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A Study of the Artistic Interaction between Zisha Teapots and Literati Group: The Case of Zisha Teapots Decorated with Paintings and Calligraphy in the 16th-18th Centuries

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Abstract

Background and Aim: This study explores the artistic interaction between Zisha teapots and the Chinese literati tradition through a case study of Zisha teapots decorated with painting and calligraphy from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The research aims to investigate how Zisha craftsmanship and literati aesthetics influenced one another and contributed to the emergence of distinctive artistic and cultural expressions during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Materials and Methods: The study employed a qualitative research design based on purposive sampling. The sample consisted of four representative Zisha teapots featuring literati-inspired decorations and three canonical literati artworks selected to reflect key developmental stages in both Zisha decorative art and literati artistic traditions. Data collection was conducted through a systematic literature review and comparative case analysis. Descriptive analysis and content analysis were applied to examine aesthetic characteristics, symbolic meanings, artistic techniques, and conceptual relationships between Zisha art and literati culture.

Results: The findings reveal a significant artistic dialogue between Zisha teapots and literati ink traditions. This interaction is reflected in the adoption of literati motifs, calligraphy, and symbolic subject matter on Zisha surfaces, as well as the technical adaptation of ceramic engraving methods influenced by seal carving practices. The study further identifies a conceptual transformation in design philosophy, particularly through the development of a "lyricism-through-materiality" aesthetic paradigm, in which artistic emotion and intellectual cultivation were expressed through material form. The relationship between Zisha art and literati culture was strengthened through shared participation in tea culture, scholarly gatherings, and elite cultural practices, all of which promoted the pursuit of cultivated refinement as a central aesthetic ideal.

Conclusion: The study concludes that the interaction between Zisha teapot art and literati traditions represents a material embodiment of Ming–Qing literati aesthetics and cultural values. This inter-artistic exchange fostered mutually reinforcing stylistic developments in both decorative crafts and elite artistic expression. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the interconnected evolution of Chinese material culture, literati aesthetics, and traditional ceramic art.

Keywords: Zisha Teapot; Literati Art; Convergence of Aesthetics

Introduction

In pre-modern China, tea consumption became a highly refined pursuit among the elite, with rulers and intellectuals cultivating a distinct aesthetic (ya) in their tea practices. As Zhang Dafu noted in the Qing dynasty Plum Blossom Studio Collection, "For literati, savoring tea was akin to admiring beauties or appreciating ancient paintings and artifacts" (Zhang, 2016). During the 16th to 18th centuries, this refined tea culture was epitomized by the prominence of Yixing Zisha (purple-sand) teapots, which became the preeminent tea ware. As Wen Zhenheng remarked in Treatise on Superfluous Things: "Among teapots, those of sand-clay are supreme" (Wen, 1620–1627). Produced in limited quantities in the Yixing kilns of Jiangnan, Zisha teapots gained widespread acclaim as scholar-officials—who simultaneously constituted the intellectual class—commissioned bespoke creations from potters. Some of these teapots were even gifted as part of the literati's artistic exchange, gradually integrating calligraphy, painting, seal engraving,

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and poetry into their design. This fusion of tea ware with artistic practices became a hallmark of literati culture, as evidenced by scholarly consensus (Wang, 2018) that identifies three distinct phases in the evolution of Yixing Zisha: emergence, development, and maturation.

However, while existing scholarship recognizes the cultural significance of Zisha teapots, especially regarding the influence of calligraphy and painting, the specific mechanisms by which these arts converged remain underexplored. Most research has focused on master potters or the stylistic characteristics of Zisha, overlooking the process through which literati art interacted with Zisha design. This gap in the literature forms the basis of the present study, which aims to examine the interactive process itself, shedding light on the dynamics of integration between literati arts and Zisha teapots. By investigating key decorative motifs, techniques, and creative paradigms within Zisha artifacts, this study seeks to uncover the socio-economic and technical realities that facilitated this cross-influence.

