

SOUTH-EAST ASIA:  
A MAJOR EXPORT  
DESTINATION  
FOR  
BRITISH TRANSFERWARE



by  
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## Introduction

For most of the 19th century, millions upon millions of items of transfer-printed earthenware made in British factories were exported to virtually every corner of the planet. In terms of sheer bulk, probably the country which imported more than any other was the United States. There were a number of other ‘hot spots’ around the world, though only recently has it become clear that one of these regions was South-East Asia.

Before engaging in a study of this remarkable trade, it is necessary to determine just what is meant by the geographical term ‘South-East Asia’. For the purposes of this study, it will be taken as encompassing present-day Indonesia and Malaysia at its core, and also including the Philippines, Thailand, Indo-China (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos), and Myanmar (though not the rest of the Indian subcontinent). The Malay Archipelago will hereafter be referred to as the East Indies. This is the chief of the three major areas that imported European pottery, the others being Burmah (Myanmar), and the Straits Settlements of the Malay Peninsula (principally Penang, Malacca, and Singapore).



*map courtesy Nations Online Project*

It is as well to establish some basic premises at the outset in order to allay any misconceptions which may arise. First of all, we really are talking

about Western ceramics being exported to a part of the world previously dominated by the potteries of China, and, to a lesser extent, some other countries of the region. A reversal of the centuries-long flow of ceramics from East to West is surprising enough; what makes it remarkable is that it depended, to an extent at least, on utilising two Oriental artistic traditions. One was Chinoiserie, essentially the Westernisation of Chinese motifs designed for Western consumption, and the other was the wholesale adoption of Chinese compositions virtually intact, for re-export back out East<sup>1</sup> It must also be borne in mind that the height of this trade took place in the 1870-1910 period.

Another important fact is that the great majority of such wares were made for the mass markets provided by the native populations of these countries, not for the expatriate communities living there. This can be established in a number of ways: (i) the quantity of wares involved was quite enormous, judging by what remains a century and more after the trade was at its peak; (ii) many of the designs are far too busy, even frenetic, to appeal to Western taste; (iii) quite a number of the pattern names are rendered not in English but in the Malay language, and some in Hokkien Chinese; (iv) inscriptions occasionally appear in Eastern writing such as Javanese, Arabic, Chinese, and Lontara; and (v) makers' marks sometimes incorporate Eastern scripts like Jawi (Malay Arabic), Javanese, Burmese, and Chinese. For an example of a mark which includes both (iii) and (v), see Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1** A highly informative mark by Bell's Pottery, Glasgow. It shows:

- (i) Bell's standard trade mark of a bell in a belt and buckle, introduced about 1870
- (ii) the initials "J&MPB" for the proprietors, brothers John and Matthew Perston Bell;
- (iii) "L<sup>d</sup>" following "& Co", indicating a date post 1880
- (iv) "Glasgow" on a ribbon, showing the place of manufacture;
- (v) the pattern's Design Registration number, 102258,

issued on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1888;

(vi) the pattern name, *Tarlalu Bagus* (Malay, meaning 'Exceedingly Good')

(vii) the pattern name repeated in Jawi script (Malay Arabic)

There is also an impressed B in a bell, large size, which is Bell's standard impressed mark on export wares to the East Indies.

An obvious question immediately arises, and that is — why? Why there, and why then? The answer is complex and multi-faceted, and not easily determined, but it would seem to reflect a fundamental change in the mercantile life of the region. For centuries, several of its constituent

countries had been producing pottery of merit. One of the premier nations was Siam, with notable centres at Sukhothai and Sawankalok; others also made their mark, with some of the Khmer and Vietnamese wares reaching high standards. Above all there was China, whose wares circulated throughout South-East Asia in large numbers. Then in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the ceramic balance of power changed dramatically. In China, the Qing dynasty went into a state of terminal decline, and many of the kiln sites were destroyed by the civil war. No longer were Chinese ceramics exported as before, and production in the other nations of that part of the world likewise slumped. Meantime, in Europe, a number of large factories were gearing up for mass production on a huge scale, and suddenly the South-East Asian market was opened up to them, and they readily moved in to fill the vacuum left by China.

This account is undoubtedly too simplistic to be properly regarded as providing the complete answer, but it serves at least to indicate one of the major planks upon which the success of the European potteries was based. There were three main centres of production:

- (i) Staffordshire in central England, centred on Stoke-upon-Trent;
- (ii) the central belt of Scotland, with Glasgow as the principal city;
- (iii) the ‘Belgian circle’, a ring of potteries in and around Belgium with a number lying in France and Germany, chief among them being those of Maastricht in Holland. The traditional Dutch pottery towns, such as Delft, were by now past their prime, and it was Maastricht which was the coming power in the Dutch and European ceramics industry.

Despite Holland’s possession of the East Indies, a considerable part of the region was within the British Empire, and so it is no surprise to find Staffordshire (and some other places of production in England) making a showing. If there is a surprise, then it must be Scotland, for not only did it play its part, but it came to prominence before the others, and then went on to secure a position of something approaching dominance. In terms of novelty of design, inventiveness of production, and sheer marketing acumen, the potteries of Scotland, particularly some of those in Glasgow, achieved a rare level of distinction in the field of world ceramic production.

### **Overview of Ceramics exported from Europe to South-East Asia**

**T**he type of industrially-produced ceramics exported from Europe to South-East Asia consisted almost exclusively of white earthenware; there was some porcelain, and also a little stoneware, but the quantities involved were inconsequential. Two methods of decoration were used to embellish the white earthenware — one was transfer printing, and the other was hand

decoration in a variety of forms, including painting, sponge printing, and stenciling, sometimes in combination. As might be expected, the principal method was transfer printing, which accounted for the majority of items.

