



## Preserving Zibo Cultural Heritage Exploring the Symbolism, Visual Identity, and Conservation Efforts of the Fish Motif Pattern Design

Nini Shao <sup>1\*</sup>, Ahmad Rizal Bin Abdul Rahman <sup>2</sup>, Hassan Bin Hj Alli <sup>3</sup>, Raja Ahmad Azmeer Bin Raja Ahmad Effendi <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr, Faculty of Design and Architecture, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Dr, Faculty of Design and Architecture, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup> Associate Professor, Dr, Faculty of Design and Architecture, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

<sup>4</sup> Associate Professor, Dr, Faculty of Design and Architecture, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia

\* Corresponding Author: [shaoninio904@gmail.com](mailto:shaoninio904@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

As the intangible cultural heritage of Shandong Province, Zibo fish plate is deeply rooted in the rich soil of Chinese traditional culture with rich folk culture connotation and symbolic significance. For thousands of years, the local folk culture and art condensed and expressed in the fish motif pattern decoration of Zibo fish plate, making Zibo fish plate unique in aesthetic performance of a mellow and rough charm. As an artistic work with national characteristics and the spirit of the times gradually formed in the evolution of society and history, this paper will start with the development process and characteristics of Zibo fish plate, in-depth analysis of the symbolic meaning and expression of Zibo fish motif pattern. In view of the current difficulties facing the inheritance of fish mother patterns in Zibo, the corresponding solutions are put forward. Relevant research has deeply revealed the relationship between the Zibo fish motif pattern and Chinese traditional culture and has solid theoretical and historical research value.

**Keywords:** Zibo Fish Plate; Mother Motif Pattern; Heritage Conservation; Visual Identity; Symbolic Meaning.

## INTRODUCTION

Zibo, located in Shandong province, China, is known as the porcelain capital of northern China and is rich in ceramics for civilian use (Tang, 2019; Dong & Wu, 2020; Y. X. Ma, 2018). Zibo fish plate has become a typical representative of Zibo folk ceramics because of its unique fish motif pattern (W. H. Wang, 2018; Y. C. Guo & Zhou, 2021). As a materialized form and image carrier of folk culture, the Zibo fish plate symbolizes not only a long history and culture and rich folk meaning but also a sign of the integration of local folk culture and ceramic art. For thousands of years, the fish motif pattern has long been rooted in human social life and is closely related to people's daily lives. With the integration of multi-nationalities and multi-cultures, after the test of history and the choice of human beings, it has been continuously refined and sublimated, and people have designed decorative patterns with the characteristics of the times and unique regional characteristics. The fish motif pattern in the fish plate of Zibo has gradually condensed into a symbol of folk art in the historical evolution, which is not only an extension of Chinese traditional fish culture, but also an artistic presentation of Zibo folk culture.

China's long history and culture are an important source of the emergence and development of "intangible cultural heritage" (Su, 2021; Y. Luo, 2021; Nie, Y. Xie, & X. X. Xie, 2022; Y. Liu, Chen, & Tian, 2023). As an excellent representative of the folk ceramics of Zibo, the fish culture with a long history is its cultural source. Figure 1 shows a typical Zibo fish dish. It can be seen from the figure that the Zibo fish plate is mostly blue and

white in colour, fish motif pattern composition is complete, round and has strong lines. A few simple strokes create a vivid fish motif pattern. It not only reflects the exquisite technology of the potter but also reflects the simple and mellow artistic style of Zibo ceramics.



Figure 1. Fish Motif Pattern in Zibo Ceramics

As the carrier of local folk culture, the Zibo fish plate contains the cultural connotation behind the locals. It not only reflects the aesthetic tendency of the local people but also the condensation of the local humanistic spirit and the crystallization of technological wisdom (Xu, 2016). Digging deep into the unique cultural value and rich folk culture connotation of Zibo fish motif pattern not only helps to highlight the regional cultural characteristics of Zibo but also can effectively promote the inheritance and innovation of fish motif pattern design. Considering the interdisciplinary aspects of folklore, history and art, this paper puts the Zibo fish motif pattern in the traditional cultural environment and specific academic research and makes an in-depth discussion and diversified interpretation of its development history, morphological characteristics, cultural connotation, inheritance and development (Z. Cui & Chen, 2023).

