

Study on the Export of Jingdezhen Porcelain in Ming and Qing Dynasties and Its Cultural Influence

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Abstract

From the Ming Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, the export porcelain of Jingdezhen experienced a process from the beginning to the development, then to the heyday, and finally to the decline. During this period, the export range of Jingdezhen porcelain was also very extensive, covering the three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. Porcelain for export has both strong practicability and high artistic appreciation. The practicality of porcelain originates from the life needs of users, but it also affects the living habits of users to a certain extent. In the process of export through “Silk Road Economic Belt” and “Maritime Silk Road”, Jingdezhen export porcelain has constantly influenced and changed the economy, culture, art, religion, science and technology, life and other fields of the countries and regions along the silk road, and even influenced the social and cultural construction of these countries and regions.

Key words: Ming and Qing Dynasties; Jingdezhen; Porcelain export; Cultural influence

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Porcelain is one of the great inventions of the Chinese people. As a commodity, the export of Chinese porcelain began in the Han Dynasty, went through the Tang, Song

and Yuan dynasties, and entered a new period with the prosperity of the export of blue and white porcelain in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, which promoted the communication between China and other countries and regions in the world. As an important period for the study of ancient ceramic trade, the Ming and Qing dynasties have been paid much attention to. Among the Chinese export porcelains of this period, the export porcelain produced in Jingdezhen was the most representative. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Jingdezhen porcelain production methods were flexible, diverse in form, novel in decoration, and huge in output. In terms of shape and decoration style, it not only retained the essence of traditional Chinese culture, but also fully absorbed foreign elements, it could even meet the requirements of foreign merchants. Such customization has gradually formed an export porcelain that blends Chinese and Western cultural styles, which has brought huge profits to China’s foreign trade exports. It has also become an important messenger for spreading Chinese culture, telling Chinese stories, and promoting the integration of Chinese and Western cultures, thus it has important research value.

1. THE STAGES AND CATEGORIES OF EXPORTED PORCELAIN FROM JINGDEZHEN IN MING AND QING DYNASTIES

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Jingdezhen porcelain production reached its peak. With the advent of the great maritime era in the 16th century, various new routes between the East and the West have been opened up, and the export of Chinese porcelain has also entered the era of globalization. The export porcelain of Jingdezhen in Ming and Qing dynasties not only promoted economic exchange and prosperity, but also promoted cultural integration. Different civilizations,

different aesthetic concepts, different religious beliefs, different food cultures and clothing cultures in the East and the West flourished through the communication and interaction of porcelain. The export of Jingdezhen porcelain in Ming and Qing Dynasties can be divided into four different periods including the early Ming Dynasty, the middle and late Ming Dynasty, the early and middle Qing Dynasty and the late Qing Dynasty.

1.1 Early Ming Dynasty

The early Ming Dynasty mainly refers to the period from the Taizu Zhu Yuanzhang to the Tianshun period of Zhu Qizhen in the mid-Ming Dynasty, that is, the period from the mid-14th century to the mid-15th century. As an important commodity in ancient trade, porcelain has mainly been transported by private merchants by sea. However, the emerging Ming Dynasty implemented a strict “maritime prohibition policy” on private trade in order to prevent the Japanese invasion of the southeast since the Yuan Dynasty. Beginning from 1371, the fourth year of Hongwu, the imperial court issued a series of edicts to enforce the policy of “forbidding people from the coastal waters to communicate with foreign countries for private affairs”. At the same time, in order to ensure the orderly development of overseas trade, the imperial court took the initiative to carry out large-scale official tributary trade exchanges, sending large delegations to visit Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia and East Africa for many times. In particular, from 1405 to 1433, the Ming official fleet headed by Zheng He achieved the feat of “sailing to the Western Seas” for seven times, pushing official exchanges mainly in the form of tributary trade to the top, and “making China’s reputation at least spread to the Persian Gulf and the east coast of Africa” (Gan Xueli, 2008). During Zheng He’s seven voyages to the Western Seas, the Ming Court loosened its “sea ban” policy. During this period, domestic coastal residents “often built private boats and embarked on them without permission under the name of the imperial Court’s work” (Yang Shiqi, 1438). A large number of Chinese goods represented by porcelain were transported to Countries in Asia and Africa in the form of folk smuggling trade, providing a good opportunity for the export of Jingdezhen porcelain. However, after Zheng He returned from his last voyage to the Western Ocean in 1433, the Xuande government began to implement the strict policy of “sea prohibition” again. The maritime prohibition policy in the early Ming Dynasty restricted the development of porcelain trade in Jingdezhen and even China, which resulted in a serious decline in the export of Chinese porcelain.

