DIS-China-Lokapala-Tang

Tang Dynasty Lokapala, locked in a Tang Dynasty tomb, this fine Lokapala was thought to ward off or defeat any evil threatening the tomb of its "occupant".  This is an outstanding and Museum Quality example of burial practices during the Tang Dynasty.

SCULPTURAL LOKAPALAS ( GUARDIAN OF THE WORLD) TANG DYNASTY TOMB  FIGURES. BOTH WEARING HELMETS AND FULL BODY ARMOR

The exceptionally expressive modeling of the faces are virtually a hallmark of the best Northern Wei tomb figures. The use of a rectangular base was also introduced during this period.

During the Tang Dynasty, restrictions were placed on the number of objects that could be included in tombs, an amount determined by an individual's social rank. In spite of the limitations, a striking variety of tomb furnishings have been excavated. Entire retinues of terracotta figures - animals, entertainers, musicians, guardians - were buried with the dead. Many of the objects reflect Tang China's extraordinary amount of contact with foreigners, bringing into China influences that were then adapted and absorbed into its culture. One of these influences is apparent in this figure that corresponds to Buddhist warrior deities that assume a mortuary role in China but also serve as protectors of Buddhist temples. Known as "Protector of the Burial Vault" or "Protector of the Burial Ground," the fierce, armored guardian stands atop a recumbent ox. This stance symbolizes the heavenly king's authority and responsibility as protector of the tomb. According to one Chinese tradition explaining their origin, the emperor Taizong when ill was threatened by ghosts outside of his room screeching and throwing bricks and tiles. When his general Jin Shubao (Chin Shu-pao) and a fellow officer came to stand guard the activity of the ghosts ceased. The grateful emperor had portraits of the two men hung on either side of his palace gates, and thereafter their images became widespread as door-gods. Originally, this colorfully painted Lokapala would have brandished a weapon in his hand. Most likely a spear, this object was probable made from a material such as wood that deteriorated over the centuries. Look unto his handsome face, complete with a carefully groomed mustache, and gazing into his stern eyes, we understand why such works were intended to frighten away tomb robbers and evil spirits. Yet despite his intimidating nature, we are not repelled by him; instead, we are attracted to his artistic mastery and intriguing history.