

## The inheritance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang: The integration of traditional handicrafts and the regional cultural background of social transformation

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**Abstract:** Creative Documentary Research Data Methodology for mixing the Qualitative Research Methods and collecting research data through surveys, interviews, observations, group discussions and seminars, literature analysis, and field research.to let the educational audience understand and learn the historical background and aesthetic knowledge of *Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines*. Sancai is a versatile decoration on Chinese pottery and other painted pieces using glazes or slip, predominantly in the three colors of brown (or amber), green, and creamy off-white. Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines is three-colored pottery in Kilns near Xi'an and Luoyang. During the Tang Dynasty, porcelain pottery appeared. Porcelain is ceramic pottery characterized by its white, translucent appearance. It is known for its durability and is often used for making delicate and intricate objects such as vases, bowls, and figurines. This research focused on the inheritance strategy of traditional handicrafts combined with education in the regional cultural regeneration system under the background of China's social transformation. In social transformation, combining traditional handicrafts with modern education and cultivating the educational audience's awareness of protecting traditional culture can not only allow handicraft skills to continue in the classroom. It is also conducive to the survival and development of traditional handicrafts in their place of origin can reshape the regional cultural identity of traditional handicrafts, promote the diversity and innovation of different cultures, traditions, and perspectives, and how to promote cultural diversity, equity, and harmony education and enhance cultural confidence and national identity.

**Keywords:** Ceramic pottery characteristics, China's social transformation, Context of cultural confidence and national identity, Cultural and traditional handicrafts, Tang Sancai pottery figurines.

### 1. Introduction

Ancient Chinese began farming rice over 9,000 years ago. Farming made life easier because people no longer had to travel to hunt animals, but could grow their food where they lived. Rice and millet were the two main crops grown in Ancient China. Rice paddy (fields) flooded from the rivers. Since modern times, Chinese society has undergone a major transformation from agricultural to modern industrial civilization (Wen, 2016). During this process, China has completed many transformations at the political and economic levels. The modernization transformation at the cultural level has always been an important task throughout from the protection and inheritance of traditional handicrafts to the rise of the culture and creative industries, each stage of social transformation has put forward new requirements for the reconstruction of culture (UNESCO Digital Library, 1982).

The Tang Dynasty's territory stretched from the Korean Peninsula to northern Vietnam, and the Silk Road connected China to Rome. *Tang Sancai Pottery*: Tang Sancai pottery is known for its use of multiple colors, primarily yellow, green, and white. The pottery was made by firing lead-glazed earthenware in two stages. The first firing toughened the body of the pottery, and the second firing applied the glaze. Tang Sancai pottery was mostly used in tombs, as the lead glaze was toxic. *Origins of*

*Tang Sancai*: Tang Sancai pottery originated in the northern Chinese cities of Shaanxi and Loyang. The Tang pottery shapes, characteristics are contrasting contours and roundness, some shapes are based on non-Chinese forms, such as ancient Greek pottery. *Influence of foreign cultures*: The Tang Dynasty was a time of cultural exchange, and the pottery reflects this. For example, a Tang Dynasty pottery figure shows a camel carrying musicians and a singer, with the musicians' playing instruments from Central Asia (Lewis, 2012).

A type of glazed pottery with the dominant colors: yellow, brown, and green was popular in the Tang Dynasty (618-907). It was later called the tri-colored glazed pottery of the Tang Dynasty, or Tang Sancai. Tri-colored glazed pottery utensils of the Tang were usually rounded and full in shape according to the aesthetic values of the time. The accurately proportioned human and animal figures have fluid lines, natural expressions, and life-like movements. The soldier figures have strong muscles, big staring eyes and wield swords or arrows. The female figures have high hair buns and full sleeves; they stand gracefully erect, looking natural and elegant. The animal figures are mainly of horses and camels. The tri-colored glazed pottery continued to improve through the centuries. Now, it has developed even further, and its varieties number several hundred. The once tri-color glaze has expanded to include yellow, purple, black, and blue, and its artistic quality has also soared (China Culture Association, 2003).

China is currently undergoing its third social transformation. In the context of globalization, the modernization reconstruction of culture has become a key task for achieving the comprehensive transformation of Chinese society. "Tang Dynasty Tri-color Pottery Figurines" is a low-temperature glazed pottery figurine that flourished in the Tang Dynasty (Benn, 2002). It is known for its vivid and lifelike shape, bright colors, and rich life atmosphere. Among them, tri-color means colorful. Its glaze colors include yellow, vermilion yellow, green, emerald green, brown-red, sky blue, etc. The tri-color pottery figurines include a variety of figures and animals, such as ladies, officials, male and female servants, warriors, kings, Hu people, horses, camels, pigs, sheep, chickens, dogs, etc. (Eberhard, 2005).

In ancient times, its main function was to be used as funerary objects in tombs. Sancai is an art form with the characteristics of the times and has an important influence on modern ceramic art. Sancai pottery, meaning 'three colors' in Chinese, refers to a type of glazed ceramic that became popular during the Tang dynasty. The art of Sancai pottery reflects the rich cultural exchanges and artistic innovations of the period, showcasing both aesthetic beauty and functional design (East Asian Art and Civilization, 2017). Luoyang is a cultural center with a long history in Henan Province, central China, and is a city located in the confluence area of the Luo River and the Yellow River in the west of Henan Province, China. Governed as a prefecture-level city, it borders the provincial capital of Zhengzhou to the east, Pingdingshan to the southeast, Nanyang to the south, Sanmenxia to the west, Jiyuan to the north, and Jiaozuo to the northeast (China: Hénán Administration, 2020). By the end of 2022, Luoyang Municipality had jurisdiction over 7 municipal districts, 7 counties, and 1 development zone. The permanent population is 7.079 million (National Information Center, 2024). Luoyang is an important part of the cultural heritage in the region, Tang Sancai pottery figurines have a deep connection with the local history, culture, and social structure. These pottery figurines are the symbol of the regional and cultural identities of the Luoyang's people (Shi, 2023).