This research offers a novel analytical perspective by focusing on the process of artistic convergence, a crucial aspect that has been largely neglected. In doing so, it reveals the shared aesthetic principles that underpinned the integration of Zisha with the arts of poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seal engraving. These shared principles not only shaped individual artistic expressions but also contributed to the formation of a collective identity among the literati. By examining this interactive process, the study provides insights into the broader historical and cultural forces that influenced the development of Zisha as an art form, firmly embedded in the intellectual and artistic life of the period.

For international readers unfamiliar with Chinese material culture, it is essential to understand that "literati art" refers to the artistic practices of the scholar-official class, which included poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seal engraving. Zisha teapots, made from a distinctive purple-sand clay, were prized for their functional and aesthetic qualities. These teapots became symbols of scholarly and artistic refinement, integrating various elements of literati culture into their design and use.

In conclusion, this study will fill a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the process of interaction between literati arts and Zisha teapots, offering a fresh perspective on the role of these teapots within the broader artistic and intellectual currents of Ming-Qing China.

Objectives

1. To examine the tangible manifestations of artistic interaction between literati arts and Zisha teapots.
2. To deconstruct the cultural mechanisms that catalyzed cross-disciplinary creation.

Literature review

Over the past two decades (2004 – 2024), scholarly interest in the cultural dimensions of Zisha teapots has intensified, particularly concerning their integration into literati culture. Early studies focused on individual artisans, notably Chen Mansheng, and the Yucheng Kiln as a distinct site of literati-influenced ceramic production (He, 2014). His seminal work identifies two major evolutionary phases in the synthesis of literati aesthetics and Zisha craftsmanship: the first, evident in Chen's Eighteen Classic Forms (c. 1800 – 1820), and the second, emerging from the Yucheng Kiln's output (c. 1860 – 1890).

Recent analyses have further advanced the field, highlighting the intricate relationship between form, decoration, and scholarly refinement. Pang (2021) explores the integration of calligraphy in Mansheng's teapots, emphasizing their sophisticated aesthetic and poetic qualities. Zhou (2020) provides a character study of Mei Tiaoding's designs, noting their blend of austere elegance and innovative structural elements with an archaic resonance. Liu (2019) offers an analysis of the Seventy-Three Teapot Designs manuscript, drawing connections between form, clay treatment, and decoration as markers of literati-Zisha characteristics. Li (2020) offers a theoretical framework that unpacks literati aesthetics through the dual concepts of ya (refined taste) and qu (whimsical charm).

A critical consensus in the literature underscores ceramic engraving as a pivotal medium for the expression of literati art. He (2016) directly links literati-Zisha to the fusion of poetry, calligraphy, painting,

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and seals (shuhuashiyin), positioning engraving as a central mechanism for cross-disciplinary creation. This intersection of literati arts is further explored by Wang (2018), who contends that the involvement of literati elevated Zisha craftsmanship beyond its utilitarian function, transforming it into a cultural artifact imbued with symbolic significance.

Despite the depth of scholarship, several gaps persist in the field. First, there remains a notable limitation in interdisciplinary analyses. While studies such as Zha (2022) examine individual art forms (shufa), there is a lack of systematic exploration of the interactions between literati arts and Zisha materiality. Second, while well-documented figures such as Mei Tiaoding (calligrapher) and Chen Mansheng (seal-carver) are frequently discussed, the socio-artistic mechanisms that enabled their collaborative practices have yet to be fully explored. Third, foundational primary sources, such as the Qing treatise Yangxian Minghu Xi, which discusses Zisha-poetry synthesis, remain underexplored within frameworks of artistic interaction.

To address these lacunae, this study aims to incorporate cross-cultural comparative perspectives, which will deepen the contextual understanding of the literati's influence on material culture. Such a comparative lens will situate Zisha teapots within broader patterns of elite-artisan interactions across different artistic traditions, enriching our understanding of how the literati ' s aesthetic ideals were transmitted and integrated into diverse material cultures. Additionally, this study will leverage previously understudied archival materials — such as artisan-litterati correspondence and workshop ledgers — to reconstruct the collaborative dynamics that transformed Zisha into a premier literati artifact during the late Ming and early Qing periods (1573 – 1799).

