Carrying Identity and Belonging
— A Study of Family Inherited Porcelain in the Cotswolds, Britain —

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This study aims to investigate how people treat family inherited porcelain and what the management of these porcelain means in today's Britain. In order to consider family porcelain from anthropological point of view, first, I discuss the former anthropological studies which have different approaches to objects. Secondly, I present data on how, and from whom, people inherit porcelain, and what the actual items are, based on the results of fieldwork carried out over several visits during the summer from 2001 to 2003. Finally, I would like to consider the modern meaning of family porcelain.

I. Anthropological Approaches to Family Porcelain

1. The Social History of Porcelain

Historically, fine porcelain had been brought from the Far East to Europe. It was a new, foreign commodity of fine quality, and with scarcity value, and therefore became expensive in 18th century England. A symbol of wealth, porcelain became a prestige item, which also had aesthetic value.

From the anthropological perspective of the inheritance of family property, Lévi-Strauss also comments on European family heirlooms and social relations in comparison with those of Kwakiutl. In Europe, family heirlooms, "coats of arms" and "house names" such as Bourbon, Orange, or Hanover act as certificates of an honourable pedigree, and convey values of power, authority and prestige [Lévi-Strauss 1982: 176-180]. Family portraits were one concrete example of such a certificate in Tudor England. But, several centuries later, not only family portraits, but porcelain became family heirlooms in this sense.

Interestingly enough, it seems that aristocratic styles of consumption were adopted by the lower social classes after the 18th century and throughout the 19th century. McKendrick claims that this "trickle-down effect" also covers family porcelain [McKendrick et al. 1982]. In the case of middle class and working class households, however, it seems that the role of family porcelain as a certificate of an "honourable pedigree" lost its power, and came to be interpreted more popularly as "family memory". Thus, the social value of porcelain in England has a history of adaptation: from imported objects to family heirlooms which convey family memories in ordinary households.

2. Anthropological Studies of Objects

To consider family porcelain in Britain, this paper examines two anthropological studies which have different approaches to objects. One is the biographical approach, which was first suggested by Kopytoff in his discussion of the process of commoditization and exchange [Kopytoff 1986]. As an example of small-scale societies, Kopytoff described three spheres of exchange among the Tiv of central

Nigeria: the sphere of subsistence items (yams, cereals, condiments, chickens etc.); the sphere of prestige items (cattle, slaves, ritual offices, special cloth, medicines, brass rods); and the sphere of rights in people (wives, wards, offspring). In the Tiv system, items within each sphere were exchangeable, and each was ruled by its own kind of morality, with the prestige sphere being less commoditized than the subsistence sphere [Kopytoff 1986: 71-74]. In comparison with small-scale societies, he pointed out the peculiarity of complex societies, in which commoditization operates with innumerable schemes of valuation and singularization devised by individuals, social categories, and groups, with these schemes standing in unresolvable conflict with public commoditization as well as one another [ibid: 79]. In addition to the above characteristics, he noted that reference to the passage of time helps the collective process of singularization. For instance, 30-year-old cars move into the category of antiques and rise in value with every receding year, and old furniture accomplishes the same process of sacralization at a more sedate pace in the period that separates one from one's grandparents' generation [ibid: 80].

Then, what is the biography of family porcelain? Family porcelain obviously falls into the prestige sphere of exchange, and has strong connection with the rites of passage of the family group. For example, in the case of somebody's death, before or after his death, porcelain as one of his possessions must be passed on to one or more family members. Porcelain as wedding presents can also be the starting point for the creation of a collection of family porcelain. During its life as a family heirloom, porcelain basically does not have a price, even though there is some willingness to overestimate its commodity value. But after changing owners, in another words, undergoing a process of singularization and sacralization among individuals, it will go into a second-hand, antique market as a form of "terminal commoditization" [Kopytoff 1986: 75].

