

Wall-Painting after Chinese Fashion in Bohemia

In the eighteenth century, Chinese fashion swept Europe and left visible traces in many branches of European art. This article examines the taste for *chinoiserie* and exotics in Bohemia,¹ by the means of wall-paintings and some other flat decorations fixed onto walls. The reason why I chose interior wall-paintings is their commonplace, and also their relative persistence. They by far outnumbered walls decorated with authentic imported materials, e.g. wallpapers or textile panels, and unlike the movable items, e.g. furniture or ceramics, they remained in place through the course of history.² It needs to be added that this is the first published survey of its kind.³ The phenomenon of *chinoiserie* in Bohemia has not yet been given appropriate attention, let alone searched in complexity, and is still widely open.⁴

Chinese fashion reached Austria later than it had reached Western Europe. This was caused not only by the inland location of Austria which hindered the import of exotic goods, but also by the economic consequences of the Thirty Years War. Günther Berger, who earlier surveyed and described *chinoiserie* in Austria, divided its reception into three periods: copies of Far Eastern imports (1670–1730); variations and paraphrases of Far Eastern

models (circa 1720–1760); and the third period bound with ethnology and nature research, up to the Romantic era (1760–1820).⁵ The situation in Bohemia basically complies with his characterization, however, the earliest examples of *chinoiserie* are still later, from the turn of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Striking about local *chinoise* wall decorations is their diversity. I shall therefore attempt to classify them according to the materials, techniques and genres deployed, and where ever possible, respect the chronological order. The survey unfolds along the following scheme:

Imitations of lacquerware

Using locally-made varnish

The *lacca povera* technique

Copies of Chinese models

Wall-paintings depicting ceramics

Illusory porcelain cabinets

Depictions of “Delft tiles”

Chinese prints and wallpapers

Wall-paintings inspired by French *chinoiserie*

Chinese figures rendered as silhouettes

Decorative scenes with idealized Chinese motifs

1 In historical terms, the Lands of the Crown of Bohemia, which included Bohemia proper, Moravia, and Silesia. This territory is often simply referred to as Bohemia, and I shall follow the habit, unless otherwise stated. Likewise, the denomination Austria refers to the whole Austrian Empire and not just the Archduchy of Austria, roughly the present Austrian Republic.

2 The confiscations of the German and private properties, in 1945 and 1948 respectively, emptied the majority of the interior spaces in aristocratic dwellings. The movable items were stored away, and many buildings adapted to other usage.

3 Precisely, this is the first survey in English; its predecessor appeared in Czech: *Lucie Olivová, Čínské komnaty v Čechách a na Moravě: výzdoba stěn* [Chinese rooms in Bohemia and Moravia: wall decorations], *Zprávy památkové péče* (ZPP) 78, Heft 2, Praha 2018, p. 151–158. My research relied chiefly on the support kindly provided by the Dean's Grant at Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, 2018. The author would also like to thank Dr. Stephen Jones of SOAS, London, for his valuable editorial input.

4 Although there are excellent Czech studies, their authors usually study a specific antiques type, not the phenomenon itself. Among the recent studies, there are *Helena Brožková, Daniel a Ignác Preisslerové – barokní malíři skla a porcelánu* [D. & I. Preissler – baroque painters on glass and porcelain], Praha 2009.– *Filip Suchomel, 3sta drahocennosti: čínský porcelán ze sbírek Valdštejnů, Schwarzenbergů a Lichnowských* [3hundred treasures: Chinese porcelain from the Wallenstein, Schwarzenberg and Lichnowski collections], Praha 2015.

5 *Günther Berger, Chinoiserien in Österreich-Ungarn*, Frankfurt am Main 1995, p. 118–152.

Wall-paintings with landscapes

Based on illustrations from books about China
Illusive exotic landscapes

Imitations of lacquerware

Using locally-made varnish

In Bohemia, there are no interiors panelled with genuine, yet very expensive Asian lacquer boards, such as can be seen in Schönbrunn, or the Fertőd Esterháza palaces. However, rooms embellished with false lacquered wall-segments exist. They are both quite early and share specific design. Possibly the oldest are the four doorways and a cupboard located in the dining-hall at Zákupy (Reichstadt) castle, embodying only a part of the overall wall decorations. The room was completed in 1701 or 1702, when it belonged to the Sachsen-Lauenburg dynasty.⁶ The door-leaves are dark, covered with an almost discernible collage (*lacca povera*), and varnished. On this base, contrasting white oval cartouches, approximately 30 cm in height, were evenly placed, picturing Chinese figures in exotic outdoors setting, in light blue colour. The pictures are executed in the style of French *chinoiserie*, their colouring alludes to blue-and-white ceramics. The same concept was used when designing the oval cabinet on the second floor of the Sternberg Palace in Prague, completed in 1708 or 1709. Its walls are divided into ten vertical segments alternating Chinese and Classical (i. e. ancient Greek and Roman) themes, as was common in baroque art. The Classical segments have the form of concave niches, whereas the Chinese segments are flat, and use two kinds of varnished decoration. The first kind is varnished black boards, partly painted with colourful figures: it imitates authentic Chinese lacquer panels. The second one is represented by white wooden plaques, symmetrically arranged on the boards, and also on the door-leaves. Their images – figures in garden setting – seem to be copied from authentic Chinese drawings. Some of them are flat and bear the look of lacquerware, but some, placed above, are oval, have convex surface and



Fig. 1: Oval cabinet, Sternberg Palace, Prague, 1708 or 1709

are set in rich gilded frames. They rather seem to imitate shiny porcelain in brass mounting (Fig. 1). Archive documents state that the artist, Johann Adalbert Kratochvíle (1667–1721), had obtained the imperial privilege in 1712 to produce artefacts in “Indian style”, which gave him the monopoly against the other competing decorators in the trade.⁷ As far as we know, this is his only surviving interior.

The *lacca povera* technique

Another way of imitating lacquered surfaces was the so-called *lacca povera* or *faux lacque*. This peculiar technique was intended to recreate the sought-after Asian lacquerware. Ready-made images printed on paper were

⁶ The castle was occupied by the deposed emperor Ferdinand V. and his wife after 1848. All interiors were modernized, only the dining-hall, due to its striking renaissance embellishment, has been preserved.

⁷ Archiv hl. města Prahy, Collection of manuscripts, sign. 338. I am grateful to R. Heisslerová, from the National Gallery Archive (Archiv Národní galerie), for bringing the document to my attention.



