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## A Survey of Traditional Chinese Drinking Games

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**Abstract.** China has a long history of wine-brewing. Traditional Chinese drinking games are a unique and mysterious part of the Chinese drinking culture. In this paper, we deal with the development of Chinese wine first, and then we take big events as reference to uncover the history of the traditional Chinese drinking games chronologically. After introducing the representative drinking games from each dynasty, it could help people understand the general development of the traditional Chinese drinking games. The results show: (1) the Chinese wine-brewing origins from the saccharomycetes, matures in Tang and Song Dynasties, and popularizes in Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties. (2) The first traditional Chinese drinking game is pitch-pot, and it emerges in the later of Spring and Autumn Period. Its system grows mature in the Tang Dynasty. The Qing Dynasty is a united period for the collection of traditional Chinese drinking games.

**Keywords.** history; traditional; Chinese; drinking games

### I. Introduction

China has a long history of wine-brewing. Based on its long history of wine-brewing skills, China has cultivated a unique drinking culture for thousands of years. According to ancient Chinese history, almost every dynasty has its distinctive drinking culture, especially drinking games. Every drinking culture is featured by its drinking games. Moreover, every drinking game aims to liven the drinking atmosphere and avoid overdrinking. Therefore, it is necessary to summarize the history of traditional Chinese drinking games.

### II. The Origin and Development of Wine

China is one of the countries famous for its long wine-brewing history around the globe. Jiu (酒), the Chinese wine pictogram, can be found in the oracle bones as early as the ancient Shang Dynasty (c.1600 BCE- c.1046 BCE).

#### *The Origin of Wine*

About the origin of the wine, there are several stories. Among these stories, the story—the drunken ape-men making wine (Zuiyuan Niangjiu 醉猿酿酒), has been accepted and verified by researchers and archaeologists. Although the so-called wine here is different from the later real wine, it is the very earliest rudiment of primary Chinese drinking. According to the archaeologists, Shuanggou (双沟), a small town in Jiangsu Province, was hot and humid

50,000 years ago and grew wild dense forest and rich wild fruits. A flock of ape-men lived on the wild fruits there, and some of them inclined to store fruits in tree holes or stone depressions. Those fruits mildewed slowly and silently as time went by. One day those mildewed fruits scented a kind of aroma of wine, and its taste became sour and sweet. Because of the changeable weather, sometimes ape-men could not pick fresh fruits, and therefore they had to feed themselves with those stored fruits. When they wolfed down those mildewed fruits, they fell in love with the sour and sweet flavor. After the feast of the fruits, ape-men limped and became drunk. When they woke up, they began to store fresh fruits into tree holes or stone depressions to make the mildewed fruits, which was the very first wine by natural microorganism—saccharomycetes. It was the saccharomycetes that fermented those fresh fruits into sour and sweet flavor fruits and made them the very first wine. However, this so-called wine was a kind of wild fruits with some wine flavor at most, not the real authentic wine (Chen 1996: 1).

### ***The Development of Wine***

In 1953, the archaeologists unearthed the Xiaocaowan ape-men's (下草湾猿) leg bone fossils near current Shuanggou wine factory. After their hard work, they have found out that these fossils are made of the drunken ape-men, who have eaten the fermented fruits or fruit juice. Therefore, they call it the fossil of drunken ape-men (Chen 1996: 2). That represents the beginning of the wine-brewing that can be dated as early as the Ape men's age, about 50,000 years ago. Moreover, the development of wine can be roughly divided as the following eight ages chronologically:

The Later Old Stone Age, about 6, 000-7, 000 years ago, saw the first wine. The wine then was a kind of sweet wine with a fruity fragrance, different from the original drunken wine.

The New Stone Age, about 2, 000-5, 000 years ago, watched the birth of milk wine. The wine was made of fermented sugary milk. *Zhou Li* or *Book of Zhou Rites*(周礼) recorded the milk wine, which was probably the earliest written record of wine.

Longshan Culture, about 50,000 years ago, saw the emergence of the grain wine. The grain wine was made from millet or paddy. Due to the improvement of farming, millet and paddy can grow then.

Shang Dynasty (c.1600 BCE - 1046 BCE) witnessed the creation of *Qu* (曲). *Qu* referred to the carrier, which cultivated microorganisms—mycete, saccharomycetes, and bacteria, from raw materials, such as grains and beans. These microorganisms can make amyloglucosidase and zymase during their reproduction. Therefore, the creation of *Qu* upgraded the wine-brewing from simple brewing method into double fermentation, which was the breakthrough in Chinese wine-brewing history and laid the foundation of the Chinese wine development (Chen 1996: 8-9). For a long time, China was the only country that could use *Qu* the unique Chinese skill to make wine. *Qu* later was introduced to Japan, India, and Southeastern Asia. It was not until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Europeans learned how to make *Qu* and brew wine, more than 2,000 years later than that in China (Xu 1989: 2).

The Western Zhou Dynasty (c.1046 BCE - 771 BCE) built up a relatively complete and scientific wine-brewing technology. There were some officers to manage, organize, and monitor the slaves to make wine. "November in Lunar Calendar" in *The Book of Rites* (礼记·月令仲冬) recorded the critical points of the wine-brewing process and its making procedures, which was the earliest written record of the wine-brewing processing and procedures. According to *The Book of Songs* (诗经), *Verse of Chu* (楚辞), etc., Western Zhou could already

make different wines, including Huangjiu (黄酒), Guojiu (果酒), and integrated alcoholic beverages (配制酒) (Chen 1996: 9).

