

Chinese



Porcelain

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ISBN: 978-1-78042-206-0

"Prudence is the mother of porcelain."

— William Wander



Chinese Dynasties Chronology

2205-1767 B.C.E.:	Xia Dynasty
1767-1122 B.C.E.:	Shang Dynasty
1122-256 B.C.E.:	Zhou Dynasty
771-475 B.C.E.:	Spring and Autumn Period
475-221 B.C.E.:	Warring States Period
221-207 B.C.E.:	Qin Dynasty
206 B.C.E.-221:	Han Dynasty
220-265:	Three Kingdoms Period
265-420:	First Jin Dynasty
302-439:	Sixteen Kingdoms Period
420-589:	Southern and Northern Dynasties

581-618:	Sui Dynasty
618-907:	Tang Dynasty
690-705:	Second Zhou Dynasty
907-960:	Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period
907-1115:	Liao Dynasty or Khitan Empire
1036-1227:	Western Xia Dynasty or Tangut Empire
1115-1234:	Second Jin Dynasty of Northern China
960-1279:	Song Dynasty
1279-1368:	Yuan Dynasty or Mongol Empire
1368-1644:	Ming Dynasty
1644-1911:	Qing Dynasty or Manchu Dynasty
1911-1945:	Republic of China
1949-today:	People's Republic of China





Introduction

Porcelain was certainly invented in China. This is acknowledged in England by the adoption of the word "china" as equivalent to porcelain. Even in Persia, the only country to which an independent invention of the material has been attributed by some writers and where Chinese porcelain has been

Octagonal Rhyton Supported by an Animal Head

Tang Dynasty, 7th century
Moulded porcelain, height: 9 cm
The British Museum, London





known and imitated for centuries, the word *chini* carries a similar connotation.

For the creation of a scientific classification of ceramic products, it may be necessary to define here the distinctive characteristics of porcelain. Porcelain ought to have a white, translucent, hard paste, to be scratched by steel, homogeneous, resonant and vitrified,

Tea Bowl

Song Dynasty, 960-1279

Porcelain covered in speckled brown,
also known as “hare’s fur” decoration,

maximum diameter: 11.5 cm

National Palace Museum, Taipei





exhibiting, when broken, a conchoidal fracture of fine grain and brilliant aspect. These qualities inherent in porcelain make it impermeable to water and enable it to resist the action of frost even when uncoated with glaze. Among the characteristics of the paste given above, translucency and vitrification

Pillow in the Shape of a Child

Northern Song Dynasty, 960-1127
Monochromatic porcelain, 31 x 31.2 x 18.8 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





define porcelain best. If either of these two qualities is absent, the material is considered a different kind of pottery. If the paste possesses all the other properties with the exception of translucency, it is stoneware; if the paste is not vitrified, it belongs to the category of terracotta or of faïence.

Vase

Song Dynasty, 960-1279
Ivory white porcelain, height: 25.2 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





The Chinese define porcelain under the name of *tz'u*, a character first found in books of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.-221 C.E.), as a hard, compact, fine-grained pottery (*f'ao*); they distinguish it by the clear, musical note that it gives out on percussion and by testing that it cannot be scratched by a knife. They do not insist on the whiteness of the paste or on

Handled Gourd-Shaped Bottle with Floral Pattern

Northern Song Dynasty, 960-1127

White monochromatic porcelain stoneware with chased and engraved enamel decoration, height: 23.5 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





its translucency, so some pieces may fail in these two points when the fabric is coarse. However, it would be difficult to separate these elements from porcelain's character. Porcelain may be divided into two classes: hard paste, containing only natural elements in the composition of the body and the glaze, and soft paste,

Cup

Northern Song Dynasty, 960-1127

White porcelain stoneware with underglaze engraved
enamel decoration, maximum diameter: 23 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





where the body is an artificial combination of various materials fused by the action of the fire, in which a compound called frit has been used as a substitute for natural rock. All Chinese porcelain is of the hard paste variety. The body consists essentially of two elements: the white clay kaolin, the unctuous and infusible element that gives plasticity to the paste,

Ju Ware Narcissus Planter

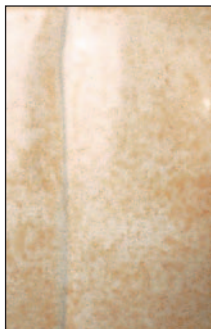
Northern Song Dynasty, 960-1127
Monochromatic porcelain, 23 x 16.4 x 6.9 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





and the feldspathic stone petuntse, which is fusible at a high temperature and gives transparency to the porcelain.

Of the two Chinese names that have become classical since they were adopted by the West, "kaolin" is the name of a locality near Jingdezhen where the best porcelain



Teapot with Pouring Spout

Song Dynasty, 960-1279
Monochromatic porcelain, height: 20.2 cm
The British Museum, London





earth is mined and “petuntse”, literally “white briquettes”, refers to the shape in which the finely pulverised porcelain stone is brought to the potteries, after it has been submitted to the preliminary processes of pounding and decantation. The feldspathic stone from the province of Jiangsu is a white, compact rock with a slightly greyish tinge, occurring in large

Bowl

Southern Song Dynasty, 1127-1279
Porcelain, maximum diameter: 14.7 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





fragments covered with manganese oxide in dendrites and featuring imbedded crystals of quartz in a mass that fuses completely into a white enamel under the blowpipe.

In actual practice, many other materials – such as powdered quartz and crystallised sands, for example – are added to the two essential ingredients above in the preparation



Bowl

Yuan Dynasty, 1279-1368
Porcelain stoneware, height: 16.4 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





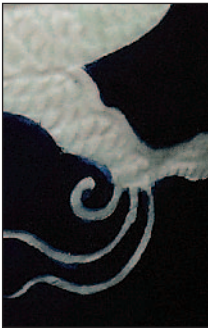
of the body of Chinese porcelain, which varies very widely in composition. A special paste made of *huang tun*, or “yellow bricks”, derived from a tough, compact rock that is pounded in large watermills, is used for coarser ware and said to be indispensable for the proper development of some of the single-coloured glazes of the high fire. The *yu* glaze

Jar Decorated with Horsemen

13th century

Porcelain with blue underglaze decoration, length: 33.9 cm
Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo





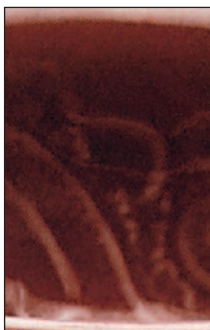
of Chinese porcelain is made of the same feldspathic rock that is used in the composition of the body, the best pieces of petuntse being reserved for the glaze, selected for their uniform greenish tone, especially when veined with dendrites like leaves of the arborvitae. This is mixed with lime, prepared

Meiping Bottle

Yuan Dynasty, 1279-1368

Porcelain with a cobalt glaze, height: 33.6 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





by repeated combustion of grey limestone and piled in alternate layers with ferns and brushwood cut from the mountainside foliage. The purpose of the lime is to increase the fusibility of the feldspathic stone. The finest petuntse, *yu kuo* or “glaze essence”, and the purified lime, *lien hui*, which are separately made with the addition of water

Small Bowl

Ming Dynasty, Hongwu period, 1368-1398
 Red monochromatic porcelain with engraved underglaze
 decoration, maximum diameter: 9.7 cm
 National Palace Museum, Taipei





into purees of the same thickness, are afterwards mixed by measure in different proportions to make a liquid glaze. This glaze is finally put on the raw body with the brush, by dipping, or by insufflation. Tang Ying tells us that in his time the glaze of the highest class of porcelain was composed of ten measures of the petuntse puree with one measure of the liquid lime. Seven or eight

Kendi Drinking Bottle

Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, c. 1400

Porcelain with copper-red underglaze decoration,
height: 15 cm

Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





ladles of petuntse with two or three ladles of lime were used for the glazes of the middle class. With petuntse and lime in equal proportions, or with lime predominating, the glaze was described as fit only for coarse ware.

