

Research on the Export Porcelain Pattern of Changsha Kiln in the Belitung Shipwreck

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ABSTRACT

Taking the Belitung shipwreck in the Tang Dynasty as a starting point, this article classifies the patterns of Changsha kiln porcelain in the Belitung shipwreck and analyzes the causes of different patterns. As a medium for carrying cultural symbols, Changsha kiln porcelain reflects the diversity of world culture and the attitude of the ancestors of the Tang Dynasty towards tolerance of foreign cultures.

Keywords: Changsha kiln, Belitung shipwreck, cultural communication

1. THE SOURCE OF THE BELITUNG SHIPWRECK

In 1998, a sunken ship was found in the waters of Belitung Island, Indonesia. Among the 67000 cultural relics salvaged from the Belitung sunken ship, the most important are more than 56500 pieces of Changsha Kiln porcelain, accounting for 85% of the total. No such large number of Changsha Kiln porcelain has ever been found in the cultural relics of any time at all times.

Among the many porcelains, there is a celadon bowl with the inscription "July 16, the second year of Baoli", which is the second year of emperor Jingzong's accession to the throne in Tang Dynasty, namely 826 ad. The Tang Dynasty carried out the policy of opening up to the outside world. Under this premise, the Silk Road had frequent foreign trade. With the development of the maritime Silk Road and the improvement of shipbuilding and navigation technology, merchant ships could carry a large number of ceramics at one time. The safety of ceramics was better than that of the land silk road. In the late Tang Dynasty, it reached the first peak of export porcelain in ancient China, Belitung shipwreck is a merchant ship in this era.

By analyzing the hull structure and material technology of Belitung shipwreck, it is determined that it is an Arab ship. Starting from the Persian Gulf, Belitung shipwreck crossed the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, passed through Thailand, Vietnam and other places, and finally arrived in Guangzhou. After selling most of its goods in Guangzhou, Belitung

shipwreck continued to go north to Yangzhou, which was the most prosperous city in the Tang Dynasty, Yangzhou is the center of water transportation from east to west, north to south, and also the most important ceramic market, attracting a large number of Arab and Persian merchants to trade in China. Belitung shipwreck purchased a lot in Yangzhou and returned to Guangzhou for final packaging, waiting for the arrival of the monsoon.

2. TYPICAL PATTERNS OF CHANGSHA KILN PORCELAIN IN BELITUNG SHIPWRECK

The Changsha kiln was a newly developed kiln after a large number of northern craftsmen moved to the South after the turbulent war in the north. Tongguan town in the Tang Dynasty was an important port on the Xiangjiang River, where the fired Changsha Kiln porcelain was loaded onto the ship, and finally reached Yangzhou by the Yangtze River waterway.

On the one hand, the cost of Changsha kiln is low and the output is large. The price of a unearthed Changsha kiln pot is only five Wen, while the price of a Yue Kiln is as high as 1000 Wen. On the other hand, it is also the most important reason that Changsha kiln has rich and colorful decorative style, There are a lot of Changsha Kiln porcelain sold into Iran, because the quality of this kind of porcelain is in line with the requirements of local residents in Iran and Mesopotamia [1]. Changsha kiln actively caters to the market, and there are obvious differences between export porcelain

and domestic porcelain. In the discovered export porcelain of Changsha kiln, the characteristics of cultural symbol exchange in different regions are reflected. Changsha kiln craftsmen express their exchange of Chinese Tang culture and foreign culture in the form of symbols on their ceramic utensils, These symbols of cultural integration make Changsha kiln have an irreplaceable position in export porcelain.

2.1. South Asian Symbols In The Decoration Of Changsha Kiln Porcelain

There are a large number of symbols such as Capricorn fish, lotus, lotus and lotus leaf in the Changsha kiln porcelain patterns found in Belitung shipwreck. There are also bowls painted with the pattern of "卍", and the word "卍" itself is a symbol in Buddhism. It means auspicious in Buddhism. These patterns all mark the absorption and imitation of South Asian pattern art.

