



MIDORI GALLERY

Ode to Drinking Morality

by Liu Ling

*He drifted around in the world,
no trace to follow,
no room to live in,
just sleeping everywhere to his heart's content,
the sky serving as the quilt and the ground as the bed.*

*Drinking was his life and his business,
a drinking pot with him wherever he went,
having a drink whether he walked or stopped to rest,
knowing nothing but drinking.*

*He never cared about what comments other made of him,
the more others remarked on his doings,
the more he indulged in drinking,
falling asleep when he got drunk.*

*Even if awakened,
he still felt faintly aware of what was going on around him,
hearing nothing even if a great thunder cracked
in a sudden and complete silence.*

*Not noticing anything even if he faced Mount Tai,
feeling nothing although it turned cold, hot or cool,
unaware of vulgar and obscure matters
such as interests, desires and affections of those around him.*

Liu Ling's poem fully reflected the intellectuals' mind and attitudes towards the society of the Jin Dynasty. The intellectuals at the time were obliged to overdrink in order to forget their worries and troubles, to avoid woes and dangers and to express their discontentment of the political affairs of the time. According to historical records, Sima Zhao, Emperor Wen of the Wei Dynasty was going to plead for the hand of Ruan Ji's daughter on behalf of his son. Ruan Ji indirectly refused the suit by getting drunk for two months, which gave Emperor Wen no chance to plead his son's case, in the end Emperor Wen had to give up.

Liu Ling was a most outstanding drunkard, who said: "I, Liu Ling, who has given a life by God, am known for drinking like a fish, one drink being one hu of alcoholic liquor (hu, a kind of ancient Chinese drinking vessel, equal to a large kettle). I feel awake and never get drunk even after drinking five hu of alcohol."