

Vessels Carry the Dao: the Cultural Connotations of Ceramic Art within the Context of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture

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Abstract: Porcelain, as an important carrier of China's fine traditional culture, with its unique concept of "the unity of vessel and Dao" and rich cultural coding, profoundly embodies the spiritual pursuit and value orientation of the Chinese nation. This article, starting from a historical perspective, explores the cultural connotations of Chinese porcelain, revealing how it conveys the core concepts of traditional culture such as "blessing, wealth, longevity, joy, and wealth" through the expression of ritual systems, the metaphorical system of decorative patterns, and the philosophical interpretation of glaze colors and shapes. Chinese artisans throughout history, with benevolence and righteousness as the core, integrated the ideal personality of Confucianism into porcelain creation, endowing it with the spirit of the times. Chinese porcelain is not only a manifestation of artistic beauty but also an important medium for the reconstruction of cultural heritage under the national discourse. Its "expression of objects" and "spirit of craftsmanship" vividly interpret the cultural, aesthetic, and spiritual connotations of China, providing important inspirations for the inheritance and innovation of China's fine traditional culture.

Keywords: The Doctrine of Vessels and the Dao; Excellent Traditional Culture; Porcelain Art; Cultural Connotation

1. Introduction

As the spiritual lifeline of the Chinese nation, China's excellent traditional culture embodies the deepest spiritual pursuit of the Chinese nation. It is the spiritual symbol that has sustained the Chinese nation for over five thousand years, passing down from generation to generation and remaining vigorous. It is a testament to the way of thinking and behavior of the Chinese nation, and it is the "root" and "soul" of the Chinese nation. Chinese porcelain is a mirror reflecting thousands of years of China's splendid culture and long history. It serves as a witness to Chinese history. As an important representative of China's excellent traditional culture, Chinese porcelain has continued the civilization and development of China for thousands of years. From its origins, where 'porcelain evolved from pottery and surpassed it,' to the true emergence of porcelain during the Eastern Han Dynasty, through the accumulation of the Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties, the great development of 'Southern green and Northern white' during the Tang Dynasty, the prosperous period of Song Dynasty ceramics, the breakthrough progress in Yuan Dynasty ceramics, and the completion of techniques and ceramic craftsmanship in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, every era's customs, emotions, and aesthetic preferences have been reflected in the historical development of Chinese porcelain, deeply showcasing the cultural essence of the Chinese nation.

2. The traditional view of creation that integrates the Dao and the vessel

Mr. Li Zhengdao once described Chinese porcelain in this way: "A history of Chinese ceramics is almost the history of Chinese civilization." This also reveals the cultural connotations inherent in Chinese porcelain itself. As one of the most representative material cultural symbols of Chinese civilization, the development process of Chinese porcelain profoundly embodies the Eastern philosophy of "Vessels Carry the Dao". Through the continuous erosion of time and the accumulation of culture over the long course of history, Chinese porcelain itself integrates culture and aesthetics, embodying the excellent cultural connotations and aesthetic orientations of Chinese culture, and also stems from the materialization of the core values of Chinese culture through the art of porcelain.

Chinese culture has always advocated the spirit of "the Dao is used to form a vessel, and the vessel is used to carry the Dao", a proposition that integrates the dialectical relationship between "Dao" and "vessel" in Chinese philosophy. It not only embodies the essence of traditional thought but also has the space for modern interpretation. The concept of Dao and Vessels, as a philosophical category, was first proposed by Laozi. In Laozi's view, Dao is the source and flow of all things in the world, existing before them and then splitting and transforming to form vessel. After Laozi, *the I Ching*, as a mature philosophical work in ancient Chinese society, is an important treatise for studying the relationship among heaven, earth and human beings, and exploring the operating laws of natural things. It is also one of the mainstream ideas of the Chinese concept of creation. The *I Ching* clearly defines the distinction between Dao and Vessels. The *I Ching*: Xici Shang states that What is above form is called Dao, and what is under form is called "Vessels", where the "unformed substance" Dao is the idea, the formless law, and is called the metaphysical. The "formed material" vessel refers to a tool, which is a tangible entity and is called "the material". Zhuangzi of the Pre-Qin period also believed that the Dao was omnipresent, independent of matter and even existing before it. By modern times in China, Tan Sitong believed that the Dao is the function and the Vessels is the essence. That is to say, once the essence is established, the Dao will not perish. "Vessels Carry the Dao" is a perfect interpretation of the realm of creation and use by the ancient Chinese people in traditional Chinese culture, and it is a vivid interpretation of the perfect integration of their thoughts and concepts into specific vessels.

