



**Straits Chinese Silver teapot, 19th century (1870-1910 circa), Canton,
mark of Da Xing
£1,700.00**

Straits Chinese Silver teapot, 19th century (1870-1910 circa), Canton, mark of Da Xing
This beautiful solid silver Straits Chinese teapot, produced for Chinese export in the 19th century, is decorated with floral patterns, branches, blooms and bamboo. The Straits Settlements were British colonial territories of settlements around British Malaya.

1

'Straits Chinese' were Chinese born migrants in Southeast Asia, maintaining unique cultures which distinguished them from the indigenous population. These communities settled in Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, establishing themselves in these lands predominantly in the 19th century.

2 While Chinese tea aficionados typically preferred to not use silver, as freshly brewed tea in silver remained too hot to drink and the handle uncomfortable to hold.

However, the Mongolian custom was to demonstrate wealth and prestige through silver and gold and the

Straits Chinese, who were predominately merchants and traders, enjoyed this manner of consumption and

luxury. However, the silver teapots and artefacts they preferred were small and delicate.

3

Featured around the teapot are groups of figures, one group surrounded by bamboo and tree trunks while

the other figures are surrounded by flowers with a large butterfly close above them. This tea pot closely

resembles other similar silver tea sets which were produced for export, melding European designs with Chinese. This genre is known as Chinoiserie. Bamboo, Chinese figures, scenes and symbols are featured

alongside what many perceive as European patterns and style,

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the meander or 'Greek key' design, which

is in several places around the teapot. However, this design, in addition to Classical antiquity, can be found in ancient China, described as a huiwen ??.

5 Therefore, it is plausible that this design would have appealed to Straits Chinese and Western clients.

6 Chinese teapots, irrespective of whether they were produced silver, gold, enamel, porcelain or pottery, are typically low and round, generally resembling a 6 Arkell.

5 Jeong-Hee Lee-Kalisch, 'The Transmission of Ornaments in Buddhist Art: On the Meander of Huiwen', *Hualin International Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 1.2 (2018): 111-130 (p. 112).

4 Roland Arkell, 'Chinese Export Silver, Silver Linings', *Asian Art, Antiques Trade Gazette* (2019)

[accessed 19 June 2025].

3 HoWing Meng, *Straits Chinese Silver, A Collector's Guide* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1984), pp. 149-150.

2 Mark Ravinder Frost, 'Transactional Diaspora: The Straits Chinese in Singapore, 1819-1918', *Asia Research Institute, ARI Working Paper*, No. 10 (2003) 1-44 (pp. 1-2).

1 David Newman, 'British Colonial Censorship Regimes: Hong Kong, Straits Settlements, and Shanghai International Settlement 1916-1941', *Silencing Cinema: Film Censorship Around the World*, ed. by Daniel Biltereyst & Roel Vande Winkel (2013) 167-191 (p. 168).

pear or are of a compressed globular form. Furthermore, diminutive tea pots were considered refined and

tasteful by Straits Chinese

7

On the teapot's base is ?? which is the Maker's Mark of Da Xing. A silver salver, by Da Xing, who is estimated to have been active between 1870-1910, was sold in Christie's in 2014.8 Da Xing, like other Chinese silversmiths, created imaginative variations on functional Western artefacts while embellishing them with traditional Chinese motifs. Da Xing made silver especially for export to Southeast Asia,⁹

therefore part of his workshop would have catered for the Straits Chinese market.

This beautiful teapot, with its floral motifs, depictions of archetypal Chinese imagery such as bamboo, bridges constructed from branches, a butterfly and figures in Chinese clothing, alludes