

BULLETIN OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

VOLUME XLVII

BOSTON, FEBRUARY, 1949

No. 267



Silver Candlestick

Persian, Twelfth Century

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Edward Jackson Holmes

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY

SUBSCRIPTION ONE DOLLAR

the designs of much later Hirado porcelains may derive from a tradition early established in the ware.

The bowl, showing in low relief a Chinese poet, probably Li Po, supported by two children, is a skillful example of moulding. Body and glaze are snow white. At first glance the piece could easily be mistaken for Hirado ware, though the glaze is a little more lustrous than that of the usual Hirado. Yet the glaze collected in the depressions of the relief has a distinctly greenish tinge to be found on many examples of Kakiemon wares. The design of Li Po comes from the repertory of Chinese subjects which was followed by the artists of the Kano family. The bowl offers two hypotheses: either it was made in rivalry with contemporary pieces of Hirado ware or, as seems more probable to the writer, it anticipates the later better known style of Hirado just as the other bowl suggests many of the later characteristics of the Nabeshima style.

These two porcelains of 1699, both products of the Kakiemon kiln, help to elucidate the variety of wares made at this site. They also supply landmarks in a very unregistered field of study. They tend to prove that much that seems novel in the later wares of Nabeshima and Hirado was achieved earlier by potters of the Kakiemon family. They add quality and historical interest to the still small collection of Japanese porcelains, a collection in which the gifts of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich form an important part.

ROBERT T. PAINE, JR.

The Dwarf as Bearer

A RECENT article in the *Brooklyn Museum Bulletin*¹ presents an admirable treatment of some aspects of the *arts mineurs* in ancient Egypt and clearly defines the values of small precious objects created in the latter part of Dynasty XVIII. Though carved with great skill they do not belong to the domain of great art, but by their attractive forms they reflect the taste of the period and give us an inkling of the luxury and refinement which prevailed under kings Amenhotep III, Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten), and Tutankhamen in the fourteenth century B. C.

The small figure of a vase bearer in our collections (Figs. 1-2) is a good example of the precious little toilet objects popular at that time. It was acquired by the Museum early last year² and has since taken its place among the cosmetic jars, hand mirrors, and necklaces exhibited in Gallery E-5. It shows the figure of a servant carrying a vase, carved out of a single piece of boxwood with the original base. The little man, despite his minute size, has been modeled quite well although

¹Vol. X, no. 1, Fall 1948, pp. 1-16; John D. Cooney, *Three Ivories of the Late XVIII Dynasty*.

²Acc. No. 48.296. Helen and Alice Colburn Fund. Height (including base) 5.9 cm.; width of base 1.8 cm.; length of base 2.6 cm. Boxwood with dark brown patina.



Fig. 1. Vase Bearer, boxwood Dynasty XVIII
About twice natural size
Helen and Alice Colburn Fund

now the face is no longer very clear due to the fact that, in modern times, the statuette was coated with paraffin as a preservative. The servant is represented walking, with his left foot advanced, and he carries on his left shoulder a jar, almost half his own size, which he supports with the palm of the left hand and steadies with his right. To keep the vessel approximately vertical and to offset its weight he leans over to the side, thus presenting a graceful movement and preserving a certain symmetry of appearance.

The little servant is actually meant to be a dwarf, characterized by abnormally short legs, a stocky torso, and a head whose size is too large in proportion to the body. The broad, flat skull, the plain features, the large ears make him look anything but intelligent, and conforming with the custom of heavy laborers of all times and countries he wears his belt rather low so that the



Fig. 2. Vase Bearer
Helen and Alice Colburn Fund
Actual Size

short skirt exposes, rather than covers, his paunch. Representations of dwarfs appear in Egypt since early dynastic times as illustrated by the incised drawing on a stone vessel fragment (Fig. 3) from Abydos in the Museum of Fine Arts,¹ and many sculptures, reliefs, and paintings from later periods picture these diminutive human beings. They are mostly shown as jesters, tending the pet monkeys and dogs of their masters, as workers skilled in the making of fine jewelry, and as house servants. Their grotesque appearance seems to have appealed to the Egyptian sense of humor, and some of the representations can definitely be rated as comical.

