

Chinese porcelain in Europe

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ABSTRACT. *Since the 16th century, with the Portuguese arriving in China, a large number of Chinese porcelain has been exported to Europe. This article depicts the collection and distribution of Chinese porcelain in Europe by three aspects: the history of ceramic trade between China and Europe, the special kinds of export porcelain and the collection of Chinese porcelain in European museums.*

Keywords: *Chinese Porcelain; Europe; Kraak Porcelain; Armorial Porcelain*

0. Introduction

Porcelain has become a Chinese business card in the eyes of foreigners. From the 5th century, Chinese ceramics began to be exported to the Middle East through the Silk Road. At the beginning of the 16th century, Chinese ceramics began to move to Europe with the arrival of the Portuguese. Hundreds of millions of porcelain were exported to the European countries. There are so many museums in various European countries still contain a large amount of Chinese porcelain.

1. "Pottery" and "Porcelain"

Before the 16th century, the Europeans used a lot of potteries as tableware in their daily life. However, unlike porcelain, pottery is not suitable for placing food and containing food. It is easy to cause food corruption and indirectly leads to the spread of various diseases. After the late 16th century, Europeans gradually used Chinese porcelain to replace pottery in daily life. In fact, there are many differences between pottery and porcelain.

Table 1 Differences between Pottery and Porcelain

	Material	Temperature	Glaze	Permeability
Pottery	Clay with iron content higher than 3%	Below 1000°C	With low-temperature glaze or no glaze	Fine
Porcelain	Clay with iron	Above 1200°C	With over-	Poor

	content lower than 3%		1200°C high temperature glaze	
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2. A brief history of the Chinese porcelain exported to Europe

Before the Tang Dynasty, Chinese ceramics were exported to Arab region through the Silk Road on the land. During the Tang Dynasty, the Maritime Silk Road gradually flourished, and a large number of Chinese porcelain began to be exported to the world. However, Chinese porcelain in the Tang Dynasty was still mainly exported to Asian nations. The porcelain trade between China and Europe may begin in 1514. With the Portuguese Da Gama opening up the Chinese route, Shangchuan Island became the earliest trading port between China and Portugal. After that, the Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, France, Sweden and other European countries have begun to trade with China. The ceramic trade between China and Europe reached its first peak from the end of the 16th century to the mid-17th century, it reached its second peak from the end of the 17th century to the 18th century. Before the 18th century, Chinese porcelain exported to Europe was dominated by blue-and-white porcelain which was produced in Jiangxi, Fujian and Zhejiang provinces in China. After the 18th century, Chinese porcelain exported to Europe was still dominated by blue-and-white porcelain, but the number of colored porcelains increased significantly.

3. Two kinds of export porcelain

(1) Kraak Porcelain

In 1602, the Dutch East India Company intercepted a Portuguese ship which name is "Kraak" in the Straits of Malacca. The largest cargo on board was a large number of similar types of blue-and-white porcelain, so the Europeans used the word "Kraak" to name this type of porcelain. Most of Kraak porcelain is wide-brimmed, and the color is mainly blue-and-white. The shape is mainly made up of plates, bowls, saucers and pots. Most of them are paneled decorations. The makers painted landscapes, figures, flowers, fruits and some other motifs at the mouth or belly of the utensils. Nowadays, most of the experts generally believe that the Kraak porcelain is made in Jingdezhen. Similar paneled decorative porcelains produced in coastal provinces such as Fujian and Guangdong are generally referred to as "Swatow".

