

The British
Museum

LIFE AFTER DEATH

A Chinese tomb figure

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Room 3

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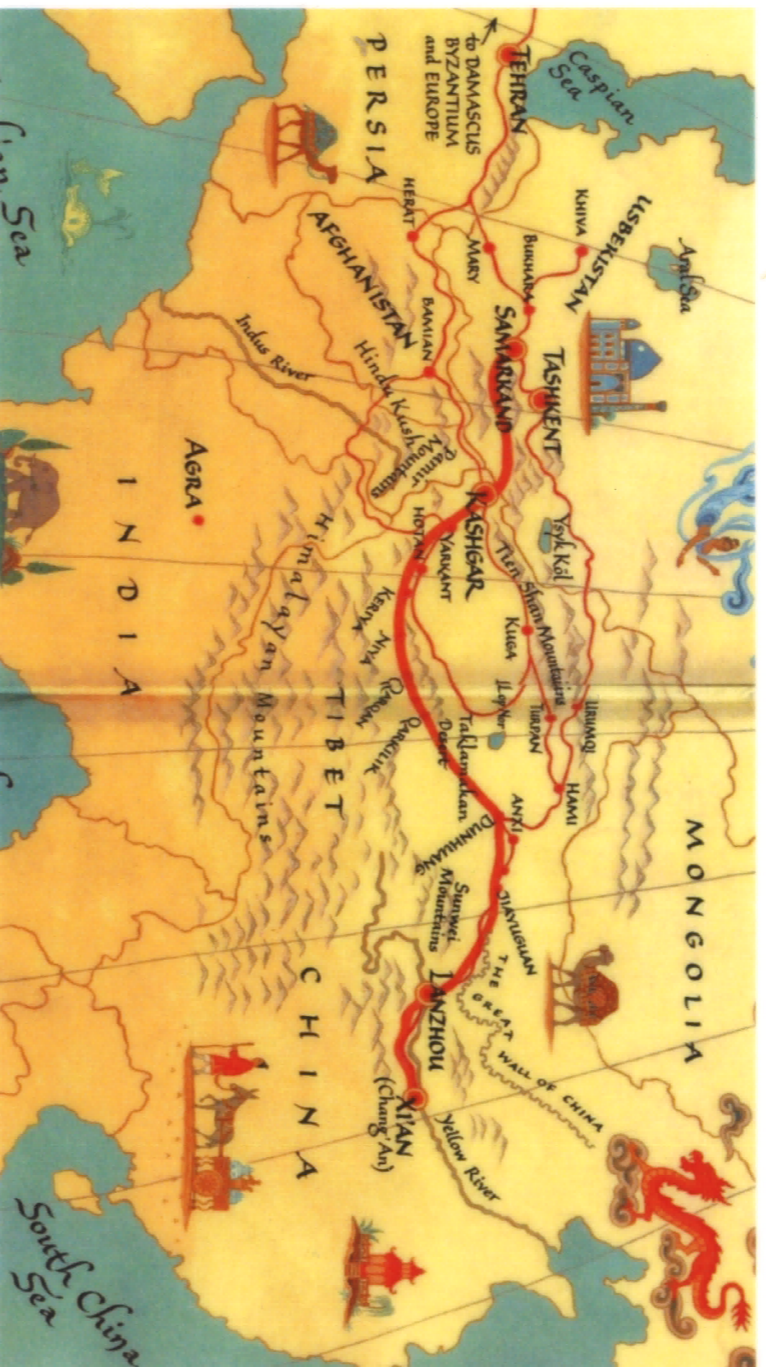


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LIFE AFTER DEATH

Earthenware Camel with Sancai glaze, Tang Dynasty, China, 618-907 AD

For over 2000 years, the Silk Road has been used as a network for the trade of valuable goods (silk, cotton, jade, gold etc.) and the exchange of knowledge, culture and beliefs or religions.



Map of the Silk Road

The Chinese Tang Dynasty (618- 907 AD) was well known for developing part of the route. Its people traded horses and camels for their military. The best horses were from the west. They believed that after death life goes on, and people were buried with their belongings and models of their belongings for future use.

In the burials of wealthy people and officers of high rank, ceramic figures and models of soldiers and camels were buried with them for their service in the afterlife.

This earthenware camel with Sancai glaze is a typical example of a funerary model. The Sancai glaze was restricted to the upper class.

The camel represents so many journeys (physical, emotional, spiritual) and this exhibition explores in depth the Chinese way of thinking about *life after death* through burial objects and ritual figures.

Model of a camel carrying luxury goods

Tang Dynasty, 618 – 907 AD, China

Earthenware with Sancai glaze

People feel frightened when they think about death. Many people think that once we die we lose awareness of everything. Since ancient times, Chinese people have believed in life after death.

We see this through burial figures, such as this camel from the tomb of a wealthy person in northern China.

Societies all over the world engage in rituals showing that there is life after death. In the modern world many still believe this, including Muslims, Christians and Buddhists.

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