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Metamorphic Medium: Materializing Silver in Modern China, 1682-1839

by

Susan I. Eberhard

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History of Art

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Margaretta Lovell, Chair
Professor Patricia Berger
Professor Winnie Wong

Summer 2023

Abstract

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"Metamorphic Medium" offers a new approach to the question of how objects can elucidate connections between local and global contexts, by centering the very material of early modern globalization. The dissertation is a social art history of silverwares that moved through the southeastern Chinese port city of Guangzhou. During the late Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) periods, silver exploited from mines in Latin America flowed into China through southern coastal ports, transforming the empire culturally and economically. Silverworking was a handicraft trade which relied on material, technical, and artistic knowledge to produce wares for both Chinese and foreign markets with connections to the region. Art historians have overlooked this topic due to the limited survival of Qing-period silverwares in China outside of court collections, and art-historical investments in literati and court art over vernacular, "export," and ephemeral forms of art and material culture. Further, while silver is often evoked as the archetype for global commodity exchange, there has never been an object-based study of how silver circulated across incommensurable systems of value.

This dissertation asks how the production and transaction of silver objects illuminate connections between craft and mercantile knowledge, consumer tastes, and the power differentials of value negotiated across oceanic distances. It converses with art histories of global exchange, commodity histories, and histories of globalization. It views silver objects not as permanent works of art, or rationalized units of uniform value, but rather as contingent crystallizations of a mutable and heterogenous medium. At a historiographic level, the study traces how local and global forces have shaped art history. It argues that silver during this period was interpreted and claimed as something other than Chinese, due to the separate agendas of, as well as interactions, between Ming-Qing literati canons of taste, and the foreign and primarily European appropriation of global commodities and their histories. At a historical level, the study positions regional Chinese silversmiths as powerful agents that impacted silverware production, consumption, and history in regions often viewed as the global centers of metalworking innovation. Finally, it argues for approaches to art history that regard the ongoing material transformation of objects and their points of social transaction as primary methodological concerns, in order to expand the subjects studied and histories produced by the field.

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Note on translations

All translation from Chinese and French to English are mine, except when otherwise noted.

Introduction: Metamorphic Medium

Introduction

According to the *Shangshu* 尚書, a foundational text of Chinese philosophy and statecraft, the fundamental nature of metal is "to yield and change."[1] Silver can be found in the earth's crust in its pure, elemental form. As mined ore or as worked objects, it is found alloyed with copper, lead, gold, and other minerals. Extracted from ore and refined, silver is a soft, lustrous, and white metal. Among all metals, it has the highest electrical and thermal conductivity, as well as reflectivity. Writing during Britain's nineteenth-century industrial transformation, Karl Marx stated that the precious metals silver and gold became the incarnation of human labor "immediately on [their] emergence from the bowels of the earth."[2] At that point, silver entered a relational space of social value as the primary medium of global capital. Yet from an early modern Chinese viewpoint, silver had a relational existence prior to its extraction, one independent from human use and social systems. In a late-seventeenth-century account of the geography and social customs of the Lingnan region on China's southeastern coast, we learn that silver in the earth could transform into water as another materialized state of *qi* 氣*,* the dynamic life force. It could be owned by spirits who would punish those who took it from a cavern or pool until it was returned. It could accumulate over time just to be eaten by insects and evaporate.[3] In China and beyond, the metal's transformational and relational qualities were key to how it was transacted across points of seemingly incommensurable cultural difference, from the seventeenth century into the early nineteenth century.

Silver could also be deceptive. Its composition—and most essentially, the quantity of silver contained in its alloy—is invisible to the human eye. Thus, while a metalsmith can manipulate its physical properties, such as its reflectivity and lustrousness, to produce a range of aesthetic effects, it is impossible to *know* silver with a glance. We experience metal and stones as boulders, lumps, and dust, as well as carved, forged, and hammered objects, but from a Chinese cosmological perspective, they were conceptually unstable and always transforming.[4] There were

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[1] "**...金曰從革。**" *Hongfan* 洪範 [The Great Plan], *Shangshu* 尚書 [The book of history], modern Chinese trans. Wang Shishun 王世舜, English trans. Du Ruiqing 杜瑞清 (Jinan: Shandong youyi chubanshe, 1993), 144. The first known statement about the five agents or elements (*wuxing* 五行)—in order, water, fire, wood, metal, and earth—appears in the *Shangshu* (also known as the *Shujing* 書經), a book of texts collected by the Western Zhou (1045-551 BCE) period. While Du translates the passage into English as "the metal melts," I prefer the translation of the passage from Xu Yiyu, "The Knowledge System of the Traditional Chinese Craftsman," trans. Dorothy Ko, *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 20:2 (Fall-Winter, 2013): 158.

[2] *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy,* vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (1867; trans. and repr., London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1976), 187.

[3] Qu Dajun 屈大均, *Guangdong xinyu* 廣東新語 [New Sayings of Guangdong], vol. 3 (Taibei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1968), 855-7.

[4] In early modern Europe, silver also held the properties of volatility and organicity; for example, early modern Europeans believed that silver grew and ripened in the earth. Pamela H. Smith, "Itineraries of materials and knowledge in early modern Europe," in *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture*

continuities in the heterogeneity and volatility of silver that erased distinctions between its subterranean, surfaced, and refined states. Indeed, unlike most other media, objects made of metals can be instantly melted, re-alloyed, and made into something else.

This dissertation is a social art history of global connections, as transacted through the metamorphic, geological medium of silver, using objects as case studies. First, it asks how Chinese silversmiths and other participants in China's silver trades transacted silver through processes of material transformation that were in effect, processes of translation. Second, it asks why, despite the apparent ubiquity of silver in China during the Qing (1644-1911) period, Chinese-produced silverwares have not only been overlooked by scholars and rendered invisible by different forces, but also ideologically transformed into something other than Chinese. The study is sited at the threshold of China's southeastern coast, the locus of the empire's oceanic connections with Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Americas (fig. 0.1). Located in the wealthy province of Guangdong, the port city of Guangzhou emerged as a powerful entrepôt from the 1680s to the first Anglo-Chinese Opium War in 1842.[5] A British parliamentary report from the early 1830s concluded that "Greater facilities are given to trade in the port of Canton [the Anglophone name for Guangzhou] than in almost any port in the world."[6] Traders journeyed there from west, south and southeast Asia, northern Africa and Europe.[7]

Their main import product, as demanded by Chinese merchants, was silver bullion in the form of struck coins. Historians tracing flows of silver through the port have used the metal's movements to counter progressive accounts of European-based modernity, which was founded on maritime colonial expansion and industrial development. They have argued that the massive flows of silver drove the rise of a global economy, with China as the main consumer of the metal driving demand and therefore early modern global connectivity.[8] Most of the imported silver was sourced from mines in colonial Latin America, beginning with the founding of Manila in 1571

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of Connections in the Early Modern World, eds. Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 34.

[5] The importance of the region not just to global trade, but also to modern Chinese history, was established by John Fairbank. He argued that Western (that is, European and American) "impact" in the form of aggressive advocating for free trade policies and imperialist violence along the southern coast, coupled with a stagnant and ineffective Chinese government, ultimately led to the collapse of the Qing, China's last imperial empire. See *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of Treaty Ports, 1842-1854* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964, c1953). While his study has been much contested and followed by important revisionist histories that account for the agency of Chinese actors and the sophistication of court intelligence throughout the changes of the nineteenth century, the thrust of Fairbank's thesis remains unchallenged. For representative studies, see Par K. Cassel, *Grounds of Judgement: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth Century China and Japan* (Oxford University Press, 2012); Matthew W. Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy: The Question of India and the Transformation of Politics in Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

[6] "China Trade," Session 6 December 1831-16 August, *Affairs of the East India Company. Reports from Committees: 1831–2*. Vol. 6. (London: The House of Commons, 1832), 462; quoted in Paul A. Van Dyke, "Ambiguous Faces of the Canton Trade: Moors, Greeks, Armenians, Parsees, Jews, and Southeast Asians," in *The Private Side of the Canton Trade, 1700-1840: Beyond the Companies* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018), 21.

[7] Van Dyke, "Ambiguous Faces," 21.

[8] Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

and the yearly ships voyaging from the Americas to Asia known as the Manila galleons.[9] The Japanese mine at Iwami in western Honshu was a significant exporter of silver to China, mostly through indirect trading due to Chinese trade bans on Japan, but it was exhausted by the end of the seventeenth century.[10] American silver, mined and minted through Spanish imperial expansion in modern-day Mexico, northern Peru, and Bolivia, not only transformed late imperial Chinese economy and culture, but gave rise to a global economic system.[11] Chinese merchants traded for silver with resource-intensive goods such as silk, tea, lacquer, and porcelain. Through the volume of precious metal that traversed these trade routes and others that developed later, silver overshadowed gold as the most important precious metal commodity in both late imperial China and the world.[12]

Silver moved through Guangzhou, between regional-global systems of craft production, currencies, and knowledge about materials and objects. This study turns from well-explored questions of political economy in this context to the connections between silver and the history of craft in the region, as Guangdong was also a center of metalworking and metal handicrafts. Cultural historians have tracked the sociocultural effects of silverization in China and beyond, and money historians have examined the forms and uses of silver monetary objects. Art historians, cultural historians, historians of consumption, and literature scholars have studied China's export goods as singularized works of art and as commodities, as evidence of the global engagements of regional craftsman, consumers, merchants, collectors and intellectuals, and as formative to European notions of self and its global others. Yet the silver that was the conduit of these larger patterns of exchange and appropriation has been largely overlooked. It has been actively dematerialized from some perspectives, erased by others, and overly objectified by still others. Most histories of Qing handicrafts are centered on court production and consumption, in part due to the relative abundance of textual sources. This study focuses on the southeastern region to decentralize the imperial court as the primary agent driving history. It recuperates the stories and histories of regional elites and non-elites by privileging objects as sources. Finally, in most scholarship, silver is typically distinguished between craft, as utensils or silverwares, and economic, as money, and studied in separate fields. Silverwares, like most arts, are also generally siloed by culture of production. The tendency to study silver as work of art or craft utensil separately from its guise as money is an artificial and anachronistic division in this context—as is the division of objects into discrete cultural categories. These separations take for granted the seemingly stable and complete object form.

This dissertation regards silver within the fullness of its liquid and solid states, and accounts for its deceptive qualities, using art historical and material culture methods of analysis.

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[9] Pierre Chaunu estimated that as much of one-third of colonial Spanish American silver ended up in China. *Les Philippines et le pacifique des ibériques (XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe siècles),* vol. I (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1960), 268-69; as cited in Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000-1700* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 113. For the role of China as consumer of silver in world history, see Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Born with a 'Silver Spoon': The Origin of World Trade in 1571," *Journal of World History* 6, no. 2 (fall 1995): 201-5.

[10] von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune,* 114; 224.

[11] From the perspective of political economy, silver was the very material of global capital in the modern world. In his classic study on the English East India Company (EIC), K.N. Chaudhuri wrote that precious metals "were regarded as universal standards of value and considered essential for the settlement of international balance of indebtedness…" *The Trading World of Asia and the East India Company, 1660-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 3.

[12] Flynn and Giráldez, 207.

It asks why and how silver constituted transactions at the Qing regional-global coastal threshold of the Lingnan region. The question is concerned foremost with knowledge and values that were channeled through medium specificity. In other words, how did silver's physical properties and aesthetic potentials lend it a form of material agency in situations of transaction? How did silversmiths and smelters exert Xu Yiyu has described as forms of embodied, non-textual knowledge in their manipulations of silver—that is, the relations between silver, the environment, the spiritual realm, and the body; its standardized measurements and the tools needed to work it; and the techniques that yielded its customary forms and ornament?[13] Finally, how was silver imbued with value through the "material consciousness" of historical agents through whose hands it also passed, such as transactors, smelters, retailers, patrons and buyers, moneychangers, connoisseurs, and antiquarians?[14]

While I will describe how I use this set of theoretical terms later in this introduction, I raise them here to signal how my project differs from others that have been grounded around silver's Chinese circulations.[15] It engages with the above-mentioned scholarship, which will be described in further detail later in this introduction, but regards silver as a transforming material and medium, accounting for its shifting objecthood and metamorphic status as art, craft, currency, store of wealth, and instrument of governance. The preservation of any worked silver object at any moment reflects the ongoing tension between display, social, and artistic meaning, practical use, and the monetary value of its materials.[16] As Timothy Schroder has written, the "intrinsic value of silver has always been such that only pieces of exceptional artistic or historic importance have been retained once their style ceased to be fashionable."[17] At any given instant, one of these values is necessarily more important than another to its owner, which in turn determines whether or not it is kept, preserved, sold, or transformed. A history of silver thus demands an approach that accounts for its shifting states, analyzing silver by keeping in tension its potential statuses as art, craft and money. Moreover, the project joins other recent work in investigating the movement of materials and material culture within contexts of global mobility, while preserving the specificity of materials, objects and their contexts.[18] This dissertation

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[13] "The Knowledge System," 156-7.

[14] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven, Yale University Press: 2008), 119-46.

[15] For an argument on using silver circulation as a geography of historical analysis, see Takeshi Hamashita, "Silver in regional economies and the world economy: East Asia in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries," trans. J.P. McDermott, in *China, East Asia and the Global Economy: regional and historical perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 39-56.

[16] I draw on Helen Clifford's theorization of why people valued silver in early modern England as "a shifting relationship" between intrinsic or money value, fashion or workmanship, personal meaning, recycling, and the display of taste. "A commerce with things: the value of precious metalwork in early modern England," in *Consumers and luxury: consumer culture in Europe 1650-1850,* ed. Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 145. In the same volume, Marcia Pointon noted, relatedly, that gold "exists culturally at the nexus of competing discourses of the economic, the aesthetic and the legal." See "Jewellery in eighteenth-century England," 120.

[17] *The Art of the European goldsmith: silver from the Schroder Collection* (New York, New York: American Federation of Arts, 1983), 15.

[18] See *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World,* eds. Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (London and New York: Routledge, 2016); Edward S. Cooke, Jr., *Global Objects: Toward a Connected Art History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022). For non-human agency in matter-based approaches, see Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A political ecologies of things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering,*

demonstrates how processes of exchange unsettle the notion of the material as universally homogenous and valuable. Instead, such processes reveal the forms of power and historical contingencies of encounter that emerge through object-based transactions.

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The troubling implication of the history briefly sketched out above is that the work of producing China's silver supply was displaced to European colonial settlement and exploitation in the Americas.[19] At the Cerro Rico mine near the town of Potosí in modern-day Bolivia, the most productive silver mine in history, Spanish colonizers appropriated the forced labor of Indigenous peoples, as well as that of some enslaved Africans, through brutal means for the mining and processing of the metal. Half of Indigenous coerced *mita* laborers were obligated to work by the state, forty to fifty percent were independent *minga* laborers, and in the late colonial period, a small population of *k'ajcha,* or self-employed workers operated simple ore mills. Recently, scholars have argued against the homogenization of Indigenous workers in the Andean region as uniformly passive and oppressed, as the historical record reveals variable levels of agency that could be exerted within the colonial system.[20] Coerced or not, the brutal work of mining was carried out almost exclusively through Indigenous bodies; for example, laborers in the Americas refined silver through an amalgamation process, for which they used their bare legs to churn a slurry of silver ore, salt or copper sulphate, mercury, and water.[21] Mining processes were devastating to the local environment, as well as to health well beyond those immediately involved in mining, due to mercury vapor emissions and other toxic pollutants.[22]

American silver extracted through these violent processes entered the Chinese silver supply and was re-smelted with silver sourced from Japan, Chinese southwestern borderland mines, and elsewhere. The objects discussed in this dissertation are implicated in this history, even if they were not solely produced using American silver.[23] The first of many occurrences of

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and Queer Affect (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Heather Davis, *Plastic Matter* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).

[19] For the often-overlooked linkages between labor and consumption in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas, see Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 1; 73-82; Lowe focuses on the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the material conditions of empire, colonialism, and commodity fetishism that as she argues, made possible the development of Western liberalism.

[20] Rossana Barragán, "Working Silver for the World: Mining Labor and Popular Economy in Colonial Potosí," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 97:2 (2017): 194-7.

[21] Peter Bakewell, "Mining in Colonial Spanish America," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America,* ed. Leslie Bethell, vol. 2. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 115-6.

[22] Nicholas A. Robins and Nicole A. Hagan, "Mercury Production and Use in Colonial Andean Silver Production: Emissions and Health Implications," *Environmental Health Perspectives* 120:5 (May 2012): 627-31; Chiara Uglietti, Paolo Gabrielli, Colin A. Cooke, Paul Vallelonga, and Lonnie G. Thompson, "Widespread Pollution of the South American Atmosphere Predates the Industrial Revolution by 240 y," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences - PNAS* 112:8 (2015): 2349–2354.

[23] Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* installation, which he produced on commission for the Maryland Historical Society in 1992, reminds us that globalized networks of silver and other metals were premised on the fungibility of humans and objects, an aspect of trade and transmission that is often occluded from view. Wilson juxtaposed iron shackles alongside Victorian silverwares in a case entitled "Metalwork 1793-1880." As Huey Copeland has written of the installation, the "arrangement… dramatically conjures

willful blindness encountered in this study, the late Ming (1368-1644) Chinese court and scholarly class remained ignorant of the source of American silver at least through the early seventeenth century.[24] In a breathtaking example of what Marx would later describe as the enchantment of commodity fetishism, the court persisted in believing that the silver imported from Manila was sourced directly from Luzon, the Philippines island where the city was located. Desperately in need of silver for the imperial treasury, the Ming Wanli emperor (r. 1572-1620) dispatched a naval expedition to Luzon in 1603, where gold was rumored to grow as beans on trees, and silver could be freely mined, at a site misunderstood by the Chinese as Jiyi Mountain.[25] Perceiving the expedition as a threat to their power, the Spanish took its leaders captive, but released them upon the assurances of other Chinese resident in Manila; the expedition's primary leader Zhang Yi 張嶷, however, was executed upon his return to China for the false information that he had supplied to the emperor and his advisers leading up to the mission.[26] The Spanish grew concerned that the expedition was in fact the first foray of an impending Chinese invasion, and violently massacred the immigrant Chinese population of Luzon, resulting in the deaths of about 20,000 people.[27] In this instance, the Chinese state and its lack of intelligence was a double provocation for Spanish colonial brutality—first, by creating the demand for importing a good produced through the exploitation of indigenous Americans, and second, for creating the conditions for the vicious repression of overseas Chinese. Silver is endemic to histories of colonial violence, and colonial violence is inextricable from the material history of silver.[28] In the colonial conflict that bookends this study, British merchants replaced silver with opium as their major import commodity to China, causing silver to flow out of China and escalating political tensions that led to the first Sino-British Opium War (1839-42).[29]

A rich scholarship in Latin American studies addresses Indigenous labor and knowledge, gender and ethnicity, urbanism, and environmental impacts of the Potosí mine in Peru, as well as

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the ghosted figures of slaves who were themselves cast in the mold of objects that might at any moment be converted into coin." *Bound to Appear: Art, Slavery, and the Site of Blackness in Multicultural America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 18.

[24] Craig Clunas has written that there is nearly no textual evidence that Chinese elites were aware of Spanish colonial possessions in the Americas, though as the following example suggests, they were concerned with the Spanish conquest of the Philippines. "Connected Material Histories: A response," *Modern Asian Studies* 50:1 (2016): 64-5.

[25] CAO Jin, "From Ricci's World Map to Schall's Translation of 'De Re Metallica': Western Learning and China's Search for Silver in the Late Ming Period (1583-1644), *Crossroads* 17/18: 105-11.

[26] Ibid., 108.

[27] Ibid. The Wanli emperor was provided with more accurate knowledge about silver and gold production in Latin America and transpacific shipping when the Jesuit Giulio Aleni (1582-1649, Chinese name Ai Rulüe 艾儒略) completed a project began by his predecessors to complete a book, *Zhifang waiji* 職方外紀 [Record of (lands) beyond the purview of the Bureau of the Operations] in 1623, containing a world map as well as individual continental maps of Asia, Europe, Africa, America and the polar regions. See Ibid., 114-5.

[28] For the methods and structures of material histories, see Ann Brower Stahl, "Material Histories," in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies,* eds. Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 151.

[29] Timothy Brook and Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, "Introduction: Opium's History in China," in *Opium Regimes: China, Britain, and Japan, 1839-1952,* eds. Brook and Wakabayashi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 3-4.

silver mines in Mexico and other sites.[30] This study is limited to silver once it has been refined and shaped into objects that embodied transactions in Guangzhou or in its vicinity. Moreover, since my focus is primarily on the on-the-ground knowledge and values that arose through transacting silver in this context, its American history of extraction is mostly rendered invisible. While my discussion of the knowledge of Chinese moneychangers in the second half of the dissertation will reveal a nuanced understanding of silver coins produced in different mints in post-independence Latin America, there is no evidence that their knowledge was connected to any notion of American geography or culture—even though by that time, most of the silver was imported by merchants from the northern Americas. The Chinese cosmologies of silver described at the beginning of this section are thus, in a sense, another form of enchantment, as they paper over the extractive histories of global economy. Yet most of this dissertation is an effort toward the disenchantment of silver as it circulated. Through studying the heterogenous forms and transcultural mechanisms through which silver was transacted, and embedded in material life, my intent is to destabilize silver from its position as the natural medium of global capital.

Methodology: Examining Two Transacted Objects

To provide a more fine-grained analysis of what is often called the "materiality" of objects, I draw on a set of methods for object-based analysis specific to silver objects. Two objects, a pot and a coin, serve here as openings to how object sources allow me to study connections between otherwise inaccessible or partially accessible historical agents, as well as account for the properties of silver that were activated through transaction. Both objects were exchanged through the circulations of craftsmen, foreign trading agents, and commodities that intersected along the southeastern Chinese coast during the Qing period. By viewing them within their material specificity as metamorphic objects which register different sets of values in their current physical states, they are at once social, economic, and aesthetic, as well as Chinese, European, and occasionally American, Japanese, Indian and Siamese. The objects are currently in museum collections in Salem, Massachusetts, and London. Insofar as they were once objects moving through transpacific oceanic circulations, at present they are suspended within transatlantic repositories. As museum objects, they are imbued with a notion of fixity and permanence, in that they are presumed to be valuable as preserved in their current form. They cannot be directly touched due to the degrading effect of skin oils on metallic surfaces. I spent considerable time examining both objects, turning them over and over in my gloved hands.

[30] Kendall W. A. Brown, *History of Mining in Latin America: from the Colonial Era to the Present* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012); D.A. Brading, "Mexican Silver-Mining in the Eighteenth Century: The Revival of Zacatecas," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 50:4 (Nov. 1970): 665–681; Allison Bigelow, *Mining Language: Racial Thinking, Indigenous Knowledge, and Colonial Metallurgy in the Early Modern Iberian World* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Omohundro Institute of Early American History Culture, 2020); Kris E. Lane, *Potosí: the Silver City That Changed the World* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2019); Nicholas A. Robins, *Mercury, Mining, and Empire: The Human and Ecological Cost of Colonial Silver Mining in the Andes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Jane E. Mangan, *Trading Roles: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Urban Economy in Colonial Potosí* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Dana Velasco Murillo, *Urban Indians in a Silver City: Zacatecas, Mexico, 1546-1810* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016). Rossana Barragàn, *Potosí Global: Viajando con sus primeras imágenes (1550-1650)* (La Paz: Plural Editores, 2019).

First, a vessel: on a silver panel, a land-and-waterscape (*shanshui* 山水) scene is fashioned in glimmering relief (fig. 0.2). The scene was produced on a slightly-rounded surface, and it catches the light differently as it is moved and rotated. The primary action appears a bit below the center, where a scholar rides a small horse or donkey, followed by a servant on foot. They are about to cross a bridge. At the other side, a pine tree awaits with its needles in bristling circular arrangements. It spreads its branches over leafy bamboo; at the base, its roots grasp a rock like the fingers of a hand. Above, the sky is punctuated by animated motifs, tiny and unmoored, but carefully plotted within the panel's borders. Birds, the size of the man and his mount, cartwheel between plum blossoms, the pine, bamboo, and chrysanthemum.[31] Below the bridge, a fisherman sits in a covered boat under a willow tree; in the image of the figure, compression of the bottom of the panel distorts the figure beyond recognition. A pair of ducks flies over his head. The figures move leisurely through an unspecified space, recessed within a frame with edges tracing the shape of a lotus flower.[32]

The scene was made by silversmiths in southern China in the mid-seventeenth century, during the transition from the previous dynasty.[33] The Qing were Manchu nomads from northeastern Asia, who conquered Ming China and its Han rulers. They led a multi-ethnic empire while both maintaining and reforming Ming systems, such as the elite scholar-official bureaucratic class. They were also actively involved in reforming the oceanic trading system based in the port of Canton.[34] In creating the composition, the metalworkers first cast all the relief elements and then soldered them by hand onto the panel's rounded surface with the aid of a blowpipe. The protagonist is a wandering scholar, either braving a snowstorm in search of a flowering plum branch, such as one that hangs over his head, or perhaps returning home from a night of elegant debauchery—a poetry competition on the subject of a treasured object, for

[31] The botanical motifs listed all have conventionalized auspicious connotations, connected by way of the bird-and-flower painting tradition and other aesthetic forms, to different scholarly virtues. The pine, bamboo, and plum, occasionally with the addition of the chrysanthemum, are viewed as a set. Together they are harbingers of spring that flourish in winter, a metaphorical virtue of endurance and fortitude under difficult conditions. The plants are viewed as embodying different ideals embraced by Chinese scholar-officials, including uprightness, honesty, purity, and humility. On auspicious devices in Chinese art ranging from court production to vernacular images and material culture, see Maggie Bickford, "Three Rams and Three Friends: The Working Lives of Chinese Auspicious Motifs," *Asia Major,* third series, 12:1 (1999): 127-131. Thanks to comments by Prof. Lin Li-chiang 林麗江 during a presentation I gave on the ewer at the Graduate Institute in Art History at National Taiwan University, for in identifying the motifs that may have served as references for the scene.

[32] For the foliated or lotus-shaped frame in Chinese art, see Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Ornament: The Lotus and the Dragon* (London: The British Museum Publications, Ltd., 1984), 125-7.

[33] Throughout the dissertation, I refer to the craftsmen who worked precious metals as "silversmiths" or *yinjiang* 銀匠 in the Chinese context and "goldsmiths" in the European context, due to convention. Both worked both materials, broadly speaking, and worked with base metals.

[34] As a result of cultural and political continuities in the Qing despite the change in dynasty, the two periods are often conjoined together as "late imperial China" by historians. For an example of how power structures were maintained across the Ming-Qing, or late imperial period, see R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors and their Provinces: The Evolution of Territorial Administration in China, 1644-1796* (University of Washington Press, 2015), for how the Qing increased the efficiency of the Ming system of provincial governance. For Qing reforms of the Canton system, see Gang Zhao, *The Qing Opening to the Ocean: Chinese Maritime Policies, 1684-1757* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013).

instance, as wine flowed around a table of friends. During the Ming-Qing transitional period when the scene was made, such a figure could have been associated with the *yimin* 移民, or remnants of the late-Ming Han loyalist class considered refugees from the political elite.[35] Thus there is an element of nostalgia for a past way of life, and the poignant difficulties of scholarly pursuit under adverse conditions or otherwise. Through sand molds, molten metal, the silversmith's breath, and the thinnest tongue of flame, the scene was replicated six times, using two variations of three panels each. In alternating variations, the panels were inset into the globular skeleton that constitutes the lotus-edged frames. The result is the faceted body of a hexagonal silver ewer, hereafter called the PEM ewer (fig. 0.3).[36]

One important question is how Chinese silversmiths worked with the physical properties of silver to produce such an object. As mentioned above, an approach I take to such an object is to examine it for what it might reveal about the "material knowledge" of its makers, a term used by Xu to describe the non-verbal, experiential understanding brought by premodern Chinese craftsmen to their manipulation of different materials. I view material knowledge as constituted relationally with what Carl Knappett and Lambros Malafouris have called "material agency."[37] Due to the binary structures of Western thought, non-human entities, including objects and materials, have often been positioned as oppositional to humans as agents; that is, because humans have agency, animals, objects, and materials do not. Archeologists and cultural

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[35] For the *yimin* class as artists and patrons of the arts, see Peter Sturman et al, *The Artful Recluse: painting, poetry and politics in seventeenth-century China* (Santa Barbara Museum of Art; Asia Society, 2012).

[36] The Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) has owned the ewer since it was last sold at auction in 1989. Within its current institutional context, the teapot is often referred to informally as the "Wagstaff teapot," after its last private owner, Samuel J. Wagstaff, Jr. (1921-87). Wagstaff was a curator and a collector of American art, silver and photography, and the benefactor and long-time partner of photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. One hundred objects from his collection of American silver were shown at the New-York Historical Society in 1987, the year he died. Grace Glueck, "Sam Wagstaff, 65, a curator and photography collector," *The New York Times*, Jan. 16, 1987. Also see Philip Gefter, *Wagstaff: before and after Mapplethorpe: A biography* (New York: Liveright, 2015). As I will discuss most extensively in chapter seven, the ewer was identified throughout most of its history as an English teapot due to antiquarians' interpretation of its full set of English hallmarks as indicated of an English maker. The ewer was sold for the first time as a Chinese object at the sale of Wagstaff's estate at Christie's, New York, April 18, 1989; in that sale it was acquired on behalf of PEM. See Asian export art curatorial records, PEM. I have elected to use the ewer's present institution, and the more generic object name of "ewer" throughout this dissertation, relatively neutral yet not completely de-politicized terms. Like "Wagstaff," the name "PEM" continues to privilege its American collecting history over other known and unknown aspects of its provenance. My intention is to connect exported Chinese silverwares to (mostly still anonymous) Chinese makers and patrons, de-centering the European and American reception histories that have thus far dominated their interpretation. Yet I evoke its present museum context purposefully, in order to link my historical work on the teapot to its modern connoisseurship and collecting history, acknowledging that the value of objects is not inherent but rather are processual and changing, based on judgements made about them in any particular context. See Arjun Appadurai on Georg Simmel's concept of value in "Introduction: commodities and the politics of value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective,* ed. Appadurai (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3, a text methodologically indispensable to my study.

[37] "Material and Nonhuman Agency: An Introduction," in *Material Agency: Towards a Non-Anthropocentric Approach,* eds. Knappett and Malfouris (New York: Springer, 2008), xii-xiii.

anthropologists have turned toward notions of networked, bundled or distributed agency, shared between humans and non-humans. They have argued for an understanding of agency beyond an exclusively human property, or one defined as intentionality, consciousness, and will.[38] As Knappett and Malafouris have written, "The clay on the potter's wheel should not be construed as the external passive object of the potter's intentional states, but as a functionally co-substantial component of the intentional character of the potting experience."[39] Viewed in this light, the silver vessel was likewise created through an interactive process between makers and medium that will be explored further in chapter three.

Extant objects serve as a rare source for Chinese silversmiths operating in the south, outside of the court—a group of people who were actively denigrated when they were addressed in print by the Ming-Qing scholar-official class.[40] The scholarly elite moreover held a privileged position in determining canons of art connoisseurship historically and have had an outsized impact on the field of Chinese art history in the present. As a result, it is the rare silverware and silversmith that has been deemed worthy of collection or study. Especially due to the scarcity of textual sources, this dissertation uses material culture methodologies and object-based analysis to trace how craft, economic, and aesthetic values were negotiated through the metal's form and substance.

The technical feat of the ewer is not just the delicate textural relief in a single scene, but its seamless replication by its makers. On the ewer, the roaming scholar, his horse and his servant are no longer singularized, but displaced from subject to repetitive ornament. Agency was likewise shifted, from the elite male scholar—idealized figures that, in the words of Dagmar Schäfer, "were the protagonists whose cunning strategy finally brought order back to the world, to the play, to society, and to the state"— to the conjunction of knowledge, skill and material through which he was multiplied.[41] As much as it serves as a virtuosic display of metalworking skill, the ewer moreover offers a knowing take on the commodification of scholarly-elite culture at the end of the Ming. Despite the turbulence of the period, the high silverization of the economy, and its demand for more specie in particular forms, gave rise to practices of conspicuous consumption, as well as increasing economic and cultural entanglements with the wider maritime world.[42] As an example of highly-skilled craft labor, a historical source, and as a commentary on its context, the ewer flips the typical script of art history: the centralized scholar

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[38] In addition to this concept of "material agency" as differentiated from anthropocentric ideas of agency, I follow work in cultural anthropology that views materials, material culture, and subjects as "entangled" in their constitutive mutual relationships. People, things, and the social are produced and reproduced together, and there is no *a priori* separation between mind and matter, subjects and objects. See Elizabeth S. Chilton, "Material Meanings and Meaningful Materials: An Introduction," in *Material Meanings: Critical Approaches to the Interpretation of Material Culture,* ed. Chilton (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 1999), 1. Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, "Making things out of objects that move," in *Things in Motion: object itineraries in anthropological practice,* ed. Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie (Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2015), 6-7.
[39] "Material and Nonhuman Agency," xiv.
[40] See chapter one for the fraught status of the premodern Chinese craftsman in elite scholarly writing of the period, and specifically that of the silversmith.
[41] *The Crafting of the 10,000 Things: Knowledge and Technology in Seventeenth-Century China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 2.
[42] For a study of the impact of silverization in Ming China, and the accompanying moral anxiety expressed by scholar-officials, see Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

figure is displaced in favor of often-marginalized historical agents—in this case, the conjunction of its craftsmen-makers and its precious metal medium. The ewer is a remarkable source due to the conjunction of material agency of silver and the material knowledge of its metalsmiths.

It is also important because it records the assessment of the economic value of its medium outside of China.[43] We can trace the object's oceanic trajectory through English hallmarks, tiny impressions which were struck on its base and on the flange of its lid (fig. 0.4).[44] The ewer was transported from a port along the southeastern coast of China, and it ultimately arrived in London by 1682 or 1683. As I will explore in chapter seven on the ewer's trajectories in Britain, possibly it first traveled through southeast Asia, and via the Netherlands, passing through the hands of traders, merchants, and elite buyers. In London, the composition of its alloy was assayed for the ratio of the fineness of its silver. The hallmarking system was administered by the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, the goldsmiths' trade guild, on behalf of the English crown. The procedure insured that each silverware brought to sale in the kingdom was assayed at a minimum of 92.5% silver, the alloy standard known as sterling.[45] It was a form of consumer guarantee, but it also protected the English sovereign's monetary system, as it operated on the assumption that any piece of wrought silver could be liquidated, become currency, and enter local markets. Through the set of tiny punches, the Chinese ewer has been rendered into an extension of England's circulating currency. The marks are also one indication that the object passed from the hands of one set of metal craftsmen to another—that is, people who had the knowledge to assess its value as material and as craft, as well as the skill and tools to change it into something else. The ewer serves as a source for the politics of its own global transaction. While many objects received inscriptions or other annotations that were records of assessment,

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[43] For a study of an object understood within its dynamic social contexts as a work of art, a functional tool, a theatrical prop, an historical artifact, a text, etc., see Judith Zeitlin, "The Cultural Biography of a Musical Instrument: Little Hulei as Sounding Object, Antique, Prop, and Relic," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 69:2 (Dec. 2009): 397; 417.

[44] As mentioned in footnote 34, the ewer was regarded as English for most of the twentieth century, though now it is consistently linked with Chinese makers. For the first publication of the PEM ewer as a Chinese object, see the important catalogue H.A. Crosby Forbes, John Devereux Kernan, and Ruth S. Wilkins, *Chinese Export Silver, 1775 to 1875* (Milton, MA: Museum of the American China Trade, 1975), 51-2. The marks on the bottom of the vessel, as indicated in Figure 0.4, include a sponsor's mark "IA"-conjoined, the date or warden's mark "e", the standard mark of a lion passant, and the town mark, the leopard crowned, for the London Assay Office. The sponsor's mark and standard mark were also struck on the lid, which as a separate piece of plate, also had to be assayed. The gothic, lower-case "e" mark is the "date letter," which indicates that it was assayed in London between July 21, 1682 and May 19, 1683. The date letter, also known as the assayer's or warden's mark, was changed each year after elections for the warden. The warden was responsible for the fineness of the ware once it had been marked and would be fined if it was found to be substandard. The date letter along with the responsible warden were recorded on tables kept at the assay office. Thus the so-called date mark functioned not to date the object, but rather primarily to identify liability, as did the other marks. See John S. Forbes, "Change of date letter at the London Assay Office," *The Silver Society Journal* 12 (Autumn, 2000): 83.

[45] An English statute dating to 1300 established the silver assay to guarantee that every silver article offered for sale should be "of the sterling alloy of the coin, or better" — or at least 92.5% silver. The Goldsmiths' Company was chartered in 1327, at which time the tradesmen were given the mandate to perform the assay on all precious metal goods to be sold in the country, as well as regulate the quality of the currency. The Britannia standard, in effect by an act of Parliament from 1697 to 1720, raised the standard alloy to 95.84% silver. J.S. Forbes, *Hallmark: A History of the London Assay Office* (London: Unicorn Press, 1998), 16; 18; 159-61.

silver objects are more likely than other metalwares, such as pewter, tin, or even copper alloy metalwares, to bear such traces, due to the importance of accounting for the value of their medium. Britain is exceptional in the early establishment and longevity of its assay system. The linkage of such a system as a partnership between the government and a trade guild was a European phenomenon; neither the United States, for example, nor China ever had a similar system.[46]

Marks applied by English goldsmiths can be viewed as a reflection of "material consciousness," a final term which I draw from Richard Sennett. In Sennett's view, humans are engaged with materials within which they see possibilities of change. One aspect of material consciousness is "presence," or the mark of the maker left in the material, such as a stamp, thumbprint, or signature, which Sennett views as a political act of claiming.[47] The English stamps on the ewer are a misleading example of presence, as they were misinterpreted historically: early English antiquarians believed that the marks indicated the name of the pot's English maker or workshop, as I will further discuss in the seventh chapter. However, they do operate in this case as a political registration of presence in the form of a guarantee, that an English goldsmith assessed and approved the alloy content of the ware. They are also evidence of Xu's branch of material knowledge that deals with notions of standardized measures, in this case of alloy content. Finally, "anthropomorphosis" is another aspect of Sennett's material consciousness; it is the projection of human qualities onto a material, from animism to morality.[48] The material of the vessel was transformed into an "honest" substance through the hallmarking process, and thus the hallmarks function as a sign of its trustworthiness from the standpoint of its value.

Next, a coin. Scarred, flattened, and gouged, a round silver lump bears impressions of both its past assessment as to whether it was genuine or fake, as well as traces of machining (fig. 0.5). The result is a complex conjunction of material agency, knowledge, and consciousness, registered within the silver. A Romanized profile of a European sovereign is discernible in relief on the face of the coin. Judging from the lettering adjacent to the rim, the coin was produced in the colonial Spanish mint in Mexico City in 1785. The coin's obverse and reverse have been partially effaced by countermarks in the form of struck Chinese characters. The marks, called *ziyin* 字印 "character-stamps," were a Chinese market adaptation for validating the invisible fineness and soundness of imported foreign silver coins. The system of authentication was practiced by merchants and moneychangers along China's southeastern coast.[49] As I argue in chapter six, the process of striking a coin with a countermark was both diagnostic, as it could assess whether the coin was embedded with pieces of base metals, as well as a guarantee, as it indicated that the coin had been checked by a specific banker or moneychanger. The mark is thus both a sign of the moneychangers' material knowledge and their presence. The moneychanger was the extension of the Chinese silver-based financial system that served as a translator of the monetary material at the southeastern coastal threshold. Each coin would be exchanged for copper cash, kept whole and stamped or sealed for local circulation, cut down, or smelted with

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[46] Chinese silverware shops applied shop inscriptions and stamps, as well as other types of marks indicating fineness, but they were not commonplace until the nineteenth century. Chinese silver marks will be discussed further in chapters five and six.
[47] Sennett, 130.
[48] Ibid., 120.
[49] Richard von Glahn, "Foreign silver coins in the market culture of nineteenth century China." *International Journal of Asian Studies* 4 (2007), 51-78.

others into an ingot. Like the ewer, the coin moved across different standards for understanding and evaluating silver within the global Qing trading world.

Two systems for understanding the value of silver as a medium collide in the same small bit of metal. From a production standpoint, the die-struck image on the obverse of the coin was produced by a coining machine. Each coin was given the same form and image. It was impressed with a number reflecting the fineness and weight of the silver making up the coin. The edge of the coin was machine-milled, which gave it a pattern as an anti-counterfeiting and anti-clipping measure. The form of the coin was meant to reflect its branding by a sovereign, the homogeneity of its metal and its standardization as one of many identical objects, and as such, the trustworthiness of its invisible value. Yet as evidenced by the *ziyin* countermarks that have re-terrained the face of the coin entirely, the soundness of silver coins was repeatedly verified as they passed across Chinese regional currency markets. The need for repetition in verification indicates that the coin could be adulterated at any point in between transactions. The authentication process has reshaped what was once a uniformly flat disc struck with a crisp sovereign image, as if to contest systems and forms that suggest that the value of silver can be self-evident, reliable, and universal. In their partial and overlapping coherence, the two sets of marks signal the agency of silver in its transformational states. Silver was far from inert matter in this situation. Its material qualities impacted the forms and imprints of its own mediation across different understandings of its value. Moreover, the two sets of marks are two approaches to the metal's material consciousness; on one hand, an assumption that silver's alloy can be standardized and made uniform, and on the other, that it was deeply heterogeneous, mutable, and suspicious.

Framework: Lingnan 嶺南 *Silver Geographies*

By the late-sixteenth century, Ming China had a "silver economy," as Richard von Glahn has written; the metal was used for the functions traditionally ascribed to cast copper coins and paper notes.[50] In the period, the Ming state issued a series of "single-whip" tax reforms, which converted all government taxes from corvée labor and in-kind commodities into silver ingots.[51] Silver became the most important form of exchange in China. In turn, the reforms created a need to import the metal, which was in low domestic supply. The coastal Lingnan region, and especially the port city of Guangzhou, was crucial for providing silver for the large and growing inland economy. The region is inclusive of the two provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, a geography that brings together mountains, river delta, and ocean.[52] A wealthy mercantile region due to its privileged access to maritime trading, it was ethnically and culturally distinct from the Yangzi River delta region to its north, with Cantonese as the ethnic majority. In the Qing period, it was delineated by its exceptional access to silver historically mined from the mountains that border the provinces to the north and imported through trade from the sea to the east. Thus, silver sources from both the mountains on the north and ports on the southern coast also happened to coincide with the geographical borders that defined the region. If silver was the dominant

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[50] *Fountain of Fortune,* 76-7.

[51] von Glahn, *The Economic History of China: From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 307.

[52] For an environmental history of the region, see Robert B. Marks, *Tigers, Rice, Silk, and Silt: Environment and Economy in Late Imperial South China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

medium of value in China in the late imperial period, then Guangdong was the region most closely associated with silver, as indicated by both regional and court textual sources.

The Guangdong geography cited at the beginning of this introduction, the *Guangdong xinyu* 廣東新語 [New Sayings of Guangdong], was written by Qu Dajun 屈大均 in 1678 and published in 1687. It cites a Song-period geographical text on the two provinces, the *Shixingji* 始興記 by Wang Shaozi 王韶之, which records that the use of silver as a circulating currency in China began in "ancient times" in the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi because there was silver ore in the Lingnan mountains that give the region its name.[53] The text relates that the northern reaches of the region were known to have silver caves and silver sand. When one mountain had a landslide, people noticed that the rocks were shining and glittering; they smelted it and were able to refine silver out of the ore. There were also plentiful outward signs of the mountains' secret silver ores.[54] As Carla Nappi has written of Daoist knowledge about searching for rocks, herbs, and other natural materials, "the physiognomy of the land" could be read through "the outward manifestations of its inner character," following guides in the model of the sixth-century *Dijing tu* 地鏡圖 Earth Mirror Charts."[55] According to *Guangdong xinyu,* evidence that the Yingde 英德 and Qingyuan 清遠 mountains contained silver mines included a white air that would rise over them, such that the plants on the mountains were covered with a white substance. When the mountain rocks were hot, they sweat silver, which was white in color and had a strong odor.[56] The liquid states of silver's external manifestations in Lingnan were consistent with how a surviving passage from the *Dijing tu* describes the *qi* of silver, in this case, the signs that could be interpreted to reveal the presence of silver in the ground:

> The *qi* of silver is true white in the night and flows on the ground. If one sweeps the substance with the hand to spread it and finds it regrouping again, this is silver. Where there is *cong* (spring onion) … in a mountain there is [also] silver below it and there appears faintly a true white [luminescence] (Brackets in quoted original).[57]

While there was known to be silver in the mountains, in the Ming and Qing periods they were not mined. Rather, government mining was primarily carried out in the southwestern provinces, such as in modern Yunnan province and its bordering regions. Those governmental mines reached a height of production from the eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. The total production estimate for the period between 1400 and 1850 is 30,000 tons, an average annual yield of 66.6 tons of refined silver.[58] By comparison, millions of American silver dollars were

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[53] *Guangdong xinyu,* 859-60.

[54] Ibid., 854.

[55] Nappi, *The Monkey and the Inkpot* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 77. The *Dijingtu* is a lost manual on mining and geobotanical prospecting that is known through quoted fragments in other texts. See Ho Peng Yoke, *Explorations in Daoism: Medicine and Alchemy in Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 95-104

[56] *Guangdong xinyu,* 854.

[57] Quoted in Yoke, 100.

[58] Yang Yuda and Nanny Kim, "Texts and Technologies in Chinese Silver Metallurgy, Twelfth to Nineteenth Centuries," *EASTM* 49 (2019): 10-11; Kim and Yang, "The *Jinniu* mines and the confusions of Qing sources on silver mining," *Artefact* 8 (2018): 111-139.

imported annually by the early Qing period, with conservative import estimates at around 150 tons per year, all passing through entry points on the southeastern coast.[59]

In *Guangdong xinyu,* silver is not addressed in the sections on the area's geography, as one might assume from the paraphrased passages above. Rather, the above geographical descriptions appear at the beginning of a long section included in the chapter devoted to regional commodities. Guangdong and its neighboring provinces were regarded as both the sources of imported silver, as well as known for using unaltered foreign coins as currency in regional markets. Chinese merchants in the region viewed Spanish colonial and later Mexican silver dollars as relatively trustworthy and stable forms of the metal. Thus, the coins were imported at a premium.[60] As foreign silver coins entered southern Chinese currency circulations primarily through Guangzhou, imported silver coins with struck faces, and often machine-milled edges, became known as *yangqian* 洋錢 "foreign money" or *yangyin* 洋銀 "foreign silver." Imported coins were melted down and cast into ingots for the imperial treasury, and other specific uses. But in the wealthy southeastern coastal provinces of Guangdong, Fujian, and Zhejiang, and inland Jiangxi province, imported foreign coins were kept mostly intact as a measured (weighed) currency.[61] A passage from a compilation of imperial economic records included in the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 in 1745 demonstrates the specific association of foreign silver with the region:

> As for the coastal regions of Fujian and Guangdong, they frequently circulate *yangqian*. This type of silver is all modeled in the style of cash coins, and it comes from the second sea to the southwest. There are several different grades. The best ones are called *maqian* 马錢 "horse coins," (Dutch East India Company trade ducatoons), because they are in the form of heavenly seahorses. The second best are *huabianqian* 花邊錢 "flowery-border coins" (Spanish eight *reales* pillar dollars). Next are *shiziqian* 十字錢, "'ten-character' coins" (Spanish eight *reales* cob dollars). People from Fujian and Guangdong call them "foreign money" or "flowery-border money," and each mercantile ship from Holland and Portugal brings several tens of millions of them.[62]

The passage details the southern epistemologies through which the coins were classified and understood. Moreover, southern-derived knowledge about foreign silver coins was transmitted to the court. Thus, within regional currency circulations, foreign struck coins and their visual

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[59] Flynn and Giráldez, "Born with a 'Silver Spoon,'" 203.
[60] Flynn and Giráldez, "Arbitrage, China, and World Trade in the Early Modern Period," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38:4 (1995): 432. While seventeenth-century merchants had a deep understanding of the relative value of goods in markets worldwide, the concept of global arbitrage was first theorized by economist David Ricardo as a difference in the relative value of production costs and prices. See Chaudhuri, *The trading world of Asia…,* 156-7.
[61] von Glahn, "Foreign silver coins," 51-78.
[62] "至於福建、廣東近海之地，又多行使海錢。其銀皆笵為錢試，來自西南二洋，約有數等。大者曰馬錢，為海馬形。次曰花邊錢。又次曰十字錢.... 閩、粵之人稱為番錢或稱為花邊錢，凡荷蘭、佛郎機諸國商般所載海以數千萬元計." *Qingchao wenxian tongkao* 清朝文献通考, *Qianbikao si* 钱币考四, *Qianlong sinian kao* 乾隆十年考, as quoted in Li Xiaoping 李晓萍, *Zhongguo jindai tudian* 中国近代金银币图典 [A catalogue of modern Chinese gold and silver coins] (Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2002), 1.

components were given descriptive names, through which they were associated with local vernacular culture.

As they were shaved down and cut, foreign coins were also integrated into a craft supply, and were transformed by local metalworkers into luxury objects and everyday adornments. Due to the proximity of metal sources and other craft trades, as well as regional wealth and the patronage it created, the urban areas of Guangdong were also known for their achievements in metalsmithing, from precious metals to pewter to iron. In 1569-70, the Portuguese Dominican friar Gaspar da Cruz wrote one of the first European eyewitness accounts of China based on his travels. In his description of Guangzhou crafts, he noted, "of little boxes gilt, and platters, and baskets, writing-desks and tables, as well gilt as with silver, there is no count nor better. Gold-smiths, silver-smiths, copper-smiths, iron-smiths, and of all other trades, there be many and perfect workmen, and great abundance of things of every trade…"[63] Vibrant silversmithing workshops and trade lineages in Guangdong and Fujian and their diasporas transformed silver into handicraft utensils, ritual objects, and jewelry.[64]

In the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, Guangdong was a southern regional center for metalworking broadly and silverworking in particular. *Guangdong xinyu* does not specifically address gold and silversmithing, but Qu's account of Guangdong emphasizes different metalsmithing trades. In the section on commodities, the first products listed and described are metals—gold, silver, copper, old cash, iron, tin and lead—which are both locally-sourced and imported.[65] The section on utensils describes many types of metalwares, including copper drums, bells, knives, and betel nut boxes.[66] Base metal trades included those devoted to pewter, tin, copper, iron, and a white cupronickel alloy known as *baitong* 白銅 (paktong, or in some cases tutenage). One of the most oft-quoted passages in material culture studies from *Guangdong xinyu* is based on Qu's assessment of the Guangzhou pewter trade, the source of the proverb "Suzhou style, Guangzhou craft."[67] He notes that the pewter wares produced in Guangdong are the finest, and that iron wares could be similarly described. Qu located many smelting industries at Foshan city in Guangdong and wrote that all metalsmiths in training must go there. Finally, he noted that metalwares made in Foshan are everywhere in the empire.[68] The Guangzhou silversmithing trade received patronage from foreigners, both via sojourners in Guangzhou and through trade connections with southern merchants. Demonstrating foreign demand, in the early-eighteenth century, English East Company (EIC) merchant Robert Scattergood kept a running account with Canton shopkeeper Buqua, a silverwares merchant who also repaired watches and jewelry. In

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[63] C.R. Boxer, *South China in the sixteenth century, being the narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar da Cruz, O.P. (and) Fr. Martín de Rada, O.E.S.A. (1550-1575)* (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1953), 125.

[64] In 1614 and 1620, Spanish records note that immigrant Fujianese craftsmen and retailers dominated the craft professions of Manila, from hatters to goldsmiths. Birgit Tremml-Werner, *Spain, China, and Japan in Manila, 1571-1644: Local Comparisons and Global Connections* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 285; 289n143. On southern Chinese jewelry, see Margaret Duda, *Four Centuries of Silver: Personal Adornment in the Qing Dynasty and After* (Chicago: Art Media Resources, Ltd., 2002).

[65] *Guangdong xinyu*, 849.

[66] *Guangdong xinyu,* 921-2.

[67] Yijun Wang, "From Tin to Pewter: Craft and Statecraft in China, 1700-1844," (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2015), 146.

[68] *Guangdong xinyu,* 972.

1714, he purchased a "silver teapot to keep tea water warm" from Buqua.[69] Thus, in the first half of the eighteenth century, Cantonese metals trades were producing for a variety of markets, both foreign and domestic.

Sites for importing silver along the Chinese coast were limited to the port of Guangzhou in the mid-eighteenth century. Thereafter, regional handicraft metalworking trades responded to the concentration of new foreign markets in the port. Following Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch traders, English ships started trading yearly at Guangzhou in 1699, leading to the establishment of seasonal residential trading activities overseen by a guild of licensed Chinese merchants. They also oversaw the collection of customs and taxes, and were known as the Co-hang (M: *gonghang* 公行).[70] In 1757 the Chinese government officially restricted all Western trade exclusively to the port of Guangzhou, inaugurating the so-called Canton System.[71] The EIC was responsible for the largest volume of trade with China until its monopoly was revoked in 1833 by the British crown; as British traveler James Wathen put it in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, "There are factories at Canton belonging to other European nations, as well as one to the United States of America; but the trade of all the rest united, dwindles into insignificance when compared to that of the English East India Company."[72] The imperial victory of the British in the first Anglo-Chinese Opium War ended the protectionist single-port policy, and led to the establishment of new trading ports along the Chinese coast and inland.[73] Yet in the meantime, Canton metals trade responded to British entertaining and dining customs that demanded silver vessels and utensils.

The availability of such objects for purchase can be attributed to the standing presence in the port of a residential British trading community and market. The adaptability of the cosmopolitan Chinese business community to the interior decoration and dining etiquette of different trading partners likely meant that the market for English-style wares included local Chinese elites. May-bo Ching has traced the earliest account of a Chinese merchant in Canton giving a party in the English style to 1769, when dinner was eaten by all with forks and knives, presumably made of silver.[74] Patronage of the existing Canton metalworking trade producing English-style wares thus included buyers of different backgrounds who identified British-designed silver tablewares as satisfying a requisite need for entertaining purposes. By the turn of the nineteenth century, a range of European (predominately British) highly-specialized silverware forms, purposely made for Britiash-style entertaining and dining practices, and following current fashion, could be purchased with ease from Chinese silver retailers.

Silver was a southern specialty craft and import, but it was also deeply imbricated within global trading systems at the coast. In Guangzhou, Cantonese silver workshops produced tablewares in English patterns, and guaranteed their products at the fineness of imported dollars. As mobile objects, silverwares were not only produced, purchased, and collected in China during the Qing period, but they had profound impacts outside of China as objects that circulated

[69] Philippa Glanville, *Silver in England* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1987), 164.
[70] For the co-hang or hong merchant system, see Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005).
[71] Zhao, *The Qing Opening to the Ocean,* 169.
[72] *Journal of a voyage, in 1811 and 1812, to Madras and China* (London: J. Nichols, Son and Bentley, 1814), 186.
[73] Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast.*
[74] "Chopsticks or Cutlery?: How Canton Hong Merchants Entertained Foreign Guests in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *Narratives of Free Trade and the Commercial Cultures of Early American Chinese Relations,* ed. Kendall Johnson (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 101.

overseas. In this local-global context, silver's economic value was never far from its aesthetic or craft value, and vice-versa. It could easily be melted and reworked at any moment. As Ariel Fox has written, *fu* 富 meaning wealth in the medieval and modern Chinese contexts was a homology for *fu* 福 meaning blessings, indicating the religious and symbolic value of "wealth" beyond its monetary value. Similarly, metal objects operated within multiple registers; in her words, "They are the stuff of both ritual and social practice, confounding distinctions between gift and commodity, sign and signified."[75] In this light, the equivalence of crafted objects with the substance of money was not immaterial to their properties and effects. Silver's property of fungibility had profound implications for how it was shaped and moved around the globe. It was a material like any other, yet it was unlike any other.

The semi-residential concentration of Europeans in Guangzhou, Xiamen, and Macao for almost a hundred years, as well as the status of Guangzhou as one of the most important global ports in the world, means that the region was not only identified as the source of silver, but also was seen as the principle Qing threshold for mediating foreign entities—including the precious metal. Silver was an important vernacular medium at the intersection of circulations of craftspeople, merchants, foreign traders, and objects in the port cities of coastal southeastern China, and particularly in the urban trading entrepôt of Guangzhou. Crystallized through craft, silverwares purchased or given as gifts gave form to complex political, economic, religious and kin relationships. They operated in some cases as expressions of affection or good luck, in others as bribes, and typically as a combination. As the world market for "foreign silver" was a base on which global trade intensified, allowing for the expansion of empire and colonialism, the nation-state and industrialization, what might seem like an obscure regional medium was in fact deeply entangled in the changes of global modernity.[76]

Background: History of Gold and Silverwares in China

Three themes that recur throughout the history of gold and silverworking in China are first, precious metals are often used secondarily to other media; second, gold and silver were connected to Buddhism; and third, techniques and designs were sourced from imported wares, mostly from regions in West and South Asia.[77] Based on extant objects, a vast array of handicraft techniques were developed in China for working precious metals, including casting, hammering and soldering; chasing and engraving; applied granules; braiding, weaving, and soldering drawn wire into filigree; different methods of gold plating; and the application of decorative materials,

[75] "Precious Bodies: Money Transformation Stories from Medieval to Late Imperial China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 76: 1/2 (Jun.-Dec. 2016): 45.

[76] The structuralist view of the exchange of materials as a base upon which market economy and culture are layered gave primacy to certain forms of economic exchange as the agent of historical change. This study asks, what if the specific material properties of materials are better understood as participants in their own transmission, transaction, and translation? On the French Annales school of the history of material life, see Robert Blair St. George, "Introduction," in *Material Life in America, 1600-1860,* ed. St. George (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987), 3-4.

[77] An excellent overview on the history of Chinese gold and silverworking is He Yunao 贺云翱 and Shao Lei 邵磊, *Zhongguo jinyinqi* 中国金银器 [Chinese gold and silverwares], (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 2008).

including enamels, inset stones, and kingfisher feathers.[78] Unlike other arts and craft trades, such as furniture making, ceramics, and painting, there was evidently no Ming or Qing manual produced to describe gold and silverworking techniques. Sections dedicated to silver in the late-Ming period treatise on craft trades, *Tiangong kaiwu* 天工開物*,* are focused on mining and refining the metal, rather than metalworking techniques.[79] There is a notable absence in terms of textual sources on silver as craft, perhaps due to necessity of silverworking lineages and workshops to protect their techniques and designs as trade secrets.

Most extant objects from the history of gold and silverworking in China are known through excavated burials and hoards. Gold and silverworking in China dates to the Shang period (1600-1046 BCE). Techniques for working precious metals were first developed for using the materials for jewelry, as well as for decorative inlays on bronze weapons, ornaments such as belt hooks, and vessels.[80] Otherwise, bronze casting techniques were used for precious metals. During the Warring States period (476 BCE-221 CE), gold and silverworking techniques were relatively advanced among northern nomadic groups such as the Xiongnu, though hollowware vessels also began to appear in the southwest during this time.[81] Silver reached its first apex of production in the Sui (581-618 CE) and Tang dynasties (619-907 CE), when gold, silverwares, and jewelry imported from the Sasanian empire and other western Asian regions, northern India, and the Mediterranean spurred both demand and innovation in forms and ornamentation.[82] Techniques for making relief surface designs through tracing and repoussé–hammering from the back–were adapted from imported vessels.[83] Gold and silver was used for banqueting vessels, as well as in Buddhist contexts relating to devotional uses and drinking tea. The imperial court established a workshop for making gold and silverwares, which produced objects for both the court as well as officials; in the height of production in the late Tang, court workshops competed with private workshops in making large, ornamented vessels.[84] Liao dynasty (916-1125 CE) silver was impacted by the forms of the conquering Khitan group, Central Plains nomadic peoples, and the Sasanian empire, while in the Song dynasty (960-1127 CE), silver became increasingly naturalistic, with vessel forms modeled after fruits, squashes, and flowers.[85] The development of porcelain in the Song dynasty meant that ceramics were made mimicking

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[78] For an overview of gold- and silverworking craft techniques, see *The Silver Age: Origins and Trade of Chinese Export Silver*, ed. Libby Lai-Pik Chan with Nina Lai-Na Wan (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Maritime Museum, 2017), 33-5.

[79] For a recent study of the manual, see Schäfer, *The Crafting of the 10,000 Things.*

[80] He and Lei, 20–23.

[81] Ibid., 53-8.

[82] Qi Dongfang 齐东方 and Zhang Jing 张静, "Tangdai jinyin qimin yu xifang wenhua de guanxi" 唐代金银器皿与西方文化的关系 [The relationship between Tang dynasty gold and silver vessels and western cultures], *Kaogu xuebao* 考古学报 2 (1994): 173.

[83] Bo Gyllensvärd, *Chinese Gold, Silver, and Porcelain: The Kempe Collection* (New York: Asia Society, 1971), 12.

[84] Cui Xue'an 崔学谙 et al, *Beijing wenwu jingcui daxi---jinyinqi juan* 北京文物精粹大系---金银器卷 [Gems of Beijing Cultural Relics series---Gold and silver wares] (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999), 28; He and Lei, 145.

[85] He and Lei, 256-8; 209-12.

silverware forms, which accompanied a decline in the silver supply.[86] The study of gold and silverwares in China prior to the Ming and Qing periods has focused on technologies of production, and elite and often courtly contexts of use, circulation and burial. Scholars have also examined the impact of foreign technologies and designs on Chinese silverworking, and transfers of designs and forms across media.

Based on what has been uncovered through excavations, gold and silver were important materials at the Ming and Qing imperial courts for everyday use, adornment in the form of jewelry and headdresses, gifts, and religious and ceremonial use.[87] They were increasingly used outside of religious contexts, as expressions of wealth and luxury at court. Gold and silver plates and vessels were also used for everyday dining, but they were distributed by rank through strict protocols that governed court consumption.[88] According to Zhang Yanfen 張燕芬, Ming court silverwares were made in a specialized department of the imperial workshops, the *Yinzuoju* 銀作局 (silver workshop), which consisted of 274 craftsmen. Specializations within the workshop included engraving, mounting gems, making large vessels, gilding, gold wire-pulling, gold-leaf making, polishing, different types of filigree, and fastening. The largest category of workers were general "silversmiths" *yinjiang* 銀匠, totaling eighty-three in number.[89] Ming tombs are filled with gold and silverware objects that were primarily practical articles used in daily elite life, as well as jewelry and other ornaments. The most spectacular objects are in the Dingling Mausoleum outside of Beijing, the tomb of the Wanli emperor, and include an imperial gold crown made from drawn gold wire woven into a fine mesh, with two sculptural filigree dragons (fig. 0.6).[90] New designs and techniques in Ming gold and silverwares reflected Han Chinese culture and excised the west Asian elements of previous dynasties.[91]

By contrast, the Qing court continued to build upon Ming production, while producing a greater diversity of objects that served as expressions of Manchu imperial power. While many objects produced for the Ming court were made of solid silver and ornamented with gems, chasing and engraving, the Qing court preferred gold and silverwares with heavily-ornamented surfaces, as well as filigree objects.[92] Objects used for court rituals were decorated with precious stones, enamels, gilding, kingfisher feathers, and other luxurious materials. Objects in Han forms would be used for Confucian ancestor worship rituals, but the Qianlong (r. 1735-96) emperor published a manual that specified the use of Manchu object forms for sacrificial rituals, including

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[86] Jessica Rawson, "Chinese silver and its influence on porcelain development," in *Cross-Craft and Cross-Cultural Interactions in Ceramics*, eds. Patrick E. McGovern and M. D. Notis (Westerville, OH: The American Ceramic Society, Inc., 1989), 284.
[87] Cui, 29-31.
[88] He and Lei, 305.
[89] "Mingdai jinyinqi de yuanliao yu zhizuo gongyi" 明代金銀器的原料与制作工艺 [Materials and Craftsmanship of Gold and Silver works of the Ming Dynasty], *Gugong xuekan* 故宫学刊 [Journal of Gugong studies] (2018): 82. For the distribution of different craft specialties and the total number of the workshop as cited in Zhang, see *Da-Ming huidian* 大明會典, *juan* 189, 2569-70.
[90] He and Lei, 300-1.
[91] Zhang, 82.
[92] Chen Kuo-tung, "Silver Ware in Exchanges between the Qing Court and Western Embassies before the Mid-Nineteenth Century," in *The Silver Age,* 128.

silver tea buckets, silver plates, silver dishes, silver spoons, and silver chopsticks.[93] Precious metals were used for Buddhist images and architectural sculptures that enforced imperial legitimacy in Tibet and Mongolia, such as gilt silver portraits of important Tibetan figures, gold stupas, and mandalas.[94] Thus while Ming gold and silverwares were made in Han Chinese forms, Qing gold and silverwares additionally reflected imperial expansion and patronage projects.

Indicating their metamorphic status as both stores of wealth and raw material, silver objects in both the Ming and Qing courts were often melted down and transformed as needed. Their weights in *liang* were carefully inventoried, and were sometimes inscribed on the objects themselves. Histories of alteration were also noted on objects; for example, one silver tea ewer owned by the Ming Chenghua court (1464-87) has an incised inscription on its base, recording its original weight at twenty *liang* and eight *qian* 錢 (fig. 0.7). The ware was modified in Chenghua year 6 (1470) so that nine *qian* of silver were removed, and seven *liang,* one *qian* of silver was applied to the object.[95] In 1752, the seventeenth year of the Qianlong reign, the records of the Imperial Household Workshops recorded that many gold and silverwares was repurposed into gold and silver pagodas, including:

> four pieces of silver (??) of different sizes, two lotus-shaped silver kettles, one silver kettle for serving oneself, two silver (??), two silver pots, four silver hotpots big and small, one silver teapot with handle, one silver hand warmer, seven silver bowls big and small, ten silver saucers big and small, eight silver plates big and small, one silver filigree box, two gilt silver bowl lids big and small, one silver enamel mug lid, two silver mug lids, five silver enamel round boxes big and small, two silver enamel kidney- shaped round boxes, various silver boxes big and small in ten pieces, four silver filigree boxes, one silver fork (?), one silver penholder, one silver spittoon, three small silver dippers, eleven silver spoons big and small, five silver teaspoons, three silver forks, five silver cans, ten silver drawers big and small, seven silver leaves, twenty-four silver teacups with coconut fiber inlay, one wooden (?) silver cabinet, four silver teacups wrapped with palm fiber inside, three silver teacups plugged with snail shells inside, one silver round box with coconut fiber inside, seven pairs of silver chopsticks with ivory inlay, seven pairs of silver chopsticks with prayer plant inlay, seven pairs of silver chopsticks with boxwood inlay.[96]

The question of how the craft or artistry of these lost objects was valued is an unresolved one.[97] Yet the courts' position on gold and silverwares in its possession—even those interred in former emperors' tombs—seemed to consistently regard them as fungible; that is, even as sacrificial vessels they could be melted and repurposed. For example, as Lai Hui-min has discovered, in 1772, the emperor Qianlong conducted policy reforms on the use and social statuses reflected by ritual utensils. In the process, he ordered that all the gold and silver ritual utensils be reclaimed from other Qing emperors' tombs, including the tomb of his father, the Kangxi emperor (r. 1662-

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[93] Lai Hui-min 賴惠敏, "Qing Qianlong huangdi zhizuo jinshu jiqi de yiyi" 清乾隆皇帝製作金屬祭器的意義 [The implications of the Qing Qianlong Emperor's Manufacture of Metal Sacrificial Utensils], *Gugong xueshu likan* 故宮術李刊 [The National Palace Museum Research Quarterly] 37:3 (2020): 47.
[94] Cui, 30-1.
[95] Susan Eberhard, "Pseudo Marks and Modular Finials: Chinese Export Silver Wares Against the Assay," in *The Silver Age,* 242-3.
[96] *Qinggong neiwufu zaobanchu dang'an zonghui* 清宮內務府造辦處檔案總匯 [Complete compilation of the archival materials of the Qing Imperial Household Workshops], *juan* 9, 430-33, as quoted in Chen, "Silver Ware in Exchanges," in *The Silver Age*, 135-6.
[97] Chen, 136.

1722). Many of the objects were used during their lifetimes, and some dated to the Ming dynasty. All of the gold objects were remade in plated silver, and all of the silver objects were remade in bronze. The "recycled" precious metals were then put in the treasury and used for other projects, possibly for making works in gold for Buddhist temples.[98] Recent scholarship on tropical hardwoods, pewter and jades at the Qing court suggests that not only gold and silver, but many different kinds of precious materials were regarded with the same sense of transformation and reuse.[99] Yet gold and silver were exceptional for their liquidity and status as a reserve of value, as well as their use for utensils and other projects that could articulate imperial power.

Field Engagements: History of Chinese Craft as Global Art History

Most extant Qing-era southern Chinese silver craft objects that were produced outside of court workshops are primarily understood through their overseas histories of possession and perceptions of their Euro-American forms. The vast quantities of period silverwares surviving outside of China has led to the claim that most of them were in fact produced for foreign consumption and exported. The following gloss in a well-known handbook on Chinese art is indicative of how the field has typically regarded Qing silverwares:

> Qing… silver made for use in China is now very rare, apart from pieces in the two palace museum collections in Beijing and Taipei…. Much silver in Western shapes, made to comply with Western tastes, was exported to Europe and the United States during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[100]

If silver was primarily an imported, and thus foreign medium in Qing China, this study takes as its main objects its most estranged incarnations, the surviving residue of the transformations of its inward and outward migrations. These objects have crossed countless borders and thresholds, and arguably today are disciplinarily stateless in the field of art history, as many are called "export" objects.[101] Mostly classified as "Chinese export silver," and viewed primarily as tourist art for foreigners, or even, as we will see, as straightforwardly European or American handicrafts, many of the objects at the center of this project have been estranged from the history of Chinese art. While essential to the history of collecting and studying these objects, the export narrative today risks shifting the agency of their production and consumption solely to Western consumers. Instead, this study takes its cue from revisionist accounts of global history, described above, that view the consumption of silver—and as part of its consumption, its transformation through craft—as indicative of the impact of Chinese silversmiths on global art history.

Craft has had an uneasy relationship with art historically and the field of art history. As the first chapter will discuss further, from an ancient Chinese perspective, craftspeople or

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[98] Lai, 71-5.

[99] Conference panel, "Skills for Recycling: Reevaluating, Reusing, and Repairing in Qing China (1644-1912), *Association for Asian Studies Conference,* Boston, MA, March 18, 2023.

[100] Jane Portal, "Decorative Arts for Display," in *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art,* ed. Jessica Rawson (London: British Museum Press, 1993), 188.

[101] In the most negative sense, objects understood as "export" are often anachronistically imprinted with a set of labor relations drawn from the rhetoric of global commodity exchange — namely, that objects were produced in one place by powerless, anonymous workers for rich, autonomous consumers in another. From the perspective of art history, such objects are often regarded primarily through the lens of their heightened commodity status. It is difficult to situate objects made for foreign markets (or assumed to be made for foreign markets) as endogenously Chinese, and thereafter interpret them within traditional canons of taste, use and signification. Yet it is exactly this in-between, multivalent quality that makes these objects relevant to my questions.

artisans (*gong* 工) made up a social class beneath the literate scholarly and ruling elites. To enforce class divisions, scholars rarely portrayed them favorably, if they portrayed them at all, in the written record. Moreover, the value of their labor was viewed as suspect by the upper classes; as Anthony J. Barbieri-Low has paraphrased the Chinese philosopher Mencius (fourth century BCE), "Since the mind (literally, 'heart,' *xin*) was more important than the arms, a man who worked with his mind (i.e., a ruler or philosopher) was naturally better and more important than a man who relied on the work of his arms."[102] Such a sentiment is expressed in the traditional aphorism of "valorizing the *dao* (principles) and disparaging vessels (instrumental or tangible things)."[103] Such hierarchies were continuous into the late imperial period with rare exceptions, as I will discuss in the next chapter in terms of the general category of silversmiths as well as the specific "branding" of one named artisan. As Dorothy Ko has written, these invisible and naturalized hierarchies leading to the denigration of craftsmen continue to impact scholarship in the present, in terms of what subjects are chosen to study over others, and which historical figures are valorized over others.[104]

In the Western academy, "craft" is a contentious term, often positioned in opposition to art and design. Scholars have historically pitted objects and materials against art, architecture, and texts, as the latter are viewed as legitimate sources for the working of the mind. Nineteenth and twentieth-century Western academic hierarchies positioned forms of "fine art" such as painting, sculpture, and architecture against objects, which are termed decorative arts or applied arts. Such divisions also have premodern origins in the European context, with binaries of the cerebral over the material persisting from early art-historian writings that celebrate the named artist over the anonymous craftsman.[105] The division in modern art history is in part a legacy of the industrializing period of the British empire in the late-nineteenth century, which sought to create distinctions between designed, industrially-produced objects, and handicrafts often produced in colonial contexts viewed (often using more disparaging terms) as "premodern." Glenn Adamson has argued that "craft" is primarily a political term when it is evoked in modernizing projects; it was simultaneously an expression of nostalgia for communal lifestyles and handiwork production, as well as a localizing stance against the prevailing and globalizing forces of industrial modernity.[106] More recently, scholars and curators have sought to rethink craft, both as a political term used to subvert dominant systems, as well as a topic of study that allows access to non-elite and traditionally-marginalized makers and artists.[107]

In modern China, the study of traditional craft is known as *gongyi meishu* 工藝美術 (craft-art); the terms *gongyi* 工藝 (craft art or artistry) and *shougongyi* 手工藝 (handwork artistry) were created through encounters with modern Western categories as expansions and articulations of *gong.* But as Xu Yiyu has written, they carry valences beyond the English terms "craft" and "handwork"—likely due to their different associations vis-a-vis industrial

[102] *Artisans in Early Imperial China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 38-9.
[103] Dorothy Ko, *Social Life of Inkstones* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 5.
[104] Ko, 6.
[105] Cooke, *Global Objects,* 9.
[106] *The Invention of Craft* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), xiii-xviii.
[107] Representative examples of recent work include Julia Bryan Wilson, *Fray: Art and Textile Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); *Hear Me Now: The Black Potters of Old Edgefield, South Caroline,* ed. Adrienne Spinozzi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022).

modernity.[108] The term *gongyi meishu* first was institutionalized in the naming of the Zhongyang Gongyi Meishu Xueyuan 中央美術學院 at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Positioned within the wider field of art practice and art history, the term was created in the 1950s by Mao-era reformers to encourage handicraft manufacturing. The term distinguished the making and study of decorative objects and vernacular folk crafts from the high arts of the scholar's brush such as painting and calligraphy. In the post-socialist period, the name of the art school at Tsinghua was changed to the Academy of Art and Design to reflect Western hierarchies of art, design, and craft, though one of the departments retains the title *Gongyi meishu xi* 工藝美術係 (Department of Arts and Crafts).[109] The legacies of nineteenth-century hierarchies are thus global.

While dropped from institution names in departments oriented around making, Chinese art historians continue to use the terms *gongyishi* 工藝史 (craft history) and *gongyi meishu shi* 工藝美術史 (history of arts and crafts) to denote the teaching and study of artifacts, decorative arts, and material culture. Due to its entanglements with industrial modernity and hierarchies of skill and training, "craft" is such a loaded category in a Western academic context that it is almost an inappropriate term to refer to premodern Chinese *gongren* 工人*,* the term for craftspeople*.* Yet I use "craft," "craftsman," and "silversmith" interchangeably in this study, as these are terms that have been used in recent English-language histories of material culture and craft in late imperial China.[110]

In the last few decades, research on objects, material culture, and materiality has surged due to the "material turn" in the humanities—itself perhaps a response to our rapidly digitizing and therefore increasingly immaterial world.[111] This dissertation follows art historical projects that offer methods for studying how objects constituted social worlds, such as Margaretta Lovell's object-based study of elite identity and anonymous craftspeople in British America.[112] Art historians have written about decorative objects in the late imperial Chinese context, particularly in the court and among the scholarly elite. Meanwhile, historians of Chinese craft, technology, and knowledge of the material world have taken up material culture methods and approaches.[113] Many of the latter also engage with both recent work in scientific and technological knowledge of early modern (mostly Western) Europe that focus on craft and making.[114] Informed by philosophy and social science studies, art historians have further sought

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[108] "The Knowledge System of the Traditional Chinese Craftsman," 156. The term *meishu* is a twentieth-century neologism derived from the Japanese term *bijutsu*, itself a neologism created in response to the term "fine arts" or "beaux arts" in the context of Japanese participation in international expositions.
[109] Wendy S. Wong, "Design History and Study in East Asia: Part 2 Greater China: People's Republic of China/Hong Kong/Taiwan," *Journal of Design History* 24:4 (2011): 376-7. The English translation of the department name reverses the order of the terms "craft and arts" in the Chinese name, reflecting Western biases.
[110] See for example Ko, *The Social Life of Inkstones,* 5; Wang, "From Tin to Pewter."
[111] Jennifer L. Roberts, "Things: Material Turn, Transnational Turn," *American Art* 31:2 (Summer, 2017): 64-5; Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, "Materiality: Signs of the Times," *Art Bulletin* 101:4 (2019): 6.
[112] *Art in a Season of Revolution: Painters, Artists, and Patrons in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).
[113] See for example, Yulian Wu, *Luxurious Networks: Salt Merchants, Status, and Statecraft in Eighteenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 8-11.
[114] Schäfer, 4-5.

methods for studying matter in its specificities, fluidities, and environmental entanglements beyond anthropocentric constructions.[115]

Finally, this study converses with the "global turn" of recent decades, and particularly models of social and material "circulations." Here I follow studies by art, cultural, and literary historians of art, craft, and the transmission of production techniques in late imperial Chinese cross-cultural and global contexts.[116] Takeshi Hamashita has argued for a model of silver circulation spheres as an approach to historical inquiry, as they connected both regional and long-distance economies in the modern world and were driven by Asian demand. Following Hamashita's explicit challenge to earlier Eurocentric understandings of world and global history, I view my primary source materials within both regional and long-distance circulations of silver, transformed through processes involving objects, people, and knowledge.[117] Similarly, the edited volume *Circulations in the Global History of Art* countered the often nationalist project of art history by focusing on "questions of transcultural encounters and exchanges as circulations."[118] For the editors, the model of circulations allows art historians to break away from static and oppositional notions of "Western and non-Western," or additionally in my case, "China and non-Chinese," which, as they write, always serve political interests.[119] Recognizing the limits of using mostly sources from China, Britain, and the United States, and thus privileging Sino and Anglo subjects, I participate in the move toward "connected material histories," as framed by Sanjay Subrahmanyam and further elucidated for the Chinese context by Craig Clunas.[120] By taking a global perspective based on the circulation of practices, materials, and designs, new connections and previously-overlooked makers and objects come into focus. Edward Cooke has described early modern objects as "nonlinear" in their movement, and asked, "Can adaptation, initiative, innovation, or appropriation flow in various directions at once?"[121] Stacey Pierson

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[115] Emily Apter et al, "A Questionnaire on Materialisms," *October* 155 (Winter, 2016): 3-110.
[116] Patricia Berger, *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003); Ching-fei Shih, "Unknown Transcultural Objects: Turned Ivory Works by the European Rose Engine Lathe in the Eighteenth-Century Qing Court," in *EurAsian Matters: China, Europe, and the Transcultural Object, 1600-1800,* eds. Anna Grasskamp and Monica Juneja (Springer, 2018): 57-76; Sophie Volpp, "The Gift of a Python Robe: The Circulation of Objects in *Jin Ping Mei,*" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 65:1 (Jun., 2005): 133-158.
[117] See "Silver in regional economies," 39-56. Though in ways it problematically replaces a Eurocentrism with an econocentrism, I find his use of the term "circulation" helpful as it is material-specific, as well as implies both different separate but overlapping spheres of exchange, and finally it allows for recursive movement through networks, as opposed to linear progression.
[118] Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, "Introduction: Reintroducing Circulations: Historiography and the Project of Global Art History," in *Circulations in the Global History of Art* (Farnham Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 1.
[119] Ibid., 2.
[120] In an appeal for undoing the work of "identifying difference in order to preserve it," a legacy of European Enlightenment and related imperial modes of knowledge-making, Subrahmanyam advocates both comparison and points of connection across fields, ending with a note that "others" are already located in "some process of circulation." Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes toward a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31:3 (Jul. 1997): 761-2. Also see Subrahmanyam, "One Asia, or Many? Reflections from connected history," *Modern Asian Studies* 50: 1 (Jan. 2016): 5-43, and Craig Clunas, "Connected Material Histories: A response," *Modern Asian Studies* 50:1 (Jan. 2016): 61-74.
[121] *Global Objects,* 11, 19.

writes that due to the ambivalence of objects, cross-cultural appropriative processes can often profoundly alter both the meaning and identity of objects. The physical and conceptual transformation of an object can illuminate the cultural context in which the reworking takes place.[122]

The material turn and the global turn are linked. The substantial literature on globalized commodities have provided blueprints for methodologies and framings. In particular, studies of Chinese porcelain as the global commodity par excellence have provided both inspiration and questions as a material that in many ways has served to obscure silver in the Chinese context.[123] It also follows art historians that have turned to object mobility; attention to the "obstacles and delays" of object trajectories shows how movement was just as integral to the unfolding meanings and values of objects as their fixed and fixing start and endpoints.[124] Fundamental to most of the latter work, in separate yet related essays, Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff have theorized the "social lives" of objects through their always-unfolding reception, meaning, and value. Their perspective based in cultural anthropology has been influential in viewing the economic exchange of objects as inextricably embedded in social and natural contexts.[125]

Published at a time when art historians sought to use the study of material objects as a means of recuperating "mind" in its different historical and cultural valences, the cultural anthropologists argued instead that a politics of value was constituted through the form of objects use for exchange. Kopytoff proposed a way of appraising all objects that allows them to move through different stages of "commodity status," with commodities as things that can be exchanged. Instead of viewing the commodity as a purely economic relation, Appardurai and Kopytoff viewed it as primarily a social situation—one in which the "exchangeability (past, present, or future)" of objects was its most "socially relevant feature."[126] In other words, studying objects in motion was a way to understand both the meeting point of different ways of assessing value, as well as the relational dynamics of their negotiation. Again, the values that entered into such negotiations were far from economic only. Further, as the pot and coin introduced above demonstrate, spaces of transaction were not fluid, but rather, governed by unevenly-overlapping sets of conventions, rules, and contingencies.

Throughout my research, I have sought moments where the "commodity status" of silver objects was at its most apparent, as well as the moments when objects were assessed in contexts of social exchange. Such situations ranged widely, as they emerge through the chapters to follow: purchases in a shop, evidence of assessment of metal alloy, packaging as a diplomatic gift between sovereigns, occasions where a precious object makes a rare public appearance at a party in exchange for its memorialization in verse. Arguing against abstract ideas of money used

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[122] Stacey Pierson, *From Object to Concept: Global Consumption and the Transformation of Ming Porcelain* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013), 3.
[123] Anne Gerritsen, *The City of Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain and the Early Modern World* (Cambrdige: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Ellen Huang, "From the Imperial Court to the International Art Market: Jingdezhen Porcelain Production as Global Visual Culture," *Journal of World History* 23:1 (Mar. 2012): 115-145.
[124] Michael Gaudio, *Sound, Image, Silence: Art and the Aural Imagination in the Atlantic World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), xi-xii; also see Jennifer Roberts, "Copley's Cargo: Boy with a Squirrel and the Dilemma of Transit," *American Art* 21:2 (Summer 2007): 20-41.
[125] Appadurai, "Introduction: commodities and the politics of value": Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things,* ed. Appadurai (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64-91.
[126] Appadurai, 13.

by market theorists, cultural anthropologists, sociologists, and others have established that money itself is a social creation with culturally-specific functions and meanings. The physical appearance of money, its forms of creation, distribution, and conversion, the ways in which it can be circulated, views of its legitimacy, and limits on its liquidity, are all determined by cultural practice.[127] Even if all silver was viewed predominantly as money, even in its money form, the shape of silver was not irrelevant. Following Appadurai and Kopytoff, the form of a monetary object is just as indicative of the politics that are constituted through its exchange as any other object.