By adopting this cross-disciplinary and comparative approach, this research seeks to further illuminate the transformative role of the literati in shaping Zisha teapot artistry, while also offering new insights into the broader patterns of elite-artisan interactions in the material cultures of the period.

Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in Material Culture Theory and Art creation to examine the interplay between literati cultural production and Zisha materiality in Ming-Qing China. Chandra Mukerji's seminal work From Graven Images broadly affirms material culture's agentic capacity, asserting: "Objects act as vehicles of ideas··· Their enduring physical presence generates autonomous forces distinct from pure ideation··· This dual material-symbolic constraint endows material culture with the unique power to shape human action. " (Mukerji, 1983, p. 26)Within this framework, Literati Meaning-Making: Scholars imbued Zisha teapots with cultural codes that crystallized collective aesthetic values, transforming utilitarian objects into vehicles of intellectual expression.

Artistic creation is reconceptualized as material engagement (Malafouris, 2013) wherein cognition extends beyond individual minds into collaborative networks. The Jiangnan literati-artisan collaborations exemplify this: Experiential Phase: Literati ya aesthetics sedimented through decades of yaji gatherings (per Dewey's lived experience)Conceptual Phase: Visual schemata projected from ink landscapes to 3D teapot forms via pictorial transmediation (Arnheim, 1969)Enactive Phase: Potters negotiated design intents through clay consciousness—a tactile dialogue where 'hands think with earth' (Ingold, 2013, p. 51)This tripartite entanglement generated what Hutchins (1995) terms distributed cognitive artifacts, materializing Ming-Qing aesthetic philosophy in fired clay."

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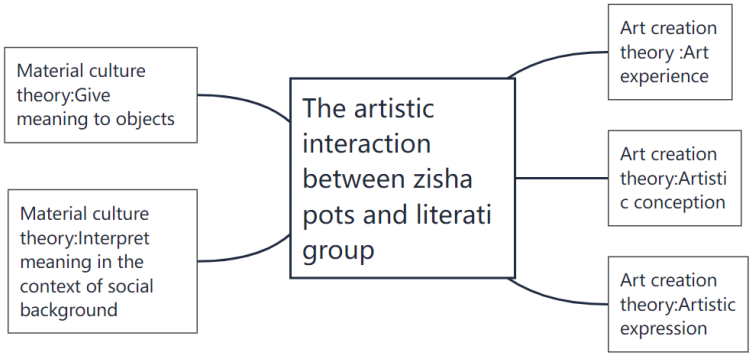


Figure 1 Research conceptual framework

Methodology

This study employs a constructivist case study approach (Yin, 2018) to investigate calligraphy-engraved Zisha teapots (1500–1800 CE) as embodiments of literati-artisan collaboration. The research design integrates a focused temporal scope from the Late Ming (1573 cited by Ebrey, 2009) to High Qing (1799 cited by Rawski,1998) periods, with analytical units comprising: (1) Material artifacts (n=7 authenticated objects): 4 Zisha teapots selected through museum provenance verification, dated inscriptions, and literati seal authentication, and 3 literati artworks; (2) Archival records including workshop ledgers and correspondence (notably the Yangxian Minghu Xi [1675] and Chen Mansheng epistolary corpus); and (3) Socio-cultural practices (documented gatherings). Grounded in a constructivist paradigm (Charmaz, 2006), this epistemological position emphasizes the co-construction of meaning through material engagement processes.

Analytical Procedures

To ensure methodological transparency and replicability, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating descriptive statistics and content analysis:

Descriptive Statistics: Quantitative analysis is applied to the material artifacts to identify patterns in form, decoration, and inscriptions. Frequency counts and statistical measures are utilized to categorize and quantify features such as motif prevalence, inscription types, and stylistic attributes. This approach allows for the identification of predominant trends and variations across the selected artifacts.

