The RA Collection of
CHINESE CERAMICS
A Collector's Vision

Maria Antónia Pinto de Matos
In 2011 we published the RA Collection of Chinese Ceramics, A Collector’s Vision, a three-volume book about a most extraordinary collection. Until then the collection was kept private and only known to a few, mostly friends and family of the collector, Renato de Albuquerque. To research the collection, he chose Maria Antónia Pinto de Matos, who went on to write the first three volumes. At the time his desire was to remain anonymous, his only intention in publishing the book was to share with the wider public the pleasure and interest he derives from his collection. But in publishing the book the inevitable happened, the collection became known and admired worldwide, and regarded as probably the most relevant Chinese export porcelain collection in existence. Interest from scholars and museums resulted in the 2016 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition Global by Design: Chinese Ceramics from the R. Albuquerque Collection, that brought together 48 highlights from his collection.

His focus has remained on constantly improving the collection, making it yet more relevant and comprehensive, and central to the understanding and study of Chinese export porcelain. It is an evolving collection, with regular, carefully chosen acquisitions, meant to fill in gaps, or to include that evasive and rare piece that may be crucial in adding further context to the field. Renato de Albuquerque also understands that to maximise a collection’s potential, even for the collector himself, it has to be shared with others, to become part of a wider conversation. It is for this reason that he is committed to continuing to have the collection serve as a base for research, to his loans to temporary museum exhibitions, and to the publishing of new research and acquisitions through publications such as this fourth volume, thus continually sharing the collection with all those interested in this fascinating field.

We are proud, again, to have been offered the privilege of being part of this project and the publishers of this further volume. We are grateful to Renato de Albuquerque and his family for the opportunity and for their trust in our team at Jorge Welsh Research & Publishing.

Luísa Vinhais
Jorge Welsh
Two long oval-shaped writing boxes or pen boxes with straight sides and recessed rims to fit the slightly domed lids; inside they are divided into compartments: at one end, a long oval-shaped compartment with barbed edges, and at the other a D-shaped opening for a removable inkwell. In between, three perforated openings: two large circular holes side by side and a third in the shape of a ruyi head.

They are heavily potted in thick white porcelain and decorated in cobalt blue under a bluish glaze. The flat bases, galleries and flanges of the boxes and lids, and most of the inkwells, are unglazed. There is a small hole in the wall of writing box inv. no. 796, aligned with the large circular opening of the interior.

The sides are decorated with a scroll of ten lotus flowers and small leaves placed symmetrically on each side, above a narrow border painted with a stylized foliate scroll (inv. no. 943) and key-fret (inv. no. 796), both framed by double blue lines. The lid repeats the decoration: a continuous scroll with four (inv. no. 943) and five (inv. no. 796) lotus flowers and leafy stems on the central oval panel, framed by a narrow border similar to the one on the sides, and repeated on the side of the lid (inv. no. 943). On writing box inv. no. 796 the lid wall is completely filled with a band of flower heads forming stylized cash coins. Inside, the compartments and ruyi head are outlined with a bold blue line. The top of the inkwell is decorated with a border in a wave pattern, formed by fine curved brushstrokes.

Demonstrating the high regard Westerners had for Chinese porcelains, small gold flower heads with turquoise centres were applied in Ottoman Turkey (inv. no. 943): twenty on the lotus band on the sides, twelve on the border below it, ten on the oval panel on the lid, fourteen on the border surrounding it, twelve on the sides of the lid, and five on the inside. The larger ones were applied to the lotus flowers.

The circular openings were used for small cylindrical, removable containers, one with small holes in the top for sand, which would be sprinkled over the paper to dry the ink, and another with a plain circular opening for silk or linen thread. The thread was inserted into the inkwell to stop the quill tip from rubbing on the bottom and wearing out. The larger oval-shaped compartment was intended to accommodate reed-pens, whereas the D-shaped opening was intended to hold the inkwell.

