

Contemporary Value of Communication History of Auspicious Cloud Patterns on Central Plains Ancient Ceramics

Licheng LIU*

Henan Key Laboratory of Research for Central Plains Ancient Ceramics, Pingdingshan University, Pingdingshan 467000, China

Abstract As one of the core visual symbols of Chinese traditional culture, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics has great significance. Its contemporary value can be summarized into four aspects, namely the carrier of cultural inheritance and national identity, the innovative resources of modern design, the media of international cultural exchange and the enlightenment of ecological philosophy.

Key words Central Plains ancient ceramics; Auspicious cloud patterns; Communication history; Contemporary value

DOI 10.19547/j.issn2152–3940.2025.02.001

The auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics carry rich cultural connotation and artistic value. Out of awe of cloud, the ancients changed various patterns related to cloud on the decoration, which were used in utensils, costumes, buildings, etc. The abundant cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics have evolved and spread in different stages, and finally shaped into auspicious cloud patterns. As the representative of China's traditional auspicious patterns, like the dragon pattern, it is a unique and representative Chinese cultural symbol, which is still widely spread in various fields today. The study on the communication history of this unique decorative pattern is helpful to enrich the understanding of Central Plains ceramics and Chinese ceramic culture, and to deeply understand the inheritance and evolution of Chinese traditional culture.

Scholars have paid attention to and studied the auspicious cloud pattern culture of ancient ceramics for a long time. The research at home and abroad mainly focuses on the following aspects.

The first is to study from the perspective of auspicious patterns. For example, in the *Cultural Implication of Traditional Auspicious Patterns* by Luo Qu *et al.*, it introduced the cultural implication of auspicious cloud patterns. In the master's thesis *Research on Chinese Traditional Auspicious Images: A Case Study of Modern Design Signs of Shops in the Ancient City Wall of Xi'an* by Shao Huifang of Shaanxi Normal University, and the master's thesis *Chinese Traditional Auspiciousness and Its Impact on Modern Design* by Li Na of Qingdao University of Science and Technology, the images of auspicious clouds are discussed from the perspective of design.

The second is to study moire in different dynasties. For example, in the master's thesis *Research on the Application of Cloud and Qi Patterns in the Han Dynasty in Furniture Design* by Xiao You of Central South University of Forestry and Technology, the furniture application of cloud patterns in the Han Dynasty is studied. In addition, there is the master's thesis *Research on the Artistic Symbols of Scroll Cloud Pattern in the Qin and Han Dynasties* by Liao Qiong from Hunan University of Technology, the master's thesis *Exploration on the Decorative Art of Porcelain in the Song Dynasty* by Hu Xizhen from Chongqing Normal University, and the doctor's thesis *Research on the Decorative Art of the Song, Liao, Xia and Jin Dynasties* by Gu Li from Suzhou University.

The third is to study from the perspective of aesthetic art. For example, there is the doctor's thesis *Aesthetic Research on Eaves Tile in the Han Dynasty* by Lu Hua from Northwest University, the doctor's thesis *Aesthetic Research on Stone Reliefs in the Han Dynasty: Focusing on Northern Shaanxi and Northwestern Shanxi* by Wang Juan from Northwest University, and the doctor's thesis *Research on the Cultural Implication and Artistic Expression of Paintings in the Han Dynasty* by Tang Jian from Shandong University.

The fourth is to study from the perspective of cultural communication. For example, there is the master's thesis *From Celestial Phenomena to Images: A Study of Traditional Chinese Moire Images* by Chen Jiaoyu from Central Academy of Fine Arts, the master's thesis *Form and Meaning Expression of Traditional Chinese Patterns from the Perspective of Extracting Image Theory* by Zhang Yi from Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication, and the doctor's thesis *In the Name of Images: A Study on the Image Design of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games* by Hang Hai from Central Academy of Fine Arts.

These studies involve the dissemination of auspicious cloud patterns from different angles. However, systematic research on the cultural transmission history of auspicious cloud patterns reflected by ceramic auspicious cloud patterns is rarely seen.

Received: February 1, 2025 Accepted: March 21, 2025

Supported by Open Project of Henan Key Laboratory of Research for Central Plains Ancient Ceramics in 2018 (ZYGTCXN2018-05).

