

An Investigation into the Relationship between the Kangxi Mark and the Qianlong Mark Enamelled Gold Bowls

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Abstract

It has been identified that the gold body of the Kangxi mark enamelled bowl from the Qing court was manufactured in Paris around 1777 according to the goldsmith hallmarks inside the bowl itself. In order to obtain further details on its manufacturing context, the X-ray fluorescence spectrometry is used to analyze the Au-body and enamel inlays of the Kangxi mark bowl, together with another Qianlong mark enamelled gold bowl also from the Qing court. The result shows the differentiation in their gold content which may explain these two almost identical bowls but bearing dissimilar deteriorations in their enamels and obvious weight difference. On the other hand, a specific list of ten enamel wares, mentioned repeatedly from the Archives of the Imperial Workshops in 1775 and in 1777, builds a stronger bond between these two bowls that both are the Qing court duplicate antique and also provides vital information on their prototype. Based on the imperial court documents, we could trace down that the Canton customs probably outsourced the manufacture of this Kangxi mark enamelled gold bowl abroad. However, the handwriting of Kangxi mark shows no sign of exotic style which suggests the inscription was most likely done by native Chinese enameller.

Keywords: basse-taille, gold bowl, the Archives of the Imperial Workshops, Kangxi, Qianlong, Canton customs