Our statuette is said to have come from Tell el Amarna which would place it within the reign of Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten), 1370-1352 B.C. This date is well supported by the style of the figure, but in addition our piece is inscribed with the names of the royal couple through which Amarna has become famous. On the body of the vase, next to the right hand of the bearer, the

¹M.F.A. 01.7292; quartzite; 6 x 9 cm.; from the tomb of King Zer. Dynasty I. Flinders Petrie, *Abydos I* (1902), p. 5 and pl. IV no. 11.

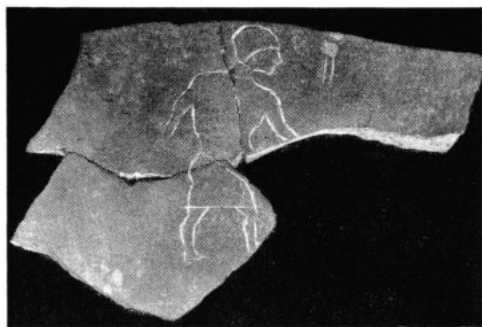


Fig. 3. Dwarf
Dynasty I
Fragment of a quartzite vessel

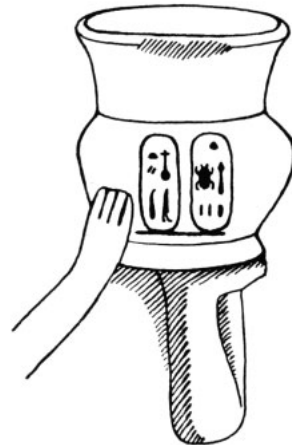


Fig. 4. Inscription on the Vase
Enlarged drawing by Miss Suzanne E. Chapman

cartouches of King Akhenaten and Queen Nofretete are incised so minutely that they are barely visible to the naked eye. The vessel with the inscription is reproduced in Fig. 4 from a drawing by Miss Suzanne E. Chapman. The prenomen of Akhenaten and the name of Nofretete occur here in abbreviated form,¹ no doubt conditioned by the space available on the front of the jar.

The *motif* of the vase bearer is found among Egyptian statuettes from Dynasty I on.² An extensive study of this subject was published some years ago, based on the three figurines of girls in the Leiden Museum, nos. 51-53.³ In connection with our wooden statuette it is interesting to note how rarely the artist deviated from the accepted norm and, gracefully as well as realistically, expressed a distinct sideward motion of the body to restore the equilibrium. Except for the Boston dwarf I know of only five other statuettes with this particular attitude, all of which can be dated to the second half of Dynasty XVIII. The best known is probably the wooden servant figure in the Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale, wearing a loin cloth ornamented with those floral designs which are so characteristic of the taste of the fully established Empire. A dwarf in the British Museum⁴ has exactly the same position of the hands as our Boston piece, while an alabaster statuette with base in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,⁵ though comparable in the treatment of the little man, shows a vase of different shape. The

¹Cf. Henri Gauthier, *Le Livre des Rois d'Égypte*, vol. II (1912), pp. 349-353, 357. Flinders Petrie, *Tell el Amarna* (1894), pl. XIV, 61. *Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca* 8 (1938), pp. 194-195.

²Flinders Petrie, *Abydos II* (1903), p. 25 and pl. V no. 47.

³*Archives Internationales d'Ethnographie* (Leiden), vol. 38 (1940), appendix *Oudheidkundige Mededeelingen XX*, pp. 1-23.

⁴No. 37,201; black stone; height 11 cm. *l.c.* p. 21 fig. 17.

⁵M.M.A. 17.190.1963; height 19.5 cm.; from Amarna. *Bull. M.M.A.* 13 (1918), pp. 2-3 (illus.). Miss Nora E. Scott, Research Fellow of the Department of Egyptian Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, N.Y., has provided me with much valuable information on this attractive object.

Louvre has in its collections an alabaster servant figure¹ which also carries the jar on his left shoulder, and the same holds true of the statuette of a woman in a long dress, found in the tomb of Queen Tiy, mother of Akhenaten.²

The last example of this group, the wooden statuette from Alnwick Castle,³ is unusual because it represents a nude girl, characterized by the youth lock as immature, who carries the vase at her left side, holding it with both hands around the neck and resting the body of the vessel on her hip. This figure shows in addition to the side-ward movement of the girl's body a marked advance of the right shoulder and withdrawal of the left, thus completely dispelling the assumption that all Egyptian sculpture followed the "law of frontality."

