

# Study on Appearance and Morphology Evolution of Chinese Ceramic Tea Ware Based on Design Semiotics Theory

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**Abstract:** Ceramic tea set is an important part of Chinese tea culture. Influenced by the environment and human development, the appearance of tea set has changed a lot. The artistic characteristics of tea set are mainly reflected in the form, color, texture and surface decoration. In order to improve the research on the evolution of the external form of Chinese ceramic tea set, this paper summarizes and explores the development process of Chinese ceramic tea set from the perspective of design symbols. From the perspective of science theory, this paper interprets the appearance of tea sets, and provides a theoretical basis for the appearance evolution of ceramic tea sets. At the same time, combined with the actual development, it provides the hypothesis for the appearance of Chinese ceramic tea set in the future and enriches its possibility.

**Keywords:** Design Semiotics, Chinese Ceramic Tea Set, Appearance of Tea Set, Morphological Evolution, Development Direction

## 1. Introduction

China is the hometown of tea. Tea is discovered and eaten in China. Chinese tea culture has rich material and spiritual levels. The tea set culture derived from it also has its unique connotation and changes in history. The appearance of tea sets will cater to the aesthetics of each era, materials, forms and other elements will also be affected by the natural environment, tea drinking methods, contemporary culture, etc., so in the process of exploring the evolution of the appearance of tea sets, the background of the times, Tea drinking culture is very important. The design symbol is a bridge for designers to convey ideas and ideas to users, a "translator" for different thinking of two parties, and a tool for bonding culture and products. Each symbol has its own special meaning. Symbol decoration is applied to the appearance of tea sets and the form of tea sets, giving cultural significance to the appearance of tea sets.

## 2. General analysis of design semiotics theory

### 2.1 Origin of Symbols

The origin of symbols is labor. As early as the primitive society, people have two needs of practicality and aesthetics, and have begun to engage in primitive design activities, enriching life with conscious or unconscious symbolic behavior. The human spirit, the human society and the whole human world are immersed in something that few people feel its existence but can't get rid of for a moment. This kind of thing is called symbol. Therefore, the appearance of symbols requires a long time of edification and acceptance. From the knotting notes of our ancestors to singing and dancing totems, they are all information symbols to maintain the traditional order of society.

### 2.2 Connotation of Symbol

Symbol, including three elements, including direct object, medium and interpretation. A symbol is a

medium for loading and transmitting information. It is something used to represent or represent another kind of thing. It is artificially set. The essential difference between human beings and animals lies in the process of symbol activities. This cultural world has constructed various symbol systems with various symbols as "materials." And we come into contact with the design of the product's modeling factors, that is, the appearance of the form is a symbol of information, including the product's form, material, color and surface decoration.

### ***2.3 Symbols and Design***

Design and semiotics have a very close relationship. Generally speaking, the elements and basic means of design can be regarded as symbols. There are direct and indirect applications of the use of symbols in the design, such as logo design and poster design, you can directly find the design of the symbol, and most designs will convey information in a more implicit way, and the symbol itself is hidden behind the scenes. Symbols can represent an attitude, a behavior, a cultural standpoint, etc., through tangible and effective carriers, the process of finding this carrier is design. Therefore, in the process of exploring the appearance of ceramic tea sets, we can find that the appearance characteristics of tea sets are a symbol, which can represent the designer, or the ideological connotation that leads to this form.

## **3. Appearance development of Chinese ceramic tea set**

### ***3.1 Development of Tea Ware in Early Han Dynasty***

Wine bottles were popular in the Han and Jin Dynasties. It can be said that they were one of the earliest ancient utensils for warming wine and holding wine. They were generally round, straight walls, covered, deep belly, with animal titles and ears, and three legs under them. Most of them are made of copper, the color is the material itself, and bronze is more, which is relatively single. These symbols mainly express product functions and serve users. There will be some animals decorated usually in the shape of birds and beasts, with images of sheep, tigers, elephants, hogs, cows, horses, birds, geese, and phoenixes, with gorgeous decorations. For example, the tiger's totem symbolizes justice, bravery and majesty. In the era when human civilization is not very developed, it is very common to use animal and plant images as symbolic elements, and they all have their symbolic meanings, which can reflect the spiritual needs of users.

### ***3.2 Appearance Development of Tea Ware in Tang and Song Dynasties***

The design of the appearance of ceramic tea sets began to develop during the Tang and Song Dynasties. Tea drinking, as a very important way of recreation and social interaction, has produced more and more artistic appearance needs to be met in form. The progress of brewing technology and the change of drinking methods have made the appearance of tea sets begin to diversify. The form, material, color and surface decoration are enriched with the changes of the times and gradually combined with practicality.