Although the Zibo fish plate has a certain popularity in the country, and it has been listed as the intangible cultural heritage of Zibo, Shandong province, in 2019, the mining and analysis of its fish motif pattern is still in its infancy. In particular, compared with Jingdezhen and Foshan ceramic-producing areas, the Zibo fish plate's cultural heritage is not enough, and the influence of ceramic culture is weak (J. Wu, Ma, & Wood, 2020; X. M. Zhang, Xie, & Zhou, 2020; R. Q. Zhang & Gethin, 2021). In addition, the representative works of Zibo traditional ceramic production techniques are relatively lacking, which is not only unfavourable to the protection and inheritance of the Zibo fish motif pattern but also unfavourable to the shaping and sustainable development of the fish motif pattern. Therefore, this paper carries out a systematic study of the development process, morphological characteristics, symbolic meaning and cultural inheritance of fish mother patterns in Zibo. Firstly, the paper briefly introduces the development process and characteristics of Zibo fish motif pattern, then analyzes the expression form and cultural connotation of Zibo fish motif pattern, and finally reveals the necessity and approach of fish motif pattern inheritance from the perspective of cultural inheritance.

## DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF FISH MOTIF PATTERN IN ZIBO

### Zibo Fish Grain Development History

China is an ancient ceramic country in the world, which influences the process of world culture. The Chinese nation also stands among the nations of the world because of its splendid ceramic culture and exquisite ceramic skills, and the English word "China" is therefore translated as "ceramic". As the most common symbol expression of folk ceramics, the fish motif pattern first appeared in the human-faced fish motif pattern basin of Yangshao culture in the Neolithic Age (Hou, Lai, & Xiao, 2012; Y. Li, Wu, & Yang, 2021; Miao, Liu, & Gu, 2021) as shown in Figure 2. It can be seen that the fish motif pattern not only recorded the fishing and hunting conditions of people at that time but also showed that the fish motif pattern was of great significance in the minds of people at that time.



Figure 2. Picture of Painted Pottery Basin with Fish Motif Pattern on Human Face

With the continuous development of the times, the fish motif pattern as an auspicious symbol continues to appear in pots, plates, bowls, dishes and other vessels in the past dynasties. The image of fish is constantly enriched and gradually condensed into a cultural symbol with vitality, which is widely used in ceramic decoration. The fish plate of Zibo has become the representative of Chinese ceramic fish plate art because it avoids the weakness of the official kiln decoration and uses plain glaze as the ink colour to give full play to the advantages of folk tradition. The development stage of Zibo fish plate roughly experienced four periods (B. L. Wang & Zhou, 2008), as shown in Figure 3.