After Qin and Han Dynasties, about (after c. 230 BCE - 210 AD), the variety of Qu increased rapidly. Yang Xiong from the Former Han (c. 202 BCE - 8 AD), in his book *Dialect* (方言), noted down many types of Qu in the Han Dynasty. In the Jin Dynasty (c. 265AD - 399 AD), people introduced plant medicine materials as a raw material of Qu to make wine. It meant the birth of herbal wine (Jiu Yao酒药), a new kind of saccharomyces to brew wine. Jia Sixie (贾思勰), an outstanding agronomist in Northern Wei Dynasty (c. 386 AD - 534 AD), made a detailed recording of the methods of making Qu and wine in his book *Essential Skills of Medioscience* (齐民要术) (Chen 1996: 10).

Tang and Song Dynasties (c. 618 AD - 1234 AD), the skillful wine-brewing technology can make various kinds of wine. The names of those wines during the Tang Dynasty (c. 618 AD - 959 AD) were almost with Chun (春). *Chun* meant spring in English, which represented the prosperity of wine-making. During Song Dynasty (c. 960 AD -1234 AD), wine-brewing became popular within the imperial palace, among the earl or duke, and even the local officials, they could have their private brewing wine, besides government-franchised wine-brewing factories (Chen1996:10-11).

Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties (c. 1271 AD - 1840 AD), more and more private brewing wine came into being. Li Shizhen (李时珍), an excellent medical expert from Ming Dynasty (c. 1368 AD - 1633 AD), summarized the development of wine before 16<sup>th</sup> century in *The Compendium of Materia Medica* (本草纲目), detailed the brand names, production places, brewing methods, and essential wine stories, and mainly introduced the medicinal value of wine which was unprecedented (Chen1996: 12).

From the above words, we can get a clear picture of the development of wine through Chinese history. We can notice that the technology of wine-brewing matures in Tang and Song Dynasties, and popularizes in Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties. Along with the development of wine, traditional Chinese drinking games are developing all the time.

### **III. The Origin and Development of Traditional Chinese Drinking Games**

Through the long Chinese history, games are always one important cultural activity (Cai 1997: 1). In ancient China, there were many kinds of games, and they were developing with time. As to the drinking game, it is the same case.

#### ***The Origin of Traditional Chinese Drinking Games***

From the above summary, the origin of wine can be traced back as earliest as the remote ancient times, called Zuiyuan Niangjiu. However, due to the lack of relevant information, it is impossible to deduce any possible clues. When we follow the development timeline of wine, we can get some stories in the Shang Dynasty (c. 1600 BCE - 1046 BCE). In “Chronicle of Shang Dynasty” recorded in *Records of the Historian* (史记·殷本纪), the author Sima Qian (司马迁), a historian from the Former Han Dynasty (c. 202 BC - 8 AD), has recorded that the King Zhou of Shang Dynasty built the *Jiuchi Roulin*. *Jiuchi* here meant a grand artificial pool filled with wine, and *Roulin* here referred to the artificial forest made of plenty of meat (Geng & Jin 1991: 2). However, this record only evidences the king’s luxury and tyranny, nothing to do with the drinking game. When time slips into the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 1046 BCE - 771 BCE), the origin of traditional Chinese drinking games showed its cue. From the

late Western Zhou Dynasty to the Spring and Autumn Period (c. 770 BCE - 476 BCE), vassal states fought for each other. Kings of vassal states often hold a series of rites and ceremonies to pray for the triumph and enhance troop morale. At the very beginning, soldiers usually echoed with the biggest bowl to swig wine in one gulp to show their bravery and determination. Gradually, such kind of drinking became ritual and boring in long march days. Soldiers turned to create some playing games in their military days voluntarily. They first played some games without any tools, such as wrestle. Later, they started to use the natural weapon at hand to play some relaxing games, such as shooting with an arrow. To ensure fairness, they usually chose one among them to be the referee. That can be very rudiment of the original drinking game. Those competitive military activities gradually expanded their entertainment in a long time, and many more games emerged, such as *Pitch-pot* (投壺). The rule of pitch-pot is to throw an arrow into one vessel, and the vessel has its strict size and location.

Moreover, the whole pitch-pot process has a whole playing ritual. According to Geng& Jin (1991: 2) and Xu (1989: 7), pitch-pot became widely accepted in the later Spring and Autumn Period, and popular in the Warring States Period (c. 475 BCE - 221 BCE). Therefore, we may safely say that pitch-pot is the first traditional Chinese drinking game, and it emerges in the later of Spring and Autumn Period, almost 2,700 years from now.

### ***The Development of Traditional Chinese Drinking Games***

With the growing popularity of pitch-pot among the military, the heads of vassal states, the blue blood of higher rank, and the officers in the palace, they started to fall in love with pitch-pot. When pitch-pot spread among the blue blood of lower rank, who was called Shi (士), pitch-pot became more and more active and animate. It stimulated the competitive Shi to find a way to prove their richness in knowledge and wisdom. Shi usually referred to those who were literate with some education, and they had some knowledge of classics, poetry, etc. Since the Shi was not good at throwing, they turned throwing actions into speeches. When soldiers were drinking, they were throwing an arrow into the appointed vessel; when the Shi were drinking, they spoke out the lines from well-known allusions, classical poetry, and books, as well as odes and songs to entertain and compete with each other. The soldiers played pitch-pot to fight for a winner in bravery and strength, while the Shi used their knowledge storage to win over the others to show their knowledge and wisdom. Moreover, to ensure a fair outcome, Shi also selected one referee to make judgments (Xu 1989: 8). Therefore, Shi created a relatively literate-oriented drinking game, compared with pitch-pot, a relatively strength-based drinking game. We call the former one *Elegant Games* (雅令), the later one *Popular Games* (通令). Until now, there are two general drinking games, *Elegant Games* and *Popular Games*. We can safely conclude that the birth of *Elegant Games* has enriched the type of traditional Chinese drinking games, which embodies a simple and compatible traditional Chinese drinking games system. From then on, the traditional Chinese drinking games evolve and blossom in the following periods chronologically:

The Former Han Dynasty (c. 202 BCE - 8 AD) and the Latter Han Dynasty (c. 25 AD - 195 AD) witnessed the birth of *Jiuling* (酒令) and *Shifu* (射覆). The *Jiuling* means traditional Chinese drinking games in Chinese. Although in ancient times, there were already some interspersed entertainments to enliven drinking, such as playing pitch-pot, reciting poetry lines, drawing pictures, etc. However, it was not until the Han Dynasty that the word *Jiuling* came into being. Jia Kui (贾逵), a litterateur from the Latter Han Dynasty, first wrote the Chinese word 酒令 (Drinking Chanting) in his book. *Jiuling* was accepted then, although it was just

popular among the then northern part (Xu1989:13). Jiuling means the games are played during drinking wine, which equals the drinking games in English expressions. From the very beginning, almost as early as the Warring States (c. 475 BCE - 221 BCE), *Shangzheng* (觴政) played the same ordering rule in drinking activities. It is recorded in prose named “Good Speech Essence” in *An Anthology of Artistic Excellence* (说苑·善说) written by Liu Xiang (刘向) from the Former Han Dynasty (Geng & Jin1991: 6; Jin 1991: 5). In ancient times, the drinking order is compared to the governance, and therefore, the drinking order is also called *Shangzheng* (Liu1993: 5). Therefore, we could say that the Jiuling was a new emergence word in the Han Dynasty, which may represent the new stage of the drinking games development in the literature part. In the Han Dynasty, there was a new type of drinking games, *Shefu*, in Chinese. She means to guess the items; fu means the items covered under covers. This *Shefu* was very popular during Emperor Wu of the Former Han (汉武帝)(c.141BCE - 87 BCE). Its uniqueness was in the following aspects: (a) player A first hid an item under a cover or a plate; (b) player B or Bs guessed the item without putting the covers away, and player B was not allowed to speak out the answer directly, instead, player B should use some rhythmical words to describe the covered item, including its shape, features, etc. (c) after the vivid description, the player B was allowed to speak out the item (Geng & Jin 1991:7). From the above words, we may safely say that during the Former Han Dynasty (c.202 BCE - 8 AD) and the Latter Han Dynasty (c. 25 AD -195 AD), drinking games well developed in literature and type, Jiuling represented its literature, and *Shefu* reflected its type innovation.

The Southern Dynasty (c. 420 AD - 589 AD) and the Northern Dynasty (c. 386 AD - 581 AD) introduced music, dance, acrobatics, versification, and riddle into the drinking games. People then played those games to persuade others to drink more during the party or feast. According to “Biography of Wang Jian” noted in the Book of *Qi Times* (齐书·王俭传), when the King feasted his courtiers, every courtier would show their talents to win the king’s favor. Chu Yuan plays the pipa; Shen Wen sings a song *when the midnight comes*; Zhang Jing’er dances; Wang Jing plays an acrobatic show in which a knife is thrown from the air with open arms; Wang Jian recites lines from *The Book of Feng Shan* (封禅书) (Geng& Jin 1991: 10). This record shows that in the Southern Dynasty (c. 420 AD-589 AD), people have already adopted music, dance, and acrobatic to enrich the drinking games. According to “Biography of Xue Xiaotong” in *History of Northern Wei Dynasty* (北史·薛孝通传), when Emperor Jie Min (节闵帝) feasted his courtiers, some played different musical instruments, and some improvised poems with specified rhyme (Geng & Jingle 1991: 10-11). The improvised poem means significant progress in the drinking games, which not only keeps the tradition of Elegant Games but also increases the interest and difficulty of Elegant Games. According to the volume III of *Temples in Luoyang* (洛阳伽蓝记·卷三), when the Kings feasted his courtiers, the former often made a riddle to ask the latter to guess to enliven the drinking atmosphere.

One well-known king is the Emperor Xiao Wen (孝文帝) from the Northern Wei. When he feasted his courtiers, he asked the latter to guess the riddle and to perform the answer with action and imitation, without directly speaking out the answer (Geng & Jin 1991: 11). Then the process of guessing the riddle turned out to be a new scene of playing drinking games. All players seemed to be actors to use their body movements to reveal the answers silently, and the full guessing process seemed to be a movie-making scene, which made the drinking games more exciting and challenging. Before long, this new riddle drinking game swept the whole places during the Southern Dynasty (c. 420 AD - 589 AD) and the Northern Dynasty (c. 386

AD - 581 AD). This new drinking game was another innovation then, which endowed the routine guessing drinking game a vivid spectacle. The players not only can enjoy the excellent wine but also can be an actor to play or an audience to watch, which adds the charm of art to the drinking games. Until the Former Han Dynasty (c. 202 BCE -8 AD) and the Latter Han Dynasty (c. 25 AD -195 AD), the drinking games absorbed the music, dance, acrobatics, versification, and riddle to some extent. Especially, their way of playing riddle during drinking activities was an artistic creation. We may safely conclude that the drinking games cultivated a unique artistic style in the Former Han Dynasty (c. 202 BCE -8 AD) and the Latter Han Dynasty (c. 25 AD -195 AD).

