

# Study on the Innovative Development Path of Shiwan Ceramic Plastic in Foshan under Cultural Change

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**Abstract:** *Shiwan pottery sculptures from Foshan represent a vital component of China's traditional craftsmanship, distinguished by their profound historical roots and unique artistic value. Originating in Foshan, Guangdong, Shiwan pottery has evolved over centuries, developing distinct regional and cultural characteristics. However, with the advancement of globalization and modernization, the phenomenon of cultural hybridization has increasingly impacted this traditional craft. Cultural hybridization refers to the collision and blending of traditional, modern, and emerging cultures at the intersection of diverse cultural influences. This phenomenon poses challenges to the traditional techniques of Shiwan pottery, while also offering opportunities for innovative development. In recent years, Shiwan pottery has managed to incorporate modern design concepts and technological advancements while preserving the essence of traditional craftsmanship, achieving innovation in both form and content. Nonetheless, a pressing issue remains: how to balance the protection and inheritance of traditional culture with the development of pathways that align with contemporary aesthetics and market demands.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural Change; Foshan Shiwan; Shiwan Ceramic Plastic; Protection and inheritance; Path of Innovation*

## 1. Introduction

Shiwan pottery sculptures from Foshan represent a vital component of China's traditional craftsmanship, distinguished by their profound historical roots and unique artistic value. Originating in Foshan, Guangdong, Shiwan pottery has evolved over centuries, developing distinct regional and cultural characteristics. However, with the advancement of globalization and modernization, the phenomenon of cultural hybridization has increasingly impacted this traditional craft. Cultural hybridization refers to the collision and blending of traditional, modern, and emerging cultures at the intersection of diverse cultural influences. This phenomenon poses challenges to the traditional techniques of Shiwan pottery, while also offering opportunities for innovative development. In recent years, Shiwan pottery has managed to incorporate modern design concepts and technological advancements while preserving the essence of traditional craftsmanship, achieving innovation in both form and content. Nonetheless, a pressing issue remains: how to balance the protection and inheritance of traditional culture with the development of pathways that align with contemporary aesthetics and market demands [1].

## 2. The Concept and Characteristics of Cultural Thixotropy

Cultural rheology stems from a profound observation of the dynamic changes in social and cultural landscapes, revealing the mechanisms by which culture adapts and adjusts to fluctuations in external environments and internal conditions. This phenomenon not only reflects the resilience and adaptability of culture but also underscores its potential for transformation in diverse contexts. Investigating the concept and characteristics of cultural rheology not only unveils the complexities of cultural development but also aids in understanding innovative pathways in specific fields, such as the evolution of Foshan Shiwan ceramic sculpture. One of the core attributes of cultural rheology is its sensitivity to external stimuli. This sensitivity is not merely a reaction but a profound adaptive process. External factors, such as globalization, technological advancements, and societal changes, prompt culture to self-adjust and reinvent itself. This process preserves the core values of culture while incorporating new elements, thereby crafting a novel cultural visage. For instance, in the context of traditional Foshan Shiwan ceramic sculpture, this rheology manifests in how it maintains traditional

craftsmanship while integrating modern design concepts amidst globalization, thus forming a distinct and innovative character [2]. Furthermore, cultural rheology also reflects internal self-renewal within culture. Culture is not a static system but a dynamic process. This dynamism allows culture to evolve through internal mechanisms of self-improvement and regeneration while retaining traditional foundations. In the development of Shiwan ceramic sculpture, this self-renewal mechanism is evident in the re-evaluation and innovation of traditional techniques. Through continuous exploration of themes, forms, and craftsmanship, the sculpture remains vibrant and appealing in contemporary society [3]. On an emotional level, cultural rheology encompasses not just technological and formal changes but also the embodiment of cultural identity and emotional resonance. Culture seeks new modes of expression amidst transformation, thereby striking a chord with audiences and eliciting emotional engagement. In the innovative process of Shiwan ceramic sculpture, this emotional resonance is particularly crucial. Traditional ceramic art, with its intricate craftsmanship and vivid expressions, has deeply rooted itself in the cultural memory of the local people. As times change, transmitting this traditional sentiment through modern artistic expressions becomes a significant task in advancing the innovation of Shiwan ceramic sculpture. In summary, cultural rheology is a complex and profound cultural phenomenon that involves not only cultural adaptation and innovation but also the continuity of cultural identity and emotional resonance. For Foshan Shiwan ceramic sculpture, understanding and applying the characteristics of cultural rheology can help preserve the uniqueness of traditional craftsmanship while discovering new developmental pathways in the context of globalization, achieving both cultural innovation and preservation.

