



LUOYANG SANCAI ART: CHANGES FROM TRADITIONAL SANCAI ART TO
MODERN SANCAI ART



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MODERN SANCAI ART



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This study takes the changes of Luoyang Sancai Art from traditional Sancai art to modern Sancai art as its research focus, aiming to reveal its historical development stage as well as the underlying cultural logic and social mechanisms. The research objectives are to analyze the historical development of Luoyang Sancai Art and its changes from traditional Sancai art to modern Sancai art. By employing methods such as literature review, field investigation, in-depth interviews, and case analysis, the research systematically explores its dynamic transformation across five dimensions: technology, art, culture, society, and economy. The findings indicate that the development of Luoyang Sancai Art generally reflects the cultural logic of continuity, rupture, and regeneration, yet this process is not linear but is profoundly influenced by multidimensional interactive mechanisms. Luoyang Sancai Art achieves dynamic adaptation between the safeguarding of tradition and the pursuit of modern innovation, gradually establishing a sustainable path for the protection of intangible cultural heritage and the reproduction of cultural values.

Keyword : Luoyang Sancai Art, Traditional Sancai Art, Modern Sancai Art, Changes in Sancai Art

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the research background of Luoyang Sancai Art, highlighting its significance as a representative form of Chinese ceramic culture. It has undergone a transformation from traditional funerary objects to a modern artistic form, reflecting a shift from “craft inheritance” to “cultural reproduction.” Against the backdrop of globalization and local cultural revitalization, Luoyang Sancai Art continues to integrate contemporary aesthetics, technologies, and market demands, demonstrating a trend of diversified development. Anchored in this context, the study defines its research objectives and hypotheses, constructs a multi-dimensional analytical framework, and aims to systematically examine the historical evolution and contemporary transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art. Core terms are also clarified to lay a solid foundation for subsequent chapters.

1.1 Background

China is widely regarded as the cradle of ceramics, with a long and rich history in ceramic art (Ye, 2006). As a vital component of ancient Chinese civilization, ceramics not only reflect the superb craftsmanship of ancient Chinese artisans but also embody profound cultural meanings and aesthetic pursuits. With its natural, human-centered character, ceramic art has formed an inseparable bond with human life, representing the crystallization of generations of artisans’ wisdom.

Luoyang, the city with the earliest, most frequent, and longest-lasting history as a capital in China, is also the birthplace of Chinese ceramics. Luoyang Sancai Art stands as a remarkable achievement in the history of ceramics and is considered a treasure of Chinese historical culture. It fully demonstrates the potential and strengths of Chinese ceramic culture and represents the culmination of techniques, aesthetics, and cultural philosophies developed over centuries (Guo, 2012). Chinese arts and crafts master Guo Aihe first proposed the concept of “Luoyang Sancai,” freeing the art form

from the historical limitations implied by the term “Tang Sancai” and opening the path for its creative development in the modern era (Hu et al., 2023).

Luoyang Sancai Art boasts a long and continuous history, originating in the Han dynasty, flourishing during the Tang, and continuing through the Song, Liao, Ming, and Qing dynasties. Its defining features include low-temperature lead-glazed firing and vivid color schemes, primarily in yellow, green, and white, creating a distinctive aesthetic of flowing glazes and expressive forms. The progression of history and cultural evolution has continually enriched the art form. Moreover, through overseas dissemination, Luoyang Sancai has given rise to regional adaptations such as “Nara Sancai” in Japan, “Silla Sancai” in Korea, and “Persian Sancai” in Iran.

The art of Luoyang Sancai reached its zenith during the Tang dynasty, a period marked by national strength, flourishing foreign exchange, economic prosperity, and a rich cultural life. As early as 1916, Luo Zhenyu's Catalogue of Ancient Mingqi (明器) included several Tang Sancai figurines, such as horses and court ladies, highlighting their discovery and cultural value in the preface. The term mingqi (明器) refers to burial objects made specifically for funerary purposes, often intended to provide comfort, protection, or status symbols for the deceased in the afterlife. In 1942, Zhao Ruzhen explicitly defined the term “Tang Sancai” in his book *Guide to Antiquities* (Guwan Zhinan), stating: “The best Tang Sancai ware features patterns painted in yellow, green, and turquoise on a white-glazed body.” Tang Sancai was primarily used as funerary objects “mingqi” and often took the form of figurines representing people and animals (Sun, 2006). However, due to dynastic changes and the art form's specific function as burial objects, the traditional techniques of Tang Sancai eventually faded and experienced a break in transmission (Lei, 2017).

The current techniques of Tang Sancai firing have been reconstructed through later reproductions. Among the notable contemporary inheritors of this tradition are Gao Shuiwang and Zhang Ernau. Gao Shuiwang, a nationally recognized inheritor of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage for Tang Sancai firing techniques, is considered a master figure in the modern reproduction of Tang Sancai.



Figure 1 Sancai works by Gao Shuiwang

Source: Anonymous. (Aug. 31, 2018) Art Mansion | Tang Sancai Art Museum - Gao Shuiwang

Retrieved from https://www.sohu.com/a/251234229_99927700

Since the 1980s, with the implementation of national policy changes and the reform and opening-up initiative, Sancai art entered a new era. The development of Luoyang Sancai has undergone several distinct phases: the foreign trade period following the reform, a period marked by large-scale reproduction of Tang Sancai, and a phase of independent research and innovation (Huang & Sun, 2018). Today, the evolution of Luoyang Sancai is best represented by Guo Aihe's brand Sancai Yi. Among its innovations, Sancai Ceramic Painting stands out as a form of flat ceramic art created on the basis of traditional techniques, enhanced by modern technology and characterized by unique glazing and firing methods (Yang, 2017).



Figure 2 Sancai works by Guo Aihe

Source: Arts and Crafts Institute. (Feb.21, 2024) Works of Chinese Arts and Crafts Master Guo Aihe

Retrieved from <https://www.cnacs.net.cn/19/202402/5763.html>

However, with the passage of time and the development of society, traditional Luoyang Sancai Art is facing numerous challenges. On one hand, the transmission and development of traditional craftsmanship are threatened by a loss of skilled artisans and the risk of technique extinction. On the other hand, shifts in modern aesthetics and market demands have imposed new requirements on Luoyang Sancai Art. Therefore, how to achieve innovation and development while preserving its traditional characteristics has become a pressing issue before us.

In today's era of increasing global economic and cultural integration, re-examining traditional cultural arts and genuinely preserving the essence of Chinese national artistic heritage has become a shared concern for artists, sociologists, and anthropologists (Meng, 2008). Entering modern society, with advances in technology and the deepening of globalization, Luoyang Sancai Art has begun to explore new developmental paths. Artists are experimenting with integrating modern design concepts, new materials, and innovative technologies into traditional Sancai practices, creating works that retain traditional charm while aligning with contemporary aesthetics.

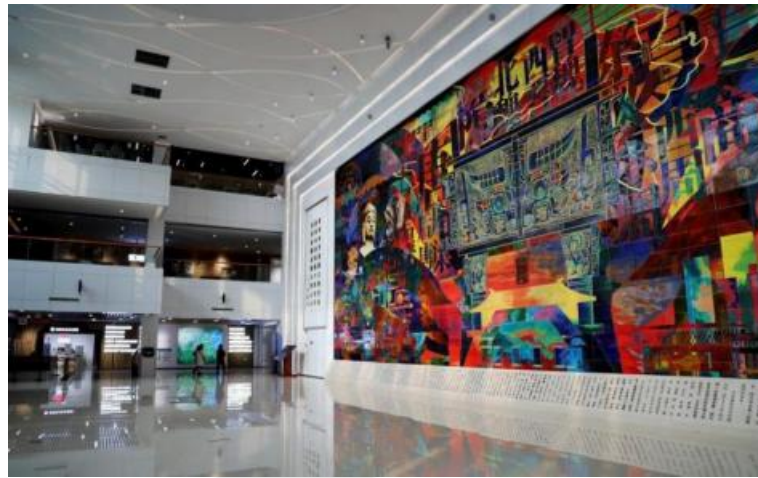


Figure 3 Modern Sancai Art in Public Spaces

Source: Feiyingliusha. (Nov.14, 2020) Luoyang Planning Exhibition Hall

Retrieved from https://bbs.zol.com.cn/dcbbs/gallery_d33999_5485.html#p1

At the same time, modern Sancai art continues to expand its scope of application, progressing from traditional art collection towards public art, decorative arts, rural landscapes, and cultural tourism, thereby revealing a broader and more promising outlook for its future development.

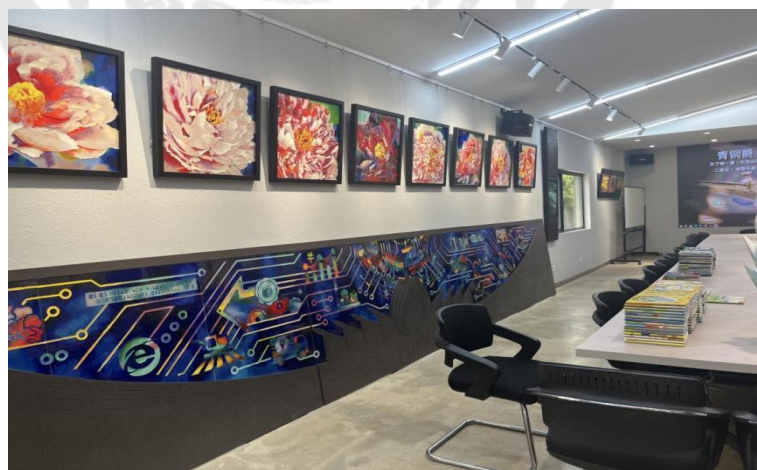


Figure 4 Modern Sancai art as spatial decorative art

Source: photographed by the Author

Although numerous studies have explored the historical craftsmanship, archaeological discoveries, and artistic styles of Sancai, there remains a relative lack of systematic research on the historical development stages and transformation dimensions of Luoyang Sancai Art, particularly regarding its evolution from traditional to modern forms. In particular, in-depth analysis of its holistic transformation pathways within multidimensional contexts is still insufficient.

This study, therefore, takes Luoyang Sancai Art as a core case to investigate its historical progression from traditional Sancai to its modern iterations. It analyzes the shift from traditional craftsmanship to contemporary cultural expression, and aims to uncover how Luoyang Sancai Art engages in the construction of cultural identity, the transfer of aesthetic values, and the mechanisms of social participation in contemporary society. Furthermore, the study explores the issue of cultural sustainability of traditional Sancai art under the tension between globalization and localization. Through this research, we aim not only to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the historical and cultural significance of Luoyang Sancai Art, but also to offer valuable insights for its transmission and development in the modern era.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine the transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art in the context of changing times and restructuring social frameworks. It seeks to systematically map its historical evolution and explore the craft characteristics, cultural functions, and social roles it has played across different periods. Particular emphasis is placed on analyzing the transition from traditional to modern Sancai art, highlighting how the practice has evolved into a modern art form integrating aesthetic, cultural, and commercial values, under the influence of intangible cultural heritage protection policies, cultural industry transformation, and contemporary artistic practices.

(1) To analyze the historical development of Luoyang Sancai Art.

(2) To analyze the changes of Luoyang Sancai Art from traditional Sancai art to modern Sancai art.

1.3 Hypothesis of the Study

The historical development of Luoyang Sancai Art demonstrates a shift from “craft inheritance” to “cultural reproduction.” In order to understand its evolutionary logic and cultural value across history and contemporary society, this study proposes two core research hypotheses based on an integrated analysis of its historical trajectory and mechanisms of modern transformation:

(1) The development of Luoyang Sancai Art follows a phased evolution marked by cultural adaptation. Its transition from ritual objects to mediums of contemporary expression constitutes a process of “cultural reproduction,” shaped by historical conditions, technological advancements, and social restructuring.

(2) The shift from traditional to modern Luoyang Sancai Art is a multi-dimensional process involving collaborative drivers, cross-boundary tensions, and institutional adjustments. Its modernization is influenced not only by technological and market forces, but also by interactions among cultural identity, social participation mechanisms, and ICH policy frameworks. Throughout this transformation, the core “genes” of Sancai, such as the aesthetic of flowing glazes and low-temperature lead-glaze techniques, remain intact. Although its forms of expression and application contexts have evolved significantly in response to changing societal demands and consumer markets.

1.4 Expected Contributions of the Study

This dissertation aims to comprehensively trace the development of Luoyang Sancai Art from its traditional origins to its modern transformations. It systematically explores the evolution of its craftsmanship, artistic forms, cultural connotations, and social value, and proposes a multidimensional analytical framework. This study not only contributes to a deeper understanding of Luoyang Sancai Art but also offers insights that may inform the transformation and innovation of other traditional crafts.

(1) To deepen the study of the historical and cultural value of Luoyang Sancai Art, thereby enriching the existing academic discourse on Chinese traditional craftsmanship.

(2) By analyzing the transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art from multiple perspectives, including technological, artistic, cultural, social, and economic, this research constructs a multidimensional framework capable of revealing the complexity and interactive mechanisms involved in the shift from traditional to modern artistic forms.

1.5 Definition of Terms

1.5.1 Luoyang Sancai

The term Luoyang Sancai is named after the site of its earliest discovery. Sancai ceramics were first unearthed in Luoyang and flourished there, hence the designation. In the 2008 Report on Chinese Arts and Crafts, the National Survey of the Industrial Arts and Crafts Sector officially classified all low-fired polychrome glazed ceramics as Luoyang Sancai. This form of ceramic is characterized by four key features: vividness, brightness, translucency, and fluidity (yan, liang, tou, liu) (Association & Office, 2009)

1.5.2 Traditional Sancai Art

Traditional Sancai art refers to a type of low-temperature glazed ceramic that flourished during the Tang dynasty. It is renowned for its vibrant glaze colors and unique production techniques. Although typically associated with three primary colors, namely yellow, green, and white, and occasionally brown or blue, the term "Sancai" actually denotes a broader spectrum of colors, rendering it an expressive, multicolored art form.

The process involves a two-stage firing technique, using various metallic oxides as coloring agents. During the firing process, the glazes melt and blend into one another, resulting in a mottled, dynamic, and harmonious visual effect. Traditional Sancai represents a high level of decorative artistry and reflects many aspects of Tang society, including its economy, culture, and ethnic diversity. It is often regarded as an encyclopedic portrayal of Tang life and constitutes a valuable component of Chinese cultural heritage.

The craftsmanship and cultural foundations of traditional Sancai originated in the Han dynasty, developed through the Northern and Southern dynasties, and reached their peak in the Tang. This tradition continued in later periods, evolving into Song Sancai, Liao Sancai, Ming Sancai, and Qing Sancai, thus forming a rich and diverse artistic system and cultural legacy. These works were highly valued in China and, through transmission routes such as the Silk Road, also influenced ceramic production in other regions, fostering cultural exchange and mutual enrichment between China and the rest of the world.

1.5.3 Modern Sancai Art

Modern Sancai art refers to a contemporary evolution of the traditional Sancai technique, involving innovation in raw material selection, kiln construction, firing methods, glaze formulation, and artistic expression. These innovations have endowed Sancai art with new meaning and vitality, allowing it to enter the field of modern art and gradually develop into a new artistic form.

Modern Sancai art retains the richness and charm of its traditional counterpart while incorporating contemporary aesthetic concepts and creative techniques. As a result, these works combine classical elegance with a strong sense of individuality and modernity.

According to Guo Aihe, modern Sancai art manifests in several key forms (Guo, 2012): Sancai ceramic sculpture, modern Sancai pottery, Sancai glaze painting, and Sancai environmental art. Specifically:

Sancai Ceramic Sculpture includes both antique-style reproductions and innovative ceramic art, encompassing both inherited and creative approaches within Sancai sculptural forms.

Sancai Ceramic Painting refers to the use of glazes as painting material applied to flat ceramic panels, producing artworks with a unique process and expansive visual possibilities.

Sancai Environmental Art involves the application of Sancai techniques in the creation of large-scale decorative murals for interior and exterior architectural spaces.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature across several interconnected fields, including Chinese ceramics, Luoyang Sancai Art, traditional and modern Sancai art, and cultural anthropology. While there is a substantial body of research on Chinese ceramics and Tang Sancai, systematic studies specifically focusing on Luoyang Sancai Art remain relatively limited. Research on the firing techniques of Luoyang Sancai is largely centered on Tang Sancai, with few comprehensive studies on the evolution of these techniques, particularly in the contemporary context. Similarly, research in cultural anthropology tends to focus on conceptual and theoretical dimensions, with relatively little work analyzing the artistic transformation of a specific craft form. At present, there is a notable gap in theoretical frameworks addressing the changes of Luoyang Sancai Art from traditional to modern forms. This study seeks to contribute foundational research in this area.

2.1 Research on Chinese Ceramics

Chinese ceramic art holds a significant position in the history of global arts and crafts. Its long history, exquisite techniques, and rich cultural symbolism have attracted sustained attention from both domestic and international scholars. From prehistoric painted pottery to the development of celadon and white porcelain, and eventually to the technical peak of Tang and Song ceramics, Chinese ceramics have functioned not only as material artifacts but also as cultural media that transcend time and space.

As an important branch of the Chinese ceramic tradition, the study of Luoyang Sancai Art must be situated within the broader framework of Chinese ceramic development in order to fully understand its historical positioning, technical structure, and evolving aesthetic characteristics.

2.1.1 Research on Chinese Ceramics History

Historical research on Chinese ceramics has primarily focused on three areas:

(1) The evolution of ceramic technologies, including changes in body and glaze composition, firing temperatures, and forming methods.

(2) The classification and periodization of ceramic types and styles, such as Neolithic painted pottery, Shang and Zhou grayware, Han green-glazed ware, Tang Sancai, and Song celadon.

(3) The cultural functions and social values of ceramics, examining their roles in religious rituals, funerary customs, daily life, and imperial court usage.

As a representative art form in the history of Chinese ceramics, Tang Sancai has been explored through the lenses of archaeology, history, and art history. Scholars such as Ye Zhemin and Wu Zhanlei have investigated Tang Sancai from various perspectives, including archaeological finds, glaze color analysis, and cultural functions, emphasizing its symbolic role in Tang dynasty multiculturalism and foreign exchange. In particular, research on techniques such as glaze flow and low-fired lead glaze systems has laid a foundation for understanding the technical features of Sancai art.

Although Tang Sancai has been relatively well-documented in academic literature, most studies have remained descriptive in nature, focusing on archaeological significance and stylistic analysis. Less attention has been given to how Sancai art has been reconstructed and reinterpreted in modern contexts. This presents a valuable opportunity for further inquiry, which this dissertation aims to address.

Ceramics, H. o. C. (1982). The Chinese Ceramic Society. Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House.

This work provides a detailed historical overview of Chinese ceramics, including a summary of Tang Sancai in Chapter 5, along with discussions of shape, decoration, and export during the Tang and Five Dynasties.

Ye, Z. (2022). *History of Chinese Ceramics*. Beijing: Life, Reading, and New Knowledge Sanlian Bookstore.

Based on his earlier work *Outline of the History of Chinese Ceramics*, Ye Zheming elaborates on the development of ceramic techniques across dynasties, reflecting political, economic, and trade changes.

Ding, W. (2013). *The Cultural Lineage of China: Ceramic Art and Sancai Pottery*. Harbin: Heilongjiang Fine Arts Publishing House.

This work documents the evolution of Sancai pottery from production to modern research, covering the mature artistic system of Tang Sancai and extending into contemporary practices.

2.1.2 Research on the Overseas Transmission of Chinese Ceramics

With the emergence of concepts such as the “Maritime Silk Road” and “ceramic diplomacy,” research on the international transmission of Chinese ceramics has become a key subfield in the study of cross-cultural exchange. This research focuses on several themes:

(1) The geographical routes and chronological phases of ceramic exports, such as the spread of Chinese porcelain to West Asia, East Africa, and Southeast Asia from the Tang to Qing dynasties.

(2) The reception and adaptation of Chinese ceramics as cultural symbols in other civilizations.

(3) The processes of cultural fusion and re-creation stimulated by the global transmission of ceramic technologies and aesthetics.

As a notable ceramic form, Tang Sancai has been frequently unearthed in archaeological sites across Central Asia and Persia. Figurines depicting foreign characters, camel caravans, and musical scenes serve as tangible evidence of Sino-foreign cultural interaction. Scholars have emphasized that these exotic motifs reflect Tang China’s cultural inclusiveness and global vision, making Sancai artifacts crucial symbols of Silk Road cultural exchange.

However, existing research tends to focus on the global exportation of Chinese ceramics as a whole, with limited attention to how Luoyang Sancai Art in particular has participated in overseas cultural networks, or how it has reconstructed its identity and public image within a globalized context. Therefore, this dissertation also seeks to explore the contemporary global transmission of Luoyang Sancai Art, including its roles in cultural diplomacy, international exhibitions, and digital dissemination, as a way of extending current research.

Mikami, T. (1983). *The Ceramic Road*. Beijing: Cultural Relics Press.

This book meticulously documents the export of Chinese ceramics from the Tang to Qing dynasties via the Maritime Silk Road to Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia, and East Africa. Through archaeological fieldwork, Mikami examines the global distribution, types, and quality of Chinese ceramics, revealing their far-reaching influence.

Wang, W. (1992). "A Review of Research on Tang Sancai in China and Tang Sancai Discovered in Japan." *Archaeology*, (12), 1122 – 1133, 1159 – 1160.

This article focuses on the relationship between Chinese Tang Sancai and Nara Sancai found in Japan, shedding light on the significance of Sino-Japanese cultural exchange during the Tang period.

2.2 Research on Luoyang Sancai Art

Luoyang Sancai Art is one of the most distinctive cultural symbols in the history of Chinese ceramics, known for its vivid color schemes, exoticized forms, and its integration with Central Plains culture. As a ceramic art form marked by both historic depth and strong regional identity, Luoyang Sancai has attracted interdisciplinary scholarly attention since its rediscovery in the early 20th century. Existing literature primarily focuses on four aspects: origins and development, technical characteristics, aesthetic and cultural values, and modern practices.

2.2.1 Research on Origins and Development

Scholars generally agree that the origins of Luoyang Sancai can be traced back to green-glazed ware from the Han dynasty and low-fired polychrome ceramics

from the Northern Dynasties. The Tang dynasty marked the peak of Sancai art, during which Luoyang, serving as the imperial capital and an important hub on the Silk Road, became a major center for the production and circulation of Sancai ceramics. Archaeological evidence, particularly the large number of Sancai artifacts unearthed from Tang tombs in the Beiyangshan region, provides substantial material support for understanding its development.

Scholars such as Guo Aihe and Huang Xiangqian have conducted systematic investigations into the developmental trajectory of Luoyang Sancai through a combination of textual analysis and fieldwork. Their studies highlight the multifaceted role of Sancai within the political, religious, diplomatic, and funerary contexts of the Tang dynasty. However, while there is a robust body of research on Tang Sancai as a whole, structural discussions of Luoyang Sancai as a regionally specific cultural system remain underdeveloped. In particular, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis of its evolution “from historical art to contemporary culture.”

Guo, A. (2012). *Luoyang Sancai Art*. Zhengzhou: Henan Fine Arts Publishing House.

This book presents Luoyang Sancai Art as the crystallization of centuries of experience, techniques, aesthetics, and cultural philosophies accumulated throughout the history of Chinese ceramics. The historical transitions and cultural evolution of each period contributed to the continuous refinement of Sancai art. Each era's works both inherited the traditions of the past and expressed distinct aesthetic characteristics of the time. The book is organized into the following sections: “The Name of Luoyang Sancai,” “Inheritance of Luoyang Sancai,” “Dissemination of Luoyang Sancai,” and “Luoyang Sancai Today.” The section on nomenclature explores the origins of the term “Tang Sancai” and establishes the standardized English name Luoyang Sancai Art.

Huang, X. & Sun, W. (2018). “The Past and Present of Luoyang Sancai.” *Ceramics Research*, (06), 33 – 37.

This article is divided into two parts. The first part traces the discovery, origins, and transmission of Sancai. The second part begins with the reform and

opening-up period of the 1980s and discusses the conceptualization of Sancai as defined by Guo Aihe. It also analyzes the internationalization of Guo's Sancai Yi brand, Gao Shuiwang's antique-style reproduction techniques, and Li Xuewu's "Peony Porcelain," ultimately concluding with an overview of the ongoing innovation and reinvention of Sancai art in the contemporary era.

2.2.2 Research on Traditional Sancai Art

Research on the technical systems and formal characteristics of Luoyang Sancai Art has yielded substantial academic achievements, with particular focus on low-temperature lead-glaze formulas, glaze flow aesthetics, forming methods, and the iconographic and cultural symbolism embedded in the artworks. Traditional Sancai craftsmanship is not merely a set of material techniques, but also an artistic embodiment of Tang dynasty visual culture and social hierarchies. These studies provide a critical foundation for understanding the logic of Sancai's artistic evolution and cultural reproduction.

As an integral part of the symbolic system of Tang society, traditional Sancai art has been extensively analyzed in relation to funerary customs, religious rituals, class symbolism, and Silk Road cultural exchange. Classic motifs—such as camels, Central Asian Figures (胡人, huren), and court musicians—are often interpreted as visual representations of cross-cultural exchange, reflecting the Tang dynasty's openness, diversity, and political inclusivity.

Existing scholarship has offered rich insights into themes such as the "representation of foreign cultures, cosmopolitan imagination of the Tang era, and ritual functions of artifacts within ceremonial systems." However, fewer studies have explored how these cultural symbols are reactivated, translated, and reproduced in modern contexts, particularly with regard to the dimensions of cultural memory and local identity, which remain underdeveloped in current research.

Zhao, R. (1992). *Complete Guide to Antiquities*. Beijing: Beijing Publishing House.

This book was the first to clearly define the term “Tang Sancai.” Chapter 3 also discusses the authentication and imitation of porcelain wares.

Luo, Z. (2010). *Catalogue of Ancient Funerary Objects*. Yangzhou: Jiangsu Guangling Publishing House.

Includes illustrations of Tang Sancai horses and female figurines, along with a preface that contextualizes their discovery and historical significance.

Li, Z. & Wang, W.(1997). *Tang Sancai of China*. Tianjin: Tianjin People's Publishing House.

Offers an overview of the origins, development, and production techniques of Tang Sancai, including clay selection, glazing methods, firing processes, stylistic periods, forms, and artistic features.

Hu, X. (2002). *Identification and Appreciation of Tang Sancai*. Nanchang: Jiangxi Fine Arts Publishing House.

Discusses Tang Sancai craftsmanship, covering forming techniques, glazing processes, decorative methods, and marbling techniques.

Gao, S. (2015). *Tang Sancai of the Great Tang Dynasty*. Tianjin: Tianjin People's Fine Arts Publishing House.

A comprehensive study of Tang Sancai, including its historical evolution, notable figures, technical processes, artistic achievements, and collectible value. It also explores the history of modern reproductions.

Research on Ancient Chinese Ceramics. (1987). Institute of Silicate Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences. Beijing: Science Press. Includes two seminal articles on Tang Sancai techniques:

On the Production Techniques of Tang Sancai by Li Zhiyan and Zhang Fukang, analyzing glaze chemistry, microstructure, forming methods, decorative glazes, kiln tools, and firing processes.

A Study of Tang Sancai by Li Guozhen and Chen Naihong, which compares ancient and modern Tang Sancai, finding ancient glaze firing temperatures at 950 °C,

body temperatures at 1150^o C, and thicker glazes (0.12 – 0.15 mm), with Henan glazes superior to those from Shaanxi.

Hei, L. (2019). Comparative Study of Tang and Liao Sancai Craftsmanship. Master's Thesis, Inner Mongolia Normal University.

Compares the production techniques and tools of Tang Sancai and Liao Sancai, analyzing differences that affect conservation and restoration approaches.

Wang, Q. (2017). On the Dynamic Inheritance of Tang Sancai Craftsmanship in Luoyang. Master's Thesis, Chinese National Academy of Arts.

Argues that the living tradition of Tang Sancai is embodied in artisans' hands-on practices, and its transformations are evident in processes, tools, forms, and functions. The thesis also addresses challenges like lack of successors, unhealthy competition, homogenization, and mass production.

Sun, X. (2006). On the Similarities and Differences Among Liao, Tang, and Song Sancai. *Inner Mongolia Cultural Relics and Archaeology*, (2): 75 – 77, 104.

Liao, Y. (2004). On the Forms and Decorative Art of Henan Tang Sancai (Part I). *Collectors' World*, (06), 20 – 23.

This article introduces the stylistic features and decorative aesthetics of Tang Sancai vessels from the Henan region. It highlights the individualized and varied forms of major vessel types. In response to the growing demands of international trade, artisans also developed new forms and decorative styles with foreign influences, reflecting the cosmopolitan spirit of the Tang dynasty.

Liao, Y. (2004). On the Forms and Decorative Art of Henan Tang Sancai (Part II). *Collectors' World*, (07), 68 – 71.

This article focuses on the artistic expression and achievements of figurines, dividing them into two main categories: human and animal Figures. Common types include male and female attendants, scribes, warriors, heavenly kings, musicians, equestrians, and mythical creatures. Among animal Figures, horses are considered the most successful, followed by camels and tomb-guardian beasts.

Han, J. (2024). The Discovery, Categories, and Formal Characteristics of Luoyang Tang Sancai. *Antique Identification and Appreciation*, (08), 150 – 153. doi:10.20005/j.cnki.issn.1674-8697.2024.08.037.

This article provides an overview of the various types and formal features of Tang Sancai unearthed in Luoyang, including figurines, architectural models, household items, and small Sancai sculptures.

Li, Y. (2011). A Preliminary Analysis of Tang Sancai's Technical Features and Their Reflections of Tang Social Life. [Master's Thesis, Minzu University of China].

This thesis explores how the production techniques of Tang Sancai reflect Tang society's worldview, including its aesthetic ideals, romantic realism, religious beliefs, and exotic cultural elements.

Lin, S. (2016). "Tang Sancai and Cultural Exchange on the Silk Road." *Archives*, (08), 47 – 51.

The article argues that Tang Sancai both inherited China's rich ceramic traditions and absorbed foreign artistic elements through Silk Road exchanges, thereby establishing a distinctive sculptural style during the Tang dynasty.

Ye, Z. (2022). A Study on the Artistic Application of Tang Sancai under Han-Hu Cultural Integration. [Master's Thesis, Jingdezhen Ceramic University].

This research analyzes the historical progression of Han-Hu cultural fusion and explores how this integration is reflected in the iconography and themes of Tang Sancai art.

Xu, Y. (2017). "Media Competition: Tang Sancai and the Tang Dynasty Funerary System." *Studies in Ancient Tomb Art*, (00), 229 – 241.

This article observes the role of Tang Sancai within the funerary system of the Tang dynasty, discussing how it coexisted with tomb architecture, murals, and other grave goods to form a comprehensive funerary aesthetic.

Cheng, Y. (2020). "A Tentative Study on the Relationship Between Silk Road Figurines and Funerary Customs in the Tang Dynasty, Taking the Two Capitals as

Examples.” *Journal of Weinan Normal University*, 35(04), 78 – 85.
doi:10.15924/j.cnki.1009-5128.2020.04.013.