The other possible approach to family porcelain is to write an ethnography of individual attitudes towards objects. McCracken tried to demonstrate the meanings of objects inherited from the past generations of a family by describing the style of consumption of Lois Roget, an old woman from a North American farming family, who maintains her family's possessions [McCracken 1988: 44-53]. Lois is bound by familial duty to store, display, and conserve the objects that have been passed on in her family and her husband's family for seven generations. The family has a very strong sense of its own continuity. Lois's heirlooms consist of a wide range of furnishings which have been passed on from a number of relatives, and which act as a kind of archive. McCracken commented on how she remembered her relatives precisely with the objects, remarking that "the relatives are so well represented I felt that she was reading me the family tree instead of showing me her living room" [ibid: 46]. For instance, an English aunt is recalled by some "pretty little plates", Lois's great-grandmother by a chair in the hall. Other objects concern important rituals in the past of the family and of her own household. The wedding of Lois's mother is recalled by "that little green cookie jar" and there are objects commemorating her wedding, her children's graduation, her husband's retirement, her wedding anniversary and so on. They have also strong ties to the locality, represented by the farm house in which they have been living for seven generations and which was made by local craftsmen of wood from local

forests. Therefore, McCracken pointed out that the family's longevity, the strength of its corporate connections, and its ties to this locality are expressed in her possessions [ibid: 46].

One of the reasons why McCracken called Lois a "curatorial consumer" is her "interactive exhibit" of the collection. For example, she has an oil lamp which is similar to the one that she used to take to bed every night in her childhood when they had no electric power. She puts it at the centre of the table at Christmas time and when her grandchildren come to visit, and the children have a special meal around the lamp, turning off the lights of the room. McCracken analysed this as similar to a participatory contact with a museum piece and as putting an otherwise distant generation in touch with its lineage by creating a living exhibit. The small lamp is one of the items in her collection, but she uses it as a symbol of family continuity. Another reason he describes Lois as a curatorial consumer is her approach to making purchases. Lois buys old objects only in order to add to the collection, and she is keen to restore a decayed family piece in order to bring out its essence. For example, she needs to find a chair that will complete a set of chairs that have descended from an aunt. Similarly, curators must continually cultivate and tend to their collections. McCracken called this pattern of consumption, "curatorial consumption" and defined it as "a pattern of consumption in which an individual treats his or her possessions as having strong mnemonic value, and entertains a sense of responsibility to these possessions that enjoins their conservation, display, and safe transmission" [McCracken 1988: 49].

Lois's consumption is rare and almost eccentric, but McCracken suggests a contrast between curatorial and modern consumption. In contemporary society, each family is free to choose its consumer goods for itself and to express its character or even to transform itself. McCracken found that even the few exceptions that can be identified, such as cutlery, plates, certain items of art and furniture having moved from one generation to another, are highly unlikely to make the transition to a third generation. On the other hand, Lois in the old curatorial system has her choices strictly constrained, and, for her, the individual is submerged within the family as corporation, through family continuity combined with a powerful sense of belonging. McCracken concluded that "the old system of family and inheritance, the movement of goods from one generation to the next was an important method of preserving the corporation, insuring its continuity, relaying its values, and of bringing each successive generation into the lineage" [McCracken 1988: 52].

In this first section, I have discussed two possible anthropological approaches to family porcelain. In this paper, I will take the ethnographic approach and combine it with the biographical approach later.

II. A Case Study of Family Porcelain in the Cotswolds

In this section, I will analyze the results of my fieldwork on family porcelain in the Cotswolds. The fieldwork data in this section is based on interviews with 15 people in their own homes. The aggregate number of pieces of porcelain is 128. (*Only Table 1 and 2 are shown in this PDF file.)

