

# Research on the "Painting of Brewing Tea" on the Export Porcelain

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## ABSTRACT

The "Painting of Brewing Tea" appearing on export porcelain contains a long history of Chinese tea culture, and the "Painting of Brewing Tea" is a concentrated reflection of Chinese religious and cultural connotations. Europeans have depicted their curiosity and longing for Chinese tea culture on top of Chinese style export porcelain, bringing novel tea drinking culture to Europe. At the same time, guided by the demand of the European local market, they have innovated the unique afternoon tea culture in Europe, reflecting the Chinese wisdom and profound Chinese cultural charm that deeply penetrate the hearts of Europe behind the spread of Chinese style porcelain in Europe.

**Keywords:** Export porcelain, Chinese style, Brewing tea.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Chinese porcelain not only serves as a symbol of European noble status, but also becomes an indispensable part of European afternoon tea and entertainment life. Europe needs to import a large amount of tea from China, and during sea transportation, the tea has a large volume and light weight. In order to increase the weight of the ship's hull and better grasp the direction, porcelain is usually placed at the bottom of the ship's hold. Therefore, porcelain is also known as ballast stone. At the same time, porcelain is placed on the bottom layer due to its physical characteristics, which can effectively prevent tea from getting damp. Therefore, in export transportation and European tea drinking, porcelain and tea always accompanied with each other. Tea culture and porcelain culture have jointly influenced the consumer society in Europe. The afternoon tea culture of using porcelain to taste tea has made European nobles live in elegance and luxury, which reflects the nourishment and integration of culture. And the prosperity of afternoon tea culture has promoted the development of tea utensils in the UK. Tea cups, tea pitchers, and chawan with a sense of ceremony and orientalism have become important artifacts for prominent figures to showcase their status and aesthetic taste. As porcelain used as a tea drinking

utensil, its decorative patterns serve as a situational tea drinking activity. When faced with the tea cooking patterns that appear in porcelain, the porcelain not only illustrates the coexistence of porcelain culture and tea culture, but also helps to understand Europe's attitude towards the two cultural and artistic treasures from China through their patterns.

## 2. THE EXPRESSION FORM OF "PAINTING OF BREWING TEA"

There are many depictions of Chinese tea cooking in export fans, as shown in "Figure 1". The scene of a family sitting around a tea stove is full of joy. The woman holds a pot in one hand and a saucer in the other, with a tea cup holding tea on top. Her hair is tied up with cloth and she is dressed in thick cloth clothes. She stands next to the gossip shaped stove, with ventilation openings on all sides of the stove. The man lies on the chair, holding a pipe in one hand and a saucer in the other, with her right foot resting on her left foot. The two children hide behind the screen, watching the man pick up the tea cup, and another child hides by the fire and watches the tea being cooked. Europeans' depiction of the painting is driven by their desire to explore Chinese culture. Intentionally or unintentionally, the characters in the painting always focus on the teapot.



Figure 1 Home tea brewing painting fan.

"Here's the skill of brewing Kong Fu tea. The skill is based on Lu Yu's 'Tea Classic', and the utensils are more delicate. The furnace is shaped like a cutting cylinder, about one foot and two or three inches high, made of fine white mud. The best pots are from Yixing Kiln. The pots are round with flat body, pouted spout and bent handle. The big ones can contain as much as half litre of water." "The first is to contain spring water in the boiling pot, and decoct the water with fine coal to the first boiling, then put the tea leaves in the pot, cover it, and then pour water on it. Then people can taste the tea. The smell is fragrant, and the tea tastes purer than chewing plum blossom." [1] As for the utensils and techniques of Kung Fu tea, utensils are best made from Yixing purple clay pots. The brewing method is quite exquisite, and it needs to be carefully and slowly tasted. The strong interest of Europeans in Chinese tea culture gave birth to the painting of tea brewing on the porcelain. Based on this mysterious Eastern beverage, they created themes about how Chinese people cook tea and how to drink it. Based on the existing tea brewing scenes, there are scenes of setting a fire in the mountains to brew tea and brewing tea in a teapot, as well as recording the process of tea distribution with a teapot and tea delivery by a maid. The painting of tea brewing usually centers around the cooked teapot, which is placed on the tea table. The person holding the fan and lighting the fire usually sits on a low stool, with the tea maker and tea distributor on both sides.