This paper compiles data on hu figurines (depictions of Central Asians) from different periods of the Tang dynasty, analyzing their numbers, dimensions, and styles in combination with funerary customs and Sancai traditions. The study reveals a shift in burial practices and beliefs during the mid-to-late Tang period.

2.2.3 Research on Innovation in Modern Sancai Art

With the advancement of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) policies and the rapid growth of the cultural and creative industries, modern Sancai art has gradually moved beyond antique-style reproduction toward interdisciplinary integration and contemporary expression. A number of scholars have begun to explore the interaction between Sancai art and cultural tourism, public art, and art education. Notable examples include the contemporary reinterpretation efforts led by Guo Aihe's Sancai Yi studio, as well as initiatives in talent cultivation at institutions such as Luoyang Normal University.

However, most current studies on modern Sancai art are limited to policy reports, journalistic coverage, or case analyses within design fields. There remains a lack of systematic theoretical construction, particularly concerning how modern Sancai navigates the complex terrain of technological innovation, social mechanisms, and identity politics to achieve cultural reproduction. This research seeks to address that gap by systematically exploring the transitional logic and cultural mechanisms of Sancai art across historical phases.

Li, N. (2017). *Research on Artistic Innovation in Luoyang Sancai during the New Period*. [Master's Thesis, Kunming University of Science and Technology].

This thesis examines the theoretical dimensions of Luoyang Sancai in the contemporary era, including its historical lineage and the formation of its modern style. Through comparative case studies, it identifies innovations in both content and form.

Zhang, L. (2024). *Innovation and Development of Luoyang Sancai*. *Jingdezhen Ceramics*, (02), 100 – 102.

Based on preliminary research into the historical context, production techniques, and aesthetic values of Sancai, this article discusses the formation and expression of its regional characteristics. It highlights the relationship between Sancai artworks and the city of Luoyang, proposing a forward-looking perspective on modern Sancai art and its potential to enhance regional cultural industries and competitiveness, while ensuring the long-term transmission of its craft heritage.

Meng, S. (2008). *Tradition and Transformation: A Study of Sancai Glazed Tile Mural Art*. [Master's Thesis, China Academy of Art].

Focusing on the developmental trajectory of Sancai tile murals, this study analyzes the artistic patterns of the medium and summarizes its aesthetic and artistic values. It emphasizes the importance of aligning with current trends in aesthetic consumption to rejuvenate the art form in contemporary contexts.

Lei, Y. (2017). *A Study on the Survival and Development of Tang Sancai Crafts in Nanshishan, Luoyang*. [Master's Thesis, Yunnan University].

This thesis takes Tang Sancai craft production in Nanshishan, Luoyang as its case study, examining internal competition within the industry, market development potential, and heritage protection. It offers a multi-perspective analysis of the challenges and future directions for industrial development.

Duan, J & Li, C. (2024). An Analysis of the Aesthetic Characteristics of Color in Luoyang Sancai Art. *Art Appreciation*, (08), 21 – 24.

This article outlines four major aesthetic features of color in Luoyang Sancai Art: richness and variety, brightness and brilliance, clarity and purity, and dynamic transformation. These distinctive visual qualities not only meet contemporary aesthetic demands and reinforce the perceived value of the art form, but also provide a source of deep psychological and cultural satisfaction for consumers.

2.3 Research on Cultural Anthropology

In exploring the historical evolution and contemporary transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art, cultural anthropology provides essential theoretical perspectives and analytical tools. As a discipline dedicated to understanding how culture is

constructed, transmitted, and reproduced, cultural anthropology emphasizes not only the material dimensions of culture but also the underlying social structures, value systems, and identity formations. In recent years, growing scholarly interest in themes such as “craft culture,” “intangible cultural heritage,” and “local identity” has led to increased engagement by anthropologists with ceramic arts and traditional crafts, thereby expanding the scope of interpretation beyond art history and the history of technology.

Carol R. Ember & Melvin Ember. (2021). *Cultural Anthropology*. Beijing: Commercial Press.

This book introduces cultural anthropology in a comprehensive manner, emphasizing how anthropologists explore cultural change and continuity across diverse societies. It covers areas such as language, gender, kinship, religion, and art, offering both empirical descriptions and theoretical reflections. The work presents cultural anthropology not as abstract knowledge about “the other,” but as a means of understanding the self and engaging with different cultures.

Lin, H. (2011). *Cultural Anthropology*. Beijing: Commercial Press.

A general introduction to the definitions, objectives, and subfields of anthropology, as well as its relationship with other disciplines. The book includes detailed discussions of primitive material culture, social organization, religion, art, and language, making it a valuable resource for understanding the origins and evolution of human culture. Lin emphasizes anthropology’s dual goals: reconstructing human history and uncovering cultural principles.

Tylor, E. B. (1871). *Primitive culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art, and custom* (Vols. 1 – 2). London: John Murray.

Tylor defines culture as a complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and other capabilities acquired by individuals in society. He proposes that different cultural stages represent sequential developments, with each stage building upon the previous and influencing the course of future history.

Nanda, S. (1994). *Cultural anthropology* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

The author asserts that culture is unique to human society and that human existence is both shaped by and generative of culture. Culture is described as an adaptive system that is fundamental to human survival and development.

Benedict, R. (1934). *Patterns of culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Benedict argues that culture, or national character, develops uniquely within each ethnic group, tribe, or community. Each culture has its own historical trajectory and is expressed through distinctive behavioral and symbolic forms.

Liao, M & Qiu, C. (2010). "The Modern Transformation of Chinese Traditional Handicrafts: An Interview with Dr. Qiu Chunlin." *Ethnic Art*, (02): 17 – 24+34.

This article notes that while traditional artisans may not have articulated a notion of "technical rights," they were highly conscious of protecting their livelihoods. The revitalization of craft in recent years is attributed both to ICH preservation initiatives and to the market economy.

Qiu, C. (2009). *Design and Culture*. Chongqing: Chongqing University Press.

Focuses on the traditional Chinese context of design art, discussing aesthetic concepts from the pre-Qin to Qing dynasties, the relationship between design creativity and cultural environments, and the cultural forces behind design principles and techniques.

Fei, X & Fang, L. (2000). "Humanistic Reflections on the Western Development Campaign." *Ethnic Art*, (03): 019.

This article addresses the impact of economic development on traditional culture and arts, arguing that preservation efforts must strike a balance: cultural forms should not remain stagnant, nor should they be distorted or erased by the forces of economic globalization and cultural homogenization.

2.4 Summary

Existing literature demonstrates that scholarly research on Chinese ceramics and Tang Sancai has yielded rich results, covering historical development, technical evolution, aesthetic features, and international transmission. These studies provide a solid foundation for understanding Luoyang Sancai Art. However, most research on Luoyang Sancai focuses on its historical origins, traditional techniques, and iconographic characteristics, with limited exploration of its dynamic evolution, institutional transformation, and pathways of contemporary expression as a regionally rooted ceramic culture system.

Particularly lacking is a systematic theoretical framework to explain how Sancai art integrates with intangible cultural heritage policies, cultural tourism, artistic innovation, and digital technologies to achieve “cultural reproduction” through multidimensional collaboration. Although cultural anthropology offers critical theoretical tools, such as “cultural adaptation,” “cultural translation,” and “revitalization of tradition”, in-depth ethnographic studies of Luoyang Sancai Art remain scarce. There is also insufficient analysis of its role as an interface between material culture, local identity, and institutional mechanisms.

This study thus adopts an interdisciplinary approach combining cultural anthropology and ceramic art history. It focuses on the transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art from tradition to modernity, aiming to systematically map its mechanisms of change and the logic of multidimensional coordination. By doing so, the research seeks to enrich current academic discourse and broaden the analytical perspectives on the modern transformation of intangible craft heritage, offering both theoretical insight and practical significance.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter aims to articulate the research methods and scope adopted in this study to investigate the transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art from traditional to modern forms. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional mechanisms of transformation encompassing technical evolution, artistic language, cultural meaning, social function, and economic value, this study adopts a primarily qualitative methodological framework, supplemented by a range of empirical tools to enhance both depth and interpretative strength.

3.1 Research Methodology

This study primarily employs qualitative research methods, including literature review, field investigation, in-depth interviews, and case study analysis. These methods are designed to facilitate a holistic analysis of the historical development, transformation, and influencing factors of Luoyang Sancai Art.

3.1.1 Literature Review Method

A broad range of sources, including scholarly books, journals, academic papers, and news reports on Luoyang Sancai Art, are collected and reviewed to gain an in-depth understanding of the concept and historical development of Sancai. Simultaneously, relevant literature in cultural anthropology is studied to provide a theoretical foundation for this research. The collected materials are systematically categorized, analyzed, and synthesized to identify the current state of research and to trace the transformation from traditional to modern Sancai art, thus laying a foundation for this study.

3.1.2 Field Research Method

Focusing on the transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art from its traditional forms to modern expressions, this study adopts a fieldwork-based research methodology. Through site visits to relevant institutions, workshops, and exhibition venues in the Luoyang region, first-hand data were collected concerning the processes

of craftsmanship, exhibition practices, and market dissemination. The fieldwork covers a range of entities, including museums and exhibition institutions, educational and research organizations, as well as public cultural spaces and industry clusters. This multi-dimensional investigation provides a comprehensive view of the current state of Luoyang Sancai Art in terms of heritage transmission, creative innovation, knowledge construction, and industrial transformation. By examining these diverse aspects, the study aims to uncover the dynamic mechanisms of transition between tradition and modernity, thereby offering practical support for analyzing the systemic evolution and cultural value reconstruction of Luoyang Sancai Art.

3.1.3 In-depth Interviews

In order to comprehensively understand the mechanisms of changes in Luoyang Sancai Art from traditional to modern forms, this study emphasizes the inclusion of key participants from different categories and roles in the selection of interviewees, ensuring the richness, systematicity, and representativeness of the data. In-depth interviews were conducted with craft inheritors, Sancai artists, expert scholars, museum curators, and craft practitioners, focusing on their real perspectives and practical experiences concerning craftsmanship transmission, creative philosophy, market changes, and cultural identity, thereby enriching the sociocultural dimension of the research.

(1) Craft Inheritors

Priority was given to craft inheritors who are representative and influential in the field of Luoyang Sancai Art and related areas, including those recognized as national, provincial, or municipal intangible cultural heritage bearers, or those who have made significant contributions to the revival and innovation of traditional techniques. The selection covers inheritors from different stylistic traditions such as Tang Sancai, Luoyang Sancai Ceramic Painting, and Luoyang Sancai Murals Painting.

(2) Expert Scholars

Selected interviewees include university professors and researchers engaged in the study of ceramic art, the protection of traditional crafts, and the theory of

intangible cultural heritage transmission. Interviewees are required to possess academic backgrounds and research achievements relevant to the field and to be able to provide in-depth theoretical interpretations and evaluations of the changes in Luoyang Sancai Art.

(3) Museum Staff

Interviewees were selected from major museums in Luoyang, such as the Chinese Tang Sancai Museum, the Luoyang Museum, and the Luoyang Sancai Art Museum. Priority was given to those involved in collection management, exhibition planning, public education, and research promotion, ensuring a deep understanding of the collections and providing first-hand information and professional insights.

(4) Career Craftsmen

Interviewees include front-line craftsmen engaged in the production and creation of Sancai art in Luoyang and surrounding regions, with a particular focus on those working in private workshops and cultural creative enterprises. The aim was to understand the status of craftsmanship transmission at the grassroots level and to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by traditional crafts in contemporary society.

3.1.4 Case Study Method

This study selects representative works of Luoyang Sancai Art and conducts a systematic analysis focusing on their modeling styles, glaze techniques, cultural connotations, and contemporary modes of expression, aiming to reveal the core mechanisms and value transformation pathways in the evolution of Luoyang Sancai Art. To ensure the representativeness of the cases and the systematic nature of the research, fifty typical Sancai works were selected from museum collections, and an additional thirty contemporary Sancai works were collected from art markets and exhibitions in Luoyang and surrounding regions. The selection criteria for the works include:

(1) historical significance and representativeness, prioritizing pieces that reflect the craftsmanship, aesthetic styles, and cultural backgrounds of different historical periods.

(2) technological and artistic achievements, emphasizing works that demonstrate outstanding performance in modeling, glaze application, and technological innovation, representing a certain level of technical and artistic excellence.

(3) social and cultural influence, selecting works that have won national-level awards (such as works by National Arts and Crafts Masters), been widely reported by authoritative media, or gained broad recognition in academic and public spheres.

(4) accessibility and completeness of documentation, ensuring that each work has clear records of provenance, production date, and artist background, facilitating subsequent systematic analysis and comparative study.

3.2 Study Scope

This study centers on Luoyang Sancai Art, focusing on its place of origin in Luoyang, Henan Province. Through close examination of museums, ICH workshops, art institutions, and local cultural spaces, it systematically investigates the transformation from traditional craft to modern art. The research covers changes in technique, form, aesthetics, cultural symbolism, and social function, spanning from early manifestations in the Han and Tang dynasties to contemporary innovations and digital expression. By employing representative case sampling and in-depth regional research, this study presents Luoyang Sancai Art as a cultural model for exploring the modern transformation of traditional Chinese crafts.

3.2.1 Study Location

This study focuses on Luoyang City in Henan Province, China, the birthplace and core transmission area of Luoyang Sancai Art. As a significant site in the history of Chinese ceramics, Luoyang possesses abundant historical heritage and rich resources in Sancai craftsmanship. The research centers on the following key locations:

(1) Museums and Specialized Exhibition Institutions: including the Luoyang Museum and the Luoyang Sancai Museum. These institutions serve as central

platforms for exhibiting both traditional and modern forms of Sancai art. With extensive collections, thematic exhibitions, and scholarly interpretive materials, they provide essential primary sources for analyzing the evolution of Luoyang Sancai Art.

(2) Educational and Academic Research Institutions: such as Luoyang Normal University. Its School of Art and Design has long been committed to the teaching and research of Sancai art and serves as an important base for cultivating innovation-oriented talent in modern Sancai practices.

(3) Public Cultural Spaces and Creative Practice Sites: including the Sui-Tang Dynasties Grand Canal Cultural Museum in Luoyang, Luoyang Metro and Railway Stations, as well as Nanshishan Sancai Town and Ai He Town in Luoning County. These sites represent the contemporary application of Sancai art in urban cultural communication, public art, and rural revitalization. They constitute vital platforms for the social value transformation and innovative expression of Luoyang Sancai Art in the modern era.

3.2.2 Study Content

This study systematically maps the overall transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art from tradition to modernity, focusing on the following core aspects:

(1) Technical and Craft Evolution: Includes changes in firing methods (wood-fired kilns, electric kilns), low-temperature lead-glaze formulation, and glaze fluidity.

(2) Form and Decorative Characteristics: Traces the formal shift from traditional mingqi, figurines, and vessels to contemporary art installations and cultural creative products.

(3) Aesthetic Values and Symbol Systems: Examines the transformation and continuity of color language and cultural symbols (e.g., camels, Central Asian Figures, lotus flowers) across historical periods.

(4) Social Functions and Dissemination Mechanisms: Explores the evolution of Sancai from ritual symbols in funerary contexts to diverse roles in cultural tourism, art education, and the creative industries.

Through fieldwork and case studies, this research analyzes how Sancai Art engages with craftsmanship inheritance, contemporary transformation, and mechanisms of cultural reproduction.

3.2.3 Time Frame

The temporal framework of this study is divided into two main stages: the traditional stage and the modern stage.

Traditional Stage: Spanning from the Han dynasty to the Ming and Qing dynasties, this phase focuses on the evolution of Luoyang Sancai Art from its early forms of low-fired lead-glazed ceramics to the flourishing Tang Sancai system, and the continuation and transformation of techniques during the Song, Ming, and Qing periods. It examines the development of techniques, cultural roles, and aesthetic transformations.

Modern Stage: Ranging from the mid-20th century to the present, this phase addresses the revival of antique reproduction, industrial development, and contemporary reinterpretation of Sancai art after the founding of the People's Republic of China. By systematically analyzing these two phases, this study aims to reveal both the continuity and innovation in the historical trajectory of Luoyang Sancai Art, and to identify the cultural reproduction and sustainable development strategies it has adopted in the context of contemporary China.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter, based on an integrated review of literature, fieldwork, case analyses, and in-depth interviews, systematically presents the transformation path and cultural logic of Luoyang Sancai Art from its traditional to modern forms. By tracing its historical trajectory and technical evolution, this study conducts a multidimensional analysis across five perspectives: technology, art, culture, society, and economy. It examines how traditional Sancai art gradually developed a distinctive system within its historical and cultural context and how it has been transformed and reinvented in contemporary society through new technologies, mechanisms, and ideas.

Through a structurally multidimensional investigation, this chapter reveals the internal tensions and evolutionary logic underlying the transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art, highlighting both its continuity as intangible cultural heritage and its dynamic adaptability to contemporary developments. The findings presented here provide an empirical foundation for subsequent discussions on the multidimensional coordination mechanisms and modern development strategies of Sancai art.

4.1 Historical Development of Luoyang Sancai Art

The technical origins of Sancai art stem from the long-term development and technological breakthroughs of ceramic craftsmanship, while its cultural foundation is deeply rooted in the open and pluralistic social and cultural milieu of the Tang dynasty. The transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art from traditional to modern forms can be traced through several developmental stages, including emergence, prosperity, decline, reappearance, revival, and contemporary innovation.

Its developmental trajectory has been shaped not only by historical and cultural contexts but also by technological evolution, aesthetic shifts, and changing societal needs. As Edward Burnett Tylor posits, the various stages of culture can be understood as different phases of development or evolution, with each stage being the product of its

predecessor and playing a significant role in shaping the course of future historical processes (Tylor, 1987).

Table 1 Development Stages of Luoyang Sancai Art

Type	Stage	Characteristics	Sample image
Development Stages of Traditional Sancai Art	Emergence and Exploration Stage (Han Dynasty, Northern and Southern Dynasties)	Early lead-glazed pottery with limited colors, primarily yellow and green glaze	
	Prosperity and Peak Stage (Tang Dynasty)	Mainly used as burial objects, vibrant Sancai glaze, exquisite craftsmanship	
	Decline and Transformation Stage (Song, Ming, and Qing Dynasties)	Transition from burial objects to daily-use ceramics, emergence in architectural	
	Reappearance and Restoration Stage (Early 20th Century)	Archaeological discoveries promoted Sancai research, artisans restored Sancai production	
Development Stages of Modern Sancai Art	Initial Revival and Antique Reproduction Stage (1950s to 1980s)	Government-led restoration, antique reproductions, industry formation	
	Breaking Tradition and Modern Innovation Stage (1980s to Present)	Technological advancements, artistic innovation, cultural applications	

4.1.1 The Development of Traditional Sancai Art

The traditional Luoyang Sancai Art discussed in this study encompasses its evolution from the Han dynasty through to the Ming and Qing dynasties. This trajectory includes the development of ceramic technology, aesthetic transformations, and shifts in cultural function, all of which laid a foundational basis for the innovation of modern Sancai art. During this period, Luoyang Sancai evolved from early lead-glazed ceramics into a mature low-fired lead-glaze decorative art form, gradually forming a distinctive glaze palette and stylistic tradition.

4.1.1.1 Emergence and Exploration Stage (Han Dynasty and Northern and Southern Dynasties)

The earliest form of Luoyang Sancai can be traced to low-fired lead-glazed ceramics of the Han dynasty, which were widely distributed throughout the Yellow River basin and are also referred to as “Northern glazed pottery”(Guo, 2012). These early Han Sancai wares typically used ordinary clay bodies, yielding a reddish-brown surface. The primary colorants were copper and iron, fired in an oxidizing atmosphere.

Han dynasty lead-glazed ceramics were predominantly rendered in green and yellow glazes. Among these, green-glazed pottery is often referred to as “Han Green Glaze,” while yellow-glazed pottery is termed “Han Yellow Glaze” (Z. E. C. Museum, 2023). Most examples feature single-color glazes, with rare instances of multicolored glazing. On the few pieces where green, yellow, and brown glazes appear simultaneously, they are applied as linear or spotted patterns, which are extremely rare and valued for their aesthetic uniqueness (Guo, 2012).

The firing temperature during this period generally ranged between 700 and 800°C, resulting in relatively soft ceramic bodies with high water absorption. Due to these characteristics, such wares were primarily used as mingqi, which were funerary objects intended for burial rather than daily use. Another notable feature of Han ceramic production was the diversification of vessel types (Wang, 2014). Typical forms included ritual objects modeled after bronze vessels, such as ding, zhong, and hu, along with a significant number of human figurines and animal sculptures such as

chickens, dogs, and pigs. There were also miniature architectural models representing granaries, wells, stoves, mills, workshops, and towers, offering vivid portrayals of everyday life.

In terms of technique, Han Sancai ceramics were produced using wheel-throwing, molding, and hand-building methods. Overall craftsmanship was relatively coarse, with an emphasis on capturing the general silhouette and spirit of the object rather than intricate detailing. While not refined in terms of minute workmanship, the overall compositions were lively and expressive, characterized by natural, flowing lines. These works demonstrated strong formal abstraction and artistic vitality, highlighting the early aesthetic of Sancai art as concise yet dynamic in form (Gao Xiongfei, personal communication, October 18, 2024).



Figure 5 Western Han glazed pottery cup

Source: Century Collection. (Mar.28, 2017). Glazed pottery Han Sancai - the earliest "Sancai" in China

Retrieved from https://www.sohu.com/a/130744804_568377

The invention and development of lead-glaze technology during the Han dynasty holds considerable significance in the history of Chinese ceramics. It broke the previous monotony of glaze colors in pottery and marked a bold innovation in glaze decoration by Han ceramic masters, representing an artistic elevation of both aesthetic quality and stylistic form. The multicolored lead-glazed wares of the Han dynasty exhibit a clear lineage to the later Tang Sancai tradition (Chen, 2005).

The Sancai of the Northern and Southern Dynasties represents a transitional phase between Han Sancai and Tang Sancai. Compared to the Han dynasty, it became increasingly common to apply multiple colors, particularly yellow, green, and brown, on the same piece (Guo, 2012)Gu. During the Northern Dynasties, the rise of the porcelain industry led to the replacement of ordinary clay with kaolin for producing low-fired lead-glazed vessels. This gradual technological advancement eventually culminated in the fully developed artistic genre of Tang Sancai in the Tang dynasty (Chen, 2005). During this period, the clay body transitioned to porcelain clay, which was first biscuit-fired at approximately 1100°C, followed by a second glaze firing, a process that would become standard practice in Tang Sancai production.

Although Sancai wares of the Northern and Southern Dynasties had not yet achieved the artistic peak of glaze thickness, fluidity, and chromatic brilliance that characterized the Tang period, the foundational techniques for multicolor glazing had begun to emerge. In terms of glaze application, artisans started experimenting with layered and combined use of yellow, green, and brown. Some pieces featured decorative green accents or triple-color compositions on a yellow-white base, resulting in richer and more ornamental effects. The glaze surfaces gradually acquired a smoother, glossier, and more translucent quality, laying both the material and technical groundwork for the opulent glaze aesthetics of High Tang.

As a precursor to Tang Sancai, the Sancai of the Northern and Southern Dynasties played a pivotal role in bridging past traditions and future innovations, contributing to the overall maturation of Chinese ceramic art (Gao Xiongfei, personal communication, October 18, 2024). Representative artifacts from this period,

such as Sancai jars with white porcelain bodies, exhibit standardized forms and strong decorative appeal. These works already embody stylistic prototypes of Tang Sancai, foreshadowing the artistic brilliance that Sancai art would later attain.



Figure 6 Northern Qi Sancai Four Eared Pot

Source: Collection House. (Dec.04, 2022). Appreciation of Ceramics in the Northern and Southern Dynasties

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/agEfHt77tLX4COqlQR7-Ig>

4.1.1.2 Period of Flourishing (Tang Dynasty)

The development of Sancai art during the Tang dynasty marks the first peak in the history of Luoyang Sancai Art. Luo Zhenyu noted that most of the unearthed objects were from the Tang Dynasty, with only occasional finds from the Six Dynasties and the Han period. Many of these ancient funerary items were transported overseas by Western merchants. This marked the beginning of the discovery of ancient mingqi (Luo, 2003). Its prosperity was deeply rooted in the material affluence and cultural confidence of the High Tang period. With the rapid advancement of agriculture and handicrafts, the prevalence of lavish burial customs, and the flourishing of the Silk

Road, Sancai techniques quickly gained popularity among the royal family and aristocracy, becoming essential burial mingqi. Overall, Tang Sancai functioned not only as mortuary wares but also as material symbols and artistic crystallizations of Tang civilization. Its technical sophistication and aesthetic expression represented a zenith in ancient Chinese ceramic art and laid a solid foundation for the future development of Sancai traditions. The rise, evolution, and eventual decline of Tang Sancai paralleled the broader political and economic fortunes of the Tang dynasty. Especially during the High Tang, these works vividly and directly reflected the affluence of the period, conveying an impression of grand elegance and imperial splendor (Yang, 1992).

On the technical level, Tang Sancai employed low-fired lead glazes and a two-stage firing process. The glazes are smooth and translucent, and the palette, originally limited to yellow, green, and white, expanded into a more diverse range of superimposed glazes, yielding rich and varied effects. The primary component of Tang Sancai glaze was lead silicate, with the glaze composed mainly of quartz, lead oxide, and metal oxides for coloration (Chen, 2007). In the Tang dynasty, a cosmopolitan aesthetic that favored a synthesis of Eastern and Western elements became prevalent, and the simultaneous application of multiple glaze colors on ceramics mirrored this aesthetic transition toward complexity and visual richness (Gao, 2015). Artisans employed decorative techniques such as dripping glaze (点釉, dianyou), flowing glaze (huiyou), and applied relief (duitie), in combination with improved kiln technologies and refined glaze formulations. These advancements enabled the creation of flowing, gradient glaze effects that were both dynamic and aesthetically striking.

Artistically, Tang Sancai is known for its broad array of forms, including human and animal figurines, vessels, and architectural models. Among these, the most iconic are Figures of horses, camels, Central Asians, and court ladies. These lifelike representations reflect a vibrant picture of cross-cultural interaction in Tang society. The forms are full-bodied and the colors are bright and harmonious, epitomizing the openness, inclusivity, and grandeur of High Tang culture. Formally, Tang Sancai

works can be categorized into human Figures, animal Figures, daily utensils, and mold-based objects.

(1) Human Figures

Large-scale human Figures include civil official figurines, warrior figurines, heavenly kings (tianwang), as well as hybrid human-animal guardians and tomb-protector beasts. Medium and small Figures include standing, seated, equestrian, Central Asian, and playful figurines. Among the most common types are the court lady (shinv) and warrior figurines: the former typically appear plump and graceful, while the latter are characterized by muscular physiques and fierce facial expressions.

Particularly noteworthy are figurines of camel-mounted musicians, which are often excavated from the tombs of high-ranking nobles and officials. These works are usually quite large, with some measuring 70 to 80 cm and others exceeding one meter in height. Their naturalistic gestures, such as uplifted arms and raised legs, seem to freeze a moment of dynamic movement, vividly capturing the spirit and vitality of the Tang era. These figurines allow the viewer to glimpse the celebratory grandeur and magnificent ethos of a civilization at its zenith (Xu, 2003).

Table 2 Typology of Figurative Human Sculptures in Tang Sancai Art

Standing Figurine	Seated Figurine	Equestrian Figurine	Court Lady Figurine	Warrior Figurine	Civil Official Figurine
立俑	坐俑	骑马俑	仕女俑	武士俑	文官俑
					

The sculpting of Sancai male figurines embodies distinct characteristics of the Tang era. Civil official figurines are typically depicted as gentle and composed, while warrior figurines appear resolute and imposing. Their representations are remarkably realistic, with vivid expressions and nuanced emotional portrayals. The captured moment in each figurine's posture conveys, with striking clarity, the individual's social status, personality traits, and inner sentiments. These works are imbued with a sense of vitality and spirit, rendering the Figures lifelike and compelling.



Figure 7 Sancai figurines of civil and military officials unearthed in Luoyang

Source: photographed by the Author

The depiction of female attendants in Luoyang Sancai Art is exquisitely lifelike. Characterized by high coiffures and long flowing skirts, these Figures possess full, rounded facial features and graceful, dignified expressions. Their curvaceous forms exhibit dynamic variation, embodying the opulence, diversity, and vitality of a flourishing era. These artistic features vividly reflect the Tang dynasty's cultural ideals of beauty and elegance, showcasing the distinctive spirit of openness and fashion-forward sensibilities embraced by Tang women during this period.



Figure 8 Sancai maid hair bun picture

Source: photographed by the Author

The Tang Dynasty was one of the most prosperous periods in Chinese history. With a wealthy nation and a strong populace, people developed more ideas for leisure and entertainment. Sancai ware from the Tang period vividly and realistically portrayed the indulgent lifestyle of the aristocracy through skillful craftsmanship and brilliant, harmonious colors (Li & Wang, 1997). Figures such as court ladies, horse riders, and dancers depicted in Sancai works reflect the daily life of the noble class, illustrating the features of women's clothing, makeup, and aristocratic leisure activities such as polo and music-dance performances. The sport of polo appeared in various artistic forms during the Tang Dynasty, and it was particularly represented in Tang Sancai ceramics.

Table 3 Polo-Themed Artworks in the Tang Dynasty

Tang Dynasty Polo Mural	Bronze Mirror with Polo Scene	Female Attendant Playing Polo Figurine	Central Asian Polo Player Figurine
唐代打马球壁画	打马球铜镜	打马球女俑	胡人打马球俑
			

The cosmopolitan environment of the Tang dynasty, particularly the cultural exchanges facilitated by the Silk Road, enabled Sancai art to absorb artistic influences from Central Asia, West Asia, and even more distant regions. As an international metropolis, Luoyang attracted merchants and cultural emissaries from various countries, and Sancai wares became important commodities in transnational trade. Tang Sancai was not only highly favored within China, but also exported through the Silk Road to regions such as Central Asia, West Asia, and East Asia, becoming a symbolic medium of cross-cultural interaction.

The raw materials, production techniques, and aesthetic styles of Tang Sancai were all, to varying degrees, influenced by the cultural interplay between Han Chinese and non-Han (Hu) peoples. These interactions left distinct marks of ethnic and cultural exchange on the art form (Ye, 2022). Figures of "Hu people" frequently appear in Sancai figurines, reflecting the Tang Dynasty's openness to the Western Regions and the flourishing trade and cultural exchanges characteristic of the era (Liao, 2004b).



Figure 9 Sancai Hu hat leading horse figurine

Source: Collection House. (Dec.21, 2024). The Tang Dynasty cultural relics collected by Luoyang Museum were unveiled at the Jimei National Museum of Asian Art in France

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/nmZxfoxBOeN66wMm4bjSDg>

(2) Animal Sculptures (Including Birds and Beasts)

Among the excavated Tang Sancai artifacts, animal figurines, particularly horses and camels, are the most prevalent, a phenomenon closely tied to the historical and societal context of the time (Li, 2011). These two animals stand out prominently among all animal representations in Sancai sculpture. Their frequent appearance in Tang Sancai is consistent with the broader patterns of social and economic development during the Tang dynasty, especially the flourishing of transportation and trade networks.

As recorded in the New Book of Tang (Xin Tang Shu), “The horse is the foundation of a nation's military strength; without it, the nation is imperiled.” This statement highlights the critical importance the Tang people attached to horses.

