

Learn names of mythical creatures from great works of art



ABC Mythical creatures in Art

Acknowledgement

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Front cover: Qing, Mythical beast, c. 1700-1900
Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, US

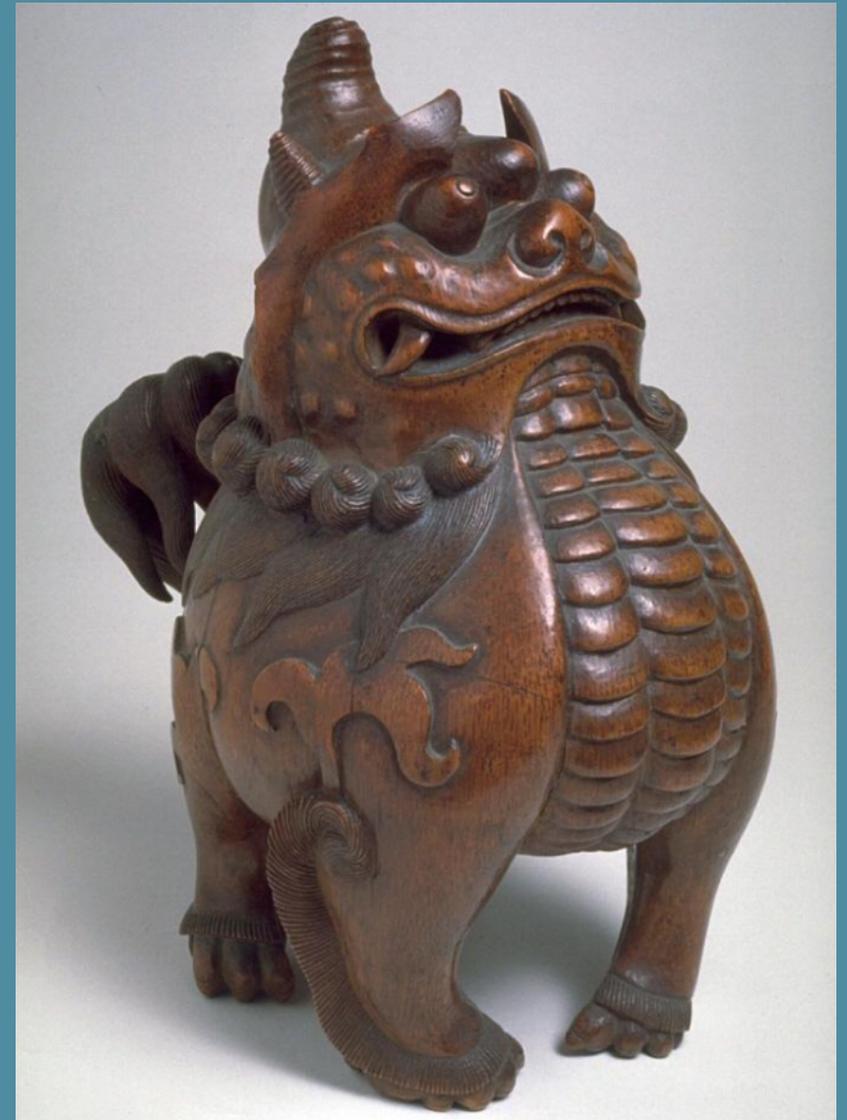
Back cover: Italy, Pair of Sphinxes on Scrolls, c. 1560
Getty Museum, Los Angeles, US