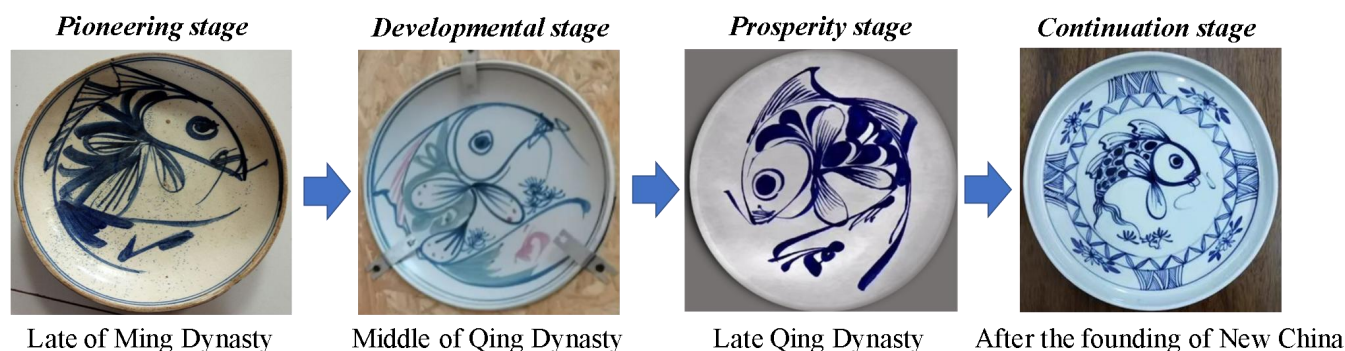


Figure 3. The Development of Fish Motif Pattern in Zibo

Zibo fish plate was officially born in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, fish plate was mainly in the form of white glaze blue and white. Fish shape realistic, full shape. After careful composition form and simple smooth line application, Zibo fish plate has formed a unique artistic style. Zibo fish plate entered the development stage in the middle of Qing Dynasty. Painting techniques are mostly blue and white colour; at this time, the level of fish plate firing and painting techniques have been further improved. The main body of the fish image is prominent, and the border pattern is colourful, with water ripples, a lotus pattern and so on. The appearance of the edge pattern makes the fish plate picture more exquisite. In the late Qing Dynasty, Zibo fish plate development entered a prosperous stage. Zibo fish plate reduces the complexity of the trim. Decorated with simple string patterns, some even without edges. In the same period, the traditional fish plate got rid of the style constraint of attaching importance to realism and began to emphasize the resemblance and charm of fish form. On the basis of the traditional fish shape's exaggerated deformation, the line is more condensed. At this time, the artistic effect of the fish plate has reached a high level. The fish plates during this period were not only exquisitely crafted but also affordable. As a result, it is favoured by the surrounding people. Since the founding of the new China, Zibo fish plate development has entered a continuation period. At this time, Zibo craftsmen followed the traditional production of Zibo ceramics on the basis of the use of new materials, research and development of new kinds of porcelain; Zibo ceramics quality greatly improved. Moreover, it gradually appeared in the form of a complete set of combinations, enriching the expression of Zibo fish plate. However, the artistic research value of fish plates is far less than that of the earlier period. Table 1 briefly lists the morphological characteristics of the Zibo fish motif pattern in different periods.



Table 1. Silk Road Trading Commodities

Development stages	Time	Morphological feature	Color feature
Initial stage	Late Ming dynasty	Realism	White glaze blue and white
Development stage	Middle of Qing dynasty	Transition from realism to freehand	Blue and white with colour
Boom stage	Late Qing dynasty	Freehand	Blue and white with colour
Continuation stage	After the founding of the PRC	Freehand	Both

Since the appearance of fish plates in Zibo, folk culture has always influenced its own shape and decorative features. It contains people's folk belief in fish grain and also contains the cultural character of the Zibo area. These cultures and customs have converged into folk customs with Zibo characteristics and are concentrated in the decoration of Zibo fish plates.

**Zibo Fish Motif Pattern Features**

Various types and styles are important features of folk ceramics. Zibo fish plate, as a type of folk ceramic, is a real and vivid manifestation of this feature. The fish motif pattern drawn by the potter by the difference of subjective consciousness and techniques can be roughly divided into four kinds: single fish motif pattern, double fish motif pattern, goldfish motif pattern and fish dragon pattern. Each fish motif pattern has its own morphological characteristics due to its different stylization.

The single fish motif pattern is usually a head-to-tail freehand style of carp, which accounts for the largest number and diversified morphological expression. In the existing fish motif pattern, similar to the end of Zibo, fish shape is very rare. The overall picture is exquisitely drawn, the lines are smooth, and it is highly decorative. The fish plate is large and colourful, and the exaggerated fins are like petals around it, giving people a sense of wealth and peace. It shows that Zibo's local fish motif pattern in the creation has distinct regional and time characteristics, as well as a unique and real aesthetic taste. Figure 4 shows the fish-pattern pattern in different directions. It can be seen that the fish-pattern theme is prominent. When observing the dynamic force of the fish from different directions, it is like a vivid fish leaping out and completing all actions, which has a very magical visual effect.

