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From Lacquer Painting to Kintsukuroi: A Rheological Study of Kintsukuroi

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Abstract: The word "Kintsukuroi" originated from Japan, but its origin is traced back to the traditional Chinese art of repairing ancient artifacts - lacquer painting. The repair technique not only has a long history in China, but also has influenced the formation and development of artifact repair in many countries and regions in the world. Based on the perspective of intangible cultural heritage, this paper analyzes and studies the ancient Chinese traditional lacquer calligraphist by sorting out the evolution of the Kintsukuroi process. At the same time, under the background of cultural confidence, this paper also continuously enhances the spiritual cohesion of the Chinese nation, and promotes the revival and inheritance of Chinese traditional craftsmanship.

Keywords: Kintsukuroi; Lacquer Culture; Ceramic Restoration.

1. Introduction

China has a long history of ceramics, which can be traced back to ancient times, such as the emergence of black and painted pottery in the Neolithic Age. With the continuous improvement of ceramic technology in different periods, the restoration technology of ancient Chinese artifacts is also developing and influenced by lacquer culture, among which the most representative is the lacquer painting process. Kintsukuroi, as a branch of lacquer culture, not only contains the ancient people's philosophical wisdom and aesthetic experience behind it, but also shows the image of China as a big country in communication and development with the rest of the world since ancient times.

2. Literature review

2.1. The Origin and Development of Lacquer Painting

China is the first country to recognize and use raw lacquer, ancient Chinese can make full use of its characteristics in the process of manufacturing. Therefore, China's lacquer culture not only built a unique system, but also formed a long history of development.

2.1.1. The Origin of Lacquer Painting

Lacquer liquid is a milky white natural liquid paint produced by the lacquer tree, also known as earth lacquer and raw lacquer. Lacquer tree has a long history of cultivation in China and is widely distributed. There are a large number of relevant records in the "Classic of Mountains and Seas": "The Classic of Mountains and Seas - The Classic of Western Mountains" records: "It is also a hundred and eighty miles north, known as Mount Hao. Its wood is mostly lacquered and brown, and its grass is mostly medicinal and aromatic", [1] "The Classic of Mountains and Seas - The Classic of Northern Mountains" records: "Another 380 miles north, called Guo Mountain, has a lot of lacquer on its top and a lot of tung trees under it." [2] According to "The Classic of Mountains and Seas - The Classic of Middle Northern Mountains", "Another two hundred miles west is called Xiong'er Mountain, with a lot of paint on its top and a lot of brown under it" [3]. Thus, it can be proved that China has had sufficient lacquer resources in ancient times, which is also the material basis for the emergence and gradual prevalence of lacquer culture. In the "Ancient and Modern Notes" written by Cui Bao, a scholar of the Western Jin Dynasty, there is a specific record of the ancient process of collecting and cutting raw lacquer: "The lacquer tree is carved with a steel axe, its skin is opened, and it is replaced by a bamboo tube. The juice is poured into a dropper, which is the later lacquer." [4] In addition, in China's first regional geographical work, "Discussion on the Tribute of Yu", it is described as follows: "The Jihe River flows only through Yanzhou. The Jiuhe River flows only through the Tao, while the Leixia River flows through the Ze River, and the Ju River flows through the Ju River. The mulberry soil flows through the silkworm, which is the soil of the descending hills and houses. The jue soil flows through the black graves, the jue grass flows only through the Yao River, and the jue wood flows only through the bamboo. The jue field flows only through the middle and the jue Fu Zhen River, which is the same for three years of writing. The jue tribute is made of lacquered silk, and the jue Fu weaves." [5] This indicates that raw lacquer was not only used in raw material manufacturing, but also used as tribute in the pre-Qin period. At the same time, it also confirms from the side that raw lacquer has important value and significance in ancient times.

In ancient China, the use and extension of raw lacquer were collectively referred to as lacquer art. As a traditional Chinese manufacturing process and technology, the development of lacquer art has a long history, which can be traced back to ancient times. As recorded in "History as a Mirror - Tang", "Shun made lacquerware and admonished more than ten people. Why is this enough to admonish?" [6] This indicates that as early as the Neolithic period, ancient Chinese ancestors were able to creatively integrate the performance of raw lacquer with processes such as making utensils and repairing. Another example is the discovery of a lacquered bow at the Cross-Lake Bridge site in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, through three archaeological excavations in 1990, 2001, and 2002. According to radiocarbon dating and thermal radiometry, its origin can be traced back as early as 8,000 to 7,000 years ago. This is not only the earliest known lacquer ware in China, but also another proof that in the Neolithic

period, ancient Chinese ancestors were able to fully understand and master the production techniques of lacquer painting and lacquer repair, providing a strong empirical guarantee for the study of the historical context of the development of ancient Chinese lacquer culture. At the same time, it fully demonstrates the philosophical wisdom and creation aesthetics of ancient Chinese.