In the Mid-Tang Dynasty, the style of drinking tea prevailed. There were many types of tea sets, and the appearance and decoration tended to be gorgeous and exquisite. The decorative symbols show the auspicious decorative patterns with Chinese characteristics. Crane patterns are used more frequently, and the use of gilt is relatively mature. The wine note is developed on the basis of the chicken head pot. The chicken head pot appeared in the Southern and Northern Dynasties. The chicken head was a pure decoration. Later, due to the use demand, the chicken head was made into a spout with a hole in the middle, which is our common wine injection appearance, which enhanced the practical value on the basis of beauty. The wine bottles before the Tang Dynasty did not have handles and tubular flow, while another wine injection container Hu bottle had handles, so Hu bottles may have an effect on the appearance of wine injection. The early shape of the wine injection is usually round and thick, the ampulla is mainly round and oblate, and the spout is large and short. In the later period, the pot body gradually became delicate and slender, the ampulla was mostly oval, and the neck, spout, and handle of the pot increased, which was gradually similar to the common modern teapots.

In the Song Dynasty, Confucianism flourished, Neo-Confucianism and Zen thoughts were deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and people's lives tended to be elegant and concise. The appearance design of tea sets was reflected in simplicity and elegance, and the appearance was simple and

restrained. The Song Dynasty paid more attention to the texture of tea sets, and the texture was more refined. Ru, Guan, Ge, Jun, and Ding represented the Song Dynasty ceramics's high-level harmony and highest achievement. At that time, drinking tea mostly used the tea method, the shape of ceramic tea cups was mostly streamlined, the mouth was round, the body and neck became higher, the curve of the handle became very soft, the style of the saucer was more, and many supporting rings were hollow and transparent. In addition to porcelain and silver products, there are also golden saucers and lacquer saucers. The ceramic tea set is slender and straight, giving people a spiritual, upward and concise feeling, creating a quiet and elegant aesthetic style.



*Figure 1: In 1987, a set of tang dynasty court tea set was unearthed in the underground palace of famen temple in fufeng, Shaanxi province.*

### **3.3 The Turning Point of Tea Ware Development in Yuan Dynasty**



*Figure 2: Blue and White Catch Pearl Dragon Dark Dragon High Foot Cup*

The Yuan Dynasty was a historical period full of changes. The Yuan Dynasty advocated drinking loose tea, and the tea-making utensils such as broiling, grinding, Luo, and cooking since the Tang and

Song Dynasties have gradually withdrawn from the stage of history. In the design and development of ceramic tea sets in the Yuan and Ming dynasties, the color was different and the tea set shape also changed. The Mongols entered the Central Plains and also brought high-foot cups. The high-foot cups require five fingers to grasp, which is completely different from the Song people's drinking method. Compared with the previous generation of porcelain high-foot cups, the shape of the high-foot cups in the Yuan Dynasty has changed a lot. The cup body is bowl-shaped, with long handles and small ring feet, which will be more convenient to use. In order to meet the needs of diversified consumers, the cave dwellings began to produce tall cups with exquisite craftsmanship. The decorative design of the blue and white porcelain in the Yuan Dynasty, with dense composition, redundant decoration and a strong alien style. In the form, the spout and handle are designed into the shapes of dragon and phoenix, auspicious clouds, bamboo joints, etc., or the overall shape of the spout body is taken from natural flowers, trees, birds and animals, such as persimmons, lotus flowers, bamboo, peony, etc., inspired by natural objects, the design is lifelike, and the desire for good luck and wealth is conveyed through beautiful moral connotations.

### ***3.4 The appearance of tea sets in the Ming and Qing Dynasties***

The Ming and Qing dynasties were a heyday for the development of ceramic wine utensils in my country. The styles, colors, and surface decorations were also more abundant. A new manufacturing process "cloisonne" appeared. The Ming Dynasty waste tuan tea was changed to tribute leaf tea on traditional tea drinking. The method also had an impact, and the shape and types of tea sets also changed accordingly. The tea cups in the Qing Dynasty, the bowls that flourished in Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong, were the most famous. The cover bowl consists of three parts: cover, bowl and support. The cover is in the shape of a dish with high-circle feet as a handle; the bowl has a large mouth and a small bottom with low-circle feet; the support is a shallow dish with a sag center, and its sag part just kisses the bottom of the bowl. In the Qing Dynasty, most of the fine porcelain tea sets were produced by Jingdezhen, Jiangxi. At that time, in addition to continuing to produce blue and white porcelain and colorful porcelain tea sets, they also created pastel and enamel tea sets. Jiangsu Yixing purple sand pottery tea set in the Qing Dynasty, while inheriting the tradition, has new development. During the Kangxi period, the plum pot, the bunchai Sanyou pot, the baggage pot, the melon pot, etc., made by the famous Yitao master Chen Mingyuan, are integrated with sculpture and decoration, with vivid charm and ingenuity. The production process is extremely skillful. Beginning in the Qing Dynasty, the embryonic lacquer tea sets in Fuzhou, the bamboo woven tea sets in Sichuan, and the biological tea sets in Hainan also began to appear. The types of tea sets were rich and colorful, forming new important features of tea sets in this period.

