

## **Valuing Craftsmanship:**

**In particular the crafting of Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue**

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The Chinese antique porcelain plate, marked with Kangxi mark in 1700

The Dutch Delft antique porcelain plate, by GenerationAntiques on Etsy

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

"A small jar of night a thousand frontiers carrying him  
The sky of old age continues the firing in the kiln  
Continues arranging this pot plant lamplight  
A glazed hand refines a blue cough  
In his flesh he embroiders the fragile whiteness of posterity  
Turns around a thousand times the little  
Room a snake's stomach swallows the longest diameter of life  
His night-long waking like the sleep-talk of the whole world  
Awake and not looking at humans not even waiting for  
A cup of darkness tea four walls softly slide up  
A small iron table sinks into a venom-coated shaft  
Another red-hot circle sealing  
His book its unread wings tightly closed  
How many bloomings and fadings of seventieth birthdays have been fondled  
Startling a container with petals that cannot be rubbed away  
Lying down revealing again the birthmark of day"

“一小罐深夜 窗外一千条国界怀着他  
老年的天空继续窑变  
继续整理这盆花草 灯光  
上釉的手 炼制一场蓝色的咳嗽  
他在肉里刺绣后代们易碎的白  
千百次转身 一间小屋里  
蛇腹吞下人生最长的直径  
他通宵的醒 象全世界在梦呓  
醒着不看人类 甚至不等  
一杯黑暗的茶 四壁柔软地滑上去  
小铁桌坠入粘满毒液的甬道  
又一只烧红的圆封存  
他的书 无人阅读时敛紧双翅  
第几个开了又谢的把玩的七十岁

[Father's Blue & White Porcelain, from Lian Yang (杨炼)<sup>1</sup>  
translated by Brian Holton, 2008]

The poem above gives poetic expression to what a teapot stands for. It uses the metaphor of “a small jar of night”, and engenders the feeling of being locked up in the colors blue and white. This fascination with Chinese porcelain was not restricted to Chinese culture. Westerners, too, became enthralled beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century enthralled with porcelain. For them it was the most special of ceramics, so delicate, so refined that no western ceramic could match its qualities. Henry James imbues porcelain with life in his novel, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), he perceives in the cracks on porcelain the characteristics of marital life, and in another novel, *The Golden Bowl* (1904), as the fragility of humanity. All this shows that porcelain holds, beyond its physical quality, special significance for many people. .

It is a teapot. At least it looks like it has the function of brewing and then pouring tea. But the pot also stands for tea ceremonies, social practices—sharing tea. The teapot may evoke memories and

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<sup>1</sup> Lian Yang 杨炼 (1955-) is an important representative poet of the Misty Poets (朦胧派诗人).

emotions and it may inspire awe for the craftsmanship that was needed to produce it. Or is it just a commodity that fetches a price in the marketplace?

Porcelain is apparently good for cultural values besides its functionality as a container for tea. At the same time it is a commodity traded on the market place for a price.

In the world of economics the latter characteristic prevails. There, the value of the teapot gets measured and is quantified. Yet that does not do justice to the values that people discern in the pot, like its aesthetic, symbolic, historical and even spiritual values. Those who are knowledgeable will be interested in its authenticity—is it really produced by that particular craftsman or in that particular workshop? In a larger sense, the porcelain teapot stands for China in its height days, for a particularly rich historical period, for Chinese identity, for China's worldwide reputation.

What concerns me in this thesis is how to assess the connections between the price of crafts and cultural qualities. Can the price do justice to cultural values, or are the latter an entirely different matter that come about and need to be evaluated outside the moment of exchange, that is, beyond the price. My suspicion that such outside evaluation is called for, is fed by findings by cultural economists who have come to acknowledge the need to go beyond the price in order to do justice to cultural qualities. (i.e. Throsby. D, 2001, 2003; Klamer. A, 1996, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Hutter. M, 2008). I will follow their lead to explore how to go beyond the pricing to explore the values of something precious such as Chinese porcelain. To that end I will pursue a value based approach<sup>2</sup>.

### **Personal motivation**

I have always enjoyed participating and working in the world of culture, especially crafts. As a bachelor student, I studied both oil painting and traditional Chinese painting. And then, in my master I studied the instruments and materials that artists and craftsmen use. Consequently I was immersed in the world of crafts, in the conversations that constitute that world. The conversations inspired and empowered me.