Table 1: Individual Possession of Family Porcelain (in 2002)

	Name	Age	Sex	From Grandmother	From Grandfather	From Mother	From Father	From Other Relatives	Own Purchase	Other
1	DE	88	F	♦ p		♠		♦ m	♦♦♦♣	
2	DS	88	F	♦♦♦ m		♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦		♦ pa	♦♦	
	Child	58	F			♣				
	Grand-child	35	F					♣		
3	MF	84	F	♦♦♦ p		♦ hm	◎ hf		♣	
	Child	60	F			◎◎			♣	
4	CW	70s	F	♦♦ m				♣ ma+u	◎	
	AW	70s	M				♦	♦ pu ♦ p ♣ mc		
5	VR	70s	F	♦♦♦		♦♥ ♦♦♦♥♣ hm		♦ha	♦♦♦♥♥♣	
6	AJ	74	F	♦◎ p		♦♦			♣	
	FJ	75	M	♥ p	♦ p					
7	RS	71	M			♦		♦		
8	DE	69	M					◎		◎company ♦♦♦last owner of house
	DE	60s	F	♦♦ ♥ ♣ p		♦♥♥♣♣			♣	
9	DB	68	F	♦♦ m		♥♥		♦♥a ♥ pa	♥	♦friend
10	PT	68	F	♦◎m ♣ p				♦a	♦♦♦♦	
11	BG	67	F			♥♥ ◎◎			♦♦	
12	DH	64	M			♦♦♦♦			♣	
13	CJ	60s	F	♦ p ♥ m ♥ p		♥♥ ♦♥hm	♦♦ hf	♦a		♦friend
14	CW	55	F		♦♦ p	♣				
15	GJ	50	F	♥♥♥♥♥♥ p						

Note: ♦ display, ♥ stored, ♣ daily use, ◎ special occasions, ♠ sold

p: paternal, m: maternal, hm: husband`s mother, hf: husband`s father, a: aunt, u: uncle, ha: husband`s aunt, pa: paternal aunt, c: first cousin

1. Individual Possession of Family Porcelain

First of all, Table 1 "Individual Possession of Family Porcelain" shows 15 individual cases, with ages ranging from 50 to over 80 (with one 35 year old), and illustrates in tabular form which member of the family gave or handed down the porcelain and how the porcelain is treated by each person who inherited and owns it. The symbols used show people's treatment of the porcelain. The diamond symbol represents porcelain put on display on the wall or in a cabinet; the heart symbol represents porcelain kept inside a cupboard and not used; the club symbol represents porcelain in daily use; and the double circle represents porcelain used for special occasions such as Christmas, or some celebrations, or Sundays. The spade symbol represents porcelain that has been sold.

The following four cases provide concrete examples of individual possessions of family porcelain, including the history of each family as represented by the porcelain, and informants' attitudes towards the porcelain.

(a) A couple in their 60s

Informant number 8 in Table 1, the DE family, are a husband and wife. The wife is in her 60s, and has four items from her paternal grandmother (for details see Table 4). Of these four, two items are prominently on display above the fireplace in their living room. One of these is a big Christmas plate with a "Mr. Holly" face, which was used for Christmas pudding once a year when her children were small. Another is a big Imari plate, which as far back as she could remember had been used for decoration, and used to be displayed on a wooden rack near the ceiling of her parents' and grandparents' house. Another item, a tea set of Grosvenor China, which was a wedding present to her grandparents in 1900 is kept inside a cupboard, while another tea set of Limoges from her paternal grandmother is often used. She also has five items which came from her mother (for details see Table 3): one on display (a big 1920s Royal Doulton plate put up on the wall above the fireplace which, like the big Imari plate, has always been used for decoration), two kept in cupboards (a Copeland dessert set which was a wedding present to her parents' in 1936, and a plate of Spode), and two which are in daily use (plates of Copeland and Spode). She told me that she especially liked the bubbly orange and flower patterns of the Copeland dessert set, which always reminds her of her parents. She bought one further item herself to add to her dinner plates for daily use.

Her husband, aged 69, has an item for special occasions not from his grandparents or parents, but from his other relatives. It is a dinner service (Royal Doulton, "Chateau Rose") given as a wedding present by his paternal aunt. He also has another dinner service for special occasions, which was given to him as a retirement present from his company. He also pointed out and explained three items on display in his house, which were bought from the last owner of his house before she died.