* Corresponding author.

This paper systematically collects and sorts out the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics. It is believed that as one of the core visual symbols of Chinese traditional culture, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics not only carry the wisdom of thousands of years of technology, but also show multi-dimensional cultural, artistic and economic values in contemporary society. Combined with its historical evolution and modern practice, its contemporary value can be summarized into four aspects, namely the carrier of cultural inheritance and national identity, the innovative resources of modern design, the media of international cultural exchange and the enlightenment of ecological philosophy.

1 The communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics being the carrier of cultural inheritance and national identity

First of all, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics is an important carrier for the continuation of the historical symbols of the Chinese nation. The evolution of auspicious cloud patterns from cloud-thunder patterns in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, cloud and Qi patterns in the Han Dynasty to clustered cloud patterns in the Tang and Song Dynasties has always taken "nature worship" as the core, reflecting the philosophy of "harmony between man and nature". The cloud and Qi pattern of the Han Dynasty is taken as the research object. The cloud and Qi pattern is not only a decorative symbol, but also a visual expression of the cosmology of the Han Dynasty. The cloud and Qi patterns transform the abstract "Qi" into flowing lines, symbolizing the harmony between life energy and Yin and Yang of heaven and earth. In the art of tombs, the cloud and Qi patterns are juxtaposed with immortals and divine animals, implying that the soul ascends to heaven by clouds, and reflecting the funeral concept of "death is like life" in the Han Dynasty. The cloud and Qi patterns of the Han Dynasty not only establish the tradition of "using lines to express emotions" in Chinese decorative art, but also influence the East Asian cultural circle through the Silk Road and Buddhist art. Its flowing lines and the composition of virtual and real images have become the source of the later clustered cloud patterns and Ruyi patterns. The core concept of "rhythmic vitality" is still an important criterion for Chinese art creation. This continuity provides a traceable cultural gene pool for modern design^[1].

Secondly, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics is an important carrier of the embodiment of the Chinese nation's aesthetics. Auspicious cloud patterns have built a unique Oriental aesthetic paradigm through graceful lines and symmetrical structures (such as the full

shape of clustered cloud patterns in the Tang Dynasty), and have become a symbolic element of international cognition of Chinese culture. The interaction between the flowing cloud patterns and ceramic patterns in Dunhuang frescoes highlights the cultural cohesion of its cross media communication. The communication of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics has gone through the evolution of symbolization (the Shang and Zhou Dynasties) → freehand brushwork (the Qin and Han Dynasties) → decoration (the Sui and Tang Dynasties) → stylization (the Ming and Qing Dynasties). Its morphological characteristics are deeply bound with the spirit of the times, technology and cross-cultural interaction. The sense of geometric order of cloud-thunder patterns in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, the flowing vitality of cloud and Qi patterns in the Han Dynasty, the complexity and extravagance of overlapping cloud patterns in the Yuan Dynasty, and the patterned simplicity of cloud patterns in the Qing Dynasty have jointly constructed the artistic pedigree and cultural meaning of auspicious cloud patterns as the core symbol of Chinese culture. The communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics has become an important carrier of the embodiment of the Chinese nation's aesthetics.

Thirdly, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics is closely intertwined with the formation process of national identity. From the Neolithic Age to the Qin and Han Dynasties, the painted pottery patterns of the Yangshao culture in the Central Plains have contained the imagery of natural worship, which laid the foundation for the symbolization of cloud patterns in later generations. The combination of cloud-thunder patterns and jade carving on bronze wares in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties reflects the integration of the ritual system in the Central Plains and the belief in heaven and earth. With the opening of the Silk Road, the Central Plains and the western regions learned from each other, forming a more fluid "clustered cloud pattern", which became the mainstream of pottery decoration in the Han Dynasty. After the capital in the Northern Wei Dynasty was moved to Luoyang, the auspicious cloud patterns in the clothing and accessories of Longmen Grottoes statues became a witness of the integration of Hu and Han arts. The Tang tri-colored pottery combined the auspicious cloud patterns with the images of camels and Hu people, highlighting cross-cultural exchanges. The maritime trade in the Song and Yuan Dynasties and the official kiln system in the Ming and Qing Dynasties strengthened the political symbolic significance and popular cultural identity of "fate". Auspicious cloud patterns have evolved from the worship of nature to the spiritual symbol of "harmonious coexistence" and become the shared cultural symbol of the Chinese nation. The thousand-year communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics is not only the evolution history of technology, but also the materialized witness of interactions, exchanges and integration among various nationalities^[2].