In 2011, I went to Jingdezhen for investigation. This small city is located in the northeast of Jiangxi province. It was the historical birthplace of porcelain<sup>3</sup> and now it is still one of the world's most important

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<sup>2</sup> In *Doing the Right Thing* (2016), Klamer argues that, "a value based approach is about realization of values and encourages awareness of the values that we ourselves and others act upon", p. 43

<sup>3</sup> In the development history of ceramics, craftsmen began to make the first porcelain in Han Dynasty in Jingdezhen, China (汉代, 202BC-220AD). Because of high demand for porcelain from the imperial court, the local market, and others countries, Jingdezhen has been the center of Chinese porcelain production since 557 AD and then it has known as the "porcelain capital".

centers for making porcelain. When I walked around the street and saw many small workshops scattered all over the city, I noticed the temptations of the market. Many local craftsmen ran their workshops in “*The Jingdezhen Shopping Mall*” (景德镇瓷城)<sup>4</sup>, and employed several apprentices. They seemed to concentrate on copying and counterfeiting Chinese porcelain<sup>5</sup>. I watched craftsmen and their apprentices copy existing patterns from some reference books. Their craft was not innovative; they did not draw satisfaction from creating their own porcelain. They were just busy making the porcelain that tourists want. They did not seem to care about the value of craftsmanship. The only thing that counted for them was the size of the income that they could earn with their imitation. I listened in vain to the poetry, to the presence of Lian Yang’s celebration of Chinese porcelain. It seemed all so crass, so profane. I was deeply disappointed.

A famous Chinese professor, Yanzu Li (李砚祖)<sup>6</sup> argues that traditional crafts and craftsmanship are parts of cultural heritage<sup>7</sup> that not only can bring great economic benefits, but also contain profound historical and cultural values. This implied that the refined civilization that was able to produce such delicate ceramics deserves admiration and by keeping crafts and craftsmanship alive enriches contemporary civilization. However, since the rapidly growing economy, the complicated production process of porcelain has gradually lost its glory in the modern-day society. The quantities of porcelains produced increased, but quality dropped dramatically. Jingdezhen, as “porcelain capital” with a glorious history, was changing. With the fierce competition among craftsmen, the local market was fraught with dishonesty, greed, and speculation. One of the shocks to me, was that a local ceramist told me about the cheating in Jingdezhen’s porcelain market. Some craftsmen often sell the fake porcelains as antiques to consumers with very high prices, they call this deceptive business “kill the pig” (杀猪)<sup>8</sup>. Although the local government is aware of market disruption caused by the deception, they always keep silence, due to the fact that they think “kill the pig” can bring a huge profit and promote the development

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<sup>4</sup> The Jingdezhen Shopping Mall (景德镇瓷城) is one of Chinese porcelain market center, which nearby Zhushan ZhongLu (珠山中路).

<sup>5</sup> About the issues of copying and counterfeiting in Jingdezhen, Maris Gillette also had mentioned in his paper, *Copying, Counterfeiting, and Capitalism in Contemporary China: Jingdezhen’s Porcelain Industry (2010)*

<sup>6</sup> Yanzu Li 李砚祖 (1952-) is a famous professor of Tsinghua University in China. His is mainly engaged in research and teaching of design art theory, history of arts and crafts, and history of Chinese fine arts.

<sup>7</sup> Cultural heritage is a wide term, which often encompasses tangible cultural heritage (works of arts and crafts, historical buildings, archaeological sites, and so on) and intangible cultural heritage (languages, traditions, rituals, skills, knowledge, and so on). Traditional crafts and craftsmanship are always considered as cultural heritages, because of they not only represent people’s history and culture, but also need to be carried by living people, which practices should be transmitted from generation to generation.

<sup>8</sup> “Kill the pig” (杀猪) is a Chinese metaphor of the deceptive behavior in commercial market: “kill” means cheating, “the pig” refers to the consumers, who victims are in the deceptive business.

of the local economy. In the same time, some craftsmen use money or their special positions in government to gain the “master title”<sup>9</sup>, because the title can bring a considerable income for them. Like my observations in Jingdezhen, it gave me the sensation of a loss, a loss of the rich practice that was once porcelain craftsmanship. I found that both in the craftsmen and buyers of the porcelain that was sold in those streets. The craftsmen cared less about the emotional quality and cultural connotation of crafts. The buyers had no appreciation for or knowledge of porcelain. All everyone seemed interested in is the price.