Under the background of social transformation, the cultural ecology of handicrafts in Luoyang has changed a lot. During this period of change, the inheritance and development of Tang Sancai pottery figurines also encountered difficulties: the uniqueness of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in the Luoyang area gradually disappeared. To better inherit the Tang Sancai art in Luoyang area and let the educational audience better understand the regional uniqueness of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang area, the article studies the history, aesthetic characteristics, and uniqueness of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in the first part; in the second part, the inheritance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang area is used as a case to explore the integration of traditional handicrafts and regional culture deeply; in the third part, the inheritance strategy of Tang Sancai pottery figurines combined with educational tools is proposed. Under the background of modern social transformation, the inheritance of traditional handicrafts, not only depends on the continuation of craftsmanship and cultural dissemination but also needs to be closely integrated with the modern education system.

## 2. Literature Review

Creative Documentary research can be used in a variety of disciplines, including health, geography, tourism, and sociology. It can be a valuable research methodology because it provides access to a large volume of data from diverse sources. However, it can also have limitations, such as biases based on the author's perspective and challenges in interpretation were reviewed as follows:

### 2.1. Part I: History and Artistic Characteristics of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines

#### 2.1.1. History of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines

The Tang Dynasty was an extremely open and prosperous period in Chinese history, with political stability, a developed economy, and cultural diversity. Tang Sancai is a product of this social background. The colorful lead-glazed ceramic vessels of the early Tang Dynasty, called Sancai ceramics, have unusual shapes and decorations, often reminiscent of early Iranian metalwork. Highly colored, lead-glazed ceramic vessels of the early Tang period, known as Sancai, or three-color ware, take on unusual shapes and decoration often reminiscent of earlier metalwork from Iran. By studying the possible sources of this gorgeous and obvious appearance, it is believed that Sancai is not directly based on Iranian metalwork or ceramics. Instead, these vessels were created when the Tang Dynasty seemed to want to establish a context that wished to foster a cosmopolitan court that matched their political aspirations. Sancai Pottery has concocted an impression of contact with Central Asia and places further west, without being a direct product of such relations. Sancai was produced at kilns in China. Tomb figures of horses, camels, dancers, and musicians suggested a flourishing trade with Central Asia (Rawson, 2012).

These vessels were produced in the context of the Tang Dynasty which seemed to be a desire to establish a cosmopolitan court that matched its political ambitions. Sancai appears to have been deliberately concocted to give the impression of links with Central Asia and regions further west but was not a direct product of such links. Sancai was produced in Chinese kilns, and similarly, tomb figurines of horses, camels, dancers, and musicians suggest flourishing trade with Central Asia. As both these vessels and figurines were intended for burials, it seems likely that Tang China's elite hoped to continue in death their desire to belong to a powerful state with extensive continental connections (Figure Caption 1).



**Figure 1.**  
Exhibits of the grand canal cultural museum of the sui and tang dynasties.  
**Source:** Liu Fei (February 2023).

It can be concluded that Tang Sancai is a unique ceramic art that Tang Dynasty craftsmen gradually developed by inheriting the ceramic craftsmanship of previous generations, drawing on the glazed pottery technology of Central and West Asia, and combining local firing technology. Tang Sancai began in the Southern and Northern Dynasties and flourished in the Tang Dynasty. After the demise of the Tang Dynasty, this craft gradually disappeared and completely disappeared in the Song Dynasty. The historical development of Tang Sancai lasted about 400 to 500 years, see Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
Development of Tang Sancai pottery figurines.

| Period          | Time range                                  | Main features of Tang Sancai  | Historical background  |
|-----------------|---|---|--|
| Start-up period | Early 7th century AD - early 8th century AD | Mainly monochrome glazed pottery, with a single variety   | In the early Tang Dynasty, politics was stable and culture and art gradually flourished but the craftsmanship of Tang Sancai was not yet mature, and most of the pottery was single-color glaze pottery.                 |
| Heyday          | Peak mid-7th century - mid-8th century      | There are too many works of high quality, mainly produced in Luoyang. Human and animal figurines appeared for the first time, representing the highest level of Tang Sancai.    | Wu Zetian established Luoyang as the capital, and the economy and culture prospered unprecedentedly. The custom of lavish burials prevailed, and Tang Sancai was mass-produced as a funerary object and quickly matured. |
| Decline         | Mid-8th century - early 10th century AD     | The production of Tang Sancai began to decline, the quantity decreased, and the craftsmanship declined. With the demise of the Tang Dynasty, Tang Sancai gradually disappeared. | After the An-Shi Rebellion, the Tang Dynasty declined, the economy declined, the custom of lavish burials weakened, and the production and use of Tang Sancai gradually decreased.                                       |

### 2.1.2. Artistic Characteristics of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines in Luoyang Area

In the 5,000 years of Chinese history, the Tang Dynasty, with its self-confidence, openness, and tolerance, widely absorbed the essence of various ethnic groups and foreign cultures, realized a high degree of intermingling of Hu and Han peoples and cultures, and forged the Tang culture with a strong vitality based on the local Han culture and the intersection and fusion of various cultures. Tang Sancai, a unique art emerging from the Tang Dynasty, is a unique flower in the history of Chinese ceramics, with a vivid cultural gene, and is known as an "encyclopedia" of the Tang Dynasty society, and a mirror reflecting the intermingling of Hu and Han cultures in the Tang Dynasty. The raw materials, production, and aesthetic style of Tang Sancai were all influenced by the intermingling of Hu and Han cultures to varying degrees and contained distinctive marks of exchange and interaction between the people in the Hu and Han regions, which provided the driving force for the formation of its artistic style representing the meteorology of the Tang Dynasty (Xia & Yu, 2023).

The Luoyang area is rich in Tang Dynasty cultural heritage resources. These historical resources have not been reused from the perspective of dance academic research and dance choreography innovation. In the new era, due to the lack of attention to cultural heritage, Tang Dynasty Palace dance is gradually disappearing from people's sight, and the problem of being unable to continue traditional culture is becoming increasingly prominent. Therefore, it is more than urgent to conduct an in-depth

research method on Tang Dynasty cultural heritage and explore ways to protect it. the inheritance and development of the Tang Dynasty Palace dance culture, cultivate the cultural self-confidence of the youth group and promote the innovative development of the Tang Dynasty Palace dance culture. To have a certain reference value for the government and the masses to inherit and develop the Tang Dynasty Palace dance, and for researchers to conduct in-depth research (He & Laoakka, 2024).