The glaze of Chinese porcelain always contains lime. It is the lime that gives it its characteristic tinge of green or blue, but at

Ewer

Ming Dynasty, Yongle period, 1403-1424
 White monochromatic porcelain covered with etched
 “secret decoration” (*an hua*), height: 35.5 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





the same time conduces to a brilliancy of surface and a pellucid depth never found in more refractory glazes that contain no lime. This has been proved, moreover, at Sèvres, and it is interesting to note that the glaze of the *nouvelle porcelaine* made in the 20th century was prepared with 33% of chalk.

Bianhu Gourd-Shaped Vase

Ming Dynasty, Yongle period, 1403-1424
 Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 24.9 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





I. Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.-221)

While it is generally agreed that porcelain was first made in China, authorities differ widely in fixing a date for its invention. The Chinese attribute its invention to the Han Dynasty, when the new character *tz'u* was coined to designate, presumably, a new substance.

Vase in the Shape of a Celestial Sphere

Ming Dynasty, Yongle period, 1403-1424
Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 42.2 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





The official memoir on porcelain administration in the area of Jingdezhen, the first edition of which was published in 1270, says that according to local tradition, the ceramic works at Xinpin (an old name for Jingdezhen) were founded in the time of the Han Dynasty and were in constant operation for centuries.



Flat Vase with Figures

Ming Dynasty, Yongle period, 1403-1424
Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 29.7 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei



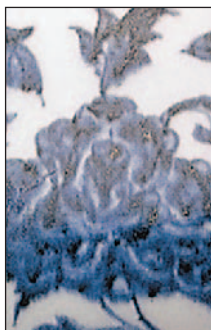


This is confirmed by the celebrated superintendent of the Imperial potteries appointed in 1728, who states in his autobiography that the result of his research shows that porcelain was first made during the Han Dynasty at Chang-an in the district of Fuliang. The industrial environment of the period lends a certain plausibility to the theory, as we know

Bowl

Ming Dynasty, Yongle period, 1403-1424
Blue-and-white porcelain with gold highlights,
maximum diameter: 15 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





that quantities of glass vessels were being imported at the time from the workshops of Syria and Egypt, and it seems natural that experiments should be made to fabricate something similar at the Chinese potteries.

The Han Dynasty was the first to open up regular communication with western

Jar with a Lid

Ming Dynasty, Xuande period, 1426-1435
Blue-and-white porcelain, maximum diameter: 16.2 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





countries by sending Zhang Qian on a mission to the Yuezhi, whose capital was then on the northern bank of the Amu Darya River. The envoy started in 139 B.C.E. and was kept prisoner for ten years by the Xiongnu nomads who ruled Eastern Turkestan, but finally reached his destination through Fergana, in modern-day Uzbekistan.

Stemmed Cup

Ming Dynasty, Xuande period, 1426-1435
Blue-and-white porcelain, maximum diameter: 17.2 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





Travelling through Bactria, he tried to return by the Hotan-Lop Nur route, but was again stopped by the Xiongnu. He finally escaped and returned to China in 126 B.C.E., after an absence of thirteen years. Zhang Qian found bamboo staves, cloth and other goods in Bactria, which he recognised as products of Sichuan, and was told that they were brought



Stemmed Cup

Ming Dynasty, Xuande period, 1426-1435
 Blue-and-white porcelain enhanced with fire-red glaze,
 maximum diameter: 10.1 cm
 National Palace Museum, Taipei





there from Shendu (India). He reported to the emperor the existence of this southwestern trade between China and India and also introduced the name of Buddha and the concepts of Buddhism as an Indian religion. The grape vine, the lucerne plant (*Medicago sativa*), the pomegranate from Parthia and several other

Stemmed Cup with Dragon Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Xuande period, 1426-1435
Blue-and-white porcelain, maximum diameter: 10.5 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





plants were introduced into China by him and cultivated in the Shang Lin Park at the capital.

The Emperor Wu subsequently sent friendly embassies to Sogdiana and Parthia in the beginning of the reign of Mithradates II and sent an army to Fergana in 102-100 B.C.E., which conquered the Kingdom of Dayuan

Stemmed Cup

Ming Dynasty, Xuande period, 1426-1435
Porcelain with red underglaze decoration,
maximum diameter: 15.4 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





and brought back in triumph thirty horses of classical fame. In the far south, modern-day Vietnam was annexed in 110 B.C.E., and a ship was dispatched from that port to get a supply of the coloured glass of Kabulistan, which was becoming so highly valued at the Chinese court.

Bowl

Ming Dynasty, Xuande period, 1426-1435
Monochromatic porcelain with copper-red underglaze,
maximum diameter: 18.5 cm
The British Museum, London





The official introduction of Buddhism followed in the year 67 C.E. Emperor Ming, having seen a golden figure floating in a halo of light across the pavilion in a dream, was told by his council that it must have been an apparition of Buddha, and at once sent a special mission of inquiry to India. The envoys returned to the capital, Luoyang,

Monochromatic Bowl

Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, mid-15th century
Monochromatic porcelain with copper-red underglaze,
maximum diameter: 18.5 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





with two Indian monks, who brought with them Sanskrit books, some of which were then translated, and pictures of Buddhist figures and scenes, which were copied to adorn the walls of the palace halls and the new temple that was built for the occasion. This was called the White Horse Temple in memory of the horse that had carried the

Large Vase with Handles

Ming Dynasty, c. 1450

Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 67 cm

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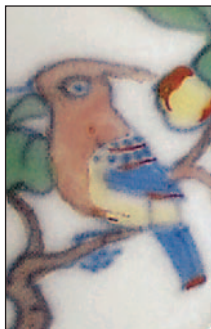
sacred relics across Asia, and the two Indian shramanas lived there until they died. The subsequent influence of Buddhist ideals on Chinese porcelain has been all-pervasive; Buddhist themes and characters appear in decorations on the oldest ceramic pieces.

In 97 C.E., the celebrated Chinese general Ban Chao led an army as far as Merv and

Large Vase Covered with Dragon and Phoenix Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
 Blue-and-white porcelain with overglaze enamel
 decoration (*wucai*), height: 34 cm
 Location unknown





sent his lieutenant Gan Ying to the Persian Gulf to take a ship there on an embassy to Rome, but the envoy shirked the sea journey and came back without accomplishing his mission. Roman merchants came by sea to Chinese-occupied Southeast Asia in 166 C.E., appearing in the annals as envoys from

Stemmed Cup

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
 Blue porcelain with overglaze enamel
 decoration (*doucai*), height: 7.7 cm
 National Palace Museum, Taipei





the emperor Marcus Aurelius, and later arrivals of Roman traders were reported at Canton in 226 and 284 C.E. Meanwhile, the overland route to the north, which had been interrupted by the Parthian wars, was re-opened, and many Buddhist missionaries came to Luoyang from Parthia and Samarkand, as well as from Gandhara in Northern India.

Stemmed Cup with a Pattern of Birds on Flower Branches

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488

Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 10.2 cm

Location unknown





China's gradual exposure to other cultures and its embracing of Buddhist philosophy may well have led to the creative expansion that inspired the invention of porcelain as a ceramic style. The eminent Japanese art critic Kakuzo Okakura suggests in *The Ideals of the East* that the alchemists of the Han Dynasty,

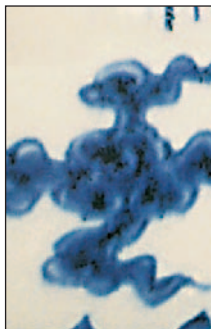
Ewer with a Dragon and Phoenix Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488

Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 42 cm

Location unknown





in their prolonged research for the elixir vitae and the philosopher's stone, may have somehow made the discovery, and he arrives at the conclusion that "we may ascribe the origin of the wonderful porcelain glaze of China to their accidental discoveries".

