections with others burnished with curved gadroons, alternating stylized ones with others decorated with punchwork (the latter device also featuring on the outside edge of both faces). The central section has a filigree border. Around the edge there is a tooth-shaped border of curved scales, and on the inside a rim and a plaque lend the piece greater stability. The liquid to be drunk is poured in through the round orifice prior to being heated and served.

There is an earlier piece worth mentioning with regard to its similarities with the three-leafed lid on the tail of the stove-kettle, and that is a jade ornament depicting a phoenix (Fenghuang), with a highly stylized design, from the Liao dynasty (907-1125). It belongs to the British Museum collection, and the head of the mythological creature is crowned by a motif of a clearly analogous design (Fig. 7).¹⁵²

In Chinese mythology, the flower associated with Fenghuang is the peony, mǔdān, 牡丹, as explained in the description of an embroidery with phoenixes and peonies from the Hunan Museum: "In Chinese legend, phoenix is known as "king of birds" while peony is "king of flowers". The combination of phoenix and peony symbolizes prosperity, bright future and happiness. People often use the decorations with the motifs of phoenix and peony and wish they will bring good luck to them."⁵³

The symbolism and attributes referred to these flowers in Chinese tradition are very extensive: "Chinese people have a love affair with peonies which symbolize wealth, honor, peace, royalty, masculinity and feminine beauty. The large, showy and variegated blossoms are favorite themes in Chinese art, poetry and drama. Famous artists through the various dynasties have produced paintings of the peony utilizing this symbolism (Fig. 8)."⁵⁴

The back of this fantastical creature features a round orifice in the middle, with a moulded cylindrical rim into which the lid is fitted (Fig. 9). This aperture is the mouth or intake of the stove, separate from the body, and into which the burning coals are introduced in order to keep the liquid hot. The stove is made up of a cylindrical body of a greater diameter than the intake, which is perfectly integrated and secured to the inside of the piece. It has a star-shaped aperture on



Fig. 7 Fenghuang (Phoenix) ornament, Liao Dynasty (907-1127); Jade, H 9.90 cm, W 7.50 cm, D 1.80 cm. British Museum (RN: 1947,0712.489), London



Fig. 9 Long-Fenghuang Stove-Kettle, China, late 16th century, early 17th century (detail of the aperture)



Fig. 8 Embroidered Red Hall Curtain with Fenghuang and Peony Mǔdān Design, Qing Dynasty (1636 - 1912 AD), H 74 cm, W 404 cm. Hunan Museum, China



Fig. 10 *Long-Fenghuang Stove-Kettle*, China, late 16th century, early 17th century (detail of the ventilation tube outlet)



Fig. 11 *Long-Fenghuang Stove-Kettle*, China, late 16th century, early 17th century (detail of the lid)



Fig. 12 *Long-Fenghuang Stove-Kettle*, China, late 16th century, early 17th century (detail of the rampant lion 'suanni 狻猊')

both sides, which are the entrances for two horizontal tubes that go through the body, providing ventilation. The ventilation outlets are open, and feature moulded borders of stylized leaves and flower buds, which have been soldered to strengthen the entire area, as the mouths of the tubes have been rivetted (Fig. 10).

The central lid which fits onto the orifice on the back is of a domed, multifoil shape (Fig. 11), while its flat edge presents a circular border of stylized leaves with a punchwork background. Rising out of this is a torus decorated with ovals and rhombuses in openwork, leading to a dome with triangular foliated openwork. At the very top there is a rampant lions 狻猊 (suānni) (Fig. 12), which is holding a ring attached to the chain that joins the lid to the handle. We may observe a similar iconography in a Tang Dynasty plate from the collection of the National Museum of China (Fig. 13).¹⁵⁵

The iconography of the lion in ancient China is complex and its original sources are scarce, the main reason being that the lion is not a native animal of China, unlike the tiger. In this way, although the lion has rich symbolism and the models represented are not historically very realistic, its representation was widely disseminated over the centuries, especially during the Ming dynasty. Zhao Jing provides analysis on the history of the lion in ancient China: "As a rare large beast, the lion is often associated with bravery, strength, majesty, and victory. It is deeply loved by people in many countries and regions



Fig. 13 *Lion pattern plate*, Tang Dynasty (618-907 DC); silver gilt. National Museum of China

and has strong cultural symbolic significance. With the opening of the Silk Road in the Han Dynasty, along with the introduction of lions and the introduction of lion images from countries in the Western Regions, coupled with the influence of Buddhism, the image of the lion was widely spread in China, and gradually became a Chinese tradition like the native beast of China - the tiger. Animals with special auspicious meanings in culture are loved by Chinese people. In traditional Chinese art, whether in architecture, sculpture, painting, or various handicrafts, the image of the lion is everywhere."