Fig. 2: A lacca povera panel, Chinese cabinet, Jaroměřice chateau, 1730s

cut out (hence the alternative term *découpage*) and glued onto wooden, paper or textile base, and finally repeatedly washed with layers of varnish. Not only the shine, but also the haphazard composition on an empty background resembled images on Japanese or Chinese lacquerware; last but not least, the printed images often represented Chinese figures and objects. *Lacca povera* originated in the 1720s in Venice, and soon became fashionable across Europe as a favourite pastime of upper-class women.⁸ The products, mostly furniture, were delicate and vulnerable to the menace of time. In spite of that, two interiors with *lacca povera* decorated walls have been preserved in Moravia, one at Jaroměřice (Jarmeritz), and the other at Milotice, being both the name of the township and the chateau. In the so-called Chinese cabinet at Jaroměřice, a small interior from the early 1730s, the Count received his



Fig. 3: Milotice chateau, circa 1740

most distinguished guests. The interior indeed looks like a jewel box with lavishly decorated walls, large mirrors, inlaid wooden floor and stucco ceiling. Attached to the walls are ten panels (height 328 cm, width 70 cm or less) decorated in *lacca povera* (Fig. 2). Preliminary blue strips with golden edges were painted across the surface of each panel, giving the sense of a symmetric composition. Of a somewhat later date, around 1740, is the rectangular room at Milotice (Fig. 3), a chateau then owned by Karl Anton Serényi (1681–1746), a member of the Secret Council at the court.⁹ The walls are fully covered by *lacca povera* collage applied on canvas, however, only a few of the printed images do relate to China. The ceiling is painted with *grotesques*, elegant ornaments popular at the time. In addition, three cabinets (pieces of furniture) deploying the *lacca povera* technique are preserved at Milotice.

Wall-paintings copying Chinese models

A relatively early *chinoise* interior, in terms of Austria, is the *sala terrena* of the Budišov castle. In general, *sala terrena* was a large hall on the ground floor of a mansion, open to the garden and designed for social events. This one consists of two joint spaces with massive vaults. The walls are now whitewashed up to 2 m, but the vaults

⁸ <http://buzzonantiques.blogspot.com/2009/02/word-of-lacca-povera.html> (10.9.2021).

⁹ Václav Lunga, *Zámek Milotice*, Kroměříž 2017, p. 6, 35.



Fig. 4: Stucco and mural on the vault of Budišovice sala terrena, detail, between 1722 and 1725

are covered with gilded stucco featuring geometric, floral and zoomorphic ornaments, including dragons and snakes, which surround painted images of figures in garden setting, rendered in colours against a bright aquamarine background (Fig. 4). Stuccoes are executed in the contemporary European manner, but the painting and its composition seem to follow Chinese depictions of palace ladies. Coromandel screens, which were imported to Europe, are a plausible source.¹⁰

The vaults of the *sala terrena* were decorated between 1722 and 1725, during a major reconstruction of the site. The owner, Count Josef Ignaz von Paar, held a high court office under Joseph I (1705–1711), and his wife was a lady-in-waiting to the Empress, thus their aesthetic taste was obviously linked with the imperial circles. Artists were called on from Vienna, among them Jonas Drentwett (1656–1736), known for the Belvedere interiors, made for Prince Eugene of Savoy. In Budišov, Drentwett probably decorated two rooms on the upper floor, in a distinct style complemented with the *grotesque* ornament, including two symmetrically placed, separate figures of Chinese boys.¹¹

The authorship of the murals and stuccoes in the *sala terrena* is pending, however. The murals seem special among the other material discussed in this article, since the unknown artist most likely copied images from authentic Chinese models. This way of dealing with Chinese topics, also witnessed in the Sternberg Palace, receded if not disappeared after 1740, when the fanciful and rich strain of *chinoiserie* came into vogue.

Wall-paintings depicting ceramics

Illusory porcelain cabinets

Europeans were equally fascinated by lacquerware and porcelain, and those who could afford it displayed their treasured collections on the walls of small cabinets: the Sibyllenkabinett at Altenburg, Saxony, built 1734/35, is one of the few surviving rococo examples. Such early cabinets are not extant in Bohemia, but there are inventories of large and valuable porcelain collections of relatively early dates, i. e. early eighteenth century.¹² This kind of furnishing has been preserved also in illusionist wall-paintings, for example, in the Jaroměřice ballroom.¹³ The colourful frescoes on its walls and ceiling were executed in 1736 in the typical illusionist manner – the image seems three-dimensional, although depicted on a flat surface. Although scenes from Greek mythology prevail in this ballroom, and the minor elements (putti, floral ornamentation) are typically baroque, the viewer will notice a few Chinese motifs (Fig. 5). Namely two plump, whimsical figures seated cross-legged, if not Chinese then definitely oriental, placed in the upper plane, opposite one another across the width of the ballroom, as well as some blue-and-white vases, decorated with small Chinese figures, painted on the walls at eye-level. These subjects are, in fact, *chinoiserie*: reinterpretations of Chinese motifs, more or less independent of the presumed original works. These were painted by Alessandro Feretti (1706–?), one of the two Italian artists who worked there. It is known

10 Such scenes also appear in Chinese paintings in the style of Qiu Ying 仇英, famous for his paintings of palace beauties. However, I am sceptical about any wide availability of Chinese paintings in Europe at the time.

11 The authorship of Jonas Drentwett (1656–1736) is claimed by Petr Czajkowski, *Malířská výzdoba v kostele a zámku v Budišově u Třebíče* [Painting decoration in the church and residence at Budišov], *Zprávy památkového ústavu v Brně* 3, 1999, 85–97, p. 89. Other researchers mention Anton Joseph Prenner (1683–1761), who decorated the chapel, as the possible author.

12 See Suchomel (cit. note 4), p. 57–63.

13 Sometimes referred to as *Lichtensaal* because of its thirty windows, placed on both sides in two rows, one above the other.



Fig. 5: Lichtensaal, the Jaroměřice chateau, 1736

that they brought along prints of Chinese figures by Jean Bérain, the designer for Louis XIV.¹⁴

French prints also influenced Franz Jacob Prokysch (1713–1791), the painter employed by Prince Josef Adam Schwarzenberg, the owner of a large property in Southern Bohemia. Prokysch created two pseudo-Chinese interiors in 1757. One is the so called Prokysch Hall, measuring 10 × 9 m, on the upper floor of the hunting lodge Červený Dvůr (Rothenhof). Except for the windows, doors, and one of the two marble fireplaces, everything is illusory: the paintings above the fireplaces – one real and one illusive – mimic a “porcelain cabinet” layout with vases and bowls, Chinese but also European, exhibited on fancy shelves (Fig. 6). The surface of the walls is divided by depicted (illusory) pillars into symmetrical segments. Colourful floral trimmings hang from the upper frieze, and on the blue-and-white plates fresh fruit is served. In the upper part of the composition, inside stylised shells or under baldachins, cute-looking Chinese figures are seated cross-legged. On the consoles, placed symmetrically around the interior, there are little statuettes, representing local peasants, soldiers, a clergyman, a magician, and one or two figures dressed in Turkish garments. It certainly is a topical mixture, but various *chinoiseries* and oriental elements are the most prominent. It has been suggested that the room may have been decorated for the enjoyment of the Prince’s children.¹⁵



Fig. 6: The Prokysch Hall, Červený Dvůr, 1757

The other interior by Prokysch, suggestive of an interior full of Chinese ceramics, is the square Oriental cabinet at Český Krumlov (Fig. 7). The walls and the pointed vault are painted with illusory blue-and-white tiles which are to be discussed in more detail later. They are just a background for more illusory decoration: in the middle of the two walls without door or window, there is a cartouche, shaped like a shell, one with a seated Chinese man and the other with a seated Chinese woman. Both adopt the style of the French patterns, and both are comical. Illusory Chinese vases and dishes, some of them representing the pottery with enamel decorations and partial brown glaze, are placed on illusory fancy shelving around the walls. Bouquets of illusory flowers decorate the ceiling. Paintings smoothly join the (real) fireplace in one corner, topped with shelves laid with real porcelain objects. The lavish interior is further equipped with large mirrors. This

14 Petr Fidler et al., *Proměny zámeckého areálu v Jaroměřicích nad Rokytnou: kritický katalog výstavy* [The transformation of the Jaroměřice chateau: a critical catalogue], České Budějovice 2017, p. 215.