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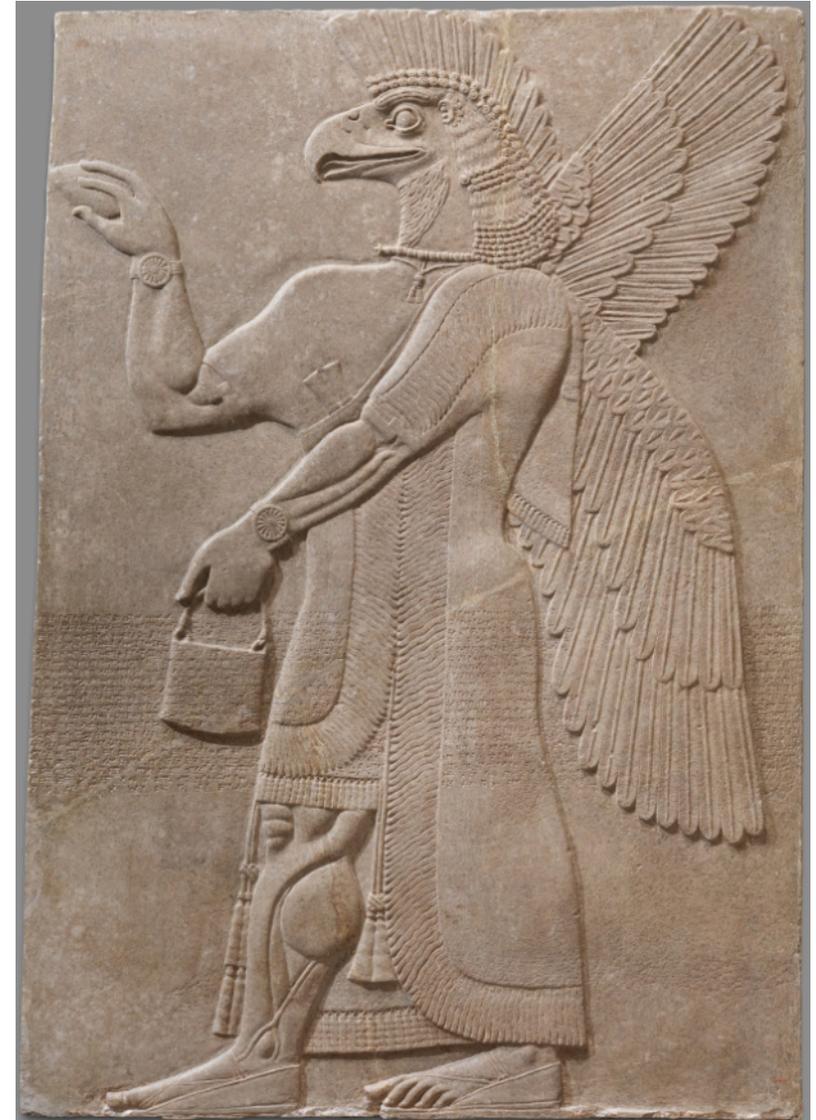
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A is for Apkallu

Apkallu is a wise man, part animal, part human in several forms including eagle-headed winged man in Akkadian mythology



Neo-Assyrian
Apkallu, Relief panel, c. 883–859 BCE
The Metropolitan Museum, New York, US

B is for Buraq

Buraq is a creature, part mule, part donkey with wings that prophet Mohammed is thought to have ridden during the Night Journey