The craftsmanship of Chinese porcelain perfectly embodies the simple philosophical view of 'harmony between man and nature'. Traditional Chinese creation philosophy respects the way of nature and clarifies the relationship between creators and objects. The 'Kao Gong Ji' also states, 'Heaven has its time, Earth has its energy, materials have their beauty, and craftsmen have their skill. Only when these four elements come together can something be considered excellent.' This reflects China's aesthetic standards from over two thousand years ago. The materials needed for making porcelain come from nature, which includes 'heavenly timing', 'geographical advantage', and 'material beauty', all part of the 'way' of nature. The people who make the objects are also part of nature. Only by following the 'way' of nature and utilizing human initiative can one achieve 'harmony with natural things' and 'conformity to the way of heaven', thus producing high-quality porcelain. The ancient Chinese views on the universe, life and matter were all based on their understanding of natural phenomena and laws, and were a natural concern for the relationship between human beings and nature. The German philosopher of technology, Friedrich Dessauer (1881-1963), associated technology with emotional experiences, believing that technology was the greatest experience of ordinary people in this world and the material realization of invention and transcendence of form^[1]. It forms a cross-cultural response with the traditional Chinese concept of "the unity of the Vessel and the Dao" in creation.

3. Cultural encoding in the historical dimension

3.1 The ritualistic expression of Chinese porcelain

From the perspective of the development history of porcelain, it is a reflection of the system of Chinese cultural ritual and music civilization. Archaeological research shows that since the Shang and Zhou dynasties in China, the use of primitive porcelain has followed the hierarchical system of "storing rituals in vessels". Up until the Ming and Qing dynasties, the shape, patterns, glaze colors and even the usage norms of the imperial porcelain all profoundly reflected the traditional ritual thought of "storing rituals in vessels". As a material carrier of the civilization of rites and music, porcelain not only serves the practical needs of daily life but also plays an important role in politics, religion and social hierarchy, reflecting the cultural logic of "Vessels Carry the Dao". The ritual system connotation in porcelain not only helps to understand the development context of traditional Chinese society, but also provides a historical reference for contemporary cultural inheritance.

3.2 The metaphorical system of Chinese porcelain decorative symbol

The auspicious patterns in porcelain express the Chinese people's expectations for a better life. As the visual text of material culture, the decorative patterns on Chinese porcelain have constructed a complete symbolic language system. These decorative motifs that have evolved over thousands of years not only carry the collective memory of traditional society but also, through symbolic visual rhetoric, have achieved a cultural elevation from daily practicality to spiritual carriers. For thousands of years, with the continuous development of China's porcelain art, the auspicious patterns in porcelain art have gradually been improved and enriched. From the perspective of iconography, Chinese porcelain,

