

TANG CHINA

A cosmopolitan dynasty
(7th-10th century)

An exceptional exhibition in partnership with  中國文物交流中心
Art Exhibitions China

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20 November 2024 – 3 March 2025

Guimet – French National Museum of Asian Arts

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Polo players
Tang dynasty (618-907), 8th century, Earthenware with three-colour glaze (sancai), H. 35.5 cm, L. 33 cm.
Discovered in 2012, Huashan North Road, Luoyang (Henan) Luoyang, Luoyang Institute of Archaeology

Tang China (618-907) is an exhibition of exceptional works devoted to one of the greatest ever Chinese dynasties. This unique and major event is one of the highlights of the Guimet x China 2024 programme.

Organised in partnership with Art Exhibitions China, the exhibition showcases 207 works from more than thirty Chinese museums recounting 300 years of effervescent art and literature, a flourishing cosmopolitan population and the rise of centralised administration.

Certain masterpieces will be presented for the first time in France, for example the three most important Tang gold- and silverwork pieces, remarkable murals, objects uncovered during recent archaeological excavations, and rare scrolls of painting and calligraphy.



Musician on a camel
Tang Dynasty (618–907), 8th century
Earthenware with three-colour glaze (sancai).
H. 50.1 cm, Depth 40.5 cm
Discovered in 2002, Guodu district, Chang'an (Shaanxi)
Xi'an, Xi'an Museum

Although often represented in modern popular culture, such as in television series or Robert van Gulik's *Judge Dee* mystery novels, adapted to film and television, the Tang era remains relatively unknown to the Western world. The *Tang China* exhibition at Guimet provides a broad and dynamic overview of this period which left its mark on the cultural and administrative foundations of modern China.

Tang, a founding dynasty

The first Tang rulers arrived after the Sui dynasty (581–618), who had managed to unify China after almost 400 years of division. The Tang secured peace, reorganised the state and helped turn their vast country a land of economic and cultural prosperity which would shape the cultural and administrative foundations of China over the next millennium. While the Tang era was a time of strong development in agriculture and craftsmanship, it was also a golden age for the arts; creativity flourished in painting, sculpture, music and dance more than ever before. Tang poetry, literature and calligraphy would even inspire some of the greatest literary works in subsequent periods. Multicultural and open to the world, the Tang period saw the rise of a life of refinement and material goods.



Ewer
Tang dynasty (618–907), 9th century
Silver, H. 25.4 cm
Inscription: /lshi ("strong man")
Discovered in 1982, Dingmaoqiao,
Zhenjiang (Jiangsu) Zhenjiang, Zhenjiang Museum

An immersion into the Tang capital

With its innovative layout, the exhibition invites the public to wander through the capital of a thousand wonders: Chang'an, (literally meaning "perpetual peace"). Stretching across an area of almost 87 sq. km and with more than a million inhabitants, it overtook Baghdad and Byzance as the most densely populated city in the world. At its height, the Palace was 3.5 times the size of the Forbidden City and 3 times the size of Versailles. Its urban layout and palatial religious architecture would influence the great capitals of Silla in Korea and Heiankyō in Japan.

Chang'an was not only at the crossroads of the silk roads, but the cosmopolitan city was also the symbol of Chinese prosperity and wealth and it inspired painters, calligraphers, poets and artisans. The exhibit focuses on daily practices across all social classes.

Welcome to Tang China

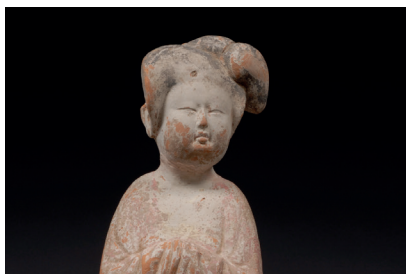
As they wander along the streets of the capital, visitors will discover how the dynasty was structured, its cosmopolitanism and its openness to the rest of the world. The objects on display evoke its culture of tea, alcohol, feasts and banquets, women's clothing and entertainment. The collection also covers the themes of commerce, craftsmanship, spirituality, and the schools of thought—Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism—that influenced the Tang political system. The three treasures discovered at the sites of Hejiacun, Famensi and Dingmaoqiao, shown together here for the first time ever in France, illustrate the splendour and extreme refinement of Tang craftsmanship, and the inspiration of faraway lands.

The visit then leads us through the development of the silk roads; the Tang era was truly a golden age for these extraordinary routes, which attracted not only trade but also developed into hubs of religious, intellectual and cultural exchange. Camel-driven Bactrian caravans would transport tea, silk, lacquer work and porcelain from China across the Gobi Desert, and bring back animals, plants, perfumes, incense, jewellery and gold- or silverware from the East and Central Asia.



Large floral motif bowl with lid
Tang dynasty (618–907), 8th century, Gilt silver
Engraved inscription: jin ("gift") H.9.5 cm, D. 21.8 cm.
Discovered in 1970, Hejia village, southern suburb of Xi'an
(Shaanxi) Xi'an, Shaanxi Museum of History

Dragon
Tang dynasty (618–907), 8th century
Gold H. 2.1 cm, W. 4.1 cm
Discovered in 1970, Hejia village, southern suburb of Xi'an
(Shaanxi) Xi'an, Shaanxi Museum of History



Court lady
Tang dynasty (618-907), 8th century
Painted terracotta, H. 40 cm
Discovered in Hansenzhai, eastern suburb of Xi'an (Shaanxi)
Xi'an, Shaanxi Museum of History



Prostrating figure
Tang dynasty (618-907), 8th century
Painted terracotta, H. 39 cm, W. 47 cm.
Discovered in 2002, Ziwei Garden City, Xi'an (Shaanxi)
Xi'an, Shaanxi Institute of Archaeology



Fuxi and Nüwa
Tang dynasty (618-907), 7th-8th century
Ink and colour on hemp canvas H. 222 cm, W. 95 cm.
Discovered in 1967, tomb n° 77, Astana cemetery, Turfan (Xinjiang)
Ürümqi, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum

The last section of the exhibition takes visitors away from the capital and out to sea, where maritime routes began to develop in the mid-8th century. These new routes allowed Chinese ceramics to be transported in greater quantities, enabling them to reach as far as the Persian Gulf and even the coast of East Africa.

Step into the Tang capital!

As the drum sounds in the distance, the public is invited by Emperor Taizong of Tang to walk along the Imperial Way. A procession of soldiers, camels and horses accompany them up to the gate of the largest city in the world...

Once through the gates, the visitor is transported into the heart of the city, the atmosphere changing as their walk through the streets. To bring the scenes alive, exclusive unseen extracts of the web series *The Litchi Road*, adapted from Ma Boyong's novel, directed by Cao Dun (from *The longest day in Chang'an*, 2019) and produced by Dongyang Liubai Film and Television Culture Co. Ltd, will be projected during the exhibition.

The music for *Vivre heureux à Chang'an* was specially created for the exhibition by the famous Paris-based Chinese composer Guo Gan.

As part of the exhibition, Guimet proposes a rich programme of shows, film showings, meetings and cultural activities including the event *Tang Art and Culture* on November 30, an exceptional concert by the Chinese composer and conductor Tan Dun, who will present a world premiere of work inspired by the Tang era on December 13, 14 and 15.

Discover the complete programme at www.guimet.fr

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