Content Analysis: Qualitative content analysis is conducted on the archival records and documented socio-cultural practices to interpret the underlying themes and meanings. Following Neuendorf (2017), the analysis involves:

Unitizing: Identifying and defining units of analysis within the texts, such as specific phrases, motifs, or references to collaborative practices.

Coding: Assigning codes to the identified units to categorize them into themes related to literati-artisan collaboration.

Theme Development: Grouping the coded units into overarching themes that reflect the nature and dynamics of the collaboration.

Interpretation: Analyzing the themes to understand the socio-cultural and artistic implications of the collaboration between literati and artisans.

To enhance the reliability and validity of the content analysis, inter-coder reliability is assessed by having multiple researchers independently code a subset of the data and then comparing the results to ensure consistency (Neuendorf, 2017).

This epistemological position emphasizes the co-construction of meaning through material engagement processes.

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Table 1 Samples

Name of artwork	Picture	Name of creator/creating time	Artwork Details	Source
DaBin“Yin” Large Round Teapot		Shi Dabin （Ming Dynasty）	Shape： Round Clay Type: Arenaceous clay Specification: Height: 19.3 cm Decoration: poem (pottery carving)	Japan Museum Collection
‘ChuanXiang” Teapot		Chen Mingyuan (Qing Dynasty)	Shape: Square Clay Type: Red clay Specifications: Length:13.2cm; Width:8.6cm; Height:6.8cm Decoration: poem (pottery carving)	Poly Huayi Fall Auction 2016

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Name of artwork	Picture	Name of creator/creating time	Artwork Details	Source
“ShiPiao” Teapot		Yang Pengnian making, QuZiye pottery carving (Qing Dynasty)	Shape: Geometric teapot Clay Color: purple red Specification: Height:5.5cm; Width:15.5cm Decoration: poem and painting(pottery carving)	Shanghai Museum Collection
“Jinglan” Teapot		Yang Pengnian, Chen Mansheng inscription (Qing Dynasty)	Shape: Round Clay Type: Red clay Specifications: Width:13.8cm; Height:7.5cm Decoration: poem (pottery carving)	Tang Yun Art Museum
Seal Engraving		Wenpeng （Ming Dynasty）	Artistic technique: intaglio	Museum of Chinese Seal Engraving
Bamboo carving		Zhou Zhiyan (Qing Dynasty)	Artistic technique: intaglio	Shanghai Museum
Bamboo and Stone Painting		Zheng Banqiao(Qing Dynasty)	Artistic Classification: Literati Painting	Shenzhen Museum

Research results

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Objective 1: The research observed that during the 16th-18th centuries (Ming and Qing dynasties), literati art was incorporated into the decoration of Zisha teapots. This integration culminated in the formation of the unified artistic paradigm integrating poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seals.

Objective 2: The research results found that during the 16th-18th centuries, the Zisha Teapot emerged as the preferred vessel for literati tea ceremonies, effectively aligning with and manifesting the characteristic elegance prized by the literati class

Discussion of research results

Objective 1: Research findings indicate a convergence in content, form, and concept between the decoration of Yixing teapots and literati painting during the 16th-18th centuries.

The decorative art of Chinese Yixing teapots underwent a significant literati-oriented transformation during the 16th to 18th centuries. A core manifestation of this shift lies in the profound convergence between the decorative content and form of teapots and literati painting. This convergence is evident across three interrelated dimensions: the form and content of inscriptions, the selection of decorative motifs, and the borrowing of artistic techniques.