with its own styles and specific meanings, has formed a metaphorical system with a hierarchical structure. Unfolding from the three levels of Erwin Panofsky's iconographic theory, the first level is the pre-iconographical description, that is, "the meaning of nature", which is presented as the concrete decorative element in the decorative visual form of Chinese porcelain. The second level is the iconography analysis of "subordinate or conventional themes", that is, "the meaning of customs", corresponding to specific folk regulations or symbolic contents in Chinese porcelain. The third level is the iconology analysis of "intrinsic meaning and content", which is a deeper iconographic analysis. It points to the values and philosophical thinking of the Chinese nation behind Chinese porcelain, embodying the cosmology of "harmony between man and nature" and the aesthetic ideal of "integration of mind and matter", and has become an important part of the national cultural connotation of Chinese porcelain. The "The Five Auspicious Virtues" culture can be traced back to the ancient Confucian classic "The Book of Documents: Hongfan Jiuchou", and it was also the fundamental principle for the ancient Confucian scholars to govern the country. At the end of the Shang Dynasty in Chinese history, the ruling group of King Zhou of Shang became increasingly corrupt. A royal minister, Bi Gan, was killed by King Zhou of Shang, and King Zhou's uncle, Ji Zi, was imprisoned. King Wu of Zhou led troops to attack the capital of the Shang Dynasty, Chaohe, and later established the Zhou Dynasty through the Battle of Muye. After the establishment of the Zhou Dynasty, King Wu of Zhou sought advice from Ji Zi, a remnant of the Shang Dynasty, on how to govern the country. Ji Zi then told King Wu of Zhou the "Hongfan Jiuchou" passed down by Yu the Xia Dynasty. Among them, the "The Five Auspicious Virtues" are the ninth in the "Hongfan Jiuchou", which is the theoretical source of the "The Five Auspicious Virtues" culture that has been passed down through the ages in Chinese history. With longevity, wealth, health and peace, good virtue, and a peaceful death as the basic contents, it advocates for people to uphold goodness. During the Ming and Qing dynasties in China, the "The Five Auspicious Virtues" culture gradually became more popular and secularized, and a new "The Five Auspicious Virtues" culture with "blessing, emolument, longevity, joy and wealth" as its main contents was formed. This vividly demonstrated the adaptive transformation of the Chinese native art symbol system in cross-cultural communication, and also provided an important model for the modern translation of traditional Chinese porcelain cultural symbols. In the content decoration of Chinese porcelain, the "The Five Auspicious Virtues" theme, as a traditional auspicious theme in Chinese folk culture, transforms the abstract value pursuit into perceptible decorative symbols through the homophonic translation of the bat symbolizing "blessings", the grafting of images such as the pine and crane representing "longevity", and the combination of patterns such as "both blessings and longevity". The visual representation of these decorative symbols typically embodies the creative logic of "patterns carrying the way", expressing the Chinese people's expectations and hopes for a better life. It is not only the inner aspiration of the ancient Chinese working people but also the ultimate goal of the Chinese nation in pursuing a harmonious life. Unlike the religious civilizations of most countries in the world, Chinese civilization belongs to the secular civilization. The "Blessing" culture folk customs centered on "good fortune, emolument, longevity, joy and wealth" have become an important part of China's secular civilization and also constitute the national cultural connotation of Chinese porcelain in the context of traditional Chinese culture.

3.2.1 Blessing Culture: Semiotic Interpretation of Auspicious Motifs

Blessing culture, as an important component of traditional Chinese culture, emphasizes auspiciousness, happiness and reunion, and is the core value and important gene of Chinese culture^[2]. The "blessing" culture in Chinese porcelain, as the core motif of China's auspicious concepts and the psychological projection of the collective unconscious of the Chinese nation, constitutes a symbolic system with profound historical roots and rich cultural connotations. As early as the Han Dynasty, in the "Book of Rites", it was stated: "Blessing means 'preparedness'; preparedness is the essence of all-round smoothness." The record states that with good fortune, all things will go smoothly. This concept of "blessing" is transformed into an ideal state of having everything ready, which is concretely expressed through the material carrier of Chinese porcelain. From the perspective of semiotics, the symbolic system of culture consists of two levels: one is the signifier level, and the other is the signified level. The signified level refers to its formal level or manifestation. The "blessing" culture on porcelain is manifested as visual symbols such as bat patterns, the "Hundred Blessings" picture, and the "blessing" character pattern at the signified level. The referential level refers to its meaning level or the object being represented. The "blessing" culture in porcelain patterns, in the referential level, points to the traditional Chinese cultural concepts such as completeness and smoothness behind Chinese porcelain patterns. These symbols not only carry the folk psychology of the Chinese nation to seek good fortune and avoid misfortune, but also have formed a stable visual grammar in the long-term cultural practice.

It is worth noting that the symbolic meaning of the "blessing" culture has distinct social stratification characteristics. In folk daily-use porcelain, the "blessing" patterns are often combined with the practical needs of the agricultural society, using themes such as "bountiful harvest of five grains" and "favorable weather" to reflect the common people's wishes for basic survival security. In children's porcelain, the emphasis is placed on protective functions such as "Safe and Sound Growth" and "both blessings and wisdom". In the decorative porcelain of the scholar-official class, patterns such as "Double Happiness and honor" were often used to symbolize the Confucian ideal of a smooth official career and a harmonious match of virtue and position. On the porcelain used for birthdays, patterns such as "Happiness, longevity, health and peace" and "Descendants for generations to come" are adopted to convey the family's continuous patriarchal concepts. In conclusion, the "blessing" patterns on porcelain are not only decorative elements but also materialized carriers of traditional Chinese values. "Blessing" is the starting point of all good wishes.