This couple had lived in London for a long time until the husband retired from his work as an executive in a famous department store and came to live in a north Cotswold town. He has family connections with this small town, and used to visit there with his parents on holiday in his childhood.

The last owner of the house was a friend of his parents', and had no relatives to succeed to her property. In a sense, they preserve the memory of the last owner of the house as well as the memory of their own families and rituals such as weddings and retirement. It is also important to note that they have room for storing all the items in their house.

(b) A 68-year-old woman

Informant number 10, PT, is a 68-year-old woman who worked as a librarian in a Cotswold town for 27 years. She has one item inherited from her maternal grandmother, who was given it as a wedding present over 100 years ago (for details see Table 4). It is a tea set which she usually puts on display in a glass cabinet and uses for special occasions, such as her grandson's christening 19 years ago. She has another tea set for daily use given to her as an engagement present by her paternal grandmother. Another tea set of hers came from her aunt, and is displayed in a glass cabinet also given by her aunt (for details see Table 6). She purchased four other items herself (for details see Table 5): a dressing set (it includes cosmetic pieces such as a powder and puff basin for makeup and toiletry items such as a bowl and a jug for washing the face) which is displayed on her dressing table; some Copeland figurines and a Royal Worcester bird figurine which are kept on top of the glass cabinet; and a foreign-made coffee set which is kept inside the glass cabinet.

She compared porcelain and silver ware in the following way: "People do not hand down silverware. Some do, but people tend to sell it because it is silver. Silver hasn't got much decoration. You've got to use it. You can't keep it in the cabinet like this (the porcelain she has). Porcelain has a more decorative and ornamental character than silver. Silver is unbreakable, so it is easy to handle, but different from what people think of china."

She not only preserves her grandmother's memory through her tea set, but also hands down family memories to the generation of her grandchildren by using it for her family's ritual celebrations as well as putting it on display.

(c) Three generations of one family

Informant number 2, DS, an 88-year-old woman living by herself, likes to display her porcelain as much as she can. Three Staffordshire figurines from her maternal grandmother are kept on a shelf with her family photographs. She is also has eight items from her mother on display, together with one from a paternal aunt and two items which she purchased. The eight items from her mother include a sardine dish, moustache cup, shaving cup, feeding cup and Toby jugs, most of which are rare pieces to see in people's houses now (for details see Table 3). One from her paternal aunt is a Luster Jug, which is also unusual to see now. Her purchased items are a tea set and a large collection of royal commemorative porcelain (mugs and plates), also displayed on a shelf.

She also told me about the porcelain her daughter and her granddaughter have, and explained how people's way of using dishes has changed. Her daughter, aged 58, has part of a dinner service given by

her (DS) with the idea that the daughter could add to it herself. The daughter also has a dinner service of Royal Worcester "Evesham" which she was given as a wedding present. "Evesham" is the name of a local place where there used to be many fruit trees such as plums and pears, and these local fruits are depicted in the pattern. Because of this, local people in this area are familiar with and fond of this pattern. DS, however, added that her daughter's plates were not dishwasher-proof (they predated dishwashers), so most of the patterns on the plates were faded by being washed in the dishwasher. Her granddaughter, aged 35, who has been married for 10 years, was given a vegetable dish as a wedding present which is also part of a Royal Worcester "Evesham" dinner service, but which is dishwasher safe.

DS recalled the past when talking of how dinner services were formerly used. "People had Sunday lunch on the best dinner service which was used only for special occasions, and all members of the family sat at the table to eat the special Sunday lunch which nowadays we do not have so often". She explained what a dinner service used to consist of, and commented that she felt how much times had changed, seeing people who hardly ever use a full dinner service, but just use big dishwasher and microwave safe plates to put everything on.

