

Some thoughts about China Repairers and Mr Tebo also possibly John Toulouse.....by John Robson

The use and meaning of the English language is constantly changing and it would be interesting to see how we would get on in Georgian England if we had a Time Machine!

One such change was the meaning in eighteenth century England attributed to the description 'Repairer' or 'modeller'. Workers who assembled complex shapes before they were fired were called 'repairers' or 'modellers'.

It is assumed that an impressed mark on porcelain was applied by the person who assembled the item, usually a figure, whatever the person's title.

The reason for applying such a mark is not known and these rare marks might have been used by modelmakers on samples, trials and demonstration pieces.

One such mark was 'To' but who was he?

We know of the existence of a Mr Tebo who was probably of French origin. Perhaps his name was in fact '*Thibeault*'.

Conjecture has been advanced that Mr Thibeault or Tebo was in fact John Toulouse and I refer to the very interesting article on this subject by Bella Kleinman entitled 'Mr Tebo vs. John Toulouse' ECC Vol.15 (no.2) 1994 (which is well worth reading.). The conclusion was that more research was needed on this interesting subject, but there was a definite link.

She found that the impressed mark 'To' was found on -

Bow figures 1755 to 1765;

Some Worcester porcelain 1765 to 1769;

Bristol porcelain 1770 to 1773; and

Caughley circa 1775.

It was also recorded that from Bristol he went to work for Wedgwood as a modeller, which he apparently failed miserably. There is a suggestion by Bella Kleinman that, having fallen out with Richard Champion, who had cost him a

great deal of money fighting over patents, he vented his anger on John Toulouse!!

For me, I have read in passing in various books such as Bow porcelain Redstone and Adams page 217, Plymouth porcelain (Adams page 79), Bristol porcelain (Severne McKenna) and Wedgwood about Tebo.

I thought it was one of the mysterious details given in the books but unlikely to be encountered by me unless I went to a museum.

I was, however, lucky to find a Bow sauceboat with the 'T' mark from which it can be seen how this indented mark was applied and I attach photos.





My Bow sauceboat is, of course, not unique and Nicholas Panes in his book 'British Porcelain Sauceboats of the 18th Century' has illustrated a very similar one to mine at page 80, illustration figure 122, with the underside shown at his page 253. The date he has given for this sauceboat is 1760 to 1765.

One wonders why an apparently skilled assembler/modeller/repairer was working on an humble sauceboat. That provokes a great deal of thought but at the end of the day, one will never know!

JMR/September 2021