The Tang Dynasty (c. 618 AD - 907 AD) was a prime age for Chinese traditional drinking games. Its prosperous economy foundation and open-up social climate bred a colorful, complete, and comprehensive system of the Chinese traditional drinking games. The Tang Dynasty enjoyed the heyday: national unity, advanced technology, blossomed culture, sound economy, active diplomacy. All of the conditions seemed to pave a smooth way for the development of the drinking games. During the Tang Dynasty, the wine culture came into being and prospered as a part of food culture, which meant the drinking games became a token of the wine culture, even food culture. From then on, traditional Chinese drinking games were admitted as a cultural symbol, which gave this game a cultural attribute. Through the poetry written at that time, many lines mentioned or recorded the drinking games. Reading these poems, we can get familiar with the drinking vessels, types of wine, famous brands of wine, and drinking games in those days. It was worth to mention that grape wine was already popular then.

Tang Dynasty has bred many drinking vessels used in the drinking games, such as chip-counters, which would be explained below. The famous brands of wine often adopted the Chinese word *Chun* (春), so the Chun can represent wine. Chun means spring literally. As to the drinking games, its form, organization, system, and contents were beyond comparison with the previous dynasties. The form and organization of drinking games were developed from simple to complicated, and its system was complete, which was suitable for elegant games and popular games. According to *The Drunken Days and Nights* (醉乡日月), the existing pioneer wine monograph written by Huang Pusong (皇甫松) from Tang Dynasty (Geng & Jin 1991:17), usually 20 people would organize a drinking party, moreover, and among these people, three important monitors play their roles respectively to keep the ball running. The first one was the Drinking Observer (明府) in Chinese, whose responsibility was to observe the other drinking activity with a pair of dice and a wine scoop. The second one is the Drinking Keeper (律录事) in Chinese, whose job was to keep the drinking activity going sound and smooth. The third one is the Overdrinking Executer (觥录事) in Chinese, whose work was to execute the punishment of drinking more wine. When people select the Drinking Keeper, they should choose those who were good drinkers. As to Overdrinking Executer, they should select those who were upright and resolute (Geng & Jin 1991:12). It was a custom in the Tang Dynasty that dancing and singing were an inseparable part of the drinking party. When people enjoyed dancing and singing performance, they usually made poems and fun spontaneously on site. That was different from the previous dynasties, and brought literary tastes into the drinking games, more like Elegant Games. Therefore, the drinking games assimilated more literal and literary instead of the wine volumes, and a more civilized drinking climate was gradually spread over every inch of the land of the Tang Dynasty.

According to the notes and records left by the scholars from the Tang Dynasty (c. 618 AD - 907 AD) and Song Dynasty (c. 960 AD -1279 AD), the variety of drinking games are as many as twenty. According to the Supplement to *National History* (国史补), written by Li Zhao (李肇) from the Tang Dynasty, the drinking games then can be roughly divided into three basic forms: *Lvling* (律令), *Toupan* (骰盘), *Paoda* (抛打)(Geng & Jin 1991: 13). (a) for *Lvling*, *Lv* meant rules, and *ling* meant to order. When players were playing *Lvling*, players would drink in turns and play games with prescribed orders. It was born at the beginning of the Tang Dynasty. The general play of diction, language, chip-counters, and flags all belonged to the *Lvling* because all of them should proceed under the playing rules and order. Here the rule and order can be strictly performed because of the complete system we mentioned above. We can take the play of *chip-counters* (筹) as an example. Chip-counters, usually made of bamboo or wood, acting as a calculator to count the number of drinks consumed by every player in every round at first. Since the people in the Tang Dynasty loved to create, they wrote different descriptions on every chip-counter, and every description prescribed unique literal contents and requirements, afterward. Every player first selected one chip-counter, and he would read these contents, understood that requirement, and finished the task. The player would drink a cup of wine if he cannot finish the task, or others cannot accept his performance. Many poets in those days loved to play chip-counters (Xu1989: 22). (b) *Toupan*, *Toupan* meant to toss a dice. It was born in the early Tang Dynasty. When people who were not good at *Lvling*, drank together, they usually wondered to decide a drinking order. *Toupan* can solve this trouble. They tossed the dice and determined their drinking order according to the number of the tossed dice. It was the easiest one, and therefore it was absorbed by other drinking games to act as the opening sign soon. (c) *Paoda*, *Paoda* was just a special Chinese name for this kind of drinking game. It was derived from the dancing performed during a drinking party. It was born at the prime age of the Tang Dynasty. It mainly included *Thumb Fight* (拇战), *Palm Fight* (抵掌), and *Gesture Fight* (手势), and it was the new type of drinking games invented by the literate and the then Chinese geisha (Geng & Jin 1991:16). When players were playing one type of them, they would not only do body movements but also do some verbal speech, a more ingenious type of Popular Games. Let us take *Thumb Fight* as an example. *Thumb* here meant fingers, and *Fight* meant to beat opponents by guessing the right number of the fingers. *Thumb Fight* meant to guess the number of fingers extended by the two players. That meant when players played *Thumb Fight*, and they would extend fingers while spoke out the number that they thought was correct. It involves body movements and spoken words.