Mughal
al Buraq, c. 1770-1775
National Museum, New Delhi, India

C is for Centaur

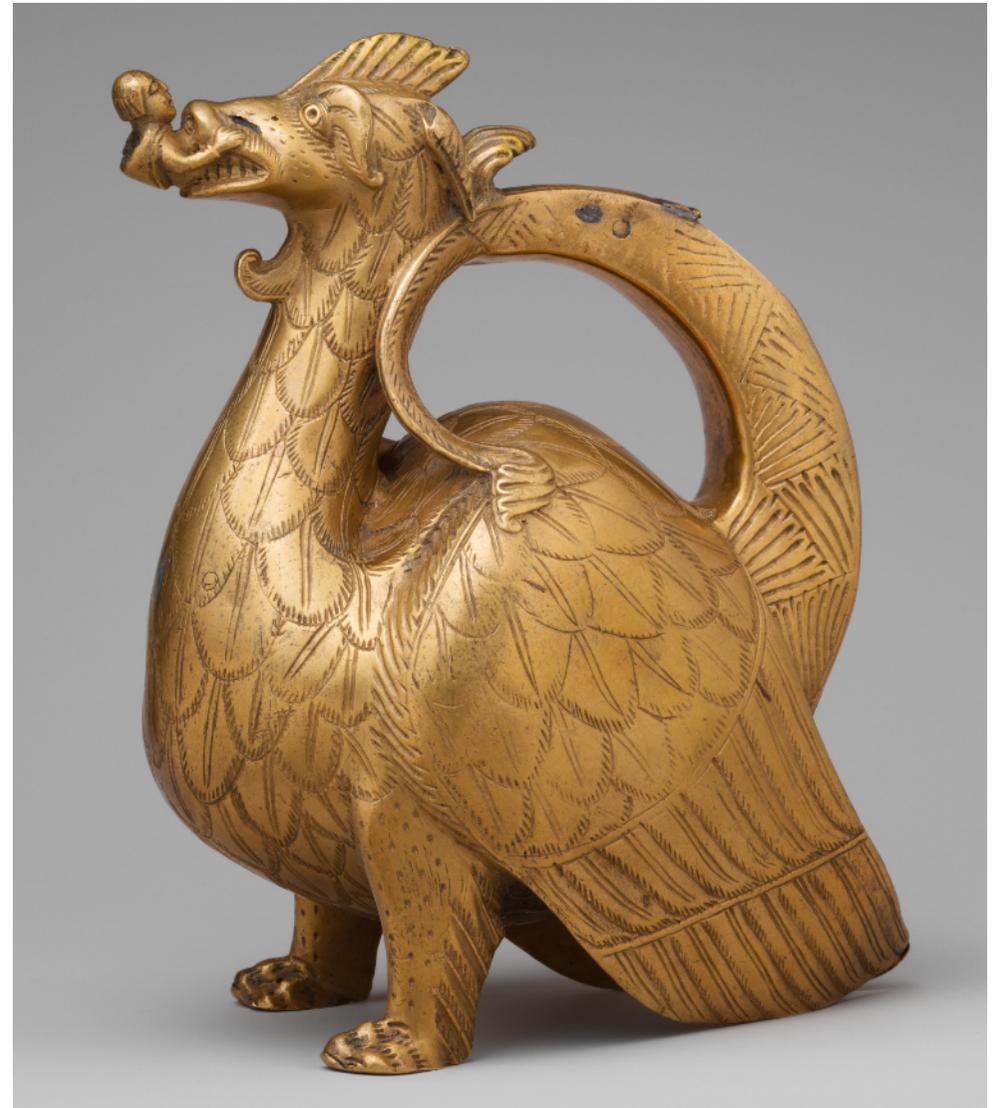
Centaur is a creature, part horse, part human
in Greek mythology



Roman
The young Centaur, c. 117-138
Musei Capitolini, Rome, Italy

D is for Dragon

Dragon is a reptile-like creature that appears in the folklore of various cultures around the world



Germany
Aquamanile in the Form of a Dragon, c. 1200
The Metropolitan Museum, New York, US

E is for Erymanthian boar

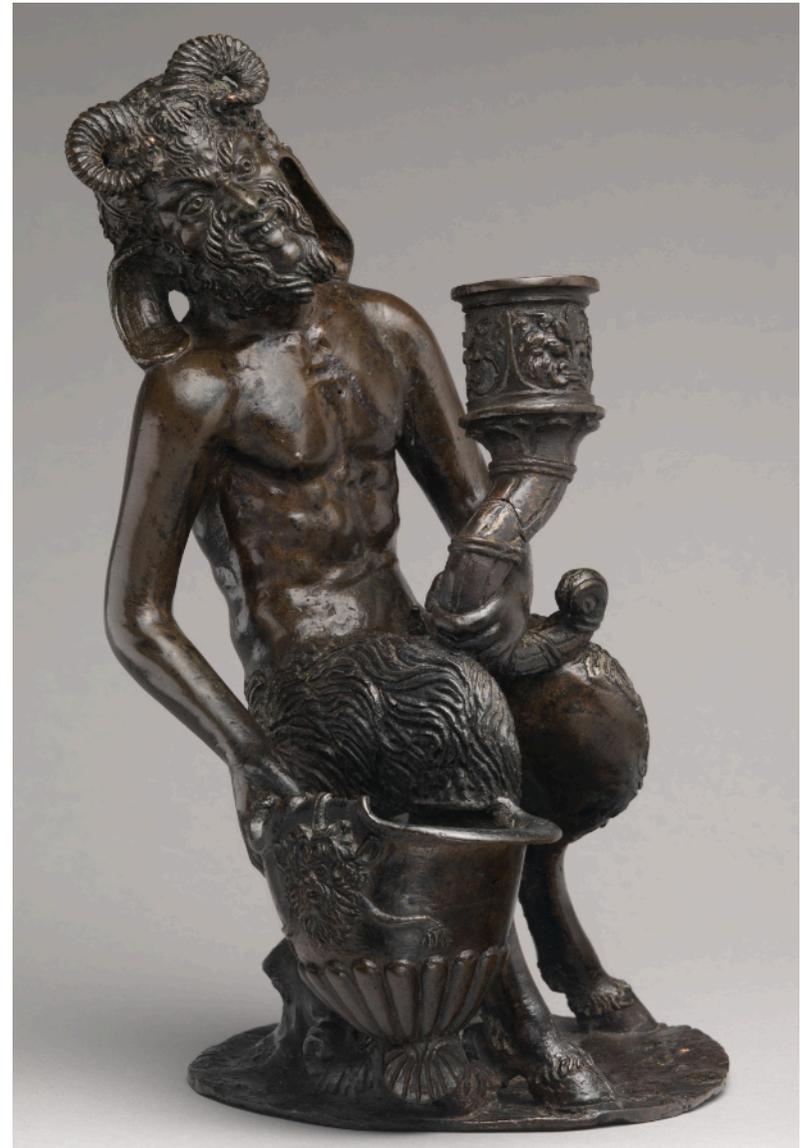
Erymanthian Boar is a giant boar that ravaged around Mount Erymanthos which was captured by Heracles in Greek mythology



