



Luoyang Sancai Art: Changes from Traditional Sancai Art to Modern Sancai Art

Yang Qiannan¹, Piyanard Ungkawanichakul^{2*} and Kittikorn Nopudomphan³

^{1,3} Faculty of Fine Art, Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand

² Faculty of Social Sciences, Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand

¹E-mail: 386397486@qq.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3838-5770>

^{2*}E-mail: piyanardu@g.swu.ac.th, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5208-1591>

³E-mail: kittikornn@g.swu.ac.th, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2813-3357>

Received 26/06/2025

Revised 15/07/2025

Accepted 30/08/2025

Abstract

Background and Aim: Luoyang Sancai Art, rooted in traditional Chinese ceramic culture, has evolved from ancient funerary ware to a modern form of artistic expression. This study aims to explore its transformation across historical periods and cultural contexts, focusing on how it balances tradition and innovation.

Materials and Methods: A qualitative approach was employed, including literature review, field visits, interviews with artisans and experts, and case analysis of representative artworks. These methods help uncover the changes in technology, form, cultural meaning, and market orientation.

Results: The findings reveal that Luoyang Sancai Art has undergone a multidimensional evolution. Technological advances introduced environmentally friendly materials and refined firing techniques. Artistically, the medium expanded from three-dimensional funerary figurines to flat ceramic paintings and diverse modern expressions. Culturally and socially, Sancai art shifted from a ritual artifact to a symbol of regional identity, urban branding, and creative industry. Economic changes also repositioned Sancai as both heritage and market-driven art, with emerging brands contributing to its revitalization and broader consumption.

Conclusion: The transformation of Luoyang Sancai Art offers a case study in the dynamic processes of cultural heritage regeneration, demonstrating how traditional crafts can adapt to contemporary contexts while navigating complex power dynamics, economic pressures, and evolving cultural identities. By bridging historical legacy with modern aesthetic and functional demands, Sancai art has evolved into a sustainable cultural system. Its journey reflects broader patterns of intangible heritage regeneration in a globalized world, where tradition is reimagined through design, policy, education, and cultural entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Luoyang Sancai Art; Traditional Sancai Art; Modern Sancai Art; Changes in Sancai Art

Introduction

China is the homeland of ceramics, with a long-standing and profound history of ceramic art (Ye, 2006). Luoyang, the earliest, most frequent, and longest-lasting capital in Chinese history, is regarded as the origin of Chinese ceramics. Luoyang Sancai Art stands as a pioneering creation in the history of ceramics and represents a treasured legacy of Chinese historical culture. It fully embodies the potential and advantages of Chinese ceramic culture and crystallizes the cultural concepts of experience, technique, and aesthetics that have accumulated throughout its long history of development (Guo, 2012). The concept of “Luoyang Sancai,” proposed by Chinese arts and crafts master Guo Ai-he, has freed Sancai art from the limitations of naming based on specific historical periods, thereby opening up new possibilities for its innovation and development in the contemporary era (Hu, Fang & Niu, 2023).

Luoyang Sancai Art is characterized by its low-temperature lead-glaze firing technique and vivid color palette dominated by yellow, green, and white, forming a unique glaze-flowing aesthetic and visual language. Traditional Sancai has a long history—originating in the Han dynasty, flourishing in the Tang dynasty, and continuing through the Song, Liao, Ming, and Qing dynasties—spanning over a thousand years. In *A Guide to Antiques*, Zhao Ruzhen noted: “Applying the three colors of lead-based yellow, green, and blue to floral designs on a colorless white-glazed body, this is what the world praises as the finest Tang Sancai”. Tang Sancai was primarily used as funerary objects in tombs, often taking the form of human and animal figurines as ritual items (Sun, 2006). Due to the dynastic changes and the era-specific function of Tang Sancai as burial goods, the traditional firing techniques eventually disappeared, leading to a break in transmission (Lei, 2017).





In the 1980s, with changes in national policy and the implementation of reform and opening-up, Sancai art entered a new era. Luoyang Sancai underwent several phases: a foreign trade-oriented stage following reform, a period of mass imitation of Tang Sancai, and later a stage of independent research and innovation (Huang & Sun, 2018). Today, the development of Luoyang Sancai is represented by Guo Aihe's concept of "Sancai Artistry." Sancai Ceramic Painting (三彩釉画), rooted in traditional craftsmanship, leverages modern technologies and employs distinctive glazing and firing techniques to produce flat ceramic artworks (Yang, 2017).

In an era of increasing global economic and cultural integration, re-examining traditional cultural art has become a shared task for artists, sociologists, and anthropologists to preserve the essence of China's national artistic heritage in a meaningful way (Meng, 2008). Entering the modern age, with the advancement of technology and deepening globalization, Luoyang Sancai Art has begun to explore new directions for development. Artists are attempting to integrate modern design concepts, new materials, and emerging technologies into traditional Sancai art, creating works that retain traditional charm while aligning with contemporary aesthetic sensibilities.

