

Decorative Elements and Symbolic Meanings in Yixing Purple Clay Teapots: A Focus on Buddhist-Themed Decorations

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ABSTRACT

The decorative elements of Yixing purple clay teapots have long served as carriers of cultural symbolism, with Buddhist themes playing a pivotal role in their artistic expression. This research aims to explore the application characteristics and symbolic meanings of Buddhist themes in the decorative design of Yixing purple clay teapots. The decoration focuses on Buddhist-themed comprised of 1) Buddhist symbolic patterns, 2) imagery of Buddhist artifacts, 3) themes of Buddhist practice, 4) biomorphic designs with form imagery. By examining these elements, this research seeks to reveal how Buddhist-themed decorations enhance the aesthetic value of Yixing teapots while reflecting deeper spiritual and cultural meanings. A qualitative research approach is adopted, utilising a literature analysis method to classify and analyses a wide range of purple clay teapot decoration cases. The findings demonstrate that Buddhist themes are deeply rooted in the decorative design of Yixing purple clay teapots, symbolising purity and enlightenment. These themes enrich the decorative language of purple clay teapots and imbue them with profound cultural significance and aesthetic appeal. This research provides an in-depth case analysis of Yixing teapot decoration design, contributing to the inheritance and development of China's intangible cultural heritage craftsmanship.

Keywords: Yixing Purple Clay Teapot, Buddhist Themes, Decoration Elements.



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1 INTRODUCTION

The Teapot of Yixing played a leading role in the tea set of the Ming Dynasty. The tea drinkers deeply affected the purple clay teapot of Yixing for its unsophisticated appearance and its breathable and heat-retaining properties, which have enriched the variety of Chinese tea (Chen, 2014). The Yixing purple clay teapot represents a convergence of functionality, craftsmanship, and cultural heritage, solidifying its place as a cornerstone of Chinese artistic expression. As an art form, these teapots transcend utility, serving as a canvas for intricate decorative elements that embody aesthetic beauty and profound symbolic meanings. Among the myriad cultural influences that shape these designs, Buddhist themes hold a particularly significant role, reflecting the spiritual and philosophical ethos deeply embedded in Chinese traditions.

Body Buddhist-inspired decorative elements on Yixing teapots often illustrate principles of Zen philosophy, such as simplicity, harmony, and the interconnectedness of all things. These motifs, ranging from lotus flowers and sutras to symbolic animals, transform each teapot into a vessel of both material and spiritual resonance. By exploring the integration of Buddhist symbols into teapot designs, scholars uncover insights into how art serves as a medium for expressing transcendent ideas and preserving cultural identity.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the characteristics of Yixing purple clay teapots in terms of artistic expression and cultural inheritance through a systematic analysis of Buddhist theme decoration design and to reveal the importance of Buddhist themes in purple clay teapot design. This study adopts a qualitative research method, specifically a literature analysis method, to conduct an in-depth study of the Buddhist theme decoration of Yixing purple clay teapots. By sorting out many literature materials on purple clay teapot works, the artistic characteristics and cultural connotations of Buddhist theme decoration are systematically summarised.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Buddhism has been a dominant cultural and spiritual force in Chinese history and has profoundly influenced artistic expression in various media, including ceramics. Scholars such as Li (2009) have argued that Buddhist aesthetics emphasise simplicity, naturalism, and harmony—principles that fit perfectly with the spirit of Yixing teapots. Huang (2006) research has detailed the integration of Buddhist motifs into functional objects, suggesting that these designs reflect broader cultural values and spiritual aspirations.

Yixing purple clay teapots have long been celebrated as a pinnacle of Chinese craftsmanship, intertwining functionality, aesthetics, and cultural depth. Central to their design are decorative elements imbued with symbolic meanings, often reflecting philosophical and religious ideologies, particularly Buddhism. This literature review examines key academic contributions to the study of Buddhist-themed decoration in Yixing teapots, focusing on the relationship between artistic expression and cultural symbolism.

