

Emperors Yejong of Goryeo and Huizong of the Northern Song: Ru and Northern Song Official Wares and Goryeo Celadon in the Early Twelfth Century

Lee Hee-gwan
Former Chief Curator of Horim Museum

Abstract

In the early twelfth century, during the reigns of emperors Yejong in Goryeo and Huizong in the Northern Song, the celadon firing simultaneously achieved unprecedented developments. This study is an attempt to explore the reasons behind this phenomenon.

For years now, many scholars have believed that Ru wares and Goryeo celadon wares existed in a direct causal relationship. In other words, the choice of Ru wares by the Northern Song court under Emperor Huizong as imperial wares led to a great development in celadon, with Goryeo absorbing the forms and methods of Ru kiln, leading to major advances in Goryeo celadon wares. While it cannot be denied that newly discovered Goryeo celadon wares of that period are related to Ru wares, many Goryeo celadon wares demonstrate a distinct difference from Ru wares. As for the reason behind this phenomenon, explaining it as merely the influence of Ru wares on Goryeo celadon wares is an unbalanced view. So what else can be the reason? According to the author's research, Goryeo at the time did not just absorb the production techniques and forms from Ru kiln, but also from Northern Song official kiln. Thus, during the reign of Emperor Yejong of Goryeo, Goryeo simultaneously absorbed the production techniques and ware forms from Ru kiln which produced the wares of the highest quality as well as Northern Song imperial kiln, leading to the great developments in Goryeo celadon.

Keywords: Goryeo celadon, Ru ware, Northern Song official ware, Yejong, Huizong

Translated by Donald E. Brix