Roman
Erymanthian boar, Silver coin, 78 BCE
The British Museum, London, UK

F is for Faun

Faun is a creature, part goat, part human in Roman mythology



Italy
Seated Satyr (Faun) with an inkwell and a candlestick
c. 1530-40
The Metropolitan Museum, New York, US

G is for Griffin

Griffin is a creature, part eagle, part lion from ancient Middle Eastern and Mediterranean lands



Old-Assyrian
Griffin, Furniture plaque, c. 18th century BCE
The Metropolitan Museum, New York, US

H is for Harpy

Harpy is a wind spirit, part bird, part human in Greco-Roman mythology



Ayyubid
Stone-paste laqabi dish decorated with a Harpy
c. 12th century
The British Museum, London, UK

I is for Ichthyocentaur

Ichthyocentaur is a merman with forelegs of a horse and serpentine tail of a fish in Greek mythology



Kushan
Marine Deity (Ichthyocentaur), c. 1st century
The Metropolitan Museum, New York, US

J is for Jinni

Jinni, also called genie is a spirit capable of assuming various forms and exercising extraordinary powers in Arabic mythology



Mughal
Album painting depicting five animal-headed demons (Jinns),
c. 1590-1600
The British Museum, London, UK

K is for Kinnara

kinnara is a celestial musician, part bird, part human in Southeast Asian Buddhist mythology



Thailand
Mythical bird-man (Kinnara), c. 1775-1850
Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, US

L is for Lamassu

Lamassu is a winged creature with bearded human head and the body of a bull or a lion in Assyrian mythology



Neo-Assyrian
Colossal statue of a winged human-headed bull (Lamassu)
c. 865-860 BCE
The British Museum, London, UK

M is for Makara

Makara is a sea creature with an elephant head and crocodile body in Hindu mythology



Nepal
Mythical Aquatic Creature (Makara), c. 10th century
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, US

N is for Naga

Naga is a creature, part cobra, part human in Hindu mythology



India
Stone plaque with the figure of a five-headed cobra (Naga)
c. 17th century
The British Museum, London, UK

O is for Oni

Oni is a fierce and powerful creature in Japanese folklore



Suzuki Tokoku (1846-1913)
Seated Oni with mokugyo and rosary, c. 1870-1910
The British Museum, London, UK

P is for Phoenix

Phoenix is an immortal bird associated with the sun and rebirth that appears in the folklore of various cultures around the world



Baekje
Phoenix, part of Gilt-bronze Incense Burner of Baekje
c. 6th century
Buyeo National Museum, Buyeo, Republic of Korea

Q is for Qilin

Qilin is a creature with a horn on its forehead, body of a deer, and an ox tail in Chinese mythology



Qing
First Rank Military Official's Insignia with Qilin Design
The Chung Young Yang Embroidery Museum
Seoul, Republic of Korea