2 The communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics has become an innovative resource for modern design

The communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics is not only the epitome of the multi-cultural integration of Chinese civilization, but also provides multi-dimensional innovative resources for the regeneration and transformation of traditional elements.

First of all, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics provides rich resources for the regeneration and transformation of traditional elements. In the design of cultural and creative products, the auspicious cloud patterns break through the limitations of traditional composition through deconstruction and reorganization (such as digital geometric deformation), which not only retains the symbolic meaning of "good luck" but also endows the product with a sense of technology and fashion. For example, the cultural and creative tea set of the Imperial Palace combines the Ruyi cloud pattern of the Song Dynasty with the minimalist type to realize the market transformation of "ancient patterns for modern use".

Secondly, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics provides rich resources for the cross-border integration of technology. New technologies such as 3D printing and laser engraving reproduce the relief texture of the auspicious cloud pattern on Central Plains ancient ceramics. At the same time, the visual level is enhanced through glaze innovation (such as gradient kiln glaze), which promotes the traditional patterns into the field of high-end industrial design. Its essence is to reflect the aesthetic accumulation in the process iteration. The fluidity of cloud patterns on lacquerware in the Qin and Han Dynasties was combined with the cobalt painting technology of Jingdezhen blue and white porcelain in the Yuan Dynasty to form a blue and white auspicious cloud decoration system under the "gray glaze" process. This technological integration spanning thousands of years provides a double reference of material science and aesthetic expression for modern ceramic design.

Thirdly, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics provides rich resources for the living inheritance of cultural genes. Only from the perspective of the image transformation of nature worship, auspicious cloud patterns originated from the natural cloud patterns worship in Chu in the Zhou Dynasty. Their smooth lines and abstract shapes originated from the observation and awe of the clouds and Qi in the sky. The natural worship symbols such as the variant salamander pattern and frog pattern on the painted pottery of Yangshao culture in the Neolithic Age laid the foundation for the symbolization of the cloud patterns. The painted pottery unearthed from the Dadiwan site in Gansu Province confirms the influence of the early dec-

orative system of the Yellow River basin on the evolution of cloud patterns in the Central Plains.

The regeneration and transformation of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics enlightens that the contemporary value release of traditional elements needs to rely on archaeological evidence to extract cultural genes, break through carrier restrictions with the help of technological innovation, activate emotional resonance through narrative reconstruction, and finally realize the creative leap from historical remains to life aesthetics.

3 The communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics provides a medium for international cultural exchanges

The communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics has become an important medium for international cultural exchanges through cross regional and cross civilization interactions.

First of all, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics provides an output symbol of the soft power of Chinese culture. Auspicious cloud patterns have frequently appeared in overseas exhibitions and co branding (such as Hermes scarves and Starbucks' Chinese Zodiac cup). The implication of "auspiciousness" has become an emotional link for cross-cultural communication, helping the global spread of "Chinese style".

Secondly, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics provides a contemporary interpretation of traditional crafts. European ceramic artists have combined auspicious cloud patterns with rococo style to create decorative porcelain that "combines Chinese and Western styles", reflecting the adaptability of Chinese traditional patterns to the world art trend.

Thirdly, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics has promoted the pattern innovation in the context of the Silk Road. First, symbol fusion and process mutual learning. After the opening of the Silk Road in the Han Dynasty, the Central Plains cloud patterns were combined with the Persian linked-pearl pattern and the western regions rolling grass pattern to form a "scroll cloud pattern" with a sense of fluidity and order, which became the mainstream decoration of lacquerware and pottery export in the Han Dynasty. The Tang tri-colored pottery juxtaposed the images of auspicious cloud, camel and Hu people, and spread to Central Asia through the land Silk Road, forming a unique cultural narrative language. Second, customized production in maritime trade. When Cizhou Kiln porcelain of the Song Dynasty was exported via the maritime Silk Road, auspicious cloud patterns collided with Islamic geometric patterns, resulting in new forms such as "Ruyi cloud head", and creating a

"foreign trade customization" mode. The blue and white porcelain of the Yuan Dynasty used West Asian cobalt material to draw auspicious clouds, and its "Su Ma Li Qing" glaze technology confirmed the catalytic effect of cross regional material exchange on the evolution of patterns^[3].