Horse figurines are typically depicted with robust bodies, broad necks, and rounded haunches, while camel figurines often exhibit muscular legs and are shown with uplifted heads and open mouths, as if braying.

Due to their large size and complex structure, Tang Sancai horses could not be formed using traditional wheel-throwing techniques. Instead, they were typically created using mold-forming methods. Although mold-based, each Sancai horse is unique in posture, detail, and expression, making it rare to find two exactly alike. This diversity suggests that Tang artisans possessed not only an in-depth familiarity with the physical characteristics of horses but also a profound understanding of their temperament and behavior (Gao Shuiwang, personal communication, November 18, 2024). As a result, the sculpting of horse figurines was both confident and refined.

Based on stylistic features, Tang Sancai horse figurines can generally be classified into five categories: Standing Horse Figurines, Raised-Leg Horse Figurines, Equestrian Figurines (Horse with Rider), Galloping Horse Figurines, Cart-Pulling Horse Figurines.

These sculptural forms not only demonstrate the artistic mastery of Tang ceramicists but also reflect the symbolic and functional significance of animals, especially horses and camels, in the broader social, military, and economic fabric of the Tang dynasty.

Table 4 Different Forms of Tang Sancai Horse Figurines

Standing Horse Figurine	Equestrian Figurine	Figurines, Equestrian Figurine	Galloping Horse Figurine	Cart-Pulling Horse Figurine
立马俑	马上人俑	提腿马俑	奔马俑	马拉车俑
				

Among the treasured collections of the Luoyang Museum is a remarkable Tang Sancai black-glazed horse figurine, measuring 73 cm in height and 84 cm in length. The horse stands firmly on all four legs, with a robust physique and a vivid, lifelike expression. Its entire body is coated in a lustrous black glaze, with the face, mane, tail, and hooves rendered in white. Ochre-yellow floral spots are interspersed across the surface, creating striking contrasts. The saddle and saddle blanket are decorated in alternating bands of green, yellow, and white, while the back is adorned with a brown-glazed leather pad. Fifteen relief ornaments hang from the harness, enhancing its ornate appearance.

The overall form is full and powerful, and the decorative elements are rich and visually compelling. The figurine has been acclaimed as an artistic embodiment of the phrase “a dragon-blood steed, its hooves treading snow,” representing one of the finest examples of Tang Sancai horse sculptures. It exemplifies the perfect synthesis of strength and beauty, and stands as a masterpiece within the canon of Luoyang Sancai Art.



Figure 10 Black glazed horse

Source: photographed by the Author

The blue-glazed Tang Sancai horse with white spots, unearthed in 1956 from a Tang dynasty tomb at Guanlin, Luoyang, is an exceptionally rare example of blue-glazed Tang Sancai. It is also the only blue-glazed horse currently held in the collection of the Luoyang Museum. This artifact is a highly representative piece from the High Tang period, embodying through its two key elements, blue glaze and horse, the prosperity of the political and economic landscape during the reign of Empress Wu Zetian.

The value of blue-glazed Tang Sancai lies not only in its artistic merit but also in the rarity of its materials and the sophistication of its craftsmanship (Mao, 2024). Blue glaze was extremely scarce during the Tang dynasty; the cobalt-based pigments required to produce it were imported through the Silk Road's trade networks, eventually arriving in Luoyang where the piece was then fired. Its unique coloration and technical difficulty render it a precious example within the tradition of Luoyang Sancai Art.



Figure 11 Blue glazed white spot Sancai horse

Source: July. (Jun.13, 2019). Have you ever seen a blue glazed horse and mule?

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/mJfwLbz2TLy2tV0FKfnPyw>

Among the mingqi unearthed from Tang dynasty tombs, Sancai camel figurines are particularly abundant, with the greatest concentration dating to the High Tang period. This reflects the flourishing of east-west transportation and the expansion of foreign trade during that era (Xu, 2003). These Sancai camel Figures vividly represent the prosperity of the Silk Road and the vibrancy of international commerce during the Tang dynasty. Camels, as essential transportation animals, were frequently sculpted in motion, bearing loads of goods such as baggage, silk, and ceramics, visually emphasizing their critical role in facilitating Sino-foreign exchange.

A representative example is a Sancai camel excavated in 1981 from the tomb of An Pu and his wife near Longmen. Measuring 88 cm in height and 76 cm in length, the camel is depicted braying with its head raised high. Draped between its humps is a Sancai floral saddle blanket alongside beast-faced cargo packs. The camel is shown carrying items such as silk fabrics, slabs of meat, and a phoenix-headed ewer, providing a realistic portrayal of Tang-era foreign trade and transport scenes. This work serves as a quintessential embodiment of Silk Road culture within the broader tradition of Luoyang Sancai Art.

In addition to camels, Sancai animal figurines also depict a variety of domesticated species such as pigs, sheep, chickens, and ducks. These subjects are rendered with a high degree of realism and stylistic diversity, demonstrating the artistic richness and expressive vitality of Luoyang Sancai Art.



Figure 12 Sancai Potcamel

Source: photographed by the Author

(3) Domestic Utensils

Among the most commonly found Sancai artifacts are objects closely related to daily life, such as dishes, basins, bowls, ewers, jars, bottles, and alms bowls. These domestic items include vessels for food and drink, writing instruments, cosmetic containers, and storage jars. As these artifacts are unearthed from burial contexts, they functioned as mingqi, serving as ritual substitutes or symbolic representations rather than utilitarian wares.

Table 5 Different Forms of Domestic Utensils in Sancai Art

Category	Object Image	Function / Use
Storage Vessels (贮盛器具)		Vessels such as zun(尊), guan(罐), and hu(壶), were typically used for the storage of liquids or solid substances.
Food and Beverage Vessels (饮食器具)		The bowl, such as the Sancai bowl, is glazed both inside and out with a white base glaze, over which white, brown, and green glazes flow freely.
		Cups, including handled cups and animal-shaped vessels such as goose or duck-form cups, were used not only for drinking wine but also for serving soups and broths.

Category	Object Image	Function / Use
		Plates served the purpose of holding or presenting food items.
Scholarly Implements (Stationery and Writing Tools (文房用品))		The Sancai tortoise-shaped inkstone (Gui yan, 龟砚) and Biyong inkstone (Biyong yan, 辟雍砚) were used for writing and painting. These items were ingeniously designed for practical use and artistic appeal.
Ritual and Religious Vessels (宗教用品)		The Sancai pagoda-shaped jar (Ta shi guan, 塔式罐) was likely used in religious rituals or as a decorative object, highlighting the symbolic and ceremonial dimensions of Luoyang Sancai Art.

(4) Architectural and Functional Models

Within Tang Sancai, there exists a distinct category of model-type artifacts that served as an integral component of tomb furnishings. The diversity of Tang Sancai models is particularly notable. In accordance with the belief in an afterlife

that mirrors earthly existence, individuals of higher social status were often buried with an array of miniature models intended to recreate the material conditions of their lives. These models were meant to provide for the deceased in the afterlife, ensuring continuity with their living experiences. The practice of including such models in tombs can be observed across multiple dynasties throughout Chinese funerary history.

As part of the broader Luoyang Sancai Art tradition, these Sancai models not only reflect the material culture and architectural styles of the Tang dynasty but also serve as symbolic representations of status, ritual, and belief in the spiritual perpetuation of worldly life.



Figure 13 Tang Sancai Courtyard Architectural Model

Source: Yachang Art Data Official. (June.11, 2022). Knowledge Encyclopedia | Treasures of Chinese Pottery: Tang Sancai

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/AZZCIBvqrxtDBMBbmf2uuw>

In traditional Sancai art, human figurines, animal figurines, daily utensils, and architectural models constitute the primary expressive forms. Among them, tomb guardian Figures (Zhenmuyong, 镇墓俑) hold a distinctive place due to their unique sculptural structure and cultural function. These Figures possess a strong visual impact and symbolic significance, embodying profound cosmological beliefs, spiritual conceptions, and protective faith. As such, they occupy an indispensable position within the overall Sancai system.

Particularly during the Tang dynasty, tomb guardian beasts were commonly used as burial accompaniments, and they played a unique role within the broader assemblage of funerary figurines (Liu, 2021). These creatures typically featured lion-like faces and were often depicted in a squatting posture. Their bodies incorporated exaggerated features from various birds of prey and wild beasts, emphasizing their intimidating presence to serve an apotropaic function. Most tomb guardian beasts excavated from Tang tombs were sculpted in squatting forms and appeared in pairs, usually placed on either side of the tomb passage or entrance. They generally fall into two types: human-faced and beast-faced guardian Figures.



Figure 14 Town Tomb Beast

Source: Jianxia. (Mar.13, 2025). Tang Sancai | Luoyang Museum

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/PYYGZh8iQSpHy4j7sud62Q>

In many tombs from the Tang dynasty, especially those belonging to high-ranking officials and nobles in the Central Plains region, Heavenly King figurines (Tianwang yong, 天王俑) have been discovered. The Heavenly Kings are guardian deities in Buddhism, originating from the spread of Buddhist beliefs; as tomb guardians, the Heavenly King figurines were regarded by the Tang people as righteous deities that ward off demons and evil spirits, symbolizing irresistible power and courage (Han, 2024). These Figures were revered by the Tang people as posthumous protectors,

believed to subdue demons, expel evil spirits, and safeguard the peace of the tomb owner (Zhang, 2019).

The figurine shown below stands at 1.26 meters tall and is currently the largest Sancai Heavenly King figurine unearthed in the Luoyang area. Its commanding posture, armored attire, and powerful stance, with one foot trampling a demon, exemplify its protective function. The fierce expression, glaring eyes, and dynamic body language are enhanced by the integration of yellow, green, and brown glazes, showcasing the bold and dramatic style characteristic of Tang-era funerary deities within the Luoyang Sancai Art tradition.



Figure 15 Tang Sancai Heavenly King Figurines

Source: SPRING. (Nov.26, 2024). Exploring the Millennium Canal and Appreciating the Splendor of the Sui and Tang Dynasties

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/XAAR1mq-DevtxmxoJUqLkEA>

4.1.1.3 Decline and Transformation Stage (Song, Ming, and Qing Dynasties)

During the Song dynasty, Sancai aesthetics underwent a notable transformation, shifting from the opulent and grandiose style of the Tang period to one characterized by elegance and restraint. This change reflected a broader shift in aesthetic values, with increasing emphasis on subtlety, quietude, and surface ornamentation (Guo, 2012). As a result, the appearance of Sancai ware in the Song

period diverged from that of the Han and Tang dynasties. The glazes became more subdued and understated, evoking a sense of depth and refined sentiment.

Technically, Song Sancai employed a variety of decorative methods, including incising, stamping, molded relief, openwork, hand-molding, and appliqué, with incised and filled color techniques being particularly distinctive. In terms of glaze palette, beyond the traditional yellow, green, white, and brown, new colors such as bright red, deep black, ochre, and the newly invented jadeite green glaze were introduced, marked by a luminous, emerald-like sheen.

Compared with Tang Sancai, Song Sancai compositions appeared more orderly and focused on the integration of craftsmanship with practical function. The primary vessel forms included pillows, dishes, bowls, and vases, often decorated with popular folk themes such as floral motifs and scenes of children at play (yingxi). The function of these wares also evolved, shifting away from purely funerary use toward more domestic and ritual applications (Gao Xiongfei, personal communication, October 18, 2024). This transformation marks a significant stage in the evolution of Luoyang Sancai Art, reflecting both aesthetic transitions and changing sociocultural functions across dynastic periods.

Table 6 Song Sancai

Song Sancai green glazed rectangular pillow	Song Sancai engraved pattern octagonal pillow	Song Sancai qin picture pillow
宋三彩绿釉长方枕	宋三彩刻花纹八方枕	宋三彩听琴图枕
		

Liao Sancai, which developed roughly contemporaneously with Song Sancai, was deeply influenced by Tang Sancai while also incorporating distinctive elements of Khitan ethnic culture, resulting in a unique regional style. Technically, it continued the use of low-fired polychrome glaze characteristic of Tang Sancai, but its color palette was more limited, primarily featuring yellow, green, and white, thus exhibiting a greater degree of chromatic simplicity compared to its Tang predecessor.

In terms of function, Liao Sancai was primarily used in daily life and Buddhist statuary, rather than for funerary purposes. Common vessel forms included square dishes, begonia-shaped plates, cockscomb pots, and chicken-leg vases, all reflecting strong ethnic characteristics and utilitarian aesthetics. This practical orientation stands in contrast to Tang Sancai, which was largely produced as funerary ware for the aristocracy.

The emergence of Liao Sancai thus exemplifies how Sancai traditions, while rooted in the central artistic achievements of the Tang dynasty, were regionally adapted and recontextualized to serve different cultural and functional needs, contributing to the broader evolution of Luoyang Sancai Art across dynastic and ethnic boundaries.

Table 7 Liao Sancai

Liao Sancai Printed Square Plate	Liao Sancai Fish Shaped Pot	Liao Sancai Arhat Statue
辽三彩印花方盘	辽三彩鱼形壶	辽三彩罗汉像
		

The representative form of Ming Sancai is Liuli Sancai (琉璃三彩), a type of architectural decorative ceramic characterized by a terracotta body coated with lead glaze. Although its earliest examples can be traced back to the Northern Wei dynasty, it was further developed during the Tang and Song periods and reached its artistic and technical peak during the Ming and Qing dynasties. In the early Ming period, kilns were established in Nanjing, followed by the founding of the renowned Liuli workshops in Beijing. This form of Sancai was extensively employed in the construction of imperial palaces and Buddhist temples, as exemplified by sites such as the Forbidden City and the Nine-Dragon Wall in Datong. The glazes were colored using metallic oxides such as copper, iron, cobalt, and manganese, with quartz added to thicken the glaze layer.

Another significant development was Fahua Sancai (珐华三彩), which evolved from the Liuli tradition and flourished in the mid-Ming period in southern Shanxi. While its glaze composition closely resembled that of Liuli, it differed in the fluxing agent used—Fahua employed potassium nitrate instead. Fahua Sancai utilized the distinctive Lifan (立粉) technique, in which outlines were drawn on the ceramic body before the application of glazes. This process enhanced both the artistic expression and decorative appeal of the finished works.

These innovations reflect the continued diversification and regional specialization of Sancai art in the post-Tang period and demonstrate the adaptive vitality of Luoyang Sancai Art within broader architectural and ritual contexts.

Table 8 Ming Sancai

Ming Sancai Datong Nine Dragon Wall	Ming Sancai Flower and Bird Pattern Large Pot	Ming Sancai Glazed Guanyin Sitting Statue
明三彩大同九龙壁	明三彩花鸟纹大壶	明三彩釉观音坐像
		

Su Sancai (素三彩) originated during the Zhengde reign of the Ming dynasty and was further refined during the Kangxi reign of the Qing dynasty, becoming increasingly sophisticated and complex. As the final evolutionary phase of traditional Sancai ware, Su Sancai marked a significant transformation: it adopted a porcelain body, thereby transitioning from glazed earthenware to true porcelain. Despite this material shift, its firing process remained largely consistent with that of Tang Sancai: the piece was first high-fired to produce a plain (unpainted) porcelain body, followed by a second firing after colored glazes were applied to the decorative motifs.

In terms of color, Su Sancai typically employed yellow, green, and purple glazes, occasionally supplemented with black, white, and blue. Notably, red was rarely used or entirely avoided, hence the name "plain" or "austere" Sancai. This chromatic restraint reflected both symbolic conventions and technological constraints in the production of red glaze at the time.

The range of Su Sancai forms is exceptionally diverse, including not only dining wares such as dishes, segmented plates (Zanpan, 攒盘), bowls, and cup stands, but also display vessels such as vases and jars, as well as functional items like censers and small tables. Moreover, it encompassed sculptural figures such as Guanyin (Guanyin, 观音), the God of Wealth, child attendants, and the Star of Longevity

(Shouxing, 寿星). As such, Su Sancai represents the most comprehensive and expansive expression within the Sancai tradition, both in form and in function.

Table 9 Qing Sancai (Su Sancai)

Qing Sancai Dark Flower Cloud Dragon Flower Fruit Pattern Plate	Qing Sancai Hollow Smoked	Qing Sancai Hollow smoked the Fishing Map of Fisherman
清三彩暗花云龙花果纹盘	清三彩镂空熏	清三彩渔夫捕鱼图长方几
		

4.1.1.4 Reappearance and Restoration Stage (Early 20th Century)

Between 1905 and 1909, during the construction of the Longhai Railway, a number of Tang dynasty tombs located in the Beimangshan area of Luoyang were inadvertently damaged. As a result, a significant quantity of Tang Sancai artifacts was unearthed. These pieces were subsequently transported to the Beijing antique market, where they garnered widespread attention. It was largely due to the advocacy and high regard of two eminent scholars, Luo Zhenyu and Wang Guowei, that the historical, cultural, artistic, and collectible value of Tang Sancai became more broadly recognized (Gao, 2015).

This moment marked a pivotal phase in the modern revival of Luoyang Sancai Art, as academic endorsement helped reframe these artifacts not merely as antiquities, but as significant cultural heritage deserving of preservation, study, and collection.



Figure 16 Tang Sancai Discovered on Bianluo Railway

Source: Joseph Skarbek. (1906-1909).

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/eGYef3qgAO2yKkh9IQFUqQ>

In 1942, Republican-era antiquarian Zhao Ruzhen authored *A Guide to Antiques* (Guwan Zhinan), in which he provided an early descriptive account of this category of polychrome glazed pottery. He wrote that the finest among what is popularly known as Tang Sancai are those pieces in which floral motifs are painted in three colors, lead yellow, green, and blue, upon a white-bodied ware with a colorless glaze.

This early definition reflects not only the technical characteristics of Tang Sancai, but also the emerging scholarly recognition of its artistic and historical significance, laying the groundwork for subsequent classification and study within the broader framework of Luoyang Sancai Art.

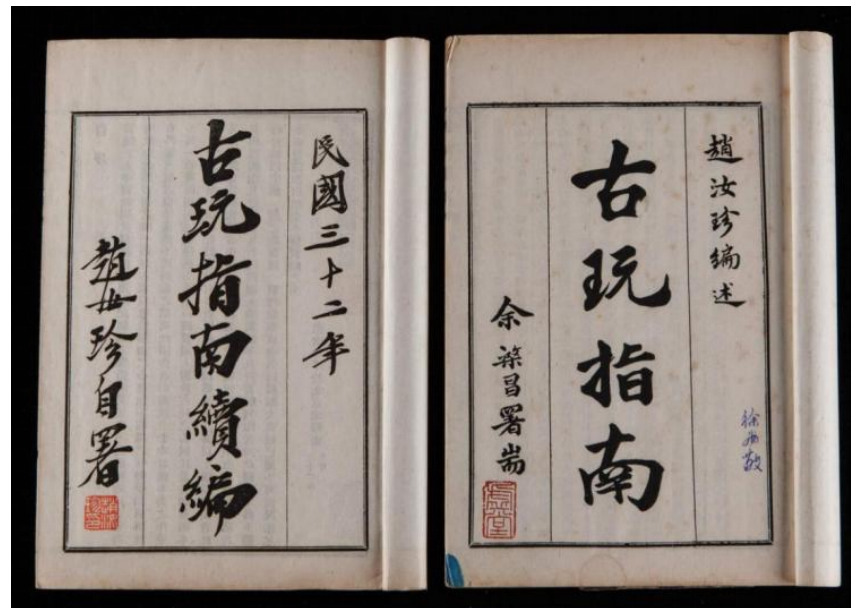


Figure 17 Zhao Ruzhen wrote the book “Antique Guide”

Source: Art, Tourism, Culture, Porto Renok. (June.05.2023).

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/eGYef3qgAO2yKkh9IQFUqQ>

At the beginning of the 20th century, a villager surnamed Gao from Nanshishan Village earned his livelihood by repairing unearthed and damaged Tang Sancai artifacts (Gao, 2015). However, with the outbreak of the War of Japanese Aggression in 1937, the production of Tang Sancai was forced to cease.

4.1.2 The Development of Modern Sancai Art

The modern development of Luoyang Sancai Art began in the mid-20th century and has since undergone a transformation from antiquarian replication to technical innovation and artistic diversification. With the establishment of dedicated research and production institutions and the ongoing experimentation by artists, modern Sancai has not only continued traditional craftsmanship but has also made significant breakthroughs in color application, form, and functional contexts. Over time, Sancai has evolved into a contemporary art form rich in cultural connotation and diverse in artistic expression. Breaking away from strictly imitative traditions, Sancai has expanded into

fields such as mural painting, sculpture, architectural decoration, and cultural creative industries, realizing the innovative transformation and modern revitalization of traditional techniques and exhibiting new cultural vitality.

4.1.2.1 Initial Revival and Antiquarian Transmission Stage (1950s to 1980s)

In the mid-20th century, Luoyang Sancai Art experienced a turbulent period of postwar recovery, political upheaval, and eventual cultural resurgence. Never underestimate the resilience of Chinese traditional culture. When neglected for long, it resurfaces in unexpected ways, even in the most modern of contexts (Qiu, 2009). This period was characterized by the revival of antiquarian-style Sancai, the reconstruction of its artisanal system, and the gradual establishment of a modern production infrastructure. A turning point came in 1984, five years after China's Reform and Opening-Up, when numerous small-scale Tang Sancai workshops emerged. The production and sale of Tang Sancai entered a peak phase, laying a technological and organizational foundation for subsequent innovation and diversification (Gao, 2015).

In 1954, the Luoyang Cultural Relics Management Committee organized veteran artisans such as Gao Songmao to form the Fine Arts Service Cooperative (later renamed the Luoyang Folk Art Supply Cooperative), with the primary goal of replicating Tang Sancai works. This initiative laid the groundwork for the revival of modern Sancai art. In 1958, the cooperative was renamed the Luoyang Ancient-Modern Ceramics Factory, focusing on the production of antiquarian-style Tang Sancai, thereby strengthening the continuity of traditional techniques. In 1962, the Luoyang Handicraft Production Cooperative was established, providing further institutional support for the development of craft production.



Figure 18 Luoyang Ancient and Modern Ceramic Factory

Source: Luoyang Network.(Oct.1.2021).

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/UE7E-G1jsp1UI4bechOs7w>

In 1966, the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution led to the suspension of production at the Luoyang Ancient-Modern Ceramics Factory, effectively halting the development of Sancai art. The political climate severely restricted traditional craft practices. However, in 1971, under the directive of Premier Zhou Enlai, the production of Tang Sancai was officially resumed, initiating a renewed phase of technical revival and artistic reconstruction. Subsequently, the factory was renamed the Luoyang Fine Arts Ceramics Factory, which gradually established a stable and modern production system for Sancai.

In 1983, the factory's Jiudu brand Tang Sancai was awarded the National Gold Medal for Quality, signaling a significant achievement in the modernization of Sancai craftsmanship. In 1986, Gao Shuiwang's piece Black-Goaded Horse (Hei Goutou Ma) received the National Excellent Product Award, further affirming the revitalization and elevated standards of contemporary Sancai production.

4.1.2.2 Breaking from Tradition and Embracing Innovation Stage (1980s to Present)

Since the late 1980s, Luoyang Sancai Art has gradually moved beyond the limitations of purely antiquarian replication, entering a new phase characterized by diversified innovation and concurrent academic engagement. In 1986, under the leadership of President Ye Peng, Luoyang Teachers College (now Luoyang Normal University) established the Mural Arts Research Studio, advancing the academicization of Sancai as an evolving art form.

In 1987, artist Guo Aihe created the Sancai mural Pursuit of Knowledge and Education (Qiuzhi Yuren), which marked a breakthrough in both color and conceptual expression by incorporating bright red glaze for the first time in a Sancai mural. This innovation departed from the traditional color palette and ushered Luoyang Sancai Art into the realm of contemporary public art (Duan, 2014).



Figure 19 Qiuzhi yuren (求知育人) by Guo Aihe

Source: Luoyang Sancai Art Museum. (Sept.13.2024).Luoyang Sancai Art Museum

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/JVehDEUTdJc-IHTrhOI35w>

Entering the 21st century, Luoyang Sancai Art has increasingly integrated contemporary design language and gradually assimilated into modern lifestyles. It has expanded beyond traditional boundaries into diverse fields such as cultural and creative industries, interior decoration, and public art, thereby forming a diversified industrial model. This period has also witnessed the participation of a

growing number of artists engaged in Sancai creation. One notable example is the Sancai mural *Chronicles of Heaven and Earth (Tian zhong Chun qiu)*, designed by Lou Jiaben and completed in 1992 by the Luoyang Fine Arts Ceramics Factory. Installed in the main hall of the newly constructed Luoyang Railway Station, the mural exemplifies the integration of traditional Sancai techniques with large-scale contemporary public art.

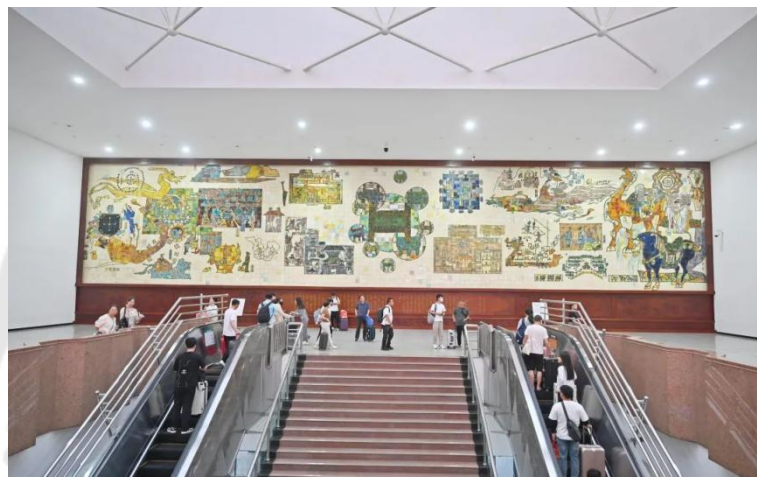


Figure 20 Tianzhong chunqiu (天中春秋) by Lou Jiaben

Source: Zhengzhou Railway. (Jun.16.2024).

Retrieved from https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/yFJf3vq4h_SFXZ_4T_nXaQ

In the spring of 2018, Mr. Cai Shuben was commissioned by the Xibei Catering Group to design and produce a large-scale mural for the newly established Tengger Tala Art Museum. As a genre within the visual arts, mural art not only demands aesthetic and compositional expertise but also requires interdisciplinary knowledge spanning materials science, architecture, and environmental studies. After careful consideration, Mr. Cai ultimately chose to render the mural using Tang Sancai glazed ceramic panels, assembled in a modular format. This decision reflects a contemporary adaptation of traditional Sancai techniques, showcasing the enduring vitality and cross-disciplinary potential of Luoyang Sancai Art in large-scale public and architectural contexts.

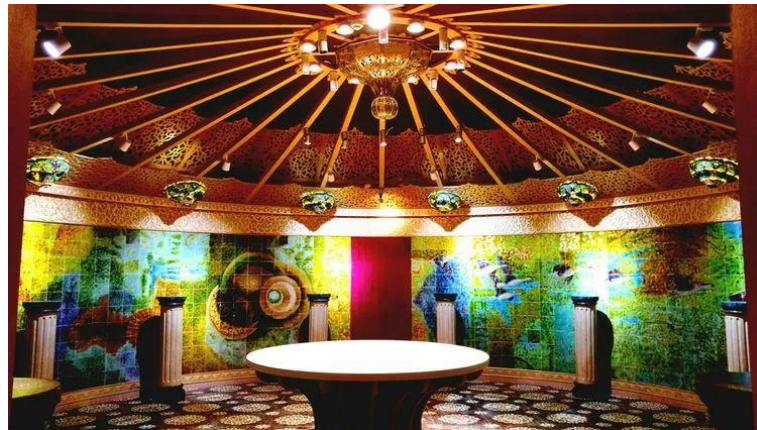


Figure 21 Lixiang de tiankong (理想的天空) by Cai Shuben

Source: Shao su. (Jun.16.2024). Art Appreciation | “Kiln Fire Shining Glaze Colors, Sancai Blooming New Flowers”

Retrieved from https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/yFJf3vq4h_SFXZ_4T_nXaQ

4.2 The Changes from Traditional Sancai Art to Modern Sancai Art

As an integral part of traditional Chinese ceramic art, Luoyang Sancai Art is characterized by its long history, exquisite craftsmanship, and deep cultural, social, and historical significance. With the passage of time, Luoyang Sancai Art has undergone multiple phases of transformation and innovation (Gao Xiongfei, personal communication, October 18, 2024). Throughout this evolutionary process, Sancai has not only been technically upgraded and innovated, but has also experienced profound changes across artistic, cultural, social, and economic dimensions. This chapter analyzes and discusses the transformative process of Luoyang Sancai Art from a multidimensional perspective and explores its future development trajectory.

4.2.1 Technical Dimension: Changes of Materials and Craftsmanship

Among the many facets of Sancai's historical development, changes in the technical dimension are particularly notable. From early low-fired lead-glazed techniques to the technical sophistication of Tang Sancai, and further to the innovations in materials and methods seen in modern Sancai art, the iterative evolution of technology has offered virtually limitless possibilities for artistic expression. In particular,

traditional techniques such as kiln transformation (Yaobian,窑变) and the flowing quality of glazes have endowed Sancai works with exceptional visual and aesthetic depth (Gao Shuiwang, personal communication, November 18, 2024).

4.2.1.1 Core Elements of Traditional Sancai Techniques

The flourishing of traditional Sancai art during the Tang dynasty was inseparable from its mature and distinctive technical system. The core of traditional Sancai craftsmanship lies not only in the combination of material and technique, but also in the artisan's deep understanding and precise control of kiln temperature, glaze behavior, and kiln transmutation. This comprehensive system reflects the exceptional craftsmanship of ancient Chinese ceramic traditions and laid a solid foundation for the subsequent development of modern Luoyang Sancai Art.

(1) Materials and Glaze Formulation

The kaolin clay sourced from the northern slopes of Mount Mangshan in Luoyang provided a crucial material foundation for the production of Tang Sancai, offering ideal conditions for the development of this ceramic tradition (Ding, 2013). In traditional Sancai craftsmanship, the selection of clay was of paramount importance. High-quality porcelain or pottery clay rich in minerals was typically used, which, after firing, yielded robust and durable ceramic wares.

Equally critical was the formulation of glazes. Traditional Sancai glazes were typically composed of naturally occurring mineral pigments such as copper, iron, cobalt, and manganese. Through precise measurements and careful blending, artisans could achieve a rich palette of colors. Depending on the desired visual effect, craftsmen would adjust the glaze composition to produce variations in hue and tonal depth, allowing for highly expressive coloration.








Figure 22 Gaolin Soil and Glaze

Source: photographed by the Author

The earliest Sancai glaze palette was primarily composed of yellow, green, and white, but later expanded to include blue, purple, brown, and black. The generation of various colors in Luoyang Sancai is closely related to the types and proportions of metals used (Duan & Li, 2024). The glaze colors of Sancai ware are not only bright and mottled, but more importantly, they are characterized by a rational and harmonious combination of colors (Xu, 2003).