The shape of these pen boxes is not traditionally Chinese, but rather inspired by a metal prototype like the silver, gold and brass inlaid example, signed by Shitum.
But the hydra with seven heads is also found in the New Testament, Book of Revelation or Book of the Apocalypse (chapter 12, verse 3), where it is described as a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon its heads. Besides, the hydra represented on this bowl made by Chinese craftsmen and probably copied from a European print, displays, as mentioned previously, two human heads, one of a man and another of a woman, who may possibly represent Adam and Eve after their expulsion from Paradise for committing the Original Sin. According to Genesis, when God punished the couple and the Serpent, He condemned Adam to toil until he dies, to eaer children with pain, and eventually to have his bread with the sweat of his brow, Eve to bear children with pain, and to thereafter earn his bread with the sweat of his brow, Eve to bear children with pain, and to thereafter earn his bread with the sweat of his brow.

In a way, the recipients of these bowls would have been the European equivalent of the Chinese literati. Although the iconographic source is known, this representation of the hydra is similar to the one illustrated in the Italian work Il Corpo Fisico by Camillo Camilli, printed in Venice in 1586. However, neither the device nor the shield are mentioned in the book, nor do they appear together in other books of that period. This theme was not exclusive to Chinese literati, but rather with images of the chaotic and uncontrolled powers of the world, the heads are connected differently. This piece, along with a still life dated 1638 by the Dutch painter Willem Claesz. Heda (1594-1680/82), depicting an almost identical bowl to the present example, suggest that a certain number of bowls were exported to Europe, namely to the Netherlands.

The existence of such interesting pieces in different countries such as Portugal, Holland and Peru during the seventeenth century, corresponding to specific orders for a particular market, means that they may have been sold to other countries.

7 Pinto de Matos, 2011, vol. I, p. 170, fig. 82.
8 Sargent, 2012, p. 102, fig. 40.
11 Graves, 1979, p. 69-70.
16 Lion-Goldschmidt, 1988, pp. 44-45, figs. 80-82; Sargent, 2012, p. 102, fig. 40.
17 Lion-Goldschmidt, 1988, pp. 44-45, figs. 80-82; Sargent, 2012, p. 102, fig. 40.
18 Lion-Goldschmidt, 1988, pp. 44-45, fig. 80-82; Sargent, 2012, p. 102, fig. 40.
21 Lion-Goldschmidt, 1988, pp. 44-45, no. 16.
22 Lion-Goldschmidt, 1988, pp. 44-45, no. 16.
A heavily potted circular dish with a narrow, flat rim with one side deliberately warped upwards, standing on a short foot ring. It was painted in a greyish cobalt blue under a bluish glaze and the decoration was overpainted in red, probably at a later date. It shows in the centre an Arhat or Sage wearing fluttering robes and sandals, carrying a gourd and a fan on the left, while holding a brush in the right hand and what is probably an ink slab in the left hand. He is surrounded by rockworks and a pine tree. The central scene is encircled by blue lines and the rim filled with a swastika pattern border. The underside of the dish is decorated with blue lines on the rim and the warped section is painted with large, overlapping flower petals.

This dish is an excellent example of ko-sometsuke that are not traditional and generally manufactured hastily and neglectfully: the materials are unrefined, some rusty stains can be seen, particles of grit and pinholes are visible on the surface of the glaze, and the glazes are thin and sprinkled with air bubbles that tend to scale away, as can be observed on the rim and edges (mushikui). In these areas, the biscuit has fired a deep orange colour on contact with the kiln atmosphere.

Even though this piece is of a traditional shape, being rolled up on one side is very unusual. The asymmetric decoration is treated with totally free brushwork.

Kawahara illustrates three similar dishes, one of which belongs to the Tokyo National Museum collection, which was also illustrated by Saitō, and in the Illustrated Catalogue of Tokyo National Museum Chinese Ceramics II. The same figure with the same attributes, but holding the brush in the left hand and a flowering prunus branch in the right hand, is represented in a ko-sometsuke dish in the shape of a folded piece of paper.