The significant value endowed by contemporary art to Luoyang Sancai art has not only driven innovations in its forms, materials, and techniques but also promoted the sublimation of its ideological connotations and communication methods. In future development, Luoyang Sancai art should continue to deeply absorb the nutrients of contemporary art, adhere to traditional cultural contexts, and explore paths for the integration of tradition and modernity.

Objectives

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.

Literature review

The literature review section of this paper is mainly based on simultaneous research in several directions, including Chinese ceramics, Luoyang Sancai, traditional Sancai art, and modern Sancai art. There are relatively abundant research results regarding Chinese ceramics and Tang Sancai. Li Zhengzhong and Wang Weikai (1997) studied the origin, emergence, and production techniques of Tang Sancai, including the selection of pottery clay, glazing methods, and firing processes. Liao Yongmin (2004) summarized the types and modeling characteristics of Tang Sancai, such as figurines, architectural and daily-use items, and small-sized Sancai pottery sculptures. Gao Shuiwang (2015) systematically explored and sorted out the development and evolution history of Tang Sancai. Guo Aihe (2012) proposed that the changes of history and the evolution of culture have continuously sublimated the Sancai art. The artworks of Sancai in each period not only inherit from predecessors but also display aesthetic styles with distinct characteristics of the times. From the perspective of existing literature, research on Luoyang Sancai mostly focuses on its historical origin and traditional techniques, lacking a holistic exploration of its dynamic evolution, institutional transformation, and contemporary expression paths as a "regional ceramic art cultural system". Duan Jinjin (2014) put forward the view that traditional craftsmanship should adapt to the modern market to achieve better inheritance and development, which further highlights the deficiency of current research in focusing on practical issues, such as how Luoyang Sancai can achieve sustainable development in contemporary society and effectively connect with the modern market.

In exploring the historical evolution and modern transformation of Luoyang Sancai art, cultural anthropology provides important theoretical perspectives and analytical tools. Tylor, E. B. (1871) argued that the various stages of culture can be regarded as different stages of development or evolution, each of which is the product of the previous stage and plays a considerable role in the future course of history. Bourdieu, P. (1986) emphasized that cultural capital plays a key role in the reproduction of social inequality and can be converted into economic capital under specific conditions. As a core discipline studying "how culture is constructed, inherited and reproduced", cultural anthropology not only focuses on the



morphological characteristics of material culture but also attaches importance to the social structure, value system, and identity it carries.

Conceptual Framework

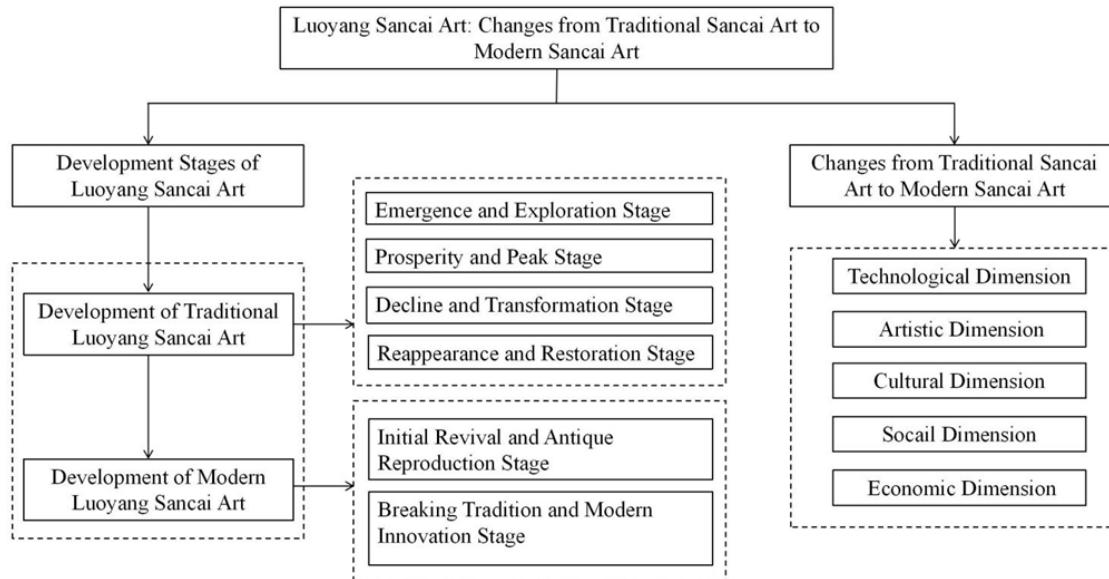


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
Note: Constructed by the researcher

Methodology

This study primarily adopts a qualitative research approach, employing methods such as literature review, field investigation, in-depth interviews, and case study. These methods contribute to a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the historical evolution, development, changes, and major influencing factors of Luoyang Sancai Art.

