

宣統三年辛亥

柴窯考證

吳興沈鎬題



How to Tell the Porcelain of Chai Yao

"The King from the Kiln"

BY

T. Y. CHEN

*Address: 207 Shun Chih Men Street,
Peking.*

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

BY

T. T. CHEN

*Address: 14 Sinza Road,
Shanghai.*

CHUNG HWA Book Co., LTD.

SHANGHAI

1919



程村居士小像



程知耻小像

How to Tell the Porcelain of Chai Yao

That Chinese porcelain has had no equals in the world is universally recognized. This fact is well borne out by the name "China" given to pottery or porcelain wares by Westerners. We have found in the books that the word "Tzū" (瓷) was given to fine pottery; and that both "Tao" (陶) and "Tzū" (瓷) are earthen wares, which were first made at the time of Yen Ti (2838 B.C.). From Yu Yü to Han Dynasty Chinese pottery was given the name of Tao and not until late in the Tang Dynasty did it take up a glaze and assume the name of porcelain. More than ten specimens of pottery wares from Hsing Yao, Yüeh Yao and Pi Sê Yao (Yao being the Chinese word for kiln) can still be found at present day. Recently, during the course of road building in Shensi and Honan provinces, pottery wares from these kilns have been occasionally dug up. But they are so rare and unknown that even authorities on pottery and porcelain can hardly specify them and merely classify them as Specimens of porcelain of Tang and Sung Dynasties. Pottery or porcelain of Tang Dynasty had for the substance of its body sand or clay. The Chi Tzū or Kang substance did not appear in pottery bodies until the period of the Five Dynasties. This illustrates the transition of the substance of which the body of Chinese pottery wares of early periods was made.

Authorities on Chinese pottery or porcelain, in later ages, when coming across specimens of ancient pottery wares, have always hesitated to comment on them owing to their great antiquity and the lack of authentic references. Therefore, they would not profess to know anything beyond the productions of the five well-known kilns of Chai, Ju, Kuan, Kê, and Ting. Although productions from Ju, Kuan, Kê, and Ting kilns are very rarely seen, yet there are still some of their specimens being kept by some people. As regards productions from Chai Yao, they are just as rare and as precious as morning stars and phenix. "A piece of brick from Chai Yao," says a Chinese proverb "is worth a thousand dollars." This well illustrates its rarity and preciousness.

According to researches, Chai Yao productions were burned during the reign of Hsien Tê of Posterior Chou Dynasty (954-959 A.D.). Chai Yao was located in Chêng Chou, Honan, deriving its name from the then reigning king, Shih Tsung whose surname was Chai. It was then only referred to as Yü Yao or Imperial Kiln, and not until in the Sung Dynasty was it given the name of Chai Yao for sake of differentiation. Porcelain from Chai Yao is as blue as the sky, as clear as a mirror, as thin as paper, and as resonant as a musical stone of jade. It has clay or sand for the substance of the body. A glimpse of yellow clay appears at the feet or pedestals. It is smooth, delicate, well-made, remarkably colored, and is considered the best of all kiln productions and unimitable in later ages.

I have been collecting antiques for nearly forty years. The Chai Yao productions I have been keeping are so remarkably bright that nothing can be compared with them. They are indeed rare and precious in the world.

Note: Since the productions of Chai Yao have scarcely been seen for more than one thousand years, how can I ascertain what are in my possession are such productions? I can do so and comment on them because they are fine, smooth, having remarkable coloring, and were mostly skilfully and delicately made. I have also the wares of Yieh Yao, which were produced before Chai Yao, but the former are not as fine and smooth as the later. As to those wares made after Chai Yao, such as the productions of Sung and Ming Dynasties, and those made during the reign of Kang Yung and Chien Emperors, yet they are not as fine and as smooth as Chai Yao, although the coloring of their glaze shows fine work. If not the productions of Chai Yao, what else can find no equals in fineness both before and after Chai Yao productions.

