

Imperial Kiln, National Heritage Site at Jingdezhen City: Re-Production of Ancient Space in the Process of China's Revitalization

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Abstract: This is basic research that uses the concept of "reproduction of space" as its core idea. The study of the Jingdezhen Imperial Kilns examines the production of space within the imperial kilns during the feudal dynasties (766-1911) and the reproduction of ancient space during China's revitalization. The findings indicate that the imperial kiln space underwent material foundations during the Tang Dynasty, systematic development during the Song Dynasty, and a shift from government-run operations to bureaucratic operations during the Yuan Dynasty. Ultimately, it evolved into a standardized production space under imperial authority during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The form and function of this space were deeply suited to feudal rituals and imperial aesthetics. The second period, from the end of the dynasties to the restoration of the imperial pottery workshops (1911-2014), saw the impact of the decline of imperial power, the inflow of capital, the effects of war, and the end of the imperial institution. This led to a shift in the meaning of the space, from imperial kilns to private craftsmanship, and ultimately, the reproduction of ancient space. Designated as a National Cultural Heritage Site (2014-2025), the Imperial Kiln has transformed from a "pottery production site" to a "national cultural heritage symbol" through various methods, including archaeological preservation and authentic display, function-focused restoration and enhancement, and linking the past and present. This is achieved by deeply connecting with dominant forces of each era, such as natural resources, imperial power, national systems, and cultural policies. The reconstruction and recreation of the Imperial Kiln site demonstrates social relationships and power structures at the local level within a historical context. This successful transformation from a production site to a national cultural heritage symbol has fostered positive interactions among heritage preservation, cultural transmission, and economic development,

enriching the theoretical dimensions of craft heritage research and serving as an example for similar heritage preservation and promotion worldwide

Keywords: Imperial Kiln Ruins; Re-production of Space; Cultural Heritage Revitalization; Jingdezhen Ceramics Industry

Introduction

The Imperial Kiln Site in Jingdezhen is located in the Zhushan Mountain area in the center of Jingdezhen City, Jiangxi Province. It is the site of an official kiln factory that produced porcelain exclusively for the imperial family during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1369-1911). The Imperial Kiln Factory represents the highest level of ancient Chinese porcelain-making craftsmanship, and the porcelain it produced remains a significant part of collections in major museums around the world. The Palace Museum in Beijing houses approximately 367,000 pieces of porcelain, 90% of which are from the Jingdezhen Imperial Kiln (Jiang Jianxin, 2020). The spatial transformation of the Imperial Kiln Site reflects profound changes in Chinese social structure. During the feudal dynasties, the space of the Imperial Kiln served as a material carrier of imperial rule, embodying a strict social hierarchy and a highly specialized production organization. Since modern times, with the end of the imperial system and the onset of modernization, the space of the Imperial Kiln has undergone a transformation from an official handicraft industry to a national capitalist industry and then to a socialist state-owned industry. Entering the 21st century, against the backdrop of updated concepts of cultural heritage protection and China's revitalization, the Imperial Kiln Site has been repositioned as a national-level cultural heritage, and its spatial function has shifted from a production site to a cultural exhibition and public service venue. This study uses Henri Lefebvre's theory of space production as an analytical framework to explore the spatial reproduction of the Imperial Kiln Site, from a royal production space in the feudal dynasties to a contemporary national cultural heritage site. In "The Production of Space" (*La production de l'espace*), Henri Lefebvre innovatively reconstructed space from a "passive container" to a "product of social relations", laying the foundation for contemporary space theory. Lefebvre pointed out that space is not a neutral physical container but a product of the intersection of social relations reproduction and ruling strategies, with the core being the revelation of the triadic dialectic of "space of practice", "space of representation", and "representational space". (Lefebvre, 1991)

Re-Production of Space in this research refers to restoring the area of the former Imperial Kiln to its present form, which is a result of the politics of culture in which the modern Chinese government recognizes the importance of the glorious past. Therefore, the Re-Production of Space process covers policy formulation, plans, and Re-Production operations linked to the new utilization or utilization of the present. In this study, "heritage utilization" refers to the transformation of cultural heritage from static protection to active use. Bella Dix mentioned that heritage is the history to be visited, and the process of heritage being used and commercialized is the process of heritage resourcing (Bella-Dicks.2012)

Research Methodology

The research is basic, using qualitative methods. Collect research data work and document research by field, analyze humanities and social science concepts, and present research results through descriptive analysis, illustrations, and line drawings. The main research objectives are as follows: 1) To study Jingdezhen's development from rural kiln sites to national heritage site(326-2025).2)To study the production in the Imperial Kiln complex under feudal dynasties(766-1911).3)To study the production history of Jingdezhen's ceramic industry from the late imperial period until its designation as a national cultural heritage site(1911-2014).4) To study the space re-production process of designating Imperial Kiln as a Chinese national cultural heritage site(2014-2025).5)To study the process of utilization from

Imperial Kiln, a national cultural heritage of China(2014-2025).