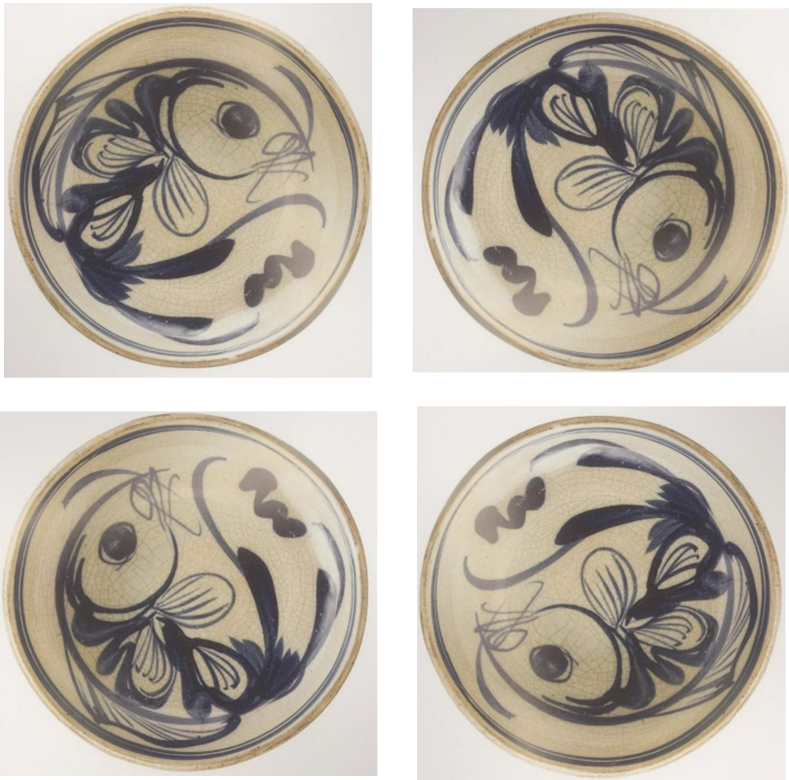


Figure 4. Single Fish Motif Pattern in Different Directions

The number of double fish plates is relatively small. According to the different directions of the two fish swimming can be divided into positive Pisces pattern, back to Pisces pattern and split Pisces pattern three types, as shown in Figure 5. The double fish plate is a good way to show the interaction between the two fish, while the composition is full. The two fish echo each other, contrast each other, and express the shape of the fish vividly. Historically, ornamentation depended on objects. However, no similar discovery can be found in the history of this stylized style. In the double fish motif pattern, two carp in opposite directions embrace each other, forming the form of a circular pattern. It is basically consistent with the traditional Chinese Taiji diagram, which contains a kind of national psychology and emotion, and is the manifestation of Chinese national wisdom and realm. It shows people's pursuit of life values of endless life and constant new life. Back to the fish grain plate, two fish back opposite, the two echo each other, the surrounding water grass embellished, extremely vividly highlighting the vivid morphological characteristics of the fish. The split double fish motif pattern is the most distinctive pattern of the folk blue and white fish plate, which is characterized by only drawing the head and tail and cleverly using the round bottom of the plate as the fish body. Visually, it gives people a sense of illusion and complexity with abstract artistic characteristics. The edge and bottom of the overlooking fish plate form two concentric circles, and the fish motif pattern is distributed in the inalienable part of the two circles. The fish seems to be divided by the bottom of the dish, and the two heads and two tails are presented in antisymmetric form. This breakthrough and traditional expression techniques bring different intuitive feelings so that we can not help but be in awe of the artistic creation of craftsmen in the past.



Figure 5. Different Shapes of Pisces Plates

The number of goldfish plates is rare, and the shape is relatively single, as shown in Figure 6. It is mainly blue and white or blue and white mainly with red colour embellishment, with goldfish as the main decoration. The drawing method is mainly to draw lines, and the line processing is dense and smooth. The picture is vivid and simple, with thin lines to outline the shape of fish, and algae and then with red and green colours as decoration. Its lines are slim, vivid, and smooth; fish; water plants seem to swim with the waves in the water, and goldfish with a smart posture to swim in the water, showing dynamic beauty in the static. It creates a quiet, chic, artistic beauty, more in line with the public's mind of leisure.



Figure 6. Goldfish Plates

The decorative pattern of "fish dragon" originates from the folklore of "carp jumping dragon gate". "Carp leap Longmen" has become the imperial examination, ascension and change of the auspicious language, indicating the good wishes for ambition and ambition. As shown in Figure 7, the decoration of the fish dragon plate in Zibo takes the fish grain as the main body of the picture. Bend the fish's back slightly. The dynamic image of fish jumping on the plate fills the entire space. Then draw the dragon beard. It looks like a fish is not a fish. Like a dragon is not a dragon, magnificent. It shows the instant image of the fish transforming into the dragon after jumping the dragon gate. The appearance of this decorative pattern of fish dragon plate expresses people's desire for fame and is a good wish for people to realize their lofty aspirations.