"The traditional Chinese lion image has gone through a long-term development and change process since the Han Dynasty. Early lion images often resembled tigers, such as a pair of Eastern Han Dynasty stone lions unearthed from Shenjia Village in Xianyang in the Forest of Steles in Xi'an and an Eastern Han Dynasty stone lion unearthed from Shizhuang Village in Xuchang in the Henan Museum. wait. The lions in many Buddhist statues during the Southern and Northern Dynasties were influenced by countries in the Western Regions; after the Tang Dynasty, the traditional Chinese lion image was generally fixed, represented by the



Fig. 14 *The Samarkand Tribute Lion in "Ming Xianzong's Lantern Festival Carnival"*
Ming Dynasty, Chenghua Emperor, 1473. The National Museum of China

*squatting lion in Qianling Mausoleum of the Tang Dynasty and the two pairs of white marble lions from the Ming Dynasty in front of Tiananmen Gate. The common features of both are the larger proportions of the head, the round skull, the wide mouth, the big eyes, and the spirally curled mane. The two come from the same origin, with little overall change, reflecting great stability.*¹⁵⁶ A famous tribute of two lions sent by Samarkand to Emperor Chenghua which were received in Beijing in the year 1471. Two years later this tribute was represented in the scene of the Lantern Festival parade, and the image of a beautiful lion was presented with an elaborate protocol (Fig. 14).

The handle is solid and undulating, with two tubular bolts fixing it to the nape and tail of the mythical creature. Both orifices are decorated with anthropomorphic vegetal faces. Moving along the handle, at both ends we find two plaques of wide flat leaves at an angle, followed by a curved baluster section, with crest-like volutes, leading to Long's heads, joined in the middle of the handle by a moulded section shaped like a three-rimmed spool (Fig. 15).

On the two sides of the creature's body we find two big, mobile and extendable wings, which are joined to the neck of the Long by hinges. On the back of these there is a system of rods which makes it possible to display the wings unfurled. Where the wings are joined to the body there are two plaques featuring flame-like decoration, with



Fig. 15 *Long-Fenghuang Stove-Kettle*, China, late 16th century, early 17th century
(detail of the handle)

moulded burnished sections, superimposed scales and volute-shaped tips. The wing is divided into three overlapping sections of plumage, separated by filigree ribbing to represent the shafts of the feathers, made up of primary covert, middle covert, lesser covert and finally the scapular. As such the wing sections get narrower the closer you are to the body, with plaques featuring uneven edges and internal ribbing made up of stylized feathers and superimposed burnished scales featuring punchwork.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This heater has been executed to the highest standards. Of the nine or ten known examples from the aforementioned series, in its characteristics this is probably the most prominent. To this we can add the fact that this piece has a more complex structure, as the others are aquamaniles, while this one includes an internal stove into which coals have been introduced to keep the liquid warm.

On analysing this function, we should mention that certain scholars from the middle of the last century suggested (without providing a basis for doing so) that the stove element was added at a later date. We emphatically refute this hypothesis, having undertaken an in-depth technical analysis of the section, as we shall now explain.¹⁵⁷

Firstly, the body shows no sign of having been cut longitudinally in order to attach the stove system. The thick line of spurs that goes right around the middle of the piece is original, without there being the slightest sign of it having been restored or replaced, a task which, in its sheer magnitude (cutting the whole body in half) would have left some kind of visible evidence in the structure of the piece, as well as having been of great technical complexity.

The second possibility one might posit is that in adding the stove at a later date, the back of the Long and the two sides were pierced in order to introduce and solder the three sections of the stove. On carefully analysing the piece, we can observe that the inner cylinder is wider than the mouth of the orifice on the back, which immediately rules out this theory as it could not have been introduced into the body. Making things more complicated still, the stove system is cross-shaped, as explained, including a central circular tube with two arms soldered onto it, ending in the inner sides of the body. The only way of introducing, and then adjusting, this structure with millimetric precision would be to instal it while the entire piece was open in two sections, and then seal the two halves of the body and perfectly solder the mouth of the stove to the Long's back.

Assembly was completed by riveting the circular tubes to thick open frames around the orifices on both sides of the body, which had been previously soldered to increase strength. Once the two parts of the body had been soldered, the moulded row of spurs or blunted spikes that goes around the entire perimeter of the piece could be added. This is the original appearance of the stove-kettle, which it has maintained for some 400 years, with just a few minimal signs of restoration due to its use and handling.