2.1.2. The Development Course of Lacquer Painting

Lacquer painting is a repair technique with lacquer as the main bonding material. As an important technique in the repair process of utensils, lacquer painting is not only a further extension of the use of raw lacquer, but also an irreplaceable existence in the long history of the development of lacquer culture. The production range of lacquer painting is extensive. Although the main objects of creation are ceramics and purple sand artifacts, they can also be used in the repair process of bamboo, jade, stone, tooth carving, and other artifacts. For example, in 1978, a broken red lacquer wooden bowl was unearthed in the third cultural layer of the Hemudu Cultural Site in Yuyao, Zhejiang Province. It not only demonstrates the creative integration of raw lacquer painting in wood carving techniques, but also confirms the diversity of Chinese lacquer culture that encompasses everything.

"Lacquering" refers to the technique of using raw lacquer to paint objects. Its earliest appearance was in the "Rites of the Zhou - Chun Guan": "A chariot, surrounded by a circle, painted with lacquer, painted with a fan, covered with lacquer, and decorated with birds." [7] This not only indicates that the painting process has taken shape in the Western Zhou Dynasty, but also confirms the role of raw lacquer in coffin and other objects for raising the life and delivering the dead. In the annotation of Zheng Xuan, a Confucian scholar in the late Eastern Han Dynasty, "Xiu" was interpreted as "a color with redder and less black". In Chapter 97 of the Book of the Han Dynasty, "Waiqi - Xiaocheng, Empress Zhao", it is recorded that "In the house of Juzhaoyang, the court is filled with Zhu, and the palace is painted with lacquer. All the sections are painted with copper and gold, with white jade steps. The wall bands are often made of gold and red, and they are written on the walls of the blue fields. They are decorated with pearls and jade feathers, which have never been seen since the harem." [8] Yan Shigu, a scholar of classics and exegesis in the Tang Dynasty, translated the above mentioned "lacquering" into "lacquer decoration" in his book "Notes to the Han Book". With continuous development, lacquering has gradually become a proprietary craft in lacquer art.

The techniques of lacquer decoration include painting gold, stacking paint, inlaying, mother-of-pearl inlay, gold and silver peeling, and carving lacquer. Among them, the gold painting process, also known as clay gold painting paint, refers to the decorative technique of using black or red paint as the ground and using gold powder or gold water to paint patterns on the surface of lacquerware or ceramics. The gold painting process has a long history, originating from the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. In the work of Huang Cheng, a painter in the Ming Dynasty, and the earliest extant monograph on lacquerwork in China, "Lacquer Decoration Collection", there is also a specific description of the gold painting process: "Painting gold, a clay gold painting lacquer, is also a pure gold flower text. Zhu Di and black are both suitable. Their text uses landscapes, feathers, flowers, fruits, and character stories, while the thin hook is yang, and the smoothing is yin, or black inside, or colored gold statues." [9] This indicates that the gold painting techniques of this period have formed a mature technological level, and have both artistic value and practical functions. Later, with the introduction of painting techniques and ceramic techniques from China to Japan, under the influence of Japanese regional characteristics and national culture, the Japanese painting technique, namely the Kintsukuroi technique, gradually developed and formed.

2.2. The Origin and Development of Kintsukuroi

Although Kintsukuroi originated in Japan, its process originated from the combination of the processes in the gold painting technique and the ceramic repair process.

2.2.1. The Origin of Kintsukuroi

Kintsukuroi originates from the clay gold process of China's lacquer decoration technology, and is the traditional porcelain repair technology of Japan. It is the porcelain fragments bonded by natural lacquer, and then applied with gold powder or gold foil on the surface, so as to achieve the purpose of repair and decoration. [10] According to literature records, Japanese military general Hiroshi distributed gold at the Yuwangshan Temple, where Zen master Shi Deguang presented a Longquan kiln blue glazed flowered bowl. As the first famous kiln in Chinese history, the Southern Song Dynasty coincided with the mature period of the development of Longquan kiln. For example, the plum and pink celadon glazes fired in the late Southern Song Dynasty are known as the culmination of the aesthetic development of celadon glaze. This blue glazed flowered bowl is of top quality both in terms of its shape and glaze color. Therefore, after Hiroshi brought this bowl back to Japan, the Japanese royal family also regarded it as a national treasure.