15 Petr Pavelec / Kateřina Cichrová, *Bellaria. F. J. Prokysch – Rococo Painter*, České Budějovice 2008, p. 151.



Fig. 7: Oriental cabinet at Český Krumlov, 1757

cabinet is a rococo gem where Czech illusionism and a strong French influence meet.

Depictions of “Delft tiles”

Depictions of a blue-and-white wall facing, made up of “tiles” with Chinese images, are known from the entire course of the period contemplated. Such wall-paintings were undoubtedly inspired by interiors embellished with real ceramic tiles, incorrectly known as Delft tiles.¹⁶ Although many tiles feature images of the Dutch realm, as many have a Chinese subject matter, and also refer to the Chinese fashion by the blue-and-white colour typical of Chinese porcelain. As such they fall into the category of *chinoiserie*. The popularity of blue-and-white wall facing spread from the French royal court, represented in particular by the short-lived Trianon de porcelaine. The tiles, however, had nothing to do with genuine Chinese architecture. Real or depicted, they were a cultural misunderstanding on the part of Europeans. In Bohemia, the Dutch ceramic wall-facing (made of real ceramic tiles, not depicted) is very rare. A damaged tile wainscot, dating from 1695, was discovered by archaeologists in the former bath in the Princes’ Palace at Ostrov (Schlackenwerth), and studied by Lubomír Zeman.¹⁷ The tiles were imported from



Fig. 8: The music oratory, Jaroměřice chateau, ca 1736

the Netherlands and show Dutch scenes. Another Dutch wall facing, in the “Delft dining room” at Mnichovo Hradiště (Münchengrätz), was applied in 1872.

In Czech Republic, however, there are several, and diverse interiors with depicted blue-and-white tiles. A relatively early example (circa 1736) is the passageway leading to the ballroom, and the music oratory above this ballroom at Jaroměřice (Fig. 8). Their walls and ceilings are depicted with oblong tiles (height 37 cm; width inconsistent). The sketches, in blue colour on a blank white surface, are rather crude, and one cannot be always sure whether the image captures a Chinese topic. Obviously, the clumsy depictions of the tiles in the interiors adjacent to the ballroom depended on the fact that guests could not inspect them closely: the passageway was too dark, and the oratory only for the musicians whose status was that of servants.

16 They were mostly produced in other places in the Netherlands, not necessarily in Delft. Piotr Oczko / Jan Pluis, *Gabinet farfurowy w palacu w Wilanowie*. Studium historyczno-ikonograficzne [The porcelain cabinet at Wilanów. A historic-iconographic study], Warszawa 2013, p. 16.

17 See <http://kvmuz.cz/typ/archeologie/vyzkum-2010-palac-princu-v-ostrove> (10.9.2021). The builders of this palace were Ludwig Wilhelm von Baden-Baden (1655–1707), and his wife Sibylla Augusta (1675–1733). Their residences in Rastatt, built later, also display ceramic facing decorations.



Fig. 9: Tea room, Jaroměřice chateau, 1741

Most other examples of the depicted wall facing are more elaborate. Still at Jaroměřice, but in the Ancestors' Hall, there are four stoves placed in rounded niches. The niches were also depicted with illusory tiles measuring 67×53 cm (bigger than those just mentioned), with greyish blue linear Chinese figures. In contrast to the tiles in the passageway, these tiles show representative character. On the stoves (two ceramic ones and two false ones, made of wood), there are more images, but without the border lines. It is assumed that they represent ceramic tiles, since stoves were made of tiles. The images resemble the wall-paintings in the Tea room, decorated in 1741 or earlier by the above mentioned Italian decorative artist Feretti.¹⁸ The Tea room is located on the ground floor of the left wing of the building, at the far-end of the winter garden (Fig. 9). The paintings cover the walls as well as the ceiling, but avoid illusionism: they are neat linear paintings in grey-bluish lines on empty background, each section delineating a scene with two or more Chinese figures in a cartouche, framed by elaborate vortex ornaments. In sum, four interiors with Chinese motifs, each executed in different style, are in Jaroměřice chateau, lavishly reconstructed under Johann Adam Questenberg (1678–1752). As

a young man, he travelled across Europe, and was strongly impressed by Versailles, where China was highly fashionable, and evidently caught his fancy, too. The *chinoiserie* in Jaroměřice preceded its culmination in Bohemia which arrived in the 1750s.

Depicted tiles also adorn the alcove in the smaller festive hall on the upper floor of Sternegg palace, Prague (Fig. 10). The alcove was used as a built-in cupboard, it had two outer door-leaves and shelves. One hundred false tiles (à 24×24 cm) were painted inside. Their subject matter is varied, not a few convincingly depict an oriental topic: riksha, camel, etc. There are indications that they were made before 1725.¹⁹ As mentioned above, the Oriental cabinet at Český Krumlov, decorated in 1757, also features illusory tiles (Fig. 7). The entire surface of walls and ceiling, divided by fanciful frames which follow the structure, is depicted with them. These “tiles” are square and their size (height 11 cm) can be compared to the ceramic tiles of Dutch or North German production. They are separated by golden lines, and depict simple Chinese scenes. The images repeat themselves, but the set-up of the tiles is haphazard. At Bruntál (Freudenthal, Silesia), tiles were depicted on the walls and the built-in wooden

¹⁸ Fidler (cit. note 14), p. 224 f.

¹⁹ Petra Hamplová, Odkrytí a restaurování části nástěnné malby s iluzivně malovanými fajánsovými kachly, Bc. thesis, Litomyšl 2011, p. 14–18.



