

**CATALOGUE OF THE
MACOMBER COLLECTION
OF CHINESE POTTERY**

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Catalogue of the Macomber Collection of Chinese Pottery by John Getz

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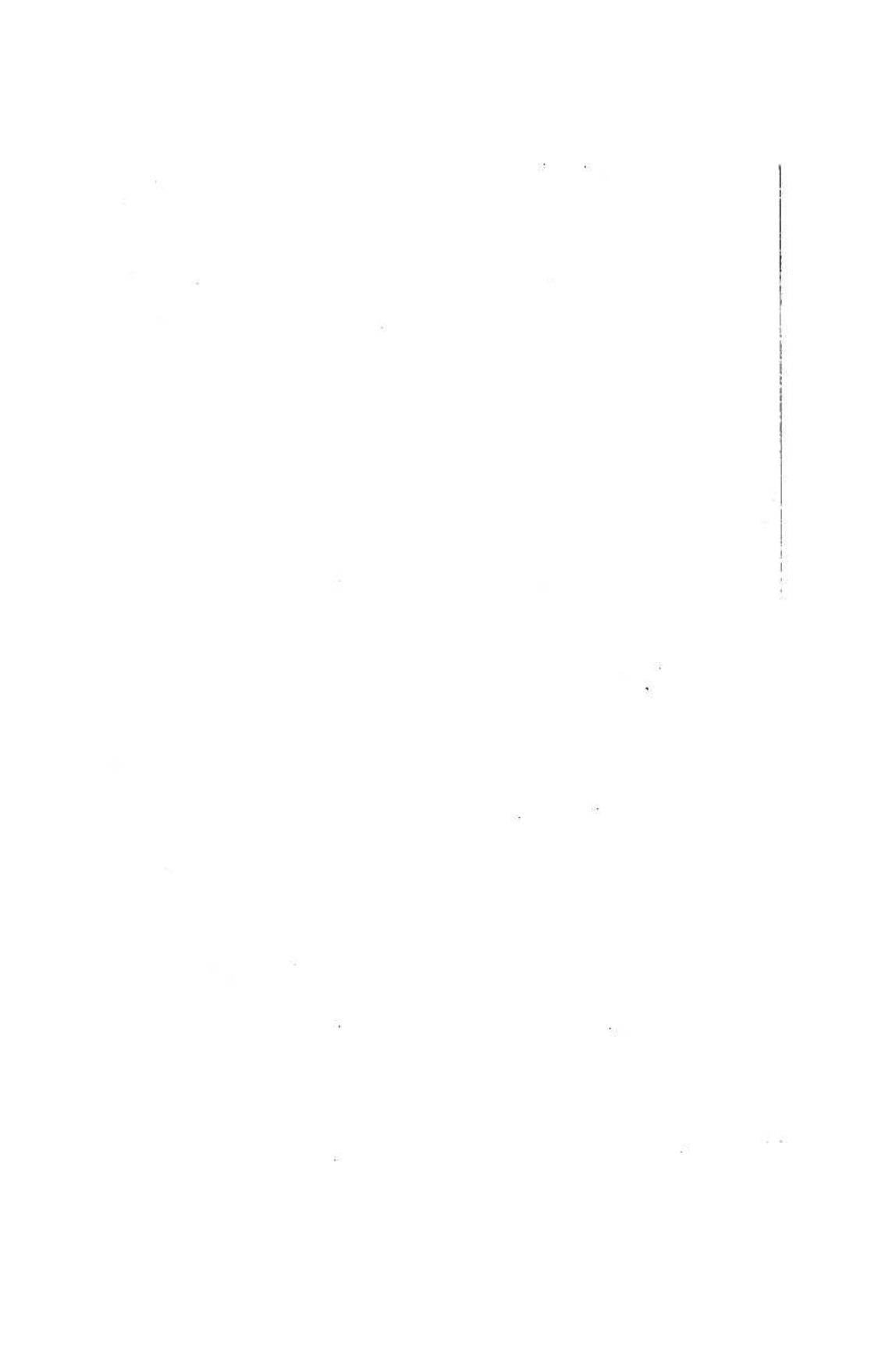
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BY
JOHN GETZ

