

The Influence of Chinese blue and white porcelain on Islamic porcelain

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Abstract. As the Chinese discovered the blue and white porcelain, China recognized as center of porcelain nation. Silk Road played a substantial role in the growth of trade and cooperation. That leads to influences in the culture and expanded throughout the Islamic nations. Porcelain trade especially blue and white was much admired as a Silk Road trade. Chinese porcelain unique design and patterns were reason for the symbolic and aesthetic value of Chinese porcelain in Islamic culture. In this paper, the author investigated how Chinese blue and white porcelain inspired to Islamic porcelain and adaptation of Chinese cultural element in Islamic culture.

Historical Background and Development

Porcelain is a ceramic made of by the fine clay kaolin. The raw materials used for producing ancient traditional porcelains in the famous kiln areas of north and south China. China started to create a ceramic back to the era from 4,500 to 2,500 years ago. The invention of porcelain was a great achievement for Chinese people especially blue and white porcelain. During the Shang dynasty, China appeared early porcelain [1]. The combination of blue and white color, first Chinese ceramic and porcelain wares were made in the early 19th century during the Tang dynasty at Henan province. The Yuan dynasty is also very important in the history of blue and white porcelain because of the blue and white porcelain produced in the Yuan dynasty at Jingdezhen, Jingdezhen known by as the capital of blue and white porcelain. Before the Ming dynasty mostly porcelain was very simple or plain means without decoration and decorative patterns. After the Ming dynasty, hand painted porcelain trend was very fashionable. During the 15th century Ming dynasty royal court had control on porcelain production particularly Hongwu and Yongle Emperors, and this time they also bring some other places or nations ideas in inspiration. In the 16th century can see a lot of influence from Persian and Arabic on white and blue porcelain. 17th century Chinese created a number of unique blue and white porcelain for export for the other countries, but when Qing dynasty started the trade was very slow or stops because the government almost stopped the trade port. In the tang dynasty can see how production technology and artistic creation reached a higher level. Porcelain production industry flourished in the Song dynasty with the various art objects and forms. Ming dynasty artists worked on decoration, creativity, techniques. In this approach, China established many places for porcelain production like Jingdezhen, Yi Xing, Jiangsu, Hebei, Changsha, Handan, and others.

Silk Road: Cultural Exchanges between Chinese and Overseas

Porcelain plays a central role in promoting the interaction between different cultures. It is more sensitive than any other goods because it records impacts from various sources, ranging from the traditional art, international trade, industrial development, political disputes, elite ideology, rituals and customs, cultural contacts, etc. [2]. Silk Road historical ancient trade routes started in China during the Han dynasty. This road established the connection between global economics and culture through the trade exchange. This road used regularly from 130BCE when Han emperors officially opened trade with others in the west. Many merchants traveled along the Silk Road for trading and

that time silk was most important and popular in trade, mostly merchant started to call this road by Silk Road. Silk Road was very well contacted with Iran, Persia, Europe, Africa, Arabia, and others. This time they had two main sea transport routes one was from Yangzhou or Mingzhou and second was Guangzhou.

Han dynasty started a silk road and China becomes a “Silk State”. When the Chinese made white and blue porcelain than China also began to know by as the “Porcelain Country.” The end of the 8th-century Chinese ceramic and porcelain start to export to the other country, and though the Tang and early Song dynasty, trade start to reach a peak. This time, they started to export a different kind of ceramic and porcelain including Tang Sancai, Xing Klin, Yue Klin Celadon, White Porcelain and Hand Painted Porcelain. From middle to late Ming dynasty, more than two hundred years was the golden period of Chinese porcelain, that time they exported maximum to maximum porcelain to the other part of the world. Blue and white porcelain made at Jingdezhen area was the most famous one, others like-colored porcelain, Fujian Dehua white porcelain, Guangdong Shiwan porcelain, Anxi white, and blue porcelain. Approximately 200,000 pieces were export that time, this was a large number of porcelain in the 17th century and one million pieces per year in the 18th century. Though, the sea and land route during the Tang dynasty Chinese porcelain was spread to many countries. Chinese porcelain technology was first given to North Korea and Japan. Due to the complicated technology of porcelain Japan sent people to learn techniques in China in the 11th century. Persia and Arabia, they also copied Chinese porcelain techniques. 15th century Chinese exported to Italy and other European countries. Though the Silk Road trade route Chinese porcelain technology spared thorough the world and Chinese porcelain also have some unique influences from friendly exchanges of culture and art.