3.2.2 Emolument culture: The material expression of the imperial examination imagery

Emolument culture, as an important component of the traditional Chinese "The Five Auspicious Virtues" cultural system, has undergone a semantic transformation in its connotation from primitive sacrificial culture to imperial examination culture during historical evolution. In his "Shuowen Jiezi", Xu Shen of the Eastern Han Dynasty of China defined "emolument" as "blessing", revealing the semantic connection between emolument and blessing. The "Thousand Character Classic" states, "Excel in learning and enter public service, hold a position and enter politics." Here, "excel in learning and enter public service" was the ideal and pursuit of intellectuals in ancient Chinese society. It not only enabled them to realize the great ambition of governing the country and pacifying the world, but also demonstrated the value of an individual's life. In imperial China, adult males qualified as "shi" (士), denoting educated elites with the political potential to serve; those who assumed official positions were termed "shi" (仕), signifying their integration into the bureaucratic hierarchy. Since the establishment of the imperial examination system in the Sui and Tang Dynasties, "emolument" gradually solidified into a specific cultural symbol for obtaining fame, fortune and official positions through the imperial examination, becoming the ultimate embodiment of the value pursuit of the scholar class.

The emolument culture reflects the value goals of numerous students and the ideal pursuit of all social strata to serve the country with their knowledge. For ancient scholars, the imperial examination system was the necessary path to enter public service. Therefore, the themes of the beautiful pursuit of the imperial examination system and the aspiration for promotion and golden titles reflected in the "emolument" culture were often used to decorate porcelain, such as the common themes of five sons passing the imperial examination, successive generations being enfeared as marquises, passing the imperial examination in the spring breeze, carp leaping over the Dragon Gate, winning three consecutive imperial examinations, and five sons winning the championship. From the perspective of semiotics, the relationship between the signifying and the signified of emolument culture porcelain ornaments presents multiple signifying characteristics. Beneath the superficial pursuit of fame and fortune lies the Confucian political ideal of "cultivating oneself, regulating the family, governing the state and pacifying the world", and it also reflects the concrete presentation of social ideology by porcelain as a carrier of material culture.

3.2.3 Longevity Culture: The Visual Translation of the Path to Extended Life

Respecting the elderly and caring for the young is an excellent tradition of the Chinese nation. Longevity means healthy longevity, and the culture of longevity can be said to be an inherent pursuit of human beings, occupying a lofty position in the cultural spectrum of China. Unlike the religious orientation of ancient Egyptian art that pursued immortality on the other shore, traditional Chinese longevity culture presents distinct contemporary characteristics. Against this background, the concept of praying for longevity has always been an important part of Chinese culture. The Analects of Confucius, Chapter 6, mentions, "The wise are happy, the benevolent live long." This means that a wise person can act according to circumstances and thus be happy, while a benevolent person can quietly observe the outside world and remain steadfast in the face of all changes, naturally leading to a long life. After thousands of years of development, the culture of longevity has become more complete in the Chinese cultural system and is closely related to the daily life of Chinese people. For example, sixty years old is called the first longevity, eighty years old is called the middle longevity, and one hundred years old is called the high longevity. Seventy-seven is called a happy longevity, eighty-eight is called a rice longevity, and ninety-nine is called a white longevity. As an important manifestation of Chinese life philosophy, a unique material expression system has been formed in porcelain art.

At the visual symbol level, the porcelain patterns have constructed a multi-level metaphorical

system. Themes and contents representing the Chinese "longevity" cultural concept, such as cypress trees, pine trees, ribbon birds, cranes, birthday stars, and honeysuckle patterns, are extensively and vividly applied in the decoration of Chinese porcelain. The plant imagery group symbolizes the evergreen nature of pines and cypresses, representing the resilience of life. The honeysuckle pattern, with its continuous growth trend, echoes the way of eternal life and longevity. Among the animal imagery groups, cranes, turtles and ribbon birds are the main subjects, symbolizing longevity based on their biological characteristics. The characters are typically depicted as Taoist deities such as the Longevity Star, Ma Gu, and the Eight Immortals, extending the imagination of life through religious imagery. It is worth noting that these visual elements often appear in a combined form. For instance, "longevity" and "happiness" complement each other, and through complex patterns such as "Pine and Crane prolonging life" and "Turtle and Crane reaching the same age", they form a multi-level symbolic system.