1. Literature Review

This research involves the collection and review of relevant books, academic journals, scholarly papers, and newspapers on Luoyang Sancai Art to gain a deeper understanding of its conceptual foundation and historical development. In addition, relevant theoretical literature from cultural anthropology is consulted to provide a theoretical framework for the study. The collected materials are categorized, analyzed, and synthesized to clarify the current state of research on Luoyang Sancai and to trace the evolutionary path from traditional Sancai art to modern Sancai art, thereby laying a solid foundation for this dissertation.

2. Field Investigation

To examine the transition of Luoyang Sancai Art from tradition to modernity, field investigation is employed as a key method. Through visits to related institutions, workshops, and exhibition venues in the Luoyang region, first-hand information on production techniques, display practices, and market dissemination channels is obtained. The research targets include museums and exhibition institutions, educational and research units, as well as public cultural spaces and creative practice sites, enabling a comprehensive observation of the current status of Sancai art in terms of transmission and innovation, knowledge construction, and industrial transformation. This multi-dimensional fieldwork reveals the dynamic mechanisms of transition between tradition and modernity, providing practical support for analyzing the systemic evolution and cultural value reconstruction of Luoyang Sancai Art.



3. In-depth Interviews

To comprehensively understand the mechanisms behind the changes of Luoyang Sancai Art from its traditional to modern forms, careful attention is paid to selecting interviewees from a range of categories and roles to ensure the richness, coherence, and representativeness of the data. In-depth interviews are conducted with intangible cultural heritage inheritors, Sancai artists, scholars, museum curators, and artisans. The focus is on their authentic views and practical experiences regarding the transmission of techniques, creative philosophies, market dynamics, and cultural identity, thereby enriching the social dimension of this research.

4. Case Study

This study selects representative works of Luoyang Sancai Art for systematic analysis, focusing on their stylistic forms, glazing techniques, cultural meanings, and contemporary expressions. The aim is to reveal the core mechanisms and value transformation pathways within the evolutionary process of Luoyang Sancai Art. To ensure both representativeness and analytical rigor, the study includes exemplary pieces from museum collections and contemporary Sancai artworks collected from local art markets and exhibitions in Luoyang and surrounding areas. Selection criteria include: works that reflect the craftsmanship, aesthetics, and cultural characteristics of various historical periods; those that demonstrate significant innovation in form, glazing, or technique; works that have received national-level awards, media coverage, or broad public recognition; and those with complete provenance, production dates, and artist information to facilitate scholarly research.

Results

The findings of this study indicate that Luoyang Sancai Art has undergone significant changes from tradition to modernity throughout its trajectory of inheritance and innovation. Traditional Sancai, grounded in profound historical accumulation and distinctive craftsmanship, laid the artistic foundation for its development. In contrast, modern Sancai has continuously evolved in terms of techniques, forms, and cultural functions, resulting in diversified modes of expression and broader application scenarios. Through a comprehensive analysis of multiple factors—including historical and cultural context, social policies, technological advancement, material innovation, artistic agency, and market economy—this research reveals how these multidimensional driving forces interact synergistically to promote the ongoing transformation and development of Luoyang Sancai Art within the context of globalization.

1. Development Stages of Luoyang Sancai Art

Luoyang Sancai Art has undergone various stages of development, including emergence, prosperity, decline, reappearance, revival, and modern innovation. Its evolutionary trajectory has been shaped not only by historical and cultural contexts but also by technological advancements, aesthetic transformations, and changing social demands.

1.1 Development of Traditional Luoyang Sancai Art

The traditional Luoyang Sancai Art discussed in this study encompasses its historical changes from the Han dynasty through the Ming and Qing periods. This includes developments in technology, shifts in aesthetic preferences, and transformations in cultural functions, which collectively laid a solid foundation for the innovation of modern Sancai art. During this period, Luoyang Sancai evolved from early lead-glazed pottery into a distinctive form of low-fired lead-glazed Sancai ceramics, gradually forming a unique glaze color system and craft style.

The origins of Luoyang Sancai can be traced back to the lead-glazed pottery of the Han dynasty, which was mainly popular in the Yellow River basin and also referred to as “Northern Glazed Pottery” (Guo, 2012). The ceramic techniques of the time were dominated by monochrome low-temperature glazes (such as yellow and green glazes), and the initial appearance of underglaze decorative techniques began to emerge. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, influenced by the integration of Central Plains cultures, the Sancai technique developed further, with more complex multicolor glazing processes, thereby laying the technical groundwork for Tang Sancai.