To some extent, this was also a kind of Popular Games, compared with *Pitch-pot*. Besides the simple action, *Thumb Fight* required one more important step, mental guessing, which was a subtle combination of physical and mental. Maybe that is why it is kept and played until today. From the above words, we can safely say that the development of drinking games encountered a peak during the Tang Dynasty. The colorful poems of the Tang Dynasty infused literary taste into the traditional Chinese drinking games; the open-up climate in those days mixed the artistic dancing into the drinking games; the high literary level of the educated people ensured the prosperity of drinking games then.

The Song Dynasty (c. 960 AD - 1279 AD) not only followed the complete drinking system from the Tang Dynasty but also created new types of literary drinking games, which represented its literary characteristics. Moreover, based on its high economic development, the ordinary people were wealthier, and they wanted more entertainment, which, to some extent, helped the drinking games approach ordinary people. It also bred a profession that catered to

drinkers in the hotels and restaurants, such as Special Wine Waiters (酒博士), Wine Service Hepler (闲汉)(Geng & Jin 1991: 19). They were the waiters responsible for serving the customers who wanted to have a drink. The educated people in Song Dynasty still had the same habit of drinking games just the same as the people in the Tang Dynasty, and the former created some new literary types to play drinking games. The Tang Dynasty bred Tang poetry, which was a good art of language, and the Song Dynasty cultivated the Song lyrics, which was a beautiful language art. The former paid particular stress on a political theme, while the latter expressed more the author's personal feelings.

Furthermore, since the rulers of the Song Dynasty valued literature rather than a martial art, the people then preferred to play literary drinking games, which we called Elegant Games above. The drinking games in Song Dynasty usually asked players to create a new line, lyrics, or couplets with daily happenings spontaneously. For example, they would prescribe the players to use lyrics to describe a burglary at night when they were playing one type of literary drinking games, called *Xianshi Zuoshi* (限事作诗Event-based Poem Writing). Here, *xian* meant to prescribe; *shi* referred to daily happenings; *Zuoshi* meant to make lyrics. The other example was *Huihuanling* (回环令Circular chanting). Here, *hui* meant to repeat; *huan* referred to the previous one; *ling* meant rules. When players were playing *Huihuanling*, players would make up a full line, and the line consisted of two parts, which were similar in the total number of words but opposite in the first three words. When the player used the "come and go" as the beginning of the first half part, then he should use "go and come" as the beginning of the second half part. The rest words in the first and second half parts would describe the similar daily happenings, such as the first half part described the butterfly was flying in the flowers while the second half part would describe the egret was standing on the beach. The views described in the two parts of the line were prevalent daily scenes and can fit each other in the same line to portray an elegant picture. Due to their special favor on literary, the people in Song Dynasty played more literary drinking games, which was very different from the people in the Tang Dynasty. The people in the Tang Dynasty treated literary drinking games and body drinking games equally. In other words, the Song Dynasty witnessed the people playing more Elegant Games, while Tang Dynasty saw the people playing both Elegant Games and Popular Games. Besides the actual drinking games, there were many books which were the records of the then drinking games, such as Zhao Yushi(赵于时)'s *A Summary of Ancient Drinking Games* (觴政述), Zhu Yizhong(朱翼中)'s *Classics of Wine-Brewing* (酒经), Dou Ge(窦革)'s *Records on Wine-Making* (酒谱) and so on (Geng & Jin, 1991, p.21). Until now, we may conclude that after the Tang Dynasty, the drinking games in Song Dynasty are more literary-oriented, whose style is more elegant and exquisite.

The Yuan Dynasty (c. 1271 AD - 1368 AD) watched its popular folk literature combine with the drinking games. The Yuan Dynasty was the first united dynasty established by a minority, the Mongol in Chinese history. When the Mongols ruled the whole country's land, they still kept their favor on the horse-riding and fighting aspects. They carried out policies of ethnic discrimination, oppressed the Han people, and paid little attention to cultural development. As a result, the educated people turned their attention to the folk literature, which included novels, plays, Yuan Opera, and Yuan Songs. Yuan Opera has its Chinese name Yuan Drama (元杂剧), which was an opera accessible in the Yuan Dynasty. Yuan Songs means Yuanqu (元曲)in Chinese, and it was a type of verse with tonal patterns modeled on tunes drawn from folk music. The educated scholars often loafed around with the then Chinese *geisha*, and

they tried to combine the Yuan Opera and Yuan Songs with the drinking games, which helped to innovate some new styles of drinking games in those days. Since the geisha was good at socializing different walks of people, they, to a certain extent, played an essential role in spreading the drinking games and helped the drinking games enter into the whole walks of people in the Yuan Dynasty. Therefore, the drinking games were marked with popular folk literature, which was a significant development then. Let us take *Dingzhen Xuma* (顶针续麻) for instance. According to Yuan Opera *Money Pool* (金钱池), and *Flower Pavilion* (百花亭), we can find some opera lines mentioned about the drinking game Dingzhen Xuma (Geng & Jin 1991: 24). Dingzhen Xuma was the full name of Dingzhen (顶针) in Chinese. Dingzhen is a kind of rhetorical method in Chinese literature. When we use Dingzhen, we should notice that it usually contains three parts, part A, part B, and part C, and we should use the ending word of part A as its beginning word of part B, and the part C should use the ending word of part B as its beginning word of part C.

