



Women's Rights and the Art Market in the Perspective of Chinese Traditional Culture

Bingqian Xia(✉)

Shaanxi Institute of International Trade and Commerce, Xian, China
bingqianxia@foxmail.com

Abstract. This paper explores and empirically demonstrates the relationship between women's rights and the art market from the perspective of traditional Chinese culture. The empirical results show that there is not much intersection and relationship between the development of women's rights and art market in China, and that the objective conditions of women's rights have a positive effect on the oil painting market when they are elevated, while there is no connection with the porcelain art market represented by men. Based on the empirical results, this paper proposes a hypothesis that the measurement of women's rights in China needs to be combined with the perspective of traditional Chinese culture to effectively understand and measure Chinese women's access and the important factors affecting their access in order to better understand gender inequality in China.

Keywords: Chinese Traditional Culture · Women's Rights · Art Market · Ceramics

1 Introduction

1.1 The Development of Women's Rights in China

The development of women's rights in China has been rocky, with the introduction of the one-child policy in 1979. However, it has had profound implications for women's reproductive rights, as the government exerted extensive control over women's reproductive decisions through measures such as mandatory birth permits, contraception use, and, in some cases, forced sterilizations and abortions [1].

There have indeed been significant improvements in women's rights in China over the past few decades. As Fig. 1 shows, as China's economy has grown, women's life expectancy has increased and literacy rates have risen. Increased access to education has been a key factor in promoting gender equality in China. According to the World Bank (2021), the female gross enrollment ratio in tertiary education rose from 16.3% in 2000 to 59.2% in 2021, surpassing the male enrollment ratio [2].

Despite these educational gains, Chinese women continue to face significant challenges in the labor market, as revealed in Fig. 2. The gender pay gap remains a persistent issue. In 2021, the International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that women in China earned 78.2% of what their male counterparts earned [3]. Moreover, women's

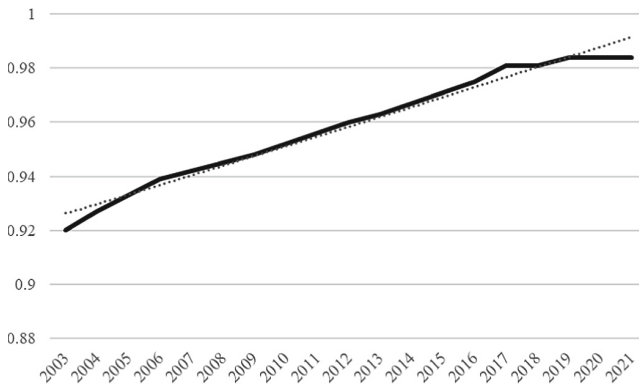


Fig. 1. Gender Development Index over the period 2003–2021 (The index is a composite indicator of the degree of equality between women and men used by the United Nations since 1995).

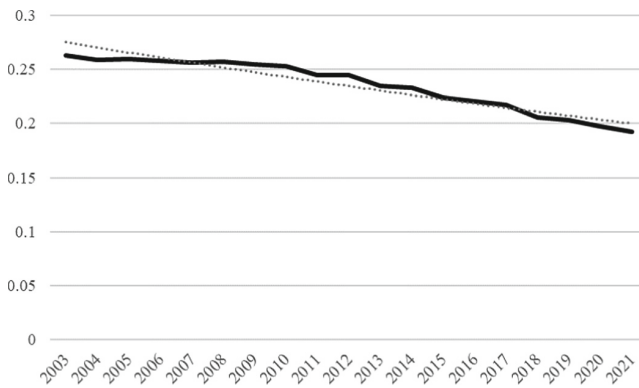


Fig. 2. Gender Inequality Index over the period 2003–2021 (The index was constructed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) based on the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Index (GEM) introduced in 1995 to reflect the extent of gender inequality in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and labor market).

labor force participation in China declined from 73.9% in 2000 to 60.8% in 2021 [2], suggesting that access to education has not necessarily translated into equal employment opportunities.

1.2 The Development of China's Art Market

The development of China's art market accelerated after the reform and opening up, the potential for further market expansion as China's middle class and wealthy individuals continue to grow [4]. The rise of the Chinese art auction market has led to a shift in the global art market dynamics, with China overtaking the United States as the world's largest art auction market in 2009 [5], as shown in Fig. 3.