At the data collection level, the researchers first conducted extensive literature research, systematically reviewing local chronicles, ancient books, archaeological excavation reports, and academic literature to sort out the historical context and existing research results of the Imperial Kiln. They also conducted multiple field investigations in the Imperial Kiln Factory National Archaeological Site Park and the Tao Yangli Historical and Cultural Block, observing and recording the physical space layout, visitor behavior, commercial formats, and ritual activities on the spot. They personally participated in the kiln god worship, ignition, and kiln opening ceremonies of the Xujia Kiln's Kiln Opening Festival, grasping the ritual process and the interaction among participants through participatory observation. The researchers also conducted in-depth interviews with multiple subjects, including staff of the Imperial Kiln Museum, intangible cultural heritage inheritors, porcelain families, young artists, tourists, citizens, and archaeologists, collecting diverse perceptions of the space transformation, identity recognition, consumption experience, and skill inheritance of the Imperial Kiln through semi-structured and open-ended interviews. In reflecting on the research results, the researchers primarily employed Lefebvre's triadic dialectic to describe spatial practices, spatial representations, and representational spaces across different periods, revealing the interactive logic between spatial forms and power structures. At the same time, through detailed descriptions of typical cases such as the "Kiln Opening Festival of Xujia Kiln" and the "Tao Yang Temple Fair", they explored the performance-based reconstruction of traditional cultural rituals in contemporary times and engaged in dialogue with theoretical concepts such as "heritage activation" and "Politics of Ruins".

Results

1. The Historical Evolution and Staged Characteristics of the Imperial Kiln and the Spatial Development of Jingdezhen's Porcelain Industry.

The evolution of the Imperial Kiln space was not linear but underwent multiple reconstructions in different historical contexts. Based on differences in historical backgrounds, it can be divided into four main stages.

The first stage was the evolution of rural kiln sites into the Imperial Kiln Factory (326-1368). The Jingdezhen area has been a region mainly inhabited by the Han people since ancient times. As early as the Shang and Zhou periods, the ancestors of the area had already begun to produce pottery. (Bai Guanghua, 2014) During this period, Jingdezhen, relying on its abundant local resources of porcelain stone, water and forests, developed a kiln site layout based on the principle of "living by water and setting up kilns by mines". Archaeological evidence shows that village-style kiln sites in the Xiaonan River basin were linearly distributed along the river at the foot of the mountains and beside the rice fields (Huang Wei. 2022). The spatial practice of this period was based on natural endowments, social space was centered on blood and geographical ties, and the spiritual space focused on practical aestheticism. During the busy farming season, producers engage in farming and their identity is that of farmers; during the slack season, they take up side businesses and refer to mining as "working the soil" (Chen Haicheng, 2016). In the Southern Song Dynasty (About 1200), the trading area, production area and logistics area jointly formed the main structure of Jingdezhen's urban area (Liu Shangqing. 2016) In 1278, the Yuan Dynasty established the "Fuliang Porcelain Bureau" in Jingdezhen. (Ai Chunlong, Wei Wanglai. 2019). In Yuan Dynasty, the state-run kilns were dominated by the official aesthetic, featuring regular shapes, pure glaze colors, and strict patterns, catering to the spiritual needs of solemnity and grandeur (Chen Jie, 2019). It marked the beginning of the intervention of imperial power in the porcelain industry space. Official kilns monopolized high-quality raw materials and core technologies, forming a production pattern of "coexistence of official and civilian kilns", laying the

foundation for the Imperial Kiln system in the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

The second stage is the imperial kiln production space period (1368-1911), which is a systematic production under the dominance of imperial power. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the imperial kiln became the spatial embodiment of the emperor's will. During the early Ming Dynasty (1368-1435), the products of the Imperial Ware Factory were directly used by the emperor. The order demands were issued by the imperial court, and the production styles and quantities were strictly regulated. The control over the products was achieved through "Ministry of Works Tasks" and "Imperial Tasks" (Zhao Wenzheng & Wen Rui, 2020). The Ming Dynasty's imperial power established a spatial order of officials being superior to the common people through the "Official Kiln Assigned Firing in Folk Kilns" system, resource monopoly, and hierarchical regulations. The Qing Dynasty's kiln supervisor system and official pattern system permeated imperial aesthetics into the production process, and the worship of the kiln god became a cultural bond integrating the spiritual space of officials and the common people. In the Qing Dynasty, the poem "Tao Yang Zhu Zhi Ci" mentioned: "In May, the Master God Festival is held; in June, the Fire and Wind Immortal is worshipped" (Zhao Zijing. 2025). The imperial kiln space reached a dual peak of function and symbol during this period. The production practice of the imperial kiln space in this stage presented highly specialized and technologically monopolized characteristics. The Ming Dynasty's Imperial Ware Factory had 23 workshops with fine division of labor. The imperial kiln space reflected the absolute dominance of imperial power. The porcelain produced by the Imperial Kiln Factory was exclusively for the imperial family, and a strict selection system of "one out of a hundred" ensured the supreme quality of the products, while substandard products were concentratedly smashed and buried (Wang Guangyao, 2004). The layers of porcelain shards discovered in archaeological excavations confirmed the existence of this system (Shown in Figure 1). The imperial kiln porcelain had strict regulations in terms of shape, decoration, and inscriptions, and specific elements such as five-clawed dragon patterns and yellow glaze were exclusive to the imperial family, reflecting the exclusivity of imperial power. Jingdezhen established a dedicated Youtao Spirit Shrine, located between the Imperial Ware Factory and the concentrated area of folk kilns, becoming a common worship space for both official and folk kiln practitioners (Li Xinghua, 2011). During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the guilds of the porcelain industry almost controlled the entire process of porcelain production. In the Ming Dynasty, there were 8 industries and 36 trades in the private kiln industry, and by the Qing Dynasty, the number of guilds had reached over 400. The guilds had completely controlled the production and sales of porcelain in Jingdezhen (Su Yongming. 2011)



Figure 1: Fragments of imperial porcelain from the Ming dynasty unearthed at the Imperial Kiln site (1988). In 1988, the Jingdezhen Ceramic Archaeology Research Institute uncovered a layer

of ceramic shards in a passageway at Dongsiling, situated outside the western wall of the Imperial Kiln Works during the Ming Dynasty. This discovery yielded numerous fragments of large blue-and-white porcelain vases adorned with cloud-and-dragon motifs, characterized by their substantial clay bodies.