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE STOVE-KETTLE

The "Peking Market" in Lima

In order to provide new information regarding the Chinese manufacturing origin of this stove-kettle, we need to give a few details about the trade relations between China and the Peruvian Viceroyalty from the end of the 16th century until the early 18th century. The motives behind our study are not to attribute this piece's manufacture to the Viceroyalty of Peru, a hypothesis entertained by some scholars, but to demonstrate that some of the silverwork produced in the Viceroyalty does present Chinese decorative elements that are similar

to those of this stove-kettle, thereby illustrating the shared sources of these designs of Chinese origin. One thing we should make absolutely clear is that the manufacturing techniques of these Asian pieces are quite dissimilar to those of Peru. That they possess shared elements does not mean a shared origin in South America. What we can say is that both the design of the inner stove, the upper aperture with its openwork lid crowned by a lion, the two horizontal tube orifices that serve as ventilation outlets and the mouldings with rings of undulating profile are the same as we find in “pavas con hornillo” -stove-kettles-produced in Peru from the early 18th century on, which allows us to conclude, without any doubt, that the heating system of these kettles was inherited from Chinese stove-kettles like ours. Furthermore, and as mentioned above, the majority of the comparable pieces that have been found are, or have been, connected to Portuguese collections, an indication of how they reached Europe from its settlement in China.

In 2011, Mariano Ardash Bonialian published an outstanding study titled “La Feria de Pekín en el Perú Colonial” (“The Peking Market in Colonial Peru”), demonstrating the astonishing trade links between China and the Peruvian Viceroyalty. These started off as official trade relations, but continued even after the Spanish decrees banning any direct contact between Peru and China, or even trade between Acapulco and Lima (Fig. 16). This ban was unable to rein in the reality of a large-scale unofficial inter-American market, profoundly affecting the exportation of European goods that arrived in Portobello, due to the competitive prices offered by China.¹⁵⁸ The author chose the title “Feria de Pekín”, in reference to a term originally coined by Domingo Marcoleta, a civil servant working as Official Agent in Buenos Aires, in his 1745 report to the Consejo de Indias (West Indies Council) in Madrid. In said document, he commented that “*it seems as if the Peking Market has opened in Lima*”. In the words of Marcoleta: “*many of the 18 million pieces of merchandise circulating in Peru were Asian, and that could not be explained by the transactions effected in the old markets of Portobello*”, in other words, via the legal Atlantic route.¹⁵⁹

The distribution of the taxes charged by the Peruvian Viceroyalty compared to those sent to Castile evolved in the 1730s from a ratio of 55% to 45%, compared to the abrupt change in the 80s, which saw 95% kept back and only the remaining 5% sent to Spain. This high figure included expenses caused by local administration, defence and local, inter-American and global trade, where China played a major role.¹⁶⁰

From the late 16th century onwards, and largely thanks to the Galeón de Manila, Hispano-America developed a sophisticated system of contraband, which supplied all sorts of luxury goods mainly intended for the “criollo” elite classes, though it would subsequently provide large numbers of items to what we would now call the middle classes. The route taken was the Pacific coast, aimed at the Viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru, with cargos delivered to the east coast of Mexico, in the port of Acapulco.

“In the ‘high society’ of Peru one breathed an air of Asian fashion. Having and displaying an array of luxurious Oriental



Fig. 16 Plaza Mayor de Lima [Main Square], before the earthquake of 1687, Viceroyalty of Peru, 1680; oil on canvas. Private collection



Fig. 17 Tapestry (fragment), Viceroyalty of Peru, 1680-1720; woven in coloured wools, Chinese silks, and silver-gilt thread. Victory & Albert Museum, London

*goods, such as desks, backrests and bed hangings, folding screens, trunks and drawer units with fine illustrations of Asian flora and fauna, detailed porcelain, blankets, fabrics and clothes of fine silk, ivory sculptures and other items, reinforced social prestige and provided a basis for the refined consumption of the elite classes. In their houses, the wealthiest families amassed a multitude of furniture and decorative items from the Orient. These articles may be consulted in the patrimonial inventories of merchants and colonial authorities. It is extremely common to find the phrase ‘à la mode’ in these inventories, denoting Asian fabrics and furniture.*¹⁶¹

*“In the final decades of the century, the more ‘liberal’ women of Peru, those who did not belong to the elite class, but who were bold enough to move in the most distinguished circles, wore Chinese silk and Oriental perfumes. They sought to appropriate certain of the consumer habits of the ‘chosen ones’ in order to mix in their own social circles. In order to fit in with the social consumer fashions, even the nuns of Peruvian convents dressed in silk ‘capichola’ [silk fabric that forms a cord like a burate] capes, and preferred to dine in their cells off Oriental porcelain.*¹⁶²

