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« La plus belle du monde » : le commerce en porcelaine de la Compagnie anglaise des Indes orientales à Canton au XVIII^e siècle

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Hui Tang

Abstract

The innovation of enamels and enamel painting techniques on porcelain during the 1720s marked the establishment of a new type of porcelain product, which soon played a significant role in Chinese porcelain trade at Canton. Yet, the impact of this innovation on export trade has rarely been studied due to the lack of resource. By looking closely to the English East India Company Records, this paper demonstrates that enameled porcelain trade was dynamic and experienced different stages over the eighteenth century. We consider porcelain as a dynamic trade, which was shaped by consumers, artisans, craftsmen and commercial networks. Thanks to detailed records, we show that from the 1720s to the 1750s, enameled porcelain was traded as a new product and created a niche market for private business. After the late 1750s, enameled porcelain trade enjoyed a boost mainly due to the establishment of a manufacture in Canton.

Keywords

enamelled porcelain, export porcelain trade, Canton, East India Company

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Résumé

Les innovations concernant les émaux et la peinture émaillée sur porcelaine durant les années 1720 marquent l'apparition d'un nouveau type de porcelaine qui a rapidement joué un rôle important dans le commerce de la porcelaine à Canton. Pourtant, l'impact de cette innovation sur le commerce d'export a rarement été étudié du fait d'un manque de sources. En lisant en détail les archives de la Compagnie anglaise des Indes orientales, cet article montre que le commerce de la porcelaine émaillée était dynamique et a connu plusieurs phases tout au long du XVIII^e siècle. Cet article envisage les recherches sur la porcelaine comme un secteur en plein essor qui a été modelé par les consommateurs, les artisans et les réseaux commerciaux. Utilisant des archives détaillées et précises, nous montrons qu'entre les années 1720 et 1750, la porcelaine émaillée a constitué un nouveau produit commercial et a créé une niche pour le commerce privé. Après les années 1750, le commerce de la porcelaine émaillée a profité d'une croissance exceptionnelle du fait de la création d'une manufacture à Canton.

Mots-clés

porcelaine émaillée, commerce d'exportation de la porcelaine, Canton, Compagnie anglaise des Indes orientales

Introduction

During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a significant technological innovation took place in Chinese porcelain production. The application of glass-based pigment to the glaze of porcelain was introduced to the Qing court by European missionaries.¹ Under the direct supervision of the Qing Emperor, especially during the Yongzheng reign (r.1723-1735) the technique of producing and using enamel colours soon developed and transferred to other manufactures. The innovation of applying new enamel colours to porcelain occurred within a short period and was to dominate all porcelain consumption in the later period from the 1730s onwards, both in China and beyond. When visiting a Chinese porcelain shop at Canton in 1734, an English East India Company Officer commented on Chinese enamelled porcelain: “...price considered is dearer yet in my opinion the finest of earth, execution and good fancy is so much superior...”² The thin, delicate, translucent porcelain dinner sets and tea sets with over-glaze colours perfectly met European’s taste, tea drinking culture. However, existing scholarship remains silent on the impact of this technological innovation and its wide-reaching consequences, such as the impact on export trade at Canton. This paper thus aims to offer an historical and contextualized perspective on Chinese enamelled porcelain trade at Canton during the eighteenth century.³

The principle objective of this paper is to point out that Chinese porcelain was not simply of one kind; rather, the types ranged from blue and white to white and enamelled porcelain, each of which required different manufacturing skills. Once we know the extent to which over-glazed and colourful enamelled porcelain became available in global markets, it

1. It is noteworthy that Enamels as colourants were already used in glass and Chinese cloisonné enamelling on metal from the fifteenth century. But it was the introduction of new enamel colours from the West especially from the missionaries that led to the technological innovation in porcelain production in China. See SHI Jingfei, *Riyue Guanghua, Qinggong huafalang* [Radiant Luminance: The Painted Enamelware of the Qing Imperial Court], Taipei, The National Palace Museum, 2012, p. 18-26. For the role that missionaries played at the Qing court, see Benjamin A. ELMAN, *On Their Own Terms: Science in China 1550-1900*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2005.