This dissertation also builds on work by scholars in different fields who have made important interventions by centralizing silver in historical frameworks, as well as studied surviving silver objects in different forms.[128] Numismatists and historians of currency have catalogued silver monetary objects, placing them within their contexts of sourcing, smelting, casting, and circulation.[129] There is a growing interest in Ming-Qing silverwares in imperial collections, yet the relatively limited survival of dateable Qing silverwares has hindered scholarship. Curators and collectors have catalogued Qing silverwares made for Western consumption, often termed Chinese export silverwares, providing an invaluable knowledge base of objects, retailers, and consumers. I am especially indebted to Crosby Forbes and the team that assembled the *Chinese Export Silver, 1785 to 1885* catalogue. Published in 1975, it created a field and an archive of objects that serve as a foundation for this study.[130] Two recent exhibitions both entitled *The Silver Age* (*Baiyin shidai* 白銀時代), one in Hong Kong and the other in mainland China, have furthered the work of the catalogue, drawing from private collections in Asia. In different ways, the exhibitions placed Chinese export silver in wider historical frameworks of the global silver trade and Chinese production and Western reception.[131]

Chapter Organization

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[127] Viviana A. Zelizer, "The Social Meaning of Money: 'Special Monies,'" *American Journal of Sociology* 95:2 (Sept. 1989): 342-377; Zelizer, *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief & Other Currencies* (Princeton University Press, 2017); *A Cultural History of Money in the Age of Enlightenment,* ed. Christine Desan (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021); Allison Truitt, *Dreaming of Money in Ho Chi Minh City* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012).

[128] A representative sample includes Flynn and Giráldez, "Born with a 'Silver Spoon'; von Glahn, "Cycles of Silver in Chinese Monetary History," in *Economic History of Lower Yangzi Delta in Late Imperial China: Connecting Money, Markets and Institutions*, ed. Billy K.L. So (London: Routledge, 2012), 17-71; Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure*; Ariel Fox, "Precious Bodies"; Chi-ming Yang, "Silver, Blackness, and Fugitive Value 'from China to Peru,'" *The Eighteenth Century* 59:2 (Summer, 2018): 141-66.

[129] The scholarship on Chinese money and numismatics is extensive. See for example Dai Jianbing 戴建兵, *Zhongguo huobi wenhua shi* [A Cultural History of Chinese Money] (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2011); Helen Wang et al, *Chinese Numismatics: The World of Chinese Money* (London: Spink, 2022).

[130] As a curator at the Peabody Essex Museum, Forbes assembled the largest study collection of Qing Chinese silver in a public collection.

[131] For a study of the mainland Chinese exhibition analyzed in the connect of nationalist historical narratives about the nineteenth century as applied to cultural heritage, see Susan Eberhard, "Concessions in 'The Silver Age': Exhibiting Chinese Export Silverware in China," *Journal of Transcultural Studies* 10:2 (2019): 126-170.

The dissertation is organized into three sections, many of which use ewers in different forms as case studies--a complex vessel that contains and distributes liquid and can be repurposed for different specialized uses across contexts. The first section, "Viewpoints on Silver in China," shows how silver's associations with money have limited its preservation in China, as well as shaped how both silverwares and silversmiths were regarded and studied historically. It tracks prevalent period attitudes in the late-Ming to early-Qing period by foregrounding Chinese textual sources. The first chapter shows how silverwares and silversmiths were at the intersection of Han Chinese elite contempt and skepticism toward money and craftsmen, an attitude they used to maintain their class position. At the same time, it argues that the artistic value of the only type of silver "masterpiece" produced outside of the court, raft cups made by the Yuan silversmith Zhu Bishan 朱碧山, was the poignancy of its perceived ephemerality and fragile longevity, also due to associations with its monetary medium. The section next turns from an individual, extant silver ewer to the concept of the silver teapot, as it was historicized through a 1612 compilation of Chinese literature on tea. By re-tracing how a late-Ming or early-Qing reader might have understood the unfolding position of silver teapots through a chronological analysis of the texts, the chapter reveals a protracted tension between the utility and desirability of the silver teapot and the moral danger of its material. By the turn of the seventeenth century, the tension was resolved by the invention, improvement, and scholarly promotion of Yixing stoneware teapots as substitutes for silver ones. The section traces how silverwares were viewed through the categories of fungibility, longevity, morality, and luxury consumption, and establish a foundation of how dominant voices in Chinese art history and connoisseurship understood such objects.

The second section, "Oceanic Configurations, Lingnan Circulations: Makers and Consumers," argues for a geo-perspectival shift: instead of relying on dominant elite views on silver, it turns to southern coastal understandings of the medium as an agentive material with shifting but always simultaneous economic, craft, and aesthetic value. As such, silver operated in tandem with regional material knowledge and craft skill at the interface with the wider world. Viewing silver from the standpoint of its Lingnan-global circulations reveals new social and cultural values brought to the making and consumption of silver, which it regards as co-constitutive processes. The first two chapters argue that silverwares produced outside the court in southern China in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were not just functional vessels, but also were made and valued as works of art. Each chapter focuses on a rare, extant vessel that arrived in Europe in the 1680s; one of the vessels is the six-sided ewer introduced above that was marked to be sold in London in 1682/3. Due to the limited survival of silver handicrafts outside imperial court collections in China, late seventeenth- and-eighteenth century Chinese silverwares that were preserved in collections outside of China are often viewed as intentionally produced for foreign consumption. Yet the formal and metaphorical references of the objects suggest that they were meaningful decorative objects within early modern Chinese contexts. Southern metalsmiths made silverwares that enervated dialogues about the enchantments of craft and technical replication, the value of silver as both a precious material and a gift, and auspicious meanings. From a craft angle, they referenced objects carved out of natural materials connected with scholarly virtue, such as bamboo and pine. Additionally, objects exhibited aspects of antiquarian revival as well as modern innovation, characteristic of eighteenth-century Chinese art. Chapter three focuses on the historical emulation of one ewer through the analysis of a type of relief ornament that has been overlooked from a cultural history perspective. Chapter four focuses on auspicious meaning of a to-date never studied ewer form. It also traces its associations with

global commodities, as it was packaged as a diplomatic gift within a transpacific space of exchange.

The next two chapters focus on the Canton silver trade in the early nineteenth century, and specifically the market adaptations of the trade to producing tablewares in the "British taste." One chapter examines the entrepreneurial modifications of the trade in response to a global market for British style metalwares, as well as the multifaceted desires of foreign transpacific patrons. It argues that the legitimacy of the wares to their consumers was predicated on both how a system of handicraft production could replicate silverwares designed to be produced using mechanical methods, as well as the viability of their performance as "British" wares. The second chapter elaborates on this argument in two ways: first, by examining silver retailers' use of imitation British hallmarks as a quality guarantee, and second, by arguing that objects referenced classical Chinese and classical Greek and Roman forms and were made through a modular system of production.

The final section, "Viewpoints on Chinese Silver and British Plate," consists of a single chapter, and examines global exchanges and erasures of knowledge about Qing silverwares through their mobility and absence. It analyzes how a distinction emerged between China and Europe as articulated through material preferences for teapots in ceramics and metal, as tea became a global commodity in the late seventeenth-century. Initially a transcultural debate about the value of objects as commodities, the distinction hardened into a boundary and hierarchy of global order, leading to instances of British reclaiming of Qing silverwares in the nineteenth and twentieth century that built upon prior premodern Chinese disavowals of the medium and its objects.

In sum, the study problematizes the self-evident, universalized preciousness of silver. It argues for greater attention to Chinese understandings and exploitations of the material as a medium, and particularly its craft and value, orientations and uses. It holds in tension the fluidities of object mobility and human migration with the stubborn concreteness of the extant objects that form its anchoring case studies — despite the liquidity of the material at its center. As the pot and coin discussed in this introduction show, silver was always a medium of economic, social, and cultural value. This dissertation rematerializes the often-fugitive element of social and cultural value through close attention to object transactions at the Qing coastal threshold with the globe.

Introduction: Metamorphic Medium
Figures

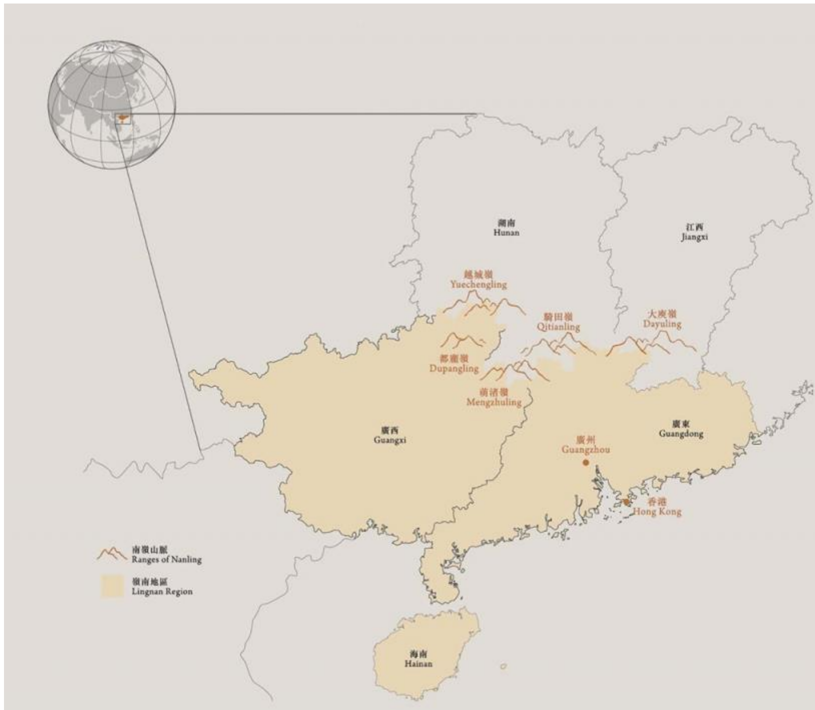

Fig. 0.1. Lingnan region with mountain ranges. Map by the Hong Kong Museum of Art

Fig. 0.2. Silver panel with relief decoration, made in the mid-seventeenth century, southern China. Peabody Essex Museum, E82766.AB. Detail of Figure 0.3

Fig. 0.3. Ewer, silver, made in the mid-seventeenth century, southern China. 5 1/2 x 8 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches (13.97 x 21.59 x 11.43 cm), Peabody Essex Museum, E82766.AB

English hallmarks on flange of lid (2 punches)

Standard mark for 92.5% silver content: Lion passant (walking lion)

Sponsor's mark: "IA"-conjoined

On base (full set of 4 punches)

Town mark: leopard crowned, for the London Assay Office

Fig. 0.4. Details of figure 0.3. English hallmarks struck on flange of lid and base

Fig. 0.5. Spanish colonial 8-reales Carolus III coin, silver struck in Mexico City in 1785, Chinese countermarks struck in southeastern China and perhaps other Asian ports. British Museum, Coins & Medals department, BM 1906,1103.2460

Fig. 0.6. Gold filigree and mesh crown, excavated from Dingling Mausoleum, Beijing, tomb of the Wanli emperor (d. 1620). Dingling Museum

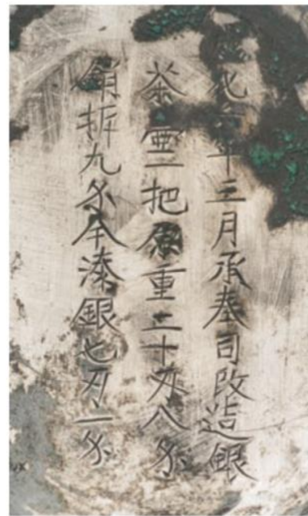

Fig. 0.7. Silver tea ewer with "apricot leaf" panel, inscription on base. Ming Chenghua court, modified 1470. Cheng Xun Tang collection, Hong Kong

Ch. 1. First, Silver is Money

Then someone said, "If your skill relies on different sorts of precious metal, or gold and silver ornament, it can only suit the vulgar (*su* 俗) kind of amusement and cherishing, and are used by women and children. If your patrons are only indulged by the sparkling and shiny, how can they appreciate the bitter labor of the craftsman?"[1]

Mao Xianshu 毛先舒, *Dai Wenjin chuan* 戴文進傳 [*A Biography of Dai Wenjin*]

Introduction

In the late 1660s or early 1670s of the early Qing (1644-1911) period, the scholar and poet Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629-1709) encountered a remarkable silver wine vessel at a banquet hosted by retired official, prolific scholar and renowned collector Sun Chengze 孫承澤 (1593-1676).[2] Zhu narrated the setting as a "magnificent hall" in which the "guests were not yet drunk."[3] Evidently wishing to both impress and intoxicate his guests, Sun declared that "Fine wine-cups and jade goblets" would not suffice for their revelries, and he brought out a heavy silver drinking vessel weighing three *huan* 鍰*,* or about two pounds. The cup took the unusual shape of a gnarled and broken tree trunk with a bare-chested man sitting inside and became the occasion for a game of poetry composition (fig. 1.1).[4] The guests examined it, marveling as they

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[1] "人曰：子巧託諸金，金飾能爲俗習玩愛及兒、婦人御耳。彼惟煌煌是耽，安知工苦?能徙智於縑素，斯必傳矣." Mao Xianshu 毛先舒, *Dai Wenjin chuan* 戴文進傳 [*A Biography of Dai Wenjin*], *Guwen jianshang cidian* 古文鉴赏辞典, comp. Wu Gongzheng 吴功正 et al. (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe, 1987), 1466.

[2] On Zhu Yizun, see *Eminent Chinese of the Qing Period: 1644-1911/2*, rev. ed., ed. Arthur W. Hummel (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2018), 929.

[3] The poem was inscribed by Zhu on a leaf of an album of painting and calligraphy dedicated to Maoshu at the Met, and I draw here from the translation of the poem by Shi-yee Liu. See "Album of Painting and Calligraphy for Maoshu," *Metropolitan Museum of Art collection online,* accessed 7 Dec. 2022 < https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/65628>. While Zhu's inscription is undated, the Met dates the album to 1666-80 based on other contributions. Zhu's inscription is the final leaf in the album, but the dated inscription are not assembled in date order, and most date to the early 1670s. Zhu included the poem in his anthology *Pushuting ji* 曝書亭集 [Collected works from the Pavilion for Sunning Books], chapter 7, "Zhu Bishan yincha ge Sun Shaozai xishang fu" 朱碧山銀槎歌孫少宰席上賦 [Song on Zhu Bishan's silver raft-shaped vessel composed at a banquet hosted by District Magistrate Sun], published after his death. Also see *Qingshi jishi* 清詩紀事, comp. Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯 (Fenghuang chubanshe, 2004), 683.

[4] This "raft cup" is now at the Cleveland Museum of Art. It entered the Qing court collection in 1766 but was likely the same one that was subsequently looted from the imperial collections at the Yuanmingyuan summer palace in Beijing during the Sino-French War, before it was acquired by the British general Robert Biddulph (1835-1918) at auction. Liu Yue 刘岳 has written that it was owned by Sun Chengze, and further, that Sun owned two silver raft cups. "Mingtongshuban wubidingyi---Zhu Bishan he ta de chabei" 名同输班 物比鼎彝—-朱碧山和他的槎杯, *Forbidden City* 152 (2007): 195. For a silver ewer also looted from the Yuanmingyuan and today known as the "Hope Grant Ewer" in the collection of the

drank. As Zhu wrote in his poem: "Passed around the table, it made us wild for its sheer extraordinariness / With a semblance of a white bird in a graceful flight."[5] Despite its heft, its marvelous craftsmanship made it weightless.

This chapter builds on scholarship that argues that both silver and craft were either criticized or held in contempt from elite scholarly perspectives. Yet differently from previous work, it brings both positions to bear on the status of silversmiths and their products, demonstrating the special conjunction of forces that have rendered Qing silver mostly invisible, or as the latter half of the dissertation clarifies, as something other than Qing or Chinese. Silver's fungibility—a product of its material liquidity, and its instant transformability into an equivalent of exchange—yielded real effects in terms of the cultural understanding and preservation patterns of silverwares during the early Qing period. Meanwhile, the poems produced around the vessel by Sun's circle, which I explore future at the end of the chapter, illuminate the narrow criteria by which a work in silver could be viewed as a masterpiece of literati art. The subject of the raft cup, as we will see, was a traveler associated with northwest trajectories of overland exploration, rather than the southeastern oceanic circulations discussed in the second part of the dissertation navigated. Thus, the raft cup and its accompanying poems provide a specific entry point into a set of widely held elite Han cultural perspectives on silver, determined by its material qualities. Silver as work of art or craft utensil, thus, could not be isolated from its economic valences, and therefore its "vulgar" connections with the material world.[6]

The chapter first describes how silver was used and understood as money, before considering the dangerous entanglement of money with craft and silversmiths from the perspective of elite scholarly sources. Providing an alternative viewpoint, the chapter then describes how silver was valued from mercantile Han and Cantonese perspectives, likely the patrons of silversmiths making the vessels described in chapters three and four. It ends by returning to the wine vessel introduced above, addressing the terms through which it was understood and canonized, and a consideration of its famous Yuan (1279-1368 CE) silversmith, as he was received in the early Qing period. The chapter does not engage explicitly with Manchu perspectives on silver, nor those of other ethnicities such as Tibetan, Mongolian or Miao; there is still much research to be done on how the heterogenous medium was used and viewed within the heterogenous Qing empire and its borderlands.[7] Rather, along with the next chapter on the moral valences of silver, it seeks to establish a context for the rest of the dissertation. The latter is premised on the notion of silver as a metamorphic medium as it was transacted through

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Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, see Kevin McLoughlin, "'Rose-water Upon His Delicate Hands': Imperial and Imperialist Readings of the Hope Grant Ewer," in *Collecting and Displaying China's "Summer Palace" in the West: The Yuanmingyuan in Britain and France,* ed. Louise Tythacott (New York: Routledge, 2017), 103-4.

[5] "Album of Painting and Calligraphy for Maoshu."

[6] Vulgar, or *su* 俗, was a common condemnation of poor taste, and also specifically of common and uninformed taste, as its association with the taste of women and children in the epigraph suggests. It was wielded by the literary elite in opposition to *ya* 雅 (elegant). Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 83.

[7] For some starting points, see Li Qianbin, "Silver of southwestern Chinese minorities: aesthetics and functionality" in *Vanishing beauty: Asian jewelry and ritual objects from the Barbara and David Kipper Collection* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2016); Wei Huo, "A study of ancient Tibetan gold and silver ware," *Chinese archaeology* 12:1 (2012): 165-74; Elizabeth Herridge, *Bringing Heaven to Earth: Chinese silver jewelry and ornament in the late Qing dynasty* (London: Ianthe Press, 2016).

southeastern circulations. It turns to other determinative aspects of how southern Chinese agents and their foreign interlocutors understood silver objects in relationship to, and well beyond, their fungibility.

An Unwieldy Measure: Silver as Money

As a commodity money, silver was heterogenous and often inconvenient. The late Ming and Qing economies were bimetallic. They had two forms of circulating currency in different metal alloys: silver and copper. As mentioned in the introduction, silver was used as money at least annually by all social classes by the end of the sixteenth century, after a series of tax reforms known as the "single whip policy" converted governmental taxes from corvée labor to annual silver payments.[8] Silver was the higher-valued currency, while copper cash coins were used for everyday transactions. Cash coins are notable for their round, flat shape with a square hole in the center, a standard form in continuous use for millennia (fig. 1.2).[9] They were sand-cast by governmental and private mints. By contrast, silver was not minted into fiat currency like the English sterling coin, or like cash coins. Furthermore, the alloy of the higher-valued circulating currency was not regulated by the state. It was exchanged by its market value, determined by its variable weight and fineness.[10]

The economy required a highly-developed financial industry of silver smelters, money changers, and informal bankers, to assess its qualities and transmute it into the required form — whether that be a tax ingot or the low-value copper cash. Currency use varied from place to place, based on local markets and regional currency circulations.[11] Each person who carried out transactions in silver carried a small pair of scales and would use clippers to cut pieces of silver into smaller fragments if necessary.[12] One Qing financial institution, a moneychanger, is

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[8] The "single whip" reforms began in 1531 and were adopted unevenly and in different regions from 1570 through 1590. They represent a gradual conversion of tax obligations from corvée labor to monetary payments. Pertinent for art history, the "single whip" reforms led to the release of artisans from labor obligations, allowing them relative flexibility in their time and labor allocations. A precedent for tax remittances in silver was established a century earlier, when in 1436 the central government announced that the southern provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Hugang, Fujian, Guangdong, and Guangxi could commute some of their tax payments to silver. Ray Huang, *Taxation and Governmental Finance in Sixteenth-Century Ming China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 52-3.

[9] Such coins were issued by government and private mints in a form standardized from the Warring States period (476 BCE-221 CE) — a circular coin with a square hole in the center — and sand-cast on one side with the name of the current reign in relief. They were also produced for export to other Asian economies. For an overview of the forms of premodern Chinese money, see Joe Cribb, *Money in the Bank: The Hong Kong Bank Money Collection* (Spink & Son Ltd, 1987), 1-12; 101-112.

[10] Takeshi Hamashita, "Silver in regional economies and the world economy: East Asia in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries," trans. J.P. McDermott, in *China, East Asia and the Global Economy: regional and historical perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 49.

[11] Richard von Glahn, "Foreign silver coins in the market culture of nineteenth century China." International Journal of Asian studies 4 (2007): 70.

[12] The use of scissors to cut coins was described by Pehr Osbeck in his eighteenth-century memoir of a voyage to China: "For want of small coin, a *Chinese* has, besides the weight, a pair of scissors about him, with which he cuts the silver money in pieces, and either gives or receives such pieces on buying of goods. These scissors, which are very thick, they call *Kiapp-chin*. When a *Chinese* wants to cut a piece of silver, he puts it between the scissors, and knocks them against a stone till the pieces drop off." *A Voyage to China and the East Indies,* trans. John Reinhold Forster, vol. 1 (London: B. White, 1771), 261-2. Also see Kuroda Akinobu, "Silvers Cut, Weighed, and Booked: Silver Usage in Chinese Monetary History,"

depicted in a watercolor and gouache album of paintings on pith paper of Cantonese trades dating to around 1790 (fig. 1.3).[13] While this image was produced for a foreign viewership, it nonetheless demonstrates the transactional complexities of the bimetallic Chinese economy. In the act of changing money (*huanqian* 換錢, as the image is annotated), he holds a delicate balance, which might be weighing a few grams of silver to be exchanged for copper cash. Strings of cast coins line the surface of his desk, and a silver clipper sits on the table in front of him. His bench drawer has small pieces of silver along the edge, and functions to catch and contain the scraps and dust that result from cutting, which would be collected and re-smelted. Even the least bits of silver were valuable, as a passage from a late-Ming manual on technical craft processes *Tiangong kaiwu* 天工開物 [Exploitation of the Works of Nature] by Song Yingxing 宋應星 relates:

> Sometimes servants or slaves gather the swept and wiped-up dust and dirt, put it in water to pan and wash, then again smelt to produce silver…. With one day of work, those with little ability can obtain 3 *fen* 分 [the lowest currency unit], those with more ability can obtain multiples of that. The silver they obtain, all comes from the blades of scissors used everyday [to cut silver pieces], the scraps fallen from an ax blade, from the sole of a shoe, soil gummed on from walking on the busy streets, or from the house and yard -- swept fragments that had been abandoned by the river's edge. Among this, silver must be mixed…[14]

Silver was thus ubiquitous in different forms, particularly in the southeastern coastal regions.

If silver was destined for the imperial treasury, silver smelters refined and recast it into high-purity ingots (fig. 1.4). Ingots were called *liang* 兩 and were equivalent to about sixteen ounces. *Liang* was also their primary unit of weight. They took different forms based on function; tax ingots were often round and compact, while high-purity ingots used to store imperial revenues were boat-shaped, with high edges falling to graining on the top surface from the silver sinking into the center as it cooled.[15] Economic and cultural historians have shown how ingots were graded visually by assessing their surfaces, including the pattern or *wen* 紋 of their top surface, and the pitting left from casting flaws on the sides and bottoms of the objects.[16] They

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The Silver Age: Origins and Trade of Chinese Export Silver, ed. Libby Lai-Pik Chan with Nina Lai-Na Wan (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Maritime Museum, 2017), 114-5.

[13] Cantonese trade albums were generally produced for a foreign viewership. They are regarded as a visual source for the trades encountered by Western sojourners within the boundaries of their trading enclave. For more on the albums, see H.A. Crosby Forbes, *Shopping in China: the artisan community at Canton, 1825-30* (Milton, MA: Museum of the American China Trade, 1979).

[14]"其贱役扫刷泥尘，入水漂淘而煎者，名日淘厘锱。一日功劳轻者所获三分，重者倍之。其银俱日用剪、斧口中委余，或鞋底粘带布于衢市，或院宇扫屑弃于河沿，其中必有焉，非浅浮土面能生此物也。" *Tiangong kaiwu,* accessed online < https://archive.org/details/thetiangongkaiwutheexploitationoftheworksofnature/page/n23/mode/2up>, 240.

[15] Li Xiaoping 李晓萍, *Yin de licheng—cong yinliang dao* yinyuan 銀的歷程—從銀兩到銀元 [Evolution of Silver—From Sycee to Silver Dollar] (Zhejiang: Wenwu chanbanshe, 2016), 29.

[16] Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000-1700* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996)*,* 168-72; Bruce Rusk, "Value and Validity: Seeing through Silver in Late Imperial China," in *Powerful Arguments: Standards of Validity in Late Imperial China*, ed.

were often struck or carved with information such as their weight, their origination and destination, and the name of the silversmith who cast the ingot as a guarantee of value. The stamps were a market mechanism for regulating and guaranteeing the value of money.[17]

Another Qing financial institution, the silver foundry (*yinpu* 銀鋪), or ingot-casting shop, is illustrated throughout a series of woodcuts created by court artists for the sixtieth birthday of the Kangxi emperor (r. 1661-1722) called *Wanshou shengdian* 萬壽盛典.[18] Published in 1717, it contained detailed depictions of Beijing showing the ceremonial procession and is remarkable for the view of everyday urban life it provided for the emperor's gaze (fig. 1.5). Silver ingot-casting shops punctuate such images, as their presence was critical for the smooth functioning of the state. Their visibility was proof that the silver destined for the imperial treasury was guaranteed at a high standard, but otherwise was left to market regulation.

Given the evident heterogeneity of silver in its monetary forms, it is a longstanding question in economic history why silver was never minted or even regulated by the Ming or Qing governments, despite their evident abilities to administer large-scale projects.[19] Jean-Baptiste du Halde's *General History of China* (1741) relates statements by Chinese interlocutors of Jesuit missionaries as to why the state did not coin silver:

> They own it would be more convenient to have Mony coined, and of a determinate Value, but they are afraid it would be a Temptation to Clippers and Coiners, whereas now there is no Danger, because they cut the Silver as they have occasion to pay for what they buy.[20]

Several theories have been forwarded by scholars, relating to the problem raised by du Halde, of getting a vast populace to view a valuable minted currency as legitimate, when it can be easily clipped and counterfeited. Silver was indeed susceptible to adulteration and fraud. The many ways in which it could be adulterated figure largely in the late-Ming *Book of Swindles* (*Jianghu lilan dupian xinshu* 江湖歷覽杜騙新書), a compendium of cautionary tales about social deceptions faced by common people. In the late-Ming context, silver was mainly transacted in the form of cast ingots, which could be hollowed out by counterfeiters who would replace parts of the core with base metals. Some tales relate how "alchemy" was used to transform base metals into silver money.[21] References to fraudulent alchemists punctuate Song Yingxing's *Tiangong kaiwu*, quoted above, an illustrated study of technical processes, and one of the most-referenced sources on late-Ming craft. In the chapter on silver mining, Song wrote, "False alchemists use the art of the furnace to swindle people," and the most effective method is by using mercury sulfide,

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Martin Hofmann, Joachim Kurtz, and Ari Daniel Levine (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 471–501; Chen Kaijun, "Learning about Precious Goods: Transmission of Mercantile Knowledge from the Southern Song to the Early Ming Period," *Bulletin of the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology* 4 (2017): 291-327.

[17] Li, 29.

[18] *Wanshou shengdian chuji*, Library of Congress collection, accessed August 14, 2022. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2014514444/>

[19] See William Atwell, "International Bullion Flows and the Chinese Economy circa 1530-1650," *Past and Present* 95 (May 1982): 83n54 for a discussion of the issue and the range of scholarly theories.

[20] *The General History of China,* vol. 2, 3rd ed. (London, 1741), 287.

[21] Written and compiled by Zhang Yingyu 張應愈, the book was published in Fujian around 1617. The stories are mostly set during the late Ming dynasty, and each includes a commentary by the author that describes the moral and cautionary tales. Christopher Rea and Bruce Rusk, "Translators' Introduction," in Zhang Yingyu, *The Book of Swindles: Selections from a Late Ming Collection*, trans. Rea and Rusk (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), xxvii-xxix.

lead, and silver to create a compound that resembles silver. After smelting it, "it looks like silver in form, superficially, but it doesn't have the spirit or value of silver."[22] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, imported Spanish and Mexican silver coins were rampantly counterfeited, as well as adulterated with base metal cores and inserts.[23] Counterfeiting, however, was due to a market preference for money in certain forms over others. For transactions other than ingots destined for the imperial treasury, the government thus displaced the need to regulate the money supply to the market.

Immaterial Implications: Silver's Anthropomorphic Animacies

The fungibility and hardness of silver made it an ideal material for economic exchange, as the shape and weight of its value could constantly be reconfigured. Its object and liquid forms were always in tension. As a result, if there was one consistency in how silver was viewed in the early modern and modern era—before and after it was deemed synonymous with capital—it was that it was an animate object with its own agency, in the human sense. As Ariel Fox has written, in its monetary forms, it seemed to move by its own volition.[24] Building on medieval tropes, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was granted autonomous, anthropomorphic qualities in Chinese literature. Viewed as enchanted, there were many tales in which money was personified, or "ran away" (*zou* 走) when hoarded.[25] As Fox notes, the stories indicate the contradiction between the circulation of silver and the temporary stasis of hoarding it; "the logic of money requires that it circulate outside of the home."[26] Despite its omnipresent material form, money was unstable and even unpredictable as a decentralized currency. It resisted private possession, even though it was increasingly ubiquitous and felt as an animate presence in the late Ming and Qing periods. Thus, commercialization, Chinese monetary theory, and mystification combined forces to make silver objects appear as fluid.

Scholars have noted that in China's long documented history, when silver was used as a currency it was subject to unruly inflationary patterns. Fearing such an outcome, the late imperial state allowed the market to determine its value, to mixed results. As Richard von Glahn has written

> …the emergence of silver as means of exchange and ultimately as the basis of the fiscal system posed new challenges to the classical repertoire of monetary theory and policy. Uncoined and largely obtained from foreign sources, silver resisted all efforts to subordinate it to the imperial will. The rise of the silver economy during the late imperial era dealt a devastating blow to the state's sovereign authority over the livelihood of its subjects."[27]

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[22] 凡虚伪方士以炉火惑人者，唯朱砂银愚人易惑。其法以投铅、朱砂与白银等分，入罐封固，温养三七日后，砂盗银气，煎成至宝。拣出其银，形有神丧，块然枯物。Song, 244.

[23] von Glahn, "Foreign silver coins," 70.

[24] Ariel Fox, "Precious Bodies: Money Transformation Stories form Medieval to Late Imperial China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 76:1/2 (Jun-Dec 2016): 43-85.

[25] Ibid., 65-74.

[26] Ibid., 70.

[27] *Fountain of Fortune,* 47.

The statement is stunning for how it ascribes human-like, anti-imperial intentionality to silver. It also raises the issues faced—or rather, deflected—by the Chinese state in its refusal to regulate the silver supply.[28]

Despite the risks of relinquishing control over part of the monetary supply, silver was not used as an expression of state power in late imperial China. William Atwell has speculated that as the Chinese government was an expansive, centralized empire, unlike polities elsewhere it did not need to "advertise their prestige and legitimacy in this way."[29] Instead of viewing coined silver as an expression of state power, the Chinese state viewed silver's constant liquidity as a tool of governance, under the theory that the circulation of money would allow for constant economic growth.[30] Rather than view state-created silver coins as a means of exerting governance, from the perspective of monetary theory, the Chinese government saw the circulation of commodity silver as a means of naturally distributing wealth in line with the heavenly mandate carried out by imperial rule.

As a result, money seemed to move with its own market logic, defying the global commercial order as well as the Chinese imperial state, as we have seen above. In its liquidity, it was often analogized with blood or water, or as resistant to human control. In European colonial contexts, it was consistently described as having a particular bodily association with the Chinese, or that it was physically compelled toward China. One of the most well-known statements to that end was written by Portuguese merchant Gomes Solis in his "Discourse on Silver" (Lisbon, 1621), "Silver wanders throughout all the world in its peregrinations before flocking to China, where it remains, as if at its natural center."[31] In eighteenth-century colonial Manila, silver was known as "the very life blood of the Chinese: *plata sa sangue*."[32] The seemingly enchanted flows of silver to China was later explained by economic historians through the principle of arbitrage.[33] The economic principle of arbitrage was critical to why European shippers sought profit through exchanging silver in China, where surplus commodities could be purchased with silver for a fraction of their price in Europe. The de facto conversion of China's economy to a silver standard caused its value to increase relative to European economies. Silver's valuation in China was thus relatively higher than in Europe, until its silver stock rose enough to lower its value.

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[28] An extensive scholarship tracks the economic and cultural consequences of silver monetization and the "crises," or losses, that attended silver flows in and out of China. Richard von Glahn, "Cycles of Silver in Chinese Monetary History," in *Economic History of Lower Yangzi Delta in Late Imperial China: Connecting Money, Markets and Institutions,* ed. Billy K.L. So (London: Routledge, 2012), 17-71.; William T. Rowe, "Money," *Speaking of Profit: Bao Shichen and Monetary Reform in Nineteenth-Century China* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2018), 150-76; Man-houng Lin. *China Upside Down: Currency, Society, and Ideologies, 1808-1856* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[29] Atwell, 83n54. As Pat Berger has shown, the Qing emperors and court had sophisticated means for establishing legitimacy of rule through patronage, multi-lingual steles, building projects and diplomatic exchanges. *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003).

[30] von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune,* 15-47.

[31] Quoted in von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune,* 128-9. Von Glahn notes that silver is often described as being "sucked" to China in European economic histories. See *Fountain of Fortune,* 128.

[32] K.N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the East India Company, 1660-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 155.

[33] While seventeenth-century merchants had a deep understanding of the relative value of goods in markets worldwide, the concept of global arbitrage was first theorized by economist David Ricardo as a difference in the relative value of production costs and prices. See Chaudhuri, 156-7.

Until the seventeenth century, the value of silver was as much as double that of Europe, such that a trader could exchange an ounce of gold for eleven ounces of silver, then transport the silver to Canton where it could be exchanged for two ounces of gold. The trader could then in theory again double their return simply by returning to Amsterdam.[34] The contradiction between its hardness and stability, and liquidity and instability, was taken as its natural attribute. Yet while it appeared that silver was drawn to its "natural center," the majority of products it was exchanged for were commodities that could not yet or ever be reproduced in Europe, such as tea, porcelain and silk.

Treasuring A Vulgar Craft—Elite Attitudes toward Silversmiths

Unlike the raft cup that appeared at the beginning of this chapter, the vast majority of silverwares produced in Ming-Qing China did not merit memorialization in verse, or in writings on aesthetics, collecting, or art history. As art historian Yang Zhishui has characterized the relative status of the medium:

> If the moral character of jade is "elegant," then gold and silver are by contrast, "common," or "vulgar." Above all, gold and silver are wealth, and its artistic meaning is of secondary value. If it is melted down, it can be made repeatedly to change form along with fashion. Thus, people do not intentionally preserve gold and silverwares for a long time.[35]

Yang's contrast between silver and jade provides further insight into why silver in China's modern period has not been a well-defined subject of study, collecting and preservation outside of palace collections. A related Chinese proverb that compares precious metals and jade is, "If gold has a value, then jade is priceless."[36] While the price of gold and silver can always be calculated, the same cannot be said for jade, making it the ultimate luxurious material. The fraught social meaning of silver both as money and as tax (and therefore the property of the imperial household) gave it a questionable valence within the hierarchy of Confucian scholarly taste. With rare exceptions, silver utensils were either secreted away or disavowed in the late-Ming critical writing on taste, distinctions that have formed the backbone of modern scholarship.[37] Broadly speaking, because of this conjunction of value in the medium, scholars have shared a marked ambivalence toward Qing silver.

Due to its literal connection with wealth, silver had dangerous connections with corruption outside the court. As noted above, according to Chinese monetary theory, the ideal state of silver was its constant circulation. From this perspective, silverwares were in effect hoarded currency. Silverwares were thus in some senses impossible to own, and certainly they were impossible to own conspicuously. Doing so risked their seizure and repossession by the state. In 1562, an inventory was made of the confiscated possessions of the purged Grand

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[34] Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Arbitrage, China, and World Trade in the Early Modern Period," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38:4 (1995): 432.

[35] *Shehua zhi se: Songyuanming jinyinqi yanjiu* 奢华之色：宋元明金银器研究 [The Grades of Luxury: Research on Song, Yuan, and Ming Gold and Silverwares], vol. 1. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010), 2.

[36] "黄金有价，玉无价."

[37] Anne Burkus-Chasson has described the "stark dichotomous mappings" of painters among this same milieu, where some artists are described as "elegant" and others as "common," with no possible position in between. Similarly, to how late-Ming distinctions have continued to shape the present-day study of Qing-period silverwares, she notes that the binary between elegant and common continued to determine modern assessments of painters. "Elegant or Common? Chen Hongshou's Birthday Presentation Pictures and His Professional Status," *The Art* Bulletin 76:2 (Jun. 1994): 279.

Secretary Yan Song 嚴嵩 (1480-1565), a document that was republished in 1727 as *Tianshui bingshan lu* 天水冰山錄 [A Record of Heaven Melting the Ice Mountain into Water] by Zhou Shilin.[38] While Yan's possessions included famous paintings and other art objects, it is notable for its inventory of his gold and silverwares, which are listed by form, decoration, and weight. In total, he owned 3,185 gold vessels, 367 gold vessels inlaid with gems, 1,649 silver vessels, as well as jewelry.[39] According to Craig Clunas, Zhou published the inventory in the eighteenth century explicitly as a cautionary tale, showing how accumulation could reveal moral corruption, as a lesson to Qing bureaucrats.[40] Moreover, as Timothy Brook has noted, late Ming literati were particularly alarmed at the threat to the social order that was posed by conspicuous consumption due to the influx of silver in the mid-sixteenth century. As a result, they used expressions of taste as a means of regulating access to types of learned status.[41] The scholarly elite claimed to eschew overt displays of material wealth as tasteless, and gold and silver utensils for ritual use were officially considered the prerogative of the imperial court.[42] Silverwares were thus deemed morally questionable as treasured possessions in specific forms, as the next chapter will explore further.

The easy liquidity of the metal raised the question of whether and in what ways it could aspire to forms of cultural longevity, such as serving as the legacy of an artist, as a message of good wishes for a long life, or as an heirloom. Another issue Yang indicated above is that silver was a fugitive artistic material, in a context where it was easily liquidated to pay taxes or a debt. To illustrate the point, Yang cited the biography of a court painter who abandoned a silversmithing career in order to pursue reputation and longevity in more enduring forms. The late Ming-early Qing poet and essayist Mao Xianshu 毛先舒 (1620-88), in relating the early life of renown Ming count painter and founder of Zhejiang school Dai Jin 戴進 (1388-1462) in *A Biography of Dai Wenjin* (*Dai Wenjin chuan* 戴文進傳), characterized the artist as an unmatched silversmith who gave up the trade after he saw his work thrown into a smelting furnace. The origin story is most likely apocryphal, but it demonstrates the early-Qing scholarly perception of the liabilities and limits of the silversmith as an artist and as a historical figure:

> In the beginning, Jin 進 was a *duangong* 鍛工 ("hammering" smith); his human figures, flowers, and birds simulated reality in form, and were refined and marvelous. In value they were worth multiples of a common smith. He was also conceited, and believed

[38] The Ming government auctioned off the collection to raise revenue instead of absorbing it into the palace collections, as had been the practice with similar objects confiscated during the Song period. See Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Accumulating Culture: The Collections of Emperor Huizong* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008), 330.

[39] Jane Portal, "Decorative Arts for Display," in *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art*, ed. Jessica Rawson (London: British Museum Press, 1992), 187.

[40] *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 46-9.

[41] See Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[42] According to the court ritual prescriptions of the Ming Code, copious amounts of gold and silver vessels were used in ceremonies, with specifications of materials and amounts determined by rank. For translation of selections from a relevant passage, see John Pope, *Chinese Porcelain from the Ardebil Shrine,* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art: 1956), 37.

people in the future would cherish and pass on his work. One day, he went to the market, where he encountered a smelter (*rongjinzhe* 鎔金者). In observing him work, he was frustrated to see the smelter melt one of the things he had made. When he returned home, he said to others, "I spared nothing of my mental and physical effort to produce my work, how can I merely receive basic sustenance in return? My wish is to rely on my work to make my name immortal. But now, people melt the things I make; they not only lose the object forever but don't cherish it. This skill is not worth having. How can I go on practicing it?" Someone said, "If your skill relies on different sorts of precious metal, or gold and silver ornament, it can only suit the vulgar (*su* 俗) kind of amusement and cherishing, and are used by women and children. If your patrons are only indulged by the sparkling and shiny, how can they appreciate the bitter labor of the craftsman? If you can transpose your wisdom into making objects as fine and simple as raw white silk, then your work will surely be passed on." Jin was pleased. He succeeded in learning painting, and his fame rose in a short period of time. However Jin had bad luck, although he obtained an official appointment, due to dire conditions he did not get much renumeration.[43]

At the market, Dai Jin was forced to viscerally confront the fact that the value of his work in silver as a medium of exchange exceeded its value as craft. According to Mao, despite Dai's abilities to make life-like objects derived from nature, silver in general had qualities treasured by those with little taste. As a result, he questioned the value of the craft as a means of establishing an artist's reputation and legacy. Differently from Chinese painters, calligraphers, and Yixing potters, all of whom practiced arts that benefited from direct scholarly intervention and patronage, the names of Chinese plateworkers are generally unrecorded, and they did not sign or stamp their work. Written in the same period as Sun's wine vessel was passed around his

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[43] "先是，進，鍛工也，爲人物花鳥，肖狀精奇，直倍常工。進亦自得，以爲人且寶貴傳之。一日，於市見熔金者，觀之，即進所造，撫然自失。歸語人曰： "吾瘁吾心力爲此，豈徒得糈? 意將託此不朽吾名耳。今人爍吾所造亡所愛，此技不足爲也。將安託吾指而後可?" 人曰： "子巧託諸金，金飾能爲俗習玩愛及兒、婦人御耳。彼惟煌煌是耽，安知工苦?能徙智於縑素，斯必傳矣。" 進喜，遂學畫，名高一時。然進數奇，雖得待詔，亦轗軻亡大遇。其畫疏而能密，著筆淡遠。其畫人尤佳，其真亦罕遇雲。予欽進，鍛工耳，而命意不朽，卒成其名." *Guwen jianshang cidian,* 1466. There is an active scholarly debate about the life story of Dai Jin, who was born in Hangzhou and is considered to be the founder of the Zhejiang school of painting. It seems that he certainly entered the court painting workshop, and then left it, afterward practicing painting in Beijing and Hangzhou. According to his sixteenth-century biographer, Li Kaixian 李開先 (1602-1568), Dai was slandered to the emperor by one of his fellow court painters, Xie Huan 謝環, who criticized him for wearing a red robe above his rank. Li wrote that Xie Huan was motivated to disgrace Dai because he was worried he could not compete with Dai's skill. As a result, both the painter and his work were dismissed from the court. In Li's telling, he died in poverty, and it was only after his death that his work became famous and his surviving work became expensive. Other scholars have questioned this story, arguing that perhaps Dai Jin fell out of favor with the emperor for other reasons, such as a change in the ruler's taste, and that he continued his career afterward. For a summary of the scholarship, see Lin Meicun, "A Study on the Court Cartographers of the Ming Empire," *Journal of Asian History* 49: 1-2 (2015): 210-14.

banquet table, the anecdote provides a view on how the scholar-official class generally perceived the capacities of painting in comparison to silversmithing as a fine art form.

For Dai, it was not just the risk of working in a monetary media, which might be melted down if required to pay a tax or a debt. In addition, the taste of the type of people that valued the "sparkling and shiny" of wrought lucre—here derogatorily cast as women and children, but presumably also encompassing the male nouveau riche—made it a less desirable trajectory in an artistic life than the pursuit of painting, where one could achieve scholarly aesthetic ideals derived from Daoist and Confucian morality. One such stylistic ideal was *zhuo* 拙*,* a type of disinterested awkwardness achieved by a truly cultivated person, where one's detachment and inarticulateness both dissemble and reveal deep virtue and completeness. As Steven Owyoung has written, the plainness or even clumsiness of *zhuo* 拙 in literary contexts "conveyed a sense of the rustic and natural, an enduring purity and simplicity, a feeling of austerity that touched on the starkly plain and astringent."[44] It was linked to *dan* 淡, or insipid blandness, which when used to describe a person, conveyed a virtuous, even temper. In painting and calligraphy, according to the model of Song master Mi Fu, a scholarly aesthete strove toward the poetic qualities of *gudan* 古淡, ancient and bland, or *kudan* 苦淡, bitter and bland, in balancing the rustic and natural, the pale and restrained.[45] In Mao's tale about Dai Jin, such values are analogized to the rusticity and austerity of raw, undyed silk.

Consistently in texts written by the scholarly class, silverwares are invoked to denigrate, or in this case reveal the limits of, artistic ambition. From the story of Dai Jin, it was certainly conceivable that gold and silverwares could be individually made as high-quality commodities, such that they were strange and marvelous, or *qi* 奇*,* or even approach the realm of art in the capacity for mimesis. Sun's silver wine vessel certainly achieved the latter, as I will address later in the chapter. Yet only artisans working in a very narrow band of arts could convey the values of *dan* or *zhuo.* Such artisans could in effect seek longevity through the serious appreciation of their work, and its preservation and circulation through elite collecting practices. Silver thus had an unstable position in a history of art, where the art object is defined against the commodity, as something unique, singular, and non-exchangeable.

With regard to silversmiths, there was a close material and moral association of their wares with money, luxury consumption, and hoaxes connected to money, which further inflected the consumption of such objects among the scholarly classes. In their view, the social class of the artisan was derived from traditional understandings of social class, based on social role. Outside of the court and people that held hereditary privileges, there were the commoners, which were further subdivided hierarchically into the "four peoples," or *simin* 四民, of scholar (*shi* 士), farmer (*nong* 農), artisan (*gong* 工), and merchant (*shang* 商).[46] Anthony Barbieri-Low has

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[44] *The Art of Tea and the Aesthetic Ideals of the Ming Literati, in Around Chigusa: Tea and the Arts of Sixteenth-Century Japan,* eds. Dora C.Y. Ching, Louise Allison Cort, and Andrew M. Watsky (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 215.
[45] Ibid.
[46] The hierarchy was premised on an ancient value system dating to the second century BCE. According to Han historian Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 CE), "Scholars, farmers, artisans, and merchants; each of the four peoples had their respective profession. Those who studied in order to occupy positions of rank were

written that any traditional society has prejudice against craftsmen, especially on the part of the elite authors of the written record.[47] The latter justified their elevated status through ascribing moral differences, and deficiencies, to material producers. The Chinese silversmith, from the perspective of Ming-Qing scholars was a figure additionally conflicted by social understandings of the ambivalent, and also politically and morally-charged medium of silver. In fact, there are very few named silversmiths in Chinese craft history, such that most remain anonymous.

Many Ming officials professed to view luxury, and the labor that created luxury goods, as a threat to the social order.[48] Within the four-part order, traditionally officials viewed craftsmen and merchants as relying on derivative forms of labor that benefitted from the essential toil of farmers and other physical laborers. The official Zhang Han 張瀚 (1511-1593), in departing from the dominant idea that merchants were the most parasitic, and therefore morally-suspect class, targeted artisans involved in luxury production. He contended that they should return to the fundamental labor of agriculture or cottage industry, reasoning that the labor equivalent of producing a small amount or small part of a luxury good could produce vastly more when reoriented toward food production. His argument was an indictment of unnecessary surface decoration:

> …with regard to the labor used to make utensils (*qi* 器), all day is spent with sculpting and embossing, and thus the worker can only produce a handful of objects [because so much labor is expended on ornamentation], and further the laborers endure constant overwork, obtaining profit is five times more difficult.… There is an ancient saying: "Carving patterns, engraving, and embossing, it hurts farmers. Embroidering brocade, it damages the silk industry." Farming and sericulture are the foundational professions under heaven, but excessive and clever labor is no more than industry and commerce.[49]

The value of craft in the form of additional ornament is thus morally compromised from the perspective of the scholar-official, and by extension the maintenance of social equilibrium through the distribution of resources.

Consumption Counterpoint: Southern Urban and Mercantile Taste

Jonathan Hay has argued for the spread of what he describes as a "fashionable and showy urban taste, characterized by accumulation and spectacle" that emerged by the end of the

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called the *shi* (scholars). Those who cultivated the soil and propagated grain were called *nong* (farmers). Those who manifested skill (*qiao*) and made utensils were called *gong* (artisans). Those who transported valuable articles and sold commodities were called s*hang* (merchants)." *Han Shu* 漢書, 24A.1117-8, quoted in Barbieri-Low, *Artisans in Early Imperial China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 37.

[47] "Artisans…were tolerated, despised, feared, and sometimes envied, but never truly respected or revered." *Artisans in Early Imperial China*, 38.

[48] Christine Moll-Murata, "Work Ethics and Work Valuations in a Period of Commercialization: Ming China, 1500-1644," in *International Review of Social History* 56 (2011): 169.

[49] "矧工於器者，終日雕鏤，器不盈握，而歲月積勞，取利倍蓰。.... 故曰：「雕文刻鏤，傷農事者也。刺繡組錦，傷蠶事者也。」夫農桑，天下之本業也，工作淫巧，不過末業。" *Songchuang mengyu* 松窗夢語 [Dream Talk from the Pine Window] (Beijing, 1985), 79.

sixteenth century, one that was actively poised against "the decorum of earlier Ming life."[50] Social commentators and literary accounts confirm the plentiful use of gold and silverwares in the Ming and Qing periods. The late-Ming writer He Liangjun (1506-73) even characterized the use of ceramic cups for serving wine at a banquet by someone who could presumably afford gold and silver as either a symptom of their tragic poverty, or an indication of their off-putting puritanism. He also lauded a friend for his elegant silver tablewares.[51] As Craig Clunas has noted, the late Ming novel, *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅) is replete with gold and silver objects, from silver ewers and cups to silver hair pins.[52] Not only did silver objects operate as material culture in the novel, silversmithing served as the occasion for ostentacious performance. In one chapter, the merchant Ximen Qing, hires "a considerable number" of mobile silversmiths, who are brought in to work in the garden of his summerhouse. They are commissioned to create a monumental sculptural work:

> …a piece in which four male figurines were depicted holding up a representation of the character for long life. Each of the silver figures in this work were [sic] more than a foot high, and were very skillfully wrought. In addition, there were two gold pitchers in the shape of the character for long life…[53]

For a merchant flagrantly unconcerned with conspicuous consumption and the charge of possessing vulgar taste, silver was not just luxurious. It could also come to life as entertainment, through the production of monumental objects. The above passage from the novel both confirms and contests Mao Xianshu's tale about Dai Jin. Despite the "longevity" the silversmiths were producing in a literal sense, their identities and reputations are beside the point. At the same time, the sculptural works were also not meant to be cherished forever, but rather, were the temporary solid states of a metamorphic medium. Thus, part of the artistic value of the silver, in this case, was the live performance of the silversmiths' skill, albeit at the will of a wealthy merchant.

Hay noted that most studies of late Ming material culture and aesthetics that preceded his work on decorative objects of the Ming and Qing periods have reinforced the canons of scholarly taste that appear in writings. By contrast, he takes seriously decorative surfaces, arguing that they should be understood as a distributed politics of taste, one that emerged explicitly in response to the perceived social transgressions enabled through increased wealth and conspicuous consumption. As Qing playwright and social commentator Li Yu 李渔 wrote in 1671, "Settings for drinking wine use gold and silver, as still ladies' trousseaux use pearls and jade. There is no

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[50] *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 27.

[51] Clunas, 158.

[52] Clunas, "Some Literary Evidence for Gold and Silver Vessels in the Ming Period (1368-1644)," in Michael Vickers, ed., *Pots and Pans: A Colloquium on Precious Metals and Ceramics in the Muslim, Chinese, and Graeco-Roman Worlds, Oxford, 1985* (Oxford Studies in Islamic Art III, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 86. On precious metal material culture found in *Jin Ping Mei,* see Yang Zhishui 扬之水, *Wuse* Jin Ping Mei: *Huoseshengxiang de mingdai qiwu zhi* 物色《金瓶梅》活色生香的明代器物誌 [Quality of Things in Jin Ping Mei: Record of Vivid Ming Utensils] (Taibei: Linking Publishing Co., Ltd., 2020), esp. 17-119.

[53] *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei,* vol. 2*,* trans. David Tod Roy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 80, 98.

alternative — all banquets require it."[54] Thus, the austerity of taste professed by late Ming and early Qing commentators was itself in part a performance, and certainly not universal.

Finally, the regional use of different precious metal objects demonstrates the value of looking outside of scholar-literati canons. Around the time the Manchus consolidated their rule in the south, patterns of local elite consumption of gold and silverwares can be glimpsed through *Guangdong xinyu.* Qu Dajun 屈大均 noted that wealthy Cantonese store betel nut and its constitutive ingredients in a small, two-level box made of gold and silver, while the lower classes used tin boxes. A stimulant used throughout south and southeast Asia, betel nut was part of elite wedding ceremonies and other rituals. Qu described the boxes as "sculpted and inlaid with figures and floral designs," the workmanship of which was "refined and beautiful."[55] From this example, we might surmise that southern coastal elites viewed luxury metalwares with richly-ornamented surfaces as desirable, much like other forms of carved decorated surfaces produced in the south using wood, lacquer, shells, and ivory. The Guangdong case also contradicts accepted maxims about the proper forms for precious metal craft from the scholar-official perspective, as well as demonstrates regional diversity in consumption. No betel nut boxes appear in *Treatise of Superfluous Things* (*Zhangwuzhi* 張物志)*,* the much-studied manual of elite scholar-official taste from the late Ming by the literati Wen Zhengheng 文震亨. They are also clearly not austere objects, as such manuals might suggest. Literati texts on objects, silversmiths and ornament are thus particular, if overly influential, elite male perspectives that cast silver as categorically "vulgar."

The Master Silversmith: Zhu Bishan 朱碧山

Given the complex enmeshments of the material with money, status and morality, how could silver serve as a medium for art? The next chapter considers this question with regard to the aesthetic criteria in Chinese literature on tea, but the remainder of this chapter returns to the unusual vessel introduced at the beginning. The gnarled bark is deeply contoured with swelling, flowing forms, its projecting surfaces and jagged edges lined with ridges and graining. The sinewy roughness of the cup surface contrasts against the smooth glossy flesh of the large figure sitting inside, with his upturned face, sightless eyes and yawning mouth. From several carved inscriptions, Sun's guests identified its maker as the Yuan (1271-1368) silversmith Zhu Bishan (active 1328/9-c.1362) and dated the vessel to the Zhizheng reign era (1341–1368).[56] Shana J. Brown has noted that during the Qing period under the imperial governance of the Manchu,

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[54] "酒具用金銀，猶妝奩之用珠翠，皆不得已而為之，非宴集時所應有也." *Xian qing ou ji* (Taibei: Chang'an zhu ban she, 1979), 240.

[55] "廣人喜食檳榔。富者以金銀，貧者以錫為小合，雕嵌人物花卉，務極精麗." *Guangdong xinyu,* vol. 3 (Taibei: Taiwan xue sheng shu ju, 1968), 971.

[56] There are three short inscriptions, a mark resembling a seal, and one long inscription on the vessel. The short inscriptions are: "raft cup," "Made by Zhu Huayu [Zhu Bishan]," and "The yiyou year of Zhizheng [1345]." The longest inscription is a poetic quatrain with lines each composed of seven characters, translated as follows: "Wishing to visit the milky-way, but the early crescent-moon was in [on] his way. / Indeed, in vain are people talking about crossing the Silver Bay. / Why return home merely with the slab of the loom-supporting stone, / Without searching for the brocade made by the celestial maid?" J. Keith Wilson, "The Fine Art of Drinking: The Silversmith Zhu Bishan and His Sculptural Cups," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Musuem of Art* 81:10 (Dec. 1994): 382.

antiquarians became interested in collecting inscriptions from conquest dynasties such as the Mongol-led Yuan.[57] In his poetic response, Zhu Yizun detailed how and why Sun came to possess such a marvelous object:

> Our host has gathered a wide range of inscriptions on stones and metal vessels,
> And he chatted with us further about the Tianli era (1328–1330).[58]

In other words, Sun collected the raft cup due to his antiquarian interest in inscriptions on metal and stone, the scholarly and collecting field of *jinshixue* 金石學. But in addition to the object's epigraphic value, it also had star power. In the writings of late-Ming connoisseurs, Zhu was the only silversmith to achieve the status of artist who made objects worth possessing and treasuring. To underline this point, Craig Clunas has written, "With the exception of objects attributed to Zhu Bishan there is no connoisseurship of silver and no interest in old silver visible in Ming texts." [59] His name became a brand used by competitors and followers into the Qing period.

Zhu Bishan's renown goes hand-in-hand with the raft cup form; he is credited with developing the iconography of the "raft cup" *chabei* 槎杯 or "dragon raft" *longcha* 龍槎 in silver, sculptural wine vessels which conflated Han-period and Daoist legendary tales about wayward travelers.[60] Based on horn cups for sipping wine, Zhu's raft cups take the form of a gnarled and broken tree trunk with a bare-chested man sitting inside. Zhu's first recorded commission was dated 1328/9. He was born in Jiaxing 嘉興 in Zhejiang province, but soon moved to the large, prosperous city of Suzhou, where he trained in metalworking. His hometown was the source of several well-known painters, and he left so as not to have to compete with them; interestingly his biography reverses that of Dai Jin's biography, in the choice between becoming a painter and a silversmith.[61] Today there are three extant examples known attributed to Zhu, a fourth only known though the woodcut print, and a fifth that was noted as lost during the late seventeenth century due to war. The extant examples are all slightly different, and it is possible that Zhu's family was producing wares stamped with his name into the Ming period.[62] Zhu might be viewed as an idealized artisan, as Anthony Barbieri-Low has written for the ancient context, "who did not really exist, except as a kind of Platonic mental construct in the mind of the philosopher, the poet, or the historian."[63] While it seems that Zhu did exist, the vision of Zhu and his sculptural abilities eclipsed those of all other precious metalsmiths in the view of the Ming connoisseurs. Zhu's name became a brand for objects valued among Ming-Qing connoisseurs, and often appeared in a litany of one or two names associated with different crafts in commentaries and manuals of taste.

Clunas has written that in the sixteenth century, Ming market mechanisms — indeed, a fashion system — began to link craftsmen's names with objects, suggesting that the association of a recognized maker's stamp was a means of creating a hierarchy of value developed much

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[57] *Pastimes: From Art and Antiquarianism to Modern Chinese Historiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 29-30.

[58] "Album of Painting and Calligraphy for Maoshu."

[59] "Some Literary Evidence," 84.

[60] Tang Kemei 唐克美 and Li Cangyan 李苍彦, *Jinyin xijin gon yi he jingtailan* 金银细金工艺和景泰蓝 [Gold and silver fine metalworking craft and cloisonné] (Zhengzhou Shi: Daxiang chubanshe, 2004), 159.

[61] Wilson, 389.

[62] Wilson, 383-5.

[63] *Artisans in Early Imperial China,* 44.

earlier through painting.[64] Zhu was first recorded by his contemporary Tao Zongyi (c. 1316-c.1402), listed as a craftsman with a "reputation" for having proficiency in silverworking craftsmanship, along with brothers Xie Junyu and Xie Junhe. Clunas notes that late-Ming arbiters of taste reiterate the same names as Tao, "showing that no more figures in this craft had registered on the consciousness of the elite in the intervening two centuries."[65] As Clunas put it, "Zhu Bishan was *the* silversmith, sufficiently well known to give a higher profile to the craft even if no more contemporary names were necessary."[66] Craftsmen were regarded as lowly and vulgar from the perspective of social status. In order for their wares to register within the upper echelons of value circulation — that is, within connoisseurial crafts — one or two names were connected with certain crafts. Zhu so effectively reconciled the contradictions in the status of the silversmith that he eclipsed all others. It is perhaps not surprising that the mark with two characters from his name on the Cleveland raft cup, *Bishan* 碧山, takes the form of a painter's or collector's seal, a convention used much later also by Yixing ceramicists (fig. 1.6). With this type of mark, Zhu claimed the status equivalent of a scholar-painter.[67] It functions relatively similar to an artist's signature as a claim of authorship, rather than more of administrative function as one in a set of guarantors of the quality of the object. As far as I am aware, Zhu is the only Chinese silversmith to have an authorial seal carved on their work.[68]

Yet the fashion system of names and trademarks had to operate within limits. Clunas characterized the small handful of named practitioners in such luxury crafts as silversmithing, cabinetmaking, and jade-carving as a means of reconciling the humble, and often degraded, status of the artisan with the need to legitimate the craft as acceptable for connoisseurial consumption within the highly-monetized Ming economy. The scholarly elites had noted of painting, since the eleventh century, that people started to view names as a more important criteria than the qualities of the work itself. Clunas noted that this type of observation proliferated in the Ming as a means of distinguishing those with taste from those without.[69] Indeed, even though Dai Jin achieved renown as a painter, in writing of his downfall immediately thereafter Mao, his early Qing chronicler, seems to not-so-subtly inflect his aspirations to make his name with a twinge of moral corruption. Craftsmen could be elevated, but had to remain in place. Belonging to a dynasty previous to the Ming, Zhu handily obviated the need for others to rise within the category of silversmith.

Conclusion: Material Meanings

Zhu's trademark iconographical invention, the silver raft cup, was also particularly appealing to late Ming and early Qing connoisseurs. Though he may appear as to be a bacchanalian figure, the multivalent iconography of the seemingly drunken man in a rough-hewn raft was taken up by the scholarly class as an exemplary escapist figure, unmoored from

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[64] *Superfluous Things*, 60.
[65] *Superfluous Things*, 63.
[66] Ibid.
[67] A supposition shared by Wilson, 389.
[68] Silver smelters and casters were under many circumstances required to strike their names or shop names into the ingots and bars they produced, as they, like English goldsmiths, served to guarantee the silver content. Yet the practice was not systematically extended to wrought plate until the late eighteenth century, with the development of a craft industry producing for foreign markets.
[69] *Superfluous Things*, 68-9.

contemporary politics, or life's vulgarities.[70] Daoist immortals were said to seek the Milky Way (in Chinese, the "Silver River," *Yinhe* 銀河) at the source of the Yellow River, and thus the figure could be a transcendent drifting through the stars, plying a raft in the form of a hollow tree stump.[71] In the Cleveland raft cup, the man holds a tablet carved with the words "loom-supporting stone."[72] Based on poems inscribed on the object, Keith Wilson has written that the figure is specifically a celestial traveler described in the Han *Bowuzhi* 博物志 by Zhang Hua 張華 (232-300 CE).[73] A traveler floated down a river on a log raft, encountered a weaving maid and a herdsman. He asked them where he was, and by answer the maid gave him her weaving shuttle and said to show it to an astrologer upon his return home. Once he did that, the astrologer realized that the man had been temporarily transformed into a star and he had observed a wayward star roving between Vega, the star known as the Weaving Maid, and Altair, the star known in Chinese as the Herdsman. Wilson has noted that movement and escapism are two themes of the naturalistic, sculptural work, which would have resonated with the scholar-official class looking to find ways of retreating into a rural, aesthetic life, away from the court. It was a subject popular in many media besides antiquarian silverwares; raft cups were also produced in the Ming and Qing periods in other materials such as rhinoceros horn, jade, and even painting.

At the same time, the cup appealed to different audiences through the theme of westward expansion. Zhu Yizun's poem identified the subject as Han statesman and envoy Zhang Qian 張騫 (ca. 164–113 BCE), a figure associated with carved raft cups in other media since at least the Tang period. Zhang was an envoy and statesman who was dispatched by the emperor to search for the source of the Yellow River in the northwest. Zhang played vital roles in early Chinese exploration, commerce and conquest, including initiating transcontinental trade with regions in Central and Western Asia, routes known colloquially today as the Silk Road. As Zhang laid the diplomatic groundwork for Han conquests to the west, scholars postulate that figure could have been developed in collaboration with a group of Daoists and scholars at the late Mongol Yuan court.[74] Not only did silver have a different valence for Mongols, but Zhang Qian had special resonance to the Yuan. Zhu here may have worked a highly literary and well-regarded Han cultural trope in a multivalent sense, to allow it to appeal to a Mongol court culture.

While early Qing revelers certainly brought this wide-ranging set of associations to bear on Sun's raft cup, they further revelers inflected their literary and antiquarian references with poignant musings on the fungible qualities of its medium. Thus the precarities of silver as a stable form due to its liquidity entered into the aesthetic value of the work. Somehow the raft cup was able to transcend its insistent exchange value and was able to repeatedly escape the smelter's furnace. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the poems written at Sun's banquet about the vessel were laced with references to the exceptional circumstances through which the object

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[70] Wilson, 392.
[71] Howard Rogers, "Boat-Shaped Wine Cup," in *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration,* ed. Jay A. Levenson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 484.
[72] See footnote 56 for inscriptions.
[73] Such a reading from the standpoint of an early Qing viewer is confirmed by a painting by Yu Zhiding, *A Han Dynasty Envoy Navigating on a Tree-Raft* (1696) in the collection of the University of Michigan Museum of Art. https://exchange.umma.umich.edu/resources/38965/view
[74] Rogers, 484.

had repeatedly survived dynastic transition. Zhu emphasized how the object was one of many that was looted during the Ming-Qing transition:

> After Li Zicheng (1606–1645) and his rebel army ravaged the capital Yan [Beijing],
> They withdrew to the west with quantities of pillaged gold and silk.
> One after another they entered stores to find metal objects for forging.
> If not used, the trophies were cast away among thick weeds along the roads.[75]

Saved somehow from the crucible, the raft cup was nonetheless discarded along the side of the road along with countless other articles of virtu. Indeed, if Sun's vessel and the Cleveland cup are indeed one and the same, it would later survive another looting, this time of the Yuanmingyuan Summer Palace in Beijing during the Second Opium War in 1860. Li Liangnian 李良年 was another guest who attended a banquet hosted by Sun and composed a poem about the raft cup. Li also addressed the ravages of dynastic transition and the contingencies of survival, but he dwelled on its Yuan history:

> Our host again emphasized that it was nothing to wave one's hand at, that such an old thing was handed down and still exists in the present day.
> Yuan scholars counted it as fleeting as the river, and like the imperial depository for secret files, hid it somewhere for its longevity (*shou* 寿).[76]

How does an object convey longevity upon its maker or its patron, or impress a sense of enduring value upon its viewer? If longevity is one of the main criteria though which an object can be called a work of art—and therefore, theoretically priceless—can it ever be grounded in the fluid and fugitive medium of silver? Arguably, the obdurate survival of Zhu Bishan's raft cup in defiance of its vulgar medium was a critical part of its value for Sun's guests. Perhaps they also viewed it through the contradictions of its material and immaterial animacies: its ephemerality like a flying bird, frozen in motion by Zhu Bishan's hammer while adrift on the Milky Way.

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[75] "Album of Painting and Calligraphy for Maoshu."

[76] "主人更勸勿揮手，舊事流傳猶在口。元家學士數臨川，祕閣相將此爲壽." *Zhu Bishan Yin zaoluo ge cheng Sunshaozai tuiweng zhu shichang* 朱碧山銀鑿落歌呈孫少宰退翁朱十倡 [Song on Zhu Bishan's silver chiseled vessel presented for entertainment to District Magistrate Sun], in Xu Shichang 徐世昌 and Fu Butang 傅卜棠. *Wanqing yi shi hua* 晚晴簃詩話 (Shanghai: Huadongshifandaxue chubanshe, 2009), *juan* 46, 1772.

Ch. 1. First, Silver is Money
Figures

Fig. 1.1. Zhu Bishan 朱碧山 (c. 1300-aft. 1362), raft cup (*chabei* 槎杯), hammered silver soldered together, with chased decoration, 1345. Height: 16 cm (6 5/16")
Cleveland Museum of Art, 1977.77

Fig. 1.1a. Additional view of Fig. 1.1.

Fig. 1.2. Examples of Chinese copper cash, Yongzheng reign (1722-35), minted in Chengdu, Sichuan

Fig. 1.3. Changing money" *huanqian* 換錢, c. 1790. Watercolor and gouache on pith paper, from an album of Chinese trades attributed to the painter Puqua or his workshop, made Guangzhou.V&A D.132-1898

Fig. 1.4. Three examples of *jinhuayin* 金花銀 high-grade silver tax ingots with high gold content (around 1%), viewed from top faces.
Image from WU Danmin 吴旦敏, "*Jinhuayin* Ingredient Analysis of Ming Dynasty," 33, fig. 3

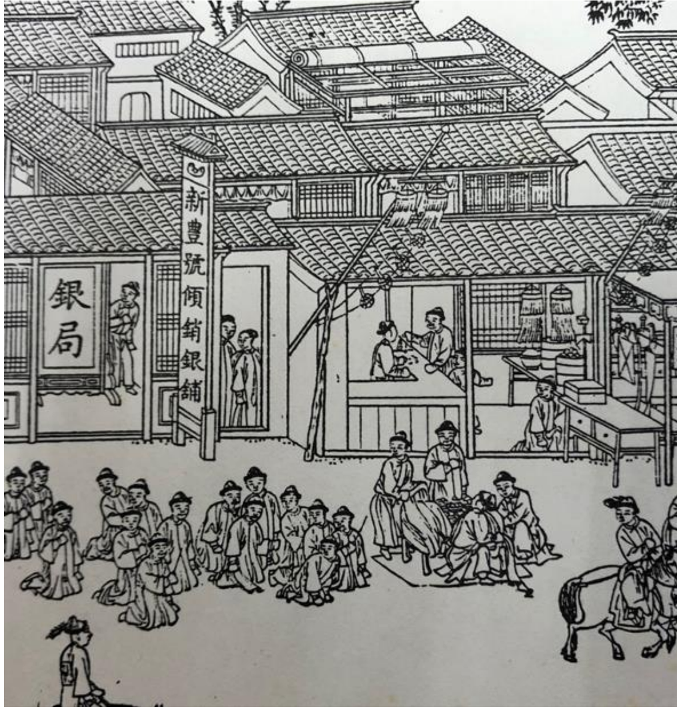

Fig. 1.5. Urban silver foundry (*yinju* 銀局), detail from *Wanshou shengdian quji* 萬壽盛典初集 [Magnificent Record of Longevity] , juan 41, 6 (1714-5)

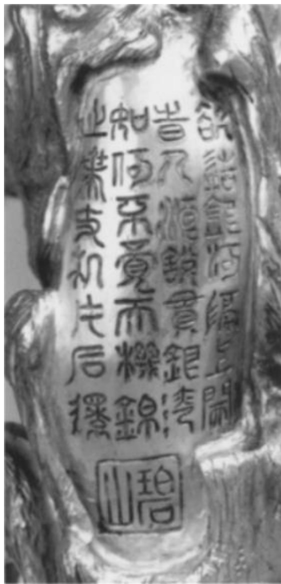
Fig. 1.6. Inscriptions on Figure 1.1, including inscribed seal of Zhu Bishan in rectangle at bottom

Ch.2. Surpassing the Silver Teapot

The use of *hu* 壺 [a closed vessel type, or ewer] as a tea utensil has been continuous throughout history.… tea in the Ming dynasty is no longer ground into powder or made into cakes, and in this way we have already surpassed the ancients. In the course of the last hundred years, teapots made of gold, silver and tin, as well as the ceramics made in Fujian and Henan, have fallen out of favor, while Yixing ceramics are treasured. In this way as well, modern people have surpassed the ancients…[1]
Zhou Gaoqi 周高起, *Yangxi minghu xi* 陽羨茗壺系 [An account of Yangxian (Yixing) teapots], c. 1640

Introduction: A Late-Ming Teapot Innovation

In the middle of the Ming period (1368-1644), silver tea vessels were the utensil preferred by Chinese critics and connoisseurs for boiling water to brew loose leaf tea in cups.[2] In part this was due to the metal's associations with luxury, but it was also due to its material qualities, such as its resistance to rust, and its minimal interference in the multi-sensory experience of drinking tea. Yet as the epitaph by Zhou Gaoqi, early chronicler of the Yixing 宜興 ceramic tea wares industry, suggests, silver teapots were outmoded by the tail-end of the Ming, and replaced by Yixing (also known as *zisha* 紫沙/紫砂 for "purple sand") stoneware teapots in the discerning eye of the elite tea drinker. While mid-Ming silver teapots, like the ewer discussed in the introduction (fig. 0.7), were used to boil water on a brazier or other heat source and dispense the water into cups where the tea was brewed, Yixing wares were the first purpose-made vessel for both brewing and dispensing tea. In other words, in many cases, there was a functional distinction, such that it was not a one-to-one replacement of one vessel for another. How and why, then, could it be stated definitively that Yixing wares replaced the use of silver teapots, effectively rendering them obsolete from the perspective of the scholarly elite?

This chapter analyzes the mid-to-late Ming discursive process through which Yixing wares became viable substitutes for silver teapots, which coincides with the period that the teapot form was transmitted to Europe along with Chinese tea-drinking practices.[3] As a result, Europeans believed that Chinese did not use precious metal teapots, which chapter seven discusses in light of the long-term implications for art history. Through a close reading of a

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[1] "壺於茶具，用處一耳... 故茶至明代，不復碾悄和香藥制團餅，此已遠過古人。近百年中，壺黜銀錫及閩豫瓷，而尚宜興陶，又近人遠過前人處也." *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng* 中國古代茶書集成 [Collection of ancient Chinese texts on tea], comp. Zhu Zizhen 朱自振, Shen Dongmei 沈冬梅, Zeng Qin 增勤 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chanbanshe, 2010), 462. I consulted this modern compilation of *chashu* 茶書 for most of the texts discussed in this chapter.

[2] Takashi Nakashima, "Paocha fa de xingsheng yu yixing minghu" 泡茶法的興盛與宜興茗壺 [The Rise of Tea Brewing and Yixing Teaware], in *Zhongguo gudai chichashi* 中國古代喫茶史, ed. Xu Xianyao 許賢瑤 (Taipei: Boyuan, 1991), 151–52.

[3] The "late Ming" is conventionally periodized as the mid-sixteenth century to the fall of the dynasty in 1644. It is associated with the growth of a vibrant elite culture centered around the Jiangnan region, as well as a highly monetized economy. See Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 153-237.

selection of connoisseurial texts on tea (*chashu* 茶書) that were compiled in a late-Ming anthology dating to 1612, the chapter argues that late-Ming readers would have understood the complex moral and social valences of the use of silver teapots and other water-boiling vessels. As a corollary, it argues that the continued presence of silver teapots in texts on tea indicates that they were both desirable and useful for tea preparation; their frequent abnegation is in fact evidence of their consumption. The invention, and importantly, the technical development and refinement of Yixing stonewares resolved the dialectical problems around ostentatious, yet functionally-ideal silver teapots, yet created a new set of problems as their market value rose. Throughout, the chapter charts how the value of silver vessels was consistently articulated in terms of material substitution, tracking the shift from hierarchical value to exchange value in the late Ming.

Ming-period changes in methods of tea-preparation are critical to the development of Yixing wares. There was a shift from whisking tea powder to brewing loose leaf tea. While boiling loose tea leaves was a method used throughout Chinese history, it was not until the Ming-era labor reforms that it gradually eclipsed cake tea or whisked powdered tea among elites, and thus created the conditions for innovation around a new aesthetics of tea consumption. In 1391, the dynasty's founder the Hongwu 洪武 emperor, Taizu 太祖 (r. 1368-98) issued an edict banning the tea cake as a form of imperial tribute from Fujian:

> Obey: the officials of the tea households are ordered to cease harvesting and presenting caked tea. Of all the empire's tea producers of annual tribute on fixed quotas, the tea of Jianning is supreme. To produce tribute tea, leaves must be crushed and kneaded into pulp and pressed into silver molds to make large and small dragon rounds, a method that greatly strains the resources of the people. Abolish the production of dragon rounds. Pick only tea buds to present as tribute. There are four kinds: Seeking Springtime; Gathering Springtime; Staying Spring; and Russet Shoots. We established five hundred tea households, exempted them from corvée labor, and allowed them to specialize in planting and harvesting tea. Afterwards, there were officials who feared these later reforms and sent overseers to abuse the householders, who dreaded their tyranny. Everywhere bribes were taken. This was reported to the imperial court. Thus, the emperor issues this command.[4]

The edict and other reforms triggered a profound shift in the way tea was consumed. Hongwu's ban of tribute tea cakes was connected to the perception of waste in their production, as there was an enormous expenditure of labor for cakes that were designated for the emperor's use. He was also responding to corruption among officials in the industry.[5] While as we will see, twenty-four vessels were required for tea preparation during the Tang dynasty (618-906), by the late Ming, the procedure was streamlined to the basics: water, fire, pot, and cups.

While Yixing potters effectively resolved some of the dialectical properties of silver as substitutes for silver vessels, a new issue arose among literati commentators in the way Yixing ware's material equivalence with silver in a different guise — that is, as coin — laid bare troubling market mechanisms. Building on the discussion in the previous chapter on the cultural history of silver in late imperial China as money, craft, and work of art, and the limits of those

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[4] Translation by Steven D. Owyoung. "The Abolition of Caked Tea by Imperial Degree," *tsiosophy,* 2 Dec. 2014, accessed 28 Jan. 2021 <https://www.tsiosophy.com/2014/12/abolition-caked-tea-imperial-decree/>.

[5] Steven D. Owyoung, "Tea in China: from its mythological origins to the Qing dynasty," in *Steeped in History: The Art of Tea,* ed. Beatrice Hohenegger (Hong Kong: Great Wall Printing Company, Ltd, for the Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2009), 49.

categories, this chapter traces the changes in constructions of value and art-historical knowledge around a single vessel type. It thus lays a groundwork for understanding the shifting and often negated position of silver in modern Chinese art and cultural history, when viewed through elite Han textual sources.

Consumption Ideals: Chashu 茶書 as Rank Treatises

The passage by Zhou was excepted from his *Yangxi minghu xi* 陽羨茗壺系 [An account of Yangxian (Yixing) teapots], the first historical account of the Yixing teapot industry. While a history, in this passage Zhou mobilized a genre of evoking a type of specialized ritual utensil in order to create a ranking system through material distinctions. Appearing much earlier in the use of objects for state ritual, ranking through material difference was continued in genres of aesthetic writing, such as in a genre of literature first developed in the medieval Tang-Song period: the literature and aesthetic theory on tea known as *chashu* 茶書. Unlike in Zhou's text, in most *chashu,* often little additional information was provided about craftsmanship, ornament or other physical dimensions. Rather, types of specialized utensils were named and described, and then listed in order of types of materials used by different social classes. Material difference thus fundamentally structured how connoisseurs understood vessels and other implements used in tea preparation and drinking.

In the late-Ming period, there was a marked increase in texts dedicated to tea, which ranged from encyclopedic discussions of tea growing, sourcing, preparation, and instructions for aesthetic enjoyment, to tracts devoted to single facets of tea drinking. To track elite social attitudes toward silver tea utensils in the decades that spanned the late-Ming to early-Qing transition, I examine the dynamics of how they are ranked and qualified over time in a selection of scholarly tea manuals, focusing on Tang and Ming texts compiled in the first dedicated collectanea devoted to tea literature, the *Chashu* (*Writings on Tea*) produced in 1612.[6] The collection begins with the earliest specialized treatise devoted to the consumption of tea, the *Chajing* 茶經 (*Classic of Tea*) around 760 CE by Lu Yü 陸羽 (733-804). Lu's *Chajing* started a scholarly dialogue that continued to develop into the late-Ming and early-Qing periods. Even though texts such as the *Chajing* were written centuries before the seventeenth century, they were requisite reading for late-Ming scholars and tea connoisseurs, demonstrated by their continuous collecting and citation. *Chashu* readers would have seen prior texts as guides to ancient tea culture and philosophy, with moral bearing on present practice.[7] In my analysis, I focus on Tang and Ming texts. Texts from the two periods demonstrate formal continuities, as well as significant shifts over time. In the Tang period, texts imbue vessels metaphorically with Confucian values and Daoist morality, but in the Ming period, they instead interpret vessels as expressions of taste.

When it came to describing utensils used for preparing tea, different types of tea leaves, sources of water used for boiling tea, and other aspects of the tea preparation process, the *chashu* drew on formulaic stylistics of grading and ranking. Rank treatises were texts that conveyed Chinese systems of evaluation and assessment. They were used in government administration

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[6] Livio Zanini, "Chinese Writings on Tea: Classifications and Compilations," *Ming Qing Yanjiu* 2 (2017): 44-5.

[7] Ibid.

where hierarchical systems were used to grade (*pin* 品) human beings, and particularly officials, in sets of tiers. Ranking vessel form through material as a way to indicate social difference has its roots in the earliest texts for standardized state ritual, namely the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮) and the *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記). The texts were likely written during the first centuries of the Han period (202 BCE-220 CE), though they describe the institutional models achieved under the Western Zhou (c. 1000 BCE).[8] As one example, a grading system was applied to the court tablets, or *hu* 笏 used both ceremonially and for jotting instructions from the emperor:

> For his memorandum-tablet, the Son of Heaven [emperor] used a piece of sonorous jade; the prince of state a piece of ivory; a great officer a piece of bamboo, ornamented with fishbone; ordinary officers might use bamboo, adorned with ivory at the bottom.[9]

Specific materials, in some cases with even more specific forms of material ornamentation, served as metaphorical signifiers for grades of social rank, which were viewed as innate.

Sumptuary codes and laws drew on a similar systematized approach to delimiting the use of objects. BuYun Chen has noted that Tang sumptuary codes were based on notions about immutable social status as linked to material display, as first presented in the *Zhouli.*[10] Like all dynastic sumptuary regulations, the texts instantiated everyday objects and materials with hierarchical meaning. Sumptuary laws extended object-based hierarchies beyond the immediate personnel of the court to a wider social space. Outside of the court and people that held hereditary privileges, there were the commoners, which were further subdivided hierarchically into the "four peoples," or *simin* 四民: scholar (*shi* 士), farmer (*nong* 農), artisan (*gong* 工), and merchant (*shang* 商).[11] The expansion in scope was accompanied by a hardening of divisions, as social rank was understood from the traditional view of the state to be innate, as well as determinative of a standardized lifestyle. As one example, Ming sumptuary laws demarcated the use of wine vessels based on social rank, as laid out in a set of statues from 1587 and included in the *Ming History* (*Mingshi* 明史):

> In the twenty-sixth year of the Hongwu reign (1393) it was decreed that Dukes, Marquises and officials of the First and Second Ranks might have wine pots and wine cups of gold, and for the rest use silver. Officials of the Third to Fifth Ranks might have pots of silver and wine cups of gold, while those of the Sixth to Ninth ranks might have pots and cups of silver, for the rest making use of porcelain or lacquer…. The common people should have pewter wine pots, wine cups of silver, and for the rest use porcelain or lacquerware…. In the sixteenth year of the Zhengde reign it was decreed that officials of the First and Second Rank might not use vessels of jade, but only of gold. Merchants and practitioners of craft skills might not use vessels of silver and were in all respects to be as the common people.[12]

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[8] Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991)*,* 149.
[9] Quoted in Clunas, *Superfluous Things,* 149-150. The *hu* was used as late as the Ming dynasty, but its use was discontinued in the Qing.
[10] *Empire of Style: Silk and Fashion in Tang China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 49.
[11] Division of society based on occupation was first recorded in the *Guanzi,* 3rd century BCE. See Christine Moll-Murata, "Work Ethics and Work Valuations in a Period of Commercialization: Ming China, 1500-1644," in *International Review of Social History* 56 (2011): 169.
[12] As quoted in Clunas, *Superfluous Things,* 149.