Pear-Shaped Vase with Flying Storks

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
 Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 27.5 cm
 Location unknown





II. Three Kingdoms Period (220-265) and Subsequent Dynasties

In the Three Kingdoms period (220-265) that followed the Han Dynasty, we read of glazed celadon ware made at Luoyang for the use of the palace, and in the Jin Dynasty (265-420), we have the first mention of blue porcelain, produced at Wenzhou, in the province of Zhejiang, the progenitor

Two Bottles with Phoenix Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 26 cm
Location unknown





of the sky-blue glazes tinted with cobalt which afterwards became so famous. The short-lived Sui Dynasty (581-618) is distinguished for a kind of green porcelain (*lu tz'u*) invented by a President of the Board of Works to replace green glass, the composition of which had been lost after its introduction by artisans from Northern India about 424 C.E.

Spouted Vessel with a Dragon Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
 Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 29 cm
 Location unknown





III. Tang Dynasty (618-907)

Much progress must have been made in the ceramic production of the province of Jiangxi. It is recorded in the topography of Fuliang, referred to above, that in the beginning of the reign of the founder of the Tang Dynasty, a native of the district brought up a quantity of



Double Bottle

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 45 cm
Private collection



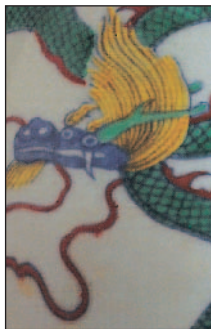


porcelain to the capital in Shaanxi, which he presented to the emperor as “imitation jade”. In the fourth year (622 C.E.) of this reign, the name of the district was changed to Xinpin, and a decree was issued directing the potters to send up a regular supply of porcelain for the use of the imperial palace.

Teapot with Dragon Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
“Two-toned” blue and yellow porcelain, height: 21.6 cm
Private collection





The simile of “imitation jade” is significant and almost proves that it must have been genuine porcelain. White jade has always been the ideal of the Chinese potter, whose finished work actually rivals the most highly polished nephrite in purity of colour, translucency and lustre, while the egg-shell body attains the same degree of hardness

Teapot with Dragon Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
Cobalt blue porcelain with overglaze enamel
decoration (*wucai*), height: 40.6 cm
Private collection





(6.5 on the Mohs scale of mineral hardness), so it can be scratched by a quartz crystal but not by the point of a steel knife.

There are abundant references to porcelain in the voluminous literature of the Tang Dynasty (618-907). The official biography of Chu Sui in the annals recounts the zeal that he showed while superintendent of Xinpin,

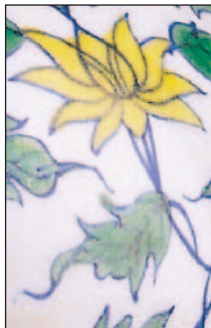
Blue Plate

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
Blue-and-white porcelain, maximum diameter: 27.4 cm
Private collection





obeying a decree issued in 707 ordering sacrificial utensils for the imperial tombs. *The Classic of Tea*, the first volume in history devoted entirely to tea, describes the different kinds of bowls preferred by tea drinkers, classifying them according to the colour of their glaze and describing how each hue enhances the tint of the infusion. The poets of



Jar with Peony Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
 Blue cobalt porcelain with overglaze enamel
 decoration (*wucai*), height: 14 cm
 Private collection





the time liken their wine cups to “disks of thinnest ice”, “tilted lotus leaves floating down a stream” and white or green jade. A verse of the poet Du Mu (803-852) is often cited in reference to white porcelain from the province of Sichuan: “The porcelain of the Ta-yi kilns is light and yet strong. It rings with a low jade note and is famed throughout the

Bowl Decorated with Boys Playing

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
 Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 9.5 cm
 Private collection





city. The beautiful white bowls surpass hoar frost and snow.”

The first line of this verse praises the fabric, the second the resonance of the tone, the third the purity of the white glaze. The bowls most highly esteemed for tea were the white bowls of the province of Zhili and the blue bowls of Zhejiang. They both rang with



Pear-Shaped Vase Decorated with a Pair of Canaries

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488

Cobalt blue porcelain with overglaze enamel

decoration (*wuca*), height: 37.5 cm

Private collection





a clear musical note and are said to have been used by musicians, in sets of ten, to make chimes, being struck on the rims with little rods of ebony.

Arab trade with China flourished during the 8th and 9th centuries, when Muslim colonies settled in Canton and other seaport towns. One of the Arabian travellers, Soleyman,



Bowl Decorated with Cavaliers

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 15.8 cm
Private collection





wrote an account of his journey that has been translated into French and English, which gives the first mention of porcelain outside China. He says, "They have in China a very fine clay with which they make vases which are as transparent as glass; water is seen through them. These vases are made of clay". The Arabs at this time were well acquainted

Flat Vase with Dragon Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Chonghua period, 1465-1488
Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 27.3 cm
Private collection





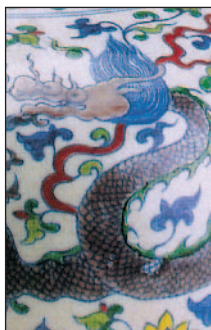
with glass and could hardly have mistaken the material, so their evidence is of particular value.

Under the Emperor Shizong (954-959) of the Later Zhou Dynasty, a brief regime established at Kaifeng just before the Song Dynasty, we have a glimpse of a celebrated production known afterwards as *Chai yao*, Chai being the name of the reigning house.

Bottle Vase with Fruit Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
 Porcelain with iron-red underglaze decoration, height: 38.5 cm
 Private collection





The porcelain was ordered at this time by imperial prescript to be “as blue as the sky, as clear as a mirror, as thin as paper and as resonant as a musical stone of jade”. This eclipsed in its delicacy all that preceded it and soon became so rare that it was described as a myth.

Bottle Decorated with a Dragon Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
Cobalt blue porcelain with overglaze enamel
decoration (*wucai*), height: 46.5 cm
Private collection





The various delicate wares referred to in the above extracts have all probably long since disappeared and we must be content with literary evidence of their existence. The Chinese delight in literary research, as much as they fear to disturb the rest of the dead by digging in the ground, so that we have no tangible proof, so far, of the occurrence of

Plate

Ming Dynasty, Chenghua period, 1465-1488
“Two-toned” blue and yellow porcelain,
maximum diameter: 30 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





true porcelain, and can only hope for the future appearance of an actual specimen of early date. Meanwhile we may reasonably accept the conclusion of the best native scholarship that porcelain was first made in the Han dynasty, without trying to fix the precise date of its invention.

Stemmed Cup

Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, c. 1500

Porcelain with overglaze red and green enamel decoration,

maximum diameter: 14.1 cm

Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





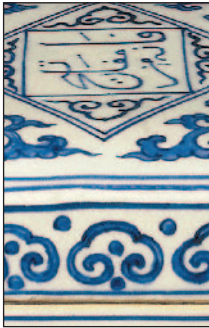
A correct classification of Chinese porcelain should be primarily chronological, and the specimens should be secondarily grouped under the headings of the localities at which they were produced. Thirdly, each group may be subdivided, if necessary, according to the fabric, technique, and style of decoration of the pieces of which it is composed.

Meiping Vase

Ming Dynasty, c. 1500

Porcelain with *fabu* glaze decoration, height: 38 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





IV. Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1279-1368) Dynasties

Beginning with the Song Dynasty, which reigned from 960 to 1279, when it was overthrown by Kublai Khan, the grandson of the famous Genghis Khan and the founder of the Yuan Dynasty, which ruled China until it was in its turn succeeded by the Ming Dynasty in 1368, we have a ceramic



Writing Box

Ming Dynasty, Zhengde period (marked), 1506-1521
Blue-and-white porcelain, 11.5 x 24 x 13.5 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





period marked generally by the primitive aspect of its productions. Actual specimens of the time are now available for comparison with the descriptions of the writers on porcelain and the illustrations of the artists in the old albums which have come down to us. The most useful of these last is an album of the 16th century in four volumes, found in the

Large Jar with Dragon Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Jiajing period, 1522-1566
Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 56 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





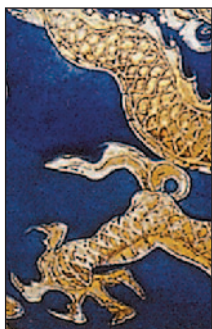
National Library of China in Beijing. This album, called the "Illustrated Description of the Celebrated Porcelain of Different Dynasties", was the work of Xiang Yuanbian, a well-known connoisseur and collector of his time, and its eighty-three illustrations were drawn and coloured by him. The seal in antique script attached to his preface gives his literary title as "A dweller in the hills of Mo-lin".