R is for Ryong

Ryong is a Korean dragon that is thought to bring rain and clouds in Korean mythology



Joseon
Ceiling Decoration with Twin Dragons (Ryong)
National palace museum of Korea, Seoul, Republic of Korea

S is for Sphinx

Sphinx is a creature with human head and lion's body from ancient Middle Eastern and Mediterranean lands



Egypt
Sphinx of Hatshepsut, c. 1479-1458 BCE
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, US

T is for Tlaltecuhтли

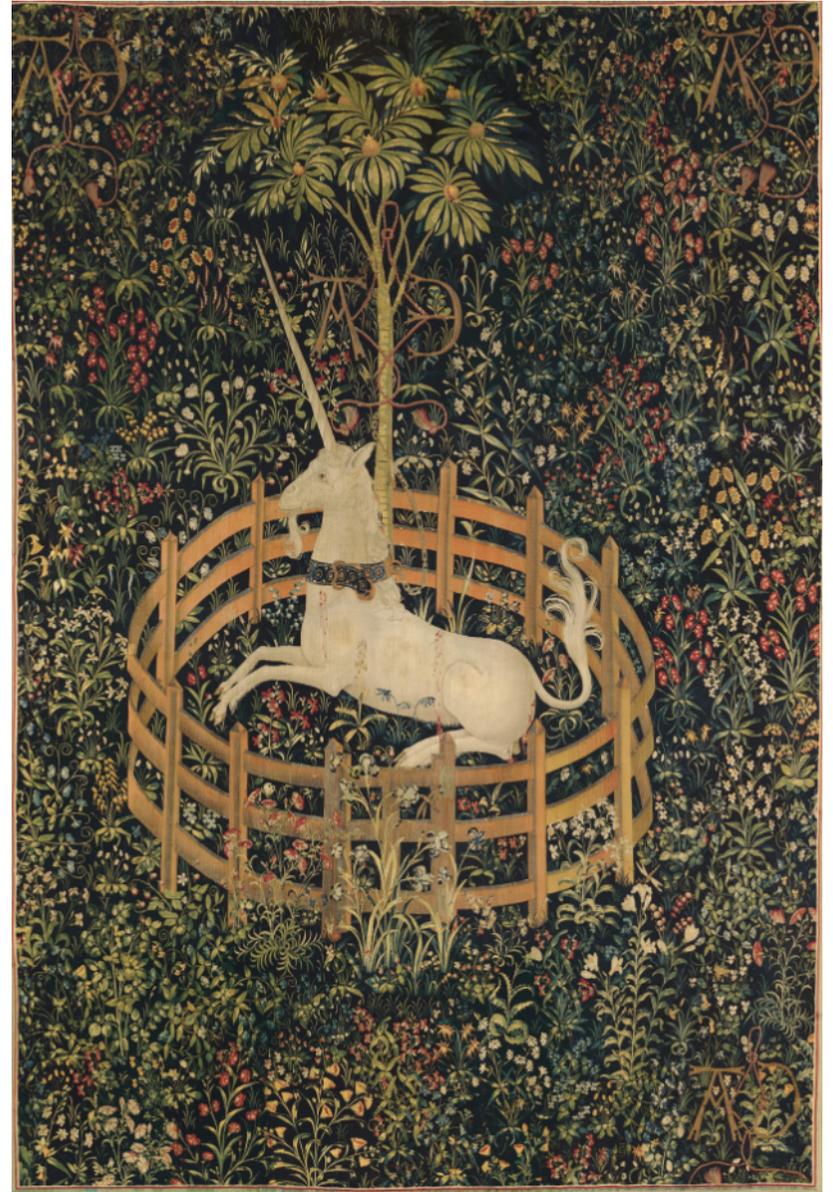
Tlaltecuhтли is a toad-like creature with claws, a gaping mouth, and crocodile skin in Aztec mythology



Aztec
Earth Monster (Tlaltecuhтли), 15th–early 16th century
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, US

U is for Unicorn

Unicorn is a horse-like creature with a single, pointed, spiraling horn projecting from its forehead that appears in the folklore of various cultures around the world



France
The Unicorn Rests in a Garden, c. 1495-1505
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, US

V is for Varaha

Varaha is the third avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu,
in the form of a boar