Buddhism flourished in Jiangnan, and among the legends about purple clay pottery, the legend of purple clay pots is closely related to Buddhism. Zhou Gaoqi recorded in the book "Records of Yangxian Teapots" that Wu Yishan, a layman, studied in the Jinshan Temple and accompanied the student Gongchun to imitate the old monk Xinjiang, and made Gongchun teapots, which is also the origin of purple clay teapots (Hu, 2012). "Many artists began to observe nature, understand the relationship between man and nature, and consciously or unconsciously carried out artistic refinement and processing, integrating Buddhist elements into the creation of purple clay pots, thereby enhancing the artistic expression of purple clay pots." (Qian, 2019). Common Buddhist patterns, such as lotus patterns and auspicious cloud patterns, are also used to decorate purple clay teapots. These patterns have both aesthetic value and carry the symbolic meaning of Buddhism, expressing the Zen spirit of purity, wisdom and enlightenment (Liu, 2013).

Despite these contributions, some research gaps exist in exploring Buddhist-themed decorations in Yixing teapots. For example, there is a lack of analysis of lesser-known themes. Although lotus and Buddhist scriptures have been widely studied, there is still a lack of research and analysis on the specific decorative applications of Buddhist themes on purple clay teapots. Further research could reveal their symbolic meanings and cultural connotations in teapot decorative design.

In the decoration of purple clay teapots, the Buddhist theme has profoundly influenced the design of teapot art with its unique philosophical and aesthetic connotations and has become an important part of the Yixing purple clay tea set decoration art. The following is a list of the manifestations of Buddhist themes in purple clay teapot decoration and their main categories:

2.1 Buddhist symbol pattern

2.1.1 Lotus

In Buddhism, the lotus symbolises purity, enlightenment, and nirvana, and it is often used to decorate the lid, body, or spout of a teapot. Purple clay teapot craftsmen use carving or decals to visualise the lotus to express the Zen spirit of transcending the world and being untainted by the mundane. The lotus is a recurring theme in Yixing teapot design, symbolising purity, enlightenment and transcendence. According to Zhang (2023), the lotus is known as the "gentleman among flowers" in the eyes of the world, and it is even more significant to Buddhists. Buddhism compares the lotus to Buddha. Lotus is the teaching flower and auspicious flower of Buddhism. Decorations inspired by the lotus, whether carved or moulded, embody the Zen philosophy of transcending worldly desires. The pace of contemporary society is constantly accelerating, and people are under increasing pressure in life. In such an environment, "Buddhism" is becoming more and more popular among the younger generation. The term "Buddhism" represents the modern young generation's pursuit of a simple, leisurely and relaxing lifestyle (Zhang, 2024). As one of the common aquatic plants in Jiangnan, the lotus has become a spiritual totem and symbol. When drinking tea with a purple clay teapot, the misty environment and the lingering Buddhist atmosphere are presented through the lotus posture, and one can feel the calm, determined persistence and composure required by Buddhist teachings (Wu, 2022).

2.1.2 Lotus Seeds

The image of lotus seeds deeply connects with Buddhism, symbolising the spread of Dharma. In purple clay teapots, these elements are often used as shapes and decorations, giving the teapot a Zen poetic and sacred feeling. The lotus seeds are used as the shape of the purple clay teapot for decoration, and the lotus seed is expressed in a simulated way, giving the overall shape a natural feeling (Chen, 2020). The lotus seed teapot by Jiang Rong, a famous purple clay teapot master, imitates the shape of a lotus seed. The whole teapot is shaped like a horizontal lotus seed, with full lotus seeds rotating. It is a representative teapot. The lotus pod contains lotus seeds, symbolising the reproduction and continuation of life. This implies the inheritance of Buddhism and endless life (Shi, 2022).

2.1.3 Auspicious Clouds

Auspicious clouds represent auspiciousness and transcendence. In purple clay pots, auspicious cloud patterns are often presented with smooth carving techniques, implying the open-mindedness and tranquillity of Zen Buddhism. (Lin, 2023). When the auspicious clouds and the purple clay teapot are combined together, one can feel the true meaning of "auspicious clouds bring blessings". With the embellishment of the auspicious cloud patterns representing auspiciousness, good fortune, agility and elegance, the purple clay teapot can exude more artistic charm. This has gone beyond the scope of a practical tea-drinking utensil and has become a true work of art (Zhu, 2022). The ancients expressed auspicious clouds in the form of lines and combined auspicious cloud patterns with purple clay shapes. The changing auspicious cloud lines can appear on the teapot's body through various techniques such as drawing, engraving, and carving, and even some parts of the teapot body can be designed in the style of auspicious clouds. Auspicious clouds represent a state of lightness and freedom, symbolising transcendence from worldly troubles and achieving spiritual peace. It is in line with the concept of "purity and inaction" advocated by Buddhism (Wang, 2024).