Figure 7. Fish Dragon Plates

**Zibo Fish Motif Pattern Traditional Skill Features**

As an excellent representative of Zibo folk ceramics, the fish motif pattern painting technique has both historical inheritance and era innovation, which has become a distinctive feature of Zibo fish plate, but its production process is not complicated. The skilful technique and perfect craft have played a great role in promoting the development of folk ceramics in Zibo. By combining the production process of the Zibo fish plate, we can have a deeper understanding of the traditional technical characteristics of the Zibo fish motif patterns. Figure 8 shows the specific production process of Zibo fish plate, among which the most prominent step of Zibo folk culture is the drawing of fish motif pattern. Zibo fish plate painting is simple and concise, full of elegant, a few strokes of painting, but because of its abstract and vivid brushwork reflects its unique folk characteristics and artistic charm.

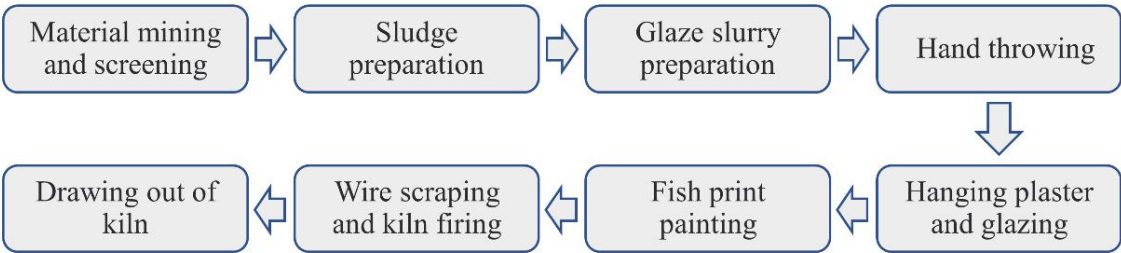


Figure 8. Zibo Fish Plate Production Process

The main tools used for fish plate painting are brushes and drawing materials. When painting a fish motif pattern, add water to mix, one hand tray, and the other hand pen to draw. The drawing technique formula is graphically summarized by the local people as "three large sums, five keys". Three large strokes refer to one stroke to draw a semicircle, two strokes to show the head and face, and three strokes to show the fishtail; The "five keys" refers to the mouth as several lines, the eyes as circles and points, the fins as waves, the scales open point line pieces, and the filling picture is complete, as shown in Figure 9. Usually, the fish plate without the trim can be finished in 7-10 strokes. Zibo traditional fish motif pattern painting skills and other manual skills, its inheritance and development can not stay in books but need to pass by word of mouth, and innovative development in production practice. Apart from the concrete practical operation process, the traditional manual skills will



inevitably decline. In addition, the protection of the traditional art of fish motif pattern painting can not stay at the performance and display level, there must be substantial production to meet the needs of people's lives, and Zibo fish motif pattern can have strong vitality.



Figure 9. Zibo Fish Motif Pattern Drawing Techniques

### THE CULTURAL CONNOTATION OF ZIBO FISH MOTIF PATTERN

Zibo fish plate has been active on people's tables for hundreds of years and is loved by the people. It records a simple folk history with vivid artistic language and carries a precious national belief with profound cultural accumulation. It is not accidental that the Zibo fish plate has been popular among the folk for a long time, but it is closely related to the cultural connotation behind it. In traditional Chinese culture, "fish" has always been a popular and enduring artistic image. The fish motif pattern, which is relevant to the image of fish, has become the carrier of Chinese people's spiritual sustenance from the spiritual level (Shi & Qian, 2021). Through the cognition of fish, express people's pursuit of beautiful things in the form of meaning or association, such as "more than one year", "fish leap over the dragon gate", "gold and jade full hall" and so on. With the expression form of fish-pattern decoration of ceramic life, the creator's subjective emotion is integrated into the fish-pattern decoration on the premise of not separating from objective things so as to achieve the artistic effect of "writing God in the form", realize the harmony between human and nature, and constitute the perfect unity of people's spiritual world and life ceramic fish-pattern decoration. It embodies the rich creative spirit of the Chinese people. In this way, the fish motif pattern exists in people's life beliefs, concentrating people's strong wishes, thoughts, emotions and beliefs. Zibo fish motif pattern is the integration of fish culture, ceramic culture and local culture. As shown in Figure 10, it not only shows the deep-rooted belief in fish and related folk customs but also reflects the broad and profound cultural spirit of the folk.