1 Kawahara, 1977(b), p. 79, nos. 299-301.
2 Saitō, 1972, p. 119, no. 56.
4 Nishida and Degawa, 1997, no. 35.

**DISH**

Porcelain decorated in underglaze cobalt blue and redecorated in overglaze red enamel

Jingdezhen kilns, Jiangxi province

Ming dynasty, Tianqi period (1621-1627)

H. 7 cm  Rim Ø 26.5 cm  Foot ring Ø 14.6 cm

Inv. no. 959
Hexagonal ewer in the shape of a double gourd, with a short neck into which fits a small, high-domed, six-sided lid with a conical finial. The ewer stands on a spreading hexagonal foot with a rounded edge. The handle, scalloped at the top, is joined to the body on the upper part of each globular bulb, as is the long, faceted spout that rises from the upper part of the lower bulb and is joined to the upper body by a cloud-shaped bridge.

The delicate decoration is finely painted in enamels, iron red being the predominant colour, together with green, turquoise and gold. The foot, spout and handle are covered in iron red and accentuated with large brushstrokes in gold. The six sides of the bulbs are emphasized by vertical iron red bands. This ewer is decorated with gold leaf added to the polychrome decoration, a technique known as *kinrande* (see cat. 55). The lower bulb is decorated with six panels, two of which, on opposite sides, are painted with overlapping scales and gilt corners containing a reserved scalloped medallion forming a quatrefoil, surrounded by a green border outlined in gold and iron red and filled with a gold peony spray and foliage. The other four panels are decorated with strings of beads hanging from a half flower head, interspersed with other flowers and tassels. They are framed by two borders: around the base, green and gold leaves on a red ground, and on the shoulder overlapping green leaves and pointed petals arranged in a pyramid form and outlined in black. The mid-section between the two bulbs is painted red and decorated with a gilt scroll of three lotus flowers and copious foliage. The upper bulb repeats the decoration of the lower one, except for the shape of the medallion with the green border, which is rectangular and pointed at the top, and contains a small flower spray. The neck is painted red, beneath which is a turquoise border with a black foot.

In 2010 the Tokugawa Art Museum and the Hoso Library commemorated their seventy-fifth anniversary, which coincided with the four-hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Owari Tokugawa in Nagoya. To mark the occasion, the Museum organized an exhibition that included not only all the treasures of the Owari Tokugawa family, the first of the Gosanke, the three collateral branches of the Tokugawa shoguns, but also pieces that had left the collection and ‘returned home’ for this special event, as was the case with this ewer, which was mentioned as belonging to a private collection.

**PROVENANCE**
Owari Tokugawa Family Collection
Yanagi Shigehiko, Kyoto
Yasuaki Manno, Osaka

**EXHIBITIONS**
*Treasures of the Owari Tokugawa Family Including works ‘Returning Home’*, The Tokugawa Art Museum, Nagoya, 2010

**PUBLISHED IN**
Manno Art Museum, 1988, no. 118
The Tokugawa Art Museum, 2010, pp. 102 and xiii, no. 233
Leidy and Pinto de Matos, 2016, pp. 68-71, no. 6

**ENTRIES**
Porcelain decorated in overglaze polychrome enamels and gold
Jingdezhen kilns, Jiangxi province
Ming dynasty, Jiajing period (1522-1566)
H. 24 cm W. 17 cm
Inv. no. 986
Pair of triple gourd-shaped vases with long trumpet-like neck, standing on a short slightly everted foot. Made in very white, heavy porcelain, covered with a clear glaze, with the exception of the slightly recessed foot ring.

Both vases are brightly decorated with overglaze enamels of the famille verte palette: several shades of green, iron red, blue, yellow and aubergine, with gold highlights. The lower bulb has a band of overlapping yellow petals outlined in green around the base, and at the top a large diaper-pattern border with flowers. One of the vases (inv. no. 868/1) has an additional yellow band. The main part of the bulb has an impressive collar of trilobate leaves suggesting ruyi heads with a thick black outline and filled with a foliate mandorl of blossoming roses painted in blue, green, yellow and iron red, some with touches of gold, all reserved on a light green ground. The middle bulb is decorated with a scroll of eighteen lotus flowers with gilt centres reserved in white on an iron red ground, between two green borders with black key-fret. On the upper bulb the decoration is similar to that on the lower one: the collar of leaves suggesting ruyi heads, with multicolored butterflies in flight and five flowers on a green ground stippled with black dots, beneath a green band; another band at the base of the neck with overlapping petals painted alternately in green and iron red. The rim is surrounded by a wide red border of six-petal flower heads in green with yellow centres forming a geometrical design. Below, a band of green ruyi heads outlined in black with bead pendants ending with a tassel and an alternating lounge and stone chime, two of the ‘Eight Precious Objects’.