### **3. Historical Development of Shiwan Pottery Plastic in Foshan**

Foshan Shiwan ceramic sculpture, an emblematic craft of Southern China, has a rich legacy dating back centuries. Its origins can be traced to the Ming Dynasty, a period that marked the nascent stages of this unique art form. The integration of local traditions with imported techniques from the Central Plains led to a distinctive style that would become synonymous with Shiwan ceramics. The evolution of Shiwan ceramics reflects the broader historical shifts within Chinese society, encapsulating the artistic inclinations and socio-political changes over the centuries. The Qing Dynasty saw a flourishing of Shiwan ceramics, with artisans developing innovative techniques that enhanced the aesthetic and functional aspects of their work. This era was characterized by a heightened emphasis on craftsmanship and the incorporation of symbolic elements that resonated with the prevailing cultural ethos [4]. The artisans of this period were not merely practitioners but custodians of a living tradition, meticulously preserving and refining their skills. With the advent of modernity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Shiwan ceramic sculpture encountered both challenges and opportunities. The upheavals of the era, including socio-political changes and the influence of Western artistic movements, prompted a re-examination of traditional methods. In this period of transformation, Shiwan ceramics adapted by integrating new artistic expressions while striving to maintain the essence of their historical identity. This dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation exemplifies the resilience and adaptability of Shiwan ceramic artistry. Contemporary developments in Shiwan ceramic sculpture reflect a synthesis of historical legacy and modern sensibilities. Today's artists are engaged in a dialogue with the past, drawing upon centuries-old techniques while exploring new forms and themes. This ongoing evolution underscores the enduring relevance of Shiwan ceramics as both a cultural artifact and a contemporary art form. In summary, the history of Foshan Shiwan ceramic sculpture is a testament to the intricate dance between tradition and innovation [5]. It is a narrative marked by periods of intense artistic flourishing, periods of transformation, and a continuous quest to harmonize heritage with modernity. This rich historical tapestry not only highlights the artistic achievements of Shiwan ceramics but also illuminates its role as a vibrant expression of cultural identity through the ages.

### **4. The present situation and problems of Shiwan ceramic molding in Foshan**

#### ***4.1. Analysis of the current situation***

In the contemporary market landscape, Foshan Shiwan ceramic sculptures present a multifaceted and intricate scenario. On one hand, with the growing demand for cultural products, Shiwan ceramics, as traditional art forms, are witnessing a resurgence in market interest. This demand, however, extends beyond traditional collectibles, expanding into diverse forms such as art derivatives and cultural creative products. In this context, the production methods of Shiwan ceramics are also undergoing transformation, shifting from traditional handcrafted techniques to large-scale, customized production

to meet the varied market demands. In terms of primary ceramic products and design styles, Shiwan ceramics continue to feature traditional motifs such as Buddha statues, human figures, and animal sculptures, but the design style is subtly evolving. Some younger artists and designers are integrating modern artistic elements, such as minimalism and abstract expressionism, into traditional techniques, infusing Shiwan ceramics with a new visual impact. Simultaneously, traditional themes are undergoing subtle innovations, moving beyond fixed shapes and topics to incorporate modern cultural elements, thereby creating works with a contemporary sensibility. Nevertheless, despite these proactive explorations in market demand and design styles, Shiwan ceramics face numerous challenges [6]. The tension between the handcrafted nature of traditional techniques and the demands of modern mass production persists, and the market's reception of innovative products is not always favorable. This situation indicates that Shiwan ceramics must further delve into market research, accurately grasp consumer psychology, and continually enhance the cultural value of their products through innovative design to maintain a competitive edge in the intense market environment.