2.1.4 Bodhi

Bodhi represents the tree of enlightenment and wisdom. It refers to a person who has just woken up from a dream, has a sudden enlightenment, has suddenly realised the truth, and has reached an extraordinary state. Purple clay teapots and Buddhism have a deep historical origin. The Purple clay Bodhi teapot combines the form of Bodhi with purple clay, thus realising the connotation of purple clay art in traditional Chinese culture and Buddhist culture (Shan, 2021). Bodhi refers to enlightenment and




wisdom, reaching a state of great awakening and understanding, which is a state that all practitioners hope to achieve. The purple clay teapot "Bodhi" is intended to give people confidence, let people abandon hostility, face the troubles in life positively, hone themselves, cultivate their body and mind in the troubles, and gain the wisdom of enlightenment (Tan, 2022). There is no Bodhi tree, nor is there a mirror stand. There is nothing at all, so where can dust gather? Bodhi refers to wisdom, and the mirror refers to a pure mind. Bodhi is a Buddhist term that means enlightenment, wisdom, knowledge, and path (Zhang, 2019).



2.1.5 Buddha's Hand

The Buddha's hand symbolises the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha. Ying (2019) pointed out that the Buddha's hand pot is based on a plant with a relatively special natural shape. It draws on the meaning and aesthetic characteristics of "Buddha's hand", integrating the simple natural aesthetics with the Zen meaning in Buddhist culture. It has a lofty and unworldly charm in its natural and elegant appearance. The Chinese characters for "Buddha" and "Fu" are similar in pronunciation, so the Buddha's hand contains the beautiful meanings of auspiciousness, happiness and keeping blessings. At the same time, the Buddha's hand also symbolises the hand of Buddha, which can be understood as the meaning of worshipping Buddha or as the hand of God, protecting people from all suffering. In addition, the Buddha's hand also represents a series of beautiful blessings, such as bravery and courage (Fan, 2021).

The decorative elements on Yixing teapots are rich and varied. The following (Table 1) summarises the common Buddhist themes on Yixing teapots - Buddhist symbolic patterns and their associated meanings.

Table 1 Buddhist Theme Decoration of Yixing Purple Clay Teapots
- Buddhist Symbol Pattern

Decoration elements	Example	Decorative Technique	Implied Meaning	Picture Sources
Lotus		clay painting and inlay	Symbolises purity, enlightenment and nirvana	Book: The Meaning of Purple Sand CNKI
Lotus seeds		Sculpture	Symbolising the proliferation and continuation of life signifies the transmission of Buddhist teachings and the cycle of life	Book: Yixing Purple Clay CNKI
Auspicious Clouds		Pottery Carving	Harmony and transcendence, openness and tranquillity	Designer: Li Wei Personal communication: Shi Lijuan

Bodhi		Floriation	Represents enlightenment and wisdom, symbolises the sudden realisation of truth, and transcendence	Designer: Tan Min Baidu
Buddha's Hand		Sculpture	Wisdom and compassion, auspiciousness, happiness and keeping blessings	Book: The Meaning of Purple Sand CNKI

2.2 Buddhist symbol pattern

2.2.1 Monk's Bowl

The bowl is a vessel held by Buddhist monks for alms and practice. Among the purple clay teapots are special imitation bowl-shaped vessels with a round bowl-shaped body and a simple shape, implying pure practice and spiritual self-sufficiency. The overall shape of the bowl-shaped teapot is a full hemispherical shape, with a round body, a slightly larger mouth, and a slightly flat bottom. It is usually equipped with a simple and smooth handle and a short spout, and the overall proportions are harmonious. The design of the bowl-shaped teapot emphasises the integration of the whole, emphasising the Zen aesthetics of "restrained but not ostentatious" (Gu, 2020). The bowl-shaped pot originated from Buddhist culture. Its shape and meaning are profoundly philosophical, especially in line with the simplicity and transcendence of Buddhism. The rounded lines of the bowl-shaped pot symbolise perfection and harmony, which aligns with the Zen idea of "all things are one". The shape of the pot comes from the monks' alms bowl, which implies contentment, gratitude and tolerance (Zeng, 2022).