Symbolic Elements and Meaning of Chinese Blue and White Porcelain

A significant characteristic of traditional Chinese aesthetic culture is it’s symbolic, or to speak through object. Symbolic meaning has played a major role in the life of Chinese culture. According to Chinese traditional culture and aesthetic Chinese used a lot of different kind of symbols and form for different aspects, Chinese never speak directly, they like to speak through the object and form. Different types of form, pattern, design, color but still behind that Chinese has some special meaning [3]. Different type of design and patterns can help them to avoid misfortune and it can help to bring good luck for them. The decorative patterns can divide into five parts like Fu, Lu, Shou, Xi, Cai means good fortune, high official rank, longevity, happy life, good wealth. Others similar to that

Four seasons: on the based on this Chinese made a lot of blue and white porcelain. In this kind of design or patterns was based on floral motif, kind of four flowers, and each flower can represent different season like pony: spring, lotus: summer, chrysanthemum: autumn and plum blossom: winter.

Lotus: its represent Buddhist philosophy, and symbols of truth and purity. It’s also has connection with Taoist philosophy. This flower widely used in Chinese porcelain as a motif and patterns and sometime used as an outer form of porcelain.

Bamboo: Chinese called, Zhu it is a very similar to congratulation and best wishes for future. Bamboo is an also symbol of longevity or represent long life. Use of bamboo was in large number of Chinese porcelain in different style.

Plum blossom or Mei hua: Chinese made a lot of porcelain on the based on plum blossom and Mei hua, they resembling it because its represent the perseverance and purity.

Peach: it is a symbol of longevity. Peach is one of the most fashionable motifs can notice in Chinese porcelain.

Dragon: dragon represents the cosmic energy and it’s recognized by most powerful symbols of good fortune. In history it’s used especially of high rank officer.

In Chinese culture have a numerous symbols which are purely belonging to Chinese traditional culture for long life, good fortune, good wealth and others. Mostly used on Chinese blue and white porcelain because that time these porcelain used as a precocious gift ,means if you are give a porcelain to other person mean you are thinking about his or her good and long life. At the same time

when the trade was start, this porcelain also export to other culture than foreigner merchant they also brought a new influences and symbols for Chinese after the used of these they created a unique styles of white and blue porcelain. Chinese artist started to produce porcelain object in Islamic styles and including their inscription in Arabic because the reason was growing Chinese Muslim market.

Influence of Chinese Blue and White Porcelain on Islamic Porcelain

From the 8th century CE to the 19th century can witness how Chinese white and blue porcelain gave inspiration to Islamic porcelain, how Islam culture adopted a Chinese inspiration. It's proved that the Silk Road trade route knew an opportunity to Chinese and another part of the world for exchange economic and trade. China started a contact nearly 2nd to 1st century BCE through the Silk Road. From the 9th century, Islamic merchant started to import Chinese ceramic and porcelain from China, especially blue and white porcelain because it was very unique, diligent and very beautiful for them. That time blue and white porcelain was count in luxury trade. Blue and white porcelain were turn out to be a new source of inspiration for local Islamic potters. Islamic culture has greatly different cultural influenced but Chinese blue and white porcelain gave a deeply influenced as a style, technical process, color combination design and patterns such as Ming plate with grape design (Fig. 1) influenced on stone- paste dish with grape design, Iznik (Fig. 2). During the trade, Islamic empires like the Abbaside and Ottomans came into the contact with Ming period porcelain and ceramic [4]. Chinese white and blue porcelain became very famous in the Middle East during the 14th century, because for the trade Chinese artist they also started to involved Islamic influences on blue and white porcelain, during the 13th century they were created only Chinese influences and symbols on porcelain. One is the very well-identified and much-visited collection well presented in the Topkapi Sarayi Müzesi in Istanbul, which was collected over a period of 500 years, by the Ottoman Sultans. The second is that of the Ardebil Shrine which Shah Abbas in 1611 presented a collection of Chinese porcelain pieces in memory of the spiritual founder of his line, the Sufi Sheik Shaykh Safi al-Din, to be housed in his shrine in Ardebil.



Fig. 1 Ming plate with grape design, 15th century, Jingdezhen



Fig.2 Stone-paste dish with grape design,Iznik, Turkey, 1550-70, British Museum

The Influence of Chinese blue and white porcelain on Islamic porcelain are as follows:

Technological influences in Islam porcelain: In blue and white porcelain techniques was very important because the use of right techniques you can get the result same like the Chinese blue and white porcelain. Islamic potter started to study technical aspects of porcelain.