The chemical characteristics of the low-fired lead glazes used during the Tang dynasty were not only the foundation of its artistic achievements but also imposed certain technical limitations on color expression. This paradox of creativity within constraint gave rise to a distinctive chromatic grammar, in which a limited spectrum was employed to evoke boundless imagery. This legacy of expressive minimalism established a historical point of reference for subsequent innovations in Sancai techniques, becoming a catalyst for breakthroughs in later developments of Luoyang Sancai Art.








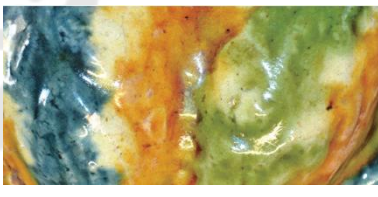
Table 10 Analysis of different glaze color components

The oxide components in glaze	Different Colors,	Glaze Color Purity
Copper oxide/Chromium Oxide 氧化铜/氧化铬	Green 绿色	
Iron Oxide 氧化铁	Yellow/Yellowish brown 黄色/黄褐色	
Silicon Oxide 氧化硅	white 白色	
Manganese oxide 氧化锰	Purple/Black 紫色/黑色	
Copper Oxide/Cobalt Oxide 氧化铜/氧化钴	Blue 蓝色	

By artificially controlling the rate of glaze transformation and the firing atmosphere, a rich hierarchy of sub-colors can be differentiated within the primary color systems (Duan & Li, 2024). The origins of Luoyang Sancai Art can be traced back to the Han dynasty, when the earliest Sancai ceramics employed low-fired lead-glaze techniques. During this period, ceramic wares were typically made from natural clay and glazed with rudimentary materials. Firing temperatures remained relatively low, and the glazes primarily exhibited yellow and green tones. The color palette was limited and unstable, with poor glaze fluidity and generally simplistic surface effects, often characterized by single-toned finishes.

The Tang dynasty marked the golden age of Luoyang Sancai Art, during which the technical foundations of the craft were substantially enhanced. The key technological breakthroughs of Tang Sancai centered on the refinement of glaze formulations and advancements in firing methods. In particular, significant improvements in low-temperature lead-glazing techniques allowed for greater chromatic diversity, more vivid hues, and enhanced expressive potential, firmly establishing Tang Sancai as a high point in the evolution of Chinese ceramic artistry.

Table 11 Different types of glaze color changes






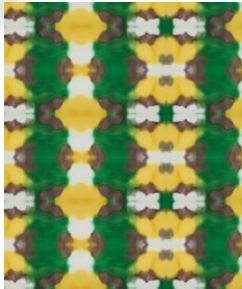
Monochrome 单色	Bicolor 双色	Multicolor 多色	Multicolor 多色
			
			

Another distinctive feature of Sancai ceramics is the fluidity of its glazes, a visual effect achieved through precise technical manipulation and temperature control during the firing process. In traditional Sancai art, glaze application was not uniformly painted, and the dynamic interaction among firing temperature, kiln atmosphere, and glaze composition was intentionally harnessed to produce flowing and intermingling chromatic effects. This kiln-transmutation technique ensured that each

Sancai piece possessed a unique surface quality, characterized by naturally formed textures and organic visual rhythm.

The kiln-transmutation phenomenon often manifests as gradient transitions and glaze drips, enriching the artwork with a heightened sense of depth and visual appeal. Such variations contribute not only to the aesthetic value of Luoyang Sancai Art, but also to its artistic individuality, reinforcing the principle that no two pieces are ever identical.

Table 12 Gradient and Flowing Effect of Glaze Color

Overall Effect			
Local glaze color			

(2) Production Techniques

Since 2002, large-scale archaeological excavations at the Huangye Sancai Kiln site in Gongyi by the Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology have uncovered traditional kilns and workshops used for Sancai firing, thereby reconstructing the traditional Sancai production process. Tang Sancai was produced through a two-step firing process. First, raw materials were crushed and soaked in a clay-refining pool for sedimentation to produce a slurry. The slurry was then

used in workshops to shape the clay bodies into various objects, which were placed in the kiln for the first firing (素烧). After removal, colored glazes were applied, and the objects were fired again for the second glaze firing (Gao, 2015).

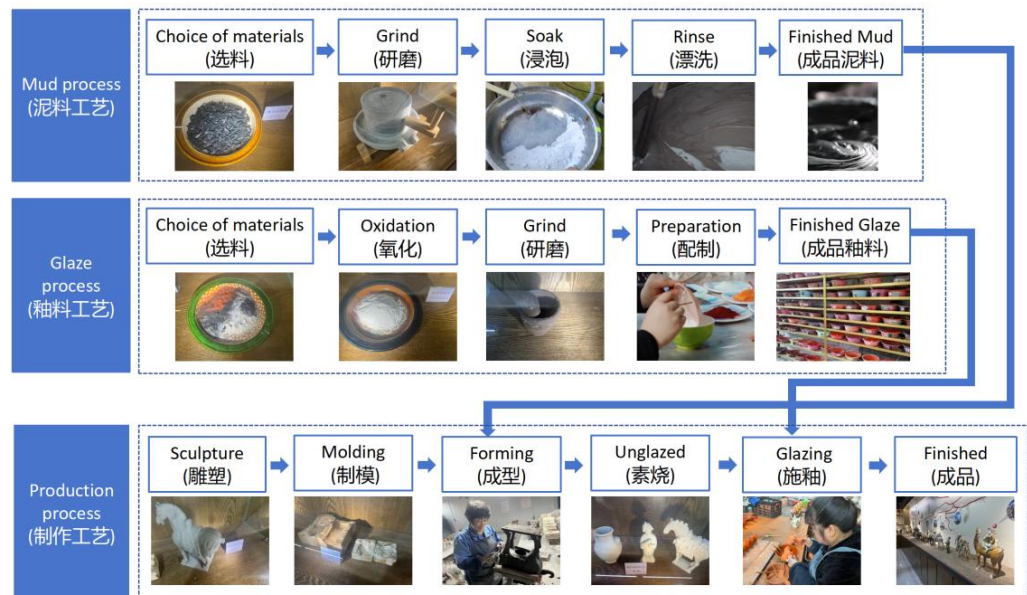


Figure 23 Traditional Sancai production process flowchart

Source: designed by the Author

During the Tang dynasty, Sancai firing primarily relied on earthen kilns and firewood as fuel (Zhang, 2020). To produce high-quality works, artisans needed to be proficient in kiln operation, and many even built their own kilns (Gao Shuiwang, personal communication, November 2, 2024). The traditional wood-fired kiln was a crucial part of the Sancai production process. However, due to the use of natural fuel such as wood, temperature control was difficult and the fire intensity fluctuated greatly, directly affecting the flow and coloration of low-temperature lead glaze. As the firing process depended heavily on manual experience, it led to high production costs and significant uncertainty, limiting the stability and efficiency of Sancai creation.

In addition, due to limitations in production tools, Tang dynasty Sancai works were relatively rough in terms of material processing. This constraint prompted artisans of the time to seek alternative approaches, enhancing the quality of their works through creative modeling and expressive use of color(Hei, 2019).



Figure 24 Traditional Chai Kiln

Source: photographed by the Author

By reviving the traditional firing techniques of Tang dynasty Sancai, Gao Shuiwang sought to restore ancient craftsmanship and original artisanal practices, demonstrating both reverence for and a conscious return to historical methods. Through the study of historical texts and in-depth exchanges with skilled artisans, he successfully reconstructed the glaze compositions, ceramic textures, and firing procedures characteristic of Tang-era Sancai. This endeavor not only preserved traditional techniques but also infused them with renewed vitality.

The vitality of traditional craftsmanship lies not solely in its preservation but also in its principled innovation, which presents a meaningful challenge for contemporary artisans in the new era (Gao Shuiwang, personal communication, November 18, 2024). Such a process of transmission extends beyond material techniques, encompassing the spiritual heritage of traditional culture and fostering the continued innovation and development of Luoyang Sancai Art in the modern context.



Figure 25 Gao Shuiwang's Sancai Art works

Source: Yihailiujin. (Feb.21.2025).Searching for 100 inheritors of intangible cultural heritage | 40 years, he awakens the dormant Tang Sancai with ingenuity
Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/JtALhk0xA7sc8cim7if6tg>

4.2.1.2 Innovations and Technical Breakthroughs of Modern Sancai

Under the dual impetus of modern technology and evolving cultural contexts, Luoyang Sancai Art has overcome the technical constraints of traditional handicrafts and embraced innovation across materials, techniques, and expressive forms. In particular, significant breakthroughs have been made in the areas of environmental protection, temperature control precision, and artistic expression, marking a fundamental shift from mere “antique reproduction” to “independent innovation”.

(1) Environmentally Friendly Glazes and Diversified Color Systems

With advances in contemporary craftsmanship and the diversification of aesthetic preferences, artists have sought new means of color expression while remaining rooted in the traditional Sancai process. Through the adoption of lead-free, environmentally friendly glazes, modern pigments, and precise temperature control technologies, the color palette of Sancai has been significantly expanded. The traditional hues of yellow, green, and white have evolved into a broader

and more stable spectrum, including vibrant tones such as crimson, lake blue, and lemon yellow (Guo Jiaqi, personal communication, October 16, 2024).

This transformation has not only enhanced the expressive potential of Luoyang Sancai Art but also imbued it with contemporary vitality and a global perspective, thereby improving its competitiveness in the modern art market. Particularly in the development of Sancai glaze painting, the art form has transcended traditional color limitations by incorporating modern shades such as pink and purple. These additions cater to a wider range of aesthetic tastes, enrich visual layering, and highlight the modern sensibility and artistic appeal of contemporary Sancai.

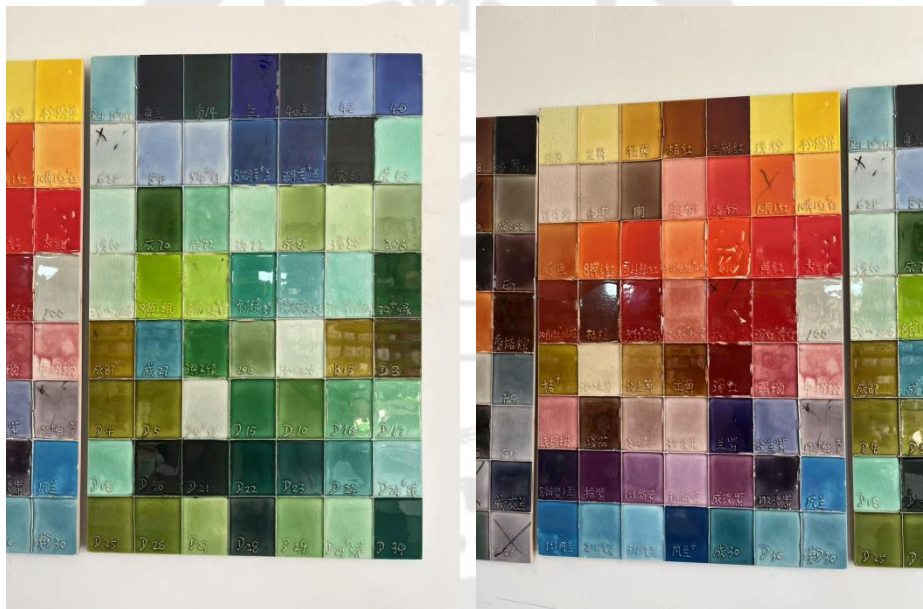


Figure 26 Modern Sancai Glaze Color Card

Source: photographed by the Author

The glaze composition of Sancai is relatively simple, generally using lead and quartz as the base glaze, with the addition of metal oxides to produce different colors. Artist Li Yanxun has conducted new experiments in material exploration, using components different from traditional metal oxides for color development, and successfully created new color ranges such as pastel purple. This innovation not only

enriches the color expression of Sancai, but also enhances its expressive potential in modern art.



Figure 27 Fen zi li fang (粉紫立方) by Li Yanxun

Source: Yanshan Art Museum. (Jul.21.2021). Tang Dynasty • Present “- Special Exhibition of Tang Dynasty Luoyang Sancai and Contemporary Li Yanjun Sancai Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/ETNu3NF3l9hcDs0Gy-1v-g>

(2) Modern production technology

Traditional production methods have limited the scalability of Sancai art. In particular, under the demands of the modern art market for high quality and consistency, high costs and low efficiency have become challenges that must be addressed. Modern technology has had a significant impact on the processing, forming, firing, storage, and circulation of materials used in Luoyang Sancai (Zhang, 2024). Today, the tools and molds used by artisans in the production of Sancai works are more complex and diverse than those of the Tang dynasty (Zhang, 2020). During the field investigation at the factory of Jiuchao Cultural Relics Reproduction Co., Ltd., a wide variety of molds were observed, including body parts of various animals and human Figures.



Figure 28 Modern tools and molds

Source: photographed by the Author

In modern firing techniques, electric and gas kilns have been gradually introduced as modern equipment capable of providing more precise temperature control, ensuring stability during the firing process, and thereby improving the yield rate. Electric kilns are primarily operated by modern machinery, with firing temperatures ranging from 1000 to 1100 degrees Celsius. These highly automated and intelligent devices can increase the temperature automatically after the technician sets the temperature curve (Q. Wang, 2017). The introduction of these modern technologies not only addresses the issue of temperature fluctuations in wood firing but also creates greater possibilities for the innovation and revitalization of traditional Sancai art (Guo Jiaqi, personal communication, October 16, 2024).



Figure 29 Modern Electric Kiln

Source: photographed by the Author

Modern Sancai art, through precise temperature control technology, has achieved controllable glaze gradients and surface textures, providing artists with a broader space for expression. Accurate temperature control allows for more natural color transitions and finer textures, enabling the presentation of unique artistic effects such as freehand expression and gradient transitions (Guo Aihe, personal communication, December 29, 2024). The introduction of temperature control technology has broken the limitations of traditional techniques, allowing artists to create rich layers of color and texture between high and low temperatures, enhancing the three-dimensionality and modernity of the works. These technological advancements not only improve the visual effect of Sancai art but also increase its competitiveness in the contemporary art market.



Figure 30 Guo Aihe's Sancai Art works

Source: Guanwu Art. (Feb.22.2025).Guanwu Ceramics | Guo Aihe - Inheritance and Innovation in Disruption

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/cRzl3aaK-fF28o8kFh-zKw>

(2) The Technique of Sancai Ceramic Painting

Modern Sancai Ceramic Painting represents the contemporary development of Luoyang Sancai, created on the basis of traditional techniques by employing modern technologies and unique glazing and firing methods to produce primarily two-dimensional ceramic artworks(Guo, 2012).

The production process of modern Sancai Ceramic Painting includes key steps such as design, transfer drawing, slip-trailing, glazing, firing, and kiln-out inspection. The design stage follows aesthetic principles of symmetry and balance, as well as the interplay between density and emptiness, while also considering the material characteristics of the ceramic body and slip. After the design is copied or directly drawn onto the ceramic body, the slip-trailing technique is used to apply even clay lines, which help control the flow of glaze. During the glazing stage, glaze is precisely applied according to the color chart codes, and techniques such as splashing and dotting are flexibly used to enhance visual expression. The firing process involves precise temperature control to ensure glaze fusion and improve energy efficiency. After cooling and removal from the kiln, the surface is inspected to ensure there are no

defects or deformation. It can be said that modern Sancai Ceramic Painting has created a unique glazing and painting technique system (Guo Aihe, 2012; personal communication, December 29, 2024).

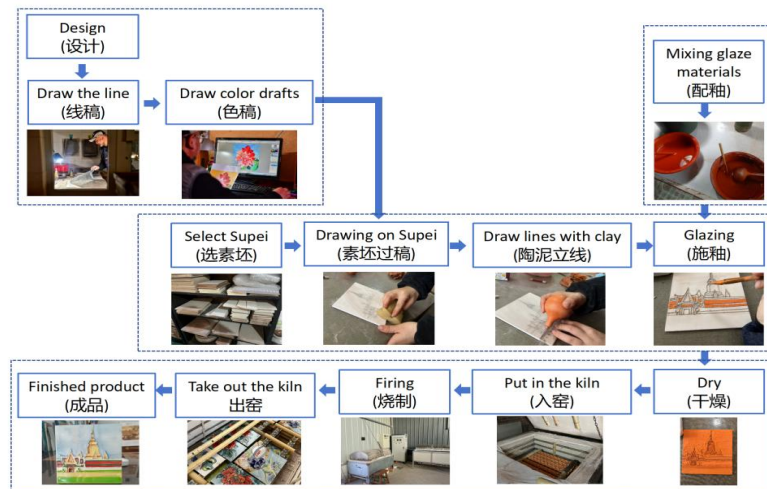


Figure 31 Sancai Ceramic Painting production process flowchart

Source: designed by the Author



Figure 32 Tools for making Sancai Ceramic Painting

Source: Shizijun. (Sept.5.2018). Sancai mural | Spring breeze ten miles away, not as good as mural one meter

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/x2JMCGFK6EUESvBwUhewng>

4.2.1.3 Drivers of Technological Transformation

The changes in Luoyang Sancai Art have been largely driven by technological factors, especially the tension between traditional craftsmanship and modern technology. Traditional Sancai techniques rely on manual skills and intuitive artistic perception, reflecting a kind of “aesthetic of ambiguity,” in which artists adjust the firing temperature, glaze color, and details based on experience and intuition during the creative process, aiming for a natural flow and random transformation of beauty (Guo Jiaqi, personal communication, October 16, 2024). However, with the intervention of modern science and technology, particularly advancements in material chemistry, kiln design, and precise temperature control, a tension has emerged between the traditional aesthetic of ambiguity and the modern pursuit of precision.

Modern technology has played a crucial role in the changes of Luoyang Sancai Art, particularly through developments in material analysis and kiln technology. With chemical analysis, artists can more accurately study glaze compositions and develop various new lead-free and high-temperature-resistant glazes. This has significantly expanded the variety and expressiveness of Sancai glazes while also addressing environmental concerns inherent in traditional techniques. In terms of kiln design, the introduction of modern high-efficiency kilns has made temperature control more precise, improving the success rate of firings and stabilizing the quality of works. This reduces the impact of temperature fluctuations on glaze color and form, ensuring uniform coloration and clarity of detail (Guo Jiaqi, personal communication, October 16, 2024).

In the development of modern Sancai art, a collision between traditional and modern techniques has taken place. Gao Shuiwang, in his early practice, built his own kilns and attempted to revive Tang dynasty firing techniques, showing respect for and a return to traditional craftsmanship. Later, he began exploring modern technologies, such as the use of electric kilns and molds, which allowed greater creative freedom. Guo Aihe broke away from traditional three-dimensional modeling and experimented with Sancai Ceramic Painting, creating abstract-style Sancai works

through precise temperature control and modern materials, reflecting the integration of the “pursuit of precision” with modern aesthetics. Therefore, technological innovation has played a significant role in promoting the changes of Luoyang Sancai Art from traditional to modern forms.

4.2.2 Artistic Dimension: Changes of Form and Language

The forms and language of Luoyang Sancai Art have undergone significant transformations, transitioning from the standardized expressions of “ritual burial objects” to open creations across diverse artistic media. Traditional Sancai ceramics, characterized by their distinctive craftsmanship and artistic vocabulary, carried forward the aesthetic ideals and cultural values of ancient societies. In contemporary contexts, the expressions of Sancai art are no longer limited to traditional ceramic figurines, vessels, and religious artifacts; rather, they extend broadly into sculptures, murals, architectural decoration, and even digital art. This dimension explores how traditional Sancai art innovates in artistic form and language, utilizing modern artistic methods and concepts to break traditional boundaries and create entirely new forms of artistic expression.

4.2.2.1 Aesthetic Characteristics of Traditional Sancai Art

Traditional Sancai art, as an important representative of ancient Chinese ceramic art, exhibits distinct aesthetic characteristics deeply rooted in historical and cultural contexts, as well as a strong pursuit of craftsmanship aesthetics, evident in its thematic content, sculptural styles, and decorative expressions.

(1) Thematic Content and Modeling

The subject matter of traditional Sancai art is characterized by a distinct historical and cultural background, especially centered on elements of the Silk Road. It profoundly reflects the religious beliefs, cultural exchanges, and social life of the time. Common themes in Tang dynasty Sancai art include camels, Hu people (Central and Western Asian Figures), horses, pack animals, and court Figures, illustrating the flourishing trade, religious activities, and diplomatic interactions along the Silk Road. These themes are not only of historical significance but also rich in cultural

symbolism, representing the exchange and integration of Eastern and Western cultures at the time.

Traditional Sancai art is renowned for its exquisite realistic modeling. The Figures are vividly designed, with graceful postures and a harmonious combination of form and spirit, demonstrating a high level of artistic expressiveness ((Gao, 2015). Among them, Tang Sancai maidservant figurines and horse figurines are particularly representative. Often adopting a static and realistic style, they emphasize natural form depiction and the recreation of historical atmosphere. Especially Sancai figurines, with their stylized yet vivid forms, authentically reflect social life in the Tang dynasty, holding both aesthetic value and cultural significance as conveyors of historical memory.

(2) Decorative Patterns

The decorative characteristics of Tang Sancai are reflected not only in glaze colors and forms but also in ornamental patterns. The unique combination of glaze and decorative motifs enhances the aesthetic and artistic qualities of Tang Sancai ceramics. The patterns of Tang Sancai were mostly applied to utilitarian objects and included plant motifs such as peonies, lotuses, and water lilies; animal motifs such as dragons and phoenixes; as well as human Figures. Techniques used included stamping, appliqué, and sculpting.

With the development of Tang society, floral motifs gradually became the dominant decorative theme in Tang Sancai. Accompanying changes in lifestyle and aesthetic preferences, Baoxianghua (宝相花) became especially popular. Baoxianghua patterns were popular during the Sui and Tang dynasties. Using flowers such as lotuses and peonies as the main themes, these motifs are combined with various leaves of different sizes and shapes to form a symmetrical structure radiating outward from the center. They symbolize nobility, prosperity, and happiness (Zhou, 2024). These motifs, typically circular floral patterns composed of peonies or lotuses, were often applied to the interiors of large-mouthed vessels or on the surfaces of jars, pots, and figurines.

Table 13 Different forms of decorative flowers

Mudan hua	Baoxiang hua	Siban hua	Siye cao
牡丹花	宝相花	四瓣花	四叶草
			



Figure 33 Baoxianghua (宝相花)

Source: Zhou Shuting (Jun.1.2024). Research on the Design Method of Tang Sancai

Color Extraction and Emotional Perception Prediction

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<https://www.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbcode=CMFD&dbname=CMFDTEMP&filename=1024730807.nh&uniplatform=OVERSEA&v=oTUmrVRYVCeTJwe7UqsiORXy19dk3nVnqdpLNhxHrOmdx9HbFY-2YaHYO69vUWwF>

4.2.2.2 Diverse Expressions of Modern Sancai Art


With the evolution of contemporary society and the diversification of aesthetic values, Luoyang Sancai Art has, while retaining the spirit of traditional craftsmanship, gradually transcended the thematic and formal constraints of the past. This has led to a more pluralistic and modern trajectory of development.



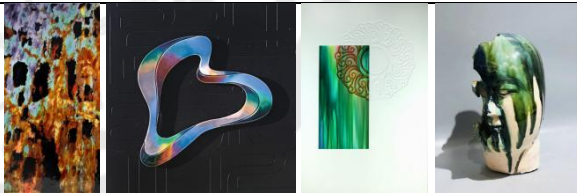
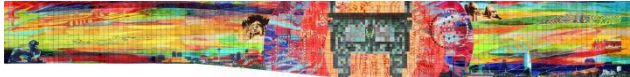
(1) Expansion of Themes

Modern Sancai art demonstrates a notable diversification of subject matter grounded in traditional techniques. In response to evolving social contexts, changing aesthetic preferences, and increasingly plural cultural ideologies, contemporary Sancai creation has moved beyond the conventional scope of historical themes, such as human figurines and animal sculptures, to embrace motifs that are more closely aligned with contemporary life.

This thematic expansion reflects not only the adaptability of Sancai to modern contexts but also its potential for cultural innovation. By incorporating elements of daily life, urban culture, environmental consciousness, and even digital aesthetics, modern Sancai artworks demonstrate a broader narrative capacity. These works not only retain the technical essence of the traditional low-fired glaze process but also articulate the lived realities, values, and aspirations of contemporary society, thereby enriching the cultural significance and expressive vocabulary of Luoyang Sancai Art.

Table 14 Different Themes

Figurative Themes	Characteristics	Expanding from traditional female figurines and civil official figurines to modern artistic human Figures, such as contemporary portraits, folk characters, and cultural icons.
	Sample image	

Animal Themes	Characteristics	Beyond the traditional horses and camels, modern Sancai Art has incorporated more native animal elements, such as dragons, phoenixes, the twelve zodiac animals, and fish, featuring imagery with modern cultural significance.
	Sample image	
Floral and Natural Themes	Characteristics	Traditional Sancai Art primarily featured floral patterns such as peonies, lotuses, and water lilies. Modern Sancai Art integrates decorative aesthetics, enriching floral and natural elements to enhance artistic expression.
	Sample image	
Abstract and Geometric Themes	Characteristics	Influenced by modern art, Sancai Art creations incorporate abstract geometric shapes and non-figurative art, breaking away from traditional realism and enhancing the contemporary nature of artistic expression.
	Sample image	
Comprehensive Themes	Characteristics	Modern Sancai Art often combines multiple themes to create large-scale environmental artworks, typically applied in public spaces.
	Sample image	

Contemporary artists have incorporated cultural phenomena, scenes from everyday life, and characteristics of modern individuals into their creations, thereby producing Sancai artworks that reflect contemporary emotions, social issues, and daily experiences. These works not only demonstrate the continuity of traditional craftsmanship but also embody the values and aesthetic preferences of modern society.

(2) Formal Innovation

Traditional Sancai art is predominantly realistic in style, with common forms including human figurines, camels, and warhorses. These works emphasize structural form and the portrayal of expression, serving as vital artistic representations of the grandeur of the Tang dynasty. However, this three-dimensional modeling approach presents limitations in terms of glaze expression and spatial adaptability, hindering broader integration into modern environments.

Since the late 20th century, Sancai art has progressively moved beyond its realist conventions, evolving toward geometric and abstract forms. Techniques such as ceramic painting (Sancai Ceramic Painting), sculptural collage, and textural coloration have expanded the formal vocabulary of Sancai, allowing for greater creative freedom. The transformation from three-dimensional modeling to two-dimensional expression has turned traditional ceramic sculpture into Sancai Ceramic Painting, breaking through spatial limitations and enabling broader artistic conceptualization(Guo, 2012).

While the traditional image of the horse in Sancai art is already rich and varied, contemporary Luoyang Sancai Art continues to develop new expressions based on this foundation (Li, 2017). For example, in the works of Master Guo Aihe, modern Sancai horses are characterized by a minimalist design and vivid red glaze with a high degree of translucency, offering strong visual impact. His Sancai Ceramic Painting horse series presents equine forms through flowing, romantic lines in a two-dimensional format, representing a modern reinterpretation of the classical Sancai aesthetic.

Table 15 Evolution from Three-Dimensional Realism to Flat Abstraction

Tang Sancai Black Glazed Horse	Imitation Sancai Horse	Modern Craft Sancai Horse	Sancai Ceramic painting Horse
唐三彩黑釉马	仿古三彩马	现代工艺三彩马	三彩釉画马
Luoyang Museum	Gao Shuiwang	Guo Aihe	Guo Aihe
			

Modern Sancai art is no longer confined to traditional three-dimensional ceramic sculpture but has developed into planar forms of artistic expression. Sancai Ceramic Painting, characterized by flowing glaze that creates abstract visual effects, enables Sancai art to transcend the limitations of ceramic sculpture and enter a diversified system of modern artistic expression. This includes its application in modern home décor paintings, large-scale wall murals, and architectural ornamentation, thereby enhancing the adaptability and relevance of Sancai art in contemporary spatial contexts.



Figure 34 Sancai Ceramic Painting

Source: photographed by the Author

As a form of public environmental decoration, Luoyang Sancai Ceramic Painting is often presented through the method of assembling and piecing together small ceramic panels. This modular approach allows for artworks of unlimited scale, making Sancai Ceramic Painting particularly well-suited for large public spaces. In urban environments such as libraries and metro stations, it functions as a form of visual art accessible to the general public, contributing to the aesthetic enhancement and cultural enrichment of public space.

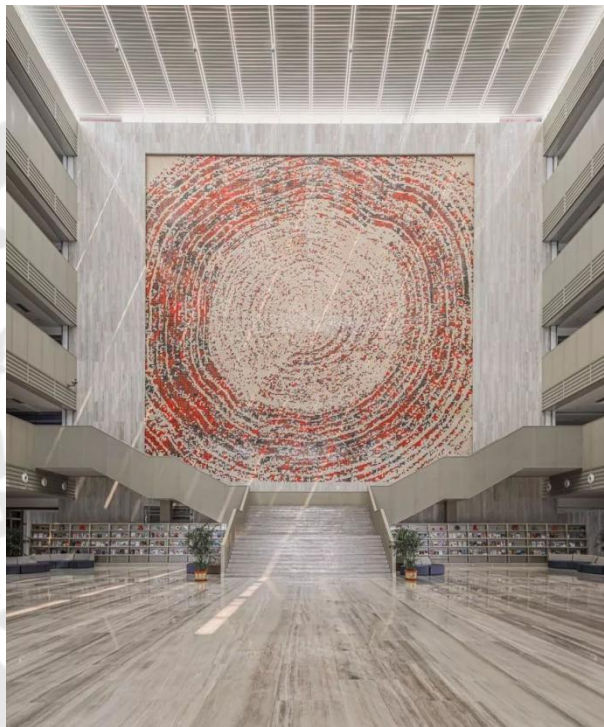


Figure 35 Wenmingzhiyuan (文明之源) by Guo Aihe

Source: Luoyang Cultural Industry. (Aug.12.2019).Henan's Emerging Cultural Creativity: The Transformation of Sancai Art into a Trendy New Art Form

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/JVehDEUTdJc-IHTRhOI35w>

Modern Sancai art, while inheriting traditional forms, incorporates an increasing number of abstract artistic elements. Artists have gradually moved beyond the constraints of traditional realism, embracing freer approaches to form and color in order to express individual inner worlds, emotional fluctuations, and unique

interpretations of reality. By simplifying Figures, exaggerating forms, or employing bold color schemes, modern Sancai art explores new visual languages and expressive techniques, thereby enhancing the modern sensibility and artistic innovation of the works (Zhang Yipeng, personal communication, October 27, 2024).



Figure 36 Xinghe (星河) by Zhang Yipeng

Source: Shangyang Museum of Art. (Oct.5.2022).New Literary Style | Transforming Things into Environments - Appreciation of Zhang Yipeng's Works

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https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/lkU4v2TrrKRygoTipvWtkQ?search_click_id=10911459203111104088-1743282358950-5113956627

The integration of modern Sancai art with installation art has generated a new form of dialogue and interaction between traditional craftsmanship and contemporary artistic thought. It enabled a shift from the language of painting to installation art, realizing a form of spatially based interactive artistic expression (Luo, 2020). This represents not only a continuation of the Sancai tradition but also a critical re-examination of its value and significance within the contemporary context. The

Luoyang Sancai International Ceramic Art Village, Ai He Town, employs Sancai as a core design element, with various forms of land-based ceramic installations harmonizing with the surrounding environment. The installation artwork “Frame”, for instance, combines the free-form aesthetics of contemporary installation with the refined techniques of Sancai craftsmanship, thereby transcending the limitations of conventional exhibition formats. Such an approach allows Sancai art to be presented and disseminated in a more open and inclusive manner. It not only attracts traditional art enthusiasts but also appeals to broader audiences interested in contemporary art, fostering a dynamic fusion and innovation between traditional culture and modern artistic expression.