2.2.2 Pagoda

The pagoda symbolises the inheritance and enlightenment of Buddhism. The rising steps of the pot body symbolise the progressive practice. The pagoda-shaped pot pursues the simplicity of appearance, echoing the Zen philosophy of "the great way is simple". The pot lid is placed on top of the pot body in the shape of a Buddhist pagoda, paying tribute to Buddhist culture with its lovely pagoda shape, further emphasising the Buddhist meaning of the Buddha's pagoda (Wang, 2021). The tower-shaped pot is a unique type of purple clay teapot. Its design inspiration comes from the "tower" in Buddhism. This teapot shape shows the aesthetics of purple clay art and contains a strong Zen and philosophical connotation. In Buddhist culture, the tower symbolises the inheritance of Buddhism, the accumulation of wisdom and the spirit of transcendence. The tower-shaped pot is the artistic expression of these spiritual connotations (Wang, 2012).

2.2.3 Monk's Cap

As the material carrier of tea-Zen culture, the purple clay teapot is influenced by both the tea ceremony and Zen. The earliest purple clay teapot to introduce Buddhist elements into its shape was the "Monk's Hat Teapot" made by Li Maolin during the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty (Hu, 2012). The monk's hat is a sacred object in Buddhism. It is abstracted from the shape of a lotus and represents Buddhism's historical origins and doctrinal theories (Fan, 2022). The shape of the purple clay monk's hat teapot is based on the shape of a monk's hat, which also has a beautiful meaning. The brim of the monk's hat is upturned, low in the front and high in the back, which also symbolises rising step by step, rising step by step, good luck and good fortune. It is full of beautiful expectations and blessings. Therefore, this teapot shape has been loved and praised by teapot lovers and collectors for thousands of

years (Lu, 2023). The monk's hat teapot contains rich Chinese traditional culture, especially the folk customs, religion, beliefs, and pottery culture. At the same time, the "monk's hat teapot" is also a microcosm of the combination of Buddhist culture and purple sand culture(Liu, 2023).

The following (Table 2) summarises the common Buddhist-themed decorations on Yixing teapots—Buddhist utensil imagery and their related meanings.

Table 2 Buddhist Theme Decoration of Yixing Purple Clay Teapots
-Buddhist Utensil Imagery

Decoration elements	Example	Decorative Technique	Implied Meaning	Picture Sources
Monk's bowl		Smoothness	Symbolises purity, enlightenment and nirvana	Designer: Zhang Chenye Baidu
Pagoda		Cubic Sculpture	The pagoda symbolises the inheritance and enlightenment of Buddhism, and the progressive level of spiritual practice	Designer: Dai Xiangming Baidu
Monk's cap		Smoothness	Step by step, good luck and happiness, full of beautiful expectations and blessings	Book: The Meaning of Purple Sand CNKI

2.3 Buddhist symbol pattern

2.3.1 LOTUS

Purple clay teapots are often carved with Buddhist meditation scenes, such as monks sitting quietly and meditating. Surrounding relief techniques are often used to show the monks' meditation posture, which is integrated with the pot body. There are also decorative techniques using pottery carving, which mainly revolves around an old monk who is depicted sitting on the ground, carefully observing a reed in the bowl. Observing the mind is actually a self-reflection in a quiet state, and it also expresses the purple clay pottery engraving artist's understanding of Buddhist concepts (Wang, 2024). In the themes of Buddhist practice, the shape of the Buddha's belly is also often used in the decorative design of purple clay teapots, which is consistent with the function of purple clay teapots to hold water. Usually, the body of a purple clay teapot uses the Buddha's belly as the design inspiration. The purple clay teapot "Buddha's head, top Buddha" decorates the Buddha's belly and adds bamboo elements. Purple clay craftsmen welcome the Buddha belly bamboo because of its unique appearance and Buddhist meaning. "Buddha's head, Buddha on the top of the mountain" is a very famous couplet in Putuo Mountain, Ningbo City, Zhejiang Province, China. It says that people worship the Buddha on the Buddha's head,