2. India Office Records, IOR/G/12/36, 20 August, 1734, British Library.

3. This paper is drawn from author’s Ph.D thesis: *‘The colours of each piece’: production and consumption of Chinese enamelled porcelain, c.1728-c.1780*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Warwick, 2017.

will become clear that blue and white porcelain can no longer form the only focus for analysing Chinese porcelain's role in world history in the eighteenth century.

Secondly, this paper shows that eighteenth-century China was not merely a place of manufactures and export; rather, Canton actively responded to the availability of new technologies and markets. Current scholarship has largely focused on the surviving objects in overseas countries, the large volume of the trade and how China's export goods played a role in other cultures and economies globally. The discussion embarked upon in this paper will move beyond the trends of the existing literature in terms of the impact of the Chinese export trade on world history by asking how this trade influenced China, especially the eighteenth-century Canton.⁴

Clarification of terminology

The technique of applying enamels over the glaze in China's porcelain production dates back to the thirteenth century in northern China. By the end of the fifteenth century, Jingdezhen potters were able to use six enamel colours: red, yellow, green, turquoise, aubergine, and black. By the 1680s, new enamel colours were introduced to China, namely translucent and opaque over-glaze colours. These new enamels were used to paint porcelain at the imperial workshops in the court. The development of new enamels consisted primarily of three new enamels: ruby enamel, opaque white and opaque yellow. During the Yongzheng reign, the manufacture of enamel colours yielded a significant technical breakthrough, that they successfully created eighteen new enamel colours. In 1729, the court sent

4. The collaborative project titled "La circulation des objets émaillés entre la France et la Chine (fin xviii^e-milieu xix^e siècle)" (2015-2020) between Palace Museum in Beijing and several institutions in France such as the Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l'Asie orientale will definitely bring more fruitful discussions to this field. For more information about this project, see <https://trenomelfc.hypotheses.org/a-propos/projet> (Accessed on 1 May 2018). See the article by Dr. Zhao Bing in this volume.

enamel colours to their Imperial Kilns⁵ to produce enamelled porcelain at Jingdezhen.⁶

There are problems with Chinese terminology for decorating porcelain in these new enamel colours, and not all authors agree on the use and meanings of the terms. In Chinese, the terms *falangcai* (enamel colours, 珐琅彩), *yangcai* (foreign colours, 洋彩) and *fencai* (soft or powder colours, 粉彩) all appear. In the West, writers describe all of these wares as *famille rose*.⁷ In much current scholarship, the term *falangcai* (enamel colours) porcelain refers to porcelain decorated in over-glazed enamel, which was exclusively painted and fired in the Imperial workshop at the Qing court.⁸ *Yangcai* was first mentioned in 1735 by Tang Ying (1682-1756), the supervisor of the Imperial Kiln in Jingdezhen who commented that *Yangcai* is a type which imitates the *falang* (enamel) style of painting.⁹ In Chinese, the word *yang* means “ocean”, and is used as a reference to all things from countries overseas. Because the painting techniques and the material enamel used in the imperial workshop were originally from Western countries, the painting techniques and the material enamel were categorised as bea-

5. The official institutions and organisations were established and controlled or oversaw ceramic production in Jingdezhen, as now generally called Imperial Kilns, which were used to produce porcelain for the imperial household at the court during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911). As a result, the product from ‘Imperial Kiln’ is often associated with the best quality or the newest techniques. However, as is argued by Margaret Medley that the term of Imperial Kiln is problematic, as there was no such kiln in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644): see Margaret MEDLEY, “Ching-tê Chên and the Problem of the ‘Imperial Kilns’”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 29, n° 2, 1966, p. 326-338. And it is also proved that the Imperial Kiln did not monopolize new techniques of production: see WANG Guangyao, *Zhongguo gudai guanyao zhidu* [Administration of the Imperial kilns in China], Beijing, Zijincheng, 2004, p. 18-20.

6. For a clear introduction of new enamels to China, see, Rose KERR and Nigel WOOD, with additional contribution by Ts’AI Mei-fen and ZHANG Fukang, *Science and Civilisation in China Volume 5, Part 12, Ceramic Technology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 364-368.

