

Collation and Impact Analysis of French Texts on Chinese Ceramics Research Since the 19th Century

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Keywords: Chinese Ceramics, Texts, France, Collation and Impact Analysis

Abstract: Since the 16th century, Europeans have been captivated by exquisite Chinese porcelains. During the 17th and 18th centuries, their people at all levels of society rode a enthusiastic trend of “Love Chinese porcelains”. By the mid-19th century, academic research on Chinese ceramics began to flourish within French scholar world. French publications from various periods have explored and interpreted Chinese ceramic culture from diverse perspectives. This paper aims to collate and examine French texts on Chinese ceramics research since the 19th century, analyzing their impact. After a systematic review, it has been found that French texts on Chinese ceramic research can be divided into three chronological stages: from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, the mid-20th century, and the late 20th century to the early 21st century. The quantity and characteristics of texts from these three periods differ, with numerous factors contributing to these variations. Therefore, on the basis of textual organization and impact research, this paper will also explore the reasons behind these phenomena.

1. From the late 19th to the early 20th century

In response to the evolving international landscape and the need to enhance the global influence of Chinese culture, the Chinese government has proposed the “Going Global” strategy for cultural development. As an integral part of Chinese culture, the international communication of ceramic culture is set to play a significant role in this initiative. In 1856, the French sinologist Stanislas Aignan Julien translated the English name of *Jingdezhen Tao Lu* into *History and Manufacturing of Chinese Porcelain (Histoire et fabrication de la porcelaine chinoise)*. This translation provided valuable insights for Western societies, which were captivated by the charm of Chinese ceramics but had limited understanding of their production techniques. It also provided a profound influence on the development of France’s ceramic industry. Consequently, Sino-French cultural exchanges in ceramics embarked on a new period [1]. This article will adopt a unique perspective by examining French texts on Chinese ceramics research since the 19th century, analyzing the impact of Chinese ceramics studies on the French ceramic industry and outlining the development of ceramic cultural exchanges between China and France.

From the late 19th to the early 20th century, the Second Industrial Revolution has taken place in the Western countries, which closely integrated science& technology with industrial production.

After the French Revolution, the capitalist system was gradually established in France, leading to more rapid advancement of the capitalist economy. In the Napoleonic period, the achievements of the French Revolution were effectively preserved, further consolidating the capitalist system. For example, a series of cultural policies carried out that emphasized science, encouraged education, and promoted the establishment of schools, offered a sound social environment for stronger technology. In addition, French literature also transitioned from Romanticism to Realism, fostering a pragmatic ethos. The translation works in science and technology during this period (from the late 19th to the early 20th century), far outnumbered those in literature. In order to promote the domestic (French) ceramics industry and acquire the manufacturing of Chinese porcelain, the French sinologist Stanislas Aignan Julien, aligning with the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, compiled and translated the French version of *Jingdezhen Tao Lu* in 1856, titling it *History and Manufacturing of Chinese Porcelain (Histoire et fabrication de la porcelaine chinoise)* [2]. The publication of this French translation aroused a significant interest in European ceramic and contributed to the emerging of French studies on Chinese ceramics [3]. Henceforth, French works focused on or related to Chinese ceramics sprung up. For more specific details, please refer to Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1 Major French-Language Works on Chinese Ceramics from the Late 19th to Early 20th Century

No.	Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Publication Year
1	Ancient and Modern Industries of the Chinese Empire (Industries anciennes et modernes de l'empire chinois)	Stanislas Julien, Paul Champion	Eugène Lacroix, Libraire-Editeur	1869
2	Chinese Porcelain (La porcelaine de Chine)	O. Du Sartel	Ve A. Morel & Cie, Editeurs	1881
3	The History of Ceramics (Histoire de la céramique)	Albert Jacquemart	Librairie Hachette et Cie	1884
4	Chinese Ceramics (La céramique chinoise)	Ernest Grandidier	Librairie de Firmin-Didot et Cie	1894
5	A Short History of Chinese Porcelain (Petite histoire de la porcelaine de Chine)	Marie-Juliette Ballot	Revue de l'art Ancien et moderne	1920
6	Chinese Ceramics (La céramique chinoise)	Jean-Jacques Marquet de Vasselot; Marie-Juliette Ballot	Editions Albert Morancé	1922

As can be seen from Table 1 and Table 2, all the French monographs, conference reports, and academic papers mentioned above were published after the release of Stanislas Julien's French translation of *History and Manufacturing of Chinese Porcelain*. Also, most of these works focus on Chinese ceramics or on the sinologist Julien himself. Therefore, it indicates that these research fruits are intimately related to Julien's translated version [4].