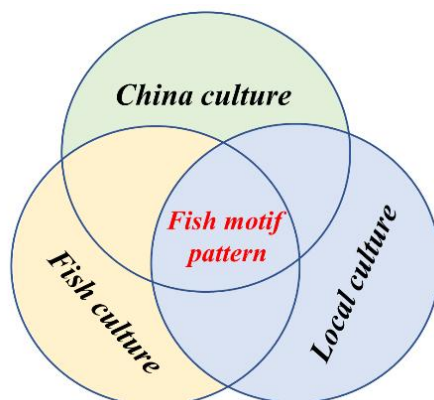


Figure 10. The Cultural Orientation of Zibo Fish Plate

### Longing for Fortune and Abundance

Since primitive society, food acquisition, production and processing have become the most basic means of human survival and the material basis of all other creative activities of human beings. Shandong Zibo is close to the Yellow River and Bohai Sea and has enjoyed the "benefits of fishing salt" since ancient times. Because the fish is homophonic with "surplus" and "jade", it is given the beautiful meaning of "more than one year after another", "good luck every year" and "goldfish in the hall" by the public. The fat big fish painted on the daily plate naturally expresses these auspicious wishes to meet the people's expectations for peace and happiness. As an excellent representative of Shandong folk ceramics, Zibo fish plate uses fish motif patterns to decorate ceramic vessels, reflecting the good hope for material richness. People want to be better off for themselves and their families. In addition, "fish" and "rain" are homophonic; fish must be in the water to survive, which is described as "like fish in water." In the traditional agricultural society, "relying on the weather to eat", pray for good weather to obtain a good harvest. This is very important in the Chinese society of thousands of years of agricultural society, so the fish has become a symbol of harvest.

### Praying for Many Children and Blessings

Procreation is the basis of the existence of any species, and it is also the basic demand for the sustainable development of human society. As a creature with the strongest reproduction ability, the image of fish was widely used in ancient times when racial reproduction was attached to great importance to symbolize and pray for the reproduction of future generations. The dots on the fish in [Figure 11](#) represent fish roe. As early as the Neolithic Age, fish-bird patterns, double fish pictures, conjoined fish pictures, etc., often appeared on various utensils as symbols of reproductive belief. Chinese Taoist Taiji diagram is also called "Yin and Yang fish"; the fish playing with each other reflect the profound meaning of Taoism Yin and Yang complement each other and live forever. The reproductive worship of fish, as an important component of Chinese traditional culture and folk art, has been inherited and developed in the fish plate, and the form of double fish is fully reflected in the fish plate.



Figure 11. Fish Roe in Zibo Fish Dish

### Looking Forward to a Better Life

Shandong is located in the hometown of Confucius and Mencius, deeply influenced by Confucian culture. Since ancient times, it has attached importance to family reunions, and there is a saying that "parents do not travel far away". The fish motif pattern painted in the disc is close to the end and almost round, which is a significant feature of the fish plate. The circle represents reunion and completeness, and the image of the fish plate expresses the beautiful meaning that the people attach importance to family reunion, family happiness, harmony and completeness. The world of Chinese traditional cultural epistemology is a harmonious, integrated and inclusive whole. On the basis of this epistemology, Chinese people seek perfection in everything and regard completeness as the highest good and beauty. This idea of advocating perfection has imperceptibly influenced Chinese people's thinking concepts and lifestyles, and is deeply rooted in people's spiritual field, and is an indispensable part of the accumulation of Chinese national culture and psychology. The whole fish plate displays a round and full aesthetic quality. The fish on the plate are large and full, end to end, with elastic tension and whirling dynamics. This tension and dynamics are a manifestation of a spiritual outlook and is a never-ending pursuit of the ideal of perfection. A happy and satisfactory life is a symbol of perfection and a dream in the hearts



of ordinary people, but this dream can be realized only through continuous efforts and pursuit. The creators of the folk blue and white fish plate, while using the brush full of ideals to describe the happy and complete dream in their hearts, also put the sincere and warm spiritual power of pursuing dreams into the fish plate. The never-ending rhythmic rotation of the fish in the dish, the tension that is ready to start, is the spiritual power of people to pursue dreams.