The influence of Chinese ornamental styles in Peruvian decorative arts may be perfectly appreciated in the beautiful and colourful tapestry belonging to the Victoria and Albert Museum collection (Fig. 17). It presents sumptuous vegetal and animal decoration, with both real and mythological creatures, including a pair of mermaids with guitars, Quesinttu and Umanttu from the Peruvian pre-Hispanic tradition, and widely depicted. Figuring prominently on the central axis we see two one-horned xiezhi 獬豸, a mythological Chinese creature associated with loyalty and duty. The Chinese origin of these ornamental designs is abundantly clear from the outset.

This consumer explosion in Chinese products had its reasons. Shortly after the fall of the Inca Empire in 1533, the Spanish discovered the silver deposits in the “Cerro Rico” of Potosí, at some 4,000m above sea level, which became the greatest source of silver in the history of mankind, turning the settlement into an Imperial Villa. Its riches not only meant the exponential economic growth of the region and that of various parts of the Peruvian Viceroyalty, but it was also the war chest that paid for the Habsburgs’ military campaigns in Europe, not to mention other expenses in Spain.

The chronicles of Potosí that refer to the lavish objects from all over the world acquired by the city’s elite classes describe extraordinary quantities, from both West and Far East. The capital, Lima, meanwhile, occupied a prime position when it came to distributing this wealth and the sums spent on these sorts of luxury items. In 1565 a route from the Viceroyalty of New Spain to the Far East was finally established, revolving around the Philippines. This new route gave rise to extensive international trade between the two regions. China, meanwhile, became a keen consumer of silver Peruvian coins from 1571 on, with the founding of Manila, and trade with Hispano-America increased through the purchase of Chinese goods. As such, the main trade destination of Peruvian silver diversified to greater and lesser extents through trade (both official and unofficial, the latter at great scale) along the Pacific route to Acapulco and from there on the Chinese or Manila Nao (carrack ships). As a consequence of the decline of Japan’s silver exports in the 17th century, China focussed on Hispano-American silver, which made up a key part of the region’s economic growth. To these circumstances must be added the end of the Japanese and Portuguese commercial exchange between 1543 and 1637, after the expulsion of all foreigners (except a port authorized for the Dutch), since in this commercial exchange the Portuguese received an important flow of silver, who entered China from Canton to trade in

this Empire. Echoes of that rich exchange can be appreciated in the fact that the current Chinese currency, the Yuan (圆 / 元), comes from the old name for the Spanish silver dollar or piece of eight (“peso fuerte”), which became the standard monetary unit in the old Chinese Empire.¹⁶³

CHINESE ELEMENTS IN PERUVIAN SILVERWORK

In the chapter on “Pots, kettles and stove-kettles” from our 2004 publication *The Mate in America*, we provided preliminary critical analysis and cataloguing, where we explained the ways water was heated to make herbal infusions in Europe, with emphasis on Hispano-America. In the 17th century, Europe witnessed a sharp rise in the consumption of drinks in social contexts with varying levels of caffeine: coffee, tea and hot chocolate. Meanwhile, consumption of herbal mate was restricted to South America. Tea and herbal mate infusions needed implements with which to keep the water hot. In Europe the main system that was devised comprised a tea kettle with stand and burner, and some later models also included a tea urn (samovar) with a tap and external heater that was also occasionally incorporated in Hispano-America. But in the Peruvian Viceroyalty the great innovation was the creation of the so-called “pava con hornillo”, or stove-kettle, which includes a ventilated heating chamber (the “hornillo”) within the body of the vessel or kettle (the “pava”), making it possible to keep water hot.¹⁶⁴

This system was unknown in Europe, and as far as we can trace them, its origins are to be found in Ancient China (Fig. 18). The most well-known drink originating in China is tea, or “cha”, drunk in porcelain bowls in small quantities, the hot water poured from little teapots. But what is of most interest to our study here is another warm drink that was consumed in larger quantities: rice wine with a very low alcoholic content. One model was the wine vessel, some of which served a ritualistic purpose, reminiscent of what we in the West would call a teapot, with or without feet.