DS is interested in displaying rare pieces of family porcelain. She is also creating her own family porcelain by collecting royal commemorative porcelain herself and dividing her own dinner service among her daughters. Similar cases can be found among the other informants. For example, BG, a 67-year-old housewife, has been collecting Royal Doulton Toby jugs and royal commemorative mugs and displaying them on a shelf above the curtain pelmet as if some of the faces pictured on this porcelain are looking down on the room from the ceiling. Other informants (see Table 1) such as a couple in their 70s (AJ and FJ) and DB, a widow aged 68, purchased brand-new dinner services in order to give to or divide among their children after their death as their own family porcelain.

(d) An aristocratic family

Informant number 3, MF, an 84-year-old woman, is the descendant of local aristocratic family in the Cotswolds town where she lives. She is actually living in a small part of the grand mansion house which one of her ancestors built 300 years ago, most of which was burned down in the Civil War. Her eldest brother is the main successor to the family line, and does not live in the town, but in another bigger property further north.

She has three items from her paternal grandmother: two Rockingham figures of birds, and a Staffordshire figurine of a cow, which are displayed above the fireplace. A Georgian tea set, handed down from her mother-in-law's family, is in a showcase in her living room. She explained, "It is valuable, so I have to keep it in a glass-fronted cabinet". She also has a Copeland dinner service with the family coat of arms from her father-in-law. She uses it very occasionally for anniversaries and special celebrations for members of the family, for example when she had her birthday celebration at the age of 80. She also has her own dinner service of Minton which she is passing on to her daughter.

She explained the porcelain with her family coat of arms by saying, "Only for the dinner service. We don't have tea cups and saucers with the coat of arms". As for the porcelain in general, she said, "We didn't buy them". Her family is used to inheriting family porcelain and being given it by other relatives, and they do not have as much interest in handing down cups and saucers as people from outside the aristocracy or landed gentry. In relation to the family porcelain, she talked about the history of her family line which started from a wealthy wool merchant who built the mansion house in the 17th century, and continues with her grandchildren.

Her daughter, aged 60, who will inherit her property and is now living with her (MF), has two sets of dinner service for special occasions. One is from her mother (MF) (mentioned above), and another is a Minton dinner service given to her as her own wedding present. She also bought her own dinner service of Spode for daily use which is dishwasher and microwave safe. As she said that she went to a boarding school in London and had been living away from her mother's house, she didn't know much detail about any objects in the house which carried a long family history connected to the family line and property. However, she has been learning about them since she came to live with her mother and has begun to take over some property from her.

This case of an aristocratic family is different from other three cases. It shows the history of the management culture of family porcelain in which families belonging to the landed gentry or the aristocracy used to hand down their family porcelain, such as dinner services with a coat of arms from the paternal side. These were not bought, but inherited, along with the history of the family line. The successor from the next generation of the family is learning about the family history by living in the symbolic mansion house surrounded by a wide range of objects.

2. Family Porcelain: "Maternal" Porcelain and "Display"

Table 2 "Number of Family Porcelain" shows the aggregate number of pieces of porcelain categorised by its source (from whom it is inherited) and people's treatment of it. We can see that about 34% of the family porcelain is from mothers and about 24% is from grandmothers. Altogether, nearly 60% of family porcelain is from mothers and grandmothers, that is, the women in the families. In the case of the porcelain from grandmothers, there are 10 items from maternal grandmothers and 21 items from paternal grandmothers (see Table 1). To be exact, the "maternal" family porcelain, found in my research, is the porcelain from mothers (34%) and maternal grandmothers (8%), which is about 42% of the total numbers of family porcelain. On the other hand, the "paternal" family porcelain is the porcelain from fathers (3%), paternal grandmothers (16%) and paternal grandfather (2%), which is about 21% of the family porcelain (see Table 1), or half the number of the "maternal" family porcelain. Thus, family porcelain tends to be inherited from the women in the family and the "maternal" family.