Figure 37 Kuang (框) by Guo Jiaqi

Source: Luoling Township, Luoning County. (Mar4.2025). Love and Harmony Town in Luoling Township: The “Alps” of Henan Province

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4.2.2.3 Motivations for Artistic Transformation

The subjective initiative of creators has played a central role in driving the changes of Sancai art. Through individualized aesthetic choices, technical innovations, and the expansion of subject matter, they have continuously revitalized Sancai art. The creators of Sancai art guide artistic trends through their aesthetic concepts. The subjects and artistic forms they choose are not only personal expressions but also reflections of the broader social and cultural environment (Gao Xiongfei,

personal communication, October 18, 2024). For example, in the Tang dynasty, the motif of the Sancai camel symbolized the prosperity of the Silk Road, and such thematic choices demonstrate the creators' deep understanding of the society and culture of their time. The creators' aesthetic orientations are shaped by their living environment and cultural atmosphere, while also reflecting their unique perception of beauty. Tang dynasty artists emphasized splendor and grandeur, Song dynasty creators preferred simplicity and introspection, while modern artists value individuality and diversity.

In today's globalized era, the identities of Sancai art creators have become increasingly diverse. Many artists not only inherit traditional techniques but are also influenced by Western modern art, digital art, and other fields, forming cross-cultural and interdisciplinary creative backgrounds (Gao Chao, personal communication, October 31, 2024). Modern Sancai artists are no longer merely traditional craftsmen; they often position themselves as artists with an international perspective. In their creative process, they aim to preserve the traditional craftsmanship of Sancai while also responding to the diverse demands and aesthetic trends of the global art context, enabling their works to gain recognition and visibility on international platforms.

Zhang Yipeng has not only inherited and carried forward the traditional Tang Sancai firing techniques of the older generation but has also made notable contributions in areas such as Tang dynasty jiaotai (marbled ware) firing and kiln-transformation glaze effects. Dedicated to contemporary artistic creation, he applies traditional multicolored glaze pottery techniques combined with new materials to produce artworks infused with contemporary humanistic expression.



Figure 38 Se yu bu kong(色与不空) by Zhan Yipeng

Source: Shanyang Art Museum. (Oct.5.2022). New Literary Style | Transforming Things into Environments - Appreciation of Zhang Yipeng's Works

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/lkU4v2TrrKRygoTipvWtkQ>



Figure 39 Comparison before and after the production of the large-scale new work

Diezhang (叠嶂)

Source: Yi tiao. (Apr.21.2021). He spent 10 years in seclusion in Jiangxi and finally found the beauty of China

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/JB1VnNhbl4Z5EdYJhu2RYw>

In traditional handicraft workshops throughout history, the transmission of skills was primarily reliant on the master-apprentice system. Within this hierarchical structure, the subjective initiative of creators was expressed through continuous learning, refinement, and innovation. In the modern context, groups of creators engage in collaborative exploration of new artistic directions through art exhibitions, academic exchanges, and other forms of interaction, thereby injecting new vitality into Sancai art. Although each artist's choices are inherently individual, the process of collective collaboration also enables them to draw inspiration from the works of others (Guo Aihe, personal communication, December 19, 2024). It is precisely this dynamic interplay between individuality and collectivity that has allowed Sancai art to maintain both continuity and innovation throughout its transformation.

A compelling example of this collaborative spirit is the Joy of Yu le tu at the Shanghai Tower, co-created by Jiang Guoxing, Guo Aihe, and Yin Jia. The project involved 18 nationally recognized ceramic art masters from 15 ceramic kilns across China, each contributing their distinctive ceramic techniques. This large-scale artwork set a Guinness World Record for the most ceramic artists participating in the creation of a single piece, exemplifying how the convergence of multiple artistic visions can expand the creative boundaries of Sancai art.



Figure 40 Yu le tu (鱼乐图)

Source: Luoyang Cultural Industry. (Aug.12.2019). Henan Cultural Innovation Force: Sancai Butterfly Art Transforms into New Wave Art

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Cheng Yongsheng, an inheritor of Luoyang Sancai mural art recognized as intangible cultural heritage, engaged in a cross-disciplinary collaboration with Zhang Zhiwen, known as the “world’s foremost peony painter.” Their mutual appreciation and artistic resonance led to a seamless partnership in which Zhang’s peony paintings on paper were transformed into Sancai Ceramic Paintings. This collaboration exemplifies the integration of traditional Sancai techniques with contemporary artistic expression, further expanding the creative boundaries of modern Sancai art.



Figure 41 Sancai Zhongcai Mudan (三彩重彩牡丹) by Cheng yongsheng and Zhang Zhiwen

Source: Hua cheng mei tao. (Oct. 18.2024). Huacheng | Collaborate with Zhang Zhiwen, the world's number one peony master!

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In 2016, a hand-painted Sancai mural project was jointly initiated by the Luoyang Display and Spatial Art Design Industry Association and “Huacheng Meitao,” led by member teacher Cheng Yongsheng. This project showcased the contemporary expressive capacity of Luoyang Sancai Art and reflected the deep integration between traditional craftsmanship and modern design, marking a new trend in the cross-disciplinary collaboration of Sancai art.

Through the participation of designers in the creation of Sancai murals, the traditional craftsman-centered creative model was broken, and concepts and artistic languages of modern spatial design were introduced. The involvement of designers not only brought aesthetic diversity but also promoted innovations and expansions in color coordination, composition, and spatial adaptation within Sancai art. This has driven the organic transformation of traditional craftsmanship toward artistic expression, spatial application, and modern lifestyles (Cheng Yongsheng, personal communication, December 31, 2024).



Figure 42 Sancai works by different designers

Source: Architectural Decoration Art. (Nov.25.2016). Works released |
Inspiration collision between designer and Sancai porcelain plate painting

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Globalization has facilitated extensive cultural exchange and mutual influence between the East and the West, ushering in a new era of cultural integration for Sancai art. Within the context of globalization, traditional Sancai has undergone a transformation from a localized craft to an international and modern art form. This evolution has not only enriched the expressive forms of Sancai but also expanded its influence within the global cultural market. In recent years, Sancai artworks have been frequently featured in international ceramic art exhibitions and intangible cultural heritage forums, emerging as a prominent representative of Chinese ceramic culture. For example, at the 2024 International Academy of Ceramics (IAC) Conference organized by UNESCO, Luoyang Sancai attracted global attention for its distinctive glaze aesthetics and profound cultural heritage.

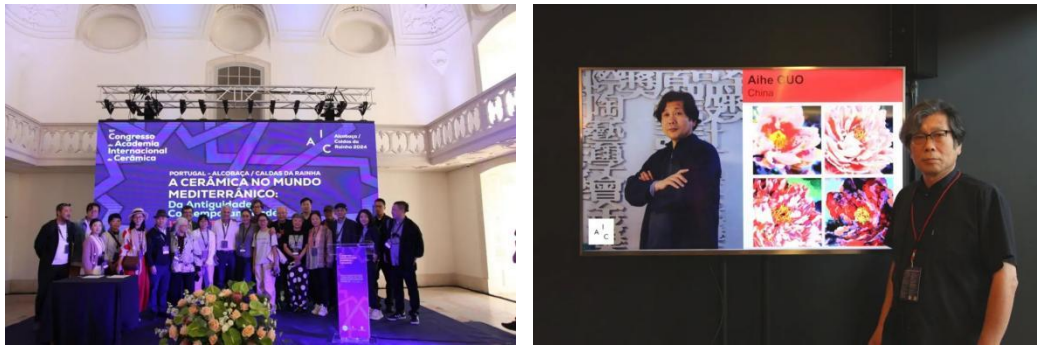


Figure 43 Traditional firewood kiln and modern electric kiln

Source: Luoyang Sancai Art Museum. (Sept.18.2024). The 51st International Ceramic Society Member Conference grandly opened in Portugal

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4.2.3 Cultural Dimension: Changes of Symbolic Meaning and Identity Recognition

Sancai art is not only a form of craftsmanship but also carries profound cultural symbolism and social significance. In traditional Sancai art, aesthetics focused on the historical sense and cultural symbolism of the Tang dynasty. It was mostly used as funerary objects, with colors and forms embodying specific symbolic meanings such as auspiciousness, longevity, and prosperity. With social development and shifts in cultural concepts, the symbolic meanings of Sancai art have gradually changed (Gao Chao, personal communication, October 31, 2024).

The creation of modern Sancai art is no longer limited to traditional cultural symbols. It has begun to incorporate emotional expression, individual cultural identity, and the blending of diverse cultures in the context of globalization. This has promoted the integration of Sancai art with modern elements and practical functions in design. For example, Sancai art has been combined with homeware and modern fashion design, merging traditional symbols with contemporary trends, presenting an art form that retains historical and cultural characteristics while aligning with modern aesthetics. This section will explore in depth the transformation of Sancai art at the cultural level,

analyzing how it seeks a new cultural position between tradition and modernity, as well as between national identity and globalization.

4.2.3.1 Cultural Connotations of Traditional Sancai Art

Traditional Sancai art not only reflects highly developed ceramic craftsmanship and aesthetic styles, but is also deeply rooted in the complex and diverse socio-cultural structures of its time. Its cultural connotations encompass funerary rituals, color hierarchy, and religious symbolism, and it exhibits significant features of cultural integration in the context of foreign exchanges.

(1) Funerary Culture

Traditional Sancai art is not merely a demonstration of technique and aesthetics, but is embedded in the cultural and religious background of the Tang dynasty, particularly in its funerary practices. Tang Sancai emerged as a product of the lavish burial system that prevailed during the Tang period (Sun, 2021). As a medium, Tang Sancai is most distinguished by its glaze colors compared to other materials (Xu, 2017). The grave goods also serve the purposes of flaunting wealth and symbolizing the afterlife, with their content and quantity being related to the family's economic strength, yet the hierarchical system remains insurmountable (Qi, 2006).

During the Tang Dynasty, the imperial court issued several decrees stipulating the number of mingqi to be buried with deceased officials according to their respective ranks (Ceramics, 1982). Classical texts such as *Jiu Tang Shu* (旧唐书) and *Tang Liu Dian* (唐六典) recorded specific regulations regarding the quantity and forms of mingqi. As a crucial part of these burial goods, Sancai ceramics embodied the Confucian belief in “serving the dead as one serves the living.” Through symbolic figures such as pottery figurines, horses, and camels, they constructed an image of continued life and dignity in the afterworld for the deceased, reflecting the integration of noble burial customs and religious beliefs in Tang society.

According to current archaeological findings, the earliest recorded tomb in Luoyang containing Tang Sancai as burial objects dates back to the reign of Emperor Gaozong of the Tang dynasty. It was discovered in the tomb of Zhang

Wenju, Deputy Prefect of Tange County, Sancang of Shenzhou in the Hongshan Township of Luoyang Old City (Sun, 2021). For example, the tomb of An Pu, a native of the An State in the Western Regions, unearthed in 1981 in the southern suburbs of Longmen, Luoyang, yielded a large number of exquisite Sancai objects. This well-preserved tomb provides tangible evidence of the deep connection between Sancai art and funerary culture. A total of 129 sets of burial goods were found (J. Wang, 2017), reflecting the tomb owner's social status and identity during his lifetime.

(2) Color Symbolism

The color system in Luoyang Sancai is not merely a manifestation of ceramic craftsmanship but also a quintessential representation of traditional Chinese color symbolism within the realm of ceramic art (Gao Chao, personal communication, October 31, 2024). The formation of this color palette was closely related to the Tang dynasty's cultural milieu, aesthetic principles, technological developments, and religious beliefs. The core Sancai color triad of yellow, green, and white embodies the cosmological theory of the Five Elements (wuxing) as applied in ceramic aesthetics.

Yellow (Earth element): Symbolizing authority and nobility, associated with the center in cosmology, it reflects imperial aesthetics and aristocratic status in Tang society.

Green (Wood element): Representing vitality and auspiciousness, frequently used in Buddhist imagery and architectural ornamentation.

White (Metal element): Connoting purity and solemnity, in alignment with the Tang aristocracy's funerary aesthetic preferences.

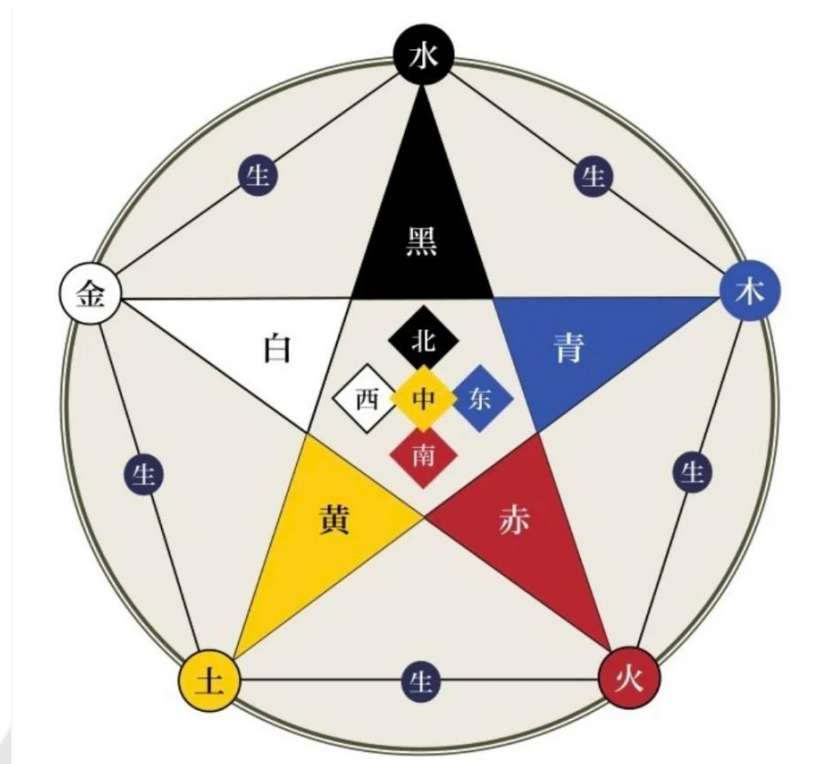


Figure 44 Five Elements and Five Colors Diagram

Source: Xiang lai wu shi. (Nov.26.2024). The Five Color Concept of Traditional Chinese Color Matching

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Yellow was one of the primary colors in Tang Sancai, symbolizing imperial authority and nobility in ancient China. As the exclusive color of emperors, yellow denoted power and dignity. In folk practices, yellow-colored ritual paper was often used for ancestral offerings, implicitly suggesting the breaking of boundaries between the living and the netherworld. Therefore, as mingqi, Tang Sancai wares, while

expressing opulence and refinement, also embodied a deeper metaphysical connotation of communication with the afterlife.

Green, another key color in Tang Sancai, was widely used in traditional utensils and garments. Historically, green tended toward a bluish-green hue, situated chromatically between blue and green, symbolizing vitality and the flourishing of life. White, in the traditional Chinese color system, represented purity and moral integrity. In the context of Sancai art, however, white was often used as a base color to accentuate the brilliance of the overlying hues.

With the advancement of ceramic technology, Sancai gradually expanded its palette to include cobalt blue, purple, brown, and black. Blue, particularly cobalt blue glaze, was introduced under the influence of Persian culture, symbolizing nobility and exotic aesthetics, and marked one of the major innovations in Tang Sancai. Purple and brown, associated with Buddhist and Daoist traditions, signified mystery and wisdom. The forms, colors, and iconography of Sancai figurines were embedded with distinct socio-cultural meanings, symbolizing auspiciousness, wealth, longevity, and other positive values. Moreover, the decorative patterns and motifs employed in Sancai art were often rich in cultural symbolism, serving as a medium through which artists conveyed their understanding of society, history, and religion.

(3) Multicultural Integration

The Tang dynasty marked the pinnacle of China's ancient foreign exchanges, during which the cultural and technological interactions facilitated by the Silk Road significantly contributed to the development of Sancai art. As one of the major export commodities of the period, Tang Sancai was widely traded to regions across Central Asia, West Asia, and even East Asia, becoming a vital medium of economic and cultural exchange between China and the broader world. Through extensive trade networks, the techniques and artistic styles of Sancai exerted a profound influence on neighboring countries.

Thanks to the prosperity of the Tang dynasty's political and economic systems, merchants from various nations ventured across oceans or traveled overland along the Silk Road to reach cosmopolitan hubs such as Chang'an and Luoyang. These merchants brought with them not only commercial interests but also cultural curiosity, and in turn transported goods—including Tang Sancai artifacts—back to their homelands. This process not only disseminated Chinese ceramic technology abroad but also facilitated a dynamic cross-cultural artistic dialogue, embedding Luoyang Sancai Art within the broader narrative of global ceramic exchange.



Figure 45 Silk Road Route Map

Source: Da Tang Sancai. (Mar. 2015).

The coastal region of Fujian to present-day Vietnam was historically known as “Jiaozhi”(交趾). Local artisans, in remembrance of their ancestral homeland, referred to their ceramic works as “Jiaozhi pottery”(交趾陶), which is also known in Taiwan as “Jiayi Shao”(嘉义烧). During the Tang dynasty, the An Lushan Rebellion and later the Huang Chao Uprising prompted large-scale migration of Han Chinese to the south, bringing not only population but also craftsmanship and techniques. By the Daoguang period of the Qing dynasty, based on Tang Sancai and incorporating southern techniques, a form of low-fired multicolored glaze pottery was developed. Originating south of the Wuling Mountains in Guangdong, it came to be

known as Jiaozhi pottery. This technique was brought to Taiwan along with migration and has continued to develop there to the present day.

In China's long historical tradition, the invention of Jiaozhi pottery can be traced back to the “Han green glaze” of the Han dynasty, which marked a major achievement in Han ceramic art. It evolved through Tang Sancai, Song dynasty polychrome ware, and Qing dynasty doucai, eventually developing into the colorful ceramics known today (B. C. A. Museum, 2023).



Figure 46 Jiaozhi pottery (交趾陶)

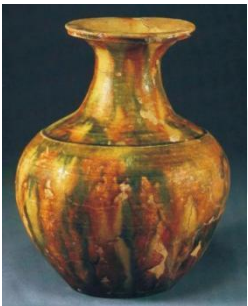


Source: Beijing Ceramic Art Museum. (January.11.2023). Jiaozhi pottery, exuding the festive atmosphere of the screen

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According to foreign archaeological findings, traces of Tang Sancai have been discovered in many countries across a wide range of locations. Chinese ceramics have been unearthed in significant quantities in nearby regions such as Japan, Korea, countries of the Indochina Peninsula, as well as island nations in Southeast Asia including the Philippines and Indonesia (Tsugio, 1983). After importing Tang Sancai wares, some countries began to produce their own imitations in similar styles, such as Persian Sancai in Iran, Silla Sancai in Korea, and Nara Sancai in Japan. Notably, a variety of Tang Sancai vessels and sherds including jars, vases, pots, and

ceramic pillows have been discovered in places such as Nara, Japan. Although the Sancai ceramics produced in these countries exhibit distinct local characteristics, they still retain the fundamental stylistic features of Tang Sancai.

Table 16 Sancai Works from Other Countries

Silla Sancai	Persian Sancai	Nara Sancai
新罗三彩	波斯三彩	奈良三彩
		

In response to the expansion of international trade markets and the growing demand, artisans at the Huangye Kiln developed a range of new products and decorative styles infused with foreign aesthetics and exotic elements, building upon their tradition of high-quality craftsmanship, in order to cater to the preferences of overseas merchants and the broader public (Liao, 2004a). For example, the forms and glazes were influenced by decorative motifs and vessel shapes from the Hellenistic world, the Eastern Mediterranean, Egypt, and Iran, drawing upon the techniques of metalware, ceramics, and textile craftsmanship, and reflecting cultural elements of religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism.

Table 17 Sancai Works Influenced by Other Regions

Name	Image	Influencing Factor
Tang Sancai Green Glazed Flat Pot (唐三彩绿釉扁壶)		The shape and decorative style were influenced by the Greco Roman world (also known as the “Greco Roman world” or “classical period”).
Tang Sancai Capricorn shaped Water Bottle (唐三彩摩羯形水壶)		The decoration draws inspiration from Hindu mythological images. The type of kettle is derived from the Hindu myth of Capricorn.
Tang Sancai Phoenix Head Pot (唐三彩凤首壶)		The type was influenced by glass and metal objects from ancient Iran
Tang Sancai Phoenix Head Pot (唐三彩狮座盘)		The lion image was influenced by Buddhist culture and entered Tang Dynasty China, while still retaining the image of a guardian

Name	Image	Influencing Factor
Tang Sancai Bowl (唐三彩碗)		Imitating the shape of gold and silverware
Tang Sancai Bowl (唐三彩碗)		The embossing and carving decoration techniques come from imitating metal objects
Tang Sancai teapot (唐三彩壶)		The shape of the vessel is influenced by Mediterranean glassware.

4.2.3.1 Cultural Reconstruction in Modern Sancai Art

After reaching its zenith during the Tang dynasty, Sancai art underwent a functional transformation during the Song and Yuan dynasties and experienced a period of decline throughout the Ming and Qing periods. Its gradual revival in the modern era has been driven not only by technical innovation and market demand but also by the support of governmental policies related to intangible cultural heritage protection, cultural industry development, and the integration of culture and tourism. As a result, Sancai has come to be regarded as a “cultural emblem of Luoyang”. Since the

Tang dynasty, Sancai has not only been a form of ceramic craftsmanship but also a carrier of profound historical and cultural meanings, reflecting funerary customs, religious beliefs, and social hierarchies. With the passing of time, Sancai art has progressively moved beyond its funerary associations and become embedded in modern society, serving as a significant regional cultural symbol of Luoyang and the Central Plains, embodying a strong sense of local cultural identity (Gao Chao, personal communication, October 31, 2024).

(1) Public Art Narratives

In the context of modern public art, Sancai art has gone beyond traditional ceramic ornaments and wall decorations, developing into more spatially dynamic and environmentally adaptable forms, such as Sancai murals, environmental art, and architectural decorative ceramic panels. Modern Sancai art, oriented toward public spaces, serves interior design and spatial aesthetics, activating the contemporary expressive power of intangible cultural heritage at the intersection of functionality and artistry. Sancai murals create unique visual effects through the flow of glazes and the blending of colors, combined with flat artistic forms (Cheng Yongsheng, personal communication, December 31, 2024).

These Sancai artworks are widely applied in public spaces such as museums, subway stations, cultural plazas, and commercial centers, becoming visual representations of urban historical memory. For example, in the Zhouwangcheng Square Station of Luoyang Metro Line 1, large-scale Sancai murals are used to decorate the city's cultural walls, enhancing the cultural atmosphere of the space.



Figure 47 Zhougong liyue tu (周公礼乐图) by Cheng Yongsheng

Source: Luoyang Intangible Cultural Heritage. (Jun.7.2022). How much do you know about intangible cultural heritage in Luoyang? Sancai mural making techniques

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The application of Sancai art in hotel space design is not only a decorative technique but also a form of cultural expression. Integrating Luoyang Sancai Art into hotel spaces can effectively highlight its unique regional cultural symbols and create an artistic atmosphere characterized by “Eastern charm and historical depth.” For example, in 2021, Cheng Yongsheng designed and produced the Sancai mural Luoyang Symbols as well as related Sancai utensils and soft furnishings for the Intangible Cultural Heritage Hotel in Luoyi Ancient City, Luoyang.

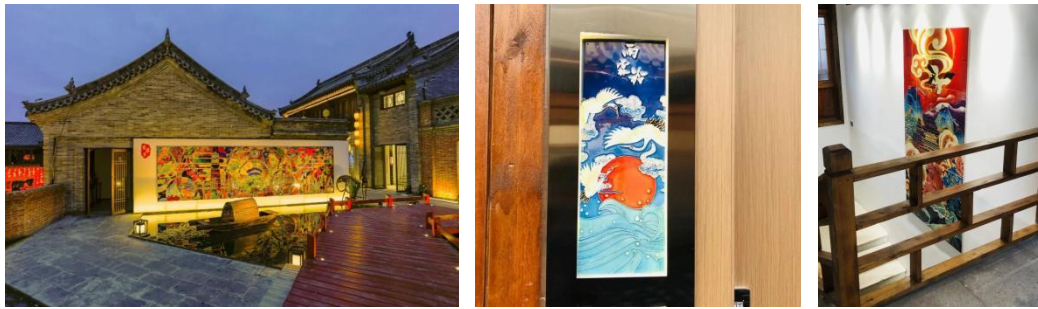


Figure 48 Sancai murals and hotel soft decoration design

Source: Huacheng Meitao. (Aug.16.2021). Huacheng Meitao | Yunhuali • 24
Scenic Cultural and Art Hotel

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As a cultural symbol of “Made in Luoyang,” Sancai art carries deep regional memory and craft tradition. Embedding it into hotel spaces can strengthen local cultural identity, enhance the cultural quality of the space, and enrich the immersive experience of guests. It also provides a new platform for the contemporary expression of local intangible cultural heritage. Through the integration of spatial aesthetics and cultural resources, Sancai art becomes not only a decorative element but also an important visual language for telling the story of Luoyang and showcasing the city's cultural charm. For example, in Luoyang's Yading Peninsula Hotel, the red Sancai horse and wall Sancai decorations serve as key cultural features.



Figure 49 Sancai murals and hotel soft decoration design

Source: Sancai Art. (Nov.22.2017). It comes from fire and shines brightly for thousands of years

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By integrating Sancai art into rural landscape design, not only has the traditional craftsmanship been preserved and transmitted, but the cultural identity and tourism appeal of the countryside have also been significantly enhanced. In Nanshishan Village, Mengjin County, Luoyang, modern Sancai art has been widely applied in cultural walls, leisure plazas, and scenic area decorations, becoming a visual symbol of the region's history and cultural legacy. Sancai art, as a symbol of Luoyang's historical and cultural heritage, also serves as an embodiment of the local population's cultural identity, thereby reinforcing the recognition and transmission of rural historical and cultural value (Gao Zhe, personal communication, November 2, 2024).



Figure 50 The Application of Sancai Art in Rural Landscape

Source: photographed by Author

The entry of Sancai art into the realm of public art reflects the integration of traditional craftsmanship with the cultural demands of contemporary urban life. On one hand, the distinctive aesthetic appeal of traditional handmade techniques grants Sancai art a strong cultural recognizability in public settings, establishing it as a key symbol of local cultural identity. On the other hand, the application of Sancai art in architectural decoration, environmental landscaping, and public cultural dissemination has propelled its transformation from a privately appreciated artifact into a form of socially shared art. For example, in modern architectural contexts, Sancai decorative ceramic panels are widely employed in both interior and exterior wall embellishments, cultural venue installations, and theme park landscapes, thereby enhancing the artistic appeal of architectural spaces while endowing public areas with deeper historical and cultural connotations (Gao Zhe, personal communication, November 2, 2024). The incorporation of modern Sancai art into venues such as the Sui-Tang Grand Canal Museum has further enriched the museum's cultural exhibition strategies. Through the unique expressive techniques of contemporary artists, these works reinterpret and convey historical narratives through artistic means, deepening the audience's sense of immersion and enhancing their understanding of history.

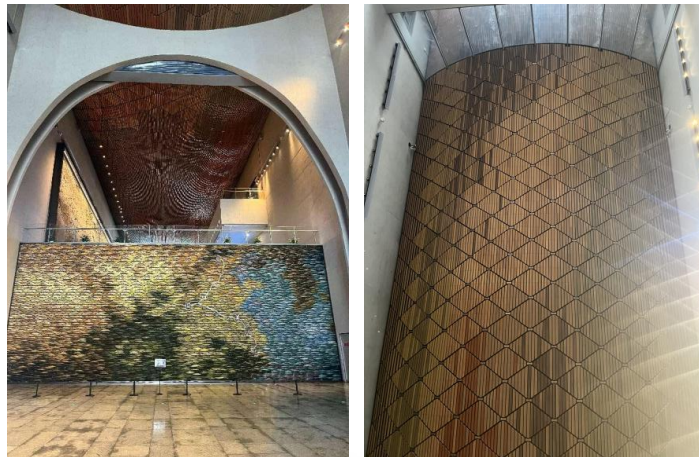


Figure 51 The Application of Sancai Art in Museum Space

Source: photographed by the Author

(2) Regional Cultural Symbolism

As a distinctive symbol of regional culture, Sancai art not only embodies the profound historical heritage of Luoyang but also strengthens the cultural identity of local residents (Guo Jiaqi, personal communication, October 16, 2024). Through contemporary design and artistic innovation, Sancai art bridges the historical and the modern, as well as local traditions and global markets, thereby emerging as a cultural emblem of Luoyang. Its unique glaze aesthetics and sculptural style grant it high visual recognizability, positioning it as a significant cultural symbol in both national and international cultural exchanges. During the 33rd World Hakka Conference held in Luoyang, Guo Jiaqi and his team meticulously designed the official invitation, which, after multiple rounds of refinement, was ultimately selected as the official souvenir of the conference. The front of the invitation features a central motif in the shape of a traditional Hakka tulou (earthen building), within which is inlaid a hand-glazed, kiln-fired Luoyang Sancai ceramic tile, bearing the Chinese characters “Huijia” (回家), written in clerical script. Notably, each ceramic piece exhibits a distinct glaze color, highlighting the artisanal individuality and cultural richness of Luoyang Sancai Art.



Figure 52 Huijia (回家) by Guojiaqi

Source: Yanshi Integrated Media. (Oct.21.2024). A 'city key' that allows customers to find the feeling of 'going home'!

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/iie5a8fXqMzc0IDpNxYSKg>

As an important symbol of regional culture, Luoyang Sancai Art has been widely applied in various fields such as city branding, cultural image promotion, and tourism souvenirs, becoming a unique cultural emblem of Luoyang. City branding in Luoyang can effectively enhance the city's overall competitiveness and fully showcase its distinctive features and beauty(Cai & Chen, 2010).

The revival of modern Sancai art has brought it new vitality in urban landscapes, festival activities, and public spaces (Liu Xinyu, personal communication, December 30, 2024). For example, during the 2025 Lantern Festival in Luoyang, Sancai art elements were widely used in festival lighting displays, further reinforcing its status as a cultural symbol of the city.



Figure 52 The Application of Sancai Art in Festival Lighting Art Exhibition

Source: photographed by the Author

(3) Contemporary Artistic Media

The symbols and elements of traditional Sancai art, with their distinctive colors, forms, and cultural connotations, have been innovatively extracted and applied in modern design, forming cross-disciplinary artistic expressions that have gradually permeated fields such as fashion design, makeup design, and product design (Li Jun, personal communication, November 5, 2024).

