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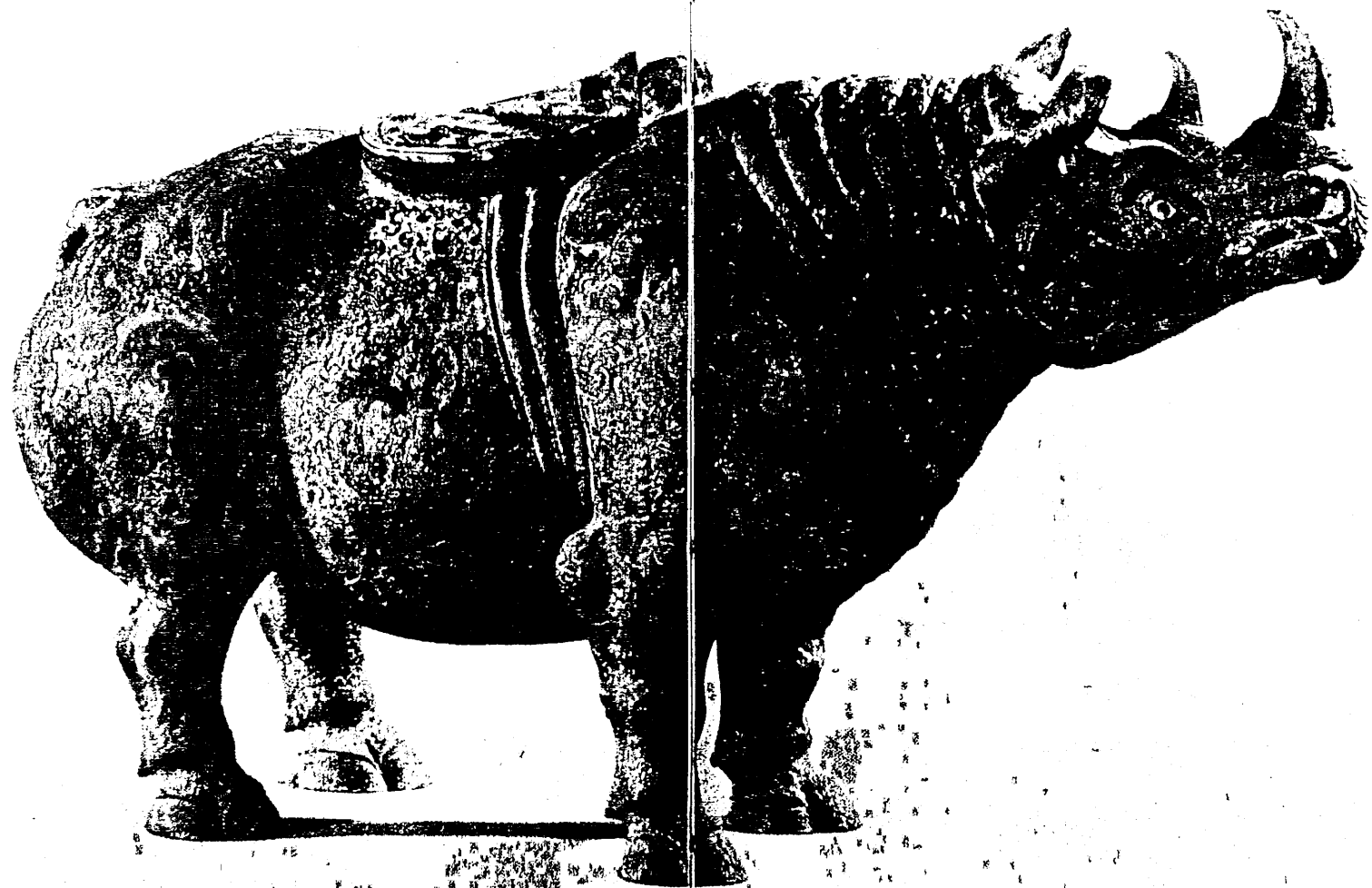
Michael Sullivan

CHINESE ART

RECENT DISCOVERIES



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guardians, for worship, or for burial. Alfred Salmony suggested that the antlers and long tongue, which also adorn creatures painted on a calendrical document on silk from a Ch'ü tomb at Changsha, were connected with ceremonies for bringing rain, but there is no proof of this. Whatever its function, this remarkable object is not only, like most of the objects from the waterlogged Ch'ü tombs, very well preserved, but it illustrates magical beliefs and practices that seem to have been peculiar to the Ch'ü people before they came under the dominating influence of the Northern Chinese civilization in the Han Dynasty.

