

# The Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage from the Perspective of Art Anthropology: Case Study of Jingdezhen's Folk Ceramic Craft

**Yang Liu**

*Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, Prague 02101–02117, Czech Republic*

**ABSTRACT.** *Ceramic as tangible material culture, it is generally not in the category of intangible culture, however, the inheritance process of Jingdezhen's folk ceramic craft through "oral teaching" between masters and apprentices includes different kinds of intangible cultural elements. From the angle of the protection of intangible cultural heritage and art anthropology, this article tries to discuss the intangible cultural factors contained in Jingdezhen's folk ceramic craft, combined with related current situations of rescuing and protecting Jingdezhen's folk porcelain techniques, and propose the slogan "saving people and saving environment" to maintain Jingdezhen's folk ceramic craft. How to make ceramic craft be better disseminated and inherited, and what new forms can absorb in the future? It is also a subject that needs our further investigation in the future. In so doing, I hope this article will contribute to a growing body of attention in contemporary intellectual history on intangible culture inheritance as well as the ideas of anthropology.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Art anthropology; folk ceramic craft; intangible cultural heritage; Jingdezhen; protection and inheritance*

## **1. Introduction**

On October 17, 2003, UNESCO passed the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, officially named and published the five basic contents of the protection of intangible cultural heritage, traditional handicraft ranked among them[1]. Because the creation and inheritance of handicraft (mainly ceramic) has been in the world for two thousand years till now, and to some extent has become a unique perspective of Chinese culture and one of the symbols of world[2]. The traditional ceramic-making handicraft in Jingdezhen has not only a long history, but also has a sound system. It has formed its own characteristics and

self-contained system based on the collection of famous kiln skills from all over the country. The traditional ceramic industry has a meticulous division of labor and a high degree of professionalism, which is unmatched by other handicraft industries.

## **2. Intangible cultural heritage factors contained in Jingdezhen art ceramic**

Ceramic handicraft in Jingdezhen includes the preparation and method of glaze, wheel and hand building, trimming, drawing, glazing, firing and decoration, carrying the cultural traditions of craftsmen from generation to generation. The ceramics produced by the folk craft in Jingdezhen are exquisitely shaped, the glaze is crystal-clear, and the engraved prints are unique. The patterns have a particular artistic atmosphere and are loved by the nobles and other classes. These folk crafts often rely on mentoring, or oral inheritance between father and son, which can be preserved to this day. In other words, the formation process of ceramic handicrafts contains many factors of intangible cultural heritage.

The traditional folk crafts of Jingdezhen, which is mainly in the form of oral inheritance, is also the oral creation that has been spread from generation to generation. It represents collective wisdom of people of Jingdezhen and has distinctive traditional characteristics. Even today, this tradition determines the factors of intangible cultural heritage in Jingdezhen folk porcelain art both in its process of formation and in the resuscitation and protection process when modern civilization is highly developed. Many of the traditional handicrafts of Jingdezhen are inherited by human beings, which exists in the form of non-materialized, non-static intangible cultural heritage[3].

## **3. The status quo of resuscitation and protection of ceramic handicrafts in Jingdezhen**

After 1970, with the development of ceramic technology, the traditional porcelain-making handicraft was replaced by mechanical techniques, the daily coarse porcelain was transferred to the daily fine porcelain. The traditional ceramic handicraft was difficult to sustain, facing the endangered state, it is imminent for us to salvage and protect traditional ceramic-making handicraft.

Family-based inheritance can maximize the protection of ceramic-making handicraft. If it is destroyed by war, by the destruction of family organizations, or the impact of modern technology, it may lead to the demise of ceramic crafts. Especially in modern society, ceramic culture products have been continually commercialized, which has had a tremendous effect on Jingdezhen folk porcelain art. Jingdezhen kiln-firing and knife-carving techniques cannot withstand the challenges of rapidly developing society, making Jingdezhen traditional porcelain-making crafts deviate from tradition, the procedure is getting simpler until it dies[4]. Such as the firing process of special glazed porcelain with strong contrast of color and rich local characteristics, the majority of ceramic handicrafts will be threatened with extinction,

and proposals for the revitalization, promotion and protection of them are needed.

#### **4. Saving people and saving the environment: the key to rescue and protect Jingdezhen porcelain art and intangible cultural heritage**

For the traditional ceramic-making craft in Jingdezhen, the existing craft is absent of heir. In the past, son carried on his father's career, nowadays due to the development of modern education and economy, the employment channels have been broadened. A considerable number of children are reluctant to inherit the craftsmanship and professional life of their parents. On the one hand, the reason lies in the hard work of ceramic-making handicrafts, on the other hand, it takes a few years or even decades for traditional crafts to reach a certain level.

Oral inheritance is a living way in Jingdezhen ceramic-making craft and intangible cultural heritage. The manifestation lies in that the carrier is a living person, the inheritance content is the development of the active national wisdom, psychological appeal and values, the inheritance process is an interactive activity process in which the inheritor and the inheriting object participate together. The inheritor is an important transmitter and carrier of ceramic-making craft in Jingdezhen. They master the knowledge of the folk porcelain handicraft in Jingdezhen. Therefore, strengthening the protection of inheritors is the key to protect the intangible cultural heritage of Jingdezhen porcelain art.

In view of the current situation of insufficient protection of inheritors, through the investigation of inheritors of Jingdezhen hand-made ceramic craft, the author reckons that these inheritors belong to different groups in society, and their living conditions are also totally different. Therefore, the supporting measures for the inheritors should be diversified.

The protection of the inheritors of Jingdezhen can be strengthened from three aspects. The first is to set up special funds for the study of traditional raw material formulating projects, thus providing more opportunities for those students who are interested in innovation and research. At the same time, providing technical support to such inheritors to improve their working environment. The second is to encourage skilled craftsmen to receive more apprentices, the allowance can be given in terms of the quantity and quality of the apprentices. The potential inheritors such as the students who study this kind of crafts, should also be supported subsidies and scholarships to stimulate their enthusiasm. The third is to strengthen the training of follow-up talents. There are many ceramic artists who don't want to pass on their exclusive recipes, which often leads to lack of follow-up talents and the danger of losing their skills. The government should promise to protect their intellectual property rights and choose excellent inheritors among their families or apprentices as far as possible, and give preferential treatment to them, forming a mechanism for tutors and apprentices to choose each other.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Intangible cultural heritage is a culture of transmission and inheritance, a culture of life and the beautification of life. The representation of ceramic-making craft in Jingdezhen is the identity and the symbol of the nation. It is necessary for us to increase our efforts to rescue and protect. One of the key points is to protect the natural ecological environment and humanistic ecological environment of the inheritors of ceramic-making craft and the inheritance areas to ensure the dynamic genetic and cultural origin of the ceramic-making craft in Jingdezhen.

The protection of the intangible cultural heritage we propose today, including the craftsmanship, especially the promotion of living heritage, it's meaningful to integrate the tradition into our lives. Only in this way can the protection of intangible cultural heritage and the inheritance and development of traditional handicrafts have real meaning and value.

### References

- [1] Alan Barnard(2006). History and theory in anthropology. Huaxia Publishing House .
- [2] Chen xinggui(2009). Re-discussion on several ways of protecting intangible cultural heritage, Heritage, no.16, pp.166-168.
- [3] Huang wenqing(2014). A Review of th protection of intangible cultural heritage of Jingdezhen ceramics in recent ten years,published in Theory and Ccriticism of Literature and Artm, no.6, pp.130-134.
- [4] Liu Xuan(2014).Study on the protection and utilization of historical and cultural ceramic heritage in Jingdezhen, Nanchang University.