In the creative practice of modern Sancai art, the reconstruction and reinterpretation of traditional cultural elements have become important driving forces in design. The introduction of the “Five Elements color system” reflects contemporary artists’ reinvention based on respect for tradition. For example, the Twelve Zodiac Oracle Bone Script Sancai Watch Series integrates the theory of the Five Elements, zodiac culture, ceramic craftsmanship, and modern design concepts. Each watch dial is hand-painted and independently fired by ceramic master Guo Aihe, with each glaze effect uniquely formed through natural kiln transformation, echoing the Five Elements philosophy of “each person has their fate, determined by the natural order,” and embodying the traditional idea of the harmony between heaven and humanity in contemporary design.

Moreover, the series deeply integrates symbolic imagery such as oracle bone script, the twelve zodiac animals, and the Silk Road. Through the color pairing logic based on the mutual generation of the Five Elements, Sancai works are endowed with both aesthetic value and cultural fortune-related meaning. The Sancai watch is not only an innovative presentation of ceramic craftsmanship but also a fashionable carrier of cultural narrative. It integrates traditional art into contemporary life, enhances personal expression and cultural identity, and establishes an emotionally connected artistic channel between tradition and modernity.



Figure 53 The “Twelve Zodiac Oracle Bone Inscriptions” Sancai Watch Watch Series

Source: Sancai Art. (Mar.30.2015). 2015 Sancai Watch: Five Elements and Color Development

Retrieved from https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/i3YOPMBkAx_JnGMkfdDWMQ

In fashion design, the colors and form elements of Sancai art are skillfully integrated into fabric, patterns, and overall design. Typical Sancai tones such as yellow, green, white, and blue can be used as main or accent colors in modern fashion design. Designers extract color combinations and the fluidity from Sancai art to create clothing works that embody both historical depth and contemporary style.



Figure 54 The Application of Sancai Art in Fashion Design

Source: Fashion Week. (Jan.22.2022). Combining elements of the millennium Tang Dynasty, men's pants expert Jiumu Wang was highly sought after at the Century Paris Fashion Week

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/jai-bW2oJQsDEbRcxoY8AQ>

In contemporary makeup design, the color schemes and symbolic elements of Sancai art have also been widely adopted. The vibrant hues found in Sancai, particularly yellow, green, and white, are frequently applied in areas such as eye and lip makeup. For instance, Sancai-inspired eyeshadow can be used to create fluid gradient effects that evoke a sense of historical tradition while simultaneously aligning with modern beauty aesthetics. This creative integration bridges the cultural heritage of Luoyang Sancai Art with contemporary fashion trends, demonstrating the adaptability and evolving significance of modern Sancai art in cross-disciplinary visual culture.



Figure 55 The Application of Sancai Art in Makeup Design

Source: Guluouni. (May.30.2024). Tang Sancai X Eye Makeup

Retrieved from

https://www.xiaohongshu.com/user/profile/649f8b800000000010037c1c?xsec_token=YBy7Wf1I_ynffknIFsE8dWVP5NW5kQC3n8qwWtp2u2T50=&xsec_source=app_share&xhsshare=CopyLink&appuid=5b0a116f11be10069c46ec4f&apptime=1742762931&share_id=db0def806f5b40d9904c0d46c7581227

The glaze colors and decorative designs of Sancai art have also served as a source of inspiration for overall makeup styling. In contemporary design, the coordination between makeup colors and fashion attire reflects a harmonious aesthetic unity. Common decorative motifs in Sancai art, such as lotus patterns, cloud motifs, and dragon-phoenix designs, are incorporated into makeup through meticulous ornamentation. By echoing color schemes, employing symbolic decorative elements, and refining visual details, makeup acquires a deeper sense of cultural layering and artistic expression. This cross-disciplinary integration not only continues the traditional aesthetics of Sancai, but also revitalizes its expressive potential within the context of contemporary makeup design. In this way, Luoyang Sancai Art transcends its historical boundaries and enters into modern creative industries, highlighting the cultural adaptability and aesthetic resilience of modern Sancai art.



Figure 56 The Application of Sancai Art in Overall Makeup Design

Source: Tutuzhuangzao. (May.9.2025). Tang San Makeup Maker that can be obtained in 2 minutes

Retrieved from

https://www.xiaohongshu.com/user/profile/5febeb090000000001000f41?xsec_token=YBvfjMBRzS9v7MjtjQTi09x0FJvR6zNDGlsyLAviVRL24=&xsec_source=app_share&xhsshare=CopyLink&appuid=5b0a116f11be10069c46ec4f&apptime=1742764188&share_id=9dea6b5772fc4a999061a0d4da28a8ac

Sancai elements can also find distinctive applications in contemporary fashion accessories. For instance, the characteristic color palette of Sancai—including hues such as blue, yellow, and green—can be integrated into the design of jewelry, handbags, shoes, and other fashion items. Designers draw inspiration from the color combinations and intricate details of Sancai art to create fashion accessories that are both rich in traditional charm and aligned with modern aesthetic sensibilities. By extracting vibrant colors from Luoyang Sancai Art, such as cobalt blue and amber yellow, designers are able to craft jewelry pieces that are vivid, expressive, and artistically engaging. Moreover, the motifs and linear forms commonly found in Sancai decoration serve as a creative source for jewelry design, resulting in pieces that

embody cultural depth and heritage. In this way, modern Sancai art not only extends the legacy of traditional craftsmanship, but also actively participates in shaping contemporary fashion discourse.



Figure 57 The Application of Sancai Art in Jewelry Design

Source: Liliweiba. (Nov.7.2024). Baoxiang Headwear

Retrieved from

https://www.xiaohongshu.com/user/profile/6040678f000000000100a67a?xsec_token=YBvu0tQn7NxUN8l74Ficf-LA6o7qpK9crTzxwXHZw3m-w=&xsec_source=app_share&xhsshare=CopyLink&appuid=5b0a116f11be10069c46ec4f&apptime=1742764082&share_id=d2de0ef959164f7c904fe54be61f1c21

The application of Sancai art in graphic poster design allows for an effective fusion of traditional cultural aesthetics with contemporary design principles, resulting in works that are both visually compelling and rich in cultural significance. Through the strategic use of color, symbolic extraction, and formal expression, elements of Sancai can imbue poster compositions with a distinctive artistic atmosphere and profound cultural connotation (Liu Xinyu, personal communication, December 30, 2024).

The vivid and layered colors characteristic of Sancai, such as green, blue, yellow, and orange, can serve as dominant tones or background hues in poster design, immediately capturing the viewer's attention. For instance, the use of green and blue from the Sancai palette may evoke a sense of freshness and natural vitality, while yellow and orange contribute warmth and energetic resonance. The deliberate combination of these tones not only highlights the chromatic aesthetics of Sancai, but also enhances the overall visual impact and emotional expressiveness of the poster. In this way, the incorporation of Sancai elements into graphic design exemplifies how Luoyang Sancai Art continues to evolve within modern visual culture, bridging historical artistry with contemporary communication.



Figure 58 The Application of Sancai Art in Jewelry Design

Source: Luoyang Sancai Art Museum. (Sept.14.2021). The eighth stop of Luoyang Sancai Art Exhibition

Retrieved from https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/k5_0rMePwADiINK0hgrXOw

4.2.3.3 Conflicts and Adjustments in Cultural Transformation

The cultural transformation of Sancai art reflects the use and reinvention of traditional Chinese culture in modern society. From its origins in the Tang dynasty's elaborate burial system to its current role as a cultural symbol, Sancai art has undergone a transformation from a symbolic object tied to religion and funerary culture to forms such as daily life art and public art. This shift reflects profound changes in society, history, aesthetics, and cultural identity. The enhanced attribute of public art has enabled Sancai to serve not only as visual expression but also as a vehicle for cultural education, urban identity, and spiritual construction, thereby expanding the social function and communicative context of intangible cultural heritage (Gao Xiongfei, personal communication, October 18, 2024).

Traditional Sancai art is deeply rooted in the funerary culture and religious beliefs of the Tang dynasty, particularly in its function as burial goods, reflecting the ethic of respecting the dead and the concept of “serving the dead as one serves the living.” These artworks were not merely cultural symbols; they carried connotations of auspiciousness, longevity, and prosperity, and reflected the Tang society's hierarchical structure, religious systems, and pursuit of life continuation. Cultural symbols often serve as distinctive local markers that prompt different social groups to reflect on their cultural “roots” and express publicly their identity and self-worth (Bernardo Kuciukian, 1998).

Over time, particularly in the modern era, the symbolic meaning of Sancai art has gradually changed. Modern Sancai is no longer confined to religious or funerary functions, but increasingly incorporates emotional expression and personal cultural identity, expanding into broader applications such as homeware, fashion design, and public art, integrating more modern elements and practical functions. The symbols of traditional Sancai have been abstracted or modernized to better align with contemporary aesthetics and market demands (Gao Chao, personal communication, October 31, 2024). In this process, Sancai art has not only retained its historical and cultural characteristics but has also gained new vitality in modern design through the

innovative extraction of colors, patterns, and forms. For instance, in modern home and fashion design, the vibrant colors and traditional motifs of Sancai are reinterpreted to meet global market demands and the aesthetic preferences of younger generations. Through this cultural transformation, Sancai art has successfully evolved from a historical symbol into an active element of modern art and culture.

The cultural conflict and reconciliation between tradition and modernity, locality and globalization, are core issues in the changes of Sancai art. The aesthetic style and functional orientation of traditional Sancai emphasize cultural depth and social symbolism, while modern society demands greater innovation, utility, and global adaptability. How to balance regional cultural identity with international aesthetics, and how to innovate artistically while preserving tradition, have become key challenges in the development of Sancai art. With the advancement of globalization, the application of Sancai in modern design is no longer limited to local contexts but has become an important medium for global cultural exchange through cultural innovation.

4.2.4 Social Dimension: Changes of Production Mechanisms and Transmission Models

With the development of society, the production mechanisms and transmission models of Luoyang Sancai Art have undergone profound changes. From the traditional handicraft model to modern industrialized production, and further to the promotion of the cultural and creative industries, the production methods of Sancai art have experienced fundamental transformations. In this process, the role of the artist has also shifted—traditional craftsmen are gradually being replaced by modern designers and artists. In addition, the transmission model of Sancai art has gradually moved from family inheritance and apprenticeship systems to more diversified forms of education and cultural dissemination. This section will analyze how these transformations have influenced the inheritance and innovation of Sancai art and explore the balance between preservation and innovation of traditional art in modern society.

4.2.4.1 Traditional Production System in Pre-modern Society

In the traditional production system of Sancai art, the division of labor between official kilns and folk kilns, as well as the apprenticeship model of transmission, were two key aspects that significantly shaped the development of Sancai art and the continuity of its techniques. With historical evolution, particularly from the Tang to the Song and Yuan periods, the production and transmission modes of Sancai art underwent remarkable changes, deeply affecting craftsmanship inheritance, quality control, and artistic innovation.

(1) Policy Protection Mechanisms

Tang Sancai artifacts are mainly unearthed from kiln sites and tombs, though they have also been discovered at city ruins, residential areas, and temples(Qin et al., 2022). The Gongyi kiln site is located in Gongyi City, Henan Province, along both sides of the Xisi River, a tributary of the Yiluo River, covering areas such as Zhanjie Town, Beishankou Town, and Zijing Road Subdistrict. It is divided into the Huangye Kiln and the Baihe Kiln (Sun, 2024). Among them, the Huangye Kiln is the most important, with the largest production scale, the highest number of products, and the most advanced techniques during the early stages of Tang Sancai production. As shown in the figure below, it displays the form of the cave dwellings at that time .

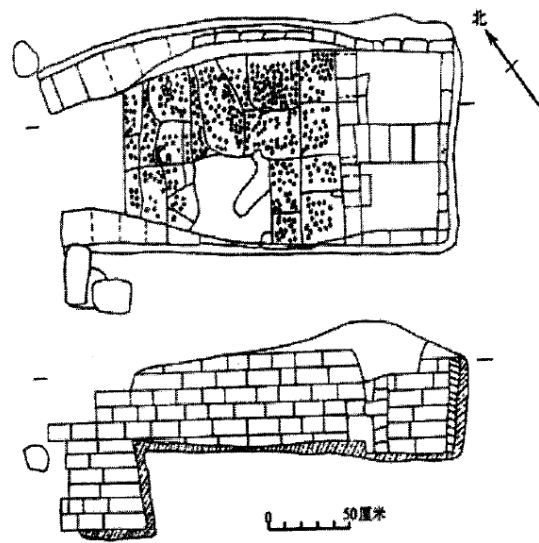


Figure 59 Drawing of Y5 in Zone II of Huangye Kiln Site

Source: Huaxia Archaeology. (2007). Brief report on excavation of Huangye kiln site in Gongyi City, Henan Province

Retrieved

from https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=XMmmt_ij6VFUeXzB4gFTj1gChO0zrMYE_N8AjoRxANG6n2swtfUvASys8eLGN82fFSOnb6YB60yMZBtAD-Ify6fAo_ssTAjjR3gb0qTqvoEgiOZBIQFvDa53FCYLpaZevNJFxzKbzyAQK43O3JwhmqQDG0AOVudA3Yz9ORt_7-3LaDdzbTIXKmVyqD04YB5&uniplatform=NZKPT

In the article *A Preliminary Study on the Development Trajectory of Tang Sancai Production*, Tang Sancai kiln sites already discovered are classified into two major categories based on their location, production environment, and production model: “Sancai kilns within porcelain kiln regions” and “Sancai kilns located near sales markets or areas of concentrated use” (Wang & Kato, 2002). The products of the Gongyi kiln were not only widely circulated and used domestically but also have solid empirical evidence of overseas dissemination. In 1998, the discovery of the Batu Hitam shipwreck off the coast of Belitung Island, Java, Indonesia, provided important physical proof of the international circulation of Gongyi kiln products (Sun, 2024).

These two production models of Tang Sancai were influenced not only by raw material availability but also by differences in the types and functions of mass-produced goods (Wang, 2021). The development of Tang Sancai was deeply shaped by the dual system of official kilns and folk kilns. Official kilns, operated under government control, were large in scale and refined in craftsmanship, producing high-quality wares for the court, religious institutions, and diplomatic purposes. Their products represented the pinnacle of both artistic and technical achievement, symbolizing power and status. In contrast, folk kilns were run by local craftsmen and aimed at the general public. Though smaller in scale, they offered a wide range of products with diverse forms, catering to the dual needs of practicality and decoration. While the technical standards of folk kilns were generally lower than those of official kilns, their flexibility and accessibility contributed significantly to the widespread dissemination of Sancai art.

By the Song and Yuan periods, folk kilns became increasingly localized and smaller in scale, aligning more closely with regional markets and popular aesthetics. After the Song dynasty, as the economic center shifted to the south, the population in Henan declined, its transportation advantages diminished, and competition from southern porcelain industries intensified. As a result, the Gongxian kilns gradually faded from the historical stage. It can be said that the prosperity of Tang Sancai was not only due to mature ceramic technologies but also deeply embedded in the political system, social structure, and economic framework of the time. Behind its material forms lay a complex mechanism of cultural production and meaning construction.

(2) Transmission Models

The most direct form of traditional craftsmanship transmission is bloodline inheritance, which relies on kinship to pass down skills, with generations depending on the craft for their livelihood (Yu, 2020). In the early 20th century, the core traditional craftsmanship of Tang Sancai was transmitted through a single-inheritor system, passed from father to son, but not to daughters (Gao, 2015). Unlike bloodline

inheritance, occupational inheritance does not depend on kinship ties; instead, it is mainly carried out through the master-apprentice system (Yu, 2020). As a significant transmission method for traditional Sancai art, the master-apprentice model not only ensured the continuity of skills but also shaped the identity of craftsmen. Through oral instruction and hands-on demonstration, artisans passed down core techniques such as firing methods and glaze composition formulas from generation to generation.

However, this experience-based method also had its limitations. The lack of written documentation put some techniques at risk of disappearing, especially amid social changes during the Ming and Qing dynasties and the differentiation between official and folk kilns, when many kiln sites declined due to the loss of inherited skills.

With industrial development, the traditional master-apprentice system has gradually been replaced by modern education systems. While this has improved the efficiency of knowledge transmission, it has also weakened the secrecy of family techniques and the spirit of craftsmanship. The transmission of Sancai art is shifting from a closed master-apprentice model to a more open and shared system of knowledge dissemination, in order to meet the developmental needs of the new era.

4.2.4.2 Reconstruction Pathways in Modern Society

Against the backdrop of profound social transformation, the transmission and development of Luoyang Sancai Art face not only challenges of the times but also opportunities for institutionalized protection and diversified innovation. With the restructuring of social systems and reshaping of cultural ecology, traditional craftsmanship confronts a dual proposition: “how to continue” and “how to transform.” As an important tradition in Chinese ceramic art, the reconstruction of Sancai art in modern society involves not only mechanisms for the protection of intangible cultural heritage but also the rebuilding of industrial logic, educational systems, and public cultural awareness. Through the joint efforts of national policies, academic research, market practice, and public participation, modern Sancai art has gradually become embedded in contemporary social systems, realizing its transformation from traditional

heritage to modern cultural resource. By examining policy promotion and innovative talent cultivation, this section outlines a modern reconstruction path supported by institutionalization, industrialization, and education, laying a practical foundation for the sustainable development of Sancai art.

(1) Policy Protection Mechanisms

As traditional crafts and art forms gradually decline in modern society, the role of national policies in their protection becomes increasingly critical. One of the reconstruction pathways in modern society is the establishment of effective intangible cultural heritage (ICH) protection mechanisms to ensure the transmission and innovation of traditional culture such as Sancai art. Traditional handicraft policies reflect the will of the state and ruling party in managing and guiding the development of traditional crafts; they define basic requirements and serve as a basis for regulating social relationships and addressing related issues (Zhang, 2022). The protection of Sancai art is not only about preserving techniques but also about the recreation of its cultural value, enabling it to gain renewed vitality in contemporary society.

Through long-term exploration, ICH legislation has played an active role in enhancing legal awareness, improving legislative quality, cultivating legislative professionals, innovating legal protection paths, aligning with international ICH frameworks, and constructing a China-specific ICH legal protection system (University, 2024). The promulgation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics in 1982, followed by the initiation of traditional craft protection plans by the Ministry of Culture and other departments in the 1990s, laid the groundwork for ICH protection. The issuance of the Regulations on the Protection of Traditional Craftsmanship in 1997 marked the beginning of ICH legislation in China. In October 2003, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, signifying the start of global ICH protection.

In the protection of intangible cultural heritage, it is essential to fully grasp the historical context and the intrinsic laws of cultural development (Yi et al., 2021). As ICH protection efforts deepen, it is increasingly recognized that “people” are

the core of ICH, and that safeguarding ICH must be people-oriented, focusing on the issue of inheritors(Huang & Li, 2023). The government has supported the protection of Sancai art by establishing systems for the recognition of inheritors, ensuring the continuation of skills. In 2008, the firing techniques of Tang Sancai were listed in the second batch of National Intangible Cultural Heritage, indicating its elevated level of national protection. Systems for inheritor recognition, technical research, and talent cultivation were gradually established. In 2009, Gao Shuiwang was named by the Ministry of Culture as the representative inheritor of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage Project for Tang Sancai firing techniques.

The government has increased funding support, research investment, and promotional efforts for Sancai techniques, gradually integrating it into the cultural tourism and creative industries, promoting the marketization of Sancai art. In 1986, Ye Peng, then president of Luoyang Normal College, initiated the establishment of a mural research studio, opening the path for the transmission and innovation of Sancai craftsmanship. In 2018, Luoyang Normal University undertook the National Arts Fund project Innovative Talent Training in Sancai Art, aiming to cultivate innovative high-level artistic talent and further promote the healthy and rapid development of Sancai art in China.

The government plays an important role in the protection of Sancai art as intangible cultural heritage. First, the construction of museums and cultural institutions provides a public platform for the exhibition and dissemination of Sancai art. By establishing specialized Sancai art museums or cultural centers, the government can popularize the historical and cultural value of Sancai art to the public and provide systematic materials and sample support for researchers (Gao Zhe, personal communication, November 2, 2024). These museums not only exhibit classical works of traditional Sancai but also engage visitors through dynamic exhibitions and interactive experiences, deepening their appreciation of this traditional art form.

Academic research plays a crucial role in the protection of Sancai art as intangible cultural heritage. Through in-depth studies of its history, techniques, and cultural connotations, academia provides theoretical support for the preservation, restoration, and innovation of Sancai artworks. Moreover, academic research helps to document and preserve traditional techniques, such as firing methods, glaze formulations, and carving techniques, providing a reliable knowledge system for future generations. Collaboration between academia and artisans also promotes technical innovation and cultural reinterpretation of Sancai art in contemporary contexts.

(2) Industrialization Model

With the rapid development of the cultural tourism industry, the industrialization model of Sancai art has gradually integrated with cultural tourism, opening up new pathways for the inheritance and development of this traditional craft. Sancai workshops have become important carriers of this industrialization model. For example, the China Tang Sancai Cultural Park, established by Zhang Ernau and Zhang Yipeng, sixth-generation inheritors of the Zhang family kiln, allows visitors not only to observe the production process of Sancai works but also to experience traditional techniques through hands-on activities.

Especially within the context of cultural tourism, the park has attracted a large number of visitors for viewing and participation and has become an important platform for cultural dissemination, enabling Sancai art to reach a broader audience (Zhang Yipeng, personal communication, October 27, 2024).



Figure 60 International exchange group experiences Sancai production

Source: photographed by the Author

In contemporary society, experiential learning has become an important form of integrating culture with education. The China Tang Sancai Cultural Park combines Sancai art with educational experiences, allowing students and young people to learn and engage with the process of Sancai production through hands-on practice. This not only enhances their interest in traditional culture but also enables them to personally experience the charm of traditional craftsmanship. Such educational experiences also play a crucial role in cultivating the next generation's recognition of and commitment to the inheritance of traditional culture.

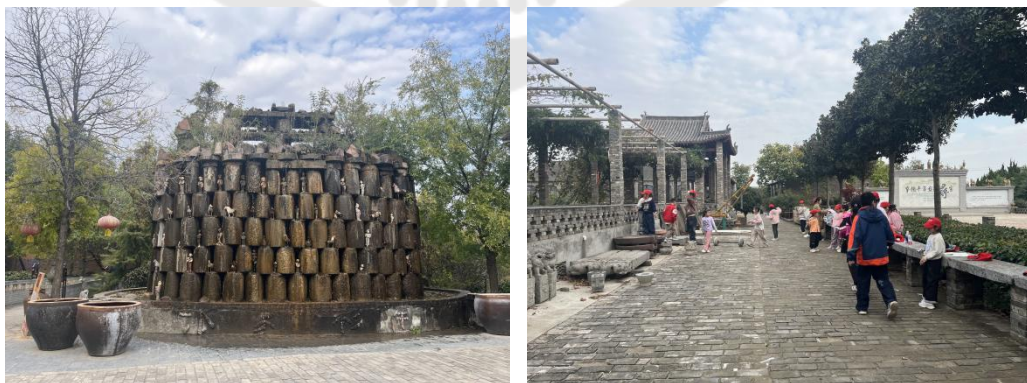


Figure 61 Youth Sancai Study Activity

Source: photographed by the Author

In addition, the industrialization of Sancai art is also reflected in the development of cultural and creative products. By integrating elements of traditional Sancai art with contemporary design concepts, a series of cultural and creative products that meet modern market demands have been developed, including Sancai-style home decorations, cultural gifts, and ceramic artworks. These products not only expand the application scope of Sancai art in the market but also enhance the recognition and dissemination of its cultural value.

(3) Educational Transmission

Luoyang Normal University, rooted in the region's rich traditional cultural resources, has established several relevant academic courses, such as Sancai Art Design and Production and Research on Cultural Creative Product Design. It also promotes project-based teaching through provincial-level initiatives, including the project A Study on the Coordinated Development Path of the Inheritance and Industrialization of Luoyang Tang Sancai Art under the Strategy of Cultural Tourism and Creative Integration, and has established a "Sancai Art Practice Workshop."

For example, the featured course Sancai Craft Inheritance and Innovative Design aims to cultivate students' practical skills in Sancai Ceramic Painting techniques and their capacity for innovative design in Sancai-related cultural products. Through the study and practice of techniques such as line outlining, glaze preparation, and glaze application, students acquire fundamental skills in Sancai Ceramic Painting and develop both hands-on abilities and creative design awareness.



Figure 62 Sancai Craftsmanship Inheritance and Innovative Design Course and Achievements

Source: Luoyang Normal University School of Fine Arts and Art Design. (Jan.18.2024). Colorful Splendor ,The Inheritance and Innovative Design of Sancai Craftsmanship (II)

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/X8TGPmAsv8L7349I3s1cuw>

4.2.4.3 Challenges of Social Transformation

With the changes in social and economic environments, Sancai art faces a series of challenges, mainly including the impact of modern technology and intergenerational discontinuity. These challenges not only threaten the traditional craftsmanship and cultural transmission of Sancai art but also affect its adaptability in modern society.

With the development of modern manufacturing technologies, modern techniques such as electric kiln firing have significantly improved the production efficiency of Sancai artworks. However, they have also led to the problem of product homogenization, weakening the uniqueness and artistic expression of traditional craftsmanship. Rapid mass production has reduced the dependence on artisans in the creation of Sancai, diminishing individuality in form, color, and decoration, and reducing market appeal. In a contemporary market that emphasizes individuality and innovation, the value of traditional handcrafts has been marginalized, the role of artisans has

gradually faded, and the cultural depth and artistic charm of Sancai art have been negatively impacted.

Sancai art is also at risk of intergenerational discontinuity. Due to the high and complex technical requirements of traditional Sancai art, combined with modern society's pursuit of quick economic returns, the younger generation is gradually distancing itself from this field, resulting in a scarcity of practitioners. Nowadays, more young people choose to work in high-income industries such as technology and finance, while the appeal of traditional handcrafts continues to decline. Even among those who are interested in Sancai art, few are willing to enter the field due to long learning periods and unstable income (Dong, personal communication, November 2, 2024). Traditional craftsmanship typically relies on inheritance through bloodlines or the master-apprentice system, but with the gradual retirement of older artisans and the lack of young successors, the effective transmission of techniques is increasingly difficult.

The core of traditional Sancai techniques depends on the precise control of glaze color composition and firing temperature, which are high-level skills that are passed down through hands-on experience and practical training. However, the younger generation is less receptive to this mode of learning, making the loss of traditional techniques an issue that cannot be ignored. The loss of these skills is not only a cultural regret but also limits the ability of Sancai art to adapt to the demands of the new era.

To address these challenges, Sancai creative cultural parks and museums have adopted the model of "living displays" to integrate traditional Sancai art with modern society and promote its transmission and innovation in contemporary culture. In such "living displays", traditional Sancai techniques are not only showcased but also demonstrated through on-site production and interactive experiences, allowing visitors to experience the making process and cultural significance of Sancai art. This approach not only enhances public understanding of Sancai art but also increases the interest of younger generations in traditional arts, encouraging more people to engage in learning and creating Sancai works.

In addition, cooperation with local art schools and craft academies has been established to provide instruction and seminars on Sancai techniques, cultivating a new generation of Sancai artists (Gao Chao, personal communication, October 31, 2024). Furthermore, museums also encourage modern designers to incorporate Sancai elements into contemporary artworks, for example, by applying Sancai colors and forms to modern decoration, interior design, and cultural creative products, thus breathing new life into traditional Sancai art.

4.2.5 Economic Dimension: Changes of Market Logic and Consumer Demands

The market demand and consumption logic surrounding Sancai art have evolved significantly with time. From ancient religious rituals and funerary objects to modern art collections and cultural tourism products, the consumer landscape of Sancai art has undergone multiple transformations. With the acceleration of globalization and the rise of cultural industries, Sancai art has transitioned from a niche traditional market to a broader contemporary art market. Especially with the development of digital art and the cultural creative industries, the commercialization and marketization of Sancai art have greatly advanced. This section will explore the driving forces behind changing market demands and analyze how modern consumer culture has influenced Sancai art's performance and development in the art market.

4.2.5.1 Traditional Economic Models

Consumers of Tang Sancai ranged from royalty and high-ranking officials to lower-level bureaucrats and affluent commoners, and even extended into monastic circles, indicating a wide and diverse consumer base (Ren, 2022). Market demand and economic factors accelerated the industrialization of Sancai art. From a royal-exclusive craft to cultural creative products, tourism souvenirs, and commercial art installations, evolving market needs have continually prompted Sancai art to redefine its positioning. Modern Sancai has entered sectors such as high-end home décor, custom art, and the cultural tourism industry, and through branding strategies, has evolved from a collectible artifact to a cultural consumer good.

The Tang Dynasty represented the peak of China’s feudal economic and cultural development. With flourishing handicrafts and urban economies, the period provided abundant resources and a strong market for Sancai production. A robust system of official and civilian kilns ensured high production standards. The well-developed transportation and trade networks promoted the widespread dissemination of Sancai wares and reinforced their social influence. However, as economic activity shifted southward during the Ming and Qing dynasties and ceramic demand patterns changed, northern kilns gradually declined, constraining both the scale and artistic style of Sancai production. Tang Sancai, as the pinnacle of traditional Sancai art, continues to achieve exceptional results in international auction markets, reflecting its enduring artistic value and historical significance (Gao Zhe, personal communication, November 2, 2024).

Table 18 Transaction Status of Tang Sancai Works in the Auction Market

ID	0104	0045	0272
IMAGE			
NAME	Tang Sancai stickers with floral patterns, phoenix head holding pot 唐三彩贴花卉纹 凤首执壶	Tang Sancai Pottery Horses (a pair) 唐三彩陶马（一对）	Tang Sancai Female Sitting Figurines 唐三彩女坐俑
SIZE	H 36.8cm	Dark Horse : H 69.6cm; Brown Horse : H 67.9cm	H 40.6cm

ID	0104	0045	0272
FINAL PRICE	2,725,000 GDP	4,197,000 USD	1,330,000 USD
RMB	26,105,500 RMB	25,681,443 MRB	8,659,630 RMB
AUVTION COMPANY	Sotheby's in London	Sotheby's in New York	Sotheby's in New York
AUCTION SALE	2015 Spring Chinese Art Treasures	Autumn 2013 Chinese Porcelain and Crafts	Chinese Art Treasures at the 2016 New York Asian Art Week
TIME	May.13.2015	Sept.17.2013	Mar.16.2016

4.2.5.2 Modern Market Transformation

With the revival of Sancai art and changes in market demand, Sancai has not only regained vitality in the traditional ceramic craft sector but has also undergone transformation in the modern art market, cultural tourism consumption, and brand strategy implementation.

(1) Art Market

The transformation of the modern market has enabled Sancai art to extend beyond traditional ceramic craftsmanship into the realms of art collection, cultural tourism consumption, and brand-oriented strategies. The high premium value of Sancai artworks, the growing market demand for commemorative items, and the geographical indication certification and IP development of “Luoyang Sancai” have created new opportunities for Sancai art in contemporary society, while also enhancing its status in the global cultural and art markets (Li Jun, personal communication, November 5, 2024). This transformation has not only promoted the commercialization of Sancai art but has also facilitated the dissemination of local culture and the development of regional economies.

As market recognition and demand for Sancai art increase, certain works that possess artistic innovation and historical-cultural value are commanding higher premiums at auctions and in private sales (Gao Zhe, personal communication, November 2, 2024). The historical significance, uniqueness of the piece, and reputation of the artist have become critical factors in determining value, driving Sancai art into higher tiers of the fine art market.

