

bers, and lived together in one big house. The ground floor of the house was the working area, while the rear yard was used for kitchen, storage area, sanitary facilities and domestic animals; the second floor was the living quarters. The working area was divided into 8 sections: 1 - Sio-Ney room (slip preparation); 2 - Mold room; 3 - Turning wheel room; 4 - Dry room; 5 - Decoration room; 6 - Kiln yard; 7 - Storage room; and 8 - Shop.

The grandfather had a very nice looking long, white, thin beard, and was the real boss; every member of the family respected him. Three young boys worked in the mold room where at least 6 different rice bowls - from 3" to 5-1/2" in diameter - were made. One boy took care of about 35 molds at one time, taking about 10 minutes to fill them; the last mold was filled just in time to start draining the first one. Draining the molds took about 20 minutes, then he would start at mold number one to open them, never losing a second; this took another 20 minutes. Altogether, this boy produced 35 bowls in 50 minutes, which seemed like magic to me.

The second boy took care of the slip. Every night from the Sio-Ney room, he would take a certain volume of Sio-Ney and cut it into small pieces, which were dumped into the wooden wind-mill barrel which was already filled with clear water. A lovely little donkey turned the mill (in case the donkey happened to be ill, the boy took his place). During the day, the boy was busy filling the slip jugs and collecting the returned slip to be put back in the mill; he also

cleaned each mold after it was used.

The third boy had a delicate mission to perform when the rice bowls came from the molds, placing them one by one on the shelf to dry and at the same time deciding which bowls were good enough to keep and which ones should be dropped back into the mill. Also, when he had time, he cleaned the dry bowls and put them upside down, one atop the other, until they looked like miniature pagodas.

The most interesting section to me, since I always liked to paint, was the decorating room. Six members of the second generation worked in this area, each one having his or her own place about 10 feet from the others. Extremely quiet, with dignity and skill, each artist enjoyed his work; some artists specialized in birds, some in dragons. This operation I observed closely, absorbing as much as I could and, I must confess, much of my ability in china painting came directly from those six artists - how to prepare the color, how to apply it correctly with a firm and steady brushstroke and the graceful outlining.

The most basic and important part of the painting was the outlining - the entire success or failure of the painting depended on this (if you know the technique of outlining, you are the master). The other steps in the painting were considered to be of second importance. One of the artists told me that you should imagine your outline to be a very fine steel wire - elastic and firm; I think this was a master-minded philosophy, and I have followed his principle without any doubt.

The artists used all colors to decorate the pieces, all of them

available in China excepting cobalt blue; cobalt blue mineral was not found in China, so had to be imported. Adding pearl powder to the cobalt blue made a sensational improvement, so much so that the Emperors for centuries collected the finished ware. If an ordinary person could have a piece of blue and white china, he would be very proud.

Another famous color they produced, which has no equal, is yellow. If you could see the magnificent Imperial Palace in Peking, its yellow roof tiles reflected under the sun, you would be amazed at the beauty of the color. This yellow color was made from a mineral found in Tibet.

I once saw a man working on a vase which was about 5' tall (to my childish eyes, it seemed as large as a house), which he divided into 4 sections and then skillfully connected them together. I asked how many years it would take to finish the decorating, he smiled and said it might be finished in a couple of months. I still cannot believe that he could finish such an undertaking in 2 short months.

I think that is about enough for one time, but I would like to tell you in future articles about the remaining sections of the family china shop, if you would care to hear about them, followed by some specific instructions for the Chinese method of china painting.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: The piece pictured with this article was decorated by the author. Please direct all inquiries regarding this article to K. Liou, L. S. K. Porcelain Portraits Studio, Box 63 R. D. 3, Jackson, New Jersey 08527 - enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope for reply.*