During this period, the export of Jingdezhen porcelain was mainly blue and white porcelain. However, under the influence of the “Sea ban” policy, the sales of Jingdezhen porcelain in foreign trade was greatly restricted, and it was mainly sold to some countries and regions in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, East Asia and Africa, with Southeast

Asia as the main export area. Islam was popular in Southeast Asia during this period, influenced by religious belief, the blue and white porcelain exported had a strong Islamic cultural feelings from shape to decoration.

1.2 Middle and Late Ming Dynasty

The middle and late Ming dynasty refers to the period from the Chenghua period of Zhu Jianshen to the Chongzhen period of Zhu Youjian in Ming Dynasty, that is, from the middle of the 15th century to the middle of the 17th century. During this period of time, with the vigorous development of maritime trade, Jingdezhen porcelain quickly occupied a place in foreign trade and became one of the main commodities in foreign trade.

In the middle and late Ming Dynasty, due to the gradual decline of national strength, the imperial court could no longer afford to support such a feat as “Zheng He’s voyage to the Western Seas”, and the once-prosperous tributary trade system was gradually disintegrated and eventually disappeared. At the same time, with the opening of new shipping routes and the advent of the great maritime era, the Portuguese began to acquire vast amounts of wealth from abroad and began to “dominate the trade routes and become an empire of dazzling wealth and power” in the 16th century (Gan Xueli, 2008). In the sixth year of Zhengde in the Ming Dynasty, that is, in 1511, the Portuguese occupied Malacca. In 1553, in order to gain a foothold on the coast of China, the Portuguese began to live illegally on the island of Macao. Due to its convenient geographical location and developed economy and trade, Macao soon became an important maritime trade center, this move has promoted the prosperity of China’s coastal trade. After Emperor Longqing of Ming Dynasty came to the throne, the Ming Empire implemented a policy of “opening the sea” to a limited extent, which greatly promoted the development of private overseas trade, and folk trade prospered again. In the last years of the Ming Dynasty, especially during the Tianqi and Chongzhen reigns, the imperial court’s implementation of the “sea ban” policy was greatly reduced due to the influence of continuous wars. In the uninterrupted maritime trade, the development of Jingdezhen’s export porcelain industry has been steadily moving forward. In the fifth year of the Tianqi domination, that is, in 1625, the Netherlands occupied Taiwan and replaced Portugal’s dominant position on the sea. At this time, the export trade of Jingdezhen porcelain was mainly dominated by the Dutch East India Company. Since the beginning of the 17th century, European maritime powers have successively established East India Company, which brought a broader world market to the export of Jingdezhen porcelain.

Jingdezhen porcelain began to occupy the overseas trade market in the mid-Ming Dynasty and gradually became the main variety of Chinese export porcelain. During this period, the export range of Jingdezhen porcelain was wider than that of the early Ming Dynasty,

from Japan and South Korea in East Asia to Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand in Southeast Asia, to South Asian India and areas along the Persian gulf, Turkey in Central Asia, Egypt, Tanzania and other regions in Africa. At the same time, Jingdezhen porcelain also reached Portugal and the Mediterranean area in Europe during this period, with footprints all over Asia, Africa and European continents. During this period, Jingdezhen still mainly exported blue and white porcelain. From the middle and late Ming Dynasty, "Kraak porcelain" made in Jingdezhen kilns were exported on a large scale and became one of the most representative and most influential varieties of export porcelain, witnessing the infinite prosperity of China's Maritime Silk Road at that time. Since the beginning of the 17th century, a small amount of multicolored porcelain has been exported, but the quantity remained small due to lack of interest in the overseas market.

1.3 Early Qing Dynasty

The early Qing Dynasty refers to the period from the entry of Emperor Shunzhi of Qing Dynasty to the middle of Qianlong period, that is, the period from the mid-17th century to the mid-18th century. This period was the most prosperous period of the Qing Dynasty's economy, and the folk kilns in Jingdezhen prospered as a result. During this period, the foreign trade of Jingdezhen porcelain reached the highest peak in history.

At the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, in order to prevent the anti-Qing forces in southeast coastal areas from contacting Zheng Chenggong of Taiwan, the imperial court issued several "sea prohibition decrees" and "sea relocation decrees" to prohibit coastal residents from engaging in maritime trade, which had a great impact on the prosperous maritime trade since the end of the Ming Dynasty. Due to the strict "sea ban" policy at that time, Europeans could not trade porcelain with China, so they turned to the Japanese market to buy Japanese imitation Chinese porcelain, that is, "Imariware". In 1680, Emperor Kangxi was determined to revive the porcelain industry. He not only rebuilt the destroyed porcelain kilns in Jingdezhen and resumed porcelain production, but also officially "opened the sea" in 1684, the 23rd year of Kangxi, allowing the people to trade abroad. The opening of the sea this time was even larger than the scale of the sea opening in Longqing period in the Ming Dynasty. It was a comprehensive and thorough opening of the sea. However, the sea ban policy has been repeated since then.