Source: Derived from Lu Chenglong's Journal article,December1,2015

The third stage is the period of continuous reconstruction of the porcelain industry space in Jingdezhen after the abdication of the imperial power (1911-2014). In 1911, the Qing Dynasty collapsed and the Imperial Kiln Factory ceased production, marking the beginning of the transformation of the Imperial Kiln space. After the fall of the Qing Dynasty (1911-1912), the buildings of the Imperial Kiln Factory were left idle and in ruins (Chen Haicheng, 2001).The disappearance of imperial power led to significant changes in the porcelain industry system, production methods, and artistic forms that had previously relied on the divinity of the imperial power. Based on the theory of space production, the social relationship changes triggered by the abdication of the imperial power, including the mobility of identities and the liberation of thoughts, promoted the transformation of Jingdezhen porcelain art from "royal craftsmanship" to "modern art" through the reconstruction of the social and spiritual space of porcelain. During the period of the Republic of China, the porcelain industry introduced machinery and coal kilns in its production technology, and established educational institutions related to ceramics. For instance, the coal kiln firing technology (Xu Liang, 2020), Jiangxi Second Industrial School, Fuliang County Primary Vocational School for Decorative Porcelain, and Provincial Ceramic College (Zhang Fa Hai, 2017).In 1949, the founding of the People's Republic of China saw the reconstruction of the porcelain production space in Jingdezhen from the ruins of war. The socialist transformation from 1949 to 1956 completely restructured the porcelain production model. A significant development was the confiscation of the bureaucratic capital of the Jiangxi Porcelain Industry Company and the establishment of the first state-owned porcelain factory-the Jianguo Porcelain Factory (Chen Yuxuan, 2021).In the social space, significant changes occurred in social relations. Ceramic workers became state employees, enjoying fixed wages and welfare benefits. The production organization method shifted from decentralized individual operation to centralized factory production, forming new production relations and labor organization forms. In the spiritual space, the inheritance and radical changes of aesthetic and belief customs coexisted. Political belief became the dominant ideology, and ceramic art creation was influenced by political orientation. The aesthetic orientation of state-ordered porcelain as national gift porcelain and government porcelain underwent fundamental changes. At the same time, government-led organizations for artistic creation emerged, such as the establishment of the Jingdezhen Ceramic Art Research Institute in 1954.According to Mr. Wang Xiliang's recollection: "Joining the Ceramic Art Research Institute back then was as honorable as entering the Imperial Kiln Factory during the Ming and Qing dynasties" (Ren Huadong, 2016).From 1956 to 1998, Jingdezhen formed a production pattern of ten state-owned porcelain factories, and the ceramic production entered a large-scale industrialization stage. Under the guidance of the mechanization concept, the entire Jingdezhen became a large-scale ceramic production center, forming a large-scale industrial production system (Li Songjie, Liu Hongna, 2016).The spatial reproduction during this period exhibited a strong political orientation: the production space was reconfigured in line with the planned economy, and the social space was reconstructed on the principle of collectivism, with ceramic aesthetics serving the national will and political demands. After 1998, with the deepening of market-economy reforms, state-owned porcelain factories were successively closed, and Jingdezhen's porcelain industry entered a low period. Handmade porcelain production once again rose, and Jingdezhen began a new transformation. In the

physical space, the dilapidation of industrial porcelain factories stood in sharp contrast to the

revitalization of handmade porcelain production. In the social space, the identities of ceramic workers changed from "unit people" to individual operators or inheritors of intangible cultural heritage. In the spiritual space, antique porcelain and art porcelain were sought after in the market, and the value of the Imperial Kiln and traditional customs returned. It was also during this period that the archaeological value of the Imperial Kiln site began to be recognized. In 2014, an archaeological team excavated in the area of Dongsu Ridge southwest of Longzhu Pavilion, uncovering 14 kilns from the Ming Dynasty's Zhengtong to Wanli periods and the site of an overglaze color workshop from the middle to late Ming Dynasty (Jiang Jianxin, 2020).

The fourth period is the time when the Imperial Kiln was developed as a contemporary national heritage space, from 2014 to the present. During this period, the reproduction of the Imperial Kiln space exhibited the following characteristics: First, equal emphasis was placed on both the protection and the display of the physical space. In terms of protection, systematic archaeological excavations and cultural relic protection were carried out on the Imperial Kiln site, and a gene bank of ancient porcelain was established. The unearthed porcelain shards were scientifically sorted and studied (Shown in Figure 2). The construction of the Imperial Kiln Museum was the most significant landmark project of this period. The museum was designed by a renowned architect and features eight concrete arch structures of varying sizes, inspired by the traditional kiln shape (Shown in Figure 3). Second, the diversification of space functions. The function of the Imperial Kiln site expanded from a single cultural relic protection to a comprehensive cultural space integrating archaeological research, cultural display, tourism, and leisure experience. Third, a significant increase in social participation. The Imperial Kiln site transformed from a royal forbidden area to a cultural heritage shared by all. For instance, the "Yearly Duck" series of cultural and creative products launched by the Imperial Kiln Museum became internet sensations (Shown in Figure 4), demonstrating innovative explorations in the activation and utilization of heritage.



Figure 2: Ancient Ceramic Gene Bank Website Interface (2025). The Gene Library website displays excavated porcelain shards organised chronologically from the Tang Dynasty to the Republic of China as major nodes, with emperors of each dynasty serving as sub-nodes. Searches may also be conducted by vessel form or decorative motif.