2.1.1. Capricorn Pattern

The shape of Capricorn in Greek culture is different from that in Indian culture. In Greek mythology, Capricorn is called Pan. He has antelope horns and legs. Pan jumped into the lake to save a fairy. The lower body was immersed in water and turned into a fishtail. Zeus turned his image into a constellation in order to reward Pan. In India, the earliest cultural relics decorated with Capricorn date back to 4,000 years ago. The head of Capricorn is shaped like an Indian crocodile, which is often carved on the bow of a ship. It is believed that in order to sail smoothly, the ancient people carved the most powerful crocodile on the ship as the essence of the river to protect the ship. With the development of time, the Capricorn shape has continued to become plump, merged with other images, and turned into a half beast, half a fish, and Buddhist stories included him. In Buddhism, Capricorn is the demon king of the underworld. He repeatedly stopped him during the process of Sakyamuni's becoming a Buddha, and was eventually defeated by the Buddha. Capricorn opened his mouth and swallowed everything, including all evils and disasters. So capricorn is regarded as a symbol of auspiciousness in South Asia that can avoid evil and drive away disasters.

The Changshang kiln porcelain in Belitung shipwreck has been simplified while retaining some features of the South Asian Capricorn pattern. The pattern was introduced into China in the Eastern Han Dynasty. In the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the pattern was integrated into the "fish culture" and "dragon culture", so the image of the Capricorn on Chinese porcelain is more like a fish. Capricorn patterns are widely used, with many changes in form and posture, either containing beads or appearing in water patterns. This is

the result of cultural exchanges between South Asia and China.



Figure 1 Capricorn pattern porcelain bowl from Belitung shipwreck.

2.1.2. Lotus Pattern

In South Asia, lotus stands for pure land, symbolizing purity and auspicious meaning [2]. In the Indian Buddhist Sutra, before the birth of Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, a white lotus was born in the swamp. At the birth of Sakyamuni, the crown prince, the lotus bloomed at the same time. As an accompanying phenomenon of the birth of Buddha, the lotus is the sacred flower of Buddhism.

It is deeply integrated into the daily life of the people in South Asia. So far, the tallest tower in South Asia, the TV Tower in Colombo, capital of Sri Lanka, is called "Lotus TV Tower", which shows the important position of lotus in South Asia.

There are many colorful porcelain bowls in the Changsha kiln porcelain on Belitung shipwreck, whose main pattern is the blooming lotus flower. The lotus flowers are painted on the inside of the bowl, mostly with five petals, as well as eight and ten petals on two layers, with full composition. The Changsha kiln wares often depict lotus patterns on the abdomen or inside of the wares, including the bud lotus and the blooming lotus. Changsha kiln is the pioneer of underglaze painting, and painting on utensils is a major feature of Changsha kiln. The Chinese craftsmen who loved the lotus pattern also brought new opportunities to Arab merchants who were good at finding business opportunities. They took the products with the lotus pattern to trade in South Asia, so the lotus did not have a religious flavor in Arab culture, but represented a beautiful symbol of wealth. The extensive use of lotus patterns in Changsha kilns is the artisan's artistic recreation of the lotus itself. Chinese artisans nationalized the lotus and combined it with various patterns such as the boy, mandarin duck and double fish in the traditional culture of Central Plains to make it rich

with more auspicious connotations, which is the proof of the mutual integration of world cultures.



Figure 2 Lotus pattern porcelain bowl from Belitung shipwreck.



Figure 3 Arabic script porcelain bowl from Belitung shipwreck.

2.2. Central And Western Asian Symbols In The Decoration Of Changsha Kiln Porcelain

During the Tang Dynasty, China had close contacts with the Arab Empire, which attracted a large number of Arabs to live and trade in the Central Plains. The vast west Asia and Central Asia were the main sales places of Changsha Kiln porcelain. There were many foreign symbols in Changsha Kiln porcelain, such as geometric patterns, Islamic objects and inscriptions.

2.2.1. Decorative Writing Pattern

Arabs advocate calligraphy. People think that good calligraphy will make the truth clearer. After conquering Mecca, Muhammad once ordered every educated prisoner of war to teach 10 Muslims to read and write. In order to spread Islam and organize and write the Koran, he also encouraged to improve calligraphy and beautify writing. In more than 100 places in the Koran, he stressed the importance of calligraphy, Arabic calligraphy is not only used in writing, but also a very important decorative pattern in Arabic. The character pattern is based on Arabic characters and achieves colorful effects through the changes of density, rhythm and color [3].