There were also other utensils aimed at keeping drinks warm including a range of stove-kettle systems that are reminiscent of the modern-day teapot (Fig. 19).¹⁶⁵ In all models, this utensil included a vessel for the hot water and a tubular stove where the coals were placed, with one or two horizontal tubes attached to the sides which, along with an openwork lid, allowed for the circulation of air. A small kettle with



Fig. 18 He, Bronze Ritual Pouring Vessel, China, Eastern Zhou, 475-221 BC. Courtesy Ben Janssens Oriental Art Ltd. Collection

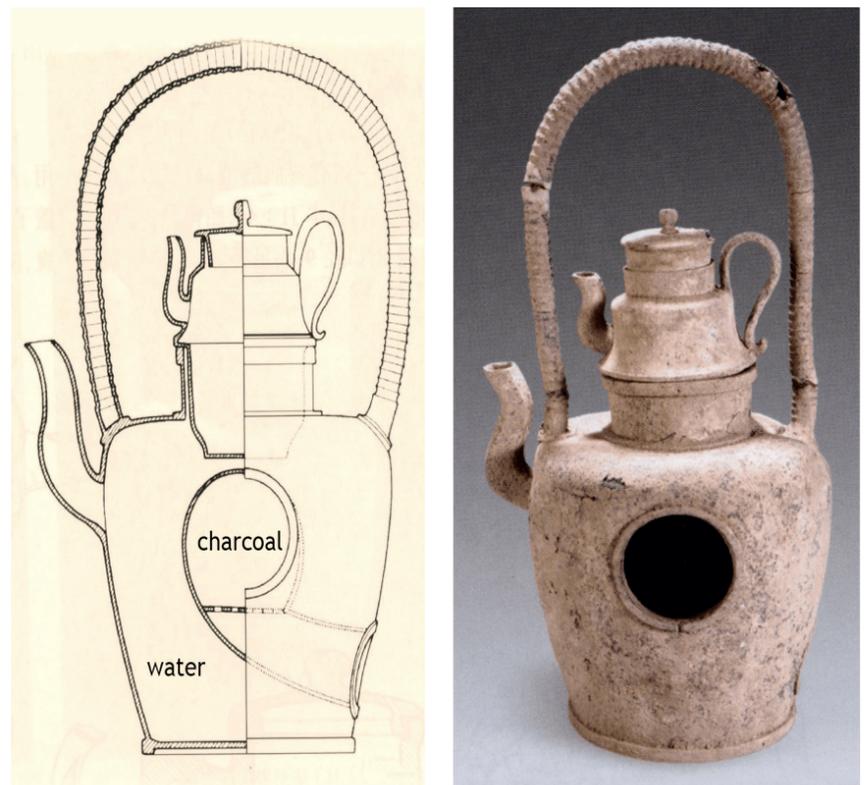


Fig. 19 Stove-kettle, Ming Dynasty (1368-1644); tin. Porcelain collection in Wanjia Town, Chongzhou Sichuan, China

the diluted wine is placed on top of this set, which in this way remains warm. We should emphasize that this system was unknown in the West.

Some of these Chinese models were prism-shaped, very similar to the prismatic “pavas-hornillo” popular in the Peruvian Viceroyalty in the 18th century. We can observe an early image of one depicted in the decoration of a herbal mate box (“hierbera”) from the Viceroyalty, which probably originated in Cuzco in about 1740 (Figs. 20a & 20b). In all likelihood it was painted by an indigenous artist, and it features two lids, one for filling it with water, while the other seals the stove. On the back we see the ventilation outlet, which should have been placed on the side.¹⁶⁶

There is also a series of twelve panels painted on silk belonging



Figs. 20a & 20b *Hierbera* [herbal mate box], Viceroyalty of Peru, Cuzco, ca 1740; polychrome wood and iron. Former Jaime Eguiguren collection, Private collection, Lima

to the Beijing Imperial Palace, titled *Yinzhen's Consorts Partaking in Pleasurable Activities* 胤禛美人图 (Fig. 21), one of which features a scene with a woman reading and drinking tea (see the blue bowl on the right), while we can observe a stove-kettle on the left, with hot water for serving the beverage. The Beijing Palace Museum collection includes a number of silver stove-kettles, and it also has another iconography from the same period, with two versions of a stove-kettle, seen from different perspectives, the second of which is in the Hong Kong Palace Museum.

To date, the earliest cataloguing of one of these pieces appears in Alfredo Taillard's 1941 work *Platería Sudamericana*. One can appreciate the stove system, with one aperture to take in the coal and another for pouring the water. The spout is also influenced by Chinese models.¹⁶⁷

A second model found in the Peruvian Viceroyalty presents a globe-shaped body with vertical “stove” in the middle. The water is generally filled through an orifice in the lid or via a tubular section to the rear. In the *pava-hornillo* belonging to the Complejo Museográfico Provincia Enrique Udaondo, in Luján (Buenos Aires, Argentina), a beautiful example of this type, we can appreciate the inclusion of a handle with two dragons, and that the piece stands on “claw and ball” feet, clearly and directly influenced by Chinese models.