Jar with a Floral and Bird Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Jiajing period, 1522-1566
 Porcelain with a bluish monochromatic glaze and
 slipware decoration, height: 32.5 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





The productions of the Song Dynasty come generally with glazes of single colours, with either uniform or mottled tint, exhibiting either plain or cracked surfaces. Among the monochrome glazes are whites of various tones, greys of bluish or purplish tints, greens from pale sea-green celadon to deep olive, browns from light chamois to dark shades approaching black, bright red and dark purple. Especially notable are the pale purple,

Incense Altar Set

Ming Dynasty, Jiajing period, 1522-1566
Blue porcelain with unglazed decoration on the
biscuit heightened with gold, height: 48 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





often splashed over with red, the brilliant grass-greens of the Longquan porcelain, called "onion-green" by the Chinese; the "clair de lune", a pale grey-blue, and the deep purple or aubergine. These kilns were also remarkable for the brilliance of their "transmutation" mottled tints, created by variations in the degree of oxidation of the copper silicates in the glaze.

Jar with Romanesque Pattern

Ming Dynasty, Jiajing period, 1522-1566
 Porcelain with overglaze red and green enamel
 decoration, height: 37.5 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





Polychrome decoration in this period was rare, as it consists of different colours applied on biscuit. Painted decoration was still more sparingly employed, although we learn that in the province of Zhili the porcelains of the time were occasionally painted with ornamental designs in brown.

Blue and Yellow Plate

Ming Dynasty, Jiajing period, 1522-1566
Cobalt blue porcelain with overglaze yellow enamel
decoration, maximum diameter: 39.5 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





Cobalt blue, according to the annals, was brought to China by people from the Middle East as early as the 10th century and was first used in the preparation of coloured glazes, as we know nothing of painting in blue under the glaze until the Yuan Dynasty. The earliest “blue and white” dates from the 13th century, when the technical process of

Loop-Handled Vase

Ming Dynasty, Jiajing period, 1522-1566
Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue and
copper-red decoration, height: 59.5 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





painting in cobalt on the raw body of the porcelain seems to have been introduced. The technique was perhaps borrowed from Persia, where it had long been used in the decoration of tiles and other articles of faïence, although porcelain proper was unknown to the Persians, except as an importation from China.

Small Jar with a Lid

Ming Dynasty, Jiajing period (marked), 1522-1566
 Porcelain with overglaze red and yellow enamel
 decoration, height: 17.4 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





There were many potteries in China during the Song Dynasty, but Chinese writers usually refer to four houses of ceramic production (*yao*) as the most important: Ru, Guan, Ge and Ding. The celadon ware of Longquan and the flambé faïence of other kilns are less prominently featured in record.



Large Jar with a Lid

Ming Dynasty, Jiajing period, 1522-1566
Cobalt blue porcelain with overglaze enamel
decoration (*wucai*), height: 47 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





Ru ware was the porcelain made at Kaifeng in Henan province. The best was blue, which was said to rival the azure-tinted blossoms of the *Vitex incisa* shrub, the “sky blue flower” of the Chinese, and carrying on the tradition of the celebrated *Chai yao* of the preceding dynasty, which was made in the same province. The glaze, either crackled or plain, was often laid on so thickly as to run

Bowl

Ming Dynasty, Wanli period, 1573-1620

Blue porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration (*wuca*),
maximum diameter: 17 cm

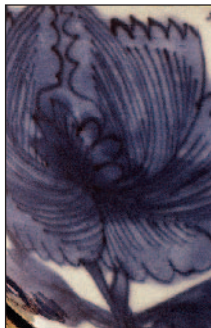
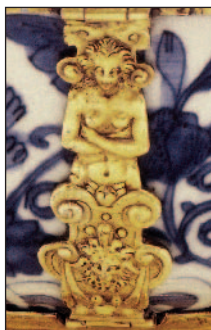
National Palace Museum, Taipei





down like melted lard and end in an irregularly curved line before reaching the bottom of the piece. This is evident in various examples containing tinges of blue.

Guan ware was the “imperial ware” of the Song Dynasty, *guan* meaning “official” or “imperial”, and the name is applied to the productions of the imperial potteries at Jingdezhen. The first factory in the Song



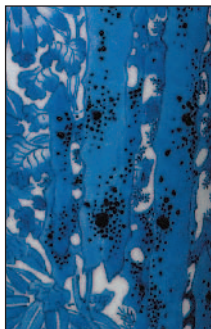
Bowl

Ming Dynasty, c. 1599-1600

Blue-and-white porcelain,
maximum diameter: 23.6 cm

Victoria and Albert Museum, London





Dynasty was founded early in the 11th century at the capital, the modern Kaifeng. A few years later, the dynasty was driven southward by the advancing Tartars, and new factories had to be founded in the new capital, the modern Hangzhou, to supply table services for the palace. The glazes of the early Guan ware were rich and unctuous, generally crackled and imbued with various

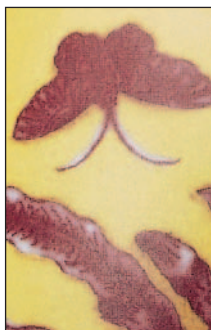
Large Rouleau Vase

Transition period, 1620-1683

Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 45 cm

Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





monochrome tints of which “clair de lune” was the most highly esteemed of all, followed by pale purple, emerald green (literally *gros vert*) and lastly grey. The Hangzhou Guan ware was made of a reddish paste covered with the same glazes, and we constantly meet with the description of bowls and cups with iron-coloured feet and brown mouths where the glaze was thinnest. A curious characteristic

Yu Hu Chun Vase

17th century

“Two-toned” blue and yellow porcelain, height: 34 cm
The Palace Museum, Beijing





of all the above glazes is the occasional blotched red due to oxidation in the kiln, which contrasts vividly with the colour of the surrounding ground. These blotches sometimes accidentally take on the shape of butterflies or some other natural form, and then they are classified as a result of furnace transmutation. The ordinary *Yuan tao* or “Yuan Dynasty Porcelain” of Chinese collectors generally

Jar

17th century

Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 77 cm

The Palace Museum, Beijing





resembles the imperial ware of the Song Dynasty, as it is fashioned in the same way and differs only in comparative coarseness and inferior technique.

The Ge ware of the Song Dynasty was the early crackled ware fabricated by brother potters in the jurisdiction of Longquan in the 12th century. The early Ge ware was distinctive especially for its crackling, which made it look



Plate with Dragon Pattern

Transition period, Chongzhen era, 1628-1644
 Blue porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration (*wucui*),
 maximum diameter: 27 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





as if it were “broken into a hundred pieces” or “like the roe of a fish” – the French *truitée*. The principal colours of this crackled glaze were pale purple, due to manganiferous cobalt, and “millet-coloured”, a bright yellow derived from antimony. Such was the original Ge ware. The name has since been extended to include every kind of porcelain covered with crackled monochrome glazes in all

Wine Bottle with Bamboo Pattern

c. 1640-1650

Cobalt blue porcelain with overglaze enamel
decoration (*wucaizhu*), height: 14.2 cm
Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, London





shades of celadon, grey and white. The old, crackled ware was highly prized in Borneo and other islands of the Eastern Archipelago as far east as Seram, and it figures largely among the relics of ancient Chinese porcelain brought to our museums from these parts.