Affixed to the base of each vase is a paper label with the following inscription: ‘This Old Chinese Tall Triple Gourd Vase and Stand [stand] (one of a pair) loaned by me to the Pennsylvania Museum of Art is part of the inventoried contents of my residence, Whitemarsh Hall, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, and belongs in the Salon (signed) E.T. Stotesbury’. Two smaller labels, one on each vase, read: ‘Main Hall – Console near small Dining Room’ (inv. no. 868/0); both vases show the inventory number of the period: ‘50.246’ (inv. no. 868/1) and ‘50.247’ (inv. no. 868/2) written in red on the paste. These labels indicate that these examples were part of the collection of Edward T. Stotesbury, a banker and financier born in 1849, and one of the wealthiest men in Philadelphia at the beginning of the twentieth century. Upon marrying his second wife Lucretia Robert Crossell in 1912, he built a huge estate called Whitemarsh Hall as a wedding gift for her.
Model of a Chinese ship in porcelain decorated in famille verte enamels on the biscuit in various shades of green, yellow and aubergine.

The ship is modelled with curved sides, a high semicircular stem with an arched opening where a moveable protruding rudder would have fitted, and a high sterncastle with side stairs and an upper deck with eight arched windows, each with a tiny white figure, some dressed in green, others in yellow. The bow is ornamented with a dolphin with slanting eyes painted for directional guidance. The yellow guard rail is pierced for eleven cannons, six on one side and five on the other. The deck is painted in bright green, as are the two masts; a smaller one on the bow with two rectangular yellow sails with green borders, and another taller one in the centre of the ship with three sails similar to the others, both of them with rigging or ladders. There are four figures on deck, each modelled with long hair, slanting eyes, long jackets (two yellow and two aubergine) and a wide-brimmed hat. One figure sits on the bow in front of the small mast, while another man hoists a sail. Another male figure sits behind the main mast next to a large capstan with a coil of thick rope, and the fourth figure is in the entrance of the cabin, where several objects are visible, probably associated with the cargo. The ship rests on an unglazed base.

This ship is a Chinese version of a European vessel, probably a Dutch merchant ship built around 1650-1700, and like the other examples in the collection (see cats. 143 and 144, and fig. 27) it combines Chinese and European details. Among the former it is worth mentioning the sterncastle, and the positioning of the free and the main masts. The rig of Chinese junks were made of rigid or semi-rigid panels whose surface could be altered to accommodate different wind conditions. They were made from bamboo or rice straw and were hoisted on flexible mats. In the mid-nineteenth century cloth sails came into use. Junks had double hulls for extra strength to allow for larger cargo capacity, which in turn affected the speed. They had several decks with accommodation for passengers and cargo holds. The bow was plumb and rounded, while the stern was round and higher. To protect merchants and the cargo from possible pirate attacks the junks were very often armed with a battery of artillery pieces on the port and starboard.

Despite the slanting eyes of the figures, they show Western influence. The cannons are foreign, as is the square shape of the sails and the painted eyes on the sides of the rounded bow, whereas the rounded stern is unusual in either culture. As on other models in this catalogue, the sterncastle is very pronounced, with side stairs, and provides suitable accommodation for an important person or a rich merchant.

