

A Study on the Cultural Memory and Identity of the Traditional Porcelain Making Craft in Jingdezhen

Shun Rao^{1, a}, Jing Liu^{1, b}

¹ School of Design and Art, Jingdezhen Ceramic University, Jingdezhen 333403, China

^a 21605511@qq.com, ^b 1026610646@qq.com

Abstract

The rapid development of modernization has had a significant impact on traditional handicraft industry, and the handicraft ceramic art, which had made brilliant achievements in history, has gradually lost its voice. It is of great significance to reshape cultural self-confidence and enhance the identity with national culture in the context of globalization. The research on the cultural memory of traditional porcelain making craft in the three dimensions of artifacts, craftsmanship and craftsmanship spirit will help to reshape the self-consciousness and subjectivity of the ceramic culture, show the charm of traditional handicraft culture with a high degree of cultural confidence in the new historical period, and enhance our identity of national culture.

Keywords

Porcelain Making Craft; Cultural Memory; Identity.

1. Global Cultural Landscape

As a result of the rapid development of modernization, the world culture presents a trend of globalization across nations and regions. Globalization is more than just a simple macroeconomic picture, but it also contains a variety of complex cultural and social development processes. The initial stage of globalization development has obvious characteristics of powerful western culture. The western world, led by the United States, has long dominated the discourse power of contemporary culture. Anthony Smith once said that "strong globalization ideology and mass consumption culture can be exchanged in the world consumer culture market like currency, which causes the dilution of country and national identity." The identity crisis and the homogenization of culture make people realize the importance of traditional local culture for the development of the Chinese nation. In this context, it is not difficult to understand the practice of tracing the root of the traditional local culture. In the multi-cultural context brought about by globalization, as an important part of Chinese traditional culture, ceramic handicraft culture has been "otherized" and "marginalized" in the global trend. As an ancient civilization and a great power in modern times, China should build a local cultural discourse system with Chinese characteristics with a high cultural consciousness and cultural self-confidence to show our own traditional culture and national image, which has also become one of the important issues that we must think about.

2. The Contemporary Value of Traditional Porcelain Making Craft

Ceramic culture has a close and unique relationship with Chinese civilization. The birth, development and evolution of Chinese pottery and porcelain also reflect the footprint of the birth and development of Chinese civilization, and they have witnessed the progress of ancient material civilization and spiritual civilization. "Pottery is a new kind of utensil created by human beings by changing the structure and nature of materials through their own labor for the first time. Other early tools were the transformation and utilization of materials by human

beings without changing the characteristics of materials. When making ceramics, humans made the clay change chemically by firing it, and created a new type of material to serve humans." Myths and legends such as "Nvwa kneading earth to make human beings", "Shennong cultivating and making pottery" all show the indissoluble bond between ancient people and soil. The process of early pottery making can also be seen as the "objectification of essential power" as Marx described. This marked that human beings turned the soil into a living tool with their hands and made it a civilization through creative labor. Through the most initial modeling ability of human beings, this kind of handicraft of soil kneading contains the aesthetic spirit of agricultural civilization, and has the symbolic value of being remembered by history. It should play an important role in contemporary social life and cultural narrative.

Ceramics are very important cultural carriers and ties. Ceramics connect ancient times with the present in the dimension of time. In the long river of history, it has extended the footprints of human progress in its own way, "solidified" the wisdom of creation and the national culture and inherited them from generation to generation. The evolution and development of ceramics have forged the spirit and belief of the Chinese nation, and implied many profound contents in Chinese history and culture. It witnessed the primitive totem worship, reflected the level of production technology in different periods, reflected the character of people everywhere, and carried the enlightenment of civilized etiquette. Ceramics have a history of nearly 10000 years, from germination to development, from single to complex. They left behind not only rigid ceramic artifacts, but also the wisdom of ancestors' labor and the historical context.

