

Disseminating Chinese Ceramic Culture by Means of Ceramic Stories

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Abstract

The Chinese national strategy of “Chinese Culture Going Global” calls for telling the story of China and conveying the voice of China to the world. Chinese ceramic historical stories, ceramic style stories, ceramic painting stories and ceramic folk stories all contain extensive and profound Chinese culture. Disseminating these Chinese ceramic stories abroad can spread Chinese culture, promote Chinese civilization and contribute to the national strategy of “Chinese Culture Going Global”.

Key words: Ceramic story; Ceramic culture; Cultural communication; Dissemination

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INTRODUCTION

In 1998, UNESCO released “Action Plan on Cultural Policy for Development”, in which it points out that culture must be one of the most significant topics in 21st century, because cultural voice is directly related to a country’s place in world culture(Jiang, 2013).

China has been the second economy since 2010, China’s comprehensive national strength has been

improved a lot, and China’s International influence has accordingly enhanced; however, compared with China’s international status, its cultural influence is very disproportionate, so China should let the world know more about itself. Only when foreigners have a desire to learn about China, will they be interested in Chinese culture and take the initiative to learn Chinese language and culture. There are nearly 1.4 billion people in China who speak Chinese, but few countries study Chinese as a second language. Why is the attraction of Chinese language so low? It is mainly because of China’s insufficient cultural influence. Therefore, it is required that Chinese people pay attention to the dissemination of Chinese culture and tell Chinese stories to other countries.

1. CHINA’S NATIONAL STRATEGY OF “CHINESE CULTURE GOING GLOBAL”

During the Sixth Plenary Session of the 17th CPC Central Committee in 2011, China’s national strategy of “Chinese Culture Going Global” was first put forward. The strategy aims to enhance the appeal and influence of Chinese culture in the world and promote global cultural communication in multiple channels, levels and forms. “Chinese Culture Going Global” reflects Chinese people’s cultural consciousness and confidence, which is the requirement of China’s rejuvenation and the fundamental impetus of constructing a harmonious world.

China’s economy is developing rapidly. At present, China has surpassed Japan and become the second largest economy in the world. However, China’s international cultural voice is still very weak, so it is an important task to put forward the strategy of “Chinese Culture Going Global” and improve the soft power of Chinese culture.

Chairman Xi Jinping, in his series of speeches after the 18th National Congress, repeatedly mentioned the

importance of implementing China's cultural strategy. On August 19th to 20th 2013, at the National Conference on Propaganda and Ideological Work, he pointed out that the excellent traditional Chinese culture has profound historical origin, broad historical basis, and is the deepest cultural soft power and outstanding heritage of the Chinese nation. Under the strategy of advocating culture going global, Chinese culture will surely create new brilliance. On October 15th 2014, Chairman Xi pointed out at the Symposium on Literary and Artistic Work that while developing China's economy, the development of cultural voice should not lag behind. China should make stronger a large number of cultural aircraft carriers with Chinese characteristics and carry out the global dissemination of "Chinese Story" in order to strengthen the voice of China, which is the important cultural mission of Chinese people at present, and which is also the responsibility of Chinese people to realize Chinese Dream.

"Chinese Culture Going Global" is an important means to enhance China's international influence. It is related to the establishment of China's cultural voice in the world, to China's status in international relations, to the contemporary cultural and political pattern, and to the major strategy of China's ideological trend(Hu, 2013).

2. DISSEMINATING CHINESE CULTURE WITH CHINESE STORIES

There are many definitions of culture, but the most accurate statement is that culture is a form of life(Liu, 2014). Historians and theorists have highly generalized human culture into three life forms: river culture, ocean culture and grassland culture.

Peter Drucker, a famous American economist and management scientist, has repeatedly emphasized that today's truly dominant resources and absolutely decisive factors of production are neither capital nor land or labor, but culture(Jiang, 2013).

Americans attach great importance to telling American stories to the world. American Hollywood blockbusters not only earn huge box office and profits, but also export American cultural ideas and emotions through American movies. American cultural export is successful because not only is the American culture in these movies accepted by people all over the world, but also young people in some countries pursue American culture and regard American culture as their Bible. There are also some people in China who unreasonably think that the Chinese cultural paradigm is too closed, too old-fashioned, thus they are fascinated with western cultures, and they stereotypically follow, apply, rely on and imitate Western cultural thinking and creative routines(Ai, 2014), so that whenever something is connected with western culture, it would immediately become "fashionable" and "cool".

The experience of American culture going abroad is worth learning. China also has many stories with Chinese characteristics, with rich cultural essence and touching depth. Chinese people should learn to extract stories with national characteristics from history and reality, and choose appropriate methods to disseminate the cultural heritages of the Chinese nation.

Churchill once said: "I would rather lose an India than a Shakespeare"(Shen, 2014). Chinese civilization has great influence and inspiration in history and contemporary times, and China has many stories worth telling to the world; therefore China should build its own cultural aircraft carrier and disseminate Chinese stories by means of the cultural aircraft carrier.