The oldest and most famous representation of this model is the one provided by Amédée Frézier (France, 1682 - 1773) in the engraving depicting three Peruvian ladies drinking mate herbal infusion, published in his 1716 work (Figs. 22a, 22b). The seated lady is drinking the infusion, placed in a silver-mounted calabash or gourd. It should be noted that the depiction is out of proportion, as these items are actually much smaller (D). To one side of the composition there is a jug for the water, while in the foreground we observe the globe-shaped silver stove-kettle “pava hornillo”. The stove system can be perfectly appreciated, and is confirmed by the author's description: “E. pot d'argent pour chauffer l'eau au milieu de la quelle est le feu dans un reservoir G” (Silver pot (E) for heating the water in the middle of which there is the fire in a reservoir (G)). This is the earliest known

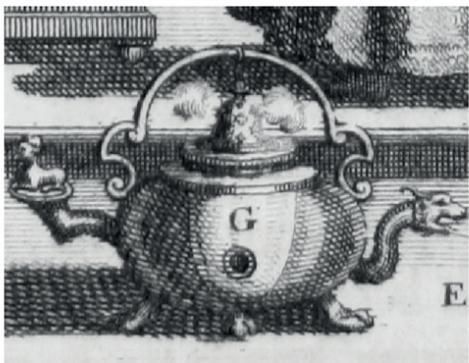
visual representation and description of a stove-kettle executed in the Western world. We can clearly observe the stove system, with one of its two sides front ventilation outlets, the openwork lid of which is chained to the handle, through which smoke is rising; the spout is curved with long-head design and the water charger is on the left and its cover includes a Chinese-designed lion, Suānní, and which the engraver had not been able to recreate with precision.¹⁶⁸

Another major iconographic source is the painting *A Merry Company on the Banks of the Rímac River* (Fig. 23), where we can see a range of figures from Lima society enjoying a picnic. They are pictured eating snacks while drinking mate with two “pavas hornillos” featuring prominently in the foreground.

One of the most beautiful examples of this type of *pava hornillo* may be found in the collection of the aforementioned Complejo Museográfico in Luján, Buenos Aires (Fig. 24). Here we can observe the same stove system, relying on an inner tube riveted to the frame of the external aperture. The centre lid, with its openwork, is attached to the mouth of a lion (although it looks more like a dog), which serves as a handle for the second side-lid when filling the vessel with water. The curved handle repeats the decoration we saw earlier, with two Longs at the ends.¹⁶⁹



Fig. 21 *Looking into a Mirror* from the series *Yinzhen's Consorts Partaking in Pleasurable Activities*, China, 1731, Yongzheng period, 1678 -1735; paint on silk panel, 184×98 cm (one of twelve). Beijing Palace Museum



Figs. 22a & 22b Ladies drinking mate in *Relation du voyage de la mer du Sud aux côtes du Chili*, (detail of *pava hornillo*), Paris, 1716, Amédée Frézier (France 1682-1773); engraving on paper



Fig. 23 *A Merry Company on the Banks of the Rímac River*, Lima, end of the 18th century; oil on canvas. Former collection of the Counts of Guaqui, Brooklyn Museum, New York



Fig. 24 *Pava Hornillo* [Stove-kettle], Viceroyalty of Peru, 18th century; silver, H 41.5 cm. Complejo Museológico Provincial Enrique Udaondo, Luján, Buenos Aires



Fig. 25 *Pava Hornillo*, Stove-kettle, Viceroyalty of Peru, Lima, third quarter of the 18th century; Silver, H 31 cm; L 26 cm. Former Goldeberg de Ursúa collection and The Apelles Collection



Fig. 26 *Pava Hornillo* [Stove-kettle], Viceroyalty of Peru, ca. 1780; silver, H 24.1 cm, L 28.5 cm. Former Jaques Kugel collection; Private collection

The third variation, commonly associated with the figure of a lion, is the model of most interest to us here, as the earliest examples demonstrate the influence of Chinese decorative arts in the former Peruvian Viceroyalty. The *pava hornillo* from the former Goldeberg-Ursúa collection (Fig. 25), is one of the most sophisticated examples of this type of *pava hornillo*.¹⁷⁰ At first glance, one can observe the influence of Chinese designs in the morphology of the kettle-stove system, intended for making mate herbal infusion. The execution of the lion's head: slanted eyes, flat nose, sunken ears, wide mouth with its tongue sticking out, and pouring spout underneath. The eyes, mouth and ears feature moulded gadrooned borders. The front claws are the same as in the Chinese model, whereas the back ones are somewhat more elongated. The lion's curved tail, which goes from its rump to the nape of its neck, serves as a handle. The tip of the tail features a delicate flower, which is probably meant to represent peony flower blossom. It is feasible that it depicts the same flower from the lid at the end of the Long-Fenghuang's tail, though with

The morphology of the *hornillo* features the same system in both cases; the sole difference is in where the aperture for pouring the liquid in is located: from the top of the curve of the tail in the Long as opposed to the crowned lid of the lion. Both also include a chain system attaching the lid of the *hornillo*, either to the handle, in the first case, or to the lid on the head of the lion in the second.