7. For more discussion of the definition of enamelled porcelain, see Rosemary E. SCOTT, *For the Imperial Court: Qing Porcelain from the Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art*, New York, The Percival David Foundation and the American Federation of Arts, 1997, p. 39. See also CAI Hebi, *Qing Gongzhong falangci tezhan* [Special Exhibition of Ch’ing Dynasty Enamelled Porcelain of the Imperial Ateliers], Taipei, National Palace Museum, 1999, p. 6-8. Baoxiu LIAO, *Huali yangcai: Qianlong yancai tezhan* [Illustrated Catalogue of Stunning Decorative Porcelains from the Ch’ien-lung reign], Taipei, National Palace Museum, 2008, p. 10-30.

8. Peijin Yu (ed.), *Jincheng xuying: Yongzheng falangci tezhan* [A special of exhibition of porcelain with painted enamel in Yongzheng period of the Qing dynasty], Taipei, National Palace Museum, 2012, p. 10.

9. B. LIAO, *Huali yangcai*, *op. cit.*, p. 32-34.

ring the characteristics of *yang* (foreign). *Famille rose* was first invented by Albert Jacquemart and Edmond Le Blant in 1862,¹⁰ in order to distinguish porcelain of different appearances judging from the dominant decorated enamel colours. *Fencai* literally means powdery colour. It aptly described such enamel, which was both opaque and has a powdery texture.

For the purposes of this research, enamelled porcelain is taken to mean porcelain decorated with new enamels and new enamelling techniques, as a result of technological innovation. I use the term “enamelled porcelain” throughout my discussion because it presents the basic material and the techniques of manufacture and was used in trade records between the English East India Company (hereafter: EEIC) and China of the eighteenth century.

The English East India Company Canton factory records

In any study of the EEIC's commercial links with China, the best source materials are provided by the Company's own documents, which are located in the India Office Records (hereafter IOR) in the British library.¹¹ Officers have written down the trading activities at Canton, including renting the warehouse, buying, packing and shipping commodities, mainly “China wares”, tea and silk, as well as other goods. All of their activities have been written down in detail in the “Factory Records”. When the EEIC officer and Chinese dealer agreed on a deal with the Chinese dealer, a contract would be produced. The contracts usually had information including the porcelain dealer, the date, the quantity of porcelain of each type, types of porcelain, and shapes of porcelain, price per piece or per set.

In studying these contracts, it is possible to tell more about how the porcelain trade operated, and to demonstrate the price of enamelled porcelain, in their imported quantities as well as their dealers. However, the original

10. Albert JACQUEMART et Edmond LE BLANT, *Histoire artistique, industrielle et commerciale de la porcelaine*, Paris, Techener, 1862, p. 70; Sir Harry GARNER, “The origins of famille rose”, *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, n° 37, 1967-1968, p. 1-16.

11. For a detailed introduction on this source, see the online introduction from British Library. <https://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelpregion/asia/china/guidesources/recordschinatrade/index.html> (Accessed on 1 May 2018).

descriptions of the detailed contracts have rarely been studied and remain largely unexplored. I have thus sought to collect these contracts from 1729 to 1774 in the EEIC records and use them chronologically to illustrate porcelain trade of different historical contexts.

The English East India Company enamelled porcelain trade at Canton

It is noteworthy that only from the year 1729 enamelled porcelain begin to appear in the EEIC's Canton trade. In previous times, there were types of coloured and gold, blue and white, white porcelain written in the records. Based on the examination of “porcelain contracts” collected, the trade of enamelled porcelain at Canton can be divided into two periods. First, during the period between 1729 and 1750s, enamelled porcelain was sold and purchased as a new type of porcelain product that reflected the latest fashion and design which created a niche market at Canton. Secondly, from the 1760s to the 1780s, the enamelled porcelain trade enjoyed a sharp increase. I argue that the most important factor contributing to this increase was due to the local manufacture at Canton.

75 —

1729-1750s: enamelled porcelain as new product

The examination of EEIC's factory records of the period between 1729 and 1750s reveals several facts about the enamelled porcelain trade.

First, enamelled porcelain was always more expensive than blue and white porcelain. Fig. 1 shows the comparison price between enamelled and blue and white porcelain of cups and saucers. We see that enamelled porcelain was always more expensive than blue and white. Similar patterns could be found in other items, such as teapots and plates. This is mainly due to the fact that from the late 1720s onwards, pattern, designs and decoration seemed to be more important for the EEIC than shape, because “the newer the pattern of decoration the easier to sell.”¹² Perfection in the use of opaque enamels of the enamelled porcelain from about 1729 provided

12. IOR/E/3 Original Correspondence, 1602-1712 and Despatch Books, 1626-1753 (124 volumes) Despatches book, 1726, 1 November, vol. 103, p. 508, cited in Eang Cheong WENG, *Hong*

Chinese craftsmen with a full range of colours with which to satisfy the needs of their trade.