I wondered whether a setting is conceivable where porcelain is appreciated for its cultural values, as such as symbolic and spiritual values. Could it be that also nowadays people are able to appreciate the craftsmanship that is needed to make high quality porcelain? Maybe something is amiss in the conventional economic way of perceiving things. There should be another perspective that does justice to the true values of craft, and makes sense of the cultural setting in which they figure.

The clash between cultural and economic values prompted me to transform my personal interest and got me started in a qualitative research for a PhD at the Erasmus University, at the center for cultural economics.

### **Motivation of the research**

I quickly discovered that interest in economic research about the crafts has grown significantly in the last decade. The standard economic view adopts ideas from the field of marketing to derive the value of craft in terms of impacts and benefits (i.e. MCACA, 2006; CRAFTS COUNCIL, 2010; INDECON, 2010). This means that crafts researchers tended to focus on questions of economic growth through price, income and profit, and focus on fairly typical questions such as the contribution of the crafts to the economy through sales of souvenirs, through the development of tourism and its impact on employment. By focusing exclusively on the economic role of crafts and examining issues of investment and revenue generation, everything is brought within the purview of the standard economic approach.

For instance, in the *General Census Report about Chinese crafts 2006* (中国工艺美术报告：全国工艺美术行业普查报告书 2006), we find mostly a statistical research project assessing the employment

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<sup>9</sup> For instance, Aimin Xu 许爱民 (1957-) is the ex-secretary of municipal party committee in Jingdezhen from 2003 to 2011 and the ex-provincial vice chairman in Jingdezhen from 2013-2015. He illegally used his official position to be selected “Chinese Ceramic Master”, and engaged in the deceptive business and the corruption.



potential of the Chinese Crafts Sector or consider the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and its attempt to combat poverty through the “traditional craft village” project in Viet nam. In *A Path out of Poverty*(2003), UNIDO states “...a poverty-reducing growth strategy should aim at the creation of complex and diversified economic structure and should include the development of non-farm economic activities and the facilitation of the transition of informal activities to the formal growth sector...” (p.8) Craft is being viewed, evaluated and executed mainly as an economic activity and its role and importance in culture are largely neglected! In the process, we find people more and more internalizing the story of the crafts in terms of “price”, and discussing economic production quantities.

Left to standard economics, it would seem that the “price” could perfectly quantify all values and money could account for all cultural matters related to crafts. But, how do we “price” the value of tradition, of the implicit knowledge and skills possessed by a handicrafts workshop? Does it do justice to simply assign a price tag to a cultural relic and ignore the non-economic values that may make it priceless? Is the relationship between the “producer” and “consumer” of porcelain a purely commercial relationship? Is it alright to even call the craftsman a producer and the connoisseur of porcelain a consumer?

Questions like this led me to doubt the notion that “price is everything”, and motivate this research.

### **For whom I do my PhD project**

*“We never know the worth of water till the well is dry”*

*[Thomas Fuller<sup>10</sup>]*

My personal interest, is finding out what the problem is around traditional crafts in contemporary society. Traditional craftsmanship today is under dire threat from industrial production due to rapid advances in technology. If we are to preserve the tangible as well as the intangible values of crafts, we must act immediately. To mitigate the loss being faced by the world of crafts, I wish to invite three groups of people to this discussion:

- 1) Craftsmen and others working in crafts-related jobs: As physical creators of crafts objects, their role is critical. Starting with a vision, they are the ones who transform plain raw materials into fully articulated objects of craftsmanship. The influx of industrial goods into their space is more

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Fuller (1654-1734) was an English physician, writer and adage collector

than a mere market mechanism, it is an attack on their very identity and way of life as cultural producers. Not only must we worry ourselves with the straightforward economic questions of their livelihood and displacement, but there are bigger things to consider such as the loss of skills, the eradication of highly specialized knowledge and indeed the damage done to the cultural identity of the population as a whole. It is my hope that this work will help this group to reconnect and rediscover themselves in the context of our modern society.

