



The Influence of the Thought of “The Unity of Nature and Man” on the Color of Jun Porcelain in Song Dynasty

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Abstract. Jun porcelain was one of the important varieties of porcelain in the north of the Song dynasty, and was among the five most famous kilns for the brilliant colors produced by kiln transformation. With its roots in the profound culture of the Chinese nation, the development, formation and significance of the colors of Jun porcelain reflect the Song dynasty’s idea of “the unity of nature and man”, in which man and all things were one, and therefore, Jun porcelain color is endowed with the spirit of The Times and humanistic connotation of “harmony between nature and man” in Song Dynasty and the it has become an important part of Jun porcelain culture and has provided new development ideas for the development of Jun porcelain.

Keywords: Jun porcelain in Song Dynasty · Jun porcelain colors · Jun porcelain · The unity of nature and man · Creation thought

1 Introduction

The five famous kilns of the Song dynasty - Ge, Guan, Ru, Ding and Jun - were the embodiment of the unprecedented prosperity of porcelain in the Song dynasty. Jun porcelain, with its unique kiln transformation technology, has the reputation of “entering the kiln with one color and leaving the kiln with many colors”. The marvellous kiln colors of Jun porcelain were closely linked to the development of Song dynasty philosophy, and the excellent social and cultural atmosphere of the time created a unique artistic language, so that it is not difficult to see the shadow of Song dynasty philosophy in the porcelain.

2 The Development of Jun Porcelain Under the Thought of “The Unity of Heaven and Man”

Jun porcelain is one of the five most famous porcelains in the history of China’s porcelain development due to its distinctive color and style. As for the origins of the development of Jun porcelain, from current literature and archaeological excavations, it is accepted

that Jun porcelain began in the Tang Dynasty and flourished in the Song [1]. This shows that the Song dynasty was a period of maturity and prosperity for the development of Jun porcelain. The development of science and technology and aesthetic needs were promoted by the Neo-Confucianism in Song Dynasty, which provided the conditions for the development of Jun porcelain. The proposition of “the unity of nature and man” was introduced in Zhang Zai’s *Zheng meng* and was gradually refined in subsequent developments. In the early Song dynasty, the support of Handicraft production and the prosperity of commercial development led to the unprecedented development of Jun porcelain, with the emergence of a number of kilns such as Liu Zhuang and Xia Baiyu kilns in Shenhou town, which were influenced by the thought of “the unity of heaven and man” in the Neo-Confucianism of the time, and which not only produced a high level of skill but also had a high aesthetic value. The colors of Jun porcelain were represented by sky blue and moon white, in pursuit of the natural and subtle beauty of the “rain over the sky”. In the middle of the Song dynasty, Jun porcelain had already entered the ranks of the famous kilns and reached its heyday, when artisans worked hard on the glaze of Jun porcelain, inventing the copper-red glaze and firing it in varying shades of red and purple kiln-changing color. In addition, official kilns were set up near Jun Tai to meet the needs of the court, and the Jun porcelain produced was divided into two types, civil and official. At this time, the Jun porcelain was fired on the basis of the azure glaze of the previous civil kilns, with the colors of blue, red and purple interwoven, forming the color style of Jun porcelain in the imperial kilns with both blue and purple. In the late Song period, the development of Jun porcelain was affected by the frequent wars and social upheaval, and the Juntai kilns ceased production, while the rest of the kilns were also damaged by the war, bringing the development of Jun porcelain to a standstill, and the colors produced were not as good as they once were.

3 The Influence of the Idea of “The Unity of Heaven and Man” on the Aesthetics of Color in Song Dynasty Jun Porcelain

In the Song Dynasty’s thought of “the unity of nature and man”, “nature” refers to the principle laws of nature, human society and historical development, or the “objective world”. “Man” refers to human nature, the idea of “the unity of nature and man” requires man to understand nature in practice by exercising subjective initiative, conforming to the ways of nature, using and transforming all things, and achieving a state where man and all things are one. The formation of color and aesthetics in Song dynasty porcelain was in line with the idea of “the unity of nature and man” in Song dynasty philosophy. The glaze of Jun porcelain came from nature, and people subjectively and dynamically selected suitable raw materials from nature and ground them to produce a glaze suitable for the color of Jun porcelain. The development of the firing technique of Jun porcelain reflects the process of man’s active transformation of the natural world, and although the kiln changes produced are a natural phenomenon of the metallic elements in the glaze of Jun porcelain firing in the reduction flame, the colors presented are the result of the Song dynasty’s pursuit of a return to natural beauty, so that the colors of Jun porcelain are the product of the integration of man and all things under the idea of “the unity of heaven and man”.