Fig. 1. - Purchase price of cups and saucers at Canton from EEIC's records (taels of silver)

B&W means Blue and White. During the eighteenth-century Canton, three taels of silver equalled one pound. (See Hosea B. MORSE, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China 1635-1834*, vol. 1, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1926, p. xxii.)

Source: The English East India Company Factory Records, Canton. IOR/G/12/28: 1729; IOR/G/12/33: 1732; IOR/G/12/47: 1739; IOR/G/12/51: 1742; IOR/R/10/4: 1759.

Enamelled wares were designed after the latest fashion and these could be sold at five times the price in England than blue and white pieces.¹³ The EEIC supercargoes realised that enamelled wares would bring more profit at home, as they wrote in 1731: “Coiqua (a Chinese porcelain dealer) has a parcel of fine enamelled China ware which we think will turn to good account in England and as it will sink much more money than Blue and White.”¹⁴

Along with the prevalence of tea drinking in Britain, the EEIC were especially interested in buying matching tea ‘services’ and chocolate sets, as well as dinner sets—‘useful wares.’ When enamelled porcelain first appeared

Merchants of Canton: Chinese Merchants in Sino-western Trade, 1684-1798, Richmond, Curzon Press, 1995, p. 18.

13. Geoffrey A. GODDEN, *Oriental Export Market Porcelain: and its influence on European Wares*, London, Toronto, Sydney, New York, Granada publishing, 1979, p. 203.

14. IOR/G/12/30, 20 July, 1730.

in Canton in 1729, the EEIC bought 78,817 pieces, but in 1732, this number increased to 198,871 pieces.¹⁵ In 1732, the EEIC spent in total almost 10,000 taels of silver on enamelled ware, and 39% were spent on service in sets.¹⁶

In order to buy porcelain in “sets”, supercargoes had to look over the examples before they signed a contract. The interior of porcelain shops was repeatedly depicted in different contemporary materials, such as painting in gauche paper.¹⁷ (**Fig. I - colour plates**) shows a painting of a porcelain shop in the 1730s. As we can see, the supercargoes are about to view the “China ware” in a porcelain shop. Judging from the interior design, the shop is quite small, and this suggests that this is probably not a Hong merchant’s warehouse, but a small porcelain shop.

The second feature of this period is that growing demand together with profit attracted new participants to the porcelain trade. It was no longer necessary to store large quantities of “China ware” in advance, but small parcels of enamelled wares decorated with the latest fashion could bring profit. As a result, small operators that did not have warehouses or firms in Canton started to take advantage of their flexibility to participate in the porcelain trade.

Small porcelain dealers were to be more mobile and flexible for the trade than Hong merchants. The Hong merchants with large capitals preferred to trade with the company in bulk orders. They traded many types of goods, porcelain, tea, silk as well as gold. In other words, they were not specialised in the porcelain trade, and porcelain trade was not their main profitable business. Because of the high price of enamelled wares, special orders from supercargoes usually came in small numbers, and required dealers to know exactly the instructions for decoration. There was sometimes a need for dealers to go to the manufacture town (Jingdezhen, 500 miles away from Canton) to place an order. In this respect, the Hong merchants did not deal with enamelled wares because it was likely to cost them

15. Appendix A.

16. This number was calculated from the account of the porcelain trade in IOR/G/12/33.

17. For a general discussion of paintings on porcelain manufactures, see Yip Keung Peter LAM, “Porcelain manufacture illustrations of the Qing dynasty”, *Journal of Guangzhou Museum of Art*, n° 1, 2004, p. 21-49.

too much time. Consequently, small dealers' greater mobility allowed them to respond to new requirements quickly.