Fig. 10: The alcove in Sternegg palace, Prague, before 1725

cupboards in the serving-room next to the dining hall. The size of the individual tiles is large, circa 16×16 cm. The date of this embellishment, also featuring depicted borders and illusive flower vases, is not exactly known, but it corresponds with the rococo style. The images of a Chinese person, a pagoda, a flower, a bird etc. on every tile were carefully painted, with shading providing them with plasticity. At the hunting lodge Hořín, built in 1696 by the Lobkowitz family, the central hall (layout circa 8×12 m), redecorated in 1760–1763, has walls and vaulting painted with false tiles, the whole set up framed by a blue-and-white ornamental rocailles (Fig. 11). The size of the tiles is 18×18 cm, and the images are relatively neatly executed. However, most of them show Dutch scenes and whimsical figures, Chinese motifs turn up but occasionally. The building is in a dilapidated condition, and needs to be



Fig. 11: The central hall, Hořín château, between 1760 and 1763

reconstructed. Tiles evidently remained popular through the 1790s, when they were depicted at Kunštát, Moravia. The room thus decorated is of a medium size, located in the owner's apartment on upper floor, possibly a private sitting room. Tiles are oblong, resting on the wide side, and mutually separated: it is a free rendering of tiles, not quite true to the form of wall facing, yet convincing at first sight. The images are stencilled, they feature architecture and trees, here and there is a figure in a Chinese garment. The walls in this room were later painted over with whitewash, and forgotten. They were only recently rediscovered, and partly recovered.

The mere fact that the tiles were depicted, instead of applying the real ones, is peculiar, but not unique to Bohemia. Depicted tiles are also known from the pavilion of Bougival in France,²⁰ or from the Esterházy Schloss in Eisenstadt, but they were not common. In Bohemia, however, they were the choice. Why is that? Why not apply real ceramic tiles, but depict them instead? Finances? Many of these aristocratic houses were rural residences, and may have been furnished in a simpler or cheaper manner than the houses in town, but not necessarily. It should be noted that ceramic tiles produced locally were quite different from the Dutch wall facing tiles. They had monochrome plastic decoration, were sturdy, and used for the construction of stoves, or paving. Therefore, blue-

20 See Bruno Bentz, *Le carrelage peint: imitation ou adaptation des carreaux de faïence? Histoire et archéologie* 6, 2017, p. 29–43. <https://doi.org/10.4000/artefact.790> (10.9.2021).

and-white flat surface tiles, i. e. the so called Delft tiles, had to be imported, and are scarce – used mainly as the facing on the border of a fireplace, or behind stoves. For full length walls plus ceilings, it was more practical to choose depiction. Wall painting was common and highly developed, there were many artists around, and the outcome was plausible. This leads to the conclusion that the deployment of depicted tiles was caused not alone by economic concern, but also by artistic convenience. It is also worthy of note that in Western Europe, ceramic wall facing was usually applied in dressing rooms or kitchens. In Bohemia, however, the illusory tiles also embellish social spaces, even the main central hall, as in Hořín. Naturally, the rendering in the social spaces is more sophisticated than the sketchy examples from the spaces of service.

Chinese prints and wallpapers

In the course of my research, as I visited number of sites in search of historic wall decorations with Chinese motifs, it gradually became apparent that wall-paintings by far outnumbered walls decorated with authentic imported material, for example wallpapers, of which there are only a few surviving examples. The rooms with original displays of Chinese wallpapers or textile panels in Lednice (Eisgrub), Bruntál, Červený Dvůr, Čimelice, and Hradec nad Moravicí (Grätz, Grodziec) date from the nineteenth century are not discussed in this article.²¹ Three examples from the second half of the eighteenth century will be briefly introduced. First, two rooms at Veltrusy mansion, adorned with combined wall hangings: Suzhou hand-coloured prints, on paper, pasted onto a textile base, and surrounded with painted illusory frames. The geometric arrangement is typical of the Theresian rococo style and does resemble the Millionenzimmer at Schönbrunn. In the small *Cabinetl* (layout circa 370 × 290 cm), there are 51 prints of various sizes with beauties, flower pots, birds

on flowering branches, and flower baskets respectively (Fig. 12). In the Count's study (layout circa 5 × 8.3 m), which in fact had been used as a bedroom, there are prints with *trompe l'oeil* still-life placed in deep bookshelves (circa 110 × 50 cm), arranged in a similar manner. Duplicates of these prints can be found in various places, e.g. Milton Hall (England), the British Museum, or Nordiska Museet (Stockholm), and when compared also help to solve the

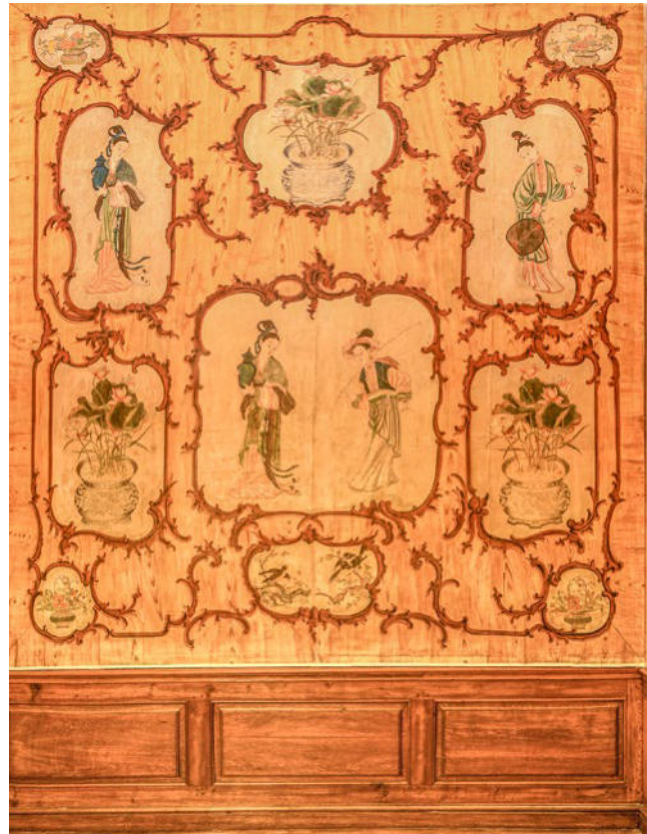


Fig. 12: Cabinetl, Veltrusy chateau, probably 1754

questions surrounding their dating.²² The Veltrusy interiors were recorded in the 1776 "Inventarium",²³ but they surely were installed earlier: the year 1754, when Maria Theresa and Franz Stephan von Lothringen visited Veltrusy, is hypothetical yet a likely date.

21 Tereza Cikrytová / Veronika Kopecká, Zmapování dochovaných tapet orientálního stylu v České republice: katalog s textovou a obrazovou částí [A survey of extant wallpapers in Oriental style in the Czech Republic]. Project SGFR01/2011, e-book, Pardubice 2011.– Lucie Olivová, Rozmanitost čínských tapet. K výzdobě interiérů v 18. a 19. století [Diversity of Chinese wallpapers. On interior decorations in the 18th and the 19th centuries], Zprávy památkové péče 8, 2020, Heft 2, p. 185–199.

22 Christer von der Burg, Wenfangtu prints of scholarly and other objects, Chinese Woodblock Printing, May 19, 2021: <https://chiwoopri.wordpress.com/author/chiwoopri/> (10.9.2021).

