



Tomb figure of a recumbent boar

On display

Title/Description: Tomb figure of a recumbent boar

Born: 0200 - 0599

Object Type: Animal, Figure

Materials: Earthenware, Glaze

Measurements: h. 60 x w. 145 x d. 148 mm

Accession Number: 291

Historic Period: Han (late) dynasty, Six Dynasties period

Production Place: Asia, China

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

The boar lies upright with its legs folded. It has a large well-modelled head on which the eyes are incised and the ears moulded in relief. A mane runs along the head and down the back. Five

impressed circles represent nipples on the belly. The sculpture was deformed in the firing and the base is no longer flat, but curves upwards on the far side. On the back of the animal the dark brown-green glaze is very thick and pooled. There is a small hole between the mane and the neck.

The precise dating of this piece, in the absence of well-documented comparative material, is problematic. It may possibly date to late in the Han period (206 bc - ad 220), when ceramic farm buildings and animals such as sheep, pigs, goats and various forms of cow or ox were much favoured among the models made for burial, to provide an agricultural background to support the dead person in the next life (see *Quest*, 1987:109-12). During the Six Dynasties (265-589), particularly in southeastern China, this sort of model continued, but emphasis began to be given to figures of attendants, soldiers and guardian spirits. During the subsequent Tang dynasty (618- 906; see p. 196) models of female attendants, soldiers and mounted warriors were more common than those representing agricultural and rural life.

The use of high-fired ceramics such as this for tomb figures is rare. However, material of an almost porcelain consistency was used for a few figures of soldiers, courtiers and ladies made in north China during the sixth and early seventh centuries. Best known among this small group are two figures of soldiers from the tomb of General Sheng at Anyang (d. 595; *Kaogu*, 1959.10: 541-5, pl. 9², 6). In form, the present piece can be compared with a boar excavated from the tomb of Gao Run (d. 576) in Ci Xian, Hebei province (*Kaogu*, 1979.3: 235-43, fig. 6:10). An almost identical boar is in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Hobson and Hetherington, 1923: pl. xvi, fig. 2).

Entry taken from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection 3 volume catalogue, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997).

Provenance

Acquired by the Sainsbury Family in 1947. Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