In the early Qing Dynasty, the East India Company of European countries developed rapidly, which promoted the development of foreign trade of Jingdezhen porcelain. With the rise of the United Kingdom, the British East India Company gradually showed a trend of surpassing the Dutch East India Company and began to monopolize the trade with the East, promoting the export of Jingdezhen

porcelain to glory. With the rapid development of European economy and the establishment of the East India Company in European countries, Europe has become the main export area of Jingdezhen porcelain. In order to meet the needs of the European market, customized porcelain designed and made according to the requirements of European merchants emerged at the historic moment, which showed the innovation and vitality of Jingdezhen porcelain industry at that time.

During this period, the types of export porcelain in Jingdezhen became more abundant and the colored porcelain began to occupy a place in the export porcelain market. The production of porcelain in Jingdezhen in the Qing Dynasty was more developed than that in the Ming dynasty in terms of shape, glaze color and pattern, and the quality of the products was also significantly improved. In addition to the blue and white porcelain that was popular for a while, colorful porcelain and elegant pastel porcelain were also very popular during this period. The colorful porcelain of the Qing Dynasty made new achievements on the basis of the colorful porcelain in Ming Dynasty, and created a new process from painting to filling, which was all completed on the glaze, representing the highest level of the colorful porcelain of Jingdezhen. Besides enamel porcelain, the famille rose porcelain was another creation of the Qing court, representing the new achievements of the Qing dynasty ceramics industry. At the same time, colored glazed porcelain in red, green and black was also very popular during this period.

1.4 Late Qing Dynasty

The late Qing Dynasty refers to the period from the late Qianlong period to the Xuantong Emperor Puyi in Qing Dynasty, that is, the period from the mid-18th century to the demise of the Qing government. In the 22nd year of Emperor Qianlong (1757), the Qing court ordered the closure of Fujian and Zhejiang ports, merchants from various countries were only allowed to trade at the Guangzhou port. From then on, Guangzhou's "one-port trade" foreign trade system continued until the Opium War. It is undoubtedly a fatal blow to the export trade of porcelain. At the same time, since the middle and late Qing dynasty, the porcelain-making technology of European countries has developed rapidly, and the scale of ceramic production has continued to expand. The monopoly situation of Chinese export porcelain represented by Jingdezhen porcelain in overseas market was broken. At that time, European countries that had gone through the baptism of industrial revolution needed the Chinese market as their export and dumping ground, but they had to face the fact that the Qing government refused to trade with them, which led to a huge trade deficit for European countries represented by Britain. In order to change the passive situation in trade, Britain sent expeditionary forces to invade China in 1840, and the "Opium War" broke out in an all-round way. Since then,

the Qing government and foreign powers kept fighting, and the export of China's porcelain also went into decline.

Due to the changes of the world trade situation and the competition among European countries, the export of Jingdezhen porcelain began to be monopolized by the British East India Company from the 18th century. Besides the European market, Jingdezhen porcelain also began to be exported to America on a large scale. Until the 19th century, the United States gradually became the main export area of Jingdezhen porcelain.

2. THE CULTURAL INFLUENCE OF PORCELAIN EXPORTED FROM JINGDEZHEN IN THE MING AND QING DYNASTIES

Culture and art is a kind of practical activity in the process of changing and conquering nature by human beings, which embodies human's perception of the natural world. The artist uses the work as the carrier to create an artistic image, combines the external form with the internal emotional expression, and uses language, rhythm, line, color and other means to express its material appearance. In the development process of culture and art, art forms of different regions, nations and cultures will inevitably communicate, merge, progress and develop in the integration. China's export porcelain, represented by Jingdezhen porcelain, has rich cultural connotations, including the material connotations of materials and craftsmanship in the firing, sales, and transportation of porcelain, as well as the spiritual and cultural connotations of customs, religions and concepts in the molding and decoration of porcelain. The large-scale export of Chinese porcelain during the Ming and Qing dynasties enriched the material and spiritual exchanges between China and foreign countries during this historical period, and had a profound impact on the economy, culture and life of countries and regions in Asia, Europe, and America.