These translation texts provided valuable references for France to have a better understanding of the ceramic manufacturing techniques of Jingdezhen, and even across China, which also plays a positive role in the technological growth of the French ceramic industry. Furthermore, they significantly promoted the international influence of Chinese ceramic craftsmanship and its historical culture in France, opening the door to ceramic cultural exchange between China and France. Due to that, Sino-French exchanges in ceramic culture have gradually taken shape and then made steady progress.

Table 2 Major French-Language Conference Reports and Papers on Chinese Ceramics from the Late 19th to Early 20th Century

No.	Title	Author(s)	Conference / Paper Type	Publication Year
1	Introduction to the Life and Works of Stanislas Aignan Julien (Notice sur la vie et les travaux de M.Aignan-Stanislas Julien)	Henri Wallon	Conference Report, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres	1875
2	Note on the Manuscripts of Stanislas Julien (Note sur les manuscrits de Stanislas Julien)	Specht	Conference Report, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres	1894
3	China in France in the 18th Century (La Chine en France au XVIII ^e siècle)	Henri Cordier	Conference Report, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres	1908
4	Chinese Taste in France at the Time of Louis XIV (Le goût chinois en France au temps de Louis XIV)	Hélène Belevitch-Stankevitich	Thesis, School of Humanities, University of Paris	1910
5	Descriptions of China by the French (Les descriptions de la Chine par les Français)	Ting Tchao-Ts'ing	Doctoral Thesis, School of Humanities, University of Paris	1928

2. The mid-20th century

A comprehensive review of existing literature reveals no examples of French-Chinese translations of ceramic texts in the mid-20th century. What's more, absence of scholarly works in French language during this period focusing on or incorporating the study of Chinese ceramics indicates a temporary interruption in ceramic cultural exchanges between China and France, leading to a gap in the history of Sino-French ceramic cultural dialogue [5]. This hiatus can largely be attributed to factors such as an unstable domestic and international environment, differing conditions in ceramic production between the both countries, and a general decline in sinological studies.

Firstly, the two World Wars profoundly impacted global dynamics, leaving nations immersed in internal and external reforms. The instability of domestic and international environment deprived Sino-French ceramic cultural exchange of the stable foundation as it required. Secondly, the ceramic industries in China and France were experiencing different development stages. Especially after the French Revolution, many ceramic kilns with royal patronage suffered severe setbacks. However, in Limoges—often called the “Jingdezhen of Europe”—private porcelain factories emerged in large numbers, unexpectedly benefiting from the turmoil [6]. Because they capitalized on rich local kaolin deposits and skilled artisans, embracing an inclusive and adaptive spirit while continuously integrating modern technological advances, which greatly accelerated the development of Limoges ceramics. In contrast, during the first half of the 20th century, China's ceramic industry experienced a period of depression: waned manufacturing, dispersed craftsmanship, declined quantity and deteriorated quality. It was not until after the 1950s, the nation's support and policy preferring, contributed to the recovery and sustainability for ceramic production in various kilns. Additionally, sinological studies in France entered a period of decline during this era. By the 1940s, amid the turmoil before, during, and after World War II, French sinology nearly came to a complete standstill and even regressed.

Therefore, the scarcity of French texts and publications on Chinese ceramics during this period truly reflects the characteristics of the era and the actual conditions of the ceramic industries in both countries. Under the influence of numerous factors, ceramic cultural exchange between China and France came to be sluggish in the mid-20th century [7].