Ding ware was made in the province of Zhili. The main product was white, but one variety was dark reddish-brown and another,

Plate with Floral and Bird Pattern

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722

Porcelain with green overglaze enamel decoration (*famille verte*),
maximum diameter: 34.5 cm

Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





very rare, as black as lacquer. The white was of two classes. The first was as white as flour; the second was of a yellowish, clay-like tint. This porcelain, usually of delicate, resonant body and invested with a soft-looking, fluent glaze of ivory-white, is probably more common in collections than any other of the Song wares. The bowls and dishes were often fired bottom upwards, and the delicate rims,

Brush Holder

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
 Porcelain with green overglaze enamel decoration
(famille verte), height: 15.3 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





left unglazed, were afterwards mounted with copper rims to prevent damage. Some were covered in plain white, the glaze collecting outside in teardrops; others had ornamental patterns finely engraved in the paste; a third class was impressed inside with intricate and elaborate designs in pronounced relief, the principal ornamental motifs being the tree peony, lily flowers and flying phoenixes.



Jar Decorated with Characters

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
 Porcelain with green overglaze enamel decoration
(famille verte), height: 56 cm
 Casa-museu Dr Anastácio Gonçalves, Lisbon





Qingbai ware, which is also notable, is the famous celadon ware made at this time in the province of Zejiang, the green porcelain *par excellence* of the Chinese, the *seiji* of the Japanese, the *maribani* of the Persians. The Longquan porcelain of the Song Dynasty is distinguished by its bright grass-green hue, which the Chinese liken to fresh onion sprouts, a more pronounced colour than the greyish sea-green of later celadons.

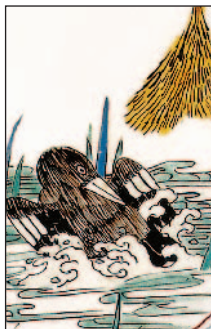
Zun Vase

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
 Porcelain with cobalt blue and copper-red underglaze
 decoration, partially covered by celadon glaze,
 height: 46.5 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





Jun ware was a kind of faïence made at Yuxian in the province of Henan. The glazes were remarkable for their brilliancy and manifold varieties of colour, especially the transmutation flambés that were composed of flashing reds passing through intermediate shades of purple to pale blue, which have hardly been equalled since. The great variety of glaze colours turned out here in former



Large Plate with Flower and Bird Pattern

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
 Porcelain with green overglaze enamel decoration (*famille verte*),
 maximum diameter: 35 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





times may be gathered from a list of Yuxian pieces sent down from the palace to be reproduced at the imperial potteries at Jingdezhen in the reign of Yung Chêng, the list comprising rose crimson, pyrus japonica pink, aubergine purple, plum, "mule's liver mixed with horse's lung", dark purple, yellow millet, sky blue, furnace transmutations (*yao-pien*) and flambés. These were all reproduced

Zun Vase

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
Monochromatic porcelain with oxblood glaze,
height: 38.8 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





on porcelain in due course during the first half of the 18th century, and the new white body was in marked contrast with the sandy ill-leavigated paste of the original pieces.

The final porcelain ware of the Song Dynasty that demands notice and description is the Jian ware, produced in Jianyang in the province of Fujian, where the black-enamelled

Imperial Bowl

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
 Porcelain, with overglaze *falangcai* enamel decoration,
 maximum diameter: 15.3 cm
 National Palace Museum, Taipei



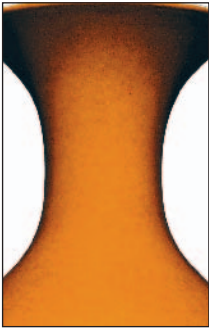


cups with spreading sides, so highly appreciated for the tea ceremony of the time, were made. The lustrous black coat of these cups was speckled and dappled all over with spots of silvery white, simulating the fur of a hare or the breast of a grey partridge, hence the names of “hare’s fur glaze” and “partridge cups” that were given to

Guanyin

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722, 17th century
 Moulded porcelain with engraved underglaze
 decoration, height: 31 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





the creations by connoisseurs. These little teacups were valued also by the Japanese for use in their elaborate formal tea ceremonies; they paid immense prices and mounted the cups with silver rims, adhering pieces together with gold lacquer when the porcelain was broken.

Baluster Vase

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
Porcelain with monochromatic red overglaze
enamel decoration, height: 45.5 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





The more recent Chien Yao, it must be noted, which was fabricated after the time of the Ming Dynasty at Dehua in the same province, is altogether different from the Jian ware of the Song which has just been described, being the velvety white porcelain sometimes known as *blanc de Chine*, which will be described presently.

Large Plate with Phoenix and Dragon Pattern

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period (marked), 1662-1722
 Blue-and-white porcelain, maximum diameter: 52 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





V. Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

The Ming Dynasty is famous in the annals of Chinese ceramic art for having made such great advances under its rule that in the reign of the Wanli Emperor, as the native writers say, there was nothing that could not be made of porcelain. The censors of the time indicted a series of urgent protests against the expenditure by the



Jar with Vine Branches

Qing Dynasty, beginning of the Kangxi period, 1662-1722
Cobalt blue porcelain with green overglaze enamel decoration
(*famille verte*), height: 27.4 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





emperor of so much money on mere articles of luxury, which are preserved in the ceramic archives. The court indents were truly conceived on a magnificent scale: in the year 1554, 26,350 bowls with 30,500 saucers to match, 6,000 ewers with 6,900 wine cups, and 680 large garden fish bowls costing forty taels each were requisitioned, among a number of other things.

Fish-Shaped Water Pitcher

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
 Porcelain with enamel on biscuit (*sancai*), height: 13.3 cm
 Victoria and Albert Museum, London



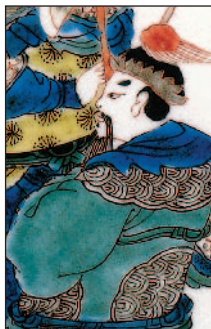


These indents, taken from the archives of Jingdezhen and all dated, are a mine of precise information for the investigation of glazes and styles of decoration, now that Chinese ceramic terminology is becoming better known. In the year 1544, for example, we find an order for 1,340 table services of twenty-seven pieces each: 380 to be painted in blue on a white ground with a pair of

Brush Box

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
Blue-and-white porcelain with red and green celadon
underglaze decoration, maximum diameter: 18.5 cm
National Palace Museum, Taipei





dragons surrounded by clouds; 160 to be white, with dragons engraved in the paste under the glaze; 160 coated in monochrome brown *fond laque*, or “dead leaf” tint; 160 monochrome turquoise-blue; 160 coral or iron-red, instead of the copper-red previously required; 160 enamelled yellow; and 160 enamelled bright green.

Plate with Romanesque Decoration

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
 Porcelain with green overglaze enamel decoration
(famille verte), maximum diameter: 20.5 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





In the face of these documents, it is no longer permissible to stigmatise any one of the above colours as subsequent inventions, although Père d'Entrecolles did so in the case of the *fond laque* colour, a glaze affording all shades of brown from chocolate to "old gold".

Plate

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
 Porcelain with green overglaze enamel decoration
(famille verte), maximum diameter: 25.1 cm
 Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, London





The Hongwu Emperor, founder of the Ming Dynasty, rebuilt the imperial porcelain manufactory at Jingdezhen in the second year of his reign (1369), and the production remained concentrated at this place and gradually developed under the direct patronage of the later emperors.

Two-Handled Cup

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
 Porcelain with green overglaze enamel decoration
(famille verte), maximum diameter: 13.4 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





From this period on, artistic work in porcelain became a monopoly of Jingdezhen, in the province of Jiangxi. All the older glazes of repute were reproduced here, and many newer methods of decoration were invented and distributed from its kilns throughout China and sent by trade routes to all parts of the non-Chinese world. Many of the other factories either disappeared

Stemmed Bowl with Lid

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
Cobalt blue porcelain with overglaze enamel
decoration (*ducai*), height: 17.5 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





altogether or degenerated to provide coarser ware adapted only for local consumption.