2.1 The Influence of Culture and Art

Before the large-scale export of Chinese porcelain, the daily utensils used by westerners were mainly pottery, wood, gold, silver and other metal ware. Therefore, when they saw a vessel with unique shape, excellent craftsmanship, and bright glaze, they thought it must be made of some precious jade. Because these porcelain came from far away China and the number was extremely rare, both the shape and decoration were full of Oriental mystery and advanced sense, so westerners directly named the porcelain "white gold". In fact, because Chinese porcelain was so precious, even nobles who owned Chinese porcelain were not willing to use it, but regarded them as indoor furnishings and decorations, and then became an important way to show off their personal wealth and social status.

In the 16th century, the Portuguese brought back a large number of exquisite Chinese porcelain through maritime trade, and auctioning and collecting Chinese porcelain became a trend in the upper class of Europe. The narrative themes of turquoise flowers and birds, landscapes and countryside, folk tales, drama and legends drawn in the porcelain have inspired the West's reverie about China, forming what the West sees as "people there are easy-going, and they often live in quiet buildings which coexists in harmony with nature"(Gan Xueli, 2008). This style which is called "Chinese style" further influenced Western literature, art and architecture in the 18th century.

2.2 The Influence of Economy and Trade

The export of Chinese porcelain represented by Jingdezhen guided the development of ceramic technology in Europe and even the world. Because the export porcelain could not meet the growing needs of overseas, countries around the world began to imitate the manufacturing of Chinese porcelain, North Korea, Japan, Turkey, Iran, Vietnam have imitated blue and white porcelain, some European countries have also established their own porcelain factories, competing to imitate Chinese porcelain, such as Britain's "Bow" Porcelain factory, the Royal Ceramic factory in France, Meissen factory in Germany, Delft factory in Holland, etc., many countries have set up factories specialized in imitating the production of Chinese porcelain and have made great achievements. Among them, the bowls made by Germany imitating Jingdezhen blue and white carving Linglong porcelain craft and the "Delft Blue Porcelain" made by Holland imitating China blue and white porcelain enjoy high reputation in the world.

Therefore, the export of Chinese porcelain represented by Jingdezhen promoted the development of ceramic manual manufacturing in overseas countries and regions, promoted the trade and personnel exchanges between countries, and indirectly stimulated the development of navigation technology and the expansion of overseas colonies.

2.3 The Influence of Life Style

The export of Jingdezhen porcelain during the Ming and Qing Dynasties enriched the lifestyles of overseas people, and even directly changed the customs and habits of people in some countries and regions. For example, before the emergence of Chinese porcelain, some countries in Southeast Asia used materials from nature to serve as food containers. According to the *History of Ming Dynasty—Foreign Biography*, "Wen Lang gods kingdom (present-day Kalimantan, Indonesia) used banana leaves as food utensils at the beginning, and then they began trading with the Chinese, and gradually used porcelain."

After entering Southeast Asian countries, Chinese porcelain, represented by Jingdezhen porcelain, became

a tool for them to eat and live, thus changing their eating habits, enriching their food culture, and then changing their living customs. In addition, the popularity of tea drinking in Europe was closely related to the export of porcelain. At the beginning of the 17th century, the Dutch East India Company shipped the first batch of tea back to Europe, and it immediately became a popular “fashion drink”. At that time, the Dutch believed that tea drinking not only refreshed the stomach, but also improved personal wisdom and accomplishment. To maintain the original flavor of tea, using the special utensils used by Orientals—ceramic tea sets to drink tea is necessary. As a result, ceramic tea sets began to be exported to Europe on a large scale, and further promoted tea drinking as a fashion in Europe. From ordinary people to nobles, as long as they had the financial ability, they must buy tea sets exported from China to drink tea. European local beverages such as hot chocolate, coffee, etc. also need to be drunk in Chinese blue and white porcelain cups.

3. CONCLUSION

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, porcelain production in Jingdezhen entered a thriving era, and the craftsmanship of porcelain industry in Jingdezhen reached an unprecedented historical peak in the history of Chinese porcelain industry. From Ming to Qing Dynasty, the export porcelain in Jingdezhen experienced a process from inception to development, and then to prosperity, and finally to decline. During this period, Jingdezhen export

porcelain was famous at home and abroad for its variety, unique shape and superb craftsmanship, and the profound Chinese culture contained in it fascinated the whole world. From the middle of the 14th century to the end of the 19th century for more than 500 years, Jingdezhen porcelain was integrated with the local culture, social customs, and religious beliefs in the process of external dissemination, which promoted the economic and cultural development of the countries and regions, enriched the connotation of economic and cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries during this period, and made a significant contribution to the study of China ceramic history.

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