23 Státní oblastní archiv Praha, fond Velkostatek Veltrusy, inv. No. 204. Quoted from Eva Lukášová / Vendulka Otavská, Aristokratický interiér doby baroka ve světle historických inventářů [Aristocratic interior of the baroque age in light of the historical inventories], Praha 2015, p. 159.



Fig. 13: “Waiting for the rain to disperse” detail, ink and colours on silk, Cantonese wall-paper, Lednice château, 1780s

Second, Chinese wall hangings were preserved, also in their original instalment of 1765, in the Music parlour at the Archbishop’s Palace at Prague. Vertical silk strips cover entire walls, all painted with colourful “tree of life” and birds on empty white background. We may note in passing that the Palace also keeps a complete series of *Tenture des Indes*, produced by the royal manufacture, Paris, in 1753–1759.²⁴

Third, a set of six panoramic panels at Lednice, painted on silk. Allegedly, they were specially commissioned for Versailles, but displaced during the French revolution; Alois I von Liechtenstein (1759–1805) acquired them at a Viennese auction.²⁵ Because of their generous proportions (height circa 6 m), a pavilion was built in 1795 to house them (Fig. 13). This pavilion was torn down at the end of the nineteenth century, the hangings were stored away and recently rediscovered, they are now undergoing restoration. The material, the size as well as quality of the painting make them exquisite, while the subject

corresponds with other Cantonese wallpapers preserved elsewhere in Europe: genre scenes in the foreground, and dynamic peaks at the back, i. e. in the upper part.

Although the wallpapers were made in China, they are connected with *chinoiserie*: they were made for export, and displayed in a new milieu; their traditional meaning, unintelligible for European viewers, was lost.

Wall-paintings inspired by French style *chinoiserie*

The next group of *chinoiserie*-interiors cast aside illusionist techniques, and took inspiration from the Louis XV style,²⁶ as rendered by Gabriel Huquier (1695–1772), Alexis Peyrotte (1699–1769), François Boucher (1703–1770) or Jean-Baptiste Pillement (1728–1808). Elegant and witty, their designs quickly spread by the means of printed pattern books, often etched by themselves, e. g. Boucher’s “Suite de Figures Chinoises”, published circa 1735, and

24 For more on this series, based on cartoons by François Desportes, see *Jarmila Blažková, Nová Indie – Soubor unikátních tapisérií s motivy objevení Ameriky* [New Indies – a unique series of tapestries with motifs of America’s discovery], Jindřichův Hradec 1996, p. 3–8.

25 *Cikrytová / Kopecká* (cit. note 21), p. 84. This information appears in several Czech articles, the source never given. So far, I was not able to find its origin.

26 Louis XV reigned from 1715 to 1774 and promoted arts; fine furniture, porcelain, tapestries and other goods from his workshops were exported to all Europe.

mainly “L’Oeuvre de Pillement”, published in 1767, with some 200 of his earlier engravings. They were used by later draughtsmen and decorators, also on ceramics and textiles.²⁷

Figural scenes rendered as silhouettes

Inspired by French sources are the silhouettes of Chinese figures engaged in various activities, framed by illusory stucco ornaments, seen at Vizovice and Pernštejn. On the third floor in Vizovice château, there is a guest apartment comprising three rooms. The presumable bedroom (layout 21.7 m²) has walls decorated with seven design projects, each one showing two scenes, upper and lower, in a reddish brown colour – reminiscent of Yixing tea pottery – with golden accents, on a stylish light green monochrome background; the vortex borders are white



Fig. 14: Chinese room, Vizovice château, probably 1757

(Fig. 14). The date is probably 1757, when several other interiors of the château were redecorated, including the magnificent main hall.²⁸

Rather similar in style are the wall paintings in the so called Chinese boudoir at Pernštejn. This castle has a splendid gothic appearance and one would not expect any trace of rococo inside. However, in the Southern tract on the upper floor, there is the ladies' apartment, with frescoes painted in the 1760s by an unknown artist. They have diverse subject matter in each room, ranging from genre scenes to emulation of wallpapers, as well as a *chinoiserie* decoration in the side room known as the Chinese boudoir (Fig. 15). The room is oblong, not too spacious (circa 6.5 × 4.5 m), with an entrance at the long side, and in the opposite wall with the recess of a window. The profile thus forms six narrow vertical strips, and two square spaces on the opposite short sides. In the centre of each wall section there is a lunette with a vivid Chinese scene with figures and architecture, rendered on white background in monochrome bright yellow, with ochre shading. So far the treatment is rather similar to Vizovice, only the surrounding rocailles in dark blue are much more expanded, and occupy a larger part of the surface. The ceiling is white, with a plastic stucco decoration of curving



Fig. 15: Chinese boudoir, Pernštejn castle, 1760s

27 Maria Gordon-Smith, Pillement, Cracow 2006, p. 36–42.

28 Aneta Andršová et al., Restaurování nástěnných maleb v tzv. čínském salónku ve Vizovicích [Conservation of wall-paintings in the Vizovice Chinese parlour]. Report on Conservation Project, Univerzita Pardubice 2011–2012, page numbers not given.

branches, and a painted blue ornamental border on the edge.²⁹ It is likely that the factual models of these elegant *chinoiserie* scenes were contemporary French prints; more research is required to verify it.

Figural scenes in colours

By the 1780s, the most popular rendering of Chinese motifs was that with colourful figures and buildings in decorative frames combined with flowers. It spread beyond the aristocratic circles, and interestingly, adorned houses occupied by catholic clergy, judging from the examples I found. This group of *chinoiserie* is ornamental and unpretentious, figures are stylized almost as dolls, buildings represented by tall pagodas. There is an obvious idealization, slightly naïve and void of spirit.

I shall introduce just two examples, which represent the two extremities – in terms of their artistic execution. One is an upstairs room in the former parish house at Krnsko, a village in northern Bohemia. The murals were recently conserved, and provide a fascinating testimony of an ordinary interior decorated by an average artist (Fig. 16). It is indeed surprising that the room lasted until now.

The other interior is the Chinese parlour in the Benedictine Monastery at Břevnov, on the outskirts of Prague. It is a medium size room (6 × 6.6 m) located in the abbot's representative suite, where he received guests (Fig. 17). The historical and spiritual program seen on wall- and ceiling-paintings in the other spaces was obviously receding at this point of time, and the profane topic of the stylish "Chinese" murals seemed appropriate. They run all around the walls of this corner room, interrupted only by doors and windows. The relatively close-up view in bright colours features an imagined, continuous scenery by the lake, with not too many Chinese men and women, phoenixes, monkeys, a couple of lions, and distant architecture. These humans and animals are not placed in empty background any more, but standing or sitting at random between exotic trees and flowers. The discrepancy in size of the flora and the other elements is amusing: the flora is far too tall. This kind of grotesque distortion is also seen on



Fig. 16: A room in the parish house at Krnsko, 1780s



Fig. 17: Chinese parlour in the Benedictine Monastery, Břevnov, Prague, 1787

Cantonese wallpapers, imported from the mid-eighteenth century onward, and other Chinese commodities, here it reinforces the imagined Chineseness. Everything in the murals is conforming with an ideal Chinese scenery, peaceful and agreeable. Only the illusive portals painted around two doors represent romantic ruins of stone – ruins being the component of the sentimental landscape. This wall-painting is somewhere in between the two eras. Figures possess the stylized charm of rococo art, but

²⁹ Surprisingly, in the middle of each side, there is a heart with the elaborate yellow inscriptions MARIA, IHS, IOSP, ANNA indicating that the room was, or was intended to be, a sanctuary, where Chinese wall-paintings seem improper. Apparently, the function of the room was altered during the decoration process, regardless of the hypothetical sequence of works. No records explaining this puzzle are available.

the treatment of trees and plants visibly foregoes the illusive exotic panoramas, discussed below. The painting is signed by the local artist Anton Tuvora (1747–1807), and dated 1787.

