

# On the Tendency of "Folk Custom" of Ceramic Patterns in Ming and Qing Dynasties

Yu Li

School of Art and Design, Zhengzhou University of Industrial Technology, Zhengzhou, Henan, 451100, China

liyu230@163.com

**Keywords:** "Folk custom"; Materialization; Religious culture; Civic class; Ceramic pattern

**Abstract:** During the Ming and qing dynasties, the various cultural demands gradually increased as the city continued to strengthen and the citizen class was stable. All kinds of decorative patterns are designed under the premise of satisfying practical needs. Through the analysis of these decorative patterns, we can glimpse the subsequent trend of "folk customs". By summarizing and analyzing the patterns on the vessels, the author intends to reveal the cultural meaning behind the "citizen class" in the social background during that time to study the political orientation, religious influence and cultural characteristics of ceramic patterns.

## 1. Introduction

As one of the utensils in People's Daily life, ceramics show the preference of "citizens". Pottery was born thousands of years ago, a variety of rounding bottom, flat bottom, pointed bottom modeling; Abstract and figurative patterns, one of the sources of Chinese art, have great aesthetic appeal and influence the development of other artistic patterns for thousands of years. "Porcelain was first burned in the Eastern Han dynasty". In the Sui and Tang dynasties, porcelain was not only used in daily life but also began to develop independently from aesthetics, forming a pattern of "South Celadon and North White". "Cyan and white series" has provided development space for the creation of diverse patterns. In the clay body carving, engraving, piling, carving, painting, etc., to draw people's belief and expectation of a better life.

Porcelain reached its peak in Ming and Qing dynasties with high artistic value. The decoration of civilian kiln reflects the aesthetic taste and spiritual outlook of civic culture. Such as baby map, plow and woven map, figures of women, historical stories. With the continuous development of The Times, the production technology and new materials appear constantly. "Underglazed five ceramic", "famille-rose porcelain" and "clashing color" has provided space and opportunity for painting. Huge market demand, business increasing, with a variety of decorative patterns of porcelain, the continuous emergence of the market. Through the analysis and exploration of them, we can understand the "civic culture" hidden behind the patterns.

## 2. Classification of Ceramic Patterns

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, porcelain was of innumerable shapes and varied contents. Patterns include various scenes and stories of life. Xu Zhiheng wrote the Chapter 5 flower painting Yinliuzhai Shouci: "the people in the Qian (long) kiln are extremely skilled. It can be seen that the ceramic pattern is complex and closely related to the civic culture. It also tends "secularization".

The patterns of porcelain can be roughly classified into three categories: the first category is material life scenes. This kind of expression mainly to the secular life observation and grasp, most close to the "context" life, but also the most plain. Usually choose the common segments in life, highly refined, mostly based on character dynamics. Such as all kinds of baby patterns, around children play, sport, ornaments on flowers, fruit, bamboo horses, birds, fish, lively composition, lively and interesting, a school of innocence.

The second category is religious thought. With a variety of good meaning of "secularization"

style, to express the people's religious beliefs and prayers. On the surface of porcelain show Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, etc. "Gods of He-He," "The three gods of fortune, prosperity and longevity," "Eight Auspicious Goddesses", "Sweeping the elephant," "Cloth bag monk" and other popular graphics in the form of deformation, exaggerated, expression of religious ideas.

The third category is culture and entertainment. Influenced by literati, all kinds of literati "painting text", stories, dramas, novels and book illustrations were designed with porcelain patterns. It shows the imitation, reproduction, and pursuit of literati's extraordinary art by the citizen class.

### **3. Formation of "Citizen Culture"**

The culture was primarily seen in The Book of Changes, Hexagram Bi. According to The Book of Changes, it is natural that a man and a woman come together, and it is cultural that that man and that woman come together to make a family. Where nature and culture meet out community. Judging from natural to detect when the change, judging from the humanities into the world. Among them, "humanization" refers to "culture". Kong Yingda explained "humanization" as "it is about the humanities to transform into the world, and a sage observes the humanities, which means" poetry", "book", "rites" and "music", and becomes the world by practicing and teaching ". Thus, culture represents the inheritance and development of an "ethnic group". Archaeology proves that Chinese ancestors formed their own "Ethnic Groups" according to "consanguinity", "geography" or "business relationship", and correspondingly maintained their own "cultural characteristics".