The Literatization of Inscription Form: From Name Marks to the Integration of Poetry, Calligraphy, Painting, and Seals

The inscriptions on Yixing teapots evolved from a purely functional purpose of identifying the maker to an artistic expression integrating poetry, calligraphy, and seals. The resultant format achieved a high degree of conformity with the compositional layout characteristic of literati painting inscriptions. In the early period, exemplified by Shi Dabin, inscriptions already demonstrated an emphasis on calligraphic artistry, as recorded by Zhou Gaoqi in Yangxian Minghu Xi: "When engraving teapot marks, Shi Dabin initially invited skilled calligraphers to write the characters in ink, then traced them with a bamboo knife or used seals. Later, he mastered engraving characters directly with the knife. His calligraphy possessed a refined elegance, reminiscent of the styles found in the Huangtingjing and Leyi postscripts, which others could not imitate, allowing connoisseurs to use it for authentication."By the Qing dynasty, the inscription on Chen Mingyuan's Chuanxiang Hu(ChuanXiangTeapot) – engraved on the base as "Ling wo xiong zhong shu chuan xiang Mingyuan" – accompanied by his name seal "Chen Mingyuan" and sobriquet seal "Hu Yin", represents a complete inscription ensemble. Its content not only aligns perfectly with the teapot's function for steeping tea but also embodies the core literati painting principle that inscribed poetry must "correspond with the painting" – meaning the poetic content should resonate with the object's theme or the depicted scene's artistic conception. This combined format of "inscribed poem + signature + seals," along with the layout convention where the signature and seals often start on a new line (as seen in Zheng Banqiao's Bamboo and Rock painting inscription), constitutes the quintessential paradigm of literati painting inscriptions. Furthermore, Yixing craftsmen adopted the literati practice of using studio names, elegant sobriquets, and their corresponding carved seals. Examples include Shi Dabin's inscribed "Sanyou Ju" "Three Friends Studio" – likely his studio or workshop name, alluding to the literati-favored "Three Friends of Winter": pine, bamboo, and plum) and Chen Mingyuan's frequently used sobriquet seal "Hu Yin", signifying the extension of such literati customs into the realm of craft.

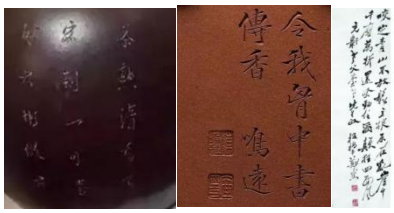


Figure 2 Comparison between the inscription on the teapot and poems inscribed on paintings

Literati Content in Decorative Motifs: The Transplantation of the "Four Gentlemen" Theme

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The decorative motifs of Yixing teapots also extensively incorporate classic themes from literati painting, particularly the "Four Gentlemen" (si junzi) – plum blossom, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum – symbols of noble character. This theme emerged as a distinct painting category in the Song dynasty, gained popularity during the Yuan and Ming, and reached its zenith in the Qing, serving as a primary vehicle for literati painters to express ideals and emotions through depicted objects. This theme was directly transplanted onto the Yixing teapot decoration. Qu Ziye's ShiPiao Teapot serves as a prominent example: one side of the teapot body features an engraved bamboo-and-rock motif, executed with precise yet dynamic knife work, conveying robust bamboo stalks and elegantly rendered leaves, imbued with a distinct epigraphic quality. Crucially, the teapot's belly features Qu Ziye's engraved renditions of bamboo paintings by Jin Nong and Zheng Banqiao, accompanied by inscriptions: "I possess a painting by Mr. Dongxin (Jin Nong) on my inkstone; the back of the stone bears a bamboo branch – I have taken its essence" next to Jin Nong's bamboo, and "Banqiao has this vertical and horizontal [stroke work], full of untrammeled spirit. The lid is inscribed "Ziye hua hu" ("Painted by Ziye"), with "Yiyuan" engraved inside. The base bears the "Ji Hu" seal, and the handle carries the "Peng Nian" mark. This teapot's decoration not only adopts the bamboo motif from the literati "Four Gentlemen" repertoire, but its pictorial composition directly derives from works by renowned contemporary literati painters (Jin Nong, Zheng Banqiao). Moreover, the inscriptions explicitly document their artistic provenance (imitation, capturing the essence). It stands as a comprehensive replication of literati painting themes, forms, and even creative concepts onto teapot decoration, and represents a collaborative product merging the arts of a master ceramic engraver (Qu Ziye) with those of celebrated painters.