which also expresses piety (Yang, 2023). The purple clay teapot is inspired by the Buddhist figure of the big-bellied Arhat, who has a big belly that can hold all the things in the world. The decoration on the teapot body imitates the appearance of the big-bellied Maitreya Buddha. It expresses the need to be magnanimous. Although life is bound to encounter troubles, only tolerance and generosity can lead to an open-minded life. With a teapot in hand, there is a symbolic meaning of being free from worries (He, 2022).

2.3.2 LOTUS SEEDS

Some purple clay teapot decorations are based on classic Buddhist stories, such as "Guanyin Pudu". Guanyin Bodhisattva compassionately saves all living beings and goes deep into the world to save suffering. She is one of the most revered images by Buddhist believers. The Zen meaning is to remind people to treat others with compassion, practice benevolence, and save all living beings (Shen, 2021). Maitreya Buddha is known for his kind, smiling face and tolerance of the world's joys and sorrows. He symbolises the future Buddha in Buddhism, implying hope and optimism. He reminds people to face life with a broad mind and remain optimistic and open-minded. The decorative theme of the purple clay teapot adopts the Maitreya Buddha, which is common in Buddhism, allowing people to feel the smiling and tolerant Buddhist verses and realise the highest realm of Zen and tea while drinking tea. The teapot's body is carved with the image of Maitreya Buddha in pottery, which is simple and smooth. The expression, clothing, and movements of Maitreya Buddha are displayed in just a few strokes, and the freehand and vivid technique is used to embody the compassion of Buddha (Zhuang, 2021).

2.3.3 AUSPICIOUS CLOUDS

Poems such as "Empty Mountains without People, Water Flowing and Flowers Blooming" are often combined with teapot art, which adds a cultural atmosphere and strengthens the ethereal Zen of Buddhism. One of the categories that Zen Buddhism has a profound influence on my country's traditional culture is the tea ceremony. Zen culture and tea culture are two cultures that meet and collide. They develop and prosper in mutual communication and integration, forming a very representative Chinese Zen tea culture. Its core emphasises "Zen and tea are one taste". The spirit of Zen lies in cultivation and enlightenment, and the artistic conception of tea lies in tasting and enlightenment. Tea inherits the meaning of Zen, and Zen exists in tea. Zen and tea are both cultivation and enlightenment, and both are realms (Liu, 2020). "Body is like Bodhi, Mind is like a Mirror" mainly expresses the image of Buddhist characters, which is also the element that can most directly express the charm of Zen. Characters can also better show the characteristics of purple clay pottery in expressing characters' charm. In addition to the image of the characters, the creator also pays attention to the presentation of background elements. The Zen poems such as "Mind is like a mirror" are engraved on the pottery to build a complete Zen space so that people can fully feel the Zen charm of the work through the image and the artistic conception of the poem (Qian, 2024).





2.3.4 AUSPICIOUS CLOUDS

Xu (2022) exploration highlights the significance of Buddhist scriptures engraved on purple clay teapots, transforming everyday objects into carriers of spiritual teachings. The Heart Sutra is one of the Buddhist classics, which is concise but profound in content and considered a condensed expression of wisdom and the path to liberation. Carving the Heart Sutra on the purple clay teapot reflects the respect and pursuit of Buddhist wisdom. When users taste tea daily, they can feel the purification and tranquillity of the mind through the visual presentation of the sutra, which is consistent with the spirit of pursuing "harmony, tranquillity, purity and silence" in the tea ceremony (Fang & Zhao, 2024). The decoration of purple clay pottery inscriptions is all-encompassing. In addition to traditional poems and songs, Buddhist themes are common, such as the entire Heart Sutra text combined with some Buddha statue decorations, a method often used by purple clay art creators. The "Heart Sutra" in the ordinary sense is what we call the "Heart Sutra of Prajnaparamita". It is the general outline of the Mahayana Buddhist teachings. Its content is concise and concise. The whole sutra has only 260 words and is one

of the six hundred volumes of Prajnaparamita. There are many classic sentences that we are very familiar with. After reading and experiencing for a long time, we can feel the essence and connotation of Buddhist culture (Shen, 2021).