As this trade did not get under way for well over a century after the Treaty of Union of 1707 between Scotland and England, it is politically correct to use the term ‘British’. It is also an established fact that during the early period of the Scottish pottery industry (the decades following 1750), it was highly dependent on incoming skilled English workers. So should export production from Britain be regarded as the combined output of the English and Scottish potteries, or should they be kept separate? An argument can be made for the latter, for as the 19th century wore on, the ceramic industry in Scotland became much more self-sufficient and self-confident, no longer dependent upon English expertise. The Scottish workforce demonstrated an aptitude to learn new skills, to adapt them to its own needs, and ultimately to realize its potential for inventiveness.<sup>ii</sup> Nowhere is this more evident than in the production of transfer ware for export to South-East Asia. As a consequence, it may be recognized that a total of six European countries and Japan engaged in this trade.

England can claim the distinction of supporting more potteries involved in the South-East Asian trade than any other European country, and not all of them were in Staffordshire, yet only two were major-league players: Adams of Tunstall for the East Indies, and Johnson Bros. of Hanley for Burmah and the Straits Settlements. In contrast to that is the case of Scotland; although fewer potteries were involved, several were of major importance, including some at the highest level: J&MP Bell and Robert Cochran & Co. (Britannia Pottery), both of Glasgow, for the East Indies; and Bell (again) and Robert Cochran & Co. (Verreville Pottery) for Burmah, with some others like David Methven of the Links Pottery in Kirkcaldy making a significant contribution in both places. Clearly Staffordshire had the potential to dominate this trade, and it is something of a mystery why it failed to do so. A shift in its export priorities to nations like Greece and Russia might be part of the answer.

### **British Pottery for South-East Asia**

One of the most intriguing factors in the production of goods for the South-East Asian market was that this was by no means a case of large quantities of mass-produced European wares simply being dumped on overseas colonies. It is true that quite a number of familiar patterns, were exported in significant amounts — *Willow*, *Wild Rose*, and *Oriental* provide three such examples. While it would be a mistake to deny the importance

of this element of the trade that is not what makes it so special. Rather, it is the blue-sky thinking of those pottery proprietors who had the vision to see the tremendous opportunity afforded to them, the courage to grasp it, and the entrepreneurship to see it through to fruition. This could only be achieved by departing from the norm and developing a range of patterns which were novel in terms both of their design and their execution, the crucial ingredient in the mix being to make them attractive and desirable to the native populations in the countries to which they were being sent. Scottish potteries led the field in this endeavour. In the furtherance of this commercial imperative, the use of pattern names in Eastern tongues was a shrewd marketing tactic. Bell of Glasgow produced at least a dozen in Malay, while Adams of Tunstall had two in Malay and another four in Hokkien Chinese. Going a step further was to render some of the pattern names in Eastern scripts as well. Bell did this in Jawi (Malay Arabic) for seven patterns, plus one in Burmese; Johnson of Hanley employed the names of at least five Burmese folk heroes, wholly unconnected with the nondescript patterns with which they were linked; while Methven of Kirkcaldy in Fife incorporated a motto in Javanese into at least four of their marks.

The emphasis of these new transfer designs moved from the Chinese/Chinoiserie mode to something quite different, combining more localised subject matter and art-forms in a way which was more relevant and meaningful to the peoples of the region. A multiplicity of dragons, a weird menagerie of fabulous beasts and birds, and a cornucopia of exotic fruits now spilled forth from a number of European potteries and swept across the oceans to amaze and delight the native populations of South-East Asia. Their effect was enhanced by the stunning use of dual-colour printing. The technique was not exactly novel, having been used, for example, by Davenport of Longport earlier in the 19th century, by Enoch Wood & Sons of Burslem (1818–46), and by W. Smith & Co. of the South Stockton Pottery from 1842 if not earlier. William Adams & Sons of Stoke was another exponent; their products may be dated to the period 1829–61, most probably to the earlier part of that span for the majority. Five different colours (black, blue, green, pink, and purple) were used in at least half a dozen paired combinations, utilizing seven patterns<sup>iii</sup> but none have the slightest appearance of being intended as export wares (and doubtless predate their East Indies venture). Most are of Romantic landscapes, plus others like *Caledonia* reflecting the wild scenery of the Scottish Highlands, and *Palestine* depicting a view of the Middle East. There is little common ground between these patterns and the bulk of those dual-colour prints produced later for the South-East Asian market. In terms of the latter, standing head and shoulders clear of the competition, was the Glasgow Pottery of J&MP Bell & Co. Ld.



**Figure 2** Plate printed with the *Borneo* pattern by Bell's Pottery, Glasgow, a registered design of 1890 (No.149158). It shows frenetic activity involving a dragon and a phoenix.

It would seem that in the major area of the East Indies, it was the dual-colour printing which was the first of the novel practices to be employed by Bell's Pottery. Apparently starting with some Chinoiserie patterns such as *Willow* and *Chusan*, they then went on to apply it to geometric patterns like *Amboina* and *Sexagon*, before unleashing it with gay abandon on a host of breath-taking patterns. The combination of twin colours with shock-and-awe content produced a startling effect, which no doubt propelled Bell's wares to the top position in terms of the market share of this new trade. Patterns like *Borneo* (see Figure 2) and *Keeling Hong* (see later) generate an excitement factor which is seldom experienced in the world of industrial ceramics.

Bell's Pottery was clearly aware the success they were generating, and between 1887 and 1892, in just half a dozen years, they registered a staggering total of 25 patterns for the East Indies trade, and they added five more over the next 15 years. Their standard range of single colours was fairly limited: strong blue, dark red, dark green, and a brown closer to russet than sepia. The dual-colour combinations (indicated here by a linking ampersand without spaces, rather than by a conjunction) were likewise restricted, usually red & blue or red & green, plus the reverse of both, though occasionally utilising less usual colours such as gray and dark yellow.

Dual-colour printing now accounted for a major proportion of all transfer ware exported from Britain to the East Indies. Bell's Pottery was the acknowledged leader, but it was not alone. Adams of Tunstall also produced similar wares if on a much lesser scale, and they occasionally employed different colour combinations, such as blue & brown. Robert Cochran & Co. did likewise at their two Glasgow potteries, Verreville and Britannia. It should be noted that the technique was also employed by the mighty Sphinx Pottery of Petrus Regout in Maastricht, though they seem to have experienced some technical difficulties in controlling the differently-coloured "inks" in a single firing. Although not to the same extent, Burmah was also the recipient of some dual-coloured transfer-printed wares, almost all from Scotland. Again Bell's Pottery assumed the lead role, most notably with the hugely-popular *Pegu* pattern, while Cochran's Verreville Pottery and Methven of Kirkcaldy made similar products; one also came from England, produced by the Dale Hall Pottery in Burslem.