Consider a temple inside the gate, the gate outside the lane, the lane inside the temple. More than that, in Cao Shao (曹绍)ʼs *Anecdotes of Ancient Drinking Games* (安雅堂酒令), there was a new chip-counter (Geng & Jin 1991: 24). Different from the chip-counters in Tang Dynasty, it improved as an instruction to ask the players who picked it to act the scene as its description on the chip. When the players picked one chip-counter, which asked the picker to imitate the sound of bees, the players should imitate the sound of the bees vividly. Otherwise, they would be punished to drink wines. These new chip-counters were just like the simple playscript, which made the drinking party become a role-play scene. From the above introduction, we may safely say that the drinking games approached the folk in the Yuan Dynasty, and it hugely popularized the drinking games at that time. The large population of drinking gamers has laid a solid foundation for the later development in Ming and Qing Dynasties.

The Ming Dynasty (c. 1368 AD - 1644 AD) witnessed the drinking games become artistry and specialization. One outstanding representative was the birth of *Yezi* (叶子). *Yezi* was the Chinese name of the innovated chip-counters, *Yezige* (叶子格) which was originated from the Tang Dynasty. In fact, *Yezi* here was a kind of Cards used in the drinking. Therefore, we may call it Cards instead in the following introduction. With its developing and advancing, Cards in the Ming Dynasty formed its new form and contents. The form of Cards was more artistry than that in the Tang Dynasty. It was brief in words for description and elegant in pictures for interest. The *Yezi* Pattern in Tang Dynasty was only in word description, which was very dull, not so lovely and lively. The Cards topped the population list of drinking games in the Ming Dynasty. According to *Cards of Yuan and Ming Operas* (元明戏曲叶子), *Cards of the History of the Three Kingdoms* (三国志演义叶子), *Cards Stories of the Successive Dynasties* (历代故事叶子), there were many stories made up for the Cards to play. Let us take *Cards of Yuan and Ming Operas*, for instance. There were only 26 pieces of Cards of it left in the world. (Geng & Jin 1991: 29) The 26 pieces of Cards were printed in blue on white cotton paper. The top of the chip-counter was lyrics, which was corresponding to the picture below, and the bottom drew a picture, which was the drama plot. The figures were touching and appealing, and the layout showed unique ingenuity. All of the lines presented on the chip-counters were flexible and flowing. We can know the handy craft and mature craftsmanship. Unfortunately, the rest of them were missed, and some of them could only be read through the novels or records in those written then. Besides that, the most celebrated painter then Chen

Hongshou (陈洪绶) has made *Cards of Water Margins* (水浒叶子) and *Cards of Historical Figures* (博古叶子). The former made 40 vivid heroes who were different in appearance and unique in manner, according to the famous Chinese novel *Water Margins* (水浒传); the latter were 48 pieces of chip-counters who were all the historical figures.

To sum up, the Cards in the Ming Dynasty was the combination of art and idea, which was a significant improvement then. Moreover, in the Ming Dynasty, the books on drinking games were sprung up like mushrooms, and they were divided into different styles by distinct varieties. The literati then loved to record the drinking games, and the publication was a prevalent trend. Many books on the drinking games came into being. A catalog of exclusive drinking games was published one after another. Among the authors, Pan Zhiheng (潘之恒) contributed six books, *Records of Cards Played during Emperor Huizong* (宋徽宗) of the Song Dynasty (宣和谱), *Records of Red Dice Cards* (除红谱), *Records on the Number of Cards* (斗腰谱), *Records on Double Cards* (双成谱), *Records on Gambling Cards* (合欢谱) and *Records of Dicing Cards* (投琼谱). Wang Daokun (汪道昆) published two books, *The Elegies of the South* (楚骚品), *Records on Number and Mahjong Cards* (数钱叶谱). Tian Yiheng (田艺蘅) finished two books, *The Drunken Township Decree* (醉乡律令), *Small-scale Drinking Games* (小酒令). Others are as follows: Chao Yu'an (巢玉庵)'s *The Guest Wishes* (嘉宾心令), Tu Benjun (屠本峻)'s *Word Games* (文字饮), Yuan Hongdao (袁宏道)'s *The Drinking Games* (觴政), Chen Liang (陈梁)'s *Rhyme History* (韵史), Zhang Bi (张陛)'s *Fascinating Date* (引胜小约), Yuan Fuzheng (袁福征)'s *Records on Thumb Fight* (拇阵谱). Those exclusive books on drinking games adopted different narrative perspectives. Some were the record and comments on the macro-level, such as *The Drinking Games* and *Word Games*. Some were the detailed introduction and description of the practical operation process, such as *Records on Number and Mahjong Cards*, *The Elegies of the South*, and *The Guest Wishes* (Geng & Jin 1991: 35). The books on drinking games written at that time turned out to be more elaborate and professional, which helped the drinking games be kept and understood by the followers. Due to those literati's contribution, the drinking games in the Ming Dynasty appeared more specialization and artistry, which helped the drinking games become a renowned art. From the above words, we may safely say that the drinking games in the Ming Dynasty become an art in form and contents. The exclusive books on drinking games are a good record of these traditional Chinese games, which are a valuable treasure for us to unveil this game with written evidence.