The growing number of porcelain dealers increased the variety of porcelain items on the market, which in turn, supercargoes had more options to purchase. In 1729 the officer complained: "The merchants having this year given orders for very little up in the Country"¹⁸ which gave them no choices. While things changed several years later, in 1736, the officer wrote: "We have employed ourselves these days in looking over the China Ware shops for what new musters we could find of the sorts proper for the Europe Market."¹⁹ And in 1737, the EEIC had more choices, such that they could refuse some porcelain that could not meet their requirements. In September, they noted: "we had to refuse some painted porcelain from Emanuells (a porcelain dealer), because the Tea pots and Milk pots were painted badly and could not make them as sets."²⁰

The third feature of this period was the great demand for fine "China ware" from private trade. Porcelain painted with desirable designs was purchased by the Supercargoes. They preferred to buy pieces in small quantities, but of high quality, especially painted with family's coats of arms.²¹ Britain was the major client for armorial services, with a possible total of five thousand armorial pieces, followed by Holland, with about six to seven hundred. Among more than 3,300 pieces of armorial porcelain of the eighteenth century illustrated in Howard's two volumes studies, most of them were enamelled ware.²² In the period 1740-1760, the private trade of enamelled armorial porcelain in Europe reached its peak throughout the whole of the eighteenth century. (Table 1)

18. IOR/G/12/28, 2 August 1729.

19. IOR/G/12/40, 29 July 1736.

20. IOR/G/12/42, 3 September, 1737.

21. Angela HOWARD, "The English and their taste for armorial porcelain", *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, vol. 78, 2013-2014, p. 53-64.

22. David S. HOWARD, *Chinese Armorial Porcelain*, vol. 1, London, Faber, 1974; *Chinese Armorial Porcelain*, vol. 2 Wiltshire, Heirloom & Howard Limited, 2003.

Table 1. - The account of special order of enamelled porcelain during the eighteenth century (set of services)

Company	1720s	1730s	1740s	1750s	1760s	1770s	1780s	1790s	1800s
EEIC	150	236	375	578	441	318	411	495	146
Spain	2	2	2	5	15	13	5	10	6
Dutch	0	85	92	65	35	29	31	0	16
Total	152	323	469	648	491	360	447	505	168

Source: Jochem KROES, *Chinese Armorial Porcelain for the Dutch Market*, Waanders, 2007, p. 14; Rocío DÍAZ, *Chinese Armorial Porcelain for Spain*, London and Lisbon: Jorge Welsh Books, 2010; David S. HOWARD, *Chinese Armorial Porcelain*, vol. 2, Heirloom & Howard Limited, 2003.

The purchase of armorial porcelain services had to put in special orders, and such an order was more likely to have been taken by dealers specialising in the porcelain trade. In this case, the EEIC supercargoes relied a good deal on the porcelain dealers, who may have better specialised knowledge of porcelain. At this point, porcelain shopkeepers' roles became crucial, as they were both suppliers of enamelled porcelain and also played a role as specialists. The individual items of service tea-pots, cups, saucers and plates were ordered from different specialised kilns in Jingdezhen, making the coordination of size and matching decoration. These special orders were carried out by shopkeepers who made a long journey to Jingdezhen to arrange for the manufacture, and a second journey to collect them when they were ready.

A surviving invoice shows the details of such orders. This order was made by Joint Auditors of 'His Majesty's Revenue' between 1728 and 1730. It is a sheet of vellum with the arms of the Tower family painted on one side (**Fig. I - colour plates**) and a list of objects wanted on the reverse.²³ Additionally, on the reverse is a description in Chinese characters, the rest of which was probably lost when the vellum was framed in the nineteenth century.

The Tower family made five orders of this pattern, but of different decorations between 1720 and 1730. One was in blue and white, one in red and

23. Christopher and Thomas Tower were brothers. They were joint auditors of His Majesty's Revenue and members of Parliament; Thomas was a trustee of the colony of Georgia. See more from D.S. HOWARD, *Chinese Armorial Porcelain*, vol. 2, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

gold, and the remaining three were enamelled. The blue and white and red in gold were made in a slightly earlier period prior to 1728 and the enamelled ones were made between 1728 and 1730. The Tower service is of great interest because it reflects the rapid changes in taste and style of Chinese porcelain from the blue and white into enamelled porcelain in the late 1720s, and also shows the process of ordering armorial service.

It also provides us with highly valuable evidence regarding instructions relating to special orders. It contains the dealer's name and Chinese translations of the instructions. This order was signed by Dao Zai (刀仔) (as circled in **Fig. III - colour plates**). Dao Zai could be a porcelain dealer or a dealer who also had a shop. He would have received the Tower order from a supercargo or captain and conveyed it to Jingdezhen. He might also have received an order from other Canton porcelain dealers. Together with other orders, this would have been carried by Dao Zai on his journey to Jingdezhen.