As the nearly two-hundred-year gap between the date the statue was first issued and its effective reissuing later in the Ming suggests, sumptuary laws were infrequently revised, despite changes in fashion.

Texts about aesthetic practices such as calligraphy and drinking tea, and later, manuals of taste, were similarly structured by material ranking. Yolaine Escande has traced how the means for ranking officials was taken up by Tang texts on calligraphy, which ordered masters into a hierarchy based on their moral qualities, their antiquity, their price, and their aesthetic qualities judged in relationship to ancient models.[13] Escande has noted that Tang-dynasty rank treatises, including chess, poetry, and painting, did not identify specific works of art; rather, they were rankings of practitioners only.[14] Yet due to the interconnected, metonymical understanding of rank, body, and ornament set out in ancient texts on state ritual, it is likely that for the purposes of aesthetic treatises, the calligrapher's name stood in for the value of the work of art within a ranked system of canonical artists. Differentiation between individual works by a single master would be determined by the learned practitioner of taste. Ultimately, the ranking of masters served as a ranking of the consumer of their work.

Craig Clunas has made a similar assertion about the absence of objects in his discussion of a related genre of rank treatises: Ming manuals of taste. The earliest example of manuals of taste dates to the first half of the thirteenth century. Such books are wide-ranging; they included sections on antique *qin* zithers, strange rocks, water droppers for the desk, antique manuscripts and calligraphy, brush rests, rubbings of inscriptions, antique bronze vessels, and antique paintings.[15] As Clunas has argued about Wen Zhenheng's late-Ming manual of taste, the *Treatise of Superfluous Things* [*Zhangwu zhi* 张物志], the text itself is not about objects, though it is filled with descriptions of types of objects appropriate for pursuits such as interior decorating, the scholar's desk and flower arranging. Rather, the "constant assertion of difference between things… is nothing more nor less than an assertion of the difference between people as consumers of things."[16] Operating in the genre of rank treatises, *chashu* and discourses on taste were thus guides for cultivating an aspirational orientation toward objects as idealized assemblages, such that each object exists in a syntactic relationship to another.

Rank treatises were not so much meant to describe objects as to bring into being an ideal subject in a universal order. In terms of the *chashu* and other aesthetic texts, that subject was one who possessed a cultivated ability to discern elegance—the opposite of the vulgar taste, or *su* 俗 described in chapter one.[17] The reader-practitioner was the ultimate entity to be sorted and ranked. As such, the texts were idealized systems of social relations, as articulated metaphorically through objects and works of art.

Consumption in Practice

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[13] "Tang Dynasty Aesthetic Criteria: Zhang Huaiguan's *Shuduan*," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 41:1-2 (Mar. 2014): 148-57.

[14] Escande, 160.

[15] *Superfluous Things,* 9.

[16] Ibid., 73.

[17] James C. Y. Watt, "The Literati Environment," in *The Chinese Scholar's Studio: Artistic Life in the Late Ming Period —An exhibition from the Shanghai Museum* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 1-13.

While I next turn to the *chashu* as a lively debate on the intersection between luxury utensils and the "simple" art of tea-drinking, the texts were not universally prescriptive, nor should they be viewed as historical evidence for consumption in practice. Rather, I analyze them as a means of accessing censure against types of consumption, from the official position of the scholarly class. In the rare cases when sumptuary laws were updated, it was a reaction against the rise of perceived threats to the social order, such as the final line in the 1587 statue on wine vessels targeting the increased wealth and conspicuous consumption of merchants and craftsmen. As John Kieschnick has written on the contradiction between ideal and practice:

> Throughout ancient Chinese history, those who displayed wealth in a manner inappropriate to their station were reprimanded, and an ideal of frugal restraint was promoted… At the same time, however, the persistent rhetoric calling for frugality and restraint in the use of wealth betrays the opposite tendency; material goods were commonly used to assert and improve social position and as a way of conveying a sense of splendor, prosperity, and affluence.[18]

In the case of tea utensils, historical tensions between a consumption ideal and consumption in practice thus erupted textually, through bureaucratic and literary disavowal.

Literary evidence as well as extant inventories suggest that the limits applied through sumptuary laws and moral codes were quite permeable in practice. As Clunas has written, "gold and silver tableware was ubiquitous in the homes of the wealthy…" Reiterating the point, he noted there were "millions of vessels in circulation, the loss of which radically distorts our picture of the Ming applied arts."[19] Conspicuous consumption and luxury production were intertwined social facts in late Ming China, especially in the southern Jiangsu regions surrounding Suzhou. Millions of taels of imported silver entering the economy increased its liquidity, and thus the spending power of people in different classes. Due to the prominent role of Fujian traders importing silver from Japan and South America, the southern coastal regions were especially flush. As mentioned in chapter one, the 1562 inventory of the confiscated possessions of the disgraced Grand Secretary Yan Song (1480-1565), published in the eighteenth century as a cautionary tale of accumulation to would-be corrupt officials, lists over 3,000 gold vessels and over 1,600 silver vessels by type, decoration, and number. It also lists their weight as measured in silver *liang* 兩*,* a standard unit of weight equivalent to about fifty grams and called the tael in English.[20] The inventory includes six gold "plain teapots" (*su chahu* 素茶壺), and three silver "small teapots" (*xiao chahu* 小茶壺).[21] The specific identification of these objects by their function is important; it is unusual within the larger context of the inventory, which focuses on general form and types of auspicious ornament. It demonstrates that gold and silver tea vessels were both produced and specifically recognizable as teapots, rather than more generalized ewer

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[18] *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 9-10.

[19] Craig Clunas, "Some Literary Evidence for Gold and Silver Vessels in the Ming Period (1368-1644)," in Michael Vickers, ed., *Pots and Pans: A Colloquium on Precious Metals and Ceramics in the Muslim, Chinese, and Graeco-Roman Worlds, Oxford, 1985* (Oxford Studies in Islamic Art III, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 83.

[20] The inventory is a rare document of the types of gold and silver utensils that could be owned in the mid-Ming. Yan was not unique, though the scale of his accumulated wealth might have been; one of his successors, Zhang Juzheng owned 617 gold vessels and 986 silver vessels when he was purged in 1582. Craig Clunas, "Some Literary Evidence," 84-5.

[21] *Tianshui bingshan lu: Fu Qianshantang shuhuaji*, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Gushuliutongchu, 1921).

forms, in the mid-sixteenth century. As exemplified by the spectacular accumulation of Yan Song, as well as the inclusion of objects distinguished as gold and silver teapots, the boom in the production of luxury and fine goods for a range of markets during the period indicates that there is a major gap between what was presented in the rank treatises as "suitable" for consumption, and what was consumed in the period.[22]

Timothy Brook and others have noted the rise of moral anxiety among officials and other elites that accompanied increased imports of silver currency in the mid-Ming.[23] Local officials tried to curb what they deemed outrageous displays of consumption by linking spending with morality. They promoted patronage of Buddhist monasteries and other institutions, and thus the diversion of cash into charity. They also encouraged the use of moral ledgers of merit and demerit, which analogized moral acts (such as said charity donations) with transactions in account books.[24] Such channels of wealth redistribution were intended to counter overt displays of luxury, which were viewed as dangerous to the social order and morally corrupt.

Sumptuary laws were also attempts to reel in excessive displays of luxury, but rules for consumption were vulnerable to cooptation. Similarly, manuals of taste provided access to a set of status symbols to the nouveau riche. As BuYun Chen has noted:

> Sumptuary laws contain an inherent contradiction: rather than maintaining social distinctions, the laws encouraged the usurping of status symbols since it was more affordable for elites and non-elites to compete over symbolic distinction.[25]

Likewise, as printed books, late-Ming manuals of taste were commodified knowledge. In fact, the texts demonstrate a deep awareness that social class can be expressed through objects, and that there was some choice in how one might wield objects against the restrictions of propriety and taste. Prosperous merchants in the late Ming followed the standard of taste set by scholar-officials in order to express their own cultivation and economic status; in turn, scholars strove to distinguish themselves as genuine practitioners of elegance—achieved through a preference for costly goods like Yixing wares that carefully professed an elegant simplicity. Thus, the alacrity of the scholarly class was targeted not just at spectacles of conspicuous consumption, but also slippages in their own privileged social standing, as others achieved the means of its expression.

In this light, gold and silver teapots and other tea utensils were socially-compromised objects when connected to tea-drinking, yet their constant presence and repeated disavowal in premodern Chinese tea manuals demonstrates that they were objects that were desired, gifted, purchased and possessed. In other words, the professed puritanical tastes of Ming-Qing elites, as well as the suspicion cast by some on the conspicuous amassing of private wealth, did not guarantee historical abstinence from gold and silverware consumption. Rank treatises like the *chashu* provide one carefully circumscribed vision of luxury consumption, but one that I argue is worth analyzing in depth because of its enormous impact on the history of silver as a subject of art and cultural history. When not scrutinized with the set of historical conditions of consumption outlined above in mind, the types of spectacular consumption the *chashu* cast as negative terms

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[22] *The Literati's Ordinaries — A Proposal of Life from the Seventeenth Century* [小時代的日常 — 一個十七世紀的生活提案], eds. Huang Yong-tai and Yu Pei-jin (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 2020), 118.
[23] See Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
[24] Ibid., 208-9.
[25] *Empire of Style,* 52.

were submerged, and ultimately rendered invisible. The seventh chapter of this dissertation considers the historiographical absences and distortions introduced into the study of Qing silverwares as a result.

A Tang Aesthetics of Tea Vessels

Toward understanding the late-Ming approach to teapots, which was based on a deep engagement with prior tea treatises, an overview of how metal vessels were articulated in Tang (618-907 AD) texts is sufficient to raise the central issues. One of the primary vessels involved in tea preparation was the pot or ewer used to boil water, or to brew tea. *Chashu* writers ascribed a set of metaphorical characteristics to this vessel, analogizing it to the figure of the virtuous official by way of its affordances, or functional possibilities and characteristics. Some writers took a strong stance on links between the vessel's material, social status, moral characteristics, and the results of the brew. Others were more ambivalent. Factors such as the technical properties of different materials, technological innovation, and market choice exerted external pressures on consumption choice, though they were not directly addressed by the texts. Confirming that the tension between textual ideal and material practice noted above was not unique to the Ming, archeological evidence reveals a different narrative of consumption than the texts, demonstrating that they were selectively followed in practice.

Among the Chinese elite, the aesthetic practice of tea-drinking, or *chadao* 茶道 took many forms and emphases over time, but consistently centered on the tripartite aesthetic experience of tea through its color (*se* 色), fragrance (*xiang* 香), and taste (*wei* 味). Specialized tea utensils were a means of preparing as well as revealing these three characteristics, and thus became an integral part of social performances and expressions of taste. Tea first appeared in archeological and written records during the Han dynasty, when it was most likely imbibed as a medicine.[26] In the Tang and Song dynasties, it was used by Buddhist monks to maintain mental

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[26] From the perspective of Chinese mythology, tea was a cultural keystone since ancient times. Its discovery is credited to the god Shen Nong, patron of agriculture and herbalist. Shen Nong enlisted the mythological Yellow Emperor, inventor of writing, to record the names of all things to distinguish them from each other in the first materia medica. After his encounter with the plant, Shen Nong presented it to Cang Jie, who gave tea its first name. Owyoung, "Tea in China," 30-1. The earliest surviving physical evidence of the human use of tea in the world (discovered to date) were excavated from the tomb of the Jing emperor Liu Qi of the Western Han dynasty and his wife (188-141 BCE), located near the present-day city of Xi'an. A sample of "apparent plant leaves, gather into a dark brown brick shape" was recently identified as tea through biomolecular analysis, primarily through traces of theanine and caffeine. Lu, H. et al.,"Earliest tea as evidence for one branch of the Silk Road across the Tibetan Plateau," *Scientific Reports* 6 (2016): 2. The same study also identified "agglomerated plant residue" found in a ceramic vessel in a tomb located in the Gurgyam Cemetery, in the capital of the ancient Zhang Zhung Kingdom in Ngari district, Tibet, dated to the 2nd to 3rd century CE, as tea. In concluding that both samples were ancient tea, the authors of the study argued that tea cultivated in central China was both imported east, into Xi'an, by the first century BCE, and west, into Tibet by the second century CE. Lu et al, 4-5. It is unknown how tea was understood at the time, though scientists believe it was likely reserved for medicinal use. The earliest textual record of tea is attributed to the court poet Wang Bao 王褒, in an essay dating to 59 BCE during the reign of the emperor Xuan of the Western Han. The essay *Tongyue* 僮约 [Contract with a slave] has been described as a "humorous" account of Wang's experience in Sichuan buying a recalcitrant enslaved domestic servant from a friend's widow with whom he was staying, and

clarity when meditating for long periods.[27] Elite temple patrons spread the practice of tea-drinking to a learned leisure class and the court, where it was coupled with the refined appreciation of painting, incense, and flower arrangement. From a medicinal draught, tea was transformed into an art form, an idea which Lu Yü had no small part in spreading among his social circles of literary scholars and monks.[28] For scholars and the court, luxurious forms of consumption were the occasion for games, pleasure and relaxation. During formal ceremonies and parties, the aesthetic qualities of tea was a central focus of social activity, and became the inspiration for poetry, painting, calligraphy, and gifting.[29]

Tang and Song tea-drinking methods relied on a large array of different utensils to produce tea from a powder, which was ground from concentrated pieces, cakes, or balls; boiled; and whisked in a bowl. The labor-intensive method of its preparation was called *zhucha* 煮茶 in the *Chajing,* and *jiancha* 煎茶 in other Tang texts.[30] In the *Chajing*, Lu noted that tea has nine "challenges," or arenas of discernment, in its preparation. One of the nine foci was selecting the appropriate utensils used to prepare and taste the tea. "Selecting" tea utensils became a standardized category in subsequent *chashu.* It followed the rank treatise convention of listing by material indexed to social status. Thus, in the most elite realms of tea-drinking practice, each aspect of the process was required to meet a certain procedural criterion of taste. Each one of these areas was systemized, and subject to rules for best use depending on social position.

As described in the *Chajing,* tea consumption in its most ritualized setting required twenty-four utensils for roasting, grinding, boiling, drinking, storing tea, and for dispensing water and salt. The process centered around a wide-mouthed vessel for boiling water known as a

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drawing up a contract of duties. The account mentions that the servant had to prepare tea, specifying that in order to properly boil (*peng* 烹) tea, very clean utensils are necessary [(*pengcha jinju* 烹茶尽具); it also mentions buying tea from Wuyang, 武阳, present-day Pengshan 彭山 county in Meishan, Sichuan. Scholars note that the text reveals that tea was available not only to elites, but also was available in markets sold to commoners; also it shows that there were specialized tea vessels in the Han, as well as certain expectations for preparation under more ceremonial circumstances, or for visitors. See Owyoung, "Tea in China," 33.

[27] Han Sheng 韓生 and Wang Leqing 王樂慶, *Famenshi digong chaju yu tangren yincha yishu* 法門寺地宮茶具與唐人飲茶藝術 [Famen temple underground chamber tea utensils and the Tang art of tea] (Beijing: Changcheng chubanshe, 2004), 9.

[28] James A. Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015)*,* 98.

[29] Liao Baoxiu/Liao Pao Show 廖寶秀, *Ye keyi qingxin : chaqi, chashi, chahua* 也可以清心：茶器，茶事，茶畫 [Empty vessels, replenished minds: the culture, practice, and art of tea] (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 2002), 22.

[30] *Zhucha* and *jiancha* were accompanied by differing terminology for the kettle used for the boiling process; the Chajing uses the terms *chafu* 茶釜, *fu* 鍑, as well as *chaguo* 茶鍋 and *chacheng* 茶鐺. Based on a comparison of texts, Liao Baoxiu 廖宝秀 concludes that *zhucha* 煮茶 and *jiancha* 煎茶 were essentially the same process by two different names, as both *zhu* and *jian* mean "to boil." *Lidai chaqi yu chashi* 历代茶器与茶事 [The History of Tea Utensils and Tea Culture] (Beijing: Gugong chubanshe, 2017), 10.

fu 鍑 or *chacheng* 茶鐺. While the *chacheng* had a spout that could be used to dispense tea directly into the tea bowl, *fu* were open pots that required a spoon or ladle to transfer tea into the tea bowl for drinking (fig. 2.1).[31] Molded and baked tea cakes were roasted, ground into powder (*mocha* 末茶) and then sifted. Water was boiled in the wide-mouthed vessel then the tea powder was added, and mixed or whipped with a spoon or chopsticks, nurturing the tea, called *tang* 湯 (soup, or brew) until it bloomed. Finally, it was ladled or poured out and served in a bowl, at which time it could be tasted.[32] Functionally, the *fu* was the teapot's predecessor, as it was the container where the material transformation of the tea brew intersected with a demonstration of the tea master's skill and discernment.

As recorded in the *Chajing,* in the Tang period, precious-metal tea wares could serve as a mark of distinction for the wealthy. Tang silver tea utensils were thus known from literary sources before extant examples were discovered. Beyond the *chashu,* they were also mentioned in poetry and other written sources; in an early Tang poem by Cui Jue 崔珏 (c. 633?) about appreciating tea, he described a "silver *ping* [a type of pouring vessel used for tea] filled with water, grasped with both hands."[33] In 1987, the excavation of Famen Temple in Shaanxi province outside of Xi'an revealed the earliest, most complete extant set of tea utensils made of precious materials, including gold and silver, glass, and lacquer (fig. 2.2). The Famen Temple implements gave physical form to many of the objects mentioned in the *Chajing*, confirming their production in precious metals. As recorded by a stele, most of the utensils had been sponsored and donated to the monastery by the Tang emperor Xizong 僖宗 (r. 873-888).[34] Gold, gilded and partially-gilded silverwares in the over twenty objects made specifically for tea preparation include a charcoal furnace (*fenglu* 風爐) for roasting, a roller (*nian* 碾) for grinding the tea cake, a sifter (*luozi* 羅子) for separating the tea powder, a spoon (*ze* 则) for scooping the tea powder, and two baskets—one openwork (*loukong* 樓空) basket (*longzi* 龍子) and one a woven filigree (*sijietiao* 絲結條) basket—for storing the tea.[35] Most of the metalwares are ornamented with auspicious ornament, either as engraving or as relief. As few *chashu* were illustrated, extant objects with archeological provenances are invaluable for the functional affordances that they reveal, while *chashu* texts convey their roles within social, aesthetic and moral systems. They also confirm that gold and silverware tea utensils were produced and consumed in practice.

[31] Ibid., 10.
[32] Ibid., 11.
[33] "銀瓶貯泉水一掬." Cui, "Meiren changcha xing" 美人嘗茶行, quoted in Han and Wang, 103.
[34] Famen Temple is a Buddhist complex in Shaanxi province. A pagoda was built to enshrine a finger bone relic of Shakyamuni presented by King Ashoka to the site in 272 B.C. In the Sui and Tang dynasties, the temple received imperial patronage. An underground palace containing relics, and treasure gifted by emperors, was built and sealed until it was excavated in 1987. For more, see Eugene Wang, *Secrets of the Fallen Pagoda: the Famen Temple and Tang Court Culture* (Singapore: Asian Civilisations Museum, 2014).
[35] Han and Wang, 46-50.

Tang Vessel-Metaphor: Cultivating the Moral Body through the Fu

In his section dedicated to selecting utensils, Lu devoted close attention to the *fu,* the wide-mouthed pot where the tea powder was boiled in water and transformed from its constitutive elements into a brewed *tang*. Lu first described the *fu* as a vessel cast out of iron, before giving a metaphorical reading of the forms of the vessel. In his choice of terms to describe parts of the vessel, Lu evoked characteristic metaphors of containment rooted in understandings of corporeal embodiment:

> Its ears (*er* 耳, or handles) are square and upright, upright like a just and accurate law; the edge of its opening is broad and wide, like striving for the long-range purpose (of achieving self-cultivation), and its belly (*qi* 臍) is long, evoking maintaining the equilibrium of the way.[36]

While Liao Baoxiu 廖宝秀 has written that Lu used the attributes of the vessel to link the preparation of tea with Confucian morality, I argue that more precisely, as the pot's physical attributes were described using terms that analogized the body, the metaphor was extended to how an ideal Daoist-Confucian temperament was duly cultivated through the body. [37] Indeed, in Daoist thought, which was prevalent during the Tang as the official court religion and closely linked to tea consumption, one of the central tenets is *wuwei* 無為. It encompasses the virtues of restraint, the avoidance of aggression, and the refusal to pursue status or authority, electing instead to seek alignment with the Dao through fasting, meditation, and physical health.[38] In this set of passages, Lu effectively indexed the ideal set of official virtues to the body of the *fu,* within both the social and corporeal realms.

The width of the belly and the bottom of the pot, where the elements of fire, water, and tea combined and were transformed, was the site invested with the most metaphorical import. As the text is about boiling tea as a moral practice, when pursued according to its just methods, it is moreover a physically transformative practice. Lu described how this set of properties assisted in the ideal preparation of tea through the opportunity for self-regulation afforded by boiling water in the wide-bodied pot:

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[36] "方其耳以正令也，廣其緣以務遠也，長其臍以守中也." *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng*, 7. Liao Baoxiu interprets this passage to analogize the tea ritual, while Zhu and Shen see it as possibly using metaphorical language to more so discuss the benefits of the fu's attributes in boiling water. See ibid., 21n120, 21n121.

[37] Relatedly, cultural anthropologists have argued that the container in the broadest sense of the term can be viewed as a metaphorical analogue to the human body. Through functional components such as orifices and surfaces, they convey related ideas about how and what to mediate between inside and outside. Carl Knappett, Lambros Malafouris, Peter Tomkins, "Ceramics (as containers)," in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies,* ed. Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 612. Containers also emphasize passages and transformations. Transmitting the boundary of the opening, Jean-Pierre Warnier has written, "entails the transformation of what passes through…things will be mixed, cooked, digested, assimilated, and so on, or they will be expelled, transformed into rubbish, or combined with other materials in other containers." Jean-Pierre Warnier, "Inside and Outside: Surfaces and Containers," in *Handbook of Material Culture,* ed. Chris Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Mike Rowlands and Patricia Spyer (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 2006/2013), 193-4.

[38] Owyoung, "Tea in China," 33.

> The length of the width and the center of the container is suitable for maintaining a moderate boiling point, it won't increase the level of boiling too high, when it is boiling moderately, the tea froth will develop and open, and in that way the flavor of the tea is clear, honest, and rich.[39]

Put this way, the affordances of the pot allow for the release of the best qualities of the tea powder. Moreover, they operate according to the same principle as a person seeking to perfect themselves morally by maintaining equilibrium and balance within the natural social order. Breaching the limits of one's social position was thus a chief offense. The analogy of the pot described an ideal countenance in maintaining an inner balance, or a moderate boiling point when met with external challenges—such as the direct heat of a flame. Lu's metaphorical description of the *fu* as a container that is also an exemplar of resilience provides a basis from which later analogous vessels—such as the teapot or *chahu*, the "tea vase" or *chaping* 茶瓶, and "tea ewer" or *chazhu* 茶注—were given special status among the assemblage of tea utensils.

The Fu's *Ambivalent Materiality: Generated in the Tang, Extended in the Ming*

While he began his text by discussing an iron *fu*, Lu considered the implications of alternative materials used to produce it:

> In Hongzhou [ancient name for Nanchang, Jiangxi] they use ceramic to make the *fu*, in Lanzhou [referring to the area of northeastern Shandong province][40] they use stone to make it; porcelain and stone both make very elegant (ya 雅) utensils, but the nature of the materials is not resilient, and thus they do not last a long time. One can also use silver to make a *fu*, with the best being a very pure silver, but it implies excessive luxury. While (with ceramics and stone) refined (ya 雅) is elegant (ya 雅), and silver is clean and spotless, but in terms of what one uses commonly and for a long time, in the end one will always come back to using silver.[41]

In this oft-paraphrased passage typically used to refer to the excessive luxury of silver, Lu acknowledged the functionality and desirability of precious-metal tea utensils as luxuries. He also noted their functional and metaphorical valences of purity, hygiene and resilience. As suggested by the previous passage discussed, the last quality would appear necessary in the cultivation of a moral body buffeted by outside forces. When the text appears in different compilations, and cited in different subsequent texts, however, the final "silver" (*yin* 銀) is replaced with "iron" (*tie* 鐵), to the effect that what one comes back to ultimately is the iron *fu*. Zhu Zizhen and Shen Dongmei, the editors of the modern anthology *Zhongguo gudai chashu jucheng* elected to use *yin* in their version, but noted other editions in which *tie* was used.[42] One possible explanation for the slippage between silver and iron could be the degree to which the editor of a particular compilation that included Lu Yü's text wanted to emphasize the morality of using certain materials over others for his audience, which was a changing criteria over time.

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[39] "臍長則沸中，沸中則末易揚，末易揚則其味淳也." *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng,* 7.

[40] Ibid., 21n123, 124.

[41] "洪州以瓷為之，萊州以石為之，瓷與石皆雅器也，性非堅實，難可持久。用銀為之，至潔，但涉於侈麗。雅則雅矣，潔亦潔矣，若用之恆，而卒歸於銀/鐵也." Ibid., 7.

[42] Ibid., 47n68. I am also indebted to their interpretation of the last sentence, see Ibid., 21n125. Also see Liao, 68 for interpretation.

By the late-Ming period in which the 1612 *Chashu* anthology was compiled, the moral import of choosing iron over silver for a tea vessel was a certainty in a context of conspicuous consumption--even though by then the *fu* was outdated, and no longer a specialized vessel type used for tea preparation. Yet the vessel, like the *Chajing* more generally, was understood as an authoritative reference for practitioners of the *chadao*. Thus it was constantly evoked and cited by practitioners. The passage often appeared in Ming texts that referenced Lu. For example, in the *Chalu* 茶錄 by Zhang Yuan 張源 (c.1595), Zhang cited Lu to make an argument about the use of silver tea vessels by Ming scholars:

> Concerning using a silver gourd [shaped vessel] to boil tea, Lu Yü wrote that it was too extravagant. But using ceramics for that purpose, they don't last for very long. In the end you will return back to silver. In my humble opinion, silver is suitable for use in mansions, but as for mountain studios or thatched cottages, only tin/pewter gourds should be used, as they will not affect the smell, color, and taste of tea. But avoid copper and iron.[43]

The Lu passage could thus be used to distinguish the idealized late Ming tea connoisseur—the scholarly recluse in their thatched hut—from both the elites and their crass social emulators.

Another literatus in dialogue with Lu at the end of the Ming, Wen Long 聞龍 (1551-1631) wrote his *Chajian* 茶箋, a series of notes on tea-drinking, the year before he died. After a section describing the quality of the water of a local river and its benefits for tea-brewing, he considered the liabilities of a silver kettle:

> For recluses living in the mountain, a silver water pot (*shuidiao* 水銚) is fashionable but very difficult to bring along, let alone an open-mouthed iron pot (*fu* 鍑). If you use the silver pot for a long time, in the end you will return to iron.[44]

Silver is difficult to bring along because it might signal excessive luxury to one's companions, but according to Zhang above, iron is also not ideal because of how it tempers the taste of tea.

The vacillation between iron and silver in different editions of the *Chajing* raises a fundamental question that emerges though a careful reading of Lu's text, and the subsequent responses to it. Why even give his readership the option of using a silver *fu*? An iron *fu* was functionally adequate from the standpoints of preparation and taste, just as it metaphorically reflected the values of simplicity and morality that tea-drinking was meant to achieve. Moreover, in his description of the object's production in iron, Lu specified its material connections to the land and agriculture, which he did not do for any other media. In the beginning of his description of the vessel, Lu wrote that the crude iron (*shengtie* 生鐵) used to make the pot was the same iron used to make plow blades. After the plow blade was used to the point where it was dull and could no longer be used for that purpose, the metal was smelted and then re-cast to make the *fu* for tea preparation.[45] The agricultural laborer was another type of Confucian ideal, and so references to instruments used to till the earth solidified the idealized moral dimensions of the vessel.

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[43] "桑苧翁（陸羽）煮茶用銀瓢，謂過於奢侈。後用瓷器，又不能持久，卒歸於銀。愚意銀者宜貯朱樓華屋，若山齋茅舍，惟用錫瓢，亦無損於香、色、味也。但銅鐵忌之." Ibid., 247.

[44] "山林隱逸，水銚用銀尚不易得，何況鍑乎。若用之恆，而卒歸於鐵也." Ibid., 411.

[45] Ibid., 7; 21n117.

The iron *fu's* production process also evoked the earth. Lu specified that the inside and outside textures of the pot bore the indexical imprint of the natural materials of dirt and sand, which were traces of the casting process. Not only did they again reference the earth, but their texture doubly operated as functional affordances of the vessel. The interior of the *fu* was cast with an earthen mold, which gave it a smooth texture so it was easy for wiping clean. The outside was cast with a sand mold, leaving it the abrasive texture of sand so it can absorb and withstand the heat of the flame.[46] For Lu, the value of the iron pot could exceed the elegance of ceramic and stone, and the purity of silver, because of its additional allusions to agricultural work. Highly-refined silver, on the other hand, carried the valence of prestige, as well as excess, and thus was best confined to the upper social ranks.

All the while promoting the use of lowly but powerful iron, Lu's text demonstrates the effect of the regulatory mechanisms of sumptuary laws, as well as their frequent transgression. There was evidently an element of choice in selecting between an iron or silver *fu.* While Lu saw the iron *fu* as an ideal vessel of transformation due to the allusions of its material properties, its means of production, and its functionality, the very presence of silver *fu* in his text indicates a disparity between the ideal and the actual, in terms of what types of vessels some if not most elites preferred to use. The tension between market availability of exquisite precious metalwares and their ability to represent status; the controlling discourses of morality, government, and hierarchical social ranks; and the connection of tea consumption to the aesthetics of scholarly refinement is consistently at play in texts on tea utensils.[47]

If Lu Yü's text was consistently referenced by Ming writers, so were other *chashu* that appeared later in the Tang period. One text called *Assessing Sixteen Kinds of Boiling Water* (*Shiliu tangpin* 十六湯品) by Su Yi 蘇廙 was repeatedly anthologized, and included in the 1612 *Chashu* anthology.[48] James A. Benn has written that the frequent anthologizing of *Sixteen Kinds* demonstrates that readers were interested in texts that further expanded upon the aesthetic qualities of tea as first outlined by Lu Yü.[49] In comparison to Lu, Su was much more prescriptive about the equivalence between different types of materials and social rank. While other Tang writers discussed different types of water based on their source, a recurrent theme throughout the *chashu* literature, *Sixteen Kinds* examined how water was transformed by facets of its preparation. Su attributed moral, spiritual, and hierarchical ranking to the quality of the liquid produced, depending on its reaction to heat and other conditions, including in one section, the material of the vessel used for boiling and brewing:[50]

> 7. "Wealth and status" water. Only the wealthy and high-ranked can possess gold and silver tea wares. Therefore, commoners cannot make such an ascension within the industry of tea. Like *qin* (musical instruments) must be made with Tung wood, and ink sticks must be made by animal glue, tea wares must be made by gold and silver.

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[46] Liao, 68. *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng*, 7; 21n118.

[47] Liao notes that the form of the *fu* was initially derived from vessels made in copper. Lu avoids any mention of copper as an option, even though it would seemingly resolve some of the issues of the relative endurance of metals for making the utensil, while avoiding the charge of "excessive luxury" associated with silver. Perhaps the close connection between copper and money also compromised the making of tea utensils in the medium. See Liao, 68.

[48] It was also titled *Tangpin* 湯品 [Assessing Boiling Water].

[49] *Tea in China,* 115.

[50] *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng*, 165; Benn, 155.

> 8. “Excellent jade” water. Jades and hardstones are the condensed excellence of heaven and earth given form. Carve it into utensils, and its excellence is preserved. There is no water boiled in stone that is not good.
> 9. “Surpassing” water. Gold and silver vessels are high in quality but expensive, bronze and iron utensils are cheap and not in good quality, and so ceramics have their merits. It is even more suitable for the taste of the secluded hermit. How could the mean [central term] of the category of *ping* — that is, ceramics — not surpass all others? But don’t discuss this with the corrupt officials and princes, who brag of their dazzling treasures.
> 10. “Tangled mouth” water. As for base people without taste, when it comes to their utensils for boiling water, as they cannot tell the difference between good and bad, how could they select anything but copper, iron, lead, or pewter, which heat only for the purpose of boiling? Although it is boiled water, the taste is rancid, bitter, and astringent, and if you drink it for a long time, a noxious air will collect around the mouth and you can’t get rid of it.
> 11. “Reduced quality” water. As for unglazed low-fired ceramic, water will seep through and be tainted by the soil. Even imperial tribute tea will lose its quality. It is commonly said, “Using an earthenware *chaping* is like trying to ride a horse with a broken foot to ascend heights”…

Su thus advocated a type of luxury achieved through restraint as well as the maintenance of one’s social position, which was viewed as inherent and unchanging. The strictly hierarchical ranking of *Sixteen Kinds* contrasted with the material ambivalence of the *Chajing.* “Surpassing water” is the category that pertained to the scholar, for whom fine-quality ceramics were offered as the material for vessels that resolved the two extremes of precious metals and low-fired ceramics or base metals like iron. While scholar-officials are placed at a middling social rank, they are nonetheless able to eclipse all other ranks in the perfect mean of their discerning taste. Lu and Su thus offered two different models for bodily and moral transformation, as accessed metaphorically through the container used to boil water for tea: one based in self-cultivation, the other premised on an unalterable physical makeup based on social status. Both texts reveal the object systems in place in the period. While certain types of wares were more appropriate than others, the texts suggest that consumer choice was an operative factor, albeit constricted by limits of morality and the social propriety of one’s position.

Ming Reforms

By the mid-Ming, following the reforms of the Hongwu emperor, techniques for tea brewing shifted from whisking powder to brewing loose tea leaves. Even as the process of brewing tea changed, along with the arrangement of vessels used, Ming *chashu* writers viewed precious metal tea utensils as the ideal vessel type. The *Chapu* 茶譜 (Treatise on Tea, 1541) by Qian Chunnian 錢椿年 (active ca. 1530-1535) and Gu Yuanqing 顧元慶 (1487–1565), demonstrated a markedly different approach to tea preparation from the Tang period. A streamlined process outlined four necessary considerations for preparing the tea (selecting the water, washing the tea leaves, boiling the tea, and selecting the utensils), and three for serving the tea (washing the vessels, heating the bowl, and selecting the accompaniments such as fruit or milk).[51] The authors followed an earlier model, set by Zhu Qian 朱權 who wrote the first Ming text on tea, in describing tea vessels in terms of size, recommending a small *ping* 瓶 as the best for the boiling process. It was also viewed as beneficial for accuracy of pouring. They added that if the *ping* is too large, if you sip and store and stop for a long time, then the flavor will either

[51] *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng,* 187-8.

become too strong or else not be good.[52] As for the materials of the *ping* or the pot (*diao* 銚*),* silver and pewter are the best, and ceramic and stone are second. In their recommendations for washing utensils, they noted that it is necessary because otherwise it is common for *ping, zhan*, and the tea spoon to rust, which would damage the taste of the tea.[53] As ceramics do not rust, it appears that Qian and Gu imagined their ideal readers using metal tea utensils.

Into the late sixteenth century, *chashu* shifted from an embodied metaphysics of tea as expressed through vessels, to tea-drinking as primarily an expression of taste. Texts on tea from the period were heavily citational, as they selectively drew on the authority of Tang and Song (960-1279) texts, while also indicating period changes in use and constraints on fashion. The negotiation of materials through rank treatises was still at issue. In the last decades of the sixteenth century, the central tension around discussions of tea wares in *chashu* continually related the prohibited desirability of gold and silver tea wares, and their possible solution in the form of alternatives in different media. For the first time, they included *sha* or sand, indicating the appearance of Yixing stonewares. In Gao Jian's *Chajian* 茶笺 (1591), Yixing *zisha* wares are included among the materials used for the vessel forms to boil and pour water, along with the standard retinue of silver, porcelain and pewter:

> *Chadiao*, *chaping*: porcelain 磁 *ci* or sand *sha* are the best, copper and pewter are second.
>
> Pouring tea using a porcelain *hu* (磁壺注茶*),* or using a sand *diao* for boiling water (砂銚煮水) is for the elite. In the *Qingyilu* it is written, "As for 'Wealth and status' boiled water, using silver pots to boil water, that is excellent, using copper pots to boil water, and tin teapots to pour tea is for the rest."[54]

Gao included an excerpt from *Sixteen Kinds,* demonstrating the continued import of the citational authority of Tang-period texts. *Sixteen Kinds* had little to offer in terms of evaluating *zisha* wares, and even porcelain, but served to evoke the types of differentiation effected through ranking vessels. However, none of the Ming manuals analogized the scholar-official's body and morality with the transformative vessel of the *fu, ping*, or *chahu*. As many tea connoisseurs read Tang-Song texts, and Ming writers continued to cite them, such dimensions were not lost, but rather became a tacit component of the exchange value of objects in different materials. In other words, the boiling and pouring vessel was still important among the retinue of tea utensils, but Daoist and Confucian metaphorical resonances with containers were no longer overtly discussed. Tea vessels were no longer analogized as physically and morally transformative.

The pattern in which the moral and spiritual valences were detached from objects can be further traced through late sixteenth-century manuals of taste where tea wares are discussed. Around 1590, Tu Long 屠隆 (1542-1605) of the coastal city of Ningbo, Zhejiang, compiled his

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[52] "凡瓶要小者易候汤，又点茶注汤有应。若瓶大。啜存停久, 味过则不佳矣。茶铫、茶瓶，银锡为上，瓷石次之." Ibid., 187.

[53] Ibid., 187.

[54] "四擇品凡瓶要小者，易候湯，又點茶注湯相應。若瓶大啜存停久，味過則不佳矣。茶銚、茶瓶，磁砂爲上，銅錫次之。磁壺注茶，砂銚煮水爲上。《清異錄》雲："富貴湯，當以銀銚煮湯，佳甚，銅銚煮水，錫壺注茶次之." Ibid., 239. This text does not appear in the 1612 *Chashu* anthology.

manual of scholarly taste, *Kaopan Yushi* 考槃余事 [Desultory Remarks on Furnishing the Abode of the Retired Scholar] which included a section on tea variously published as *Chashuo* 茶說 and *Chajian* 茶笺.[55] Tu drew extensively on the Tang text *Sixteen Kinds,* maintaining ancient material hierarchies. In terms of the material used for the vessel, Tu makes use of the hierarchy laid out by Su; in fact most of Tu's instructions on *ping* are paraphrased from Su. Tu wrote that gold and silver *chaping* are the best, but stressed that according to one's social status, it is no longer possible to continue to use the highest luxury goods. Therefore, ceramic and stone wares are desirable. Next, writing that ceramic wares are beautiful and elegant, as they do not affect the tea's essential qualities, he noted that they are the most suitable for the consumption of recluses and retired scholars. Tu continued to paraphrase *Sixteen Kinds,* ending with base metals previously associated with the use of the lowest classes, but now phrased in such a way as to dictate the selection of utensils by his readership:

> As for other metalwares like copper, iron, lead, and pewter, they will cause a bad smell or make the water bitter. Don't use glazed earthenware, or the water will seep through and be tainted by the clay; if you use it to boil water and wait too long to drink it, an earthy smell will gather around the mouth and you won't be able to dispel it easily.[56]

Tu notably does not mention a specialized vessel called a teapot, or *chahu,* but he also does not mention *zisha* wares. He rather uses the Song vessels terms *ping* 瓶 and *zhan* 盞*,* while also acknowledging that today's method of brewing tea (*zhucha* 烹茶, or steeping dried tea leaves in water) is not the same as the one used by the Tang-Song ancients. While not accounting for period innovation, Tu nonetheless indicated a period shift in his reworking of *Sixteen Kinds*: the transformative capacity attributed to vessels in different capacities by Lu and Su is replaced by relative relationships between objects.

A Late-Ming Resolution: Inventing Yixing Teapots

A relatively new category of luxury product at the turn of the seventeenth century, Yixing tea wares were produced out of robust, craftsman-scholar collaborations in the Yangzi river delta region.[57] The region was associated with tea since the Tang period, as it was known for producing high-quality tribute teas and high-profile tea connoisseurs. Collectors and practitioners valued Yixing wares for their sculptural, handmade qualities, the refined composition of their clay bodies and their resultant hues and textures, their modest size, their technical improvements as functional vessels, and their branding by well-regarded craftsmen. The most desirable objects were signed or inscribed by known craftsmen, with Shi Dabin the most well-known in the early seventeenth century. In literati accounts, the vessels were often called "sand" vessels, or *sha* 砂.

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[55] Ibid., 232.

[56] "銅鐵鉛錫，腥苦且澀，無油瓦瓶，滲水而有 土氣。用以煉水。飲之逾時惡氣纏口而不得去." Ibid., 235.

[57] Yuanxin Jiang, "More than just a Drink: Tea Consumption, Material Culture, and 'Sensory Turn' in Early Modern China (1550-1700)," (PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2019), 172-226. Ceramics were produced in the ancient pottery towns of Ding and Shu at Yixing for centuries, but it was not until the late Yuan (1279-1368) to mid-Ming periods that the trade started specializing in tea wares. K.S. Lo, *The Stonewares of Yixing: From the Ming Period to the Present Day* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press and Sotheby's Publications, 1986), 13-15.

They were distinguished from other ceramics by the gritty consistency of their clay body, which upon firing, yielded hard yet porous surfaces with a sandy texture. As suggested by Zhou's passage in the epigraph, unlike art and aesthetic practices in which value was placed on the creative emulation of ancient model practitioners, Yixing wares were notable for the progressive narrative of improvement that accompanied their development.[58] In this case, Zhou's term "surpassing" must be viewed as both technological advancement as well as a moral improvement. Yet despite the many reasons that Yixing teapots eclipsed precious metal teapots as both works of art and functional utensils, silver nonetheless remained a spectral presence in critical discussions of the objects. As we have seen, gold and silver implements were traditionally perched at the top of the hierarchy of utensils, but when they were displaced, they did not vanish; rather, I argue that Yixing wares were not just artistic and technical achievements of the late Ming, but moreover, were produced discursively as metaphorical substitutes for desirable, yet compromised silver tea vessels used to boil, if not brew, tea.

Absent in the discussion to date on the elevation of Yixing teapots into both works of art and desirable commodities is how their material properties informed how they were valued—even though medium and manufacture were the primary ways they were assessed in period critical literature. I argue in this chapter that the emergence of the gritty-sand clay bodies effectively neutralized silver's negative valences, as they evoked both the shine and glitter of metals as well as the texture of earth. Tracking the status of types of heating and brewing vessels in the tea literature over centuries reveals that earth and metal were two intertwined yet oppositional terms, which found their ideal image in the advent of viable Yixing wares.[59]

In the last decade of the sixteenth century, tea connoisseurs were not unanimous in their embrace of Yixing wares. Technical issues arose from faults introduced into the consistency of the clay body, or its improper firing. The most extensive discussion from the 1590s of the use of Yixing wares for preparing tea appears in the *Chashu* 茶疏 [Comments on Tea], a text compiled

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[58] Foundational modern scholarship on Yixing wares include Li Jingkang and Zhang Hong, *Yangxian shahu tukao* [Illustrated Study of Sand Clay Teapots from Yangxian] (Hong Kong, 1937), Terese Tse Bartholomew, *I-Hsing Ware* (New York: China Institute in America, 1977), K.S. Lo, *The Art of the Yixing Potter: the K.S. Lo Collection, Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware* (Hong Kong: Urban Council Hong Kong, 1990), Lo, *The Stonewares of Yixing,* 1986, and Patrice Valfré, *Yixing: De Théières pour l'Europe* (Poligny, France: Exotic Line, 2000). For more recent scholarship, see articles by Wang Liang-chung 王亮鈞, such as "*Riben chutu de zishaqi yi xiangguan wenti*" 日本出土的紫砂器及相關問題 [Yixing ware excavated in Japan and its related issues], *Gugong xueshu likan* 35:4 (2018): 121-191; and the volume Huang Jianliang 黃健亮 and Huang Yijia 黄怡嘉, eds, *Jingxi zhuni: Ming Qing Yixing zhunihu yanjiu* 荊溪朱泥：明清宜興朱泥壺研究 [The study of Yixing "purple mud" teapots of the Ming and Qing dynasties], (Taipei: Yingji Tangren gongyi chubanshe, 2010). Yuanxin Jiang provides an invaluable cultural history of the Yixing industry in "More than just a Drink."

[59] Paul Bowman has written of the filmic emergence of Bruce Lee as "what [Jacques] Rancière calls the partition of the perceptible — in terms, that is, of a redistribution of perceptions, values, possibilities, and ways and modes of living and doing and being," to which he productively attached Alain Badiou's theorization of the "event" as producing subjects, as the viewer's experience of seeing Lee in a martial arts film is often narrated as a personal *change*. While the case of Yixing is a premodern rather than postmodern "media" event, the ways in which the Yixing teapot both embodied and resolved prior literary tensions can be viewed as analogous. See Bowman, *Beyond Bruce Lee: Chasing the Dragon Through Film, Philosophy, and Popular Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2013), 32-33.

by scholar Xu Cishu 許次紓 first published in 1597. Xu retained that silver teapots were the best for tea-drinking practice, compared to teapots of tin, porcelain, and "sand." He detailed several ways in which the technical issues surrounding the production of *zisha* pots could negatively impact the experience of tea-drinking. While the following passage is lengthy, it is instructive as to how Xu made distinctions between pots through perceived manufacturing faults:

> As for teapots (*chazhu* 茶注), the best are impervious to the effects of bad flavor and smell, thus silver is the best, and tin is the second best. The effectiveness of the tin wares on the market is great and does not diminish, but be careful that their alloy has not been mixed with black lead. Even if it holds fresh water, the alloy will affect the taste. Glazed ceramic teapots are ranked next, but they have to be types from the Chai, Ru, Xuan, Cheng kilns. If you use them after boiling water, they are best. But if you suddenly pour boiling water inside, these old ceramic wares will easily crack, which is a pity. The recent wares produced at Raozhou [Jingdezhen] cannot be used. These days, Shi Dabin produces teapots modeled after old ones made by Gong Chun. They are greatly treasured by contemporary people. They are constructed with coarse sand, because there is no soil-vapor (bad earth smell) in this type of clay mixture. They are made by hand, and their craftsmanship is extremely refined. But when they are fired, the power of the fire must reach a sufficient strength, and only then can you remove it from the kiln. If after the kiln the vessel fails to pass the standard, it will be smashed into many pieces, which multiplies the value of the surviving ones. As for the case in which the vessel is fired to an insufficient level, if you put water in a partially-unfired vessel, soil-vapor will fill your nose and thus it is unfit for use. Comparing such vessels to tin wares, the utility (in their imperviousness to bad effects of flavor and smell) is reduced by thirty percent. The quality of *zisha* as a material is to allow for a bit of permeability, so there is no need for glaze, and it does not quickly emit and lose the tea fragrance. But it will easily grow cold and easily spoil, and so it can only provide aesthetic amusement. Finally, regarding the ones made of excessively fine sand — also handmade individually by potters other than Shi Dabin — the quality is bad and the production is poor, and moreover they contain soil-vapor, which will damage the taste extremely. DO NOT USE.[60]

Xu cautioned against poor quality, improper firing and even the damaging effects of "soil vapor" (*tuqi* 土氣) afflicting pots of finer clay body composition. Yixing wares are described as fashionable, aesthetic objects of appreciation made individually by talented craftsmen such as Shi Dabin, but Xu was concerned with the varying quality of their production. The passage suggested that for some critics, the clay mixture and its transformation through firing was just as important to the final product—if not more so—than the act of sculpting the clay.

In the first decades of the seventeenth century, critics and connoisseurs increasingly promoted Yixing wares in *chashu* and manuals of taste. In 1609, *Chajie* 茶解 by Meng Lin 夢麐

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[60] "茶注以不受他氣者為良，故首銀次錫。上品真錫，力大不減，慎勿雜以黑鉛。雖可清水，卻能奪味。其次內外有油瓷壺亦可，必如柴、汝、宣、成之類，然後為佳。然滾水驟澆，舊瓷易裂，可惜也。近日饒州所造，極不堪用。往時龔春茶壺，近日時彬所制，大為時人寶惜。蓋皆以粗砂制之，正取砂無土氣耳。隨手造作，頗極精工，顧燒時必須火力極足，方可出窯。然火候少過，壺又多碎壞者，以是益加貴重。火力不到者，如以生砂注水，土氣滿鼻，不中用也。較之錫器，尚減三分。砂性微滲，又不用油，香不竄發，易冷易餿，僅堪供玩耳。其餘細砂，及造自他匠手者，質惡制劣，尤有土氣，絕能敗味，勿用勿用." *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng*, 261-2.

noted with regard to selecting a pouring vessel for tea (*zhu* 注): "Shi Dabin's handmade coarse sand fired containers are ingenious, after that are pewter wares."[61] The reputation of the wares had eclipsed that even of the well-regarded ceramic kilns with Song pedigrees, and Meng did not even mention gold and silver. By the 1620s, when Wen Zhenheng 文震亨 was compiling his treatise on taste, *Zhangwu zhi* 張物志 [Treatise on Superfluous Things], gold and silver tea utensils had decidedly lost favor altogether; they were not even viewed as covertly desirable. In his section on teapots (*chahu* 茶壺) he explained that the best pots are the ones of sand, as the lid will not suppress the fragrance, nor will it excessively over-cook the vitality of the tea. Next, he described several types of garish sand teapots, like Xu acknowledging a range in quality of production by the Yixing potters. Concerning gold and silver pots, "none are considered tasteful."[62] While earlier texts exhibited a careful ambivalence about the propriety of consuming luxurious as opposed to more rustic objects, Wen categorically claimed that gold and silver teapots could not be used when practicing a refined style of consumption. Yixing wares had effectively become their substitutes, surpassing them in both material and functionality.

Yuanxin Jiang has argued that the wares became the focus of connoisseurs because potters collaborated with literati patrons to carve inscriptions and poetry into their surfaces.[63] Yet the surface walls of most late Ming Yixing teapots, such as a spherical example by the renowned maker Shi Dabin 時大彬, excavated from a site dated 1632 in Shanxi province, were unmarked; instead, the pot is notable for its smooth sculptural forms, rich earthy tones, and metallic sheen (fig. 2.3). A red pot dated by an inscription on its base to 1627 is ornamented with a low relief prunus ornament on its frontal surface and dedicated to the studio of its Chinese patron by the maker Hui Mengchen (fig. 2.4). Both of these teapots were valued by their elite Chinese owners for the material properties expressed through the types of clay mined at the two mountains of Huanglongshan and Zhaoshuangshan.[64] Connoisseurs connected the smooth forms and surfaces of late Ming Yixing stoneware teapots with metals such as fine bronzes, as both expressed the quality of *run* 潤, a lustrous, soft and dewy smoothness that mimicked skin.[65] Yixing wares were not just surfaces, but also functional objects formed of a special ceramic medium.

The clay used to produce Yixing wares was sourced from local pits. In textual accounts, it emerged as the key component of how the objects' aesthetic properties and liabilities were evaluated. Three main clays were used, which produced rich, deep tones and sandy textures after firing: *zisha* 紫砂 (purple), *benshanlü* 本山綠 (light-brown), and *zhusha* 硃砂 (vermilion). The

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[61] "以時大彬手制粗沙燒缸色者為妙，其次錫." Ibid., 319.

[62] "… 金銀俱不入品." *Zhangwu zhi* 張物志 [Treatise on Superfluous Things], ann. Li Ruihao 李瑞豪, (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju), *juan* 12. China E-Book Hub.

[63] Jiang further attributed the success of the industry to the patronage and institutionalization of the Wu 吳 family and other Jiangnan elites, and credited Shi with transforming the surfaces of stonewares into a site of refined exchange between makers and scholars through literary inscriptions. "More than just a Drink," 202-6.

[64] Lo, *The Stonewares of Yixing,* 19.

[65] Jonathan Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 109-13.

clays could be mixed, or combined with other ingredients, to create an array of colors and effects.[66] As the vessels achieved a high level of production in the first decades of the seventeenth century, the physical resemblances and metaphorical connections with metals, including silver, cemented their place as a viable substitute for desirable and refined metalwares.

In offering both a history and mythology in order to promote Yixing wares, Zhou Gaoqi emphasized the special properties of the clay ores mined from the Huanglong and Zhaozhuang mountains in Jiangsu province, and their suitability for releasing tea's sensory and aesthetic potential.[67]

> How to select the type of clay, or choose its manufacture? It is the case that using the earth of this mountain, it allows the expression of the true color, fragrance, and taste of tea.[68]

Zisha clay is a mixture of kaolin, quartz, and mica, with a high iron oxide content. The properties of its composite minerals allow it to be fired at a high temperature (1100-1200 degrees Celsius) rendering it into a hard stoneware body that retained a small degree of porosity due to the kaolin. The chemical structure of fired *zisha* yields aggregates surrounded by layers of open and closed pores, which allows for both tensile strength and a "breathing" quality in the fired clay body.[69] While the metaphorical connections between tea containers and the body were less explicit in late-Ming *chashu* texts, as mentioned above, scholars have noted that period connoisseurs appreciated the *run* or unctuous, skin-like quality of the surface of Yixing teapots. Yet the qualities of the surface were produced not only through the sculpted forms of the vessel, but also the material consistency of its medium. As a result, the body's "permeability" was not limited to its orifices. Precious metal tea wares, by comparison, were functionally beneficial for exactly the opposite reason—they presented clean, hygienic surfaces that if kept clean, were impervious to adulteration such a rust or "soil vapor."

Zhou's account of the industry discussed the foundational steps of production in terms of how the clay ores were prepared and their firing. *Zisha* clays are first mined either in the form of rocks or soft muds, depending on the layer from which they are found. Different strata yielded different grades of clay, which were used to make a range of aesthetic and utilitarian objects, from luxurious teapots to storage jars.[70] Zhou described the privileged access of artisans to the clay pits, and their secret techniques for mixing and aging the clay mixture, as well as technical concerns with firing:

> As for the craftsmen making the *hu*, each has a square of land outside the pit entrance, where they obtain earth of different colors, sift and pound, mix until complete, then cover the storage cellar. This process is called "to nurse earth." In selecting, using, and mixing, each has their own doctrine. The latter is secret and is not shared amongst themselves, and the pot is made in secret following it. Then the artisan waits until it is very dry, and then five or six of them are stored in an earthen jar, which is sealed so there is no crack…. When it is fired, it might be left in too long,

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[66] Lo, *The Stonewares of Yixing,* 19.

[67] Zhou wrote his *Yangxi minghu xi* around 1640, after he was invited to visit the Hall of Zhu'e by a member of the Wu family. The family had built the hall in 1520 as a center for tea-tasting as well as a museum of the family's tea wares. Jiang, 200.

[68] "陶曷取諸，取諸其制，以本山土砂能發真茶之色香味…" *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng,* 462.

[69] Lo, *The Stonewares of Yixing,* 20.

[70] Ibid.*,* 19-20.

> and in which case it is not pleasing to the eye, but if it is not in there long enough it is too immature and will cause the smell of earth and sand to emanate from the clay.[71]

Zhou indicated the proprietary aspects of how the clay mixture was prepared, shaped, hardened, and fired. The success of the process was dependent on the artisans' knowledge of the sandy clay, as well as their unique recipes in combining different materials. The factor of time brought to earth was also critical, as it gradually transformed the clay mixture into a composite, hardened the sculpted vessel, and determined the quality of the outcome of firing.

The designs of late-Ming teapots were made after archaic bronze forms, natural forms such as flowers, and geometric forms, and were inscribed on the base as opposed to the sides; thus, one's full attention in appraising the object would fall on the aesthetic qualities of its round and full surfaces, as produced relationally between the potter and the clay. While scholars have stressed the smoothness of the surfaces of Yixing wares, late-Ming connoisseurs were equally interested in their gritty textures and earthy-metallic tonal expressions. Often connoisseurs would analogize gritty surfaces with tiny extruding yellow particles to pear skin, gesturing toward the tension between rough and smooth achieved by the ceramics. Objects were made to create a spectrum of deep colors with different types of surface grit, sand, and silver sparkle. K.S. Lo has written that the mica content in the clay ore was a basis for the "rough, sandy texture" of the objects.[72] The object in figure 2.3 is made of purple clay embedded with fine sand that could be the result of mica in the clay body. As Zhou noted, potters would further add substances like ground quartz and fired clay shards into their clay mixtures, in order to heighten the granular quality of the surfaces:

> Regarding the color of the clay of the *hu*. Starting from Gong Chun to the early years of Shi Dabin, all are of fine earth, with a light ink color, and on the surface there are glittering points of silver sand. More recently, broken pieces of already-fired clay are mixed together with the clay, and used to coat around the exterior before firing, which results in the effect that the whole body is covered with faint pearls and grains, which is more dazzling to the eye.[73]

A teapot excavated from a grave in Hebei province and made between the Ming and Qing periods is a deep glowing purple in tone, with yellow grit, possibly the result of mixed-in, pre-fired clay pieces (fig. 2.5). The material transformations of the kiln yielded objects that would catch and reflect light in areas, but also absorb light through the warm dark, iron-rich clay composite. Into the Qing dynasty, teapots were made in different shades of purple, red, and black, with quartz spots that glittered in the sun (fig. 2.6). While the effect was subtle, it nonetheless heightened desirable metallic resonances of the objects.

Jonathan Hay has called the result of the potter's interventions "alchemical patterning," giving it literary associations in that it could refer to similar transformational surfaces in other media.[74] Yet in another literary sense, the resultant effects solved the scholarly problem of selecting a proper vessel for tea-brewing raised repeatedly in the *chashu*: the material properties

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[71] "造壺之家，各穴門外一方地，取色土篩搗, 部署訖，弇 窖其中，名日養土。取用配合，各有心法。祕不相授，壺成幽之，以候極燥，乃以陶甕庋五六器，封閉不隙，始鮮欠裂射油之患。過火則老，老不美觀，欠火則稚稚沙土氣." *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng,* 464.

[72] Lo, *The Stonewares of Yixing,* 20.

[73] "壺之土色，自供春而下及時大初年，皆細土淡墨色，上有銀沙閃點，迨碙砂和制瑴縐周身珠粒隱隱，更自奪目." *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng,* 465.

[74] *Sensuous Surfaces,* 139-41.

of Yixing clay produced objects that could simultaneously evoke the characteristics of an earthly ceramic and a luxurious precious metal. Zhou explicitly addressed the long-lasting paradox around the benefits and lure of gold and silver tea wares, and their resolution with Yixing wares:

> Although the [Tang poet] Du Fu 杜甫 wrote "Whether tipping ale into silver (or gold) or pouring into jade, it startles a person's eyes [disrupts one's sense of propriety]," but with the best ceramics, one can also avoid vulgarity.[75]

The dazzling of one's eyes that might lead down a dangerous road into moral excess is thus neutralized by the dazzle of broken pieces of clay affixed to a teapot's exterior, that after firing, glitter like understated silver stars. The physical properties of the stoneware's clay body after firing metaphorically referred to metals; thus, the feat of displacing precious metalwares accomplished by the Yixing potters and promoters was just as much alchemical as it was substitutive. The clay body effectively resolved the longstanding vacillation between high and low, metal and clay, desire for conspicuous consumption and aesthetic of restraint.

Conclusion: The Paradoxical Late-Ming Art-Commodity

While drawing on the genre of rank treatises, manuals of taste such as *Zhangwu zhi* divested tea vessels of their moral dimensions. Rather, they posited relations of material difference as hierarchies between objects instead of those between socially-ranked humans, as mediated through objects. Such a transformation was not invented by the literati; rather, they were responding to late-Ming cultural and economic changes, through which wealth was rationalized and objects were commodified.[76] Objects were related instead through their relative economic value, as measured by the weight of silver. In his account of the Yixing industry, Zhou introduced a new problem that arose with the increasing marketability of *zisha* wares, which would later be taken up by Ming-Qing scholarly writers; namely, the transformation of sandy clay into gold due to market mechanisms.

> According to legend, the first time the earth used for the *hu* was discovered, there was a strange monk making a pilgrimage through the village, each day shouting that he is selling wealth and status. The locals crowded around him and laughed. He said, well, if you don't want to buy status, how about buying wealth? He guided all of the village elders to the mountain to show them the cave where to dig the earth. And as they unearthed the clay, there was five colors of earth, as brilliant as a brocade robe.[77]

Just as the raw material of clay became wealth, so too did the objects produced using it:

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[75] "不但杜工部雲「傾金注玉驚人眼」，高流務以免俗也." *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng,* 462. The poem Zhou references draws a rare equivalency between bowls of silver and pottery, as it suggests the end result is the same regardless of the status conferred by the object—a drunken stupor. "Laugh not at the field hand's old pottery bowl, since the time it first held ale his children and grandchildren have grown up. Whether tipping ale into silver or pouring into pottery, it startles a person's eyes, both get drunk and at last are the same, lying by roots of bamboo." Du Fu 杜甫, *The Poetry of Du Fu*, vol. 3, translation by Stephen Owen, Ding Xiang Warner and Paul Kroll (Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), book 10, 57-9.

[76] Benjamin A. Elman, "Global capitalism and local artistic taste in late imperial/early modern China, 1600-1800," *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 49 (Dec. 2016): 32-3.

[77] "相傳壺土初出用時，先有異僧經行村落，日呼日：賣富貴。土人羣嗤之。僧日貴不要買，買富何如。因引村叟，指山中產土之穴去。及發之，果備五色，爛若披錦." *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng*, 464.

> As for those Yixing teapots made by famous artisans, one of them doesn't even weigh several *liang* 兩, but each are sold for the weight of twenty gold coins [likely meaning silver coins].[78] Thus, the price of earth is made to vie with the value of gold.[79]

Innovation in both branding and production in the Yixing teapot industry had allowed the objects to infiltrate the highest echelons of connoisseurship and collecting. The marked thus pitted the value of gold and silver against the value of earth, a competition in which earth ultimately emerged as more precious, as measured by the literal weight of its price in silver. Zhou's comment is a period acknowledgement of how "intrinsic" material value is an arbitrary, and often shifting, assignment. Earth had become a viable substitute for the substitute for wealth that is silver and gold.

The price of Yixing pots was repeatedly, even compulsively noted by early Qing cultural elite, as if a primary metaphorical association of the teapot was the small pile of silver coins that it could fetch on the market. Modern objects made from simple earth had eclipsed precious metalwares in value. They thus effectively unraveled the hierarchical relationship of materials that had been in place for centuries. For example, in his jottings *Tao'an mengyi* 陶庵夢憶 [Dream recollections of Tao'an], scholar Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597-1679) echoed Zhou, pondering the ironic and startling phenomenon that accompanied the development of Yixing wares and the allied pewter teawares industry: at the moment when such objects were put up for sale — that is, entered the theater of value negotiation of the market — modern vessels made out of earth and base metal could not only equal ancient antiques in their value, but could make different materials disturbingly commensurate:

> While sand jars are sand, and while pewter jars are pewter, when you put the utensils up for sale, then each jar and ewer is the price of five or six silver pieces, and so then sand and pewter are equivalents in price. Their weight in silver [their measure of value] is thus made equal — and isn't this a bizarre thing! So a sand jar, or a pewter ewer, are valued at the equivalent rank of a Shang bronze wine vessel, or a Zhou bronze *ding*, without an ounce of shame — but then, this is the rank of their inherent value.[80]

Value in the marketplace was thus highly tangible, as it took the embodied, weighty, and sensuous form of the precious metal. It was also intangible, as it was rendered into a metaphor through the equivalence of silver, and thus could become a measure of commensurability between different materials. That the commensurability of earth with metal was remarkable to commentators in the period indicates that it was also an emergent shift in the typical order of how materials could measure and mark social distinctions.

In enunciating the irony of market mechanisms such that a vessel of simple earth could be worth a specific quantity of coin, Yixing teapots became the exemplary commodity for late-

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[78] *Jin* 金 (gold) is a word that was often used to mean precious metals in general, and could, based on context, refer to silver, as gold was never used as currency in coin form.

[79] "至名手所作，一壺重不數兩，價重每一二十金，能使土與黃金爭價." *Zhongguo gudai chashu jicheng*, 464.

[80] "夫砂罐砂也，錫注錫也，器方脫手，而一罐一注價五六金，則是砂與錫與價，其輕重正相等焉，豈非怪事！然一砂罐、一錫注，直躋之商彝、周鼎之列而毫無慚色，則是其品地也." *Tao'an mengyi* 陶庵夢憶 [Dream recollections of Tao'an] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 2018), *juan* 2, 30.

Ming commentators. Like many literati, Zhang was anxious about the shifting, arbitrary nature of commodity value wrought by the metal. The workings of the late Ming market had disrupted the naturalized social order of things, such that the new material of purple sand was of equal weight — and thus inherent value — to traditionally-treasured Shang and Zhou bronzes. Such material reordering echoed the threatening period changes which allowed for new forms of social mobility, particularly among the nouveau riche of the merchant class. In their writings on the status of Yixing wares, Zhang and his peers can be observed musing at the workings of market logic typically identified with the advent of capitalism in the early modern period. The scholar's studio, the site of refined pastime for the learned connoisseur, it turned out, was never far from the peril and prestige of the marketplace.

The late-Ming shift in the Chinese canon of teapots as utensils for an aesthetic practice, and also as works of art, was a critical juncture in two senses. First, it illuminates pivotal aspects of why silver was a disputed medium in premodern Chinese writings on works of art and aesthetic objects, ultimately contributing to its marginalization as a subject of modern art historical study. Canons of aesthetic practice were only applicable to certain types of refined practices of consumption and followed under idealized circumstances. Late-Ming treatises derided the use of gold and silverwares for scholarly pursuits such as tea appreciation and vase arranging, but as we have seen in chapter one, elite Chinese could display their wealth more conspicuously at banquets, drinking games and parties. Second, insofar as silverwares have been understood as a type of decorative or applied art in a Euro-American context, the object-category of teapot was received from China through examples of imported objects, as well as a fragmentary and historically-contingent view of Chinese preferences of consuming the vessel. When tea-drinking was transmitted to Europe as a social practice in the seventeenth century, so too was the notion that Chinese tea-drinkers categorically preferred teapots produced out of clay or earth, rather than those made from precious metal. The distinction in taste was picked up by European commentators, subsequently leading to the idea that Chinese did not use silver teapots at all, while they were preferred by Europeans. The seventh chapter of this dissertation examines the impacts of transmission in translation—that is, the implications of how a misconceived distinction between European and Chinese elites in terms of consumption fashion was enshrined in late-seventeenth century European accounts as global comparative knowledge.[81]

[81] Much later, distinction split into division. In the seventh chapter, I continue my examination of the problem of how global difference articulated through an opposition of materials -- namely, China and the Euro-American "West," as constituted through a binary of ceramics and metals — has served as a powerful ideological factor shaping the classification of Qing silverwares, and therefore the ways in which they have been rendered into political objects. The binary became the basis for larger claims about cultural and racial difference as negotiated through stories of invention, and as entangled with European, and specifically English, progressive narratives of global and industrial capital.

Ch.2. Surpassing the Silver Teapot
Figures

Fig. 2.1. Two Tang dynasty silver *fu* 鍑

Left: Excavated in Zhenjiang Dingmaoqiao 镇江丁卯桥窖藏

Right: Excavated in Xi’an Hejiacun 西安何家村

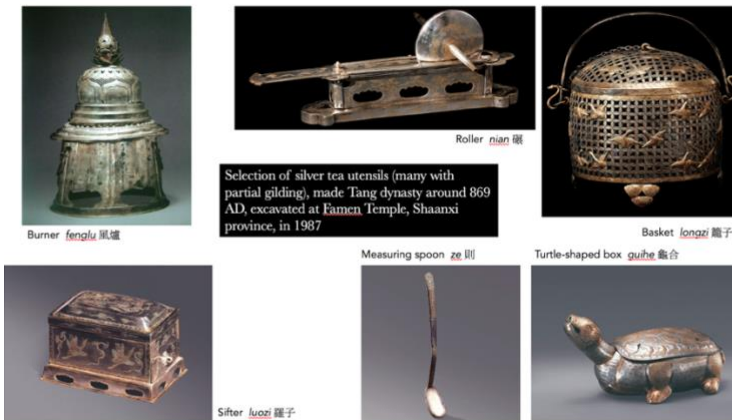

Fig. 2.2. Selection of silver tea utensils (many with partial gilding) made Tang dynasty around 869 CE, excavated at Famen Temple, Shaanxi province, in 1987

Fig. 2.3. Shi Dabin 時大彬, Yixing *zisha* 紫砂 teapot signed by Shi Dabin, 1632. Excavated from Shanxi, Zhangguangkui.

Fig. 2.4. Hui Mengchen 惠孟臣, Yixing *zisha* stoneware teapot, 1627, likely made for a Chinese patron. V&A. Inscription: "Tianqi dingmao year Mengchen made for the Hall of Friendship"

Fig. 2.5. Chen Yongqing, *zisha* teapot, late Ming-early Qing; excavated from Qing dynasty grave in Hebei Province. Relics Storage Bureau, Zhengding County, Hebei Province

Fig. 2.6. Teapot with inscription “Made by Yongwen” in an incised gourd-shaped reserve on base, Qing period. Excavated in Jiangsu province, Zhenjiang Museum.

Ch. 3. Reanimating Tang Ornament

Introduction

A precious metal surface is not only a flat, empty plane, a blank substrate for the gleam of light, the play of decoration, or the presentation of images. It is also a record of intervention by craftsmen's tools from both the back and front. Techniques such as hammering, striking, incising, cutting, appliqué, inlay, annealing, soldering and buffing leave and extract marks, impressions, and additional metal or other materials. Even a smooth surface is the result of hours of careful planishing and polishing. The working of a silver surface thus poses a unique problem in terms of value. It represents additional, specialized labor brought to the making, finishing, or transformation of an object that overwhelmingly draws value from its material. Any ornament is, in a sense, pure excess, in that it is supplementary to the precious metal and its utilitarian affordances as an object.[1] At the same time, the "excessive" value of the craft of ornament represents what is most essential and particular to the object's desirability. Its buyer was willing to pay extra for the specialized skills required for "fashion" beyond the cost of function.[2] Yang Boda 杨伯达 has written that finishing techniques (*jiagong gongyi* 加工工藝) are one of the most distinctive aspects of Chinese gold and silversmithing.[3] In particular, relief ornament appears on many objects. Raised designs were effected through a range of technical means, including repoussé, chasing, carving, engraving, and appliqué. This chapter argues that the high, fine relief found on the six-sided ewer first described in the introduction, and on other seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Chinese gold and silverwares, is a late-Ming to early-Qing revival of Tang dynasty (618-907 CE) relief ornament, modified to engage with the formal qualities of carving techniques (fig. 3.1).[4]

As described in the introduction, the ewer was impressed with a set of English hallmarks, dating its evaluation in London to 1682/3, and thus its production by a Chinese silversmith in China or the Chinese diaspora to the mid-seventeenth century. Also as noted in the introduction, the Tang period was important in the history of gold and silver working in China for the increased elite patronage of precious metal workshops producing both for the court and non-court markets, as well as the development of new techniques and designs spurred by migrant

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[1] In this chapter, I expand on Jessica Rawson's definition of ornament, as distinguished from notions of pattern and decoration, as an "enhancement of the shape and surface of an object to draw attention to it; to make it attractive and to place it within a given context or fashion." "Ornament in China," in *A Companion to Chinese Art,* eds. Martin J. Powers and Katherine R. Tsiang (John Wiley and Sons, 2016), 371.

[2] "Fashion," defined in early modern England as the "action or process of making," or "make, build, or shape," was a term associated with workmanship. See "fashion, n.," *OED Online,* accessed April 6, 2021 < https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/68389?rskey=pIHtdi&result=1>. Goldsmiths were often charged with melting down and remaking objects to update them based on the current vogue, in which case the "fashion" was essentially all that was paid for.

[3] "Gongyi dingming de shangque: guanyu zhongguo jinyinqi yinqi tu'an" 工艺定名的商榷: 关于中国金银器隐起图案 [Discussion of craft definitions: regarding Chinese gold and silver hidden-raised designs," *Gugong bowuguan yuankan* (1995), issue 4: 7.

[4] Crosby Forbes first identified and schematized this form of relief that is often dated based on the PEM ewer hallmarks, though viewed it as specific to non-Chinese markets. See "Chinese Export Silver for the British Market, 1660-1780," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 63 (September 1998): 1-18.

metalsmiths and imported metalwares from Samarkand and Ctesiphon, the capital of the Sassanian empire (224-651), close to modern-day Baghdad. Goldsmiths and silversmiths arrived in the Tang capital of Xi'an and other cities as refugees after the Islamic caliphate conquered Ctesiphon in 651 and Samarkand in 712. Precious metalwares became popular among Chinese elites not least because they believed that drinking from them conveyed long life and good health.[5] The precise, granular detail of the early Qing reliefs mimic the animated textural effects of Tang silver decoration, as well as cast-bronze surfaces, carved lacquer, ivory, and wood; thus the ornament connects to antiquarian revivalism in different metals, histories of foreign exchange through design, and a range of southern regional craft practices. It also indicates that diverse markets of patrons outside the court were willing to pay extra for skill-intensive, as well as material-intensive, surface techniques.

The ornamental technique first appeared during the Ming-Qing transition of the turbulent mid-seventeenth century and was practiced outside of the Qing court by southern Chinese silversmiths, likely both on the mainland and in the Chinese diaspora in southeast Asia. While the Ming-Qing transition was marked by political turmoil and social upheaval, it also has been described as a period of growth and creativity in craft production. The Ming imperial court lost Beijing in 1644, but the court retreated to the south and established a new capital. It took the Manchu Qing forces decades to consolidate their power, with Taiwan as the final territory to be annexed in 1683. Between 1673 and 1681 the lords of the fiefdoms of Yunnan, Guangdong and Fujian revolted against the Qing Kangxi emperor. During this time, official maritime trade with Europe was suspended, only to resume in 1684; that said, Chinese merchants traded with Europeans in ports throughout southeast Asia and Japan throughout the seventeenth century, despite the maritime trade ban. While the turbulence of the seventeenth century is often the grounds for assuming that Chinese silversmiths were driven abroad, it is rather the case that the loosening of imperial oversight allowed for more creative production and the development of new markets.

Historicism and Innovation in Ming-Qing Transitional Silver Ornament

In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, demand grew for luxury goods that creatively emulated antiquities (*fanggu* 仿古) among people outside the scholar-official class, particularly among merchants. If the technique was practiced in the court, then scant objects survive; one plum blossom cup in the Beijing Palace Museum is a rare example, though it is unknown when it entered the court collections (fig. 3.2). Artistic innovation in the period was not only spurred by interest in antiquarianism, but also two additional factors: the desire for new and strange designs, described in period terms as *qi* 奇; as well as an entrepreneurial drive to develop new, and often foreign, markets.[6] One focus of revivalism was bronze forms, designs, and surfaces from the Shang and Zhou periods; examples include ceramics imitating bronze patinas, as well as jade and bamboo carving imitating ancient bronzes.[7] Craft scholars have noted that

[5] Valerie Hansen, "The Hejia Village Hoard: A Snapshot of China's Silk Road Trade," *Orientations* 34:2 (Feb., 2003): 15.

[6] Yang Mei-li 楊美莉, "Introduction," trans. Donald E. Brix, *Through the Prism of the Past: Antiquarian Trends in Chinese Art of the 16th to 18th Century* 古色：十六至十八世紀藝術的仿古風 (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 2003), 24.

[7] Ibid.

fanggu was a characteristic of late-Ming silverworking.[8] The examples I discuss below indicate that it was a thread that continued into the Qing period, with the increasing use of new types of raised relief on a range of vessel types.

Tang precious metal ornament is not typically a subject associated with Ming-Qing antique emulation, but my claims are not without their own precedents. Robert Mowry has written that Ming jade and lacquer incense boxes, as well as copies thereof in bronze, likely followed models of Tang gold and silver boxes and related versions made in the Song in ceramics.[9] Further, period collecting of Tang bronze mirrors with relief silver backs, as well as Qing-period replications of Tang-style bronze mirrors, indicates that patterns were available (fig. 3.3). As the demand for luxury consumption discussed in chapter one grew in the late Ming and early Qing, so too did the production of such goods, as well as new types of objects that combined an aesthetic of antiquity with contemporary design innovations.

The triad of antique emulation, strange designs, and new markets is exemplified by the relatively well-studied case of seventeenth-century Jingdezhen porcelains.[10] From the death of the last Ming Wanli emperor in 1620, until the Kangxi emperor of the Qing dynasty re-established authority over the ceramic kilns of Jingdezhen in 1683, absence of imperial attention allowed unprecedented innovation in ceramics. Out-of-work official workshops lacked imperial patronage as the Manchu Qing secured their territorial reign. Conditions in ceramic production thus became favorable for workers to take greater stake and profit in their own labor.[11] Wealthy and well-connected Huizhou merchants connected the kilns to new domestic, non-court markets, as well as Japanese and Dutch export markets.[12] The result was a carefully-designed and well-executed range of new shapes, painted with exuberant underglaze blue designs drawn from woodblock-print narrative illustrations.[13] Similarly, there was also innovation and diversification of markets in the seventeenth-century production of carved lacquer "coromandel" or *kuancai* screens in the southeastern provinces of Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Anhui, luxury objects which were made initially for Chinese buyers and as gifts before they became an export product for Europeans during the late seventeenth century.[14] In sum, war and political change were not prohibitive for commercial activity. Arguably, in the case of the Jingdezhen kilns and *kuancai* (款彩 "cut colors" or Coromandel lacquerware) workshops, it fostered commercial opportunity.

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[8] Zhang Yanfen 张燕芬, "Mingdai jinyinqi de yuanliao yu zhizuo gongyi" 明代金銀器的原料与制作工艺 [Materials and Craftsmanship of Gold and Silver works of the Ming Dynasty], *Gugong xuekan* 故宫学刊 (2018): 91-2.

[9] See *China's Renaissance in Bronze: The Robert H. Clague Collection of Later Chinese Bronzes, 1100-1900* (Phoenix, AZ: Phoenix Art Museum, 1993), 64.

[10] Scholarship on these wares includes Michael Butler, Julia B. Curtis, and Stephen Little, eds., *Treasures from an Unknown Reign: Shunzhi Porcelain, 1644-1661* (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 2002).

[11] Margaret Medley, "The Ming-Qing Transition in Chinese Porcelain," *Arts Asiatiques* 42 (1987), 65.

[12] Colin Sheaf and Richard Kilburn, *The Hatcher Porcelain Cargoes: The complete record* (Oxford: Phaidon/Christie's Limited, 1988), 24.

[13] He Li, *Chinese Ceramics: The New Standard Guide* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1996), 207-8.

[14] Tamara H. Bentley, "Barbarian Tropes Framed Anew: Three Qing dynasty screens of Europeans hunting," in *Picturing Commerce in and from the East Asian Maritime Circuit, 1550-1800* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 250-3.

Similar conditions likewise allowed for the cultivation of Tang-style ornament among the southeastern silverworking craft trades.

The presence of silversmiths in the midst of the Ming-Qing transition can occasionally be traced through southern tax records spanning the seventeenth century. In the late Ming Chongzhen reign year 10, approximately 1637, the gazetteer for Jiaxing 嘉興 county in northern Zhejiang province recorded 116 households (*hu* 戶) of silversmiths (*yinjiang* 銀匠); Jiaxing was the hometown of Zhu Bishan several centuries earlier, and thus the tax record perhaps reveals a regional silversmithing lineage, or concentration of workshops in the region.[15] By 1687/8, a tax census from the Yong'an 永安 county in eastern Guangdong province (present-day Zijin 紫金 county), a relatively rural county in Guangdong, indicate that there were five silversmiths working to make or repair utensils, or *dayinjiang* (打銀匠, literally "hammering silver craftsmen") and six silver smelters, or *qingjiangyinjiang* (傾煎銀匠, literally "pour and smelt silver craftsmen"), who cast ingots.[16] The record of six silversmiths working outside even a small city, much less the commercial entrepôt of Guangzhou, indicates that likely many more were practicing closer to urban centers. While these records are uneven and leave much to be desired, they indicate the continuous presence of silversmiths in southern Chinese provinces across the seventeenth century, as well as the possibility that there were specialists in different ornamental techniques.

As a result of overseas patterns of preservation, the relief technique found on the six-sided ewer has never been studied from the standpoint of its connection to Chinese craft history. Rather, scholars have studied the object and objects with similar relief primarily through their European reception and collecting histories. Ongoing ambiguity over whether objects are Chinese or English copies of Chinese objects has perpetuated the domination of Western framings of the relief ornament technique as one component of the "Chinese taste" in Restoration period (1660-1714) English plate. This chapter contends that the relief technique should not be viewed as exclusively "export," but rather establishes links with Chinese histories of production, as well as diverse markets. Some of the gold and silver objects discussed in this chapter were modeled after ancient bronze vessel forms, as well forms common in Ming silverworking. Some of them were produced for European markets. Despite the ambiguities introduced by a longstanding conflation of Chinese and English objects, object-based scholarship has revealed important characteristics of the relief technique. Philippa Glanville has described the relief ornament found on wares that appeared in England and Holland between 1690 and 1720, inclusive of both Asian imported objects and European copies modeled on them, as "imitating carving."[17] Hugh Honour similarly described it as a relief effect mimicking carved lacquer.[18] In analogizing their impressions of the surface to other craft techniques, Glanville and Honour identified a critical difference between the ornament on earlier Chinese gold and silverwares and those made during the late Ming and early Qing, especially in the relationship between raised

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[15] *Jiaxing Xianzhi* 嘉興縣志, *juan* 9.

[16] *Yong'anxian cizhi* 永安縣次志 [Updated records of Yong'an county, Guangdong], *juan* 6, 13, printed Kangxi 26 (1687/8)

[17] Glanville, *Silver in England* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1987), 236.

[18] Honour, *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (London: J. Murray, 1961), 251-2.

decoration and surface. The relief on Tang wares was created by hammering from the back, contiguous with the same plane as the relief's ground, and thus creates a sense of seamless tactility. By comparison, this chapter demonstrates that the relief on the surface of the six-sided ewer and related wares was made in part through an additive method, one that creates visual and tactile affinities with, on the other hand, subtractive carving techniques used on media such as lacquer, bamboo, wood, and ivory. Thus, while the relief recalls a design template established at high point of medieval Chinese gold and silver production, it is grounded in its resemblance to carving, which in certain media is associated with the south. The applied technique requires the use of more silver than the more economical methods of creating relief through hammering from the back. The literal applied weight of ornament speaks to its desirability.

Lively Revival

Returning to the ornament on the six-sided ewer first described in the introduction, the surfaces are blanketed by slight, knobby protrusions, glinting and raised against an evenly-matted, curved ground. Each of the six panels is ornamented with small, raised elements forming a land and waterscape scene, as well as fine-grained horizontal punching in the negative space of the ground (fig. 3.4). The effect is multiple levels of textural relief. As I will describe in the next section of this chapter, the reliefs were made using the fine metalworking technique of *tiehan* 贴銲(pasting-welding)," by first sand-casting small appliqué pieces, and then delicately soldering them to the slightly-curved surfaces. The panels were soldered to the frames, which were then joined to each other at the edges, making six corners. The shiny relief contrasts against a ground finely and evenly matted in minute punches, a finishing technique known in the Ming period as "sand ground" (*shadi* 沙地). Not just a visual media, silver allows for a highly-textural and thus tactile field.

Visual and material aspects of the scene evoke other artistic media through shared iconography and formal resemblance. In its vertical spread, a single panel follows conventions of Chinese compositional scenes, chiefly developed in landscape painting, which encourage the eye to meander across the surface without a single focal point. The small bridge of land on which the primary figures stand is punctuated by small starburst dots or *dian* 點, following the convention by which land is efficiently marked by the tip of a brush in ink painting. The scene may be linked to any of several popular themes in painting of the Ming and Qing periods, involving a scholar returning home late at night from a party, or searching for plum blossoms in the snow. One well-known example is by the early-Ming court painter Dai Jin 戴進, who was discussed in chapter one (fig. 3.5, 5a). Similar scenes of a scholar wandering through a landscape appeared on many decorative objects of the Ming-Qing transition, such as on ivory carvings (fig. 3.6). Related scenes reference the popular motif of the Tang poet Meng Haoran 孟浩然 (689-740 CE) riding a donkey through the snow in search of fragrant plum blossoms, which were the first signs of spring. In this iconography, Meng is often accompanied by his servant; popular during the seventeenth century, one example of a scene depicting Meng Haoran is a Ming-Qing "transition period" blue-and-white ceramic plate (fig. 3.7).[19] The depiction of Meng Haoran on the plate is

[19] See Eva Ströber, "Literati and Literary Themes on Porcelain from the collection Keramiekmuseum Princessehof Leeuwarden," *Aziatische Kunst*, 41:2 (2011): 17.

likely based on an illustrated pattern and is more specific in its reference; the genericism of the scene on the ewer could be an indication of its more generic market, or a non-Asian market.