- 2) Economists working in the world of culture, especially crafts: The traditional view of economics is that all values can be expressed by price, which is itself driven by the interplay between supply and demand. To this group, I wish to offer different insight and an alternative approach. As cultural goods, crafts have “values” that go beyond “price”; there are aesthetic values, symbolic values, social, ritualistic and political values. These non-economic values derive not from supply and demand, but from conversations between people; from deliberations, negotiations and even controversies that emerge from people talking to each other about these goods. Consider the frequency with which Chinese relics and artifacts appear in auctions<sup>11</sup>. Consider the question of why Westerners are so keen to participate in these auctions where the object at auction represents Chinese identities and have little in common with the West. Why does the Chinese Government so often protest and attempt to block such auctions? And why do some people, after winning the object in the auction, end up gifting it back to the people of China? With questions like this, different with conventional economists, some cultural economists (as mentioned before, such as Throsby, Hutter, Klamer) are aware of the limitation of focusing on price. The fact that values of crafts should be complex and erratic, changing through time and/or by people.

I wish to draw the attention of conventional economists to the fact that the life of crafts involves a social relationship between the various participants that goes far beyond the simple economic relationship between producer (craftsman) and consumer.

- 3) Cultural policy-makers: Having the task of managing, governing and supporting culture, especially crafts, through the formal mechanism of public policy, this group often faces difficult questions and dilemmas in their policy-making. Should the crafts be defined as utilitarian objects,

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<sup>11</sup> For conventional economists, “auction” can establish and evaluate the value of crafts by a set of trading rules for exchange. In this work, I will not further discuss how the auction system works in the world of culture, but more concern how “auction” as a marketplace influences the price of culture.

or must other intrinsic values be considered when setting laws and regulations? What is the relationship between tradition and innovation and how can this be nurtured and balanced? Does commodification destroy the authenticity of crafts or does it lead to greater overall benefits in the tourism industry? How can the economic potential be tapped without destroying cultural heritage? To answer such questions efficiently and equitably, it is important for cultural policy-makers to understand the impact of their policies on the lives of people, both the craftsmen and the consumers. I hope to engage this group by focusing them on “crafts culture” and helping them to think about how best to promote identity, diversity and creativity through their policies making activities.

### **Combining economic concerns and cultural interests**

For decades now, there have been debates on the treatment of the culture in economics. On one hand, Economists typically ignored cultural aspects in their research, perhaps not finding these things to be worth their time. Yet, when questions on the allocation of public funds come up, such as whether the money should be used to conserve heritage or develop industry, economists became necessarily engaged in conversations on culture. Even with questions on the contributions of museums, or why the Dutch Government tried to cut the cultural budget, or why the Chinese Government constantly intervenes in the trade of Chinese cultural relics, economists who carry out a cost-benefit analysis are forced to deal with cultural matters whether they like it or not.

On the other hand, culturalists are very important for the appreciation of values in the world of culture, especially crafts. Anthropologists, historians, and sociologists always think in terms of “what is the relationship between the world and us, how do we interact with the world, and why”, and then these scholars follow the trace of the history to explore the answers (i.e. Becker, H.S, 1978; Faroqhi, S. and Deguilhem, R, 2005; Arnold, D.E, 2015). In the world of culture, especially crafts, from the prehistoric ceramics arts to Chinese blue-and-white porcelains, or from the ancient Egyptian tomb with colorful murals to Mondrian’s compositions, or from the ancient Roman architectures to Picasso’s cubist sculptures, culturalists prefer to interpret these objects as the semiotic system, which is constructed by a series of human activities (i.e. Geertz. C, 1972; Klamer. A, 1996; Sayers. S, 1998; Terry, E, 2000). For the story of what happens in the world of culture, especially crafts, they propose the cultural

discourse is on the term of “historical” “cultural”, “symbolic”, “aesthetic”, and so on. The economic topics, however, are rarely mentioned in their conversation.

But, the important consequence of many cultural practices tell us we need culturalists also to step into the economist’s shoes a little bit. To effectively argue for financial support for the culture, they must apply some of the rigorous data driven methods that economists commonly employ. To not do so would negatively impact the development and conservation of cultural goods. For example, even though the craftsmanship of porcelain in Jingdezhen has been listed as part of Chinese intangible cultural heritage since 2006, by the Ministry of Culture of the People’s Republic of China, the development of porcelain is still suffering. In recent years, more and more porcelain industries are shutting down due to the increasing debt burden. To keep the values of crafts and craftsmanship alive, the financial issues that economists talk about must be addressed, and for this the culturalists must learn the methodology of the economists so that they can ensure a sufficiently broad-minded to treat crafts.