In the middle of the Muromachi era, blue-glazed flower-shaped bowls that had been tossed and turned around many times in various Japanese families were collected by General Tsuri Yoshitsu. However, due to long circulation time and improper storage, the bottom of the bowl was damaged. Zuli Yizheng sent envoys to China to request the same payment. However, at that time, China had already entered the Ming Dynasty. The porcelain making process of Longquan Kiln in this period continued the technological style of the Yuan Dynasty, pursuing carved decoration and thick glaze, which was also greatly different from the process and decoration of the Southern Song Dynasty. Therefore, Chinese craftsmen adopted the curium porcelain process to repair and fix the damaged Longquan kiln blue glazed flowered bowl. In the book "A Record of Horse Locust Tripping Tea Ou" written by Ito Dongya, a Confucian scholar in the Edo era in Japan, there is also a related record of this: "There is a trace at the bottom. The Prime Minister sent it to the Ming Dynasty for the second time of his appointment, and recruited him to replace it. The Ming Dynasty sent a craftsman to tie it with iron nails and six seals, stumbling like a horse locust. He still felt interesting and called it Horse Locust Tripping Tea Ou." [11] This not only provides a specific description of the Longquan kiln's blue glazed flowered bowl after the curium porcelain process was repaired, but also provides a certain factual basis. According to legend, after the Japanese envoy brought the restored blue-glazed flowered bowl back to Japan, Ashikaga Yoshimasa was not satisfied with it. At the same time, influenced by Chinese lacquer art culture during this period, Japanese lacquer art also entered a peak period of development. Therefore, Japanese craftsmen combined the

lacquer repair process and the curium porcelain process to repaint and gold powder decorate the blue-glazed flowered bowl. As a result, Kintsukuroi process was produced in Japan. And under the influence of Japanese culture, it has continuously developed and gradually formed the concept of "cherishing things" process manufacturing.

Although the above-mentioned theory on the origin of the Kintsukuroi process has been widely recognized by Japanese academia and Chinese researchers, it cannot be used as a reference and basis for the origin of the Kintsukuroi process due to the lack of physical evidence and literature support. However, an analysis of the techniques of the Kintsukuroi process can provide a certain reference basis for its origin and development.

2.2.2. The Development Course of Kintsukuroi

Japan is known as "the country of lacquer" due to its strong admiration and development of lacquer culture, but the origin of its lacquer culture is deeply rooted in the influence of Chinese lacquer culture. According to literature records, during the Eastern Han Dynasty, ancient Chinese lacquer craft was introduced into Japan through the Korean Peninsula, and the level of Japanese lacquer art was greatly improved. After entering the Tang Dynasty, with the increasingly frequent political, economic, and cultural exchanges between China and Japan, traditional Chinese lacquer art culture began to enter Japan systematically and on a large scale. By taking this opportunity, it also once again promoted the development of Japanese lacquer art. At the same time, during this period, influenced by techniques such as lacquer carving, gold and silver peeling, mother-of-pearl inlay, and gold sprinkling, Japan not only created a highly representative "carving and painting process", but also gradually began to form a unique lacquer culture system with its national characteristics.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Japanese lacquer art culture continued to develop and entered its heyday. During this period, three official lacquer art schools, represented by Ami, Guman, and Kakawa, and three lacquer art centers, dominated by Kyoto, Edo, and Kanazawa, were formed. The Japanese lacquerware industry is also extremely prosperous, and the production of lacquerware is no longer dominated by official manufacturing, but also has formed a wide range of private scale among the people. The sufficient output created not only made lacquerware enter the daily life of ordinary Japanese people as a daily product, but also began to export in large quantities. For example, the introduction of Japanese lacquerware is also described in the book "Seven Revisions Categories of Things" by Lang Ying, a book collector in the Ming Dynasty: "In ancient times, there was a closure of gold without mud gold, a paste of gold without tracing or spreading gold, an iron blunderbuss without wood blunderbuss, a hard screen without soft screen, and a carved red without ethereal clouds and colored paint, all of which originated in this dynasty. It also existed due to the tribute or transmission of the Eastern barbarians. The painting of gold and the sprinkling of gold in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, are based on the general history of the Japanese state. They were obtained by touching each other with affection, and the sprinkling of gold cannot yet be as round as that of the other. Therefore, fake Japanese fans are also made in Ningbo. Clay gold, colored paint, and ethereal clouds sent by Xuande to that place to spread their teachings." This confirms that the manufacturing level of Japanese lacquer art during this period has to some extent been higher than the technological level of Chinese lacquer art. At the same time, this also shows that "Japanese lacquer" was not only highly praised and sought after by the upper class of China at that time due to its unique craftsmanship style. Moreover, with the emergence of some lacquer art works that imitated "Japanese lacquer" and had a "やまと style" aesthetic during the Ming and Qing dynasties, it indicates that the exchange of Chinese and Japanese lacquer art has shifted from a unilateral export of Chinese lacquer art to a stage where Japanese lacquer art has had an impact on Chinese lacquer art.