With the continuous enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength, China's international status has gradually improved, China's ability to participate in international affairs has greatly improved, and China is moving towards the center of the international political arena. Thus China should disseminate Chinese culture and voice, tell Chinese stories, and make cultural strategies serve the overall work of the country more effectively(Cai, 2015). For instance, on July 12th 2016, Philippines unilaterally requested to establish the so-called provisional arbitration tribunal according to the so-called South China Sea arbitration case, the Chinese government expressed its solemn position, reiterated China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights in the South China Sea, and pointed out that the arbitration decision was invalid, non-binding, and China did not accept it. It can be seen that China must set up a global vision, safeguard its own interests in the global scope, and make the culture of the Chinese nation bigger and stronger, so as to continuously strengthen its voice in the international arena.

3. DISSEMINATING CHINESE CERAMIC CULTURE BY CERAMIC STORIES

Chinese ceramics is product of the combination of scientific and technological development, culture and art, and is an important part of Chinese civilization. In the process of making and using pottery, the Chinese people have combined spiritual civilization with material civilization, and gradually formed a materialized culture which incorporates ceramic culture with historical culture, folk culture, religious culture, political civilization, economic development, scientific and technological progress, aesthetic art, etc.(Dai, 2004). In the course of its development, Chinese ceramic culture has formed its own unique cultural content, which is the ceramic story worth telling to the whole world. The story of Chinese ceramics can be disseminated from the following four aspects.

3.1 The Historical Story of Chinese Porcelain Making

The earliest pottery in China appeared 10,000 years ago, when the primitive tribal groups found that water and clay could be mixed in a certain proportion and made into containers of various shapes; the containers could be dried and then burned to become utensils for holding things. This is a great invention of the primitive Chinese in the process of conquering nature. It marks a great leap in the way of human life and a milestone in the history of human civilization. The red pottery unearthed from Peiligang and Cishan, the colored pottery unearthed from Yangshao and Majiayao, and the pottery unearthed from Dawenkou, Hemudu and Majiahong cultures are all proofs of the early Chinese pottery culture. They are all early historical stories of Chinese pottery making.

Chinese porcelain appeared in Shang and Zhou dynasties, and gradually matured in Donghan Dynasty. At that time, the chinaware was mainly primitive celadon. Celadon fired at high temperature is harder than original ceramics, and through glazing, the body of the ceramics is smooth and lustrous, and the sound is crisp. This kind of ceramic technology is a great progress in the history of China's and even the world's ceramics.

In the Sui and Tang Dynasties, China's politics, economy, culture and foreign trade developed rapidly. The ceramic industry, together with the domestic and foreign ceramic trade, made great progress, and a pattern of "South celadon, North white" ceramic production pattern was formed. The South mainly produced celadon, which is bright, light and delicate, and its representative is Yue kiln; the North mainly produced white porcelain with solid body and white glaze, and its representative is Xing kiln.

Porcelain-making in the Song Dynasty gained fast development. Porcelain-making in the Song Dynasty spread all over the country. Porcelain makers at that time focused on decoration and shape, and made individualized porcelain with divergent thinking. Porcelain-making industry in the Song Dynasty could be summarized as "six kiln systems" and "five famous kilns"(Lu, 2005).

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, China's ceramic industry reached its peak in history, and the ceramic art also achieved brilliance. The color porcelain represented by Jingdezhen blue and white porcelain gradually flourished, and the production of color glazed porcelain reached the stage of perfection.

Throughout China's 10,000-year history of pottery and porcelain-making, ceramics embodies the great wisdom of the Chinese people, carries brilliant cultural connotation, and enriches the whole course of China's historical development(Yao, 2014). It is a long story of Chinese ceramics worth telling to all over the world.

3.2 Chinese Ceramic Style Story

Chinese ceramics show different shapes and styles in different historical periods, which is closely related to the social form and people's aesthetic taste of each historical period. In primitive times, the pottery style was single and the types were few: with deep belly pots, small mouth pots and bowls as the main types, reflecting the low level of pottery production at that time. During Shang and Zhou Dynasties, the porcelain industry developed, and the types of *jue*, *li*, etc.were added, which indicated that the level of porcelain production at that time had been improved. Porcelain in the Three Kingdoms and the Jin Dynasty deeply affected all aspects of people's lives. The production of porcelain could meet the needs of people's daily life. There were daily porcelain types such as sheep-shaped, lion-shaped candlesticks, bird cups, bear lanterns, and so on. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, Buddhism had a great influence on porcelain making, therefore many lotus-shaped ceramics came into being.

Tang Dynasty occupies an important position in the feudal history of China. The economy and culture of Tang Dynasty developed rapidly. The emergence of Tang Tri-Colored Porcelain is the reflection of the society at that time. The appearance of multi-colored porcelain reflects the multi-cultural characteristics of Tang Dynasty. Therefore, Tang Tri-Colored Porcelain is the inevitable product of Tang Dynasty's culture. In Tang Dynasty, the country was strong, the economy was developed and the life was rich. In addition, the Tang Dynasty porcelains are plump and mellow, reflecting the aesthetic taste of the Tang Dynasty, which regards being fat as beautiful. Song Dynasty porcelain is exquisite and elegant, advocating the beauty of glaze color, which embodies Song Dynasty people's pursuit of simplicity, quietness and elegance. Compared with the bold artistic style of Tang Dynasty, the pursuit of restrained artistic expression reflects the social state of Song Dynasty, which was conservative in politics and attached more importance to literature than to military force. The most representative porcelain is the slender and tall plum bottle. The Yuan Dynasty mainly used large pieces of porcelain, which expressed the rough and bold character of the grassland nationality(Jiang, & He, 2015).