With the growing global attention to Sancai art, some outstanding Sancai works have achieved high premiums in the international art market. Artists such as Gao Shuiwang have creatively inherited and developed traditional Sancai techniques, incorporating elements of contemporary art while preserving the essence of traditional craftsmanship. As a result, their works possess significant artistic and collectible value. For instance, Gao Shuiwang's pieces have been collected by more than fifty museums including the National Museum of China and the China Arts and Crafts Museum, and have been acquired by numerous political leaders, foreign heads of state, heads of international organizations, and UNESCO directors-general. This demonstrates the rising global influence of Sancai art on the international art stage.

Such a transformation in the art market has positioned Sancai art as a highly valuable artistic form, attracting increasing interest from collectors and investors. On September 6, 2020, Gao Shuiwang's signature works Black Horse and Sancai Camel appeared in the Beijing Xiangyunxuan Grand Auction. After fierce bidding, the pieces were sold for 2.2 million RMB, indicating their exceptional artistic and market value.

(2) Cultural Tourism Consumption

With the advancement of brand building and the enhancement of cultural identity, Sancai art has gradually become integrated into the cultural tourism market, emerging as a key category of travel souvenirs. Miniature Sancai horses, "Tang Girls," and other small-scale Sancai artworks are favored by tourists for their distinct regional characteristics and rich cultural connotations. These pieces not only serve as

tangible cultural memories for visitors but also showcase the charm of Sancai art in daily life (Gao Zhe, personal communication, November 2, 2024).



Figure 63 Modern Sancai cultural and creative products

Source: photographed by the Author

As an important vehicle for cultural tourism products, Sancai art has facilitated its commercialization, promoted the dissemination of local culture, and contributed to regional economic growth. Heritage is, in fact, a new mode of cultural production that gives a second life to endangered ways of life, economies, and places (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1988) . Through in-depth integration with historical and cultural sites, museums, and cultural parks, Sancai art has not only enriched the cultural dimension of the tourism experience but also become a crucial component of local tourism industry chains.

In the development of local cultural industries, the role of Sancai art has become increasingly prominent. Local governments have actively supported its innovation and promotion, propelling Sancai art into a representative cultural brand that attracts tourists and investment, thereby stimulating regional economic development. For example, the Luoyang Sancai (International) Ceramic Art Village in Luoning County has leveraged Sancai art to stimulate the rural economy, improve living environments, and achieve cultural empowerment for rural revitalization. This initiative has not only

revitalized Sancai art, but also opened new avenues for the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture (Liu Xinyu, personal communication, December 30, 2024).



Figure 64 Aihe Town

Source: photographed by the Author

(3) Branding Strategies

Against the backdrop of intangible cultural heritage protection and the upgrading of cultural consumption, “Sancai Yi,” as a new representative brand of Luoyang Sancai Art, has explored a brand development path that integrates traditional craftsmanship with modern commerce. Its practices have not only promoted the inheritance and innovation of Sancai art but also injected new vitality into the local cultural industry. Brand economy is the product of productivity and market economy reaching a certain stage of development. It is an advanced form of market economy that integrates various economic elements around brand identity and drives the overall economic operation (Liang, 2012).

“Sancai Yi”, based on the geographical indication of “Luoyang Sancai”, establishes its origin identity and cultural lineage, safeguards brand intellectual property rights, enhances product recognition and market trust, and shapes the image of “authentic Sancai”, thereby strengthening brand identity and loyalty (Guo Jiaqi, personal communication, October 16, 2024). The brand deeply explores the visual language and cultural connotations of Sancai art, promotes IP-based development,

integrates traditional elements into modern design, and extends into home decoration, cultural and creative products, fashion, and other fields to create products with contemporary aesthetics and practical value. At the same time, through collaboration with cultural tourism, museums, and education sectors, it expands communication channels and realizes brand rejuvenation and diversification. For example, the “Sancai CHORD” car fragrance, themed “Autumn Journey”, combines traditional craftsmanship with modern lifestyle aesthetics, showcasing the beauty of natural kiln transformations and endowing Sancai art with new vitality.



Figure 65 Sancai Craftsmanship Inheritance and Innovative Design Course and Achievements

Source: Luoyang Sancai Art Museum. (Sept.16.2024). Sancai [Autumn Moon Fragrance] CHORD Car Fragrance

Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/YFN3EhGG98CkiaUsLaZUww>

4.2.5.3 The Double-Edged Effect of Economic Drivers

As Sancai art becomes increasingly commercialized in modern society, its expansion in the market has brought both positive and negative effects. From the perspective of economic motivation, the marketization of Sancai art has promoted the inheritance and innovation of techniques but also faces the problem of artistic dilution due to excessive commercialization.

(1) Positive: Market Revenue Supports Craft Transmission and Encourages Innovation

In adapting to the development of the market economy, reasonable and orderly utilization based on the protection of intangible cultural heritage can create economic value, allowing people to gain economic returns and thus transforming protection into a purposeful and motivated conscious action(Huang & Li, 2023). With the growing market demand for Sancai art, the income of artists has increased accordingly. This has provided greater support for the preservation of traditional craftsmanship and techniques. Commercialization has offered Sancai artists more funding and platforms for creation and display, thereby promoting the safeguarding and inheritance of traditional crafts. For example, funding from local governments and intangible cultural heritage protection programs often depends on market revenues. The commercialization process of Sancai art has facilitated capital inflow, allowing for further development and innovation of traditional techniques.

The diversification of market demand has driven innovations in the form, design, and application of Sancai art. In order to meet the aesthetic preferences of contemporary consumers, artists have gradually incorporated modern elements, adopted new technologies and techniques, and developed Sancai artworks that cater to modern lifestyles, such as home decorations, wall art, and small-scale artistic items. This innovation has not only revitalized traditional art forms but also provided broader creative space and market opportunities for artists.

(2) Negative: Excessive Commercialization Leads to Dilution of Artistic Value

As Sancai artworks enter the market, some producers, in order to cater to mass-market demand, excessively simplify and reduce the quality of their products, causing certain Sancai items to lose their original cultural and artistic value. Although the industrialization of culture may appear to revive traditional culture at certain levels, it also faces the risks of cultural alienation and damage caused by commodification (Ai, 2019). For instance, low-cost Sancai souvenirs such as miniature

animal figurines or tea sets may prioritize marketability and mass production in terms of color and form, while neglecting the refinement and artistry of traditional craftsmanship. As a result, the artistic quality of Sancai art is weakened. These low-quality products not only fail to convey the historical and cultural significance of Sancai art but also diminish consumer recognition and interest.

To meet the needs of mass markets and popular consumption, many Sancai artworks are produced through mechanized and standardized processes, resulting in homogeneity in form, color, and technique. This commercial nature of Tang Sancai crafts determines that the development of Tang Sancai products in Nanshishan is bound to be large-scale and mass-produced(Lei, 2017). However, the oversaturation of low-cost, homogeneous Sancai products in the market makes it difficult to reflect the uniqueness and cultural value of the art, leading to the loss of traditional artistic essence and creativity. Therefore, the contradiction between mass production and the inherent artistic quality of Tang Sancai crafts must be squarely addressed in the process of industrialization(Lei, 2017).

On e-commerce platforms, the sale of Sancai artworks presents a dual-track model of high-end customization and mass-market products. The former emphasizes craftsmanship and cultural value and targets the collectors' market, while the latter attracts the general public with low prices and mass production, but lacks artistic and cultural depth, leading to homogeneity and weakened cultural significance. The market development of Sancai art must strike a balance between popular promotion and cultural value, avoiding excessive commercialization that undermines its artistic essence and cultural identity.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an overall summary of the study, systematically reviewing the development trajectory of Luoyang Sancai Art from tradition to modernity. It also offers an in-depth analysis of the driving mechanisms and interactions behind its multidimensional changes, focusing on five key dimensions: technology, art, culture, society, and economy.

5.1 A Brief Summary of the Study

This chapter offers a comprehensive summary of the study, systematically reviewing the developmental trajectory of Luoyang Sancai Art from its traditional roots to modern transformation. The research covers the evolution of Sancai art across history and analyzes its multidimensional transition into modern Sancai art, focusing on five key dimensions: technology, art, culture, society, and economy. It concludes by discussing the findings and proposing future research directions.

5.1.1 Historical Development Stages of Luoyang Sancai Art

This study first introduces the traditional developmental trajectory of Sancai art, reviewing its origins and evolution, with a focus on the Tang dynasty as its golden age and an emphasis on its role in funerary culture and social hierarchy. Subsequently, the study explores the development process of modern Sancai art, analyzing the influence of technological advancement, market demand, and cultural transmission.

By systematically tracing the developmental history of Luoyang Sancai Art from its origins in the Han dynasty to contemporary innovations, the study finds that the historical changes in Sancai art are not isolated or linear. Rather, they represent a staged trajectory of cultural evolution deeply embedded in the traditional Chinese social structure, aesthetic systems, and mechanisms of cultural identity. These developments are both the result of accumulated historical forces and a process of cultural self-renewal and adaptation to social transformation.

5.1.1.1 The Germination and Exploration Stage: From Technical Experimentation to Cultural Prototype

From the Han dynasty to the Northern and Southern dynasties, Sancai techniques were based on low-fired lead-glazed ceramics, initially establishing a decorative language for glazed pottery. During this stage, Sancai had not yet formed an independent artistic style, but its integrated “object–ritual–symbol” cultural function laid a critical technical and cultural foundation for the later development of Tang Sancai. Its identity as “northern glazed pottery” also highlights its regional characteristics at the confluence of diverse cultures in the Yellow River basin.

5.1.1.2 The Maturity and Peak Stage: From Imperial Utensils to Artistic Zenith

The Tang dynasty marked the peak of Sancai art, with technical and aesthetic achievements reaching a high level of integration. At this time, Sancai was not only used in funerary contexts but also served as a symbol of power and a material expression of national cultural identity. Its rich colors, realistic forms, and refined craftsmanship made Tang Sancai a carrier of the inclusive, diverse, and open spirit of the High Tang era. Its social function expanded beyond practical use to become a symbol of cultural identity, initiating its historical role as a medium of cultural transmission.

5.1.1.3 The Decline and Transformation Stage: From Central Usage to Functional Shift

After the brilliance of the Tang dynasty, Sancai art gradually retreated from the central stage, especially as its status declined under the Song dynasty’s shifting aesthetic values. Although it retained some applications in architectural decoration and religious sculpture, its artistic style became more restrained, with its cultural function shifting toward decoration and utility. This period, though marked by “marginalization,” was also a potential starting point for Sancai culture’s gradual penetration into everyday life.

5.1.1.4 The Reappearance and Restoration Stage: From Archaeological Awakening to Technical Reconstruction

In the early 20th century, the archaeological discoveries of Tang tombs in Beiyang Mountain, Luoyang, rekindled interest in Sancai art. The efforts by artisans in Nanshishan Village to restore and replicate Tang Sancai marked a critical moment when Sancai transitioned from “historical memory” to “cultural practice.” During this stage, activities centered on replication and restoration. Although innovation was limited, this period saw the reconstruction of essential techniques, laying the groundwork for modern development.

5.1.1.5 The Neo-Antique Transmission Stage: From Industrial Revival to Cultural Reawakening

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, with supportive policies and growing market demand, Luoyang Sancai experienced an industrial revival. The mass production of neo-antique Sancai led to the initial establishment of systems for craft standards, product categorization, and market pathways. Meanwhile, Sancai gradually transitioned from a “replicative craft” to a more “design-oriented art form,” gaining potential for artistic reinvention.

5.1.1.6 The Stage of Innovative Development: From Artistic Innovation to Cultural Ecology

Since the 1980s, academic research and the involvement of higher education institutions have driven Sancai’s transition from traditional folk craft to scholarly art. Sancai art began to move beyond the limits of antique replication toward diversified artistic expression and expanded cultural functions. Its forms have extended from traditional ceramic sculpture to murals, installation art, cultural and creative products, and public art, actively participating as a visual cultural symbol in shaping contemporary social spaces. Sancai art has also started to integrate with digital technologies, eco-friendly materials, and international exchange, entering a phase of “living intangible heritage” reproduction. This marks a fundamental transformation from “historical reenactment” to “cultural ecology.”

5.1.2 The Changes from Traditional Sancai Art to Modern Sancai Art

Through multiple dimensions, this study deeply analyzes the transformation process from traditional Sancai art to modern Sancai art and explores the interactive mechanisms behind the changes in Sancai art. The mutual interaction among these multidimensional changes has driven the innovation and transformation of Sancai art.

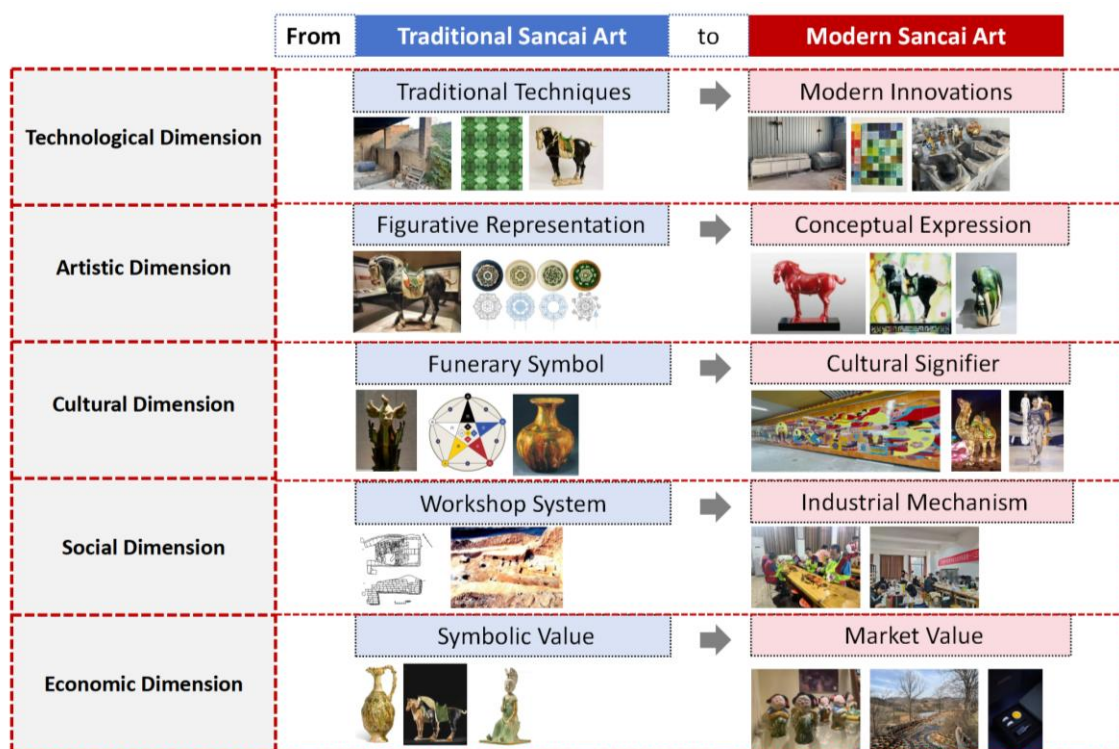


Figure 66 Five Dimensions of the Changes

Source: designed by the Author

5.1.2.1 Technological Dimension: From Traditional Techniques to Modern Innovations

The development of Luoyang Sancai Art has always been accompanied by technological innovation. Beginning with low-fired lead-glazed ceramics in the Han dynasty, it matured during the Tang dynasty, forming a core system based on Mangshan kaolin clay, refined glaze recipes, and wood-fired kilns. The effects of kiln variation and glaze fluidity exhibited the unique charm of traditional “fuzzy aesthetics.” In

modern times, with breakthroughs in eco-friendly glazes, electric kiln temperature control, and innovations in Sancai ceramic painting techniques, the expressive power and market space of Sancai art have been continuously expanded. The instability of traditional wood kilns has been effectively resolved, realizing a transformation from craftsmanship to industrialization. Gao Shuiwang's restoration of traditional techniques and Guo Aihe's application of modern technologies form a vivid contrast between tradition and modernity, demonstrating the diverse possibilities for artistic innovation driven by technological changes, and highlighting the dynamic synergy and developmental potential of Luoyang Sancai Art between tradition and modern breakthroughs.

5.1.2.2 Artistic Dimension: From Figurative Representation to Conceptual Expression

Traditional Luoyang Sancai Art emphasizes figurative and realistic representation. The themes of its works often include people, animals, and objects, expressed in a highly realistic style to reflect daily life or symbolize auspicious meanings. With the shift in modern artistic concepts and aesthetic preferences, Sancai art has gradually evolved toward abstraction, symbolism, and expressiveness. Artists began focusing on the formal beauty between glaze and form, the texture of materials, and the abstract meaning and inner spirituality of their works. Modern Sancai art thus gradually broke away from strict thematic constraints and started to explore pure aesthetic experience and conceptual expression, enriching its artistic language. In addition, through cross-disciplinary integration and the introduction of modern artistic ideas, Sancai art has gradually entered the mainstream field of contemporary ceramic art, forming increasingly diverse creative styles.

5.1.2.3 Cultural Dimension: From Funerary Symbol to Cultural Signifier

Traditional Sancai art initially emerged within the funerary culture of the Tang dynasty, primarily presented in the form of burial objects. Its symbolic meanings included wealth, power, and expectations for a better afterlife. With gradual shifts in societal and cultural concepts, modern Sancai art has progressively departed from its original funerary context and has been integrated into daily life, aesthetic enjoyment,

and artistic expression. It has become a medium that reflects modern lifestyle and cultural character. Especially in today's social context, Sancai art has been endowed with new symbolic meanings and identity, representing not only regional cultural characteristics but also becoming a symbolic expression of cultural confidence and the innovative revival of traditional craftsmanship. Furthermore, in the context of globalization and cultural exchange, Luoyang Sancai Art has gradually developed into a cross-cultural symbol through international exchange, further expanding its cultural significance in both depth and breadth.

5.1.2.4 Social Dimension: From Workshop System to Industrial Mechanism

The traditional production mechanism of Sancai art was primarily based on individual or small-scale workshop models. Skills were passed down through master-apprentice systems or family inheritance, forming a relatively closed production mode. Since the contemporary era, with societal transformation and the development of the market economy, Sancai art has gradually shifted toward large-scale, industrialized, and market-oriented production. New social organizational forms such as specialized enterprises, craft research institutions, and art design companies have emerged, leading Luoyang Sancai Art toward marketization and socialized production. However, this transition has also introduced new challenges, such as generational gaps in skills transmission and the compromise of traditional techniques in favor of standardized modern production. Thus, the transformation of the social dimension has both promoted the market expansion and cultural dissemination of Sancai art and posed the risk of decline for traditional craftsmanship, urgently calling for the establishment of a new cultural ecosystem and protection system.

5.1.2.5 Economic Dimension: From Symbolic Value to Market Value

The economic model of traditional Sancai art mainly focused on imperial tributes or daily folk crafts, with relatively stable economic value but limited market scale. In recent years, with the rapid development of the tourism industry and the growth of cultural consumption demand, Luoyang Sancai Art has gradually entered the markets of tourist souvenirs, cultural and creative products, and high-end artworks, leading to significant industrial expansion. In addition, with increasing recognition of Tang Sancai

in the international collector's market, the auction market for Tang Sancai has rapidly developed, with top-quality works repeatedly achieving high prices, significantly boosting their market value. This rise in the high-end market has not only enhanced the overall economic value of Sancai art but also promoted the internationalization and refinement of its cultural brand. However, the rapid expansion of the economic dimension has also led to tensions between artistry and commercialization. The market is flooded with large quantities of low-quality replicas and souvenirs, which weaken the artistic purity and cultural value of Sancai art. Therefore, finding a balance between commercialization, marketization, and the elevation of artistic value has become a key issue in the current economic development of Luoyang Sancai Art.

5.1.3 Conclusion

The development of Luoyang Sancai Art from traditional Sancai to modern Sancai represents a process of cultural inheritance and innovation integration. Through a systematic investigation of Luoyang Sancai Art, this study reveals its evolutionary path from tradition to modernity from two aspects: historical development stages and multidimensional changes. Historically, Luoyang Sancai Art has undergone a trajectory from primitive accumulation in the Han dynasty, flourishing and maturation in the Tang dynasty, marginal transformation during the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, to archaeological revival and industrial reboot in the 20th century, and finally advancing toward contemporary cross-disciplinary integration and cultural reproduction. This reflects a historical progression of "origin – glory – transformation – revival – innovation."

On this basis, the study further analyzes the key mechanisms of modern transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art from five dimensions: technology, art, culture, society, and economy. Technologically, it has shifted from wood-fired kilns and low-temperature lead glazes to electric kilns with precise temperature control and environmentally friendly glazes, driving technical breakthroughs. Artistically, it has evolved from figurative realism to abstract expression, expanding its artistic language. Culturally, it has transformed from an identity symbol in funerary rituals to a visual symbol of contemporary cultural confidence. At the social level, it has shifted from

individual workshops to industrial organizations, reshaping the transmission mechanism. Economically, it has developed from noble tributes and daily utensils into cultural creative products and high-end artworks, with continuously increasing market value.

Overall, the development of Luoyang Sancai Art is not only a continuation of traditional craftsmanship, but also a typical case of cultural reproduction and artistic innovation driven by multidimensional forces, demonstrating the dynamic transformation and sustained vitality of traditional art in a modern context.

5.2 Discussion of Results

This chapter systematically discusses the research findings from a cultural anthropological perspective, focusing on the historical evolution and cultural reconstruction of Luoyang Sancai Art from tradition to modernity. It highlights the core logic of “staged development,” “multidimensional driving forces,” “boundary reconstruction,” and “ecological construction.” The study demonstrates that Sancai art is not only a representative of traditional Chinese ceramic craftsmanship but also a dynamic and continuously translated cultural system. Its modern transformation reflects the multi-layered negotiation between “tradition” and “modernity,” and exemplifies the cultural adaptability logic of intangible cultural heritage in contemporary society.

Compared with previous literature, this study adopts a more systematic and dynamic perspective to analyze the changes in Luoyang Sancai Art. As reviewed in Chapter Two, scholars such as Ye Zhemin (2022) and the Chinese Ceramic Society (1982) have laid a solid foundation for understanding the technological evolution and historical significance of Chinese ceramics and Tang Sancai. However, their research has mainly focused on technical descriptions, typological classifications, and historical investigations, with relatively limited exploration of how Sancai art undergoes cultural reinterpretation and transformation within contemporary contexts. Similarly, studies by Guo Aihe (2012) and Huang Xiangqian and Sun Wen (2018) have highlighted the significance of Luoyang Sancai Art within multiple cultural contexts and analyzed its historical development and partial modern practices. Nevertheless, their discussions largely emphasize historical continuity and pay insufficient attention to the dynamic

negotiation of boundaries between tradition and modernity, as well as the mechanisms of cultural reproduction in the context of globalization.

5.2.1 Staged Evolution and Cultural Logic: From Historical Embedding to Cultural Regeneration

Through a systematic review of the development of Luoyang Sancai Art from its origins in the Han dynasty to its contemporary innovations, it becomes clear that its trajectory did not evolve in isolation but was deeply embedded within the broader historical and cultural transformations of China. Human beings are fundamentally the same in both body and mind and should not be subject to discrimination. Culture, as a "way of life," exists among all ethnic groups, each shaped by and adapted to its specific environment. Every culture holds practical value for its own people and should not be arbitrarily disparaged by outsiders (Lin, 2011). This study confirms the stage-based evolutionary characteristics of ceramic art as proposed by Ye Zhemin (2022) through a detailed examination of the historical development of Luoyang Sancai Art.

The developmental history of Luoyang Sancai Art presents the typical characteristics of continuity, disruption, and regeneration, with its functional positioning, aesthetic features, social roles, and cultural identity exhibiting a dynamic evolutionary logic across different historical periods.

British cultural anthropologist Edward Tylor proposed the theory of "Primitive culture" in his book *Primitive Culture*, arguing that all cultures undergo an evolutionary process from primitive stages to civilized stages (Tylor, 1987). Each stage of cultural development is both the result of the previous stage and the foundation for the next. Luoyang Sancai Art precisely reflects such a logic of continuity and transformation, from primitive accumulation, peak maturity, to functional transformation, marginal dormancy, and eventually cultural revival and reproduction.

The period from the Han to the Northern and Southern Dynasties represents the stage of primitive accumulation, during which low-fired lead-glaze techniques and the integrated function of "object-ritual-symbol" laid the foundation of its cultural genes; the Tang Dynasty witnessed the peak stage of cultural expression, where Sancai became a symbol of aristocratic power and a vehicle for civilizational imagery; from the

Song to the Ming and Qing periods, due to changes in aesthetic preferences and social structure, Sancai gradually became marginalized, entering a relatively dormant stage in which its cultural function shifted from ritual practices to architectural decoration and symbolic representation. Culture is not a static entity but a dynamic process of continual change and adaptation (Ember & Ember, 1988).

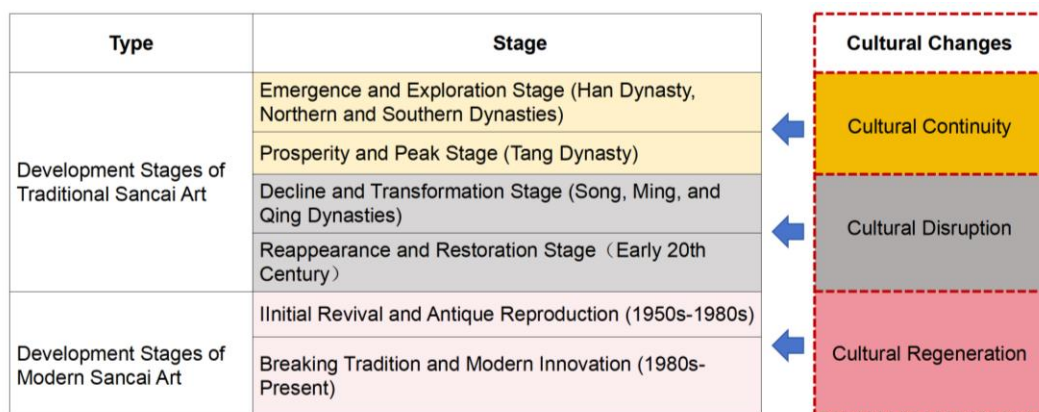


Figure 67 Cultural Changes

Source: designed by the Author

5.2.1.1 Cultural Continuity

In the developmental trajectory of Luoyang Sancai Art, the "continuity" phase represents a critical period during which it was established, standardized, and embedded into the ritual system and social structure as a form of cultural craftsmanship. This phase, primarily corresponding to the period from the Han to the Tang dynasties, not only laid the technological foundation and aesthetic system of Sancai Art but also accomplished a profound transformation from craft exploration to institutionalized cultural embedding. It reflects the typical continuity logic of "cultural accumulation, institutional establishment, and symbolic construction" emphasized in cultural anthropology.

During the continuity phase, spanning the Han to Tang periods, Sancai Art evolved from a stage of technological experimentation to an artistic form symbolizing ritual and hierarchical order, becoming a material carrier of social stratification and cultural regulation. From a functionalist perspective, the continuation of culture depends on the functions it performs within a given society. Bronislaw Malinowski, a leading figure of functionalist anthropology, asserted that any attempt to define the relationship between cultural expressions and human needs (whether basic or derived) can be regarded as functional (Malinowski, 1944). Cultural institutions are inherently functional, and culture exists to meet the basic needs of individuals, thereby sustaining the overall operation of society. The functional changes of Sancai Art across historical stages reflect its proactive adaptation to social transformations.

Each part of the social structure is interrelated through its function, collectively maintaining societal stability and continuity. Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, in his work *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, systematically articulated his theory of social structure and function. He noted that the continuity of the social structure, like that of an organic structure, is not destroyed by changes in its units. Individuals may leave the society, by death or otherwise, but the social structure remains intact (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). In the Tang dynasty, Sancai Art primarily served religious and ritual functions as funerary objects, constituting a cultural response to the "death ritual" system. At the same time, its brilliant colors and exquisite craftsmanship became symbols of the flourishing Tang culture, carrying clear social hierarchical and political symbolic meanings.

The continuous accumulation of technology and materials served as the fundamental basis for the cultural continuity of Luoyang Sancai Art. Echoing the view of the Chinese Ceramic Society (1982) on the relationship between ceramic craftsmanship and artistic transformation, the development of Luoyang Sancai Art reflects not only the driving force of material and technological advancements but also the dynamic adjustment of artistic forms in response to socio-cultural changes. Since the Han dynasty, the northern region had already adopted low-fired lead-glazed pottery

technology known as "northern glazed pottery," which became the technical origin of Luoyang Sancai. Its main features included the use of red or yellow clay as the body, lead combined with copper and iron oxides as glaze material, low-temperature firing, and a glaze palette dominated by yellow, green, and brown. Initially, single-colored glazes prevailed, while the Northern and Southern Dynasties saw the emergence of multicolored glaze combinations. Although a complete artistic style had not yet formed during this stage, the glaze technology, formal language, and operational techniques were gradually established, providing a solid material and technological foundation for the artistic peak of Tang Sancai (Gao Xiongfei, personal communication, October 18, 2024). Particularly during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, with experimental efforts such as biscuit firing and secondary glazing, Sancai gradually evolved from simple glazed pottery into an independent art form, marking the transition from a phase of technological exploration to an institutionalized and typified stage of art, and laying a continuous technical and aesthetic foundation for the flourishing of Sancai during the High Tang period.

The second aspect of the continuity phase was reflected in the continuation and institutionalization of modeling and aesthetic systems. Tang Dynasty Sancai rapidly developed on the basis of Northern and Southern Dynasties craftsmanship, forming standardized modeling systems and glaze color languages, achieving an evolution from monochrome glaze to multicolored glaze and flowing glaze aesthetics, and establishing the visual characteristics of flowing, overlapping colors. The diverse themes of human figurines, animal figurines, utensils, and life models, combined with composite techniques such as molding, appliqué, and carving, constructed a complete artistic expression system. This system not only met aesthetic and decorative needs but also culturally embedded Sancai into funeral rituals and identity symbols, achieving a sublimation from handicraft to institutionalized cultural paradigm.

Continuity was also evident in the construction of regional culture and the accumulation of cultural memory, with Luoyang Sancai's local identity being particularly prominent. As the Eastern Capital during the Tang Dynasty and a node on

the Silk Road, Luoyang not only had the resource advantage of Mangshan kaolin but also relied on the palace, religion, and folk workshops to form a composite production system, allowing Sancai craftsmanship to continuously evolve in this region. “Luoyang Sancai,” as a regional cultural symbol, frequently appeared in literature and archaeology, becoming a symbolic cultural memory. This high degree of overlap among geographical, institutional, and craft elements made it an important gene of Luoyang's local culture and a material carrier of historical identity.

5.2.1.2 Cultural Disruption

From the perspective of cultural anthropology, cultural “rupture” does not imply the complete termination of tradition, but rather refers to a functional disconnection, aesthetic redirection, or institutional displacement that arises from structural changes within the continuity of culture. In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). Many seemingly ancient traditions were, in fact, “invented” in the modern era. Such “reinventions” are often deliberately constructed in contexts of social transformation or rupture, in order to establish a sense of continuity with the past.

