

The Significance of Liao Ceramic Model Design Research

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Abstract—Liao ceramic is the combined product of Central Plains' ceramic-making technology and people's way of life in the Liao Dynasty. Its model was designed according to both its function and people's aesthetic standard. The generation, development and evolution of Liao ceramic model is the transitional materialized form of nomadic culture of Liao people. The research has the values of historical introspection and realistic enlightenment. The paper is aimed to discuss the significance of Liao ceramic model design research from four aspects, Liao ceramics, modeling style, necessity, purpose and value of Liao ceramic model research.

Keywords—Liao ceramics; model design; research; significance

I. INTRODUCTION

Liao ceramic is an important part in Chinese ceramics history and the representative of Chinese minority ceramics. Liao ceramic model is of unique characteristic, and a model of northern nomads' model design and an important carrier of Liao culture. Now we attach importance to developing ethnic culture and making innovation. So, it has a theoretical and realistic significance to research Liao ceramic model design.

II. LIAO CERAMICS AND MODELING STYLE

The Liao ceramics refer to all ceramics of Liao dynasty unearthed from the territory of Liao. On the concept of time, it refers to about 200 years from the establishment of Khitan to its end (916~1125). In the geographical distribution, it mainly includes ceramics unearthed from Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Inner Mongolia and the southern region of Hebei and Shanxi. Liao ceramics can be divided into two categories according to its origins. One is the local ceramics made in the territory of Liao. The other is the ceramics transported into the territory of Liao.

The Liao Dynasty had ever coexisted successively with the Five Dynasties, Song and Western Xia Dynasties. They frequently contacted with Han people in Central Plains, and their ceramic industry developed rapidly. In the Liao Dynasty, its ceramic industry was rising and flourished among minorities. Liao people learned ceramic-making technologies from people in Central Plains, and designed ceramics of various models according to the needs of life. Models of Liao ceramics can be divided into two major types, Khitan style and Central Plains style. Ceramics in Central Plains style mainly included bowls,

plates, dishes, basins, pots, boxes, kettle with handle, saucer, dreg cuspidor, pillow and inkstone which were baked according to original models of Central Plains. Ceramics in Khitan style included chicken comb pot, drumstick pot, long-neck pot, phoenix-head pot, pot with string, pot with narrow mouth, plate-mouth pot and long plate with begonia pattern and square plate. These models mainly were designed according to models of traditional Khitan wood, fur, gold and silver wares. "Two types of models have close relationship with Liao's politics, economics and culture. They have reflected the changes and development of Liao's animal husbandry and agriculture economy and life"¹. The shapes of Liao ceramics show their open and inclusive attitude, rough and simple regional characteristic and generous and practical ethic style. They are model design examples of northern nomads.

III. THE NECESSITY OF LIAO CERAMIC MODEL DESIGN RESEARCH

A. Liao Ceramic Is an Important Part in the History of Chinese Ceramics. It Has an Academic Value to Research Liao Ceramics

China was a famous ancient ceramic country. Since the beginning of Eastern Han and going through the Three Kingdoms, Eastern and Western Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, Tang, Liao, Song, Jin, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, Chinese people of all ethnic groups have created world famous and brilliant ceramic culture. One part of Chinese ceramic history was the cultural integration and historical development of all ethnic groups. Liao ceramics are excellent examples of minority's ceramic making. It is an important part in the history of Chinese ceramics. We have made great achievements on research of Liao ceramics. But "due to less unearthed ceramic wares and ethnic prejudice, some are mistook as of other dynasties except for wares with annals and ethnic characteristics, or as inferior-quality products from folk kiln. Even they turn a blind eye to them"². It can be seen that there are still a lot of problems and a large space for research.

Liao State is a feudal kingdom established Khitan people. They ruled the northern area of China and have an important

¹ Edited by Chinese Silicate Society, History of Chinese Ceramics. Beijing: Cultural Relics Press, 1982, 319.

² Geng Baochang. Identification of Ming and Qing Ceramics. Beijing: Zijincheng Publishing House, 1993. Preface.

position in the history of China. The ethnic group of Khitan is an ancient nomadic people in northern China. At the end of the Tang Dynasty, Yelü Abaoji, Chief Leader of the Khitan Diela Tribe, unified Khitan and adjacent tribes. In A.D. 916, he established the kingdom of Khitan. Later, it was renamed as Great Liao, coexisting with the Five Dynasties, Northern Song and Western Xia Dynasties. From 10th century to 12th century, Great Liao was magnificently situated in the Northern China, becoming the first prairie feudal empire established by minority. Khitan, on one hand, maintained their national cultural tradition. On the other hand, they absorbed the excellent culture of various nationalities and created the famous Liao culture. It greatly enriched the contents of the Chinese civilization. The establishment of Liao State has laid a solid foundation for China to unify a multi-ethnic country.