The Burmese trade seems to have got under way in earnest a little earlier than that to the East Indies, though the wares sent by the likes of Thomas



Shirley & Co. of Greenock were simply European products shipped halfway around the world. Two other potteries earned distinctions for their transfer-printed exports to Burmah. One was David Lockhart of the Victoria Pottery at Pollockshaws just outside Glasgow, with an extensive series of patterns, enhanced by colourful painted decoration; most of them were European in style, but some examples, such as *Watercarrier* (see later), were reflective of Burmese society. The other was Johnson Bros. Pottery at Hanley, whose formal patterns were often enhanced by sayings written in Burmese; even some of the pattern names were rendered in Burmese script as well as in English. A dominant element in the overall trade to Burmah was the production of earthenware with flow-blue decoration, and while this was almost exclusively hand applied, by brush or sponge, the occasional piece was transfer-printed, for instance by John Marshall of Bo'ness Pottery in West Lothian. Very much out on its own was a curiously formal and formulaic set of floral patterns made for the Malay Straits Settlements by a number of English factories; Johnson Bros. were dominant among them, and registered four of these patterns.

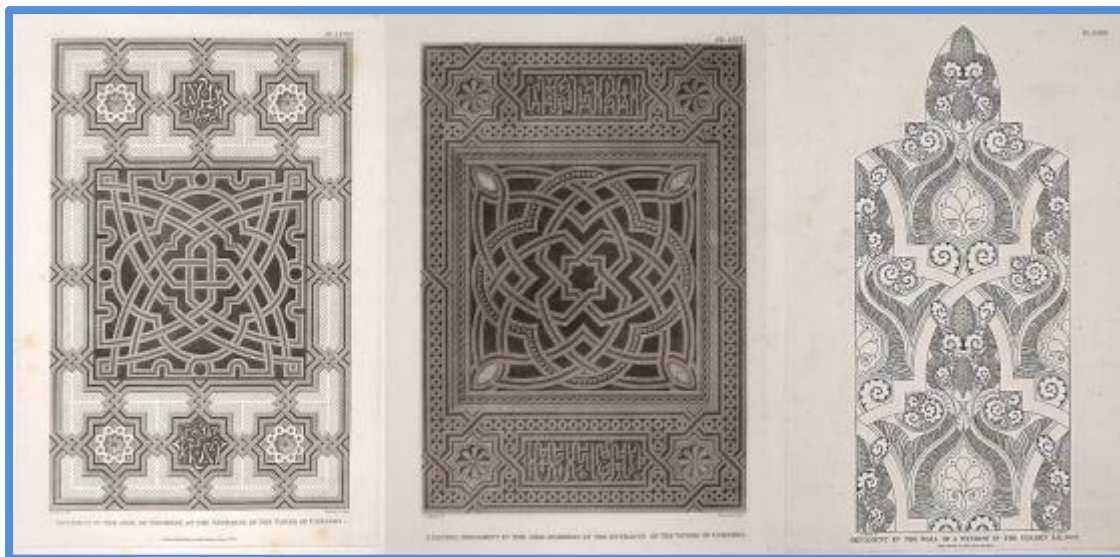
The above is a broad overview of the subject, though it does not constitute more than a brief summary of the available evidence. Rather than continue in generalisations, it might be instructive at this point to consider three completely different patterns in some detail. *Alhambra* is a geometric/floral pattern with an unexpected addition. *Keeling Hong* illustrates a pair of fabulous creatures. *Watercarrier* records the supply of a vital social need.



## *Alhambra*

This pattern derived its name from what is generally reckoned to be the most outstanding architectural survivor of the Moorish occupation of Spain. It is a combined palace and fortress, situated on a hill overlooking Granada. The name comes from the Arabic for ‘the red one’, being a contraction of *Calat Alhambra* meaning ‘the red fortress’, a reference to the red brick used in the construction of its outer walls. The building of the Alhambra took over a century; begun in 1248, it was not completed until about 1354. Today, only remnants of its former glory remain, including the main entrance gateway: the so-called Gate of Judgment, because an informal court of justice met in the massive square tower which surmounts the gateway.

Not surprisingly, the Alhambra was to become a source of artistic inspiration. A key element in this process was *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain* by James Murphy, published in London in 1815. According to the Introduction, it took Murphy seven years to record the details of selected buildings (1802–09), and nearly seven more to prepare the work for publication. The great majority of its 97 Plates show the Alhambra, concentrating on the intricacies of internal decoration of several of its principal structures.



Details of plates in *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain*.

Murphy's book proved to be highly influential, ceramics being one of the artistic fields to benefit, and it led directly to the creation of the ‘Alhambra jug’, produced by Ridgway & Abingdon of the Church Bank Pottery, Hanley, in 1845. The ornament might well be taken from the wall decoration in the Tower of Comares and/or the Golden Saloon. Its every

detail was scrutinised by the *Art-Union Journal* and commented upon with their characteristic candour: “The whole of the design is traceable to the work mentioned, though it would be exceedingly difficult to detect an unaltered plagiarism; it is more the spirit than the letter which has been copied, and, after all, this is the only legitimate mode of copying”<sup>iv</sup>. The same sentiments might equally apply when it came to the creation of an Alhambra-inspired transfer print.