Technical Interchange: The Influence of Seal Carving and Bamboo Carving

The maturation and refinement of Yixing teapot decorative techniques also reflect the borrowing and fusion of literati seal carving (zhuanke) and bamboo carving (zhuke) arts. The engraved calligraphy on Chen Mingyuan's teapots, characterized by uniform incision depth and smooth edges, aligns with the effect defined as the "double-knife technique" (shuangdao fa) in Xu Xiutang's modern treatise Zisha Gongyi (The Craft of Zisha Teapot). This technical characteristic bears a strong resemblance to the intaglio (yinwen) carving method used in seal carving. Given the relative scarcity of pictorial engraving in seal carving, the techniques for carving intricate Chinese paintings (especially floral, bird, bamboo, and rock subjects) on teapots likely drew more substantially from the highly developed literati bamboo carving art of the same period. Comparing details of knife marks in Ming-Qing bamboo carvings with those on teapot engravings (e.g., bamboo patterns) reveals significant similarities in conveying line texture and surface quality, corresponding to the "scraping" (gua) knife technique effect described by Xu Xiutang. As noted earlier, by the time of Chen Mingyuan, Yixing ceramic engraving techniques had reached maturity. The double-knife method subsequently became a stable and sophisticated primary decorative technique for Yixing teapots. This developmental trajectory demonstrates the profound influence of literati seal carving and bamboo carving arts on Yixing ceramic craftsmanship.



Figure 3 Comparison between seal engraving and pottery engraving

Zisha Teapot as a Medium for Expressing Art Philosophy: The Case of the Jinglan Hu

The creative practice of Yixing teapots further demonstrates their role as vehicles for literati expression through depicted forms. The Jinglan serves as a prime exemplar. Both the form and nomenclature of this teapot derive inspiration from the physical object of a "well curb". The inscription

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engraved on its body—" (Ji jing fei shen, qie ping fei xiao, shi yin shu ji, yong yi wei hao. Mansheng ming.)—profoundly reinforces this thematic unity. The integration of form, name, and inscription constitutes a cohesive, three-dimensional creative schema, embodying a conceptual alignment with the core literary artistic principle of "conveying ideals through depicted forms".The inscription employs the act of drawing water from a well as a metaphor, expounding the philosophical tenet of moderation in action (" Ji jing fei shen – "Drawing from the well is not about its depth" implies using resources judiciously; " Qie ping fei xiao – "Carrying the vessel is not about its smallness" signifies the suitability of the implement). Simultaneously, it resonates with the teapot's function for steeping tea (" Shi yin shu ji – "Drinking in this manner is nearly ideal"). This holistic creation elevates a utilitarian object to the realm of philosophical discourse, manifesting the literati characteristic of "using the vessel to convey the Way". This artistic technique of imbuing physical forms with philosophical imagery possesses deep roots within the literati artistic tradition. A parallel exists in Zheng Banqiao's inscribed poem for his Bamboo and Rock painting: " (Yao ding qing shan bu fang song, li gen yuan zai po yan zhong – "Clamping onto the green mountain, never loosening grip; Its roots are anchored within the shattered rocks"). Through this symbolic portrayal of the bamboo's tenacity, Zheng projects the scholar-official's spiritual character. The underlying creative logic of expressing ideals through objects is fundamentally congruent with the conceptual approach embodied in the Jinglan Hu inscription.

Objective 2: Research findings indicate that the Aesthetic Integration of Zisha Teapots into the Artful Lifestyle of the Literati

During the 16th to 18th centuries, Zisha teapots became profoundly integrated into the artful lifestyle of the Chinese literati. Through sustained interaction with scholar-official circles, they co-constructed an aesthetic system centered on Ya, the quintessential literati ideal. The aesthetic essence of Ya manifests as conceptual and formal restraint: The Classic of Poetry defines Ya as "proper", The Jade Chapters interprets it as "unadorned".This aesthetic principle materialized across literati arts: the concision of poetry, the dynamic void-solid interplay of calligraphic lines, the suggestive emptiness in ink-wash painting, and the calculated spatial rhythms in seal carving. Zisha teapot design evolution directly responded to this paradigm: Inspired by the literatus Chen Jiru, Shi Dabin transformed prevailing large-capacity hoop-handled teapots into small vessels suited for solitary literati contemplation. This shifted the teapot's role from utility to spiritual appreciation. Concurrently, dominant clay types rejected gaudy red-green glazes in favor of natural mineral hues, embodying the literati ideal of "unadorned elegance".