Chinese motifs in Islamic porcelain: Islamic potter used the Chinese motifs and patterns as decorative elements in Islamic porcelain because it was extremely attractive, beautiful and elegant. It was suitable for their Islamic beliefs. In the 16th century, the beginning of the Iznik period can fund the complete adoption of Chinese blue and white porcelain.

Writing words on porcelain: The writing system in Chinese blue and white porcelain is very common. Sometimes Chinese artists used calligraphy character or sometimes they used a word for

good luck or ling life, at the same time Islamic potter they also started to writing system on porcelain which belonged to their own culture and religion.

Decorative portions: Chinese white and blue porcelain is also known for its decorative quality, Chinese artist used a different kind of decorative patterns for it. Some time it belongs to geometrical shapes, sometimes animals, floral, etc. Islamic potters, they also adopted the decorative styles of Chinese blue and white porcelain. The patterns are including Bogutu, eight immortals, eight auspicious, diamond-shaped structure and flower.

The use of blue and white in porcelain: It no doubt Chinese adopted the cobalt from Iran, but they used it very brilliantly in blue and white porcelain. They created a good balance between blue and white, and it was easy for Chinese because they already painted a Chinese traditional painting and calligraphy with ink and white as an empty space has a unique meaning for Chinese. In the 9th century, the Chinese started to do experiments with blue and white in porcelain. Till 14th century it was the pick point. After the influences of Islamic potters, they also started to use in Islamic porcelain, even can see Mamluk brass works which were converted into blue and white Chinese porcelain design.

Daily life utensils: Islamic potter, they also created porcelain for daily life use objects same like a Chinese few were like this tableware, dish, bowl, cans, pot, cup, wine vessel, etc. with decorative characters or patterns.

Historical literature and archeological evidence: We have a lot of historical literature and archeological evidence for the influence of Chinese porcelain in the Islamic world. These all can prove that how adopted the Chinese porcelain in Islamic culture. According to it's the beginning of the ceramic and porcelain were exporting in tang and song dynasty. This type of details can observe in the richest sources is a manuscript of the Divan, this was a collation of different types of narratives and poems by Khwairu Kiram, a 14th-century Persian poet, now this is kept at the British Museum.

Chinese porcelain lactated at Iran: Iran has large quantities of collections of high quality Chinese ceramic and porcelain. They started to collect from Silk Road trade and after that, they used as an influence. The Topkai museum, Istanbul, turkey and Ardebil shrine located in Iran both collect huge Chinese porcelain from Yuan to Qing dynasty which shows the friendly exchange trade between China and the Middle East.

The symbolic value of Chinese porcelain in the Islamic culture: In Islamic culture have good symbolic respects of Chinese porcelain, in the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire was started to reproduce Chinese porcelain. Chinese porcelain beauty, rarity, and unique design and patterns were the reason for the symbolic value of Chinese porcelain in Islamic culture and that was the reason they started to copy that.

Islamic miniature painting: The Ottoman Turkish sultan had started to collect Chinese porcelain in the late 15th century. The tradition of collection of Chinese porcelain in royal family especially white and blue porcelain showed in Islamic miniatures paintings, for example, the sultan and his court from al -katibi, album painting from Samarkand [5].

Imitations of Chinese porcelain: In Islamic culture, in this way, we can see the strong impact of Chinese porcelain on Islamic porcelain. It was copied from Chinese prototypes to Turkish stylization of Chinese design. It's a kind of transmutations of the original.

Shaping and molding techniques: Islamic potters they just did not imitate the outer and inners shapes or Chinese porcelain even they also copied the way of production techniques of Chinese porcelain. That time trade was on pick point, and demand was very high than Chinese artist started to develop the various modeling techniques like convex mold [6].

Glazed techniques: Chinese potters used especial glazed techniques on Chinese blue and white porcelain. After the glazed porcelain looks like glass and porcelain gave a beautiful impression, so the Islamic potters also they started to glazed the same like a Chinese artist on their porcelain.

Summary

Exchange of trade and culture was not possible without a Silk Road. Uniqueness and mysterious techniques of Chinese blue and white porcelain were not only attract Islamic merchants even other

countries. Chinese blue and white porcelain are as an art practice that profoundly influences the basic approach and technical process of Islamic porcelain. Islamic merchant played a major role in the growth of Chinese blue and white porcelain because they began to use in daily life and used it as an inspiration in their own culture. Islamic porcelain adopted it due to various reasons such as elegant design, varieties in elements, composition, color scheme, symbolic representation, techniques, and aesthetic value. Many historical literature and archeological evidences showed the influence of Chinese porcelain in the Islamic world.

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