The Qing Dynasty (c. 1636 AD -1912 AD) noticed the traditional Chinese drinking games become sociable customs, and the Elegant Games and Popular Games were both accessible on the streets and in the small lanes. People of all walks loved to play drinking games in the Qing Dynasty, and we can see many funny anecdotes in various kinds of books published then. We can see poets play literary drinking games or Elegant Games with his peers in *New Words in A Thriving Dynasty* (熙朝新语); we can read the merchant of salt bails out his guests with drinking games in *A Grand View on the Unofficial History of the Qing Dynasty* (清朝野史大观); we can know the failed scholar play literary words drinking games with the then geisha in *Chat by the Window of the Hostel* (客窗闲话) and so on (Geng & Jin 1991: 36-37). Furthermore, the scene of Qing people playing drinking games was widespread to read in the Qing novels. In the familiar novel, such as *Flowers in the Mirror* (镜花缘), *A Dream of Red Mansions* (红楼梦), *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (聊斋志异), *An Exposition of the Official Circles* (官场现形记), and so forth (Geng & Jin 1991:37). Since *A Dream of Red*

*Mansions* is the most well-known novel among the above novels, let us get a general summary of the drinking games recorded there. In *A Dream of Red Mansions*, there were not only once to mention the drinking games, and anyone who read the book can realize that the young Childe and Miss in the book love to get together and play different kinds of games. On the crucial days or festivals, they often liked to have a little drink and played some drinking games with their servants. The most impressive drinking games were the Thumb Fight in chapter 63 and Shefu (射覆) in chapter 62. From the description of drinking games in those novels, we may say that the Qing people loved to play the drinking games. This climate stimulated its prosperity in the literature aspect. During the 295 years, the particular books studying the kinds of drinking games were much more than that in any previous dynasties. Therefore, it was believed that the Qing Dynasty was the time for the scholars to gather all the materials of drinking games of the previous time, and made a full packet of drinking games from all aspects. This achievement seemed to have something to do with the prevailing trend of exegesis in the academic circles at that time. Scholars preferred to make exegesis of the previous works rather than create original works. Among those books, there was one influential work, *A Transcription of Traditional Drinking Games* (酒令丛钞). It is written by Yu Dunpei (俞敦培) and is still republished until today. This book is like an encyclopedia of the traditional Chinese drinking games and lists out over 320 types of the names of drinking games in its special division as Ancient Games (古令), Elegant Games (雅令), Popular Games (通令), Chip Games (筹令) (Geng & Jin 1991: 44). Although it has divided the abundant types of drinking games into four major parts, many researchers have their understanding of every drinking game and make their division of drinking games. That is to say; there still lacks a standard division of the colorful traditional Chinese drinking games until today. It is maybe the research part left for later scholars. In a word, we may safely conclude that the Qing Dynasty is a united period for the collection of traditional Chinese drinking games. Based on the rich works, which are the summary of the history and development of drinking games, the Qing people can enjoy a happy leisure time filled with the various types of drinking games. Moreover, the drinking games climate has helped keep the games, and even record the games for the offspring to study and inherit.

After the Revolution of 1911, China has entered into a new stage. The May Fourth Movement or New Culture Movement advocated the use of colloquial language, and some of the ancient Chinese drinking games, especially those classical-prose-oriented and ancient Chinese-used literary games, gradually disappeared in the trend. As a result, the Thumb Fight tops the list of traditional Chinese drinking games. The current people still play Thumb Fight on the streets, in the restaurants, and in the small lanes. It is still loved by the present Chinese, young or old, northern or southern.

Until now, we can get a general idea of the development of traditional Chinese drinking games. From the later of the Spring and Autumn Period to the end of the Qing Dynasty, the traditional Chinese drinking games have been birthed, developed, and evolved for almost over 2,600 years. In the later of Spring and Autumn Period, the first traditional Chinese drinking game Pitch-pot emerges. In the Han Dynasty, the particular Chinese words Jiuling for Chinese drinking games appear, and Shefu comes into being. After that, the Western Han Dynasty and Eastern Han Dynasty, the Southern Dynasty and the Northern Dynasty, the traditional drinking games gradually grow some artistic tastes with literary development. In the Tang Dynasty, the drinking games welcome its prime age, and it innovates both in form, contents, and styles. The whole society is covered with games in various ways.

All walks of people can play some drinking games. Its system grows mature in the Tang Dynasty. After that, in the Song Dynasty, the literary type of drinking games wins over the non-literary type due to the growth of wealth among ordinary people. In the Yuan Dynasty, the drinking games approach the folks and lay the foundation for the later development in Ming and Qing Dynasties. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the drinking games win the largest population nationwide. In particular, the Qing Dynasty is a united period for the collection of traditional Chinese drinking games. Its vibrant works on the drinking games substantially have made an excellent review of the development of the traditional Chinese drinking games in words. Finally, after the Revolution of 1911, China has entered into a new stage. The push of the May Fourth Movement or New Culture Movement has got rid of the traditional Chinese drinking games which use non-colloquial language, especially ancient Chinese-used literary games. Thumb Fight is still lively kept and played by present people.

#### **IV. The Influence of Traditional Chinese Drinking Games**

The development and prosperity of traditional Chinese drinking games depend on the literate level, the political state, and the economic forms of the society. Judging from the history of traditional Chinese drinking games, a stable society with a prosperous economy and a safe and open-up climate is beneficial for its evolving and innovating. We can see the first developing peak in the Tang Dynasty, and the following prevailing tide in the Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties. All of them have contributed to the popularization of the drinking games home. Moreover, traditional drinking games not only popularize home but also abroad. It not only merely enriches the people's entertainments but also fills the Chinese literature developing history.