Tang Sancai pottery figurines are vivid in shape and bright in color, with strong regional flavor. (Yan Linlin, 2017) Tang Sancai pottery figurines unearthed in the Luoyang area are mostly human, and animal images. These pottery figurines show rich details and vivid expressions through exquisite sculpture skills. The costumes, hairstyles, and postures of human figurines are different, reflecting the lifestyles and styles of different social classes in the Tang Dynasty. Animal figurines mostly show camels, horses, and other animals, with realistic images, showing the trade and cultural exchanges between the Tang Dynasty and the Western Regions. The production processes of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang are complex and involves many steps.

**Table 2.**

Artistic style and characteristics of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang area.

| Classification               | Artistic style  | Glaze characteristics   |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Ladies figurines             | The faces are delicately portrayed, the figures are plump, and the clothes are gorgeous. The details are portrayed with a focus on realism in hair and clothing lines.  | The glaze colors are mainly green, yellow, and white the glaze layer is uniform, the glaze color is full and bright, and some parts are colored.  |
| Hu people figurines          | The high nose, deep eyes, thick beard, and exotic clothing reflect the cultural exchange and diversity of the Tang Dynasty.   | The glaze colors are mainly yellow and green with an emphasis on detail. The glaze layer is thick and multi-layered, highlighting the characteristics of foreign culture and showing the uniqueness of the image of the Hu people.  |
| Civil and Military Officials | The image is solemn, wearing official uniforms or armor, with a serious face and an upright posture, symbolizing the bureaucracy and military power of the Tang Dynasty.  | The glaze colors are mainly brown, green, and yellow, with a thicker glaze layer, which emphasizes the layering of the glaze colors and highlights the majesty and dignity of the civil and military officials.   |
| Heavenly King Figurines      | The figure is burly, with a dignified face and a majestic posture. It often appears in the image of stepping on a turtle or subduing a demon, symbolizing the protection of the four directions and the tomb owner. | The glaze colors are mainly dark green, blue, and yellow. The glaze layer is thick and the multiple firing process is adopted. The glaze color is stable and bright, emphasizing the majesty and mystery of the Heavenly King figurines. Some glaze colors show a natural flow. |
| Grave Guardian               | The shapes are unique and exaggerated, with various forms, such as human face, lion face, etc., usually combined with the characteristics of multiple animals to deter evil spirits.                                | The glaze colors are mainly yellow, green, and blue, with a thick glaze layer. The glaze is mostly piled up, and some parts are colored. The glaze surface is glossy, emphasizing its majesty and deterrence.   |
| Terracotta                   | The strong body and rich  | The glaze colors are mainly green, white,   |

|                 |  |   |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Horse           | posture reflect the strength and spirit of horses in the Tang Dynasty and show a strong sense of movement. | and yellow, and the glaze layer is uniform.   |
| Camel figurines | The shapes are lifelike, often appearing as carrying goods or people.                                      | The glaze is mainly yellow and green, with a thick glaze layer and sharp color contrast. The glaze flows naturally, enhancing the three-dimensionality and realism of the camel figurines, reflecting the prosperity of business travel activities in the Tang Dynasty. |

The flow and blending of glaze colors make each piece unique. The glaze colors are mainly yellow, green, and white, with a small amount of blue, brown, black, and other colors. These glaze colors blend during the firing process, and the dynamic glaze surface of the Tang Sancai pottery figurines brings a strong visual impact (Shen et al., 2019). In 2020, the catalogue *Sancai: Three Colours*. It is a celebration of Chinese ceramics that pottery figurines have a recognizable decoration in mainly three colors: green, brown, and or amber with uncolored areas in white. Though these are the main colors in this palette, they may as well encompass other colors (Vandervan Oriental Art, 2020).

In terms of decorative techniques, Tang Sancai pottery figurines in the Luoyang area often use carving, molding, painting, and many other techniques. The main categories are ladies' figurines, foreign figurines, civil and military officials' figurines, heavenly kings' figurines, tomb guardian beasts, horses, and camel figurines (Yuping, 2019). Their main artistic styles and glaze color characteristics are shown in Table 2. These artistic characteristics enriched the cultural expression of Tang Dynasty pottery figurines and consolidated their status as an important representative of Tang Dynasty art (Xia & Yu, 2023).

### 2.1.3. The Uniqueness of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines in Luoyang

Luoyang is the earliest place where Tang Sancai was discovered in modern times. Luoyang's Tang Sancai pottery figurines were unearthed in tombs but also found in the Tang Dynasty's Eastern Capital, urban residential sites, and pottery kiln sites. The Tang Sancai artifacts unearthed from Luoyang tombs are concentrated in the Tang Dynasty tombs in the suburbs of Luoyang, the Eastern Capital of the Sui and Tang Dynasties - Mangshan in the north of the city, Guanlin and Longmen in the south of the city, and Gushui in the west of the city. The age is concentrated in the tombs from Wu Zetian to Tang Zhongzong. Therefore, experts infer that "Luoyang Tang Sancai came with Wu Zetian and developed under the influence of Xi'an Tang Sancai." Based on current archaeological evidence. Before 705, Luoyang was the only manufacturing center of the prosperous Tang Sancai (Ebrey, Walthall, & Palais, 2006; Wei, 2003).





**Figure 2.**  
On the left is a white-bodied Tang Sancai Heavenly King figurine, and on the right is a red-bodied lady figurine.  
**Source:** Liu Fei (August 2022, July 2017).

However, some nobles were buried in Chang'an, the Western Capital. After their death, the white body Sancai was likely sent from Luoyang to Chang'an and then buried with the deceased. The white-body figures in the tombs of Li Hui and Kang Wentong provide archaeological evidence for this speculation. Between 705 and 755, there were two Sancai production centers: one near Chang'an (now Xi'an), mainly producing red-body products, and the other near Luoyang, producing white-body products (Figure 2).

Although the Tang Sancai unearthed in Luoyang and Xi'an have many similarities in terms of shape, decoration, and glaze color, in their respective development processes, due to different geographical locations, different clay and glaze selections, and due to strong regional cultural differences, the Tang Sancai in Luoyang formed its unique characteristics are differentiated from those in Xi'an (Table 3).