Figure 3: The kiln industry relic pit located outside the Imperial Kiln Museum (2025). In the relic pit, one can see kiln bricks and porcelain shards. The relic pit and the newly-built Imperial Kiln Museum together form a spatial layout of "dialogue between the past and the present", which is also one of the reasons why the Imperial Kiln Museum is popular.

Source: Derived from Zhou Zhenzhen photographed at the Imperial Kiln Museum. June 22, 2025 and October 19, 2025



Figure 4: The Imperial Kiln Museum's 'Yearly Duck' Series of Cultural and Creative Products (2025). The Ming Chenghua Plain Three-Colour Duck-Shaped Incense Burner, housed in the Imperial Kiln Museum of Jingdezhen, is a rare imperial kiln treasure from the Chenghua period (1465–1487) of the Ming Dynasty. As a vital artefact for studying imperial porcelain production techniques and courtly life during the Ming, its lifelike form, exquisite craftsmanship, and singular surviving example have established it as one of the museum's signature exhibits.

Source: Derived from Zhou Zhenzhen photographed at the Imperial Kiln Museum. June 22, 2025

2. The driving mechanism for the spatial recreation of the Imperial Kiln site.

The spatial reproduction of the Imperial Kiln site is the result of the combined effect of multiple factors, mainly including political drive, capital drive, cultural drive and social drive.

Firstly, in terms of political drive, the national revitalization strategy and the cultural heritage policy have a significant impact. During China's revitalization, cultural heritage has been tasked with constructing national identity and enhancing soft cultural power. In 2018, the Chinese government proposed the strategic goal of "comprehensive revitalization of traditional culture", elevating the inheritance and development of traditional culture to a national strategy. The Imperial Kiln site, as the pinnacle representative of ancient Chinese porcelain-making techniques, naturally became an important carrier of this strategy. The national-level policy support provided institutional guarantees for the spatial reproduction of the Imperial Kiln site. In 2019, the establishment of the Jingdezhen National Ceramic Culture Transmission and Innovation Experimental Zone marked the entry of the

protection and utilization of the Imperial Kiln site into the national strategic level. This strategic positioning greatly enhanced the political status and development space of the Imperial Kiln site. The active promotion by local governments was an important driving force for the spatial reproduction of the Imperial Kiln site. The Jingdezhen Municipal Government regarded the protection and utilization of the Imperial Kiln site as the core handle of urban transformation and implemented a series of measures such as the relocation of government offices, the relocation of surrounding residents, and industrial adjustment, freeing up space for the protection and display of the site. The municipal government office building located in the core area of the Imperial Kiln site was transformed into a display space (Shown in Figure 5), demonstrating the government's determination to promote heritage protection.



Figure 5: The former office building of Jingdezhen Municipal Government (2025). The left side of the picture shows the former Jingdezhen Municipal Government office Building, which is now located inside the east side of the main gate of the Imperial Kiln Site Park. The exterior of the building retains the style of the original government building. On the right of the picture is its interior decoration, which has been redesigned to be consistent with the royal living and office areas of the Forbidden City, and imperial porcelain is displayed inside.

Source: Derived from Zhou Zhenzhen photographed at the Imperial Kiln Factory - National Archaeological Site Park, June 22, 2025

Second, capital-driven development mainly relies on the cultural industry and tourism economy. The power of capital is an important driving force for the reproduction of the Imperial Kiln site space. Jingdezhen Ceramic Cultural Tourism Group, as the main operator of the Imperial Kiln site, through market-oriented operations, has promoted the commercial development of the site space. The construction of Taoyangli Historical and Cultural Tourism District, the operation of the Imperial Kiln Museum, and the development of cultural products all reflect the significant role of capital in the revitalization and utilization of the heritage. The rapid development of the tourism economy has provided economic support for the reproduction of the site space of the Imperial Kiln. The Imperial Kiln site has transformed from a professional archaeological site into a popular tourist destination, attracting large numbers of visitors. "Taking photos" at the Imperial Kiln Museum, experiencing pottery making, and purchasing cultural products have become mandatory activities for tourists visiting Jingdezhen. The extensive dissemination on social media has further amplified the popularity of the Imperial Kiln site (Shown in Figure 6).



Figure 6: The most popular internet-famous art installation in the Imperial Kiln Sites(2024-2025). The picture shows the most popular internet-famous art installation facilities in the Imperial Kiln Sites. It is not affected by seasons or weather, and there is always a queue here. The left picture was taken on a sunny morning in June, with tourists and citizens queuing up to take pictures. The picture on the right was taken on a chilly early spring night in March. Despite the light rain, tourists still came in a continuous stream.

Source: Derived from Zhou Zhenzhen photographed at the Imperial Kiln Factory - National Archaeological Site Park, June 22, 2025 and March 16, 2024

Thirdly, cultural drive is mainly manifested in cultural identity and traditional revitalization. Cultural identity is the deep driving force for the spatial reproduction of the Imperial Kiln site. The Imperial Kiln site carries the thousand-year ceramic culture memory of Jingdezhen and is an important symbol of local identity. For the people of Jingdezhen, the Imperial Kiln is not only a historical relic but also a symbol of the city's spirit and a source of cultural confidence. The revival of traditional craftsmanship has injected dynamic elements into the spatial reproduction of the Imperial Kiln site. In the Taoyangli neighborhood surrounding the Imperial Kiln site, numerous ceramic artisans and artists gather, inheriting traditional porcelain-making techniques and expanding the Imperial Kiln space from a static site display to an active transmission of skills. The re-firing of Xujia Kiln is a typical representative of this trend(Shown in Figure 7). This traditional wood-fired kiln built in the Qing Dynasty has become an active museum showcasing traditional porcelain-making techniques. The implementation of the policy to protect intangible cultural heritage has further strengthened the cultural drive of the Imperial Kiln site. Jingdezhen's handcrafted porcelain-making skills have been listed in the national intangible cultural heritage list, and a group of ceramic artisans have been recognized as various levels of intangible cultural heritage inheritors. These inheritors open studios around the Imperial Kiln site, conduct skill demonstrations, and offer experiential activities, making the Imperial Kiln site an important place for the active transmission of intangible cultural heritage (as shown in Figure 8).