The multiple layers of relief are similar to carved cinnabar lacquer decorations. In its texture and regularity, the punching, which will be addressed further in its relationship to Tang precedents, resembles the geometric diaper patterns used on Ming carved lacquers to distinguish water, land, and air (fig. 3.8).[20] Other examples of eighteenth-century silverwares decorated with relief ornament, such as a coffeepot in the Royal Collection Trust, display closer connections to lacquer than the relief on the six-sided ewer (fig. 3.9).[21] The relief was applied over the punching, but essentially creates a flat planar layer of ornament, as opposed to the dimensionality of the relief on the six-sided ewer. The differences between the relief on the ewer and coffeepot indicate different workshops were using related techniques, to slightly different effects.

Yet both recall a template established by Tang gold and silver relief ornament: raised elements contrasted against a ground evenly punched in horizontal rows or concentric circles. The ring-matting on Tang silverwares was known as "fish-roe pattern" (*yuziwen* 魚子紋), such as the ground that appears on a hammered box (fig. 3.10). On some curved or lobed vessels without relief, even finer marks created worked surfaces that feel like smooth, supple fish skin. A specialized technique in itself, it was created by the repeated and regular hammering of a fine, hollow point, or perhaps a tool tipped with several points in a line, at precise intervals. A detailed comparison between the matting on a Tang mirror and on the six-sided ewer demonstrates a similar, and quite skilled approach to applying tiny punches in neat rows (figs. 3.11–13). Zhang Yanfen has written that analogous finishing, refined down to a point instead of a hollow circular mark, was known as "sand grain pattern" (*shaziwen* 沙子紋), or simply "sand ground" (*shadi* 沙地) in the Ming period.[22] While it was also used as a decorative technique in the Ming period, Zhang wrote that ornament had a "planar tendency" and was often applied through chasing or incising from the front. Chased and incised surface decoration can be seen on sixteenth-century examples, such as a silver wine cup stand (fig. 3.14, 15).[23] Thus from the sixteenth century to the mid-seventeenth century when the relief ornament begins to appear, the matting became finer and more uniform, and a planar tendency was discarded by some workshops in favor of lively dimensionality.

While there are many compositional similarities between Tang and Ming-Qing transition ornament, the Qing silversmiths pushed the capacity of the metal to more sculptural, as opposed to surface, effects. The Tang ornament is created through repoussé, or hammering from the back, an economic technique that does not require the addition of metal. The transitional relief is created through the addition of tiny cast pieces of metal. Because the relief is not coequal with the surface, it can exceed it. Relief elements even go so far as to lift up and off the surface, introducing play with depth and movement. The relief can be rounded, in the form of gnarled

[20] Harry Gardner, "Diaper Backgrounds on Chinese Carved Lacquer," *Ars Orientalis* 6 (1966): 167-81.
[21] John Ayers, *Chinese and Japanese Works of Art in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen,* vol. III (London: Royal Collections Trust, 2016), 932. The round foot overlaps with the bottom point of the foliated panel surface ornament, indicating that potentially it was a later addition, and further, that the body of the vessel was modified into a coffeepot.
[22] "Materials and craftsmanship," 82.
[23] Ibid., 91-2.

tree branches, twisting vines, tangled branches, animal bodies and flowers in the round.[24] For example, a pair of cup stands with octagonal lobed rims are ornamented on the face and raised rim with curling vine tendrils and long, slender, wavering branches (figs. 3.16). The result is a remarkable expression of decorative surplus and craft technique, in the form of animated, sculptural ornament. On the cup stand, the squirrels and birds, the curl of petals, the bunches of grapes, all are minute sculptural elements that contrast against the punched ground, and especially contrast against the graphic decorative elements of the chased and gilded chrysanthemum in the center of the stand (fig. 3.17). On a small wine cup evidently made to accompany the stands, raised elements include prancing horses, birds, and flowers (fig. 3.18). Notably, all of the lightly-raised relief is chased to create naturalistic texture through different types of struck and incised lines. The technique demonstrates the capacity of the material to be stretched and stabilized by silversmiths beyond the minimal requirements of making functional vessels. Silver was made to perform in the shape of an animate, organic material—crawling, growing, and twisting from the surface plane.

As exemplified by the mirror ornamented with a heavenly horse, phoenixes, and a *qilin* (麒麟, a mythical animal similar to a unicorn), Tang reliefs are often formed by complex enmeshments of delicate curling vine tendrils, which entwine with magical animal motifs.[25] Another mirror, with lions and grapes interwoven between vines, might be compared more directly to the PEM wine cup stands (fig. 3.19). While there are some consistencies in motifs and their composition that prompt me to draw the comparison, the rendering of the motifs reflects seventeenth-century approaches to form, which are at once more naturalistic and sculptural. Tang reliefs use the object's edges and sides as frame, covering entire surfaces. The composition of the reliefs on Tang mirrors and boxes are different from the Ming-Qing reliefs in that the latter are always grounded in their frame, if only by a stem or root. In other words, there is always a directionality, if not an outright orientation, to the natural forms rendered in metal. On the cup stand, the vine adorned with bunches of grapes and different types of flowers is rooted at the top-left of the image. On other examples, such as on the lobed cups that accompany the stands, the ornament is focused on central botanical or animal motifs and bracketed within foliated frames. By comparison, Tang forms of relief are more geometric in the division of space, recalling Islamic arabesques in their repetition and symmetry.[26] While the form of the plate stand mimics the Tang mirror in that the orientation of the design is concentric, because of the attachment of the root, it rather crawls and winds around the circular space; on the mirror, the lions are symmetrical and rigorously geometrically composed.

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[24] The earliest dateable example of relief that exceeds the surface can be found on an ewer that was brought as a diplomatic gift from the 1686 Siam ambassadors to the court of Louis XIV, an object that is the subject of chapter four.

[25] Chuan-Ying Yen has written that the iconography of Tang mirrors includes birds and flowers, "animated" animals, and immortals living in garden landscapes; the choice of decoration is thus more resonant with the living world than decorations on Han mirrors, which were abstract cosmological ornaments. "The Decorative Motifs on Tang Dynasty Mirrors." *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* 9 (2005): 2. Tang mirrors thus combined secular and religious themes. See Suzanne E. Cahill, "The Moon Stopping in the Void: Daoism and the Literati Ideal in Mirrors of the Tang Dynasty," *Cleveland Studies in the History of Art* 9 (2005): 24-6.

[26] Tang silverworking techniques and early designs were impacted and transformed by metalwork imports from Central and west Asia. See Jessica Rawson, "Inside out: creating the exotic within early Tang dynasty China in the seventh and eighth centuries," *World Art* 2:1 (2012): 33-4.

One Tang compositional cue referenced by transitional reliefs is the circular disposition of the Daoist land of the immortals, a new motif in the Tang depicting an auspicious, swirling landscape and best exemplified by a mirror in the Shōsōin Repository in Nara (fig. 3.20). While the outer registers of the mirror contain animals in floral scrolls, the central roundel surrounding the knob contains a centrifugal paradise: roiling waves around the knob, punctuated by immortals and dragons, then a layer of mountains with deer, geese, and clouds.[27] On an eighteenth-century gold cup stand, the composition is in the round, but compared to the examples discussed above, the landscape is grounded centripetally around the central hexagonal recess (fig. 3.21).[28] Projecting high-relief elements include jumping and prancing deer, tree branches and flowers, pagodas and willows, all against horizontally-punched *shadi* (fig. 3.22). Much of the textural chasing recalls the effects of painted brush strokes. The soft metal allows for the precise registration of textural chasing, for example on the rocks at the center, the pine sprays, and the brick tiled roofs of the low-lying buildings and tall pagodas.

Finally, a silver plate, which was later gilt in England and perhaps made in Batavia by Chinese silversmiths, extends the idea of a centripetal composition one step further in combination with the grounded or oriented design of some examples of transitional relief (fig. 3.23).[29] In the center of the plate, a pair of phoenixes are positioned at the top and bottom of a landscape scene (fig. 3.24). One phoenix stands on one leg on the ground, surrounded by trees and rocks that expand into a sky filled with the other flying phoenix, as well as clouds. The outer reaches of the scene shape-shift outward into the circular ground of a surrounding register that rings the central scene. The outer ring of relief ornament is comprised of animals, such as deer and birds, as well as architecture. Unlike the panels on the six-sided ewer, where there are floating animals, there are no free-floating elements. Rather, the specific orientation of the central medallion effortlessly shifts—through no little effort on the part of the ornamenting silversmiths—into a continuous circular scene. On this plate, elements of the design lift up off of the surface, enhanced through repoussé applied from the back of the plate. The set of objects discussed in this section demonstrate that there were different workshops producing Tang revival ornament in the mid-late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, using a set of different techniques; the Queen's coffeepot mimics the flat layer of carved lacquer relief, but applied on a continuously curved surface, the six-sided ewer replicates versions of the same scene with additional dimension and tactility compared to the coffeepot, and several of the cup stands discussed exhibit sculptural expressions of relief, to the extent that decorative elements are freed from the surface of the plate. The commonality across all the objects discussed is that relief elements were separately cast or molded, then applied to the surface, in combination with other techniques. The use of appliqué against a matted ground was a transitional period

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[27] Yen, 8-9.

[28] The cup stand is incised with a variant of the royal monogram of George II (r. 1727-1760), now in a private collection (fig. 3.21). There is an unsubstantiated claim that the gold cup and stand was a diplomatic gift from either the Yongzheng (r. 1722-1735) or the Qianlong (r. 1735-1796) Qing emperors.

[29] The plate is paired with a ten-lobed covered cup that I will argue was likely made for a Dutch patron in colonial Batavia and was based on similar tazza or *brandewijnskom* forms produced in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. There is no evidence that the plate was made en suite with the covered cup, however, and the ornament on the two objects is different, indicating they may have been made by two different workshops. See John Ayers, *Chinese and Japanese Works of Art in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* III (London: Royal Collections Trust), 931-2.

innovation in gold and silverworking ornament and represents an additional investment both in skill and precious material.

Constructing a Relief Scene, Multiplied and Framed

A common assumption about ornament is that it should be understood as secondary rather than integral to an object: that is, ornament is not functional, and it is applied toward the end of the process of construction. The view of ornament as superfluous is undermined by the construction of the six-sided ewer, which was planned in order to account for the application of cast surface decoration in pieces. It is also undermined from a craft standpoint by Yang Boda's claim that appears at the beginning of the chapter, which repositions "finishing techniques" such as ornament as central, rather than auxiliary, to Chinese gold and silverworking.

The panels were first made separately in order to first attach the ornament. The panels were then fixed within the frames, likely using a lower temperature degree of solder to prevent slippage of the ornament on the curving surfaces of the panels. The interior seam of the curved panels are visible when looking inside of the container (fig. 3.25). Each frame was attached together to create one of the six corners. From the exterior, the solder seams were rendered entirely invisible, and polished to emphasize the contrast between the textured surface of the panels and their smooth, shiny frames. The frames, panels and arguably the ornament are thus structural. Moreover, the surface decoration was constitutive to how the object was executed from the beginning, and therefore understood by its makers. This section takes a closer look at the transition-period "Tang" style relief on the six-sided ewer to speculate on its process of construction, drawing on the maker's perspective of a contemporary silversmith. Finally, it uses ornament as a lens to consider its intended market. The replication of panels on the ewer have given rise to a series of different interpretations about its production.

Past theories about the construction process have focused on extractive and replicative metalworking techniques. In the earliest published account of the vessel, when it was regarded as English, British antiquarian W.J. Cripps viewed the craft technique used to produce this set of relief scenes, as well as the relief that lines the neck, handle, spout, and the flat surface of the lid, as a type of carving (describing it as "deeply cut").[30] This suggests that each panel was made by hand, through the removal of surface layers, like wood, lacquer, ivory or bamboo carving. Later scholars, beginning with the authors of *Chinese Export Silver,* believed the six panels and the lid were cast using a mold, like bronzes. Crosby Forbes wrote that the PEM teapot was constructed from "no less than fifty-six separate parts skillfully soldered together."[31] At the time, he assumed that each body panel was cast from the same mold, replicating a relief landscape composition in two variations on six panels. Thus from the 1970s, arguments about its production have crystallized around the idea that casting was the primary technique of production.

More recently, John Hawkins has furthered the casting hypothesis, arguing that the six-sided ewer and related Chinese gold and silverwares were made in Nagasaki by Chinese migrant craftsmen who learned *shakudō* 赤銅 copper casting techniques from Japanese metalsmiths. In order to make this argument, Hawkins maintained that after the vessels were cast, subsequent chasing or working of the surface by hand included "deep undercut carving."[32] Yet Hawkins

[30] Wilfred Joseph Cripps, *Old English plate, ecclesiastical, decorative, and domestic: its makers and marks,* 6th ed. (London: J. Murray, 1899), 346.
[31] "Chinese export silver for the British Market," 3.
[32] "Chinese Silversmiths working in Nagasaki between 1660 and 1800," *Silver Studies* 35 (2016-17): 147.

never explained why such an effect would be sought by craftsmen, and why if so, they would choose a production technique that required such meticulous finishing. The surfaces of carved bamboo, a developed literati art by the late seventeenth century, are strategically undercut to create spatial recession within the limits of a flat and extremely thin substrate (fig. 3.26). But the value of carved bamboo work, like painting, is in the creative hand of its maker, in the craftsman's wielding of tools to execute a carved, dimensional scene and the rendering of contour and shadows. The multiple nearly-identical surfaces of the object trouble the notion that the singular expressivity of sculptural carving was its desired effect.

Bronzes have duly cast a long shadow over the history of Chinese metals. In modern scholarship, both the six-sided ewer and the Zhu Bishan raft cup discussed in chapter one were thought to have been cast. The detail in the bark on the raft cup suggested to many that it was cast with the lost-wax technique, perhaps even using a piece of wood or branch to make the mold.[33] Bruce Christman published a study of the raft cup in 1994 disproving the casting hypothesis, noting that his conclusions dispelled prior notions of facture based on more superficial examinations. He discovered that the cup was made of cold-worked sheet metal, which was heavily chased and finished. He noted that the soldered joins were so carefully done, and then hidden with hammered detail, that it is impossible to count how many pieces were used. X-rays confirmed it was made out of sheet silver with no evidence of the porosity and bubble flaws that would be present with casting (fig. 3.27). Examination of the PEM ewer in 2018 from a construction standpoint, with the expertise of silversmith Steve Smithers, silver curator David Barquist, and Asian export art curator Karina Corrigan, revealed that the reliefs were produced through the surface application of cast elements rather than casting. Conservators at Versailles have likewise confirmed that the relief on a lobed ewer that is the subject of chapter five was produced through appliqué techniques.[34] Like the Zhu Bishan raft cup, the casting hypothesis for the transition-period Tang revival relief has been overturned. Object-based analysis has modified the point at which casting was involved in the process.

After several minutes of examining the ewer, Smithers noted that the walls of the panels, and especially the flat panel of the lid, appear too thin to have been cast at such a relatively high level of relief; when the molten silver worked its way into the mold, it would have been extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible, to consistently fill all of the deep recesses of the ornament in the mold, and in the same mold create such a thin planar surface. Likewise, the relief is too high to have been entirely hammered out from the back, a technique known as embossing or repoussé. While there is some evidence of working from the back (or rather, inside) of the panel—as there is on the gilt plate discussed above—its traces would have been more evident if the ornament was accomplished entirely through embossing. Conspicuously absent, for Smithers, was a single observable instance where the side of any of the relief elements continued in a sheer drop to the surface of the teapot, merging into the background, which would have been the case had the relief been cast. Instead, most of the sides of the relief elements have an overhang, creating the effect Hawkins viewed as an "undercut" finishing technique (fig. 3.28). In two-part

[33] J. Keith Wilson, "The Fine Art of Drinking: The Chinese silversmith Zhu Bishan and his sculptural cups," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art,* 81: 10 (Dec. 1994), 390. Bruce Christman, "Technical Note on the Raft Cup," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 81: 10 (Dec. 1994): 402. Some scholars continue to publish the raft cups as cast, a testament to the deep entrenchment of the notion of production.
[34] Conversation with Marie Laure de Rochebrune, April 20, 2019.

mold-making, the effect of the undercut is an impediment to making an effective cast. According to Oppi Untracht, the separation of the mold parts during the mold-making process would cause the destruction of the part of the model creating the undercut. Untracht adds that undercuts are possible in more complicated, multi-piece molds, or one-piece molds that could only be used once.[35] The tiny vertiginous overhangs of the relief elements thus posed several challenges to the notion that the six sides of the vessel and the lid were cast from the same mold.

Smithers and Barquist hypothesized another explanation as to how the decorative relief was made: the additive process of appliqué. Visual examination with magnification revealed sparing evidence of solder around the landscape elements on the ornamented panels and on the neck. The level of, and evidence of solder on the surface suggests that instead of being cast along with the flat panel surface wall, most of the relief elements were meticulously attached to the surface of each panel. Soldering is a means of fusing two pieces of metal together by applying a heated alloy at their intended join that melts at a lower temperature than the melting point of the two pieces of metal. Broadly, solder can be composed of any metal that can be alloyed with the metal pieces to be joined. Before solder is applied, a flux typically made of borax is applied to the silver surfaces. When heated, the flux will form a glass at a lower temperature than the solder melting point, which aids the flow of solder, in part by preventing the formation of oxides.[36] As the solder is melted, it flows between the two parts through the chemical reaction of capillary attraction, drawn toward the heat source. The adjoining metal parts do not melt, but rather the solder diffuses into the parts and creates an alloyed metal on the facing surfaces, effectively joining, not fusing, them together.[37] Even viewed without additional magnification, one minuscule pearl-shaped remnant of silver solder, which as Untracht noted in his terminology was called goldsmithing skull or skeletal residue, can be noted above an upturned tri-tipped chrysanthemum leaf on one panel.[38] While the traces of solder were minimal, we nonetheless confirmed that most if not all of the relief ornament was attached by hand using solder joins, instead of through casting. From there, we conjectured that the panels were completed through a series of transcriptive, finishing and additive processes before they were soldered into their foliated frames.

The construction description to follow is a combination of the process hypothesized by Smithers and Barquist, additionally informed by Untracht's manual on fine metalworking techniques and the Ming treatise on craft and statecraft published in 1637 by Song Yixing, *Tiangong kaiwu* 天工開物 [title variously translated as "The Exploitation of the Works of Nature" or "Creations of Heaven and Human Labor"]. My intent is to sketch a possible method that was used by seventeenth-century silversmiths in making the vessel, primarily based on our object analysis. I am acutely aware that there are likely steps or processes missing from the construction as laid out below. As mentioned in the introduction, there are scant primary source materials about Chinese gold and silverworking. Manuals describing craft production processes were produced and reprinted in the Ming and Qing periods for trades such as carpentry, lacquerware, bronzes and silk, but no equivalent has survived for gold and silversmithing. The most relevant surviving manual is *Tiangong kaiwu*, but the manual focuses on silver mining and refining, and does not further address plateworking or finishing techniques. Scholars of Chinese

[35] *Metal techniques for craftsmen: a basic manual for craftsmen on the methods of forming and decorating metals* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 325.
[36] Ibid., 163.
[37] Ibid., 159.
[38] Ibid., 166.

craft thus rely on object analysis to reconstruct the processes by which objects were made. It is a method that I also use in this dissertation, with the proviso that these are not documented processes, but rather guesses informed by close looking and informed by supplementary materials.

First, silversmiths cast the small ornamental applications for the landscape scene, possibly using a carved wood or tin pattern pressed into two-sided sand or clay molds. The landscape was likely cast in several pieces. Perhaps the larger composition was divided into several smaller pieces, as were the independent elements presently attached at the top and bottom. The section on copper coin casting in *Tiangong kaiwu* using two-piece sand molds offers one method in which the ornament could have been made — though the relative complexity and delicacy of the applied forms and the higher melting point of silver would have required additional considerations on the part of the silversmiths. For casting copper coins, Song wrote that four long slats of wood were used to make an empty frame. Sand and charcoal powder were sifted very finely and placed into the frame. Then fir or willow charcoal powder was spread on top, or pine rosin and rapeseed oil was used to cure the mold. When the molten metal runs through the material, it will burn the charcoal powder, and allow the castings to be separated from the mold. The hundred "mother coins" (models sculpted from tin) were set into the front or back of the mold, arranged in order. Presumably a central channel would be made connecting all of the coins together, in order to allow the metal to flow through the mold. Then another framed sand mold was prepared in the same way and placed on top of the first mold. After they were sandwiched together, with the two backs of molds facing out, the metalsmith would turn them over quickly, so the mother coins fall into the top of the second mold. Then again the craftsman would take a filled frame, and put the second frame (which now holds the mother coins) on top. The pattern is transferred again. In this way, according to Song, the craftsman can repeatedly produce over ten frame molds, and then tie them together with string.[39]

After the molds are stacked and attached, the metal can be cast. The top side of the wood frame has an “eyehole” opening where metalsmiths pour copper inside the molds. The caster uses "eagle beak tongs" to pull the molten copper crucible from the furnace, while another person supports the bottom and assists with pouring the molten copper into the opening. After it cools, the frames are untied, revealing many hundreds of coins like “flowers and fruit on a tree branch.” The coins are then snapped off of the cast coin tree, and the edges are filed and polished. Song specified that each coin was first filed around its edges, then strung on a length of bamboo or wood to file further.[40] Critically, through this process, the tin models of the hundred “mother coins” are preserved, and not destroyed during the cast, which would allow them to be reused for another casting. Additionally, the molds are made in an iterative fashion, so in effect each mold does not produce a hundred identical coins, but rather an identical configuration of coins as coin trees that subsequently had to be hand-finished. The distinction is important when considering that the scene on each facet of the ewer was made of a configuration of elements that were cast, finished, and then reassembled onto each panel.

After casting, the pieces were additionally worked to remove the sprue (the extra cast metal remaining as the trace of the path in the mold leading to the cavity) and filed to become

[39] *Tiangong kaiwu,* accessed online, < https://archive.org/details/thetiangongkaiwutheexploitationoftheworksofnature/page/n23/mode/2up>, 296-7.

[40] Ibid.

smooth.[41] The backs of the ornament applications would be flat, though a question that remained for us was how and when the panels were slightly curved outward to create the slight arch to mirror the slightly-curving sides of the belly of the pot. If the panels were curved before the castings were applied, the small pieces of ornament would have likewise echoed the exact curvature of the panel surface before attachment. If they were curved after the punching and castings were applied, the silversmith would risk distorting the ornament, perhaps unevenly, though bending the panel first would likewise create a set of production challenges during the soldering application process. We believe that the flat, or more likely curved surfaces of the oval sheet silver panel were first punched with rows of *shadi* chasing, likely while secured to a piece of pitch. Photographs taken by Hedda Morrison in Beijing from 1933 to 1946 demonstrate how a silversmith would secure silver to pitch (fig. 3.29). Then, the flat or curved backs of the castings were prepared with flux, to which grains of the solder alloy was attached. The attaching surface was then left to dry, which would assure that the solder was positioned well. The applications would then be positioned on the surface of the panel, with the solder facing down. The silversmiths may have placed all of the elements at the same time, and possibly used a caliper to make sure that the composition was spaced uniformly on each panel. If the panel was curved, they must have also used an adhesive to keep the castings in place as they applied the composition; otherwise, gravity would be the main force keeping the castings in place on a flat surface.

The silversmiths next used a blowpipe and lamp to heat the panel and castings, to solder them to the surface; the use of the blowpipe as a tool for soldering is illustrated by another modern photograph by Hedda Morrison (fig. 3.30). Untracht notes that when soldering flat surfaces, the "upper part" — or in this case, the relief element — "which had been resting on the solder particles, will suddenly drop." The drop indicates that the solder has flowed completely and that the heat should be removed.[42] After adding the entire relief ornament composition, the silversmith likely next soldered the six panels into their frames. Smithers noted that the silversmiths could have used a high-temperature silver solder for the castings, and then a lower-temperature silver solder for the panel joins, in order to prevent the applied castings from moving or melting during that stage of the assembly process. Finally, a silversmith added additional chasing to create lines and other textures on the surface of the relief. More *shadi* punching was added around the relief elements, as well as along the join of the panel to the frame, correcting any loss of the *shadi* punches applied before the applications were attached. While the reconstructed process is a speculative recreation and likely is missing several critical steps and technologies, it nonetheless outlines a process by which the pot's surfaces were made using additive, replicative, and surface chasing processes.

Framing, Repetition, Reproduction: The Craftsmen's Skill

Completed with the assistance of simple technologies, the clarity, precision, and multiplication of the ornament prefigures the seriality of industrial mechanical processes, all the while maintaining the gesture of handicraft.[43] The composition of the panels on each of the six

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Untracht, 174.

[43] As has been noted about the porcelain kilns of Jingdezhen by the sixteenth century, the scale and complexity of Chinese craft production "anticipated modern methods of assembly-line manufacture." Robert Finlay, "The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History," *Journal of World History* 9:2 (Fall, 1998): 156.

faces and the lid is nearly identical, and indeed appears identical at first glance. Closer looking reveals small variations between two versions of one composition. Each is repeated three times alternatively around the teapot (fig. 3.31). The variation of the composition is most evident at the center of a clearing at the upper right of the panel created by the arched chrysanthemum in the upper right. On one version, a floating *qilin* replaces a leftward flying bird on the other. On the *qilin* panel, the entire scene is shifted slightly to the right, such that a pair of birds appear on the right side, and a pagoda appears at the bottom right by the low-lying roof. On the bird panel, several plum blossoms seen on the *qilin* panel are missing to the right. The *qilin* and bird compositions are each repeated three times in variation, such that one *qilin* panel is never adjacent to another one, and its opposing panel will always be a bird. Either the two different compositions reflect the use of two different molds, and the variation was part of the silversmiths' vessel design, or they reflect a single mold that was slightly modified in order to accommodate distortions created by construction. While the intent behind the panel variation is unknown, it was certainly part of the silversmiths' design for the object. Moreover, the relief was not decoration added after the rest of the object was complete. Rather, as the panels were soldered in after they were ornamented in order to accommodate the technique, the relief was part of the structural design of the vessel.

The composition of the ewer thematizes variation within replication. It raises the question as to what extent the two qualities are direct products of the construction process, or whether the silversmiths worked toward realizing them as a set of effects. Perhaps in part, the casting hypothesis was left unquestioned for many years because it was precisely the intention of the pot's craftsmen to create an object that mimicked the effect of casting. Why did seventeenth-century Chinese silversmiths go to such extraordinary efforts to make an object with the appearance of serial casting, yet such measured variation?

The variation within replication is an effect that partially reflects the modular construction methods of the silversmithing workshop where the ewer was produced, and in part shows that the workshop sought to demonstrate and distinguish its skill through the replicative production of this type of ornament over other possible skills or techniques. There are several gilt circular copper boxes with a similar panel composition to the six-sided ewer (fig. 3.32). The panel on one box appears to be the same as the *qilin* version of the panel, while another box appears to be the same as the swooping bird variation; one has horizontal punching, while the other has concentric circles of punching. The production of such boxes indicates that a workshop could have been set up to produce ornamented panels by one set of skilled silversmiths, which were then carefully fastened into objects by other silversmiths. The fineness of the workmanship is reflected in the seamless uniformity of the modular pieces, their arrangement, and their near-invisible attachments both within and across panels.

On the ewer, the relief ornament is emphasized by the design of the vessel, which is essentially a series of frames around the scene. As mentioned above, each rounded side panel face is inset by soldering into a hexafoil, foliated frame. The frame is not just an engaged relief against the panel but was once a literal frame now sealed into place. The frames reinforce the linguistic correspondence of the panels in their sameness and difference, distinguishing, in the words of Jeffrey Hurwit, the "edges and contours of the object" from the "semiotic field" of the space of representation.[44] Features projecting in cardinal directions from the globular body both serve as a meta-frame, in enrobing a body itself composed of framed surfaces, as well as offer

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[44] As paraphrased in John H. Pearson, "The Politics of Framing in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Mosaic: An interdisciplinary Journal* 23:1 (Winter, 1990): 17.

additional faceted surfaces for the decoration to extend and further cover the vessel. The body sits on a low, wire foot. It has a hexagonal neck, which provides another register for horizontally-oriented relief decoration of blossom branches and birds. Through the surrounds of the foot, lid, handle, and spout, the silversmiths focused attention on the body, and therefore the primary surfaces for the display of the ornamental scene. Through framing and repetition, the scene in Tang revival relief itself becomes a reproducible motif, a block or modular component, or a sign. As a sign, it certainly served as a shorthand for the demonstration of the silversmiths' skill and precision in replication and variation.

Given the new understanding of the ewer's construction and status as an object for the display of a particular ornamental skill, what is the value of craft conveyed by the landscapes and motifs, raised and repeated, across the vessel's many faceted surfaces? We might never be able to associate the object with a master silversmith, like Zhu Bishan. Yet from an examination of this object and its decorative surfaces, it is clear that its maker or workshop drew on the material capacities of silver, in striving to reconcile the fluid appearance of sculptural carving, as well as the uniformity and precision of transcriptive processes of casting metalwork. The low relief against a textured ground both mimics the cast surfaces of Chinese bronzes, as well as the relief created by the subtractive process of carving. Replication, variation, and finally concealment of facture are all further thematized by the construction of the rest of the pot, through the repetition of both the miniature decorative elements and larger components, as well as the clear attempt to erase or at least minimize signs of their soldering. The ewer's body, as a series of frames, pulls the user's attention to the exterior decoration in its enchantment of replication and variation in crisp detail. As Mimi Hellman has argued in a different premodern context about serial design, the machine-like replication of the landscape scene would have appeared wondrous to period users, producing a sense of enchantment in handicraft production.[45]

Through a modern lens, we tend to view the two processes of casting and carving as mutually exclusive, and even as contradictions. One is a process that depends on the human hand, the other on mechanical reproduction. The ewer reveals that the distinction is an anachronistic one when applied to premodern craft production. In the history of Chinese craft, rather, they are interdependent processes; in metal casting, for example, molds for the relief designs on ancient bronzes were carved from clay by hand.[46] The use of both casting and carving in this case alluded to the enchantment of nature in its repetition and variation, like one might observe the seriality and variance of natural forms. Some examples introduced in this chapter showed how this idea was furthered by different workshops, as the medium was extended as sculpture into the beholder's space. The tendrils of vines and twisted branches of trees began to lift up off the matted plane of cup stands and vessel walls. In his likely apocryphal guise as master silversmith, Dai Jin was said to be able to make human figures, flowers, and birds that were true to life, and Zhu Bishan modeled raft cups with hammered plates that nonetheless appeared to be cast from branches. Picking up on the concepts surrounding construction established by this chapter, the next chapter examines a lobed ewer with panels depicting different scenes and natural themes, with relief that lifts up in areas from the surface. The chapter

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[45] Mimi Hellman, "The Joy of Sets: The Use of Seriality in the French Interior," in *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century: What Furniture Can Tell Us about the European and American Past,* eds. Dena Goodman and Kathryn Norberg (New York and London: Routledge, 2007): 140-44.

[46] Lothar Ledderose, *Ten Thousand Things : Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 32.

will argue for how the particular animations of silver enlivened an auspicious iconography, suggesting that the form was initially developed for Chinese patrons. The lobed ewer was transported to Europe via southeast Asia, where it joined other examples of the Chinese form but was not widely replicated by European goldsmiths. The PEM ewer, by comparison, offers an opportunity to consider a broader, and one might say more global, set of possible consumers.

Ewer Typologies and Consumers: Marketing A Sixfold Landscape

Who was the intended consumer of the six-sided ewer? The object is certainly unusual from a Chinese perspective. Based on surviving objects and visual depictions, the normative notion of the gold and silver ewer in the Ming period was an object with a pear-shaped body, like the Chenghua silver teapot referenced in the introduction. The ewer shape was called an "apricot-leaf" *xingye* 杏葉 panel ewer, and was derived from West Asian forms.[47] Two examples from the tomb of Prince Liangzhuang 梁庄王 (1411-1441) display the panel, which was either applied to the exterior, or slightly raised from the body through embossing (fig. 3.33).[48] Unlike the six-sided ewer, the vessels are vertical instead of globular, and often round instead of polygonal. They also have elongated necks and a low, wide base, as well as a slender, outward curving spout attached low on the body, and a curved handle. The body is ideal for heating liquid and providing an even pour.

A related ewer form with a longer neck and more slender spout was also produced in the Ming period, as demonstrated by an illustration in the late Ming encyclopedia *Sancai tuhui* (fig. 3.34) Modeled after Persian examples, such long-necked ewers often had handles that swoop up into a round loop, a dramatic shape that nonetheless balanced the body, especially the wide base tapering into a slim neck. On some examples, such as a fifteenth-century silver one with a lotus bud finial on a domed lid excavated from an early Ming royal tomb, an apricot-leaf panel was incorporated as part of the body (fig. 3.35). In the *Sancai tuhui* woodcut image, the decorative panel is encircled by a foliated frame, which twists at the top and is rounded at the bottom with a small indent. It is similar to foliated frames adorning the round bodies of a pair of seventeenth-century copper ewers in the Clague collection (fig. 3.36). While I have not encountered "apricot

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[47] Yang Zhishui, *Shehua zhi se—Song Yuan Ming jin yin qi yanjiu* 奢華之色 — 宋元明金銀器研究, vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 132. Apricot-leaf hu was not even necessarily a term used to describe an ewer with a spout, as early uses of the term describing a jar-like vessel persisted as well. In the late-Ming Dingling imperial tomb excavations, a pewter hu was excavated that had a lid but no handle and no spout. It had an apricot-leaf ornamental plate attached to the body. An inscription on the apricot leaf self-referentially labeled it as a "tin apricot-leaf tea *hu*" (*xi xingye chahu* 錫杏葉茶壺). The object has served as evidence that the term "apricot leaf" was used to refer to the particular paneled form affixed to its side.

[48] The Yan Song inventory records several different types of "apricot leaf" ewers, and by far it represents the greatest number of ewer types recorded in the inventory. The apricot-leaf panel could be empty or plain (*su* 素), or it could also serve as a reserve for ornamental motifs. For example, there were eleven gold plain apricot-leaf *hu*, two with fish decoration, two with *qilin* decoration, and two with *caoshou* 草獸 "plant and animal" designs. As for silver, there were twenty feather-work apricot-leaf *hu*, ten niello, eight tall ones with lion finials, six six-sided apricot-leaf *hu*, and three apricot-leaf *tanghu* 湯壺, the latter the single classification given based on a specialized use. *Tianshui bingshan lu: Fu Qianshantang shuhuaji*, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Gushuliutongchu, 1921).

leaf" ewers with Tang revival applied ornament, the Clague collection copper ewers demonstrate that the ornament was desirable from the perspective of Chinese consumers in the seventeenth century. Yet while they share the addition of an ornamental panel that is sometimes also ornamented in relief, this set of ewers shows that the six-sided ewer is atypical from the standpoint of Chinese consumption.

That said, other objects decorated with Tang revival ornament referenced in this chapter were likely produced for Chinese patrons. The lobed wine cups and cup stands are based on a Chinese form, the *zhanpan*, or cup and stand, which is recorded in *Sancai tuhui* (fig. 3.37). Another example of an object that could have appealed to a Chinese consumer is a wine cup in the shape of a *ding* 鼎, now in the Hermitage Museum (fig. 3.38). The object form is a late seventeenth century or early eighteenth-century example of a revival ancient bronze form, additionally transformed with Tang revival ornament on its four segmented surface panels.

Further, Tang revival ornamented objects invite multiple approaches to visual and tactile perception that recall other Chinese decorative arts. Like the copper ewer described above, a similar approach to relief ornament appears on eighteenth-century gilded copper wine cups, an example of which Jonathan Hay used as an example of how Chinese decorative objects engage in "transactional" interactions with their handlers (fig. 3.39):

> A two-handled bronze wine cup asks to be lifted with both hands — to the mouth, while it has wine in it, and to the eyes when the wine is gone…the delicate punched background of the scene asks us to come in close; the pool of gold that is the interior asks us to tilt the cup towards us….In such transactions as these, it is by giving the object what it wants that one derives pleasure from it.[49]

Amending David Freedberg for material culture studies, how does one give an object what it wants? Hay argued that Ming-Qing decorative objects that are more than simply flat surfaces are exceptional in how they provide their user "directional" cues about how to handle them. Additionally, he claimed there is movement inherent in how decorative objects ask to be used. As he put it, "As bodily objects, Ming-Qing decorative artifacts tend to be in a state of potential or just completed movement."[50] Like the gilt-bronze wine cup he illustrated, the wine cups I have shown similarly ask to be grasped and manipulated. The six-sided ewer asks to be lifted, assessed from top to bottom, and further, turned, to examine how the relief scene is repeated in variation across its many surfaces. The plastic properties of silver allow for the space of the plane to not only be figure and ground, but flat and curved, as well as far and near. Two views of the same panel offer a sense of how the scene unfolds vertically in two directions, wrapping up the bowing side panel. As a result, distance likewise expands and collapses (fig. 3.40). The pot could be manipulated to encourage such viewing practices. When it is sitting on a surface, the figure crossing a bridge seems to be the most immediate to the user's space. But when the fisherman at the bottom is tilted toward the holder of the teapot, the water register is compositionally the closest aspect of the scene. Thus, much like other Ming-Qing Chinese decorative objects, the six-sided ewer demands the experience of touch, as well as physical manipulation.

Other objects with Tang revival ornament were likely not made for Chinese consumption, but rather for European consumption in Asian colonial contexts. One example is a ten-lobed

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[49] *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 62.

[50] Ibid., 63.

covered cup with two *ruyi*-cloud handles (fig. 3.41).[51] The form is reminiscent of other lobed covered cups produced in Dutch colonial Batavia by Dutch immigrant goldsmiths from the late seventeenth century throughout the eighteenth century. Based on rare extant examples such as one in the Rijksmuseum, the lobed covered cup would have been paired with a lobed plate with a flat central reserve (fig. 3.42). Goldsmiths from the Netherlands emigrated to Batavia to work for the VOC, where they set up shops in the artisan quarter and employed immigrant silversmiths from China, Sri Lanka, and India. Chinese silversmiths also produced filigree objects, and therefore it is highly likely that they practiced other plate-working and decorative techniques from the mainland, such as the Tang revival ornament techniques.[52] The lobed cup is similar to a late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Dutch form known as a *brandewijnskom*, a cup used for drinking brandy, though extant examples appear to be lid-less.[53] A photograph taken of the silver plate of the sultan of Ternate, Indonesia around 1920 records both types of vessels—that is, *brandewijnskom,* as well as lidded multi-lobed with and without lobed plates (fig. 3.43). The plate could have been presented to previous sultans as gifts by the VOC. Each lobe of the ten-lobed lidded cup is ornamented with a different scene of auspicious motifs arranged into landscape or bird-and-flower scenes from the natural world, such as chrysanthemums, squirrels and grapes, lotus, plum, persimmon with birds, red maple, crane and pine. Similar ornament appears on the lobed lid, as well as in reserves on the high foot. Like the coffeepot mentioned earlier in the chapter, the workshop that made this relief practiced the flat single-layered application against a matted ground that mimics lacquer; while intricate with detail and applied chasing, the ornament does not have the dimensionality of the six-sided ewer or other examples discussed above. The ten-lobed cup is a clear example of the use of the Tang revival ornament—in this case, put toward creating a metalwork lacquer surface—for a vessel likely produced for a European patron. At the same time, the preservation of similar objects in the twentieth-century collections of the sultan of Ternate demonstrates the fluidity of possible markets for gold and silverwares.

It has been widely assumed that the six-sided ewer was crafted by Chinese silversmiths expressly for European consumption. Scholars have argued that it was made as a copy after polygonal, relief-ornamented Asian ceramic teapots, which were popular European export wares in the late seventeenth century. Peter Kaellgren has written that by the late seventeenth-century, Chinese silversmiths began copying Yixing wares, albeit basing this statement on the single case of the six-sided ewer.[54] In additional to faceted Yixing teapots, other imported examples that could have served as models include hexagonal porcelain Dehua teapots or wine pots with relief reserves, such as one that was inventoried at Kensington Palace in 1693/4 (fig. 3.44, 45). On some six-sided Dehua ewers, each panel has an inset relief decoration of a scene with a scholar engaged in various activities, which thematically recalls the ornament on the silver pot. The glaze of the Dehua wares, however, coats the entire vessel, making the surface uniform, while

[51] John Ayers, *Chinese and Japanese Works of Art in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen,* vol. III (London: Royal Collection Trust, 2016), 931-2.
[52] Titus M. Eliens, *Silver from Batavia: Religious and Everyday Silver Objects from the Time of the Dutch Each India Company* (Zwolle: Wbooks, 2013)*,* 9-10.
[53] S.M. Voskuil-Groenewegen, *V.O.C.-zilver : zilver uit de periode van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie 17de en 18de eeuw* (Den Haag: Gemeentemuseum, 1983): 26-7.
[54] "Chinese Yixing stoneware teapots as a source of English silver design 1675-1830," *The Silver Society Journal* 26 (2010): 50-7.

the shiny frames of the silver ewer's panels offset decoration from its borders. Both Yixing clays and porcelain have tensile and durable properties, and pots were constructed using thin slabs or with molds, instead of the coiling or wheel-throwing required for softer clays. While examples were produced in a range of round and naturalistic forms mimicking fruit or plants, they were also made as faceted vessels complete with the appearance of inset decorative panels with appliqué relief designs. Yet the association between the six-sided ewer and these possible models is troubled by a circular logic: the set of physical characteristics that make polygonal ceramic vessels candidates to be the model for the six-sided ewer suggest that they themselves were modeled after metalwares. Their angled and lobed bodies, faceted sides, indented inset panels, and flanged and knobbed lids suggest metalwork precedents.[55] More effort was expended to make these objects look like metalwork than in making the six-sided ewer look like a "ceramic" form. In other words, the ewer could just as easily serve as a prototype for its posited ceramic counterparts.

Such an origin story has obscured the possibility that its workshop made objects for a range of Chinese and wider Asian markets. It also overlooks the possibility that polygonal and hexagonal metalwork ewers were produced initially for Chinese consumption. The late-Ming Yan Song inventory records many polygonal objects, some of which are named as apricot-leaf ewers, but many which are not given specific designations. Some vessels are described as six-sided (*liu leng* 六稜), or six-cornered (*liu jiao* 六角). Two vessels are described as a "six-sided egret (*lusi* 鷺鷥) ewer with a lion finial." There was one gold eight-sided apricot-leaf ewer. Six-sided silver ewers listed include eight "six-sided apricot leaf, tall," six "six-sided, tall," four "six-sided pouring-wine" ewers, and three vessels listed simple as "six-cornered."[56] Thus, there are several different ways an object similar to the six-sided ewer might have appeared in the Yan Song inventory. Unlike ceramics objects, which could not be melted and repurposed, we no longer have these objects as possible models.

Instead, I suggest that the six-sided ewer and exported polygonal ceramics, particularly six-sided Dehua paneled ewers, referenced still other objects as models. While they are morphologically similar, we do not yet have enough information to argue for a causative relationship between the two, one way or another. Rather, both potters and metalsmiths sought a solution to the problem of how to foreground decorative relief scenes on polygonal objects. One model they might have both separately referenced are octagonal Longquan vases of the Yuan dynasty (fig. 3.46). The quatrefoil inset panels of an example in the Asian Art Museum are unglazed, in contrast with the rest of the green-glazed vessel. The relief ornament alternates between scenes of Daoist immortals and chrysanthemums, the latter recalling the raised ornament on some panels of the ten-lobed covered up. Two other examples, one at the Pola Museum and one in a private collection, each have eight immortals instead of the alternating floral motifs. Small differences in the poses of the figures offers an experience of variation within resemblance. As discussed above, each panel of the six-sided silver pot appears to offer the same scene, but a closer look reveals the alternation of two different versions of the same

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[55] Jessica Rawson has written that metalware physical attributes reproduced in porcelain include stepped handles on ewers, rolled spouts, flanged and knobbed lids, indented vessel sides, faceted vessel sides, everted lids, angled bodies, high footrings, flat rims with rolled lips, lobed and lotus-shaped rims, and lobed and lotus-shaped vessel sides. Jessica Rawson, "Chinese silver and its influence on porcelain development," in *Cross-Craft and Cross-Cultural Interactions in Ceramics*, eds. Patrick E. McGovern and M. D. Notis (Westerville, OH: The American Ceramic Society, Inc., 1989), 287.

[56] *Tianshui bingshan lu: Fu Qianshantang shuhuaji*, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Gushuliutongchu, 1921).

scene. Both convey the technical enchantment of reproduction. Yet the Longquan vase comparison, while compelling, leads to another twist in the chain of replication, as it also could have been made to resemble a metalwork pattern, or even a lacquer model. In divorcing the silver ewer from its supposed prototypes by creating lateral connections of shared morphological sources, we can open up the indeterminacy of the object and its manifold metaphorical references, rather than fix it within a certain developmental lineage.

Conclusion: Unwieldy Historicisms

As the last chapter will consider in depth, to date, the six-sided ewer has been interpreted through its English reception history as one of the earliest examples of English silver teapots, as well as its American collecting history as the earliest dateable example of Chinese export silverware. On one hand, scholars have viewed its heavily ornamented surfaces as blank screens for the projection of chinoiserie fantasies. Alternatively, the type of appliqué ornament analyzed in this chapter is viewed as an indication that particular objects were made for European consumption, and thus they are framed within bilateral relationships of production and reception. This chapter has ranged widely over media, geographies, and periods of time to give the six-sided ewer a richer history of production and the relief ornament technique—as practiced by different workshops—a set of historical and craft references. It argues that the type of ornament described cannot be rooted to a particular workshop, market, or even continent. It was practiced across the southern Chinese diaspora for a wide range of possible markets. The ornament added literal weight to the surfaces of wares that carried historical significance through reference to an important point in Chinese gold and silverworking history, when a template for multilayered relief pattern was developed. As a Ming-Qing transition innovation, the ornament thus conveys cultural value beyond the weight of the plate.

The last chapter of the dissertation will examine the engagements of the ewer with the late-seventeenth-century English goldsmithing trade. The beginning of the chapter considers how the six-sided ewer was replicated in nineteenth-century Britain, during a period of chinoiserie revival. At that time, it was viewed as an English antiquarian object. Retail goldsmithing companies produced versions of the ewer primarily through silver casting, creating objects which display different levels of fidelity to the surface ornament. The replicas raise many questions, some of which are also raised by the six-sided ewer: namely, under what conditions does a particular set of historical forms become naturalized and become a source for revival? What are the politics of one culture claiming another culture's revivalist cultural heritage as its own, a common phenomenon which is celebrated in some contexts but overlooked in others?

Fig. 3.1. Six-sided silver ewer (over 94% average silver alloy) Made southern China, or southern Chinese diaspora before 1682; 5 ½" inches high, 874.1g (28 troy oz)
Assayed in London, 1682/3 (between July 21, 1682 and May 19, 1683)
Peabody Essex Museum, E82766

Fig. 3.2. Silver plum blossom cup with relief panels, Qing period. Beijing Palace Museum

Fig. 3.3. Bronze mirror, mimicking Tang period bronze mirrors. Qing, Qianlong period. Private collection

Fig. 3.4. Single panel of Fig. 1.

Fig. 3.5. Attr. Dai Jin 戴進 [1388-1462], *Chunyou wangui* 春遊晚歸 [Scene of a scholar returning late from a spring outing], Ming dynasty. Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk. National Palace Museum, Taipei

Fig. 3.5a. Detail of Fig. 3.5

Fig. 3.6. Medallion with scene of scholar returning home from a spring outing, riding a donkey or horse, accompanied by a servant. Carved ivory, late sixteenth or seventeenth century. H. 3 ¼." MMA 1993.176

Fig. 3.7. Dish, decorated with the poet Meng Haoran in a wintry landscape, Jingdezhen porcelain with underglaze blue, h. 4.5 cm., d. 19.7 cm., Ming dynasty, early 17th century. Keramiekmuseum Princessehof, Leeuwarden, OKS1984-62

Fig. 3.8. Box with scene of a zither (qin) gathering, carved red lacquer, 1403-24. MMA 2015.500.1.6a,b

Fig. 3.9. Panel detail of coffeepot and cover, silver, China, c. 1690 (engraved with inscription: “Lady Eliz.b Stanhope Countess of Stanhope,” indicating that it entered her possession between 1691 and 1723). RCIN 104100a—b

Fig. 3.10. Covered box in the form of a six-petaled flower with birds and flower scrolls, silver with mercury gilding. Mid-Tang dynasty (early 8th century), Shaanxi province, likely Xi’an, 3 x 10.7cm. Freer Gallery of Art, F1978.39a,b

Fig. 3.11. Lobed mirror with birds, animals, and floral scrolls, Cast bronze and applied silver plaque with repoussé, chased, and ring-punched decoration and mercury gilding, Early or mid-Tang dynasty (late 7th to first half of the 8th century); 24.7 cm diameter; Freer Gallery of Art, F1954.22

Fig. 3.12. Tang mirror detail with *yuziwen* 魚字紋 [fish egg pattern] surface matting

Fig. 3.13. Detail of panel with fine matting

Fig. 3.14. Cup stand with incised and gilt decoration including *shadi* 沙地 [sand-ground], silver, 16th century. Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1969-260-2a (identical example excavated from Ming site in Beijing, Haidian district)

Fig. 3.15. Detail of Fig. 3.14.

Fig. 3.16. Cup stand (one of a pair) with partial gilding, Chinese silversmiths, 17th century. PEM AE85688.1A

Fig. 3.17. Detail of Fig. 3.16

Fig. 3.18. Plum blossom cup and stand (one of a pair), 17th century. PEM AE85688.1AB

Fig. 3.19. Silvered bronze lion and grape" mirror, Tang dynasty
Private collection

Fig. 3.20. Octafoil bracket-lobed mirror with landscape and the eight divinatory trigrams, silvered bronze, 40.7 cm diameter. Likely China, 8th century. Shōsōin Treasury, Nara, Japan

Fig. 3.21. Six-sided cup stand. Gold, made by Chinese metalsmiths, eighteenth century. On loan to the Peabody Essex Museum from a private collection

Fig. 3.22. Detail of relief of Fig. 3.21

Fig. 3.23. Plate or cup stand, silver gilt (gilding applied in England, c. 1826), late seventeenth or eighteenth century. RCIN 50264.c

Fig. 3.24. Detail of central medallion of Fig. 3.23

Fig. 3.25. Interior of Fig. 3.1

Fig. 3.26. Bamboo carving detail, Qing dynasty. Private collection, Taipei

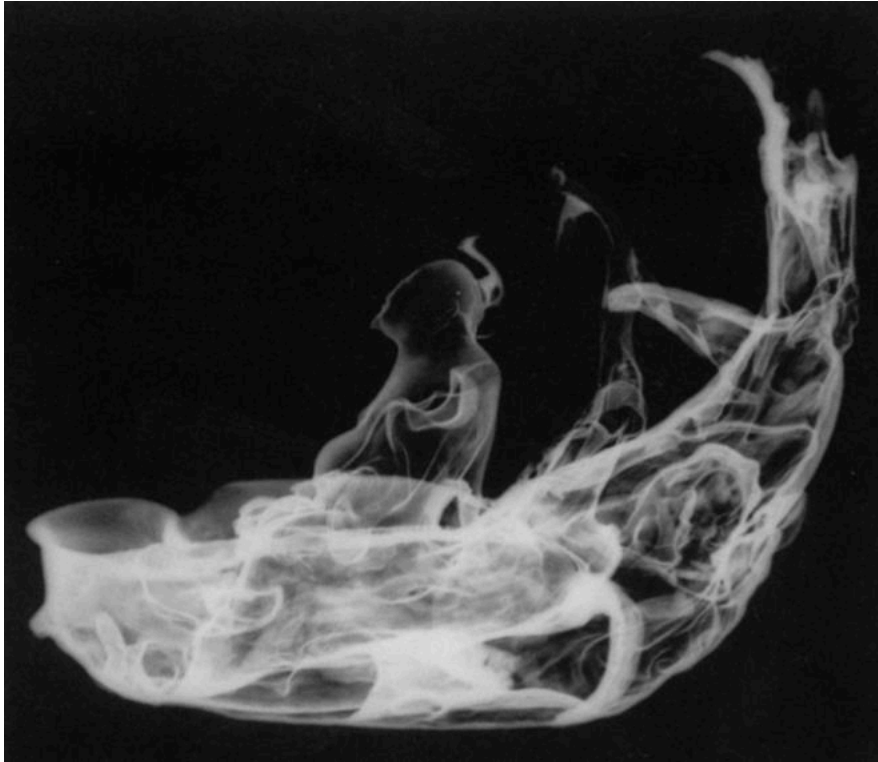


Fig. 3.27. X-ray of raft cup, Fig. 1.1. Image from Bruce Christman, Technical Note on the Raft Cup," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 81:10 (Dec.1994): 403, fig. 2

Fig. 3.28. Detail of Fig. 3.1, panel showing soldering of applied elements

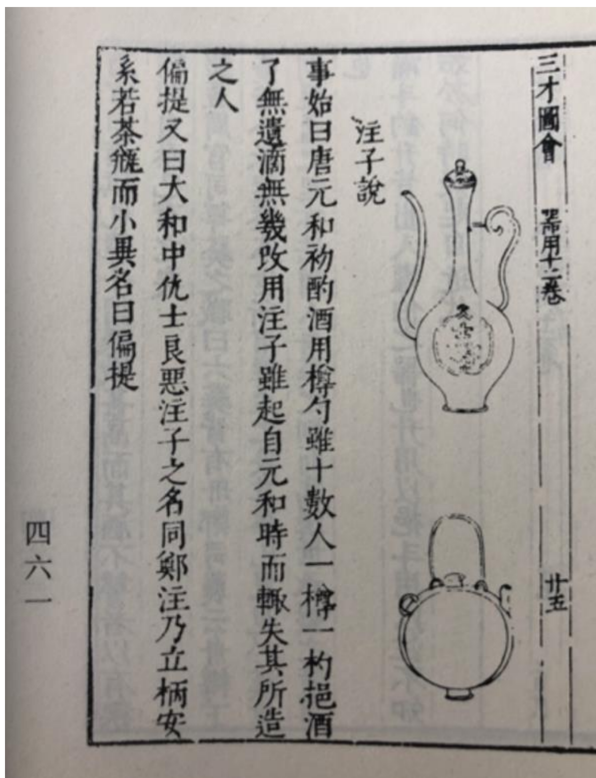
Fig. 3.29. Beijing silversmith embossing a piece of silver with a hammer and punch. From Hedda Morrison, "Handicrafts" albums, photographs taken in Beijing ca. 1933-1946. Yenching Library, Harvard University

Fig. 3.30. Beijing silversmith using a blowpipe. From Hedda Morrison, “Handicrafts” albums, photographs taken in Beijing ca. 1933-1946. Yenching Library, Harvard University

Fig. 3.31. Comparison of two versions of panels on Fig.1

Fig. 3.32. Gilt copper box, possibly for snuff. Chinese, late seventeenth century or early eighteenth century. PEM

Fig. 3.33. Two gold ewers from tomb of Prince Liangzhuang, early Ming period. Hubei province



三才圖會 器用十二卷 廿五

注子說

事始曰唐元和初酌酒用樽勺雖十數人一樽一杓挹酒了無遺滴無幾改用注子雖起自元和時而輒失其所造之人

偏提又曰大和中仇士良惡注子之名同鄭注乃立柄安系若茶瓶而小異名曰偏提

四六一

Fig. 3.34. “About ewers,” in *Sancai tuhui* 三才圖會, *Qiyong* 器用 [utensils for use], 1609

Fig. 3.35. Silver ewer, early Ming tomb, Qinchun, Hebei province

Fig. 3.36. Covered long-necked ewer (one of a pair), 17th century. Raised copper with cold-worked applique ornament. Clague Collection, 227

Fig. 3.37. *Zhanpan* 盞盤 cup and stand, in *Sancai tuhui* 三才圖會, *qiyong* 器用 [utensils for use], 1609

Fig. 3.38. Wine cup in the shape of a *ding* 鼎 (one of a pair), silver with mercury gilding, late seventeenth or 18th century. Hermitage, 50

Fig. 3.39. Gilt bronze cup with *lingzhi* ear handles, late 17th to early 18th century. Published Jonathan Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces,* 63

Panel view from above

Panel view from below

Fig. 3.40. Top and bottom views of curved panel, Fig. 1

Fig. 3.41. Ten-lobed covered cup and stand. Made by Chinese silversmiths likely in Batavia for a Dutch patron, silver. H. 14.7cm, early eighteenth century, gilt in England, c. 1826. RCT 50264a,b

Fig. 3.42. Cup with lid and plate. Silver, h. 13.5cm. Made in Batavia by Dutch goldsmiths, 2nd half of the 17th century. Rijksmuseum

Fig. 3.43. Photographer unknown, silverwares of the sultan of Ternate, Indonesia, c. 1920. KITLV 6862. Leiden University. http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:789273

Fig. 3.44. *Zisha* red stoneware teapot with later filigree mounts, made Yixing, China, late 17th century. Hong Kong Museum of Art, c.1981.0482

Fig. 3.45. Porcelain teapot or wine pot, made Dehua, Fujian, China, likely one that appeared in an 1693/4 Kensington Palace inventory. Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 1182

Fig. 3.46. Longquan porcelain *meiping* vase of octagonal form with Daoist immortals, high-fired ceramic with mold-stamped decoration under glaze, 1279-1368, China. H: 10 7/8”. Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, B60P372

Ch. 4. An Auspicious Ewer and its Transpacific Trajectories

"The list of the King's presents is complete; if you are not satisfied, that is your problem." [1]
Abbé de Choisy to the Abbé de Dangeau, from Ayutthaya, November 11, 1685

Introduction

When the earliest recorded example of a French silver *chocolatière,* a vessel used for preparing and serving drinking chocolate, came to light in 2018, it was black, covered in a dense layer of tarnish (fig. 4.1, hereafter called the Versailles ewer).[2] It was also not French. Rather, it was the only verifiable artifact that has survived from what Sophie and Michael Coe have termed "a very strange episode in the relations of Baroque Age Europe with Asia."[3] Namely, the event that produced the first documented silver *chocolatière* in France was the third diplomatic embassy sent by King Narai of Ayutthaya (r. 1656-1688) to the French court of Louis XIV in 1686. Sensational in its time and remembered vividly across Europe for decades, the mission arrived at the newly-constructed Hall of Mirrors at Versailles with over three hundred bales of objects carefully chosen for different members of the court—including approximately eighty pieces of Chinese and Japanese gold and silverwares, and Thai metalwares of tambac, a copper-zinc alloy. The Chevalier de Chaumont, French ambassador to Thailand in the previous year, published an inventory of the gifts in his travel and diplomatic memoir of the mission. Marie-Laure Rochebrune has demonstrated that the ewer was part of the gift by verifying the 1697 and 1729 inventory marks on the object (fig. 4.2).[4] She has argued that in the diplomats' inventory the ewer with a thin, sinuous bamboo spout was categorized as one of several chocolate pots, described variously as "Une chocolatiere d'argent, fleurs d'or" and "Une autre chocolatière d'argent, fleurs d'or, d'un ouvrage fort revelé, du Japon."[5] The inventory suggests that a "Japanese" silver container made with the specialized function of pouring a Mesoamerican

[1] Abbé de Choisy, *Journal of a Voyage to Siam, 1685-6,* trans. Michael Smithies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 185. Choisy wrote his travel accounts of the mission as a journal addressed to his friend Dangeau; Smithies writes that it was likely evidence that Choisy used it as a literary device with plans to publish it from the start distinct from the format used by Chaumont. "Introduction," in Choisy, *Journal of a Voyage to Siam,* 33.

[2] The earliest mention of *chocolatières* in French comes from a letter dated 1671 by the Marquise de Sévigné to her daughter, Madame de Grignon, urging her to drink chocolate medicinally, but lamenting that she did not have the proper equipment — namely, a *chocolatière* — to make it. Suzanne Perkins, "Is It a Chocolate Pot? Chocolate and Its Accoutrements in France from Cookbook to Collectible," in *Chocolate: History, Culture, and Heritage,* eds. Louis Evan Grivetti and Howard-Yana Shapiro (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 158.

[3] *The True History of Chocolate,* 2nd. ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 159. The sole other surviving object connected to the mission is a mounted jade in the collection of the Prado. See Leticia Arbeteta, "Tesoro del delfín. Una herencia de la familia real francesa," in *Los tesoros ocultos del Museo del Prado* (Madrid: Fundación Amigos del Museo del Prado, 2017), 248-276.

[4] Marie-Laure de Rochebrune, "Un trésor retrouvé: une verseuse chinoise en argent, offerte par les ambassadeurs du Siam à Louis XIV le 1er septembre 1686, revient à Versailles," *Revue du Louvre et des musées de France* 1 (2019): 59.

[5] Alexandre de Chaumont, *Relation de l'ambassade de Mr. le Chevalier de Chaumont à la Cour du Roy de Siam, avec ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable durant son voyage* (The Hague: Isaac Beauregard, 1733), 161.

drink—a newly-fashionable ingestible procured through Spanish imperial networks—was first brought to France by Siamese statesmen.

After the pot was restored by conservators, not just the flowers but other elements projecting in high relief on its paneled surfaces shone with touches of mercury gilding. It is six-lobed with a segmented bamboo spout and a handle incised with designs meant to mimic wood grain. Each rounded surface bears a panel of different vertical landscape scenes in relief, inset within a foliate frame. On two panels, for example, paired deer graze under a plum tree with intertwined branches, and a duo of phoenixes flirt amidst tree peonies. The relief emerges from the matted surface (fig. 4.3). Like the Tang revival relief described in the third chapter, small, raised elements contrast against the fine-grained horizontal punching in the negative space of the ground, creating multiple cohesive layers of textural relief. These panels all carry auspicious meanings in the form of rebuses. For example, "deer" (*lu* 鹿) is a homophone with "superfluous" (*lu* 祿), a message conveying a wish for great wealth; the phoenix (feng 鳳) combines with the peony to convey the message *fugui jixing* 富貴 吉祥 "May there be wealth, rank, and good fortune," among other possible combinatory meanings with the elements of the panel. I focus my analysis, however, on the auspicious meanings associated with the elements of relief projecting and branching off the surface of the vessel, which in some cases merging with the objects' appendages.

Other examples of the vessel form are known, but this is the only one that can be dated to the late seventeenth century; much like the six-sided ewer with English hallmarks, the vessel's history of transmission to Europe has been recorded on its surfaces through European methods of accounting for precious metal objects. Much like the third chapter on Tang revivalist ornament, this chapter positions the iconography of the Versailles ewer within the history of Chinese art and design, establishing connections to related objects and visual sources. I argue that the vessels' forms activated a set of auspicious meanings resonant in a Chinese context, with the implications that the luxury vessel form was first developed for Chinese, rather than European consumption. The chapter then turns to the transmission of the Versailles ewer to Europe by way of Siam. The case of its transformation into a Siamese diplomatic gift to the French further reveals that the bilateral relationships set up by "export" narratives are much more complicated. Rather, in the material circulations and discursive packaging of the container as a "Japanese" *chocolatière,* the transpacific connections between Asia and the Americas become most salient. They also bring to light the regional and global articulations of power through which a Chinese ewer was transformed into a transpacific diplomatic vessel.

An Honorific Ewer: Bamboo, Plum, and Pine

My analysis focuses on an investigation of how late seventeenth century and eighteenth-century vessels, the ornamental surfaces described as a type of "japan-work," and on the inventory described as gold flowers, and work in high relief, merge with the naturalistic appendages. Thus the framed, and therefore contained, landscape scenes on the faceted surfaces literally grow outward into the user's space, through the affordances of silver. The signifying features of the Versailles ewer are made more apparent through comparison with another ewer in the Leung collection, dating to the late seventeenth or eighteenth century (fig. 4.4). Many other ewers that resemble the Versailles ewer appear in public and private collections, such as another one in the Hermitage Museum, yet like the decoration on the objects' surfaces, little attention has been paid to the ewer form (fig. 4.5). Some of them are engraved with Chinese shop marks or

collectors' marks in the form of Chinese characters. Due to the pattern of survival, they are assumed to have been produced for export to European markets. A closer look at the objects from the perspective of craft and form demonstrates that they were legible within elite Chinese contexts of object connoisseurship, honorific gift-giving, as well as social wine- and tea-drinking practices. In this section I examine the set of references that the ewer makes within a Chinese context of auspicious signs and gifting practices, arguing that the ewer activates the iconography of bamboo, plum, and pine through its reliefs and appendages. While the forms of bamboo, plum, and pine (the "three friends of winter") would make an appropriate gift to a Chinese scholar-official or elite male figure, the illustrated use of similar vessels in women' drinking contexts demonstrates the remarkable ambivalence of the ewer — in this case, in terms of gender, but in the rest of the essay, in terms of cultural reception.

The six-lobed vessel is patterned after melons or other flower, fruit, squash and gourd forms, naturalistic in the late Ming, and simplified and abstracted into the Qing. Gold and silverwares utensils were increasingly given organic forms starting in the Song dynasty. Different natural forms were duly connected with auspicious meanings. One of the earliest silver ewers discovered through modern archeology in 1959 is a Song melon-shaped vessel with a long, narrow spout from a Sichuan temple site. The vessel was hammered and raised into a naturalistic form, with gently-rounded lobes that are slightly uneven. It was completed with a stem above a flat-hammered leaf cap or lid, which is deeply chased with foliated designs (fig. 4.6). Another common Song silver form were lobed cups that resemble plum blossoms (fig. 4.7). Qing versions discussed in chapter three, such as fig. 3.18, are effectively, stem cups with naturalistic stems, complete with incised whorls on the broken edge of the stem. In the 1562 Yan Song inventory, many different plant vessel-form ewers are listed, such as melons and gourds. Another one of the gold vessel types included in the Yan Song inventory was a "pine, bamboo, and plum ewer" (*songzhumeihu* 松竹梅壺).[6] The three characteristic elements can also be found on the Versailles ewer and its related objects, especially the way that the vessels' handles, spouts, and finials are sculptural renderings of the three friends in silver.

The three friends appear across many artistic media of the late imperial period, from paintings to lacquer to furniture. On a Ming porcelain dish, for example, they are painted in a neat line on the face of the plate in underglaze blue (fig. 4.8). As pine and bamboo are evergreens, the appearance of plum blossoms in the late winter heralds spring. Therefore, the combination in the decorative canon of Chinese auspicious design—sometimes with the addition of a lotus—carries the meaning of steadfastness and resilience, ideal qualities ascribed to the Chinese scholar-gentleman.[7] They are also appropriate good wishes for longevity. It is unknown whether the Yan Song *songzhumeihu* was a decoration inscribed or applied to its surface, or whether somehow the ewer was made to literally embody the characteristics. Yet in examining the late seventeenth-century Versailles and Leung collection ewers, the so-called "three friends of winter" are brought alive, growing from its surface and radiating out into its limbs.

As Annette Haug and Adrian Hielscher have written, materials have many aesthetic qualities, which are variously revealed and concealed through different treatments. In the case of silver as in any metal alloy, polishing, oxidizing, inlaying, or coating are all interventions that

[6] *Tianshui bingshan lu: Fu Qianshantang shuhuaji*, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Gushuliutongchu, 1921).
[7] Terese Tse Bartholomew, *Hidden Meanings in Chinese Art* (San Francisco: Asian Art Museum, 2006), 210.

allow for different qualities of the metal to be "visually privileged or made visible."[8] Planished silver surfaces could produce reflective effects. By contrast, the makers of the Versailles and Leung collection ewers textured, matted, segmented, layered, and linked its surfaces and appendages. Twisted branches on the surfaces and limbs were made to resemble organic materials constituted through metal. On the "three friends" ewers, the aesthetic potential of silver is explored through its extension and enlivenment into plant forms.

On both pots, double arched bamboo tendrils connect the bamboo spout to the surface. The segmented bamboo spout swells so it is thicker at the base; where the segmenting is more compressed and curved, it resembles the underground root of the bamboo plant. Towards the top of the spout, the arching tendrils connect to the surface, where they extend into thick bamboo leaves in relief (fig. 4.9). On the Versailles ewer, they are gilded, and further are illusionistically constrained by one of the vertical panel frames. In Chinese or Buddhist design, often more precious materials used to imitate bamboo. In the Han dynasty, a bronze censor was made with a stand imitating bamboo (fig. 4.10). A Liao dynasty silver ewer has a curved spout, also segmented to imitate a bamboo stem or root (fig. 4.11). The use of precious metal and tropical hardwoods made the impermanent living bamboo permanent, as well as provided a medium for sculptural expression, as seen in the case of the silver ewers.[9] Moreover, associations with the refinement of rusticity made bamboo an elegant form, an idea which gained additional currency in Buddhist contexts when expressions of material luxury needed to be tempered by shaping them into humble objects and materials.[10]

Something similar might be noted of the arched yet flat-topped pine "wood" handles on the two ewers. On the Versailles ewer, the handle is chased with wavy graining, while on the Hermitage ewer, the knobby handle is covered with whorls chased into the handle. On both ewers, the lower attachment of the "wood-grain" handle splits off into small branches that like the bamboo branch, connect with surface relief on the body in the form of round pine sprays (fig. 4.12). Wood-grain patterning and wood textures were appreciated in furniture, either as a finished surface or as unfinished, rustic roots and branches. The table legs that appear in a late seventeenth-century Suzhou print are made of seemingly unrefined branches and vines, which are grained, twisted, and knotted with whorls (fig. 4.13).

Jonathan Hay has called such decorative strategies "material patterning," and associated it with scholarly refinement. The word for such natural designs was *wen* 紋 or "pattern," which is a homophone for the word *wen* 文 meaning culture and refinement in the terrestrial realm, as well as cosmic order in the heavenly realm.[11] Hay and others have made the connection between decoration as a metaphor for the revelation of the natural essence or substance of things; in the scholar's studio, he has noted, "natural patterning functioned as a metaphor for cultured

[8] "Materiality as decor: aesthetics, semantics, and function," in *Materiality in Roman Art and Architecture: Aesthetics, Semantics and Function,* eds. Annette Haug, Adrian Hielscher and M. Taylore Lauritsen (De Gruyter, 2022), 5.
[9] Sarah Handler, *Austere Luminosity of Chinese Classical Furniture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 77.
[10] Mette Siggstedt, "Chinese Root Furniture," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 63 (1991): 147-52.
[11] Cast silver ingots from the late imperial period also had *wen* in the patterns left by the cooling of the metal in its mold, though which the quality of the alloy was allegedly ascertained.

refinement."[12] Silver in the form of cast, high-grade boat-shaped ingots was also understood to have natural patterning. Swirls and lines created on the topmost surface of the ingot from gradual cooling in the mold were known as *wen* and were viewed as a way to assess the quality of the ingot. Further, in late Ming texts on assaying ingots, ripples on high-grade silver were analogized to pine wood-grain (*songwen* 松紋).[13] The twisting, expressive graining of the Zhu Bishan raft cup discussed in chapter one indicates that one of the aesthetic potentials explored by Chinese silversmiths was its ability to mimic the texture of tree bark and grain (fig. 4.14). One of the poet-revelers encountered in chapter one, Zhu Yizun, described the vessel as taking the form of an "ancient tree several thousand years old," its "hoary bark cracked and peeling, its twigs torn." He imagined where such a form might have been sourced, as if it was a naturally-occurring object: "On some gloomy cliff, since it was felled by a devil's axe, years of rain have covertly gnawed its mossy coating into veins, lines, and speckles."[14] Only after he imagined the history of organic growth and decay of the vessel does he turns to the figure seated inside. Either on the raft cup or the "three friends" ewers, the exquisite detail of the *wen* of the twisted tree in silver must have contributed to its value as an object that could express values of cultural refinement, as well as the natural passage of time. Through the graining on the handles of the ewers, the true pattern of the pine is expressed—and in this case, it could be a material reference to the high fineness of the silver alloy of the vessel.

The finial of the ewer form completes the trio of bamboo, pine, and plum. The finial of the Leung ewer is a twisted plum bough in blossom, with a similar twisting and interweaving set of plum tree bows on the panel that includes the bamboo leaves. A geometric chrysanthemum-shaped finial on the Versailles ewer does not conform to the tripartite pattern. However, on a panel with a downward-reaching pine branch in figure 3, a lively, twisted plum tree completes the set of references. As Maggie Bickford has written, the plum tree is a morphologically and metaphorically rich subject in Chinese art.[15] The artistic qualities of the twisted plum tree, and its conventionalized approach in Chinese art are conveyed in the *Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden* (*Jieziyuan Huapu* 芥子園畫譜), a printed manual on Chinese painting first published in 1679:

> Attention should be given to the structure of the tree in all of its strange and wonderful shape…. The roots of the tree are torturous in some parts and outspread in others, the ends of the branches like flying plumes, the blossoms with their heads grouped like *pin* [the character *pin* 品]…. The trunk seems to have the scales of a dragon, the scales being like old scars.[16]

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[12] *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 130.

[13] Bruce Rusk, "Value and Validity: Seeing through Silver in Late Imperial China," in *Powerful Arguments*, ed. Martin Hofmann, Joachim Kurtz, and Ari Daniel Levine, Sinica Leidensia (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 483n25.

[14] "Album of Painting and Calligraphy for Maoshu," *Metropolitan Museum of Art collection online,* accessed 7 Dec. 2022 < https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/65628>. Translation by Shi-yee Liu.

[15] For more on the auspicious meanings of the plum, see Maggie Bickford, *Ink Plum: The Making of a Chinese Scholar-Painting Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[16] *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting: A Facsimile of the 1887-1888 Shanghai Edition*, translated and edited by Mai-mai Sze (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 402.

Against the textural stasis of the trunk, the branches are meant to be enervated with life: "Sinuous branches should give an impression of growing and stretching out."[17] At the end of one passage, the plum is described as the optimal embodiment of pine and bamboo together, as the "purity of the bamboo and the strength of the pine are manifest in the plum."[18] Given the levels of symbolic registration of the winterly triad, it is not surprising that they were adapted to the three-dimension form as ewers, beyond serving as a subject matter for painters. A copper ewer with cold-worked and gilded relief panels and black induced surface color, dated by Robert Mowry to the mid-to-late eighteenth century, is yet another version of the pine handle, bamboo spout, and plum finial ewer form (fig. 4.15). If purity and strength are qualities made manifest in living trees and plants, the metalsmiths' craft makes inert metallic matter into a lively organic tangle of blossoms, branches, and pine sprays, bringing the object to life as if to activate its symbolic meaning.

The concept of the form was evidently part of a standard repertoire of elegant Chinese antiques and fine objects by around 1707, when a version was included on two panels of the border of a coromandel screen (fig. 4.16, 17). Perhaps understood on the folding screen as wine ewers, their medium as imagined through carved lacquer intriguingly intertwines artificial and natural. Possibly the vessels were regarded to be sculpted out of a hardstone or made from a ceramic. One of them, shown together with a basket and a small fan, appears partially animated, with a gnarled branch for a spout, and flowering branches on the body which move from depicted surface image to living branch as they reach as if to grow off the body, and become the handle. Another image of the ewer form appears on a court painting dated around 1709 to 1723, one of a series of beautiful ladies (fig. 4.18, 19). The painting depicts an elegantly-dressed woman, her hair ornamented with jewelry of gold, silver, jewels, and kingfisher feathers, drinking tea from a porcelain teacup with peach-bloom glaze. An ewer resting on a table to her right is partially obscured by the tree that frames the right side of the painting. Under the circumstances implied, presumably here it functioned as a vessel for pouring tea. Unlike the lacquer craftsmen who made the screen, the court painter was evidently concerned with conveying material qualities more precisely, as suggested by the difference between the wood grain on the table and the whorls of the tree. The ewer was painted in gold and silvery tones, indicating the painter might have been intended to convey a precious metal vessel — even a mercury-gilt silver one, like the Versailles ewer. Most remarkably, the visible details of the ewer bear many similarities with the naturalistic forms of the Versailles ewer crafted in metal, such as the bamboo root spout, and plum blossom and bamboo relief ornament.

The two eighteenth-century visual sources suggest that ewers related to the forms and decoration of the Versailles ewer were also in use in elite Chinese contexts and were possibly connected to tea-drinking in women's domestic settings. Given their auspicious connotations, they would also have made good gifts to male elites. Due to their craft, which both occluded and drew attention to the monetary value of their substance, gold and silverwares made excellent gifts to officials — and it is very possible the Yan Song inventory could be in part, a record of gifts operating as bribes to the Grand Secretary. In the late Ming novel *The Plum in the Golden Vase* [*Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅], which is often used by scholars as a window onto sixteenth-century elite material life, the main character, Ximen Qing, a corrupt merchant with upwardly-mobile aspirations, uses a set of gold and silver wine vessels along with fifty silver taels, or ingots, to

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[17] Ibid., 403.
[18] Ibid.

bribe the district magistrate.[19] Sophie Volpp has written that the novel moreover satirizes the accumulation of gifts as a form of official corruption; among the ludicrously wealthy, money has little value, but much more valuable are "goods that are difficult to procure."[20] While "three friends" vessels are multivalent, if not multi-functional, finely-craft objects like the Versailles ewer could have served as an honorific gift or bribe among men.

Chinese and Chinese diaspora silversmiths produced six-lobed ewers related to the form of the Versailles pot, which could be adapted for different uses by different markets. Related examples were made in enamelware, copper, and ceramic for both domestic and foreign markets, though like one enameled metal ewer, they may not follow the same "three friends" iconography (fig. 4.20). The vessel form was not ideal for making drinking chocolate, or for heating tea, but it could dispense water or wine, or decoctions prepared in a different vessel. Thus it was versatile as an ornamental ewer for social occasions, ceremony or display. Though it is difficult to know where the ewers were produced, many were almost certainly made in Canton in the eighteenth century. As mentioned in the introduction, in the early eighteenth century, English East Company (EIC) merchant Robert Scattergood kept a running account with Canton shopkeeper Buqua, a silverwares merchant who also repaired watches and jewelry. In 1714, he purchased a "silver teapot to keep tea water warm" from Canton retailer Buqua.[21] Did Scattergood's ewer look like the Versailles chocolate pot, the six-sided ewer, or something else altogether? One important example is engraved with *Yueyoudian zao* 粵有店造, or "Canton shop" (fig. 4.21). It also has a VOC import mark, which dates its arrival to the Netherlands from Asia between 1814 and 1893.[22] The shop was illustrated by Chinese draftsmen working for the market of foreign sojourners in Canton in a nineteenth-century drawing, which was included in a collection of ink illustrations of Canton shops now in the British Museum (fig. 4.22). Labelled as a *dayinpu* 打銀鋪 or silverworking shop, the name of the shop is also visible in at least five places on the hanging and posted signage. The long vertical sign on the left specifies that the shop specializes in gold and silver jewelry and silverwares. None of the shop wares are visible, however, but rather locked away in drawers behind counters, indicating the relatively high security necessary for shops dealing in precious metalwares. The connection between the inscribed object and the Guangzhou shop image is a rare correlation; it is unknown whether the shop took a romanized name as was typical among the Cantonese silverwares industry. Perhaps the shop mark preceded the use of imitation English hallmarks discussed in the fifth and sixth chapters.

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[19] *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei, Volume One: The Gathering,* trans. David Tod Roy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 189.

[20] "The Gift of the Python Robe: The Circulation of Objects in 'Jin Ping Mei," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 65: 1 (Jun. 2005): 143.

[21] Philippa Glanville, *Silver in England* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1987), 164. The evident distaste for imported southeast Asian wine vessels among Cantonese markets, however, raises the question of how such wares were dispersed once they were imported; potentially they were resold to foreign sojourners by Cantonese shop retailers such as Buqua, or sold wholesale and re-exported.

[22] The latter might suggest they were either consumed by members of the VOC in their Asian colonial trading outposts, such as in Batavia (present-day Jakarta), or were later purchased from previous owners as antiquities.

Unlike the six-sided ewer discussed in the previous chapter, the tall, lobed ewer was not widely copied outside of Asia.[23] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the ewer form prevalently appeared as a wine ewer used in Peranakan Chinese wedding ceremonies in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, though in such settings it took on a different set of ornamental and auspicious features. Sylvia Fraser-Lu has written that the wine ewer form was used in the same contexts for ancestor worship rituals.[24] According to Ho Wing Meng, it was a relatively rare object by the late twentieth century, limited to the wealthy as others would use porcelain versions. He described one example with six longitudinal panels embossed with scenes from martial dramas as an heirloom of a Malacca family and suggested that based on craftsmanship it was likely made in southern China for the Peranakan market (fig. 4.23).[25] On Peranakan ewers, the relief is no longer applied, but was created through embossing. The iconography of the "three friends" is replaced with lion finials, *kui* 夔 dragon faces at the base of the spout, and other motifs. The panels on this particular example are covered with the martial and hunting imagery that was popularized in the nineteenth century, and commonly produced by Cantonese silversmiths. Thus the "three friends" ewer form was adapted in the southeast Asian context for ceremonial uses, demonstrating its versatility.

Finally, the description of an object as a "silver ewer" or *yinhu* 銀壺 in an undated hand-transcription, or *chaoben* 鈔本, of collected series of manuals relating to the Qing pawn shop industry (collectively entitled *Zhibao jingqiu* 至寶精求) offers a last clue as to how such ewers were perceived through Chinese epistemologies. In a section that discusses the evaluation of different types of objects and jewelry, "Secrets of understanding jewelry" *Shoushi mijue* 首飾秘訣, the *chaoben* notes that there is a type of *yinhu* made "specifically to give as a gift. Each one is fifteen to sixteen *liang* in weight. Its craftsmanship is exceedingly exquisite, as demonstrated through the way its spout and handle turn and bend."[26] The manual directs our attention to one continuity in how the six-lobed ewer form has operated in known examples throughout its history. It functioned in gift-based and ritual contexts, whether as a diplomatic gift, an honorific gift, or bribe, or as a wedding or ritual implement, as primarily an ornamental luxury object, albeit one that activated auspicious signs through metal craft. The auspicious iconography of bamboo is typically valued for its flexibility—it could bend in the wind and not be broken, like a good civil servant. The "three friends of winter" ewer gave form to how the plant could signify through the plastic and sculptural properties of silver, as confirmed by the evaluation of the pawnshop manual.

The Foreign Materials of Thai Kingship

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[23] One example marked by the English goldsmith Andrew Fogelberg with the assay date of 1774 at PEM is thought to be a Chinese import, but I suspect it is a rare copy made by an English goldsmith, pending firsthand study.
[24] *Silverware of South-East Asia* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), 77.
[25] Meng, *Straits Chinese Silver: A Collectors' Guide* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1984) 156.
[26] 銀壺有一種專門送禮者每把約重十五六兩極其精巧其觜柄轉灣之豦. *Zhi bao jing qiu* 至寶精求, chaoben (Cuizhuxuan Zhengji 翠竹軒鄭記, between 1795 and 1911).

How was the Chinese silver *songzhumei* ewer transformed into not only a Thai diplomatic gift, but also a "Japanese" chocolate pot through its transcultural gifting? The remainder of the chapter traces the global transmission of the object to the court of Louis XIV in 1686. Previous scholarship on the 1686 Siam mission was written in a lacuna of artifacts, and thus focused on the context and process of exchange over the specificities of individual objects. However, scholars have placed special importance on the gold and silver gifts, and have argued that they were political agents that shaped Franco-Siamese relations, assuaged competing agendas, and revealed asymmetries in kingly aspirations.[27] Their studies follow reappraisals of diplomatic gifts invigorated by anthropological theories of exchange.[28] Giorgio Riello has noted that as one of France's main objectives was to consolidate French trading privileges in the use of Thai ports, usurping the Dutch in their dominance in the region; the gold and silverwares aptly demonstrated Thailand's commercial potential as an access point to China and Japan.[29] Meredith Martin has argued that the precious metalwares were meant to stir up the French's "gilded dreams" of the potential richness of Thai's untapped gold and silver mines.[30] Thus the silverwares speak to both the value of Chinese and Japanese luxuries in circulation, as well as the intrinsic value of the material.