With the strong support of the ruling class and the popularity of the people, Japanese lacquer art has flourished. After the Edo period in the 17th century, successors who made their living by Kintsukuroi began to appear in Japan. In the process of development, three craft schools represented by "Wuyi", "Baichuan" and "Wenzu" have been gradually formed. At the same time, different schools of kinzam techniques also have their own characteristics. At the same time, the Kintsukuroi techniques among different schools also have their own characteristics. The "Wuyi School" is named after "Qin Feng Wuyi" in the "Book of Songs", and its creative pursuit is the strong contrast between the bright and dark colors of large lacquer and glaze, while the "Wenzu" school is famous for its fine gold threads as mosquito feet. The process of Kintsukuroi is roughly the same as that of paint painting, mainly including painting and spraying gold powder. However, in order to make the damaged parts of the restored artifacts more closely fit the original artifacts, its practical operation is difficult. During the repair process, it is not only necessary for the inheritor to continuously control the thickness of the paint during the coating process, but also to achieve the same area and line as the original artifacts during the spraying process, which requires the inheritor to have sufficient patience and certain artistic expression ability. At the same time, the Zen thought introduced from China to Japan during this period not only deeply influenced the development of Japanese aesthetics, but also led to the creative formulation of the aesthetic concept of "silence". Under the joint influence of the aesthetic concept of "material mourning" in Japan, the artistic appreciation of incomplete beauty, and ancient Chinese philosophical thoughts, the Jinshu craft takes "cherishing things" and "simplicity" as its creative basis, and achieves the re integration of restoration techniques and artistic aesthetics on the basis of inheriting the original style of the artifacts.

3. Conclusion

3.1. The Current Situation and Application of Kintsukuroi

In the context of modernism, the aesthetic thought of silence once again satisfies the spiritual pursuit of people in modern society. Therefore, the lacquer culture represented by the Kintsukuroi process gradually has a voice in the global development of handicraft industry. Moreover, due to the practical and artistic characteristics of the Kintsukuroi process, modernist artists have refined their spiritual concepts and forms of expression into artistic symbols and extended them to other artistic fields. By taking this opportunity, the cross-domain integration and innovative development of the metal repair process have been achieved. For example, Korean artist Yeesookyung creatively combined hundreds of damaged porcelain pieces with the process of Kintsukuroi techniques to form a series of sculpture works. Another example is Chinese Millennium Porcelain Cultural Jewelry,

which is based on ancient porcelain fragments from official kilns, achieving a secondary creation of traditional restoration techniques and modern jewelry. This not only demonstrates the artistic charm of traditional Chinese crafts, but also becomes a new carrier of traditional Chinese culture.

As a technique and craft produced by the collision between Chinese and Japanese cultural exchanges, Kintsukuroi not only exhibits the artistic charm of restoration techniques, but also symbolizes the long history of lacquer culture. At the same time, its rich cultural connotation and artistic expression ability have promoted the inheritance and development of repair technology and modern lacquer art.

3.2. Inheritance and Development of Lacquer Art

In the long history of the development of lacquer art in China, the function and artistic value of lacquer art are constantly changing. For example, in the early stage of the development of lacquer art culture, mainly practical function, its artistic expression form is limited by the object subject. With the emergence and development of lacquer decoration, lacquer painting and other techniques and processes, lacquer art began to turn from decorative production based on practical function to artistic appreciation and artistic aesthetic stage of artistic creation, and gradually formed the lacquer painting, Kintsukuroi and other extension processes.

After entering modern society, the continuous development of science and technology not only promotes the continuous improvement of lacquer art level, but also realizes the integration and innovation of lacquer culture in different fields, multiple dimensions and all aspects. In addition, with the deepening of research and understanding, the inheritance of traditional Chinese crafts such as Kintsukuroi has become the top priority of development. Especially in recent years, under the background of cultural confidence, with continuous attention to Chinese traditional crafts, Chinese intangible cultural heritage technology represented by lacquer art has been revitalized and developed. For example, the 14th Five-Year Plan for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism not only put forward the requirements, tasks and measures for the inheritance of traditional Chinese crafts, but also promoted the spread of traditional culture once again.

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