Now, for the purpose of exhibiting them to my co-lovers of arts, I have taken them out of privacy, and, here I enumerate a number of extracts, from Chinese Authorities dealing with productions from Chai Yao. These, I believe, will serve us as illustrations and as grounds for further study.

T. Y. CHEN.

(A Chinese Scholar of Chen Village.)

1. "Specimens from Chai Yao are found in the North, having a sky-blue hue, smooth, fine, with yellow sand and pedestals, very rarely seen in later ages."—From I Men Kuang Tu (夷門廣續).

2. "Ancients have commented that productions of Chai Yao is as blue as sky, as clear as mirror, as thin as paper, and as resonant as a musical stone of jade."—From Ku Ying Tai's Po Wu Yao Lan (谷應泰博物要覽).

3. "Productions from Chai Yao are most precious and rarely seen. I have heard that they were made as blue as sky, as clear as mirror, as thin as paper, and as resonant as a musical stone of jade."—From Wen Cheng Hêng's Chang Wu Chih (文震亨長物志).

4. "Chai Yao productions are of fine make and remarkable coloring, and the best among productions from all kilns."—From Huang I Chêng's Shih Wu Kan Chu (黃一正事物紀珠).

5. "As has been said, Chai Yao, was built in Pien (modern Honan) to supply the imperial household with porcelain articles. Emperor Shih Tsung once ordered some articles to be manufactured just like the blue sky peeping through the clouds after rain. Indeed commentations on porcelain, nowadays, have always referred to Chai, Ju, Kuan, Kê, and Ting. But specimens from Chai Yao are almost unprocurable. Any fragments from a broken Chai vessel may be used as adornments for hats or chains and considered very valuable. According to tradition, the sparkles of a piece of Chai ware darted one's eyes, and its reflection could push back an on-coming arrow. The former statement is probably true, while the latter is altogether on unfounded exaggeration."—From Tang Ying's *A Study of Porcelains* (唐英瓷器肆考).

6. "No perfect ware of Chai Yao can be found. But recent discoveries have found a few perfect ones. Ma Bu An showed me a vessel, oblong in form, seven inches in diameter, dark-blue in wavering colors. Mere 'blue sky after rain,' cannot sufficiently portrait its picturesqueness. Mr. Ma said 'I could style it a purple heaven'."—From Chi Sung Tang's *Shih Shiao Lu* (七頌堂識小錄).

7. "Commentators on porcelain must always make reference to productions from Chai, Ju, Kuan, Kê, and Ting. Chai productions can hardly be found now. Formerly I saw a little fragment from a shattered Chai vessel and the said fragment was used as an adornment on a chain. It's brightness in color is same as had been referred to, but a little thicker."—From Chang Ying Wen's *Ching Pi Tsang* (張應文清秘藏).

8. "Wares from Chai Yao were produced at Chêng Chou, Honan, in Northern China. According to tradition

they were made during Chow Shih Tsung's time and thereby derived the name of Chai Yao wares. They have a sky-blue coloring, and are smooth and fine."—From Ming Tu Lung Kao Pang Yü Shih (明屠隆攷弊餘事).

9. "Posterior Chou Dynasty had its seat of government at Pien. Pien, in Tang Dynasty, belonged to the Inspectorate of Honan. According to Official Geography of Tang Dynasty, Honan Inspectorate paid tributes of porcelain wares. From this it is evident that this place was suitable for pottery works. The Chên Ho official Kilns of Sung Dynasty also sprang up at Pien. Yu was also somewhere within Honan Inspectorate during the Tang Dynasty. Chai Yao was located in its capital."

10. "Kao Dan Jen wrote a Sung Chün song on a certain porcelain bottle, and in its commentary he said any shattered piece from a Chai ware had been usually made into ornaments or set up as curious, because it was hard to procure and therefore precious."

11. Mr. Wang Yu Yang wrote in his Hsiang Tsu Recollection: "A certain nobility had a bowl of genuine blue, sparkling in four directions. How fortunate had he been!"