Some of the informants said that this was because people inherited bigger items of property such as houses and furniture from the paternal side and smaller objects such as porcelain and jewellery from the maternal side. Another reason, they pointed out, is that women have always been closely involved

Table 2: Numbers of Family Porcelain (in 2002)

	Display	Stored	Daily Use	Special Occasions	Sold	Total (%)
From Mother	22	11	5	4	1	43 (34)
From Grandmother	16	11	2	2	0	31 (24)
Own Purchase	14	1	7	1	0	23 (18)
From Other Relatives	9	2	3	1	0	15 (12)
From Grandfather	6	0	0	0	0	6 (5)
Other (from friends etc.)	4	1	0	1	0	6 (5)
From Father	3	0	0	1	0	4 (3)
Total (% Total (%)	74 (58)	26 (20)	17 (13)	10 (7)	1 (0.7)	128

*Notes: Numbers counted in each treatment, when one item has more than one treatment.

with the use of porcelain through cooking and housekeeping, so that people tend to relate porcelain to the memory of their mothers and grandmothers and then think of it as coming from the maternal side, even though the actual owners of porcelain were fathers and grandfathers. This is also clearly reflected in the fact that it was women who were introduced to me and actually gave explanations when I conducted interviews about family porcelain.

However, family porcelain from mothers is handed down not only to daughters, but also to sons. In fact, the male informants such as RS, aged 71, and DH, aged 64, (Table 1) were given porcelain by their mothers, but they are the eldest sons. This porcelain will be inherited by their children, but is described as coming from their mothers, who are "paternal grandmothers" to their children. It can be also assumed from the history of patrilineality in English inheritance that mothers tend to give things to their son's children. The result is that there was twice as much porcelain inherited from paternal grandmothers as from maternal grandmothers, perhaps indicating that patrilineal inheritance still takes place, but skips a generation.

As for the treatment of the porcelain, about 58% of it is put on display and about 20 % is kept, but not put on display or used regularly. It can be said that nearly 80% of the whole family porcelain is not used, but is maintained by being displayed or kept safely. The display of family porcelain both makes visible and transmits the memories of family members and ritual celebrations, that is, the family history, to the next generation. If family porcelain is used everyday, or even just on special occasions, the family history carried by the porcelain will be more actively maintained as a part of daily life within the family although there are few cases of this in the results of my research. .

On the whole, over half of the pieces of porcelain from informants' mothers are put on display and 25% of them are kept, but put away. Half of the pieces of porcelain from grandmothers are put on display and one third of them are stored away. Maternal memories carried by porcelain are inherited more visibly within families.

If family porcelain is mostly stored and displayed in people's houses, what sort of porcelain have people handed down for generations? And what sort of porcelain do people store, display, or use in their houses? The next section will analyse the actual items and investigate the various values they embody.

3. Different Values of Family Porcelain

Tables 3 to 7 give a description of the actual items of porcelain, categorised according to provenance – from which relative they were acquired, or if they were purchased. These tables also show where the porcelain is displayed, and other detailed information. For instance, some were given as a wedding present from the husband's mother and some are kept because they were wedding presents to parents or grandparents.

Among the porcelain from grandparents (Tables 4 and 7), figurines, jugs, vases and big plates are displayed on walls, tables, shelves or window sills. These include Staffordshire figurines, an Irish jug, a jug picturing Africa, Japanese vases and some oriental big plates, and are displayed in order to emphasise the aesthetic value of the objects. Some tea sets are displayed inside a glass cabinet because they are "fragile and valuable". "Valuable" also means "prestigious". In England, foreign objects such as old Japanese and Chinese porcelain are valuable, and this is related to their history of importation and adaptation into English society. Examples of such items are CW's Japanese vases and Chinese ginger jar, and DE's big Imari plate, all of which were inherited from their respective grandmothers (Table 4), and AW's Japanese stand from his father (Table 9), all of which are put on display; and VR's Noritake China dinner service from her mother-in-law which is in daily use. English porcelain makers' oriental designs and patterns related to Chinese porcelain include "blue and white" plates such as Spode's or Copeland's "Italian Spode" pattern (Table 3 stored items from mother) and "willow pattern" porcelain such as Booths' dessert dish and cups and saucers (Table 4 stored items from grandmother). There are also no-brand "blue and white" plates and a big plate of an English maker's oriental design which are on display (Table 7).