The Liao Dynasty has made outstanding achievements in ceramic making industry. After the founding of Liao, the ceramic industry developed and they established official kilns. They also made a major breakthrough in processing technology, and created ceramics of northern nomadic style and regional characteristics. Liao people have established the first systematic ceramic production system supported by the officials in ancient northern China, which has laid a solid foundation for the development of northern ceramic industry for later generations. In additions, as a typical artifact, the development and evolution of Liao ceramics recorded the rise and decline history of this minority. What's more, it has provided precious first-hand materials for us to research its political system, economic business, foreign exchange, ethnic culture, science and technology and life customs. So, it has a high academic value to research Liao ceramics.

B. There Are Only a Few Special Achievements about Liao Ceramic Models from the Perspective of Design

If we compare Liao ceramics with Chinese ceramics of other generations, it can be found that the most unique characteristic of Liao ceramics is its model. From the angle of design style, Liao ceramic model has strong northern nomadic style and regional characteristics. From the angle of design form, Liao ceramic model can be divided into two types, Khitan style and Central Plains style. Khitan style is the specific model of Liao ceramics. From the angle of design culture, Liao ceramic model contains both ethnic culture and Central Plains culture and Western culture. The evolvement of Liao ceramic model is centralized and reflected by the melting of ethnic groups, economic development, political system and trade intercourse and culture exchange. In the view of the nomadic culture, research on Liao ceramic model belongs to one part of Chinese northern nomadic model system. It sourced from the nomadic culture of Chinese northern prairie. It is one of the most active carriers of Liao nomadic culture.

In the study of the history of ancient Chinese design, ceramic is an extensive and profound research object. It was closely related to people's daily life, for it was an indispensable tool for everyone. Ancient Chinese attached great importance to the modeling of artifacts. They not only strived to improve its material properties, but also attached complex spiritual connotation to them. They invested a lot of manpower, material and financial resources. It was no exception in the Liao

Dynasty. Liao is an important dynasty in the history of Chinese artifacts. It is a period transforming from the prosperity of nomadic culture to agricultural culture and an important time for the formation and development of multi-integrated design pattern. Due to its minority ethnic characteristic of Liao Dynasty and the special link status in the history, the wares of this period model design should arouse people's attention. We should neglect its model to research Liao ceramics.

Research Liao ceramics from the perspective of design. The basic concern is around the harmony relationship among figure, character and settings on the ceramics. We can also analyze and research their producer, users, aesthetic model and function and technology and lifestyle. Ceramic model is the carrier of its function. To design ceramic model is to realize its multifunction and to serve users. Therefore, it should arouse the attention of the academic circle. However, most of researches about Liao ceramics were concentrated on the archaeological and historical category. There are only a few specific researches on the model design of Liao ceramics. If we want to gain further fruits on Liao ceramics intensively and extensively, we should expand new topics, care new fields and uses new patterns. Only by putting ourselves in a broader perspective, can we make comprehensive multi-disciplined and multi-dimensional researches.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF LIAO CERAMIC MODEL DESIGN RESEARCH

A. Make In-Depth Researches on Liao Ceramic Model from the Perspective of Design

Starting from the angle of design, the authors take Liao ceramic model as research object and make profound analysis on typical wares in order to expand new path for Liao ceramic model research, deepen Liao ceramic model design research and sort a clear sequence of Liao ceramic model as a complete material form in the ceramic design history of China. Finally, the authors conclude the people-centered creation consciousness in design mechanism, the clear purpose of survival and the simple principle of supremacy of function and the creation thought under traditional customs and cultural changes.

B. Explore the Cultural Motivations and Reasons to Research Model Design of Liao Ceramics

Generally model characteristics in the development and evolution of wares contain current social system, views and values, aesthetic interests, lifestyle, national culture and technological level and other factors. The main purpose of making in-depth research on the influential factors of Liao ceramic model design is to explain the inner and outer factors that influence the development and evolvement of Liao ceramic model and the specific process, to discuss the relationship between the integration of different cultural elements and ceramic model design under the background of nomadic culture, to reveal the origin of Liao ceramic model design and the truth of design, the relationship of Liao people's life and their culture and to conclude the development law of Liao ceramic model design.