3.2.4 Joy culture: The Visual Shaping of Folk Psychology

"Joy", as the core emotional dimension in the collective psychological structure of the Chinese nation, profoundly embodies the people's enduring spiritual pursuit of a better life and harmonious smoothness. Unlike the Western expression of "joy" centered on personal emotions, the core of Chinese "joy" culture is the social projection of the Confucian "harmony and happiness" ethics, emphasizing the social values of family continuation and human harmony. On the material carrier of Chinese porcelain, which carries profound cultural connotations, the visual presentation of the "joy" culture has become an important medium for carrying and spreading the "joy" culture.

In the decorative patterns of porcelain, the expression of the "joy" culture has a rich and diverse visual vocabulary. The appearance of a large number of "magpie" patterns and their combined imagery constitute the most representative cluster of "joy" cultural symbols. The magpie, due to its name carrying the connotation of joy, along with its value and the folk belief that it is the "bird that brings good news", has naturally been endowed with the auspicious attribute of conveying good news and foretelling good omens in folk perception. The pattern combination related to magpies, "Joy on the Tip of the Eyebrows", depicts a magpie standing on a plum tree branch. It ingeniously utilizes the homophonic connection between "plum tip" and "eyebrow tip" to convey the psychological expectation of "good news coming to the door" through intuitive images, forming the most popular visual vocabulary of joy culture. Similarly, "Joy and surplus" is often presented in the form of Pisces or a combination of fish and lotus, which relies on the homophonic meaning of "surplus" in Chinese for "fish", symbolizing abundance and surplus, closely linking the wish for material abundance with the joyous emotions of festivals. These patterns, through intuitive visual narratives, semiotically translate the people's expectations for specific joys in life such as a happy marriage, passing the imperial examinations, and a smooth life, becoming the universally recognized visual representations of the "joy" culture. In addition, the "dragon and phoenix" pattern represents another aspect of the visual shaping of the "joy" culture. The dragon symbolizes masculinity, strength and nobility, while the phoenix represents beauty, auspiciousness and femininity. Their combination naturally embodies the philosophical implications of "harmony of Yin and Yang" and "nobility and auspiciousness", perfectly aligning with the universal aspirations of the people for a happy marriage and a prosperous family. Therefore, in the ceremonial porcelain used for major "happy events" such as folk weddings and birthdays, dragon and phoenix patterns are widely employed. It is worth noting that throughout the long history of feudal society, the use of "dragon and phoenix" patterned porcelain was strictly embedded within the strict hierarchical ritual system, becoming an exclusive visual symbol of "imperial power" and "divine mandate", mainly serving the imperial court and serving as a visual declaration of the emperor's authority and legitimacy as well as court celebrations. The dragon and phoenix patterns of this period, with their "joy" culture, more often pointed to the meaning of "national peace and prosperity" and "eternal imperial power" at the national level. Their visual expression was highly political and significantly different from the secular and popular nature of the folk "joy" culture. This difference in visual symbols reflects and reinforces the characteristics of porcelain as a carrier of material culture in a specific historical period. With the development of the commodity economy and the rise of citizen culture, the cultural connotation of "joy" contained in the dragon and phoenix patterns has also undergone a transformation from secularization to popularization. In summary, the visual shaping of the folk psychology of "joy" by porcelain patterns is a dynamic process of visual symbol construction.

3.2.5 Wealth culture: The aesthetic manifestation of economic ethics

In the context of traditional Chinese culture, "wealth" is by no means simply the accumulation of material wealth. Instead, it is an economic ethical system interwoven with the ideal of "abundant food

and clothing" in the agricultural civilization under the background of the Confucian "distinction between righteousness and profit". It not only carries the basic material demands of individuals and families for a prosperous life, but also reflects the spiritual realm of society's ethical norms such as "having a way to make money" and "being rich and giving gifts". Porcelain, as a "vessel for carrying the way", its decorative pattern system visually shapes the "wealth" culture by no means an isolated expression of economic aspirations. Instead, it creatively transforms the "economic ethics" into "aesthetic forms" by harmonizing the agricultural civilization's prayer for abundance, the patriarchal society's expectation of family prosperity, and the Confucian culture's distinction between righteousness and profit. It embodies the profound cultural connotation of "Vessels Carry the Dao".

