



# CHINESE SPOONS

2-10 NOVEMBER 2006

This exhibition comprises a small group of spoons and ladles (*shao* or *dou*). All were made in China, with one exception (*page 9*), which is Korean. The spoons range in date from the Western Zhou dynasty to the Qing dynasty. The exhibition serves to illustrate the different ways in which spoons were used in China, be it in rituals, for domestic use or on the scholar's table. The spoons are all made of metal, including bronze, copper and silver. Most examples are decorated with elaborate finials, some in the form of mythical animals, such as dragons and phoenixes, other with naturalistic depictions of birds' heads such as ducks and geese.

The earliest ladle (*page 1*) dates from China's great Bronze Age and was used to transfer alcohol from wine vessels into cups. Such spoons have been found near bronze wine vessels in tombs, indicating that they were used in rituals before being buried with the deceased. Other spoons were used for serving food (*pages 4 – 6*), for straining liquids (*page 2*) or for transferring a tiny amount of water onto freshly ground ink in preparation for painting (*page 7*).

The most opulent spoons in the exhibition date from the Tang dynasty (618 – 906); all are made from silver. Fine silverwork blossomed during the Tang dynasty, when silversmiths produced delicate silver and gold pieces, often with minutely detailed decoration, usually incised. A pair of heavy silver spoons (*page 4*) is particularly unusual, as is a set of no fewer than ten matched silver spoons, the tiny bowl of each pierced with a lotus flower design (*page 5*). The delicate nature of these spoons suggests that they were made for grand ladies at the Tang court.

**Bronze wine ladle**  
China, Western Zhou dynasty  
c. 1100 - 771 BC  
Length: 8 inches, 20.2 cm





**Gold inlaid bronze straining spoon**

China, Eastern Zhou dynasty

Warring States period, 475 - 221 BC

Length: 10 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches, 26 cm



**Bronze wine ladle with dragon handle**

China, Han dynasty, 206 BC – 220 AD

Length: 18 1/2 inches, 47 cm



**Pair of silver and parcel-gilt spoons**  
China, Tang dynasty, probably mid-9th century  
Length: 14 inches, 35.5 cm



Set of ten silver miniature spoons

with openwork lotus flowers

China, Tang dynasty, 619 - 906

Length: 5 1/2 inches, 14 cm



Silver spoon with duck's head finial

China, Tang dynasty, 8th - 9th century

Length: 11 inches, 28 cm



**Copper and parcel-gilt miniature water ladle**

China, Song dynasty, 960 – 1279

Length: 4  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches, 12 cm



**Bronze spoon with goose head finial**

China, late Ming or early Qing dynasty

17th – 18th century

Length: 11 inches, 28 cm



**Bronze spoon with chrysanthemum finial**

Korea, Koryo dynasty, 918 – 1392

Length: 8 inches, 20 cm

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