Wall-paintings with landscapes

Based on illustrations from books about China

A radical turn in the perception of China, as well as the changing aesthetic taste is clearly reflected in the three “Chinese” rooms located on the second floor of the Troja Mansion on the outskirts of Prague. Ten full-length wall-paintings representing buildings (a pagoda, a bridge, an archway) in landscape-settings were made by an anonymous painter in a slightly sloppy, perhaps hurried manner. On the ceilings, the prior baroque depictions of Classical mythology were left as they had been, whereas the walls were newly decorated with Chinese prospects copied from the illustrations in “Entwurf einer historischen Architektur” by the Viennese court-architect Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach (first published 1721), and also in “China illustrata” by the Vatican scholar Athanasius Kircher (first published 1667). Both books have plentiful engravings, based on pictures drawn by travelers to China, Jan Nieuhof especially.³⁰ They were the source for these brightly coloured wall-paintings, executed with a serious endeavour to faithfully depict a particular building set in open landscape (Fig. 18); furthermore, each prospect carries a label, also copied from the book, specifying the exact place. They are a manifestation of an almost “scientific” interest in China, of enthusiasm for distant foreign lands, but also of the shift in arts toward landscape, and nature in general. From the art historical point of view, the wall-paintings in Troja already belong to Classicism. The fanciful rococo wall decorations were not totally discarded, but endured only in supplementary elements, such as stucco or painted framing, or the space along window bays and door recesses, still adorned with

minuscule oriental motifs seen on Chinese porcelain and furniture, habitual for the receding rococo manner.

The imperial couple visited this mansion in summer 1754 during their visit to Prague. From 1763–1776 it was owned by the Empress and during this period, some members of the imperial family occasionally stayed in Troja. Since the revenues of the manor turned out unsatisfactory, the Royal Chamber sold it to a Prague gentleman.³¹ There are no documents relating the commission of the *chinoise* paintings, nor the actual stimulus for this kind of decoration, and no dating on the frescoes. Specialists in baroque painting, however, agree on the second half of the eighteenth century, considering the technique, the illusory frames and other secondary elements.³²



Fig. 18: Chinese room, Troja Mansion, Prague, second half of the 18th century

This hypothetical dating is also supported by the paintings in the Chinese pavilion at Bon Repos, a loosely built up park area on the edge of the village of Čihadla. The mansion has been used as a summer dwelling for one century, whereas the addition of this single-spaced pavilion was ordered in the 1770s by its then owner, Prague Archbishop

30 One of the murals actually represents the view of Ayutthaya which Fischer von Erlach took over from a travelogue by Guy de Tachard. For more about the sources, see Georg Kunoth, *Die Historische Architektur Fischers von Erlach*, Düsseldorf 1956.

31 Pavel Preiss / Mojmir Horyna / Pavel Zahradník, *Zámek Trója u Prahy* [The Troja mansion near Prague], Praha-Litomyšl 2002, p. 268–290.

32 Pavel Preiss, personal communication, February 2007.



Fig. 19: Chinese pavilion, the Bon Repos retreat, 1770s

Anton Peter Przychowsky (1707–1793), who was on friendly terms with the Empress. The main hall inside (14.30 × 9.10 m) has a shallow vault, painted as blue sky with flying exotic birds. Along the bottom ridge – being the upper level of the walls, a sequel of buildings and trees including palms was painted (Fig. 19). The buildings are those one can see at Troja, e.g. the archway in Canton or the Nanking pagoda. They are, however, placed in a unified connected panorama. Some peculiar details such as a little pet dog feature in both Bon Repos and Troja. Compared to the book illustrations, the images in Bon Repos have a lower degree of accuracy, and were rather modelled after the Troja wall-paintings. The painter has not been identified, although he left his initial on the wall. He probably was someone else than the artist from Troja, considering a certain difference in style.

Full-size landscape-views decorating walls in aristocratic residences were frequent at the time, but their topic was European landscape. Chinese landscape was not too common, although prints depicting Chinese prospects were very popular, and readily available on the market in a variety of forms. For example, the same Chinese prospects as in Troja were published as *vues d'optique* in Augsburg by the Imperial Academy between 1770 and 1800.³³ The

Troja and Bon Repos prospects were produced as large wall-painting, which is unique. The other comparable interior, i. e. decorated with Chinese landscape views borrowed from book illustrations, is inside the Chinese garden pavilion in Pillnitz, dated 1804.³⁴

The murals discussed above were based on real architectural models, indirectly mediated through book illustrations, but newly set into landscape backgrounds. The general appeal of landscape in this period, incited and fostered by the thoughts of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and others, pertained both to real or imaginary sceneries. Two frescoes in the second floor room in Neuheim House in the centre of Brno exemplify the latter. The house underwent a major reconstruction in 1716, but the frescoes seem to be from the end of the eighteenth century. Each one covers major part of a wall, and is framed by a geometric painted border (Fig. 20). The Chinese subject matter is suggested by an exotic bird, a tree, and last but not least, a pavilion. Its architectural construction is an informed rendering of the Chinese timber construction, depicted with accuracy after an unspecified source, the image as a whole is a fantasy, however. The painter hypothetically could have been Josef Winterhalder, Jr. (1743–1807) who decorated the interior of the City hall at the time.³⁵ It is also interesting that the



Fig. 20: A mural in Neuheim House, Brno, second half of the 18th century

33 Niklas Leverenz, *Vues d'Optique with Chinese Subjects*, *Print Quarterly* 31, March 2014, Heft 1, p. 20–44, here: 23.

34 See Dirk Wellich, *Der Chinesische Pavillion und Garten im Schlosspark Pillnitz*, Dresden 2001.

35 <https://brnensky.denik.cz/serialy/orientalni-motivy-v-kancelarich-turistickeho-centra-namaloval-je-neznamy-autor-20160204.html> (10.9.2021).

house was a burgher's property, unlike the other places described which belonged to aristocracy.