12. "Only Chai porcelain has the color of sky-blue. Imitations made from Ju Yao (kiln) bear very little semblance, and Sung Chang Pai has mistaken them for Pi Sê Yao's productions. In quoting 'clear sky after rain,' he has mistaken the word 'clear' for the word 'blue.' Further, commentaries in the 'Cha Ching' (Tea Book) are found to have remarked that Yüeh Chow productions are the best. By this he evidently referred to Lang Chüan Yao wares. These statements are all found in Liu Ting poetry Discussions."

13. "Pottery wares of blue or green coloring have always been esteemed since olden times. Ching (Dynasty) porcelain noted for its Piao color; Tang, for emerald; Posterior Chou, for sky-blue; Wu and Yüeh, for Pi Shê. Sung porcelain has various colorings. Porcelain made in Ju Kiln, in the Sung Dynasty, has a light blue color. Kuan Yao and Kê Yao productions with whitish-blue color are considered best. Productions of Tung Yao and Lung Chüan all have a blue color. Until Ming Dynasty, Pi Sé was extinct."—From *Diaries of Loving Sun Hall*. (愛日堂鈔).

14. "Ancient porcelains of blue color are preferred for drinking (tea or wine) purposes. As for serving purposes on a dinner table, porcelains of white tones and blue flowers are considered more tasteful as a matter of artistic conceptions. Tsou Yang, in his Fu wrote 'Take out the blue porcelain cups while the wine matures.' Lu Yu's Ching (a book) contains a passage reading: 'Yüeh (Chekiang province) porcelain is blue, while the tea green.' Chi Chi (also a book) also says, 'Hold it (tea) with a emerald part.' Chi Nan Chin's poem: 'When we hear the rustling pines and the murmuring streams, we haste to order for a blue porcelain cup.' Tung Po's poem remarks that the blue of the oval cup seems as if floating up an oderiferous vapor. Judging from these passages it is evident that drinking vessels of olden times are mostly of blue color. However, the color referred to here is not all an exact equal to the blue of the Chai wares.

15. "With regard to the blue colors of porcelain vessels, there are many variations. The blue of Chai Yao and Ju Yao productions is a light blue; of Kuan Yao, Nei Yao, Kê Yao, Tung Yao and Hsiang Yao productions,

a light greenish blue; of Lung Chiian and Chang Yao productions, an emerald; and of Yüeh Yao and Yao Yao, a Pien (bluish white) color. But ancient commentations on porcelain have generalized these various colors into one color, the 'blue.'

16. "The various kilns at Ching Tê Chen give different descriptions to the so-called ceramic blue. Some say that it is blue on white, ground, as is also the 'lightly delineated blue,' in which the blue approaches ultramarine but differs in its own degree of tint. Then there is the imitated ancient pottery, which bears similar blue to the age-honored ware. Again there is the 'clear-up sky blue,' azure, coming very near to deep ultramarine. Still, the ware produced by the factories at Ching Tê Chen after the Ju Yao shows a bluish color tinged with some ultramarine, unlike cosmetic blue which is in closer vicinity to green. According to 'A study of porcelain,' the color of Ju Yao resembles that of Kê Yao but of a deeper shade. This is, however, a mistake in recognizing blue as associated with green. The author seems to disregard the identity between the pale blue of Ju Yao and the good moonlight ultramarine of the present. As a matter of fact, the Ching Tê Chen factory ware is the direct facsimile after the genuine Ju Yao taken out from the imperial palace. It is more commonly known as the 'clear sky after rain.'"—From Ching Tê Chen Ceramics (景德鎮陶錄).