India
Varaha, Small bronze sculpture of the boar-headed
avatara of Vishnu, c. 18th century
The British Museum, London, UK

W is for Wadjet

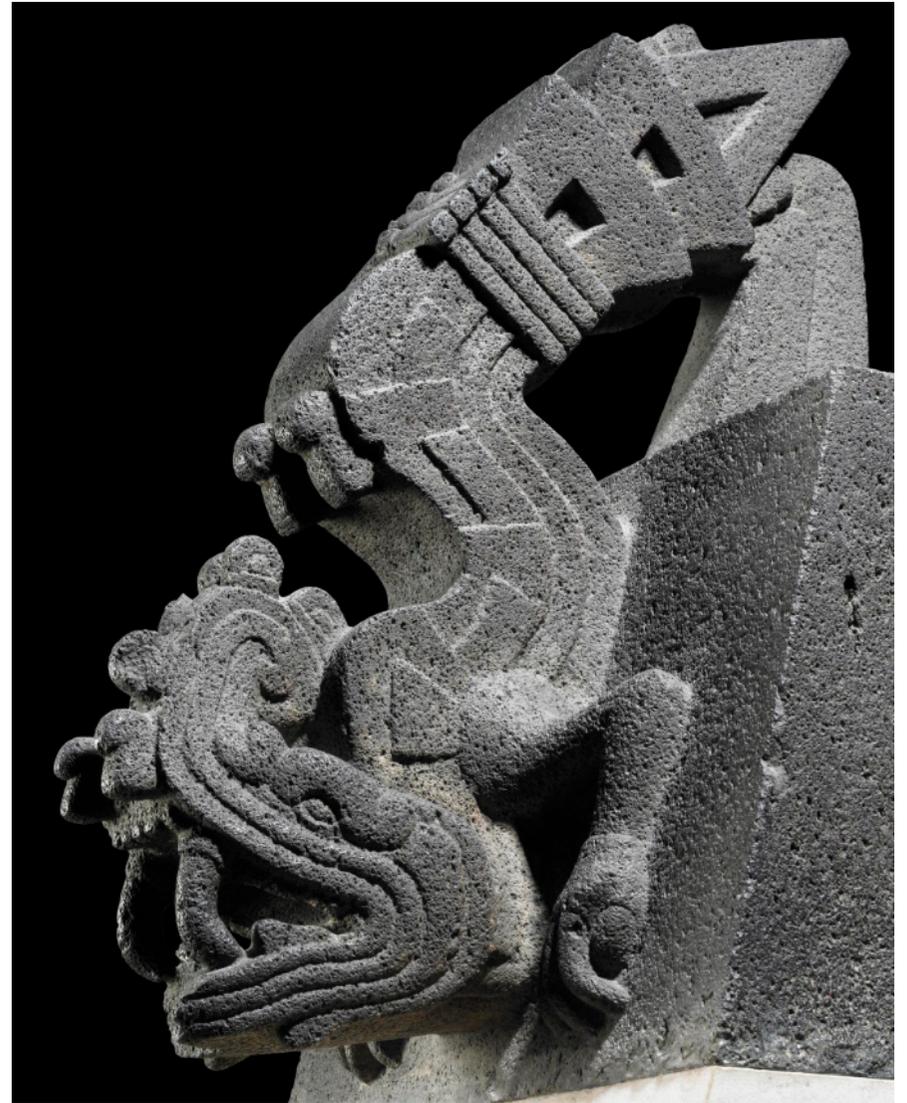
Wadjet is a cobra goddess in several forms including a lion-headed woman wearing a solar disc and the Uraeus (cobra) in Egyptian mythology



Egypt
Wadjet, c. 664-525 BCE
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, US

X is for Xihcoatl

Xihcoatl is a fire serpent in Aztec mythology



Aztec
Stone figure of Xihcoatl, c. 1300-1521
The British Museum, London, UK

Y is for Yali

Yali is a creature, part lion, part elephant in Hindu mythology



India
Yali, Pair of leogryph columns, c. 1900-1925
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia

Z is for Zhulong

Zhulong is a pig-headed dragon in Chinese mythology



Hongshan
Jade Pig-dragon (Zhulong), c. 3500-3000 BCE
National Palace Museum, Taipei, China