The following (Table 3) summarises the common Buddhist themes on Yixing teapots - Buddhist practice themes and their related meanings.

Table 3 Buddhist Theme Decoration of Yixing Purple Clay Teapots
- Buddhist Practice Themes

Decoration elements	Example	Decorative Technique	Implied Meaning	Picture Sources
Meditation scene		Sculpture	Symbolises purity, enlightenment and nirvana	Designer: Qiu Weizhong CNKI
Classic story		Painting	Guanyin's salvation reminds people to treat others with compassion, cultivate benevolence, and save all living beings	Designer: Li Wei Personal communication: Shi Lijuan
Zen Poetry		Pottery Carving	Enhance the ethereal Zen essence of Buddhism	Designer: Li Wei Personal communication: Shi Lijuan
Buddhist Scriptures			A respect for and pursuit of Buddhist wisdom, experiencing the purification and tranquillity of the soul	Designer: Wang Chaopeng Personal communication : Shi Lijuan

3 METHODOLOGY

This study uses literature analysis and original data collection methods to explore Buddhist-themed decorations' cultural and symbolic significance on Yixing purple clay teapots. Specifically, it is carried out from the following aspects. First, from the Chinese academic institution China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), we visit theses of universities and colleges, including dissertations and research papers, to collect research on Buddhist themes of purple clay teapots. Understand the relevant information and current situation of professional scholars' research on Buddhist themes of purple clay teapots in recent years. Second, through electronic publications and online resources, we can collect the latest picture materials on the decoration of Yixing purple clay teapots, from which we can see the latest situation of Yixing purple clay teapot decoration. Third, we obtain literature materials from professional purple clay books and the works of some purple clay artists and examine the creative works of Yixing purple clay experts, focusing on Buddhist-themed decorations. By integrating these resources, we strive

to fully reveal the artistic characteristics and symbolic significance of the Buddhist-themed decorative elements of Yixing purple clay teapots and provide references for research in related fields.

4 FINDINGS

Figure 1 shows the inherent cultural characteristics of Yixing purple clay teapots, emphasising the symbolic meaning conveyed by the Buddhist theme decoration theme. These decorative elements and their symbolic meaning are integrated with Chinese aesthetics and philosophical thoughts to form the Chinese purple clay culture.