### **Meaning Good Test Scores**

Zibo fish-based dragon dish is a very characteristic variety of Zibo fish dishes. The fish-like dragon plate pattern is vivid, dynamic, and has outstanding artistic characteristics, meaning "high promotion" and "lucky", and expresses the people's strong desire to change their fate. The beautiful meaning of the "fish dragon" design is consistent with the folk story of "carp jumping Longmen" so as to encourage and bless the students of later generations to work hard, study hard and achieve success. Moreover, according to the characteristics of both fish and dragon, the ichthyosaur is boldly transformed, and a new artistic shape is created by using abstract expression methods, showing the folklore that the carp has to go through hardships to transform into a dragon. The appearance of the fish motif pattern of the "fish-like dragon" is to compare the winner of the imperial examination and express the hope for the good wishes of aspiring people.

## **INHERITANCE, DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION OF FISH MOTIF PATTERN IN ZIBO**

### **Fish Motif Pattern Inheritance Dilemma**

Traditional manual skills rely on human hands to complete, which is a perfect combination of practicality and artistry, reflecting the magic of nature and the creator's personal feelings (X. C. Luo, 2017; K. Zhou, Wang, & Lin, 2021; Hu & Liu, 2017; Hui, 2017; N. Li, Yang, & Hua, 2023). The transformation of production mode in industrial society, the impact of modern machinery production and commodity economy have made the environment for the inheritance and development of traditional handicraft skills face changes. Due to the negative impact of the rapid development of industrialization on traditional handicraft skills, coupled with people's lack of awareness of the value of traditional handicraft skills, traditional handicraft skills are lost in large numbers and faced with inheritance crises, including the Zibo fish motif pattern.

In terms of social transformation, since the 21st century, influenced by the inflow of Western cultural ideas, Chinese people's ideas, lifestyles and values have changed. The rapid change in society has broken people's inheritance of traditional culture and lifestyle and also lost their attention to traditional culture. As the representative of folk ceramics, Zibo fish plate has been regarded as the product of backward productivity in the old era for a long time, which makes the traditional fish plate of Zibo lose its market competitiveness. In addition, with the innovation of ceramic production technology, the mechanized mass production of ceramic vessels had a huge impact on traditional folk ceramic production, and the manual production and painting of folk ceramics are complicated, low efficiency and high cost, which leads to the increasing loss of traditional ceramic production talents. In terms of raw materials and processes, Zibo, whether mineral resources or water resources, can not support extensive ceramic production at present. The air pollution brought by the ceramic industry and other heavy industries in Zibo has seriously affected the air environment in Zibo. If the traditional folk ceramic production mode is followed, the pollution problem will be aggravated. In terms of skill inheritance, the economic status and social status of folk ceramic artists have not been fully recognized, and the ageing age structure of ceramic talents has become the bottleneck of the development of ceramic.

### **Fish Motif Pattern Protection Principle**

As a unique cultural form created by ancestors and continuously inherited, developed and innovated by future generations in real production and life, "intangible cultural heritage" is the unity of living material wealth and spiritual wealth continuously inherited in the long practice (X. X. Zhang, 2021; Y. Liu, 2022; Yan & Chiou, 2021; J. Xie, 2022). "Intangible heritage" has two core characteristics: intangible and active. As the intangible cultural heritage of Shandong province, Zibo fish motif pattern has faced many problems in the inheritance of fish motif pattern due to the factors of social change, resource depletion and brain drain. Therefore, we must pay attention to the protection of the inheritance of Zibo fish motif pattern. The methods of "intangible heritage" protection can be roughly divided into static protection and active protection. As the most important protection measure of intangible cultural heritage, active protection needs to follow the essential attribute of "intangible cultural heritage", innovate in inheritance and develop in innovation so as to achieve the best balance between social and economic benefits.

The active protection of "intangible cultural heritage" should pay attention to the combination of "tangible" material carrier and "intangible" traditional skills (C. Y. Cui, Zhao, & Wang, 2021; Qin & Zhen, 2022; Ren, 2017; Y.