Figure 7:The process of applying clay during the re-firing of Xujia Kiln(2025).In the picture, it can be seen that tourists are queuing up to participate in applying mud to the kiln door. This part does not require traditional skills and the tourists' participation is high.

Source: Derived from Zhou Zhenzhen photographed at the workshop of the Ming and Qing dynasty Kiln at Xujia Kiln,January 3,2025



Figure 8:Zha Shuqiong, an intangible cultural heritage figure, is currently painting camellia bowls(2025).In the intangible cultural heritage workshop of the Ming and Qing Dynasty kiln group of Xujia kiln in the Imperial Kiln Ruins Park, when there are no tourists, Zha Shuqiong and her colleagues are creating carefully together.

Source: Derived from Zhou Zhenzhen photographed at the workshop of the Ming and Qing dynasty Kiln Works Complex at Xujia kiln,June15,2025

Fourth, social drive relies on public participation and media dissemination. Public participation is an important social force for the spatial re-production of the Imperial Kiln site. With the improvement of the public's cultural literacy and the enhancement of heritage protection awareness, more and more people are paying attention to and participating in the protection and utilization of the Imperial Kiln site. Forms of public participation such as volunteer services, community involvement, and public archaeology have enriched the social connotations of the Imperial Kiln space. Media dissemination has played a significant role in the spatial re-production of the Imperial Kiln site. In the era of social media, the Imperial Kiln Museum, with its unique architectural design and rich cultural connotations,

has become a popular destination for tourists to visit and take photos. The experiences shared by visitors on platforms such as Weibo, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu have created a wide-ranging dissemination effect, further enhancing the reputation and influence of the Imperial Kiln site(Shown in Figure 9).



Figure 9:Tourists take photos and check in for social needs, which is usually seen in group trips.(2024-2025).The picture on the left shows the Gan Opera performance at Fengcheng Guild Hall. According to the author's observation, the three tourists were not watching the performance seriously but were looking for a good photo Angle with bright smiles. The picture on the right shows the distinctive poses posed by tourists inside the Imperial Kiln Museum, which should also be for Posting on social media.

Source: Derived from Zhou Zhenzhen photographed at the Imperial Kiln Factory - National Archaeological Site Park,January4,2025 and October31,2024

The Triple Dialectical Relationship of the Spatial Reproduction of the Imperial Kiln Ruins.

3.1 Spatial Practice: The Game of Protection and Utilization

The spatial practice of the Imperial Kiln site reflects the balance between protection and utilization. On one hand, as a national-level cultural relic protection unit, the Imperial Kiln site must strictly adhere to the principle of prioritizing protection in cultural relic work to ensure the authenticity and integrity of the heritage. On the other hand, as a national archaeological site park, the Imperial Kiln site must also be open to the public, providing services such as visits, experiences, and education. This balance is manifested in multiple aspects in specific practices. At the material space level, there is a contradiction between archaeological excavation and site protection. Excavation may damage the integrity of the site, but without excavation, the historical information of the site cannot be revealed. At the functional configuration level, there is a contradiction between display and utilization and cultural relic protection. Excessive tourist traffic may cause damage to the site, but restricting tourists is contrary to the purpose of public services. The managers of the Imperial Kiln site coordinate this contradiction through various means. In spatial planning, they implement zoned management, designating the core area of the site as a strict protection zone and restricting commercial development. The buffer zone is

designated as a display and utilization zone, allowing moderate commercial development. In

terms of display methods, digital technology is used for virtual displays to minimize interference with the physical site.

3.2 Spatial Representation: The Interaction between National Will and Local Practice

The spatial representation of the Imperial Kiln site reflects the complex interaction between national will and local practice. National-level policies on cultural relic protection, the standards for World Heritage application, and the criteria for national archaeological site parks constitute the normative framework for the spatial representation of the Imperial Kiln site. Local governments and heritage managers carry out specific planning and management work within this framework. National will dominates the spatial representation of the Imperial Kiln site. The site is incorporated into the national cultural heritage system, and its protection and utilization must comply with the requirements of national cultural relic protection laws and regulations. At the same time, the Imperial Kiln site is endowed with the political function of showcasing China's fine traditional culture and enhancing cultural confidence, and this functional positioning profoundly influences the display content and narrative methods of the site. Local practice also plays a significant role in spatial representation. The Jiaying City government combines the protection and utilization of the Imperial Kiln site with the city's transformation and development based on local development needs. In the implementation of specific projects, local managers make flexible adjustments according to the actual situation, such as the construction of the Taoyangli Historical and Cultural Tourism District and the design of the Imperial Kiln Museum, all of which reflect the innovative exploration of local practice.