The arch of the Gate of Judgment, and also some of the internal architecture of the Alhambra (the colonnade in the Hall of the Baths, for instance), finds an echo in the main element of the *Alhambra* transfer-printed pattern, a



**Figure 3** Plate printed with the *Alhambra* pattern, made by at least six British potteries for export (five from Scotland to the East Indies, and one from England to Turkey and beyond).

round-headed arch of crescentic shape, i.e. slightly more than semicircular (See Figure 3). This print proved popular with a number of British potteries, though this does not necessarily mean that it was all that popular with British customers, and the evidence suggests that a large proportion of the wares went for export. Although it is unusual, it is not one of those patterns which could only have been produced with the South-East Asian market in mind ~ yet that is where a great many pieces were sent. Which factory first made it is a moot point; the style of makers' marks may be of assistance with dating. The producers which have been recorded so far are considered here in alphabetical order. All were engaged in the export trade, and the majority of them are known to have shipped this pattern to the East Indies. (Note — This list should not be regarded as being exhaustive.)



**Figure 4** The *Alhambra* mark as used by John Thomson & Sons of the Annfield Pottery, Glasgow, version 1. Also visible is an impressed device which may be a potter's tally mark

**Figure 5** The *Alhambra* mark as used by John Thomson & Sons of the Annfield Pottery, Glasgow, version 2. Also visible is the impressed mark "J"

**Annfield Pottery of John Thomson & Sons, Glasgow (1826–96)** Annfield was probably the principal exponent in the production of this particular pattern, and the only maker of it to be listed in the *Dictionary of Blue & White* (both volumes). Two styles of mark were used for *Alhambra* by this factory, therefore it may be assumed that it was made over a period of time; both include "JT & Sons", the latter element dating from 1866. The first style of mark, involving a decorative frame (see Figure 4), may perhaps be dated to the late 1860s, while the second style, the firm's standard trade mark, is somewhat later (see Figure 5).

### **Britannia Pottery of Robert Cochran & Co., Glasgow (1856–1935)**

Marks feature a picture of Britannia though without the Pottery name.

The *Alhambra* style of mark is the earliest of the Britannia series, being registered under the Trade Marks Registration Act of 1875, but was probably in use from the start. It shows a seated figure of Britannia holding a trident and Union Jack shield; the Imperial lion is in close attendance, while behind there appears (faintly) a ship under full sail, representing Commerce (see Figure 6). The same mark was re-registered in 1889 and used on the vast bulk of items made for the home market throughout the tenure of Robert Cochran & Co. at the Britannia Pottery, but it seems to have gone out of use fairly quickly on East Indies export goods. As five different versions were used on such wares before the end of the century, this one is unlikely to have

remained in vogue for much longer than a decade, approximately 1856–66.



**Figure 6** The registered trade mark of the Britannia Pottery, Glasgow (No.86480).  
*Reproduced from the Trades Marks Journal.*

### **British Anchor Pottery of Malkin, Walker & Hulse, Longton 1858-83**

After 1853 it became a Limited company; this partnership, which was the founding one, ceased in 1864. Recorded examples of this pattern do not give it a name. It is associated with a registered design of 1864, the final year of operation of this partnership. (See later for a discussion of its marks.)

### **Clyde Pottery, Greenock (1816–1905)**

Their *Alhambra* pattern is marked “C.P.Co.”, which dates it to the period 1863–1900. The style of mark is the same as that of the earlier Annfield example, and therefore probably dates from the first decade of this phase of the Pottery’s production. The printing is unusually strong for what is a fairly complex pattern.

### **Glasgow Pottery of J&MP Bell (1841/2–ca.1912)**

Known examples of *Alhambra* carry the fourth-phase Bell's mark *i.e.* the firm's standard trade mark of a bell inside a belt and buckle (as in Figure 1), small size, which was introduced around 1870. It is here lacking the addition of "Ld." to "& Co." and therefore predates 1881.

### **Links Pottery of David Methven & Sons, Kirkcaldy (1776–1928)**

The essential ingredients are here, though the proportions are unusual as the pattern had to fit into a deep basin rather than the normal flat plate. The 4+4 points of the central motif were increased to 6+6, with a surround of similar shapes in three groupings, which are curved. It is different from the others in that the central pattern and the border pattern are not merged, allowing for a dual-colour print, in this case green and red for export to Burmah, probably in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is unnamed, and unusual for a transfer-printed item, the maker's mark is applied by a rubber stamp (see Figure 7). This trade mark was registered in 1893; the elephant confirming that items bearing it were destined for Burmah.



**Figure 7** The registered trade mark of David Methven & Sons of the Links Pottery, Kirkcaldy (No.176176). This is the rubber-stamped version, which unusually has been applied to an item of transferware. (Note: the appearance of the elephant indicates the Pottery's intention to export the piece to Burmah, and the actual item, a basin, and the location where it was found, confirms this.)

### **William Adams & Co., Tunstall**

The maker's mark is rendered as "W. Adams & Co. Tunstall" which has a date-span of 1892–1917. Despite Adams' extensive trade to the East Indies, their *Alhambra* has not been noted there, and consequently no example of this mark is available to allow a description of it to be given.

### **Other patterns names Alhambra**

An unconnected pattern also named *Alhambra*, which was composed of blossoms and geometric arrangements of arcs, was made by Mann & Co. of Hanley (1858–60); surprisingly, it too was exported to the East Indies, though in small numbers. It might be worth mentioning here the odd situation regarding the Sphinx Pottery of Petrus Regout in Maastricht. They did produce a pattern which they called *Alhambra*, but it is a rather twee floral border pattern, though made during the appropriate period (1864–82). Even odder, they produced a version of the standard *Alhambra*, which they called *Resina* (the name of the small Medieval town, now known as Ercolano, which was built on the volcanic deposit resulting from the

eruption of Vesuvius and consequent destruction of Herculaneum). It has five arches instead of four, resulting in their being much too narrow and out of proportion. For some reason, the central motif has been replaced by a less striking design. Production dates were 1874–1911, and curiously there is an English connection. Regout employed the services of engravers from various countries, and the Sphinx Archive reveals that for this pattern he used Elisha Pepper & Son of Hanley in 1874, and Henry Toft of Stoke in 1881.<sup>v</sup>

‘The Alhambra’ became popular as a name for a theatre, and one was found in Glasgow. Considering that several of the city’s potteries were manufacturing the *Alhambra* pattern, it may be wondered if there was any connection. The Glasgow Alhambra (architect John James Burnet, built 1910–11, demolished 1970–71) was situated on the corner of Waterloo Street and Wellington Street — good omens, it might be thought, remembering that Murphy’s book was published in 1815 (the year of the Battle of Waterloo, in which Wellington was the victor). However, it was not so, as the *Architecture of Glasgow* relates: “Alhambras were of their nature Moorish, but Burnet’s only concession to the exotic were topee-topped turrets in banded red and white at the corners of an aggressively square-shouldered entrance elevation.”<sup>vi</sup> Ironically, the theatre had more in common with the plain sturdiness of the Gate of Judgment than with the more subtle delights within. There was an Alhambra theatre in The Potteries as well, at Normacot near Longton; it was a small building of simplified Classical design, without a hint of Arabesque.