(2) Armorial Porcelain

This is a kind of custom-made porcelain. The armorial bearings represent the symbol of each nobility, family, nation and even some groups. In European countries, many nobles and families draw the armorial bearings on some items. Under normal circumstances, the owner of the armorial bearings provides drafts to

European merchants firstly. They handed over the patterns of these armorial porcelain to Chinese merchants. According to the current research, the earliest Armorial porcelain is ordered by King Manuel I of Portugal. The early Armorial porcelain was mostly blue-and-white porcelain, and the Armorial porcelain was mostly attached to the ornamentation, which was embedded in the main body ornamentation. With the increase in orders for custom-made porcelain, the artisans began to make other kinds of Armorial porcelain, such as Wucan Porcelain, famille rose and porcelains with golden decorations. In the 17th and 18th centuries, along with the flourishing of Guangcai porcelain, there were many armorial porcelains decorated by golden armorial bearings.

4. European museums with a large collection of Chinese porcelain

From the beginning of the 16th century to the end of the 19th century, the ceramic trade between China and Europe has not been interrupted. It is predicted that hundreds of millions of Chinese porcelain could be exported to the European countries through the silk road. According to my field research in the past two years, a large number of Chinese porcelains are in the following European museums: the East Asian Art Museum in Berlin, the Zwinger Palace in Dresden, Cologne East Asian Art Museum, Rijksmuseum, Groninger Museum, Princessehof National Ceramics Museum in Leeuwarden, British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, East Asian Art Museum in Bath, Musée national des arts asiatiques Guimet, Musée Cernuschi, Stockholm Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Madrid Prado Museum, Oriental Foundation of Portugal, etc. The following is a brief introduction to some museums which collected a large number of Chinese porcelains:

As one of the most famous museums in the world, the British Museum collected thousands of Chinese porcelains. The David Hall displays thousands of Chinese porcelains collected by Percival David in his lifetime. Compared with the other museums, the Chinese porcelains of the British Museum are higher quality and more exquisite, especially the Guan kiln porcelain, the Ru kiln porcelain and the Ding kiln porcelain. The most famous blue-and-white David bottle is displayed in David Hall. And the British Museum collected second largest collections of Enamel porcelain.

There is a ceramic hall in the Zwinger Palace, which displays nearly 400 pieces of Chinese porcelain. Most of these porcelains were made between the Wanli Emperor and the Yongzheng Emperor. Most of the porcelains are blue-and-white porcelain, and the shapes include cups, bowls, plates, bottles, etc. The Kraak porcelain plates are very distinctive. There are also a certain plenty of Wucan porcelains. In 1717, the Saxon kingdom (August II) used 600 cavalry interchange for hundreds of Chinese porcelains from the King of Prussia (William I), so the blue-and-white bottles are also called "Dragon Knight Bottle".

In the small town of Leeuwarden, there is a museum which name is Princessehof of National Ceramics Museum. The princess loved Chinese porcelain very much during his lifetime, so she collected a lot of Chinese porcelains. There are about 2,000 Asian porcelains in the museum. The collection of Chinese porcelain comes

from Jingdezhen kiln, Zhangzhou kiln, Longquan kiln, Cizao kiln and so on. There are bowls, plates and bottles, among which the number of large plates of Zhangzhou kiln is the most.

The Guimet museum was founded in 1889 by industrialist Emile Guimet. The museum collected thousands of East Asian porcelains, including Chinese porcelain. There are three main sources of Chinese porcelain in the museum: the first is that Emile Guimet purchased Chinese porcelains in China, the second is that hundreds of Chinese porcelains were transferred to the Guimet Museum from the Louvre in 1945, and the third is the famous collector Grandidier donated about 6,000 pieces of Chinese porcelain to the Guimet Museum. There are so many imperial porcelains were collected in this museum, such as the Chenhua Wucui pot decorated by fish and enamel porcelain.

5. Conclusion

There are two sources of Chinese porcelain. One is to obtain the collections by the ceramic trade between China and Europe. The other is that some collectors looted Chinese porcelains from the late Qing Dynasty to the 1950s.

From my views and my field research, most of Chinese porcelains are distributed in the Western European countries. Most of Chinese porcelains in European museums are blue-and-white porcelain and most of them were made during Ming and Qing dynasties. From the perspective of shapes, some of the Chinese porcelains are bowls, plates, dishes, bottles, etc.

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