Here lies the gap between the economic world and the cultural world; culturalists are ill-equipped to deal with the problems of the economic world and economists are incapable of sufficiently capturing the subtleties of the cultural world. The need to combine economic concerns and cultural interests is increasingly urgent in our modern society; one that requires economists to recognize the unique relationships between people and objects in the cultural world and for culturalists to incorporate issues of finance and price in their analyses of cultural matters.

In this work, I attempt to highlight a far wider range of values that make up our complex society and show how having different concerns can lead to different practices, such as between economists and culturalists; though they both share many common areas of study, the economist mocks the culturalist for not being rational enough and the culturalist accuses the economist of being too reductionist.

In Chapter 2, I employ a new discourse, *Cultural Economics*, to study the world of the culture, especially crafts. Here, we will mainly discuss the notion of values, the definition of a cultural good, and the relationship between people and cultural goods. I will employ the value-based approach to consider how values are realized in valuation, evaluation and valorization and I will use the 18<sup>th</sup> century Qianlong porcelain story to look beyond price and simplistic economics and interpret the discursive constructs of cultural goods in people’s lives.

In Chapter 3, I will highlight that craft is not just a product, but also a practice. I concentrate on “crafts culture” and the importance of crafts and craftsmanship in our modern society. As a cultural good, crafts and craftsmanship have always had an important position. I will attempt to break the limitations of conventional understanding and to further realize the special values and qualities of crafts in people’s social lives. With the advances in technology and the rapid adoption of mass production in crafts, the issue becomes truly complex.

In Chapter 4, I use ceramics as an example with which to interpret how the values of crafts work and evolve in people’s lives. The case of Chinese ceramics, Dutch Delft Blue in particular, is a cultural exchange story that will help us understand what is happening to ceramics through a value-based conversation. I will highlight five values, existence, aesthetic, symbolic, social and authenticity in the life of Dutch Delft Blue.

In Chapter 5, I continually explore “*what is up today*” with the crafts and craftsmanship, throughout the investigation, based on existing theories, available data, and interviews. Due to the onslaught of commercial production, every country, either China or the Netherlands or elsewhere, faces the same impending crisis over the development of the crafts. My goal is to examine the challenges faced by the craftsman and the changing nature of the crafts sector.

In this work, I will not be drawing up detailed policies for crafts, but will suggest some best practices that the sector can follow in our modern society. I stress the importance of traditional craftsmanship in our lives and argue that this is the best way to recognize our humanity in the world of culture, especially crafts. With this, I seek to make a wake-up call to remind governments how the crafts guide people’s behaviors and invite more people to join this conversation.



## Chapter 2 Cultural economics perspective

### 2.1. How about a Vase

Everyday people are busy measuring, weighing and negotiating about cultural goods. On a Thursday in November 2010, Peter Bainbridge was working in his own auction house as usual, to open the bidding for an 18<sup>th</sup> century Qianlong porcelain vase (清乾隆粉彩镂空吉庆有余转心瓶). “Ok, I’m at £1.2m, £1.2m, bid on £1.25m, I’m at £1.2m, would you go £1.25m, £1.25m...”, his voice was in a rhythmic monotone, without any pause. The atmosphere of the saleroom was heating up; many bidders felt excited and many phones frantically rang. After an intense bidding war, the vase was finally sold for £43m with an additional buyer’s premium of £8.6m, possibly a record for any Chinese artwork. This sale became a November headline causing a great sensation in the international art markets before it appeared in the newspapers. This 16 inch high vase (See Figure. 2.1) is yellow and sky blue in color with a fish motif on the front and a perforated outer wall. It was made in 1740 during the Qing dynasty. Neither the auctioneers nor the owners had any idea how much the vase was worth and estimated it would fetch up to £1.2m. Thus, most people were extremely surprised by the final price.