However, with the arrival of the industrial civilization, the roar of modern machines has drowned the simple and natural idyllic life that romantic poets yearn for. Industrialized mass production in modern society has opened up the automation of labor, and programming, standardization and speed have become the key words of the machine age. After the founding of New China, the way of industrial mass production entered the ceramic industry. Jingdezhen Ceramics Co., Ltd. established the first porcelain chemical plant for the production of over-glaze decal paper. After the late 1970s, "conveyor belts were widely used in major ceramic factories, making film decals an assembly line process." With the advantages of mass production and high speed, the industrialized ceramic production has had a huge impact on the folk manual ceramics industry. While changing the social production and lifestyle, this impact also makes the traditional handicraft ceramic art face unprecedented challenges. With the continuous development of China's economy, China is experiencing a transformation into a post industrial society. The natural crisis of globalization and the outbreak of cultural crisis have made people reflect on the negative consequences of modern mechanical civilization. In the vision of ideology and culture, the sages began to re-examine the humanistic significance and aesthetic value of labor. People try to get rid of the rigid and indifferent atmosphere brought by "instrumental rationality" and move towards the ideal realm of "humanistic rationality".

Handicraft ceramic art also ushers in a new turn in this social context. From daily life tools in the traditional farming society to a marginal existence in the industrial society, the handicraft ceramic art presents different living conditions in the process of social changes and development. It has experienced the embarrassment of the impact of industrial civilization, and has highlighted its unique charm and vitality in the new historical environment, regained a new cultural identity and entered the vision of the public's daily life. The "handicraft complex" of modern people is the spiritual adjustment and compensation that human beings seek in the face of cultural shocks. In the process of making handmade ceramic art, whether it is the spiral lines left by the drawing process, the knife marks left by the shaping process, or the marks left by the techniques such as beating, carving, carving, punching, scribing, printing, and picking on the body tread, they all record the feelings, mood, and thoughts of people. The process of handwork, from the surface to the deep layer of the artifacts, contains the spirit of life consciousness and personal emotional creative activities, and integrates personal skills and

traditional aesthetic consciousness, “it appeals to people's senses in the form of beauty, reflects the unity of practicality and aesthetics, and integrates thought and emotion, technology and art into artifacts through hand labor.” Handmade ceramic art allows us to feel the temperature of artifacts, and their fingerprints are printed on the road of creation civilization. The originally solidified objects are full of the spirit of things and the wisdom of people. They can arouse our sense of the rhythm and rhythm of life flow, and have an indescribable feeling of warmth, comfort and intimacy.

3. The Dimension of Cultural Memory of Traditional Porcelain Craft

In 1920s, Maurice Halbwachs, a French scholar, put forward the theory of “collective memory” in such books as *The Social Framework of Memory*, believing that memory was restricted by social factors, and that “cultural memory” played a technical role in supporting memory and identity by means of ritual, text, memorial and other symbol systems. Through cultural memory, members of a collective can establish and cultivate a common identity and sense of belonging. At the same time, “through the recollection of their own history and the modernization of the memory image that plays a role in consolidating the foundation, the collective confirms its own identity.” By preserving collective knowledge handed down from generation to generation, cultural memory confirms cultural continuity, thus providing a diachronic dimension for later generations' cultural identity. Handicraft ceramic culture, rooted in the historical and cultural value of ceramics, is a cultural form that transcends and has both material and spiritual attributes. It takes ceramics as its material carrier, handicrafts as its inheritance method, and craftsmanship as its core element. These cultural symbols with historical significance are the main forms of “cultural memory”. Utensils are a medium, a carrier of historical memory, connecting a typical, symbolic, emotional or cultural heritage network. The shape, glaze color and picture of ceramic ware all have specific shape norms and philosophical context. While presenting the aesthetic preference of the nation in different periods, they can also reflect the social and cultural background and humanistic trend of thought in politics, economy, culture and other aspects.

The food vessels, flower vessels, ritual vessels, wine vessels, tea vessels and sacrificial vessels in ceramics show the traditional Chinese idea of creating things from different aspects. The ideas of creation, such as “harmony between man and nature” and “Tao following nature”, are embodied in ceramic artifacts in different periods. Ceramics are the combination of man and nature, nature and humanity, aesthetics and function. Since their birth, they have carried the gene of Chinese civilization and become representative cultural symbols and touchable cultural memories. Like a long historical scroll, they vividly displayed the long history, culture and beautiful social scene of our country and all ethnic groups since ancient times. Some show people's ideal pursuit through different forms of porcelain, such as thin and beautiful porcelain in the Southern and Northern Dynasties, round and full porcelain in the Tang Dynasty, elegant and long porcelain in the Song Dynasty, and thick and heavy porcelain in the Yuan Dynasty; some vividly reproduce historical stories by depicting scenery, such as blue and white porcelain pots with Guiguzi descending the mountain in the Yuan Dynasty, and Doucai chicken bowl cup during the reign of Emperor Chenghua; some show people's aesthetic orientation in different periods through different colors and glazes, such as Longquan celadon, Dehua white porcelain, Jingdezhen celadon white porcelain, etc; some show religious belief and spiritual pursuit through different artistic patterns, such as human face and fish patterns, bird patterns, frog patterns, lotus patterns in Tang porcelain, etc. It is these various shapes, varied patterns and colorful glaze colors that enable us to see the historical features and cultural landscapes of different periods and regions in ceramic artifacts, making them living textbooks for us to learn the traditional culture.