## **4. Symbol Interpretation in the Evolution of Chinese Ceramic Tea Ware Appearance**

### ***4.1 Interpretation of Traditional Symbols***

Ceramic tea sets contain many traditional Chinese cultural symbols, such as calligraphy, dragon and phoenix patterns, animal patterns and other symbols, including purple sand, blue and white, white porcelain, etc., which also have their own unique color connotations, and traditional tea sets in my country make full use of symbolic and allegorical techniques in decoration, which are similar to the essence of symbols. For example, Chinese traditional culture emphasizes the transfer of feelings to scenery and the transfer of feelings to things, poems and ink pens inscribed on the tea set, and patterns such as flowers, birds and animals drawn, symbolize auspiciousness, express emotions, and achieve spiritual edification on a practical basis. It embodies the rich and rich Chinese cultural connotation. Among them, the calligraphy decoration includes seal script, running script, cursive script, official script and other fonts. On the pattern, lotus is used to indicate "out of the mud but not stained", and peony is used to reflect wealth and glory. Use bats and gourds to symbolize happiness, and use peaches and pine cranes to pray for longevity. For example, in the blue and white porcelain of the Yuan Dynasty, white symbolizes the mountain; blue symbolizes the sky; red represents dignity. The color of blue and white porcelain is the color of the Mongolian totem "Cang Lang White Deer". It shows the flamboyant and unrestrained character of the nomads in the Yuan Dynasty, and endows the artifacts with straightforward and vigorous power and beauty. In the tea ware of the Ming Dynasty, the tea ware design tended to be small and exquisite, and began to be considered for users. It contains the humanistic thought of "the people's daily use is the Tao", which has developed in practicality. In the Yongzheng year of the Qing Dynasty, it was popular to cover bowls. The tea set was covered with the

tea cover on the top and the saucer on the bottom. The design of the middle tea bowl implies the meaning of harmony between heaven and earth.

Chinese traditional tea sets are elegant in shape, simple and generous, and their colors are relatively simple and clean. These symbolic features are consistent with the attributes of pure heart and indifferent in tea culture. Teach natural tea, return to nature in tea drinking, and realize the harmonious unity of man and nature. This concept is the true embodiment of Taoism's "harmony between man and nature", "Tao follows nature" and "returning to nature".

#### ***4.2 Modern Symbol Application***

In the design of modern ceramic tea sets, the traditional symbols of Tai Chi Bagua are also used, such as the design of Tai Chi pot, the shape of the pot body and the handle, one virtual and one real, one yin and one yang, which skillfully shapes the three-dimensional Tai Chi symbols. Tai Chi pot is equipped with five elements of teacups, namely gold, wood, water, fire and earth, and the basic elements formed by all things in the universe, impl, the overall feeling is solemn and serious.

In the development history of tea sets, while its appearance has diversified development, it is also a diversified development of symbols. Historical needs and details continue to enrich the form and connotation of symbols, and embody the emotional sustenance under the symbols expressed by designers through color, form, texture and surface decoration.

### **5. Analysis on the Development Direction of Appearance and Form of Chinese Ceramic Tea Ware in the Future**

#### ***5.1 The Development Direction of Tea Ware in the Future***

The culture of Chinese ceramic tea sets is extensive and profound. The future development of ceramic tea sets is undoubtedly based on tradition. Inheriting and then innovating is undoubtedly a major trend in the development of tea sets. The aesthetic standard of ceramic tea sets is mainly light color and simple and elegant. Under this bedding, the color of tea sets is often simple and single, which is similar to most images of furniture, mainly pure color. Usually, such symbols reflect the quiet and leisurely living conditions when drinking tea. However, there should be some breakthroughs in color selection, such as blue, green, red and other colors, which have a sense of youth and bring different tea drinking experiences. The form of tea set is the most subtle part of the change since the birth and development of tea set. Due to the use demand, the general area of tea set is difficult to change in the design, and its form has become a symbol of Chinese tea set. However, there are many different symbol designs in the design of modern tea sets, which break the traditional concept and bring different use and viewing experiences. For example, the tea set bar "White Soup Tun" by Hara Kenya uses a purified body and mind, a reborn white tea bowl and a teapot without a handle to show Japan's habit of drinking tea and boiling plain boiled water. Changing the tea handle from round to square or even removing the design of the tea handle is a great change for the previous symbols. The intuitive feeling is not only the visual experience of a simple tea set, forming a brand-new symbol feeling.



*Figure 3: White Soup Swallowing -2014*

### **5.2 The principles of future tea set development**

In the direction, the development of ceramic tea sets has always followed the principle of humanization. In terms of its use function, material comfort, space size, etc., it will gradually become more suitable for modern use. It often has a simple, green, and efficient design direction. It will become richer, and the personalized design will be reflected in the appearance of the tea set. It has distinctive characteristics of the times and can have more symbolic experience, it may be the creation of new symbols, it may be redesign, or a different feeling of reorganization.

### **6. Summary**

The appearance development of ceramic tea sets is actually the process of symbol development. Based on the culture of the times, the form and body are combined with each other to show a new interpretation of symbol and symbol reorganization. In the future development of ceramic tea sets, we should re-understand the tradition, summarize the historical change process in the way of symbols, and at the same time guide the innovation of symbols with social changes, bringing about the of the appearance development of tea sets. Only in this way can tea sets and people interact with each other, and tea sets of different times can represent the culture of different times. The author believes that with the support of the systematic theory of semiotics, the evolution of the appearance of tea sets will have great development, and more soul-deep design works can appear.

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