



Ara Container (Palang or Jandhom)

Date

20th Century

Medium

Bamboo and leather

Description

This object is a bamboo storage container (called palang or jandhom) for a traditional alcohol called ara. Traditionally consumed in Bhutan and surrounding regions, ara is a distilled or fermented liquor made from barley, rice, millet, or wheat. Palang come in a few different forms and can also be made of wood or horn with leather and metal fittings. This palang was likely used to transport and store ara, as it has a leather strap used to sling the container over one's shoulder. As part of the Bhutanese government's efforts to discourage excessive alcohol consumption by its citizens, the sale of ara is prohibited, so it is commonly produced in small

batches in villages or homes for private consumption. Ara is consumed in Bhutan for a variety of reasons. Some farm workers drink it daily, as the sugar content provides energy and the alcohol keeps them warm in the mountainous climate without producing an overly intoxicating effect like stronger liquors. It is served hot, and additives such as eggs and butter are also sometimes added for energy and nutritional value. Ara is also consumed during ceremonies, negotiations, and religious occasions. In the latter case, an ara drinker might dip their ring finger in the liquid and flick the drops away prior to taking a drink. This is interpreted as an offering to the spirits and a merit accumulating action among Bhutanese Buddhists.

Dimensions

18 × 4 1/4 × 4 1/4 in. (45.7 × 10.8 × 10.8 cm)