A large number of "wealth culture" patterns with the theme of "wealth, prosperity and good fortune" have emerged in porcelain decoration. The fish, homophonic with "surplus" (余) in Chinese, is often depicted alongside lotus flowers (lotus, homophonic with "continuous") and water plants, forming the classic patterns of "abundance year after year" and "abundance in wealth and honor". This not only expresses the desire for material abundance but also implies the simple economic view of continuous wealth growth in an agricultural society. The peony is known as the "King of Flowers". With its elegant and noble posture, it has become the most direct visual symbol of "wealth and honor". It not only symbolizes the abundance of wealth but also metaphorically represents the honor of status and the prosperity of the family. The "Jade Hall Wealth and Honor" pattern, formed by the homophonic combination of "cassia" (桂 *gui*, homophonic with "nobility" 贵) and "Chinese flowering crabapple" (棠 *tang*, homophonic with "hall" 堂), integrates the pursuit of material wealth ("fu" 富), social status ("gui" 贵), and familial prosperity ("tang" 堂), perfectly embodying the core ideal of "both wealth and honor" in traditional society.

In addition, the decorative patterns on porcelain are not only aesthetic expressions but also tools for social education. Confucianism advocates "simplicity after painting", emphasizing the moral implications of patterns. The aesthetic concept of "comparing virtue with objects" has a long history in Chinese culture. Ancient Chinese scholars often used the natural attributes of plants and other things to symbolize people's spiritual pursuits and value considerations, and used the attributes in porcelain patterns to describe people and events, all of which expressed or extended into a kind of humanistic connotation, social customs and human character.

3.3 Cultural interpretation of the philosophical aspects of Chinese porcelain glaze colors and shapes

The different lifestyles and cultural backgrounds of the East and the West have given rise to two distinct aesthetic thoughts, which in turn have nurtured different concepts in artistic creation between the East and the West. By the second half of the 19th century, the Western academic circle had shifted from the traditional perspective of technological history to further studying Chinese porcelain from aspects such as culture, history, and aesthetics^[3]. Compared with the reproduction and transformation of nature in Western art forms, Chinese art is more about conforming to and inheriting nature. Of course, Chinese porcelain art is no exception. Taking the development of white porcelain and celadon in the Tang Dynasty of China as an example, the aesthetic trend of simplicity, elegance and plainness was widely praised by the public. The Tang Dynasty poet Lu Guimeng once said, "as autumn dew falls on Yue kilns, a thousand peaks' green hues are captured; Best to hold night's clear dew within, and toast with Ji Kang's legacy cup." The phrase "Thousand Peaks of Green hues" in it describes the natural beauty of the glaze color of Tang Dynasty celadon. By the Song Dynasty, influenced by the Taoist philosophy's admiration for nature, such as "therefore, it is simple and unadorned, and no one in the world can compete with its beauty" and "the five colors blind the eyes", the form of Song Dynasty porcelain pursued its own simplicity and plainness without excessive embellishment. The Jun kiln of the Song Dynasty made every effort to find "a single cloud, mist and rosy glow on a high mountain, a sky full of stars in the smoke and light." The natural wonder of the canyon with its cascading waterfalls and the setting sun suddenly turning purple and green into a mist. The diverse forms have formed the diverse shapes of Chinese porcelain. It is precisely that Chinese porcelain has grasped the principle of the unity of practicality and aesthetics to the greatest extent that its shapes and styles are rich and exquisite. The practicality and beauty of porcelain are in harmony and unity, demonstrating the unique cultural connotation of Chinese porcelain and the wisdom of the Chinese working people. Taking the widely popular Yuhu Chun vase shape in the Song Dynasty as an example, its rim slightly spreads outward, the neck is long and elegant, the belly slightly protrudes, the lines are simple and smooth, and the overall shape is naturally formed. With unique natural materials, it integrates the pursuit of the soul and the myriad phenomena of nature, embodying the perfect blend of earth and fire in nature and the reverence for all things in nature. It reveres the creation of nature and the unity of self and object,

perfectly expressing the spiritual pursuit of returning to simplicity and tranquility beyond prosperity, as well as the admiration for the natural beauty of "simplicity and plainness".