The one exception to this general rule is the factory of Dehua, in the province of Fujian, where the *blanc de Chine* porcelain is produced. The potteries were established here early in the Ming Dynasty. Their characteristic production is the white porcelain par excellence, the *blanc de Chine* mentioned

Vase with Landscape Pattern

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722
 Porcelain with yellowish enamel decoration on biscuit
(famille jaune), height: 44 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





frequently by French ceramic writers. It differs widely from other Chinese porcelain, the paste of smooth texture being of a creamy white tint resembling ivory; the rich, thick glaze, which has a satiny aspect like the surface of soft-paste porcelain, blends closely with the paste underneath. During the Ming Dynasty, these potteries were celebrated for their well-modelled images of Buddhist

Quadrilateral Vase with Floral Pattern

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722

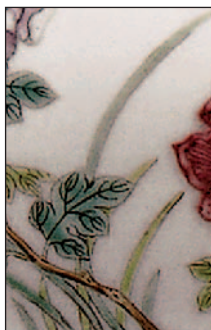
Black decoration on biscuit (*famille noire*), height: 46 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London





divinities like Maitreya, the coming Buddha, Guan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy, the Buddhist saint Bodhidharma, the immortals of Taoism and many others.

We now pass on to the consideration of Ming porcelain decorated in colours (*wucai*). The earliest specimens of this important class seem to have undergone a preliminary firing,



Small Water Pot

Qing Dynasty, end of the Kangxi period (marked), 1662-1722
 Porcelain with copper-red underglaze and overglaze
 enamel decoration, height: 7.5 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





the raw body having been worked in relief with defining rims and counter-sunk partitions, then baked to the consistency of biscuit and filled in with coloured glazes, known technically as glazes of the *demi-grand feu* because they were fired at a comparatively low heat. The turquoise and aubergine purple porcelain of the Kangxi Emperor's

Tang-Style Jar

Qing Dynasty, c. 1680-1735
Monochromatic blue porcelain, height: 51.8 cm
The Palace Museum, Beijing





reign and the Japanese Kishiu ware may probably both be traced back to archaic Ming porcelain of this class.

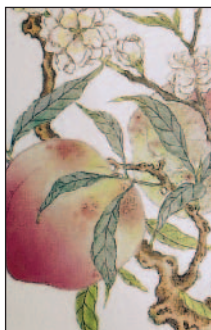
Cobalt blue as an underglaze colour was used in the decoration of porcelain throughout the Ming Dynasty, both in combination with other colours and alone. In the general run of "blue and white", three well-defined periods are to be distinguished from



Ewer with Flower, Leaf and Rock Pattern

End of the 17th century
 Porcelain with green overglaze enamel decoration
(famille verte), height: 37.5 cm
 Casa-museu Dr Anastácio Gonçalves, Lisbon





the rest. The reign of the Xuande Emperor (1426-1435) specialised in a pale grey-blue porcelain of pure tint, called at the time "Mohammedan blue", which was somewhat like the later Japanese "blue and white" of Hirado, pencilled under the ordinary glaze; or under a specially prepared finely crackled glaze in the forerunners of the so-called "soft paste", which are occasionally found with

Plate with Butterfly and Peach Pattern

Qing Dynasty, c. 1680-1735

Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration

(*famille rose*), maximum diameter: 38 cm

The Palace Museum, Beijing





this mark attached. The reign of Jiajing (1522-1566) produced a dark full-toned blue of marvellous depth and lustre. The joint reigns of Longqing and Wanli (1567-1620) showed a gradually improving technique, especially in the use of the cobalt as a ground wash, foreshadowing the greater triumphs of the coming Kangxi epoch.

Small Monochromatic Hu Vase

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, end of the 17th century
 Porcelain with monochromatic copper-red
 underglaze decoration, height: 16.9 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





The decoration of Chinese porcelain in under-glaze cobalt blue and under-glaze copper red, both colours of the *grand feu*, was already fashionable in the first half of the 15th century, during the reign of the Xuande Emperor. The application of muffle-stove enamels identical to those used in cloisonné enamelling on metal was a later development

Tea Bowl

17th-18th century

Porcelain with *falangcai* enamel decoration,

height: 6.1 cm

National Palace Museum, Taipei





of the art. The enamel colours were first employed as ground washes to relieve and heighten the blue, then used in combination, until they gradually dominated in the scheme of coloured decoration typical of the reign of the Wanli Emperor and became known to the Chinese as “Wanli Five Colours” decoration.

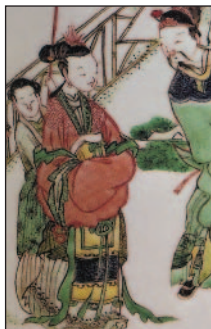
Bottomless Black Vase with Peach Pattern

Beginning of the 18th century
 Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration
(famille rose), height: 40.8 cm
 Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo





Large quantities of Chinese porcelain were made for exportation in the kilns of Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province and traded through Southeast Asia and by an overland route through Turkey into Europe. In 1557, the Portuguese established a trading base in Macau in southern China and began to deal in porcelain. Much of this porcelain went



Vase Decorated with a Marriage Scene

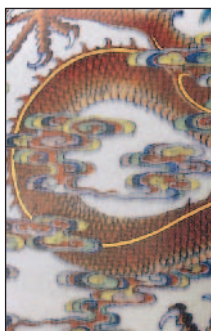
18th century

Porcelain with green overglaze enamel decoration

(*famille verte*), height: 44.8 cm

Shanghai Museum, Shanghai





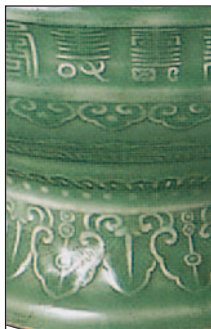
directly to Lisbon, so it was still extremely rare and highly prized in England, although the activities of English pirates did increase the British supply somewhat. The founding of the Dutch East India Company in 1602 led to greater quantities of porcelain entering the market, with a consequent drop in its status and value.

Bottle with Dragon Pattern

18th century

Porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration, height: 49.5 cm
The Palace Museum, Beijing





Some pieces made in Jingdezhen were for the domestic market and some for export. Chinese porcelain was a particularly exotic and highly valued product in 16th-century England, often considered in the same way as natural curiosities like ostrich eggs, nautilus or trochus shells, serpentine (a hard green stone), coconut or gourd cups, and

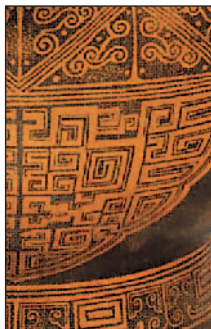
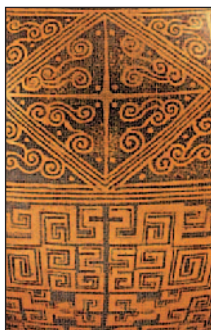
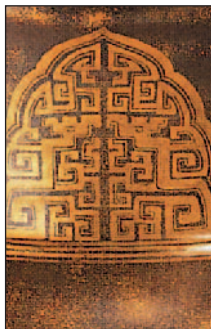
Celadon Vase

18th century

Monochromatic porcelain, height: 42 cm

Baur Collection, Geneva





given expensive silver or gold mounts. Many people were still not certain what it was. Some said it was a precious stone or a composite material made from crushed shells. The possession of such items made of hard, white, translucent material and decorated in fine detail denoted wealth and high social standing.

Vase

18th century

Porcelain with brown overglaze enamel decoration,

height: 25.5 cm

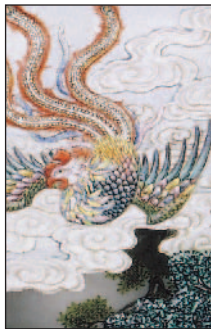
Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo





VI. Kangxi Period (1644-1722), Qing Dynasty

We have now reached the culminating epoch of the ceramic art in China by common consent of all connoisseurs. The brilliant renaissance of the art of porcelain that distinguishes the reign of the Qing Dynasty's Kangxi Emperor is shown in every class: in the

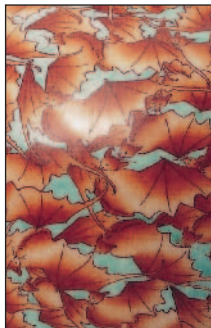
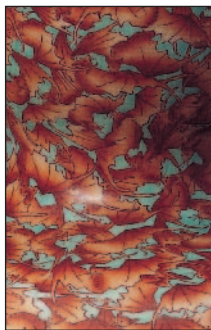


Vase with Bird Pattern

18th century

Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration
(*famille rose*), height: 63 cm
Private collection





single-coloured glazes, in the overall quality of the ceramics, in the painted decorations of the *grand feu*, in the jewel-like enamels of the muffle-kiln and their manifold combinations, in the pulsating vigour of every shade of blue in the inimitable “blue and white”.