China's economic growth has led to a significant increase in the number of high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) in the country [6]. These individuals have shown a strong

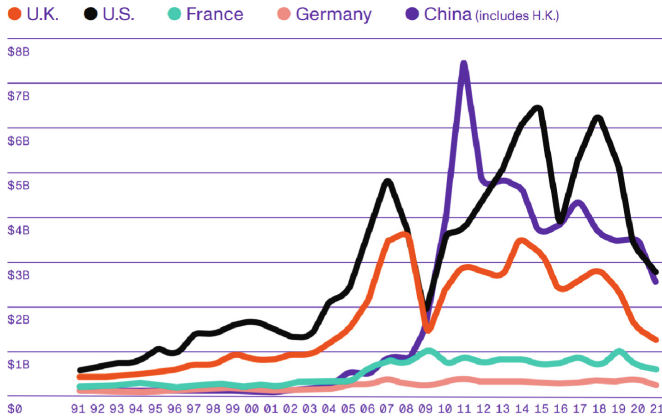


Fig. 3. Fine-Art Sales (USD) by Regional Market for the period 1991–2021 (Data from Artnet)



Fig. 4. Global Total Sales Value (USD) of Chinese Art and Antiques for the period 2009–2019 (Data from Artnet)

interest in investing in art, both as a status symbol and as an alternative investment asset [7]. The growth in the number of HNWI’s has contributed to increased demand for art, driving up auction prices and market growth. As shown in Fig. 4, although the scale of traditional Chinese art transactions declined after 2011, it remained at a high level, supported by the growth in the number of high net worth individuals.

1.3 Women’s Rights and Artwork in the Perspective of Traditional Chinese Culture

Traditional Chinese culture has traditionally given preference to sons over daughters, and there is a Chinese proverb that says, “Unfiliality has three consequences, but no offspring is the greatest”; no son is no offspring, and no offspring is unfilial, a phenomenon that became more prevalent after the government introduced the one-child policy. It reached a peak of 121.2 boys per 100 girls in 2004, compared to a natural ratio of 105 boys per

100 girls, and 25% of children adopted from overseas in the United States come from mainland China, almost exclusively girls [8].

And in terms of artwork, porcelain has been a significant part of Chinese culture since the late Neolithic period, with the earliest examples dating back to 1600–1046 BCE. The art of making porcelain reached its peak during the Song Dynasty (960–1279), and Chinese porcelain became renowned worldwide for its beauty, quality, and intricacy [9]. As a result, porcelain has become a symbol of Chinese cultural pride and identity [10]. Confucius (551–479 BCE) promoted the idea that a refined and cultivated life should include an appreciation for art, literature, and ceramics [11].

Porcelain, as a symbol of refinement and sophistication, provides Chinese men with an opportunity to express their personal and social identities [12]. The ownership of high-quality porcelain objects can enhance an individual's self-concept and self-esteem, as well as communicate their social status to others [13]. Recent scholarly research revealed that Chinese men aged 25–50 were more likely to purchase and collect porcelain items than their female counterparts [14].

2 Methodology

2.1 Selection of Indicators

The indicators of women's rights are selected from the Gender Development Index (GDI, Z) of the United Nations Human Development Report, which is a comprehensive indicator reflecting the degree of equality between men and women used since 1995 to measure the inequality of different genders in basic human capabilities, using three main indicators: first, life expectancy by gender, second, educational attainment by gender, and third, adjusted for both genders' real income, and these three indicators are mainly used to evaluate the degree of gender development.

The art market indicators were selected from the Oil Painting 100 and Porcelain Index of Artron Art Market Monitoring Center, which has counted over 4,300,000 lots sold and graphic information from 840+ Chinese art auction houses in 18,000+ auction specialties since 1993 to the present, the situation is shown in Fig. 5. Firstly, the Oil

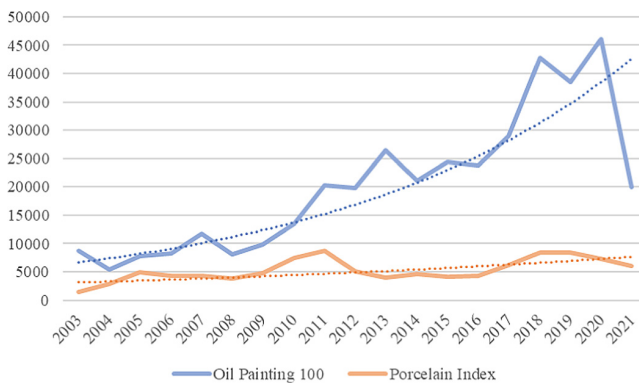


Fig. 5. Oil Painting 100 and Porcelain Index for the period 2003–2021

Table 1. The results of ADF

Variable	Inspection method	t-Statistic	Test critical values			Prob
			1%	5%	10%	
$\Delta(A)$	(c, t, p)	-3.98	-4.67	-3.73	-3.31	0.03
$\Delta(B)$	(c, t, p)	-3.78	-4.62	-3.71	-3.30	0.04
$\Delta(Z)$	(c, 0, p)	-3.73	-3.86	-3.04	-2.66	0.01

Painting 100 (A) is a model based on the basic characteristics of oil paintings and the average price per square foot, aiming to reflect the overall trend of the oil painting auction market and the magnitude of price changes. Secondly, the Porcelain Index (B) is based on Chinese porcelain artworks, based on the basic characteristics of Chinese porcelain artworks such as dynasties and techniques, combined with the average price method to build a porcelain price index, aiming to reflect the auction market situation and price trend of Chinese porcelain artworks.

2.2 ADF Test

Before the Granger causality test, ADF test needs to be performed on the time series of the selected set of indicators. The results of the test are shown in Table 1.