The Tang dynasty marked the golden age of Sancai art. Tang Sancai was widely produced in Luoyang, Chang'an, and other regions, primarily serving as funerary objects for the royal family and nobility. The most representative colors of these works were amber yellow, grass green, and creamy white (Gao, 2015). With refined techniques, harmonious and vibrant color schemes, and vivid realism, Tang Sancai vividly depicted the luxurious lifestyles of the Tang aristocracy (Li & Wang, 1997). The main types included human figurines, animal figures, domestic vessels, and architectural models, characterized by their lifelike realism. Figurines often depicted Central Asian (Hu) people, reflecting the open trade and cultural exchange along the Silk Road during the Tang dynasty (Liao, 2004).

After the fall of the Tang dynasty, political turmoil led to a decline in Sancai production. With the changing aesthetic ideals of the Song dynasty, Sancai ware took on a more subdued appearance, with soft glaze tones, reserved expression, and a contemplative mood (Guo, 2012). Song Sancai gradually transformed into daily-use ceramics such as pillows, plates, and boxes, placing greater emphasis on practical aesthetics. During the Ming dynasty, typical liuli (glazed tile) Sancai emerged, primarily for architectural decoration. The "Su Sancai" (Plain Sancai) of the Qing dynasty featured yellow, green, and purple glazes as its main color palette.

Between 1905 and 1909, during the construction of the Longhai Railway, several Tang tombs in the Beimang Mountain area of Luoyang were damaged, leading to the discovery of a large number of Tang Sancai pieces. These artifacts were transported to the Beijing market, attracting significant attention from scholars such as Wang Guowei and Luo Zhenyu, as well as antique dealers. In the early 20th century, a man surnamed Gao from the village of Nanshishan in Luoyang made a living by restoring damaged Tang Sancai unearthed from burial sites (Gao, 2015). However, the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan in 1937 forced the cessation of Tang Sancai production.

1.2 Development of Modern Luoyang Sancai Art

Modern Luoyang Sancai Art has experienced a revitalization since the mid-20th century, undergoing a transformation from antique replication to technological innovation and artistic diversification. The art form has broken away from purely imitative styles and expanded into fields such as mural painting, sculpture, architectural decoration, and cultural creativity, thereby realizing the innovative transformation and modern upgrading of traditional craftsmanship and demonstrating renewed cultural vitality.

In the mid-20th century, Luoyang Sancai Art went through a fluctuating period of post-war recovery, cultural turbulence, and eventual revitalization. The main characteristics of this period were the revival of antique-style Sancai, the reconstruction of craft systems, and the establishment of a modern production framework. In 1984, the fifth year after China's Reform and Opening-Up policy began, numerous small-scale workshops producing Tang Sancai emerged, ushering in a peak period for the production and sale of Tang-style ceramics (Gao, 2015). Although production at this stage centered on imitation Tang Sancai, it gradually laid the technical standards and craft foundations for the development of modern Sancai, providing a basis for subsequent innovation and diversification.

From the late 1980s onward, Luoyang Sancai Art began to move beyond the singular model of imitation, entering a new phase characterized by both artistic innovation and academic inquiry. In 1987, artist Guo Aihe designed the Sancai mural *Seeking Knowledge and Cultivating People*, which broke through the limitations of traditional glaze colors by incorporating bright red glaze for the first time, pioneering a new mode of expression. This marked Luoyang Sancai's entry into the realm of modern public art (Duan, 2014). Since the turn of the 21st century, Luoyang Sancai Art has increasingly integrated modern design languages and gradually assimilated into contemporary lifestyles. It has expanded into areas such as cultural creativity, home décor, and public art, forming a diversified industrial model.

However, this development process is confronted with multiple challenges. Some products, in pursuit of profits, excessively cater to public aesthetics and simplify traditional craftsmanship and processes, resulting in uneven quality and shoddy production, which damages the brand image. Some creators have a shallow understanding of the cultural connotations of traditional Sancai art, and their works



merely stay at the level of formal imitation and splicing, making it difficult to achieve an organic integration of tradition and modernity. Therefore, when expanding the diversified industrial model, Luoyang Sancai art needs to strike a balance between pursuing market benefits and adhering to the quality and cultural connotations of traditional craftsmanship.

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, the vibrant Sancai glaze and exquisite craftsmanship are characteristic of them.	
	Decline and Transformation Stage (Song, Ming, and Qing Dynasties)	Transition from burial objects to daily-use ceramics, emergence of architectural	
	Reappearance and Restoration Stage (Early 20th Century)	Archaeological discoveries promoted Sancai research, and artisans restored Sancai production	
Development Stages of Modern Sancai Art	Initial Revival and Antique Reproduction Stage (1950s to 1980s)	Government-led restoration, antique reproductions, and industry formation	
	Breaking Tradition and Modern Innovation Stage (1980s to Present)	Technological advancements, artistic innovation, and cultural applications	

2. Changes from Traditional Sancai Art to Modern Sancai Art

Luoyang Sancai Art has undergone a profound transformation from Tang dynasty burial pottery to a form of contemporary cultural and artistic expression. This evolution not only reflects the continuity of traditional craftsmanship but also embodies the impact of technological advancement, shifts in aesthetic values, and changing social demands. This chapter systematically reviews the transformation of Sancai art from three perspectives: the evolution of techniques and craftsmanship, the transformation of forms and modes of expression, and the expansion of cultural functions and application contexts. It explores how traditional handicraft has transitioned into modern art, becoming a comprehensive art form that integrates cultural value, artistic innovation, and market potential.