Illusive exotic landscape

In the park next to the Vlašim chateau, a Chinese pavilion was built between 1780 and 1783.³⁶ It is a two-storey octagonal structure, 16 m high, with a loggia surrounding it on the ground floor (Fig. 21, 1). The upper floor used to be accessible by a bridge leading from the neighbouring brick



touche with Chinese script, clumsy but easily discernible. On the ground floor, pillars are decorated with a painted pergola, a green lattice with flowering plants growing over it. Inside the ground floor loggia, depicted exotic trees are reaching up over the ceiling (Fig. 21, 2). The rendering is faithful, the different species of the trees can be identified, and indeed they are exotic plants, one each different. Such a degree of accuracy, together with the script above, provide another example of the enlightened, informed



Fig. 21, 1 + 2: Chinese pavilion, the park, Vlašim chateau, between 1780 and 1783

tower with a staircase inside. A thorough reconstruction in 1847 discarded the brick tower with the bridge, and made the access by a central interior staircase inside the pavilion proper. This basically had no effect on the overall wall decorations outside and inside. They were made by Michael Hueber (dates unknown), a Viennese painter summoned for the task in 1781.³⁷ The outer surface of the upper floor is blue, above each window, there is a car-

approach to the Chinese subject, witnessed already in the Troja mansion. Importantly, though, the visitor feels the illusion of standing amidst an exotic grove. Upstairs, the attempt to make the room look like a garden is continued, on the limited space of narrow strips around the windows, on the door, and the ceiling. Here and there are exotic birds, notably cranes, a beast, a monkey, and butterflies. The overall tint is the light "mountain green".³⁸

³⁶ Vlašim pavilion was designed by Philipp Aigner from Enns. The romantic park was developed in 1775–1785, under Prince Karl Josef von Auersperg (1720–1800).

³⁷ Jindřich Nusek, *Budování a původní podoba Čínského pavilonu ve Vlašimi* [The building and original likeness of the Chinese pavillion in Vlašim], *Památky středních Čech* 31, 2017 Heft 2, p. 20–26, here: 23.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

The attempts to turn an interior into an illusory garden occurred already in classical Roman architecture, or Italian Renaissance. In the second half of the eighteenth century, it was revived at the Viennese court, as exemplified by the decoration preserved in the Festsaal, Niederweiden (Austria), painted by Pillement already in 1764.³⁹ This work is now overshadowed by the three ground floor apartments in Schönbrunn, painted in 1770, and 1773/1774 by Johann Wenzel Bergl (1718–1789).⁴⁰ What he created are not just fancy decorations; the whole space becomes an illusion of exotic paradise or garden, with trees reaching to the blue sky, birds flying above, occasional animals and architectural elements, but no humans. It is a complete negation of the actual interior, replaced by a continuous illusive prospect. Nature is imminent, penetrating, sometimes set off by a low balustrade, as if the room was a gazebo. Referred to as the “illusive exotic landscape space”, this kind of decoration departed from baroque representations of overseas realms. Instead, it antedates romantic feeling, and nurtures whim and fantasy.⁴¹

The illusive exotic landscape soon became fashionable in the Austrian empire. From the 1770s to the 1790s, it spread across the territory, but interestingly not beyond. Thirty-one interiors are in Niederösterreich, Steiermark, Brixen, and the South Bavarian frontier regions,⁴² and (as it seems at this point of my research) six more are in Moravia/Silesia, and four in Bohemia. Although their affinity to the Bergl’s manner is visible, commission records from Bohemia require “exotic decoration”, but do not mention his name, neither personal contacts, e.g. between Bergl and Tuvora, are supported by any written evidence.⁴³

Like the wall-paintings in Vlašim pavilion, the anonymous decoration inside the Chinese pavilion in the garden by the Pernštejn castle is connected to China by the mere fact that the pavilion imitates a Chinese building (exotic



Fig. 22: The Monkey Hall, Dukovany chateau, 1791

trees alone cannot be automatically regarded as a Chinese sign). It should be noted that, with the exception of these two small garden pavilions, all the other illusive exotic landscapes decorate spaces intended for social gatherings, some of them quite large. All feature sporadic details symbolizing Chinese culture such as pagodas, monkeys, or peacock, but combine them with romantic ruins, wild animals, and also masonic symbols. The Monkey Hall on the ground floor of the Dukovany chateau⁴⁴ is a fine example (Fig. 22). The murals were completed in 1791 probably by Wenzl Waitzmann (1764–?),⁴⁵ and contain more fantastical elements than any other subjects discussed. Masonic symbols, combined with pagodas and monkeys, are also set amid the landscape views in the central oval hall of the Mitrowsky Casino, Brno, completed in 1794 by Ignaz Mayer (1763–1842). Mayer provides magnificent tall trees sloping along the shallow canopy of the ceiling painted with blue sky. The linearity similar to his was also put to use by the already-mentioned Anton Tuvora, in Nebílovy where, between 1790 and 1792, he painted the walls and

39 According to *Gordon-Smith* (cit. note 27), p. 110, 112, 118.

40 See *Elfriede Iby*, *Die Berglzimmer in Schloss Schönbrunn*, P. Martin Rotheneder / Andreas Gamerith (Hg.), *Einerseits Bergl*, Melk 2019, p. 43–49.

41 *Antje Senarclens de Grancy*, *Illusionistisch gemalte exotische Landschaftsräume des späten 18. Jahrhunderts in Österreich*, *ÖZKD* 1990 Heft 3/4, p. 141–151, here: 142–144.

42 Entered on the schematic map in *Senarclens de Grancy* (cit. note 41), p. 142.

43 Petr Arijčuk, personal communication, March 2021.

44 Built as a summer retreat by Marie Brigita, Countess Canal (1738–1810), member of the Masonic lodge.

45 Waitzmann also decorated the now extinct Chinese pavilions in Kunštát, and Kroměříž. *Lenka Kalábová*, *Malíři a dekoratéri v Brně kolem roku 1800* [Painters and decorators in Brno around the year 1800]. *Opuscula historiae atrium*, F 44, Brno 2000, p. 74.



Fig. 23: Ball-room, Nebílovy chateau, the rear building, between 1790 and 1792

the ceiling of the grand ballroom (180 m²) on the upper floor of the rear building (Fig. 23). Monkeys, and butterflies are plentiful, there also is a pagoda and ruins, but no references to the Free Masons.⁴⁶

A student of Tuvora was Antonín Machek (1775–1844), the acclaimed portrait painter. From his teacher, however, Machek learned *Zimmermalerei*, and his first engagement around the year 1798 was to decorate rooms in the episcopal residence in Chrast.⁴⁷ The “Chinese room”, used for receiving audiences, features three landscape prospects with exotic trees, birds, animals, and remote Chinese pavilions. The scenes are limited by the size of each prospect, and the illusion of standing in open nature is only suggested by blue sky painted on the ceiling (Fig. 24). Inasmuch as the illusive landscapes are exotic, they are not always alluding to China, and can simply be understood as a natural paradise without a geographical attribution, like the remaining four interiors in Bruntál

(Silesia), Budišov and Holešov, both in Moravia, and in the former Jesuit College in Prague.⁴⁸ The so called Dutch room in Bruntál, with abundant exotic plants and wading birds is of interest since the occupant of this residence was nobody else but the youngest son of Maria Theresa, Maximilian Franz (1756–1801), who as a boy lived in one of the Schönbrunn apartments decorated by Bergl, and who became the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights Order in 1784. Bruntál was the residence of the Grand Masters. Once more, the link to the imperial court fashion, Bergl notwithstanding, was to be naturally expected.