Another beautiful example is the stove-kettle in the form of a lion from the Jaques Kugel collection, where we can still see the marked Chinese influence in the design of the head (Fig. 26).

A third piece that also takes on the form of a lion is the one from the former Mario Hirsch collection (Fig. 27). It is exceptional in both its size and the lavish ornamentation of the creature's fur. It presents the same model of mouth with tongue sticking out and spout, though here the shape of the nose has taken on a more Western appearance. It has a very original feature: the kettle stove system is above the front legs and its lid is hinged on the neck. But the really remarkable detail in this piece is the same rampant lion (suānní 狻猊) motif crowning the lid of the stove compartment.¹⁷¹

We also see certain traces of the double moulding with spurs in the silverwork of the Peruvian Viceroyalty, probably dating to the 18th century. This is the case, for instance, of a container with a shell-shaped body and silver fittings, in the form of a bird looking at the



Fig. 27 *Pava Hornillo* [Stove-kettle], Viceroyalty of Peru, Lima, 18th century.; silver, H 31.2 cm, L 41 cm. Former Mario Hirsch collection; Private collection

ground. What makes it unusual is that the head and neck of the bird feature a thick moulding made up of spikes, which is reminiscent of the longitudinal row of spurs running around the body of the Chinese stove-kettle we are studying here.¹⁷²

LONG – FENGHUANG STOVE-KETTLE

In her essay analysing a bronze ritual vessel shaped like a bird, auctioned at Christie's in 2018,¹⁷³ the scholar Rosemary Scott provides some key insights, shedding light on various of the characteristics of pieces with similarities to the one we are examining here. The Song Dynasty (960-1279) was of particular interest in terms of the collecting of antiquities mostly discovered by farmers. Subsequently, during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), and as a result of the emergence of new economic groups dedicated to trade in China, there was a considerable increase in interest in owning classical antique pieces, whether originals or reproductions of items depicted in the collections of old printed treatises, many of which were reprinted. Towards the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), China witnessed a real boom in the collecting of these sorts of items.¹⁷⁴ One consequence of the expansion of the commercial development between the Far East and the West was that numerous Chinese artworks reached European markets during this time (Figs. 28 & 29).

In the light of all these observations, explanations and adjustments with regard to the history (and comprehension) of this extraordinary masterpiece, *The Fantastic Chinese Stove-kettle of the Three Worlds*, we can understand its title. Manufactured in a workshop in southern China for the Portuguese market, its unique characteristics make it the most important piece in this known series. Its origin and nature are confirmed by the rich and complex symbolism of its design and composition, based on new research into diverse fields of Chinese culture, and access to a wide range of worldwide information networks. China is one of the oldest civilisations in the history of mankind, and the magnitude of its written historical records go far beyond what we can possibly imagine.

As we can infer from the history of this group of aquamaniles



Fig. 28 *Luduan Vessel* 角端尊, Qing Dynasty, early 17th century; bronze inlaid with gold and silver, H 29.9 cm, W 19.8 cm, D 31.5 cm. The British Museum, RN 1891,0617.12, London



Fig. 29 *Fenghuang* [Phoenix] vessel 天鸡尊, China, Qing Dynasty, 17th century; bronze inlaid with silver and gold, H 47.40 cm, W 28.4 cm, D 35.7 cm. The British Museum (RN 1936,1118.43), London

and the stove-kettle we have before us here, the destination port of all these works were Europe, specifically Portugal, whose empire spread far and wide across extensive regions of Africa, Asia and Brazil in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Finally, in order to understand and shed light on some of the unique characteristics of this Long-Fenghuang Stove-kettle, we have also explored the dominions of the Spanish Empire in Peru, and the astonishing and extensive networks that connected China, the Viceroyalty of New Spain and that of Peru, through the trade route of the Galeon de Manila and the silver exports of these two viceroyalties to China. These commercial links with the Americas flouted each and every type of restriction decreed by the Spanish administration, reaching unprecedented levels. But it was specifically in the Peruvian Viceroyalty where, through old Peruvian silverwork, we can demonstrate how Chinese designs exerted a profound influence on this extraordinary chapter in viceregal decorative arts.