#### **4.2. Problems**

In its current development, Shiwan ceramic sculpture faces several pressing issues that necessitate profound reflection and response. Firstly, the decline of traditional craftsmanship and the lack of innovation have become undeniable realities. Renowned for its unique handcraft techniques, Shiwan ceramic sculpture is gradually losing its foundation as modern society advances rapidly. The gradual passing of the older generation of artisans and the younger generation's insufficient enthusiasm for preserving traditional techniques have led to a diminishing vitality of this art form. Moreover, despite the market's call for innovation, Shiwan ceramic sculpture struggles with progress in this area, with many new works lacking breakthrough elements and merely repeating traditional themes without displaying the vibrancy needed in a globalized cultural context. Secondly, Shiwan ceramic sculpture faces dual challenges of market competition and cultural identity [7]. Amidst the waves of globalization and modernization, a plethora of cultural products emerge, and as a traditional art form, Shiwan ceramic sculpture contends with fierce competition from various cultural products both domestically and internationally. The modern market's preference for "fast fashion" and "affordable luxury" makes it difficult for an art form like Shiwan ceramic sculpture, which requires time to mature, to quickly capture the interest of younger consumers. Additionally, Shiwan ceramic sculpture's cultural recognition both domestically and abroad faces challenges, as many people's understanding of its cultural value remains superficial, failing to appreciate its historical and artistic essence. This lack of recognition hampers Shiwan ceramic sculpture's efforts in market promotion and cultural dissemination. These issues compel Shiwan ceramic sculpture to reassess the balance between tradition and innovation, deeply explore its cultural connotations, and enhance its competitiveness and cultural identity in modern society through effective market strategies [8].

### **5. Innovative Development Path of Shiwan Ceramic Plastic in Foshan**

#### **5.1. Integration of traditional crafts and modern design**

As a treasured gem of traditional Chinese arts and crafts, Foshan Shiwan ceramic sculptures must rely on a profound integration of traditional craftsmanship and contemporary design for future development. This integration signifies not only an innovation in technique but also a fusion of cultural essence with the spirit of the times. Historically renowned for its exquisite manual skills, Shiwan ceramic sculptures embody centuries of artisans' wisdom and dedication in each piece. However, faced with the impact of modern design, traditional craftsmanship must address the challenge of merging with contemporary art and design concepts while preserving its uniqueness [9]. The essence of modern design lies in balancing functionality, aesthetics, and innovation, whereas traditional craftsmanship emphasizes the inheritance of technique and cultural continuity. Shiwan ceramic sculptures must find a harmonious balance between these aspects, requiring not just innovation in form but, more crucially, resonance on a spiritual level. Modern design can infuse traditional ceramics with new vitality by employing styles such as minimalism and abstract expressionism, thus aligning Shiwan ceramics with contemporary aesthetic demands while retaining its profound cultural heritage. Furthermore, the fusion of traditional craftsmanship with modern technology can transcend the limitations of traditional handcraft in production efficiency and expression. For instance, the introduction of 3D printing technology allows for more complex designs and large-scale production without losing the warmth of handcraft. With the aid of digital technology, Shiwan ceramic designers can explore new possibilities in

form, creating works that preserve traditional charm while embodying modern sensibilities. Throughout this process, the core value of traditional craftsmanship must not be overlooked. The unique appeal of Shiwan ceramics lies in the "human touch" and "warmth" inherent in its handcraft process, qualities that mechanized production cannot replicate. Thus, the integration of modern design with traditional craftsmanship should not remain at a superficial level of design changes but should delve into every detail of the craft, infusing modern design principles into each step of manual production to create modern ceramic works with unique cultural significance. Through this profound integration, Foshan Shiwan ceramic sculptures can maintain their cultural foundation while forging new pathways for development, ensuring their continued presence in the domestic market and their emergence on the international art stage. This path of integration represents both a respect for and continuation of tradition and an exploration and innovation for the future [10].

