



BACTRIAN CAMEL

618–907 (Tang Dynasty, 618–907)

Earthenware with *sancai*
(tricolor) glaze

Height: 32 inches (81.3 cm)

CENTRAL ASIAN GROOM

618–907 (Tang Dynasty, 618–907)

Earthenware with *sancai* (tricolor)
glaze and traces of painted
decoration on head

Height: 17 inches (43.2 cm)

CHINA

LET'S LOOK

Describe the poses and
expressions of the
camel and the man.

What do they tell you
about each?

How would you describe the
camel's behavior?

What textures and colors do you
see on each figure?

LET'S LOOK AGAIN

What material was used to
make these sculptures?
How can you tell?

These figures were found in
ancient tombs in China.
Why might tombs have been
filled with such things?

TOMB FIGURES: BACTRIAN CAMEL AND CENTRAL ASIAN GROOM

These **ceramic** figures of a Bactrian camel and **groom** were made over one thousand years ago in China for the tombs of wealthy aristocrats or merchants. Objects such as these, along with figures of guardians, soldiers, and entertainers, were placed in tombs so that the spirit of the deceased person might have a rich and full **afterlife** similar to the life he or she had lived on earth.

China was the eastern end of the Silk Route (also called the Silk Road), some five thousand miles of roads linking Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, along which traders exchanged not only goods and services but also customs and languages. Two-humped Bactrian camels were ideal for carrying the trade goods. Standing seven feet tall at the hump, they can carry great weight, walk on varied terrain with their large feet, and store fat in their humps, converting it to energy or water on long journeys.

The unknown artists who made these sculptures filled them with a lively spirit. The camel twists its neck and opens its mouth to bray loudly. The groom raises his arm as if to control a stubborn camel with invisible reins. Attached to the camel's saddle you can see a water flask, a slab of smoked meat, and a saddlebag with a fanged guardian face.

The figures were coated with cream, amber, and green **glazes**, which still shine brightly after a thousand years. The groom's face and legs were not glazed, but instead were originally painted with **watercolors**, which have faded away over time.

Camel: Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Mrs. John Wintersteen, 1964-9-1
Groom: Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Charles H. Ludington from the George Crofts Collection, 1923-21-12