**Table 3.**  
Characteristics of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang and Xi'an.

|                  | Luoyang Tang Sancai  | Xi'an Tang Sancai   |
|------------------|--|---|
| Clay             | The use of mainly white clay (kaolin) gives Luoyang Sancai its unique light color and delicate appearance.                                       | Mainly using red or brown clay, the terracotta figurines have a deeper and heavier texture.   |
| Glaze and color  | Bright and varied, including bright yellow, green and blue, the color application is more intense than Xi'an.                                    | The color tone is more stable, appearing more elegant and delicate.   |
| Decorative style | Intricate geometric patterns, floral designs and fine decorative details are often used  | Relatively simple, smooth lines, and attention to detail  |
| Type             | There are many kinds of Tang Sancai artifacts in Luoyang, but the most famous are the human figurines (such as court ladies and civil servants). | The variety of Tang Sancai produced in Xi'an is even richer, and it is particularly famous for its large animal figurines (such as horses and |

|          |  |  |
|----------|--|--|
|          |  | camels), reflecting the city's status as a trade center.   |
| Modeling | The figures in the pottery figurines are elegant in shape and slender in body, presenting a more graceful image. | The shapes of the terracotta figurines are thicker and rounder, with an emphasis on realistic representations of humans and animals. |
| Feature  | The colors and details are more gorgeous, with higher artistic and decorative qualities.                         | It pays more attention to the expression of form and has a solemn style and strong realistic characteristics.                        |

The craftsmen of ancient Luoyang incorporated the regional culture and art of Luoyang into it, and it vividly demonstrated the diversity and richness of Tang Dynasty society through the Tang Sancai pottery figurines. As one of the important cultural symbols of Luoyang, the Tang Sancai pottery figurines also bear an important social memory function in the Luoyang area. These pottery figurines were preserved, in the form of craftsmen of ancient Luoyang burial objects that became physical evidence of the social life, cultural customs, and aesthetic concepts at the time. They not only record the history of the Luoyang but also become a symbol of identity for modern local people. The costumes, utensils, and life scenes displayed by the pottery figurines faithfully reflect the lifestyle and social identity of the Luoyang people in the Tang Dynasty. Luoyang provided the soil and resources for the creation of Tang Sancai pottery figurines, and the Tang Sancai pottery figurines enriched Luoyang's historical and cultural heritage through their artistic forms and cultural connotations.

**Table 4.**

Summary and analysis of policies related to the inheritance of traditional Chinese handicrafts.

| Year | Documents and policies  | Main function  |
|------|---|--|
| 1995 | China traditional crafts research association was established   | Carry out research and practice on the protection and inheritance of traditional crafts, and promote the development of traditional handicrafts.                                       |
| 1996 | Compilation of the complete works of Chinese traditional arts and crafts  | Record and protect the contents of traditional Chinese arts and crafts, and help inherit and spread traditional handicrafts.   |
| 1997 | Regulations on the protection of traditional arts and crafts  | Promulgated by the State Council<br>Aims to regulate and promote the protection and development of traditional arts and crafts.  |
| 2003 | International convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage   | The 32nd session of the UNESCO General Conference adopted the document, which marks the global emphasis on intangible cultural heritage protection                                     |
| 2004 | China's national and folk cultural relics protection project launched   | The ministry of culture has included traditional handicrafts in its long-term development plan, opening new prospects for comprehensive protection and research.                       |
| 2004 | China joins the convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage   | Approved by the 11th session of the standing committee of the 10th national people's congress, China became one of the earliest signatories.   |
| 2005 | "Opinions on strengthening the protection of my country's intangible cultural heritage" & "Interim measures for the application and evaluation of | The work of building a representative list system for the intangible cultural heritage has been initiated, and traditional handicrafts have become an important content of protection. |



|      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
|      | national intangible cultural heritage masterpieces"   |   |
| 2011 | Intangible cultural heritage law of the people's republic of China  | Its formal implementation marks the inclusion of intangible cultural heritage protection into the national development system.  |
| 2012 | Outline of the cultural reform and development plan during the 12th five-year plan period                       | It further promoted the protection and development of intangible cultural heritage and strengthened the protection mechanism at the national level.   |
| 2015 | China's intangible cultural heritage protection and development report (2015)                                   | The article analyzes and summarizes the overall situation, characteristics and trends, hot spots and difficulties, existing problems and development strategies of China's intangible cultural heritage protection and development in 2014. |
| 2021 | Opinions on further strengthening the protection of intangible cultural heritage                                | The general office of the CPC central committee and the general office of the state council issued a document proposing specific guiding ideas and main tasks for strengthening the protection of intangible cultural heritage.             |
| 2024 | Opinions on further strengthening the protection of intangible cultural heritage (may be updated or reiterated) | The 2021 edition of the document has been reaffirmed or updated to include new implementation measures and targets.   |
|      | Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Inheritance, Innovation, and Development of the Arts and Crafts Industry      | Aiming to promote the inheritance, innovation and development of the arts and crafts industry, it proposes measures such as strengthening the protection of traditional craft skills and promoting product innovation and upgrading.        |

During this process, the Chinese government has introduced a series of relevant policies is reported in Table 4 to protect and pass on traditional handicrafts. These policies include strengthening the protection of intangible cultural heritage, promoting the development of cultures and creative industries, and encouraging the combination of traditional handicrafts with modern technology.

## 2.2. Part II: Status Quo of Traditional Handicraft Inheritance under Social Transformation

### 2.2.1. The Current Status of Traditional Handicrafts Under China's Social Transformation

The background of China's social transformation is complex and diverse, mainly including economic globalization, the rapid development of information technology, and the profound adjustment of the domestic social, and economic structure (United Nations Publication, 2019). The state-owned arts and crafts factories established in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China to accelerate the transformation of industry and handicrafts were disintegrated, and arts and crafts production returned to the era of individualized and private production (Moll-Murata, 2018). As more traditional handicrafts participate in market competition, the economic law of survival of the fittest further screens them. Behind the gradual disappearance of traditional handicrafts is the traditional culture era facing China's social transformation and development process. Traditional handicrafts in Shanxi played an immeasurable importance in understanding and explaining the underlying cultural origins. However, traditional handicrafts nowadays have been seriously impacted by globalization and modernization, especially in the development of productive forces. Industrialized production not only threatens the economic worth of traditional handicrafts but likewise destroys their cultural value making the preservation of traditional handicrafts an unprecedented challenge. (Lyu et al., 2024).