2.1 Technical Dimension: Changes of Materials and Craftsmanship

The techniques and craftsmanship of Luoyang Sancai Art have experienced significant changes throughout its historical development. From the early use of low-fired lead-glazed pottery, through the

maturity of techniques and richness of glaze colors during the Tang dynasty, to contemporary innovations in craftsmanship and material improvements, each stage demonstrates distinct characteristics and technological breakthroughs.

The glazes of Sancai ware are not only vivid and mottled but are especially noted for their harmonious and well-balanced color combinations (Xu, 2003). Due to technological limitations, some glaze materials were scarce in traditional Sancai production. During the Tang dynasty, Sancai firing primarily relied on earthen kilns and firewood as fuel (Zhang, 2020). Furthermore, limited production tools resulted in relatively coarse raw material processing. This compelled craftsmen of the time to seek alternative approaches, enhancing the quality of their works through expressive modeling and the visual impact of color (Hei, 2019).

With advancements in modern craft techniques and the diversification of aesthetic demands, contemporary artists have explored new approaches to color expression while inheriting the traditional Sancai craft. The introduction of lead-free, environmentally friendly glazes, modern pigments, and precise temperature control technologies has significantly expanded the color palette of Sancai art, leading to a more diverse and vibrant chromatic system.



Figure 2 Technological Changes of Sancai Art

(A: Traditional Kiln, B: Modern Kiln, C: Modern Glaze Color Swatch, D: Modern Glaze Color Presentation, E: Modern Glaze Materials)

Note: Photographed by the researcher

2.2 Artistic Dimension: Changes in Form and Language

The forms and modes of expression in Luoyang Sancai Art have undergone significant transformation. While traditional works emphasize symmetrical balance and auspicious symbolism, modern creations, building upon traditional aesthetics, integrate elements of contemporary art and pursue more diverse and individualized forms of expression. This transformation is not only evident in formal innovations but also reflects a reinterpretation of traditional culture and an integration of contemporary spirit, endowing Sancai art with renewed cultural vitality.

Traditional Sancai art is renowned for its exquisite realism in modeling. These works feature lifelike designs, graceful postures, and a harmonious unity of form and spirit, exhibiting a high degree of

artistic expressiveness (Gao, 2015). However, such three-dimensional Sancai artworks are limited in their glaze performance and spatial adaptability, lacking the capacity for broader environmental integration. The shift from three-dimensional modeling to two-dimensional surfaces transformed traditional ceramic sculptures into Sancai ceramic paintings, thereby overcoming spatial limitations and expanding the creative possibilities for artists (Guo, 2012).

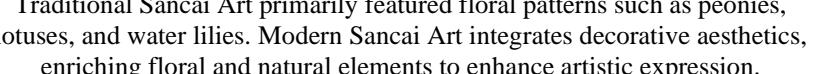
Sancai ceramic painting employs flowing glazes to create abstract visual effects, allowing Sancai art to transcend the boundaries of ceramic sculpture and enter a diverse system of modern artistic expression. Although the traditional imagery of horses in Sancai art is already rich and varied, in the new era, Luoyang Sancai continues to develop new representations of horses based on this legacy (Li, 2017).

Table 2 Evolution from Three-Dimensional Realism to Flat Abstraction.

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

The development of Luoyang Sancai Art has evolved from a focus on singular themes to a diversification of subject matter. This transformation has not only enriched the expressive content of Sancai art but also extended its application beyond traditional funerary culture into broader realms such as public art, cultural creativity, and modern design. As a result, the contemporary relevance and cultural adaptability of Luoyang Sancai Art have been significantly enhanced.

Table 3 Diversified Themes in Modern Sancai.

Characteristics	Expanding from traditional female figurines and civil official figurines to modern artistic human figures, such as contemporary portraits, folk characters, and cultural icons.
	
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.
	