In the place of objects, scholars have pointed to a print image of the Thai embassy attributed to the French Jesuit artist Pierre Paul Sevin, which shows the ambassadors placing gold and silver gifts at the feet of Louis XIV at Versailles (fig. 4.24). Yet the depiction of Asian precious metalwares in the print are impressionistic rather than sketches taken from the objects. A key at the bottom of the image labels many of them — such as "a Chinese gold vase" and "a gold Japanese flagon" — as if to serve as a pictorial inventory of the gifts. Yet while many of the vessels are faceted and lobed, like Asian vessel forms, most verge closer to fantastical versions of European forms. One object, labeled a "*chocolatière* with its cups," appears to be a perfume bottle with a wide, lobed base, a long narrow neck, and a stopper with a globular top (fig. 4.25). The resurfacing of one luxury silverware from the cache lends a concrete, if partial, form to the precious metal gifts brought from Thailand. It allows us to move beyond the metal value of the

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[27] Meredith Martin wrote that they "complemented, exceeded, or in some cases, deviated" from state ceremonial protocols and agreements, allowing for non-explicit forms of '"mirroring 'between the two powers" in their negotiated understandings of rulership and trade. See "Mirror Reflections: Louis XIV, Phra Narai, and the Material Culture of Kingship," *Art History* 38:4 (Sept. 2015): 653, 654. Giorgio Riello has noted that the exchange of gifts was a means to assuage cultural misunderstandings, though the asymmetries in the intention of their selection, and their assessment and treatment upon reception, reveal differences in how they were put toward performative use in expressing kingly power. See Riello, "'With Great Pomp and Magnificence: Royal Gifts and Embassies between Siam and France in the Late Seventeenth Century," in *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia,* eds. Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritsen, and Giorgio Riello (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 238-9.

[28] My methodological approach to the material specificities of the gifted object as well as the event of transmission is indebted to Cecily J. Hilsdale; see "The Social Life of the Byzantine Gift: The Royal Crown of Hungary Re-Invented," *Art History* 31:5 (Nov. 2008): 605; "Gift," *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012): 173. Also see *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange,* eds. Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner and Bernhard Jussen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

[29] Riello, 244-5.

[30] Martin, 664. Martin notes that French Jesuit missionary Guy Tachard, who accompanied several missions to Thailand, surmised that the island had rich precious metal resources because it was located on the opposite side of the globe from Peru.

gold and silverwares, and their value as "sample" manufactures obtainable through Thai trade connections. Rather, we can interrogate the value of craft and materiality of the ewer: its specific expressions of power and hierarchy in the context of transcultural diplomatic exchange.

From the evidence of this object as well as inventory of gifts published by Chaumont, it is notable that gold and silver gifts were not Thai manufactures. Some French courtiers complained that they were only indicative of a country without its own luxury production.[31] Phra Narai was remarkably fluid in his expressions of both sacred kingship and worldly cosmopolitanism, and thus the Chinese and Japanese gold and silverwares sourced directly from his palace and storehouses must be considered as extensions of his rulership. His was a Theravada Buddhist kingdom with a Brahmanic courtly culture; he claimed he was a descendent of the Khmer kings of Angkor, and yet during his coronation ceremony he was consecrated as a manifestation of the primary gods of the Hindu pantheon, Brahma, Vishnu, and Śiva.[32] Beyond his pluralistic sacred authority drawn from south and southeast Asian religions, he was fascinated by how power was expressed through objects and architecture by foreign courtly cultures across Eurasia.[33] Among the Siamese court and nobility, foreign luxuries were essential displays of social status both locally, and to visiting Asian counterparts. Siam international trade was primarily motivated by the desire to source such goods, as well as metals necessary for munitions and temple construction.[34] As historian George Vinal Smith wrote of Narai, in seventeenth century Ayutthaya, "the reign of King Narai was undoubtedly the most elaborate and luxurious" and international trade consequently was at its most vigorous in the period.[35] Foreign luxury objects were indicative of his power and the commercial reach of his realm, but more to the point, materially constitutive of his kingship. Luxury objects manufactured by Chinese silversmiths carried the powerful valences of Narai's ability to acquire such goods, as well as the political might of the more powerful empire.

In the burgeoning, if short-lived, official state relationship between the French and Siamese crowns at the close of the seventeenth century, diplomatic ceremonies were carefully orchestrated to negotiate regimes of power. Quantities of lavish gifts were required by Siamese protocol, and were given with the expectation of reciprocity. Indeed, the reception of the 1686 embassy at Versailles was arranged precisely with the intent of replicating Siamese state ceremony in order to convince the Siamese ambassadors that Louis XIV stood on equivalent footing with Phra Narai. Differently from the French, the Siamese viewed diplomatic gifts as inalienable possessions of the king, as if they were parts of his body. In this chapter, I extend Barry Flood's notion of "cultural cross-dressing" to the Chinese and Japanese gold and silverwares given as diplomatic gifts by Phra Narai. In the context of sartorial codes exchanged between Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist elites in 10th-12th century northern India, Flood has written that clothing could produce subjects both physically and socially, that clothing's "incorporative qualities" might lead elites to appropriate clothing used as an articulation of

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[31] Riello, 245.

[32] Alan Strathern, "Sacred Kingship under King Narai of Ayutthaya: Divination and Righteousness," *Journal of the Siam Society* 107:1 (2019): 57-8.

[33] Martin, "Mirror Reflections," 655.

[34] George Vinal Smith, *The Dutch in Seventeenth-Century Thailand* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University and the Cellar Book Shop: 1977), 74.

[35] Ibid., 73.

power in nearby regions, effecting "radical translations in identity."[36] I contend that the cultural cross-dressing through the craft of the container was its operative efficacy, in that it served as a surrogate for Phra Narai — especially through its enfolded references to Japanese craft and Chinese form.

In doing so, I destabilize the dominance of the vessel's European reception history, and moreover the binary relationship between Siam and France (as proxies for East and West) that has gained currency through recent emphases on the reciprocal metaphor of mirroring, as well as the global trade in mirrors and mirroring technologies.[37] Certainly it is an apt metaphor; after French envoys Chaumont and Choisy had been received by Phra Narai the previous year, they returned in the spring with detailed instructions about how to prepare the court for the reception of their Asian counterparts. Louis XIV closely questioned the two when they arrived at Versailles, as one historian has written, "to recreate detail for detail the ceremonies observed at Chaumont's reception, using French equivalents for Siamese forms."[38] The trope of the mirror has also been invoked readily and to convincing effect in recent art-historical scholarship of late seventeenth-century colonial encounter and economy, relations that laid the groundwork for the European imperialism and colonialism of the eighteenth century. Byron Hamann has argued that objects sourced from the Americas in Velázquez's painting *Las Meninas* operated as mirrors for projecting structurally-hidden indigenous labor, lending it indirect visibility.[39] Elizabeth Horodowich and Alexander Nagel have characterized the knowledge structure through which Europe constituted itself within a global geography in the late seventeenth century as an "Amerasian mirror," through which Asia, Africa, and the Americas were organized under an "axes of association" of terms such as India, Indies, and Indian.[40] But a mirror is a material surface that leads to effects of estrangement just as much as self-constitution. According to David Nye, polished surfaces that allow for a sharp, mirror-like reflection, yield "an equivocal effect because the surface itself is all but invisible" and so evades an easy settling of vision; as a result, "we are thus left in some slight unease because we are uncertain about what we are looking at and where."[41] I thus instead turn to the multiple and variable aesthetic potentials of silver to evoke the prismatic range of social, ritual, and economic value brought to their crafted surfaces in the context of early modern diplomacy.

Unlike the planished surfaces of European silverwares that produced reflective effects, the surface of the Versailles ewer is purposefully textured, matted, segmented, and layered, in the way that natural and dimensional forms merge with surface. It thus operates more so in line with Pamela Crossley's invocation of a mirror in the Chinese imperial context as a historical

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[36] Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 63

[37] Martin, 660-3.

[38] Ronald S. Love, "Rituals of Majesty: France, Siam, and Court Spectacle in Royal Image-Building at Versailles in 1685 and 1686," *Canadian Journal of History* 31 (Aug. 1996): 188.

[39] "The Mirrors of *Las Meninas*: Cochineal, Silver, and Clay," *The Art Bulletin* 92:1/2 (Mar.-Jun. 2010): 29.

[40] "Amerasia: European Reflections of an Emergent World, 1492-ca.1700," *Journal of Early Modern History* 23 (2019): 289.

[41] *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (Cambridge University Press, 1968), 91.

narrative, through which the light of the present as well as the shadowy past could be seen.[42] Like Crossley drawing on the image of a translucent mirror in her efforts to make the layers of the past visible, I offer what Dipesh Chakrabarty has called "the partly opaque relationship we call 'difference'" at the uneven intersection of Western and non-Western understandings of objects.[43] In using Chakrabarty's metaphor for historicizing knowledge, namely through "translucence — and not transparency," by holding in tension multiple perspectives and orientations at the point of its exchange, I investigate the mutable surface of a silver container, one that itself can be qualified as translucent, as well as tarnished.[44] The auspicious botanical forms of the ewer took on new meanings as they were prepared to be sent to France, and were instead associated with American plant commodities. Importantly, what might be described as an "Amerasian mirror" was constituted in 1686 in southeast Asia, emerging out of a Pacific trading context where American and Asian goods and crops intermingled.

Choisy and the Section and Packaging of Gifts

French courtier François-Timoléon de Choisy (1644-1724) was coadjutant ambassador to Chaumont in the 1685 French mission to the Siamese court, which immediately preceded the Siam ambassadors' reciprocal visit to Versailles. Choisy played a remarkable, if mostly overlooked, role as intermediary in the missions. During the 1685 French mission, he accompanied Constantin Phaulkon, the Greek adventurer who had been installed at the center of Narai's court as chief minister, in the selection of diplomatic gifts directly from the storerooms and palaces of Phra Narai. Phaulkon was a former employee of the English East India Company, who had become the primary advisor of the Thai king. This section focuses on Choisy's accounts of sourcing the gifts, placing them within the luxury economy of southeast Asia. Insofar as he was dedicated to the successful reception of the gifts at Versailles as a form of royal bodily recognition, we can thus view the objects as an expressive language of geocultural positioning.

Choisy lived an early life as a member of French high society who found himself deeply mired in gambling debts. He took his orders to become a Catholic priest while on the French mission to Siam that preceded the reciprocal 1686 mission to Versailles.[45] He was part of the conclave that elected Pope Innocent XI, was charged with Saint-Seine abbey in Burgundy, and was elected dean of the Académie Française. He went on to write notable historical and theological works. Upon his death, his nephew and executor discovered two fragments of memoirs — distinguished from his other papers due to their meticulous script and lack of corrections — concerning his experiences living for several years in Paris, Bordeaux, and Bourges by assuming the identities of several different women. While scholars have cast doubt on their authenticity, whether or not the cross-gender memoirs are accurate transcriptions of

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[42] As Crossley wrote, "We should not be too ready to associate the mirror with reflection of oneself, though modern academic theory predisposes us to see all as our own projection and to regard self-narrative as the only authentic enterprise. In earlier uses, 'mirror' — whether the historical narrative, the model ruler from the past, or the tool used to inspect one's own image — was associated with words for looking, and especially for 'light.'" *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 23.

[43] *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 17.

[44] Ibid., 18.

[45] *Journal of a Voyage to Siam,* 212-3.

experience is less important for my purposes.[46] Rather, they reveal Choisy's keen understanding, if articulated later in life, of how material objects could incorporate a subject in radical rearticulations of identity, and how social performance was contingent upon the effective deployment of material codes.

He recounted how he began living as one persona, Madame de Sancy, by first re-piercing his ears (his mother had pierced them in childhood, but the holes had closed up), then donning "embroidered corsets and bold and black *robes de chambre* with white satin panels, with a hooked belt and a large knot of ribbons at the back to show off my waist, a long trailing train, a heavily powdered wig, earrings, beauty spots, and a small bonnet with a *fontage.*"[47] He then detailed all of the people he visited as the Madame, and their different ways of approving of his appearance. He wrote that over time, he slightly modified his appearance — undoing buttons, wearing different earrings, restyling the wig, and changing the arrangement of beauty marks — and in doing so, "little by little, I accustomed the world to seeing me adjusted."[48] From his descriptions of life as Madame de Sancy, it is possible to see that Choisy viewed social identity as a dialogical process, and one effected through the dynamics of power enabled by self-fashioning. According to Choisy, an understanding of gender as a constructed field of material and bodily comportment was conditioned in him from childhood, as he wrote, "almost from birth my mother accustomed me to women's clothes."[49] Thus his perspective on the sourcing of the gifts is valuable from two respects: first, he regarded them with the understanding that dress and luxury goods could be wielded to rearticulate one's positioning within regimes of power, and second, he was interested in how such codes operated through these particular objects.

The port of Ayutthaya was a rich, if competitive, source for global luxuries, indicating how the objects eventually selected for the mission were initially acquired by Narai. It is possible that Choisy's request to Louis XIV to join the mission was motivated in part as a way to access costly Asian luxuries as a means of repaying his debts; through his journals, it is clear that he also brought an acquisitive eye to the mission. In October of 1685, he notes after the mission had been received at Ayutthaya that he had tried to buy some things, but that the selection was poor because the English had already traded for the best goods:

> To have rare things, you have to be here in the months of April and May, when the ships arrive from China and Japan. The merchants of diverse nations buy up everything to send back home, and at present, not being able to have anything first hand, we are at the mercy of people who want to make a big profit.[50]

King Narai sent his own ships to India, China, Japan, and Dutch colonial Batavia. For example, between 1664 to 1694, the Thai sent seventy-seven junks to Japan, fifty-four of which were

[46] In the memoirs, which recount his seductions of young court ladies as the Madame and Countess, he appears in lavish gowns, silks, and jewelry. Scholars have cast doubt on their veracity as historical events, as not a single period source has been discovered that corroborates what in Choisy's rendering are very public existences and audiences with important social and ecclesiastical figures. Paul Scott, "Authenticity and Textual Transvestism in the Memoirs of the Abbé de Choisy," *French Studies* 69:1 (Jan. 2015):15.
[47] "Excerpt from *Mémoirs de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme* (*Memoirs of the Abbot de Choisy Dressed as a Woman*)," original by François-Timoléon de Choisy, translated by Emily Rose, *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 6:3 (Aug. 2019): 449.
[48] Ibid., 450.
[49] Ibid., 449. Emily Rose's translations of excerpts from his two memoirs written as women helpfully distinguish between his variable use of masculine and feminine verbal constructions. For Rose, Choisy's occasional use of feminine grammar is what distinguishes the texts as trans.
[50] *Journal of a Voyage to Siam,* 171.

commissioned by the king.[51] Narai was an ardent consumer of foreign luxury goods sourced through his own shipping, as well as through tribute and international trade.[52] Choisy emphasized in his November 6 entry Phaulkon's experience in the China and Japan trade, and his acumen as a trader, a portfolio of skills that made him indispensable to the Siamese court. According to Choisy, Phaulkon had five or six ships which carried on his personal trade to China and Japan; it is through the means of these ships that his own storehouses were filled with gift selections.[53] Upon the completion of the list of gifts, Phaulkon further stressed that many of them were "just for display," and that Louis XIV should send him a list of further things he should want based on what was sent.[54] Thus it is possible that most of what was sent was already in the court's possession, and that little if anything was specially commissioned for the French court.

Choisy's experience selecting gifts appears in his memoir of the French embassy, which were published under royal imprint almost immediately after he returned.[55] Ideas of "self" and "subject" of a late-seventeenth-century Thai king were necessarily much different than the French courtier. Yet Choisy's attention to objects and their social meaning in the Siamese context, and their agency as cultural intermediaries, is a recursive thread throughout his journals of the mission. Given that the journals were published by 1687 and could be compared against other eyewitness accounts as well as by the narratives published by other members of the mission, it is possible to view them as more reliable narratives than his posthumously-discovered memoirs.

Through Choisy's journals, Phaulkon emerges as an outstanding ambassador adept at cross-cultural diplomacy. When the 1685 French mission proceeded on the river from Bangkok to Ayutthaya, they stopped every night at houses that were outfitted especially for the comfort of the Europeans with new furnishings produced expressly for them. Choisy wrote Phaulkon had "ordered all this; the houses, the furniture, everything is according to his design, and although we have not yet met him, we can appreciate, from his behaviour, that he has much judgement. He must have to have risen to the post he holds, and he knows that more than anyone else."[56] Phaulkon attended to the small details of every part of the 1685 French mission, from the cleaning of the French gifts before they were presented to Narai, to gifts sent to the ambassador along the way, to the highly-sensitive matter of the physical presentation of Louis XIV's letter to the king.[57] Choisy was evidently impressed by Phaulkon's attention to detail in cross-cultural diplomacy.

In late October, Phaulkon began to show Choisy through the palaces and storehouses to begin gift selection. In the palaces, Phaulkon toured Choisy through rooms of rarities and treasure assembled under different Siamese kings. According to Phaulkon, the treasure is seen as indicative of that king's social status; "the king who, at his death, leaves the greatest treasure is more honored than the one who has won battles." Choisy is, however, critical of the kings' hoards, readily placing it within the European lens of oriental despotism: "would it not be better for a king to spend two million… than to bury them and to deprive his people of them forever.

[51] Smith, 78.
[52] Smith, 74-5.
[53] *Journal of a Voyage to Siam*, 186.
[54] Ibid., 209.
[55] Smithies, 6.
[56] *Journal of a Voyage to Siam,* 152.
[57] For the latter, see ibid., 163-4.

For here no one touches this amassed wealth."[58] Exotic, imported luxuries are revealed again as constitutive of Siamese rulership, here as inalienable possessions of former kings.

In the storehouses, their task was to choose "what is finest there" as presents for Louis XIV and his court.[59] What follows is an episodic account of the gradual emptying out of the residences and storerooms of Narai, evidently with the expectation of French return in the form of even more spectacular (and rarer, from a southeast Asian perspective) European goods. Given that Narai's kingship was constituted through his luxury possessions, it was also remarkably fungible. Choisy is set to the task of choosing and ordering presents for the King, the Dauphin, Mme la Dauphine, and their sons on November 3 — a weighty responsibility, for "If the presents are not beautiful, it will be [his] fault."[60] Choisy is set on "great golden vases [which are] just as good as screens and eaglewood."[61] Selecting and preparing the presents take places over the span of weeks. Phaulkon also began to choose his own gifts for the king and court, which are strategically, "not as lavish as those of his master, but which are at least as agreeable." On November 7, Choisy wrote, "The list of presents never ends; more are always being brought forward." Later he wrote, "Assuredly the King's presents are magnificent and increase by the hour…. and more than four times I said to Mr Constance [Phaulkon], *basta,* but he added ever more, and as he only has to take them from the royal stores, and his power is limitless, he adds everything he thinks worthy of the King."[62] As confirmed by Choisy's experience, Siamese court ritual required that the French embassy was barraged with gifts throughout their stay.

Lisa McQuail has written that gifts to foreign delegations from the Thai court were tripartite: first, there was an "official welcome," consisting of costly accommodations and personal gifts to the diplomats; second were the "gifts of mutual respect" (*khru'ang ratchabannakan*) of Thai forest and agricultural products; third was gifts of insignia of rank (*phraratchathan*).[63] Certainly the effect of the overwhelming generosity of the king to the French embassy was to instill Choisy with a heavy sense of obligation, and regret that he had nothing more to give them in return. Also on November 7, it was revealed that Narai was including all of the Chinese porcelain in his council room in the capital as a gift to Chaumont, which was worth, in Choisy's estimation, 2,000 crowns. With them were included a small Persian carpet, which according to Choisy, was worth almost the same in Persia.[64] Over a month later, on December 14, when the king asked all of the furnishings of his council room be packed up to accompany the porcelains — "Persian carpets with a gold background, Chinese screens, a bed, a dais, and so on" — Choisy declared "These people are rather overwhelming…. Certainly this man likes to give presents, but it is getting irksome. If we had something to give in return, it would be a pleasure; but always to receive and to give nothing is hard to endure. We shall have to send some from France."[65] Clearly it was French or European luxuries that were desired in return. On November 29, when Phaulkon sent him some personal presents, Choisy wrote "If I had something very interesting in the French style, assuredly I would give it to him. He will

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[58] Ibid., 174-5.
[59] Ibid., 174.
[60] Ibid., 179.
[61] Ibid., 174.
[62] Ibid., 183. The primary language that Phaulkon and Choisy used to communicate was Italian.
[63] *Treasures of Two Nations: Thai Royal Gifts to the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Asian Cultural History Program, Smithsonian Institution, 1997), 17.
[64] *Journal of a Voyage to Siam*, 183.
[65] Ibid., 218.

wait…for the return of the Siam ambassadors."[66] Upon their departure, Narai ceremoniously bestowed an insignia of rank on Chaumont, in the form of a (likely Siamese) gold betel box, an object whose bestowal granted Chaumont the equivalent of a ducal rank in the Thai court.[67]

The amount of presents soon began to exceed the ability of the French to transport them, to the point of imperiling their return. Also on November 9, Choisy wrote that the ships were loaded with 300 bales, and they could not obstruct the bridges or gun batteries without putting the ships in danger; when he expressed this to Phaulkon, the latter laughed "saying it would be curious if two French ships could not carry the presents of the King of Siam; and just to annoy me he went to look for a golden basin, a gold writing desk, and a gold cup to add to presents for the Dauphin."[68] After the ships were loaded and they are about to leave, the King's expectations were underlined by two Chinese officials in the employ of his court, who were sent with "samples of things he wants to have made in France. He is urging us greatly to give him a list of things which would please our King, to have them made here, in China, or in Japan."[69] Again, a statement by Phaulkon indicates that the gifts for the French, such as the Versailles ewer, were objects sourced at hand, rather than special commissions.

Choisy viewed his role as one that articulated, and moreover, legitimized the presents within the social codes of Franco-Sino diplomacy. Choisy spent the morning of November 9 starting to write out the list of the presents, which he noted, "will be a book" in its discerning description of objects, not "like a trader in the Rue Saint Denis." Choisy here acknowledged the ambivalent status of diplomatic objects as they wavered between commodities and gifts. The way in which they are recorded and categorized — and not only operate as a language of expression but are elucidated through linguistic descriptions — aids in negotiating their status at the point of exchange. In the case of the Chinese porcelain, Choisy recorded them within connoisseurial canons of history and design, based both on their marks and their surface ornament. He sketched out the extent of the knowledge he brought to the porcelain gifts:

> … I hope you will like the history of the porcelains. I shall tell you: this vase came from the Emperor Jiajing, who had it made 380 years ago, this one comes from the conqueror of China; this other from Kangxi. And if you want to go into greater detail, I can tell you, this cylindrical porcelain vase was offered by the Emperor Zhengde, but it is in the Persian shape and the flowers are in the Siamese style. I can tell you that on most ancient porcelain the name of the reigning emperor appears, except for those made according to the whims of foreigners, for the Chinese never put the date if anything was not in the Chinese manner. And in this way you can, if you wish, draw up chronological tables of the history of China.[70]

In this passage, Choisy revealed a sophisticated understanding of Chinese porcelain, including how to appraise and date objects produced for imperial taste and for export markets, as well as the use of foreign design in imperial production.

Throughout the month in which he is charged with sourcing and qualifying gifts for the French court, Choisy carefully recorded the origins and composition of various types of metalwork and is particularly interested in their packaging. Cultural origins, linked to evaluation of craft production, are thus just as significant in his view as the specific givers and destined recipients of goods. On December 4, he discussed with Phaulkon the gold-copper alloy tambac, which is sourced from the Siamese mountains and considered a precious metal among them.

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[66] Ibid., 205
[67] *Aspects of the Embassy to Siam,* 65.
[68] *Journal of a Voyage to Siam*, 205.
[69] Ibid., 222.
[70] Ibid., 183.

Choisy does not see it as especially beautiful (preferring gold and silver), but noted that a large vase made of tambac was included among the presents for Louis XIV, and that an armchair was being made from it in Japan as a present for the Pope.[71] From this entry, it is clear that the sources of different metal alloys was a salient characteristic, and its geographical transformation into luxury goods was specifically part of their value. On December 10, King Narai presented Chaumont with a gold saucer and covered cup of Siamese manufacture.[72] Special care was taken with the precious metalwares in their packing for the voyage:

> All the gold and silver pieces are placed in large purses of Persian brocade; these are enclosed in others made of holland, and the lot are placed in japanned [lacquered] chests, placed inside ordinary chests, wrapped in oilcloth, tied with small strips of bamboo, and over each bale is a cow's hide, covered with lime, to ward off the woodworm and ants in the ship.[73]

Given Choisy's close attention to metalwares, and his task making the list of the goods that likely appeared in published form in Chaumont's inventory, how can we regard the inventory as a form of "packaging" for efficacious cross-cultural diplomacy?

Choisy likely drafted Chaumont's inventory in some form, given his supportive role in the embassy. In the French list of gifts published by Chaumont, many objects are carefully distinguished by geographic signifiers, in terms of production, style, or origin. For example, one of the first gifts on the list for Louis XIV is a tambac basin, mentioned above by Choisy, which was distinguished as "made in Siam in the fashion of the country." The word "*ouvrage*," for workmanship or work, is used repeatedly throughout the inventory, suggesting a distinction based on a quality of craft. The next gift is a gold basin, with "*ouvrage relevé"* on four sides, with its saucer, likewise of workmanship made in Japan ("*de mesme ouvrage faite au Japon*").[74] Some objects are noted as "in the Chinese fashion" (*à la façon Chinoise*); or of the fashion of the Japanese. One entry is for silver vases in the fashion of the English, for drinking beer, with their covers, likewise of Japanese workmanship (*ouvrage*). Some objects are specified as formerly belonging to the Japanese emperor or nobility, suggesting that they were diplomatic gifts that were re-gifted by Narai. Yet many objects are simply listed as "from China" (*de la Chine*) or "from Japan" (d*u Japon*). What is the meaning of "du Japan" as opposed to "ouvrage du Japon"?

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, European descriptive terms for "foreignness" were remarkably fluid. Terms such as "Indian," "Chinese" and "Japanese" were applied indiscriminately to objects sourced from Africa, Asia, and the Americas.[75] Yet from his accounts of the mission, Choisy seems interested—if not obsessed—with object specificity. But how Choisy was applying "Japan" differently in terms of origin or craft will perhaps never be known. Michael Smithies has noted of Chaumont's inventory, "'Of Japan' and 'Japan work' may mean lacquerware (for which 'varnished' is also sometimes used in the original) or may indeed mean

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[71] Ibid., 211.

[72] Ibid., 215. The presentation of a gold cup and saucer to Chaumont is also recorded in his accounts of the mission, but Chaumont does not note its manufacture. *A relation of the embassy of monsieur de Chaumont, knight, to the court of the King of Siam, with an account of whatever passed that was remarkable on the voyage,* part 1, in Smithies, *Aspects of the Embassy to Siam, 1685,* 64.

[73] Choisy, 183.

[74] *The Discourses at Versailles of the First Siamese Ambassadors to France, 1686-7, together with the list of their presents to the court,* ed. Michael Smithies (Bangkok: Siam Society, 1986), 82.

[75] Jessica Keating and Lia Markey, "'Indian' Objects in Medici and Austrian-Habsburg Inventories: A Case Study of the Sixteenth-Century Term," *Journal of the History of Collections* 23:2 (2011): 283-300.

the objects come from Japan, which was probably the case with the silverwares."[76] One case scholars have made for the imprecision of the term "Japan" in the inventory is based on the evidence of one entry for three cabinets made at "Macao capitale du Japon."[77] Yet as Kyoto was called Meaco by the English in the early sixteenth century, and so it is likely not an error.[78] Yet while we can ascribe great care to Choisy in his selection and documentation of gifts, we cannot know for certain how he drew a distinction between Chinese and Japanese objects in making the inventory of gifts. English East Company agent Robert Parker was based in the sultanate of Bantam (Banten) in Indonesia from 1678-9, and his accounts provide a remarkable window onto the late seventeenth-century southeast Asian luxuries market from the perspective of a different port. He thus had access, if at the level of a trader rather than a monarch, to similar types of luxury goods as those sourced from Narai's storerooms. Parker's accounts include different types of metalwares, including "1 small bundle w'th 2 Japan silver salt-sell's in which went a gold chaine & 2 cornelion rings worth 40," "a p 'of manilla plate, 2 Japan salt sell'r? & 2 cornelian rings." He also lists "2 Japan silver cups."[79] Again, the "Japanese" silver in Parker's account, defies specification, from either a geographical or craft perspective. Choisy most likely used "Japan" as a laudatory term, due to its period association in Europe with high craftsmanship, particularly in lacquerwares.[80]

An additional possibility, proposed by Paul Bromberg, is that the "japanned" gold and silverwares on Chaumont's inventory were Siamese niellowares — in his words, "a confusing attribution given incorrectly to many of the royal presents because the niello objects were coated with a material that gave a black gloss to them."[81] The effect of niello, according to Sylvia Fraser-Lu, is that designs appear to be outlined in silver against a black surface.[82] Niellowares were produced in Thailand as early as the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, and were produced at a high quality of craftsmanship, for a range of markets including the nobility and court, by the mid-sixteenth century.[83] The technique was likely transmitted from Persia. After designs are chiseled in relief from the surface of a metalware, a black niello amalgam, composed of silver, copper, lead, and sulphur, is applied in powdered form to fill all of the recesses. The vessel is heated, allowing the amalgam to melt and fuse with the surface. Afterwards it is cooled, sanded,

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[76] *A relation of the embassy of monsieur de Chaumont,* 137n2. Adding to the range of European uses of "japan" as applied to silver, in England, "Japan work" as well as "jappaned" were period terms for a type of specialized surface ornament altogether different from the relief surfaces of the Versailles ewer as well as niello; rather, it was a decoration formed by goldsmith-chasers, who flat-chased textural line drawings of exotic figures, plants, animals, rocks and ruins, fantasies of distant exotic and ancient lands that was a perplexing melange of references to China, Turkey, India, and Europe. See David Mitchell, *Silversmiths in Elizabethan and Stuart London: Their Lives and Their Marks* (London: The Boydell Press with the Goldsmiths' Company, 2017), 75-6.

[77] *The Discourses at Versailles,* 256.

[78] See *Letters received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East,* vol. 3, ed. William Foster (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1899), 205-7.

[79] Journals of Robert Parker, volume 2, folios 14, 16, 22; E 140/9/4, National Archives.

[80] For changing French perceptions of Japanese lacquer from the late seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries, see Kristina Kleutghen, "Imports and Imitations: The Taste for Japanese Lacquer in Eighteenth-Century China and France," *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 17:2 (Spring 2017): 177-180.

[81] Bromberg, *Thai silver and nielloware* (Bangkok: River Books Co., Ltd, 2019), 67.

[82] *Silverware of South-East Asia,* 18.

[83] Bromberg, *Thai silver and nielloware* 44, 58.

and finished.[84] Niellowares also appear in the Yan Song inventory among the silver ewers, though presumably they were produced in China, where the technique is called *wuyin* 烏銀 or "black silver." None of the silverwares on the inventory are specified as Siamese; rather, all were some variant of Chinese or Japanese.[85]

Perhaps in designating the objects as Chinese or Japanese, Choisy was following the advice of Phaulkon in allowing them to operate as expressions of Narai's kingship. The latter was deeply versed in the performance of Siamese diplomacy, and specifically in how the Siamese king positioned his polity as an importer rather than producer of luxury metalwares. Barry Flood's notion of "cultural cross-dressing" can here be extended to how the gold- and silverwares operated as material representatives of his rulership. Flood has written that clothing's "incorporative qualities" could lead regional elites to appropriate the dress used as an expression of power in nearby areas.[86] The container's enfolded cultural signifiers expressed through craft—its mutable status as a Japanese object taking a Chinese vessel form—effectively incorporated the Siamese king through his more powerful, East Asian counterparts, from whom he received manufactures as gifts as well as trading privileges.

Inventing the Americas in Asia

Choisy and Phaulkon made a similar strategic choice to express Narai's kingship by classifying the Chinese ewer as a *chocolatière.* Furthering the slippage of geocultural signifiers, the lifelike, animated Asian plant forms of the Versailles vessel were readily conflated with European ideas of "Indian" botanicals. Increasingly popular in Europe in the late seventeenth century, according to Marcy Norton, the European taste for chocolate was initially cultivated in Spanish colonial American domestic spaces, where indigenous women introduced settler-colonizers to Mesoamerican drinking practices. Not just the botanical commodity, but also the practice of preparing and drinking it, was exported to Europe from the Spanish colonial Americas.[87] However, Versailles ewer is utterly impractical as a chocolate pot. First, it has a narrow foot and high shoulder. Wide-bottomed pots, such as those used in colonial Mexico in the late seventeenth century, are better suited for the purpose of melting and stirring chocolate, and the standard form of the silver European *chocolatière* by the eighteenth century was a tall vessel with a round base based on Mesoamerican models (fig. 4.26).

Further, the ewer lacked a critical component that set apart the vessel as a chocolate pot from other specialized vessels, a distinction also made at the French court by the time of the Siamese mission: a hole in the lid through which a *molinet* or mill, a stirring rod used to stir up sedimented chocolate, could be inserted while keeping the lid closed. In a 1687 medicinal tract promoting tea, coffee, and chocolate, Nicolas de Blégny, French surgeon-in-ordinary to Louis XIV, described the properties of a vessel required for making chocolate. He noted that the

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[84] Ibid., 55.

[85] *Tianshui bingshan lu: Fu Qianshantang shuhuaji*, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Gushuliutongchu, 1921).

[86] *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 63.

[87] Spaniards encountered chocolate in village markets and were presented chocolate as a gift by Indigenous tributaries and parishioners. Yet Norton argues that both the taste and the practice of preparation were cultivated in domestic spaces. Marcy Norton, "Tasting Empire: Chocolate and the European Internalization of Mesoamerican Aesthetics," *The American Historical Review* 111:3 (June 2006): 670; 677-9.

vessels used to boil the drink resembled a coffee pot, with the important distinction of the place to insert and use the *molinet* and included an illustration of their different forms (fig. 4.27).[88] The ewer gifted by the ambassadors lacked an opening in the lid, and the finial is not detachable. Finally, as an object produced completely from silver, it was impractical as a vessel for preparing and dispensing hot liquids from a safety standpoint. While with European silver chocolate pots, such as one marked by George Garthorne in London in the same year as the embassy, a carved wood handle is attached to the pot to provide a nonconductive material buffer, wood is only referenced metaphorically through the graining on the ewer's silver handle (fig. 4.28). The unnatural chocolate pot was naturalized as such through French classification, obscuring its Chinese signification.

Interestingly and likely relatedly, late seventeenth-century European understandings of what the proper vessel for preparing the new, exotic beverage of chocolate settled temporarily on the high-shouldered form of the Versailles ewer, which in its most basic form (without its appendages) is a common Chinese shape known as a *guan* 罐 used for dispensing liquid as well as for storage. Several chocolate pots made in England and the English colonial Americas, such as the pot marked by George Garthorne mentioned above, also take the *guan* form as a basic design. Unlike the Versailles ewer, the Anglo chocolate pots share the feature of the *molinet* insertion in the lid. The goldsmiths that made these objects were likely referencing ceramic versions, or possible Chinese pewterwares, as the surfaces are mostly smooth and lustrous instead of layered, overlapping and textural (fig. 4.29). The association between chocolate and an Asian vessel form was likely made along the same southeast Asian luxury networks described in this chapter, but again based in Spanish routes through Manila. Meha Priyadarshini has demonstrated that at the turn of the eighteenth century, the *guan* form was adapted by Mexican ceramicists into the *chocolatero*, a container used to store cacao beans directly modeled after blue-and-white Chinese lidded jars that were traded through the Philippines to Mexico (fig. 4.30). The nearly simultaneous association with chocolate and a Chinese guan-shaped vessel in France, England, and the colonial Americas perhaps could be attributed to the fitness of the shape of the vessel for inserting a long rod for stirring, a practice that originated in Mexico. It was also appropriate for storage, as in the *chocolatero,* which is not surprising considering that the *guan* form was often used as a storage jar.

If the ewer was a novel form for a European audience, with surfaces and limbs of animated pine and plum flowers, then it seemed natural to connect it to new Asian and American medicinal products like cacao, coffee, and tea. In the late seventeenth century, the European logic in which the "Indies" were a single entity led to the publication of books that introduced readers to "Indian" products without any further geographical designation, such as Henry

[88] *Le bon usage,* 265-6. The treatise explained the benefits of new imported beverages from Asia and the Americas, but was also written as a form of advertisement for products invented by de Blégny and sold at the Laboratoire Royal des quatre Nations. Among the many medicinal products he advertised for sale in the last section of his treatise are "All the kinds of Teapots, Coffeepots, and chocolate pots, recently invented by Monseiur de Blégny, for the practical preparation of Tea, Coffee, and Chocolate, with the book recently printed at the privilege of the King, which teaches the best use that one must make of these beverages, and the serving utensils to prepare them." *Le bon usage pour la preservation & pour la guerison des maladies,* 334. Christine A. Jones characterizes de Blégny's book as an enthusiastic tract on the social practice of consumption, rather than a medical treatise; she wrote that it "casts ingestion, a biological act, as consumption, a sociopolitical act." See "Exotic Edibles: Coffee, Tea, Chocolate, and the Early Modern French How-to," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 43:3 (Fall, 2013): 636.

Stubbe's *The Indian Nectar, or a Discourse Concerning Chocolata* (1662). Others grouped the three hot, caffeinated drinks together, such as du Blégny's *Le bon usage du thé, du caffé, et du chocolat pour la preservation & pour la guérison des maladies* (1687), disregarding their disparate origins.[89] Transforming the Chinese *songzhumei* form into a *chocolatière,* at first glance it might seem that Choisy participated in the creation of what Elizabeth Horodowich and Alexander Nagel have termed an "Amerasian mirror"—a geographical and cultural imaginary of a global other, through which Europeans could both know and distinguish themselves.[90]

Chocolate was never imported on a large scale to China in the early modern period. Most demand for the American drink in late seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century China was among Franciscan missionaries. Franciscans imported it through Manila to drink it themselves and gave it as gifts to southern Chinese officials.[91] The European taste for chocolate was initially cultivated in a domestic sphere dominated by Mesoamerican culture.[92] It is thus not surprising that chocolate never gained currency on among late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Chinese elites, as the product required a process of acculturation. Chocolate was circulated, however, as an American luxury through southeast Asian networks. One of the French missionaries sent on the 1685 mission, Simon de La Loubere, wrote that the Portuguese drank chocolate in Siam, which had been imported from the Americas via Manila.[93] La Loubere did not comment on whether the Siamese also drank it, though he mentioned that they liked the punch brought by the English. Other American crops such as avocado, maize, and tomato were introduced to southeast Asia via Spanish networks through the Philippines.[94] Some were successful in Siam; for example, the French missionary Nicholas Gervaise wrote of maize in a history of Siam published in 1688, "Although the cultivation of maize was only started [in Siam]… twelve or fifteen years ago, already vast plains are to be seen covered in it. It grows so well in the highlands that there are grounds for hoping it may soon be a widespread crop…"[95] The EIC agent Parker imported 190 casks of chocolate to Bantam on behalf of the archbishop of Manila, as a gift.[96] Thus on November 23 in Choisy's account, when Phaulkon presented the ship captain Vaudricourt with several presents including "fine porcelain, chocolate pots, gold and silver cups of Japan, and fine japanned ware," the *chocolatières* given were, like the Versailles ewer, likely versatile pouring vessels rather than specifically made for the task.[97]

By casting the ewer with a bamboo spout as a specialized vessel for preparing chocolate, Choisy and Phaulkon served the political interests of the Siamese court by creating a transpacific

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[89] Jones, 623-625.

[90] Horodowich and Nagel, "Amerasia: European Reflections of an Emergent World, 1492-ca.1700," *Journal of Early Modern History* 23 (2019): 258-260.

[91] Bertram M. Gordon, "Chinese Chocolate: Ambergris, Emperors, and Export Ware," in *Chocolate: History, Culture, and Heritage,* 595-6.

[92] Ibid., 677-8.

[93] *The Kingdom of Siam* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1969), 23.

[94] Ibid., 596.

[95] *The Natural and Political History of the Kingdom of Siam,* translated and edited by John Villiers (Bangkok: White Lotus Co., Ltd., 1989), 19-20.

[96] Journals of Robert Parker, volume 2, folio 14; E 140/9/4, National Archives.

[97] "Ce sont de belles porcelaines, des chocolatières, des tasses d'or et d'argent du Japon, des vernis admirables…" Translation mine for the distinction between Japan and lacquer (*vernis*) that is not made in the Smithies translation. Choisy, *Journal du Royal de Siam,* edited and annotated by Dirk van der Cruysse (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 254.

imaginary that linked Asia with the Americas. The phenomenon described as an "Amerasian mirror" was thus neither an exclusively European creation, nor did it necessarily invoke a bidirectional relationship of reflection. The cultural and political packaging of the Versailles ewer demonstrates that a transpacific material discourse could be mobilized toward different strategic ends. Namely, in sending the so-called, earliest-documented example of the *chocolatière* form to France, Narai and the Ayutthaya court were uniquely positioned at the center of the late seventeenth-century global luxury economy. As this case shows, intra-Asian circulations to the Americas, and the accompanying creation of transpacific imaginaries, either preceded or worked in collaboration with those produced in Europe. While the *songzhumei* form of the Versailles ewer was never replicated by European goldsmiths on any scale, and Narai's reign ended soon after the 1686 mission, the Chinese silver object allowed the court to produce an early cosmopolitan imaginary of a transpacific world, emerging from a southeast Asian vantage point.

Ch 4. An Auspicious Ewer and its Transpacific Trajectories

Figures

Fig. 4.1. Ewer, c.1680. Made by Chinese silversmiths, silver with mercury gilding, 16 x 8.2 x 8.5 cm. Chateaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France

Fig. 4.2. French court inventory marks and inscriptions for 1697 and 1729 on Fig. 4.1

Fig. 4.3. Two relief panels on Fig. 4.1.

Fig. 4.4. Ewer, late 17th/18th century. Silver, made by southern Chinese silversmiths. K.L. Leung collection

Fig. 4.5. Ewer, c.1660-90. Made by Chinese silversmiths, silver with mercury gilding, 18 x 5.5 x 5.5 cm. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

Fig. 4.6. Melon-lobed silver ewer, Southern Song, excavated from Sichuan province, Deyang, Xiaoquan town, excavated 1959

Fig. 4.7. “Plum blossom” cup, Southern Song dynasty (AD 1127-1279). Private collection

Fig. 4.8. Dish with “Three Friends of Winter, ornament, Chinese ceramicists in Jingdezhen, late sixteenth century. Porcelain painted with cobalt blue under transparent glaze, h. 4.4 cm; diam. of rim 17.9 cm; diam. of foot 11.7 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Fig. 4.9. Detail of Fig. 1

Fig. 4.10. Gilt silver bamboo-joint stand with bronze mountain censor (*boshanlu* 博山爐), Western Han. Shaanxi History Museum

Fig. 4.11. Eight-sided silver wine ewer with peony incised decorations and bamboo spout, excavated from Bairin Right Banner tomb, Inner Mongolia, Liao dynasty (916-1125)

Fig. 4.12. Detail of Fig. 4.4, with pine branch connecting to pine tree relief on the surface of the vessel

Fig. 4.13. Woodblock print from a series of Chinese beauties, late 17th century, made Suzhou. Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum

Fig. 4.14. Detail of Fig. 1.1. Cleveland Museum of Art

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Fig. 4.16. Twelve-Panel Screen, Chinese lacquer artisans, c.1707. Lacquer, 285 x 600 cm. Lindenmuseum, Stuttgart, Germany

Fig. 4.17. Detail of Fig. 4.16

Fig. 4.18. Court painters, *Drinking Tea* from *Yinzhen s Twelve Ladies* series, 1709–23. The Palace Museum, Beijing

Fig. 4.19. Detail of Fig. 4.18

Fig. 4.20. Enameled metal ewer, 18th century. Sold Chait galleries

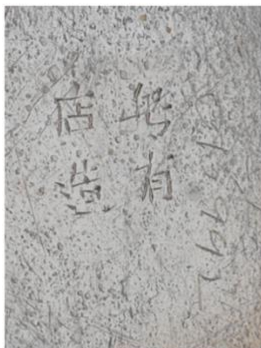

Fig. 4.21. Silver ewer with *Yueyoudian zao* 粵有店造 shop mark, 18th century, imported to the Netherlands 1814-93, sold Bonham s, 2018

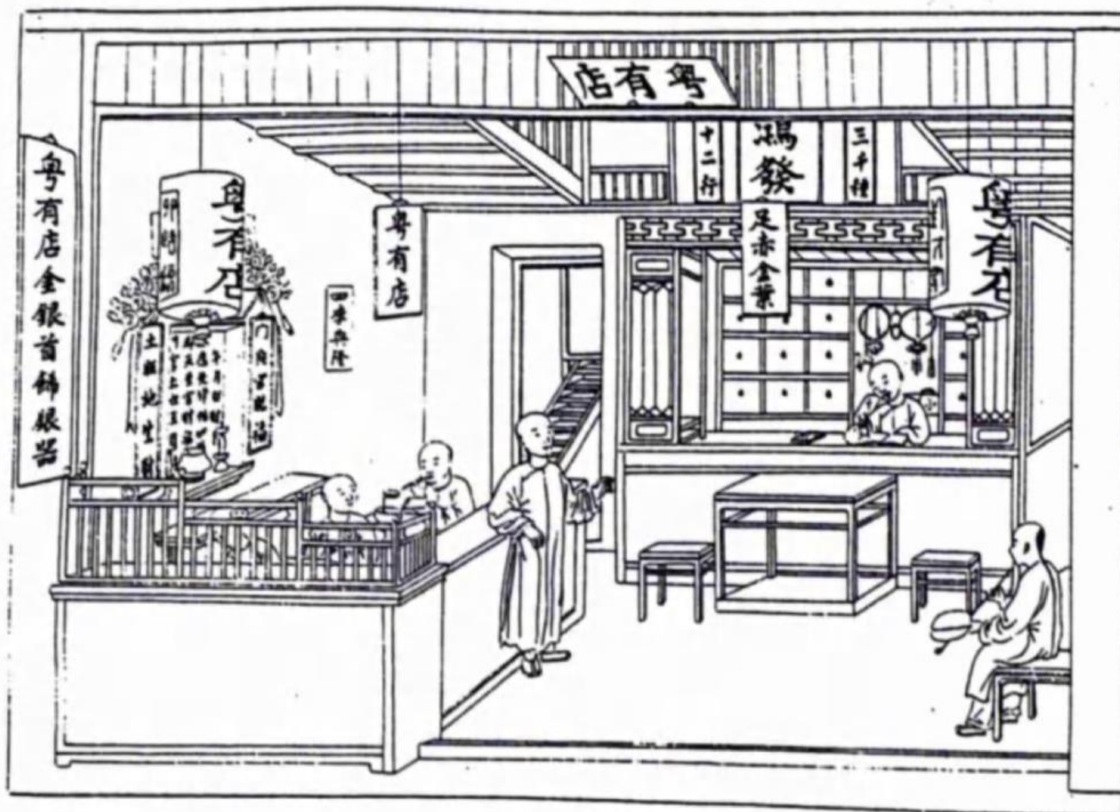

Fig. 4.22. Drawing of *Youyuedian* silverwares shop, Chinese artist, from an album of Canton shops, 18th century to early 19th century. British Museum 1877.7.14.412

Fig. 4.23. Silver ewer, made by Chinese silversmiths (possible in Canton) for a Peranakan market, late 19th/20th c, owned by family in Malacca

Fig. 4.24. Pierre Paul Sevin, *The Royal Reception of Ambassadors from the King of Siam by His Majesty at Versailles on 1 September 1686*, published by François Joillain, etching and engraving. Louvre, Inv. 26984LR

Fig. 4.25. Detail of Fig. 4.24

Fig. 4.26. Pierre Vallières, Chocolate Pot, 1781. Silver with wooden handle, 26 × 23.8 × 13.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

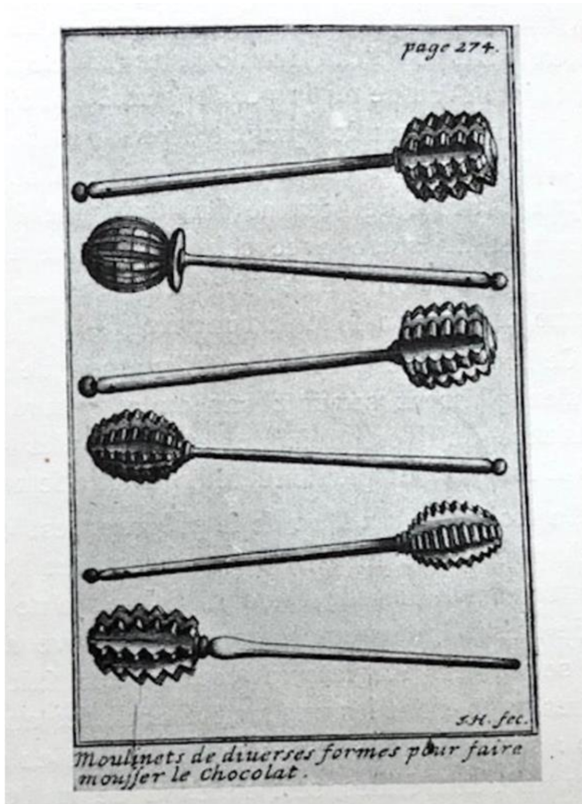

Fig. 4.27. Illustration of *molinets* from Nicolas de Blégny, *Le bon usage du thé, du Caffé, et du chocolat* (Paris, 1687)

Fig. 4.28. George Garthorne, chocolate pot, made London, marked 1686. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 99.28A,B

Fig. 4.29. Pewter tea or wine pot, c. 1700, with lacquer case. PEM

Fig. 4.30. *Chocolatero*, tin-glazed earthenware and iron. Made Puebla, Mexico, c. 1700. Met

Ch. 5. Canton Silver I: Entering a Global Marketplace of Imitation Metals

…the reputation of a nation's artists and mechanics is necessary toward extending her trade; for if her workmen are not ingenious and skilful, they will not be able to hit the taste [sic] of foreign purchasers, to tempt them with new inventions, or to imitate those of other nations, nor, in short, to satisfy the various humours and caprices of consumers.[1]

Malachy Postlethwayt, *Britain's Commercial Interests Explained and Improved,* 1757

Introduction: Producing Canton Silver in the "British Taste"

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the Guangzhou handicraft silverwares trade made exceptional adaptations to its production to make and retail wares in the "British taste." In the United Kingdom, both the British upper and middling class, as well as middle-class aspirants, purchased silver and silver-plate tablewares in sets, including sets of knives, forks and spoons, and sets of teawares that included teapots and kettles, tea urns, cream jugs, and sugar bowls. Using the objects for dining and social occasions was a requisite means of conveying gentility. [2] By the early nineteenth century, sojourners could expect to buy a wide variety of specialized silver utensils for British-style dining and entertaining while trading in the port of Guangzhou. In 1800, American supercargo Sullivan Dorr arrived in Canton with the expectation that he could fully outfit his port-based office with European-style furniture and housewares. One of the first orders he placed was for silverware: "You will see hereafter I have procured about one hundred dollars worth of silver plate for my table, which when done with shall Cr[edit] you with due proportion, taking it home with me <u>for my familys</u> use [,] they are necessarys [sic] that must be procured —"[3] His order included English-derived forms such as a coffeepot and a teapot with stand, a castor stand with six (likely glass) bottles, a sugar and cream pot with spoons, a mustard pot, a nutmeg grater, a ladle, other flatwares such as tea and dessert spoons, and a fish knife and a butter knife.[4] According to an American captain, it was standard procedure to purchase silver in the port; as he wrote in 1809, "Having taken a factory, you hire your China Ware of Old Synching, or some other merchant, and your plate of Cumshing or some other Jeweler."[5] Silver retailers based their wares on models brought from Britain and other

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[1] Malachy Postlethwayt, *Britain's Commercial Interest Explained and Improved,* vol. 2 (London: D. Browne; A. Millar; J. Whiston and B. White, 1757), 411.
[2] Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 163.
[3] Sullivan Dorr to Mssrs. Dorr, transcription of letter dated 5 February 1800, page 46, MSS 390, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 1, Rhode Island Historical Society.
[4] Sullivan Dorr, Memoranda Book, MSS 390, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 8, Rhode Island Historical Society. His memoranda book does not note the retailer, though scholars have assumed that it was a Chinese silver retailer, and the wares were produced in southern China. H.A. Crosby Forbes, John Devereux Kernan, and Ruth S. Wilkins, *Chinese Export Silver, 1775 to 1875* (Milton, MA: Museum of the American China Trade, 1975), 26. In 1801, William F. Megee purchased a silver mustard pot and spoon, a cheese toaster and bread toaster, a fish spoon, two salt cellar with spoons, and a pair of sugar tongs. The order appears in his account book with a John Lippitt and is credited to the firm Benjamin Hoppin and Co., and there is a notation that the items were purchased "with cash in Canton." Thus while they were possibly also Cantonese silverwares procured through an American intermediary, since a Chinese retailer is not noted, we cannot be certain. Mcgee accounts with John Lippitt, 1795-1800, MSS 588 Nightengale-Jencks papers, Sub Group 4, Box 6, folder 17, Rhode Island Historical Society.
[5] Walter Muir Whitehead, ed., "Remarks on the Canton Trade and the Manner of Transacting Business," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* (EIHC) LXXIII (Oct. 1937), 306, 309, quoted in Forbes, 87n3.

locales, and from there modified the forms so they could essentially be produced on demand. By the turn of the nineteenth century, a range of European (predominately British) highly-specialized silverware forms, purposely made for European-style entertaining and dining practices, and following current fashion, could be purchased with ease from Chinese silver retailers.

The objects are generally classified today as "Georgian" in form, as most were produced during the reigns of the four Georgian kings and William IV, a period that lasted from 1714 to 1837. While British silver forms varied throughout the period, they were impacted primarily by refugee Huguenot skill, references to Greek and Roman forms, restrained rococo ornamentation, and chinoiserie revivalism. Developments in British industry and empire were also important factors that shaped silverware production during the period. To give a concrete example, a four-piece tea set was purchased in 1838 from the silversmith-retailer Khechoung by the American supercargo John Robinson for his wife (fig. 5.1).[6] It is an unusually well-documented order that will inform my discussions of the meeting points of Chinese production and foreign consumer expectation in this chapter and the following chapter. What was the process by which the Guangzhou metals trade made a decisive pivot to reorganize around producing and retailing British-style objects, such as fish knives, sugar bowls, and caster sets?

Reorganization as such was not inevitable, nor was it the only type of silverware production in Guangzhou. In the previous chapter, I tracked the transpacific movements of a Chinese silver ewer. I argued that the object's form was one developed for Chinese consumption outside of the court, with at least one example connected to the silverware retail shop Yueyou 粵有 or "Canton Shop" in Guangzhou. Yet due to the fugitivity and loss of silver objects produced in the first half of the eighteenth century, there is a considerable gap in the record of eighteenth-century silver production for both Chinese consumers outside of the court, and foreign sojourners.[7] As a result, the hypervisibility of nineteenth-century Canton silver in the British taste in scholarship and catalogues has produced the notion that the Canton silver trade constituted itself naturally in response to the impetus of foreigner—and specifically British—demand.

Objects that were produced in this context are commonly called "Chinese export silver," a term that assumes a bilateral relationship between an Asian producer and Western consumer base, founded on the utilitarian logic of the market.[8] Indeed, the sustained presence of British East India Company (EIC) traders in the port from about 1757, when the Chinese government restricted all foreign trade to Guangzhou, created reliable demand for such objects. In this chapter, I counter the notion of Western consumption as the driver of innovation implicit in the standard story of the development of the Canton silver trade. I track some of the practical

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[6] Khechoung is also romanized as Khecheong, but I use the former to be consisted with a document produced by the shop discussed in chapter six.

[7] The Chinese silver collection at the Hermitage is an exception, as it is a well-documented court collection of Asian silver from the eighteenth century. See Maria Menshivkova, *Silver Wonders from the East: Filigree of the Tsars* (Altershot, UK: Lund Humpries in Association with Hermitage Amsterdam, 2006); *Treasures of Catherine the Great,* ed. Mikhail B. Piotrovski (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2000).

[8] For a consideration of how "export" operates in discussions of contemporary art, see Alex Burchmore, "The aesthetics of export in Chinese art outside of China," *Journal of Chinese Contemporary Art* 9:1+2 (2002): 19-23.

changes made by the silver retailers to produce wares that were not just in the British taste, but rather, adeptly *performed* Britishness for a wide range of markets, achieving different potentials and ends. Entrepreneurial innovations served to increase the viability of Canton wares as British-style products in a global marketplace for imitation metalwares. This chapter argues that Canton silver handicrafts were conceptually linked with the global demand for fashionable metalwares from the English Birmingham and Sheffield silver-plating industries. Rather than make outright copies, Guangzhou silver workshops and retailers worked with silver's material capacities to make wares that performed British legitimacy, using silver alloys instead of plated silver.

Georgian for Different Markets: By Hand or Machine

By the early 1800s, the British metals industry had established a high reputation for quality production, much like Chinese and Japanese porcelain production in the previous century.[9] As Maxine Berg has written, Britain and British exceptionalism became synonymous with metalworking expertise, and in particular, the invention of small, fashionable consumer goods in iron, steel, silver, silver-plate, and other alloys: watches, snuffboxes, steel buckles, enameled buttons, small stove wares, jewelry, toys and other goods, in an endless array of products.[10] As English politician and free trade advocate Richard Cobden wrote, "Our strength, wealth, and commerce grew out of the skilled labour of the men working in metals. They are at the foundation of our manufacturing greatness."[11] Thus while Canton metalworking retained its high reputation for quality of craftsmanship, British metal industries became known for novelty and scale of production, through design as well as the use of semi-mechanized production processes. Consumers sought Canton wares not as imitation British goods, but as legitimate silver tablewares produced using handicraft technologies. As the next chapter will show, Canton silversmiths achieved the production standard of British semi-mechanized metalworking trades through modular production systems, as well as a modular understanding of imported European silver forms. Chinese silverwares shops convinced buyers of the quality of their goods through the uniformity, precision, and flexibility by which they appeared to replicate the authoritative standard of the British metalworking trades, foremost characteristics of which included design standardization and interchangeability.

British-style production, while significant, was never the exclusive or likely even the dominant market for the trade, as there was consistent local need for silver utensils for wine-drinking, rituals, jewelry, and other uses. Southern Chinese customs records from the 1830s demonstrate the range of gold and silver objects exported from both the international Guangzhou

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[9] However, the reputation of Chinese porcelain in comparison to European porcelain had fallen in the period. Maria Kar-Wing Mok, "Trading with Traders: The Wonders of Cantonese Shopkeepers," in *The Private Side of the Canton Trade, 1700-1840: Beyond the Companies,* eds. Paul A. Van Dyke and Susan E. Schopp (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018), 75. Several observers variously contrast the early nineteenth-century Canton ceramic, porcelain, and painting trades as compared to European manufactures. Emma Roberts wrote, "Our extraordinary success in the manufacture of every denomination of this beautiful preparation of clay, has completely ruined the Chinese market: the shops of Calcutta are filled with goods from the Staffordshire potteries; English delf [sic], though brought from so great a distance, being much cheaper, as well as superior, to the common ware made in China, which is heavy and coarse. The exports are now wholly confined to ornamental appendages, in some of which they are still unrivalled." *Views in India, China, and on the shores of the Red Sea,* vol. 1 (London: H. Fisher, R. Fisher, and P. Jackson, 1835), 18.

[10] *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 155-8.

[11] Quoted in Berg, 155.

and regional Xiamen ports. Objects listed with customs duties in the Guangzhou port included filigree (*leisi* 纍絲) and gold utensils, which were assessed by the piece, and silverwares, which were assessed by weight, as well as foreign (*yang* 洋) filigree and silverwares. Following these general categories in the duties list, different types (*se* 色) of gold and silverwares are listed next, and may indicate commonly-sold goods that were enumerated by object type as opposed to by piece and weight. They include different types of clocks, large and small silver figurines, silver snuff boxes, gold filigree belt buckles, gold and silver buttons, gold blade handles, gold rings, gold shoe buckles, and silver spoons.[12] It is not indicated whether the specific goods listed were produced locally or were themselves imports. Presumably such objects would have been exported both to domestic and international markets, based on the location as well as the objects listed. The objects on the Xiamen customs list were likely for domestic consumption only, and again include silverwares assessed by weight, but there was no mention of gold wares or filigree. Specific items included silver soup spoons, silver boats, silver crabs, small silver wine cups without a foot, silver wine cups with tripod feet, coconut-shell bowls lined with silver, silver flower baskets, and small silver figurines.[13] While the Canton customs indicate an international market, the forms listed on the Xiamen register all suggest that they were specifically destined for inland Chinese ports. They were all likely objects produced by the Fujian rather than the Canton metals trade. Nonetheless, both customs lists offer insight into types of objects that the Canton silver trade may also have produced for local markets.

Moreover, the adaptability of the cosmopolitan Chinese business community to the interior decoration and dining etiquette of different trading partners meant that the market for English-style wares included local Chinese elites. May-bo Ching has traced the earliest account of a Chinese Hong merchant giving a party in the English style to 1769, when dinner was eaten by all with forks and knives, presumably silver, though of unknown origin.[14] Patronage of the existing Canton metalworking trade producing English-style wares thus included buyers of different backgrounds who identified British-designed silver tablewares as satisfying a requisite need for entertaining purposes. In his visit to the retired Hong merchant Puankhequa II (Pan Youdu 潘有度), James Wathen wrote that the receiving room where he met the gentleman, which he described as a "grand audience-chamber," was "furnished with chairs and tables of elegant workmanship, in the English taste."[15] A dinner held at Puankhequa's residence for the English factory was described as an "elegant dinner dressed in the mixed style, English and Chinese."[16] The American supercargo Bryant P. Tilden voyaged to Canton for the first time in 1815-6, and in his accounts described a series of banquets hosted by Chinese merchants for the members of the foreign business community. Again at Puankhequa's residence, English, French,

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[12] *Yuehaiguanzhi* 粵海关志, *juan* 7.

[13] *Xiamenzhi* 廈門志, *juan* 7.

[14] "Chopsticks or Cutlery?: How Canton Hong Merchants Entertained Foreign Guests in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *Narratives of Free Trade and the Commercial Cultures of Early American Chinese Relations,* ed. Kendall Johnson (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 101. The imperial victory of the British in the first Anglo-Chinese Opium War ended the protectionist single-port policy and led to the establishment of new trading ports along the Chinese coast and inland.

[15] *Journal of a voyage, in 1811 and 1812, to Madras and China* (London: J. Nichols and Son, 1814), 199.

[16] Ibid., 200.

and Chinese dishes were served in twenty different courses, each of which "was served separate, and with a different style of Chinese and English ware."[17] While the services were likely porcelain and not silver, it is clear that leading Chinese merchants flexibly entertained using both English and Chinese modes of presentation, serving ware and utensils, even alternating during the same meal.

While it is impossible to locate specific objects in the possession of Chinese merchants, we can surmise that they likely purchased such objects based on foreigners' reports of their entertaining using foreign and foreign-style objects. Tilden was served fine wine and port imported by the EIC, drunk "from silver cups -- and richly cut English glass, of which the Chinese are very partial, being an article they cannot imitate!"[18] At another party at the leading merchant Houqua's residence, thirty different courses were served "in a variety of ways, and in a different service of china ware & glass, each having its appropriate embellishments." Meanwhile, "The most costly of European wines were drank from silver gilt goblets."[19] The goblets were likely European in form, as southern Chinese typically drank wine out of small silver cups on stands; as an example of Chinese customs of alcohol drinking, at Chunqua's event, Tilden noted that Chinese wine was poured from silver pots into metal cups.[20] If Houqua's silver goblets were European made or styled, they might have taken a Greek revival form, with a high, narrow pedestal, a round foot, and a smooth exterior or gadrooning or fluting on the body. Such objects were also produced in Guangzhou in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, such as a pair marked by two separate Canton retailers and given to the First Church of Boston (fig. 5.2). Given the demand from a range of markets for English-style goods, the Canton silver industry was adept in the type of production required by the early nineteenth century. English-style production, while significant, was never the exclusive market for the trade, as there was consistent local need for silver utensils for wine-drinking, jewelry, and other goods. Nonetheless, accounts of such banquets demonstrate the demand among local Guangzhou elites for tablewares, and particularly cutlery and drinking vessels, in the English taste.[21]

Scholarship on the foreign consumption of Asian goods beyond silverwares has focused on the desirability of objects as expressions of global cosmopolitanism. British and American sojourners were not the only or even primary market for Canton silver in the British taste; while the main purchase cases discussed in this chapter are Anglo American due to the surviving quantity of sources documenting them, Canton silver utensils in British forms were purchased by consumers of diverse cultural, ethnic, and gender identities in many transpacific markets. Consuming British-style silverwares from China was not paradoxical to these buyers, and many were aware that their silver tea services and flatwares were made in Guangzhou. The case of Canton silver offers an alternative model of consumption; what was desirable about these objects was how they operated as simultaneously Chinese and British objects. As such, they conveyed trust through craft, and legitimacy through form.

Following sustained sojourner patronage in the port, long-distance sales of Canton silverwares in British forms were made viable through a specific entanglement of reputation via form and facture, at the center of which was a tension around production: on one hand, the

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[17] Bryant P. Tilden, "First voyage to China, master Isaac Hinckley, 1815-6," MH 219, Bryant P. Tilden, Box 1, folder 1, volume 1, 79, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum.
[18] Ibid., 81.
[19] Ibid., 231.
[20] Ibid, 78-9.
[21] Ching, "Chopsticks or Cutlery?," 108.

fashion among adherents to the "genteel taste" purveyed by the British empire for English Georgian silverware forms, many of which were adapted and modified due to their machine-based manufacture, and on the other, the technical abilities and managerial acuity of the Cantonese silver handicrafts trade. The second half of this chapter examines consumption of Canton silver at three different removes from the port—from Canton silver in the British taste purchased and used in the port, to long-distance orders placed through agents in the port, and finally, the consumption of Canton silver entirely outside of port networks. The final case discussed in the chapter will demonstrate that Canton silver could also be viewed as English and have no connection to the port, proving that the objects were effective in how they signified differently to consumers with different needs and desires. In doing so, it supplies a more nuanced sense of the varied types of values that a diverse range of consumers brought to the consumption of such objects, which will also be further explored in the next chapter. The methodology of this chapter and the next is to use objects to track production and consumption as interrelated and dynamic. Due to the interventions of the Guangzhou trade in its production and retail processes, all buyers could evidently trust in the quality of Chinese-made, Georgian silverwares, based on the metalworkers' seamless fidelity to semi-luxuries produced at the vanguard of British industrialization.

"Chinese export silver": visibilities and erasures of an object category

To account for a nuanced set of intertwined production and consumption histories, instead of using the predominately-used term "Chinese export silver" in this chapter, I prefer the terms "Canton silver," which was a period term used by Anglo consumers, as well as silver in the "British taste." While the latter was not a period term, it implies a wider consumption of British-style wares, inclusive of Chinese patrons in Guangzhou and elsewhere. It is also more resonant with the later Chinese term *xizhuang* 西裝 or "Western-style fashion," which appeared in late-nineteenth-century shop signage and advertisements for silverwares in Western forms, as well as other Western-style products, which were marketed to urban Chinese consumers.[22] "Taste" as such was thus not inherent in the Britishness of the buyer, but rather itself constituted a kind of performance through consumption. For different consumers, buying and using Canton silver in the British taste marked different relationships with British modes of empire—such as emulation, cosmopolitanism, accommodation, identification and subversion.

Before examining the production of the Canton silver trade, this section sets out the terms through which they have been studied and historicized to date. The term "Chinese export silver" emerged in the twentieth century to classify the objects discussed in this chapter. It served the important function of rendering their Chinese production history visible. In the 1950s and 1960s, a group of dealers and curators in Massachusetts began reevaluating objects found on the market and in local family collections.[23] The objects appeared to be British, American, or British colonial based on their forms, decoration, and highly-polished surfaces, all of which were consistent with Georgian silverwares. Due to construction details and family trade connections, the group began to reevaluate the production histories of objects, understanding them as Chinese

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[22] Susan Eberhard, "Concessions in 'The Silver Age': Exhibiting Chinese Export Silverwares in China," *Journal of Transcultural Studies* 10:2 (2019): 153.

[23] John Kernan had examined some of the Forbes family silverware "'known' to have been George III," but proposed that that based on the maker's marks — KHC, W, and CU conjoined — that they were all Chinese made for Anglo markets. Forbes et al, *Chinese Export Silver,* 9.

but produced exclusively for British and Anglo American consumption. An early mention of the term in print was published in the magazine *Antiques* in 1954*,* by the silver dealer J. Herbert Gebelein, who illustrated several objects from his study collection as "Chinese Export silver to Salem, Mass."[24] In 1966, Salem-based curator and historian H.A. Crosby Forbes held an exhibition of silverwares at the Museum of the American China Trade. He founded the museum in the previous year in his family house, the Captain Robert Bennet Forbes House in Milton, Massachusetts.[25] Between the exhibition and the publication of the book *Chinese Export Silver: 1785-1885* in 1975, Forbes and a group of American curators and collectors developed a new classification system for Chinese silverwares that had been "forgotten" in American and British collections.

They modeled their classificatory scheme on the object categories of "Chinese export porcelain" and "China trade porcelain," terms established by the 1950s through private collecting and exhibition.[26] According to a 1956 catalogue that claimed to inaugurate the term "China-trade porcelain," the wares were "made in China more or less according to Western specification and for Western use."[27] Defined as such, their global commodity status was viewed as their most salient property. Forbes, Kernan, and Wilkins similarly defined "Chinese export silver" or "China trade silver" as objects produced by a Guangzhou gold and silverwares industry working for foreign sojourners, particularly in the English taste. Reinforcing the notion that global commodities were estranged from the hands that made them, most of the wares they published

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[24] Forbes et al, *Chinese Export Silver,* 9.

[25] House of Representatives, Select Subcommittee on Education of the Committee on Education and Labor, "Statement of Ralph Forbes, President, Board of Trustees, Museum of the American China Trade, Milton, Mass.," *Museum Services Act [H.R. 332] hearings* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974), 255-64.

[26] Similarly, Craig Clunas has written that "Chinese export watercolours" was a name "formed by analogy" with export porcelain. See *Chinese export watercolours* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984), 7. Eighteenth-century period terms for Chinese porcelain exported to England included "East India Company china," "East India china." There is extensive scholarship on the linguistic conflation of the geographic entity China with the material/product. In England, colonial Anglophone America and United States, common terms included "Canton china," and "chinaware," while certain types of blue-and-white wares were called "Nanking" or "nankeen china" after the seaport where it was thought they were produced. In twentieth-century connoisseurship and scholarly circles, aside from the term "Chinese porcelain," these objects were also known as "Oriental porcelain" and "Oriental Lowestoft." The latter term was based on a discounted yet enduring notion forwarded by William Chaffers in *Marks and Monographs* that all Chinese porcelain with European armorials was produced in the small town of Lowestoft, England. See John Goldsmith Phillips, *China-Trade Porcelain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), xx-xxi. According to Phillips, "One of the curious things about the Chinese porcelain made for the Western market is that in the past it has been given many names, none meeting with lasting acceptance." There was a "concentrated effort to call the material 'Chinese export porcelain,'" but he elected the "new name" "China-Trade porcelain," used for the first time as a "formal designation for the ware," as an "Apparently American and of the eighteenth century in origin," as it "describes the commerce carried on in the Orient by the East India Companies and by independent merchants," of which the wares were a "significant part." *China-Trade Porcelain,* xx-xxi.

[27] John Goldsmith Phillips, *China-Trade Porcelain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), xix. For other early appearances of the term, see Margaret Jourdain and R. Soame Jenyns, *Chinese Export Art in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Country Life Ltd., 1950/New York: Scribner, 1950); J.A. Lloyd, *Oriental Lowestoft, Chinese Export Porcelain, Porcelaine de la Cie des Indes* (Newport, Monmouthshire: The Ceramic Book Company, 1954).

were preserved in American and English collections — in other words, outside of China. Moreover, insofar as the objects operated as artifacts of cultural heritage, they were valued for how they connected American families and their ancestors to the historical trade with China. For example, an exhibition of silverwares, arranged by Crosby Forbes through the China Trade Museum, toured the United States in 1984, the bicentennial of the first American trading voyage to China.[28] Titled *A Legacy of Luxury,* it positioned the objects not only as heirlooms belonging to descendants of "China trade" merchants, but moreover, as artifacts of American economic and cultural exchange with China.

The criterion of export silver was extended to include earlier wares that either were intentionally or unintentionally exported, such as the seventeenth-century six-sided ewer introduced in the introduction and analyzed in chapters three and seven. Like nineteenth-century Canton silver in the British taste, such objects were previously understood as English, despite their morphological and construction differences from their English silver contemporaries. As I will describe further in chapter seven, the PEM ewer analyzed from a construction standpoint in chapter two appeared in some of the earliest British antiquarian histories of silver plate as an English object. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Forbes et al reattributed it as the work of a Chinese silversmithing workshop through design and alloy analysis.[29] The factor casting doubt on a Chinese provenance at that time was its English maker's mark, the evidence, they wrote, that for British antiquarian W.J. Cripps "eliminated…the possibility that the pot might actually be Chinese."[30] Through x-ray spectrographic (XRF) analysis taken from several points on the object's exterior, the silver content of the ewer was averaged at around 94%.[31] The high silver content relative to the English currency and silverware standard of 92.5%, which had been in effect since 1300, was viewed as the most reliable indicator that the object was not made in England.[32] Instead it was judged to be more consistent with the alloy composition of early modern Asian silverwares. While the hallmarks had served to identify the pot as English, it is the invisible physical attribute that they verify that confirmed the object's origins. Not only was the ewer shifted from one taxonomic category to another, but its hallmarks lent it the new distinction as the earliest dated example of "Chinese export silver." It effectively moved from its benchmark position at the beginning of a sequence of formal development — based on a culturally-internal logic of stylistic change in response to notions of "taste" and endogenous cultural needs — to a

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[28] See *Chinese Export Silver: A Legacy of Luxury* (Baltimore, MD: Garamond/Paramount Press, Inc. for the International Exhibitions Foundation, 1984), unpaginated.
[29] Forbes et al, *Chinese Export Silver,* 54.
[30] Ibid*.,* 52.
[31] Late seventeenth-century English goldsmiths were able to refine their silver alloy to the minimum amount required by royal statue, which was 92.5% throughout most of English history, except for the Britannia period. For the scholarly consensus on the interpretation of the hallmarks, see correspondence surrounding the teapot's acquisition in the Asian export art curatorial records, Peabody Essex Museum. Also see Philippa Glanville, "Chinese Influence on English Silver 1550-1720," *London International Jewellery and Silver Fair catalogue* (1987), 19. Early modern painters' signatures have similarly undergone a shift in understanding, from a statement of authorial claim of the individualist artist, to a guarantee of quality of a master craftsmen overseeing a workshop of artisans who collaboratively produced the object. For a discussion of this shift in interpretation, see Clunas, *Superfluous Things,* 64-5.
[32] The Britannia standard, in effect by an act of Parliament from 1697 to 1720, was the one period of exception; it raised the standard alloy to 95.84% silver. J.S. Forbes, *Hallmark: A History of the London Assay Office* (London: Unicorn Press, 1998), 16; 18

classification that privileged the commodity status of objects. Its marks were also the evidence that thereafter served to create a history for the category.

In 1999, Forbes further linked a diverse set of eighteenth-century silver objects in English and Americans collections to the six-sided ewer based on its relief surfaces, several of which were discussed in chapter three.[33] The objects became the basis for a scattered archive now viewed as "Chinese" due to the six-sided pot's re-articulation as such. Forbes likewise attributed them to Chinese silversmiths working for export markets as an effect of their non-European design properties, such as faceted and lobed vessel bodies, lobed frames, and the use of Chinese landscape scenes and ornamental motifs. The ewer is the first object discussed in the article, where he formulated it through a revelation that became a rupture: it was previously understood to be British, until its "true identity" was "recognized."[34] While Forbes subscribed to a positivist notion of objects and their identification that I aim to complicate in this dissertation, he and his collaborators nonetheless staged two important interventions in the history of silverwares — first, in acknowledging late Ming and Qing Chinese silversmiths as makers, and second, in conceptualizing a history for silver objects that required a global understanding of consumption.

"Chinese export silver" was codified as a means of categorizing and understanding objects during a Cold War moment, when the global, in the words of art historians Steven Nelson and Caroline A. Jones, first became "imperative to think…as a necessary condition of history."[35] The authors of *Chinese Export Silver* viewed their book as an "acknowledgment of a cultural debt long since incurred but only recently recognized," as one of perhaps legion "lapses of memory on a massive scale."[36] The catalogue authors saw these lapses as a willful misapprehension. Silverwares, they contended, were under certain circumstances publicly recognized as Chinese prior to the catalogue's publication. A large silver soup tureen owned by the Low family of Salem traders and dating to the 1860s was "prominently displayed" in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's well-known 1941 exhibition *The China Trade and Its Influences*. However, from the point of view of this exhibition context, the tureen was slotted into the category of sundry Chinese luxuries consumed by foreigners, such as porcelain, fans and carved rhinoceros horn, instead of analyzed in the context of a distinct craft industry with a critical mass of surviving objects.[37]

Forbes's founding of the Museum of the American China Trade was likewise premised on a gap he had identified in the American historical memory. As noted in the museum's organizational materials, American relations with China were responsible for the nation's early wealth accumulation. Recent histories of America-China entanglements confirm the role of the nineteenth-century trade to China in accruing the capital used for the textile and railroad industries.[38] Yet in 1970, as the museum's statement of purpose claimed, American-Chinese relations was among the most overlooked chapters of American history:

Inasmuch as trade and other relations with China are once again of concern to Americans, the

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[33] "Chinese export silver for the British market, 1660-1780," *Transactions of the Oriental Society* 63 (1998-9): 1.
[34] "Chinese Export Silver for the British Market, 1660-1780," 2.
[35] "Global turns in US art history," *Perspective* 2 (2015): 11.
[36] Forbes et al, *Chinese Export Silver,* 3.
[37] Joseph Downs, "The China Trade and Its Influences," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 36:4 (Apr. 1941): 95.
[38] For example, see John D. Wong, *Global Trade in the Nineteenth Century: The House of Houqua and the Canton System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

> Museum seeks to provide Americans with usable information to help them better understand China and the many continuities as well as discontinuities between past and present…. While [the American "China Trade era"] helped make America a Pacific power, was instrumental in opening up parts of the American West and helped to make this country a maritime power, it was almost ignored… In the late 1940s, to complicate matters even further, about one-eighth of the land surface of our planet and 600 million human beings 'disappeared' as America stopped thinking about the vast land of China and forgot also about the long China Trade era…[39]

The museum was thus founded within the context of American Cold War tensions and elisions regarding Mao-era China, which had infiltrated into the realm of decorative arts scholarship.

Most of the southern Chinese silverwares published in *Chinese Export Silver* date to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and according to the authors, underwent a similar process of reattribution as the six-sided ewer. The objects had previously been obscured as English or American in collections due to a collective forgetting of their history as Chinese-made objects.[40] In identifying them as such, the authors believed they were righting what they viewed as a willful "cultural amnesia." As they put it, "until recently few reputable scholars, collectors, or dealers were prepared to acknowledge the existence of Chinese Export silver…. certainly no one had ever heard of a Chinese silversmith… Even granting there might have been one or two, was it not an accepted fact that China had little or no native silver from which to manufacture such articles?"[41] Given that generations of Euro-American traders imported massive quantities of coined American silver to China through the so-called China trade, this line of reasoning betrays the twentieth-century assumption that Chinese craft industries relied solely on materials sourced locally. In other words, China, unlike Europe and later the United States, could not operate as a hub of global commerce. It had been construed as a site of resource extraction for Western nations.

The tension of the category "Chinese export silver" is that it both counters the erasure of Chinese production history, as well as maintains a cultural binary between China and the West—a binary perpetuated through a material opposition between ceramics and silver discussed in chapter four. The term was born out of a gap in decorative arts history congruent to what Lydia Liu has called, in the looming absence of Chinese porcelain in Daniel Dafoe's novel, *Robinson*

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[39] Asian export art curatorial records, Peabody Essex Museum.

[40] Some of objects, such as a covered bowl on stand in the British Royal Collection, were likewise previously catalogued as English. The gilt covered cup and stand, which likely were not produced as a set but have been published as such, were first published in Edward Alfred Jones, *The Gold and Silver of Windsor Castle* (1911), 46, plate 23, no. 1.

[41] Forbes et al, *Chinese Export Silver,* 7. As previously described, while China did have its own silver mines, they were not exploited on the scale of silver needed for a the highly-monetized economy. Forbes et al aptly characterized the disregard of presumably European and American experts toward Chinese silversmiths as to elide centuries of silver imports carried by European and American ships to China during the Ming and Qing dynasties, effectively denying China's participation in modern global trade. The rhetoric bears instructive parallels to an article in the *London Illustrated News* on November 12, 1842, about the massive silver indemnity payment that the Qing government was forced to remit to London as part of the Treaty of Nanjing that concluded the first Anglo-Chinese Opium War (1840-1842). The article imagines that the silver was actively mined from "Golden Island" or Jinshan Island, located by Zhenjiang on the Yangzi River, which was not an active mine but rather a Buddhist monastery. In this case, the colonial gaze invents a fantastic mineral source rather than acknowledge that a war had just been concluded over the British substitution of opium for silver as the major import commodity to China. Instead, the indemnity silver was sourced from the imperial treasury of the Qing government.

Crusoe, a “poetics of colonial disavowal.”[42] Even the Chinese origin of porcelain was subjected to British erasure in the early written histories of the medium. Like the reclaiming of Chinese silver as British or American, William Chaffers claimed in 1863 that Chinese porcelain wares made for export to British markets were instead made at the small English fishing village of Lowestoft in East Anglia.[43] As a result, Chinese porcelain with designs identified for the British market was often classified by dealers and connoisseurs, and published as “Lowestoft.”[44] A 1902 excavation at Lowestoft uncovered objects and sherds made of a soft-paste porcelain body “differing materially” even from other English potteries due its coarseness.[45] Evidence of the low quality of wares produced at Lowestoft led American curator Edwin A. Barber to write that “every piece of hard paste porcelain found in this country, which has heretofore been supposed to have been made at Lowestoft, is of Chinese origin…”[46] Beginning in the late seventeenth century, the Anglo-American cultural construction of East Asia-Europe as a foundational civilization binary served to exclude China from the early modern economic exchanges of which it was a critical part. Yet unlike porcelain, which was coded as Chinese or as “china” even as they were claimed as British, silver (both Chinese and English) was both claimed and coded as English and British.

“Chinese export silver” is premised on a notion that begins to undo how art history has been bounded by the area studies model of civilizations, cultures, and the nation-state. I take this shift in understanding as an initial loosening in what constitutes both “Chinese” as well as “English" objects from the perspective of material, and the craft techniques applied to it. Yet it remains a taxonomic distinction, based on a set of criteria that attempts to fix objects in a bilateral exchange between an assumed Chinese producer and a British or Anglo-American consumer. In the most negative sense, objects understood exclusively as “export” are often imposed with a set of labor relations premised on global difference — namely, that objects were produced in one place by anonymous workers expressly for elite consumers in another. It thus substitutes an economic relationship for cultural or national centrism. Further, the transaction it sets up grants command in agency to the Western consumer, whose desire is solely determinative of Asian production. As much as it works to surface overlooked Chinese histories of silverworking, the category of “Chinese export silver” thus also functions to maintain an estrangement between China and silver. Because there is so little surviving Chinese silver from the period, the term assumes that all silver produced in China was not made for Chinese consumption.