Interestingly, among the items from grandmothers and mothers (Tables 3 and 4) that people keep inside cabinets or cupboards, are grandparents' or parents' wedding presents or some remembrance of them. These items of remembrance are often some sort of set such as tea or coffee sets or dessert sets or even cups and saucers.

If we consider porcelain that is actually used, whether for "daily use" or "special occasions" throughout these tables, there are more tea and coffee sets and dinner services than other types of porcelain. In particular, most dinner services can be found in the "daily use" or "special occasions"

categories of porcelain passed on from informants' mothers, or porcelain purchased by informants themselves.

People also collect items which they like and add them to what they have been given. Some examples are Staffordshire figurines inherited from grandmothers, as well as Toby jugs and royal commemorative plates and mugs, some inherited from informants' mothers and some purchased by informants themselves. Commemorative porcelain is related to a public memory which contemporary people can share, while specific members of the royal family remind a person of his or her own life at the time [Ozeki 1999:8]. Personal relationships as an informative aspect of family porcelain can be seen here.

Lastly, there is the educational value of family porcelain: to pass on memories of past family members to the next generation of the family. Family porcelain is not only an object, but it also tells the history of the family when people look at it in glass cabinets or on shelves and use it daily or for special occasions. Moreover, as in the case of the daughter of the aristocratic family, discussed above, after a person inherits porcelain, the person may come to know and experience the history of his or her family.

Thus, the actual items of family porcelain contain various values: aesthetic, remembrance, utility, informative, educational, and prestige and monetary worth. Each item may combine various values. In terms of their value as commodities, the brand is also important for all the items of family porcelain. Most of what people showed was brand-name porcelain, and I made a note of any brand names found on the bottom of any items. Famous English brand names such as Minton, Spode, Royal Doulton, Royal Worcester, Wedgwood, Copeland, Coalport and so on were found in all types of items, from Toby jugs to dinner services. The power of the brand name makes family porcelain more valuable and prestigious, and makes owners willing to hand it down within families. However, it is also true to say that there are items of no-brand family porcelain which carry a strong memory of family members for their owners. In this sense, even without a brand name, family porcelain is still a symbolic object for the family.

Conclusion

I sum up the results and analysis of this paper under the following three aspects.

(1) The changes and continuity of the British society

Family porcelain reflects the changes and continuity of the British society. The beginning of its social history, in which porcelain came to England as imported foreign objects, can still be observed in a few old Japanese, Chinese and "blue and white" plates displayed in glass cabinets or walls or shelves. The case of the aristocratic family shows that the aristocracy used to have full dinner services featuring their coat of arms handed down within the family.

As shown by the case of DS, an 88-year-old woman (Table 1), who recalls the scene of Sunday lunch in the past with the best dinner service, porcelain also embodies the family life of the past, which has been lost nowadays in many households. Her own daughter and granddaughter have dinner services for daily use which are dishwasher and microwave safe. Also, dinner services tend to be divided up

after a few generations. The sets of family porcelain which my informants often have are not dinner services, but tea sets, reflecting the change in people's lifestyle and problems of storage space experienced by younger generations in the early 21st century.

Next, as for the English inheritance patterns, the result that over 60% of family porcelain is passed on from mothers and grandmothers, and 42% is the "maternal" family porcelain (inherited from mothers and maternal grandmothers) as shown in Tables 1 and 2. In short, family porcelain is handed down from the women in the family. One of the reasons for this is based on the old English inheritance patterns, that the bigger types of property such as houses and furniture are passed on from the paternal family, and the smaller types of property such as porcelain and jewellery are from the maternal family. Another reason is that people tend to relate their memory of the women in the family to the porcelain because they have always looked after porcelain as part of housekeeping. In any reason, it is certain that the memory of mothers and grandmothers carried by the family porcelain is vividly transmitted by putting it on display in people's houses.