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	
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.
Abstract and Geometric Themes	Sample image	
Characteristics		Modern Sancai Art often combines multiple themes to create large-scale environmental artworks, typically applied in public spaces.
Comprehension-sive Themes	Sample image	

2.3 Cultural Dimension: Changes of Symbolic Meaning and Identity Recognition

Traditional Sancai art is not only a manifestation of craftsmanship and aesthetics but is also deeply rooted in the cultural and religious context of the Tang dynasty, particularly as it relates to funerary practices. A vivid example of this connection is the tomb of An Pu, a native of the Western Regions and a subject of the state of An, unearthed in 1981 in the southern suburbs of Longmen, Luoyang. The tomb yielded a large number of exquisite Sancai artifacts, providing concrete material evidence of the close association between Sancai art and funerary culture. The tomb was well preserved, and a total of 129 sets of burial objects were excavated (Wang, 2017).

With the evolution of social values and aesthetic preferences, Luoyang Sancai Art has gradually shifted from its traditional roles in funerary use and antique-style collection toward integration into contemporary life and public spaces. It has become an art form that combines both utility and aesthetics. The construction of Luoyang's urban brand can effectively enhance the city's overall competitiveness and showcase its unique characteristics and beauty (Cai & Chen, 2010). As a cultural symbol of the Luoyang region, Sancai art is widely used in urban branding, cultural promotion, and tourism souvenirs, highlighting the city's distinctiveness and enhancing its cultural competitiveness.



Figure 3: Expansion of cultural functions and application scenarios

(A: Traditional burial objects, B: Modern cultural and creative products, C: Public art)

Note: Photographed by the researcher

2.4 Social Dimension: Changes of Production Mechanisms and Transmission Models

With the advancement of society, the production mechanisms and transmission models of Luoyang Sancai Art have undergone profound changes. From traditional handicraft-based models to modern industrialized production, and further to the influence of the cultural and creative industries, the production methods of Sancai art have experienced a fundamental transformation.

The most direct form of traditional craftsmanship transmission was bloodline transmission, wherein skills were passed down through kinship, sustaining families across generations (Yu, 2020). In the early 20th century, the core traditional handicraft of Tang Sancai followed a single-inheritance model, transmitted only to male descendants (Gao, 2015). In contrast, professional lineage transmission was not based on blood relations but primarily occurred through master-apprentice relationships (Yu, 2020). As traditional crafts and artistic forms gradually fade in modern society, national policy protection has become particularly crucial. Traditional handicraft policies reflect the will of the state and ruling parties in managing traditional crafts. These policies define the fundamental requirements for the development of traditional handicrafts and serve as a basis for regulating related social relations and addressing associated social issues (Y. Zhang, 2022). Accordingly, the transmission model of Sancai art has gradually shifted from family-based and master-apprentice systems to more diversified frameworks, including formal education and broader cultural dissemination systems.

2.5 Economic Dimension: Changes in Market Logic and Consumer Demand

During the Tang dynasty, the consumer base for Tang Sancai expanded from royalty and high-ranking officials to mid- and lower-level officials, eventually reaching wealthy commoners and even Buddhist temples for monastic use. This indicates a wide and socially diverse consumer group (Ren, 2022). As the pinnacle of traditional Sancai art, Tang Sancai has frequently achieved remarkable results in international auction markets, reflecting its unique artistic value and historical significance.

Market demand and economic factors have accelerated the industrialization of Sancai art. Modern Sancai has now entered high-end home décor, customized art, and cultural tourism industries. Through brand-oriented operations, it has evolved into a form of cultural consumer good, rather than solely a collectible artwork. The brand economy is a product of the development of productivity and the market economy to a certain stage. It integrates various economic elements around brand identity and drives the overall operation of the economy, representing an advanced stage of the market economy (Liang, 2012).

The brand Sancai Yi (三彩艺), by leveraging the geographical indication of Luoyang Sancai, establishes its origin identity and cultural lineage, safeguards intellectual property rights, and enhances market trust and brand loyalty. In doing so, it forms a brand recognition system with core competitiveness.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that the development of Luoyang Sancai Art can be broadly divided into two stages: traditional Sancai art and modern Sancai art. The historical evolution and cultural reconstruction of Luoyang Sancai Art from its traditional roots to modern expressions are systematically discussed through the lens of cultural anthropology, highlighting the core logic of "phased evolution" and "multi-dimensional driving forces." The study reveals 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 process embodies multiple negotiations between "tradition" and "modernity," and demonstrates the logic of cultural adaptability of intangible cultural heritage in contemporary society.

British cultural anthropologist Edward Tylor, in his book *Primitive Culture* (1871), proposed the theory of "cultural evolutionism," suggesting that all cultures undergo an evolutionary process from primitive to civilized stages (Tylor, 1871). Each developmental stage of culture is both the outcome of the previous stage and the foundation for the next. The developmental history of Luoyang Sancai Art exhibits the typical characteristics of "continuity—rupture—regeneration," with its functional positioning, aesthetic features, social roles, and cultural identity all showing dynamic changes and an evolutionary logic across different historical periods.