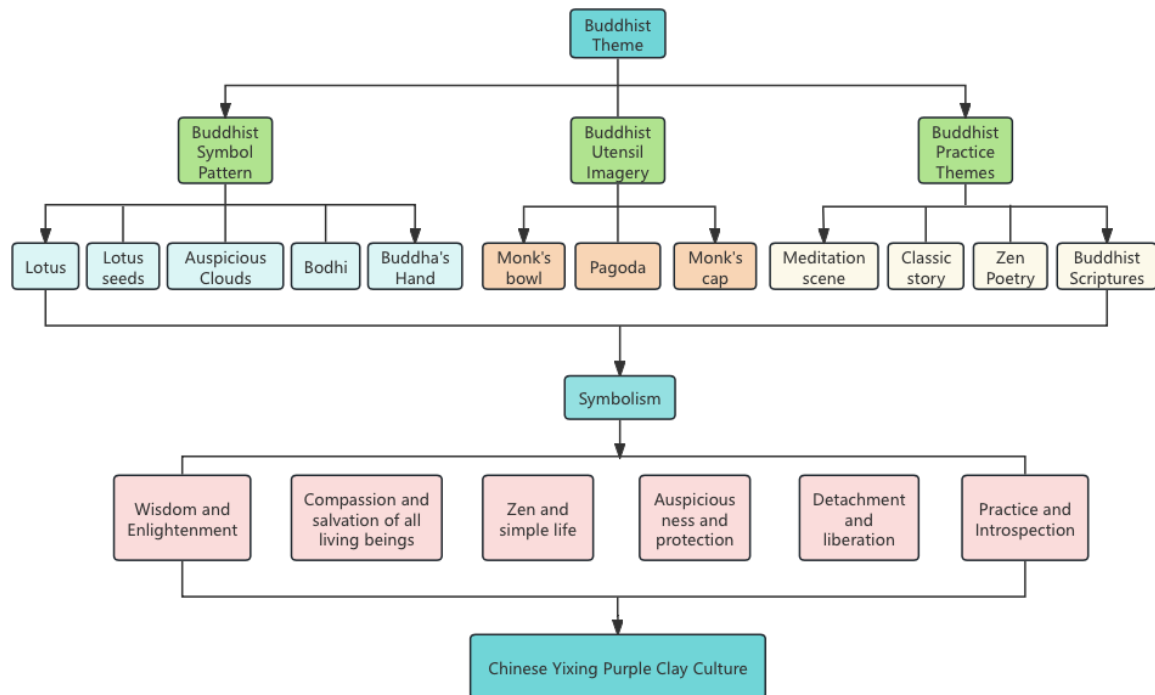


Figure 1 Chinese Yixing Purple Clay Culture
(Source: Shi, 2025, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

Research shows that the Buddhist-inspired patterns on Yixing purple clay teapots, such as lotus, Buddha's hand, monk's hat and Buddhist scriptures, have profound cultural symbolic meanings behind them. This study reveals the unique role of Buddhist-themed decorations on Yixing purple clay teapots in terms of cultural symbolism, aesthetic value and social impact. Buddhist decorative elements reflect the dissemination and inheritance of religious ideas and enhance the artistic aesthetics of purple clay teapots with their unique visual expression. At the same time, decoration's functionality and symbolic meaning have achieved an organic fusion of culture and practicality in the contemporary context, making purple clay teapots an important carrier of life aesthetics and cultural communication.

4.1 Zen Aesthetics

The Buddhist theme decoration enhances the aesthetic value of the purple clay teapot without destroying its practicality. The design of the teapot and the decorative elements show a high degree of harmony, which not only meets the functionality of the tea-drinking vessel but also gives it the collection value of the artwork. The decorative elements are presented through concise pottery engraving, inlaying or mud painting techniques, reflecting the exquisite skills of arts and crafts, especially the coordination between the shape and pattern, which reflects the aesthetic concept of "ruling by inaction" in Zen Buddhism. Zen aesthetics takes "simplicity" as beauty, advocates abandoning cumbersome decoration and excessive carving, and conveys profound spiritual

connotations in a simple and natural form. The Zen aesthetics of the purple clay teapot vividly embody this concept. The purple clay teapot pursues a simple and natural shape without too much modification to show the texture and texture of the clay itself. This "inaction" design language reflects the Zen idea of "Tao follows nature".

Lotus, monk hats, Buddha statues, and other Buddhist-themed decorative elements often appear in purple clay teapots. Integrating these symbolic elements with the teapot body gives the purple clay teapot an artistic beauty and conveys the Buddhist concept of "purity and purity". The Zen aesthetics of purple clay teapots is a visual art and a philosophy of life with rich cultural connotations. The design and use of purple clay teapots integrate Zen thought into daily life, making tea tasting a ritual of understanding life and cultivating the body and mind. In the interaction with the purple clay teapot, users not only enjoy the fragrance of tea but also experience the spiritual peace brought by Zen.

4.2 Symbolic Meanings

Each decorative element carries rich cultural symbolic meanings, expressing the core Buddhist concepts of peace, tranquillity, wisdom and enlightenment. For example, the lotus symbolises purity and enlightenment in Buddhism, while the bodhi tree represents enlightenment and the tree of wisdom. In Buddhist story themes, the Bodhisattva Guanyin represents the meaning of saving all living beings and compassion. Auspicious clouds represent good fortune. Zen poems generally advocate the meaning of simple life, and Buddhist scriptures symbolise the purification of the mind. These Buddhist themes are decorated on the purple clay teapot, giving the functional purple clay teapot a cultural heritage. It achieves the effect of Zen and tea integration.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Impact on cross-regional cultural communication