3.1 Natural Glazes and the Production of Color in Song Dynasty Porcelain

The Song dynasty porcelain production area is located in Yuzhou City in central Henan Province, where the topography slopes from north-west to south-east, creating a complex landscape of low mountains, hills and plains, as well as the characteristics of the local warm temperate monsoon climate, resulting in a large number of mineral resources and a rich vein of waterways. The geological composition of Yuzhou is dominated by sedimentary and metamorphic rocks such as serpentine quartzite, chert, sandstone, sand shale and micaceous rocks. This unique geographical location and the abundance of mineral resources provide a variety of ridges materials, plastic materials, solvents feedstock and fuels required for the production of ceramics, providing a rich material basis for the production of Jun porcelain [8].

The preparation of the glaze is an essential part of the production of Jun porcelain, as it is the basis for the many color variations that can be produced. The quality of the natural minerals used to make the glaze had a direct impact on the production of the porcelain and the texture and artistic effect of the colors. The raw materials for the glaze were taken from nature and were the embodiment of the idea of ‘the unity of nature and man’, with the Song craftsmen using clay, quartz, feldspar, wood ash, calcite and other solvent materials for the glaze, and adding high iron content to the purple gold clay for coloring purposes [7]. The glaze was prepared and put into production to provide the external conditions for the production of color in Jun porcelain. The colors presented in Song dynasty porcelain are mainly opaline blue glazes, such as azure, azure blue, moon white and onion green, as well as the creation of the red glaze, which produced shades of red or purple color spots on Jun porcelain. At the same time, because the glaze is a milky glaze, the porcelain exhibits a warm, quiet and deep sense of beauty, so the blue color of the porcelain is a product of the humanistic and spiritual connotations of the Song dynasty [5]. In the idea of “the unity of nature and man”, it is believed that man and nature are in an integral relationship, and that the clothing, food, housing and transport that people need in their daily lives are inseparable from the gifts of nature. These chemical elements were the source of the unique color style of Jun porcelain, and they also enabled the beauty of the glaze to be revealed in a new light during the Song dynasty.

3.2 A Blend of Skills and Song Dynasty Porcelain Colors

During the Song dynasty, artisans worked out their skills in the production of Jun porcelain and summary them in seventy-two processes, which is why the saying “a piece of Jun porcelain is made in seventy-two hands” shows the complexity of the process. The seventy-two processes include the processing of raw materials, molding, glazing, manufacturing and firing. The selection of clay is the first step in the production of Jun porcelain and refers to the processing and preparation of the embryo and glaze, both of which come from natural materials and prepare the porcelain for the production process. Forming techniques include the traditional forming, glazing and decorating processes, which reflect the initiative of Song artisans in processing natural raw materials, with forming being the process by which the artisan creates and uses these materials as intended, and glazing and decorating being the process by which the finished embryo is

decorated with a Jun glaze or other technique to meet the aesthetic needs of the people. Firing is the most important of the three key techniques, and because the porcelain needs to be fired twice, this involves both a plain firing and a secondary firing process. In the secondary firing process, there is an inextricable link between the atmosphere in the kiln and the presentation of the colors of the porcelain. The glaze is richly colored [6].

The idea of “the unity of nature and man” humanity nature, making it human and transforming people’s lives, just as each step in the production of Jun porcelain is the result of the wisdom of Song artisans who, starting from nature, understood and mastered the objective laws of nature in the process of firing Jun porcelain, complying with the natural ways of heaven and earth, using and transforming all things, and integrating their practical experience into the art of manufacturing Jun porcelain. This idea of the integration of people, things and nature into the fabric of creation led to the coloring of Jun porcelain in a style that was in keeping with nature, breaking the previous pattern of a single tone for celadon [3]. It was also the result of this integration that pushed the development of Jun porcelain to its peak and promoted the research and exploration of color in the Song dynasty, laying the foundations for the many color variations of Jun porcelain.