As a group of porcelain dealers, shopkeepers like Dao Zai bridged the gap between traders and producers, and were a link between Canton and Jingdezhen. In other words, their role in prompting enamelled porcelain was significant. Because of their willingness to deal in small quantities of porcelain, the EEIC supercargoes had the opportunity to place special orders. At the same time, the producers or painters in Jingdezhen could have the chance to see and copy designs. Cross-cultural exchange became convoluted, with shopkeepers' participating in trade.

Enamelled porcelain trade 1760-1780

The Seven Years War (1756-1763) between Britain and France caused another gap in the records.²⁴ But it should be noted here that the EEIC trade did not stop at this period, and the private trade of porcelain constituted the largest part of the EEIC's porcelain trade. Some of the cargoes did not even carry any porcelain on the company's account.²⁵

24. I use the data from the VOC collected by C.J.A. Jörg. The porcelain bought by the VOC to the Netherlands is surveyed in Christiaan J.A. Jörg, *Porcelain and the Dutch China trade*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1982, Appendix 11.

25. G.A. GODDEN, *Oriental Market Porcelain*, *op. cit.*, p. 78. For private trade, we only have the number of porcelain chests, without details about the contents. According to Godden, Christie's

Figure 2 shows a striking curve in the Dutch East India Company’s (Hereafter: VOC) enamelled porcelain trade during the 1750 and 1780. Fig 3 depicts the total number of imported enamelled porcelain by the EEIC during 1750 and 1777. The most striking phenomenon that can be observed from these figures in the development of porcelain trade at Canton from 1760 onwards was the tremendous increase in the total pieces of enamelled porcelain.

Fig. 2. - Enamelled Porcelain trade of the VOC between 1750 and 1780

Source: Appendix A.

Fig. 3. - Imported enamelled porcelain pieces by the EEIC between 1750 and 1777

Source: Appendix A.

Manson & Woods still hold some sales records relating to private trade. But he did not provide any reference about this that made the trace of these records impossible.

Why and how would it be possible for the enamelled porcelain trade to enjoy such a dramatic increase during the 1761 season? The most important factor is probably the increased production of local workshops at Canton. It is necessary to mention the issue of when exactly Canton started to produce its enamelled porcelain. Current studies emphasise the fact that enamelled porcelain in Canton began to be produced during the 1740s.²⁶ This paper uses the trade data of the VOC and the EEIC to propose a different theory, by which this paper argues that Canton only started to produce enamelled porcelain on a large scale during the late 1750s.

In the light of the trade data of the EEIC and the VOC, as shown in Fig 2 and Fig 3, it was not until the early 1760s that there was a dramatic increase in the enamelled porcelain trade. Following the hypothesis by the present scholarship that Canton was capable of producing enamelled porcelain on a large scale, one would naturally assume that the exported pieces of enamelled porcelain in the following decades would increase sharply. However, the account of exported enamelled porcelain of the VOC and the EEIC refuted this assumption. The slow and steady growth of enamelled porcelain suggests that the Canton did not have many workshops for porcelain enamelling before the late 1750s.

Another piece of evidence may be drawn from a record in the year 1739. The officer of the EEIC wrote thus: "We went to the merchants who were making our silks to press the delivery of them soon and to desire them to air those pieces which were already made, and to cause them all to be brought to Canton, so that we might see them. They assured us, that effaced card had been taken by the weavers this year to prevent their being damp."²⁷

This record is of particular importance in terms of manufacture at Canton, since it shows that the EEIC was involved in the process of silk production and they had a direct connection with the merchant who was in charge of the production. This means that the EEIC could have played a role in the production process in order to get satisfactory products. However, during the same period, even though the trade of porcelain had difficulties such as

26. Works by C.J.A. Jörg, and Shi Jingfei all agree that during the 1740s, Canton started to produce enamelled porcelain.

27. IOR/G/12/47, 10 November 1739.

the delivery of porcelain was delayed or in short supply, the EEIC’s records are silent about the manufacture of porcelain.