There are a large number of Chinese tea cooking scenes in European Chinese style porcelain art books such as Schenck Prints. As shown in "Figure 3", a family of three is playing and cooking tea by the stream outside the courtyard, dressed in cloth clothes to reflect their identity as ordinary people. A fire pot is placed next to the small stream in front of them, and the teapot is placed on the fire pot to cook tea. The teapot is round and full, with a slightly retracted spout and a handle for easy carrying. The child's hand is held by his mother,

while the other hand is raised. His gaze is tightly fixed on the tea set tray held by his mother. The man is half bent, arms resting on the child's shoulders, and his gaze is fixed on the teapot being brewed. The protagonist focuses on the teapot and porcelain, demonstrating the importance of porcelain and tea culture. In painting of literati's gathering, as shown in "Figure 2", there are similarities in the form of such images.



Figure 2 Song Dynasty tea ordering skills, painting of literati's gathering (partial).



Figure 3 Painting of family drinking tea and touring.

In order to ensure the purity of Chinese taste, European craftsmen try to resemble the manuscript as much as possible when painting porcelain, as shown in "Figure 4" and "Figure 5". The printmaking and porcelain patterns are almost identical. A tall and thin old man is pouring tea for a hunter wearing a bamboo hat and carrying a bow and arrow bag. The old man is dressed in cloth, with a small braid on his head, pouring tea with one hand and supporting it on the table with the other, standing barefoot on the platform. On the platform, the fire is booming, with firewood placed at the bottom and a teapot heating the tea at the top. The hunter leans back, dresses in patterned cloth clothes, with cloth shoes on his feet, and holds a saucer and cup in his hand. Beside him is an oval shield, with both eyes focused on the cup. In the background, there is smoke generated by the stove and a large pot, with various cooking utensils such as horns and lids hanging on the wooden frame behind the pot. The difference between porcelain painting and

printmaking manuscripts is that there is a smiling Maitreya Buddha sitting directly above the wooden frame in the manuscript, symbolizing good luck and wealth. On the left is a square edged bottle with branches inserted at the mouth, resembling a pure bottle in the hands of Guanyin; In the porcelain painting, Maitreya Buddha has been removed, and the position, shape, and size of the willow branches in the clean bottle have all changed. The reason for this may be that foreigners are not clear about the metaphorical meaning of Maitreya Buddha. In order to ensure the balance of the picture, the jade net bottle originally on the left side of Maitreya Buddha was enlarged to achieve balance. This kind of appropriation, adjustment, and reconstruction caused by Europe's unfamiliarity with Chinese culture and elements in manuscripts reflects the creative laws of European Chinese style porcelain painting. Although this may result in some unique Chinese elements losing their own value, and the tampering with Chinese culture may also lead to Europeans misreading Chinese ceramics, it does not affect Europe's spontaneous enthusiasm for interpreting China.



Figure 4 Manuscript of two people sitting oppositely and pouring tea.



Figure 5 Painting of two people sitting oppositely and drinking tea on a pot.