Illusive exotic landscape space was just a short-lived, though very intense fashion wave which came and went at a period when *chinoiserie* already were in recession.⁴⁹ In Bohemia, the styles applied by various painters deviate from Bergl, and the approach to exotic subject matter is not the same; more comparative research is needed before conclusions can be pronounced.

46 The interior underwent a thorough restoration in 2012–2013. *Karine Artouni*, *Restaurování tanečního sálu na zámku Nebílovy* [Conservation of the Nebílovy ballroom], *Zprávy památkové péče* 74, 2014 Heft 5, p. 417–422.

47 Thereafter, in 1800, Machek decorated Haus der Laune in Laxenburg, partly preserved. *Luděk Novák*, *Antonín Machek*, Praha 1962, p. 169.

48 The decoration probably dates from after the abolition of Jesuits in 1773.

49 Johann Wolfgang Goethe is mocking this fashion in his play “Triumph der Empfindsamkeit” (1777), saying that it developed so that the intimidations of real nature, such as moisture and changes of temperature, could be avoided.



Fig. 24: Chinese room, Chrást chateau, 1798

Conclusion

The striking variety of the gathered material reflects the gradual transformation of *chinoise* wall decorations over the eighteenth century, both in styles and topics. The concluding discussion draws on three aspects of relevance: the knowledge of Chinese art and perception of China at the time, the popularity of the Chinese fashion, and the contextual development of painting in Bohemia. I also mention the disparity and the disparity in *chinoiserie* between Austria and Western Europe.

Much has been told about the engagement of *chinoiserie* with Chinese art. It is true that Chinese artefacts were emulated, and at the same time marked by cultural misunderstandings. The results of my research imply that in Bohemia, artists drew indirectly on various styles of *chinoiserie* rather than Chinese models, unable to make clear distinctions between authentic and European-made goods. In addition, mixing of radically different cultural motifs, e.g. of Graeco-Roman mythology or the Pompeian motifs with Chinese subjects, was common in the eighteenth century; their mutual compatibility must have been accepted. Such circumstances made possible the rise of peculiar artistic styles which are labelled as *chinoiserie*. It

does not come as a surprise that nowadays audiences in China and Europe sometimes do not find anything typical “Chinese” about them.

The number of my findings is a key to understanding the popularity of Chinese fashion on Bohemia, being the second aspect of relevance in this study. Altogether, there were over 600 aristocratic residences in Bohemia’s countryside at the time. Most of them were permanent residences of lower aristocracy, some were summer retreats of the high ranking aristocracy. By estimate, only one half of these buildings survived the changes after 1945, and only a small fraction still features relevant interiors. I inspected thirty,⁵⁰ plus ten illusive exotic landscape spaces. In this light, Bohemia falls behind major producers of *chinoiserie* in Europe.

The third aspect, i. e. the art historical context, is pivotal when estimating the dating of the decorations, if records are missing. Naturally, the later the period, the more interiors survived; of the examples considered, only six were produced in the first half of the eighteenth century, while in fact over twenty, including the illusive exotic landscapes, date from the last quarter of that century. Furthermore, in the later period, more artists were known by name and can be identified. They were not first-rate

50 For various reasons, not all of them were included here, e.g. the Lobkowitz palace in the Prague castle area, the Clam-Gallas palace in Prague, the Přebořovský Lobkowitz Palace (now German embassy), etc.

creative artists, but able and successful local decorators, some of whom were trained or also active in Vienna.

As is well known, Chinese fashion was favoured at the Habsburg court.⁵¹ Chinese as well as Japanese objects decorated imperial palaces, and the sophisticated level and dearness of the court *chinoiserie* can be demonstrated by the lacquer rooms in Schönbrunn, or the less known, but equally fascinating *chinoise* wall embellishment of the central hall (14 × 8 m) in Holíč, the private estate of Emperor Franz I. Stephan.⁵²

Grounded on the hypothesis that the imperial taste had to be emulated, I suppose that courtiers and officials did not lag behind in putting forth the “Indian” fashion. For the owners of the residences in Bohemia and Moravia, this was the key motivation behind mounting *chinoiserie* in their homes. It is worth noting that exotic rooms, not one but several, are usually encountered in places whose owners were princes or counts who had links with the Viennese court. On the other hand, they feature sporadically in the mansions of minor aristocracy. The geographical proximity is another issue not to be neglected, and on that account Moravia has a few more examples of *chinoise* interiors than Bohemia.

Finally, two notable disparities from Western European regions will be reiterated. Just like elsewhere, the early interiors in Bohemia, which made use of Chinese and pseudo-Chinese motifs, were as a rule “cabinets”: exquisite small rooms usually placed at the end of an apartment, where the most distinguished guests only were admitted. However, from the 1730s on, *chinoise* decorations

appeared inside large representative spaces where society met. This had already been valid of the Jaroměřice ballroom, or the Budišov *sala terrena*. During the second half of the eighteenth century, the number of large halls increased (Holíč, Hořín, Bon Repos, Nebílovy). Why is that? Illusory treasures painted on the walls were not restrained by the size of a porcelain collection, anything exquisite could be painted. Moreover, painting was a less expensive and faster way of embellishing the interior, multiplied by the fact that illusionism was quite a common technique in Bohemian art. It is my assertion that the use of illusive painting was adopted because of its convenience, and not alone because of economic concerns.

As for the second disparity, Chinese interiors in Western Europe often were a private room with effeminate decorations, designed by and for the use of a lady. Except for the *lacca povera* in the château of Milotice, seen in the antechamber of the Countess’ apartment, all the interiors in Bohemia and Moravia depart from this rule. By contrast, they were intended for the use of the male resident and his guests. Chinese rooms are also in places occupied by clergy (Břevnov, Bruntál, Krnsko), as noted.

Wall-paintings and wall decorations from the eighteenth century, presented in this article, have not been put together in a single survey before. In their complexity, they represent various stages and modes of particular kind of *chinoiserie* in Bohemia, thereby shedding new light on this often neglected subject, and forming a solid basis for future research.

51 There is a substantial corpus of literature in German, for a recent and clear English work, see *Michael Yonan*, *Veneers of Authority: Chinese Lacquers in Marie-Theresa’s Vienna*, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, 2004, Heft 4, p. 652–672.

52 The interiors were completed by 1762. See *Radoslav Ragač*, ed., *Zlatý vek cisárské rezidence v Holíči v období Františka Štefana I. Lotrinského* [The golden age of the Holíč residence during the times of Franz I. Stephan von Lothringen], Skalica 2010.

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