We can also find clues from textual records. The earliest observation of enamelling porcelain was recorded by William Hickey, in 1769, who when visiting Canton was shown ‘the different processes used in finishing the Chinaware. In one long gallery we found upwards of a hundred persons at work in sketching or finishing the various ornaments upon each particular piece of the ware, some parts being executed by men of a very advanced age, and others by children even so young as six or seven years.’²⁸ Similarly, Chinese textual records documented the production of enamelled porcelain at Canton as being derived from the late Qianlong reign, and the production flourished during the early nineteenth century.²⁹

In the later period, textual record shows that the EEIC was involved in the enamelled porcelain manufacture. In 1778, the EEIC officer wrote back to London mentioning that the merchant who contracted with them was not able to supply particular items but the merchant promised to give his agents and to place the orders as soon as possible.³⁰

In 1778, the English supercargo reported thus to the EEIC’s court directors:

“ The China ware merchant with whom we have contracted for the investment of next year acquainted us that he had received letters from the place where it was manufactured that it would not be possible to glaze the tops of the milk pots and sugar basins, nor to have large mugs, bowls and fruit dishes ribbed... as we are convinced that no persons is more capable and that he will do his utmost to complete his contract to our satisfaction. We have no thought of changing but have strongly recommended giving orders to his agents that they comply with our directions as closely as possible.³¹

Details of this kind are extremely rare within the EEIC records. Their value resides in their ability to show us the communication between the Company and the porcelain dealer, which in turn demonstrates the

28. Alfred SPENCER (ed.), *Memoirs of William Hickey 1749-1775*, vol. 1, London, Hurst & Blackett, 1913, p. 210; <https://archive.org/details/memoirsofwilliam015028mbp> (Accessed on 14 February 2016).

29. Yuansou Ji, *TaoYa* [The elegance of porcelain], vol. 2, Beijing, Jingyuan congshu, 1918.

30. IOR/G/12/60, 27 January 1778, Letter 73.

31. *Ibid.*

participation of the EEIC in terms of production. These two records dated 1739 and 1778 show that the EEIC would have paid considerable attention to the production process if they had a chance.

Due to the lack of materials, it is impossible to estimate how many workshops were established in Canton. However, it is no doubt the case that from the late 1760s, Canton became another main manufacture site of enamelled porcelain production. As the 1772 VOC supercargo mentioned, “completely white pieces are in order to be painted here (Canton)”.³²

The growing local production at Canton led not only to quantitative changes in exported pieces, but also to qualitative changes. Samuel Shaw, in Canton in 1784 as supercargo for *the Empress of China*, found that: “There are many painters in Canton, but I was informed that not one of them possesses a genius of design...it is a general remark, that the Chinese, though they can imitate most of the fine arts, do not possess any large portion of original genius.”³³

In all, in drawing attention to a different source, it can be argued that Canton only started to produce enamelled porcelain at a large scale during the late 1750s. And from the 1760s onwards, the production of enamelled porcelain shifted from the main site in Jingdezhen to Canton and gradually expanded. To recognise this shift is certainly very important to studies of Chinese export porcelain. Firstly, the shift marked a different trade in enamelled porcelain from the previous period. From a production point of view, this enamelled porcelain produced in Jingdezhen was not directly sold to foreign customers, but rather, was channelled by porcelain dealers, and was not specifically produced for the overseas market. The workshops at Canton were established, in particular, to meet the requirements of overseas markets. Only from this period onward can we determine the porcelain produced at Canton as being “export” porcelain. Secondly, the recognition of such a shift will shed light on the studies of Chinese enamelled porcelain of the later period of the eighteenth century. For curators and collectors of Chinese enamelled porcelain, it is important to understand

32. C.J.A. JÖRG, *Porcelain and the Dutch Trade*, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

33. Samuel SHAW, *The Journal of Major Samuel Shaw, the First American Consul at Canton*, edited with a life of the author by Josiah QUINCY, Boston, Wm. Crosby and H.P. Nichols, 1847, p. 198-99, cited in Jean McCLURE MUDGE, *Chinese Export Porcelain for the American Trade, 1785-1835*, 2nd ed. revised, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 1981, p. 53, note 32.

that the trade of enamelled porcelain was dynamic. With a better understanding of this trade, the stylistic changes in Chinese enamelled porcelain may be better explained.