BOSTON : MDCCCXCIX

ALTHOUGH Chinese porcelain has for some three centuries excited the interest and admiration of Western collectors, little attention has been paid to the pottery of China. The present catalogue describes an important collection of Chinese pottery, which has been loaned to the Museum by Mr. Frank Gair Macomber; Mr. Macomber has also met the expense of preparing this catalogue. Mr. Getz, who has compiled the catalogue, has been known for many years as a student of Oriental pottery and porcelain. As the subject has received but little attention outside of China, it is of course not to be expected that a discussion like the present will be free from error. It is published in the confident hope that it will prove useful to students of the collection and will create a more intelligent public interest in the subject.

ARTHUR FAIRBANKS,
Director of the Museum.

MARCH, 1909.

PREFACE

THE Macomber collection of ancient Chinese and Korean pottery is exhibited as presenting an interesting phase of Eastern ceramic art, in its historical, intellectual, and technical development.

In the several groups of glazed pottery, well identified and representative types are shown in such abundance that they may be said fairly to cover the history of the potter's art during those dynasties which are held in particular esteem. These monochrome glazed potteries or vitrified stonewares of the Middle Kingdom, as at present exhibited, are quite distinct from porcelains. They offer an excellent opportunity for the study of special æsthetic features pertaining to this fictile art, which, except to a few ardent searchers after the rare and the beautiful, have until recent years remained least known in Western collections.

With regard to pottery, it is evident that the Chinese artists, while thorough masters of the superior kaolin at their command, have for many centuries deliberately chosen to essay combinations of crushed gray felspathic stone and heterogeneous materials in preference to pure white kaolin and the felspath pe'tun, and have by this means achieved superlative effects, especially in their monochromes and variegated glazing.

Although ceramics is a secondary art, the annals of pottery making in China are, with the Middle Kingdom

more than elsewhere, a history of art itself, and as we study its early progress during remote times we are enabled to penetrate to some extent the mysteries of Celestial culture in this ancient *terra incognita*. A large nation like China, remaining until very recent years so entirely exclusive of the Western world, is both unique and interesting, in that it developed its own type of art as it did its caligraphy and civilization, largely perhaps as a consequence of its geographical isolation.

In the compilation of this catalogue, it has been deemed desirable to join a few brief notes on glazed pottery, together with an outline of its early history, in such manner as would tend to bring the subject of this Eastern art accurately before the general visitor to the Museum and the student alike. The text is supplemented by a number of plates in half-tone, illustrating typical specimens in the collection, which have been classified and grouped according to the most recent research. Each group is prefixed by a brief account of its main characteristics, or special qualities. Chinese names or dates have been harmonized so far as practicable, with the later and larger works treating of ceramics; especially such as are based on native authorities, or reliable contemporary records.

J. G.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

ACCORDING to Chinese chronological records, the history of ceramics extends far back to a legendary epoch. Reliable history may be said not to extend further than the second millennium before Christ, and such knowledge of this period as is possessed by the Chinese is due largely to Confucius and Mencius, who, with great labor collected for posterity all that could be gathered in regard to the antiquity of their country. The former of these two great philosophers especially gained much of his data from ancient bamboo slips, upon which he found marked the legendary or historical events of remote ages. These were compiled by Confucius and published in a classical work called "Shu-ch'ing" (Shu-king) or "Ancient Book of History," which is the source of much in the following pages.

Following the annals of Chinese ceramic art from the earliest times of which we have native historical testimony, we reach the semi-legendary epoch of the Wu Ti, or Five Sovereigns (B. C. 2638 ?-2205 ?). It may be conceded that the potter's wheel was known to several great nations of antiquity, including the Egyptians, probably twenty-five centuries before Christ. The Chinese date the contrivance in the same remote era; their literature ascribes the invention of the wheel to a potter, stated to have been attached to the court of the mythical emperor Huang-ti (B. C. 2638 ?-2556 ?)—the first and most