The literati tea ceremony was elevated to a comprehensive artistic practice pursuing "elegance": Wen Zhengming's Huishan Tea Gathering depicts scholars in plain robes sipping tea amidst secluded mountains, constructing an ethereal spatial aesthetic. Late Ming tea culture further embodied the philosophical realm of "clarity" (Sun Xixi, 2016). Garden gatherings portrayed in works like Examining Antiques, fused tea drinking, antiquing, painting/calligraphy appreciation, and poetry. Within this context, Zisha teapots—recognized as supreme vessels since "for teapots, stoneware is best" (Wen Zhenheng's Treatise on Superfluous Things)—became central to such refined assemblies. Through this integration, Zisha teapots underwent a triple ontological shift: from utilitarian vessels, to artistic mediums integrating poetry, calligraphy, and painting, and ultimately into conduits for literati aesthetic philosophy.

This interaction stemmed from the literati's practice of "unity of knowledge and action". Late Ming scholars not only personally produced tea and drew water for brewing to embody the ceremony's essence, but also deeply engaged in Zisha creation. The Qing calligrapher and seal carver Chen Mansheng established his studio "Aman tuo Studio" as a creative hub, convening literary assistants and craftsmen (Yang Pengnian, Yang Fengnian, et al.) to collaboratively design forms and compose inscriptions. This produced the "Mansheng Eighteen Styles"—a canonical series bearing the "Aman tuo Studio" seal. This system established a literati-directed collaborative paradigm: scholars provided conceptual designs and poetic inscriptions, while artisans focused on technical execution, achieving a dialectical synthesis of

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intellectual substance and technical mastery. Thus, Zisha teapots transcended functionality, becoming both material witnesses to the literati's artful existence and tangible expressions of their aesthetic ideals.



Figure 3 Ancient paintings depicting a gathering of the literati group

Conclusion

This study deciphers the formation mechanisms underpinning literati-style Zisha teapot during the 16th to 18th centuries, with a central focus on the dynamic interplay between the literati group and the artistic practices of zisha production. Through meticulous interdisciplinary analysis, the research scrutinizes the precise pathways by which literati-style zisha appropriated the integrated "poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seals" artistic system, revealing three principal mechanisms:

Paradigmatic Transplantation of Creative Mode: The creation of zisha teawares actively adopted the holistic, subject-oriented creative paradigm intrinsic to literati painting and calligraphy, namely the unified integration of poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seals. This constituted a fundamental transposition of the literati artistic framework onto the ceramic medium.

Stylistic Migration of Visual Schemata: Decorative motifs applied to the teaware bodies extensively incorporated and transformed the distinctive compositional principles and aesthetic sensibilities characteristic of literati painting, demonstrating a conscious absorption of established visual idioms.

Intertextual Linkage within Technical Genealogies: At the technical level, zisha ceramic carving processes are deeply engaged with and borrowed from the expressive systems and textural vocabulary inherent in scholarly traditions of seal-carving and bamboo carving, forging a tangible inter-artistic kinship.

Furthermore, leveraging a focused cultural examination of the "elegant gatherings" – identified as the core symbiotic arena facilitating interaction between literati and zisha – this research elucidates the underlying impetus for the profound artistic shaping of zisha by literati aesthetics. The analysis demonstrates conclusively that the driving force stemmed from the literati group's inherent aesthetic coherence. The convergence of zisha art and the shi-shu-hua-yin system towards the aesthetic realm of "elegance", culminating in a state of structural isomorphism within their aesthetic paradigms, epitomizes the concentrated material manifestation of this specific scholarly stratum's cultural identity and aesthetic ideals.