In the tens of thousands of years before the advent of the modern industrial era, human beings had been dealing with nature with their hands. The history of handicrafts is the history of humans' self creation. Engels once pointed out that "hands are not only organs of labor, they are also products of labor, just because of labor, because they adapt to the ever-changing movements...these inherited dexterity are applied to new and more complex actions in more and more new ways, so the human hands have reached such a high degree of perfection." As a mode of production, traditional manual labor is the basis for people to make a living in the agricultural era, which contains rich technology and cultural content. In manual labor, humans learned to use tools, and integrated personal experience and historical experience through the close connection between hands and hearts and the close cooperation between hands and tools. The handicraft porcelain craft with a long history in China is the blood and cultural gene of the historical development of our spiritual home, allowing us to feel the glorious history of our ancestors and find the source and power of our development at the same time. In the face of the rapid development of modern society, we can escape from the bondage of instrumental rationality through the temperature of our hands and the perceptual brilliance, and move towards the road of clarity to achieve what Heidegger termed "poetic habitation".

4. Cultural Consciousness and Contemporary Identity of Traditional Porcelain Making Craft

If the traditional porcelain craft is sealed in the museum or recorded only in words, it will become a historical relic and eventually enter the "amnesia" state, followed by the weakening of national cultural identity. As Jan Assmann said, "Identity, in the final analysis, involves memory and recall... Any group can only cultivate group identity through memory." He believed that collective memory was based on culture, and each individual integrated into the society by recognizing the social value system. Chinese traditional ideas and ways of creation are vividly displayed in the shape and techniques of handmade ceramic art. These common pursuits and values formed in the long history have influenced and even shaped the spiritual world of the Chinese descendants, and will continue to integrate into our lives at present and in the future. Like the ceramic craft customs and ceramic cultural systems handed down from generation to generation, they constitute the collective cultural memory of ceramic handicrafts, carry the history and feelings of the nation, and show the concept system, value orientation and psychological structure of people in different periods. It is these long-standing cultural memories that awaken our national cultural identity. On the basis of systematically sorting and aesthetic discrimination of ceramic history and culture, we should rebuild the subjective consciousness and self-consciousness of handmade ceramic culture. In the future art practice and exploration, we should rely on the historical culture of Chinese ceramics, consciously rediscover the creativity and vitality of new cultures from the historical civilization of ceramic culture, and observe and learn from the world culture in many ways with an open view, so as to reconstruct a language mode that conforms to the current national conditions and social development status to carry out "self representation". This subjective conscious cultural identity is not a conservative and narrow regionalism, but a critical inheritance of ceramic cultural tradition. It includes the concern for the alienation of human mind and the loss of humanistic spirit in the process of globalization, and the reconstruction of spiritual value and humanistic care from the perspective of culture. It allows the handicrafts of the farming era to be integrated into modern life as cultural genes and social genes.

Acknowledgments

Fund programs: This paper is an interim result of *A Study on the Living Inheritance and Development of Traditional Porcelain Making in the Post-heritage-application Period: a Case*

Study of the Ink Color technique in Jingdezhen, a research project of humanities and social science by higher education institutions in Jiangxi Province in 2017, Project No. : YS17115 . it is an interim result of *On the Application of Intangible Cultural Heritages in Jingdezhen into the Ceramic Art Education in Colleges and Universities*, a project in the Social Science Planning of Jingdezhen City in 2017. 2021 Jiangxi Provincial Culture, Art and Science Planning General Project *Study on the Shape Design of Jingdezhen Ceramic Wine Vessel in Song Dynasty*, Project No. : YG2021074.

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