



Dog Cage (Goulong)

1736–95

China

(Qing Dynasty, 1644–1911;
Qianlong Period, 1736–1795)

*Brass with cloisonné enamel and gilt
decoration; jade rings*

Height 45 ½ inches (115.6 cm)

This cage on wheels most likely housed a favorite pet dog of a Chinese nobleman. It exemplifies the extravagant wealth and fondness for exotic luxury items of the Qing (ching) dynasty court under Emperor Qianlong (chee-en long). Over 60 five-clawed dragons—symbols of the Chinese emperor—fill the blue and turquoise designs, created using a complicated enameling technique called cloisonné. The **finials** on the top of the cage, the golden dragon decorations on the sides, and the studs in the shape of lion heads are bronze covered in gold. The small hook that projects from each lion’s mouth once supported delicate silk curtains, providing a cozy place for the dog to sleep. White jade rings above and below the upright bars add to the opulence of this masterpiece.

The word cloisonné is French and means “walled enclosure.”

Using copper wires, small enclosed spaces were created on the surface of the object. They were then filled with different colors made from metal oxides mixed with glass paste, which hardened into **enamel** when fired. Favorite colors included cobalt blue and turquoise. This technique was first imported from the Byzantine Empire to China in the fifteenth century, during the Ming dynasty.

Emperor Qianlong made China one of the most powerful and wealthy countries in the world during his long reign from 1736 to 1795. A great patron of the arts, he commissioned countless lavish objects for imperial enjoyment. Qianlong was said to have loved cloisonné and established workshops that specialized in the process on his palace grounds in Beijing, where this kennel was probably made.

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