

Yixing ware Excavated in Japan and Its Related Issues

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Abstract

Yixing ware produced in the area of modern-day Yixing County, Jiangsu Province, due to dispersal by people and circulation as commercial products, made its way to other areas in China and overseas. In the past, scholars in their discussion focused on the different forms and decorative motifs developed in response by Yixing craftsmen to different export markets. The perspective of the present study, however, points to a more unfamiliar destination of this ware for export, that of Japan and the Ryukyu Islands, to examine the date and forms of wares that have been excavated there and various related issues.

The present study first starts with research efforts on the part of Japanese scholars as a foundation to deliberate on a general idea of the date of production for archaeological and historical pieces, determining the period for Yixing ware excavated in Japan and the Ryukyu Islands. Then, on the basis of comparing external characteristics and methods of production, an introduction is offered on the one hand for the unique joining method of clay pieces for Yixing ware. And, on the other hand, it explains that “Yixing ware” mentioned in Japanese archaeological reports actually includes wares from other areas. In other words, it is a comparative retrospective on the place of production. After combing through the possible periods and places of production, the study turns to Yixing ware as export items to examine the possible routes taken to Japan and the Ryukyu Islands, as well as considering the possibility of its local sale and use, forming the focus of the investigation. Finally, by concentrating on one category, Yixing ware with molded applique that scholars considered as being solely exported to Europe, one finds its excavation in Japan and the Ryukyu Islands, as well as historical objects, as a way to reconsider this kind of export product spanning Europe and Asia. In short, besides studying Yixing ware within the network of trade between China and Japan and the Ryukyu Islands, it attempts to compare Yixing ware transported by the East India Company to Europe. By investigating individual cases in Japan and the Ryukyu Islands, it

is hoped that another side to the study of Yixing ware can be presented.

Keywords: Yixing ware, isolationism, Nagasaki, Ryukyu, Sino-Japanese trade, Sino-Ryukyu trade

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