In the context of China's social transformation, the protection of traditional handicrafts has gradually formed three main modes: rescue protection, production protection, and overall protection,

from the initial individual exploration to systematic policy support. The implementation of these measures and policies has opened up a new situation for the protection, inheritance, development, and utilization of traditional handicrafts, ensuring the continuation and development of this important cultural heritage in modern society. However, due to the long-term separation of traditional handicrafts from people's daily lives and changes in the market economy system, the endangered situation of traditional handicrafts has been improved, but there are still many problems in inheritance and development.

### 2.2.2. *The Inheritance Status of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines in Luoyang Area*

In the process of China's social transformation, tourism has gradually become an important industry to promote economic development. As an important city in the Central Plains, Luoyang's economic structure has also transformed from agriculture-based to industry and service-based. Traditional agriculture in Luoyang City has gradually been replaced by modern manufacturing, service industries, and cultural consumption, which has become a new economic growth point. Luoyang's rich historical sites and cultural heritage have attracted tourists. As the tourism market gradually grows, cultural heritage and traditional handicrafts have become important factors in attracting tourists. This provides a new channel and market for the inheritance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines.

Tang Dynasty tri-color pottery figurines from the Luoyang area have seen more innovative forms in today's market. Modern Tang tri-color works retain the essence of traditional techniques while incorporating contemporary design elements (Figure 3). Such works use different color combinations and glaze techniques to cater to modern aesthetics. They are often brighter and may use additional materials to create unique textures and effects.



**Figure 3.**  
Three-color horse craft ornaments.  
**Source:** Liu Fei (August 2023).

However, there is no shortage of traditional replicas on the market. These works are made using traditional methods and strictly imitate the original technology of the Tang Dynasty. They usually use lead-glazed pottery fired at low temperatures and use typical three-color glazes (green, yellow and brown), and sometimes blue is added. The prototypes of these replicas are mostly well-preserved pottery figurines in museums, which are relatively well-known. However, they lack the regional cultural characteristics of the Luoyang area and are difficult to distinguish from tourist cultural products in other places. (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.**  
Ladies' figurines and tri-colored horses and camels.  
**Source:** Liu Fei (February 2023).

To adapt to the modern market, some craft practitioners began mass-producing low-cost, low-quality Tang Sancai pottery figurines on assembly lines. These works are mainly for the tourist market and may not strictly follow traditional methods. They are usually more affordable and use cheaper materials. The color and shape of such works may not be as accurate as tradition replicas, and the overall craftsmanship is relatively simple. This behavior not only damages the cultural value of Tang Sancai pottery figurines but also has a great impact on the inheritance of their artistry and craftsmanship.

The social transformation has changed the inheritance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines. The traditional master-apprentice teaching model has been gradually replaced by school examination and factory training models due to the impact of the modern education system and employment concepts. As a cultural business card of Luoyang, Tang Sancai pottery figurines' status in the tourism market has gradually increased (Jing & Ismail, 2023). However, balancing the relationship between cultural heritage protection and tourism development and protecting Luoyang's regional characteristics is an important issue that needs to be solved in the inheritance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang under the background of social transformation (Tan, Anwar, & Jiang, 2024).

### *2.3. Part III: Cultural Reproduction of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines in Luoyang*

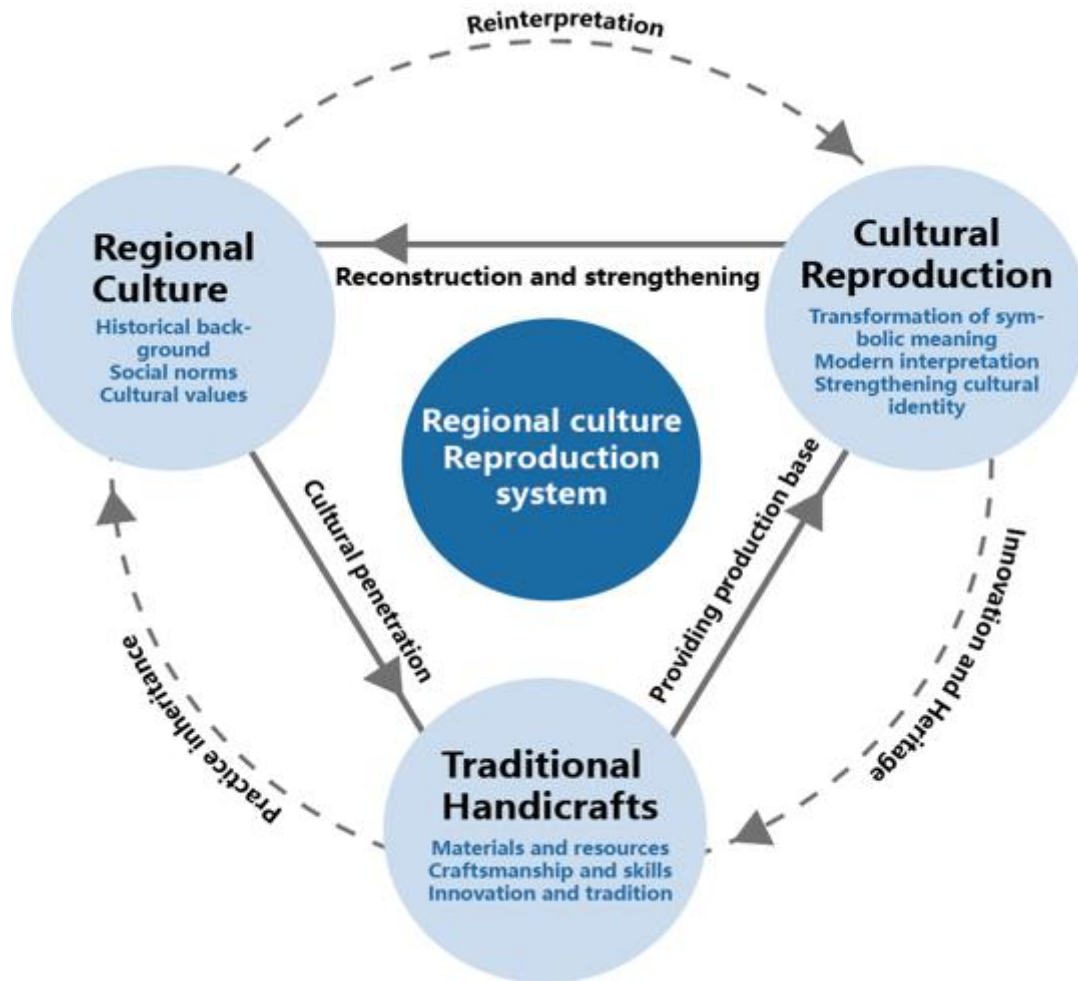
#### *2.3.1. Regional Cultural Identity of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines*

