

BOARD OF EDUCATION, SOUTH KENSINGTON,
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CHINESE ART

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but it is represented, as a survival, by the bridal wine cups of the present day which are often made of the same shape in silver, or silver gilt.

Another ancient form of sacrificial wine vase is the *ku*, with slender body, lightly spreading foot, and flaring trumpet-shaped mouth, a typical example of which is presented in Fig. 54. It is moulded with four vertical dentated ridges projecting from the sides of the stem and foot, between which appear in relief the lineaments of the *t'ao-t'ieh* ogre on a ground of fret representing clouds, and a similar design spreads up the neck in four conventional palm leaves. There is an archaic inscription *Fu Kêng*, "For my father Kêng," within a cartouche (*ya*), supposed by Chinese archaeologists to figure the outline of the ancestral temple. This graceful bronze form, by the way, is often reproduced in recent times in monochrome porcelain invested with enamels of turquoise blue or imperial yellow.

Another class of sacrificial vases is modelled in the shape of animals, like the elephant vases (*hsüung tsun*) and the rhinoceros vases (*hsi tsun*), some of which are hollow inside to hold the wine, while others, of less ancient date, are solid and carry ovoid wine vases on their backs. The vase in Fig. 55 is an ancient form shaped in the form of a rhinoceros standing with ears erect and a collar round the neck, and is provided with a hinged cover on the back and a spout at the mouth. The wood stand is appropriately carved in openwork to represent water plants and rocks.

The curious wheeled wine vessels commonly called *chiu ch'ê tsun*, or "dove chariot vases," one of which is illustrated in Fig. 56, are of later date than the preceding, and are generally attributed to the Han dynasty (B.C. 202, A.D. 220). The bird of mythological aspect, which is supposed to represent a dove (*chiu*), has its tail curved downwards, and a trumpet-shaped vase-mouth strengthened by vertical ridges on its back; it is engraved with scroll ornament and dragons, and displays on its breast a grotesque head moulded

trelliswork of bamboo, floral sprays and palm leaves. The panel on the lid displays a Buddhist temple with many courts and wide grounds containing *pai-lou* gateways, stupas and bridges, through which a mandarin is riding on horseback, with a state umbrella held over his head, accompanied by a long retinue of attendants.

Passing on to industrial art work in *horn*, the only branch that need be alluded to here is the carving of rhinoceros horn. This is chiefly done at Canton, the horns of the one-horned Indian rhinoceros and of the two-horned Sumatran rhinoceros being imported by sea for the purpose. In former times the material was obtained by hunters in Yung ch'ang Fu and other parts of the province of Yunnan, and also in the borders of Annam and Siam, where both of the above species were found. Marsden, in his *History of Sumatra*, states that the horn is esteemed there as an antidote against poison, and on that account made into drinking cups. This belief in the peculiar virtues of the horn is ancient and widely spread. Ctesias, writing in the fifth century, B.C., describes the great one-horned Indian rhinoceros and the wonderful medicinal properties of the cups made from its horns. These horns were brought to China as early as the Han dynasty, and the old writers descant on the prophylactic power of the material as well as on its decorative value. During the T'ang dynasty the official girdle of the period was studded with carved plaques of rhinoceros horn, of amber or golden-yellow transparent tints veined with black. These were the colours most highly esteemed for art work generally, red grounds coming next, while black opaque horns were only used to make shavings for medicine. The presence of poison was said to be revealed by the exudation of a white humour from the cup, or from the surface of a rod of rhinoceros horn put into the liquid to test it.

A carved cup of rhinoceros horn is illustrated in Fig. 83, elevated into a kind of cornucopia upon a wooden stand, elaborately carved in open-work with symbolical designs of Taoist character. The cup is decorated outside with branches of pine and polyporus fungus,

and with the figure of a gigantic toad-like dragon at the top of a waterfall below which carp are swimming—emblematic of literary triumph, whereby the persevering scholar becomes a mǎndarin. The stand rises from a clump of bamboos, branched fungus and pines, underneath which, on the right, Bodhidharma is seen with a single shoe in his hand returning, in spirit, to his native land, and on the opposite side a group of deer. It is pierced, above, with interlacing branches of pine, bamboo, and sacred fungus, mingled with blossoming peach and other flowering trees; and in the meshes of the network are posed two groups, a Buddhist hermit, above, accompanied by a lion, and another, in the middle, with an attendant monk carrying his *patra* almsbowl. The artist revels in the mythologies of two religions to lift up a cup destined, as it were, to hold a draught of the *elixir vitæ*, the draught of longevity of the Taoist mystic dreamer.

FIG. 82.—TORTOISE-SHELL BOX CARVED WITH FIGURE SUBJECTS.
No. 636-77.

H. 4 in., L. 10½ in.