We should highlight the most important detail with regard to the Chinese stove-kettle we are studying here and the known Peruvian models, which is that the latter were all executed in the 18th century, some hundred years after our Chinese piece, which goes to confirm its role as an original source. It is thus that this Long-Fenghuang Stove-kettle now bears unparalleled testimony to the convergence of three worlds: Asia, Europe, and the Americas. The Chinese Empire, the Portuguese trading base in that empire, and the Chinese contribution to the Peruvian Viceroyalty.

On comparing the stove-kettle we are studying here, one can infer that our model was clearly inspired by the Chinese wine vessels found in the ancient dynasties, with particular emphasis on those from the Ming and Qing Dynasties. This beverage, which was made of wine diluted with water, was drunk luke-warm, as it still is today. One of the more striking facts is that the teapots that became popular in the West actually originated from these wine vessels, given in China green tea is drunk in little bowls, where the herb is placed before hot water is poured on top of it and stirred, which is quite different from the way tea is drunk in the West.

In the major collections of Chinese art preserved in museums such as the Beijing Palace Museum, the National Palace Museum in Taiwan, the British Museum or the Victoria and Albert, we can observe pieces that are reminiscent of the one we are studying here. One fundamentally unique factor, however, is that the group of silver aquamaniles and stove-kettle (the surviving pieces number approximately ten) were manufactured in China in the same silver workshop, for the Portuguese market, at a time when in ancient China luxury items were mainly manufactured in gold and exports were paid in silver. Historically, in China a higher rate was paid for silver than for gold, and exports were paid for in silver. This cycle culminated in the 18th century, with changes in China's export market, giving rise, at the end of the century, to so-called Chinese Export Silver, which was mainly aimed at the European and U.S. markets.

Having examined the characteristics of this series of Chinese silverwork, both the aquamaniles and the stove-kettle, which various experts consider the most prominent piece in the entire ensemble, we can conclude that this Long-Fenghuang Stove-kettle is a masterpiece of Chinese silverwork from the end of the Ming or start of the Qing Dynasties and, as far as our research has been able to confirm, the most important in terms of its characteristics and type. We can only hope that our research will serve to clear the way for future studies, and they could shed more light on this astonishing chapter in the history of the Decorative Arts in ancient China.

THE SERIES OF AQUAMANILES / STOVE-KETTLES

Seven examples mentioned by Luís Castelo Lopes in his 2008 essay on this serie of objects, some of which were transformed into “perfume-burners”.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, as we previously indicated, the transformation from aquamanile into stove-kettle is not feasible. According to Hugo Miguel Crespo, there are nine or ten known

examples.¹⁷⁶ Both of them claimed there's one of whice was eventually converted into a ewer by having its holes sealed. Even if additional components are known, it is still challenging to determine their whatabouts and whereabouts. According to the in-depth studies we have carried out, it undoubtedly different opinions agree that this our Long-Fenghuang Stove-kettle has retained its originality for more than 400 years, which is undoubtedly the most important of the series.

	Female with bird in the mouth 44x47 cm, 4,746 g	Sold in auction 2000 in Lisbon	Exhibted Museo do Oriente 2014-2015	Mario Roque Collection, Lisbon
	Female with bird in the mouth 46.4x50.5 cm, 4,737 g	Left Portugal 1970s	USA private collection Northumberland	Sold by Peyton Wright
	Female with birid in the mouth 53x55 cm, 5,875 g	Pedro Costa Collection		
	Male with bird in the mouth Converted into aquamanile?	Collection Jose Maria Jorge, Lisbon		
?	Left Portugal 1980's	Brazil		
	Male with bird in the mouth	Sold in Lisbon 1994	Whereabouts unknown	
	Male with bird in the mouth 45x41 cm	Mayer Carl Von Rothschild (1820-1886)	Bequeathed to Musee de Renaissance in 1922 by his eldest Daugher Adele (1843-1922)	
	Male without bird in the mouth, created no later than 1866, copy of Conde de Bertianos' 17th-century original	King Fernando II (1818-1885)	Sold in auction 1892	
	Male without bird in the mouth	Prince Felix Yusupov (1887-1967)		
	Male without bird in the mouth 47x44.5 cm, 5,058 g	Conde de Bertianos...(Other Titles) Marquis Alegrete	Exhibited in Lisbon & Pairs 1954-1955, 1983	Jaime Eguiguren Collection



