

A Review of S. W. Bushell's Research on Chinese Ceramic Art in Late Nineteenth Century of China

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Abstract. British-man S. W. Bushell concentrated himself a lot in collecting, researching and writing about ancient Chinese porcelains in the late nineteenth century. And his efforts helped the western world to understanding the culture of Chinese ceramic art at that time. Bushell's research could be considered as the basis of a new light and the knowledge system in this academic field. In this paper, the author will analyze the cultural diffusion and development of Chinese ceramic in the west in late Qing dynasty, and the re-building of art historiography system about the ceramic, by reviewing Bushell's journeys in China and publications in Britain. The result will be helpful in researching of Chinese porcelain art and its communicating.

Introduction

In late thirteenth century, Italian traveler Marco Polo had introduced Chinese ceramic to Europe. Portuguese and Dutchmen began their trades of Chinese porcelains in sixteenth and seventeenth century. Until late nineteenth century, China and western countries started frequent exchanges. More and more western scholars and art collectors went to China then. Including Chinese porcelains, many of the Chinese artworks were acquainted by foreigners. British man Stephen Wootton Bushell was one of the most important persons about collecting and researching Chinese ceramics.

The British played an important role in collecting Chinese art works. Bushell became one of art collectors soon after he moved to China, worked as a medical doctor in British Embassy in Beijing. He had collected lots of ceramic works of Qing dynasty and earlier, and wrote several articles and books about ceramic art. His efforts made a great contribution to leading and demonstrating the western academic circles to studying on Chinese ceramic art. Reviewing and re-discovering the activities, academic researches and other efforts of Bushell about Chinese porcelains in late 19th century is helpful to broadcasting the ceramic culture of China over the world.

1 General Review of the Activities of Bushell in China

Bushell was born in a family of British farmers of Kent County in 1844. He finished his study in Guy's Hospital Medical School, London University while he was 22. And he got the degree of Medical Doctor two years later. On the recommendation of famous doctor William Lockhart, Bushell got the offer of doctor position of British Embassy in Peking from Lord Stanley on January 24th, 1868.

After arrival at Peking, Bushell spent a lot of time on studying mandarin and Chinese art besides his work and duty. His position of doctor brought some sorts of benefits to the hobbies of art. "I have obtained access, in the exercise of the duties of my profession, to several palaces and private houses, and have in this way had many opportunities of seeing the treasures of native collectors, which usually are so rigidly closed to foreigners." Bushell himself wrote in *Oriental Ceramic Art*.¹

In the first year in China, Bushell had joined in North-China Branch of Royal Asiatic Society. The society was an important center of cross culture communication between China and western world, and had a large number of scholars from Europe and China. Bushell had made several speeches in the society then.

At the beginning, the Chinese art collections of Bushell were some stone sculptures, bronze wares and ancient coins. The first recorded event of Bushell concerning Chinese porcelains was South Kensington Museum entrusted him making purchase of a shipment ceramic artworks in the year of 1882. Three years later, Bushell got a copy of ancient book *Noted Porcelains of Successive Dynasties with Comments and Illustrations (Lidai Mingci Tupu)* written by Hsiang Yuan-P'ien (*Xiang Yuanbian*) in Ming dynasty in the Palace of Prince Yi (*Yi Qinwang Fu*).

Bushell started his writing on Chinese ceramics in 1886. He published an essay *Chinese Porcelain before the Present Dynasty* on *Journal of the Peking Oriental Society*. Bushell retired and returned to England in the end of 1899. However, he had not stopped writing on Chinese porcelains. Totally, he had published 6 books and 5 essays on Chinese porcelains. From his published works, it was known that Bushell's interest of porcelain ranged from Han Dynasty to Qing Dynasty, and mainly in Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty. It was due to the influence of Hsiang Yuan-P'ien and Chu Yan's works.

2 The Main Achievements of Bushell's Collection and Research on Chinese Porcelains

Because of the 233 purchases for South Kensington Museum, Bushell researched Chūn Yao (*Jun Yao*), Kuan Yao (*Guan Yao*) and other kilns in Jin and Yuan Dynasty. In the meanwhile, curator Philip Cunliffe Owen of Victoria and Albert Museum appointed Bushell to purchase a lot of ancient Chinese porcelains.