After the Song Dynasty, Luoyang Sancai Art gradually detached from the ritualistic functions to which it was originally bound within the funerary system of the Tang Dynasty, leading to profound changes in both its social demand and aesthetic mechanism. By the Ming and Qing periods, a marked cultural rupture had emerged. This rupture was not only manifested in the interruption of the craft's transmission chain but also reflected a structural disconnection between Sancai Art and its original cultural context. As in many cases, the continuation of so-called traditions is in fact a response to the disintegration of earlier cultural systems, a strategy of symbolically reconstructing the past (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). In the historical trajectory of Luoyang Sancai, this “reconstruction after rupture” is similarly evident: during the Ming and Qing dynasties, some local potters attempted to replicate Sancai techniques, yet these practices were already removed from the religious and funerary functions of Tang Sancai, instead

shifting toward revivalist production with decorative and commercial intent. Sancai ceased to be a necessary item within the ritual system and was transformed into an object of aesthetic appreciation or a collectible for literati studios. This process of “re-semanticization” precisely reflects the logic of cultural rupture and re-coding.

Bourdieu’s theory of “cultural reproduction” further reveals the non-continuity between knowledge and technique in the historical development of Luoyang Sancai Art (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This nonlinear condition of cultural rupture remained clearly visible in the folk practices of the early twentieth century. According to, Gao Shuiwang in the early 1900s, a craftsman surnamed Gao in Nanshishan Village made a living by repairing unearthed and damaged Tang Sancai wares (Gao, 2015). This act of restoration was essentially not a continuation of the traditional craft system, but rather a “post-traditional” behavior shaped by the needs of museology and the antique market. It represents a transformation of cultural craftsmanship from a ritual context to a space of collection and aesthetic appreciation. This kind of “post-rupture reuse” further confirms notion of “structural discontinuity in cultural reproduction” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977): after a long period of dormancy, Sancai craftsmanship was not transmitted intergenerationally as in traditional handicrafts, but was instead revived through archaeological discoveries and heritage restoration practices.

However, this restorative reproduction did not form a continuous system, and came to an abrupt end in 1937 with the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan. The war not only caused the material cessation of cultural production, but also constituted a form of enforced historical rupture. Marshall Sahlins noted that cultural change often takes the form of “structural translation” in the face of major historical events (Sahlins, 1985). Under wartime conditions, the cessation of Sancai craftsmanship was not merely an interruption of technique, but a manifestation of how cultural mechanisms passively adapt to the structural pressures of politics and war. This rupture, caused by external historical forces, effectively blocked the emerging potential for “re-traditionalization,” casting Sancai craftsmanship back into a state of cultural silence.

In summary, the evolution of Luoyang Sancai Art from the Song through the Ming and Qing, and into the modern era, is marked not by a singular rupture, but by a series of discontinuities across multiple historical junctures. These ruptures stem both from transformations in social structure and ritual systems, and from the impact of historical events and external pressures. It is a typical case of “interruption–reconstruction–interruption” within cultural reproduction. This indicates that the historical development of Sancai art is not a linear progression, but a continuous process of cultural repositioning within the tension between rupture and re-embedding. Any effort to revitalize this intangible cultural heritage must fully engage with the internal logic and translational structures embedded in its history of discontinuity.

5.2.1.3 Cultural Regeneration

In the developmental history of Luoyang Sancai Art, the “regenerative” phase since the twentieth century not only marks its re-emergence from the margins of cultural rupture into the broader sociocultural landscape, but also highlights the mechanism of “traditional reproduction” in the anthropological sense. As long as traditional craftsmanship can be effectively integrated into a healthy and civilized modern life, cultural regeneration can occur even amid the inevitable loss of certain cultural elements (Liao & Qiu, 2010). The core feature of this phase is that traditional Sancai art, under multiple modern driving forces—such as archaeological discoveries, policy support, and market mechanisms—has been reactivated. It is no longer a passive replication of ancient techniques, but a process of selective inheritance, reorganization, and innovation through which traditional culture has been reconstructed and reintegrated into the context of contemporary expression.

This transformation pathway can be summarized as a three-tiered logic system of cultural core, formal evolution, and social adaptation. First, Sancai art has consistently maintained its deep cultural structure—namely, glaze color language, vessel forms, and symbolic motifs—which constitute the stable genes of its “cultural core.” Second, at the level of formal evolution, Sancai is no longer confined to funerary mingqi, but has extended into a variety of contemporary mediums such as murals,

sculptures, interior design, and digital collectibles. Third, in terms of social adaptation, Sancai art has entered new social systems such as exhibition education, cultural and creative consumption, and urban image building, thereby achieving a structural transformation from “ritual embedding” to “public cultural participation.”

From the perspective of cultural reproduction, many so-called “traditions” are not inherited uninterruptedly from the past, but are in fact cultural constructions “reinvented” under specific historical conditions. Such reinventions often presuppose a certain degree of rupture and reflect the selective continuation of tradition integrated with modernity (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). The archaeological rediscovery, imitation-based restoration, and later industrial revitalization of Sancai art in the twentieth century vividly embody this logic of cultural reconstruction.

Moreover, Marshall Sahlins, in *Culture and Practical Reason* (1976), emphasized that culture is an organic system, and its development derives not only from historical continuity but also from adaptive responses to changes in the social, technological, and symbolic environment (Sahlins, 1976). The transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art from archaeological artifact to urban public art is a typical manifestation of the cultural system's “core continuity and functional renewal.”

James Clifford further pointed out in *The Predicament of Culture* that “tradition is not a static legacy, but something that acquires new meanings through selection, reorganization, and performance within constantly changing societies” (Clifford, 1988). Modern Sancai art, through its interaction with systems such as urban visual identity, intangible cultural heritage policy, and cultural-creative consumption, demonstrates its dynamic regenerative capacity as a “living culture,” while also validating the anthropological perspective on the negotiated boundaries between tradition and modernity.

In summary, from the perspective of cultural regeneration, it becomes possible to systematically reveal how Luoyang Sancai Art, following historical rupture, has achieved its revival and reconstruction through cultural mechanisms. This process is not a mere inheritance of the past, but a leap from “historical heritage” to

“contemporary cultural practice,” realized through symbolic reinterpretation, functional transformation, and institutional embedding.

5.2.2 Multidimensional Drivers and Systemic Mechanisms: Coordinated Pathways to Cultural Modernization

The modern transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art is not the result of a single driving factor, but rather the outcome of an interplay among multiple forces, including technological innovation, artistic creation, cultural identity, social participation, and economic development. Serena Nanda, in her work *Cultural Anthropology* (1994), posits that culture is dynamic and evolves over time. This change may stem from internal innovations or the influence of external cultures (Nanda, 1994).

This evolutionary process has formed a dynamic system composed of cultural gene safeguarding, cross-disciplinary innovation, and systemic mechanism evolution, presenting a coordinated path and a sustainable paradigm aligned with the modernization of traditional crafts. Within cultural change theory, American sociologist William Fielding Ogburn proposed the theory of cultural lag: new technologies often advance ahead of the prevailing culture. They introduce new transformations but are also hindered by traditional cultural resistance, and thus only slowly penetrate society (Ogburn, 1922). This theory is validated in the development of Sancai art: technological innovations first broke through the limitations of tradition, while cultural functions and social mechanisms were subsequently adapted and integrated. As Fei Xiaotong pointed out, the development of a regional civilization must be comprehensive and balanced. Within such a whole, various subsystems are mutually dependent, mutually supportive, and mutually constrained, forming a state of equilibrium (Fei & Li, 2000).

5.2.2.1 Technological Innovation Stimulates Artistic Expression, Reshaping Craft Identity

Technological innovations such as electric kiln temperature control and improved glaze formulations have significantly enhanced the controllability and expressive capacity of Sancai firing, allowing the traditional glaze aesthetics of “kiln transformation” to evolve into an abstract, modern, and designable artistic language. This not only expands the visual expression of Sancai but also offers contemporary

artists a space for experimental creation, facilitating a transformation from “craft replication” to “personalized artistic production.”

At the same time, the standardization and intelligentization of technology have made the firing process less dependent on experiential operation, thereby lowering the threshold for creative participation. This has attracted more young practitioners and urban designers, promoting the “intergenerational continuation” of traditional techniques and fostering “cultural regeneration” at the community level.

However, as Zhang Lei (2020) pointed out, modern technology exerts a distinct dual effect on traditional craftsmanship: on the one hand, it enables more refined preservation and processing of craft objects, offering a broader extension of traditional aesthetics; on the other hand, it also gives rise to issues such as mechanized production, assembly-line replication, and stylistic homogenization, thereby impacting the “individual skill–cultural context” structure upon which traditional craftsmanship depends.

In summary, the introduction of modern technology has undoubtedly injected new momentum into the transmission and dissemination of Luoyang Sancai Art, yet its disruptive effects on the traditional system cannot be ignored. The future development path should not be a matter of “technology replacing tradition,” but rather a process of “dialogue and re-coupling” between technology and tradition. Only by achieving a “re-indigenized” application of technology based on cultural rootedness and the logic of craftsmanship can the sustainable transmission and innovative transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art truly be realized.

5.2.2.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage Identity Enhances Market Value, Conversely Promoting Cultural Dissemination

Xu Yanyan argues that Tang Sancai, as a type of funerary object (mingqi), was systematically integrated into the overall spatial arrangement of tomb architecture, murals, and other grave goods (Xu, 2017). Cheng Yuping further points out that the emergence of new funerary concepts during the mid-to-late High Tang period influenced both the function and symbolic meaning of Hu figurines and Sancai funerary objects (Cheng, 2020). At the same time, the logic of cross-cultural integration

emphasized by Lin Shangbin also confirms the new functional expansion of Sancai art under the context of globalization (Lin, 2016). The overseas dissemination of Luoyang Sancai art corroborates Sanjo Tsugio's (1984) theory regarding the global circulation and cultural adaptation of ceramics, while also echoing Wang Weikun's (1992) argument that Tang Sancai served as a symbolic medium in the interactions between Chinese and foreign cultures.

After being inscribed on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Sancai art gained official recognition as “intangible cultural heritage,” resulting in a simultaneous elevation of both its cultural value and market value. Cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu, in *The Forms of Capital*, pointed out: “Symbolic capital, i.e., capital – in whatever form – insofar as it is perceived and recognized as legitimate” (Bourdieu, 1986). Symbolic capital can be converted into actual social and economic capital through cultural recognition. Sancai art has realized a dual leap in both market and cultural domains precisely through this “cultural capital mechanism.”

Moreover, the branding effect of intangible heritage has not only promoted the expansion of Sancai products into high-end cultural and creative markets and tourism-related consumer sectors, but has also enabled it to frequently appear as an emblem of urban culture in exhibitions, festivals, and international exchanges, thereby enhancing the communicative power and soft strength of local culture. Organizational models such as intangible heritage workshops, rural markets, and cultural festivals have also contributed to the systematic evolution from individual artisan creation to community-based collaborative mechanisms.

5.2.2.3 From Individual Creation to Collective Identity, From Handicraft to Social Mechanism

The modern trajectory of Sancai art clearly illustrates a developmental path from individual to community to society. Under the synergistic influence of technology, market forces, and cultural identity, Sancai art has evolved from the traditional, individual craftsmanship of artisans into a multidimensional cultural

ecosystem that encompasses education, the creative industries, cultural dissemination, and community building.

This transformation also affirms the view presented in *The Predicament of Culture*: the continuation of traditional culture is not a matter of mechanical replication, but rather the result of “border crossing, reconfiguration, and localized reinvention” through which new cultural expressions and social linkages are formed (James Clifford, 1988).

5.2.3 Reconstruction and Negotiation of Boundaries Between Tradition and Modernity: The Tension Field of Cultural Authenticity

The modern transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art presents a dynamic tension field of “cultural authenticity” that is constantly negotiated and reconstructed. It is not merely a simple continuation of traditional craftsmanship nor merely a formal innovation in a modern context. Rather, it represents a redefinition and dynamic reproduction of “cultural identity” within contemporary society. This study supports Guo Aihe’s (2012) view regarding the influence of multiple cultural contexts on Luoyang Sancai Art and integrates the discussion by Huang Xiangqian and Sun Wen (2018) on the processes of identity reconstruction and cultural reinterpretation across different historical periods, thereby further revealing the dynamic negotiation of the boundaries between tradition and modernity.

From a cultural anthropological perspective, this transformation reflects the “reordering of symbolic systems” and the “negotiated construction of symbolic boundaries” across historical stages (James Clifford, 1988). Culture is not a static entity preserved through mere transmission but a dynamic process that is continuously reconstructed through social practice. The boundary between tradition and modernity is constantly contested, blurred, and redefined within this ongoing practice. As Qiu Chunlin (2009) emphasized, the modern transformation of traditional craftsmanship requires achieving a dynamic balance between innovation and preservation.

5.2.3.1 The “Change” and “Constancy” of Cultural Genes

The core cultural genes of Sancai art, including the “aesthetics of glaze fluidity” and the “Silk Road cultural symbolism,” constitute its irreplaceable system of cultural identification. As Ruth Benedict noted in *Patterns of Culture*, “A culture, like an individual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action”(Benedict, 1934). Each culture possesses its own internal “schematized expression,” that is, a deep structural system of aesthetics and symbols, which sustains the historical identity of its cultural community. Luoyang Sancai Art achieves the continuation of cultural identity precisely through this kind of “structural persistence.”

At the same time, media transformation has become a primary path for contemporary expression. Sancai art is no longer confined to funerary mingqi or religious figurines, but has extended into architectural decoration, home furnishings, and even NFT digital collectibles. This transformation in form is not merely a technical update, but a reinterpretation of the “traditional visual symbol system” within new cultural contexts. Underlying this transformation is a process of cultural “semantic drift” and “structural adjustment,” in which the transmission of traditional cultural cores is dynamically realized through the evolution of media.

5.2.3.2 Controversies and Negotiations on the Boundaries of Innovation

The tension between tradition and modernity is, in essence, a negotiation between different understandings of cultural authenticity and the strategies by which it is practiced. From a functionalist perspective, culture survives because it fulfills adaptive functions within a given social structure. “The function of any recurrent activity, such as a ritual, is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity”(Radcliffe-Brown, 1952). The “boundary-keeping” group seeks to preserve the original texture of Sancai as a “historical artifact” by strictly replicating Tang-era techniques and forms, thereby maintaining stability and continuity within the cultural system. In contrast, the “boundary-crossing” group emphasizes the need for culture to possess the capacity for sustainable evolution, advocating for the integration of Sancai into contemporary art systems to activate its expressive potential in a new era. Technological reproduction does not

replace art, but rather brings new vitality to its creation and display. In the digital age, the aura of unique pieces, originals, and authentic artifacts still shines undiminished.

This negotiation is not a simple opposition, but rather, as James Clifford (1988) argues, a “rearticulation of tradition within modern cultural contexts.” Therefore, the contemporary expression of Sancai art must respond both to the value expectations of traditional “ought-to-be beauty” and to the cultural demands of present-day “usefulness.” This tension not only constitutes the ethical foundation of artistic creation but also forms the basis of legitimacy for the transformation of intangible cultural heritage.

5.2.3.3 Philosophical Reflections on the Limits of Innovation

While technological advancements have expanded the expressive possibilities of Sancai art, they also pose a challenge to its “aesthetics of contingency.” The allure of Sancai glaze lies precisely in the beauty of unpredictability generated by the traditional firing process, where temperature fluctuations and the natural flow of glaze materials produce effects that cannot be precisely controlled. This aesthetic is a unique experience rooted in the “handcrafted era.” In contrast, digital techniques emphasize precise replication and high controllability of craftsmanship. Although these methods improve efficiency and consistency, they may also undermine the original “craft spirit” inherent in traditional techniques.

This shift from “handmade indeterminacy” to “technological controllability” echoes Marshall Sahlins’ insight that symbolic systems permeate all aspects of social life—including not only what are typically considered utilitarian activities, such as the fulfillment of material needs or interest-driven behaviors, but also purely symbolic domains such as ideology, ritual, myth, and moral codes (Sahlins, 1976).

This indicates that cultural practice is not merely an adaptation to external technologies, but rather a manifestation of deeper symbolic systems. On the one hand, external technologies enable the expansion of cultural expression; on the other, they may dilute the internal symbolic structure. Therefore, while the emergence of

digital Sancai expands the dimensions of artistic dissemination, careful consideration must be given to its capacity to carry cultural depth and artistic essence (Gao Chao, personal communication, October 31, 2024). What Sancai art faces is not simply a media transformation, but a redefinition of the very notion of “authenticity.”

5.2.4 Preservation of Cultural Genes and Construction of an Innovation

Ecosystem: A Systemic Pathway for the Revitalization of Intangible Cultural Heritage

In the process of the modernization of Luoyang Sancai Art, how to effectively safeguard its deep cultural genes while stimulating innovative vitality has become a key issue in the protection and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage. In the face of continuous impact from digital technologies, market logic, and contemporary aesthetics, there is an urgent need to construct a systematic mechanism that can both uphold the essence of traditional culture and adapt to the new demands of social development.

Based on this, this study proposes an overall path for the protection and innovative transformation of the intangible cultural heritage of Sancai Art, with a “Three-layer Cultural Gene Preservation Framework” at its core, supplemented by “Categorical Protection Strategies,” an “Ecological Development System,” and a “Risk Early-warning Mechanism.”

5.2.4.1 Three-layer Cultural Gene Preservation Framework

To clarify the boundaries between what can and cannot be changed between tradition and modernity, this study proposes a three-layer cultural gene preservation framework: “core layer—intermediate layer—peripheral layer.” This structure not only responds to the classic question in cultural heritage protection of “what should be preserved and what can be changed”(Lowenthal, 1998), but also provides a theoretical basis and practical guidance for the orderly transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art in the contemporary context.

Table 19 Layer Gene Guardian Framework

Layer	Content	Changes	Elements
Core Layer	The most essential cultural and technical markers of Sancai art, forming the uniqueness of its visual language and craftsmanship spirit. These are the “genetic codes” that cannot be replaced by other ceramic art forms.	Unchangeable	Glaze flow aesthetics (originating from Tang Dynasty kiln transformation effects); Low-temperature lead glaze technique.
Intermediate Layer	The traditional patterns and symbolic systems carry specific cultural meanings and can be appropriately reinterpreted in modern contexts to extend and renew their cultural connotations.	Appropriate changes	Peony, Baoxiang hua patterns, lotus motifs; Geometric reconstruction, application of modern color schemes; Adaptation to various styles of cultural and creative design.
Peripheral Layer	The carrier forms and application scenarios of Sancai art reflect the expansion of its cultural functions and the diversification of its contemporary expressions, serving as an important path for traditional craftsmanship to adapt to modern social demands.	Highly changes	From mingqi (burial objects), ceramic figurines to murals, installations, and home furnishings; Digital art, NFTs, AR/VR-based Sancai; Cross-disciplinary integration in urban public art and cultural tourism products.

5.2.4.2 Categorical Protection Strategies

To ensure that Luoyang Sancai Art does not lose its cultural essence in the continuous process of innovation, this study proposes “categorical protection strategies” to achieve an organic coordination between the accurate inheritance of traditional essence and the diversified expansion of contemporary expression.

On one hand, authenticity-oriented inheritance focuses on the restoration and safeguarding of the core techniques of Tang dynasty Sancai. By constructing a traditional Sancai craft archive, systematically organizing key parameters

such as low-temperature lead-glaze formulas, traditional modeling systems, and firing processes, and encouraging reproduction teams to continue traditional revival work through policy funding and project support (Gao Zhe, personal communication, November 2, 2024). The practice of inheritors such as Gao Shuiwang exemplifies this strategy, with works that highly restore the style of the Tang dynasty and are regarded as paradigms of “living cultural relics.”

On the other hand, innovation-oriented inheritance emphasizes the exploratory expansion of Sancai art within contemporary cultural environments. Mechanisms such as establishing Sancai contemporary art funds are used to support artists in cross-media and cross-cultural experimental creation, expanding its visual vocabulary and material boundaries (Guo Jiaqi, personal communication, October 16, 2024). For instance, the practice of Guo Aihe’s “Sancai Yi” Studio integrates traditional glaze aesthetics with public art, promoting a transformation of Sancai art from “craft reproduction” to “artistic regeneration.”

This categorical protection path of “authenticity & innovation” responds to the dual demands of “preserving essence and embracing innovation” in intangible cultural heritage protection and also provides a replicable model for the modern transformation of other traditional crafts.

5.2.4.3 Ecological Development System

To achieve the sustainable development of Sancai Art, this study proposes the construction of an ecological development system covering the three major aspects of production, consumption, and dissemination.

On the production end, it is recommended to implement a dual-track model of “handcrafted customization & limited mechanical production.” Only in actual production processes can a traditional craft truly be protected and continued (Lv, 2009). High-end customized products focus on handcraft skills to embody artistic value. For mid- and low-end products, mechanized means are introduced to improve market responsiveness and scale efficiency, thereby forming an organic integration of technical depth and market breadth.

On the consumption end, immersive consumption scenarios should be constructed through study tours and hands-on experiences to enhance public participation and cultural identity. For example, the Sancai experience courses offered by the Zhangjia Cai Kiln Sancai Cultural Park have successfully attracted large numbers of visitors and gained widespread dissemination on social media (Zhang Yipeng, personal communication, October 27, 2024).

On the dissemination end, full use of digital technology should be made to build platforms such as a “Virtual Sancai Museum,” utilizing emerging media such as AR/VR and the metaverse to realize global dissemination. This model has already been validated by cultural institutions such as the Dunhuang Research Academy, demonstrating great potential for cross-regional cultural communication.

Overall, this ecological system realizes the deep integration of traditional crafts within modern social mechanisms through hierarchical optimization of production organization, culturally guided consumption structures, and digitally reconstructed dissemination pathways.

5.2.4.4 Risk Early-warning Mechanism

While promoting innovation and cross-sector integration, it is also necessary to remain vigilant against cultural risks caused by the abuse of technology or value displacement. Therefore, this study proposes the construction of a multi-level risk early-warning mechanism.

First, the establishment of a “Sancai Art Innovation Ethics Committee” is suggested to assess the cultural compatibility of new technologies such as AI design, 3D printing, and virtual exhibition in the application of Sancai Art. This committee will define rational boundaries for technological innovation from the perspectives of craft authenticity, cultural symbolism, and aesthetic principles.

Second, a certification system for intangible cultural heritage inheritors should be established and gradually refined in practice to align with legal logic and practical realities (Zhang, 2016). It is recommended that inheritors be categorized into junior, intermediate, and senior levels based on their apprenticeship background, work

standards, and teaching experience to avoid “pseudo-inheritance” and “low-quality replication” that could harm traditional culture.

In summary, the revitalization path of Sancai Art is not a simple binary of “preservation” or “change,” but rather a tension-regulating mechanism of two-way symbiosis. Only with the joint protection of ethical mechanisms and institutional governance can Sancai Art achieve healthy and sustainable development through technological empowerment and cultural transformation.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art. However, there remain numerous directions worthy of further exploration. Approaching the subject from perspectives such as technological innovation, international dissemination, and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) protection will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the contemporary value of Sancai art and offer forward-looking theoretical support and practical solutions for its future development. With continued research and innovation, Luoyang Sancai Art has the potential to occupy a more prominent place within China’s cultural industries and to expand its influence in global cultural exchange and the international art market.

5.3.1 Technological Innovation in Sancai Art

Currently, traditional Sancai still relies on low-temperature glaze techniques. However, in light of increasing environmental regulations, future research should focus on developing more eco-friendly, durable, and sustainable materials. Although handmade craftsmanship remains central to Sancai production, advancements in digital technology provide new possibilities. Future studies could explore how artificial intelligence (AI) may assist in Sancai design, such as AI-generated Sancai patterns and intelligent color-matching algorithms, thereby enhancing the efficiency and diversity of artistic creation.

5.3.2 International Dissemination and Cultural Exchange

Although Luoyang Sancai Art embodies profound historical and cultural significance, its international dissemination remains insufficiently explored. Future research should investigate how Sancai art can be promoted in international art markets, expos, and cultural exhibitions to enhance its global presence. It is also important to analyze the reception of Sancai in different cultural contexts and how it may adapt to the aesthetic preferences of Western home decor and art collection markets. Furthermore, research could examine how Sancai art, as a symbol of Chinese culture, can play a role in the cultural exchange initiatives of the Belt and Road Initiative and in international collaborations on ICH preservation.

5.3.3 Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection and Educational System Development

As a national-level intangible cultural heritage, the sustainable transmission of Sancai art is a critical issue. Future studies should investigate how to draw from both domestic and international experiences in ICH protection to develop more scientific and effective policy support systems, including financial subsidies, technical training, and intellectual property protection. Research could also explore how to integrate specialized Sancai courses into universities, vocational institutions, and arts and crafts schools, in order to cultivate a new generation of Sancai artists and promote the inheritance of these skills. Additionally, studies should consider how museum exhibitions, interactive experiences, and social media platforms can be utilized to increase public awareness and interest in Sancai art, thereby enhancing market demand.

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APPENDIX



APPENDIX A

Interview Purpose

The interviews in the research on Luoyang Sancai Art aim to explore its evolution from traditional to modern forms, focusing on changes in technology, art, culture, society, and economy. Interviewees include experts, scholars, inheritors, museum staff, and artisans, whose insights will deepen the understanding of Sancai's history, craftsmanship, and modern innovations. The research also examines the cultural identity and inheritance of Luoyang Sancai Art, highlighting the balance between traditional craftsmanship and modern demands, offering theoretical and practical solutions for its sustainable development.

Interview Method

Using a combination of online interviews and face-to-face interviews

Interview Information

ID	NAME	CATEGORY	ROLE/POSITION	INTERVIEW DATE
001	Gao Shuiwang	Craft Inheritors	Inheritor of Tang Sancai	Nov. 2,2024
002	Guo Jiaqi	Craft Inheritors	Inheritor of Luoyang Sancai Ceramic Painting	Oct. 16,2024
003	Guo Aihe	Craft Inheritors	Inheritor of Luoyang Sancai Ceramic Painting	Dec. 29,2024
004	Cheng Yongshe ng	Craft Inheritors	Inheritor of Luoyang Sancai Mural	Dec. 31,2024
005	Zhang Yipeng	Craft Inheritors	Inheritor of Jiaotai Sancai	Oct. 27,2024
006	Gao Xiongfei	Expert Scholars	Professor at Jinan	Oct. 18,2024

007	Gao Chao	Expert Scholars	University Professor at Jiangnan University	Oct. 31,2024
008	Gao Zhe	Museum Staff	Director of the Chinese Tang Sancai Museum	Nov. 2,2024
009	Liu Xinyu	Museum Staff	Staff of Luoyang Museum	Dec. 30,2024
010	Li Jun	Museum Staff	Staff of Luoyang Sancai Art Museum	Nov. 5,2024
011	Dong	Career craftsman	Luoyang Jiuzhao Cultural Relics Reproductions Co.	Nov. 2,2024
012	Jin	Career craftsman	Luoyang Jiuzhao Cultural Relics Reproductions Co.	Nov. 2,2024
013	Gege	Career craftsman	Luoyang Huacheng Fine Arts Ceramics Co.	Dec. 31,2024



APPENDIX B

Luoyang Sancai Art Interview Questions

1. Interview Questions for Craft Inheritors

Q1. How do you view the status of Luoyang Sancai Art in traditional craftsmanship? What are its key craftsmanship characteristics, and how have they been passed down?

Q2. As a Sancai art inheritor, how did you learn and inherit these skills? What challenges have you encountered in the process?

Q3. What is the most challenging part of the traditional Sancai art-making process? How have you overcome these difficulties?

Q4. With the changing times, how do you view the impact of modern technologies on the production of traditional Sancai art? Have these technologies helped improve traditional skills?

Q5. How do you understand the cultural significance of Luoyang Sancai Art? What cultural messages and social values do these artworks convey?

Q6. In the inheritance process, how do you balance traditional craftsmanship with modern artistic needs? How do you think modern audiences accept these traditional art forms?

Q7. What do you believe are the greatest challenges facing the inheritance of Luoyang Sancai Art? How can these skills be ensured to be passed down in the future?

Q8. In promoting the innovation of Luoyang Sancai Art, how can its cultural essence be preserved?

2. Interview Questions for Expert Scholars

Q1. How do you view the status of Luoyang Sancai Art in the history of Chinese ceramics? What are its cultural value and artistic characteristics?

Q2. From a historical perspective, what are the key stages in the development of Luoyang Sancai Art? How have these stages influenced the evolution of modern Sancai art?

Q3. What are the main differences between traditional Sancai art and modern Sancai art? How can the essence of traditional craftsmanship be preserved during innovation?

Q4. How has the development of modern technologies impacted the craftsmanship of Luoyang Sancai Art? What effects have these changes had on artistic creation?

Q5. What is your view on the global dissemination of Luoyang Sancai Art? How is Luoyang Sancai Art perceived in the international art market?

Q6. What gaps do you think exist in current research on Luoyang Sancai Art? What areas should future research focus on?

Q7. What new application areas have emerged for Luoyang Sancai Art in modern society? How do these applications help align Sancai art with contemporary cultural needs?

Q8. What role does cultural heritage play in the protection and innovation of Luoyang Sancai Art? How can a balance between preservation and innovation be maintained in the future?

3. Interview Questions for Museum Staff

Q1. As a museum staff member, how do you evaluate the historical and cultural value of Luoyang Sancai Art? What is its importance in museum exhibitions?

Q2. How does the museum help the public understand the historical background and artistic value of Luoyang Sancai Art during exhibitions?

Q3. Do you think that the exhibition of Luoyang Sancai Art can promote cultural exchange and education? How can the museum contribute to this?

Q4. What challenges does the museum face when collecting and exhibiting Luoyang Sancai Art? How do these challenges affect the preservation and display of Sancai Art?

Q5. With the development of digital technologies, is the museum considering virtual exhibitions or interactive exhibitions to attract more visitors?

Q6. How do visitors interact with Luoyang Sancai Art in the museum? How can exhibitions improve public recognition of Sancai Art?

Q7. What is your view on the commercialization of Luoyang Sancai Art? Does this commercialization help protect and pass on traditional art?

Q8. What successful experiences does the museum have in promoting the education of Luoyang Sancai Art? How can the museum inspire young people's interest in this art form?

4. Interview Questions for Career craftsman

Q1. How did you first come into contact with and learn about Luoyang Sancai Art? What does this traditional craft mean to you?

Q2. Which elements of Luoyang Sancai Art attract you the most in your handicraft creations? Why?

Q3. How do you view the impact of modern technologies on traditional handicrafts? Do these technologies help improve the quality or efficiency of your creations?

Q4. What do you consider the most challenging step in the production of Luoyang Sancai Art? How have you overcome these challenges?

Q5. How can Luoyang Sancai Art continue to maintain its uniqueness and cultural value in modern society?

Q6. With the changes in market demand, have you made innovations in the style or themes of your Sancai works? How is this innovation reflected?

Q7. In producing Luoyang Sancai Art, how do you manage the relationship between traditional craftsmanship and modern design?

Q8. As a career handicraft artist, how do you think Luoyang Sancai Art can be promoted and popularized in daily life?





APPENDIX C

Modern Luoyang Sancai Art Work



Figure 68 The creative process of Modern Luoyang Sancai art works

Source: designed by the Author



Figure 68 Modern Luoyang Sancai Art finished product display

Source: designed by the Author

VITA