From the late twentieth century to the present, the economic rise of mainland China, Singapore and Hong Kong has led to reinterpretations of these objects, as well as their patterns of ownership and display. As a result, they have been incorporated into a Chinese heritage sphere

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[42] Liu, “Robinson Crusoe’s Earthenware Pot,” *Critical Inquiry* 25:4 (Summer, 1999): 732-3.
[43] Chaffers published the Lowestoft attribution in his *Marks and Monograms on Pottery and Porcelain* (London: Bickers and son, 1874). Marc-Louis Salon, in an article criticizing “one of the worst mystifications recorded in ceramic history,” listed Chaffers’ evidence for the attribution, which included the appearance of the crest and initials of old Lowestoft families on wares he found in the town. “The Lowestoft Porcelain Factory, and the Chinese Porcelain Made for the European Market during the Eighteenth Century,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 2, no. 6 (1903): 271.
[44] See for example, Geoffrey A. Godden, *The Illustrated Guide to Lowestoft Porcelain* (New York: Praeger, 1969).
[45] Barber, “What is Lowestoft China?” *Bulletin of the Pennsylvania Museum* 5:18 (Apr. 1907): 34.
[46] Ibid.

as part of the *wenwu huiliu* 文物回流, or the large-scale "return flow" of Chinese artifacts lost overseas during the nineteenth century, which is coded as the "century of humiliation" in Chinese political-historical materials. Yet the terms of their return have been rather uneasy, as exhibitions preserve the history of their previous estrangement as "export" wares. Further, exhibitions have interpreted objects as fundamentally Western in form, and Chinese in decoration, consolidating their Chinese elements as secondary. *The Silver Age — A Special Exhibition of Chinese Export Silver* is an exhibition of nineteenth-century objects made for foreign sojourners which was first installed in the Changsha Museum in 2017 and toured museums until at least 2022. The phrase "Western object forms as the base, Chinese decoration as supplementary," or *xishiqi wei zhu, zhongshi wenshi we*i *fu* 西式器形为主，中式纹饰为辅 was repeated throughout the exhibition, and demonstrated didactically through case installations.[47] Thus, even in the reinterpretation of the objects in the twenty-first-century Chinese museum, the hierarchy between Asian producer and Western consumer was maintained. The rest of this chapter returns to the nineteenth century context of Canton silver's production and consumption. It argues that even more fundamentally to the Western forms of the objects is their Chinese construction, as well as entrepreneurial changes made by Cantonese silver retailers to ensure that their wares were viable and trustworthy as "British" silver. Moreover, it argues they should be viewed as transpacific objects, as they were not just consumed in the United States and Britain, but more broadly across Pacific markets, from Hawaii to Australia to Latin America.

A global marketplace of "imitation" metals

The British imitation metalware industries in Birmingham and Sheffield had reached not only a domestic but global prominence before the Canton Georgian silver trade was established. The entrepreneurial adaptations of the latter followed changes in production first made by the former, but to different ends. The Canton silver industry accommodated British design adaptations that resulted from increased mechanization and standardization, and certain construction issues created by fused plate. Another important shift was in consumption, in terms of how metalwares and their intrinsic worth were understood and valued by British consumers and Anglo consumers globally. According to Helen Clifford, the precedent for British demand for high-quality imitation silverwares was established in the 1720s, in fact through imported Chinese copper-zinc-nickel alloys such as paktong (*baitong* 白銅) and tutenage.[48] The metals were well-known in the eighteenth century as imported materials from Asia, and like porcelain, were initially viewed as miraculous and mysterious in their soft lustrousness and hard durability.[49] The white-copper alloys were especially desirable among the English elite for fire grates and candlesticks, as they retained their shine without tarnishing; Greek Revival interiors designed by architect Robert Adam at Saltram, Devon; Syon House in Middlesex; Croome Court in Worcestershire; and Coventry House, Piccadilly all included paktong fire grates (fig. 5.3)

[47] For an analysis of the exhibition, see Eberhard, "Concessions in 'The Silver Age.'"

[48] Also known as tutenag or "tooth and egg," the English understanding of the term ranged from cupronickel-zinc alloys to crude zinc. For the reputation of paktong and tutenag in Europe, see Helen Clifford, "Concepts of Invention, Identity and Imitation in the London and Provincial Metal-working Trades, 1750-1800," *Journal of Design History* 12:3 (1999): 241.

[49] "The Mystery of Paktong," *Journal of Chemical Education* 20:4 (1943): 188.

made in England from imported Chinese metals. The alloys' composition remained a mystery in Europe until it was artificially recreated in Germany in the 1750s; as British economist Malachy Postlethwayt wrote in 1751, "We have much also brought here from the East indies under the name of tutenage, yet nobody ever knew from what or how it was produced there…"[50] Unlike later silver-plated wares, paktong and tutenag were understood as a silver substitute that was nonetheless intrinsically valuable for its special properties, its Asian origins, and its unknown alloy formula until the mid-eighteenth-century.

By contrast, silver-plate wares were understood in England as a cheap alternative to solid silverwares. Fusion plating, developed in the 1740s, improved upon previous methods of silver-plating where the silver was applied to surfaces by hand. It allowed plated wares to be produced at an industrial scale, aided by flattening mills that facilitated the production of plated sheet metal at a standardized gauge.[51] In order to create plated sheet metal, a base metal ingot (typically copper) was bound together with a thin layer of sheet silver on either one or both sides, applied with borax as a flux, and then heated until the silver began to melt. The adjoining surfaces of copper and silver would fuse. The plated ingot would then be cold-rolled into sheet metal through a powered iron rolling mill. The plated sheet could be worked thereafter like sheet silver, as the fused metals responded to heating and working like a homogenous material.[52] The imitation metals industry not only made desirable, semi-luxurious tablewares with the appearance of silver more affordable and available, it also used the quick production made possible through semi-mechanized means to drive the change of fashion.[53] As Helen Clifford noted, the acceptance of plated and other imitation metals by British consumers and export markets as effective substitutes for solid silver plate meant that the value of fashion eclipsed that of the metals' intrinsic worth.[54]

Increasingly, consumers understood that codes of refinement and respectability could be signaled through a table set with a highly specific array of silver-resembling objects in particular configurations. They also understood that taste was communicated through form and a reflective surface veneer, rather than through substance.[55] The English goldsmiths' company protested the fused plate industry in the 1760s, resulting in the formation of a parliamentary committee to investigate the "Frauds and Abuses" of the trade, yet by the last decades of the century the market demand for Sheffield plate and other alloys had triumphed over their protests.[56] The Birmingham and Sheffield industries were much more responsive to demand for new forms and fashions, and could make wares for middling markets. As a result, designs created by different British metals industries were readily copied and imitated by each other. Philippa Glanville has described a "culture of imitation" between London goldsmiths and Sheffield platers, such that the "design and finish of plated wares was virtually indistinguishable from those in solid

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[50] Quoted in Clifford, 253n3.
[51] Anneke Bamberg, *Old Sheffield Plate* (Haverfordwest, Great Britain: Shire Publications, Ltd., 1988), 3.
[52] Ibid, 6. Birmingham and Sheffield metalworkers were therefore highly skilled and had undergone a long period of apprenticeship, as they had to draw on the same set of specialized craft manufacturing techniques as goldsmiths of the period such as raising and chasing. Bamberg, 26.
[53] Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure,* 157-9.
[54] "A commerce with things: the value of precious metalwork," in *Consumers and luxury: Consumer Cultures in Europe, 1650-1850*, ed. Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 164.
[55] Ibid, 161-2.
[56] Ibid., 242.

silver."[57] All metalworking industries had access to powered machines such as fly presses, die-stamping machines, and flattening mills, which increasingly determined both design decisions as well as component production.[58] The establishment of the British imitation metals industries by 1770, which is approximately the time that the Canton Georgian industry was beginning to offer a larger array of silver handicrafts in the British taste, suggests that the latter responded to the value shifts and design interventions of the former. Consumers were no longer primarily invested in silverwares as wealth. Thus, both changes in British production and consumption laid the groundwork for the viability of Canton silver within a global market of imitation metalwares.

While we have no evidence for the profits made by Cantonese silver retailers, and indeed scant textual sources from the industry remain, I contend they operated as translators across different standards in order to accumulate wealth through their adaptation of a British design system, relying on local skill and industrial organization.[59] The managerial feat of reproducing the output of a foreign industry, and the resulting accumulation of capital that followed, can be attributed to the silversmith-retailers whose names we know through shop names and brands. However, even more so than in the English metals industry, the identities and stories of smallworkers, plateworkers, finishers, chasers, and other specialized craftsmen are lost, apart from the evidence of their highly-skilled craft in the modularized production of foreign fashion in plate. Despite the impressions of some foreign observers, the handicraft industry was not simply in the business of blindly imitating imported models.[60] Rather, their handmade objects were selective, and more importantly, adaptive translations of the key forms that signified the Britishness of the metalwares.

Powing 宝盈 Shop Adaptations

According to surviving evidence, the Powing (M: *Baoying* 宝盈) shop is one of the earliest known Canton silverwares retailers to decisively orient a segment of its production toward a market for the "British taste" at the turn of the nineteenth century.[61] This section traces

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[57] Philippa Glanville, *Silver in England* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1987), 111.
[58] Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure,* 163.
[59] A trade making similar products also developed in British colonial India, though they were operated and partially staffed by British colonials. Vidya Dehejia, et al, *Delight in Design: Indian Silver for the Raj* (Ahmendabad: Mapin Publishing, 2008).
[60] The charge of imitation leveled against the trade will be discussed further in chapter six. As Osmond Tiffany, Jr. (1823-95) wrote in 1844: "Some people… say that [the Chinese] are not an inventive, but merely an imitative race. What nation have they imitated? Are they not the originators of almost every art they possess? Are they not adept in some arts, that no other nation can attempt?" Tiffany, *The Canton Chinese; or, The American's sojourn in the Celestial Empire* (Boston: J. Monroe and Company, 1849), 73. Quoted in Carl Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade: Paintings, Furnishings, and Exotic Curiosities* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1991), 338. More specifically to silversmiths, Félix Renouard wrote after a visit to a Guangzhou silverwares shop in 1807, The Chinese make silverwares very well when they have good models; they imitate very well, except the complicated pieces…" "Les Chinois fabriquent très-bien l'argenterie lorsqu'ils ont de bons modèles; ils imitent fort bien, excepté les pièces compliquées, où il y a des figures et de l'argent en dessin mat." *Voyage commercial et politique aux Indes Orientales,* vol. 3 (Paris, Clament, 1810), 197.
[61] Forbes et al identified as Powing as one of the two earliest retailers selling to the Euro-American sojourner market. We know that the retailer adopted this romanization of the shop name from an order in the ledger book of Ephraim Bumstead and Company in 1804. Forbes et al, *Chinese Export Silver,* 74.

the shifting output of the shop, from finely-woven and soldered filigree objects to bright-cut, shiny Georgian hollowware, based on extant objects. In doing so, it demonstrates the market agility of the retailer in targeting a broadly Western market, and the decision of its management to specialize in the market for the British taste. While the market agility of retailers is one factor that emerges through this chapter, the next chapter will further show how the Guangzhou metalworking trade adapted to the specific demands of producing Georgian-style wares.

While there are few Canton hollowware objects in the British taste extant from the early three-quarters of the eighteenth century, there are more filigree and filigree-covered objects that were produced chiefly for elite West Asian and European consumption.[62] Filigree is a technique that consists of using gold or silver wire, drawn to a very fine gauge through holes in a metal plate, which is curled, twisted, braided, and soldered together with borax in patterns using a blowpipe.[63] There is only one modern English term for the technique, which is derived from the Spanish word *filigrana,* a composite of *filum* for thread and *granum* for grain. By comparison, Chinese has at least four terms for the technique, describing different means of manipulating the wire: *huasi* 華絲 "pattern threads," *leisi* 纍絲 "piled threads," *qiasi* 掐絲 "wire inlay", and *biansi* 編絲 "braided threads."[64] In the eighteenth century, rosewater sprinklers, toilet sets, tea sets, bezoar stone holders, figural centerpieces and jewel boxes were all made in thin plate metals, and then covered in a skein or several layers of looped and finely-soldered filigree ornament. Other objects consisted solely of fine looped, twisted, braided, and soldered wire, attached to a ribbon-like skeleton. Some objects, such as table centerpieces and jewelry, are sculptural accumulations of minute and precisely-worked gold and silver wire. As described by Maria Menshikova, the relatively well-preserved Hermitage collections of Asian filigree demonstrate the range of objects consumed by European courts, and includes a thirty-two piece toilet set dating to 1740-50 (fig. 5.4).[65] Owned by Catherine the Great (r. 1762-96), it was recorded in a palace inventory

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[62] Chen Zhigao 陈志高 has argued that the earliest wares in non-Chinese forms to appear were filigree objects such as a rose water sprinkler. See *Zhongguo yinlou yu yinqi: waixiao* 中国银楼与银器 [*Chinese jewelers' shops and silverwares*: *export* (*waixiao* 外銷) volume] (Beijing: Tsinghua University Publishing, 2015), 13-14. For more on the wares in the Hermitage, see Maria Menshikova, *Silver Wonders from the East;* also see Libby Chan, "Crossing the Oceans: Origins and Redefinition of Chinese Export Silver Ware," in Libby Lai-Pik Chan with Nina Lai-Na Wan, eds. *The Silver Age: Origins, Production, and Trade of Export Silverwares in Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta Region* (Hong Kong Maritime Museum, 2017), 162-6 for a discussion of Chinese silver filigree in European royal and elite collections, dating from the late seventeenth through eighteenth centuries.

[63] Menshikova, *Silver Wonders from the East*, 12; 20-1. Filigree was produced in Europe, India, Sumatra, West and Central Asia, Latin America and other production centers in addition to China, as well as European imitation of Asian filigree. Filigree was furthermore produced in southeast Asia, India, Manila, and elsewhere by immigrant Chinese silversmiths. It is often difficult to attribute origin, and more research needs to be done to distinguish differences in construction technique.

[64] Zhang Yanfen 張燕芬, "Mingdai jinyinqi de yuanliao yu zhizuo gongyi" 明代金銀器的原料与制作工艺 [Materials and Craftsmanship of Gold and Silver works of the Ming Dynasty], Gugong xuekan 故宫学刊 [Journal of Gugong studies] (2018): 84

[65] Louis XIV had a large collection of Asian filigree — likely mostly Chinese and Indian — inherited from his mother Anne of Austria and received in the dowry of his wife Marie-Thérèse of Spain, though it

of 1789.[66] Forms included in the toilet set include objects that could have been made for Chinese consumption, but incorporated into the set, such as ewers, ingot-shaped boxes, vases with double-dragon handles, peacock centerpieces, leaf stands and crab-shaped boxes (fig. 5.5). It also included objects that were produced for West Asian or European consumption, such as rose water sprinklers. Chinese filigree wares can be viewed similarly to the "three friends" ewer form discussed in chapter five; it was a versatile and desirable type of object that was consumed by both Chinese and foreign markets in the mid-eighteenth century.[67]

Surviving filigree objects are evidence that the Powing silver retailer pivoted from producing such objects to the production of Canton Georgian wares.[68] The Powing shop retailed a pair of filigree-covered, lidded sugar vases or urns datable to the 1760s, demonstrating that the shop was selling objects in European forms in the mid-eighteenth century (fig. 5.6). The urns are based on a rococo form, such as a set of silver-gilt sugar vases that were made by Thomas Heming for King George III in 1760-3 (fig. 5.7). Like the boxes and rose water sprinklers in the Hermitage toilet set, the Powing sugar urns are metal objects covered with a skin of filigree. The layered ornament is dimensionally enhanced with applied filigree elements, such as the flowers ringing the shoulder. However, the voluptuous baluster form, with its many sinuous s-curves, is translated somewhat disjunctively by the Canton silversmiths, with the flattened top of the shoulder and the flat sprays of filigree flowers disrupting the smooth s-curve of the profile. From a design perspective, they are a precursor to how Canton metalworkers translated later European metalwork forms, but also show that more complex rococo forms made for less successful adaptations than Georgian-style wares.

The sugar urns are moreover important evidence that Powing was an early adaptor of shop marks on objects made for Western consumers. As discussed further in the next chapter, the use of struck shop marks became widespread among early nineteenth-century Canton silver shops. Silver retailers almost entirely used Roman initials as designations for Cantonese shop names, along with other stuck marks that mimic British hallmarks. On the bases of these two objects, however, the Powing shop inscribed the Chinese name for the shop using the characters

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has not been preserved; the collection consisted of 167 gold and 693 silver objects which he displayed in his bedroom and two adjoining rooms at Versailles. He received more Asian filigree as diplomatic gifts from the Thai embassy in 1686. See Menshikova, 26.

[66] Ibid., 51-9. Another toilet set also recorded in the 1789 inventory has been attributed to South Asian silversmiths in Karimnagar. Ibid., 59.

[67] The Hermitage collection includes several examples of ewers, including a "three friends" ewer similar in many respects to the Versailles ewer, illustrated in the previous chapter. Yet it is easier to trace the mid-eighteenth-century market diversification in filigree objects, since objects in both Chinese and European forms survive in collections such as the Hermitage.

[68] As noted in the Guangzhou customs list from 1839, Canton workshops continued to produce filigree objects. Filigree objects were produced in southern China throughout the nineteenth century, and European observers remarked on their exquisite workmanship. French officer Félix Renouard de Sainte-Croix wrote that "one could see [in Canton] many silverwares very well done in filigree," including trees with leaves of silver, with flowers made in precious stones of different colors. He noted that they were extremely expensive, but that the curiosity of the objects and the finish of the work merited the cost. *Voyage commercial et politique aux Indes Orientales,* vol. 3 (Paris, Clament, 1810), 198. Wathen, meanwhile, reported that filigree fans sold at twenty dollars each — the most expensive variety, compared to fans in ivory at five to twenty dollars, tortoiseshell at fifteen, and sandalwood at one dollar. See *Journal of a voyage*, 189.

baoying 宝盈. Meanwhile, the filigree stands for the objects were struck with single struck shop marks, with the same Chinese characters in incuse (fig. 5.8). Struck Chinese-character shopmarks are otherwise unknown in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century on objects made for export markets. However, struck incuse Chinese characters were used on earlier objects, such as a silver cup and plate from the Five Dynasties period (907-960) (fig. 5.9).[69] Ingots could also be stamped with the names of casting shops or ingot smelters to guarantee their quality. Eighteenth-century Guangdong tax ingots, for example, were given both struck and incised marks which specified the names of smelters as well as other entities, such as a Guangdong tax ingot from around 1785. The ingot was stamped with the year and month it was cast for this purpose, along with the name of the smelting shop, *Dongji* 東記 (fig. 5.10). Other ingots were stamped with the names of the silversmith who cast them, such as the name of the silversmith (*yinjiang* 銀匠) Chen Fuchang 陳福昌 that appeared on a salt tax ingot produced in the eighth year of the Xianfeng emperor's reign, around 1858.[70] Stamped character marks were commonly used again by Chinese retailers in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and were struck on objects made for both Chinese and foreign consumption. In addition to shop names, the later marks also indicated unofficial standards of fineness; some have been interpreted to indicate workshop or maker names.

The inscribed and struck marks on the Powing sugar urns demonstrates that Chinese systems for marking precious metal objects were adapted to silverwares made for foreign consumption. Powing's shop name was signed in the account book of an American supercargo John Bowers, in a 1797 entry for a purchase of gold sleeve buttons and silver spectacles made of "Poyyeng, Silversmith" (fig. 5.11). Powing's shop, according to this ledger book, was located in China Street, and thus was an "outside shop" in the foreign trading enclave of Guangzhou known as or "thirteen hong" district (*Shisanhang pang shangpu* 十三行旁商舖).[71] Bowers' account book is unusual because it is signed by Chinese artisans or shopkeepers, and Powing's entry was signed *baoying* 宝盈 in ink. The signature is a reminder that foreign traders had signed receipts from Canton merchants, shopkeepers, and craftspeople with their Chinese names, one of which was preserved with the Robinson service mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Thus, silverwares stamped or inscribed with Chinese characters could be connected by consumers to particular shops, if their quality was in dispute.

Inscribed marks on eighteenth-century objects are also rare, but not unknown. In chapter four we encountered an instance of an inscribed shop mark on an eighteenth-century object: the "three friends of winter" silver ewer marked by the "Canton Shop" or Yueyou shop. Another "three friends" ewer was inscribed with the characters *Ruilong* 瑞隆 which might indicated a shop name, or the studio name of an owner (fig. 5.12).[72] As discussed in chapter four, the Canton Shop was illustrated in an album of "outside shops," dating from around 1812 to 1831, indicating

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[69] Chan, *The Silver Age,* 25.

[70] LI Xiaoping 李晓萍, *Evolution of Sycee—From Sycee to Silver Dollar* [*Yin de licheng—cong yinliang dao yinyuan* 银的历程—从银两到银元] (Hangzhou: Wenwu chubanshe, 2015), 163.

[71] I am grateful to Winnie Wong for sharing this source with me. "Accounts of purchases made in China by John Bowers, supercargo, 1797," folio 34. Brown family business records, John Carter Brown Library

[72] Chan, *The Silver Age,* 50.

that it, like the Powing shop, likely had a romanized or English name, though it is not included in the illustration. Chinese-language shop signs describe the store and its services: “Canton Old Shop,” “Canton Shop,” “Canton Shop and Silverware Exchange,” and “Canton Shop Gold and Silver Jewelry Exchange.”[73] The inclusion of the shop in the album demonstrates that it was producing wares for the market of foreign sojourners in the port by the early nineteenth century, and perhaps had been doing so at the turn of the nineteenth century.

By the 1780s, the Powing shop was branding Canton Georgian wares with the Chinese-character struck shopmark, indicating the shop had pivoted from producing filigree wares made for European consumers to silverwares in the British taste. Such objects included tablewares, as well as spoons and other flatware. An oval cruet stand that is dated stylistically to 1780-90 was struck with the Chinese *baoying* mark for Powing (fig. 5.13). Additional known objects with the struck *baoying* mark include a goblet or standing cup, one of a pair made for First Church of Boston, imaged in figure 2. Others include a teapot which was brought from Guangzhou in the early 1790s to New Haven, Connecticut, and various examples of flatware, including a set of teaspoons engraved with the initials of a Rhode Island couple and the year they married, 1783.[74] Notably, all of these objects in the British taste are ornamented with bright-cutting on the surface, with border swages, garlands, and oval reserves. Bright cutting is a specialized type of engraving that involves using a polished graver tool to make short and deep, faceted v-shaped cuts into the sheer silver surface. It was fashionable in England on neoclassical Georgian wares beginning in the 1770s, and requires their perfectly flattened, mirror-like surfaces to create a contrastive effect. Ornamental bright-cutting also appears on a Canton Greek revival urn, double-struck on its base with the shop mark “CS” for the shop Cumshing, a retailer recommended by several early American sojourners (fig. 5.14). As shown in a detail of the Cumshing urn, the faceted incisions reflect light from inside the cut (fig. 5.15).

A specialized, extractive engraving technique, it might nonetheless have found an easily-transferrable precedent among Guangzhou metalworkers in the types of incised decoration techniques used for pewterwares, discussed in chapter seven. Achieving the appearance of English bright-cutting would have been adapting the graving tool to the purpose and raises the question of whether the technique was achieved by a single workshop or outworker who was

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[73] Lesley Lau 劉鳳霞, “Trade Port Culture---to Explore the Mutual Perception between China and the West in Modern Era Through Canton’s Export Art 口岸文化 —-從廣東的外銷藝術探討近代中西文化的相互觀照” (PhD dissertation, CUHK, 2012), 362. The album was likely commissioned by EIC tea inspector John Reeves (1774-1856), who commissioned Cantonese artists to make albums of botanical drawings, as well as images of everyday life, religion, and occupations in the Guangzhou environs. His granddaughter Sarah Maria Reeves donated more than 1500 export watercolors to the British Museum in 1877, including the album of outside shops. See “Sarah Maria Reeves,” The British Museum website, accessed 29 Mar. 2022 <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG13563>.

[74] The two teaspoons are engraved with the monograms of Rhode Island couple William and Mary Donnison and the date 1783. They are formerly of the Potash Collection, and their present location is unknown. See “China Trade Silver,” updated 2007, accessed May 3, 2023 <http://www.potashco.com/potash_3.htm> . The author met with Jeremy Potash, the widow of collector Steve Potash on September 20, 2018. Potash said most of the collection had been sold to a planned “China Trade” museum in North Carolina; this is corroborated by his obituary. “Stephen Potash Obituary,” *East Bay Times,* August 11, 2013 <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/eastbaytimes/name/stephen-potash-obituary?id=18270185>.

then commissioned by several retailers, or was widely achieved by the early Canton Georgian silver industry. Helen Clifford has speculated that the fashion was perhaps developed by English goldsmiths in competition with their imitation-silver rival industries. Such deep cuts applied to Sheffield plated wares would reveal the copper base under the thin fused layer of silver.[75] Similarly, their appearance on Canton silver indicated that they were fashioned out of silver plate, instead of plated silver. If they were used by English goldsmiths, as Clifford suggests, as a means of troubling the rise of imitation metals industries, by inviting the risk of revealing the base metal underneath a silver skin, then its use in the Canton Georgian trade simultaneously confirmed the legitimacy of the wares as solid silver.

Into the nineteenth century, Chinese retail shops increasingly adopted the use of English-style hallmarks as a means of branding their wares. A standard set of English hallmarks includes an initial mark that is often called a "maker's mark" by silver connoisseurs, but as mentioned above, it refers to the registered entity offering the item for assay by the Goldsmiths' Company, a process that determines the alloy content meets the standard for legal sale. The other marks applied at assay include the town mark, a date mark which takes the form of a roman letter, a sovereign mark and sometimes a duty mark. The marks when struck on Canton silver functioned as shopmarks, as they included an initial mark patterned after the English sponsor mark that referenced the romanized name of Canton silver shops. While on one hand, the marks operated as a means of guarantee rather than as false English hallmarks, on the other, they were a means of performing Britishness through metalwares. The next chapter will investigate the use of such marks, arguing that it was one component of a modular system. While the Powing shop can be viewed as an important early adaptor of struck marks, it is unknown whether the shop had a romanized initial mark like other shops.

While I will make the case that the Canton marks were not wholly meant to deceive, and in fact have a specific function of guarantee in the Canton marketplace, there is one troubling mark — though I make the case here to connect it also to the Powing shop. One mark directly, though not astutely, copies the mark of the English firm William Eley, William Fearn, and William Chawner, which is an incuse stack of the three serifed initials, WE, WF, and WC (fig. 5.16). The punch is found on early-to-mid nineteenth century objects, some of which are Greek Revival with bright-cutting. As it appears on Canton silver objects, the mark is rendered as WE/WE/WC and occasionally WE/WF/WC, and always appears with the "date mark" "P" (fig. 5.17).[76] While Forbes et al observed the invariable inclusion of the "P" — linked in the London Goldsmiths' Company date tables to the year 1810-11 — they did not raise the possibility that the so-called "date mark" was operating in this case, as the shopmark, and thus very possibly as the shopmark for Powing, adopted necessarily after 1811. The serifed "P" appears consistently on objects, and on some objects, such as a mustard pot that is dateable to the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the WE/WE/WC is dropped altogether.[77] The mustard pot is similar, though not identical, to another mustard pot with the full set of hallmarks.[78] While most researchers have classified objects marked with a WE/WE/WC punch as attributable to an unknown but prolific maker or retailer, Chen has previously raised the possibility that Powing

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[75] "A commerce with things," 164.

[76] Forbes et al, *Chinese Export Silver,* 83. The only other retailer to use a date letter consistently is Khechoung, which invariably takes the form of a lower-case k.

[77] Chen, 114.

[78] John Devereux Kernan, *The Chait Collection of Chinese Export Silver* (New York: R.M. Chait Galleries, 1985), 204.

was using the WE/WE/WC mark — or more accurately, using the pseudo date mark "P" as a shop mark.[79]

Considering that we have traced the retailer to the transitional edge of selling objects in George III Greek revival forms, it follows that the shop may also have been among the first to reappropriate English hallmarks around 1810-15, when objects with the date mark P, and particularly the spoons produced by the firm of Eley, Fearn, and Chawner, may have been presented by clients as models for reproduction. Objects marked by the "SS" shopmark connected to Sunshing, another early silverwares shop that appears frequently in merchants' accounts, appear with both "A" and "C" so-called "date marks" in shields.[80] While it seems the retailers understood the value of initial marks in how they might brand objects operating within Anglo-Chinese circulations, or at least provide for precious metal objects to retain a connection with their sellers, there is no reason to assume they would differentiate English date marks from maker's marks or sponsor's marks. Thus, it is possible that Powing was the entrepreneurial firm that adopted the use of the Eley, Fearn, and Chawner mark along with the "P" date mark in the context of its foreign sales and dropped the first set of stacked initials in favor of the last initial—which would have been consistent with both of the known romanizations of the shop as Powing and Poyyeng.

Long-distance Orders through Port Agents and Kin: Buying the Robinson Service

Patrons placing long-distance orders for silverwares from southern Chinese, Guangzhou-based retailers from 1775 to 1840 included a Hawaiian king, a Thai noble, a Manila-based Macanese trader, Parsee merchants and British colonial residents in Bombay and other South Asian cities, Peranakan Chinese in Singapore and Malaysia, a Spanish Franciscan missionary to California, an Anglo-Australian woman merchant-pastoralist in Sydney, and an Anglo-American woman in Salem, Massachusetts.[81] The diversity of buyers and the larger markets they represent indicates that there was a quality particular to southern Chinese silverwares that stimulated interest from Asian, Pacific Islander, European, Australian and North American consumers, each at a different geographic remove from where the silver was made and sold. Most, though not all, of the purchases were patterned (and named in extant orders) after contemporary British silver tableware forms, drawing from late Georgian and Victorian designs. They were purchased through personal or commercial connections to traders doing business in the southeastern Chinese port city. What was the value of southern Chinese craft in the global market for British semi-luxury, semi-mechanized metalwares? How did the Canton handicraft silver trade

[79] Chen, 113-4.
[80] Chen, 127-8.
[81] As one example, Pedro Benito Cambón placed a large order in the late 1770s for liturgical objects and everyday goods in Manila, including "one wrought silver chalice, made in Canton in South China, with its paten and spoon," all of which was shipped to Mission San Francisco de Asís (Mission Dolores) in San Francisco, New Spain. See J.M. Mancini, "Pedro Cambón's Asian Objects: A Transpacific Approach to Eighteenth-Century California," *American Art* 25:1 (Spring, 2011): 29-30; Mancini also noted that a silver chalice stolen from the mission in 1970 could have been the Chinese one procured by Cambón. "Pedro Cambón's Asian Objects," 32. A reliquary monstrance in the Museu de São Roque in Lisbon dated by the museum to the seventeenth century is similarly attributed to Chinese goldsmiths, demonstrating the historical precedence of Iberian patronage of the industry. Among the exports from Canton to British colonial India in 1805 included "plate and plated ware" valued at 14,866 sicca rupees; see William Milburn, *Oriental Commerce…*, vol. 2 (London: Black, Parry & Co., 1813), 484. Further examples will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

producing for global markets make the value of Chinese craft both conspicuous as such, and naturalized to the point of erasure?

Out of the orders mentioned above, the case study with the most extant accompanying documentation is an order for a double tea set initiated through request by the Anglo-American woman noted above, Lucy Pickering Stone née Robinson (1815-1899).[82] It was purchased by her then-fiancé John Robinson from the Chinese silversmith-retailer Khechoung in Guangzhou in 1838. I analyze a range of sources connected to the set, including correspondence between Stone and Robinson, the original purchase receipt, and the extant objects. Perception of value as indicated by form and fineness is a problem unique to silverwares — that is, goods vulnerable to devaluation in the absence of trade oversight, and the lack of authentication expertise.[83] The fact that Stone and other consumers bought silverwares long-distance from Canton indicates that they viewed the trade as trustworthy and reliable, even though they would likely never set foot on Chinese soil. We will also see that some consumers, such as twenty-two-year-old Lucy Stone in Salem, Massachusetts, understood the specific quality of Canton Georgian silver as distinct from other English-style metalwares.

Anticipating a future domestic life together, John Robinson wrote often to Lucy regarding what domestic products, such as the porcelain and silver tablewares, he might procure while trading seasonally in Guangzhou. Seeking her input from aboard the *Monsoon* on June 3, 1837, he wrote:

> If you will take the trouble, I shall be very glad to have you send me a memo of what is required for common use china ware, as I shall probably have a better opportunity to get what we might want than will ever again. Mrs Ward says (she *ought* to know) that china is not only the best but is the cheapest, therefore I should like to get a full supply of all the little & out of the way things; do you like blue?[84]

Certainly price was a concern, as least as regards the types of Chinese porcelain he was able to procure in Asia. He next asked her to open a box he had stored with Mrs. Ward soon after his previous arrival from India, wherein she would find a set of silver that he had purchased in China. He instructed her to send for and open the box to see whether "anything else of this sort will be wanted & to let me know what."[85] In her return letter of October 28, 1837, she included a list of Chinese silver items she discovered in the box, categorized using their specialized forms for Western-style dining and their quantities: twelve tablespoons, twelve dessert spoons, twenty-four teaspoons, eighteen tablespoons, eighteen table forks, eighteen dessert forks, six sugar spoons, four salt spoons, two mustard spoons, two butter knives, one soup ladle, and one kitchen knife.[86] She also requested additional wares, which she justified due to the specific material qualities she used to distinguish Chinese silver from American:

> I…opened the box of silver, & like the patterns very much -- but think there are not enough tea spoons -- I will enclose a memorandum in this letter of the contents of the box & think 4 doz tea spoons are not too many -- & here I would suggest that as Canton Silver is so entirely different

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[82] Harrison Ellery and Charles P. Bowditch, *The Pickering Genealogy,* vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, J. Wilson and Son, 1897), 464.
[83] The issue of how to appraise commodities exchanged in international markets would seem to be a contemporary one, but it was equally important during earlier moments of long-distance maritime trade.
[84] Letter from John Robinson to Lucy P. Stone, dated June 3, 1837, MSS 317, box 1, folder 2, Phillips Library.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Memo from Lucy P. Stone to John Robinson, October 28, 1837, MSS 317, Box 1, Folder 1, Phillips Library.

> [in] colour from ours, would it not be adviseable to procure Tea Pots, Suger [sic] & Creamers & Baskets of the same material to correspond -- I think it would be so much handsomer, & the more simple the better is my taste, & I believe you agree with me there - you must recollect - these are merely my suggestions, & act according to your own feelings - Mother has always spoken of silver desert [sic] knives - being very desireable - that is very small knives - to eat fruit only - & no matter how small - if you please you can get one doz — [87]

It seems from her letter that the silverwares she discovered were all precisely uniform, and either shared a pattern or a set of patterns — indicating that they met a certain expectation for homogeneity of form. Lucy's letter contains a rare glimpse into not only an overseas consumers' informed appraisal of southern Chinese silverwares, but also a women's perspective. Interestingly, the motivation for buying silver in China was not due to price, but rather the color of the alloy and her desire for all of the silverwares on her table to match.

From the variety of requests and assessments made in Lucy's letter, it is clear that the prospect of buying Chinese silver in Anglo silver forms, such as baskets and dessert knives, was not unusual to her; it was as expected and desirable a purchase in Canton as porcelain. She had relatively little to say about the porcelain set, writing at the end of her request for a tea set "as it regards the China - you are a much better judge of those things than I am -- therefore will only say that I like very dark blue —"[88] She also ignored his request for a memo of "what is required for common use china ware," focusing instead on her silverwares order. Is it surprising that Lucy had so many opinions about a long-distance silver purchase? Perhaps not, as she was setting herself up with a respectable Salem home for entertaining, where silver was likely a more desirable, and certainly a more valuable possession than porcelain.

There moreover seemed to be a certain valence of prestige associated with Canton silver, given the distinction made by Stone. From the tenor of her statement, it seems that she had encountered southern Chinese silver before, likely on the tables of other Salem wives of merchants voyaging to China. Interestingly, this period consumer identified its primary distinction as the color of its lustrous, smooth and polished surface, not at all its form or construction — the latter, the qualities that experts today rely on to distinguish the products of regional silversmithing industries.[89] In other words, despite its Chinese production, there was nothing noteworthy or undesirable about its form. Lucy was either repeating a shared opinion about the color of the alloy in comparison to silverwares produced in the United States, in that it was "so entirely different," or it was a conclusion she had drawn herself from silverwares owned by others in her social circle. In his reply, however, Robinson indicated that her opinion was not universal or common knowledge; he wrote:

> Your memo of "Silver" is before me, I see you made no remark for increasing any thing but the "Tea Spoons" this I will do to 4 doz. - I was not aware before of the different color of the Chinese silver work from other - I have been looking out for 1 doz dessert knives + will get them if I can — [90]

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[87] Letter from Lucy P. Stone to John Robinson, October 28, 1837, MSS 317, box 1, folder 1, Phillips Library.
[88] Letter from Lucy P. Stone to John Robinson, October 28, 1837, MSS 317, box 1, folder 1, Phillips Library.
[89] That said, the difference in color is often noted anecdotally by present-day curators, collectors, and decorative arts dealers who have handled large amounts of nineteenth-century Chinese silver, who describe it as a dark gray.
[90] Letter from John Robinson to Lucy Stone, April 22, 1838, MSS 317. Box 1, folder 3, Phillips Library.

The difference in color might be due to the relatively high amount of copper in the silver alloy, indicating that the material of the silver itself was not as fine as what could be procured in the eastern United States or in Britain. In other words, the characteristic color of the alloy distinguished by Lucy Stone was a sign that the silver itself fell short of standard. Unfortunately we do not yet have any alloy composition readings for the Robinson service, nor can we refer to any large-scale scientific studies of Canton silver. Forbes et al have written that the fineness of Canton silver ranged from 78.8 to 97.0 parts silver, and that assay readings taken from a single object could range from 870 to 970 parts per thousand.[91]

Robinson received her letter asking for a tea set to match his Canton flatware on April 18, 1838, but evidently had already purchased it and sent it to her. Khechoung's receipt for the set is dated January 20, and in a letter dated March 30, he wrote that he is shipping about twenty-six packages with Captain Remmonds of the *Monsoon* for her. While the *Monsoon* was destined for New York or Boston, and Remmonds would arrange for most of the shipment to arrive to her in Salem separately, the silver would come with Remmonds himself to Salem and he would deliver it at her door: "He will also bring a box — + leave at your House[,] please let it to be taken care of[,] it has some silver inside."[92] After receiving in the meantime her letter asking for a tea set, he responded on April 20, again making special note of the silverwares shipped with Remmonds:

> I have requested Capt Remmonds of the *Monsoon* to deliver at your Fathers house a Box…[containing] two Tea pots, one Sugar, + one creamer, they are the opposite from simple. They are I think rich + good form; I hope they will suit you —[93]

Not everything she had requested was right at hand. As I mentioned above, Robinson expressed that he could not find any pattern for a basket, and "fear to undertake to have one made without one. Therefore may not get them."[94] As Lucy specified that she wanted the baskets to match her other Canton plate, it seems that he could not substitute filigree baskets, which were produced for Chinese markets and were doubtless available. Similarly, he wrote in the same letter that he was coming up short with regard to the dozen dessert knives she requested: "I have been looking out for 1 doz dessert knives + will get them if I can." As in this case he does not express the want of a good model, perhaps it was more the problem of finding the right quantity that was stalling his purchase. By the *Monsoon,* Stone received her silver tea set. The couples' correspondence stops before it arrived, so her impressions of the finished objects are lost. Stone's correspondence offer us a rare glimpse into the desire of the long-distance consumer for Canton silver, and an understanding of the nuanced criteria by which she assessed it. In the next chapter, I return to the case of the Robinson service to take a closer look at its modular assembly, as well as use its receipt, in order to further assess the factors that legitimated Canton silver.

Further Transpacific Transactions

Two orders placed with Cantonese retailers by customers in different areas of the Pacific demonstrate the efficacious construction of the objects in performing British legitimacy. In addition to Robinson and Stone, they also show the range of consumers across the Pacific that consumed Chinese silver in British forms, and their relative proximity to European colonialism and empire. The orders consist of flatware (forks, knives, and spoons) in the fiddle, thread and shell pattern. One order was made in 1815 by Elizabeth Macarthur, a settler colonist who was at

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[91] Forbes et al, *Chinese Export Silver,* 24; 47n11.

[92] Letter from John Robinson to Lucy Stone, March 30, 1838, MSS 317. Box 1, folder 3, Phillips Library

[93] Letter from John Robinson to Lucy Stone, April 22, 1838, MSS 317. Box 1, folder 3, Phillips Library.

[94] Ibid.

that time the manager of sheep farming estates in New South Wales while her husband was away in England. The merino wool trade was instrumental in validating British colonial settlement in Australia, and Macarthur's farms were worked through forced convict labor. Though not born to the upper class, Macarthur was among the first educated British women to colonize Australia. She held a prominent role in colonial society, and entertained officers of the navy and the New South Wales corps, and colonial administration members.[95] Her order was placed in Sydney through the agent Walter Davidson, who placed an order for a variety of flatwares from the Cantonese silver dealer Houchong. The order is itemized by object type but does not note the pattern; surviving serving spoons, forks, spoons, and other utensils engraved with the Macarthur crest all share the fiddle, thread, and shell pattern. Notably, the objects are marked with the shop mark of different Cantonese retailers, including the unidentified shop WE/WE/WC and S (Sunshing).[96]

Flatwares were also acquired on behalf of Kamehameha III (r. 1825-54), ruler of the Kingdom of Hawaii from Guangzhou. Extant objects in the royal collection inventoried in 1893 include a fish knife, two soup ladles, one tablespoon, three gravy lades, one butter knife, eleven soup spoons, twelve dinner forks, twenty-eight breakfast forks, eight dessert spoons, and three teaspoons; they are also marked by different shops.[97] The king's long reign was marked by selective and strategic efforts in integrating Western policies into the administration of his kingdom. He changed the structure of rule from absolute to constitutional monarchy and was stalwart in fending off attempts at colonial annexation from both Britain and the United States.[98] As his defense strategy for his kingdom included accommodating Western diplomatic practices, he likely used his Canton silver at state dinners and other official social events.

While Lucy Stone Robinson's Cantonese tea service can be viewed as aspirational in its use of fashionable British patterns, Elizabeth Macarthur's Canton flatware played a role in co-constituting British imperial rule in Australia in the domestic and social realms. Moreover, as Macarthur's name was on her order with Davidson, and Robinson played a direct if removed role in ordering silver from Guangzhou through her fiancé, both women were evidently aware that their silver in the British taste was made in China. What might be commonly viewed as a transatlantic fashion in Robinson's case, and the dominant taste of the metropole exerted on the colonial elite in Macarthur's case is mediated through transpacific circulations. It is unknown the degree to which Kamehameha was aware that his silverwares were from China. But likely he employed them as a sign of sovereign recognition: that is, to protect his kingdom from Western colonial acquisition by in part, mirroring British-style diplomatic entertaining. Thus, for each of these consumers, buying and using Canton silver allowed for a range of different relationships with British empire.

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[95] Jill Conway, "Elizabeth Macarthur (1766-1850)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/macarthur-elizabeth-2387/text3147, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 12 March 2023.
[96] James Broadbent, *India, China, Australia: Trade and Society 1788-1850* (Historic House Trust of New South Wales, 2003), 125-7.
[97] Forbes et al, *Chinese Export Silver,* 12n14.
[98] J. Susan Corley, *Leveraging Sovereignty: Kauikeaouli's Global Strategy for the Hawaiian Nation, 1825–1854* (University of Hawaii Press, 2022).

Coda: Mrs. Adam's Silver Teapot

Arthur Hayden wrote in *Chats on Old Silver,* an early antiquarian guide to English plate, of different material graduations of consumption, "If the squire's lady had her silver, or the farmer's wife had her Sheffield plated set, the cottager had her lustre ware" — the latter a type of ceramic with a metallic glaze.[99] With reference to Lucy Stone's request for a tea set from Canton, we might add that the supercargo's wife had her Chinese silver. A final case, a Canton silver tea set owned by a president's English wife, confirms that Canton silver could achieve British legitimacy in full masquerade. While this chapter has spanned purchases made in the port to long-distance purchases made through port-based agents, the last case demonstrates that Canton silver could operate as viable, recognizable British or English silver. It is thus not surprising that it was misrecognized by a generation of silver connoisseurs. The next chapter will further uncover the design and production decisions made by Cantonese retailers and metalsmiths in their production of silver in the British taste.

A tea service marked by the Guangzhou retailer Wongshing was owned by the wife of former American president John Quincy Adams (in office from 1824 to 1829) (fig. 5.18). Louisa Adams, however, was born in London to a British mother and an American father. Though an American citizen, she first came to the United States in 1801 after meeting and marrying Adams in London. It is thought that Louisa Adams purchased the tea set in England, though it is unknown. She may have bought it during her husband's two-year stint serving as a diplomat in London from 1815 to 1817, the first time she lived there since she left England after her marriage. The set is composed of a teapot, a sugar bowl, and cream pot, all consisting of round, squat bodies with gadrooned ornament around the exterior. Produced prior to the Robinson service, the service is notable for its Greek revival elements, such as the fluting, acanthus, and spare overall design. On its base are a full set of Cantonese hallmarks in the British style; the serifed "W" mark has been connected to the Cantonese silver retailer Wongshing (fig. 5.19). Yet unlike the other objects discussed in this chapter, it is unknown whether or not Louisa was aware of the set's Asian origins and its Cantonese makers and retailer.

The service was passed down through the Adams family as an heirloom. On its base, the Adams teapot bears the inscription in script, "LCA to HA HA to EA, July 1917."[100] "HA" refers to Henry Adams, the well-known American historian and grandson of Louisa. In his 1907 memoir, *The Education of Henry Adams,* he recounts (and handily dates) an early memory of his grandmother: "Then it was that the little Henry…first remembered her, from 1843 to 1848, sitting in her panelled room, at breakfast, with her heavy silver teapot and sugar-bowl and cream-jug, which still exist somewhere as an heirloom of the modern safety-vault."[101] Adams unwittingly evokes the characteristic heaviness of Canton silver, here cast as the weighty relic of memory. In his association of her with the silver tea set, his grandmother is consummately English, "hardly more Bostonian than she had been fifty years before, on her wedding-day, in the shadow of the Tower of London." Yet absent from Adams' account is the mention that the tea set was not as English as his flinty grandmother.

To an unknowing eye, the marks on the base of the teapot could easily read as a full set of English hallmarks. Yet unlike other Cantonese hallmarks, this set seems to overperform. The

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[99] *Chats on Old Silver* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1917), 250.

[100] *The Education of Henry Adams* (Massachusetts Historical Society, 1918), unpaginated, accessed online November 13, 2017 <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2044/2044-h/2044-h.htm>.

[101] Ibid.

first mark is modeled after the lion passant mark, guaranteeing the sterling quality of the silver at 92.5%. But instead of a stoic lion, the more so beast recalls a whimsical Chinese guardian lion, its eyes rotating around in its head, its tail playfully winding aloft in a spiral. Meanwhile, the crowned leopard's head stamp that signifies the town of London was interpreted as a European man's head with a top hat. In Cantonese vernacular art, European men are distinguished typologically by high noses and the flat-topped, brimmed hat. The sovereign mark, finally, is an indistinct blur instead of a proud stately profile. The Wongshing shop's creative and funny renderings of the set of statuary punches seems to undermine their purported function as official marks. Instead, they are specific to the context of transaction—and further, seem to be made for a Cantonese viewership instead of a Euro-American consumer. The next chapter explores the function of Cantonese hallmarks further. It argues that they were one component of a Cantonese modular design strategy that simultaneously pulled from both classical Chinese and European design and achieved contemporary developments in industrial technologies through handicraft techniques.

Ch. 5. Canton Silver I: Entering a Global Marketplace of Imitation Metals
Figures

Fig. 5.1. Tea service (two teapots, sugar bowl, and cream pot), made in Guangzhou by Cantonese silversmiths and retailed at the shop of Khechoung 其昌, silver with bone insulators, 1837-8. Peabody Essex Museum, E82873.1—4

Fig. 5.2. Pair of standing cups, one with *baoying* 宝盈 mark retailed by Powing, the other with "SS" mark for Sunshing. On long-term loan to the MFA Boston

Fig. 5.3. Adam-style paktong fender, c. 1780

Fig. 5.4. Toilet set consisting of thirty-two objects demonstrating a range of filigree techniques and applications, owned by Catherine the Great. Chinese silversmiths, c. 1740-50. State Hermitage Museum

Fig. 5. 5.Box in the shape of a crab and a stand in the shape of a leaf or tree, part of toilet set of thirty-two objects owned by Catherine the Great. Chinese silversmiths, 1740s-50s, silver, enamel, metal. Stand: 20 x 15 x 3.5 cm. Hermitage ЛС-9

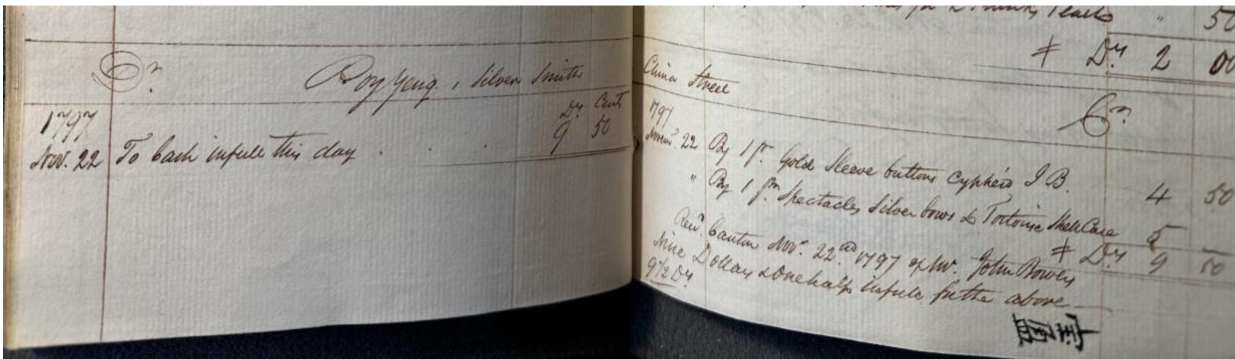
Fig. 5.6. Filigree tea caddies or sugar urns with Powing (Baoying) 宝盈 scratch mark. Chinese silversmiths, eighteenth century, gilt silver. Published in Chan, *The Silver Age,* 127, fig. 2

Fig. 5.7. Silver-gilt sugar vases (two of four), made by Thomas Heming (1760-63) for King George III

Fig. 5.8. Powing (Baoying) 宝盈 scratch mark; stamp mark

Fig. 5.9. Silver cup and plate from the Five Dynasties period (907-960 CE) with stamps. Cheng Xun Tang collection

Fig. 5.10. Guangdong silver tax ingot, Qianlong reign year 50. Zhejiang Provincial Museum



Dr. Powing, Silver Smith

1797 Nov. 22 To Cash in full this day . . . Drs 9 Cents 50

China Street

Cr.

1797 Novem. 22 By 1 pr. Gold Sleeve buttons Cyphers I.B. 4 50
" By 1 pr. Spectacles Silver bows & Tortoise Shell Case 5
+ Drs 9 50

Recd. Canton Novr. 22d 1797 of Mr. John Bowers Nine Dollars & one half in full for the above
9½ Ds

Fig. 5.11. Detail from John Bowers accounts, with Powing’s signature at lower right. John Carter Brown Library, photo courtesy of Winnie Wong

Fig. 5.12. Silver ewer with *ruilong* 瑞龍 incised inscription on base, late seventeenth or eighteenth century. K.L. Leung collection

Fig. 5.13. Cruet stand with *baoying* 寶盈 mark. Silver, c. 1780. Published in Forbes et al, *Chinese Export Silver,* 215.

Fig. 5.14. Hot water urn, marked CS for Cumshing, c. 1800. Engraved with Van Rensselaer crest with PSVR in script for Philip Schuyler Van Rensselaer. Peabody Essex Museum.

Fig. 5.15. Detail of bright-cutting on Fig. 5.14.

Fig. 5.16. British WE/WF/WC mark with “P” date mark for 1810/11

Fig. 5.17. Canton WE/WF/WC mark with pseudo marks and “P”

Fig. 5.18. Three-piece silver tea service (teapot, creamer, sugar bowl) retailed by Wongshing and owned by Louisa Adams. Silver, first quarter of 19th century. Adams National Historical Park, Quincy, MA

Fig. 5.19. Wongshing "W" mark and mimicked British hallmarks

Ch. 6. Canton Silver II: Performing Britishness at a Dollar Standard

Introduction: Constructing Value in Pieces

In the first half of the nineteenth century, silver took many forms in its Asia-transpacific trajectories. As it was transited through Guangzhou, it arrived as struck coins taking Western European (primarily Spanish and later Mexican) forms. It was transformed by the Cantonese silver handicraft trade into tablewares and other handicraft objects often resembling Western European (primarily British) forms. Guangzhou tradespeople and craftspeople that worked with silver included informal bankers, moneychangers, coin authenticators, smelters, silversmiths, jewelry, gold and silverware retailers, and pawnshop owners. Insofar as they dealt with foreign agents, people involved in Cantonese silver trades also possessed practical knowledge about the commercial viability of silver in certain standardized and recognizable forms, particularly those linked with European empire. Their knowledge was informed through their close study of imported objects.

As this dissertation has stressed throughout, silver is a medium of invisible worth, measured by the percentage of the precious metal in its alloy. In the Chinese marketplace, unlike the British context, there was no reliable, independent process by which silver handicrafts could be verified by a standard of quality on behalf of consumers.[1] Authentication of silver as money was a case-by-case exercise in determining the invisible yet consequential quality of fineness, or the percentage of silver present in the alloy. While as a commodity money silver was inherently heterogenous in China, people who transacted silver through cross-cultural circulations understood that homogeneity in form conveyed legitimacy, and a high, stable value. Systemization was further connected to mechanized and industrialized production processes, as well as expressions of empire, sovereignty, and social status through coins, and luxury and semi-luxury objects. The long-distance market circulation of Chinese-made, English-style silverwares required that each silver object "produce a consensus" about its "value and validity," as Bruce Rusk has written in the context of the exchange of silver as money in Ming-Qing China.[2] In the Canton silver trade, adapted marking systems allowed objects of invisible value to traverse cultural boundaries of expectation, ultimately allowing them to move across oceanic distances.

The dominant production narrative we have received about the Canton silverware industry is a familiar one to scholars of Chinese export art: namely, that it was an industry primarily adept in imitation. At the turn of the nineteenth century, foreign buyers and observers regarded Chinese craftsmen as the ultimate copyists of European-made objects, though this was regarded with a positive valence. In the "Canton" entry of the *Encyclopedia Brittanica* from 1791, the people of the city were described as "…very industrious. They possess in an eminent degree the talent of imitation, so that if they are only shown any European work they can execute others like it with surprising exactness."[3] Silversmiths were no exception. As the French officer

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[1] Forbes et al. problematized the fineness of Canton silver due to the lack of an industry standard silver alloy in China. They wrote not only that there was no standard for silverwares produced in China for foreign markets, nor did the foreigners who ordered or purchased silver there demand or receive any guarantee from the producers. See H.A. Crosby Forbes, John Devereux Kernan, and Ruth S. Wilkins, *Chinese Export Silver, 1775 to 1875* (Milton, MA: Museum of the American China Trade, 1975), 25.

[2] "Value and Validity: Seeing Through Silver in Late Imperial China," in *Powerful Arguments: Standards of Validity in Late Imperial China,* eds. Martin Hofmann, Joachim Kurtz, and Ari Daniel Levine (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020), 471.

[3] *Encyclopedia Britannica,* vol. 4 (Dublin: James Moore, 1791), 126.

Félix Renouard wrote after a visit to a Guangzhou silverwares shop in 1807, "The Chinese make silverwares very well when they have good models; they imitate very well, except the complicated pieces…"[4] Imitation did not universally have the negative associations that it gained in the later nineteenth century, but rather was seen as essential to art and invention.[5] Yet once "imitation" acquired an adverse aspect, it was leveled against Chinese production, as referenced and refuted by Osmond Tiffany, Jr. (1823-95), an American factor who traded in Canton and wrote a memoir of a voyage taken in 1844:

> Some people… say that [the Chinese] are not an inventive, but merely an imitative race. What nation have they imitated? Are they not the originators of almost every art they possess? Are they not adept in some arts, that no other nation can attempt?[6]

Tiffany recognized that many forms of productions, from media to object types since claimed by Europeans, had been appropriated from Asia and other parts of the world. In this chapter, I consider how the Cantonese silver trade achieved the timely and wholesale replication of a semi-mechanized foreign industry using entirely handicraft techniques. The art of reproduction was derived from a coastal vernacular knowledge system, which viewed silver as signifying its own value through a modular assemblage of specific parts.

In addition to imitation, Canton silver has been given a corollary production narrative: that it was cheap, and specifically cheaper than what could be purchased in Britain, the United States, Australia, and other silver trades that produced in the British taste. Tiffany also penned one of the most widely-circulated descriptions of Canton silversmithing, based on his 1844 visit to a silversmith on Old China Street in the foreign enclave:

> He can manufacture any article, from a salt spoon to a service of plate, in the most elegant manner. He will line a pitcher with its coating of gold, or produce a favorite pattern of forks at very short notice. The silver is remarkably fine, and the cost of working it it [sic] is a mere song. Its intrinsic value is of course the same as it is in Europe, but the poor creatures who perspire over it are paid only about enough to keep the breath in their bodies…. It is much cheaper to have a splendid service of plate in China than in any other country, and many Europeans send out orders through supercargoes.[7]

Tiffany's shocking assessment of the labor exploitation of Chinese silversmiths, in combination with their ability to produce any object desired on demand, have dominated understandings of the Canton silver trade to date. Yet cases described in this chapter reveal that not only could silver be expensive, given the additional cost of workmanship in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, but as we will see, Chinese silversmiths were not universally accommodating to their foreign patrons.

In a period of both rising imperial power and decolonial movements, how did Cantonese silver trades adapt to shifts in the seemingly-homogenous "European" forms through which silver was supplied and demanded through transpacific circulations? In the last chapter, I argued that foreign consumers viewed Canton silver as legitimate semi-luxury goods in a global market

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[4] "Les Chinois fabriquent très-bien l'argenterie lorsqu'ils ont de bons modèles; ils imitent fort bien, excepté les pièces compliquées, où il y a des figures et de l'argent en dessin mat." *Voyage commercial et politique aux Indes Orientales,* vol. 3 (Paris, Clament, 1810), 197.

[5] Helen Clifford, "Concepts of Invention, Identity and Imitation in the London and Provincial Metal-working Trades, 1750-1800," *Journal of Design History* 12:3 (1999): 250.

[6] *The Canton Chinese; or, The American's sojourn in the Celestial Empire* (Boston: J. Monroe and Company, 1849), 86.

[7] Tiffany, 73. Quoted in Carl Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade: Paintings, Furnishings, and Exotic Curiosities* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1991), 338.

for silver and imitation silver metalwares, focusing on foreigners' perceptions of the objects. This chapter takes a closer look at the knowledge and mechanics through which the Canton silver trades accomplished this feat. The success of the trade indicates that silversmiths did not copy foreign objects through a rote reproduction process, but rather, integrated flexibility and variation. We observed a precedent for this type of modular production in my discussion of the making of the PEM ewer in chapter three.

In the early nineteenth century, people engaged in the Cantonese silver trades understood imported and exported silver in different forms through modular systems of design. While conservative, they were flexible systems that could accommodate change. They also further reveal a southeastern Chinese understanding of the material as performative. If silver coins and silverwares successfully expressed different components in their object configurations, they operated as standardized objects of exchange as well as viable "European" silver objects, which retained the power of imperial legitimacy in a range of colonial, semi-colonial, and postcolonial Asia-Pacific contexts. Even as silver was heterogenous, copper coins were more so; Richard von Glahn has quoted a diarist writing in the region around Hangzhou in 1796 on the phenomenon of the rise of the use of foreign silver coins in the southern provinces north of Guangdong and Fujian:

> When selling silver and buying copper coin, the exchange rate is determined by reckoning the quality of the coins. But it is difficult to transact business using copper coin since the coins in circulation are so heterogenous. Consequently foreign silver coins are preferred as substitutes for copper coin.[8]

In southern currency markets, the relative standardization of foreign silver coins thus made them a more reliable medium of exchange than indigenous copper coins. Consequently, Chinese silver retailers guaranteed the alloy of their silverwares at the fineness of imported silver Spanish and Mexican dollars. While the silver content of these objects fluctuated over time, colonial Spanish dollars, often called Carolus pesos for the bust of Charles IV on the obverse, were recorded in a 1836 Chinese silver treatise as over 90% silver, and post-independence Mexican dollars were recorded as above 89%.[9] In order to express their equivalence in invisible value, the visible qualities that expressed the stable and reliable high value of imported coins—consistency but also variability in a certain arrangement of component parts—was adapted to the making of Canton silver tablewares. The "peso standard" was thus made visible through a modular approach to form.

Assessing Silver's Value in Theaters of Exchange

Export albums of outside shops within the Guangzhou foreigners' enclave reveal the settings where silver was exchanged cross-culturally as craft and coin by the early nineteenth century. The images are not photographic-like transcriptions of reality, but rather visual shorthands condensing essential physical components and the workmen's tasks of each shop. The first is a depiction of the Wansheng 萬盛 jewelry and silverwares shop in watercolor and gouache, dating to around 1825 (fig. 6.1). It can be compared to the depiction of the Yueyou or

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[8] Wang Huizu 王輝祖, *Bingta menghen lu* 病榻夢痕錄 [Dream Memoirs from my Sick–Bed], xia, 79a-b, quoted in Richard von Glahn, "Foreign silver coins in the market culture of nineteenth century China," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 4:1 (2007): 56.

[9] The fineness of Spanish and Mexican changed over time, distinctions that were quickly picked up on by Chinese moneychangers and merchants. Carlos III coins were minted at 91.6% until 1772, when a new design was introduced minted at a slightly lower fineness of 90.2%. See von Glahn, 57.

"Canton Shop" silver utensils shop discussed in chapter five. Perhaps Wansheng, my transliteration of the shop name given on the image, was instead romanized as Wongshing, the final silversmith-retailer discussed in chapter six though this remains unconfirmed; Wongshing's shop was located at No. 15 China Street in the foreign enclave and shopping district, and thus could have been depicted in this album of Canton outside shops.[10] Unlike the drawing of the Yueyou shop, the Wansheng shop has merchandise on view, though most of it seems to be jewelry instead of worked plate. In both the Yueyou shop and Wansheng shop images, men are seen in the process of working silver. On the left of the Yueyou shop, for example, a man sitting behind the bars lifts a blowpipe to an oil lamp, implying that he is soldering a small silver object or piece of jewelry. In the Wansheng shop images, a man at the back right is working silver at a desk. While the spaces are spare, they are nonetheless pictured as centers of activity focused on the working and selling of silver.

In the image of the Wansheng shop, a Chinese woman stands at the counter, apparently either buying some jewelry or having it appraised for exchange. Extant orders and other business records demonstrate the types of objects that foreign sojourners would buy from Canton silverware shops, as discussed in the previous chapter; for the purposes of this chapter, I examine them to give a fuller sense of how the cost of silversmiths' labor was calculated. Philadelphia merchant Robert Waln, Jr. drew up a list of "outside men" in 1819, presumably a resource for himself and his business partners, which listed romanized names of Chinese shopkeepers and artisans along with their "standing," "character," trade and location.[11] Waln listed four purveyors of "Silver, Gold Ware," but listed their trade simply as "Silversmith": Linshing, Sunshing, Houcheong, and Cumshing.[12] Carl Crossman wrote that since Pao Ying, one of the shops discussed extensively in the previous chapter, was not included on the Waln list, it is possible that he was not working by 1820, or that the business concern had folded.[13] Thomas Tunno Forbes' journal from 1826 mentions three of the four silversmiths on the Waln list, and he placed orders with them on behalf of other customers. He bought rings and spectacles from Linshing, with no additional cost for workmanship.[14] Forbes purchased twelve sets of flatware from "Hochun," likely Waln's Houcheong, each of which included a tablespoon, a dessert spoon, a teaspoon, and a table fork. Houcheong charged fifteen percent on top of the cost of the silver for workmanship. Forbes also placed an order from Sunshing, who charged 25% on top of the price of silver used for workmanship. Sunshing's workshop evidently specialized in hollowwares for the table, such as tea caddies, sugar bowls, coffeepots, and strainers.[15] Benjamin Shreve also paid 25% in workmanship from Sunshing for an order that included a coffee urn and two teapots in 1822.[16] From this array of purchases, it might seem that the cost of workmanship in the 1810s

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[10] Carl L. Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade: Painting, Furniture, and Exotic Curiosities* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collector's Club, 1991/1972), 349.
[11] Robert Waln, Jr., "Book of Prices," Vol. 2, Canton, 1819 (Sept. 1819-Jan. 1820), folio 27, Waln Family Papers, Yi2 2571.F, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Thanks to Winnie Wong for providing me with a scan of this document.
[12] Ibid., folio 29.
[13] Crossman, *The Decorative Art of the China Trade,* 341.
[14] Journal B, folio 24, Series D. Thomas Tunno Forbes papers, Forbes Family Business Records, MSS 766 1803-1942 F693, Baker Library Special Collections and Archives, Harvard Business School.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ledger for the Brig Comet, folio 93. MH 20, Benjamin Shreve papers, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum.

and 1820s was calculated according to the additional requirements of skilled labor needed for a teapot as opposed to teaspoon.

Yet that does not seem to be universally the case; indeed, the cost of workmanship varied widely in the period, and was not necessarily cheaper than the cost of silverwares purchased closer to home. In 1815, a little over ten years before Forbes placed an order with Houcheong, the Scottish merchant Walter Davidson placed an order with him on the account of Elizabeth Macarthur, whose Canton flatware was discussed in the previous chapter. Macarthur was charged an additional thirty percent for workmanship on all of the goods ordered, which consisted of mostly flatware, but also included a teapot.[17] The total price of her order was 418.64 silver dollars, and this sum did not include the cost of shipping. Crossman has written that while silver was not expensive by Western standards, it was also not very cheap, either, as confirmed by Macarthur's order.[18]

The separate albums containing each of the silver shop images each also include a painting and a line drawing of a money exchange shop (fig. 6.2, 3). The level of extra security required by the Wansheng shop is implied by the bars on the left of the image, but is multiplied by the bars seen facing the street in the Meihe 美和 money shop in figure 2. The sign on the Meihe shop specifies that it changes *huaqian* 花錢 or "flowery money," one of the vernacular terms for imported foreign coins with a milled edge, as well as *yinding* 銀錠 or silver ingots. The final line drawing depicts a cutaway view of the Yongxing money shop. Like the silverwares and jewelry shop images, these two images show men engaged in different tasks related to the assessment and working of silver. In the Meihe shop painting, one man sits in front and appraises money for a customer, while another man sits inside behind a set of scales.

One of the essential tasks was the appraising of foreign silver coins, which is the activity depicted at the right of the Yongxing money changing shop. The moneychanger behind the desk drops a round piece of silver, most likely a struck Spanish or Mexican dollar, on the desk, while the customer watches, and listens, raptly. According to Chinese silver coin authentication manuals from the early nineteenth century, the sound of the coin ringing on a hard surface was one of the diagnostics used to assess the authenticity of the coin. Moneychangers were also concerned with determining whether genuine coins had been adulterated with base metals. The manual from 1836 mentioned above, titled *Foreign Coins Silver Treatise — A Complete Guide* [*Yangqian yinlun quanfa* 洋錢銀論全], was produced by the brothers Su Fuyuan 蘇富源 and Su Deyuan 蘇德源 in Foshan, a city just to the southwest of Guangzhou in Guangdong province known for metalworking. The manual described the process for authenticating a coin using the following set of guidelines:

> Everyone must examine silver coins closely and carefully. Just looking once and getting the gist is a waste of effort. When it comes to understanding silver, is it possible to exaggerate the ways in which the coin-press has met with evil spirits?
>
> First examine the edge-rail. Then look at the designs. Then look at the chops 字印 [*ziyin*, "character stamps"]. Fourth, listen to its sound. Fifth, check [or scrape] the surface purity 色 [*se*,

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[17] James Broadbent et al, *India, China, Australia: Trade and Society, 1788-1850* (New South Wales: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2003), 126.

[18] Crossman, 348.

> color], revolve the coin several times [or check several parts of the alloy] to see if the entire alloy is genuine silver.[19]

Repeated object-based scrutiny of silver coins was thus necessary for understanding them, according to the manual. The manual provides insight into different sensory means used to appraise coins, which included sound and touch, in addition to visual characteristics.

In this chapter, I will use the coin manuals to analyze the latter and argue that the means for understanding silver coins was based on an understanding of modular deconstruction of physical component parts. It required close looking to assess whether the coin's impressed designs on all three sides (that is, the coin's obverse, reverse, and edge) were crisply rendered and in the correct configurations. Meanwhile, the "chops" mentioned are Chinese single-character punches that were applied to the coins as both a diagnostic tool to test the structural soundness of the coin, as well as a guarantee from the moneychanger or banker. Unlike the Canton hallmarks discussed in the previous chapter and this one, most *ziyin* are not yet directly linked with known money shops. However, they presumably served a similar function as the shop marks on silverwares. The array of known *ziyin* are vast, and include generic characters such as *you* 有, *cheng* 城, and *xiang* 香. Some are not characters, but as-yet unidentified symbols. Later chops include known symbols such as the Mexico City mint mark that appeared on valuable Spanish coins, in this case applied to a post-independence *real* minted struck at Zacatecas (fig. 6.4). Visual design components, from designs on the milled edge, to struck surface elements, to the chops were all used as sources for material knowledge about the value of the coin.

Modular Systems

As Lothar Ledderose has argued, modular systems were common to premodern Chinese craft manufacturing processes. They were used to efficiently organize labor at a large scale and create standardized products.[20] As Ledderose wrote of third-millennium BCE ceramics made by the Dawenkou and Longshan cultures of Shandong province, vessels were made of distinct components and then joined together, using "standardized shapes and measurements," as well as the mechanical reproduction of molds.[21] Such techniques were employed several millennia later in the sixteenth-century Jingdezhen porcelain industry, where hundreds of kilns produced ceramic objects at an industrial scale simultaneously for imperial, domestic, and export markets.[22] The sides of the PEM ewer discussed in the introduction and second chapter were also produced through a modular system, though it is still unknown where the object's workshop was located. The early nineteenth-century Cantonese silver industry operated at a much smaller scale than the Jingdezhen ceramics industry, which was located over five hundred miles away; yet the evidence of their manufacture indicates that local Guangzhou metals manufacturing operated with a similar organizational logic.

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[19] "諸君看銀须子細。一時大意枉勞心。莫道識銀誇得口天師還有遇邪神。先看邊欄。次看花草三看字印。四聽聲音。五察皮色，幾般齊整是眞銀." *Yangqian yinlun quanfa,* 67. Coins and Medals department, British Museum.

[20] *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 2-3.

[21] Ibid., 85.

[22] Ibid., 86.

The Canton silver handicrafts trade was particularly adept at meeting the demand for silverwares in the British taste because the latter were produced using methods that increased precision, standardization, and the division of labor. As the previous chapter discussed, British metalwares were made in parts and using semi-mechanized means, such as steam-powered flattening and rolling mills to create sheet metal, as well as die-stamps to create components.[23] Further, from the standpoint of consumers' taste, a backlash against the previous fashionability of French rococo designs welcomed simplified and reproducible forms, produced through cast and polished steel molds and dies.[24] While steam power was used, it was not extensive; nonetheless, the use of flattening mills with steel rollers created a thin, light and workable sheet metal of a standardized gauge.[25] The use of these technologies made the reproduction of such objects entirely by hand, sand molds, and the use of simple machines in the southern Chinese context — given the cheap skilled labor available and the managerial ability of Chinese retailers — efficient and effective.

Beyond handicraft production, scholars have traced similar organization within Chinese visual culture and literary texts. In her article on auspicious motifs in late imperial visual-material culture, Maggie Bickford has written that the production of an "auspicious visuality" across elite and vernacular arts demonstrates an "impressive economy of expression." Different textual and visual elements were used repeatedly, quoted and referenced, and were inflected in meaning through recombination and use.[26] Through time and iteration, luck-bearing motifs drawn from a range of sources become discrete elements that were "hard-working: combining and interlocking with one another to deliver multiple auspicious messages."[27] They are used with agility, crossing divides of elite and vernacular, and are resonant and meaningful to different social groups.

The flexible, systematic, and appropriative use of auspicious motifs in visual-material culture is also similar to how language is used in the late-Ming novel *Jin Ping Mei,* which English translator David Tod Roy has described as "replete with verbatim quotations from every level of traditional discourses as well as parodies of the generic characteristics of many of them."[28] While the use of discursive fragments often strongly contradict each other, Roy writes that the pervasiveness of the rhetorical "antimonies" reveals that contradiction was the anonymous author's strategy. The text's author never speaks directly, but rather by interweaving appropriated language and formulaic poetic phrases into a complicated pastiche. For the educated period reader, such a stylistic approach would have activated metaphorical and other literary connotations.[29] Roy views the novel as an instance of what M.M. Bakhtin has called heteroglossia:

> The language of the novel is a *system* of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimate each other…. The author (as creator of the novelistic whole) cannot be found at any one of the novel's language levels: he is to be found at the center of organization where all levels intersect.[30]

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[23] John Culme, *Nineteenth-Century Silver* (London: Hamlyn for Country Life Books, 1977), 8.
[24] Philippa Glanville, *Silver in England* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1987), 102.
[25] Jack Ogden, *Age and Authenticity: The Materials and Techniques of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Goldsmiths* (London: National Association of Goldsmiths, 1999), 3.
[26] "Three Rams and Three Friends: The Working Lives of Chinese Auspicious Motifs," *Asia Major: Third Series* 12:1 (1999): 127.
[27] Ibid., 131.
[28] "Introduction," *The Plum in the Golden Vase,* vol. 1 (Princeton University Press, 2013), xliii.
[29] Ibid., xlv.
[30] As quoted in Ibid., xliii.

Through indirect expression and recombination of appropriated texts, the author of *Jin Ping Mei* thus performed a managerial function at the nucleus of a system of language. Cantonese silversmiths and retailers, as well as foreign silver coin graders and moneychangers worked similarly. They operated from the center of an appropriated design system of components derived from imported European-style metalwork and coins.

Deconstructing Value in Pieces (of Eight)

First, I will examine how moneychangers and graders evaluated imported Spanish coins, using the nineteenth-century treatises mentioned above as evidence of vernacular knowledge systems of design and authentication. Woodblock-printed treatises on foreign silver coins were a genre of Chinese practical reference handbooks. The manuals provide insight into a modular process garnered through object-based knowledge of silver. It was a system of design through which people understood the process of authenticating, grading, and exchanging imported European coins. These books were popular texts written for merchants, though they likely were consumed by a much wider readership. Not just merchants, but also anyone circulating foreign silver coins—indeed, as mentioned above, the primary circulating currency in southern China—would have interest in gaining this type of vernacular knowledge. Chinese merchants viewed Spanish colonial trade dollars (often recorded as "old heads" in Anglophone merchant accounts) as a relatively trustworthy and stable forms of the metal. The coins were imported at a premium, and were rampantly faked, increasing the demand for publications divulging knowledge on the exchange of such objects.[31] While these objects were considered viable and to some extent trustworthy forms of money, we can next ask, how did they function as such through their visual design? How did the visual diagnostics impart knowledge about the visible and invisible material qualities of coins?

I focus my analysis on the Su brothers' *Yangqian yinlun quanfa* (1836). Different manuals were published throughout the nineteenth century, and contained similar and sometimes identical content, even though their publishers were different. As a genre, the manuals were expansions of sections of eighteenth-century merchants' manuals into standalone volumes on the single topic of foreign coin authenticating, grading and faking. Earlier versions are shorter texts that appear in compendia of merchants' knowledge, such as a short treatise by Wu Zhongfu 吳中孚, *Bianyin yaopu* 辯銀要譜, included in the volume *Shanggu bianlan* 商賈便覽 (Hangzhou: Tongwentang 同文堂, 1822, reprint of 1792 edition).[32] *Shanggu bianlan* also contains practical knowledge relevant to the merchants' trade, such as a section on local Chinese commodities, and another on how to use an abacus to calculate sums. Other merchants' manuals contain route

[31] "Dollars, though of the same weight and purity, are not received alike by the Chinese; the difference chiefly arises from caprice, so that what is preferred in one place is often refused in another place, unless at a discount. But the Spanish dollars, known by the name of 'pillar dollars,' if uninjured by the Canton practice of stamping, bear every where a premium, varying from 1 to 1 ½ per cent. on those that are from a recent date…and even 6 per cent. on the older dollars called 'flowery rimmed.' There are other dollars, bearing the stamp of the letter G, to denote their being coined at the Guadalajara mint, which are never received but at discount. Their inferiority has been fixed by authority of an order from the hoppo [customs administrator]." John R. Morrison, *Chinese Commercial Guide* (Canton: Albion Press, 1834), 63.

[32] Copy consulted in Institute of Oriental Culture, Tokyo University.

maps, which described roads, canals, and terrain for transporting goods.[33] Earlier related texts also included treatises on how to assess different types of domestically-produced silver ingots.[34] Based on extant examples, foreign silver coin treatises were primarily compiled and published in the southern regions where such coins were a dominant currency form.

A coin such as a Charles IV (r. 1788-1808) eight-reales coin, minted in Mexico City in 1797, is an "old head" coin known to have circulated through southern China due to the small *ziyin,* or character-stamps, on its surface (fig. 6.5). The coins, along with the Charles III (r. 1759-1788) pesos were known as Carolus dollars, featuring a profile view of the bust of the two Spanish kings on their obverse. They were so common in southern China by the first decades of the nineteenth century, they "became a new de facto monetary standard," according to Richard von Glahn, and were called *yuan* 圓, 元 in Chinese.[35] They were preceded by the pillar dollar, which created a precedent for the Chinese understanding of the other two coins (fig. 6.6). The pillar dollar was struck in Spanish colonial Latin American mints from 1732 to 1772. On its obverse, the coin was struck with a pattern including two columns representing the Pillars of Hercules. In between the pillars are two terrestrial hemispheres, representing the new and old worlds, united under the Spanish crown. To Chinese viewers, the pillars were interpreted as candles, the globes were navels, and the crown was a canopy. Likely due to the precedent of this design, the reverse faces of subsequently-minted coins with columns, crown and Bourbon coat-of-arms were understood as the "front" of the coin by Chinese coin graders.

The iconography of the pillar dollar was meant to convey Spanish terrestrial power over both Asia and the Americas; while the image of the two overlapping globes visually united the continents under Spanish rule, the Chinese interpretation of the images disregarded the Spanish claim of global sovereignty embedded into the silver's surface. The imagery of the two globes synoptically expresses the trajectory of the silver in the form of the trade coin, eliding Europe in the middle. Even though Chinese saw the globes as navels, from a present-day view the coin's die-struck pattern also expressed the economic power of Asia as a majority consumer of the precious metal coming from the Americas.

As mentioned above, the tiny marks that appear on the Charles IV coin's surface are called *ziyin* 字印 in the Chinese coin manuals, and "chops" by Western traders.[36] They were sometimes applied by Chinese moneychangers, graders and bankers (called shroffs by Anglophone merchants) in the process of authentication.[37] A line drawing of the Meihe shop also

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[33] Endymion Wilkinson, "Chinese Merchant Manuals and Route Books," in *Chinese History: A New Manual* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012), 8–34.

[34] Chen Kaijun, "Learning about Precious Goods: Transmission of Mercantile Knowledge from the Southern Song to the Early Ming Period," *Bulletin of the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology* 4 (2017): 308-18.

[35] von Glahn, 53. As the name implies, they were also the basis of the current Chinese currency system.

[36] "*Chop*, from Malay *chapa*, a seal or stamp, any thing sealed or stamped; hence government edicts, licenses, &c, also stamped or printed documents. Again, a *thing* licensed, as a *chop-boat*; also, a *place* able to give licenses as a *chop-house*, i.e. a custom-house. *Chop* is also used as synonymous with 'quality,' as *first chop* or *No. 1 chop*, for 'best-quality.'" *Chinese Commercial Guide*, 3.

[37] "Shroff" was a general term in the Anglophone trading world for Asian moneychangers, derived from the Arabic "saraf." The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines "shroff" as a "banker or money-changer in the East; in the Far East, a native expert employed to detect bad coin." The first recorded instance in English in the OED of the term is from 1618, in the context of the Anglo-Indian trade. Shroffs

illustrated in the painted album is a rare view of shroffs "chopping" coins, or striking them with *ziyin* (fig. 6.7). *Ziyin* served a diagnostic purpose in striking, in that they were a physical test of whether the internal structure of the coin was consistent. They also could serve as a guarantee that the coin was checked by that money shop or a grader for an informal bank. As a coin manual from 1830 noted on *ziyin:*

> When you look at silver, but have doubt regarding parts that you can't decide, you must always strike through [the surface] to see the base. If there are patterns resembling coconut meat, and the reflection in the field is soft, then it is fine. Or drill to open, and direct [the area] toward daylight. Blow on the surface. If it is good silver, then its color immediately will change to green-yellow. If it is low base-metal and thus fake, it won't change.
>
> When you are beginning to learn striking silver and cutting silver, you can't let your hand fall toward areas of fresh chops, out of fear of preventing accidentally striking another shop mark chop. In case of low-grade fake silver, it is difficult to return. From the outset, every shop each has its own chop as proof. If there is no chop, then how could you return or exchange it?[38]

Other diagnostic methods included deeply-struck gouges that marred the surface of the coin, mentioned here as drills or cuts, evidence of which can also be seen in on the 1797 coin. *Ziyin* and gouges revealed the substance of the coin below the surface, which could have been coated in a silver-like material.

As *Yangqian yinlun quanfa* instructed:

> How does one discuss and judge chops? Glance at the sign or stroke to distinguish whether it is poor in quality or well-done, old or new. Look to see whether the impression reveals hard-copper at the bottom. There are three types that you must differentiate.[39]

Chops could thus vary in quality, as well as reveal differences in when they were struck. Discerning whether *ziyin* were genuine was yet another subject of concern. Yet from this set of passages, they served both a diagnostic function, as well as operated as a guarantee.

Western observers described the work of moneychangers working for Chinese compradores involved in the import of silver coins; while coins were not rigorously chopped, assessing their internal consistency was an essential part of the process. In his photographically-

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were also trades visually depicted in the Anglo-Indian world; see *Shroff or Cash Keeper* [as inscribed on back in English and Tamil], gouache on paper made c. 1805 by an Indian painter in Tanjore, from an album of 36 paintings of trades and costumes. Victoria & Albert Museum, AL.9254:11. In this painting, one shroff is depicted weighing objects on a set of hand-held scales, while the other is checking coins. Differently from the Chinese context, different types of objects are sorted into small piles by form and metal (based on the different colors), and include different types of jewelry as well as coins and other forms of money.

[38] "一凡看銀。 但有疑未决。總要撞穿見脚。有似椰肉紋。帶軟者。為佳。或鑽開向朝光。用口氣一吹。若好銀其色立變青黃。如低銅偽者。則不變矣。一凡初學撞銀切不可向新鮮字印處落手恐防偶撞他店號字印。倘低偽銀難回上手每行店皆以字印為憑。如無印則不換豈。非生理論事雖細微亦可為後學者。宜愼之故並錄於此。已上備列規條十欵其偽者。無定或有更變高低隨時議值不過權為初學之階勿以一概統而論之至若吹。手求疵。總要眼力堅心研究者。 亦無難之也." Pan Zhengye 潘正業, *Canzheng yinlun* 參証銀論 [A work on testing silver coin] (Guangzhou, 1830). British Library, 15252.d.15.

[39] "字印看來何議斷。撇畫分明軟熟生。觀其印硬銅低是。三樣看來要分明." *Yangqian yinlun quanfa,* 67.

illustrated account of his travels in China, Scottish photographer John Thomson published an image of moneychangers involved in large-scale imports of foreign dollars. It shows four men and a boy engaged in the task of "shroffing dollars" (fig. 6.8). Four of the men are examining coins, which they sort into different woven containers. Thomson's text notes:

> In transferring the dollars from one sack to another, two are taken up at a time, poised upon the tips of the fingers, struck, and sounded, the tone of base metal being readily detected. The milling of the edge is also examined, as the Chinese show great cleverness in sawing the dollar asunder, scraping out and re-united the two halves, which they fill up with a hard solder made of a cheap metal, that when rung emits a clear silver tone. So deftly is the re-uniting done, that none but an expert can detect the junction of the two halves.[40]

American merchants' accounts from the early nineteenth century track both the subtraction of "bad dollars" as well as shroffage charges on shipments of coins, two indications of the cost of the authentication process.[41] While painted images of single moneychangers such as the one discussed in chapter one are representatives of the trade, Thomson's photograph and its description reveal the scale of the industry of money graders involved in the import of foreign coins on a massive scale.