According to the number of characters appearing in the pattern, the Chinese style tea brewing pattern can be preliminarily divided into three forms: multiple person, double person, and single person tea brewing. Firstly, there is a picture of multiple people brewing tea; In the Chinese style

porcelain painting of tea brewing, there are both males and females. There are female servants cooking tea for the main guest, and male attendants pouring tea for the female host. The number of people is usually two to three, with one person brewing tea, one person dividing tea, or one person pouring tea, and one person delivering tea. In the picturesque wilderness, many people sit around the tea stove, with flowers and trees on the side, feeling relaxed and happy. This composition is clearly reminiscent of the local Chinese tea cooking scene, and also imitates the way and demeanor of Chinese people serving tea. And the picture of two people brewing tea is the most common form, usually centered around the tea table, with the people brewing and dividing tea fundamentally located on the left and right sides. The third type of single person tea brewing painting; the quantity is relatively small. As shown in "Figure 6", a man dressed in spotted flesh colored cloth and wearing a black bamboo hat is kneeling to brew tea. The teapot used is a classic blue and white ware, and there are also blue and white pots, jars, and pots on the table behind him. This drawing showcases to the West the possibility of Chinese people brewing tea without a stove.



Figure 6 Sugar box with painting of single person tea brewing.

Oriental elements are everywhere, and tea brewing images also appear in Chinese style wallpapers and the image of "Chinese people" in "European clothing". As shown in "Figure 7", on the right side of the front of the gold storage box is a man dressed in white and green sleeves, wearing a black hat. He is adding tea to the cup of bald man dressed in red, with a set of tea sets in between. On the round table behind the man in white, there are tall glasses and a round bottle (presumably a wine vessel) used by Europeans for drinking, reflecting the sharing stage of European wine vessels and tea vessels. If the man wearing a bamboo hat is seen as the embodiment of China, and the bald man in red on the left is seen as another civilization, the picture of China delivering tea to other civilizations seems

to imply that tea culture and porcelain culture have linked the two different civilizations.



Figure 7 Painting of two people sitting oppositely and pouring tea on box.

### 3. THE ARTISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE "PAINTING OF BREWING TEA"

The "Painting of Brewing Tea" is often drawn on tea cups and teapots, which may be related to the European idea of matching utensils. "When drinking tea, one should use Chinese tea cups or imitation Chinese porcelain or cloisonne tea cups, otherwise it may not be fashionable enough. Moreover, it is best to sit in a Chinese style imperial chair to appear perfect." [2] The complementary ideas of Europeans regarding the use of artifacts have emerged in every corner of their lives.

The brewing process and tea utensils displayed in European Chinese style porcelain are basically modeled after China. The tea cooker has a traditional Chinese style, with a short and round body and a deep bulging belly, making it easy to cook tea leaves. The circular handle and teapot flow are curved in the middle and lower part of the teapot, making it easy to control the water flow speed and accurately pour tea. Some teapots have iron products embedded at the bottom of the spout and lid to reduce wear and tear. The tea maker wears a pointed hat, a patterned red robe, a large waistband, and holds a tea cup in one hand and a pipe in the other; Another person sits on a stool, dresses in a spotted purple robe, with both hands resting next to the cooked teapot, parallel to the view of the man in red. The characters in the picture have a pleasant expression and seem to be waiting together to taste the beauty of tea. The painted tea utensils, whether in terms of pot shape or function, contain the subtle influence of Chinese tea porcelain culture on Europe.

The color scheme of the tea cooking pictures painted on Meissen porcelain is relatively unified,

with porcelain bodies mostly having a white background, followed by characters wearing red and purple clothing, and a small number of European nobles with gorgeous clothing. The background is usually outdoor scenery, and there are occasional Western trees, flowers, and plants on the green vegetation. The tea brewing utensils in porcelain paintings are usually solid colors with no decorative patterns. It is speculated that the display of patterns is inconvenient due to the small space in the picture, or that the tea cooking utensils are mostly plain and without decorations.

