

P'yojubak

Water Dippers



The mountains and rivers of old Korea were not only beautiful, they also provided clear fresh water for drinking and irrigation. In traditional Korea, travelers carried small dippers called *p'yojubak* to collect fresh water seeping from between huge boulders or to scoop mineral water from mountain springs. The fragile-looking dippers were used daily and reflected Koreans' love of nature and unpretentious sense of beauty.

Each dipper was unique as they were made from a variety of materials. Many were carved from the wood

of the jujube tree in the shape of nectarines, which were thought to symbolize good health and long life. Others were made of zelkova wood, shells or gourds. At the palace and in the homes of the *yangban* elite, dippers made of bronze, silver or ceramic were often used; some were even made of lacquered paper or leather.

Travelers often hung their dippers from a belt or a string with a metal or leather fastener because they, whether of high or low birth, needed water during their journeys through the countryside and mountains. ♦

This peach-shaped wooden water dipper (12 x 16.5 cm) from the Chosŏn period is one of 259 treasured artifacts donated to the Korea University Museum by the late Ye Yong-hae, a journalist and member of the National Committee for the Preservation of Cultural Properties, in 1977.