The viceroy of Jiangxi in the beginning of the reign lent his name to two glazes,

Gourd-Shaped Vase Decorated with Bats

18th century

Porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration, height: 33.3 cm
The Palace Museum, Beijing





both derived from copper silicates: the rare apple-green *lang yao* and the still more celebrated ruby-red *lang yao*, the *sang de bœuf* of the French that was really a revival of the “sacrificial red” glaze of the previous dynasty and a precursor of the costly peach bloom, or *peau de pêche*, which was fired

Commemorative Plate

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722, dated 1713
 Porcelain with green overglaze enamel decoration
(famille verte), maximum diameter: 25.5 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





from the same elements later in the Kangxi Emperor's reign.

The renaissance of ceramic art during the reign was mainly due to a secretary of the Metropolitan Board of Works, appointed in 1683 to be superintendent of the imperial factories of Jingdezhen, which had lately been rebuilt. For all the new monochrome

Imperial Bowl

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722, c. 1720

Porcelain with *falangcai* enamel decoration,
maximum diameter: 11.3 cm

Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





glazes introduced under his tenure and for his other ceramic triumphs, there are many books on Chinese porcelain available for reference that also describe the characteristics of the *famille verte* that came out of the reign and the *famille rose* that developed towards its demise.

Imperial Bowl

Qing Dynasty, Kangxi period, 1662-1722, c. 1720

Porcelain with *falangcai* enamel decoration,
maximum diameter: 10.5 cm

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Various themes and patterns adorn porcelain pieces from this period. There are examples of charming jars, intended to hold New Year's gifts of fragrant tea, that are painted with floral, symbolic designs appropriate to the season. Prunus flowers burst forth in the warmth of returning spring while the winter's ice, seen through their meshes, is just melting. Other jars are strewn with single



Tea Bowl

Qing Dynasty, Yongzheng period, 1723-1735
 Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration
(famille rose), maximum diameter: 14.4 cm
 Staatliches Museen zu Berlin, Berlin





prunus blossoms and buds reserved in white on a pulsating blue ground, cross-hatched with lines of darker blue to represent cracking ice. Another artistic phase of cobalt decoration involves finely pounded pigment that is blown upon the raw biscuit to produce, when glazed, a “powder blue”, or *bleu fouetté* ground, which is interrupted

Imperial Bowl

Qing Dynasty, Yongzheng period, 1723-1735
 Porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration,
 maximum diameter: 15.1 cm
 National Palace Museum, Taipei





by shaped panels reserved in white. Panel pictures are sometimes painted with underglaze colours in the same tone as the ground; occasionally, bright overglaze enamel colours of the *famille verte* style are applied. In other examples of the class, the powder blue ground is pencilled over with gold or has reserves of fishes and other designs filled in with vermilion and gold. But the *bleu fouetté* is at its very best as a monochrome,

Large Hexagonal Vase

Qing Dynasty, Yongzheng period (marked), 1723-1735
 Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 66.8 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





unadorned, thickly strewn with tiny specks of intense blue shading down as they mix and melt into the pellucid glaze.



Some pieces are decorated with archaic dragons and cloud-scrolls mingled with symbols of longevity and happiness, all pencilled in underglaze copper red (*rouge de cuivre*) of the *grand feu*, the technique and



Monochromatic Cup

Qing Dynasty, Yongzheng period, 1723-1735
 Monochromatic white porcelain, maximum diameter: 20 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





firing of which are the same as those of the cobalt blue. A vase with imperial dragons grasping characters as it rises from the sea is painted in the soft coral red of the muffle stove, derived from iron peroxide (called *rouge de fer*). This last colour, of paler coral shade in combination with gold, has been used in the charmingly artistic decoration of other bottles. In addition to coral red,

Peach-Shaped Cup

Qing Dynasty, Yongzheng period, 1723-1735
 Porcelain with celadon glaze, 16.2 x 11.5 x 4 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





the same iron peroxide, fired at the heat of the *demi-grand feu*, furnishes all possible tones of brown, ranging from chocolate and “dead leaf” (*feuille morte*) tints to “old gold”. Some decoration involves a brown ground overlaid with flowers in white “slip”, a kind of pattern that has sometimes been wrongly attributed to Persian ceramic masters.

Imperial Bowl

Qing Dynasty, Yongzheng period, 1723-1735

Porcelain with *falangcai* enamel decoration,
maximum diameter: 14.8 cm

Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





For a typical example of the *sancai* or three-coloured decoration on biscuit, see the fish-shaped water pitcher (p. 159), which is painted with the brownish-purple, green and yellow enamels of this genre. The remaining examples of the *wucan* or five-coloured decoration in enamels of the period can

Vase with Bird Pattern

Qing Dynasty, end of the Yongzheng period, 1723-1735, or
beginning of the Qianlong period, 1736-1795

Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel
decoration (*famille rose*), height: 20 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





hardly be illustrated properly without a full palette of colours. Another form of decoration, the black lac, is an effective patterning that is spread as a thick coat upon the body of the vase, left unglazed for the purpose, while the rims and interior are glazed; the mother-of-pearl is occasionally artificially tinted and so

Plate with Bird Pattern

Qing Dynasty, Yongzheng period, 1723-1735,
or Qianlong period, 1736-1795
Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration
(*famille rose*), maximum diameter: 20 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





minutely carved that every leaf of the tree is distinct; the houses are inlaid in plates of silver, and gold leaf is applied at frequent intervals to heighten the general effect.

Yet another common form of decoration is the glaze called the “mustard crackle”, which corresponds to the millet-coloured glaze of



Bottle

Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period, 1736-1795
Blue-and-white porcelain, height: 47 cm
Asian Art Museum, San Francisco





the Chinese. This crackled glaze dates from the Song Dynasty, but it is difficult to identify, because with age the glaze can be inaccurately described as “rice-coloured”, and consequently taken to be a kind of grey crackle, not the rich yellow in well-preserved pieces. In Chinese silks, the millet

Vase with Peach Branch Pattern

Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period, 1736-1795
 Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration
(famille rose), height: 52 cm
 The British Museum, London





colour is a full primrose yellow – as a colour applied to ceramic glazes, it often deepens to mustard, although always paler than imperial yellow, which is more like the yolk of an egg in its deepest tint.

The turquoise blue or “peacock-green” (also known in Chinese books by other



Bowl

Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period, 1736-1795
 Porcelain with enamel decoration,
 maximum diameter: 10.3 cm
 National Palace Museum, Taipei



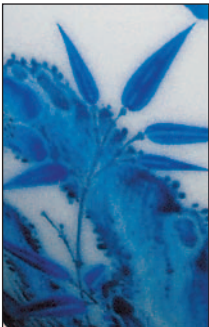


names originating from its resemblance to the blue plumes of the kingfisher that were used in jewellery) is a self-coloured glaze of charming hue and *truité*, or finely crackled texture. It is prepared from copper combined with a nitre flux and generally – although not always – applied on biscuit.