3. From the late 20th to the early 21st century

From the late 20th to the early 21st century, cultural exchanges in ceramics between China and France have been back to seeing active participation. The number of French translations of ancient Chinese ceramic records and French publications focusing on Chinese ceramics has increased significantly. For more specific details, please refer to Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3 List of Chinese-to-French Translated Works from the Late 20th to Early 21st Century

No.	Title	Author(s)	Translator	Publisher	Publication Year
1	A Brief History of Chinese Ceramics	LiZhiyan, ChengWen	Edited by ChengQinhua	Foreign Languages Press	1996
2	CHINA Keramik und Porzellan	LiZhiyan, ChengQinhua	Daniel Cogez	Foreign Languages Press	2003
3	Traditional Porcelain-Manufacturing Techniques of Jingdezhen	BaiMing	Revue de la Céramique et du Verre (France)	French Ceramic and Glass Art Publishing House	2005
4	Chinese Ceramics	FangLili	MengLina	China Intercontinental Press	2011
5	Chinese Pottery and Porcelain	ChenJin	LuoDongxiang	Baihuazhou Literature and Art Publishing House	2013

Table 4 Major French-Language Works on Chinese Ceramics from the Late 20th to Early 21st Century

No.	Title	Author(s)	Publication Year
1	Chinese Porcelain of the 17th and 18th Centuries (La porcelaine chinoise des XVII et XVIII siècles)	YangEnlin	1970
2	Chinese Polychrome Porcelain: Three Centuries of Trade Under the Qing Dynasty (Porcelaines chinoises polychromes---trois siècles de commerce sous la dynastie des Qing)	Daniel Nadier	2001
3	The Odyssey of Chinese Porcelain (L' Odyssée de la porcelaine chinoise)	Christine Shimizu	2003
4	Chinese Ceramics (La céramique chinoise)	Michel Beurdeley	2005
5	The Splendor of Fire: Masterpieces of Chinese Porcelain from Jingdezhen, in 12th–18th Century (La splendeur du feu---chefs d'oeuvre de la porcelaine chinoise de JingDeZhen du XII au XVIII siècle)	YouFeng	2007
6	The Secret of Kaoline (L'arcane de gaoling)	Catherine Bourzat	2009
7	Chinese Porcelain (Porcelaine chinoise)	Du Sartel	2011
8	The Taste for Chinese and Japanese Porcelains in Paris in the 17th and 18th Centuries (Le goût pour les porcelaines de Chine et du Japon à Paris au XVII et XVIII siècles)	Stéphane Castelluccio	2013
9	Ancient Chinese Ceramics (La céramique chinoise ancienne)	Alexandre Hougron	2015
10	The Jingdezhen Porcelain Tradition (La tradition de la porcelaine à JingDeZhen)	Nancy Balard	2016
11	A Thousand Years of Monochromes (Mille ans de monochromes)	Alexandre Hougron	2018
12	Chinese Ceramics (La céramique chinoise)	Marie-Juliette Ballot, Jean-Jacques Marquet De Vasselot	2019
13	Meissen and Chantilly Porcelain(Porcelaine de Meissen et de Chantilly)	Mathieu Deldicque	2020

As can be seen from Table 4, from the late 20th to the early 21st century, French scholarly works dedicated to the specialized study of Chinese ceramics kept cropping up, appearing nearly every year or two. This indicates a growing French interest in Chinese ceramics and a deepening of

ceramic cultural exchanges between China and France. This trend is closely linked to the stable global political and economic order, the accelerating process of globalization, the need for preserving and innovating ceramic techniques worldwide, as well as the revival and flourishing of sinology [8].

The substantial increase in French translations of Chinese ceramic classics and French scholarly works on Chinese ceramics during this period has had a positive impact. It has not only facilitated Sino-foreign cultural exchange activities, such as international exhibitions and overseas promotions of Chinese ceramic works, but also encouraged the French academic community to explore a wider range of topics and adopt more specialized research perspectives on Chinese ceramics. As a result, ceramic cultural exchanges between China and France have gradually expanded in both width and depth.

In conclusion, French research on Chinese ceramics since the 19th century can be roughly divided into three stages. In each of these distinct phases, the volume of French textual output on Chinese ceramics was closely influenced by the historical context, the state of the ceramic industries in both China and France, and the trajectory of sinological studies. Meanwhile, these research efforts exerted varied impacts on the French ceramic industry and on the cultural exchange in ceramics between China and France.

Acknowledgements

1) This work was supported by 2021 Jingdezhen Social Science Planning Project "Collation and Impact Analysis of French Texts on Chinese Ceramics Research since the 19th Century".

2) This paper is part of the research findings of "JCU New Liberal Arts Foreign Language Teaching Team on Ceramics".

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