

Important
and
extremely
rare
tianqiuping



CHINA, Qianlong mark and period, 18th century

A highly important and exceptionally rare porcelain vase of tianqiuping ("Heavenly Sphere") bottle form, featuring a generous globular body rising to a tall cylindrical neck, adorned with a superb underglaze cobalt-blue enamel decoration against a white ground. The intricate design depicts nine dragons—both five-clawed and three-clawed—emerging dynamically amidst voluminous swirling clouds. The rim of the neck is embellished with a frieze of **Lingzhi**, the sacred "Mushrooms of Immortality."

A six-character **Qianlong** mark in **zhuan** script, rendered in underglaze blue, appears to the underside.

Height: 53 cm

Diameter: 40 cm

(Previously mounted as a lamp, with a 9 mm aperture to the lower section of the body.)

Estimation : 300.000/500.000 €

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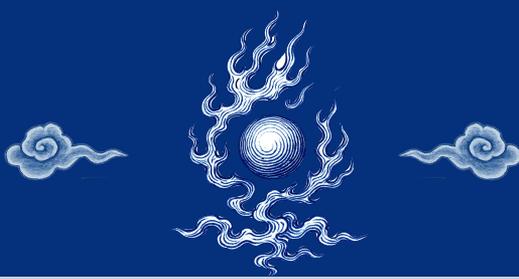


A Union Between Earth and Heaven... Such was the celestial status of emperors under the Qing dynasty. Known as "Sons of Heaven," they bridged the human and divine realms. This vase embodies that symbolism through its rarity, shape, and decoration.

The divine allegory begins with its form. Called tianqiuping (天球瓶) in Chinese - translated as "celestial sphere" in English - its impressive size and perfectly round suggest the likeness of a celestial orb. This model emerged during the Yongle Emperor's reign (1402-1424) in the Ming dynasty, often used to adorn altars in imperial palace temples. Early examples, like this one, feature blue-and-white decoration, hinting at the masterpiece it would become.

This style gained popularity throughout the Ming dynasty, thanks to advanced firing techniques that produced a flawless spherical body and harmonious decoration. These were costly, meticulous productions with no margin for error. Under the Xuande reign (1426-1435), notable examples - like a vase in the Palace Museum, Beijing, with a three-clawed dragon amid clouds - foreshadowed this design.





The dragon motif, an allegory of the Emperor in zoomorphic form, became the favoured decoration for imperial commissions early in Chinese porcelain history. This mythical creature, whether marine or terrestrial, links the earthly and divine. It may appear alone amid clouds or within lotus scrolls .

On this vase, the dragons - sometimes winged - are shown in profile with dynamic poses, arranged harmoniously across the body. They retain classic Ming-era traits: bulging eyes, broad snouts, deer-antlered heads, and finely detailed scales.

These dragons have either three or five claws, the latter reserved for imperial works meant for the Emperor and his family. The nine dragons here are no coincidence: in Chinese symbolism, nine - the highest single-digit number - is tied to the Emperor, a privilege exclusive to the imperial family. Paired with the celestial *tianqiuping* form, these nine dragons affirm this piece's purpose within the Imperial Palace, likely for the Qianlong Emperor himself. An identical vase resides in the Palace Museum, Beijing, under reference no. 00087783.

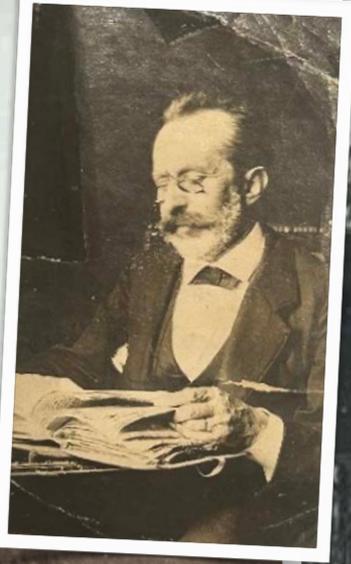
A Testament to the Finest Qing Porcelain. This vase is a remarkable example of Qing dynasty porcelain at its best, blending technical perfection with the potent symbolism of Qianlong's reign. It showcases the relentless pursuit of excellence by Jingdezhen's imperial artisans in service to the Emperor.





Provenance

- **Edmond André GAUTIER (1835-1895)**, great-grandfather of the current owner of the vase. Edmond Gautier, a clerk at the Court of First Instance in Loches and a corresponding member of the Société Archéologique de Touraine, was a historian of the city and château of Loches. A street in Loches is named after him. He authored numerous works on the city.
 - **Marie François Méturas Edmond André GAUTIER (1873-1929)**, son of the above, a man of independent means who served in the Great War (1914-1918). He continued some of his father's research on the château of Loches.
 - **By descent :** The vase has been in the family since at least the 1920s, as confirmed by dated photographs in the family archives. However, family tradition suggests it entered the collection during the 19th century.
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**BEIJING
PALACE
MUSEUM**

INFORMATION

Fees in addition to the hammer price: 30 % including VAT

Conditions for participating in the auction: A €100,000 bank deposit must be transferred by the bidder to the Cannes Enchères account and received by June 11 to bid in the room or by telephone (French/English). No online bidding is permitted for this lot. Please request our banking details for the deposit.

Only bidders registered by June 11 may participate, after providing:

- Two valid forms of identification (passport, ID card, etc., front and back)
- Full contact details (phone number, exact postal address, with a copy of a bill - such as a bank statement, electricity, or water bill - issued in the bidder's name and matching the address)
- The bidder's international banking details (IBAN)
- Credible references from internationally renowned auction houses (recent, fully paid invoices in the bidder's name for significant purchases are required).

If references are deemed insufficient, Cannes Enchères may refuse participation or request an additional €200,000 bank deposit. If the buyer is represented, the same information is required for both the buyer and their representative.

No changes in the buyer's name on the invoice will be allowed after the sale. The final buyer's name must be provided at the time of the participation request.

INFORMATION

Payment: Payment for the adjudicated lot must be made in full immediately by any means, noting that cash payments cannot exceed €15,000 for non-professionals and tax residents outside France. Payment cannot be split and must come from the buyer alone. Cannes Enchères accepts multiple partial payments for a single invoice, but only from the same payer.

Viewing:

- At Cannes Enchères in Cannes until May 23, by appointment only (+33 6 78 69 44 29).
- At the expert's office in Paris between May 31 and June 9, by appointment only (+33 6 12 43 84 29).
- Public pre-auction exhibition on June 12 (10:00-12:00 / 14:30-18:00) and on the morning of the sale on June 13 (10:00-12:00).

Exportation: A request for an export certificate for cultural property was submitted on March 12, 2025, to the Service des Musées de France in Paris. Once the buyer's name is known, Cannes Enchères will request the export license on their behalf (cost: €300 excl. VAT, payable by the buyer).

Post-sale Insurance: Due to settlement and administrative processing times beyond Cannes Enchères' control, the lot will be insured after the sale until collected by the buyer or their appointed transporter, for its adjudicated amount including fees (cost: 0.30% of the insured amount, payable by the buyer).

For any request
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ASIAN ART AUCTION



13 JUNE 2025





Gauchet Art Asiatique

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Graphisme: Anna Kerviel