17. According to a study of Chinese porcelain, it is said that the pedestals or feet of ancient porcelain vessels are purposely made heavy so that they can stand well and firm. Therefore, the feet of Chai wares are generally made of yellow sand, and Kuan, Kê and Lung Chiian wares have iron pedestal. But this is

erroneous. For, during the Posterior Chou Dynasty, the biscuits of porcelain wares, owing to the lack of any other better material, are generally made up of yellow sand, hence the pedestals are also of yellow sand. The iron feet referred to in the above book are by no means real iron. They are made of black clay and therefore look like iron.

18. "A certain person had a fragment of a Chai vessel and asked for it a price of a several hundred dollars. He said that the fragment if inlaid on a helmet might protect one from bullets in battle. However, he was not, after all, certain of the truth of what he had just said. I told him to hang it and shoot at it. If the bullets could not pierce or break it, it ought to be worth more than the price he asked for; but if they did break it, what he said was not true, he should not then demand any payment. He refused, saying that I was not an expert to judge on antiques, and went away with it hastily. Afterwards I heard he had sold it to a rich family for a hundred dollars. In my opinion, Chai porcelain is only noted for its skilful, blue coloring and it is only absurd to attribute to it such wonderful charms."—From *As I Have Heard* (如是我聞).

19. "The so-called 'as blue as the sky, as clear as mirror, as thin as paper'—the three qualities of Chai productions—is undoubtedly referred to the quality of the glaze and not the body. Porcelain wares made before Yuan Dynasty, in some cases, have thin bodies. However, their thinness can not be compared with that of the Ming wares. This means merely the glaze surface. That Ching Pi Tsang had attributed this kind of thinness to the body of a fragment of Chai ware is rather incorrect.

20. "As reported, a certain family of Hankow possessed a Chai Yao ware. This might be the blue bowl of Bing Yu Tsu Jen. This bowl had been brought by a native of Hupch, who, I suspect might be the man named Wan Han. Originally this bowl belonged to Yin Shien Prince. It is the best production of Sung Dynasty. But it is still disputable whether it is a Chai ware. Prince Yin Shien styled himself, Bing Yu Tsu Jen. 'The owner of Ice-Jade Hall,' and from this name, it is probable that he might have a collection of Yuch Chow Yao Wares."—From Tao Ya (蜀正)

21. "Chai Yao was located in Chêng Chou, Homan, and was the very one built by Shih Tsung. According to tradition, Shih Tsung had ordered some articles to be manufactured just like the blue sky peeping through the clouds after rain. From this, I discern that in the saying 'as blue as the sky, as clear as a mirror, as thin as paper, as resonant as a musical stone of jade,' the phrase as thin as paper, is undoubtedly referred to its glaze surface and not its body. The phrase 'as blue as the sky' is also not wholly consonant with facts. For Chai Yao productions are, with doubt, chiefly of sky blue color, but there are still, according to the book of Po Wu Yao Lan, many other colorings of greens. Blue is, then, not the only color. Most of the green colored wares have cracks on their glaze surfaces and where there is no glaze, the body appears to be of yellow clay. Nevertheless the body is smooth and fine and wares of such make-up are the best productions of their kind. These wares had already become rare in the Ming Dynasty. Recently, during the course of road building many ancient pottery or porcelain wares have been dug up and among them are

found specimens very similar to these. I have seen them at one of my friends. (In other places, I have also seen some of the specimens here mentioned, but they are of deep black color and not real Chai Wares). I suspect that no precious things should be long hidden from human eyes."—From Hsü Chih Hun's Yin Lin Chai Shui Tzū (許之衡飲流齋說瓷).

With regard to the Chai Yao wares possessed by my family, they are priceless and seldom seen in the world. Each of them will cost ten or twenty thousands of pounds sterling. After my father retired from office to Chen Village, in the year 1911, he compiled a book entitled "How to Tell the Porcelain of Chai Yao" in order to let people in general know what Chai Yao is. Hence, he has been examining his collection with famous antiquarians as an amusement. During the summer vacation, I translated the work into English for the convenience of those westerners interested in this oriental art, so that these highly invaluable historic masterpieces may not remain unknown forever.

TS TS CHEN.