**Figure 8** An addition to the *Alhambra* pattern applied by the British Anchor Pottery, Longton, a registered design of 1864 (No.170883). It shows the national emblem of Persia (now Iran) and an Arabic text. (Note: as this image, lodged in the book of Design Representations, is a pull from the copper printing plate, it needs to be shown here in reverse in order to prevent it appearing as a mirror image.)  
 Reproduced by kind permission of the

The *Alhambra* story contains an unusual twist. In the Sarawak Islamic Museum in Kuching, Borneo, there is a set of three small bowls (unusual items in the context of export goods to the East Indies) bearing this pattern — but with a difference. The central motif has been removed, and replaced by the national emblem of a state in the Middle East, below which is quite a

lengthy inscription in Arabic. The items are marked, but they carry neither the maker's name nor the pattern name. Instead, both the emblem and the script are repeated, at a reduced size. They are clearly of European manufacture, but who could have made them? Fortunately, one of the bowls offers a clue in the form of a registration diamond. It had not been applied perfectly, but it is sufficient to date the design to 11<sup>th</sup> January 1864, Rd. No. 170883 (1<sup>st</sup> series). This allowed the maker to be identified: it was the British Anchor Pottery at Longton during the period of Malkin, Walker & Hulse, who comprised the founding partnership in 1858, and ceasing a few months after registering the curious Middle Eastern design which they added to *Alhambra* (see Figure 8). The national emblem is that of Persia. It shows a lion (symbolising power, decisiveness, and strong leadership) holding a sword (symbolising strength, resilience, and ultimate triumph); over its shoulder rises the sun (symbolizing energy, enlightenment, permanence, and life itself). Superimposed upon the sun is a man's head (representing Mithra, the son of the sun), above hovers a crown (representing the institution of monarchy).

Although there were many variations over the centuries, these were the core components of the Persian flag, until replaced by a simpler device following the Iranian revolution in 1979. It is worth noting that the Sphinx Pottery of Petrus Regout in Maastricht used this same device at the centre of a pattern produced in 1902, which they called *Cashmere* (an archaic spelling of Kashmir, situated on the North-West Frontier of India). The Arabic text, composed in the Persian language, which sits below the Persian national emblem on the British Anchor version of *Alhambra*, refers to Naser al-Din, who ruled Persia as Shah from 1848 to 1896.

This same composite pattern has also been found on dishes, one of which replaces the small quasi-mark and the registration diamond with what is probably an importer's name, despite its claim:



**Figure 9** The mark of British Anchor Pottery on their version of the *Alhambra* pattern, with additions which indicate that this piece was made for export to Turkey.

“Th. Stefanidi & Son, Manufacturer, Istanbul”, plus the British royal coat of



arms and the word “Patent”<sup>vii</sup> for no apparent reason other than to appear impressive to potential customers (see Figure 9). There is one more element in the transfer mark, and this time it is significant — an anchor, presumably indicating that this item too is a product of the British Anchor Pottery. The dish also has an impressed device: another anchor! It is accompanied by the word “London”, a mark of questionable provenance, though as it has also been noted on a plate bearing the same registration details as discussed above,<sup>viii</sup> there is no doubt that this item too was made by the British Anchor Pottery.



**Figure 10** Plate printed with the *Keeling Hong* pattern by Bell’s Pottery, Glasgow, a registered design of 1889 (No.139291). It shows a Qulin and a phoenix.

### ***Keeling Hong***

This is a truly astonishing pattern (see Figure 10), one of a large group produced by the Glasgow Pottery of J&MP Bell (1841/2–ca.1912) following its rebirth as a Limited company in 1881. For the reasons discussed earlier in this paper, such patterns are instantly recognisable as having been manufactured for export only, their destination being the East Indies. The great majority were registered with the Patent Office, *Keeling Hong* being Rd. No. 139291 (seventeenth in Bell's series of thirty), and its date of registration being 29<sup>th</sup> November 1889.

This pattern features a pair of fabulous creatures taken from the world of Chinese art — but neither appears here in its regular form. Both have been given exotic tails, but it is the twists in their tales which makes this pattern so remarkable. Each of them, the quadruped and the bird, are anatomical composites with dual-word names representing not just separate creatures but also male and female entities. The *keeling* (normal spelling: Qulin) is a combination of *ki* (male) and *lin* (female) to give an animal which is part deer and part dragon, plus other parts, while the *hong* (more fully feng-huang, male/female) is a combination of a peacock and a pheasant, giving a bird which is sometimes referred to as the Chinese phoenix.

The Qulin is truly remarkable, even for a creature of myth and legend. It has the body of a deer, with cloven hooves, a spiky spinal ridge, a powder-puff tail, and, most strikingly, a dragon's head (see Figure 12). The *lin* element in its name (which is indicative of an auspicious animal) is a homophone of the Chinese word for 'scaly'; this may account for the scales which extend virtually all over its body. It is occasionally known, erroneously, as the Chinese unicorn – most illustrations (except for modern renditions) clearly show it with *two* horns. Despite its ferocious appearance, it was the gentlest of creatures; it was said that it would never do the least hurt to any living thing, not even a blade of grass, so that when it walked across a lawn it did so with such a light tread that it left no footprints. It was regarded as one of the most auspicious of animals, as indicated by the second syllable of its name. However, it was said to appear only in a place controlled by a wise and beneficent leader, be that a whole nation or a single house.

