

A pair of large fantastical animals (Luduan) in turquoise-glazed Chinese porcelain, Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period (1662–1722), on French Louis XV mounts of chiselled ormolu with rocaille motifs and scrolling feet.

Paris, mid 18th century.

Height: 12 in. (31cm)
Width: 11,81 in. (30 cm)
Depth: 7,48 in. (19 cm)



Provenance:

Collection of Pietro Accorsi, Turin
An Italian private collection

Comparative Literature:

Kangxi – Yongzheng – Qianlong. Qing porcelain from the Palace Museum Collection, Peking, 1989, p. 159, tav. 142.

The mythical horned beast sits with its head raised and slightly turned to one side, the wavy tail resting on its side. The modelling is powerful and the facial expression fierce, with protruding eyes, gaping nostrils, and exposed teeth. The mane and tail are finely modelled. Covered in a vibrant turquoise glaze.

The present pair of objects attests to the taste that pervaded Europe around the mid eighteenth century for chinoiserie, a term broadly indicating all that came from the East. In that period, it was fashionable to transform precious Chinese porcelain items in luxury objects with the addition of gilt bronze mounts, as evidenced by the precious ormolu mounts of the present Luduans decorated with rocaille elements typical of the Louis XV production (1745–49).

These mythological beasts, characterised by a rounded body and clawed paws, are known as *luduan*, legendary animals able to distinguish good and bad – they are not to be confused with Fu or Foo dogs, guardian beasts of equally mythical origin. In Chinese mythology, luduans are auspicious creatures with the ability to discover the truth and travel great distances in a very short time. A legend says that a luduan once appeared to Genghis Khan and convinced him to abandon his efforts to conquer India. They were believed to speak fluently all the languages of the world, and to offer books to wise and virtuous sovereigns. For these qualities, a pair of incense burners in this shape were often placed next to, or in front of, the Imperial throne to symbolise that the emperor, protected by these animals, was a virtuous and learned

ruler (In this function a pair of cloisonné enamel incense burners of this form can be seen in situ in a photograph of the throne in the Hall of Supreme Harmony illustrated in *Palaces of the Forbidden City*, Hong Kong, 1986, pp. 66–67).

A similar turquoise-glazed luduan, modelled in reverse to the present example, is in the collections of the Palace Museum of Peking (illustrated in *Kangxi – Yongzheng – Qianlong. Qing porcelain from the Palace Museum Collection*, Peking, 1989, p. 159, tav. 142).

Conditions:

The porcelain elements are in overall good conditions. Hairline cracking at the base and craquelure in the glazing in the rear part, both related to the firing. Minor repair to the horn and mimetic integration to the extremity of the left ear for the left Luduan, and minor repair the right ear for the other sculpture. Subtle oxidation to the glazing, consistent with age.