Zhang, Han, & Chen, 2018). First of all, as a tangible carrier of fish motif pattern, Zibo fish plate should be fully explored and studied on the basis of static protection, which contains the essence of culture and skills. Secondly, the "intangible" traditional skills in active protection are the core elements of active protection, and folk artists are the key to the inheritance of skills. In the process of "intangible cultural heritage" living inheritance, it is necessary to strengthen the protection of inheritors and inheriting groups based on the principle of people-oriented. The key to the active protection of "intangible cultural heritage" lies in the active participation of inheritors. With these inheritors, precious traditional skills can be preserved and passed down, and the "invisible" skills can be truly inherited and developed sustainably.

The active protection of intangible cultural heritage should pay attention to the combination of authenticity protection and innovative development. First of all, in the process of active protection, we must adhere to the cultural core of "intangible cultural heritage". "Intangible cultural heritage", as an excellent representative of national folk culture, is the gene of national and national culture. The living protection of "intangible cultural heritage" should adhere to its traditional characteristics, which is the transmission of national culture. Without the historical inheritance of skills, it will lose its spiritual function. Secondly, "intangible cultural heritage" is constantly developing and endowed with new era significance. The protection of "intangible cultural heritage" is a process of continuous innovation. Only by constantly digging and summarizing on the basis of the authenticity of intangible cultural heritage and seeking modern development in the tradition can "intangible cultural heritage" remain alive and have vitality. Innovation and development must follow the development law of "intangible cultural heritage" itself and find the convergence point with the modern market economy. Only by understanding the living characteristics and cultural characteristics of Zibo people through traditional art can Chinese people's pride in Zibo fish plate culture be inspired, and new innovations can be further realized in the inheritance and artistic development of fish grain culture.

### **Fish Motif Pattern Protection Approach**

With the social attention to folk culture and the rise of "intangible cultural heritage" protection, the traditional folk ceramic craft, including fish plates, has been increasingly concerned by society. Society and the public have only paid attention to it for more than a decade, and most people, especially the local people, only regard the old fish plate as a cultural relic and antique collection, not realizing that the fish plate should be inherited, innovated and developed under new historical conditions, and not realizing the cultural connotation rich in the fish plate. Therefore, we should raise the understanding of folk ceramics to the height of national traditional culture so that it can play its value and role in the new historical conditions.

Strengthening the publicity, promotion and cognition of folk ceramics such as fish plates is an important way to protect fish motif patterns. Society and the public need to realize that "intangible cultural heritage" is around us, and "intangible cultural heritage" is linked to all of us as our way of life and production. "Intangible cultural heritage" protection can take the form of mass media to more effectively break through people's limited cognition of it. On the one hand, traditional media can be used for publicity and promotion, such as local TV, radio, newspapers, wall newspapers and other communication media, through the opening of special reports on the fish plate, the addition of traditional fish plate exhibition, and the creation of fish plate culture special issue, to maximize the public's attention and cognition of fish plate; On the other hand, online media, especially local government websites, micro-blogs, Tiktok and other online media favored by young people, can be used to enhance the connotation of Zibo fish plate culture and display the skills, so as to effectively deepen young people's recognition and understanding of traditional intangible cultural heritage.

## **CONCLUSION**

As a unique art form, the Zibo fish plate has been active in civil society for thousands of years and has won people's love and favour both in its profound artistic accumulation and rich cultural connotation. The fish motif pattern is one of the most important patterns in the Chinese national pattern, which constitutes a long cultural chain with the longest duration, the most widely used, the most folk function and the strongest folk character in Chinese cultural history. The beautiful meaning of the fish motif pattern decoration represents the creator's expectations and blessings for a better life and reflects the traditional creation concept of "the unity of heaven and man". The reason why the fish motif pattern can continue for such a long time is that its symbolic meaning is transformed into an unconscious ideological form hidden in the national culture. Zibo fish design is the pursuit of the beauty of life, is a symbol of a happy and complete life, and is the spiritual style and attitude to life. Under the new historical conditions, we need to excavate the cultural value of excellent folk ceramics, including the fish plate, and implement active protection to promote its continuous innovation and development.

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