Recommendation

From the research results, the researcher has the following suggestions:

1. Suggestions for Putting Research Results to Good Use

Results from research objective 1 found that: The formation of literati-style Zisha teapot was fundamentally driven by the profound interaction between creators (artisan potters) and core users (the literati class) within a shared cultural milieu. Artisans, through close association with literati, systematically acquired the knowledge system of "poetry, calligraphy, painting, and seals" and became deeply immersed in the refined aesthetic atmosphere of scholarly culture. This significantly enhanced their artistic cultivation, directly shaping the stylistic qualities of their work and demonstrating the

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intrinsic aesthetic commonality and potential for cross-fertilization between distinct art forms (literati arts and zisha craftsmanship).

Therefore, relevant agencies/individuals should take the following actions:

To Artisans/Craftspeople: Consciously cultivate cross-disciplinary artistic literacy, particularly a deep understanding of the culture. Actively seek opportunities to study, transform, and integrate the formal languages, aesthetic sensibilities, and expressive techniques from diverse artistic domains to foster unique stylistic innovation.

To Cultural Institutions: Facilitate structured interactions and knowledge exchange between contemporary artisans and scholars/practitioners versed in traditional literati arts to replicate the historical conditions enabling creative cross-pollination.

Results from research objective 2 found that: Yixing teaware evolved into an indispensable component of the literati lifestyle during the 16th-18th centuries. The process by which objects are imbued with meaning by a specific group (the literati) constitutes the establishment of their social role and cultural symbolism, intrinsically linked to the group's status. The literati's strong need for identity affirmation necessitated aesthetic consistency in their cultural daily objects. The integration of literati's elements provided not only transferable artistic motifs and formal vocabularies but, more crucially, infused zisha ware with the core aesthetic essence and cultural character of "elegance", transforming it into a materialized representation of literati cultural identity.

Therefore, relevant agencies/individuals should take the following actions:

To Cultural Researchers & Curators: Prioritize investigating the dynamic process through which objects acquire social meaning and cultural roles, rooted in specific practices and contexts of use. Recognize artifacts as key material mediators that connect social relations, embody group identity, and convey cultural values. Apply this framework to interpreting and presenting historical and contemporary craft objects.

To Designers/Craft Artists: Understand the power of objects as carriers of cultural narrative and identity. When creating works intended for specific cultural contexts or user groups, consciously consider how design choices can embody shared values and aesthetic principles.

2. Suggestions for Future Research

This research has found that literati influence was a significant factor in the stylistic formation of the Zisha teapot during the 16th-18th centuries. The important thing is that this stylistic development was highly dependent on the individual artisan's experiences, technical mastery, and artistic sensibility. Crucially, the emergence of the "literati style" should not be singularly attributed to literati patronage. This insight can be applied to: The study of artistic influence, craft evolution, and material culture, particularly concerning interactions between elite culture and artisan production.

You (future researchers) should give importance to:

For Zisha teapot Studies: Developing a more nuanced and multi-dimensional explanatory model for the genesis of the literati style. Future research must actively investigate and analyze the roles of other critical factors, such as specific artisan lineages and master-disciple relationships; regional craft traditions and workshop practices; technological innovations in clay preparation and firing; market demands and patronage networks beyond the literati; and the impact of broader socio-cultural trends.

For Studies of 16th-18th Century Literati Life and Culture: Recognizing literati-style Yixing teawares encountered in elegant gatherings and tea ceremonies as material epitomes of literati aesthetic taste and lifestyle ideals. The artistic quality of the decorations on these wares offers a valuable window into contemporaneous developments in these art forms.

For the next research issue, research should be done on issues related to: Utilizing objects (like Zisha teapot) as primary sources to meticulously examine their circulation within literati social networks, patterns of use, and accrued symbolic meanings. This approach enables a deeper exploration of the group characteristics, social interaction patterns, and the level of material culture sophistication reflected by

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these artifacts, representing a highly fruitful and recommended research perspective for achieving a holistic understanding of late imperial elite society.

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