##### ***The Overseas Influence of Traditional Chinese Drinking Games***

Through Chinese history, the Tang Dynasty enjoys a large amount of wealth and an open-up mind to handle the matters home and abroad. Its capital Chang'an, today's Xi'an, attracted foreigners from the Eastern Roman Empire through the Silk Road, and Eastern Asia across the East Sea, especially the Japanese. Japan sent many students, scholars, diplomats, and monks to the Tang Dynasty to communicate, study, and absorb the culture, technology, and political systems. As to culture, Japan was influenced by the wine culture, especially drinking games. The *Wuduquan* (五毒拳) was welcomed and learned by the then Japanese, and the latter even created a new similar type of drinking games inspired by the former. *Wuduquan* was one type of finger-beating games that prevailed in the Tang Dynasty. *Wu* represented number five; *du* meant poisonous insects; *quan* meant the drinking game in Chinese. *Wuduquan* used the five fingers to represent the five poisonous insects: the thumb represented a toad, the index finger a snake, the middle finger a centipede, the ring finger a gecko, and the little finger a spider. The rule was as follows: (a) the spider restricted the gecko; (b) the gecko ate the centipede; (c) the centipede ate the snake; (d) the snake swallowed the toad; (e) the toad ate the spider. The five insects restricted and beat each other.

When the player A extended his index finger, and player B extended his thumb, it was easy to figure out that the player A beat the player B because of the rule (d). As a result, player B should drink. After the Japanese introduced the *Wuduquan* into Japan, they simplified it into *Chongquan* (虫拳). *Chong* meant insects, and *quan* was the drinking game. *Chongquan* only used three fingers to represent three insects: the thumb represented a frog instead of a toad, the index finger a snake the same to that of *Wuduquan*, the little finger a slug similar to the

centipede of Wuduquan. The rule was as follows: (a) the frog was afraid of snakes; (b) the snake was afraid of slugs; (c) the slug was afraid of frogs. The three insects restricted each other, whose principle was the same as that of Wuduquan. In Japan, even children can play Wuduquan, so we can see its acceptance and popularity (as cited from Liu 1993: 90). Today, the west believes that the Japanese create the well-known game rock-paper-scissors (剪刀石头布). The French even name it the Japanese Game. However, this game was believed to be a variation of the Chinese drinking games, which was introduced in the 17<sup>th</sup> century from the frequent communication between the then China and Japan. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it prevailed over the whole of Japan. It was spread worldwide from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century through increased contact and communication with the Western countries. Therefore, we may safely say that traditional Chinese drinking games have exerted an international influence since the Tang Dynasty.

### ***The Home Influence of Traditional Chinese Drinking Games***

From the brief history of traditional Chinese drinking games summarized above, Pitch-pot was the first drinking game in history. Its popularization inspired the literate people to create another type of drinking type instead of throwing an arrow into one particular vessel. Because of these literate people's competitive hearts, they added the literate and literature part into the simple drinking games. Since then, it was common for educated people to use literary words to add fun to their drinking party. In the beginning, they can just recite the ancient classics to beat the others. As time goes by, they were not satisfied with reciting, and instead, they started to introduce music, dance, versification, and simple riddles into the drinking games, which helped the drinking games evolve more comprehensive and complete in terms of form and contents. From the Han Dynasty, the drinking games started to help the poets write down some great pomes, such as the Cao Cao(曹操)'s *Short Song* (短歌行). In the Tang Dynasty, the system of drinking games was complete and mature. Its influence on the literature and culture was more significant than the previous dynasties. Li Bai, a world-known famous poet, was the best example. His poetry is famous for his romantic imagination and beautiful images.

Whenever he wrote poems, he would drink and play drinking games with his peers. Therefore, we may see the influence of drinking games on the Tang literature, which was believed to occupy half the volume of the ancient Chinese literature history. When time slipped into the Song Dynasty, the whole society loved to read lyrics and play drinking games from the emperors to the ordinary folks. Su Shi, an outstanding poet, loved to drink and play drinking games with his colleagues and friends. He even wrote the famous lyric: "Drink to the sky." Song lyrics are also an essential part of ancient Chinese literature. The following Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties were the time for the drinking games to approach the ordinary folks of all walks. In their opera and novels, we can read the vivid description of the drinking games. These words help to keep the traditional Chinese drinking games alive on the one hand, and these traditional Chinese drinking games make these literary words funnier and more attractive on the other hand. By now, we may safely conclude that the traditional Chinese drinking games are developing with Chinese literature, and the Chinese literature is a good witness and recorder of the traditional Chinese drinking games through the time.

### **V. Conclusion**

To sum up, the traditional Chinese drinking games are birth in the Western Zhou (c. 1046 BCE - 711 BCE), perfect in Tang Dynasty (c. 618 AD - 907 AD), and popularize to this day. The earliest drinking game is Pitch-pot, birthed among the soldiers' relaxing activity, and

its popularization inspires the literate to create the corresponding games among the literati. From then on, the drinking games can be regarded as two general types: the former is Popular Games, and the latter is Elegant Games. As time goes by, the drinking games evolve and innovate various types. The drinking games have greatly influenced the foreign countries, Japan in particular.

Furthermore, it has made a significant contribution to ancient Chinese literature. Every type has been marked with different names that are not consistent with the Popular Games and Elegant Games. The history of traditional Chinese games is vibrant and colorful, and we only select the most impressive one to be the representative of each period. Because of the limited space and time in this paper, the above two questions may be solved by writing the other papers focused on the consistent name of the traditional Chinese drinking games. All in all, traditional Chinese drinking games are vast treasure deposits waiting for us to dig.

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