



Standing female tomb figure

On display

Title/Description: Standing female tomb figure

Born: 0618 - 0906

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Earthenware

Measurements: h. 280 x w. 100 x d. 87 mm

Accession Number: 297

Historic Period: Tang Dynasty (618-906)

Production Place: Asia, China

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

This figure, probably of a serving woman, is dressed in a heavy robe and elaborate folded head-dress. She has a slender neck, bare above the line of her high-waisted dress, and her features are delicately shown, with short lines for the eyes and mouth. The full length of the main garment is pulled up over her left arm, revealing the underdress below, beneath which the toes of the shoes are visible. A shawl is draped over the shoulders.

Plain tomb figures with a straw-coloured glaze appear to have been popular at the end of the Sui dynasty (589-618) and the beginning of the Tang (618-906). They are often found in very large groups. This figure may be compared with figures of seated women from the tomb of General Zhang Sheng (d. 595) at Anyang (Kaogu, 1959.10: 541, pls. 10-11) and with figures from a tomb of the Sui period at Anhui Bo Xian (Kaogu, 1977.1: 65-8, pl. 10:1). However, it seems more sophisticated than these examples, and probably belongs to the early Tang rather than the Sui period. There are traces of what may be pigment over the glaze, which would place it firmly in the Tang period. Figures with painting over the glaze have been found in the tombs of the Princes Zhang Huai and Yi De, buried in the early eighth century, near Qianling at Xi'an. These figures have quite diverse pigments - green, red, blue, and gold - over a buff glaze such as is seen here. Closely comparable figures are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Hearn and Fong, 1973-4: pl. 67).

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

Provenance

Formerly in the collection of P. Steiner (Sotheby's, 1948: lot 25); exhibited in the Ausstellung

Chinesischer Kunst (Wurfel Verlag), Berlin, 1929: no. 358.

Acquired by the Sainsbury Family in 1948. Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