The concept of "Local Knowledge" is an important theoretical knowledge for understanding regional culture. Clifford Geertz's concept of "local knowledge" is a collection of essays, which explore the importance of context, meaning, and nuance in understanding cultural phenomena. Geertz's work emphasizes that anthropologists should uncover and articulate the systems of meaning that underlie human behavior. This knowledge is specific and empirical, and can only be fully understood in a specific social and geographical environment. This view emphasizes the regional characteristics of culture, and the specific forms, and meanings of culture in different places (Geertz, 1983). Therefore, the regional cultural identity of Tang Sancai pottery figurines can be regarded as a concrete manifestation of the historical, cultural, and social development. Symbols guide action. Culture according to Geertz (1983), is "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms using which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge, and attitudes toward their life." The function of culture is to impose meaning on the world and make it understandable (The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, 2024).

As a local art form, Tang Sancai integrates the social, economic, and political factors of the Luoyang area and a Distinct regional cultural symbol form through its unique craftsmanship and artistic expression. It not only reflects the social outlook of the Tang Dynasty but also reveals the interactive relationship between regional culture and handicrafts in a broader cultural context. Handicrafts are not only the material carrier of regional culture, but also an important means of cultural inheritance (Wang

& Zhang, 2022). In Luoyang, the production of Tang Sancai pottery figurines depends on the rich local natural resources and technical conditions but is also deeply influenced by regional cultural customs and social values. This interactive relationship has prompted Tang Sancai pottery figurines to gradually become an important part of the cultural identity of the Luoyang area through the continuous evolution of artistic style, craftsmanship, and symbolic meaning, it has shaped the unique cultural expression of the region (Guo, Kou, & Jiang, 2023).

The production and dissemination processes of Tang Sancai pottery figurines have been reflected in the interaction between regional culture and handicrafts. The regional cultural identity of Tang Sancai pottery figurines is not only a reflection of their material attributes but also a dynamic cultural symbol formed through the inheritance and innovation of handicrafts under the specific historical and cultural background of the Luoyang. This symbol has been given new meanings in different historical periods and has continued to influence the cultural identity and social memory of the Luoyang (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.**

The relationship between regional culture, handicrafts, and cultural reproduction in Tang Sancai pottery figurines.

**Source:** Liu Fei (September 2024).

### 2.3.2. The Role of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines in Modern Society

Traditional handicrafts connect us to the past, present, and future. They connect people, places, and time. A handicraft with exquisite craftsmanship is loved because of its perfection and the superb

craftsmanship it shows. (Michael & You, 2006). Tang Sancai pottery figurines also connect the past, present, and future. They have undergone profound changes in the process of cultural reproduction. From the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty's lavish burial customs to the modern times when they were rediscovered from Tang Dynasty tombs and reappeared in people's vision, the Tang Dynasty Sancai pottery figurines experienced a period of prosperity and change. The two "reappearances" of Tang Dynasty Sancai pottery figurines represent Chinese traditional culture and regional cultural symbols of Luoyang (The Marchant Asian Art, 2023).

The significance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines have been reinterpreted and expanded in historical and contemporary contexts, and its symbolic significance has been continuously redefined and reinterpreted through the process of cultural reproduction in the subsequent historical development. In modern society, Tang Sancai pottery figurines continue to play an important cultural and social function through their application in museum display, cultural tourism promotion, and cultural and creative product development, further consolidating their status as a symbol of Luoyang's regional cultural identity. The reproduction of Tang Sancai pottery figurines involve the continuation and inheritance of ancient craftsmanship and the reconstruction of its cultural symbols in the contemporary context (Wang et al., 2024).

As a representative cultural product of Luoyang, the three-color pottery figurines of the Tang Dynasty carry unique cultural memories and historical heritage and have become an important part of the construction of the cultural identity of the Luoyang region. Moreover, the reproduction of the three-color pottery figurines of the Tang Dynasty not only continues the cultural context of Luoyang's traditional handicrafts, but also gives the three-color pottery figurines of the Tang Dynasty new cultural significance and artistic value, making them an important cultural bridge connecting the past and the present in the context of modern social transformation, and promoting the sustainable development and innovation of Luoyang's regional culture (Rothschild, Alon, & Fetscherin, 2012).

Tang Sancai pottery figurines' application in cultural tourism and creative industries has further expanded its role in modern society. As an important resource for cultural tourism, Tang Sancai pottery figurines attract a serial number of tourists and promote the development and sales of cultural and creative products related to them. This process of cultural industrialization has promoted the modernization of traditional handicrafts and provided new impetus for the cultural reproduction of Tang Sancai pottery figurines. The roles of Tang Sancai pottery figurines have been reinterpreted in the contemporary cultural context through multiple paths of artisticization, industrialization, and symbolization in modern society (Bai, 2022).

## *2.4. Part 4: Inheritance Strategies of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines in the Luoyang Area*

### *2.4.1. Inheritance of Traditional Handicrafts in a Global Context*

There are many successful cases of traditional handicrafts being reproduced around the world. They have achieved the modern transformation of traditional handicrafts through innovative design, brand building, cultural tourism integration, etc. (Lui et al., 2023). Japanese lacquerware craftsmanship is a successful case. There are many famous lacquerware production areas in Japan, such as "Echizen lacquerware" in Fukui Prefecture, "Aizu lacquerware" in Fukushima Prefecture, "Yamana lacquerware" in Ishikawa Prefecture, and "Kishu lacquerware" in Wakayama Prefecture. The lacquerware craftsmanship of these production areas has incorporated the cultural elements of their respective regions in the inheritance, forming unique regional cultural characteristics (Xiao, Shen, & Lin, 2024).