The earliest references to the Qulin appear in a Chinese book of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Two millennia later, when two giraffes were taken from East Africa to China (along with ostriches, zebras, and camels) by the explorer Zheng He, they were hailed as being quins, despite being so hugely out of proportion. The giraffe, of course, does not have a dragon's head, but there are some similarities ~ it has a pair of horn-like protrusions on its head, a

fluffy termination to its tail, and a tessellated pattern to its coat vaguely reminiscent of scales. It is also worth noting that the Japanese version of Qulin is 'kirin', and this is the present-day Japanese word for a giraffe. Some Chinese renditions of a Qulin do possess heads not altogether unlike that of a giraffe.

Bell's Pottery was by no means the first to feature the Qulin. It frequently appears in Chinese ceramic art, and it had also made an appearance on early English china, though with no great distinction *e.g.* on a Minton cup of 1793×1816, and on a New Hall plate of 1795×1805; its depiction on both is somewhat degenerate. Bell's transfer-printed version also lacks artistic merit, being a rather heavy engraving, and it was produced for an export market where refinement was not a prime consideration in any case. The artist rather lost control of the Qulin's mouth and jaw-line, but more than made up for such lapses by turning it into an animal even weirder than the regular version. The head, though poorly rendered, is supremely dragon-like, the front half of its body is robustly scaly, the spinal ridge rears up in spiky profusion, but what makes it ultra-extraordinary is its feet — they belong to four different creatures! Quite distinctly, each foot is of a different type. Bell's Qulin has been given one hoof, one claw, one cloven hoof, and one paw (see Figure 11).



**Figure 11** A 'regular' Chinese qilin, from *Mythical Monsters* by Charles Gould (London, 1886), Figure 79, p.349.



**Figure 12** The Qulin from Bell's *Keeling Hong* pattern, seen in isolation.

No English pottery is known to have produced anything like this, though at least three on the Continent of Europe did, coming from three different countries. In Europe this pattern was known as *Bima* (the name of a town on Sumbawa, the third island east of Java). The mainland European quoins totally fail to match Bell's inventiveness, and the likes of Regout of Maastricht (Holland), and Memmel of Bonn (Germany), seem to have lost their nerve and allowed their creatures' feet to stray beyond the circular frame of the scene, thus obviating the need to decide what sort of feet to give them. At least the version from Longwy (France) shows the feet, and although they are all the same, they are different from the Chinese standard cloven hooves ~ they are all claws. This raises the question of how Bell's Pottery came to acquire their extraordinary Qulin. In the weird world of fabulous animals, there are many examples of hybrids and quite a number of instances of multi-composite creatures, and one in particular has some marked similarities.

Moving now to the hong, or Chinese phoenix: it was somewhat different from its western counterpart. It was partly a peacock, a bird much favoured by Bell's Pottery, which featured in slightly stylised form on some of their other export patterns to the East Indies such as *Peacock & Lilies* and *Makasser*, in Art Nouveau splendour on their amazing *Burong Merak* (which is Malay for 'peacock bird'), and in more natural form in the border pattern of *Bangkok* and on several of their patterns for Burmah. The most eye-catching feature of the hong is its group of large tail feathers, which includes a truly gigantic one (and this likewise appears on all the Continental versions of this pattern). This may represent a borrowing from another bird, the argus pheasant, which had a distribution right across eastern Asia from China to Malaya; the great argus was to found chiefly in Borneo, Sumatra, and the Malay jungles. Its enormous 'tail' is actually a combination of its two broad and exceptionally long secondary wing feathers, which can attain a length of 6½ feet (2 metres). In Chinese art, the hong is sometimes rendered with wording on various parts of its body: *virtue* on its head, *duty* on its wings, *ritual* on its back, *humaneness* on its breast, and *trust* on its stomach.

The hong features in several other patterns made by British potteries for export to the East Indies, but although its impressive tail feathers are always well to the fore, its spectacular secondary-wing pairing is consistently absent. Perhaps these birds represent 'ordinary' argus pheasants rather than the 'great argus' variety. Bell's themselves used such a bird in their spectacular pattern *Borneo* (see Figure 2), paired with a dragon (though quite a different type of creature from the Qulin). The other pairings of the hong are all with large flowers of the peony type, the principal example

being *Hong Botan* by W&T Adams of Tunstall (1864–92); the second word is a corruption of the Hokkien *vodan*, meaning ‘peony’. This was also a hugely popular pattern (see Figure 13), being part of a set dating from 1882 or later. It was often rendered in dual-colour printing (though interestingly, when for the domestic market, it consisted of a single-colour print with additional polychromatic painting). The same pattern was also made by Robert Cochran & Co. of the Britannia Pottery in Glasgow, providing on occasions one of their rare examples of dual-colour printing, the mark possibly dating it to the period 1885–93. Annoyingly, Cochran & Co. lost confidence in their market, and merely named this pattern *No.256*. They also produced a pattern in which the phoenix and peony were the principal but not the only elements, which they called *Sunda* (a district in western Java; the Sunda Strait, which includes Krakatoa, separates Java from Sumatra).

The hong and the Qulin were creatures said to be beloved of the Immortals, ranking high in their affections. They were of such elevated status that they came behind only one other animal – the dragon. Little wonder, then, that *Keeling Hong* proved to be the most successful of more than fifty patterns which Bell’s Pottery exported to the East Indies.



**Figure 13** Plate printed with the *Hong Botan* pattern by W&T Adams of Tunstall.

## *Watercarrier*

While plates and dishes were the main items of European pottery exported to the East Indies, the trade to Burmah dealt mainly in basins and jugs. Basins were the principal product, but huge numbers of jugs were also sent there, the overwhelming majority having been manufactured in Scotland. The principal factory involved was the Victoria Pottery of David Lockhart



(1855–1952) at Pollockshaws, just outside Glasgow (until absorbed by the city in 1912), and one shape of jug which they made is to be found far more commonly than any other. The Pottery produced a wide range



of transfer-printed patterns to go on these jugs, many of them having been designed with the domestic market primarily in mind, but there were also a number aimed specifically and exclusively at a Burmese clientele. One such is *Watercarrier* (see Figure 14), bearing the maker's mark "DL & S" (see Figure 15); the firm changed its name from David Lockhart & Co. to David Lockhart & Sons in 1899.