### 4. THE INFLUENCE OF TEA CULTURE ON EUROPE

The tea drinking trend in China began in the Spring and Autumn period, formed in the Jin Dynasty, inherited from the prosperous Tang Dynasty, and flourished in the Song Dynasty. It gradually penetrated into the field of humanities in a spiritual form, becoming a culture with a long history, [3] and integrating with Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism to form a unique Chinese tea culture. Chinese tea culture first influenced neighboring countries such as Japan and South Korea, and later spread to Europe. According to "Suleiman's Journey to China and India", "Chinese people use a type of hay to brew with water and drink. All Chinese cities sell this type of hay, and the quantity is also quite large. People call it 'tea'. Tea has a stronger aroma than clover, but with a slight bitterness. People boil water and use it to brew this kind of grass. This infusion is used as an antidote to eliminate various discomfort and ailments in the body." [4] From this, it can be seen that during the Tang Dynasty, when Suleiman lived, drinking tea had become a trend, and tea, as an important export commodity, would not be available for two centuries. Until now, drinking tea is still a global fashion. The differences that arise from the integration of tea culture with local culture and customs have been demonstrated as early as shortly after porcelain and tea were introduced to Europe.

Just as Chinese tea culture nurtured the classic English afternoon tea, the matching use of tea cups and saucers has become a style, and it can be seen that the tea drinking methods extended from the Song Dynasty tea culture have also subtly infiltrated European social life. During the Great Navigation period, the Dutch brought Chinese tea and porcelain to Europe. At that time, Europeans believed that only matching porcelain made in

China was suitable for tasting Chinese tea. The exquisite appearance and noble temperament of Chinese ceramic tea sets were highly sought after by European nobles. Due to differences in cultural concepts, aesthetic customs, and usage methods, Chinese tea cups are inevitably "Europeanized" during use. The most obvious difference in appearance between Chinese and European tea cups is the "cup handle". Due to the Chinese people's pursuit of tea ceremony, it is necessary to feel the water temperature of the tea wall with their hands when brewing tea (to prevent scalding, Chinese tea cups are designed with a complete set of tea lids and saucers), while Europeans have improved the design of Chinese tea cups based on the shape of local milk cups and added cup handles. As shown in the picture, in the oil painting, people from the upper class enjoy snacks and taste black tea at the dining table. The convener of afternoon tea will choose high-end tea sets to entertain guests, and the host will use white porcelain with red and white stripes, corresponding to the table cloth and red rose decorations. There's the reason to speculate that Chinese style porcelain became an important prop for the European aristocratic class at that time to create a beautiful atmosphere and improve the quality of life; Chinese porcelain or local exquisite porcelain that imitates Chinese porcelain has already infiltrated the social life of European politicians through afternoon tea culture, becoming an important aspect of exquisite enjoyment.

With the promotion of tea in the UK, people's "tea drinking customs have become more widespread. The average British person who drinks tea once in the morning is called 'bed tea'; drinking tea once in the morning is called 'morning tea'; drinking tea once in the afternoon is called 'afternoon tea'; and drinking tea again after dinner is called 'evening tea'." [5] After China's tea culture entered the British market, it evolved into a variety of British tea drinks. British people attempted to brew boiled hot tea into milk, forming "milk tea"; On the basis of hot milk tea, the "fruit tea" has been derived by adding sugar and fruits. The specific brewing method is: "The first is to add concentrated peach or orange juice to the boiling water on the stove and stir evenly. The second is to add a tea bag and stir slightly until the tea soup turns red. The time should not be too long or too short. People can also cut apples, oranges, lemons, and other fruits into small pieces and pour them into the water." [6] Compared to the European alternative tea drinking method, Chinese people have always adhered to tradition and focused on the etiquette and spiritual

pursuit of tea drinking. Chinese tea culture has always been a classic of Chinese culture, and in the process of its dissemination and promotion in the UK, it has also conveyed the unique charm of Chinese tea culture to the world.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Under the conceptualization of prosperous China described in the Eastern records, the royal nobility's pursuit of Chinese porcelain made it a symbol of wealth. Chinese art is a product of a powerful empire that has directly influenced the lifestyle of the nobility: using Chinese porcelain to contain food and show respect to guests, and using Chinese porcelain afternoon tea to showcase taste.

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