It can be seen that the development of porcelain styles is compatible with the material and spiritual civilization of Chinese society. It not only reflects the progress and improvement of ceramic technology, but also shows people's living conditions, ideological concepts, aesthetic characteristics and spiritual pursuit at that time. Through the story of style development of ceramics, the political, economic and social development of China in different historical periods is exhibited to people all over the world.

3.3 The Story of Chinese Ceramic Painting

With the development and progress of ceramic technology, ceramic painting art has been gradually improved. Ceramics, as the carrier of culture, invisibly promoted the development of painting art. Ceramic painting shows different styles in different historical periods of China, which is closely related to the economic and social background at that time, as well as the cultural literacy and aesthetic taste then.

Because of the restriction of glazing technique in early ceramic painting, people could only carve patterns on clay and then burn them. After the glazing technology gradually matured, especially from the Tang Dynasty, the underglaze color technology was adopted, that is, first writing on the ceramic body, then glazing and firing, to make the ceramic painting vivid. Ceramic paintings of the Tang Dynasty were grand and magnificent, reflecting the bold and free character of people at that time.

The ceramic paintings of Song Dynasty inherited the calligraphy art of Tang Dynasty, and put a large number of short sentences of poetry on the ceramic works. The fonts were full, powerful and dignified, reflecting the preference of the Song Dynasty for Yan calligraphy.

The representative of the Yuan Dynasty porcelain is the blue and white porcelain. The blue and white decorative painting method is mainly flat painting, combining the techniques of hooking, wrinkling, dotting and dyeing. The lines are vigorous and powerful, which expresses the characteristics of Mongolian calligraphy art.

The ceramic painting art of Ming Dynasty inherited the literati style of Song and Yuan Dynasties, and landscape painting had been greatly developed. In addition, many new types of ceramic paintings appeared in Ming Dynasty, including glazes with various colors such as contrasting colors, multicolors and filled white color. Painting decorations also appeared, representative works are *Eight Diagrams*, *Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea*, *Eighteen Arhats*, and *Immortals Celebrating an Elder's Birthday*, reflecting the prevailing social state of Taoism in Ming Dynasty.

The ceramic paintings of Qing Dynasty were mostly influenced by the "Eight Eccentric Artists of Yangzhou". They attached life-like and civilian paintings to ceramics. The works pursued truth and nature, and expressed the literati's wild and cynical painting style (Jiang, & He, 2015). In the late Qing Dynasty, the light purple-red landscape porcelain paintings made by Xin'an literati and the famille rose porcelain paintings created by "Eight Friends of Zhushan" symbolized that ceramic painting had become a new art form. Nowadays, after decades of efforts of ceramic painting artists, ceramic painting has become a kind of painting that rivals oil painting and traditional Chinese painting (Yang, & Ye, 2014).

Ceramics, as a carrier, promotes the development and growth of painting art. Ceramics is a widely accepted art

by the East and the West. Ceramic painting, with the help of ceramics as the carrier, reflects the ideological and cultural characteristics of various historical periods in China, and is an important story for the dissemination of Chinese culture.

3.4 Chinese Ceramic Folk Stories

Chinese folk stories and legends about ceramics are also an important part of the development of Chinese ceramic culture. Most of these folk stories are based on certain historical figures, historical events, social customs, local characteristics, etc., and then the folk stories were formed by people's imagination. After several generations of spreading, these folk stories have been constantly added or subtracted, constantly rendered or processed. Although many folk stories are fictional, they all reflect the heroic spirit of the ancient Chinese porcelain workers who are indomitable, fearless of violence, fearless of sacrifice and dare to struggle. They also express people's desire to advocate beauty and pursue ideals. In Jingdezhen, which is the porcelain capital with thousands of years of history, there are many folk stories such as "Fairy Master of Fire and Wind", "Blue-and-White Porcelain Girl", "Beauty Drunk Porcelain", "Linglong Porcelain" (Wan, & Wu, & Xu, 2010). These folk stories have become part of the Chinese ceramic story, reflecting the progress of Chinese ceramic industry and the development of people's ideological understanding.

CONCLUSION

Ceramics is the crystallization of the wisdom of Chinese working people and the cultural accumulation of Chinese civilization for thousands of years. Ceramics represents China's economic development, social progress, customs, cultural changes and ideology in various historical periods. Ceramic stories also reflect the changes of people's aesthetic taste for ceramics in each historical stage of China, and express people's good wishes and pursuits at that time. Every piece of ceramics is a unique story, which contains rich Chinese culture. These ceramic stories must be disseminated globally, to spread Chinese culture to all over the world, and to contribute to the Chinese national strategy of "Chinese Culture Going Global".

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