Large Vase with Quail Pattern

Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period, 1736-1795
 Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration
(famille rose), height: 52.6 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





The glaze is really the master quality in porcelain, and some of the other single-coloured glazes of the time require a word of notice. The brilliant oxblood red of the earlier potters was succeeded by its derivatives of softer hue, the “haricot red” and “apple green” of the Chinese, which are known to us

Vase with Knotted Cloth Pattern

Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period (marked), 1736-1795

Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration

(*famille rose*), height: 10.2 cm

Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris



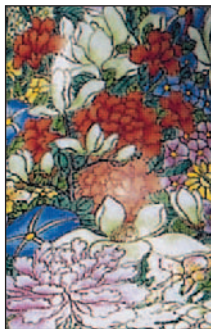


as peach-bloom (*peau de pêche*) or crushed strawberry (*fraise écrasée*); a new bright black appears, shot with purple, the “raven’s wing” glaze of collectors, which is occasionally overlaid with a surface decoration pencilled in gold. Also delicately etched on the surface is the more recent “Mazarin blue” and the soft-toned,

Jar with “Hundred Flowers” Decoration

Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period, 1736-1795
 Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration
(famille rose), height: 48 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris



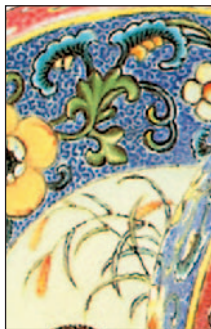


coral-red glaze derived from iron. Some of the most brilliant monochromes in Chinese ceramic history were plain washes of one of the enamel colours used in polychrome decoration, such as the green of the *famille verte*, which supplies an intense shade of colour that flashes with iridescent hues known as “snake-skin green”.

Vase with “Hundred Flowers” Decoration

Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period, 1736-1795
 Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration
(famille rose), height: 32.4 cm
 Asian Art Museum, San Francisco





This was a monochrome used in the imperial factory under the Qing Dynasty, together, we are told, with an “eel-skin yellow” of brownish tint, turquoise, imperial yellow, cucumber green and brownish purple. The palace services of the period were yellow, green or purple, with white for use in mourning, and five-clawed dragons were usually etched in the paste under the monochrome glazes.

Conjoined Vase with Panels of Birds and Flowers

Qing Dynasty, 1742

Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration

(*famille rose*), height: 19.7 cm

National Palace Museum, Taipei





VII. Yongzheng and Qianlong Period (1723-1795), Qing Dynasty

The two reigns of Yongzheng and his celebrated son Qianlong, who succeeded his father in 1736, are taken together on account of the general similarity of their ceramic productions. Jingdezhen and its imperial manufactory still

Garlic Bulb-Shaped Vase

Qing Dynasty, Qianlong period, 1736-1795
Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration
(*famille rose*), height: 28 cm
Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





monopolised ceramic production, its official directors including Tang Ying, who was made assistant director in 1728 and became director in 1736, retaining sole charge up to 1749. Tang Ying was a prolific writer as well as an enthusiastic cultivator of the ceramic arts, and much of our knowledge

Plate with Quail Pattern

Qing Dynasty, mid-18th century
 Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration
(famille rose), maximum diameter: 21 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris





of the craft and its history is thanks to his work. He devoted his powers to the reproduction of archaic wares, specimens of which were sent down from the palace at Peking (modern-day Beijing) so that they could be copied. He also encouraged the invention of new methods of decoration.

Soup Tureen and Base Ordered by Europeans

Qing Dynasty, c. 1775

Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration

(*famille rose*), length: 30 cm

Florindo Ferreira dos Santos Collection, Lisbon





The brilliant greens that dominated the enamels of the painted decoration of the reign of the Kangxi Emperor earned for it the name of *famille verte*. In later periods, the greens become paler in tone, and even these hues have been gradually supplanted by



Punch Bowl

Qing Dynasty, c. 1785

Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration (*famille rose*)
The British Museum, London





rose-reds of crimson and pink shades derived from gold, hence the name of *famille rose* for these enamels, a term that is often applied to the entire scheme of decoration in colours that rose to popularity in the 19th century.



Bowl with Country-Style Pattern

Qing Dynasty, Daoguang period, 1821-1850
 Porcelain with pink overglaze enamel decoration
 (*famille rose*), maximum diameter: 13.9 cm
 Musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet, Paris



List of Illustrations

B

Baluster Vase	153
Bianhu Gourd-Shaped Vase	39
Blue and Yellow Plate	115
Blue Plate	83
Bottle	223
Bottle Decorated with a Dragon Pattern	97
Bottle Vase with Fruit Pattern	95
Bottle with Dragon Pattern	191
Bottomless Black Vase with Peach Pattern	187
Bowl	25, 27, 45, 57, 123, 125, 227
Bowl Decorated with Boys Playing	87
Bowl Decorated with Cavaliers	91
Bowl with Country-Style Pattern	247
Brush Box	161
Brush Holder	139

C

Celadon Vase	193
Commemorative Plate	201
Conjoined Vase with Panels of Birds and Flowers	237
Cup	19

D

Double Bottle	77
---------------	----

E

Ewer	37
Ewer with a Dragon and Phoenix Pattern	69
Ewer with Flower, Leaf and Rock Pattern	179

F

Fish-Shaped Water Pitcher	159
---------------------------	-----

Flat Vase with Dragon Pattern	93
Flat Vase with Figures	43

G

Garlic Bulb-Shaped Vase	239
Gourd-Shaped Vase Decorated with Bats	199
Guanyin	151

H

Handled Gourd-Shaped Bottle with Floral Pattern	17
---	----

I

Imperial Bowl	149, 203, 205, 209, 217
Incense Altar Set	111

J

Jar	131
Jar Decorated with Characters	141

Jar Decorated with Horsemen	29
Jar with a Floral and Bird Pattern	109
Jar with a Lid	47
Jar with "Hundred Flowers" Decoration	233
Jar with Peony Pattern	85
Jar with Romanesque Pattern	113
Jar with Vine Branches	157
Ju Ware Narcissus Planter	21

K

Kendi Drinking Bottle	35
-----------------------	----

L

Large Hexagonal Vase	211
Large Jar with a Lid	121
Large Jar with Dragon Pattern	107
Large Plate with Flower and Bird Pattern	145
Large Plate with Phoenix and Dragon Pattern	155

Large Rouleau Vase	127
Large Vase Covered with Dragon and Phoenix Pattern	63
Large Vase with Handles	61
Large Vase with Quail Pattern	229
Loop-Handled Vase	117

M

Meiping Bottle	31
Meiping Vase	103
Monochromatic Bowl	59
Monochromatic Cup	213

O

Octagonal Rhyton Supported by an Animal Head	9
--	---

P

Peach-Shaped Cup	215
Pear-Shaped Vase Decorated with a Pair of Canaries	89

Pear-Shaped Vase with Flying Storks	71
Pillow in the Shape of a Child	13
Plate	99, 165
Plate with Bird Pattern	221
Plate with Butterfly and Peach Pattern	181
Plate with Dragon Pattern	133
Plate with Floral and Bird Pattern	137
Plate with Quail Pattern	241
Plate with Romanesque Decoration	163
Punch Bowl	245

Q

Quadrilateral Vase with Floral Pattern	173
--	-----

S

Small Bowl	33
Small Jar with a Lid	119
Small Monochromatic Hu Vase	183

Small Water Pot	175
Soup Tureen and Base Ordered by Europeans	243
Spouted Vessel with a Dragon Pattern	75
Stemmed Bowl with Lid	169
Stemmed Cup	49, 51, 55, 65, 101
Stemmed Cup with a Pattern of Birds on Flower Branches	67
Stemmed Cup with Dragon Pattern	53

T

Tang-Style Jar	177
Tea Bowl	11, 185, 207
Teapot with Dragon Pattern	79, 81
Teapot with Pouring Spout	23
Two Bottles with Phoenix Pattern	73
Two-Handled Cup	167

V

Vase	15, 195
------	---------

Vase Decorated with a Marriage Scene	189
Vase in the Shape of a Celestial Sphere	41
Vase with Bird Pattern	197, 219
Vase with "Hundred Flowers" Decoration	235
Vase with Knotted Cloth Pattern	231
Vase with Landscape Pattern	171
Vase with Peach Branch Pattern	225

W

Wine Bottle with Bamboo Pattern	135
Writing Box	105

Y/Z

Yu Hu Chun Vase	129
Zun Vase	143, 147