3.3 Representational Space: The Fusion of Historical Memory and Contemporary Experience

The representative spaces of the Imperial Kiln site embody the organic integration of historical memory and contemporary experience. For different groups, the Imperial Kiln space carries different meanings and values. For the porcelain artisans, the Imperial Kiln space is a sacred place for the inheritance of craftsmanship. The re-firing of the Xujia Kiln is a conscious practice by the artisan group to continue historical traditions. For the citizens of Jingdezhen, the Imperial Kiln space is a symbol of urban identity. The Imperial Kiln site carries the thousand-year-old porcelain cultural memory of Jingdezhen and is an important source of the citizens' cultural pride. Many citizens use the Imperial Kiln site as a place for leisure and recreation, taking walks, exercising and socializing in the site park. The Imperial Kiln space has become a part of the citizens' daily life. For foreign tourists, the Imperial Kiln space is a destination for cultural experience. Tourists gain a sensory understanding of Jingdezhen's porcelain culture through visiting museums, experiencing pottery making and purchasing cultural and creative products. The unique architectural design and rich exhibition content of the Imperial Kiln Museum provide tourists with an immersive cultural experience.

Discussion

1. The Process of Space Production and Reproduction in the Imperial Kiln is a Transition from the Natural Space to the Production Space and then to the Cultural Space. Each Stage is a Process where the Three Attributes of Space Work Together.

Based on Levofull's theory of space production, the evolution of the imperial kiln space is not a simple change in physical form. Instead, it has achieved a transition from a natural space to a production space and then to a cultural space in response to the needs of the times. The core of this process lies in the collaborative reconfiguration of physical space, social space, and spiritual space. This process deeply aligns with the theory that "space is the product of social relations". The spatial forms

at each stage are the spatialized manifestations of the dominant forces and real needs of specific eras, such as the natural endowments in ancient times, the imperial power in the feudal era, the national

system during the socialist large-scale production period, and the cultural policies during the era of national rejuvenation.

The conditions of the natural space were the material foundation for the initial production of the kiln site. Its core feature was the deep integration of space and natural endowments. During this stage, the spatial practice relied on natural resources such as clay, water sources, and fuel to form scattered production settlements. The social attribute of the space was centered around blood ties and geographical ties, while the spiritual attribute focused on pragmatic aesthetics and simple production prayers. No systematic spatial order and value system had been formed yet. Essentially, the natural geographical conditions had carried out the primary shaping of the spatial production.

The core driving force in the production space stage is the intervention of power and the transformation of production relations, with the space shifting from being naturally endowed to being artificially constructed. During the imperial era, imperial power became the dominant force and main demand for space production. Through the imperial kiln establishment, scattered production settlements were integrated into ritualized urban spaces. Social space formed a collaboration between the government and the common people and the governance of guilds, while the spiritual space was dominated by royal aesthetics and hierarchical order. The core goal of space production was to meet the imperial power's production needs for imperial porcelain. The instrumental rationality characteristic of space was prominent. After the downfall of the dynasty, the transformation of the national system promoted the transition of production space to industrialization. Under the planned economic system, a cluster of state-owned porcelain factories was formed. The social attribute of space transformed into collective production relations. The spiritual space carried industrial production memories and socialist aesthetics, and production efficiency became the core orientation of space production.

In the cultural space stage, the dominant force shifts to the influence of cultural policies under national rejuvenation and the need to build cultural confidence. In the context of national heritage, the imperial kiln space has evolved from a production carrier to a cultural symbol. The physical space realizes functional reconfiguration through the construction of heritage parks and tourism and culture clusters. The social space forms a pattern of collaborative participation by multiple entities. The spiritual space becomes a symbol of Chinese excellent traditional culture. During this stage, space production breaks away from the sole production or economic functions and turns towards diverse value demands such as cultural inheritance, identity recognition, and cross-cultural communication. The symbolic attribute and cultural value of the space become the core, achieving an evolution from physical space as the main form to meaning space as the main form.

2.The Logic behind the Utilization of Imperial Kiln Heritage Lies in the need to Re-produce the Physical and Intangible Remnants of the Heritage in the Present.

The dynamic revitalization and utilization of imperial kiln heritage is not an extension of static protection; rather, it transforms the heritage's contemporary value through the reproduction of its material and intangible remnants. This reproduction breaks free from the limitations of museum-style static protection, allowing the heritage to continuously generate cultural and economic value in

accordance with the needs of contemporary society, aligning with the dynamic balance concept of "protection - utilization - inheritance" in the theory of heritage revitalization.

The reproduction of material remains by the Imperial Kiln is based on archaeological evidence for functional reconstruction. Through empirical archaeological research, the material foundation of the heritage is strengthened, and then adaptive functional reconfiguration is carried out

based on contemporary needs. At the level of archaeological evidence, through systematic excavation and research, the spatial layout, production system and historical context of the heritage are clarified, which is the prerequisite and core for the activation of the heritage. At the level of functional reconstruction, it is not simply restoration and reconstruction, but rather the creative transformation of spatial functions based on the historical value of the heritage and contemporary needs. For example, historical remnants such as kiln sites and guild halls are transformed into exhibition spaces and cultural tourism carriers, preserving the historical information of the heritage while giving it new uses. The reproduction of intangible heritage by the Imperial Kiln is to transform historical memories into participatory contemporary experiences. In terms of intangible heritage reproduction, at the level of skills, the traditional apprenticeship system and educational institutions are used to continue the manual porcelain-making skills. The ancient ceramic gene bank uses digital means to make the thousand-year-old craftsmanship traceable and learnable. At the level of customs, traditional ceremonies such as opening kilns and Taoyang temple fairs are restored, and interactive elements such as adding firewood for worship and ordering porcelain products are integrated, making the historical memories of burning the kiln gods become immersive experiences. At the level of symbols, elements such as imperial porcelain patterns and duck-shaped incense burners are extracted to develop cultural products, integrating historical aesthetics into daily consumption. This transformation retains the cultural core of intangible heritage while activating its contemporary value through participation and practicality, making historical memories no longer static remnants but touchable and resonant scenes.