The explanation of "citizen" in Shuo Wen Jie Zi is as follows: "the city is the place where people buy and sell", which clarifies the function of "city", which is a place related to commercial activities. Therefore, we can be aware that the group of "citizens" has typical business characteristics. The earliest commercial development in China can be traced to the early Shang dynasty. There is a record in Yi Jing Yi Shuo Gua that "trading sheep for concubine". But the real commercial activities seem to be closely related to the development of cities. In the northern Song dynasty, the construction of the city was mature, the business was flourishing, and the "citizen class" was formally established.

"Citizen Groups" of the northern Song dynasty were numerous and complex, including industrialists, craftsmen, officials in poverty, literati in poverty, prostitutes, nomads and so on. Meng Liang Lu and *Tales of the Old Capital* on the record of a large number of Song dynasty street details of life, such as, In Lin 'an daily supply of cooked food more than 200 kinds, a variety of Wasi and Goulan in the performance of dozens of kinds of trade, artists as many as hundreds of people, and hundreds of versions of various miscellaneous drama words... Finally, class characterized by "secularization" and "commercialization" is formed, which influences all aspects of social life. After the Song dynasty, China's commercial development, the Ming dynasty capitalism germination, overseas trade frequent, the number of citizens continued to rise; A large number of people with wealth and knowledge continue to join, and the influence of "civic culture" continues to expand.

### **4. The Tendency of "Folk Customs" of "Citizen Class"**

The understanding of "civic culture" is generally divided into three levels: the first is the spiritual level, mainly including the group's values, aesthetic taste, and moral standards; The second is the physical layer, which mainly refers to the physical carrier needed by the daily life of the group. The third is the cultural level, which is the most representative embodiment of citizen culture, and the negative carrier of citizen cultural spirit. It is most intuitively expressed in their cultural products, from which we can see the essence and connotation of a citizen culture and the tendency of "folk customs".

The basic characteristics of civic culture are obvious: materialization, enjoyment and rapidness. Materialization is the basic feature of citizen culture, and the goal of "survival" determines the rational function. The joy, anger, sorrow, and joy in daily life are always favored and consumed by

citizens. "Urbanization" is part of the most typical characteristics of civic culture. Strong commercial consciousness of citizens and their deep understanding of the concept of "profit" enables them to best understand the turn of the market, makes the most rapid transformation, caters to the market and even guides the aesthetic trend of the market.

#### 4.1 Materials

This kind of materialized feature is mainly manifested in the pattern of daily life fragments. Such as plowing weaving map (Fig. 1, 2), the peaceful life scene of male plowing and female weaving has always been the best "peace garden". From the publication of Geng Zhi Tu in the Southern Song dynasty to the end of the Qing dynasty, more than 700 years, there were numerous editions. After all, the popularity of this pattern is to persuade farmers and mulberry trees, promote cultivation and promote the development of social productivity. This pattern is popular in ceramics: first, it is "responsive" to the society, which is more or less "political". 2nd still depends on citizen estate to pray through him quiet and beautiful "male plows female weaves" "peach land" life.



Fig.1 Plowing and Weaving Scenery Area in blue and white of Kangxi, Qing dynasty



Fig.2 Plowing and Weaving Scenery Area

"Baby play pictures" are a traditional Chinese painting subject. There are different scenes of playing, playing, flapping eagle, Cuju and carving. The expectation of a "child" is an innate human quality. Archeological findings of baby drama first appeared in the Tang dynasty Tong Guan kiln; During the Ming and Qing dynasties, we can still see the combination of Cuju and children's education. Cuju is a popular sport. A poem written by Wang Wei said. "Cuju is used by many birds, and the swing comes out of the trees." Cuju has been very prevalent among the people since the Ming dynasty. It is easy to see the expectation of the citizens for the health and happiness of children.

#### 4.2 Religious Expressions on Ceramic Patterns

Buddhism spread east along the "silk road" two thousand years ago and developed with local culture to create the zen thought. In the beginning, Buddhism was controlled and guided by the upper nobles. After hundreds of years of development, gradually civilian, popular. The introduction of Buddhism greatly changed the indoor furnishings in China, especially the change of furniture from low to high, which brought about the change of relative objects' shape and pattern position. At the same time, Buddhist propaganda of various "universal view", "karma" and other thoughts have also affected the life of the citizens; The most intuitive expression is that there are more Buddhist figures, religious elements, and rituals on the ceramic patterns. Such as: popular in the late Ming dynasty, Buddhist "Elephant Sweeping" ceremony based on the "Elephant pattern" blue and white; Also has the localization Buddhism figure "The cloth bag monk"; The "Eight treasures" image symbolizing the Buddhist things and so on. Thus it can be seen that the influence of Buddhism is more popular and localized.

