

MARBLE SARCOPHAGUS

It is a miniature coffin and contained no ashes or bones when exhumed. As stated in the inscription carved into the lid, this sarcophagus was made in A.D. 673 for a merchant, Fu Pao by name, who lived at K'ien-fung hien (now K'ien chou) in Shensi Province. He had it made in memory of his deceased parents that their souls should reside in it for a thousand years. It was an act of filial piety, one of the cardinal virtues inculcated by Confucius. The sarcophagus was interred in the mound which had been erected above the wooden coffin that contained the bodily remains of Fu's parents. An auspicious day was selected for the purpose of invoking their spirits to move from the wooden coffin into the marble sarcophagus as a more durable abode. Its walls are decorated with fine tracings of a dragon soaring in clouds (on each of the long sides), a phoenix hovering in clouds (on one of the small sides) and two monsters facing each other on the opposite end. Dragon and phoenix are emblems of death and resurrection.

A.D. 673, EARLY T'ANG PERIOD

BLACKSTONE EXPEDITION TO CHINA, 1908-10
BERTHOLD LAUFER, COLLECTOR

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