The reproduction of material heritage and intangible heritage does not occur independently; instead, they mutually empower and synergize to form an organic whole. Material heritage provides a carrier space for intangible heritage, while intangible heritage injects spiritual connotations and dynamic vitality into material heritage. Together, they constitute a complete system for the dynamic activation of the imperial kiln heritage.

3. The Re-production of the Imperial Kiln Space is the Result of the Collaborative Participation of Multiple Entities.

The spatial reproduction of the modern imperial kiln is not dominated by a single entity. Instead, various entities such as the government, capital, ceramic merchants, and tourists, based on their own interests and role positioning, jointly shaped a complex space that combines cultural, economic, and social elements through power distribution, interest coordination, and value creation in spatial production.

The government, through top-level planning and institutional guarantees, defines the boundaries and provides support for the production of the imperial kiln space. Its core role is manifested in two dimensions: strategic empowerment and institutional guarantee. At the strategic empowerment level, through national strategies such as the National Ceramic Culture Heritage Innovation Pilot Zone and the application for World Heritage status, the imperial kiln is elevated from a local heritage to a national cultural symbol, conferring upon it the national mission of cultural inheritance and innovation, and providing strategic positioning and development directions for the

space production. At the institutional guarantee level, through special regulations and protection plans, the protection boundaries, utilization rules and management mechanisms of the imperial kiln space are clearly defined, regulating the behavior of space production and avoiding the damage to the heritage value caused by market-oriented operations, providing a stable institutional environment for space production. The government intervenes through its power to define the public nature and cultural

value of the imperial kiln space, ensuring the public welfare and sustainability of space production.

Capital transforms the cultural value of the imperial kiln into economic value through market-oriented operations, and its main role is manifested in the integration of business models and the development of IP. At the level of business model integration, the capital entity integrates core resources such as the imperial kiln site, museums, and historical districts, converting a single heritage resource into a multi-functional cultural consumption space, thereby achieving the economic transformation of cultural value. At the IP development level, the capital extracts the core cultural elements of the imperial kiln, develops IP derivative products such as cultural products, digital content, and tourism and cultural activities, and expands the cultural influence and market competitiveness of the imperial kiln through new media dissemination and market promotion, achieving the amplification and appreciation of cultural value. Through the market mechanism, capital activates the economic potential of the imperial kiln space and provides sustainable financial support for heritage protection and inheritance.

The ceramic merchants serve as fillers for the imperial kiln space, presenting dynamic cultural practices and craftsmanship demonstrations to supplement the reproduction of the imperial kiln space. The role of the merchants is as follows: First, the dynamic inheritance of craftsmanship, through the production practices of ceramic families, intangible cultural heritage inheritors, artists, etc., to continue the core craftsmanship and cultural traditions of the imperial kiln, allowing the craftsmanship to be passed down in production. Second, the cultural filling of the space, through the display of store products, demonstrations of craftsmanship, etc., to create a scene atmosphere with the characteristics of the imperial kiln culture, turning the physical space of the store into a cultural domain. Third, the supply of experiences, by providing manual porcelain-making experiences, ceramic customization services, etc., to meet the in-depth experience needs of tourists, enhancing tourists' understanding and identification with the imperial kiln culture. The merchants are the dynamic carriers of imperial kiln culture, and are the bridges connecting history and the present, culture and consumers.

As participants, tourists contribute to the continuous vitality and social value of the Imperial Kiln Space by consuming, engaging in interactive experiences and cultural dissemination. They are the value realizers and cultural disseminators of the space. Their significance lies in the following: First, the realization of consumption value, by purchasing cultural products, participating in cultural tourism activities, and experiencing related services, providing support for the economic value realization of the Imperial Kiln Space. Second, the creation of value through experience, by participating in manual porcelain making, sacrificial ceremonies, and cultural activities, jointly creating the cultural experience and social significance of the Imperial Kiln Space with other entities. Third, the amplification of dissemination value, by sharing their experiences and perceptions through social media and other means, transmitting their own experiences and cognition to a wider audience.

4. The Spatial Evolution of Imperial Kilns Throughout History is deeply intertwined with Urban Development, and the City and the Porcelain Industry Coexist.

The spatial production and reproduction of the imperial kilns in ancient times and the present have always been the core driving force and cultural symbol of the development of Jingdezhen City. They form a symbiotic relationship. This relationship aligns with the theory of mutual construction between industries and cities in urban geography. The symbiosis between the spatial production of the imperial kilns and the development of the city manifests in three core dimensions: spatial form,

industrial structure, and social relations.

At the level of spatial form, the layout and expansion of the Jingdezhen Imperial Kiln site directly shaped the ancient urban spatial pattern of Jingdezhen. During the imperial era, the ritualized layout of the Imperial Kiln laid the foundation for the city's spatial structure centered around Zhushan. During the industrial era, the clustering of state-owned porcelain factories promoted the expansion of the city along the Changjiang River. During the transformation period, the revitalization of the Imperial Kiln heritage shaped the current urban landscape of Jingdezhen, which integrates both past and present. At the same time, the expansion and optimization of the current urban space provide support for the reproduction of the Imperial Kiln site, and the city's transportation network, infrastructure, public services, etc. guarantee the operation of the Imperial Kiln heritage.

