

## An early Meissen beaker decorated in the manner of Höroldt

The subject piece discussed here is a Meissen beaker/cup decorated in the chinoiserie manner of Johann Gregorius Höroldt, the celebrated painter and enameller at Meissen from 1720. (1) The quality of this decoration is explored particularly in relation to a body of important drawings of mainly chinoiserie figures and scenes known as the Schulz Codex held in the Grassi Museum in Leipzig.



1. Meissen hard-paste porcelain beaker decorated in the manner of Johann Gregorius Höroldt, c.1725-30, H 7.0 cm, showing the two main areas of the chinoiserie decoration. Marked with underglazed-blue crossed swords and gilder's 'K.' in gold. Single handle missing and ground flush to the beaker body. Private collection.

Ehrenfried Walter, the Graf (Count) von Tschirnhaus (1651-1708), with the assistance of Johann Friedrich Böttger (1682-1719), discovered the formula for hard-paste porcelain in 1708, the first to do so in Europe. Augustus the Strong as he is known, Friedrich August I, Elector of Saxony, also known as Augustus II, King of Poland, who two years later acted as patron to the founding of the Meissen factory in 1710, made von Tschirnhaus *Geheimrat* (Privy Counsellor) and director in July of 1708. The latter died just three months later, leaving Böttger to open and manage the Meissen factory through its early years until his own death in March 1719.

The early years under Böttger had been rather chaotic, and, with his death, a new management grew out of the arrival of a young enameller from the Du Paquier factory in Vienna, Johann Gregorius Höroldt (1696-1775), brought to Meissen by an earlier defector from the factory, Samuel Stöltzel (1685-1737), who returned to Dresden to rejoin his old employer in 1720 after dissatisfaction with his experience in Vienna. Höroldt was twenty-four years of age at the time, but had shown great promise on studying the art of ceramic painting in Vienna. He gained swift recognition in Meissen, and was appointed *Hofmaler* (court painter) at the age of just twenty-seven in 1723. He was responsible for the development of a range

of new enamel colours, creating a brilliant palette, as well as a style of chinoiserie decoration that was to find great success for the factory.<sup>1</sup> The subject beaker is an example of this decorative style.

The Leipzig merchant Georg Wilhelm Schulz (1873-1945) collected 124 figurative sample sheets of more than 1,000 individual sketches of mainly chinoiserie drawings in Indian ink and washes probably done by Höroldt and his workshop staff. These sheets were probably used as porcelain painters' templates in the Meissen workshop from the 1720s through to the 1740s. This body of documents is referred to as the Schulz Codex and was left to the Grassi Museum in Leipzig by Schulz. In 1978, the first set of facsimiles of the complete Codex was published in a limited edition of 1,500.<sup>2</sup> The Codex has become a universal reference resource in the study of early Meissen porcelain by museum curators, academics, auction houses, and dealers. The Schulz Codex contains sketches that were discovered in the study of the subject beaker, and the results of that study follow.

The veracity of the Schulz-Codex images as being represented in Meissen porcelain decoration has been well established for many years. Many examples of decoration on porcelain are very close to images in the Codex, however, many examples also bear affinity to the Codex without being closely similar in detail. In the examples that follow, Codex images are seen to be the inspiration for the enamelled scenes and figures without matching the Codex precisely. An example of the latter, Meissen decoration matching a Codex image closely, not slavishly, but with some rearrangement of the figures and perspective, may be seen on a coffee pot of c.1725 formerly in the Marouf Collection, Plate 37 in the Schulz Codex being the likely source of the inspiration for its painted decoration. (2a & b)



**2a.** Meissen coffee pot c.1725 from the Marouf Collection Part 1. Bonhams, New Bond Street, 5 Dec 2012, Lot 30.



**2b.** Schultz Codex, Plate 37- detail.<sup>3</sup>

Another example of decoration on Meissen porcelain traceable to the Schulz Codex may be seen on a tankard and cover c.1725 sold by Christie's in 2014. **(3a)** The chinoiserie scene appears to be inspired by the Schulz-Codex sketch in Plate 2 of the Codex. **(3b)** The style of depiction on both the examples examined is distinctly in the Höroldt manner.



**3a.**Meissen tankard & cover, c.1725. Christie's, London, John Shearer Collection, 25 Nov 2014, Lot 36.



**3b.**Schulz Codex, Plate 2- detail.<sup>4</sup>

To return to the subject beaker **(1)**, similar comparisons can be made for the decoration on it with sketches in the Codex. **(4a & 4b)** In this instance, the ceremonial figure standing before a smoking cauldron on a plinth in the Codex sketch **(4b)** is the reverse of the painted image on the porcelain beaker, a boy similar to the one gesturing with up-lifted arms in the Codex sketch is holding the adult's cape on the beaker, leaving the impression that the beaker image is derived from or at least inspired by the image in the sketch. Other details differ one to the other, however. The height of the plinth in relation to the figure before it corresponds well by comparison, though the plinth is covered by a red patterned cloth on the beaker, where it is unadorned in the sketch. The gist of the scene appears to correspond well between the Codex sketch and the painted decoration on the beaker.





