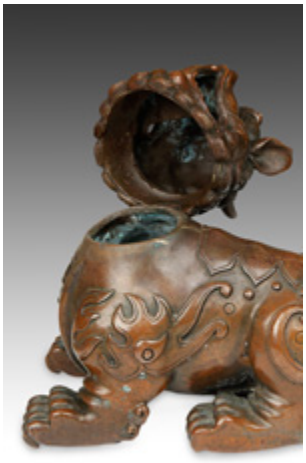
# Bronze Foo Dog Incense Burner



*Bronze foo dog or foo lion incense burner or censer*

"*The representation of the Foo Dog in this incense burner is typical of how the lion was viewed in pre-modern China. The animal was believed to have powerful mythic protective properties*"

Incense in China is traditionally used in a wide range of cultural activities including religious ceremonies, ancestor veneration, traditional medicine, and in daily life. Known as xiang, incense was used by the Chinese possibly beginning as early as 250 BC. The use of incense came to greater prominence during the Han Dynasty (206 BC – AD 220) with increased trade and the availability of more fragrant foreign materials. Incense is used for a variety of purposes associated with ritual and religious devotion in China and elsewhere. It is traditionally burned before the threshold of a home or business, before images of deities and ancestors, in shrines found in homes and at the main entrance to each and every village.



*The foo dog's head acts as the lid to this bronze incense burner*

In Chinese art and secular life, incense and the utensils used in associated rituals are seen as metaphoric symbols suggesting refinement and sophistication. In most religions, incense smoke represents the prayers of the faithful rising to the ears of the divine. This particular incense holder is meticulously cast in bronze and depicts a Chinese guardian lion, commonly known as a Foo Dog.

The representation of the Foo Dog in this incense burner is typical of how the lion was viewed in pre-modern China. The animal was believed to have powerful mythic protective properties. Their appearance in Buddhist religious art in China is found as early as 208 B.C., where it was believed the Foo Lion was a protector of the Dharma, or Buddhist teachings. Oddly, considering their appearance in Chinese art, lions are not indigenous to China. However, they were once quite common in neighboring India. As Buddhism was spread in China by traveling Buddhist priests and monks from India, they brought with them stories about stone lions guarding the entries to temples, monasteries, and the palaces of kings. It is believed by scholars that the depiction of the Foo Dog came about because Chinese sculptors modeled lion statues after native dogs. This incense burner depicts a classic Chinese Foo Dog.



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