The results show that the time series results of each indicator meet the prerequisites for Granger causality. Their ADF Prob are all less than the threshold at 5% significance level, i.e. they are all smooth series.

2.3 Granger Causality

The test results are shown in Table 2: at the 1% significance level, it shows that women’s rights have a predictive effect on the oil painting art market, however, this predictive effect is one-way, indicating that the development of the art market has not played an effective role in the development of women’s rights for the time being, while there seems to be no bilateral relationship between women’s rights and the ceramic art market, which symbolizes men. The empirical results provide strong evidence for a two-way relationship between these two categories.

Table 2. The results of Granger causality

Null hypothesis	t-Statistic	Prob	Test result
A does not Granger Cause B	0.03352	0.8572	Accept the null hypothesis
B does not Granger Cause A	1.10053	0.3108	Accept the null hypothesis
A does not Granger Cause Z	0.17007	0.6859	Accept the null hypothesis
Z does not Granger Cause A	10.5576	0.0054	Reject the null hypothesis
B does not Granger Cause Z	1.50295	0.2391	Accept the null hypothesis
Z does not Granger Cause B	0.67426	0.4244	Accept the null hypothesis

3 Conclusion

As China's economy grows, Chinese women's life expectancy, educational attainment, and real income are rising, indicating that women's rights are on the rise, yet ranking lower in international comparisons, while women's labor force participation rate has been declining, indicating that more Chinese women are committing to the family environment as conditions improve. From this perspective, it is difficult to say that Chinese women's rights have gained an overall progress and development. Combined with the traditional Chinese culture's perspective on women, this development trend is in line with the dominant idea that women are subservient to the family and to men in traditional Chinese culture, coupled with the consistent existence of patriarchal thinking, including the strengthening of that idea by the one-child policy, and although public opinion in society currently emphasizes gender equality, this is far from the truth.

From the perspective of the art market, women's rights do not seem to have much to do with the art market, especially the porcelain market, which is represented by men, has nothing to do with the development of women's rights in China. Instead, women's rights have a predictive effect on the oil painting market, which suggests that women's income levels, when raised, have a positive effect on the oil painting market, and that oil painting conforms to women's preferences, as the empirical results also show. From this perspective, the Chinese art market is still dominated by men, and the share and influence of women in it is very low.

It is worth noting that the development of the art market is only one of the sectors that are soaring in the development of Chinese society. The continued development of a range of industries, but in the context of a long-term decline in China's gender inequality index, suggests that men have long dominated the development of certain industries, and that this situation is intensifying, with more women choosing to return to their families despite better expected incomes, higher levels of education, and living conditions. There may be a problem that the traditional international indicators used to measure gender inequality in a region fail, because there are differences in the measurement and factors of access for women in each region, and this phenomenon is not necessarily female, and the manifestation of inequality may also be female, especially in the traditional Chinese cultural perspective, where labor rate is not necessarily one of the important factors of access for women.

Finally, regarding the measurement of the level of female inequality in China, there is a need for more reconstructing of the actual inequality and the factors affecting their access in the region, which is an important direction and reflection for future expansion proposed in this paper. There must be a rational reason for the persistence of unreasonable realities, and it is likely that this is part of the mapping of traditional Chinese culture.

References

1. Hesketh, T., & Xing, Z. W. (2006). Abnormal sex ratios in human populations: Causes and consequences. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 103(36), 13271-13275. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0602203103>
2. World Bank. (2021). Gross enrolment ratio, tertiary, gender parity index (GPI). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ENR.TERT.FM.ZS>
3. International Labour Organization (ILO). (2021). Global Wage Report 2021: Gender Pay Gap. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-wage-report/WCMS_817697/lang-en/index.htm
4. Wang, Y. (2015). The development of the Chinese art auction market: A historical and comparative perspective. *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 39(3), 217-232. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10824-015-9242-4>
5. Li, X., & Lang, M. (2018). The Development and Challenges of the Chinese Art Auction Market. *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 42(2), 309-326.
6. Capgemini. (2021). World Wealth Report 2021. Capgemini.
7. Velthuis, O. (2013). *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art*. Princeton University Press.
8. Lisa Ling, "China's Lost Girls," *St. Louis Times*, June 24, 2004 (www.scanews.com/2004/june/s722/fcc/).
9. Curtis, R. (2006). *Chinese ceramics: A history of elegance*. London: Thames & Hudson.
10. Finlay, R. (2010). *The pilgrim art: Cultures of porcelain in world history*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
11. Wang, Y. (2017). Confucianism and the appreciation of art in China. *Asian Studies Review*, 31(3), 445-460.
12. Yang, D., & Tian, S. (2011). Identity, culture, and consumer behavior: A study of Chinese consumers' preferences for luxury goods. *Journal of International Marketing*, 23(4), 56-72.
13. Zhou, L. (2013). The symbolic value of Chinese porcelain in contemporary society. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 22(80), 313-328.
14. Liu, X., Chen, Y., & Zhang, M. (2019). Consumer behavior and preferences for porcelain in China: A survey study. *Journal of Chinese Economic Studies*, 19(2), 158-173.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