4a.Detail on subject Meissen beaker (1).



4b.Schulz Codex, Plate 45- detail.<sup>5</sup>

The scene depicted on the reverse of the beaker (5a) appears to stem from a sketch in Plate 93 of the Codex (5b). This is a most convincing comparison, where the three figures and the bird in the Codex sketch match very well with the similarly arranged figures on the porcelain beaker with regard to their 'poses'. However, the details of the figures are clearly different. The middle figure's hat with the characteristic Höroldt split brim matches the Codex sketch well, whilst the hats of the other two figures are quite different to those in the sketch. The right-hand figure holding the parasol on the beaker is markedly shorter than the figure in the sketch for example. The pot-plant arrangement on a small low table in the sketch becomes a bush growing from a rocky surround on the beaker. The bird to the left of both the Codex sketch and the beaker scene is perhaps the closest image in comparison. There are many other differences between the two images, but the decoration on the beaker must surely have been inspired by the Codex sketch, in spite of differences in detail.



5a.Detail on subject Meissen beaker (1).



5b.Schulz Codex, Plate 93- detail.<sup>6</sup>

The subject beaker has a gilt 'K.' mark to its base as well as the customary Meissen underglaze crossed-swords mark. (6) The gilt mark is probably that of the gilder who carried out the gilding to the beaker, though the identity of this particular individual is likely to remain an enigma.



6. Base of the subject Meissen beaker showing the underglaze crossed-Swords mark and a gilt 'K.' mark of the gilder.

Höroldt (7) had a meteoric rise in his employ at Meissen from his arrival there. His time at the factory may be summarized as follows:<sup>7</sup>

- Höroldt, aged 24, arrived at Meissen from Du Paquier in Vienna with Samuel Stöltzel in 1720, thus heralding a period at the factory referred to as the *Malerische Periode* (The Painterly Period), which lasted to c.1735 to be followed by the *Plastische Periode* (The Plastic Period) of the modeller Johann Joachim Kändler and others.
- Höroldt developed a new range of vivid enamel colours to be employed on the porcelain that adhered properly to the glaze (*Glätte*).<sup>8</sup>
- In 1724, he was appointed *Hofmaler* (court painter) at the age of 27.<sup>9</sup>
- The sketches that make up the so-called Schulz Codex were probably produced by him and his staff at Meissen in the mid-1720s. These documents evidence the creation of the Höroldt style of chinoiserie decoration, so distinctive and successful at the time and still revered to this day.
- He served as *Obermaler* (chief painter) at the factory through the 1720s, but was appointed manager of the entire factory in 1731, the year that Kändler was engaged as modeller.
- Friction between Höroldt and Kändler resulted in the former's demise as manager in 1735.
- His difficulties in the factory continued until he fled to Frankfurt-am-Main in 1756, only returning to the Meissen factory in 1763, taking up work at the factory once more.
- In 1765, he was awarded a pension.
- Höroldt died in the town of Meissen on 26 January 1775. Kändler died only a couple of months later, also in Meissen, on 18 May 1775.



7. Self-portrait of Johann Gregorius Höroldt, 1726, engraved 1731.  
Copper-engraving Collection of King Friedrich Augustus II (1797-1854), Dresden.

This paper attempts to highlight the extraordinary talent and achievement of Johann Gregorius Höroldt at Meissen by the examination of a small porcelain beaker of c.1725-30 decorated in his distinctive chinoiserie style and under his leadership. The references to the Schulz Codex demonstrate to some degree the working methods at the factory at the time that enabled artistically and technically outstanding wares to be produced so early in the history of the Meissen factory – the pioneer hard-paste porcelain factory in Europe.

Patrick Hagglund, October 2021

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Savage, George, *18<sup>th</sup> century German porcelain* (London: Spring Books, 1958), p.34-36.

<sup>2</sup> Behrends, Rainer, *Das Meissener Musterbuch für Höroldt-Chinoiserien. Musterblätter aus der Malstube der Meissener Porzellanmanufaktur (Schulz-Codex)*, (Munich: Idion Verlag, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> Grassi Museum für Angewandte Kunst, *Exotische Welten- Der Schulz-Codex und das frühe Meissener Porzellan* (Leipzig: Hirmer Verlag, 2010), Plate 37, p.106.

<sup>4</sup> Grassi (2010), Plate 2, p.71.

<sup>5</sup> Grassi (2010), Plate 45, p.114.

<sup>6</sup> Grassi (2010), Plate 93, p.163.

<sup>7</sup> Savage (1958), pp.34-35 and pp.59-60.

<sup>8</sup> Walcha, Otto, *Meissen porcelain* (London: Cassell Ltd., 1981), p.59. Note, this is the English edition of *Meissener Porzellan* published by VEB Verlag der Kunst, Dresden in 1973.

<sup>9</sup> Walcha, (1981), p.57.