During buying ceramic works for museums and himself, he translated the book *T'ao Shuo* (*Tao Shuo*) by Chu Yen (*Zhu Yan*) to English. Bushell regarded this book as the best special work. And this ancient book was captured in *Oriental Ceramic Art* published in New York, 1897. The book *Oriental Ceramic Art* featured William Thompson Walters' Chinese ceramic collections from Song Dynasty to late Qing Dynasty. T'ang Ying's (*Tang Ying*) *T'ao Yeh T'ou Shuo* (*Taoye Tushuo*) translated by Bushell was also featured in this book. Besides Chu Yen and T'ang Ying's books, *Oriental Ceramic Art* featured other important ancient book on ceramics, such as *Ching-tê-chên T'ao Lu* (*Jingdezhen Tao Lu*) and *Fou liang hsien chih* (*Fuliang Xianzhi*).

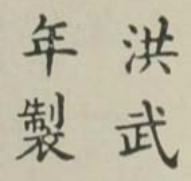
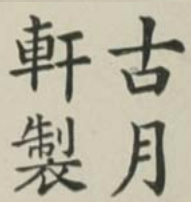

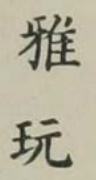
Depended on large circle of friends and acquaintances and extensive reading, Bushell wrote lots of articles for *Chinses Art* and *Oriental Ceramic Art*. These two books demonstrated Chinses artworks to western world with colored illustrations.


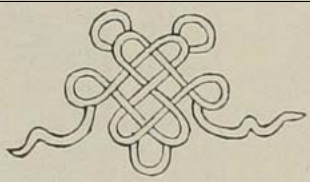
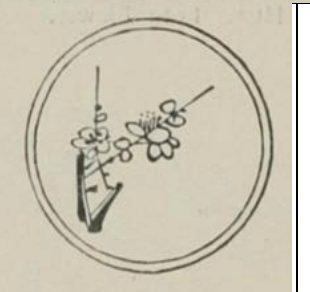

Bushell's articles added value to the books. And the value was mainly in the contents and layouts of these books. The categories and classification of Chinese art was vague and slurred in the past time. Bushell classified the art works into 12 categories according to the collections of western museums and individuals. The categories were:

- 1) Sculpture;
- 2) Architecture;
- 3) Bronze;
- 4) Carving in Wood, Ivory, Horn, etc.;
- 5) Lacquer;
- 6) Carving in Jade and Other Hard Stones;
- 7) Pottery and Porcelain;
- 8) Glass;
- 9) Enamels: Cloisonné, Champlevé and Painted;
- 10) Jewellery;
- 11) Textiles: Woven Silks, Embroidery, Carpets;
- 12) Pictorial Art.²

It be seen that Bushell thought highly about ceramic art, so that he independently listed pottery and porcelain as a category of Chinese art. What's more, he set an appendix under it, for discussing the marks and seals on the wares. He also classified the marks and seals. There were 6 kinds of marks and seals in the book *Chinese Art*.

Table 1 Mark categories in book *Chinese Art*³

Mark Category	Example Picture	Translation of Mark
Marks of date		"Hung Wu (<i>Hong Wu</i>)" Made in the Years of Hung Wu (<i>Hong Wu</i>)
Hall-marks		"Ku Yue Hsüan Chih (<i>Gu Yue Xuan Zhi</i>)" Made at the Ancient Moon Terrace
Marks of dedication and good wishes		"Ta Chi (<i>Da Ji</i>)" Good-luck
Marks in praise of the piece inscribed		"Ya Wan" Artistic Trinket

Symbols and other pictorial marks		“Lun” Wheel, enveloped in flames
		“Chang” Entrails, an endless knot
		“Mei Hua” A spring of prunus within a double ring
Potter’s marks		“Ko Yuan Hsiang Chih (<i>Ge Yuan Xiang Zhi</i>)” Made by Ko Yuan Hsiang (<i>Ge Yuan Xiang</i>)

From the table above it can be known that the sorts classified by Bushell was similar to Chinese’s. In this case we might say the reason could be the communication with Chinese collector and scholars had effect on Bushell.

Bushell classified Chinese ceramics into 4 classes as well. And each of the classes was divided into several subclasses. This classification was systematized and intuitive, and was helpful to the westerners who came into contact with Chinese ceramic art for the first time.

Table 2 Chinese ceramic classified by Bushell⁴

Class	Subclass	
Not Painted	Pain White	
	Single Coloured Glaze, Not Crakled	
	Crackled Glaze	
	Flambé Glaze	
	Soufflé Glaze	
	Glazes of Several Colours	
Painted in Colours	Under-Glaze Colours	Cobalt Blue
		Copper Red
		Celadon
		Different Colours in Combination
	Over-Glaze Colours	Iron Red
		Sepia
		Gold
		Two or more Colours
	Under Glaze and Over Glaze Colours Combined	
	Single Coloured Grounds Decorated in Colours	White Slip (Over Blue and Brown)
		Gold (Over Blue, Black, and Red)
		Mixed Enamel Colors on Crackled or Monochrome Grounds
		Medallions of Diverse Form
Special Fabrications	Etched Patterns and Embossed Designs	
	Open-Work or Reticulated	
	Open-Work Filled in with Glaze (“Grains of Rice”)	
	Imitation of Other Material – Agate, Marble, and Other Stones, Patinated Bronze, Veined Wood, Carved Cinnabar Lar, etc.	