The Buddhist theme decoration on Yixing purple clay teapots shows a profound cultural connotation, reflecting the profound penetration of Buddhist thought in traditional Chinese culture and highlighting the important potential of purple clay teapots as a cultural carrier in cross-cultural communication. Yixing is known as the "Buddhist Kingdom in the South of the Yangtze River". In its heyday, there were many temples. The monks took the Zen enlightenment life as inspiration and integrated Buddhist philosophy and artistic expression into the production of purple clay teapots. Through elements such as lotus patterns, Buddha carvings, and Zen calligraphy, they transformed the abstract concepts of Buddhism into intuitive visual art forms so that non-Buddhists could also feel the beauty of Zen. This form of decoration not only adds artistic expression to the purple clay teapot but also makes it an important medium for popularising and disseminating Buddhist culture, connecting users from different cultural backgrounds with Zen aesthetics.

5.2 Impact on consumers' spiritual experience

Buddhist-themed decorations give purple clay teapots unique aesthetic value and carry profound spiritual significance, providing psychological and emotional satisfaction for users. By using these richly decorated purple clay teapots, people can feel inner peace and Zen and thus draw spiritual strength from their daily lives. There are significant differences in the understanding of Buddhist decorations among different consumer groups: religious believers pay more attention to the symbolic meaning behind the decorations, such as the spiritual connotations of tranquillity, enlightenment, and purity, while non-believers tend to appreciate their artistry and decorativeness. This shows that purple clay teapots are not only daily utensils but also cultural artwork that can trigger human inner resonance.

5.3 The symbolic meaning and global value of purple clay teapots in the contemporary context

In modern society, the symbolic meaning of Buddhist-themed decorations is constantly being reinterpreted and extended. It is not limited to religious expression but also incorporates the popular Buddhist lifestyle concept, becoming a cultural symbol that reflects the contemporary lifestyle. In addition, with the advancement of globalisation, Buddhist-decorated purple clay teapots, as a model of "Oriental aesthetics", have gradually emerged in the international market. While showing the charm of Chinese culture to the world, these decorative arts have also enhanced the cultural status of purple clay teapots globally and become an important bridge to promote cultural exchanges. In the future, we can further explore how purple clay teapots can play a greater role as a cultural exchange tool in the global context.

6 CONCLUSION

This study deeply explored the Buddhist theme of decorative elements and their symbolic meanings on Yixing purple clay teapots. It found that these decorations not only carry the core concepts of Buddhist thought but also show the superb craftsmanship and unique aesthetics of traditional purple clay art. These decorative elements successfully combine religious philosophy with daily utensils in the form of visual symbols, making purple clay teapots an important carrier of religious and cultural communication and a model of artistic expression. Research shows that Buddhist decorative elements, such as lotus, Buddha statues, and Zen calligraphy, contain profound spiritual connotations such as peace, tranquillity, and enlightenment. These decorations not only enhance the artistic value of purple clay teapots but also resonate with users in a metaphorical and symbolic way, constructing a cultural experience that transcends material functions. Buddhist theme decorations have found a balance in the integration of traditional craftsmanship and modern design language. The study found that while retaining the essence of traditional craftsmanship, craftsmen have made purple clay teapots inherit classics and meet contemporary aesthetic needs through innovative interpretations of Buddhist art elements. This combination of innovation and inheritance gives purple clay teapots unique advantages in cultural heritage protection and artistic innovation. The significance of Buddhist-decorated purple clay teapots in contemporary society has gone beyond religion's scope and become a symbol of life aesthetics and cultural identity. The study shows that these decorations have been widely accepted and loved by consumers at home and abroad, and their aesthetic qualities and spiritual connotations meet people's pursuit of a harmonious life and inner peace. The Buddhist theme decorations on Yixing purple clay teapots demonstrate the profound heritage of Chinese traditional culture and the perfect combination of arts and crafts and spiritual culture. This study provides a new perspective for understanding the artistic value and cultural symbolism of purple clay teapots and, at the same time, provides new inspiration for the protection and innovative development of purple clay crafts.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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