PROVENANCE
James Garland Collection, USA, 1895
J. P. Morgan Collection, USA, ca. 1902-1914
Private collection, Europe, until 1980s
Deiters Collection, the Netherlands, 1988-2011

See Schieto 2003, pp. 64-67 no. 21
See Cramers, 1991, p. 23
A porcelain model of a Dutch ship decorated in bright overglaze enamels of the famille rose palette. The boat is modelled with a rectangular hull with curved sides, pierced rails, sixteen protruding gun ports and a tall tapering mast flying three square-rigged rectangular sails decorated on the forward side with an X-pattern in blue, black, green, pink and red enamels with a flower head in the centre. Atop the mast is a pink triangular flag, behind which is a device for hoisting the sails. The aftercastle is shaped like a pagoda with two storeys. The lower storey has three square windows on each side of an arched doorway, and the upper one has five arched windows separated by six white statues of Chinese scholars. Four figures of Dutchmen stand on the deck looking out to sea, each finely modelled with long hair, slanting eyes and wearing a long jacket, two in blue and two in green, and a wide-brimmed tricorn hat. One of them is holding an instrument in his hands, possibly an astrolabe, and beside him is a basket that might have been used as a depth probe. On the bow is a figurehead modelled in relief like a Buddhist lion, beneath the barrel of a blue cannon. The hull is painted in bright pink enamel and around the bottom are overlapping waves in relief, painted in white enamel. A number of porcelain loops are attached to the back of the sails and cabin, which may have served to thread a string to imitate the real rigging of the boat. The boat rests on a flat unglazed base exposing the whiteness of the paste, with four porcelain wheels, each painted with a spiral design in shades of dark blue and turquoise.

This type of vessel is a hybrid depiction of a European ship and a Chinese junk. The European figures and square-rigged sails instead of traditional Chinese bamboo sails indicate Western influence. The aftercastle in the shape of a pagoda and elements such as the statues and figurehead on the bow evoke the Chinese world. In nautical terms, this ship is out of proportion; the single mast is too high, making the vessel unstable. The bow is not hydrodynamic, which suggests that it may have been used for river transport. In the stern there is a cabin for an important person or a wealthy merchant, and the row of gun ports for artillery shows that the ship was used to transport important people or valuable cargo.

The high quality of the potting and the mixture of Eastern and Western elements make this model an excellent example of the artistic and cultural crosscurrents of the early Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Although models of porcelain boats were first produced during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), this piece decorated in famille rose enamels is the only known example of its type.

The earliest recorded porcelain ship model is a Chinese junk from 1506, in the collection of the British Museum (EA 1937.7-16.97). It has applied and incised decoration and is glazed in fahua style in turquoise, dark blue and yellow. It bears an ink inscription indicating the date of its manufacture, ‘the first year of the Zhengde period’, and the name of the place ‘Xintian’.

A small group of porcelain boats representing Chinese junks, or a Chinese version of European ships, decorated in overglaze enamels of the famille verte palette applied on biscuit and dating to the Kangxi reign (1662-1722) is also recorded.
Tureen with lid, moulded like a seated Budai Heshang figure, divided into two parts at chest height, and an oval stand with moulded, sloping rim and scalloped edge, made in white porcelain and coated in an almost clear glaze, except for both bases, which were left unglazed. Decoration painted in overglaze famille rose enamels and gold.

The figure is smiling with his mouth open and has iron red lips, a pinkish-mauve tongue, white teeth, a broad, flat nose, large ears, grisaille eyes and eyebrows, and blue hair, moustache and beard. His head, shoulders, stomach, hands and bare feet are faintly highlighted in shades of sepia, suggesting flesh colour. This corpulent figure, dressed like a beggar, with bare chest and prominent belly, is seated in a characteristic pose, his right leg bent and knee raised, his right hand resting on it, and his left leg bent sideways with his left foot lying next to his right leg. His left hand holds a large cloth bag decorated with a round medallion of foliate motifs and scattered flower sprays enamelled in iron red and gold, which stands out against his loose iron red robe decorated with gold lotus motifs; the robe has a green lining trimmed at the bottom with a white ribbon of flowers and leaves in shades of pink and green. Draped over this he is wearing a white cloak decorated with round medallions showing in the centre a vase flanked by two dragons, above a lotus flower and under a canopy or parasol, two of the Eight Buddhist Emblems, interlaced with pink flowers and green foliage, scattered flower sprays and butterflies in flight, outlined in iron red and filled with gold. The cloak is trimmed on the side with a black band with gold trellis and on the top it is additionally finished with a spearhead pattern. The Buddha figure is repeated in the centre of the stand, surmounted by a flower bouquet arranged in a circle. At the top of the cavetto and on the rim, a spearhead border in gold, and edge of the rim highlighted by an iron red double line.

