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Porcelain is a compound material, ceramic in nature which is made by heating clay with some other raw materials in a kiln to temperature of about 12000C. Porcelain is translucent in nature and its name is derived from the Italian language. Due to the translucent nature of the material, it has gained widespread use in the pottery industry to make kitchen ware and some other materials mainly of prestige 1.

The use of porcelain can be traced back to the 4th century in China and Japan. It started off as just pottery but with time, it gained popularity to a point that the Chinese porcelain and Japanese porcelain gained international recognition.

The use of porcelain and export are mostly attributed to China than any other country in the world. The porcelain products from China were diverse and mostly depicted different reigns of dynasties. The most remembered dynasties were the Yang, Ming and Qing dynasties which spanned between 13th and 17th centuries 1.

Porcelain gained popularity in the European region after the attack of two carracks ferrying the porcelain products were captured and their cargo auctioned in Europe by the Dutch. This occurred between the years 1602 and 1604. This is what led to the popular international trade of China in porcelain products. The actual porcelain trade started off earlier in the 14th century during the Yang dynasty. In the Ming dynasty, the international trade in porcelain which led to development of porcelain products specifically for export purposes (Export porcelain) 2.

1. Kelun, Chen. 2004. Chinese porcelain: Art, elegance, and appreciation. San Francisco: Long River Press.
2. Temple, Robert K. G. 2007. The Genius of China: 3, 000 Years of Science, Discovery, and Invention. London.

The porcelain business thrived to appoint that the Dutch set up a company to control the trade. Several other industries cropped out so as to either feed the porcelain industry with raw materials or use the final products. One of the most evident industries that cropped and thrived due to the existence of the porcelain industry was the cobalt mining industry. The cobalt was used to make decorations on the white porcelain products before heating the products in a kiln from hardening 2.

Several porcelain industries cropped in Europe and North America. The industries used the original Chinese porcelain as the masterpiece to make their own porcelain products or repair the worn out imports from China. In this process, different forms of porcelain products were developed.

Porcelain can be divided majorly according to the origin of the porcelain products. According to the origin, porcelain can be divided into Chinese porcelain and European porcelain. Chinese porcelain is the oldest porcelain attributing the origin of porcelain to China. The porcelain products were fired once in a glaze to a temperature of 12000C. The products made were later decorated using cobalt which was not applied in any specific format. The European porcelain was a developed as a copy of the Chinese porcelain 3. The difference between Chinese porcelain and the European porcelain was

the type of heating. The Chinese porcelain was fired once to make hard porcelain products while the European porcelain was soft fired.

1. Burton, William. 2002. Porcelain, Its Nature, Art and Manufacture. London

Porcelain is best divided according to the composition. It is divided into hard paste, soft paste and bone china porcelain. The types of porcelain are discussed below.

1. Hard paste porcelain. This is mainly attributed to originate from East Asia and precisely china. Its main components are kaolin and alabaster. Products made of this type of porcelain are fired once to a temperature of about 1400C giving them great hardness and translucency 3.

2. Soft porcelain. This was developed by European potters who tried to imitate the Chinese porcelain. The porcelain is of low quality since the firing temperatures were not as high as for the Chinese hard paste porcelain. Also, the composition was not meant to produce hard porcelain

3. Bone china. This porcelain category was originally developed in England but is currently all over the world. It was developed to compete with the Chinese porcelain but the quality is still not up to the Chinese level 3.

Porcelain is mostly used in manufacture of electronic components mainly in capacitors. This is mainly due to the high tolerance of the material. The capacitance of such capacitors has the ability of attaining capacitance of more than a farad which is a very large quantity. It also helps in miniaturization of capacitors.

The last use of porcelain started off in the Chinese royal palaces and courts. The product was used for decoration in the building industry. Therefore, the products are used up to date to decorate walls of highly prestigious places or high rank offices 2.

In conclusion, porcelain is a product that has more potential of exploitation than any other product in the pottery industry. Therefore, dedicating more concentration and time to the industry can result in full exploitation of the natural resource which is currently almost everywhere in the world.

## **References**

Temple, Robert K. G. 2007. *The Genius of China: 3, 000 Years of Science, Discovery, and Invention*. London.

Burton, William. 2002. *Porcelain, Its Nature, Art and Manufacture*. London