The idea of "immortals" is a local folk belief in China, which uses various fairy tales to explain supernatural phenomena and pray for beautiful things. In the cognition of Chinese people, every place that cannot be reached is inhabited by "immortals" with "magic power", who is in charge of everything that ordinary people hope for. "Reproduction and growth", "life cycle" and "imperial high

school" are all about life, class status, close to life but difficult to dominate the "yearning". Thus, the people "deified" them, and there was the immortal who dominated marriage -- "two immortals of harmony"; For example (Fig.3) the "queen mother of the west" is the master of "immortal medicine"; As well as the metaphor of "denke high school" "toad hall wins the title", such as (Fig. 4). The image appeared on the surface of the earthenware, expressing the people's wishes for happiness, health and longevity and the urgent change of the fate of the class.



Fig.3 Qing Yongzheng blue on white and powder enamel bottle



Fig.4 QingKangxi blue and white toad hall laurel pot

#### 4.3 Entertainment in Ceramic Patterns

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the demand for porcelain increased greatly owing to the frequent commercial activities and continuous maritime trade. Many literati and painters also participated in the creation of "civic culture", and the professional creation of "professional painters" influenced the artistic fashion of the civic class. Yuan Qu, Zhang Hui style novels of Ming and Qing dynasties and historical stories are all valuable materials, which can best reflect the artistic level. According to the record, Chen Hongshou directly designed the illustrations in the Romance of West Chamber, such as, depicting Yingying and Zhang Sheng talking to each other through the wall, and telling each other about their feelings of "listening in the corner"; Before Zhang Sheng went to Beijing to take the examination, Yingying was seen off in Changting. These artistic work created by literati and painters is common decorative patterns on Ming and Qing porcelain, such as (FIG. 5). There are also such as Gaolian's Jade Hairpin is also one of the common painting themes, such as (FIG. 6). On the one hand, the frustrating literati can be seen participating in the creation of the citizens, and on the other hand, the citizens want to break through the class rules and regulations, break the class concept, and freely pursue the desire of marriage and love.



Fig.5 Qing Kangxi blue and white west chamber story



Fig.6 Qing Shunzhi blue and white jade kanzan characters writing

Popular classical fictions are also widespread on pottery patterns, which express the public's love and desire for culture in the most intuitive way. Such as the common "Two Joe and read". "Three Heroes Combating with Lv Bu" are patterns often take the material; There are also some interesting literati stories, such as "Wangxizhi love goose" and "Eight Drinking Immortals". The late Ming dynasty was attacked by Manchu, and the drawings often borrowed stories of "unadorned and antique" from the literati, reflecting the political will to be loyal to the Han dynasty, such as "Boyi Shuqi story ", "Suwu Liling story" and "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove". Cultural products that these literati participate in and create have diversified influences on the culture of the citizens. Naturally, there are various reasons for this situation. These designs mixed by literati are rich in cultural flavor, and at the same time, they are also very worldly. These intrinsic and explicit characteristics all illustrate the diversity and complexity of civic culture.

## 5. Conclusion

The patterns on ceramics are not identical to those in literati paintings. The carriers of the realistic functions determine those artistic positioning, which are different from both elegant literati art and common patterns. It reveals the economic factors and the tendency of folklore. Whatever the classes the ceramics flows as a commodity in, the ceramics has the double meanings of invisibility and dominance. We can see the characteristics of the culture of "citizen class" which differs from that of "gentry" through them.

## References

- [1] editor-in-chief of Chinese silicate society, History of Chinese Ceramics[M], cultural relics publishing house, 2013,127-129
- [2] Shang gang, the new edition of history of Chinese arts and crafts [M], Higher Education Press , 2007
- [3] Feng Xiaoming, chief editor, Chinese ceramics [M], Shanghai ancient books publishing house, 2001
- [4] Yin dingbang, introduction to design [M], Hunan science and technology press, 2008
- [5] Wu hong, Ten essays on Art History, reading, Xin Zhi sanlian bookstore, 2008
- [6] Xu zhiheng, annotated by Ye zhemin, annotation Yinliuzhai said porcelain annotation and flower painting the fifth [M], Forbidden City press, 2005
- [7] Xu Shu notes: "the book of changes, hexagram Bi · TuanCi", Anhui people's publishing house, 2000 editions.
- [8] Ruan yuan: notes on the Thirteen Classics Explanatory Notes and Commentaries, Zhouyizhengyi , Zhonghua publishing house, photocopied edition.
- [9] LiYu, the influence of the rise of high furniture on porcelain design, journal of Chifeng University (natural science edition) [J], 2016