

XIII.—*Notice of a Carved Ivory Ciborium, the Property of*
JAMES T. GIBSON-CRAIG, Esq. (Plate XLII.)

By JOSEPH ANDERSON, Assistant Secretary and Keeper of the
Museum.

This curious and interesting vessel of ivory, presenting a rare and rude style of art, was exhibited by Mr Gibson-Craig at a meeting of the Society in June 1876.

It was then described in the "Proceedings" as a Carved Ivory Ciborium, or Cup with Cover, and, as, through the kindness of Mr Gibson-Craig, the accompanying plate has been presented to the Society, the description is here repeated. The cup stands 14 inches high, and is curiously ornamented with beaded work, and with birds, lizards, serpents, and human figures in high relief. The lid is surmounted by the figure of a palm-tree trunk, the top ornamented with open work, on which sits a parrot-like bird. A man is climbing the tree on one side and a lizard on the other. A serpent issues from the man's right hand, reaching up to the bird on the top of the tree. Two serpents chase two birds in a circle round the base of the tree. Four lizards are carved round the base of the middle of the lid, which is semi-globular in shape. The foot-stalk of the cup has a projection in the middle, from which four serpents hang down at regular intervals round its circumference. In the mouth of each of them is a bird's head. The swelling base of the foot-stalk is ornamented by a bird, a lizard, and a human figure, placed alternately at equal distances round the middle of its circumference. This rare and curious ivory was obtained by Mr Gibson-Craig at Milan. There are two of the same style and period in the British Museum, and one in the Newcastle Museum, which is figured in Fox's "Synopsis of the Allan Museum" (p. 183), and also in W. B. Scott's "Antiquarian Gleanings," pl. xxi. They are regarded by some as West African, and by others as Indian, most likely from the neighbourhood of Goa, and dating probably about the middle of the sixteenth century.



CARVED IVORY CIBORIUM

THE PROPERTY OF JAMES T GIBSON-CRAIG ESQ^r F. S. A. SCOT.

(14 INCHES HIGH)

The late Albert Way, a high authority on all such questions, thus describes the Newcastle specimen :—

“A covered cup or pyx, sculptured with singular figures, animals, serpents twined around the stem, and ornaments of an Oriental character. On the cover is a figure of a female holding an infant, possibly intended to represent the Virgin with the infant Saviour. Height, 10 inches. It was also formerly in the museum of Mr Allan, near Darlington. It appears to be one of the works produced at Goa during its occupation by the Portuguese. The arms of Portugal occur reversed under the bowl. They are also formed on several other sculptured objects of ivory of a similar class.”

An Ivory Hunting Horn, carved in the same style as this cup, was exhibited at the meeting of the Archæological Institute, London, held on 7th February 1851, by Mr Forrest. It is thus described in the “Journal of the Archæological Institute” :—

“An ivory hunting horn, curiously carved with subjects, in which a singular mixture of European and Oriental character is seen, so that it is difficult to determine the country or period to which objects of this peculiar workmanship may be assigned. This horn measures $22\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, the mouthpiece issues from the jaws of a monstrous head bearing on the brow a cross, with limbs of equal length; at the other or widest end is twice introduced a blundered achievement of the arms of Portugal. Two figures of very Indian aspect, with a castle between them, hold aloft an escutcheon in an inverted position, resembling the coat of Portugal. The other carvings represent subjects of the chase, and bowmen aiming very long shafts at various animals. Amongst the ornaments is found a winged scaly monster, with two legs, a kind of wyvern, resembling the supporters and crest of the arms of Portugal, explained to be the fiery serpents that assailed the Israelites. Bands of interlaced work appear, presenting a style of design which may have led some antiquaries to ascribe a Scandinavian origin to these sculptures.

“M. Pulski laid before the meeting a beautiful drawing of a horn of this class, preserved in the collection before mentioned. The ornaments and style were almost identical with those by which Mr Forrest's horn is characterised. The arms are different—one coat has a crowned eagle in the centre of the shield, another has a saltire. Both, however, have the bordure imitating that of the arms of Portugal. M. Pulski observed that ivory horns of this description are preserved in Hungary, and have been regarded as objects sculptured in the north of Europe. One specimen which he had examined had been attributed to an Hungarian chief of the 10th century.”

Two other horns of precisely similar workmanship deserve to be mentioned. One is given by Olaus Wormius (“*Danicorum Monumentorum*,” lib. v. p. 435, Hafniæ, 1643). It was at Florence in the possession of the

Grand Duke of Tuscany, and exhibited the hunting of stags and lions, the Portuguese arms and a cross patée. Around the mouth was inscribed : DOM LVIS : IMFAMTE, supposed to refer to the second son of Emmanuel, king of Portugal (1495–1521), and brother of John III. The other horn was in the museum at the Jesuits' College at Rome, and is engraved by Bonanni in the Museum Kircherianum (Roma, 1709, pl. ccxcix., p. 281). It is sculptured with hunting subjects, the arms of Portugal very incorrectly given, and the cross patée appears near the mouth. It seems highly probable that these horns were carved in the East, in imitation of Portuguese models, and that they are not more ancient than the early part of the 16th century.

Mr Maskell in the appendix to the Description of Ancient and Mediæval Ivories in South Kensington Museum, published for the Department of Science and Art, mentions that in the British Museum there are "several remarkable pieces of the so-called Goa work; or rather of Western Africa." Among them he notices two cups, "having much the character of Scandinavian art," and a large tusk which has been turned into a grotesque drinking-horn, bearing "some original African carvings of animals," and the inscription—

"Drinke you this and thinke no scorn
All though the cup be much like a horne.

1599, *Fines.*"

Also in the Mayer Collection there are "many pieces of what is commonly known as Goa work, and made for the Portuguese of that settlement two or three hundred years ago." Concerning them Mr Maskell adds that "later investigation has induced authorities of great weight to believe that carved ivories of this class were mostly made in the settlements founded on the west coast of Africa. Several of the specimens in the Liverpool Museum are very large and important of their kind.