The shape of this tureen was probably inspired by figures of Budai Heshang manufactured at the Dehua kilns and enamelled in famille rose.1 Budai Heshang is a reincarnation of Maitreya.
There are very few known armorial pieces decorated in powder blue, and only four with this coat of arms: a bottle inspired by a Dutch glass prototype in the present collection, on which the hanging cords of the ecclesiastical hat have three tassels on each side placed 1, 1, 1 (fig. 36), a stem dish in Fundação Ricardo Espírito Santo Silva, Lisbon (inv. no. 83), and the above-mentioned jar, both with the same number of tassels (six on each side placed 1, 2, 3) but with the hat represented slightly differently on the coat of arms and inspired on a metal model, and a tray from the collection of Count of Folgosa, illustrated by the Count of Castro e Solla, in which the number of tassels is four per side, placed 1, 1, 1. There seems to be no doubt that these pieces were made for the same person, most likely for D. Nuno da Cunha de Ataíde, and the uneven number of tassels can be explained by the fact that the number was only established as fifteen on each side during the pontificate of Pius VI (1775-1799), and regularized during the pontificate of Gregory XVI (1831-1846) by decree 13 of the Sacred Congregation Ceremonial, and observed ever since.

1 Langhans, 1966, p. 48.
2 Heraldic description by MLCB.
3 Zúquete (coord.), 1961, p. 188.
5 Gonçalves, 1992, p. 154, fig. 65.
7 Branco and Abreu, 2000, pp. 93-94.
10 Oliveira, 1950, p. 6.
Every book and every article depend on a considerable number of contributions, from simple commentaries about an item, an idea or the indication of a source, to a more exacting work of reading and constructive criticism, which help improve the text.

I am once again profoundly grateful to collector Dr Renato de Albuquerque and his wife for continuing to trust in my undertaking, and to Luísa Vinhais and Jorge Welsh for the effort and in-depth work involved in publishing this work, the continuation of the three previous volumes. I would like to thank Alice Stilwell for her inestimable work that often goes over and above her function as editorial coordinator; Ana Moás for her eagle-eyed proofreading; Dr Maria de Lourdes Calvão Borges for the heraldic interpretation of armorial pieces and for always giving us a little extra in terms of family data on the probable commissioners; Ms Gao and Shenglan Zhou for their task of translating from the Chinese; Alexandra Lelão, Luís Carvalho e Silva and Alice Stilwell for the translations from Portuguese; and Jane Boughton for copy-editing.

I am grateful to Alexandre Pais for invaluable information on and suggestions for other readings that always make a difference; to Professor Peter Lam for indicating the sources, illustration and identification of some of the scenes linked to Chinese literature and culture; to Professor Fernando António Baptista Pereira, Filipa Marques de Sousa, Regina Králí, Professor Christian Jörg, Dr Eva Stilwell, Maria Mendes of the State Hermitage Museum, Luísa Penalva of Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Teresa Maranhais of Palácio Nacional da Ajuda, Dr Adalino Rodrigues da Costa, Mrs Isabel Almeida Ribeiro, Monsignor Arnaldo Pinto Cardoso and Professor Ayres de Nascimento, who helped clarify certain aspects of the wares.

I would also like to thank Inês Rolo Mendonça and Pedro Noto from Panorama for the graphic design, Richard Valencia for the excellent photographs, and Aronson Antiquairs, Amsterdam, Stichting Amsterdam Museum, the Dutch National Museum, Copenhagen, Casa-Museu Medeiros e Almeida, Museu do Oriente and Palácio Nacional da Ajuda, all three in Lisbon, Museu de Évora, Convento de Santa Clara-a-Velha, Coimbra, J Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, the Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar, and Bergen City Museum, for providing images free of charge.

Thank you also to Renata Donnini, Helena Kimura, the team at Jorge Welsh Research and Publishing, and all those who contributed to the completion of this work and have not been mentioned through no one’s fault but my own.

A big thank you to you all.

Maria Antónia Pinto de Matos