Finch & Co



GERMAN TURNED BLONDE RHINOCEROS HORN FOOTED CUP

A SMALL GERMAN TURNED BLONDE RHINOCEROS HORN FOOTED CUP
EARLY 18TH CENTURY
SIZE: 6.5CM HIGH, 9CM DIA. - 2½ INS HIGH, 3½ INS DIA.

LITERATURE

MANY EUROPEAN RHINOCEROS HORN CARVINGS WERE PRODUCED AS A DIRECT RESULT OF CONTACT WITH THOSE CARVINGS MADE IN CHINA. HOWEVER, IT IS NOT KNOWN WHEN VESSELS OF RHINOCEROS HORN FIRST ARRIVED IN EUROPE. THE EARLIEST DOCUMENTED EVIDENCE OCCURS AT THE END OF THE 16TH CENTURY WHEN 'A VESSEL MADE OF RHINOCEROS-BONE ORNAMENTED WITH SILVER, MOST ARTFULLY AND PRETTILY MADE' WAS PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNOR OF PORTUGAL BY A GROUP OF JAPANESE CHRISTIANS TRAVELLING ON A PORTUGUESE SHIP, VISITING SOUTHERN EUROPE BETWEEN 1584 AND 1586. IN 1601 IT IS RECORDED THAT 'UN CORNO DI RINO CERONTE' WAS ONE OF SEVERAL RARE AND PRECIOUS ARTICLES TAKEN TO BEIJING BY THE JESUIT MISSIONARY FATHER MATTEO RICCI, WHO MOST PROBABLY BELIEVED HE WAS PRESENTING THE CHINESE EMPEROR WITH AN OBJECT HE HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE. HE DID NOT REALISE THAT THIS RHINOCEROS HORN, WAS ALREADY VERY FAMILIAR TO THE WANLI EMPEROR, AND THAT THE BELIEFS IN THE MAGICAL POWERS AND ABILITIES OF RHINOCEROS HORN HAD ORIGINATED MORE THAN ONE THOUSAND YEARS PREVIOUSLY IN CHINA.