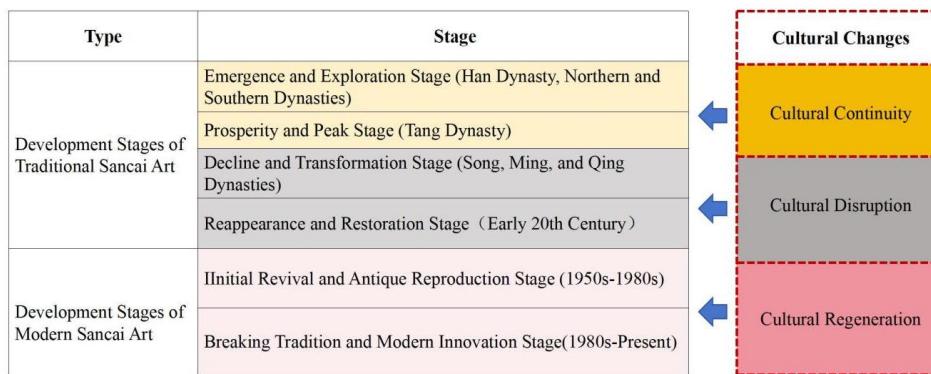


Figure 4 Cultural Changes of Luoyang Sancai Art

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Secondly, this study encompasses the historical development trajectory of Sancai art and the multidimensional transformation of modern Sancai art, with a detailed analysis of changes across five dimensions: technology, art, culture, society, and economy. By examining these multiple dimensions in depth, the study explores the transformation process of traditional Sancai art into modern Sancai art, investigating the interactive mechanisms behind its evolution. The interplay among these dimensions has collectively driven the innovation and transformation of Sancai art.

Today, the technological forces driving social change are exemplified by information control technologies. The introduction of new technologies is often accompanied by increasingly complex market economies and progressively democratized social structures, which in turn propel transformations in traditional social mechanisms (Qiu, 2009). In the theory of cultural change, American sociologist William F. Ogburn proposed the concept of "cultural lag," asserting that new technologies often outpace current cultural systems—they bring about new changes but may be resisted by traditional culture, and only gradually permeate society (Ogburn, 1922). This theory is validated in the development of Luoyang Sancai Art: technological innovations first broke through traditional constraints, while cultural functions and social mechanisms gradually adapted and integrated in response. Therefore, the development of civilization in any given region must be holistic and balanced. Within this whole, various components are interdependent, mutually supportive, and reciprocally constraining, forming a state of equilibrium (Fei & Li, 2000).

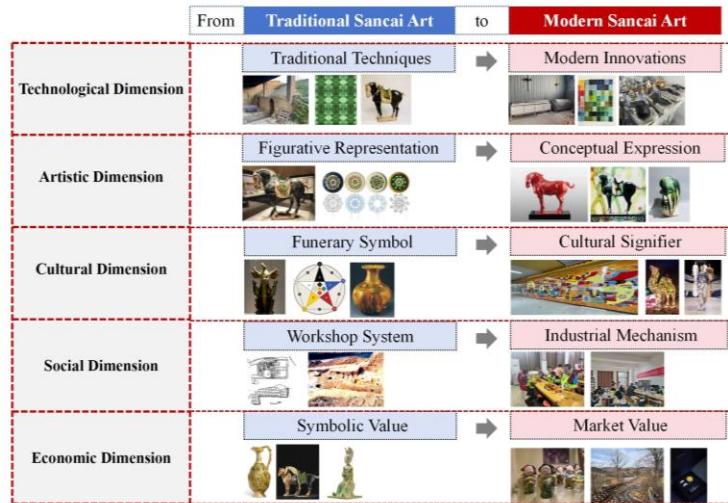


Figure 5 Changes in Five Dimensions of Luoyang Sancai Art

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Conclusion

Following its inclusion in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List and the subsequent recognition of its “intangible heritage” status, the cultural and market value of Luoyang Sancai Art has risen in tandem. Cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu, in *The Forms of Capital*, emphasizes that “symbolic capital, i.e., capital – in whatever form – insofar as it is perceived and recognized as legitimate” (Bourdieu, 1986). The modern trajectory of Luoyang Sancai Art clearly illustrates a development path from “individual – community – society.” As proposed in *The Predicament of Culture*, the continuity of traditional culture is not a matter of mechanical reproduction, but rather a process of “border-crossing, reconfiguration, and local reinvention” that fosters new modes of cultural expression and social connection (Clifford, 1988). Under the combined influence of technology, market forces, and cultural identity, Sancai art has gradually evolved from the individual craftsmanship of artisans into a multidimensional cultural ecosystem encompassing education, the creative industries, cultural dissemination, and community development.

Recommendation

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.