The Japanese government has ensured the inheritance of traditional crafts through its intangible cultural heritage protection policy, and through the combination of modern design and traditional crafts, lacquerware products not only retain the essence of traditional crafts. At the same time, the Japanese government supports a series of inheritance plans and training programs. The inheritors of lacquerware crafts can teach traditional skills to the younger generation through government-supported training programs. These programs include not only the teaching of handicraft techniques but also education on the historical and cultural background of the craft (Suzuki, 2021). The successful case of traditional handicraft reproduction abroad proves that the inheritance of traditional handicrafts needs to



be combined with regional culture and educational tools. This case can provide useful inspiration for the modern reproduction of Tang Sancai pottery figurines (Lyu et al., 2024).

#### *2.4.2. The Inheritance Strategy of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines in the Luoyang Area*

With the deepening of China's social transformation, the inheritances of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang are facing new opportunities and challenges. The impact of social transformation on Tang Sancai pottery figurines is mainly reflected in the changes in the tourism market, the transformation of the way of handicraft inheritance, and the change in the style of works. These changes have brought development opportunities and new challenges (Xia, 2023). However, with the addition of modern elements, how to preserve more of the artistic style, cultural connotation and special artistic symbols of Tang Sancai pottery figurines is a question worth thinking. To ensure the sustainable development of Tang Sancai pottery figurines and other traditional handicrafts, Luoyang should gradually form a protection and inheritance strategy based on government support, market operation, and educational participation (Zheng, 2023).

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study takes Tang Sancai pottery figurines as the research object and adopts qualitative research methods. By consulting relevant literature and materials, we understand the historical and cultural background of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang; through field investigation, we collect first-hand information and understand the inheritance's current status. Based on Stuart Hall's "cultural identity" and Pierre Bourdieu's "cultural reproduction" theory, we deeply explore the formation of the regional cultural identity of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang during social transformation. Through case analysis, we study successful inheritance cases combined with educational tools, and extract experiences and lessons; through comparative research, we derive inheritance strategies and methods.

#### *3.1. Research Objective*

To gain and explore the inheritance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang that has explored the integration of traditional handicrafts and the regional cultural background of social transformation and promotion.

#### *3.2. Methods*

Documentary research methodology is a qualitative research method that involves analyzing documents to gain insight into the past and processes of change:

- Document analysis: Involves examining documents to gain a deeper understanding of the topic being investigated. This can include coding content into categories.
- Content analysis: Involves applying scientific methods to documentary evidence to analyze written, verbal, or visual communication.
- Textual analysis: A key method of documentary research since the 1970s.

Documentary research can be used in a variety of disciplines, including health, geography, tourism, and sociology. It can be a valuable research methodology because it provides access to a large volume of data from diverse sources. However, it can also have limitations, such as biases based on the author's perspective and challenges in interpretation.

#### *3.3. Research Procedures*

Some research procedures in qualitative research include the research study focuses on Qualitative and Documentary Research Methods in five sub-sections with descriptive note-taking to describe social occurrences:

- History and Artistic Characteristics of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines including History of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines; Artistic characteristics of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in the Luoyang area; The Uniqueness of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines in Luoyang.



- Status Quo of Traditional Handicraft Inheritance under Social Transformation: The current status of traditional handicrafts under China's social transformation; The inheritance status of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang area.
- Cultural Reproduction of Tang Sancai Pottery Figurines in Luoyang: Regional cultural identity of Tang Sancai pottery figurines; The role of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in modern society.
- Inheritance strategies of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in the Luoyang area: Inheritance of traditional handicrafts in a global context; The inheritance strategy of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in the Luoyang area

The inheritance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang: The integration of traditional handicrafts and the regional cultural background of social transformation Combinations of white, amber, and green glazes, typically known as Sancai or “three-colored” wares, were first developed in China in the late seventh century and were used primarily for funerary goods. During the Tang Dynasty, porcelain pottery appeared. Porcelain is a type of ceramic pottery that is characterized by its white, translucent appearance. It is known for its durability and is often used for making delicate and intricate objects such as vases, bowls, and figurines, significantly.

#### 4. Results

Creative Documentary Research Data Methodology was reviewed on the inheritance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in Luoyang: The integration of traditional handicrafts and the regional cultural background of the social transformation was mixed and combined through qualitative research as above. The results are summarized as follows:

Firstly: At the government level, government support has played a key role in the protection, and inheritance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines. The Luoyang Municipal Government has established a special fund for intangible cultural heritage protection to support the inheritance and development of traditional handicrafts. These funds can not only be used to support traditional craftsmen but also to carry out publicity education and market promotion activities for cultural heritage protection; secondly, the government can also protect the intellectual property rights of Tang Sancai pottery figurines through legislation to prevent its process and cultural symbols from being improperly used, thereby maintaining the purity culture of handicrafts; in addition, the government can also hold an international Tang Sancai cultural festival to enhance its influence at home and abroad.

Secondly: In terms of the operation market, market operation has become an important force in promoting the inheritance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines. Through market-oriented operation, craftsmen can improve the quality and artistic level of their products by directly participating in market competition; with the rise of the cultural and creative industry, they can develop a series of cultural products with a sense of the times by integrating Tang Sancai elements into modern design.

Thirdly: In terms of training inheritors, colleges and vocational schools in Luoyang can develop teaching courses through cooperation with craft masters. While teaching technology, conveying the cultural connotation and spiritual value behind the handicraft is the key consideration for curriculum development. Integrating the skills and cultural connotations of traditional handicrafts into the teaching system can not only impart craft skills, but also enhance students' sense of identity and pride in traditional culture. This method can cultivate inheritors with modern aesthetics and craftsmanship; local primary and secondary schools in Luoyang can also stimulate students' interest in learning traditional handicrafts by holding various practical activities, such as experiencing the firing of Tang Sancai pottery, holding Tang Sancai pottery figurines exhibitions, and theme handicraft competitions, etc., on the one hand, and provide them with a platform to display their talents on the other. The participation of school education provides talent guarantee for the inheritance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines. It not only promotes the inheritance of traditional handicrafts, but also injects new vitality into the development of Tang Sancai pottery figurines.

Finally: In the process of implementing the protection and inheritance strategy, the synergy of government, market, and education is the key to achieving sustainable development. Through the government's policy support and effective operation in the market, the inheritances of Tang Sancai

pottery figurines have been institutionally guaranteed but also found new development space in the market economy. Participation in school education provides a long-term driving force for the inheritance of traditional handicrafts, allowing this cultural heritage, to continue to shine in modern society. In the future, the Luoyang area needs to explore more diversified inheritance models based on policies, markets, and education to meet the challenges brought about by social transformation, jointly promote the inheritance and development of Tang Sancai pottery figurines, and ensure that this traditional handicraft continues to shine in modern society.