### ***5.2. Development of cultural and creative industries***

In today's era of globalization and information technology, the development of the cultural and creative industries provides a vast stage for the innovation of Shiwan ceramic sculpture. As an art form with profound historical accumulation, the cultural value of Shiwan ceramic sculpture is indisputable. However, how to closely integrate this traditional craft with the modern cultural and creative industries is becoming a key path for its future development. The essence of the cultural and creative industries lies in creating products with unique market value through the combination of culture and creativity. For Shiwan ceramic sculpture, this means not only preserving traditional techniques but also innovating in content, form, and modes of dissemination [11]. As a cultural symbol with distinct local characteristics, Shiwan ceramic sculpture can generate products that resonate with modern consumers by blending with contemporary lifestyles and aesthetic preferences. For instance, integrating Shiwan ceramic sculpture with modern home design, fashion accessories, and cultural derivatives could transform it from a traditional art collectible into a part of daily life, thereby expanding its market space. Additionally, the development of the cultural and creative industries provides new dissemination channels and platforms for Shiwan ceramic sculpture. Through new media forms such as film, animation, and games, Shiwan ceramic sculpture can be imbued with new cultural significance, attracting the attention and affection of younger generations. This cross-disciplinary collaboration not only broadens the dissemination pathways of Shiwan ceramic sculpture but also infuses traditional culture with new vitality, allowing it to shine in the context of the new era. Nonetheless, in the course of development within the cultural and creative industries, Shiwan ceramic sculpture must also be wary of the pitfalls of formalism [12]. Mere superficial innovation and commercialization may lead to the loss of its cultural essence. True innovation should involve a profound interpretation and re-creation of traditional culture, rather than a simple replication of surface symbols. Shiwan ceramic sculpture should find a balance through deep integration with the cultural and creative industries, preserving the essence of its traditional craft while discovering new modes of expression in modern culture. Through the advancement of the cultural and creative industries, Shiwan ceramic sculpture is expected to occupy a more prominent position in the global cultural market, not only as a representative of traditional craftsmanship but also as a significant symbol of Chinese cultural confidence. This innovative development path will pave the way for a broader future for Shiwan ceramic sculpture, allowing it to continue to be inherited and glorified in the new historical stage.

### ***5.3. Innovation of technology and materials***

In the innovative development trajectory of Foshan Shiwan ceramic sculpture, technological and material advancements play a crucial role. The progress of modern technology has infused traditional craftsmanship with new vitality, offering a wealth of possibilities and choices for the creation of Shiwan ceramic sculpture. Confronted with the clash between traditional techniques and modern demands, Shiwan ceramic sculpture has achieved a more contemporary expression without sacrificing its cultural essence through material and technological innovations. Traditionally, Shiwan ceramic sculpture relied primarily on clay, a material that imparts a unique texture and charm to the works. However, the advancement of modern technology has introduced a broader range of materials, such as high-temperature-resistant composites and more malleable eco-friendly materials. These new materials not only expand the artistic scope for creators but also enhance the durability and environmental sustainability of the pieces while maintaining their quality. For instance, the introduction of composite materials can endow ceramic sculptures with greater crack resistance and stability, extending their preservation time and enabling them to meet diverse environmental display requirements. Moreover, the application of technology in production processes has introduced novel creative methods for

Shiwan ceramic sculpture [13]. The incorporation of 3D printing technology allows creators to explore complex shapes and details more freely during the design phase. This technological intervention enables the realization of intricate structures and forms that are challenging to achieve by traditional handcraft methods. Additionally, the widespread use of digital design tools allows designers to preview and adjust the shape and proportions of their works in virtual space, thus enhancing design efficiency and reducing material waste. However, the innovation of technology and materials should not merely pursue technical breakthroughs but must also align with the artistic spirit of Shiwan ceramic sculpture. Technology should serve as an auxiliary tool rather than a dominating force. The unique value of Shiwan ceramic sculpture lies in the emotion and warmth embedded in its handcrafted artistry, an element that mechanical production cannot replicate. Therefore, the use of technology should support artistic expression rather than replace its essence. Through technological and material innovations, Foshan Shiwan ceramic sculpture has the opportunity to reach a broader market. It can not only improve production efficiency and quality through technological means but also attract more attention with a fresh new appearance. This innovative path combines the spirit of traditional craftsmanship with the advantages of modern technology, providing strong support for the inheritance and development of Shiwan ceramic sculpture, and allowing it to continue to radiate its unique artistic charm in contemporary society.