**Figure 14** Jug printed with the *Watercarrier* pattern by David Lockhart & Sons of the Victoria Pottery at Pollockshaws, near Glasgow (plus additional polychrome painting).

**Figure 15** The *Watercarrier* mark of David Lockhart & Sons. (Note: This device was used by quite a number of potteries throughout Britain — see *e.g.* Figure 5 above — so attention must be paid to the maker's initials.)

The choice of name is hardly inspired, and applies to only one of the three scenes portrayed. In truth, it must be said that the quality of these jugs is rather poor in all respects. The body is of an inferior type of quite coarse

earthenware, the design of which is aesthetically unappealing, meaning that such an item is heavy both to the hand and to the eye. The engraving lacks any semblance of refinement, and the hand painting which enlivens it has not been applied by anyone deserving of being called an artist, having been slapped on with crude strokes of the brush, a technique known colloquially by a well-deserved if somewhat insulting epithet — ‘clobbering’. In a league table of technically accomplished ceramics, Lockhart’s *Watercarrier* jugs would surely find themselves languishing near the bottom rung. **However**, their obvious technical deficiencies are more than compensated for by the intense interest of their social content. The pattern, which runs round the jug in a continuous band, tells a developing story in three parts.

1. A Burmese woman is seen emptying a small jar of water into a large globular water pot. The reservoir from which she has drawn the water would seem to be a substantial circular cistern which stands adjacent — but that is not what it is. Although depicted here as having rather thin walls, this is actually the top section of a well, driven deep into the ground and lined (latterly at least) with a stack of concrete cylinders. They are to be seen to this day all over rural Burmah, though the blue coloration existed only in the mind of the Scottish decorator. At the time when these illustrations were produced, it was women in the main who were the potters making such water pots as shown, a practice which pertains unto the present day.



2. Another Burmese woman (her attire is substantially different from the first) is seen walking along a roadway, balancing on her head a globular water pot, presumably full (see Figure 18). She departs herself with a serene sense of poise, an attribute seemingly acquired innately by the female population of Burmah and displayed from an early age. Indeed, the majority of these water carriers today would seem to be girls rather than grown women. She is aided in her balancing act by a cranial pad comprised of a twisted scarf, which softens the weight pressing down on her skull and also provides a more secure resting place for the pot.



3. No human figure appears in the final scene; instead, it is the water pots themselves which have become the focus of attention (see Figure 19). A cluster of them sit upon a roadside platform, unattended, beneath a placard carrying a word written in Burmese characters, painted in a bronzy colour against a purple background.



It speaks the sound *sa-doo-dee-ta*; if the meaning can be rendered in English by a single word, then ‘charity’ would fit the bill quite well. The inference is that the water has been put out for the benefit of any thirsty traveller. Stalls similar to this one are still widespread throughout Burmah, enhanced for modern sanitation purposes, and perhaps containing the name of a commercial sponsor. Just where the Victoria Pottery obtained this piece of Burmese script from is an intriguing question, the more so in that it has been provided, or engraved, with less than

complete accuracy. (The source was surely not the same as used by Johnson Bros. of Hanley, who employed an extensive range of Burmese proverbs on their wares, composed of convincing Burmese characters.)

There remains a twist to the story of the *Watercarrier* pattern, for although jugs carrying it were widely and plentifully distributed all over Burmah, another type of object also bore this pattern, but made for the home market ~ the punch bowl. The punch popular at the time was a warm, alcoholic beverage hardly suitable for consumption in Burmah. The punch bowl is a large enough, to include the complete *Watercarrier* pattern sequence four times over, inside and out and thus not a realistic export because of its size and weight. It is worth noting that several changes were made in the painting applied to these punch bowls: the women’s hair and the trunks and branches of the trees appear as black as coal, the water pot being filled has turned from russet brown to bright orange, while the other pots have all become fawn, a colour which now pervades the roadway, the fencing, and most significantly the placard. The Burmese writing is still there, though somewhat masked by a monochrome wash. It may also be noted that the standard of both the engraving and the painting is inferior to that on the jugs, which is a reversal of the expected ‘domestic versus export’ comparison. Most odd of all, these punch bowls, characteristically deep-bodied as such Pollockshaws products were, are not known with any markings, neither a maker’s mark nor a pattern name. It was as if an overtly export pattern had to remain anonymous when made for the domestic market.



These three patterns, *Alhambra*, *Keeling Hong*, and *Watercarrier*, reflect, each in a different way, the very special nature of transferware patterns made for export to South-East Asia ~ and they represent only a tiny fraction of this truly remarkable venture in the field of international trade ceramics.

#### **Previous articles on the subject by Graeme Cruickshank**

- 1992 'Scottish Pottery in Indonesia' in  
*Book of the Jakarta Highland Gathering*, pp.72–74.
- 1993 do., reprinted in the *Directory of the Himpanum Keramik Indonesia*  
{Ceramic Society of Indonesia, Jakarta}, pp.53–57.
- 1995 'Crossing Cultural Frontiers: the Chinese Dragons of Scotland and Thailand'  
in *Siam Araya* {'Thai Civilisation', Bangkok ~ in Thai},  
No. 28, May, pp.84–86, and April following, p.119.
- 1997 'Scottish Export Pottery in South-East Asia: report on the Gunning Victoria  
Jubilee travelling fellowship' in  
*Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Newsletter*, No. 8.2, pp.4–5.
- 1997 'Ceramics in Perspective: Illustrious Eastern Past' in  
*Artwork* {Scotland} No.89, p.7.
- 1999 'Tracking down Scottish Export Pottery in South-East Asia' {lecture  
summary} in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* for  
1998,  
vol.128, pp.1122–1124.