Foreign Designs	Laque Burgauté
	Plain White
	Painted in Blue
	Painted in Enamel Colours
	Decorated in Europe

The latter class did not attract Chinese collectors' attention before Bushell's time. As a British, Bushell thought highly the class of foreign designs. This was a representation of Bushell examination oriental art with a role of the other as a foreigner.

Except classification of Chinese ceramic art works, Bushell also divide the porcelains into different periods.

Table 3 Historical periods of Chinese ceramic art divided by Bushell

Period of Chinese Ceramic	Historical Dynasty and Period	Time
Primitive Period	Song and Yuan Dynasty	A.D. 960-1368
Ming Period	Ming Dynasty	A.D. 1368-1644
K'ang Hsi Period	From the beginning of Qing Dynasty to the end of Kang Xi period	A.D. 1644-1722
Yung Chêng and Chiên Lung Period	Yong Zheng and Qian Long Period of Qing Dynasty	A.D. 1723-1795
Modern Period	Jia Qing Period to when the book was published	A.D. 1796-1905

The way Bushell divided Chinese ceramic art periods reflected his basic viewpoints about Chinese art. Because how a researcher divides the history period of art represents his concept of art history and research method. By and large, Bushell divided the periods as political dynasties.

3 Bushell's Activities in North-China Branch of Royal Asiatic Society

Since 1857, Shanghai Literary and Scientific Society was established by E. C. Bridgman and William Lockhart. Shortly after it changed its name to the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. Bushell became a member in the first year he arrived in China.⁵

The society was very important to cultural communication between China and western countries. Many western and Chinese scholars joined this society from 1857 to 1949. This branch had its own library and Shanghai Museum. The museum exhibited Chinese ceramic and art works in 1907 and 1908.

Bushell published 4 essays in the Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, and gave several speeches to the members.

Table 4 Essays in the Journal of the North-China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society by Bushell

Essay Title	Volume Number	Pages	Publish ed Year
The Stone Drum of Chou Dynasty	N.S. Vol.8	133-179	1873
Coins of the Present Dynasty of China	N.S. Vol. 15	195-308	1880
The Hsi Hsia Dynasty of Tangut: Their Money and Peculiar Script	N.S. Vol.30	142-160	1896
Additional Coins of the Present Dynasty	N.S. 33	30-45	1900

It can be seen that Bushell not only paid attention to ceramic art, but also other classes of Chinese art. And the understanding about China history and arts from other classes of Chinese art helped him doing his research on ceramics.

According to his outstanding contributions to the society and art research, Bushell became one of 65 RMs among 3158 members of this branch.

4 Bushell's Efforts to Ceramic Cultural Communication between China and Western World

While *Oriental Ceramic Art* and *Chinese Art* were published, art collectors of western world followed Chinese art works with so much interest. And the academic circle of art and archaeology had focus on China and other areas of East Asia again. To speak of, British art historian Clunas Craig divides Chinese art to Art in the Tomb, Art at Court, Art in the Temple, Art in the Life of the Elite and Art in the Market-Place, on the basis of different fields, in his book *Art in China*.⁶ This way of division of art is totally different from Bushell's. It represents the new development and advance of art research in almost one century.

Since the Renaissance, art was classified into painting, sculpture, architecture, etc. in western world. Bushell continued this concept because of two main reasons. One was the tradition of art research in 19th century in western world lasted from the Renaissance continually. The new concepts of industry age had not taken powerful hold of the

whole society. It was still a reliable way to follow the old and conventional method of classification. And it was also easy to understand. The other reason was that classifying Chinese Art was not a very important issue in the past time in China. However, the most important discussions on arts in ancient China were mainly about philosophy, aesthetics and spiritual topics. In many of the ancient books of China, it can be seen that the classification of art was painting, calligraphy, bronze, ceramic, jade, chop and sculpture. The classification was different from Bushell's.

Bushell did not simply translate Chinese book to English, nor transfer Chinese art work to western world. Due to the connection with other scholars from over the world brought by Royal Asiatic Society, Bushell played an important role in investigation, collection, connoisseurship, translation and writing about Chinese ceramic art, with the efforts of many people he met in late 19th century in China.

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