

ANCIENT CHINA: Draw Your Own Tomb Guardian

The entrance to the tomb of a member of the Tang aristocracy was elaborate, not only to display their wealth but also to protect the body and valuables inside from unwanted spirits and graverobbers. Leading to the tomb was a *shendao* (spirit path) flanked by pairs of stone animals and human attendants. At the end of the path, a doorway marked the entrance; on the other side of the door, a ramp led down to the burial chamber. The most elaborate ceramic tomb guardians were placed along the sides of the ramp. At the Asian Art Museum, you can see different types of tomb guardians, both human figures and composite animal figures.

Ready to make your own tomb guardian? Will your guardian have a human form, or will it bring together different parts of fierce animals?

DURATION

10–15 minutes

VOCABULARY

Afterlife: (noun) life after death.

Aristocracy: (noun) a form of government that places power in the hands of a small, privileged ruling class, the aristocrats.

Ceramic: (noun) articles made from clay hardened by heat.

Tomb: (noun) a large vault, typically an underground one, for burying the dead.



Tomb guardian, one of a pair, 618–907. China; Shaanxi or Henan province, Tang dynasty (618–907). Earthenware with glaze. *Asian Art Museum, The Avery Brundage Collection, B60S155+*. Photograph © Asian Art Museum.

Tomb guardian, one of a pair, approx. 690–750. China, Tang dynasty (618–907). Earthenware with painted decoration under glaze. *Asian Art Museum, The Avery Brundage Collection, B60S152+*. Photograph © Asian Art Museum.

Tomb Guardian

Remember: Your tomb guardian needs to be strong and fierce to keep unwanted spirits and graverobbers out of the tomb and keep the tomb objects safe.



What are important things in your life that you would want to take with you into the afterlife?