#### **Acknowledgements**

With a general paucity of documentary evidence and very little published information on the subject (and such as there is, being for the most part inaccurate and misleading), the above summary could only have been written with the benefit of extensive field work. The author has visited the region fifteen times in less than two decades with trips lasting for up to seven months, staying there for a total of around five years. This would not have been possible without the generous financial assistance of a number of grant-aiding organisations: the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, the British Academy, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (Gunning Victoria Jubilee travelling fellowship), and the Scottish International Education Trust (all more than once); also the Leverhulme Trust, for assisting with the costs of writing up and photography. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Transferware Collectors Club for an award made from the Paul and Gladys Richards research fund which has enabled this paper to be written, which may be seen as a curtain-raiser for the major study which is currently in the course of preparation.

#### **Captions**

- Figure 1** A highly informative mark by Bell's Pottery, Glasgow. It shows:
- (i) Bell's standard trade mark of a bell in a belt and buckle, introduced *ca.* 1870;
  - (ii) the initials "J&MPB" for the proprietors, brothers John and Matthew Perston Bell;
  - (iii) "Ld" following "& Co", indicating a date post 1880;
  - (iv) "Glasgow" on a ribbon, showing the place of manufacture;
  - (v) the pattern's Design Registration number, 102258, issued on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1888;
  - (vi) the pattern name, *Tarlalu Bagus* (Malay, meaning 'Exceedingly Good');

(vii) the pattern name repeated in Jawi script (Malay Arabic).

There is also an impressed B in a bell, large size, which is Bell's standard impressed mark on export wares to the East Indies.

**Figure 2** Plate printed with the *Borneo* pattern by Bell's Pottery, Glasgow, a registered design of 1890 (No.149158). It shows frenetic activity involving a dragon and a phoenix.

**Figure 3** Plate printed with the *Alhambra* pattern, made by at least six British potteries for export (five from Scotland to the East Indies, and one from England to Turkey and beyond).

**Figure 4** The *Alhambra* mark as used by John Thomson & Sons of the Annfield Pottery, Glasgow, version 1. Also visible is an impressed device which may be a potter's tally mark.

**Figure 5** The *Alhambra* mark as used by John Thomson & Sons of the Annfield Pottery, Glasgow, version 2. Also visible is the impressed mark "J Thomson & Sons", though it is inverted in relation to the printed mark.

**Figure 6** The registered trade mark of the Britannia Pottery, Glasgow (No.86480).  
*Reproduced from the Trades Marks Journal.*

**Figure 7** The registered trade mark of David Methven & Sons of the Links Pottery, Kirkcaldy (No.176176). This is the rubber-stamped version, which unusually has been applied to an item of transferware. (Note: the appearance of the elephant indicates the Pottery's intention to export the piece to Burmah, and the actual item, a basin, and the location where it was found, confirms this.)

**Figure 8** An addition to the *Alhambra* pattern applied by the British Anchor Pottery, Longton, a registered design of 1864 (No.170883). It shows the national emblem of Persia (now Iran) and an Arabic text. (Note: as this image, lodged in the book of Design Representations, is a pull from the copper printing plate, it needs to be shown here in reverse in order to prevent it appearing as a mirror image.)  
*Reproduced by kind permission of the National Archives of the UK.*

**Figure 9** The mark of British Anchor Pottery on their version of the *Alhambra* pattern, with additions which indicate that this piece was made for export to Turkey.

**Figure 10** Plate printed with the *Keeling Hong* pattern by Bell's Pottery, Glasgow, a registered design of 1889 (No.139291). It shows a Qulin and a phoenix.

**Figure 11** A 'regular' Chinese Qulin, from *Mythical Monsters* by Charles Gould (London, 1886), Figure 79, p.349.

**Figure 12** The Qulin from Bell's *Keeling Hong* pattern, seen in isolation.

**Figure 13** Plate printed with the *Hong Botan* pattern by W&T Adams of Tunstall.

**Figure 14** Jug printed with the *Watercarrier* pattern by David Lockhart & Sons of the

Victoria Pottery at Pollockshaws, near Glasgow (plus additional polychrome painting).

**Figure 15** The *Watercarrier* mark of David Lockhart & Sons. (Note: This device was used by quite a number of potteries throughout Britain ~ see e.g. Figure 5 above ~ so attention must be paid to the maker's initials.)

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#### Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> This curious game of 'cultural ping-pong' has prompted the author to compose a lecture entitled 'East to West then East again ~ Chinese influences on European pottery exports to South-East Asia'. It has been delivered to the Scotland-China Association in Edinburgh and in Glasgow, and to several decorative arts groups in England; and in more general terms within the broad context of the ceramic trade under discussion, to ceramic societies and interest groups in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Bangkok, Rangoon, and Hong Kong.

<sup>ii</sup> For an overview of this subject, see Graeme Cruickshank, *Scottish Pottery* (Shire Publications, Princes Risborough, England, 1987; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, considerably enlarged, 2005; reprinted with some additions, 2010). A brief selection of export wares made by Bell's Pottery in Glasgow for the East Indies is shown in colour on p.37 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

<sup>iii</sup> All of these patterns are illustrated, in colour, in *Adams Ceramics* by David Furniss and Richard and Judith Wagner (Atglen, Pennsylvania, USA, 1999).

<sup>iv</sup> *Art-Union Journal* Vol. VII, no. 80, May 1845, p.135.

<sup>v</sup> Marie-Rose Bogaers, *Drukdecors op Maastrichts Aardewerk {Printed Designs on Maastricht Earthenware}*, 1850–1900 (Lochem, Nederland, 1992), pp. 35 & 133.

<sup>vi</sup> Andor Gomme and David Walker, *Architecture in Glasgow* (London, 1968 and 1987), p.266.

<sup>vii</sup> *Friends of Blue Bulletin* No.143, April 2009, p.10 (note by Gerard Ledger).

<sup>viii</sup> Geoffrey Godden, *Encyclopaedia of British Pottery and Porcelain Marks* (London, 1964 and 1991), mark no. 2497, p.411.