## 5. Discussions

Historical Background of Chinese Pottery in the Tang Dynasty, the Tang Dynasty (618–907) was a time of great prosperity, cultural exchange, and artistic innovation in China. The Tang Dynasty is also known for its Tang Sancai pottery which is a multi-colored, lead-glazed earthenware that was a symbol of the Tang Dynasty's pottery technology, some details about the Tang Dynasty and Tang Sancai pottery. Tang Dynasty: The Tang Dynasty is considered a golden age in Chinese history. It was a time of economic prosperity, a strong military, and successful diplomacy (Lewis, 2012). Although Chinese industrialization is largely defined by its 20th-century campaigns, especially those motivated by Mao Zedong's political calls to "exceed the UK and catch the USA", China has a long history that contextualizes the proto-industrial efforts and explains the reasons for the delay of industrialization in comparison to Western countries (MacFaruqhar, 1997). In 1952, 83% of the Chinese workforce was employed in agriculture throughout the early industrialization between the 1960s and 1990s. By 1977, the fraction of the workforce employed in agriculture had fallen to about 77%, and by 2012, to 33% (Cheremukhin et al., 2015).

The industrialization of China refers to the process of China undergoing various stages of industrialization and technological revolutions. The focus is on the period after the founding of the People's Republic of China where China experienced its most notable transformation from a largely agrarian country to an industrialized powerhouse (Meisner, 1999). Focuses on The Tang dynasty saw the maturity of the landscape painting tradition known as shanshui (mountain-water) painting, which became the most prestigious type of Chinese painting, especially when practiced by amateur scholar-official or "literati" painters in ink-wash painting. Chinese pottery, objects made of clay and hardened by heat: earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain, particularly those made in China. Nowhere in the world has pottery assumed such importance as in China, and the influence of Chinese porcelain on later European pottery has been profound. Many of the most impressive inventions and advancements in Chinese history (gunpowder, air conditioning, gas stoves, printing, advancements in medicine, science, technology, architecture, and literature) come from the Tang Dynasty (Mark, 2023).

The Tang dynasty's three-color glazed pottery is the treasure of ancient Chinese ceramic firing techniques. It is a kind of low-temperature glazed pottery popular in the Tang dynasty. The glaze has yellow, green, white, brown, blue, black, and other colors (Wood, 1999). Marked by strong and benevolent rule, successful diplomatic relationships, economic expansion, and a cultural efflorescence of cosmopolitan style, Tang China emerged as one of the greatest empires in the medieval world. Perhaps the most well-known of all Chinese ceramics, Ming dynasty porcelain benefitted from China's return to Han Chinese rule in 1368 after 97 years of the foreign Mongol-led Yuan dynasty. As the internecine struggles abated, Ming pottery flourished in the world-famous 'porcelain town' of Jingdezhen and beyond (The Marchant Asian Art, 2023).

The A Lushan Rebellion was a devastating rebellion against the Tang dynasty of China; it significantly weakened the dynasty. The power of the jiedushi, or provincial military governors, increased greatly after imperial troops crushed the rebels, taking administrative power away from the scholar-officials (World Civilization, 2018). Sancai, meaning three-colored, is a polychrome ceramic ware that was produced during the Tang dynasty which ruled China from 618 to 907 AD. Archaeological evidence shows that initially Sancai was exclusively manufactured for the Imperial elite who used the pieces as tomb objects. Tang scholars compiled a rich variety of historical literature, as well as encyclopedias and geographical works. Notable innovations included the development of woodblock printing. Buddhism became a major influence in Chinese culture, with native Chinese sects gaining prominence (Medley, 1981).

From the Tang Dynasty onward, brick and stone architecture gradually became more common and replaced wooden edifices. The earliest examples of this transition can be seen in building projects such as the Zhaozhou Bridge (completed in 605) or the Xumi Pagoda (built in 636). The Tang Dynasty (618–907 A.D.) was a prosperous time of social development in ancient China, when the porcelain-making industry advanced rapidly. The porcelain made in that period was known for its great variety, varicolored glazes, and multiple vessel shapes. Chinese dynasty that succeeded the short-lived Sui dynasty (581–618), developed a successful form of government and administration on the Sui model, and stimulated a cultural and artistic flowering that amounted to a golden age. The Tang dynasty saw the maturity of the landscape painting tradition known as *shanshui* (mountain-water) painting, which became the most prestigious type of Chinese painting, especially when practiced by amateur scholar-official or "literati" painters in ink-wash painting (Vainker, 1991).

In these landscapes, usually monochromatic and sparse, the purpose was not to reproduce exactly the appearance of nature but rather to grasp an emotion or atmosphere so as to catch the "rhythm" of nature. Most Tang artists outlined figures with fine black lines and used brilliant color and elaborate detail filling in the outlines. The poetry of the Tang dynasty is perhaps the most highly regarded poetic era in Chinese poetry. The *Shi*, the classical form of poetry which had developed in the late Han dynasty, reached its zenith. The anthology *Three Hundred Tang Poems*, compiled much later, remains famous in China. During the Tang dynasty, poetry became popular, and writing poetry was considered a sign of learning. One of China's greatest poets was Li Po, who wrote about ordinary people and about nature, which was a powerful force in Chinese art (Bai, 2022).

## 6. Conclusion

The reproduction and re-creation of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in modern society enriches its cultural connotation and enhances the residents' sense of identity with regional culture. The reappearance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines in modern society hides people's unique aesthetic and cultural identity and reflects the vitality of traditional culture in contemporary society. This study aims to reveal its close relationship with social memory, regional cultural identity, and other issues through an in-depth analysis of the cultural phenomenon of Tang Sancai pottery figurines. Focusing on the inheritance of Tang Sancai pottery figurines under the background of social transformation, this paper explores combining traditional handicrafts with regional culture and modern educational tools to join and promote the inheritance of traditional handicrafts. Combining traditional skills with school education, community participation, and cultural creativity can not only realize the inheritance of handicraft skills but also stimulate students and the public's interest in and recognition of traditional culture through the means of education. This inheritance strategy helps the continuation of cultural heritage in its place of origin and promotes it to gain new meaning and value in a broader cultural context.

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