C. *Find the Sense of Identity of Nomadic Culture and Regional Culture and Reshape the Historical Status of Liao Ceramics*

Khitan is the successor and spreader of the nomadic culture. It was an active period of northern nomadic culture changes in the Liao Dynasty. With vast land, now Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang, the northern of Hebei and Shanxi were all her territory. These regions, especially Inner Mongolia, are concentrated living areas of nomadic ethnic groups so far. With common territory and similar production and living style, the ethnic groups living in this land have close relationship with the historical Khitan. Liao ceramic is an important carrier of Liao's nomadic culture. It showed a series characteristics on its development, model design, production state, technological conditions and exchange and innovation, which provide a precious historical mirror for researching the ceramics of Chinese northern nomads and creating material and spiritual cultures. By researching model design of Liao ceramics, the authors hope to re-explain and understand Liao ceramics, increase the identity to nomadic ethnic culture and regional culture, respect the relationship among different cultures and reconstruct the historical identity of Liao ceramics in the history of Chinese ceramics.

V. THE VALUE OF RESEARCH ON MODEL DESIGN OF LIAO CERAMICS

A. *The Theoretical Value*

Take model design of Liao ceramics as research object. The authors, from the angle of design, attach importance to its own researches, different from past researches despising Liao ceramics, and historical information the ceramics carry. The authors have made a systematical research on Liao ceramic model and regarded it as a complete creation system. The past researches generally understated it, but the authors expand to deeper level. The authors have studies Liao ceramics, their design law and cultural changes. On the one hand, introduce the design science into research to make up the shortage of Liao ceramic model research from the angle of design science, and expand the research view and path for Liao ceramics and provide new pattern for Liao ceramic model design research. It facilitates the profound research on ancient Chinese ceramic model. It has an important meaning for enriching theoretical knowledge of ceramic model design and perfecting theoretical system of ancient design. On the other hand, it explains the development and evolution of Liao ceramic model design from the angle of Liao's nomadic culture. It can deepen our understanding on wares and design law and improve the cultural connotation of ceramic wares. It has a great theoretical value for researching the nature of Khitan culture and comprehensively understanding the evolution of Liao nomadic culture and the history of Liao Dynasty.

B. *The Practical Significance*

Liao ceramic model is the product of their ethnic culture and other cultures. Khitan could seek the balance between the ethnic and the exotic, the backward and the advanced, and they made good use of cultural diversity. It has an important realistic meaning to explore the characteristics of Liao ceramic

model design, conclude the motivations of the development of model design, to view and direct modern product design between the ethnic and the exotic and the tradition and the times. In addition, it fits the development theme of modern times to research and study Chinese ancient tradition wares. Liao ceramic is the most representative symbol of Liao people's nomadic culture. Under cultural globalization and diversification, China is marching toward modernization and developing national cultural innovation. It is conducive to arousing the collective memory of northern nomads with Khitan as representative in the history, finding their cultural genes and characteristics and having strong national and regional cultural identity. Liao ceramics, representing the materialized symbols of its group and regional characteristic culture, are humanized resource as well as economic resources. It can provide some thinking and enlightenment for the current development of modern national and regional culture to research it.

VI. CONCLUSION

The model of Liao ceramics has distinct ethnic and geographical features. Its model design shows the lifestyle of Liao people. They are symbols of their ethnic identity and product of multi-culture exchange. Liao ceramic model design is an excellent case of northern nomadic ethnic creation culture. By analyzing typical model design of Liao ceramics, the authors conclude its multiple design characteristics and investigate the design law and influential factors of the development and changes of its models. The authors also study their views of nature, design and culture, which have reflected their open cultural concept and their standpoint that never forget the national culture. They have showed double identity to advanced culture of Han people and their own ethnic culture.

The research on the design of Liao ceramics has a great theoretical meaning on expanding the research view and scope of Liao ceramics, enriching the research content of Chinese ceramic history, perfecting ancient design theory system and examining the changes of Liao's nomadic culture. Except for its theoretical research value, it is possible to directly enlighten modern product design. So, it has a role of certain enlightenment to the development of modern national design. It can direct and solve real problems. In addition, under the background of ethnic diversity and ethnic identity, wares are the reflection of culture. The development and evolution of Liao ceramic model design reflect the multi-integration process of Chinese nation. Liao people's design and identity on ceramic wares reflected their identity to their national identity, and to Chinese culture. It has a great practical significance to develop the current economy and culture of minority regions.

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