Conclusion

This paper touches upon several historiographies, ranging from art history, to the history of Chinese export porcelain, to the history of the Chinese export trade at Canton. It sets out to investigate the Chinese enamelled porcelain trade of the eighteenth century using a more contextual approach, so as to consider the impact of new techniques and on export porcelain trade. This is the first time that the Chinese enamelled porcelain trade with the EEIC has been investigated to this level of depth.

The preceding argument shows that the trade in enamelled porcelain may be separated into several chronologic stages. For the period between 1729 and the late 1750s, it has been argued that enamelled porcelain, which appeared as a new type of porcelain in the market, brought new commercial opportunities and profits both for the EEIC and Chinese porcelain dealers. For trade after 1760, this paper presents the view that a sharp increase in both VOC and EEIC's enamelled porcelain trade in the early 1760s was resulted in the establishment of enamelled porcelain workshops in Canton.

This paper also provides a different approach to studies of Chinese export porcelain trade. It looks at porcelain as a dynamic field which was shaped by consumers, artisans, craftsmen and commercial networks. This field involves complex interrelated social processes such as technological innovation, consumption and global trade, all of which need to be studied in their connected contexts.

In all, these arguments sheds light on studies of Chinese porcelain from art historians, whilst arguing that we should move on from a sole focus on the style and physical characteristics of individual pieces of porcelain to a wider study of the context of production and consumption. In doing so, the way in which styles changed and the reasons for this, as well as the rationale for production sites shifting from one place to another, may be more clearly understood.

The porcelain brought by the VOC to the Netherlands is surveyed in Jörg's book (VOC records): *Porcelain and the Dutch China trade*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982, Appendix 11. He subdivides porcelain according to types arranged in alphabetical order, and these are further subdivided by colour and decoration. He has listed 27 seven types of porcelain in terms of their decoration, but most are blue and white, enamelled porcelain, Chinese Imari and white porcelain. In order to use his Appendix in my thesis, I calculated the blue and white (n° 1, 2, 3, 8, 11 of Jörg's order) and enamelled porcelain (n° 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26)

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Appendix A. Imported B&W, Enamelled porcelain by the EEIC and VOC, 1729-1780

Notes: B&W refers to Blue and White; * means unknown.

Source: the EEIC records are accounted by the author from IOR/G/12. I calculated this according to pieces: for porcelain in sets, for example, Tea Sets, D.20/P.10, I counted this as 30 pieces.

Year	VOC B&W	VOC Ena- melled	EEIC Ena- melled	EEIC B&W
1729	207735	628	78817	476393
1730	83692	19355	*	*
1731	364726	73643	*	550926
1732	319011	134846	198871	616591
1733	744281	93818	101918	1155606
1734	0	0	10650	251943
1735	0	0	43795	295725
1736	130471	23654	31532	608195
1737	324827	77982	93316	604156
1738	191698	5045	*	470835
1739	150490	0	20440	880677
1740	200583	25075	*	*
1741	270	0	35953	*
1742	145035	21319	57119	285255
1743	467207	81185	*	*
1744	529969	20342	*	*
1745	549211	5196	*	*
1746	481258	8686	*	*
1747	466354	29877	*	*
1748	400554	57598	*	*
1749	212995	39060	*	*
1750	285189	53719	58869	418993
1751	308535	7515	22965	415632
1752	391209	99740	*	*
1753	351449	62034	68834	363474
1755	0	0	*	368138

Year	VOC B&W	VOC Ena- melled	EEIC Ena- melled	EEIC B&W
1757	197212	14587	*	*
1758	491603	160447	*	*
1759	553191	69685	85909	561287
1760	514429	217366	*	*
1761	284512	71415	90050	429872
1762	468116	174334	*	*
1763	349704	104843	*	*
1764	396309	157362	*	*
1765	410415	195081	*	*
1766	365564	257589	*	*
1767	384562	171588	*	*
1768	343250	264897	*	84445
1769	416481	259038	*	*
1770	450073	337740	*	*
1771	469583	278965	*	*
1772	401087	142997	*	*
1773	416361	155801	*	*
1774	440595	215606	533816	941345
1775	347522	206217	*	*
1776	347796	199920	533816	941345
1777	312058	213004	417184	700138
1778	405213	250016	*	*
1779	447478	201987	*	*
1780	347186	211565	*	*