As coins were cargo, moneychangers could handle thousands of coins a day. *Yangqian yinlun quanfa* demonstrates that southern Chinese merchants and moneychangers had a sophisticated, object-based understanding of imported machine-milled foreign coins, as well as the different ways of adulterating and faking them. The text is divided into several sections. An introduction provides the rationale for the book: in a context of rampant counterfeiting, the book claims to teach the reader the ability to differentiate between genuine and fake coins. Next, a section groups types of foreign coins, using their Chinese names typically describing a visual salient feature of the pattern, grouped by the descending percentage of silver in the alloy. A set of woodblock-printed illustrations follows, with different coin faces, raised milled edges (often described by numismatists as the "third side" of a coin), and different patterns of lead or other base metal inserts used to adulterate the coin and extract silver. Further illustrations are annotated with textual descriptions of how to authenticate different edges. A pronunciation guide with tables illustrating different "foreign characters" *guizi* 鬼字 or the letters that appear on the faces along the rims of foreign coins, are next. Diagnostic guides to the relative placement of particular elements on the faces of Spanish and Mexican coins follow, along with illustrations of obverse and reverses of Spanish colonial coins. Finally, there are illustrations of both sides of the coin die and the coining press. The remainder of the book consists of short essays on authenticating foreign coins. While sections focus on the process of checking coins referencing visual concepts introduced through the set of illustrated elements, most of the text is devoted rather to descriptions of the many methods of faking coins. For the purposes of this chapter, I will analyze how coins are understood by the text through a process deconstructing their component parts.

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[40] John Thomson, *Illustrations of China and Its People. A series of two hundred photographs, with letterpress descriptive of the places and people represented,* vol. 1 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1874), unpaginated.

[41] For example, a typical shroffage charge was .05% on a shipment of $8995 cash from Bombay on December 27, 1841. Augustine Heard & Co shipping records, carton 21. MSS 766, Heard family business records, Series II. Augustine Heard & Co. Baker Library Special Collections and Archives, Harvard Business School.

In addition to the sound of the coin when struck or dropped, visual factors were important diagnostics that provided indications of whether the coin was genuine. The manual included large, single-page images of the reverse and obverse of the two Carolus dollars, as well as the coin minted under the reign of Charles IV's successor, Ferdinand VII (r. 1814-1833). The coin in Figure 6.5 could be identified as a Charles IV peso using these images. In Figure 6.9, the coin's reverse (or back) is depicted, with the pattern of the crowned arms of the Bourbon kings of Spain in between the columns of Hercules. From this image of the "face" (*mian* 面) of the coin, or what from a Western perspective would be the reverse, or back of the coin. According to the text, the coin is identified as the "thousand-character border" coin. The second image, Figure 6.10, shows the "back" (*bei* 背) of the coin—or what from a Western perspective would be the obverse, or front of the coin. The text accompanying the image notes that the coin is also known as the *dayi* 大衣 "big robe" type, also correlated by another image on the chart of different coin faces (fig. 6.11). Here the coin is labeled as a *sigong dayi* 四工大衣 or "four-gong 工 big robe" coin. The four *gong* indicated the four roman numeral "I" behind the profile head of the monarch, which resembled the Chinese character *gong* 工, and "big robe" distinguished the coin from the later Ferdinand VII coin, where the figure wears a garment that takes up slightly less of the coin's surface.[42] From this set of identifying images, it is apparent that the valuable Charles IV coin was indexed through its three surfaces: its face, its back, and its edge.

Out of the three surfaces, the most important visual-material diagnostic was the edge, as indicated by the coin's primary identification as a "thousand-character border" coin (fig. 6.12). The struck designs in the border are a series of hollow rectangles and circles, with each circle alternating with a rectangle. In the passage giving an overview of the process of checking coins from *Yangqian yinlun quanfa*, quoted above, the first step is to check the edge, before looking at the patterns on the faces, and then the *ziyin.* The milled edge of machine-struck coins was an anti-counterfeiting measure that also prevented clipping, or shaving bits of silver from of the edge, as any loss would become instantly apparent. Patterns on the edges of coins are added in several ways through machine-struck processes, but commonly, each coin blank or planchet is held in place by a collar during striking. The collar is made out of metal that has patterns carved into it, so when the two dies strike the coin, impressing patterns on both faces, the metal of the coin is also forced into the small grooves or patterns of the collar. In its transformation from silver disc to coin, the object is thus stamped with ornamentation on three sides. While the top and bottom faces could be gouged and struck in circulating, it was important to have a completely sound edge.

Yangqian yinlun quanfa illustrated the "thousand character" border in two additional ways, which reiterates that the coin's edge was a critical diagnostic component. An illustration of the edge is included in the charts of images of different coin faces, along with edge types including *yabian* 芽邊 "grass-blade border," *huabian* 花邊 "flowery-rim border," and *shengchuanbian* 繩串邊 "rope border" (fig. 6.13). Additionally, a full page is dedicated to illustrating the difference between a "genuine" "thousand character" border, and how fake ones might appear (fig. 6.14). Faked edges could have been hand-chiseled, or poorly cast. The page gives two examples of how faked edges might appear. It notes that the "eyes" at the centers of

[42] von Glahn, 54.

faked rectangles on the borders are too large, while the round borders of the circles are too thin, and not properly abutting each other. The region is rough, coarse, thick, and tough. The top line accordingly shows blobby and uneven designs with large central openings; the bottom line is likewise uneven, and the alternating circles and squares are placed at varying distances from each other. The top line on the page shows how on genuine edges, the interior and exterior of each shape align, creating an even width of raised "characters." It is difficult to know whether these textual and visual cues were employable in practice without the experience of examining coin after coin to evaluate minute differences. Rather, it is more likely that the practical coin manual could only function effectively with either an expert's instruction, or in the context of transacting hundreds of coins, aligning material knowledge gained through handling coins with the visual and textual knowledge from the manual.

As these first few printed images reveal, the book created an intertextual web of visual-material diagnostic components through which the coin could be deconstructed into modular parts. While we began with the obverse and reverse faces, and from there studied the edge, the book also links the edge with the mint mark, a single character from the Roman alphabet which links a coin with its place of manufacture. Figure twelve, which distinguishes genuine and fake "thousand character" edges, also notes that the face (*mian* 面) of the coin should contain the "foreign character" of an M with a circle above it (Mo). On the reverse of a Carolus coin, the mint mark appears on the rim, positioned about where the eight appears on a clock face. It is preceded by the motto "HISPAN ET · IND · REX" which is begun on the front face of the coin by "DEI · GRATIA · 1797 · CAROLUS · IIII" meaning "Charles IV by the grace of god, King of Spain and the Indies." The motto is followed by the mint mark, Mo, indicating that the coin was minted in Mexico City, and the coin's value of "8R" for eight reales. Finally, the initials "F · M" designate the two assayers Francisco Arance y Cobos (1777-1803) and Mariano Rodríguez (1784-1807).[43] While there is no evidence that Chinese moneychangers knew that Mo indicated the place of minting, it is telling that they selected this mark as an important diagnostic.

Another diagnostic image shows the positioning of the mint mark on the "thousand character border" coin in relation to the central salient feature of the coin's *mian*: the crowned arms of the Bourbon kings (fig. 6.15). The two columns were interpreted by the manuals as candles on a platform, while the crown was viewed as a canopy. The image notes that on this coin (identified by its edge), the foreign character Mo should be located below the midsection of the right-sided candle. While the text does not describe it, the "T" in "ET" is also illustrated on the diagnostic image. The directionality of right and left are not oriented toward the viewer, but rather indicate the coin's right and left; this is consistent with other images of coin faces throughout the manual. Precision of foreign letter rendering and placement was thus stressed on what the Chinese viewed as the front or face of the coin, and in certain cases over others. The letters on figure nine—the "back" of the coin—for example, contain several inaccuracies, as the "L" in "CAROLUS" is upside-down, the date of 1083(?) is impossible, and "GRATIA" contains several indistinct letters. Rather, the primary diagnostics for authenticating Charles IV coins were stressed on the side of the coin with the canopy and candles—that is, the Spanish arms and the mint mark.

Other manuals describe in more detail the images on the faces of the coins, but *Yangqian yinlun quanfa* deemphasized these characteristics in place of how the different components of the

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[43]Josep Pellicer i Bru, *Glosario de Maestros de ceca y ensayadores, siglos XII-XX* (Bogotá, Colombia: Museo Casa de la Moneda, 1997), 40 and 110

coin relate together. Another section of illustrations gives further details about how to authenticate the "foreign characters" that appear on the rims of the coins. One page depicts the Mexico City mint mark, showing its accurate rendering and giving its pronunciation (*ah-yan* 阿掩) as well as an example of how fake versions might appear (fig. 6.16). The page specifies that on the fake versions, the "O" and "M" are glued together, and the image or drawing of the letter is "fat, swollen, flat, and askew."[44] Thus, understanding these components extended to the ability to discuss them. They are not viewed as letters of an alphabet, but rather, foreign characters that serve as components within a system of authenticating components. The text deconstructs foreign coins into their constituent parts and identifies certain components as important diagnostics. The approach to understanding objects is modular in how it breaks down and reorganizes coins into a hierarchy of parts from a design standpoint.

The manuals raise the question of whether Chinese moneychangers and merchants were aware of the semi-mechanized means through which the coins were produced abroad. *Yangqian yinlun quanfa* illustrates a coining press as well as steel coin dies (figs. 6.17-19), but does not explain the process of their use. In the guidelines for how to use the manual, the Su brothers included a sentence referring to the coining press, called *Tianshi* 天師 or "Daoist master," writing that there is no way to exaggerate the evils met by the coining press. *Canzheng yinlun* notes that the *tianshi* 天師 is a mold for striking silver coins, and describes the process as follows:

> The so-called "Daoist master," namely, the mold used to strike silver. It strikes "foreigners' heads" and flowery rims, as well as other designs. Two navels, two candles, the canopy, each and every [decorative] item. Foreigners originally used steel to strike silver into forms. If grinding the form, there is a top and bottom one -- two in total. Put silver inside in the center of the two molds. Bring the two together from the top, pound with a big iron, and one strike will yield the designs. Eventually there are some that once struck do not rise. They are convex-concave, not even, once they come out of the press mould. Then the press is not able to strike its edge. So as a separate step, they use steel to strike the edge-seals. The interior is carved with edge-letters. The rimming is chiseled. This is called edge-chiseling.[45]

The illustrations in *Yangqian yinlun quanfa* reflect this understanding of the coining process, where it seems a heavy weight was attached to a standing frame, and used to strike the coin molds— or "stamps" *yin* 印 as they are described on the illustrations—by a lever. The process does not account for the use of a screw press, which was used in order to amplify human, animal, and later mechanized force, as described above (fig. 6.20). The technology of steel dies are understood as casting molds, rather than two surfaces struck together or screwed together with great force. Coin blanks were produced using rolling mills, which created a standardized flat disc; this step was also omitted from Chinese vernacular understanding of the process of minting. Pan's account describes the minting of both pillar and Carolus coins, due to the components described, inclusive of foreigner's heads, flowery rims, navels, candles, and canopies. While they

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[44] "其 O 與 M 相粘連。并字畫肥腫扁歪。" *Yangqian yinlun quanfa,* 25.

[45] "天師模. 所云天師者。即擊銀之模也。乃打出鬼頭花邊。等花草。兩臍兩柱寶蓋，各項。外國原用鋼打成形。如磨樣，上下二個。將銀納於其中。合上用大鐵捶一擊使成花草。故有打不起。凸凹無齊出此也。即天師不能擊其邊。另用鋼打成邊印。內刻邊字。鑿之邊欄。號曰邊鑿是也。"

were aware that all designs had to be struck at once from all sides to maintain the flatness of the disc of the coin, the textual and visual descriptions do not account for the collar piece, through which the critical designs on the edge were struck. Thus, through translation into Chinese vernacular knowledge, there were several important elements missing from the process of producing the machine-minted coins.

The appearance of the faces, edge, foreign characters, and chop marks contributed to the assessment of a "real" coin. But did it matter whether the coin was minted in Mexico City, Zacatecas, or any other mint in Latin America? If the manuals indicated the site of production of the coins at all, they would often reiterate the eighteenth-century knowledge discussed in the introduction, that the coins were sourced from Luzon in the Philippines. The source and "author" of the coin reflected by the mint mark, though ironically a part of the formal validation of the coin, was most likely an immaterial component of the process. In other words, Chinese silver transactors did not need to know the distant and unknown site where the coin was made, and where the silver was often mined. Rather, that they were concerned with whether the coin's visual components accurately indexed its invisible value, calibrated to the percentage of silver in its alloy. The same was in effect true of foreign consumers of Cantonese silver in the British taste. As I discussed in the previous chapter, foreign consumers saw these wares are viable and valuable, despite—or often, because of—their Chinese site of production. In the following section, I argue that they exhibited a modular approach to the construction of British Georgian tablewares. As such, they demonstrate the Cantonese application of the above-described vernacular understanding of foreign silver forms in the context of production. Silversmiths and silver retailers, among those agents intimately familiar with the value of foreign silver coins, extended an approach to deconstructing coins to verify their authenticity as sound, to constructing sugar bowls and teapots, such that that they performed an authenticity as British.

Modularity in Canton Silver

In this section, I explore the production characteristics of the Canton silverwares trade by assessing a selection of modular technical solutions used for producing silverwares in the British taste. Two main technical distinctions between British production and Chinese were the use of hand-hammered sheet metal, which was then hand-raised or turned using a human-powered machine and cast structural and ornamental elements. One of the main observations that curators accustomed to handling British and American silver make when handling Canton silver is that it is surprisingly heavy, likely based their expectation based on similar semi-machined forms. The relative weight of Canton silver—and thus the relative amount of silver used for production—results from the aforementioned methods used by Chinese silversmiths to adapt British silver and plated metal forms that were produced with the assistance of new industrial processes, and with semi-mechanized rolling mills, presses, piercing saws and other powered technologies. Components produced after British semi-luxury metalwares were handicraft versions of machined and plated models, but they were not straightforward copies. While Chinese silversmiths used handicraft methods common to many early modern silversmiths globally, many of which were still current into the nineteenth century, they nonetheless represent major shifts in Chinese production. Unlike the textural, ornamented, and varied surfaces we have seen thus far in this dissertation, Canton silverwares in the "British taste" have remarkably smooth, planished and shiny surfaces, offset by uniform ornament that are either embossed or cast-and-applied. In the process of translating a British approach to form and design in the creation of such objects,

Canton silversmiths also subtly modified construction techniques as well as designs following Chinese construction techniques and design references.

From a design perspective, the Robinson service introduced in the previous chapter followed a Greek and Roman revival repertoire, embellished from its characteristic lightness under sway of a rococo revival, and given naturalistic shapes and embellishments.[46] Each multi-lobed, melon-shaped vessel was embossed with acanthus leaves, and sits on four feet decorated with anthemions or palmettes. A teapot from the Robinson service demonstrates the seriality of forms. The object is assembled from pieces, including a squat, melon-lobed body, a high neck narrowing at the center, a cast rim, a cast foot in four pieces, a wide-based spout, and a high arched handle with a cast thumb piece. Within the tea service, the lobed body with chased acanthus-inspired leaves extending up from the foot and down from the neck on each lobe is repurposed in three different forms—a lidded container for dispensing liquid, a container for holding solids, and an open container for dispensing liquids. Within the set, the same forms are readapted toward different functional purposes.

Other extant tea sets retailed by Khechoung and other retailers demonstrate that the service was not a unique commission, but more likely a product line kept in stock and produced by outworker silversmiths. A three-piece tea set inscribed with an English viscount's coronet shows that the designs were produced at a certain, if limited, scale (fig. 21). The viscount's set is embossed with a single row of upward-reaching palmettes instead of the two rows that meet in the middle of the Robinson service. It also has cast decorative rims applied around the openings of each object, and the teapot lacks the lobed petalled lid. A similar combination of forms can be seen on another tea set retailed by the Cutshing shop but ornamented instead with gadrooning extending from just above the midline to the base of the objects (fig. 6.22). Instead of the four cast feet, the Cutshing set sits on a ring foot. Finally, a five-piece set marked by Houchong shares the same body form, decoration, and feet as the viscount's Khechoung set (fig. 6.23). The lid designs are also similar, with a flat lid on the sugar bowl decorated with radial embossed acanthus leaves, and a slightly raised, domed lid on the teapots. The similarity of two sets marked by different retailers indicates that they commissioned a common silversmithing workshop to produce the sets, or component parts of the sets. Through their slight variations, the sets are not identical replicas, but rather, modular recombinations in which different elements are switched in and out. For example, while the Robinson set retailed by Khechoung and the Houchong set both sit on four cast feet, the Cutshing set sits on flared ring feet. The sets thus not just recreate British forms, but functionally mimic the constant change of fashion.

The Cantonese silver trade made two design decisions in their modular translations of British silver and silver imitation tablewares. First, a limited set of British forms were selected for precise standardization and reproduction. The four above-mentioned sets collectively indicate the array of chosen components characteristic of Canton silver in the British taste, which include

[46] One silver scholar has described the integration of a rococo revival with the neoclassical designs of the second quarter of the nineteenth century (1820s to 1850s) as "naturalistic decoration [applied] to swelling, bulbous shapes." Charles Venable, *Silver in America, 1840-1940: Production, marketing and consumption,* vol. 1 (PhD dissertation, Boston University, 1993), 74. London goldsmiths such as Paul Storr (1771-1844) working at the forefront of Greek revival designs, turned to earlier rococo work by Paul de Lamerie (1688-1751) and Thomas Germain (1726-91); while neoclassical designs of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries can be characterized as light and delicate, designs became heavier and more curvilinear throughout the nineteenth century, drawing more specifically from ancient Roman and Egyptian forms. Ibid., 75.

a ring foot or four-part cast foot; a squat, round symmetrical body, sometimes with ten lobes and sometimes with gadrooning or other vertically-oriented, repetitive patterns; spouts with embossed ornament at the base; cast handles; cast decorative rims; and high concave collars or necks. Second, as noted above, certain forms were slightly adapted to suit historical Chinese design systems. In doing so, they departed from the Greek and Roman classical references which were evoked in the British context. Both types of changes can be viewed in the round, squat body of the objects made for tea and coffee services. In the British context, the form is meant to evoke the classical reference of a squat Roman glass lamp, a form that is notably flattened (fig. 6.24). Like on the glass lamp, on Roman terracotta lamps, the mold-made top typically included a design in relief on the flattened circular surface. Thus, when it was adapted as a design component by the British goldsmith Paul Storr for the firm of Rundell, Bridge and Rundell, the Greek and Roman revival teapot's body was flat-topped, with an extended rim (fig. 6.25). The spout is short and sharply upturned. Even on a chinoiserie example with a melon-shaped body retailed by Joseph Angell I and John Angell I a little over two decades later, the high neck and rim of the object is upturned, and the body is compressed at the back and uplifted toward the front (fig. 6.26). In all of the British examples, the neck is short and the top is flattened. The classical form was thus clearly an antiquarian reference preserved in the form across early-nineteenth-century English production.

By contrast, Canton Georgian teapots were dissociated from the Roman reference. The bodies and necks were modified to suit a different classical canon, as well as reflect the modular production of the British-derived shape. Most if not all Canton Georgian teapots and related tea wares have a high, inverted neck piece, a "collar" component that was likely created by a specialized plateworker. The collar components were hand-hammered from a flat piece, shaped and bent into a ring, and then joined with a single vertical seam. The collar heightens the object's form instead of preserving the squat, flat-topped form of the Roman lamp. In doing so, the collar vertically balances the horizontality of the spout and handle. The resulting profile is more comparable to the Chinese ritual bronze *zun* 尊*,* a jar with a widely-flared lip, sitting on a tall ring foot (fig. 6.25). The *zun* was a Chinese antiquarian bronze form commonly reproduced for both antiquarian and ritual purposes in metals and ceramics. A notable design intervention of the Cantonese handicraft silverwares trade was therefore to relinquish the sense of compressed form of the English models. The incorporation of a "collar" piece, which was lacking in the English case, served to rebalance the form and make it more accommodating to serial handwork production, in creating a standardized form that could be connected to the body. Another typical component of Canton silver is a ring foot, which as noted above, was used interchangeably with the four cast feet that followed English precedents such as the Angel teapot. The ring foot was commonly found on Chinese ceramic forms, such as the Jun *zun.* Together with the collar piece, the ring foot was inspired by Chinese classical forms. Their incorporation loosened the Greek and Roman revival associations of Georgian wares in the British taste, in favor of Chinese antiquarian revival forms.

Further, silversmiths adapted Chinese construction techniques to English forms, as well as produced components that could be used repeatedly on different objects in different arrangements. Kyoungjin Bae has argued that in the eighteenth-century Cantonese export furniture trade, cabinetmakers creatively deployed Chinese joinery techniques to adapt them to European furniture forms or combined them with metalware to expand the affordances of the join. The "components" of the modular system, thus, are "blocks" of technical knowledge that emerged at a material level, as joins were flexibly deployed under different circumstances to

solve different design and construction problems.[47] Likely the same could be said of Canton silverware joins, but the lack of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Chinese silver objects makes analogous comparison difficult. Forbes et al have described several joins particular to Canton regional silverworking, which we might view as specific modifications due to the Guangdong reliance on sand and stone casting as opposed to using flywheels and die-stamping machines to produce components. On flatwares, the decorative tip of the handle in patterns such as the fiddle, thread, and shell were cast separately using sand molds, then soldered to the rest of the handle in a V-shaped or chevron join (fig. 6.28). In the so-called king's and queen's patterns, which extended further down the handle, again the tip of the handle was cast separately and attached to the rest of the handle with a horizontal join. The soldering line is nearly invisible (fig. 6.29). Meanwhile, in English or American production, the entire length of the spoon, fork, or knife would have been die-stamped, including the decorative patterned tip of the handle.[48] More research is necessary to determine in what ways Canton silver joins can be viewed as modules of adaptable knowledge or not, but this set of examples demonstrates a range of solutions to the structural problems introduced by the need to join together Chinese cast and hand-raised components.

Using handicraft techniques, the Canton silver trade accomplished a modularized Georgian silhouette by stacking convex and concave shapes, cast rims, and high, cast or hammered feet. Forms such as the collar piece, cast feet, and cast spouts and handles were used with both repetition and variation across sets, to lend the products legitimacy in simulating both wares and fashion in the British taste. Yet slight modifications were made in terms of both form and construction to accommodate Chinese design knowledge as well as a modular handicraft mode of production. While we do not have a technical manual describing how the Canton silver in the British taste were discussed by Cantonese retailers and silversmiths, we can imagine that the forms and objects were indigenized into a local vernacular, much like the Carolus dollars discussed in the previous section of this chapter. Some of those understandings can be glimpsed through a receipt (*diandan* 店單) from the Khechoung shop for the purchase of the Robinson service (fig. 6.30).[49] The receipt is a rare Chinese-language textual source on the Cantonese retail silver trade. The document relates that Khechoung sold a set of silverwares classified as *mihua* 浵花 "many flowers," which could indicate the embossed leaf ornament on the lobes, or perhaps was the Cantonese name for the design pattern of the objects. Next it lists the objects included in the order: two teapots (*chahu* 茶壺), one ice or sugar cup (*bingzhong* 氷盅), likely designating the lidded sugar bowl, and one milk cup (*naizhong* 奶盅), likely designating the creamer. The receipt provides much more information about how the objects were valued and guaranteed than how they were conceptualized, as I will discuss further in the next section. Yet the document also links the silver teapots produced for Robinson, and in the British taste more broadly, to the silver teapots (*chahu*) recorded in the Yan Song inventory, in the consistent use of the term to describe

[47] *Joints of Utility, Crafts of Knowledge: The Material Culture of the Sino-British Furniture Trade during the Long Eighteenth Century* (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2016), 132-3.
[48] Forbes et al, *Chinese Export Silver,* 64-5.
[49] The receipt was donated to the Peabody Essex Museum along with the tea set. It is unknown whether this document, which does not appear to be a receipt of payment for the service, was commonly provided by Canton silversmith-retailers, or whether it was a unique document produced from a single transaction.

a specialized vessel involved in tea preparation. In other words, while the objects appear foreign, they nonetheless readily fit within existing Chinese object epistemologies.

Modular Marks, Guarantees and Returns

A final modular adaptation of the Canton silver trade was the use of tiny punches modeled after English hallmarks, described in the last chapter as modified shop marks applied by the Cantonese retailer on or near the bases of objects. In the last chapter I discussed these marks as an innovation of the Canton silver retail trade, as well as an index of adaptation. In this chapter, I pick up this discussion to consider the questions of whether and how they served as a customer guarantee of value.

Into the nineteenth century, Chinese silver and paktong retail shops increasingly adopted the use of copied British hallmarks as a means of branding their wares. "Modeled" is a fairly neutral description of what are considered to be illegal marks from an English legal perspective. Technically they were illegal marks in Britain, and in some cases they were effaced upon import to Britain or resale on the secondary market.[50] They reproduced punches that served a statutory purpose in England. In silver scholarship they are subsequently referred to as "pseudo hallmarks" – signaling their status as fraudulent—and they technically render objects counterfeit when imported into England.[51] The silver scholar's term "pseudo hallmarks" alludes to the idea that the marks were forgeries, and thus deceptive, profit-seeking fakes. As Philippa Glanville, Martin Gubbins, and Wynard Wilkinson have written, pseudo-hallmarks were a common phenomenon among goldsmithing trades producing for an Anglo colonial-global market, operating in Canada, South Africa, Australia, and workshops in India working for European markets. Yet as Gubbins writes

> There is a basic difference between true hallmarks and pseudo hall-marks. With the former the marking is outside the silversmith's control, whereas with the latter the smith himself, or his firm, stamped his wares. Pseudo hall-marks therefore are personal rather than having any standardized significance; they are also variable and consequently enigmatic.[52]

They also appeared on imitation metals; in the 1770s, the Sheffield silver-plate industry applied a full set of four marks to their wares. According to one London goldsmith that appeared before the parliamentary committee investigating the industry mentioned above, he saw them as connected to makers. He did not believe they were put on "with a fraudulent design, but probably to gratify their Customers, as it made the Work look more like Silver."[53] According to Helen Clifford's analysis of this smith's statements, the main purpose of the marks on Sheffield plate was to satisfy consumer's demand for the presence of the marks, as opposed to governmental fraud or duping the customer.

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[50] According to an act of 1738, if someone is caught trying to sell wares below standard, they would be fined L10 for each piece or imprisoned for 6 months, and if they include counterfeit marks they will be imprisoned for two years or be fined L100. This act was still in force in 1839. See documents relating to Rex v John Brown, on case brought by the Goldsmiths' Company for forging a hallmark, Goldsmiths' Company archives, G.II.4.8a.

[51] Martin C. B. Gubbins, "Pseudo Hall-Marks on Silver," *Connoisseur* 195 (Aug., 1974): 256. While I have combed through all of the files of "offenses" in the archives of the Goldsmiths' Company, I did not find a single recorded case of imported Chinese-made silverwares with pseudo hallmarks, though Forbes noted that the Company effaced the marks and confiscated examples for its collection of fraudulent wares.

[52] "Pseudo Hall-marks on Silver," 256.

[53] Quoted in Clifford, 248.

Yet unlike fraudulent marks applied in Britain or Australia, which often served to provide legitimacy at a glance to objects less than standard, the Canton silver hallmarks indicated a responsible party for their alloy in the absence of an independent assay system, as we have seen.[54] In the Chinese context, they served as a shop mark (*zihao* 字號) as well as an appropriated instrument of trust. On one hand, they satisfied foreign consumer understanding, as such marks rendered the objects legible within a certain standard of quality. On the other, they were understood within a Chinese history of inscriptions and stamps on handicraft objects, which as Dagmar Schäfer has written, performed a variety of functions, from a guarantee of quality and sign of regulatory oversight, to a symbol or brand that enhanced the value of the object. Across the range of their shifting roles, Schäfer has argued that the primary purpose of shop marks was to link the producer, distributer, and consumer in a relationship of trust, whether serving as a "trust-invoking instrument" or as a "trusted symbol."[55] Carrying the implications of the goldsmith's complex statement one step further, the customer was versed in the quality and substance of the wares, but desired the presence of the marks as signs that confirmed the authenticity of the objects. Could the same be said of the marks on Canton silver? In other words, did the marks when applied to Canton silver operate as a "trust-invoking instrument" such that they guaranteed the quality of the wares for foreign buyers?

Social scientists Christian Bessy and Francis Chateauraynaud have written that authenticity is "the expression of a real concern for signs of presence or absence, at the core of sensitive and perceptive activity," and that questions surrounding object authenticity are "the reflection of a sense of anxiety at the intersecting points, or overlap, of different ways of attesting to reality."[56] Beyond the risk of fraud that accompanies any transaction of a valuable good, the issue of authenticity is especially pertinent in transcultural trade contexts, which as William Pietz has written, are additionally charged with "intense anxiety" about the value of commodities.[57] For consumers who expected a particular alloy standard, the industry in fact had a guarantee — that the wares were produced at the fineness of Spanish and Latin American silver dollars, the primary import commodity supplied by European and American merchants to the Chinese market throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[58] As Renouard noted during his 1807 visit to a Guangzhou silversmith's shop, "…as one must be careful that the silver is of good fineness (it is that of the piastres [pesos]), one usually signs a contract with the silversmith, in which he commits to take the wares back if the fineness is not that [of pesos], and to pay freight

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[54] Pseudo hallmarks in such contexts are in some ways analogous to fake Chinese reign marks on porcelain and other objects, as Stacey Pierson has written, "makers assume that most buyers are not versed in the history or stylistic applications of reign marks and still see such an inscription as a guarantee of authenticity." "True or False? Defining the Fake in Chinese Porcelain," *Les Cahiers de Framespa* [online] 31 (2019), http://journals.openedition.org/framespa/6168.

[55] "Inscribing the Artifact and Inspiring Trust: The Changing Role of Markings in the Ming Era," *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal* 5 (2011): 242.

[56] "The Dynamics of Authentication and Counterfeits in Markets," *Historical Social Research* 44 (2019): 137.

[57] "The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of Fetishism," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 16 (Aug. 1988): 111.

[58] For quantities of imports in the nineteenth century separated by trading country, see Alejandra Irigoin, "The End of a Silver Era: The Consequences of the Breakdown of the Spanish Peso Standard in China and the United States, 1780s-1850s," *Journal of World History* 20:2 (Jun. 2009), 207-44.

and compensation of twenty percent."[59] Renouard's statement granted the silversmith who ran the shop with the responsibility of legitimating his own products. The shop owner also provided a means for return and exchange, even from overseas.

Certainly John Robinson, Lucy Stone's supercargo fiancé, had the question of value on his mind when he purchased her tea set from the Khechoung shop. While Stone saw the value of the set in its "colour to correspond" the rest of Robinson's Canton silver, as well as its Chinese origins, Robinson saw the silverwares as an investment. The receipt provided by Khechoung mentioned above also records the total weight of the set, which was 137 *liang* 兩 and six *fen* 分. Finally, it guarantees the quality of the set at a Spanish silver dollar standard: "Its alloy (*yinshui* 銀水) is the fineness of silver dollars (*yuan* 员). If it is found to be counterfeit, return to the shop and exchange it, along with this receipt."[60] The receipt is dated and signed by the Khechoung shop on the lower left, with a leaf-shaped seal struck over the shop name in red ink (M: *Qichang* 其昌) (fig. 6.31). A Romanized stamp with the shop name, description ("Gold and(?) Silver Smith") and address ("No. 2 China Street) all contained in a double-ringed border was also stamped in red above the date (fig. 6.32). Robinson's name appears in two places on the receipt; he signed and dated the receipt to the right of the date and shop name, and it was transliterated into Chinese above the date line as *Labeichen* 喇備臣 with the honorific of boss, *daban* 大班. Khechoung's bill and guarantee served as an instrument of trust, as well as a record of the transaction between the shop and a specific buyer. Robinson's supercargo's mercantile discernment sought — and evidently received — confirmation that the wares were trustworthy and returnable. Perhaps Khechoung's stamps, applied to the base of each object and featuring the three-letter initial mark "KHC," served as a verifying shop mark upon the event of their return.

The document also raises some questions. There is no additional cost listed for workmanship, which indicates that the document was not the receipt of payment. Rather, it records the total weight of the silver in *liang* (a unit of weight known in English as the tael) and makes a specific promise from the shop about the quality of that silver. Given that the exact weight of the service was known at the time the document was produced, they were likely present in the shop at the time of purchase. A "translation" of the receipt that accompanied the gift to the Peabody Essex Museum was signed by W.F. Robinson, John Robinson's cousin, who acted as a "witness," as well as by the potentially illiterate shop keeper. The translation further guaranteed the set to be "made of the Silver of the same fineness as Spanish Dollars, and when examined in the United States if they should be found any different I promise when a certificate of the same is presented to me to pay double the amount of such difference."[61] The promise of double compensation of any deficit is well beyond what is expressed by the Chinese document, raising the question of the translation's veracity as a document. Yet the return policy is consistent with the Khechoung shop receipt. At the least, shops were open to exchange, as it was part of their business. As seen in the export gouache image of the Wansheng shop discussed at the

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[59]"Le prix de l'argenterie est ordinairement de vingt-cinq pour cent; mais comme on doit faire attention que l'argent soit à bon titre (c'est celui des piastres), on fait ordinairement passer une obligation à l'orfèvre, dans laquelle il s'engage à la reprendre, si le titre n'y est point, et à payer le fret et un dédommagement de vingt pour cent." *Voyage commercial et politique aux Indes Orientales,* 197.

[60] "其银水包之成员 如有假伪 任来回换 此照"

[61] Translation (?) of Khechoung receipt, Peabody Essex Museum.

beginning of the chapter, the hanging shop signs on the left also implies that wares, from jewelry to silverwares, can be "altered/replaced and exchanged" (*genghuan* 更換) and "converted and exchanged" (*duihuan* 兑換). The latter aspects of the business related to the convertibility and liquidity of precious metals. Yet even so, shop marks most likely connected silverwares to their site of production and sale, even with the separation of thousands of nautical miles, through the promise of return and exchange.

The possibility of return may have been limited to deficiencies in the alloy, though the conditions of return and exchange likely varied from retailer to retailer. What if the design of an object was found wanting? Robinson raised the possibility of return due to design faults to Stone after he received her request for a tea set, in which she specified "the more simple the better is my taste." He had in fact already shipped her a tea set by the receipt of the letter, which he described as "the opposite from simple." In case that they did not meet her criteria, he added, "If on further consideration we should not be satisfied with the Tea[pots,] Sugar [bowl] &c we can change them for something more simple…[62] Though he seems concerned with pleasing her taste, return would be cumbersome, as it would require the extra expense and time delay of shipment.

A case in which Canton silverwares were not accepted for return appears in Thomas Tunno Forbes' accounts. In 1824, Forbes ordered what turned out to be an undesirable silver tea caddy on behalf of Macanese merchant Luis Barretto of the Luso-Indian trading concern L. Barretto & Company in Manila. Barretto placed an order on his account through Forbes for a large order of silver from the silver retailer Sunshing, including the tea caddy, a sugar bowl, a coffee pot, a teapot, a slop bowl and stand, a cream pot, and a strainer.[63] Evidently when the silverwares were received, the tea caddy was deemed unacceptable, as correspondence written by Forbes to Barretto detailed:

> I observe you had rec'd the plate via [the] *Danube* & am sorry to find that the Tea Caddy did not suit which however I am not surprised at, I left it altogether to [the silversmith-retailer] & was not satisfied with it myself. I shall be happy to remedy the Evil & will find you such a one as you want as well as the other articles as soon as I can have them made. Would it not be well to return the Tea Caddy as I can get the silver smith to receive it back?[64]

Barretto evidently dallied on the return but ordered more silver in the meantime. Two months later, Forbes wrote:

> I have got the silver you requested underway but fear it will not be finished in time for this Conveyer — I hope you will send the Tea Caddy back as I can return it to the Man who made it for some trifling allowance — [65]

A year and a half later, the matter was not yet resolved. Forbes wrote to an assistant named Hartt at Macao that the box was in the possession of an employee there, and that it had yet to be returned:

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[62] Letter from John Robinson to Lucy Stone, April 22, 1838. MSS 317, Box 1, folder 3, Phillips Library.
[63] Thomas Tunno Forbes, Journal B, folio 104, Forbes family business records, Baker Library.
[64] Letter from Thomas Tunno Forbes to Luis Barretto, September 29, 1824, Forbes family business records, Baker Library.
[65] Letter from Thomas Tunno Forbes to Luis Barretto, November 25, 1824, Forbes family business records, Baker Library.

> There is due from Sunshing, silver smith, 162.98 for a silver box which did not suit & was returned & which he agreed to receive back — Affoo has the box & I wish it returned to Sunshing & the above amo rec 'or if he will not take it to have it sold for what it will bring.[66]

The cost of the box included 25% for workmanship on top of the dollar price of the silver of 130.39, which is likely why Forbes saw it necessary to pursue the return instead of liquidating the object for its silver value.[67] But Sunshing evidently refused to take it back. On June 30, 1828—almost four years since the order was placed—Forbes credited Sunshing's account back for the amount he had previously debited. Forbes wrote that he credited Sunshing's account "for [the] silver tea caddy returned from L Barretto which he w'd not receive back, & which I gave Hoaching to make into spoons &c."[68] On Waln's list, Sunshing was the only silversmith whose "character" was described as "middling" instead of "good," which perhaps was an indication of the degree to which the retailer sought please the vagaries of his customers' taste.

The Pacific peregrinations of Barretto's tea caddy raise many questions about why the object was unsatisfactory. Seemingly, the problem was not due to an issue with the alloy content; in which case, would Sunshing have taken it back? Rather, it was perhaps due to its inadequate expression as an English object, or relatedly, due to a perceived deficit in its design. The promise that Forbes obtained from Sunshing to take it back or to pay compensation was verbal, and likely premised on their ongoing business relationship as Forbes acted as a silverware broker for several of his accounts in Manila.

According to Bessy and Chateauraynaud, the "paradox of 'authentic merchandise'" is the intersection of personal meaning brought to an object, and its valuation by the market.[69] Canton hallmarks were paradoxical confirmations of authenticity through its performance, as one of the many modular components and adaptations made by Cantonese silver retailers. To foreign consumers for whom the intrinsic value of the objects was less important than their other meanings, such as Lucy Stone, their presence works to confirm their legitimacy as simultaneously Chinese and English from a design standpoint. For John Robinson, they likely operated as a guarantee of the value of their material at a peso standard. For all foreign consumers, the shop marks did not guarantee the value of the wares alone; rather, they were one component of a system that conceived silver through a standardized, modular set of parts. For the silversmith-retailers, they served as a shop mark, with the main directive of socially connecting people in a relationship of trust. The conditions and provisions of that trust, however, seemed to be at the discretion of the silversmith, or was conditional depending on the type of faultiness diagnosed in the wares.

Conclusion: Coins Carried to Canton

An inscription engraved in script on the bottom of each object in the Robinson service provides yet another perspective on the value of the objects. The inscription was presumably added by Robinson's granddaughter to mark the change in ownership of the set when she

[66] Letter from Thomas Tunno Forbes to Hartt, April 24, 1826, Forbes family business records, Baker Library.
[67] Thomas Tunno Forbes, Journal B, folio 146, Forbes family business records, Baker Library.
[68] Thomas Tunno Forbes, Journal B, folio 190, Forbes family business records, Baker Library.
[69] Christian Bessy and Francis Chateauraynaud, "The Dynamics of Authentication and Counterfeits in Markets," *Historical Social Research* 44:1 (2019): 147.

inherited it in the early twentieth century.[70] As it reads, in a round script: "John Robinson carried silver dollars to Canton, China / from which this tea service / was made and brought to his wife / Lucy Pickering Robinson, 1838 / Bequeathed to / Mary Kemble Wheatland / by her father / John Robinson, 1925".[71] With the passive construction of the inscription's production tale ("from which this tea service was made"), the objects are severed almost completely from their Chinese makers and retailers. The agency of their making, as well as the reliable verification of their alloy content, is shifted instead to Robinson. The colonial imaginary that erased the agency and creativity of the Canton silver trade is reminiscent of narratives discussed throughout this dissertation, which attributed designs and even the impetus to production to English and American goldsmiths, manufacturers, and consumers. Robinson certainly carried coins to Canton, but they were more likely sealed in hogshead barrels and meant to be exchanged for tea and silk, among other products. Meanwhile, the silver dollars John Robinson used to buy the tea service were likely only liquidated by Khechoung as far as they were exchanged for ready-made merchandise, or objects available via short order.

Why was it important to register the service's moment of becoming inalienable from Robinson to an event that preceded its purchase and presentation, to Robinson's hand-carrying of the coins to Canton from America? The story, as well as the impulse to inscribe it on the objects, seems to arise from an early twentieth-century Western skepticism that the southern Chinese silver trade could satisfy a certain silver standard, or meet a particular quality of production. Verification of the alloy of the Robinson service was granted to an Anglo-American ancestor offering an expression of his fidelity. The inscription effectively obscured the labor, authorship, and credibility of nineteenth-century Guangzhou craft, retail, and guild organizations. The authenticity of the set is instead guaranteed through the sourcing and authentication of coins by familial, Anglo-American hands.

This chapter demonstrates, in fact, the opposite. Cantonese silver trades had a sophisticated understanding of assessing and conveying silver's veracity and value through fidelity to European models, one conceptualized through formal deconstruction, modification, and variable recombination. Above all, those conversant in Cantonese vernacular silver knowledge dealt in the relative location of viable parts, many of which were viewed through an indigenized lens. Just as on the *mian* of a "thousand character" coin the "Mo"should be located in relation to the belly of one of the candle-columns, the foot of a teapot should be located on a squat body underneath a handle and spout. The spatiality of silver's forms, therefore, was important to its performance as viable objects of value, which was used in turn to confirm the value of its alloy at a dollar standard.

While it erased the context of production, the conditional context implied by the inheritor's inscription—the transformation of coins and gifting of the set—was indicative of their viability as valuable goods within Anglo-American social life. As Nicholas Thomas has written about the wedding ring, the presentation and wearing of which approaches both signifier and signified of the marital bond, it is "constitutive of the conjugal relationship which it subsequently

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[70] Commemorative inscriptions that identify and track familial connection to heirlooms often consist of initials and dates, and sometimes record the conditions of exchange of history of ownership. See Glanville, 322-3.

[71] The second John Robinson is Lucy and John's son. "John Robinson Papers, 1802, 1848-1926, 1950-1974, undated," *Phillips Library Finding Aids,* accessed 4 July 2023 < https://pem.as.atlas-sys.com/repositories/2/resources/478>.

stands for."[72] Thomas' example of the "sentiment-burdened gift in the modern industrial situation" demonstrates how certain objects could acquire inalienability outside of premodern contexts.[73] Later viewed as heirlooms, they retained inseparable associations with their former owners. In this case, the tea set operated as inherited property. Inalienability became an intrinsic property of the object, which determined how its past exchangeability was historicized.[74] We have encountered several examples of Canton-Georgian silverwares that were inextricably associated with their English or Euro-American owners, in some cases through their misunderstanding as English-made objects. With these examples, inalienability again demonstrates the ability of the Canton silver industry to create objects that served performative functions in Euro-American social contexts. This chapter examined the modular mechanics through which silver, as both coin and craft, signified its own value within a Cantonese vernacular knowledge system.

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[72] Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 18-19.
[73] Ibid, 18.
[74] It also singularized it in a way that impacted its possibilities for future exchange. Hence instead of selling or melting down the Robinson service, it was given to the Peabody Essex Museum, effectively removing it from commodity circulation.

Ch. 6. Canton Silver II: Performing Britishness at a Dollar Standard
Figures

Fig. 6.1. Wansheng 萬盛 (Wongshing?) silverwares and jewelry shop, watercolor and gouache, c. 1825. Peabody Essex Museum, E80607.9

Fig. 6.2. *Meihe* 美和 money shop, watercolor and gouache, c. 1825
Peabody Essex Museum, E80607.30

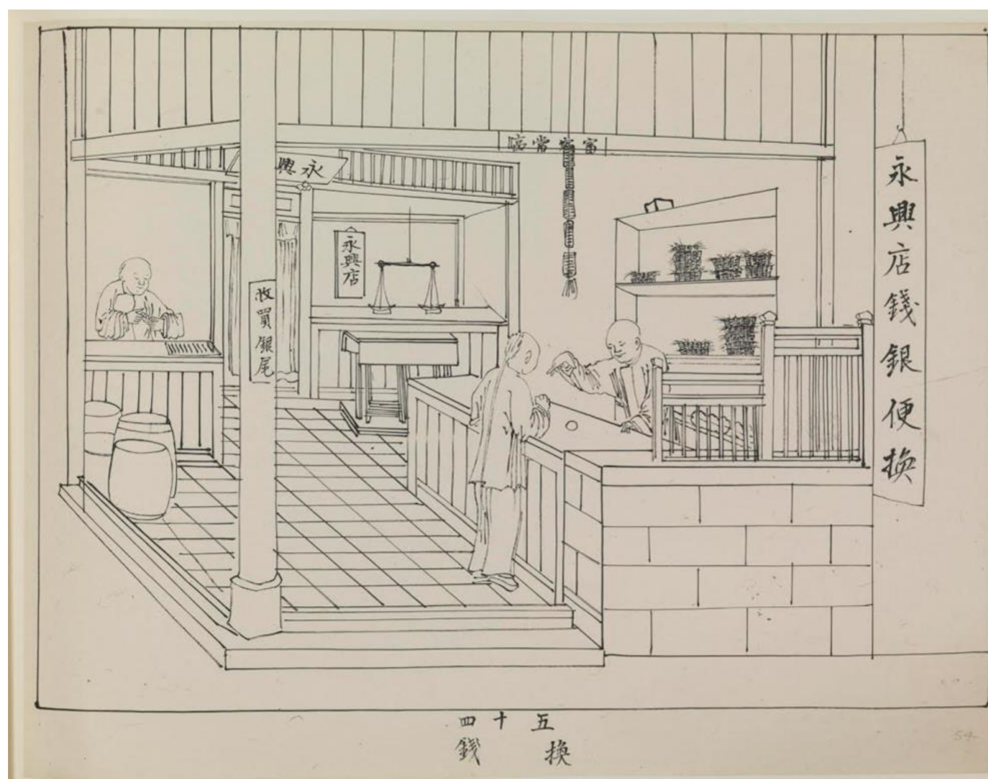


Fig. 6.3. Yongxing 永興 money shop. Line drawing by a Chinese artist from an album of Canton shops, 18th century to early 19th century. British Museum 1877.7.14.454

Fig. 6.4. Mexican silver peso, Zacatecas mint, 1866(?). BM 1983, 0245.20

Fig. 6.5. Charles IV 8 reales obverse (front) and reverse (back), minted Mexico City, 1797. BM 1976,0114.1070

Fig. 6.6. Pillar dollar with tulip edge (known as *huabian* 花邊), minted Spanish colonial Mexico City, 1739

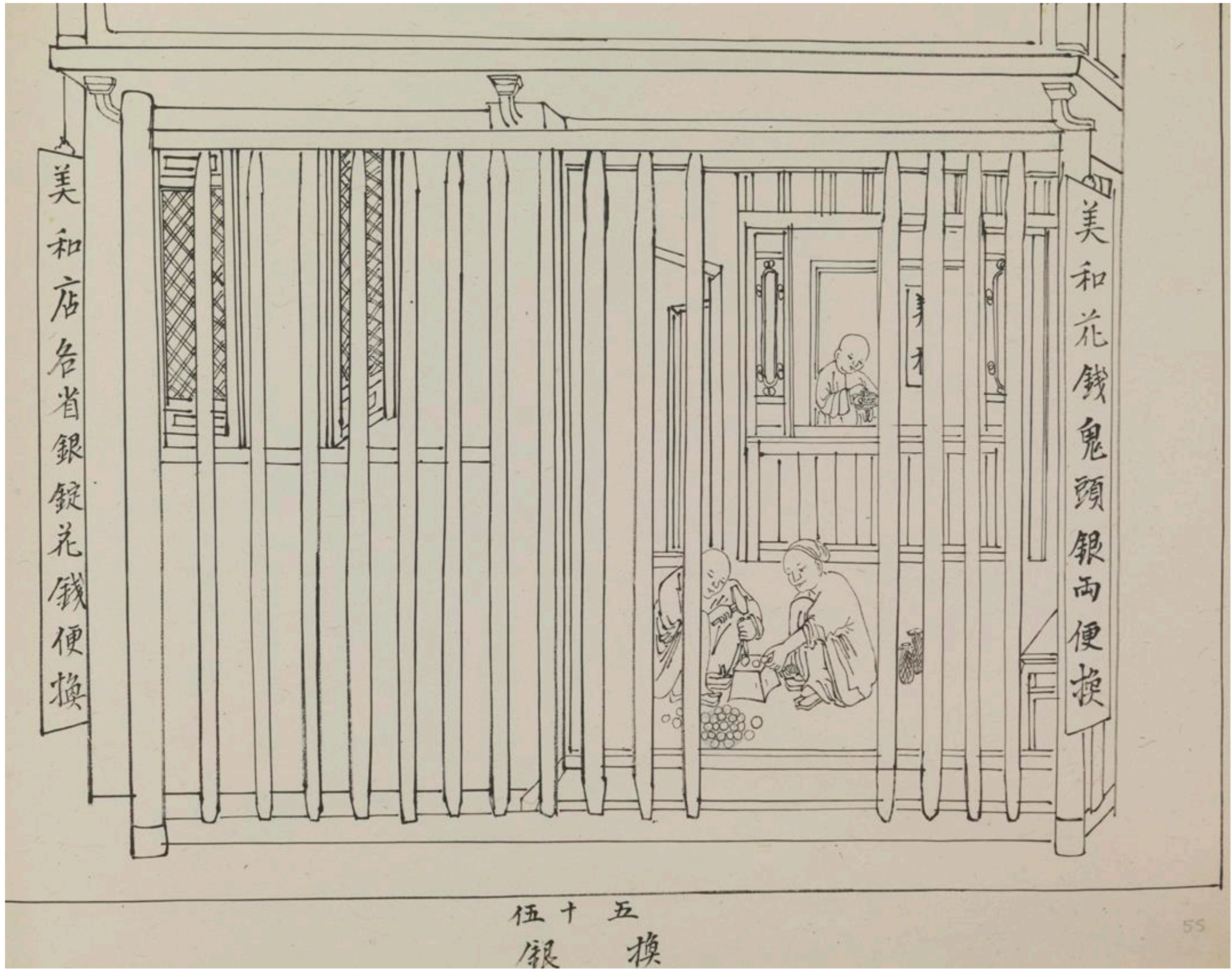


Fig. 6.7. Meihe 美和 money shop. Line drawing by a Chinese artist from an album of Canton shops, 18th century to early 19th century. British Museum 1877.7.14.455

Fig. 6.8. “Schroffing dollars,” in John Thomson, *Illustrations of China and Its People. A series of two hundred photographs, with letterpress descriptive of the places and people represented,* vol. 1 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1874), plate XXII.IA

Fig. 6.9. Charles IV dollar reverse, from *Yangqian yinlun quanfa.* British Museum, Coins and Medals department

Fig. 6.10. Charles IV dollar obverse, from *Yangqian yinlun quanfa* (1836). British Museum, Coins and Medals department

Fig. 6.11. Four-*gong* 工 big robe" illustration in *Yangqian yinlun quanfa.* British Museum, Coins and Medals department

Fig. 6.12. Rim of Charles IV 8 reales, minted Mexico City, 1797. BM 1976,0114.1070

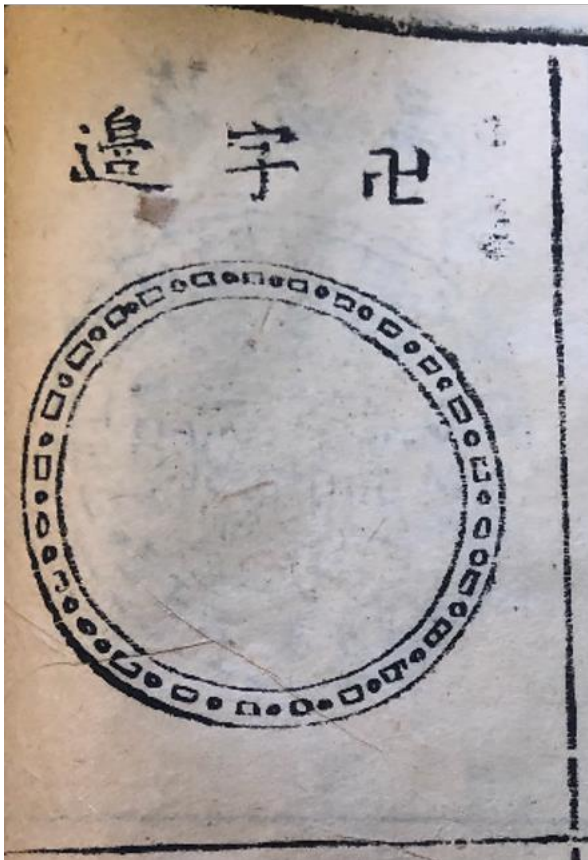


Fig. 6.13. Thousand character" border illustration in *Yangqian yinlun quanfa.* British Museum, Coins and Medals department

此眞銀萬
字邊式
銀面有此
M鬼字所
管
此僞銀萬
字邊式
其方口眼
太大。圓圈
眼太細。而
不配。帶粗
鈍厚硬。

Fig. 6.14. Illustrations of genuine and fake thousand character” borders in *Yangqian yinlun quanfa.* British Museum, Coins and Medals department

此萬字邊
銀式
其右便燭
臺腰下處。
必要有此
一鬼字所
管。

Fig. 6.15. Illustration of thousand character” coin with foreign letter Mo, in *Yangqian yinlun quanfa.* British Museum, Coins and Medals department

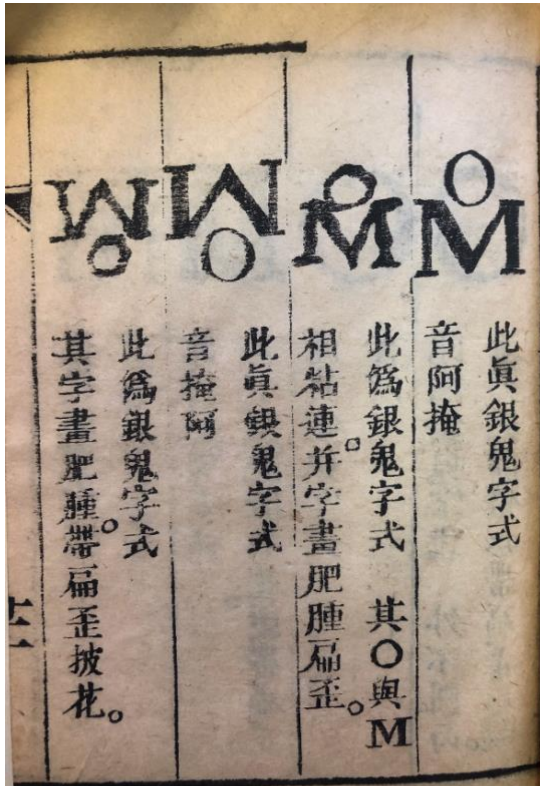


Fig. 6.16. Mo genuine and fake, with pronunciation guide, in *Yangqian yinlun quanfa.* British Museum, Coins and Medals department

Fig. 6.17. Illustration of coining press, *Yangqian yinlun quanfa.* British Museum, Coins and Medals department

Fig. 6.18. Illustration of top of die, *Yangqian yinlun quanfa.* British Museum, Coins and Medals department

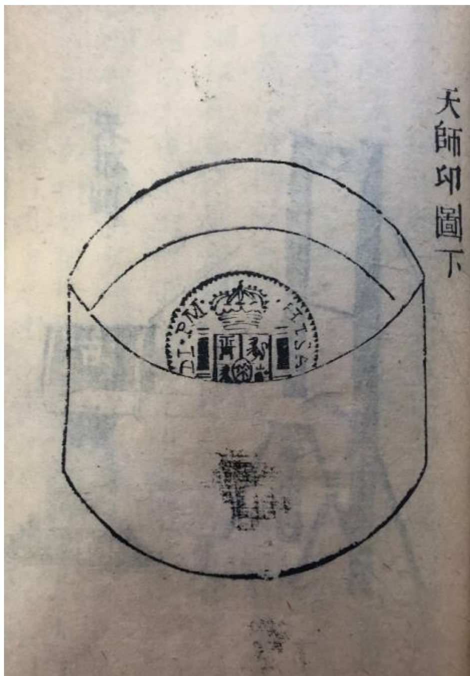


Fig. 6.19. Illustration of bottom of die, *Yangqian yinlun quanfa.* British Museum, Coins and Medals department

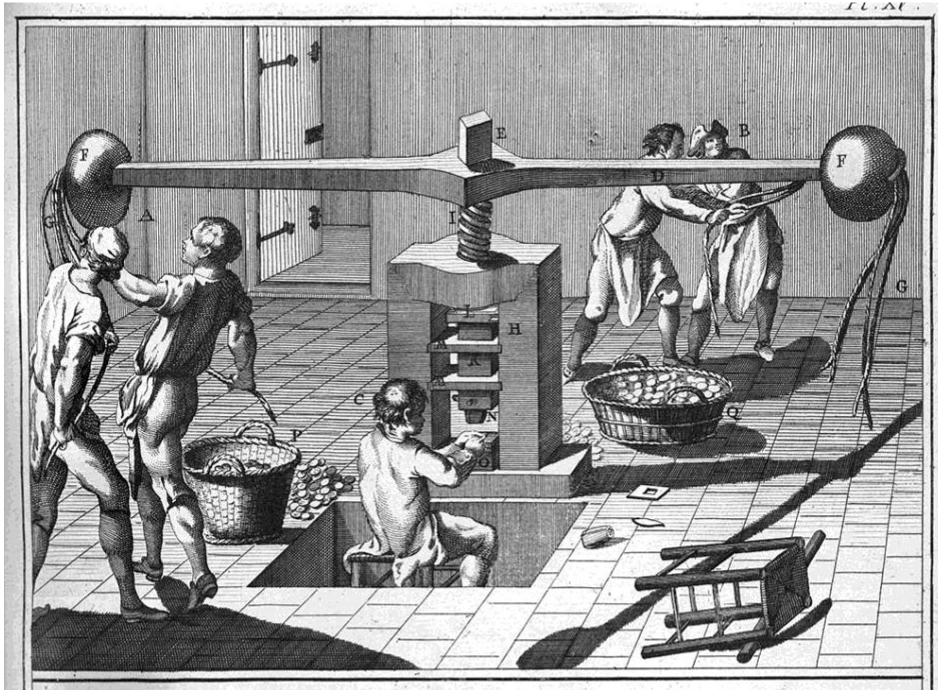


Fig. 6.20. Plate XV, "A screw press in operation" engraving, in Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers,* vol. 8. Paris, 1771

Fig. 6.21. Silver three-piece tea set retailed by Khechoung, made Guangzhou, early 19th century. Photo courtesy of Esmé Parish

Fig. 6.22. Cutshing-marked three-piece tea service, early nineteenth century. Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, London

Fig. 6.23. Houchong-marked five-piece tea service (two teapots, sugar bowl, creamer, and waste bowl), c. 1820-35. Private collection

Fig. 6.24. Glass lamp, 2nd c AD, perhaps made Italy. BM 1867,0508.586

Fig. 6.25. Paul Storr, silver gilt teapot retailed by Rundell, Bridge & Rundell in London, 1812. MFA 2005.532.3

Fig. 6.26. Joseph Angell I and John Angell I, Silver teapot, marked London, 1834. Private collection

Fig. 6.27. *Zun* with rosy-purple glaze, Jun kilns, Northern Song, 18.4 x 20.1 cm. Beijing Palace Museum

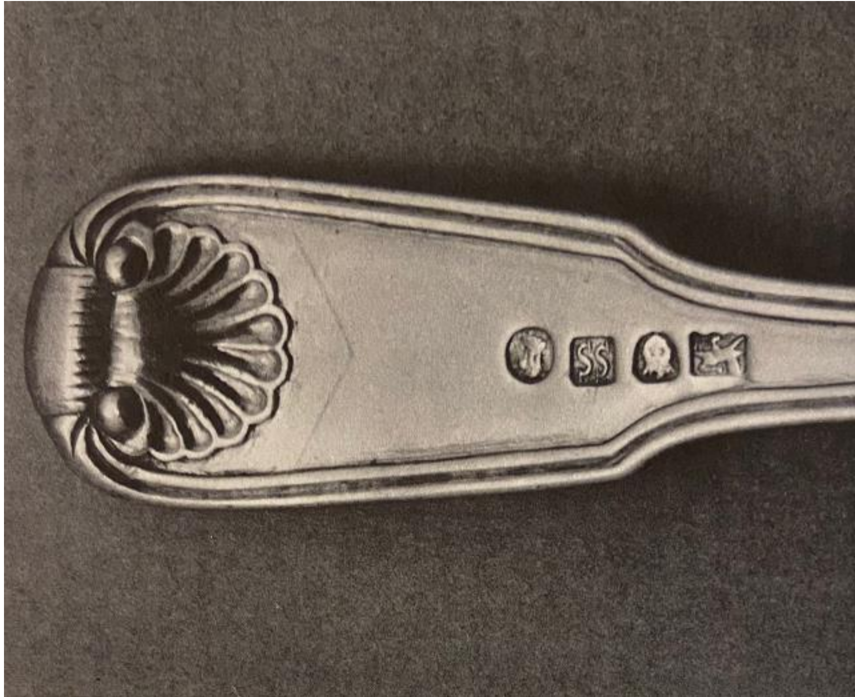


Fig. 6.28. Flatware handles decorative end: Chevron" seam on fiddle, thread, and shell pattern. Illustrated in Forbes, *Chinese Export Silver,* 65, fig. 32

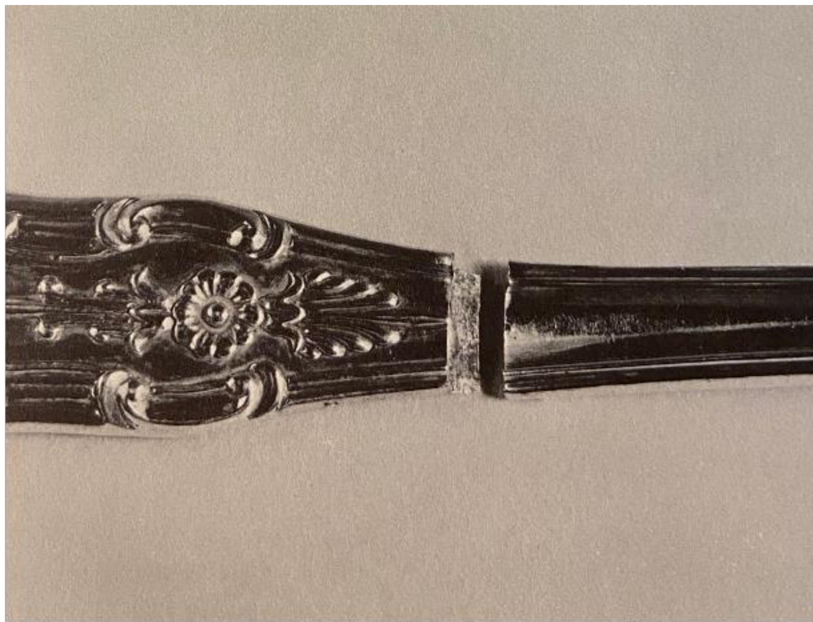
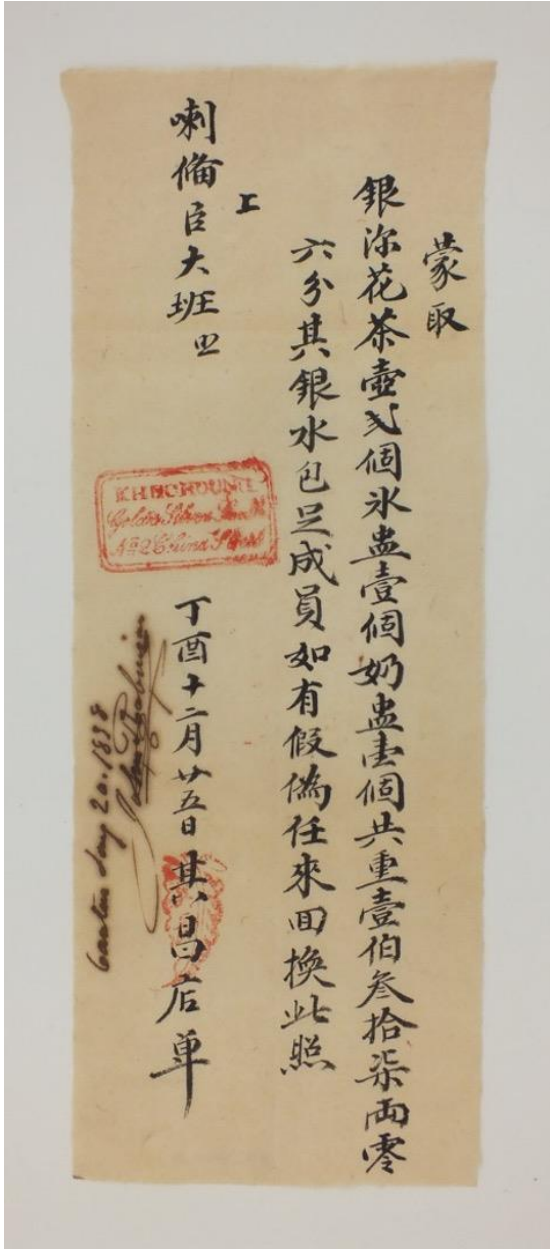


Fig. 6.29. Flatware handles decorative end: straight soldered joint on king s and queen s pattern. Illustrated in Forbes, *Chinese Export Silver,* 65, fig. 33



蒙取
銀涂花茶壺弍個氷盅壹個奶盅壹個共重壹伯叁拾柒両零
六分其銀水包足成員如有假偽任來回換此照
上
喇備臣大班
丁酉十二月廿五日 其昌店 單

Canton Jany 20. 1838

Fig. 6.30. Receipt for Robinson service, 1838. Peabody Essex Museum.

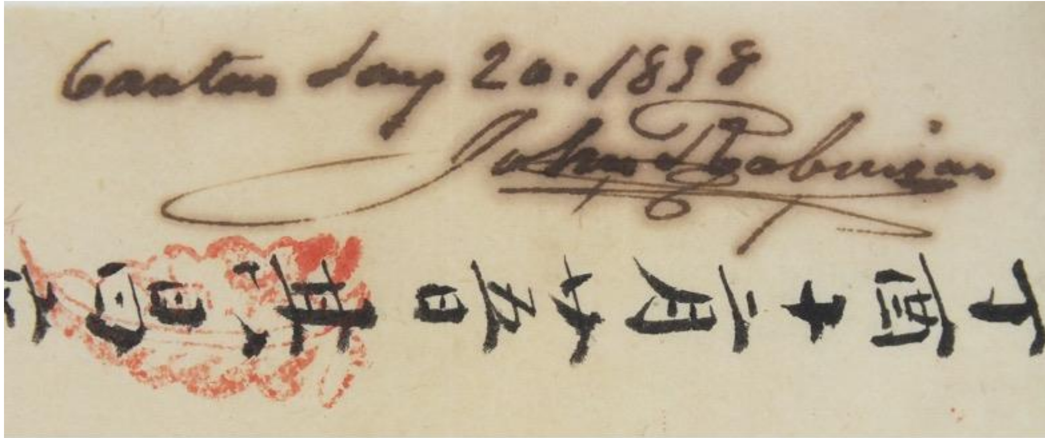


Fig. 6.31. Khechoung shop stamp over shop name, detail of Fig. 6.30

Fig. 6.32. Khechoung shop stamp, detail of Fig. 6.30

Ch. 7. Inventing the British Silver Teapot

I once asked a merchant the price of a common tea-pot, which would hardly have cost three dollars of copper money in *Sweden,* but he demanded ten pieces of eight, and shewed me a stamp at the bottom of it, according to which, he said, it was made in the times of some emperor, who lived four thousand years ago: as if such poor frail vessels had at that time been made use of to assist chronology. [1]

Pehr Osbeck, *A Voyage to China and the East Indies,* 1757/1771

Introduction

In 1814/5, the British goldsmith William Eley I hallmarked a six-sided silver teapot with relief ornament in the Chinese taste (fig. 7.1). Six panels cast with landscape scenes composed the body of the vessel, each showing a scholar on horseback adrift in a now-familiar sea and sky of dispersed motifs (fig. 7.2). A round finial capped a flat, hexagonal lid, pinning an imaginary vertical axis at the centripetal center of jointed spout and handle. In form, the teapot replicated the PEM ewer, with the surface ornament emulating the repetition and variation of the landscape scenes analyzed in chapter three. But distortion gnaws at the fidelity of the scenes to their Chinese model. The crisp, minute details of the seventeenth-century object were displaced in favor of other effects. Eley or his workshop cast each panel in its entirety and added surface chasing, which covered the areas of relief in rippling texture against a matted ground. Identifying certain elements is ambiguous; for example, the relief floral motifs in the sky and the prunus tree at the right of the landscape were indiscriminately struck with the same hollow punch tool, homogenizing different plants into bunched round clusters. The rock at the right of the landscape, gripped by the well-defined roots of a pine tree on the PEM ewer, is here a mottled outcropping, a textural idea which continues into the striated bridge and rippled ground where the horse and rider stand. Unlike the precise contrast between shiny, jewel-like projections and sand-like ground on the PEM ewer, the ornament on Eley's pot emphasized the plasticity of the medium, and its ability to hold an impression taken from a mold.

Eley's vessel was one of many versions of the PEM ewer produced in the early nineteenth century by British goldsmiths. It was made during a period of English revival of designs in the Chinese taste popular in the previous century.[2] In other words, while the Canton silver trade was producing silver teapots in the British taste in the early nineteenth century, there was a parallel move to reproduce the PEM ewer in Britain, if on a much smaller scale and for much different purposes. The ewer was not chosen for reproduction because it was a Chinese object, but rather, because it was viewed as a landmark in English plate history and goldsmithing innovation: British silver antiquarians regarded it as the earliest example of a teapot produced by English

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[1] *A Voyage to China and the East Indies,* trans. John Reinhold Forster, vol. 1 (London: B. White, 1771), 243.

[2] "Chinoiserie" is typically regarded as the European emulation or reinterpretation of Chinese designs in the decorative arts of the second half of the seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century. See Monique Riccardi-Cubitt, "Chinoiserie," *Grove Art Online* (2003, updated and revised 30 Jan. 2002), accessed 3 May 2020 < https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T017240>. As many scholars have argued, chinoiserie design is a form of cultural stereotyping. Recent scholarship has provided more nuanced approaches to chinoiserie practices as emerging out of the particular cultural needs and imaginaries of certain social and political contexts. See for example Stacey Sloboda, *Chinoiserie : Commerce and Critical Ornament in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

goldsmiths. The standard narrative of the invention of the silver teapot was that seventeenth-century English goldsmiths copied the form from an imported Asian ceramic teapot. It was a story applied by early silver antiquarians to the PEM teapot, as we will see. By translating it from one medium to another, goldsmiths were attributed with elevating the object within European criteria of value. Through reproduction, they also claimed it as European. Viewed as such, the vessel participated in Western efforts to code silver and other metals as European, and porcelain and other ceramics as Chinese or Asian.

From Asian Ceramic to European Metal: An Origin Story

That the teapot form was a viable transcultural idea in the late seventeenth century suggests that there was something simultaneously both mundane and magical about the container as a site of invisible transformation, composed of a decoction of water, a dried and cured leaf, catalyzed by flame. Given that the vessel could be made in different materials, it follows that the container which signified this process could relate to notions of social difference, and thus could reflect rankings of wealth, and by an extension, hierarchies of bodies. Both Chinese and Europeans used tea utensils to actively mark distinctions; while in China the distinctions were used to distinguish social rank through material difference, as I showed in chapter two, in Europe they became part of the project of carving out global hierarchies through the assimilation of imported objects and object forms.

Teapots were thus an early ideological platform for mapping out material differences through global taste distinctions. By the last quarter of the seventeenth century, European commentators could definitively state that Chinese drank tea served out of ceramic teapots, while Europeans preferred it poured out of precious metalwares. In an 1687 medicinal tract promoting the Asian and American imported beverages of tea, coffee, and chocolate, Nicolas de Blégny, French surgeon-in-ordinary to Louis XIV, described the method of tea preparation used by both Chinese and Europeans: boiling leaves and water in a vessel before serving it in cups or goblets. He also drew a boundary between China and Europe, using cultural distinctions made between earth and metal. For the specialized utensils used for tea preparation, de Blégny explained:

> The form of the vessels to make tea is as diverse as it is indifferent, because it suffices that it is able to resist fire, and that their openings are covered by a very good lid. That is why besides all the kinds of coffeepots and chocolate pots that can be used for this purpose, we see in the Indies and in Europe pots intended particularly for Tea, in which material and form there is a notable difference, which one will know better by the illustration …where we will find the forms that are given to pots of silver, tin, or the earth of China.[3]

He indicated an illustration of five vessels titled “Pots à preparer le Thé” (fig. 7.3). The bottom four teapots, two of which are hexagonal and three of which are placed above lamps-on-stands of de Blégny’s design, are teapots of “simply chiseled earth” (*terre sizelée simple*), indicating

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[3] "La forme des vaisseaux à faire le Thé, est aussi diverse qu'elle est indifférente, car il suffit qu'ils soient propres à resister au feu, & que leurs embouchures soient fermées par un couvercle bien juste, par un couvercle bien juste, c'est pourquoy outre que toutes les sortes de caffetieres & de chocolatieres peuvent être employées à cét usage, on voit aux Indes & en Europe des pots particulièrement destinés au Thé, dans la matière & dans la forme desquels il se trouve une notable difference, c'est ce qu'on connoîtra mieux par la figure que j'ay sait representer icy, où l'on trouvera les formes qu'on donne aux pots d'Argent, d'Etain ou de terre de la China.” *Le bon usage du thé, du caffé, et du chocolat pour la preservation & pour la guérison des maladies* (Paris, 1687), 30.

Yixing stonewares.[4] The large round pot illustrated at the top of the page, meanwhile, embodied de Blégny's distinction, in that it represents "the form of tea pots, which we have made in Europe of the size that we want, of gilt silver, silver or tin."[5] De Blégny pointed to a critical congruence; namely, that specialized vessels associated with tea-drinking were used and produced in both Asia and Europe by the 1680s.

His phrasing imputes that a European preference for large, metal teapots had been established, and a line of difference drawn. Yet that is not to say that there were no precious metal tea wares known to have been produced in Asia present at European courts. In the previous year, in addition to the so-called parcel gilt silver chocolate pot that served as focal point for chapter four, the mission from Siam brought several examples of Asian precious metalwares, including a gold teapot, a gift specifically designated for Louis XIV.[6] At the same time, European commentators built on a foundation of taste distinctions through materials previously established through the elite Chinese preference for Yixing stoneware teapots. The Chinese preference for teapots of earth instead of metal was also narrated in the early seventeenth century through a story of innovation and product substitution, in the invention and technical refinement of Yixing stonewares that allowed for tea preparation that surpassed the methods of the ancients.

Modern scholars have argued that Chinese ceramics were important models for late seventeenth-century English goldsmiths making new drinking vessels for the exotic, imported beverages of tea, coffee, and chocolate. In his 1956 article "The Early Silver Teapot and its Origin," N.M. Penzer wrote that English goldsmiths "copied in silver" Yixing "simple and beautiful shapes… pear-shaped, of flattened globular form or boldly faceted…"[7] In arguing that English goldsmiths sought models in ceramic, scholars have furthered the idea that Chinese silversmiths never produced silver teapots. As one plate historian has written about early English silver teapots:

> These were only the beginnings of a category of English silver which was later to become one of the most important aspects of the goldsmith's ordinary business, and which expanded dramatically in the early years of the eighteenth century as the demand for tea and coffee — and chocolate — grew and the fashion developed for taking these beverages at home.[8]

Penzer attributed the initial link of precious metal and tea to the demands of East India Company (EIC) agents in the context of trade. Richard Wickham, an EIC factor credited with the earliest mention of tea in English, wrote to EIC factor William Eaton in Meaco (Kyoto), advising of him in his arrival in Firando (today Hirado, Nagasaki) on June 27, 1615. He asked for "a pot of the best sort of chaw [tea, after the Chinese *cha* 茶]…"[9] Eaton's expenditure accounts from Kyoto

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[4] Thanks to Alex Courtois for help with this translation.

[5] "… qu'on fait faire en Europe de la grandeur que l'on veut, de vermeil doré, d'argent ou d'étain." *Le bon usage,* 305.

[6] Alexandre de Chaumont, *Relation de l'ambassade de Mr. le Chevalier de Chaumont à la Cour du Roy de Siam, avec ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable durant son voyage* (The Hague: Isaac Beauregard, 1733), 161.

[7] "The Early Silver Teapot and its Origin," *Apollo* 64 (Dec. 1956), 209.

[8] Timothy Schroder, *The National Trust Book of English Domestic Silver, 1500-1900* (London: Viking, 1988), 138.

[9] Quoted in Charles James Jackson, *An Illustrated History of English Plate, ecclesiastical and secular, in which the development of form and decoration in the silver and gold work of the British isles from the earliest known examples to the latest of the Georgian period is delineated and described,* vol. 2 (London:

list the purchase of "three silver porringers to drink chaw in."[10] Penzer noted that the import of the order is that "the Englishman was dissatisfied with the capacity of the porcelain cup and found the size of a silver porringer much more satisfactory" and concludes that "for the first time (1615) we find silver connected with the service of tea…"[11] The separation between China and Europe, ceramic and silver was maintained in 1972, when art historian Carl Hernmarck wrote while tracing the development of the teapot in Europe that "Silver teapots were utterly unknown in China…"[12] On the invention of the teapot form, he further added, "the novelty was complete. No greater change ever occurred in the silver repertoire, the more so as the vessels devised to contain these new drinks became the most popular of all silver objects."[13] As we will see, historians of the PEM teapot and the English silver teapot form positioned them metaphorically through the notion of a "translated" Asian ceramic analogue.

More recently, historians of consumption built a broader theory of the "invention" of the English silver teapot as proof of British ingenuity, itself a major precondition for the industrial and consumer revolutions.[14] They argued that the "extraordinary proliferation of new goods" in early modern England was spurred in part through the ability of English craftsmen, including

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Country Life Limited, 1911), 941. The European use of the word "chaw" reflects the East Asian origination of the beverage, which could only be procured via Chinese or Japanese merchants and was consumed after the Chinese fashion. Another English mention of tea is by Peter Mundy, who likely worked as a factor for the EIC, noted from Fujian in 1637, "The people there gave us a certain Drinke called Chaa which is only water with a kind of herb boyled in it." As quoted in Philippa Glanville, *Silver in England* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1987), 66.

[10] Quoted in Jackson, vol. 2, 941.

[11] Penzer, 208.

[12] *The Art of the European Silversmith, 1430-1830,* vol. 1 (London; New York: Sotheby Parke Benet,1977), 144.

[13] Hernmarck, 143. While it is unknown what metric Hernmarck used to assess the special appeal of the vessels in question, he perhaps was echoing Daniel Defoe, who in 1713 wrote, "It is impossible that Coffee, Tea and Chocolate can be so advanced in their Consumption, without an eminent Encrease of those Trades that attend them; whence we see the most noble Shops in the City taken up with the most valuable Utensils of the Tea-table." Quoted in Jane Pettigrew, *A Social History of Tea* (London: National Trust Enterprises Ltd., 2001), 37.

[14] Myths of invention through cross-cultural technological transfer often assume a linear process. A technological transfer described as a bilateral, one-directional relationship conceals what Liliane Hilaire-Pérez and Catherina Verna have called the "manifold and multicentered" nature of such a process. Rather, its viability is entirely contingent on the local needs, resources, and constraints of the importing environment. Hilaire-Pérez and Verna, "Dissemination of Technical Knowledge in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era: New Approaches and Methodological Issues," *Technology and Culture* 47:3 (Jul. 2006): 543. Also see Nathan Rosenberg, "Economic Development and the Transfer of Technology: Some Historical Perspectives," *Technology and Culture* 11:4 (Oct. 1970): 570. Looking more broadly at reception of technologies across contexts, Stacey Pierson has similarly criticized the typical reception story of Chinese porcelain in global contexts as a "satisfyingly linear history"; namely, that when encountered outside of China, porcelain was a naturally desirable commodity that drove similar processes of imitation, such as the race to replicate the material and the design phenomenon known as "chinoiserie" in Europe and the Middle East. She has argued for a "more nuanced, less universalizing" stance on Chinese ceramics and their trade, to account for heterogeneous adaptation within local conditions. Stacey Pierson, "The Movement of Chinese Ceramics: Appropriation in Global History," *Journal of World History* 23, no. 1 (Mar. 2012): 10.

goldsmiths, to imitate, remake, and improve Asian objects.[15] John Styles argued that the silver teapot was one innovation of the late seventeenth-century English consumer revolution, effected through the "transformation of an Asian ceramic object, used for the consumption of an Asian beverage, into a European silver one… despite silver's functional disadvantages as a material for holding hot drinks."[16] From the perspective historians of European decorative arts and consumption history, the silver teapot was effectively invented by "innovative" goldsmiths who cannily exploited a cultural difference in how social prestige was expressed through materials. European imitation of Asian commodities was elevated in social histories of consumption as either a technological feat or design innovation. But as Osmond Tiffany, Jr. insinuated in the last chapter when he wrote that "Some people say… that [the Chinese] are not an inventive, but merely an imitative race," Asian reproduction of European forms was often cast as derivative.[17]

This chapter shifts perspective from the dissertation's previous focus on Qing-period silversmiths in southern China, to consider the reception history of the PEM teapot after it was transmitted to England in the 1670s or early 1680s.[18] While I have previously shown how the

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[15] John Styles, "Product Innovation in Early Modern London," *Past and Present* 168 (Aug. 2000): 124. Imitation, especially of imported Asian goods, was the definition of invention in late-seventeenth-century England. According to eighteenth-century English encyclopedias, "invention" did not pertain to the unique product of an individual's creativity and genius, but was premised on new combinations of copied forms, technologies, and knowledge. Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 106. Also see Berg, "From Imitation to Invention: Creating Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *The Economic History Review* 55, no. 1 (Feb. 2002): 2. The English capacity for "invention" in this light was noted in the eighteenth century; in 1766, a Swiss calico printer is quoted as saying the English "cannot boast of many inventions, but only of having perfected the inventions of others; whence came the proverb that for a thing to be perfect it must be invented in France and worked out in England." A.P Wadsworth and J. de L. Mann, *The English Cotton Trade and Industrial Lancashire, 1600-1780* (Manchester, 1931), 413, quoted in Peter Mathias, "Skills and the Diffusion of Innovations from Britain in the Eighteenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 25 (1975): 96.

[16] Styles, "Product innovation in early modern London," *Past and Present* 168 (Aug. 2000): 145.

[17] *The Canton Chinese; or, The American's sojourn in the Celestial Empire* (Boston: J. Monroe and Company, 1849), 86.