Fourthly, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics reflects the transformation of technology communication and cultural symbols. First, the global diffusion of porcelain making technology. Jingdezhen imperial kiln porcelain in the Ming Dynasty spread the auspicious cloud decoration system to Southeast Asia, the Middle East and other places through Zhenghe's voyages to the west, and stimulated the imitation and re-creation of auspicious cloud elements by Vietnamese blue and white porcelain, Persian pottery and other local ceramics. The imitation of Chinese blue and white auspicious cloud patterns by European Delft pottery promoted the popularity of "Chinese style" decorative art in the 18th century. Second, the transnational construction of political symbols. The official kiln in the Qing Dynasty combined auspicious clouds and dragon patterns to strengthen its ideological output of "destiny" through the tributary trade system, which became an authoritative symbol accepted by the Confucian cultural circle in East Asia. This kind of decorative pattern system has variants in Korean celadon of the Li Dynasty and Japanese Imari porcelain.

Fifthly, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics has become a new carrier for the dialogue between modern and contemporary civilizations. First, the digital dissemination of cultural heritage. The Henan Museum has transformed the auspicious cloud patterns in cultural relics such as cloud pattern and bronze jin into immersive digital art through the XR technology of the Tang Palace Banquet, and realized the cross-media expression of traditional patterns in overseas exhibitions. The cloud and Qi patterns of Yongle Palace murals reproduced by 3D printing technology provide a technical paradigm for the digital cooperation of museums around the world. Second, the visual language of international public diplomacy. Auspicious cloud patterns sublimate from the decoration of utensils to the cultural symbol of "harmonious coexistence". It has been applied in the Olympic medal design, APEC summit gifts and other scenes, and has become a consensus symbol to convey the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind. Jingdezhen National Ceramic Culture Inheritance and Innovation Pilot Zone systematically explains its media function in the dialogue of global civilizations through the theme exhibition of cloud patterns.

The evolution of the media value of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics shows that the transformation from material exchange to spiritual resonance needs to rely on technological innovation to break through the carrier restrictions, establish cross-cultural identity through symbol deconstruction, and finally realize the sublimation from regional decoration to glob-

al narrative in the mutual learning of civilizations.

4 The communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics reveals the enlightening value of media ecological philosophy

First of all, the spread of "cloud and Qi spirit" in the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics has an ecological metaphor from the perspective of ecological civilization. The fluidity and regeneration of auspicious cloud patterns (such as the circular composition of flowing cloud patterns in the Wei and Jin Dynasties) coincide with the contemporary concept of sustainable development and provide "endless" natural philosophy enlightenment for ecological design^[4].

Secondly, the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics provides the social driving force for the revitalization of handicrafts. The revival of auspicious cloud patterns on ceramics has led to the inheritance of traditional kiln techniques (such as Jun Kiln and Ding Kiln). Through the integration of culture and tourism (such as experience workshop of ceramic town), the rural economy is activated, and the living protection of cultural heritage is realized.

Thirdly, the enlightenment of media ecological philosophy embodied in the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics is manifested as media diversity and ecological symbiosis. First, the adaptive transformation of cross media symbols. The auspicious cloud patterns evolved from the natural worship symbols of Neolithic painted pottery (such as frog pattern and salamander pattern of Yangshao culture) to ritual carriers such as cloud-thunder pattern of bronze and scroll cloud pattern of lacquer, and finally formed a decorative system with both flow and order on ceramics. This symbol transformation across different media such as clay, bronze and lacquer wood shows the dynamic adaptation ability of "content – carrier" in media ecology. Second, the co-evolution of technology system. The blue and white porcelain of the Yuan Dynasty used West Asian cobalt material to draw auspicious cloud patterns, and its "Su Ma Li Qing" glaze technology confirmed the catalytic effect of material exchange on the evolution of patterns. The contemporary 3D printing technology can reproduce the cloud and Qi patterns of the murals in Yongle Palace, and realize the niche expansion of traditional symbols in digital media.