#### ***5.4. Protection and inheritance***

Foshan Shiwan pottery sculptures, as a prominent representative of traditional Chinese ceramic art, have accumulated profound historical significance and developed a distinctive artistic style over centuries. However, with the evolution of time and societal changes, Shiwan pottery sculptures face formidable challenges in the contemporary cultural landscape. An urgent issue is how to achieve innovative development while preserving and inheriting this art form. The preservation and inheritance of Shiwan pottery sculptures are not merely about continuing traditional techniques but also safeguarding cultural spirit. Renowned for their lifelike forms and exquisite craftsmanship, Shiwan pottery sculptures depict figures, flora, fauna, and religious themes, showcasing the wisdom of ancient laborers and reflecting the core principles of Chinese traditional aesthetics. These artworks offer not only visual pleasure but also carry historical memories and cultural identity. Therefore, preserving Shiwan pottery sculptures involves not only maintaining their physical forms but also preserving their underlying cultural values and spiritual essence. In the process of preservation and inheritance, the transmission of traditional techniques is crucial [14]. The creation of Shiwan pottery sculptures involves complex and meticulous processes, including the selection of clay materials, shaping, carving, and firing, each requiring extensive experience and skilled craftsmanship. To ensure these techniques are not lost with the passage of time, it is essential to enhance the documentation and transmission mechanisms of the skills of veteran artisans and encourage younger generations to learn and inherit these precious techniques. Simultaneously, Shiwan pottery sculptures should be integrated into modern educational systems by offering related courses and organizing practical activities to allow more people to understand and experience the charm of this traditional art. However, the protection and inheritance of Shiwan pottery sculptures extend beyond the realm of technique and require attention to their survival and development in modern society. Conflicts often arise between traditional culture and contemporary lifestyles, and Shiwan pottery sculptures should seek breakthroughs through innovation when facing such conflicts. Protecting traditional cultural artifacts does not entail rigidity and stagnation; rather, it should involve combining traditional respect with modern design concepts to explore new forms of expression. By integrating with contemporary art and fashion design, Shiwan pottery sculptures can create new works that align with modern aesthetics, infusing new vitality into contemporary society. Furthermore, cultural preservation and transmission should extend beyond museum walls into everyday life. By building the brand effect of Shiwan pottery sculptures and conducting cultural exchanges and promotional activities, more people can appreciate the unique charm of this traditional art. In the digital age, the use of digital technologies provides new opportunities for the inheritance of Shiwan pottery sculptures through virtual exhibitions and online education, expanding its influence and gaining recognition on a broader scale. The preservation and inheritance of Shiwan pottery sculptures not only involve safeguarding cultural heritage but also form the foundation for cultural innovation. In the context of globalization, protecting and inheriting Shiwan pottery sculptures not only concerns the continuity of local culture but also respects and promotes the diversity of Chinese culture. Through ongoing innovation in preservation, Shiwan pottery sculptures will undoubtedly continue to thrive with renewed vigor, leaving an indelible cultural legacy for future generations [15].

## 6. Conclusion

The innovative development of Foshan Shiwan ceramic sculptures must, while honoring the essence of traditional culture, actively respond to the changes and demands of modern society. The evolving cultural context presents new challenges to Shiwan ceramics, yet it also offers unique opportunities. On the foundation of preserving traditional craftsmanship, exploring the integration of modern design and technological innovation has become a crucial direction for the advancement of Shiwan ceramics. Moreover, the growth of the cultural and creative industries provides a vast platform for innovation in Shiwan ceramics. Through diverse forms of expression and market promotion, Shiwan ceramics are poised to rejuvenate with new vitality. In the future, the development path of Shiwan ceramics should continually adjust within the balance of globalization and localization, in order to address the ever-changing cultural context and market demands, thus achieving the modern transformation and sustainable development of traditional craftsmanship.

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