Furthermore, the history of patrilineality in English inheritance is demonstrated in the case of the aristocratic family discussed above, and in the results of Table 2, which showed that porcelain inherited from paternal grandmothers is twice as common as that inherited from maternal grandmothers. It seems that patrilineal inheritance still survives in the passing on of family porcelain from grandparents to grandchildren in England.

(2) Family porcelain connecting generations

As Kopytoff argues, family porcelain also has its own social biography. Tracing its life, porcelain handed down within a family connects different generations into the linage.

People are given porcelain for their 21st birthday, as an engagement or wedding present, on retirement, and on the death of relatives. The birth of family porcelain is thus often related to family rituals or ceremonies. It may include tea sets, cups and saucers, dinner services, plates, and figurines. Some informants purchased royal commemorative mugs and plates or Staffordshire figurines themselves in order to make their own collections, and some purchased new dinner services to hand down to their children in the future. This is also a way of beginning a collection of family porcelain.

Family porcelain continues its existence for several generations within one family. Although McCracken claims that each family is free to choose its consumer goods and that items like plates rarely survive for three generations nowadays, there were quite a number of items of family porcelain in this case study which were described as being passed on from grandparents. Family porcelain has participated in important rituals in the past of the family and also concerns the present owner's household. A tea set, for example, given to PT, a 68-year-old woman, by her grandmother (Table 4), was originally given to PT's grandmother as her wedding present over 100 years ago. It is now on display in a glass cabinet, and was used for PT's grandchildren's christening by PT. This shows that the tea set has survived for at least three generations and has links with five generations in the family.

At the end of its life, unless it is broken, lost, or stolen, family porcelain is sold into antique markets as a "terminal commodity", or is again given to another person who is not a member of the family. Then, it may or may not have an after-life as family porcelain in a different family.

(3) The way of connecting generations

The way in which family porcelain is kept and displayed is quite similar to Lois Roget's treatment of objects as a curatorial conservationist of her family possessions, as described by McCracken [1988]. Some informants recalled their memories of the past family members by objects such as a dessert set, a big Christmas plate and Staffordshire figurines. A number of informants talked about their memories of important family rituals in the past, and also in their own households, with reference to family porcelain. Several informants, who also were born and bred in the area, are even using Royal Worcester's "Evesham" dinner service which is named after the local town and the pattern of which shows local fruits. They have a sense of the family's continuity, corporate connections, and its tie to the locality to some extent, although not as strongly as Lois. Some do use their family porcelain for special occasions such as their grandchildren's christenings, relatives' funerals or an 80th birthday celebration with their family, in a similar way to Lois's "interactive exhibit" of her collection. So, subsequent generations can make contact with their own lineage through the family porcelain by taking part in these rituals.

However, the case study discussed in this paper does not show the "old system" which McCracken pointed out in Lois's style of consumption. If we compare the old system with the modern consumption, the former is a strictly restricted system of consumption and there is no individual autonomy: the emphasis is on family continuity and a powerful sense of belonging, while in modern consumption, the individual is free to choose the family's consumer goods for itself, as a means of expressing character and even transformation of the family's concept. Such restricted aspects as McCracken thinks in the old system cannot be found in this case study, although the people interviewed do have some sense of belonging and of family continuity. People seem to enjoy buying their own collections of porcelain in the modern system, for example royal commemorative items, Staffordshire figurines, or dinner services, as well as maintaining the heirlooms handed down in the family in the old system. By using both systems, people express quite freely their own taste and style, and the character of their own household, as well as family continuity and a sense of belonging. In other words, family porcelain in modern Britain is carrying people's identity as themselves and belonging to their own linage.

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