Fourthly, the enlightenment of media ecological philosophy embodied in the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics is the dynamic balance of cultural communication. First, the tension reconciliation between localization and openness. The Tang tri-colored pottery juxtaposed the images of auspicious cloud, camel and Hu people, and formed

an exotic narrative language through the land Silk Road. The "Ruyi cloud head" pattern of Cizhou Kiln in the Song Dynasty maintained the aesthetic core of the Central Plains in the collision with Islamic geometric patterns. This mode of "localization innovation" maintains the ecological balance in cultural communication. Second, the construction of hierarchical communication network. In official kilns of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the auspicious cloud patterns were incorporated into the political symbol system, and the ideology was exported through tribute trade; folk kilns were combined with opera stories and folk patterns to form a mass culture network. This official – folk hierarchical communication structure constitutes a multiple energy exchange channel of the media ecosystem.

Fifthly, the enlightenment of media ecological philosophy embodied in the communication history of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics is the contemporary enlightenment of ecological wisdom. First, the recycling mechanism. The archaeological blind box embeds cloud pattern elements in the "miniature archaeology" scene to transform historical symbols into participatory cultural consumption. The geometric reconstruction of auspicious cloud patterns in the cultural creation of the Imperial Palace realizes the metabolic symbiosis of traditional aesthetics and modern design. Second, the construction of global niche. Auspicious cloud patterns have been sublimated into a visual carrier of the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind through Olympic medal design, APEC summit gifts and other scenes. This transition from utensil decoration to civilized symbols confirms the self-organization ability of media ecosystem in cross-cultural communication.

Through the analysis on the enlightenment of media ecological philosophy of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics, it can find that the sustainable vitality of cultural symbols stems from its dynamic adjustment in the triangular relationship of "technology iteration – carrier innovation – meaning reconstruction", which needs not only to maintain the stability of core genes, but also to open up new niches through cross-border integration. This ecological wisdom provides a historical frame of reference for cultural communication in the digital age.

In short, the contemporary value of auspicious cloud patterns on Central Plains ancient ceramics lies in activating the gene of traditional culture with "new use of ancient patterns", and realizing the creative transformation from historical heritage to modern resources through design empowerment, international dialogue and ecological reflection. This process not only continues the cultural mission of "cloud patterns carrying the Tao", but also provides a unique visual grammar for Chinese narrative in the global context.

References

- [1] ZHANG R, ZHANG BX. Simple and primitive: Have you seen the real appearance of ceramics thousands of years ago[N]. Qianjiang Evening News, 2018 – 11 – 28.
- [2] WANG N. Cultural and museum calendar: What did the "villa" look like in the Han Dynasty 2 000 years ago[N]. CCTV News Client, 2024 – 02 – 03.
- [3] WANG SD. Ding Kiln: The beauty of neutralization[N]. Hebei Daily Client 2024 – 08 – 15.
- [4] GU Y. Chinese traditional pattern atlas[M]. Beijing: Oriental Publishing House, 2010.

About the Databases of Meteorological and Environmental Research

The journal of Meteorological and Environmental Research [ISSN: 2152 – 3940] has been included and stored by the following famous databases: CA, CABI, CSA, EBSCO, UPD, AGRIS, EA, Chinese Science and Technology Periodical Database, and CNKI, as well as Library of Congress, United States.

CA (Chemical Abstracts) was founded in 1907, and is the most authoritative and comprehensive source for chemical information. Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International(CABI) is a not-for-profit international agricultural information institute with headquarters in Britain. ProQuest CSA belongs to Cambridge Information Group (CIG), and it provides access to more than 100 databases published by CSA and its publishing partners. EBSCO is a large document service company with a history of more than 60 years, providing subscription and publication services of journals and documents. CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), universally acclaimed as the most valuable Chinese website, boasts the greatest information content, covering natural science, humanities and social science, engineering, periodical, doctor/master's dissertations, newspapers, books, meeting papers and other miscellaneous public information resources in China.