At the industrial structure level, the functional transformation of the imperial kiln site directly drove the transformation of the urban industrial structure. During the imperial era, the handcraft industry led by the imperial kilns promoted the formation of the first industrial city in the world. During the industrial era, the imperial kiln heritage transformed into an industrial production base, making the city a ceramic industrial city. The revitalization of the imperial kiln heritage also promoted a shift in the city's industry from an industry-dominated structure to a diversified one featuring tourism, culture, and intangible heritage preservation. At the same time, the transformation of the urban industrial structure provided the impetus for the reproduction of the imperial kiln site. The city's industrial policies, market demands, technological innovations, and other factors influence the methods of utilization and development directions of the imperial kiln site.

At the level of social relations, the production and reproduction of the Jingdezhen space have shaped the social structure and social relations of Jingdezhen. During the imperial era, the "official support and private production" system promoted the interaction and integration of official and private kiln artisans, forming a social governance model based on guilds. In the industrial era, the collective production model shaped the social identity of the working class and the collectivist social relationships. During the cultural heritage period, the Jingdezhen site, through the participation of multiple entities, has reshaped the social structure of the city, creating an open and diverse social relationship. At the same time, the changes in urban social relationships have also influenced the production of the Jingdezhen space. Social cultural concepts, consumption demands, and participation awareness have driven the Jingdezhen space to move from being closed to open, and from production to experience.

Overall, the functional changes of the imperial kiln space were the driving force. These changes led to adjustments in the urban form, industrial structure, and social relations. The development of the city provided support and guarantee for the further reproduction of the imperial kiln space. The two factors worked together to promote Jingdezhen's transformation from a rural market town to a ritualized handicraft city, then to an industrial city, and finally to a cultural tourism city. This process

indicates that the symbiotic relationship between the imperial kiln space and urban development is the core logic of Jingdezhen's urban development, and the history of the imperial kiln space's reproduction is essentially the history of Jingdezhen's urban development.

5. In the Context of China's Revitalization, the Imperial Kiln has become a Cultural Symbol and its Influence has spread Globally.

China's revitalization cannot be achieved without the cultural confidence of its people and its global influence. The Imperial Kiln has accomplished its transformation from a local heritage to a national cultural symbol through the process of "reconstructing cultural symbols - constructing national

identity - engaging in cross-cultural dialogue", and has extended its influence globally.

The reconstruction of cultural symbols is the foundation. The imperial kiln has accomplished the transformation from traditional heritage symbols to modern national cultural symbols through the extraction of historical elements and the endowment of value connotations. The core cultural elements, technical characteristics, and historical memories extracted from the heritage have been transformed through modern design language, forming a cultural symbol system that combines traditional connotations with contemporary recognizability. Its value connotation has transformed from a symbol of imperial power of the dynasty to a representative of excellent traditional Chinese culture, becoming the material carrier of cultural confidence.

The construction of national identity is the core goal of the utilization of imperial kiln heritage. Through cultural exhibitions, interactive experiences, etc., the imperial kiln enables the public to deepen their understanding and identification with the Chinese cultural heritage during their contact with it. The craftsmanship spirit, innovative genes, and cultural inclusiveness carried by the imperial kiln are highly consistent with the national spirit advocated in the revival process, and have become an important arena for consolidating national sentiments and strengthening national identity.

Cross-cultural dialogue and communication are of great significance. Through measures such as applying for World Heritage status, international cooperation, and cultural exchanges, using the Jingkou Kiln as a channel, we have achieved equal dialogue and mutual learning between Chinese culture and world cultures. Through the cross-cultural dissemination of cultural symbols and the sharing of values, we have promoted equal dialogue and mutual learning between Chinese culture and world cultures, thereby highlighting the cultural soft power and global influence of China's revitalization process.

Conclusion

This study takes Lefebvre's theory of space production as the analytical framework to systematically examine the spatial evolution of Jingdezhen Imperial Kiln from an ancient royal kiln to a contemporary national cultural heritage site. The research finds that the production and reproduction of the Imperial Kiln's space is not merely a physical transformation, but rather the result of the joint action of dominant forces such as natural endowment, imperial will, national system, and cultural policy in different historical contexts, achieving a leap from natural space to production space and then to cultural space. This process profoundly validates the theoretical proposition that "space is a product of social relations", and the spatial form of each stage is the spatialized presentation of the social structure and power relations of a specific era. The production and reproduction of the Imperial Kiln's space always follow the logic of the coordinated reconstruction of physical space, social space, and spiritual space. The contemporary utilization of the Imperial Kiln heritage has successfully achieved a

transformation from static remains to a living cultural landscape. This process is the result of the collaborative participation of multiple subjects. The government defines the spatial boundaries through strategic empowerment and institutional guarantees, capital activates cultural value through market operations, merchants fill local significance through living practices, artists inject innovative vitality through creation, and citizens and tourists endow the space with continuous vitality through daily use and consumption. The spatial practice of the Imperial Kiln also reveals the symbiotic relationship between the city and the porcelain industry. The functional transformation of the Imperial Kiln's space has always been the core driver of Jingdezhen's development. From an ancient ritualized handicraft city to a modern industrial city and then to a contemporary cultural and tourism city, the history of the Imperial Kiln's spatial reproduction is essentially the history of Jingdezhen's urban development. In the context of China's revitalization, the Imperial Kiln has successfully upgraded from a local heritage to a

national cultural representative through cultural symbol reconstruction, national identity construction, and cross-cultural dialogue. Its influence has expanded globally, contributing an Eastern experience to the transformation of resource-based cities and the revitalization and utilization of cultural heritage.

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