- 14-15 Ritual vessel in the form of a rhinoceros; bronze, inlaid with gold. Length 57.8 cm. Found by a peasant in 1963 in an earthenware jar that had been buried in a deep pit near Tou-ma-ts'un, Hsing-p'ing-hsien, Shensi Province. Ch'in or Western Han Dynasty, third-second century BC. This rhinoceros has a hinged lid on its back and holes in its snout, and is believed to have been used for pouring wine. Inside it were found a bronze openwork file, perhaps for massaging the skin, shells and other bronze and lacquer objects. The intricate inlaid decoration in no way robs this creature of its extraordinarily life-like quality. The rhinoceros was unknown in North China at this period, but so accurate is the modelling, down to the small beady eye of black and white glass paste, that the craftsman may have seen a living specimen in the imperial zoo where animals sent as gifts and as tribute were kept. The date of this beautiful piece is uncertain, but the area where it was found, just west of Sian, is rich in remains of the Ch'in and Western Han Dynasties.

The rhinoceros of mainland Asia has one horn, while the Sumatran and African species have two horns. It is extremely unlikely that an African rhinoceros could have reached North China, so we may assume that this one, and the famous two-horned Shang Dynasty specimen in the Brundage Collection in San Francisco, represent the Sumatran species, which at this time may have been found also on the mainland of Southeast Asia.

- 16 Mirror with three ring-handles; bronze, inlaid with gold, silver and turquoise. Diam. 29.8 cm. Excavated in 1963 at

Shang-wang-ts'un, Lin-tzu-hsien, Shantung Province. Late Chou period, fifth-third century BC.

This mirror is unusual for its large size and the ring handles for suspension instead of the usual central boss. The surface was polished, the reverse, shown here, being decorated with a geometrical design of which the bands end in volutes that suggest birds' heads. The vigorous swinging rhythm of this style is probably derived from lacquer painting. The decoration is also unusual, but there are bronze vases (*hu*) with rather similar motifs in the Pillsbury Collection in Minneapolis and the Freer Gallery in Washington.

Lin-tzu is the site of the capital of Ch'i of the Warring States period, and it is not unlikely that a mirror of this size and splendour was made for court use.

- 17 Covered square-section jar; lacquered wood. Ht. 50.5 cm. From a tomb at Ma-wang-tui, Changsha, Hunan Province, discovered late 1971. Western Han, about 180 BC. This is one of the largest and most perfectly preserved Han lacquer vessels yet found. The decoration in horizontal bands consists chiefly of diagonals and volutes, or elaborate cloud scrolls picked out in two colours. While the shape of the vessel is copied from a bronze form (the *fang hu*), the style of the decoration is entirely natural to lacquer painting. Indeed, it was lacquer painting of this kind which provided the motifs and style of the decoration of many of the inlaid bronzes of the late Chou and Han.

- 18-19 Lady with Attendants. Detail of a hanging scroll; silk painted in mineral and vegetable colours. Total length of scroll 205 cm. Height of this detail, about 18 cm. From the tomb at Ma-wang-tui, Changsha, Hunan Province. Western Han Dynasty, about 180 BC. This is a detail of the central section of a T-shaped silk scroll or banner, fitted with tassels and a cord for hanging, which was found draped over the body of the dead lady, believed to be the wife of Li Tsang, first Marquis of Ta, who was ennobled in 193 BC. The painting as a whole shows beings in the nether regions, in the world of man, and in the heavens. Most of the creatures are common in Han mythology and art, but this central part very likely depicts the