In the digital age, digital technologies have opened up more possibilities for the cross-border integration of Sancai art. For instance, virtual reality (VR) technology can be used to create immersive Sancai art experience exhibitions, allowing viewers to feel as if they are traveling through time and space to be present at the scene of Sancai art creation; augmented reality (AR) technology enables the virtual placement of Sancai artworks in modern home scenes, helping consumers better perceive the beauty of their integration with modern life. It is reasonable to believe that, rooted in Chinese culture, Luoyang Sancai art will surely continue to innovate and develop with its unique charm in the tide of the digital age, and its vitality will be constantly demonstrated in the integration of tradition and modernity.



References

Bourdieu, P. (1986). *The forms of capital*. Greenwood Press.

Cai, L., & Chen, C. (2010). A brief discussion on the construction of Luoyang's urban brand. *Chinese & Foreign Entrepreneurs*, (06), 125–126. <https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:ZWQY.0.2010-06-062>

Clifford, J. (1988). *The predicament of culture: Twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art*. Harvard University Press.

Duan, J. (2014). *An exploration of Guo Aihe's "Sancai ceramic painting" art* [Master's thesis, Shanxi Normal University].

Fei, X., & Li, F. (2000). Humanistic thoughts on Western development. *Humanistic Thoughts on Western Development*, (03), 8–23. <https://doi.org/10.16564/j.cnki.1003-2568.2000.03.019>

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

Guo, A. (2012). *Luoyang Sancai art*. Henan Fine Arts Publishing House.

Hei, L. (2019). *The study on the tri-colored patterns of the Tang Dynasty and the tri-colored patterns of the Liao Dynasty process comparison* [Master's thesis, Inner Mongolia Normal University].

Hu, Y., Fang, C., & Niu, J. (2023). How traditional handicrafts can unleash innovative vitality – Taking the innovative development of Luoyang Sancai art as an example. Retrieved from https://culture.gmw.cn/2023-11/14/content_36965287.htm

Huang, X., & Sun, W. (2018). The past and present life of Luoyang Sancai. *Ceramic Studies*, (06), 33–37. <https://doi.org/10.16649/j.cnki.36-1136/tq.2018.06.011>

Lei, Y. (2017). *Research on the space of survival and development of the Luoyang Nanshishan Tang tri-coloured glazed pottery* [Master's thesis, Yunnan University].

Li, N. (2017). *Artistic innovation of Luoyang Sancai in the new era* [Master's thesis, Kunming University of Science and Technology].

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

Liang, L. (2012). Strategic discussion on the shaping of the Luoyang city brand. *Journal of Chifeng University (Philosophy and Social Science Chinese Edition)*, (08), 75–78. <https://doi.org/10.13398/j.cnki.issn1673-2596.2012.08.088>

Liao, Y. (2004). Tang Sancai shape and decoration art III. *Collection World*, (08), 35–36. <https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:SCJE.0.2004-08-016>

Meng, S. (2008). *Inheritance and transformation: A study on Sancai ceramic panel mural art* [Master's thesis, China Academy of Art].

Ogburn, W. F. (1922). *Social change with respect to culture and original nature*. B. W. Huebsch.

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

Ren, Z. (2022). Investigation report on Tang Sancai consumption classes. Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/8QINEMRuyuDlNRKrctgREQ>

Sun, X. (2006). A brief discussion on the similarities and differences between Liao Sancai and Tang, Song Sancai. *Cultural Relics and Archaeology in Inner Mongolia*, (02), 75–77, 104. <https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:NMWC.0.2006-02-011>

Tylor, E. B. (1871). *Primitive culture: Research into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, art, and custom*. John Murray.

Wang, J. (2017). Essence of Tang Sancai artifacts from the tomb of General Tang Dingyuan and his wife An Pufu. *Cultural Relics World*, (08), 36–39. <https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:WWTD.0.2017-08-007>

Xu, W. (2003). Exploring Tang culture through Tang Sancai characteristics. *Ceramic Studies Journal*, (02), 34–38. <https://doi.org/10.16649/j.cnki.36-1136/tq.2003.02.010>

Yang, F. (2017). Sancai connects Eastern and Western civilizations: Painting thoughts on porcelain, ancient and modern. Retrieved from https://lywb.lyd.com.cn/html2/2017-09/30/content_133506.htm

Ye, Z. (2006). *History of Chinese ceramics*. Life, Reading, and New Knowledge Sanlian Bookstore.





Yu, X. (2020). The inheritance and innovation of Luoyang Tang Sancai firing techniques. *Henan Science and Technology*, (24), 116–118. <https://doi.org/CNKI:SUN:HNKJ.0.2020-24-026>

Zhang, L. (2020). The influence of modern technology on the techniques of Tang tri-colored pottery: A case study of Luoyang's Tang tri-colored pottery. *Journal of Henan Institute of Education (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, (06), 29–33.

Zhang, Y. (2022). *A research on China's traditional craftsmanship policy from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding* [Master's thesis, Chinese National Academy of Arts].