[18] The span of approaches to the PEM ewer in this dissertation recalls recent studies of the "social life" of Chigusa, a tea-leaf storage jar produced in Guangdong in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, which in sixteenth-century Japan became appreciated as an aesthetic and utilitarian object. Chigusa was used for *chanoyu* tea gatherings, treasured by a lineage of owners, and recorded in tea diaries. Yet unlike the PEM ewer, high-quality iron-glazed stoneware jars like Chigusa retained an identity as a *karamono* (Chinese object) that could mediate between fine Chinese porcelain and coarser Japanese pottery. While such objects were able to create harmony among objects of different aesthetic qualities and of different cultural origins, they nonetheless maintained such distinctions. Dora C.Y. Ching, Louise Allison Cort, and Andrew M. Watsky, "Introduction," in *Around Chigusa: Tea and the Arts of Sixteenth-Century Japan,* ed. Dora C.Y. Ching, Louise Allison Cort, and Andrew M. Watsky (Princeton, NJ: P.Y. and Kinmay W. Tang Center for East Asian Art in Association with Princeton University Press, 2017), 17. Also see Louise Allison Cort and Andrew M. Watksy, *Chigusa and the Art of Tea* (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler and Freer Gallery of Art, 2014). A passage by Murata Shukō (1423-1502) to Furuichi Harima (1459-1508) in his text *Kokoro no fumi* (Letter of the Heart) gives light to the intended purpose of mobile vessels with complex cultural identities: "In the way of tea, the matter of greatest importance is dissolving the divide between Japanese and Chinese things. It is essential, truly essential." Murata Shukō, *Shukō*

PEM teapot was designated as an effect of Anglo-American discovery as a work of Chinese export silver, this chapter follows the processes by which it was designated as an exemplar of English invention. It tracks the cultural metamorphosis of the PEM ewer, a transformation undergirded by its material qualities and the ways in which its material could represent economic value.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first part of the chapter traces the PEM ewer's ideological transformation into a foundational work of English plate in the early twentieth century, following its historicist reproduction by Eley and other goldsmiths. Second, I return to consider its late seventeenth-century trajectory within a larger context of imported Asian objects. By taking the presence of Chinese metalwork into account, the story of the silver teapot's transmission becomes rather one of global exchange of design and technique between metalworkers. Imported Chinese metalwork moreover becomes an active dialogic counterpart rather than a passive source of inspiration for entrepreneurial English goldsmiths. Taken together, the two parts of the chapter shown how the transmission of a vessel gave rise to imaginative responses to the provocation of a global imaginary in silver. Separately, and centuries later, its reinterpretation as English served to constitute a civilizational binary mapped out through material, that ultimately led to the erasure of Asian metalwares in the history of English plate. The chapter ultimately counters the notion of British "invention" in order to open up new possibilities for understanding the considerable impact of Chinese metalworkers on European goldsmithing. It also demonstrates how the art history of the silver teapot was constituted through the exchange of global distinctions of taste.[19]

I. Inventing the PEM Ewer in English Plate History

Nineteenth-Century "Chinese Taste" Revival Copies

Informed commentaries on the PEM ewer did not begin with written histories of plate, scholarship which was first published in the late nineteenth century. Rather, such commentaries took the form of historicist copies and chinoiserie variations on the teapot made in silver by British goldsmiths such as Eley.[20] The early decades of the nineteenth century saw a revivalist interest in Chinese design and English chinoiserie decorative arts in Britain, though the vogue ended with the anti-Chinese sentiment resulting from the first Opium War (1839-41). The Prince Regent, later George IV (r. 1820-1830), was known for his taste for eighteenth-century chinoiserie revival, epitomized through the furnishing of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, which was completed in 1823. To date, I have identified fourteen extant examples of teapots that, while exhibiting differing degrees of creative reinterpretation, reproduce or were made in reference to the PEM ewer. They were marked by different goldsmiths and firms such as Paul Storr, Storr and

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Furuichi Harima Hōshi ata isshi, annot. Nagashima Fukutarō in *Chadō koten zenshū*, ed. Sen Sōshitsu (Kyoto: Tankō Shinsha, 1960), 3:3, as quoted in Steven D. Owyoung, "Chigusa and *Kujie Jun*," in *Around Chigusa,* 31.

[19] Arguing for white European agency over passive non-European objects and practitioners is a pattern often repeated across fields in art history. As Steven Nelson and Caroline Jones have written, drawing on Saloni Mathur's work on Picasso's appropriation of African art, Enlightenment legacies in art history have privileged the "taste and ingenuity" of white men and denied non-European agents "agency and coeval development." "Global turns in US art history," *Perspective* [online] 2 (2015), 10.

[20] In a further entanglement that merits further research, Eley was one of the goldsmiths whose firm was represented by the appropriated WE/WF/WC mark possibly used by the Canton silver retailer Powing/Baoying, which was discussed in chapter five.

Mortimer, John Page, Joseph Preedy, John Edward Terrey, and Barnards, with known hallmarking dates that range from 1814 to 1838. The teapots are artifactual evidence that the form of the PEM teapot was viewed through an antiquarian gaze in the early nineteenth century, with such a gaze functioning in part as recreation of "classical" forms, and in part as a means of mining the past for creative reproduction in the present. While its location in the period is unknown, some of the makers evidently had access to the PEM ewer; the object was not copied from a printed image, as there is still careful attention to the curvature of the relief scenes which cannot be conveyed without distortion in two-dimensional images. Copies of the PEM ewer produced during this period were made to suit the pattern of late Georgian taste.

While some of the revival copies of the PEM ewer attempt to replicate it, others reinterpret it. While the Eley pot might seem to replicate the PEM ewer at first glance, the ornament does not fit the mode of a historicist recollection of Tang silverworking techniques, due to the stark departures from the appliqué and fine, even punching; rather, the essence of the PEM ewer is retained through the object's form and distribution of relief ornament across the panels within foliated frames. To produce the Eley teapot, engaged relief was whole-cast into the surface of the panels instead of separate structural elements. Much like the historical design references to Roman terratacotta and glass lamps were submerged in favor of Chinese classical vessel design in how the Canton silver trade modified silverwares in the British taste, something is both gained and lost in this translation of the PEM ewer. Three of the teapots (namely the John Page, marked 1819, and the Paul Storr/Storr and Mortimer teapots of 1825) seem to have the same or very similar panel design. It departs significantly from the PEM teapot, with a set of pagodas on either side of a bird at bottom of the panel, and a writhing willow tree at right, referring to its Chinese precedent, with the addition of rococo revival bouquets, shells, and spirals at the top half of the panel. Moreover, the reclining, stereotyped "Chinese" figure that supplants the ball finial on the George King teapot is a common feature of these objects, and is just one aspect of chinoiserie revival that were used to further embellish and modify the pattern set by the PEM ewer.

By the 1820s, there was an established market in old plate in Britain, as well as modern copies and innovations based on historical objects and forms.[21] British elites sought to buy antique silverware and new silverware in historicist styles to furnish the interiors of their country houses and other antiquarian spaces. The Prince Regent's brother, Prince Frederick, the Duke of York, was advised by the antique plate dealer Kensington Lewis in purchasing large amounts of silverware. Lewis commissioned goldsmiths such as Edward Farrell to produce plate for the Duke using historical designs and eclectic borrowings of antique forms. Similarly, influential collector and aesthete William Beckford worked with retailers, chiefly the royal goldsmiths Rundell, Bridge and Rundell, in securing objects for the interiors of Fonthill Abbey, statements of his opulent taste. From Rundells he purchased antique plate sold from the royal collection, and through the firm he commissioned goldsmiths like Paul Storr to produce innovative designs based on historical forms, in some cases using his heraldic crest as an all-over chased pattern. Michael Snodin and Malcolm Baker have noted that the silver commissioned for Fonthill from 1812 to 1822 has two notable emphases: interests in family heraldry and historicism. As to the latter, they write that the orders began with copies, and then developed into "an imaginative use

[21] Glanville, *Silver in England,* 279.

of renaissance and mannerist forms and ornament" to a level unmatched until midcentury.[22] Beckford was also interested in Asian objects, including lacquerware and porcelain; one of his treasures was an early-fourteenth century Chinese *qingbai* porcelain vase with applied relief medallion panels, mounted into a pitcher, and today regarded as one of the earliest, most well-documented, examples of porcelain brought to Europe. Snodin and Baker characterize Beckford's historicist taste in silver as unusual in the period, as most sources of revival English plate in the early 1820s were "primarily gothic and baroque."[23]

Beckford owned a gilt teapot that either was another imported one made by the same Chinese workshop as the PEM teapot, or an early European copy that was very skillfully produced. One of the last objects sold in the 1817 sale of Beckford's collection was an object catalogued as "A BEAUTIFUL HEXAGONAL TEA POT, with chased landscapes in compartments, in Chinese taste, *of very fine workmanship*."[24] According to the annotated auctioneer's copy of the sale catalogue, the teapot weighed 27 troy ounces, 12 pennyweights. Its hammer price was 16 shillings per troy ounce, which resulted in a total price of 22 pounds sterling, 1 shilling, 7 pennies. Sixteen shillings/troy ounce is in effect the relative value of the object's workmanship compared to other objects.[25] Moreover, the value of the workmanship of the teapot was 185.7% of the period price of the weight of the silver, added on top. Given the value its unknown buyer applied to the workmanship of the vessel, could this have been a Chinese teapot? Its weight is about twenty standard ounces lighter than the PEM ewer, so it is unlikely that they were one and the same. Nonetheless, Beckford's consumption of a teapot with a similar description as the PEM ewer, along with the many known nineteenth-century British silver copies, indicate perceptions of the object's historical status, its desirability as a fashionable object, and its value as a direct prototype and source for creative re-adaptation. Further, the replicas and variations codify English objects "in the Chinese taste" as fundamental to understandings of English plate history. At the same time, they cemented the identity of the PEM ewer as an English teapot.

The PEM Ewer in the Recorded History of English Plate

Reproductions of the PEM ewer in the chinoiserie revival era demonstrate that the pot was known to collectors, goldsmiths, and antiquarians. In the first histories of English silver that appeared later in the century, British scholars and critics posited that the PEM teapot was one of the earliest silver teapots made by English goldsmiths. They based its identification on two criteria: first, its full set of English hallmarks, and second the Chinese design current in the period of the marks. They placed it at the beginning of a linear chain of responsive copies and transmissions of the globular silver teapot form. The PEM ewer first appeared in print in the 1899 edition of *Old English Plate*, in which antiquarian W.J. Cripps wrote that the "earliest

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[22] Michael Snodin and Malcolm Baker, "William Beckford's Silver I," *The Burlington Magazine* 122: 932 (Nov. 1980): 748.
[23] Snodin and Baker "William Beckford's Silver II," *The Burlington Magazine* 122: 933 (Dec. 1980): 824.
[24] "Catalogue of all the truly elegant household furniture, silver-gilt and silver plate; oriental and modern porcelain; some pictures, and drawings framed and glazed of William Beckford, Esq. of Fonthill" (London: Christie's, 1817), 9. Thanks to Charlotte DonVito for help sourcing this catalogue.
[25] In the sale it was only exceeded by a tea canister (listing 129) that apparently matched a sugar basin (128), both of which, it is likely, were made to match the teapot.

[English] tea-pot known to the author in actual domestic use" was a hexagonal pot dated 1682.[26] The PEM teapot was remarkably Chinese in appearance to Cripps; he described its relief ornament as "Chinese scenes, very minute in detail, and deeply cut." Cripps posited that the object" must have been copied exactly from a Chinese original," never conceiving its status as its own Chinese original.[27]

The object's emergence was consistently explained via the appropriation of an unknown Asian ceramic object. It was next published and first illustrated in Charles James Jackson's *Illustrated History of English Plate of 1911* (fig. 7.4).[28] In the grainy photogravure image, the profile view of the object offers a configured set of integral features: the faceted surface; foliated panels with textured interiors; a squat, rounded body; a jointed, upturned spout and a jointed handle; a hexagonal neck and a lid with small knob for a finial. Jackson provided his theory of its model:

> The body is convex in section and hexagonal in plan; each of its six sides having a panel of waved outline decorated with branches of foliage, flowers, and birds in low relief in the Oriental taste, probably copied from a vase of Chinese porcelain in the vogue of the period.[29]

He confirmed the period authenticity of the PEM teapot through its "Chinese" ornament. He noted that "the whole of the decoration is quite consistent with its having been executed at one time and that in the year indicated by the hall-marks, when Chinese ornamentation was very fashionable."[30] The statement creates a recursive logic of self-confirming authenticity between ornament, dating, and authorship, all premised on convictions about craft brought to the silverware's surface. For decorative arts historians throughout most of the twentieth century, its apparent Chinese form and ornament was consistent with a late seventeenth-century English "Chinese taste." They relied on the surprising logic that it appeared Chinese, and thus, it was English.

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[26] Wilfred Joseph Cripps, *Old English plate, ecclesiastical, decorative, and domestic: its makers and marks,* 6th ed. (London: J. Murray, 1899), 346. The first edition of Cripps' antiquarian manual was printed in 1878; while his contemporary William Chaffers published a compilation of "maker's marks," or sets of Roman initials connected to goldsmiths and retailers, Cripps' was the first study to take an art-historical approach to English gold and silverwares, examining the development of form of utensils over time. In the preceding 1894 edition of *Old English Plate*, Cripps dated the earliest English silver teapot to 1709, which suggests that in the interim he had encountered the hexagonal teapot, which according to Cripps, was then in the collection of Morgan Stuart Williams of St Donats Castle and Aberpergwm, Wales.

[27] Cripps, *Old English plate*, 6th ed., 346.

[28] Jackson, 945. Jackson noted that the teapot was in the collection of Godfrey H. Williams of Aberpergwym, Glamorganshire. Jackson, 946. Godfrey was the son of Welsh collier and collector Morgan S. Williams, whose silver collection was sold on May 1, 1946, the first time the teapot appears in modern auction records. In accordance with Jackson, it was listed as "A CHARLES II HEXAGONAL TEAPOT AND COVER, chased with panels of Chinese landscapes in relief — 1682, *maker's mark T A monogram in shaped shield* — (*weight 28 oz.* [870.897 g])" with the Jackson illustration cited. It sold for £40 to "Haye." See "Catalogue of Old English Silver, formerly the property of the late Morgan S. Williams, Esq., of St Donats Castle, S. Wales, and now sold by the order of Godfrey H. Williams, Esq. and his Trustees" (London: Christie, Manson & Woods, 1946), 8, lot 94. Priced catalogue in V&A Library.

[29] Jackson, 945.

[30] Jackson, 946.

Unlike Cripps, Jackson identified the so-called Berkeley teapot, a conical vessel with a tapering lid dated 1670/1 as a preceding example of the teapot form, due to its own self-referential inscription: it was, as it indicated, a "siluer tea : Pott" (fig. 7.5).[31] By comparison, Jackson saw the six-sided PEM ewer as "an object much more in accordance with the modern idea of a TEA-POT" than its obsolete predecessor.[32] Jackson questioned whether the angular appendages of spout and handle were original to the body, thus evoking a vase. Nonetheless, in his view, the object was an innovative breakthrough at the beginning of an artifactual sequence of the "modern teapot."[33] The proof was in the iconicity of its form: by the twentieth century, the early modern globular silhouette of the PEM vessel was instantly legible as a specialized, English vessel for serving tea.

So-called "maker's marks" were the cornerstone of how the history of English plate was first constructed. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, however, it can be more accurately understood as the mark of the sponsor of the object presented for assay.[34] In the late nineteenth century, English archeologists and antiquarians began to compile and publish tables of the initial marks, using them to attribute examples of antique wares. The first lectures on the topic of marks were given by Octavius Morgan at the Archeological Institute in London and Bristol in 1851, and inaugurated the historical study of English silverwares.[35] In 1363, a statue mandated "every Master-Goldsmith shall have a Mark by himself" which would be applied after the ware was assayed: "and after the Assay made, the Surveyor [of the assay] shall set the king's Mark, and after the Goldsmith his Mark, to which he will answer."[36] Morgan noted that each statue that followed enforced the use of the "'Mark or Sign' of the worker," in the parlance of the

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[31] Jackson, 943-5. Cripps's attribution of the PEM teapot as the earliest English example was never revised in his manual. Cripps died in 1903, when the 8th edition of his long-running manual was published. Culme, *Nineteenth-Century Silver* (London: Hamlyn for Country Life Books, 1977), xxxiv. Posthumous editions published after Jackson (1911) did not revise the identification of the hexagonal teapot as the earliest example of the form. See for example *Old English Plate,* 10th ed. (London: J. Murray, 1914), 396.

[32] Jackson, 945. Cripps discussed obsolete silverware forms from the medieval and early modern period, such as the nef, double or "trussing" cups, the "goddard," and the "voider," which were luxury objects that met dining needs, since either changed or vanished. *Old English Plate,* 218-9.

[33] Alfred Jones also noted the disparity between the Berkeley pot and hexagonal PEM pot, musing that the Berkeley pot was indistinguishable in form from a coffee pot dated 1681/2 in the V&A and thus might be mistaken as such. Alfred Jones, *Old Silver of Europe and America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1928), 142.

[34] Within the hallmarking system, the initial mark referred to, as Helen Clifford phrased it, "the person responsible for the quality of the silver," and is today often called instead, the sponsor's mark. See "A commerce with things: the value of precious metalwork," in *Consumers and luxury: Consumer Cultures in Europe, 1650-1850,* ed. Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 151. Also see Glanville, *Silver in England,* 147.

[35] Throughout most of the eighteenth century, connoisseurs collected antique plate based on visual intrigue and curiosity. Antiquarian interest only emerged in the latter decades of the century. Research began with reconstructing date and maker's marks in the 1840s-50s. See John Culme, *The Directory of Gold and Silversmiths, Jewellers & Allied Traders,* 1838-1914, vol. 1 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1987), xvi-xxvi.

[36] W. B. (William Badcock), *A Touch-Stone for Gold and Silver Wares, or, A Manual for Goldsmiths…* (London: Printed for John Bellinger and Thomas Bassett, 1677). Quoted in Octavius Morgan, "Assay Marks on Gold and Silver Plate," *The Archeological Journal* IX (1852): 231-2.

law, but which he instead termed the "Maker's Mark."[37] William Chaffers and Cripps carried on Morgan's work, with publications reproducing hundreds into thousands of recovered marks in tables.[38] Until revisionist silver scholarship of the early 1970s, the initial mark was thus often misconstrued as the maker's identification mark, or as a type of authorial signature.[39]

Antiquarians did not start reconstructing the date-letter tables used by the Goldsmiths' Company until the late nineteenth century, so it is unlikely that the historicist reproductions of the PEM ewer were made with any reference to its posited status in the development of the silver teapot form. Rather, Chinese objects with high-relief ornament of the type demonstrated by the PEM and Versailles ewers and studied in chapter two, their emulation by European goldsmiths, and a type of chinoiserie flat-chasing all appeared in England at the same time. Thus, the late-seventeenth century has been specifically linked with the first historical emergence of the "Chinese taste" in England.[40] One result of the conflation was that the PEM ewer was classed by Cripps, Jackson, and others as English because it appeared Chinese.[41] Yet the importance of this period was suggested by Hugh Honour when discussing the particular and perhaps unique intersection of silver and Chinese ornament in England:

> Some of the earliest indications of the Restoration taste for chinoiserie are to be found in the decoration of silver. The choice of this medium is, in itself, curious and calls for comment. Chinoiserie japan [lacquer], pottery, and textiles produced in the first half of the century were all inspired by, if not directly imitative of, objects of similar materials imported from the Orient. But so far as is known, no silver or gold, apart from filigree, was brought to Europe from the East at this period. The notion of applying eastern-style decorations to silver tankards and bowls was therefore as novel as it was strange.[42]

Thus, among the earliest glimmers in England of the eighteenth-century demand for both domestic and foreign objects in the "Chinese taste" emerged within the goldsmiths' trade; it follows that in terms of the field of chinoiserie studies, these are important objects and case studies.

In 1951, the Empire Tea Bureau exhibit "Two Centuries of Silver Teapots" featured forty objects from the W.S. Bell collection, arranged to trace the development of the metalwork form in Europe.[43] *London Illustrated News* critic Frank Davis had a less laudatory view of the PEM

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[37] Morgan, 231-2. F.W. Fairholt continued to trace the historical concept of the private mark of gold and silversmiths focusing on England and France, in the second of a three-part series about marks on porcelain and artists' marks published in 1855 in *The Art-Journal*. F.W. Fairholt, "Marks of Gold and Silver Smiths," *The Art-Journal* X (Oct. 1, 1855): 269-71.

[38] Culme, *The Directory of Gold and Silversmiths,* xxvii-ix.

[39] Incidentally, Chinese-made silverwares were being recognized in American and British collections as such at the same moment, perhaps indicating a period in which the meaning of the authenticity of English silver was being rethought.

[40] Glanville, *Silver in England,* 234-6.

[41] Winnie Wong has written that European collectors and antiquarians have conflated Chinese export and European chinoiserie objects together in a "general Orientalist mode of consumption," and as a result "scholars of reception associate the two together as instances of the same European taste and imagination." "Chinese export art [Art of the Canton Trade]," *Grove Art online,* published online 11 July 2022 https://doi.org/10.1093/oao/9781884446054.013.90000138495.

[42] *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay* (London: J. Murray, 1961), 69.

[43] The Empire Tea Bureau, which promoted the interests and developed markets for the United Kingdom's planter industry of "Empire growers in India, Ceylon and East Africa," sponsored the Regent Street gallery space in London where Davis encountered the hexagonal teapot in 1951. Erica Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017),

ewer than Jackson. Instead of contrasting it with earlier objects, he compared it to what he viewed as the culmination of the form in silver, the English Georgian teapot:

> If this is the classic type of Georgian teapot — and by the middle of the eighteenth century the form of such things had become more or less stabilized — two others, much earlier, and very elaborate, are examples from a period when silversmiths had not yet decided what was the proper shape for such an object.[44]

Though Davis was unaware, both of the pots he would describe next as "extravagances" made in advance of what he viewed as the more economical and refined achievements of the Georgian-era goldsmiths, were early Qing-period Chinese silverwares. Davis classified them as English experimental prototypes, "examples from a period when silversmiths had not yet decided what was the proper shape for such an object."[45] His characterization of them as less-than-proper teapots was accurate, as they were likely made as ornamental vessels, intended as honorific gifts, and primarily used for pouring wine. Despite all of the troubling physical evidence otherwise, Davis and a preceding generation of British silver antiquarians persisted in regarding certain examples of historical Chinese silverwares as not only London-made objects, but as historical evidence of English ingenuity in the silver teapot's invention.

Bringing to them his expectations not only of what was a "proper" teapot, but also a "proper" European silverware, Davis evidently struggled to qualify the "incongruous" yet as he says of the second, "remarkable," objects. The first one is the PEM ewer (fig. 7.6). The second is a six-lobed, necked ewer, each side decorated with animal, plant, and landscape elements in relief (fig. 7.7).[46] Revealingly, he saw the PEM ewer through the lens of Britain's history of commercial trade with China:

> Here is one of them… and in this the maker (1682-3) has copied a Chinese porcelain original, or rather, translated that original into a different material. The result is a little incongruous — at any rate, to modern eyes — for the soft metal has its own peculiar attributes, but there is no denying the skill with which it is put together.

Davis viewed the material fluidity in the form of the object as a product of its evolutionary instability, and its liminal status as a copy across media — an import substitute in process.

314-5. The Tea Centre was opened in 1946 to "tell the story of this vast Empire industry" during World War II, promoting their main product in part by holding small exhibitions. Concerned that wartime restrictions, such as tea rationing, would permanently damage their markets, they launched a sophisticated marketing campaign to solidify the importance of tea in the national consciousness. As Rappaport described its intentions, the Tea Bureau "used [public relations]… methods to declare that the right to drink tea defined the British way of life…" *Thirst for Empire,* 315. It was a case made, as Rappaport demonstrates throughout her study of the role of tea in the building of the British empire, repeatedly throughout modern history.

[44] "A Page for Collectors. Two Centuries of Silver Teapots," *Illustrated London News,* May 12, 1951.

[45] Ibid.

[46] As Davis wrote of this object, "The other teapot is even more exotic, for in this handle and spout are made to imitate bamboo. The lid has six lobes and a finial in the form of blossoming branches, while the spout is strengthened by a small bridge of metal from its upper portion to the top of the body in the form of a branch with a bird perched upon it. The shape is baluster with six lobed sides; parcel gilt, each of these six sides is decorated with birds, branches, and foliage in relief." "A Page for Collectors. Two Centuries of Silver Teapots," *Illustrated London News,* May 12, 1951. The object is likely the teapot in figure 7.7, which when it appeared on the market in 2008, was noted as an object formerly in the John Bell of Aberdeen collection until 2008. Sold Christie's New York, 23 Oct. 2008.

In contrast to the formal incongruities of the two Chinese pots, Davis described one illustrated English example from the 1740s as "the classic type of Georgian teapot," a form "stabilized" by the mid-eighteenth century (fig. 7.8). It was "solid, dignified, and nicely balanced," the curved wooden handle and wooden knob finial identified as integral to its harmonious design. Left unremarked and perhaps tacitly assumed by his Anglo readership was the shiny, globular surface of the bullet-shaped body, which produced a reflective glare at the center of the photograph, evidence of its smooth lustrousness.

Davis' reframing of the work of the goldsmith from "copied," in Jackson's terms, to "translated," is a critical operation, in that it acknowledged what was seemingly viewed as the revelation of an ideal object through the process of transformation, akin to what Walter Benjamin has called the "translator's task." English goldsmiths were the optimal translators of a form, which had found through its transmission into a new metal medium a "constantly renewed, latest, and most comprehensive unfolding."[47] Aspects of its incoherence, or extravagance, were related to a teleological notion of how the form at last developed into a "classic" or "satisfying" Georgian shape. Transfer via the teapot form was thus viewed as a negotiation, and one tied to hierarchical notions of both production and taste.

In imagining a porcelain model for English silver teapots, and the PEM ewer in particular, it is significant that twentieth-century scholars and critics drew on its symbolic association as a trading commodity with close links to China. As Alden Cavanaugh and Michael E. Yonan have written, no other material served as a more apt conduit and projective screen for mediating Europe's perception of China; hence the material served as a shorthand for the geographic region: "china."[48] Hierarchical differences between the world's most developed economy at the time, and European countries, were affirmed by European perceptions of its miraculous qualities. Lydia Liu has written that in the eighteenth century, the gradual European mastery over Asian technologies to make materials such as porcelain "produced the very ground" on which the mythos of Western civilizational superiority could be built.[49] Such productions were methods of import substitution, which Liu has argued operated as powerful claims of British self-sufficiency. Domestically made objects and images could become a disavowal of the foreign and colonial others upon which the British had depended for labor, resources, commodities and ideas.

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[47] Walter Benjamin, "The translator's task," trans. Steven Rendall, *TTR: traduction, terminologie, rédaction* 10, no. 2 (1999): 154.
[48] "Introduction," in *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteen-Century Porcelain*, ed. Cavanaugh and Yonan (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 3-4. Much has been written about porcelain as a metaphorical material in the European context, to the neglect of its cultural meanings in Asia outside of Chia. In intra-Asian commerce, Chinese porcelain could also serve metaphorical functions, drawing on different aspects of its material qualities. In 1666, Sultan Saifuddin of Tidore (r. 1657-1687) evoked the sonic ringing of porcelain in a letter to Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies Joan Maetsuycker, to describe how he felt caught in between the demands of the Dutch and Ternate, his neighboring sultanate. Apparently having received a chastisement, he replied, "…and I, your Son, am like a fine porcelain dish upon which rap both the Dutch and those people of Ternate in the Moluccas. Because of this…my ears are full of a strong sound and nearly deaf from all these doings." See T. Volker, *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company, as recorded in the Dagh-registers of Batavia Castle, those of Hirado and Deshima, and other contemporary papers, 1602-1682* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), 208. The former sultanate of Tidore was part of present-day northern Maluku islands, Indonesia.
[49] Lydia Liu, "Robinson Crusoe's Earthenware Pot," *Critical Inquiry* 25, no. 4 (Summer, 1999), 739.

If Liu contends that a foundational claim of Western superiority was European imitation and triumph over Asian production technologies and goods via ceramics, Maxine Berg likewise notes that claims made for British exceptionalism are often rooted in superior metal-working skills and technologies—a phenomenon that also impacted, as we have seen, the Canton silver trade. Therefore, early criticism of the PEM ewer resides at the conjunction of claims about two different materials from a British imperial perspective. From its globular shape, which Jackson called the prototype for the "modern" teapot, to its hallmarks, to the specific English taste for Chinese-style ornament in the 1680s, the teapot was interpreted through evidence assumed to indicate its English cultural legitimacy.[50] The material of silver fostered an unshakable connection between England and its silver assay system—thus the reiteration in the scholarship on the PEM ewer that even as it appeared Chinese, its hallmarks were "genuine," and thus it was an authentic English object. With Davis' criticism, the process of substitution was rendered complete, as the Georgian teapot was the highest achievement of the teapot form. In the second half of the chapter, by recontextualizing the PEM ewer's possible vectors of transmission and range of impacts, my intention is both to defamiliarize it as material evidence of Anglo ingenuity and propose a set of new directions for understanding the object in a global context of both production and imagination.

II. Seventeenth-Century Global Transmission and Impacts of a Silver Ewer

A Tea-Bourne Trajectory

The precise means by which the PEM ewer was transported to London and was hallmarked in 1682/3 are unknown. The most likely conduits for the ewer were either a Dutch merchant who imported Asian luxury goods to London, or an EIC agent who brought it in his private cargo. Contributing to its uncertain trajectory, the ewer was imported during a period of upheaval in China as the Kangxi emperor consolidated Qing rule over southern coastal China and Taiwan, and a related time of turbulence in both Dutch and English trade with Asia. In the mid-to-late-seventeenth century, the Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, hereafter VOC) and the EIC traded unofficially with Chinese merchants and their intermediaries in Amoy (Xiamen) and Taiwan, south and southeast Asia, Japan, and the Philippines.[51] Kangxi's Qing forces captured Amoy in 1681, driving out the Ming rebel Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (known to Europeans as Koxinga) with whom the English had established trading agreements along the China coast. The VOC had established a residential trading colony in Batavia (present-day Jakarta, Indonesia) in 1619, and competed fiercely with the EIC for trading privileges in the region; in 1682, the Dutch captured the EIC headquarters at Bantam (Banten), Indonesia where a regime change in the sultanate was also underway.[52] In 1684, the

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[50] Vimalin Rujivacharakul has written that when seeking when and why Chinese objects are marked and defined as such, the "challenge is to locate the criteria that alter or maintain those definitions." As such, to ask how and why certain things are called, understood, and marked as 'Chinese 'is to delve into the subjectivity of things and the ways their cultural significations emerge and change." "China and china: An Introduction to Materiality and a History of Collecting," in *Collecting China: The World, China, and a History of Collecting,* ed. Rujivacharakul (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 15. The same can be said of when objects are marked and defined as British or English.

[51] K.N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the East India Company, 1660-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 6-16.

[52] H.B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India company trading to China, 1635-1854,* vol. 1 (Taipei: Cheng-wen Publishing Company, 1966), 48.

Kangxi emperor reopened trade with Western countries, with the primary trading company and customs house established in Guangzhou.[53] While VOC and EIC trading during the 1670s and early 1680s was precarious and often indirectly carried out through other ports, Chinese products such as tea, silk, and porcelain, as well as luxury goods, nonetheless were shipped to Europe throughout the period.

European consumer interest in an object such as the PEM ewer, and the demand for the teapot form more broadly, was predicated on the spread of the medicinal and addictive commodity it dispensed.[54] Dutch trading agents established the earliest European domestic demand for tea, as well as Asian-made ceramic tea wares in the early seventeenth century. In a 1637 dispatch to their agents in Batavia, VOC directors noted that "as people begin to use tea, we expect to have some jars of Chinese as well as Japanese tea with every ship."[55] Tea was not a major import until the 1660s, when the EIC imported 100 pounds in 1664, and the VOC ordered seventy-five baskets in 1667.[56] While Amsterdam was the first major tea market in Europe, by 1658 tea was available in English coffee houses. The Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza brought a chest of tea with her as part of her dowry when she married Charles II in 1662, and it is said that she popularized tea-drinking at the English court, and from there to the wider populace.

By the Wanli 萬曆 period (r. 1572 to 1620) of the late Ming dynasty, a closed vessel with a spout was the central functional object used for preparing tea, either for boiling water and pouring into a bowl of leaves, or as the container where leaves where boiled together with water to brew the tea.[57] As noted by German naturalist and physician Engelbert Kaempfer, both Chinese and Europeans made "a simple infusion of the Tea-leaves in hot water, which is drank as soon as it hath drawn out the virtue of the Plant."[58] As understood at the time, the preparation used by Chinese and Europeans was distinct from that used by Japanese tea-drinkers. As noted by Kaempfer, whisking tea powder ground from tea cakes, balls, or bricks was the method current in Japan in the late 17th-century, and was an alternative to the brewed method. John Chamberlayne noted in his 1682 treatise, "There are several ways and methods for preparing Thee. The Japonians powder the plant upon a Stone, and so put it into hot Water. The Chineses

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[53] Gang Zhao, *The Qing Opening to the Ocean: Chinese Maritime Policies, 1684-1757* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013), 79-98.

[54] European trading companies built empires, in part, through the transport trade of the desirable Asian leaf. While the VOC was responsible for the first wave of tea imports to Europe beginning in 1610, by the eighteenth century the British East India Company had gained dominance in the European trade with Asia by importing tea from India and China. As Erica Rappaport has argued, the history of the British empire along with the world integration of trade were built around the "advertising, retailing, and other forms of distribution" of tea. *A Thirst for Empire,* 7.

[55] Volker, 48.

[56] Lo, *The Stonewares of Yixing: From the Ming Period to the Present Day* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press and Sotheby's Publications, 1986), 247.

[57] Cai Dingyi 蔡定益, *Xiangming yaqi: Mingdai chaju yu mingdai shehui* 香茗雅器：明代茶具与明代社会 [Fragrant Tea and Elegant Utensils: the Tea Sets and Society in Ming Dynasty], (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2019), 108.

[58] The details of the preparation he assumed to be so familiar to his elite readers that it was "needless to add anything about it." *The History of Japan: Together with a Description of the Kingdom of Siam,* vol. 3, trans. John Gaspar Scheuchzer (Glasgow: James McHose and Sons, 1692), 238.

boyl the Leaves with Water and a little Sugar."[59] In the second chapter, I demonstrated that Chinese tea-drinkers had used silver teapots and tea utensils for centuries, but that Yixing stonewares had replaced the preference for silver teapots among connoisseurs by the early seventeenth century. The shift in preference coincided with the period in which tea drinking in the Chinese manner was transmitted to Europe.

Throughout most of the seventeenth century, Asian ceramic tea wares were rare imports, which were either destined for elite collections or to those with personal connections to traders in Asia.[60] The first examples were shipped in private cargo allowances; for example, Patrice Valfré writes that a small teapot is recorded in an inventory of private merchandise dated 1620, thought to be notes for a cargo list for a Portuguese trader sailing from Macao. The teapot was sent from Joao Carvalho to Batiao Pinto, State Prosecutor in Malacca. Valfré contends that it must have been an Yixing teapot due to the import of the transaction implied by the title, but that is unconfirmed.[61] The first order for a small group of ceramic teapots is thought to have been placed in 1639 by the VOC. The archeological findings of the Hatcher cargo, a Chinese junk that sunk around 1643 and was presumed to be in route to Batavia with a Dutch order, included twelve blue-and-white porcelain ewers that have been classified by the maritime archeologists as teapots, and also fragments of Yixing wares. The forms of the teapots were described as "new shapes not seen in Ming wares," and thus perhaps were speculative patterns intended for a Dutch market, though the assessment bears further research.[62] One of the ceramic ewers is six-sided like the PEM ewer, with underglaze blue figural designs in framed panels (fig. 7.9). In 1665, Simon Paulli illustrated a teapot in the Swedish royal collection that had been acquired in 1656 and later fitted with a gold spout and chain. The teapot appears at the far left of a table drawn by the mathematician Julius Reichelt for Paulli, to convey the volumes and measurements of the Chinese vessels (fig. 7.10).[63] Robert Parker, the EIC agent in Banten until his death in the early 1680s, regularly sent pounds of tea to his wife, friends, and business associates in London. He also sent ceramic teapots; in 1678, he tucked "one white & 2 red china tea potts" into one of a

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[59] *The Natural history of coffee, thee, chocolate, tobacco* (London: Printed for Christopher Wilkinson, 1682), 11.

[60] The ceramics collection of Augustus the Strong, elector of Saxony and King of Poland at Dresden was started in 1700, and when it was first catalogued in 1721, ninety-six Yixing wares were listed. See Patrice Valfré, *Yixing: Exotic Teapots for Europe* (Poligny, France: Ediciones Exotic Line, 2000), 133-7. Yixing teapots were also sent as diplomatic gifts to Europe; the inventory of the diplomatic gifts sent in 1686 from the Thai court of Phra Narai to Louis XIV and his court, includes "Trois petits pots de terre extraordinaire pour le Thé, de la Chine" (three small extraordinary teapots made of earth, Chinese). Alexandre de Chaumont*, Relation de l'ambassade de Mr. le Chevalier de Chaumont à la Cour du Roy de Siam, avec ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable durant son voyage* (The Hague, Isaac Beauregard, 1733), 159.

[61] Cited from Simonette Luz Afonso and Vicente Borges de Sousa, *Du Tage à la Mer de Chine, Une épopée portugaise* (Paris, Éditions de la Réunion de musées nationaux, 1992), 146-7, in *Yixing: Teapots for Europe* (Poligny, France: Ediciones Exotic Line, 2000), 115.

[62] Colin Sheaf and Richard Kilburn, *The Hatcher Porcelain Cargoes: The Complete Record* (Oxford: Phaidon and Christie's, 1988), 50.

[63] *A Treatise on tea, coffee, and chocolate,* trans. Dr. James (London: T. Osborne, 1746), 152. The teapot is one of four Yixing wares recorded in an inventory drawn up in 1665 of the collection of Frederic III of Denmark and Norway (r. 1648-70); categorized under "collections of the wonders of the world," the other Yixing wares include two other teapots and a *gu* vase. Valfré, 134.

pair of Japanese lacquer cabinets bound for London.[64] Perhaps the white teapot was a faceted Dehua wine pot, such as a hexagonal example today in the Royal Collection (fig. 3.45). It was likely the object recorded in the first inventory ever taken of Queen Mary's porcelain at Kensington Palace, perhaps done in 1693/4, as a "very large white Tea Pott and cover with white figures all over the outside."[65] While the earliest extant ceramic tea vessels in Europe have been noted in court and elite collections, access to such objects was certainly dependent on VOC and EIC connections.

Toward the end of the century, the import of Asian ceramic tea wares became more commonplace. In 1680, the VOC *daghregisters* (day registers) record that the Ternate, a ship bound for Amsterdam, carried 5,898 Japanese porcelains of unspecified form, and 1,635 Chinese tea-pots.[66] In England, by the latter part of the seventeenth century tea-related ceramics were imported on a greater scale and the price fell. For example, in an EIC sale for September 1704, the company sold a lot of 203 porcelain teapots, including eighteen with mismatched covers, for a little over four pounds.[67] Thus, by that date, Asian ceramic vessels specifically understood as "teapots" were imported to Europe on a significant scale.

In this context of European demand for tea and Asian tea wares, imported silver objects are relatively rare. Yet examples are sought and identified in late-seventeenth century Dutch accounts of elite consumption and tend to be associated with women. A silver *teekan* (tea cann) is listed among the Indian and Chinese objects in the 1654-68 inventory of the collections of Dutch Amalia von Solms, Princess of Orange and then the chair of the regency council in The Hague for her grandson, William III of Orange. In 1664, the Dutch astronomer and mathematician Christiaan Huygens was tasked with assembling a gift for the queen of Poland, Maria Louisa de Gonzaga while in Paris. Huygens wrote to his brother in The Hague with instructions to source a case of tea service items. He noted that while such objects were commonplace in copper in the Dutch Republic, one needed special connections with the VOC to obtain more luxurious tea service items in silver and gold. From this statement, it is implicit that such objects were known and available, if one had the right connections. He advised contacting the former VOC chief merchant Francois Caron, who would know the best way to import such objects.[68] Like Asian ceramics in the early seventeenth century, in the late seventeenth century, direct personal or commercial relationships with agents in European trading companies to Asia could provide access to unusual luxuries, such as Chinese gold and silverwares.

Though few, Asian silver vessels related to tea are also recorded in British records and collections. In 1684, Solomon de Medina (c. 1650-1730) sold an object described as a "Sillver Indian Tey pott" to Lady Elizabeth Percy (1667-1722), subsequently the Duchess of Somerset, along with six (likely ceramic) "Choccolleta cups."[69] De Medina was a Jewish merchant, who in 1688 accompanied William of Orange to England as an army contractor and financier. He likely

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[64] Journals of Robert Parker, volume 2, folio 15; E 140/9/4, National Archives.
[65] "Wine Pot and Cover," *Royal Collections Trust online,* accessed 5 July 2023 < https://www.rct.uk/collection/1182/wine-pot-and-cover>.
[66] Volker, 167.
[67] "Account of goods East India Company sold in September, 1704 sale," IOR/H/11, British Library
[68] *Asia in Amsterdam: The Culture of Luxury in the Golden Age,* eds. Karina Corrigan, Jan van Campen, and Femke Diercks (New Haven: Yale UnIversity Press, 2015), 330-31.
[69] While he charged her fifteen pounds for the teapot, the chocolate cups were priced at ten shillings, and thus were most likely ceramic. Duchess of Somerset, Bills Paid, 1684/5, Petworth House Archives 262, folio 6. Thanks to James Rothwell for sharing this source with me.

sourced the object through the type of desirable VOC connections mentioned by Huygens, either in The Hague or Amsterdam. It was not unusual for Asian luxuries to arrive in England via Holland in the 1680s. For example, a Chinese brown-glazed jar with white engobe decorations first appeared in a 1688 inventory of Burghley House in Lincolnshire, but it had previously been mounted with a handle, spout, and finial by Dutch goldsmiths in Amsterdam (fig. 7.11).[70] In other words, the ceramic jar was transformed into a teapot in Holland before it was acquired by John Cecil, 5th earl of Exeter (c.1648-1700) for the collections at Burghley House. Elizabeth Percy acquired several more "Indian" tea pots, as in April 1688, English goldsmith Richard Hoare charged her for the gilding of a total of three of them.[71] It is unknown what these objects looked like; while Elizabeth Percy's teapots weigh, on average, a little over 589 grams, the PEM ewer weighs 871.1 grams, and thus perhaps they were more analogous to the smaller "three friends" vessels such as the Versailles ewer. That they were distinguished as "Indian" teapots indicates that they were, however, Chinese objects.

That said, the vessels were not the only silver objects marked as "Asian" to appear in the Duchess' accounts with Hoare. She also commissioned him to supply her with a "pair of Japan candlesticks" and a "Japan porringer and cover" in 1680, as well as a "Japan cup and cover" in 1682.[72] Unlike other early modern European inventories in which terms for Asian and Asian-inspired objects were indiscriminately interchangeable, the distinction between "Indian" and "Japan" is meaningful in Hoare's receipts when compared with his other accounts. "Japan work" was a specific type of English "fashion" or decoration, in this case a flat-chased chinoiserie surface ornamentation, that was briefly in vogue from about 1675 to 1690. It was applied by English chasers to gold and silverwares such as monteiths, two-handled cups, toilet or dressing services, and plates, and recorded as "Japan work" in goldsmiths' accounts.[73] Designs include "exotic" robed figures, birds, flowers and plants, and architectural ruins, and are drawn from a variety of Asian and European sources. David Mitchell has shown that Richard Hoare frequently commissioned the outworker goldsmith-chaser Andrew Raven to "japan" pieces of plate. Imported Chinese silverwares thus circulated in the same networks of goldsmiths and patrons as English chinoiserie designs, as I will explore further later in the chapter.

Lady Elizabeth Stanhope (1663-1723) also acquired a silver Chinese vessel with panels of relief decoration, which is presently in the Royal Collection Trust (fig. 3.9). While it is currently described at a coffee pot, it is possible that like the Burghley teapot, the object was imported as a lidded jar and later converted into a pouring vessel; a lack of accommodation of the relief ornament for the attachments of the foot, spout, and handle suggest that they were not part of the object's original design. The pot is engraved on the shoulder, "Lady Eliz.h Stanhope Countess of Strathmore."[74] Elizabeth Stanhope was styled as the Countess of Strathmore and

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[70] "The Burghley Teapot," *National Trust Collections online,* accessed 5 July 2023 < https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/513426>.

[71] Specifically the charges were dated April 3, 1688, "ffor guilding an Indian Teapot wtt. ob. 18 oz [589.41 g]"; and April 7, 1688, "ffor guilding two Indian teapots wtt. 38 oz, 10 dwt [1197.48 g; average 589.74 g]." PHA 265, 1688, 8, Richard Hoare, 3/4/1688 to 28/1/88/9, receipted 5/2/1688/9. West Sussex Record Office. Thanks to James Rothwell for generously sharing this source with me.

[72] PHA 259 1680/1, folio 57; PHA 264 - 1686/7, folio 20.

[73] David Mitchell, *Silversmiths in Elizabethan and Stuart London: Their Lives and Marks* (London: The Boydell Press for the Goldsmiths 'Company, 2017), 75-6.

[74] John Ayers, *Chinese and Japanese Works of Art in the Collection of Her Majesty The Queen,* vol. 1 (London: Royal Collection Trust, 2016), 932.

Kinghorne in 1695, and died in 1723; it is during this period that the inscription was added to the vessel, though she may have purchased or received it earlier.[75] Thus, while Elizabeth Percy acquired her likely-Chinese silver vessels in the 1680s, and thus in the same set of years when the PEM ewer was hallmarked for sale in London, Elizabeth Stanhope may have acquired her Chinese vessel in the following several decades. The two cases, however, demonstrate that Chinese silver objects were desired and consumed by elite English patrons, even if they understood them as "Indian." Notably, all of the cases from both the Dutch and English contexts were women, the implications of which are yet to be explored. While the numbers were relatively few, from this set of examples it is clear that Chinese silverwares were brought to Europe and sold for the purpose of tea preparation, within a larger influx of Asian ceramic tea wares.

Global Imaginaries: English Goldsmiths Respond to Imported Chinese Metalwares

The history of the English silver teapot has been told as one of cross-medial reinvention, but a new picture emerges if the presence of not just the PEM ewer, but a range of imported Chinese metalwares are taken into account.[76] I approach this question from two angles. First, I examine a teapot currently in the Burghley collection that was made by the French Huguenot immigrant goldsmith Pierre Harache (1639-1712), which appears to reference the PEM ewer or a similar object as a primary design source (fig. 7.12). Harache did not copy the PEM ewer directly, but rather reworked several aspects of its form and ornament in order to create a global imaginary for an elite English patron. Second, the English goldsmith who hallmarked the PEM ewer in 1682/3 also hallmarked two monteiths which were decorated with the "Japan work" flat-chasing mentioned above. Given that goldsmiths such as Richard Hoare had access to imported Chinese silverwares among other objects, an overlooked design source for the English form of decoration could have been Chinese tutenague or pewter wares, which were similarly ornamented with designs using the specific technique of flat-chasing. Both examples create imaginaries that conflate, to different degrees, Europe, Asia, and the Americas, in an era of encounter, trade, and colonialism. More research is needed into what purposes these specific "global" visions served for the elite consumers of these English silverwares, and how they differed from the transpacific cosmopolitanism created in Siam through the packaging of the Versailles ewer. I sketch them out here in order to show how designs from imported Chinese metalwares were selectively activated and reproduced by European goldsmiths in England. Foremost, the arrival of the PEM ewer and other Chinese silverwares shows that English goldsmiths were producing silver teapots within a larger constellation of objects than previously understood.

French Huguenot goldsmith Harache emigrated to London in 1681 and became the first foreign goldsmith to be admitted to the Goldsmiths' Company in 1682, despite the outcry from English goldsmiths against "strangers" being admitted to their guild. Huguenot goldsmiths were

[75] The spout of the vessel is engraved with an earl's coronet on top of the crest of the coat of arms of the Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne—interestingly, a depiction of a woman— "Between two Slips of Laurel a Demi Lady to the girdle habited and holding in her right hand a Thistle all prope."

[76] An important exception to the scholarship outlined in the introduction, Philippa Glanville laid out the case for Chinese silverwares imported to Europe prior to 1700, even without the now-known cases of the PEM ewer and the Versailles ewer. Her primary evidence was the impact of (absent) Chinese gold and silverware design on European metalwork. See "Chinese Influence on English Silver, 1550-1720," in *London International Jewellery and Silver Fair catalogue,* (1987), 15-22.

viewed as more skilled than English goldsmiths due to their exposure to Continental techniques and designs, and differences in their apprenticeship system. Pressure to admit goldsmiths like Harache to the guild thus came from elite buyers, who sought to patronize them.

The Harache teapot is evidence of one such unusual commission. Much like the explanation for the emergence of the PEM, silver scholars to date have written that the Harache teapot was made following the pattern of faceted Dehua wine pots with inset reserves.[77] Yet there are design congruences between the PEM ewer and the Harache teapot, which suggest instead that the latter makes reference to the former, as well as other imported Chinese silverwares. Foremost, like the PEM ewer, the Harache teapot is hexagonal with rounded panels. Cast relief designs are inset in reserves, which take up the majority of space of the panels. Unlike the PEM ewer, the shiny borders that create the six corners are engaged; the panels are not physically soldered and inset into the frames. Harache seemed to take Chinese silverwares like the Versailles ewer as a source for the forms of the spout and handle, as the spout appears to reference bamboo or bamboo root, and the so-called "crabstock" handle is a set of knotted branches or tree trunks. Cast flower blossoms serve as attachments for the arms of the handles to a piece of turned wood, which would have insulated the user against the heat from the contents of the teapot. The stepped hexagonal lid with matted inset reserves is also similar to the form of the PEM teapot, as is the hexagonal pulled wire foot. The ornament on the lid is a direct reference to the type of relief designs against a matted ground described in the third chapter, with each of the six heart-shaped reserves containing interpretations of Chinese decorative motifs from the natural world, including cranes, bamboo, and lotus (fig. 7.13). Thus, the teapot was made with clear reference to Chinese silverworking forms and techniques.

While Harache did not attempt to replicate the iconography of the hexagonal surfaces of the PEM teapot, he drew from alternative "Indian" visual sources. The content of the ornamental reserves is a strange mix of Europeans on horseback, and European views of Indigenous Americans engaging in different activities. Figures and landscapes are depicted in relief against a matted ground, which perhaps also was a nod to Chinese relief ornament techniques. Europeans and Americans are distinguished by their dress; the Americans recall Theodor de Bry's images published as the *Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies,* as well as Dutch images of Tupinambá and other peoples of the Amazon Basin, as they wear feather headdresses and skirts.[78] They are surrounded by tropical plants, such as palm trees with scaly trunks (fig. 7.14). Such images appeared in European prints, painting, as well as objects such as carved coconut cups.[79] It is more likely that the people depicted on the Harache teapot were meant to represent a generalized notion of Americans, rather than people and landscape from a specific region.

Unlike related European colonial imagery in which Europeans are depicted as superior and Americans are pictured as cannibalistic savages, Harache's scenes are ambiguous in their blending of European and "Indian" references. On one panel, a figure in European dress on horseback is accompanied by a dog, but holds aloft a hunting spear, which would seem to draw from European depictions of indigenous American hunting and warfare. On another panel, two figures—coded as Indigenous due to their feather skirts—ride horseback but seem to have adopted European riding tack. One Indigenous figure is shown aiming a bow and arrow, and he

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[77] Glanville, "Chinese Influence on English Silver," 22.

[78] Michiel van Groesen, "The de Bry Collection of Voyages (1590–1634): Early America reconsidered," *Journal of Early Modern History* 12 (2008): 1–24

[79] Virginie Spenlé, "'Savagery' and 'Civilization': Dutch Brazil in the Kunst- and Wunderkammer," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 3.2 (Summer 2011): 2-3.

is accompanied by an English hunting dog. Both of the two panels featuring European figures shows them confronting, in the adjacent panel in the direct they are facing, a responding American on foot. The scenes appear to be confrontational, as each American figure is about to launch an arrow, and in one, the European figure holds a spear. Yet in the other, the European figure is unarmed. Interspersed among these scenes of hunting or fighting, the remaining two scenes are peaceful depiction of pairs of Indigenous figures; one is possibly a pair of women, due to the suggestion of breasts on the bare chest of one figure, the other is the pair of men on horseback. While they are stereotyped depictions and seem to lodge Europeans against Indigenous figures in frozen conflict, it is unclear from the scenes which party is given the upper hand. Rather, it appears that hunting for pleasure and for sustenance has become a point of affinity between the figures, however uneasy.

More research has yet to be done to interpret the iconography of the scenes, but if Harache indeed had the PEM ewer at hand for reference, it is possible that he was inspired by the repeated scenes of a scholar on horseback, accompanied by a servant on foot, as three out of the six panels show figures riding horses. Further, if both the PEM ewer and the Harache teapot are viewed in profile facing left, they each feature a figure on horseback immersed in a landscape, also in profile facing left, on their central panel. Stripped of its scholarly valence in a European context, a depiction of an equestrian figure nonetheless carried associations with chivalry and masculine virtue.[80] Perhaps Harache responded to this set of cues as the impetus for English-style riding and hunting in his recreation of an "Indian" teapot.

Insofar as it served as a model for new designs by goldsmiths in England, the PEM ewer was one of many imported Asian metalwares, as the Harache teapot's expansive set of design references connected to Chinese silverworking demonstrate. To date, the PEM ewer is the only known Chinese silverware marked by the goldsmith who used the initial mark "IA" conjoined, recently identified by David Mitchell as likely the plateworker John Austen. However, Austen also marked two silver monteiths which were ornamented with the type of "japan work" flat-chased chinoiserie designs, and hallmarked in the late 1680s (figs. 7.15, 16). Such designs were mentioned above in connection with the wares purchased from the goldsmith-retailer Richard Hoare by Elizabeth Percy. The designs include "exotic" robed figures, birds, flowers and plants, and architectural ruins. Before it was identified with the period term "japan work," the ornament has been described as a flat-chased chinoiserie pattern briefly in vogue from about 1675 to 1690.[81] The first article to discuss the designs by Charles Dauterman was indicatively entitled "Dream-Pictures of Cathay."[82] Dauterman's title referred to Hugh Honour's classic study *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay*—referenced above--and oriented the objects within Honour's understanding of chinoiserie as image: an "idealized vision of the Chinese empire….an autonomous style which, in its turn, modified the European picture of the Orient."[83] As viewed

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[80] See for example Anthony van Dyck's "Charles I (1600-49) with M. de St. Antoine," *Royal Collections Trust online,* accessed 5 July 2023 < https://www.rct.uk/collection/405322/charles-i-1600-1649-with-m-de-st-antoine>.

[81] See Carl Dauterman, "Dream-Pictures of Cathay: Chinoiserie on Restoration Silver," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 23:1 (Summer, 1964): 11-25; Tessa Murdoch, "A silver-gilt cup commemorating the coronation of James II and the culture of gifts and prerequisites in Stuart and Hanoverian coronations," *V&A Online Journal* 2 (Autumn, 2009) <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/research-journal/issue-02/a-silver-gilt-cup-commemorating-the-coronation-of-james-ii/>.

[82] Dauterman, 13.

[83] Honour, 234.

on the monteith presently at Erddig, in Wrexham, Wales, figural designs appear—at first glance—as simple line drawings contrasted against a reflective ground. Each panel is dominated by a central figure wearing what appears to be sumptuous and strange dress, including elaborate hats and draping sleeves. Many of the figures straddle a deep rocky rift in the ground, and many are surrounded by oversized exotic plants and bulbous clouds. Viewed closely on a panel from the monteith now at Erddig, the outlined, textural designs are rendered using struck punches (fig. 7.17). Forms that appear as solid lines from a distance are constructed from a sequence of jabbed impressions when viewed closely. In other words, the surfaces were chased using chisels and punches, and would have required a specialized skill set distinct from engraving, or carving away the surface with a pointed blade. The lines emphasize the lustrousness of the smooth surface but are also textural in their application.

Silver scholars have not identified any original patterns for the designs. They surmise that they were a produced from a blend of imagery from European illustrated books on Asia and the Americas, decorations on imported Asian objects such as lacquer and porcelain, and other "exotic" design sources—like other types of European "japanned" objects of the period, such as tapestries and furniture. They agree that the scenes are fantastic combinations that freely borrowed from Turkish, Indian, European, and East Asian precedents.[84] Scholars have conjectured whether all of the chinoiserie flat-chasing was done by a single goldsmith, a workshop, or by multiple workshops. One such goldsmith was certainly the chaser Andrew Raven, who has been linked to Hoare as a subcontractor through his surviving accounts and was tasked with adding "Japan work" to different vessels. Austen also appears as a subcontractor in Hoare's accounts; in 1685, for example, Hoare delivered a teapot to Austen to alter, and in 1686 he delivered various silverwares to Austen, including a coffeepot and a chocolate pot as patterns for new objects.[85] It is thus possible that Austen made the monteith, and then sent it to Raven for chasing, either via or outside of Hoare's commissioning network. Yet scholars have not asked why the unusual and specialized technique of flat-chasing was used to create the flat, outlined, and textured surfaces. The question of why these specific designs were linked with the technique of struck punches is not answered by the conjectural set of sources, such as porcelain and textiles.

The specific network of English goldsmiths that had access to objects like the PEM ewer also had access to high-quality Chinese metalwares, and specifically ornamented canisters used for importing tea. Chinese pewter smiths produced tablewares, wine vessels, candle stands, and ritual objects, but famous late-Ming pewter artisans were most well-known for their teapots and tea caddies.[86] Such objects were a likely source for the specific surface-chasing technique used to create the effects of English "Japan work," as designs were often chased onto their relatively soft surfaces. Tea was imported in such sealed base-metal canisters in order to prevent the tea from exposure to air, odors or moisture, and according to a late seventeenth century source, were tin alloys that were identified variously as tutenage (paktong), pewter, and tin.[87] Robert Parker, the EIC agent at Banten mentioned above, imported seventeen "tutenagg pots," in addition to tea, in 1679.[88] Almost a century later, in his visit to the shops of Canton in 1751, Pehr Osbeck described

[84] Glanville, *Silver in England,* 234.
[85] Goldsmith's workbook, 1684-7, HB/1/1, folio 2a, folio 52a, Hoare's Bank archives.
[86] Yijun Wang, "From Time to Pewter: Craft and Statecraft in China, 1700-1844," (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2019), 149-50.
[87] J. Ovington, *An essay upon the nature and qualities of tea* (London: R. Roberts, 1699), 18.
[88] Journals of Robert Parker, volume 2, folio 27; E 140/9/4, National Archives.

a variety of sundry wares, including "tea-boxes made of tutanego, or of copper, with a porcellane enamel" sold among objects such as ribbons, mother-of-pearl snuff boxes, fans, coarse porcelain, and silk.[89] By widening the aperture of types of Asian objects imported to Europe in the late-seventeenth century, we can accordingly expand the visual references that European craftsmen encountered and emulated.

More research has yet to be done to connect any extant ornamented tutenage, pewter, or tin canister to an English collection in the late-seventeenth century; in the meantime extant Chinese objects can be used for visual comparison. A Chinese pewter octagonal vessel decorated with inlaid brass figural scenes can be dated to 1578 due to an inlaid inscription, demonstrating that such wares were produced for Chinese domestic consumption (fig. 7.18). A related object, an octagonal lidded pewter vessel with brass inlaid decoration and flat-chasing at the Field Museum, likely dated to the eighteenth century, provides more evidence of the types of techniques used by premodern Chinese pewter workers (fig. 7.19). The large canister or vase is ornamented with two registers of figural decoration, each in a foliated frame created by brass inlay. While the top register contains complex multi-figure scenes, the bottom register each contains a single figure (fig. 7.20). A close look at the surface reveals it was flat-chased over the applied copper, with a stippled line composing the figure swathed in draping garments. English "japan work" chasers undoubtedly drew on a range of sources for their designs, but likely turned to the surfaces of imported Chinese metalwares similar to this vessel as inspiration for the technique used. Intriguingly, the figures chosen by the English goldsmith-chaser for their depictions of strange and fanciful "others" were themselves meant to convey foreignness from a Han Chinese perspective. The figures in this second register of Field Museum vessel are depictions of foreign envoys, a common type of auspicious decorative ornament. A future article will further argue that "japan work" not only used pewter surfaces as a source for technique, but also as design sources for figures as well as composition.

Conclusion

Current conversations about "global art history" have acknowledged how Eurocentrism, empire and coloniality have shaped the field in its present guise and practice.[90] Yet paradoxically, the same conversations often refuse to acknowledge premodern, non-Western forms of art-historical writing, or acknowledge them only tentatively, presumably due to lingering scholarly biases around claiming connoisseurship as the root of the discipline. Despite the silver *chahu* appearing in early modern Chinese inscriptions and inventories, historians of consumption have claimed that it was seventeenth-century English goldsmiths who "invented" the silver teapot by copying imported Asian ceramics, foreclosing its Chinese history and transmission. At the point when it became a desirable form in Britain, the Chinese silver teapot had fallen out of fashion and been declared outmoded within Chinese connoisseurial canons.

Ming-Qing Chinese art-historical canons have had a direct impact on Euro-American canons of Chinese art in the fields where objects were recognized as such; for example, nineteenth-century Euro-American collectors and connoisseurs studiously replicated classifications and hierarchies established in Chinese scholarly writing on porcelain in early

[89] Osbeck, 220.

[90] See for example, Zainab Bahrani's response in "A Questionnaire on Global Methods," *October* 180 (Spr., 2022): 4-7.

scholarly studies.[91] By dispensing with a notion of what qualifies as "art" as limited to forms such as painting, sculpture, and architecture, and what serves as "art history" beyond the search for beauty, truth, and universality in the visual realm, premodern and indigenous art-historical practices can disrupt the primacy of Euro-American writing and concerns in the historiography of art. In doing so, the latter is also revealed as in part, shaped by systems of value from outside Europe. In certain fields, art history was always "global" in two senses — first, it took place completely divorced from Euro-American contexts, and second, European art history was impacted, if not driven, by historical developments and historicization from outside Europe. Thus, while the history of the silver teapot was transformed in nineteenth and twentieth-century England to reflect colonial understandings of global difference, the dynamic and often negated position of silver in late-Ming connoisseurial and art-historical texts was a determinative factor in how specific art-historical teapot canons were transmitted globally, as elucidated in chapter two.

Most of this dissertation has focused on the processes by which the material agency of silver and craft knowledge of southern Chinese silversmiths shaped the production of objects that were viable for transcultural circulation in the Qing period. This chapter focused on an object that through its reproduction, was claimed and cemented as an English object, even as it was specifically chosen for reproduction because of its Chinese appearance. At the same time, it was given a history of reproduction, as a copy of a lost Chinese ceramic object, a story which erased its Chinese makers. By reinstating the PEM ewer as a Chinese object into British art history of the late seventeenth century, I have demonstrated the impact of southern Chinese metalworkers on English goldsmithing design and technique within a larger field of imported metalwares. Far from absent, as literature to date has suggested, Chinese metal artisans are made present through the effects of their craft manufactures. The mark shared by an imported Chinese silver ewer and English silverwares that became surfaces for Chinese-inspired designs reveals the long-distance yet closely-enmeshed networks of Chinese and English metalworkers. It also demonstrates that Chinese metalsmiths were agentive sources of designs and objects in the global early modern world.

[91] Ellen C. Huang, "From the Imperial Court to the International Art Market: Jingdezhen Porcelain Production as Global Visual Culture," *Journal of World History* 23:1 (Mar. 2012): 137-8.

Ch. 7. Inventing the British Silver Teapot
Figures

Fig. 7.1. William Eley I, teapot, 1814/15. Silver, 12.7 x 10.8 x 19.9 cm. MFA Boston

Fig. 7.2. Detail of Fig. 7.1

Fig. 7.3. Nicolas de Blégny, “Pots à preparer le Thé,” in *Le bon usage du thé, du Caffé, et du chocolat* [Good uses of tea, coffee, and chocolate], 1687

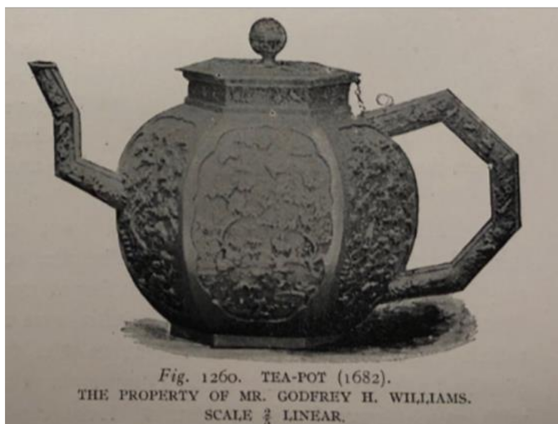

Fig. 7.4. Charles James Jackson, *Illustrated History of English Plate,* vol. 2 (1911), 945, fig. 1260

Fig. 7.5. “Berkeley” teapot, marked “TL”, 1670/1. Silver with leather handle, Victoria and Albert Museum, M.399-1921

FIG. 2. MADE IN LONDON, 1682-83, IN A SHAPE COPIED FROM A CHINESE PORCELAIN ORIGINAL: A SIX-SIDED TEAPOT WITH SHAPED PANELS.
The shape of this elaborate teapot was copied from a Chinese porcelain original. Each panel is adorned with gay little landscapes, birds, flowers, foliage, bridges and people.

Fig. 7.6. PEM ewer, illustrated in Frank Davis, A Page for Collectors. Two Centuries of Silver Teapots,” *The Illustrated London News,* May 12, 1951, 774, fig. 2.

Fig. 7.7. Silver-gilt six-lobed ewer, late 17th or 18th century. Unmarked, attr. to southern Chinese silversmiths. 6 ¾” (17.1 cm) high, 789 g (25 troy oz). Former Bell collection (Dukes of Buccleuch by tradition). Private collection

FIG. I. ORIGINALLY AT ROSENEATH CASTLE: A GEORGE II. TEAPOT BEARING THE ARMS OF THE DUKE OF ARGYLL, BY PAUL DE LAMERIE, LONDON, 1746.
This small, bullet-shaped teapot, bearing the arms of the Duke of Argyll, is reputed to have been presented to him by George II. for his part in quelling the Jacobite rising. It is, in common with the other teapots illustrated, on view at the exhibition of Silver Teapots from the collection of Mr. W. S. Bell, of Aberdeen, at the Tea Bureau, Regent Street.

Fig. 7.8. “Classic type of Georgian teapot,” in Davis, “A Page for Collectors,” fig. 1

Fig. 7.9. Porcelain teapot with underglaze blue, from the Hatcher cargo [Chinese junk presumed to sink en route to Batavia for Dutch market], made Jingdezhen, China, c. 1643 Private collection

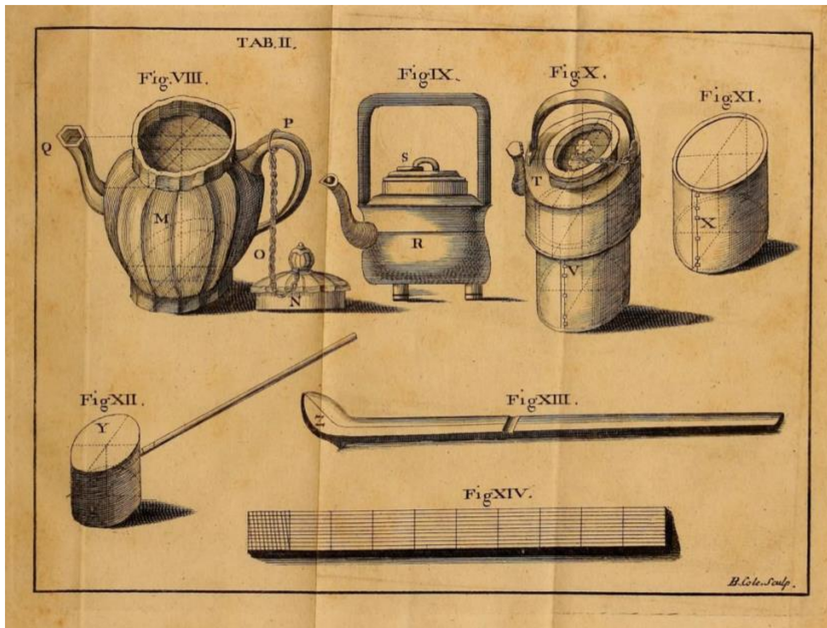

Fig. 7.10. Simon Paulli, Commentarius De Abusu Tabaci Americanorum Veteri, Et Herbæ Thee Asiaticorum in Europe Novo (1665), table II

Fig. 7.11. Burghley teapot, porcelain jar with brown glaze and white engobe decorations, c. 1600-40, mounted by Dutch goldsmiths in Amsterdam, c. 1660-88. 218 x 192 x 135 mm. Anglesey Abbey, National Collections Trust NT 513426

Fig. 7.12. Pierre Harache, silver-gilt hexagonal teapot, hallmarked London, 1695. 29 cm high, 17.5 cm diameter. Burghley House

Fig. 7.13. Detail of lid.

Fig. 7.14. Detail of side panel.

Fig. 7.15. Monteith, marked “IA”-conjoined likely for John Austin, made London, 1689. National Trust, Erddig, Wrexham, 1151486

Fig. 7.16. Monteith, marked “IA”-conjoined likely for John Austin, made London, 1687/8. MFA Boston, 2018.114

Fig. 7.17. Detail of Fig. 15

Fig. 7.18. Yan Tong and Zhao Zibao, octagonal pewter vase with lid and copper alloy inlay (or applications?), 1578. Height: 39.1 cm. Sold Sotheby’s, 2020

Fig. 7.19. Tea caddy with octagonal body and single-walled lid. Pewter with copper alloy surface applications, likely 18th century. Height: 45 cm. Field Museum, 110008

Fig. 7.20. Detail of Fig. 7.19

Coda: Silver After the Opium War

While the final section related the erasures and reclaiming of Qing Chinese silver in late-nineteenth and twentieth-century Britain, the activities of the silver trade in China during that period is much more complex. It is a story that deserves its own study from an art historical and cultural history perspective.[1] In the century following the first Sino-British Opium War (1839-42), the trajectory of the southern silverworking industry experienced a precipitous rise and fall. Silver heirlooms held in private collections were liquidated through melting and sale. They were also plundered from the imperial collections in the tumultuous nineteenth century.[2] As Osmond Tiffany, Jr. wrote of the period immediately following the First Sino-British Opium War,

> … after the war, articles of virtu, such as had never before been seen in Canton, and which were probably plundered from ruined families, were exposed for sale in that city.[3]

While the fugitive qualities of the material as craft led to its dispersal, they were also produced in exceptional quantities for both domestic and foreign consumption. By the late-nineteenth century, highly-skilled metalworking trades based in the coastal regions of Guangzhou, Fujian, and Zhejiang built major retail industries in "treaty port" cities throughout China, run by native-place merchants 'guilds (*shangbang* 商帮). They catered to both Chinese and expatriate communities. Southern silversmiths developed a type of desirable all-over embossed relief ornament, composed of figural theatrical scenes and battles, exemplified by a lidded soup tureen marked by the Cantonese retailer Hoaching (fig. C.1). Entrepreneurial silversmiths and retailers created the designs in a context of conflict and violence, stemming from both foreign invasion and domestic uprising. It was also a context in which foreign governments extracted massive indemnity payments from the Chinese government in the form of silver.

It is hard to believe that the designs were not developed, at least initially, as a commentary on foreign invasion. While like English "japan work" silverwares, the sources for the designs are unknown, it is suspected they were drawn from illustrated books of theatrical dramas and legendary histories of war, such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義). Anne E. McLaren has written that the history of the Three Kingdoms period was revisited throughout Chinese history at points of civil war and political fragmentation.[4] Yet if

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[1] For a business history of the silversmithing trade in the nineteenth-century, see Xie Junmei 谢俊美 and Xie Jianxiao 谢建骁, *Shanghai yinlou jianshi* 上海银楼简史 [Brief history of Shanghai silverware retail shops] (Shanghai: Shanghai remin chubanshe, 2008).

[2] For a study of the "social life" of an imperial gold ewer looted from the Yuanmingyuan during the Second Opium War, see Kevin McLoughlin, "'Rose-water Upon His Delicate Hands': Imperial and Imperialist Readings of the Hope Grant Ewer," in *Collecting and Displaying China's "Summer Palace" in the West: The Yuanmingyuan in Britain and France,* ed. Louise Tythacott (New York: Routledge, 2017), 99-119.

[3] *The Canton Chinese, or the American's Sojourn in the Celestial Empire* (Boston and Cambridge: Monroe & Co.: 1849)*,* 91.

[4] *Sanguo yanyi* was written by Luo Guanzhong in the late Yuan and Early Ming period. The work was a new type of historical fiction that served as part history, part entertainment, and part myth. It told the story of feudal lords, their generals and ministers, who fought to wrest power from the declining Han dynasty. There are hundreds of characters and countless battle scenes, but the epic primarily follows the struggles of the leaders that formed the states of Wei, Shu, and Wu. See McLaren, "History Repackaged

they were commentaries on foreign violence, they were also lucrative semi-luxury goods that appealed to foreign taste. While negotiating the Treaty of Whampoa with the Qing government in 1844, French diplomat M. Charles-Hubert Lavollée encountered what he described as“ real artists” in a silversmith’s shop in Guangzhou, where “the workmen are skilled in the art of carving on metals.” By contrast, he wrote “There is no art” in the nearby workshop of trade painter Lam Qua, where twenty young assistants completed paintings through a rote division of labor. He goes on to write that the silverware forms, modeled on European vessels such as teapots, sugar bowls and tankards, “have a remarkable originality of design,” and the hammered and chased Chinese figural scenes that decorate them “are perfectly rendered.”[5] An upcoming article will consider these objects within a Sino-British visual culture of violence and material history of extraction.[6]

Despite this set of unstable conditions, silverware handicraft production flourished in many cities throughout China.[7] Foreign observers remarked upon the consumption of silver among all Chinese social classes, as money, utensils, ritual objects, and jewelry. As American consul to Amoy (Xiamen) Edward Bedloe wrote:

> Silver is to the Orient what gold is to the west. To the artist, the artisan, the scholar and the collector, it is the king of all the precious metals…. Silver jewelry and curios… are universal. The poorest coolie’s wife has usually an argent bracelet and earrings.[8]

The British photographer John Thomson recorded such women, albeit as ethnographic types instead of as individuals (fig. C.2). An old woman’s head in profile, her chin perched on her thin, worn fist: she appeared as an illustration of one of four “heads, types of the laboring class,” in a plate from his four-volume *Illustrations of China and its people* (1874). Thomson’s text described her life as “a uniform scene of hardships and toil.” Yet her careful presentation emphasized not just her age and labor, but also her meticulous personal adornment. Her hair is held up in elaborate folds and twists, and suspended from her ear, a heavy silver earring hung with a jade ring. Appearing below her, another “head” represented an “unmarried woman” with downcast eyes, her hair covered with a cloth. Thomson noted that hidden beneath, her hair is combed back, plaited, coiled, and then “fastened with a silver pin.”[9] The women’s silver jewelry recalls the passage about Dai Jin written by Mao Xianshu in the late seventeenth century discussed in the first chapter, a commentary which negatively associated a taste for silver with women and children. The juxtaposition of the passage with Thomson’s dignified, if typological, photograph makes yet another case to reexamine literati judgements on silver in a new light. As I

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in the Age of Print: The ‘Sanguozhi’ and ‘Sanguo yanyi,’” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 69:2 (2006): 293-6.

[5] *Voyage en Chine* (Paris: Imprimerie de Pommeret et Moreau, 1852), 363-4.

[6] Susan Eberhard, “Art and Extraction: The Conflicted Substance of Silver in the Opium War Era,” *Visual and Material Culture in China, 1796-1912*, British Museum, June 9, 2023, forthcoming conference proceedings.

[7] See Chen Zhigao 陈志高. *Zhongguo yinlou yu yinqi* 中国银楼与银器 [Chinese jewelers’ shops and silverwares], 5 vols. Beijing: Tsinghua University Publishing, 2015 for a detailed account of silver retail shops in different regions.

[8] “Chinese Silverwork,” *The Collector* 3:20 (Oct. 15, 1892): 317.

[9] John Thomson, *Illustrations of China and Its People. A series of two hundred photographs, with letterpress descriptive of the places and people represented,* vol. 1 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1874), unpaginated.

have argued throughout this dissertation, by allowing an elite minority to control the narrative on silver production and consumption, we erase subjects otherwise made uniquely visible through the objects they made, used, or wore. In that vein, this dissertation has demonstrated that by centering a previously-overlooked, and even erased, form of handicraft, historical connections between coastal craftsmen and their Chinese and transpacific consumers emerge in a new light.

In the later nineteenth century, Guangzhou silver retailers and craftsmen such as Lee Ching 利升 set up branches in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and other port cities where they dominated the industry of "western-style" (*yangzhuang* 洋装) silver tablewares and jewelry. In 1868, a European visitor recorded an account of a visit to the Lee Ching shop in British colonial Hong Kong, a shop also photographed by John Thomson the same year (fig. C.3). In comparison to the painter's shop at left, where painters can be seen at work in the upper story, the Lee Ching shop is shuttered. Glass windows at the ground floor served as security against theft by a long bamboo hook. The chronicler described the "carved work" of the Chinese silversmith as "Admirable and spirited," before writing, "their historical bas-reliefs are really strikingly good."[10] He compared the work to English and French silver, and laments that often when it is imported into England, it incurs an enormous duty payment, or is smashed by the Customs House. "If the Chinese can beat [the British silver retailers] Mssrs. Hunt and Roskell in a fair field… why not let him do so?" he asked.[11] In an increasing climate of international competition through manufactures, Chinese silverwares were viewed as a threat, especially as European and American silver manufacturers were increasingly drawing on the Asian ornament and techniques popular among Victorian-era consumers.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Chinese silverwares market was both self-sufficient and continually producing for foreign consumers. In 1902, an American consular report assessing the market for importing silverwares and plated wares of American manufacture to China, found both domestic and expatriate needs fully met by Chinese production. While the Chinese did not use objects made in Western shapes, the American vice-consul of Guangzhou reported that "Native silver vessels, which are made in a great variety of shapes and designs, are extensively used." As to the the foreign market, he noted

> There is quite a trade in Chinese silverware made for the foreign trade, which is in great demand by tourists and foreign residents. Old Chinese silver is heavy and handsome, but most of the articles turned out for the European trade contain a large percentage of copper, which gives it a tinnish appearance…. The shapes are taken chiefly from European models, ornamented with flowers, bamboo, or dragon designs. The principal articles are tea sets, toilet articles, bowls, finger bowls, trays, picture frames, cups and mugs, napkin rings, belts and belt buckles, umbrella handles, bracelets, hat pins, scarf pins, and curios.[12]

From the late-Qing into the early Republican period (1911-49), the robust productivity and visibility of the Chinese silversmithing trade, producing for both domestic and foreign markets contradicts the art-historical and commonplace understanding that instead imagines a void or absence.

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[10] "Sketches in China by Our Own European: Going Round the China Shops II," *The China Magazine,* vol. 5 (Hong Kong: China Magazine Office, 1869), 89.

[11] Ibid.

[12] M.M. Langhorne, "Canton," in *Special Consular Reports. Silver and Plated Ware in Foreign Countries.* Vol. XXIII -- Part II. Reports from the Consuls of the United States in Answer to Instructions from the Department of State. Issued from the Bureau of Foreign Commerce, Department of State. Vol. 57th Congress, no. 708, pt. 2. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1902), 349.

Many factors already discussed in this dissertation contributed to the erasure of southern Chinese silversmithing from multiple perspectives. The final two decisive factors were the Nationalist government's efforts at economic modernization in the 1930s, and the sequential upheavals of the mid-twentieth century. The Nationalist government decimated the silversmithing trade when it nationalized silver in the 1930s, with the aim of shifting the economy from the use of commodity silver as the primary medium of exchange. The government banned its use in commerce and started issuing bank notes as compulsory legal tender.[13] These changes along with a silver-buying program in the United States led to severe deflation, coupled with the rapid flight of silver abroad—a reversal of the arbitrage patterns of the preceding centuries in which silver was observed to "flow" into China. The Finance Ministry regulated silver's use for utensils and jewelry. The silver supply was managed by the Central Bank, and silversmiths were required to heavily adulterate the alloy of their wares to 30% silver, which decreased their quality.[14] Ingot smelters were put out of business altogether.[15] The Shanghai Silversmiths' Association sent delegates to protest the measures in Nanjing, viewing the measure as an existential threat to their business.[16] Economic modernization efforts were soon followed by the Second Sino-Japanese war, the Maoist period and the Cultural Revolution, all of which created perilous conditions for the luxury trades and their products.

I argued in this dissertation that local and global forces shaped the art history of Qing Chinese silverwares produced outside of the court. Similar forces were at work in the fate of the silversmiths' trade across the twentieth century. One of the most evident effects, based on surviving evidence, is that most Qing silver from the period was preserved outside of China. The history of preservation of silver in certain forms, and especially as Chinese, was thus contingent in many cases on its concealment—either in boxes or underground, in cabinets and storehouses abroad, or through being declared as something other than Chinese.

This dissertation has established, on the contrary, that objects produced by southern Chinese silversmiths in the Qing period outside the court, and understood as such, have provided the basis for new interpretations of Chinese and British art history, if not also American, French, and perhaps Siamese art history. Given the impacts of these objects and the range of social values beyond the purely economic that transpacific consumers brought to them, the dissertation has positioned regional Chinese silversmiths as powerful agents that impacted silverware production, consumption, and history in regions often viewed as the global centers of metalworking innovation. Further, it has provided evidence for a new view of silver in the early modern period. A textured understanding of silver's value as crafted containers has destabilized the dominant understandings of silver as money in the context. By restricting its understanding to the money commodity par excellence, it becomes the general equivalent by which exchange values of all other commodities are measured, and "hence becomes the unique commodity whose

[13] "Machinery of Money Policy Starts Working: Reserve Board Formed," *The China Press,* Nov. 5, 1935.
[14] "Silversmiths Urged to Use Alloys in Work; Finance Ministry Makes Suggestion as Means of Conservation," *The China Press,* Feb. 1, 1936; "Silversmiths Must Buy from Bank," *The China Press,* Jun. 9, 1936.
[15] Hawthorne Cheng, "Tael minters feel pinch of hard times: Long Established Shops Passing into Oblivion; Silversmiths now Idle; End of Tael is End of Trail [sic] for Craftsmen," *The China Press,* Oct. 21, 1933.
[16] "Silversmith delegates to protest in Nanjing," *The China Press,* Feb. 26, 1936.

use is only to be exchanged."[17] This dissertation has demonstrated that while its status as money was central to its understanding to both silversmiths and their patrons, different sets of cultural, aesthetic, and social values inflected its economic value within contingent circumstances of transaction. In its early modern and modern circulations, silver thus was not just a homogeneous commodity that served as an inert catalyst for trade, or a self-propelled, animate material that maneuvered itself to China. Rather, it was crystallized matter as well as liquid, a plastic medium that could achieve organic realism as well as mimic other craft media, a collaborative assembly of components, and a diverse alloy often infiltrated with lead or other metals. It was also a handicraft medium of performative legitimacy in an industrializing global market for imitation silver and silverwares. While it was culturally dexterous, by performing deftly as Chinese or as British, it could also be co-opted and reclaimed.

As quoted in chapter one, the Portuguese merchant Gomes Solis wrote in 1621 that silver traveled the world before its inevitable migration to China. While disputing the naturalization of directional flows of capital, this dissertation nonetheless has taken objects—such as the PEM ewer and the *ziyin*-struck coin minted in Mexico City discussed in the introduction—and shifted them from conventional transatlantic or bilateral understandings to transpacific historical framings grounded in the Lingnan region. Pursuing art history within dynamic, transcultural contexts presents difficulties due to the disparities between the types of sources available to scholars. Yet by looking at the in-between spaces of transaction and connection, this dissertation has elucidated the Chinese historical understanding of silver as inherently in flux, further challenging the concept of the work of art that is coherent and immutable.

[17] Matthew Rowlinson, "Reading Capital with Little Nell," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 9:2 (Fall, 1996): 354.

Coda: Silver After the Opium War
Figures

Fig. C.1. Soup tureen with lid, retailed by Hoaching (Guangzhou, c. 1830-1900), c. 1865. Silver, 10 x 16 3/4 x 10 1/16 in. MMA, 67.109a,b

Fig. C.2. Four Heads, Types of the Labouring Class" from John Thomson, *Illustrations of China and Its People,* v. 1 (1874). GRI 84.XB.733.4.1.

Fig. C.3. John Thomson, Queen's Road West, Hong Kong, 1868/71, photographic print made from wet collodion glass plate (detail of stereographic view). Wellcome Collection, 18746i

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