4. Reconstructing heritage under national discourse

In the context of China's excellent traditional culture, porcelain art, as an important cultural carrier, is undergoing an era-specific reconstruction under the national discourse system. The contemporary interpretation of porcelain art by national discourse is first reflected in the re-coding of its cultural symbols. The aesthetic, craftsmanship and philosophical thoughts carried by traditional porcelain have been incorporated into the framework of the national cultural strategy and have become an important medium to demonstrate cultural confidence. Chinese porcelain, as a kind of expressive spatial art, focuses on expressing a certain artistic conception or emotion. From pottery to porcelain, China leaned towards jade. Celadon was like celadon and white porcelain was like white jade^[4]. In Chinese culture, we often use the five virtues of "jade" - benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and trustworthiness - to symbolize people of excellent character and virtue. During the process of making porcelain in the Song Dynasty, artisans controlled the heat, temperature and other conditions, and took advantage of the characteristic that the glaze was not easy to flow at high temperatures to apply thick glaze and fire it to produce a light blue glaze, creating an artistic effect like green jade, thus giving rise to the aesthetic tendency of "like jade" in glaze color expression to pursue delicacy, simplicity and elegance. Porcelain of the Song Dynasty did not make excessive carvings on the surface, pursuing charm, elegance and inner essential beauty. This artistic pursuit also reflected the pursuit of the ideal beauty of high taste in traditional Chinese culture. Just as Su Shi of the Song Dynasty pursued in his paintings "to judge painting by literal resemblance—such vision borders on childish naivety", and in his poetry and prose, he sought "the ultimate brilliance returns to simplicity", elevating artistic works to the realm of expressing emotions. Porcelain is no longer merely a relic of history but has been endowed with the significance of the new era. It is not only a witness to the continuity of Chinese civilization but also a manifestation of innovative development. This process not only involves the modernization transformation of traditional craftsmanship, but also encompasses the value reshaping of cultural heritage in contemporary society. The intervention of national discourse has elevated porcelain art from a simple material cultural heritage to a symbol of national spirit and national image, and it has taken on the functions of cultural dissemination and identity construction in the context of globalization.

The protection and inheritance of China's cultural heritage have shifted from simple skills to extensive socialized practices. Driven by national policies, the inheritance model of Chinese porcelain art has presented new changes. On the one hand, China's traditional porcelain-making techniques have been incorporated into the intangible cultural heritage protection system, and the path of living inheritance has been achieved through forms and means such as digital education. On the other hand, porcelain culture has also been integrated into contemporary design and cultural creativity, international cultural exchanges and other aspects, forming a new path of "productive protection". As a representative symbol of Chinese culture, Chinese porcelain has become an important medium for cross-cultural dialogue under the impetus of the Belt and Road Initiative and the context of traditional Chinese culture. We should pay attention to the new developments of porcelain in contemporary times, especially in the context of the "Belt and Road Initiative", and employ new technologies, new concepts and new methods to innovatively express "porcelain", which is the requirement of the new era^[5]. Unlike the export porcelain trade in history, the contemporary porcelain culture export places more emphasis on the exchange at the value level rather than merely the circulation of commodities. The reconstruction of porcelain art under the national discourse is not only a reinterpretation of tradition but also a forward-looking exploration of the future development of traditional Chinese art. In this process, the exploration of cultural connotations not only relies on historical research, but also requires the combination of contemporary social demands, so that porcelain art can truly become a bridge connecting the past and the future.

5. Conclusion

Chinese artifacts convey Chinese culture, Chinese aesthetics and Chinese spirit through their unique "expression of objects" and "spirit of craftsmanship" ^[6]. As one of the important carriers of traditional Chinese culture, Chinese porcelain contains diverse cultural elements and value pursuits. Besides being a spiritual product that embodies artistic beauty, Chinese porcelain naturally reflects people's value orientations. In the Confucian ideal, the term "gentleman" is usually used to refer to a virtuous person

with high moral cultivation. For a "gentleman", if one desires to have high moral cultivation, it is essential to first cultivate benevolence and righteousness, as well as a genuine aspiration from the bottom of one's heart. It can be said that the cultural thoughts of Confucianism inspire people to strive towards an ideal personality. The ceramic art of our country has gradually developed under the encouragement of such an ideal personality. Since the Han Dynasty, through the foundation of the development of porcelain in the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the gradual maturation of porcelain in the Tang Dynasty, the worldwide fame of porcelain in the Song Dynasty, the transformation of porcelain in the Yuan Dynasty, and the revival of porcelain in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, ceramic artisans of all dynasties in China have combined the core content of Confucianism with the current social development, creating porcelain artworks of each era and constantly endowing these works with new connotations.

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