3.3 Kiln Variations and the Formation of Color in Song Dynasty Porcelain

Kiln transformation is the key to the soul and color formation of Jun porcelain, which is why it is possible to create a vibrant, varied and layered surface without relying on artificial painting or pattern decoration. The glaze is applied to the embryo in a layered process using glazes containing different metallic elements, which produce natural and vivid flow patterns under the influence of gravity, laying the foundation for the formation of color on the porcelain. As the glaze is typically a two-phase glaze, the composition of the fuel, the position of the kiln, the thinness of the kiln and the climate all have an impact on the kiln transformation, while the secondary firing provides the external conditions for the kiln transformation. During the firing process, the Song craftsmen discovered that the metal elements copper and iron contained in the glaze would produce copper oxide and iron oxide in the reducing atmosphere, and that these two elements would make the porcelain appear in different colors depending on the temperature and atmosphere of the kiln, with the copper oxide facilitating the formation of a purple-red glaze and the iron oxide easily producing a blue glaze. However, the coloring of Jun porcelain is difficult to control in terms of firing techniques, which are influenced by a variety of factors such as firing temperature and firing atmosphere, and any slight deviation will result in the color of the porcelain failing to achieve the normal color changes. ‘This is why the folk sayings ‘nine out of ten kilns’ and ‘born in the mould, die in the firing’ show that there is an uncontrollable nature to the kiln transformation of Jun porcelain, and that the colors of Jun porcelain are also inherently beautiful because of this uncertainty.

The color of Jun porcelain is the result of the fusion of metallic elements on the surface of the porcelain with the fire, which is the result of the beauty of natural rhythms, reflecting the core idea of nature and man becoming one in the ‘unity of heaven and man’. The natural kiln transformation of Jun porcelain produces a multitude of colors, including the purple-red glaze produced by the kiln transformation of Jun porcelain, which is highly sought after for its greenish-red color, as brilliant as a red haze, and the

world's love of this red hazel-like color is a result of the Song literati's fascination with and love of natural scenery [4], as well as the artisan's observation and use of the natural environment. The blue and purple colors of Song dynasty porcelain are closely related to the natural aesthetics of the Song literati who sought to merge man and nature into one, and the colors of Jun porcelain absorbed this natural and simple aesthetic thought during its development.

4 The Significance of Incorporating the Thought of “The Unity of Nature and Man” into Jun Porcelain

The beauty of Song dynasty Jun porcelain is the result of the influence of the idea of the ‘unity of heaven and man’, which embodied a rigorous and subtle, light and elegant beauty, containing the meaning of ‘reason’. Song dynasty porcelain is a combination of heaven, earth, material and workmanship, with the beauty of nature blending into the colors of the porcelain, showing a rich variety of variations. The development and evolution of the idea of ‘the unity of heaven and man’ in the colors of Jun porcelain is a manifestation of the high degree of integration of the spirit of the times into the living objects of the Song dynasty. This integration of the spirit of the times into the creation of the objects provides a new perspective for the production and development of modern Jun porcelain. Although there are endless possibilities for Jun porcelain to flourish in contemporary society, the pursuit of imitation of traditional Jun porcelain has been too great, derailing the types of porcelain needed for everyday life and causing the creation and development of Jun porcelain to be divorced from the spirit of the times and the practical needs of modern society [2]. In the development of contemporary Jun porcelain, it is important to inherit the Song dynasty's excellent ideas on the creation of objects, to integrate traditional techniques into modern humanities, to create vessels that are suitable for everyday use, to innovate based on the ideas and practices of traditional production techniques, to consciously draw on the essence of traditional Jun porcelain, and to organically combine the best of traditional culture with contemporary needs, so as to promote the development of Jun porcelain with new vigor and vitality. The art of porcelain has been developed with a new vitality and vigor.

5 Conclusion

The color system of Song dynasty porcelain, with its combination of blue and purple, not only presents a distinctive style, but also expresses the spirit of the times and aesthetic thought of the Song dynasty of “the unity of heaven and man”. The idea of “the unity of man and heaven” embodied in Jun porcelain is the essence of the times, handed down through history, making Jun porcelain still extremely influential in modern society, where it exists not only as a national gift, but also as a vessel for everyday life. The development of Jun porcelain is diversified and diverse, and the use of existing porcelain-making techniques and technology has helped to preserve the traditional colorful production techniques of Jun porcelain, thus giving it a new lease of life.

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