The Changsha kiln porcelain in Belitung shipwreck has many text patterns written in Arabic, and the most commonly used font is Kufi, which is popular in Islamic areas. Like the date palm pattern, Chinese craftsmen don't know Arabic characters. What's more, there are several fonts for Arabic characters. So Changsha kiln craftsmen remodeled them, incorporating moire patterns and green hills as decorative objects when drawing. There are also variants.

2.2.2. Geometric Pattern

In the eyes of the Arabs, mythological characters and animals are a retrogression of idol worship. The idols here include all living beings. Although secular art and daily necessities are not restricted by this ban, it is largely restricted. In the creative field of painting and sculpture, people have turned their enthusiasm to geometric figures that are not within the scope of living beings, and the use of geometric abstract figures has reached an unprecedented height, forming a unique charm. The Arab region is hot during the day and cool and comfortable at night. There are stars and moons shining at night, so Arabs worship the sun, the moon and the stars. The geometric patterns use circles, squares, and stars as basic elements. The circle represents the universe, and the square has four sides. It represents the four seasons, four directions, four substances, four virtues, and four tastes. The stars can be combined into six stars, eight stars, twelve stars, and so on. They cross and deform basic figures such as circles, squares, and stars at 60° and 90° , and form endlessly changing gorgeous patterns through repeated combinations [4].

In the Changsha kiln porcelain in Belitung shipwreck, a large number of geometric patterns such as four-petal continuous arcs and continuous bead patterns appeared, which are exactly the same as the geometric decorations popular in contemporary Islamic countries. Changsha kiln craftsmen have uniquely applied the general geometric patterns of West Asia to the pattern drawing of exported porcelain, giving Changsha kiln porcelain with Arabic characteristics, and made a great contribution to the export of Changsha kiln porcelain to West Asia.



Figure 4 Comparison between Changsha Kiln Ceramics and Islamic Ceramics.

2.2.3. Plant Pattern

The Arab nation has been living in areas lacking green vegetation since ancient times. Mecca means "suck" in Arabic, showing a strong yearning for drinking water. In the Arabian myth, there are clear springs and oases with flourishing trees and flowers, which are the dwelling places of immortals in the myth. The plant pattern symbolizes the worship of vitality of people in Central and West Asia, so the plant pattern is a common pattern in the Arabian region. Date palms are the most common tree species in West Asia. Date palms have most of the nutrients needed by the human body. A person can survive by eating six dates a day. After processing, date palm palms can also be used as materials for Arabian seaming boats. Boats allow the Arab people to cross the ocean to travel around the world. The date palm is the main cash crop in Iran, Iraq, and Oman. It is also a sacred item in the hearts of the people of West Asia. It plays an important role for the local people. There is an Arab proverb called the date palm trees are the mothers and aunts of the Arab people. Mothers and aunts are the main source of maternal care in a person's life. Date palms give the Arabs the greatest blessing. More than two thousand years ago, the people of West Asia often carved date palm trees on the stone carvings of the temple, indicating the sacred status of date palm trees in West Asian culture.

If you want the porcelain to be favored by foreigners, you need to use the patterns that foreigners like. Changsha kiln painted date palm and other plants on the porcelain as decorative patterns to facilitate the export of porcelain. Because Changsha kiln craftsmen had not seen the trees in central and Western Asia, their techniques were slightly inferior, and a large number of plant patterns more like "pineapple" than date palm appeared. In addition, there are palm leaf patterns similar to those of the date, blooming lotus, hibiscus, autumn chrysanthemum and some unknown wild flowers and water plants. These patterns are more or less related to the Western Asian culture in terms of structure or pattern characteristics[5].



Figure 5 Plant pattern porcelain pot from Belitung shipwreck.

3. CONCLUSION

The Changsha kiln was a folk kiln that developed rapidly in the Tang Dynasty. When the quality of the kiln was not as good as other folk kilns, the craftsmen of Changsha kiln not only created underglaze painted porcelain, but also set their sights on the vast overseas market with unique insight. Catering to the needs of people in different regions, the Changsha kiln became the kiln with the largest sales volume of export porcelain in the late Tang Dynasty. From today's perspective, the Changsha kiln artifacts found in the Belitung shipwreck show the inclusiveness and cosmopolitanism of the Tang Dynasty culture [6].

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