¹N. 1344; height 14.5 cm.; the base is made of limestone; provenance unknown. Ch. Boreux, *Guide-catalogue sommaire* II, pp. 569-570.

²Cairo Museum; height 8 cm. Theodore M. Davis, *The Tomb of Queen Tiy* (1910), p. 35 no. 40; pl. I, 2.

³Boxwood; height 13 cm. V. Poulsen, *Skulpturboken* (1947), p. 25 and pl. 7. *British Museum Quarterly* 14 (1939-40), pp. 27-29 and pl. VII-VIII.

Even if the shape of the vases and other evidence did not indicate already that these little statuettes were used as toilet implements, there could be no doubt about their purpose. Another alabaster figurine in the Louvre¹ has again the form of the familiar dwarf, this time carrying on his shoulders a quadruped whose head has been lost. The body of the animal is hollowed out in such a way that it forms a flat open vessel of irregular outline. Two holes are provided for the plugs of the lid which is no longer preserved. Such vessels in the shape of animals, made of stone, wood, or ivory, contained cosmetics and were used for mixing the perfumed ointment favored by the great ladies of the Egyptian New Kingdom. As a foil for their aristocratic beauty the homely and humble Boston dwarf carries his jar, now lacking its original sweet-smelling contents.

BERNARD V. BOTHMER.

¹N. 1341; height 13.5 cm.; provenance unknown. Ch. Boreux, *l.c.* pp. 569-570. *Archives Photographiques* no. E 1176. Modern repairs to the legs have made them too long between knee and ankle.

Accessions, June 4 through November 18, 1948

Asiatic Art.

Drawing, Balinese.

Res. 48.10-13. *Procession to a Temple, Two Monsters, The Four Feminine Sins, and Arjuna in a Mountain Cave*, all done on palm leaves, Contemporary. Gift of Kirtya Lieftrinck-van der Tuuk, Singaradja (Bali).

Painting, Chinese.

48.1089. *Yangtze Kiang*, by Wên Ting, eighteenth-nineteenth century. Asiatic Curator's Fund.
48.1245. *View of Lake Shih*, by Lu Chih (1495-1576), painted in 1558. William F. Warden Fund.
48.1271. *Fisherman*, eighteenth century; 48.1272. *Birds and Flowers*, Ming dynasty; 48.1273. *Heron in Lotus Pond*, Ming dynasty; 48.1274. *Two Horses*, after Chao Mêng-fu, Ming dynasty; 48.1275. *Lohan and Attendant*, eighteenth century; 48.1276. *Palace*, after Li Tang, Ming dynasty; 48.1277. *Autumn Landscape*, after Ni Tsan, eighteenth century; 48.1278-48.1281. Four panels, each with four painted leaves, nineteenth century. Gift of Mrs. Richard E. Danielson.

Porcelain, Chinese.

48.1238. Plate, K'ang-hsi period. Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich.

Pottery, Chinese.

48.1265-48.1267. Set of three mortuary figures, third-fourth century. Gift of Eugene, Paul, and George A. Bernat, in memory of their father, Emile Bernat.

Prints, Japanese.

Res. 48.14-48.28. Fifteen from the series, *Twenty-four heroes*, by Yoshitoshi; Res. 48.29. *Totsuka*, from series, *Gojū-san-tsugi Meisho Zué*, by Hiroshigé; Res. 48.30. *Ueno Kiyomizudō*, from series *Meisho Edo Hyak-kei*, by Hiroshigé; Res. 48.31. *Long-tailed birds and peony*, by Hokusai (modern copy) Gift of the Heirs of Miss Marion Olmsted.

Silver, Persian.

48.1283. Candlestick, dated 1137. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Jackson Holmes.

Silver, Tibetan.

48.1091. "Skull cup," early nineteenth century. Gift of Miss Lucy T. Aldrich.

Textile, Chinese.

48.1092. Sleeve, gauze, T'ang dynasty. Gift of the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art.

48.1282. *Rocks and Peonies, k'o-ssu*, seventeenth century. Gift of Mrs. Richard E. Danielson.
Res. 48.33. Square, brocade, twentieth century. Gift of Mrs. Alfred M. Tozzer.