Figure 2. 1 The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase (photo taken from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-11739781>)

Several months after the transaction, western newspapers held readers in suspense with stories concerning the whereabouts of this Qianlong porcelain vase. Was it even sold or not? Eventually it sparked a fierce debate among involved people when the owners failed to get payment from the mysterious “buyer”. China’s State Administration of Cultural Heritage condemned these kinds of auctions, claiming that the items were frequently stolen or looted from China. A spokesman stated that

selling items of Chinese cultural heritage would damage the citizens' cultural rights and feelings. Many Chinese also believed that the possession of the vase by the Western "owners" was illegal and therefore Bainbridge's auction had no right to sell it. On the other side, Peter Bainbridge, from Bainbridge's auctioneers, complained that the "buyer", a "wealthy industrialist" in Shanghai with links to the Chinese government, refused to pay the winning bid and soon the Mail, a local newspaper, speculated that the Chinese government was suspected of sabotaging auctions of Chinese artifacts. The Qianlong vase remained unsold for the next two years, but in 2013, *Bloomberg News* revealed that it had been sold to another buyer, an Asian collector, for less than half the original bid price through a private transaction by the London-based auction house Bonhams. With this sale, it would appear that the earlier debates have died down, but in reality, that's not the case.

The question of ownership rights has become a focal point in the case of the Qianlong vase. In the common opinion, the vase is a cultural treasure of China, which was taken out of the country by looters during the Second Opium War. In 2002, the Chinese government set up The Lost Cultural Relics Recovery Program to track down such relics and bring them back home. Given this orientation, the government considers the auction of the vase, an item that belongs to the Chinese people, to be illegal.

From the standpoint of China's State Administration of Cultural Heritage, even though the second deal was successfully completed, the actual transaction was one that would cause anxiety and uproar amongst the Chinese citizens for whom the robbery of the vase was a moment of great humiliation during China's long period of colonial subjugation. Indeed, when the vase first showed up for auction, most Chinese reacted strongly, and in context of the restitution of cultural property, a cause supported by the UNESCO, the Chinese government would automatically assume the role of a caretaker for the vase and require the British government and owner to unconditionally return the vase to China. This of course did not happen and it remains to be seen if China agrees to a compromise after the latest successful transaction.

Nobody will object when producers of handcrafts offer their product for sale on the market, but if your belongings are stolen and you see them in the market the next day, you would block the deal and also call the police instead of just buying them back. Going beyond the geo-politics of the situation, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage also emphasized the inappropriateness of the market sphere for dealing with lost Chinese relics. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase is a part of China's cultural



heritage and has significance far beyond any economic price. The vase as an historical object was made during the period of the Qing dynasty. Its life not only has a special history, illegally taken out of China to Europe at the end of the Second Opium War, but has a presence in the development history of Chinese ceramics. But beyond the historical value, it also has important prestige value within specific social contexts. When this vase enters the market sphere, it not only attracts the attention of many businessmen, but also historians, art critics, and cultural experts. For these culturalists, history, sociology, anthropology and archaeology are dominant aspects that far exceed the simplistic “price” view of the relic. By downplaying the exchange value, the transaction can evoke other values such as loyalty, tradition and morality.

Culturalists appeal for people to pay more attention to the cultural values of the vase and call for restricting the trade of the vase for the sake of Chinese culture and heritage while economists oppose this. One of the major grounds for this objection is the idea that moveable works of art cannot be unequivocally assigned to one specific country (Center. G, 1998). Although art has always expressed the local culture, it is a global phenomenon and in the course of history its owner can change. This is why British Museums have a lot of Chinese treasures and even though China is unhappy about this, it cannot simply take back these relics by force. Thus, economists would rather insist that current owners of such relics should be free to offer them for sale to the highest bidder than get stuck in the complex social, historical and political dynamics of the situation.

Once we use the economic perspective to look at this story, “price” engraves on our glasses. Roger Keverne, a specialist dealer in Chinese ceramics and works of art, commented on the last deal, “It’s the right price. That was the figure at which most people were interested when the vase was originally offered. It’s settled to its true value.” He said this successful deal was good news for owners and dealers, because it resolved the troubling situation of the two-year non-payment transaction. He also opined that the original bid price was a casino price, one which was not normal in the rational financial market. The position of China’s State Administration of Cultural Heritage did not seem to matter to him much, and all he really focused on was whether this deal was successful. At the same time, most economists researching why this antique Chinese porcelain reached such an astronomical price began to think Chinese clients were crazy for this item. They considered Chinese clients from mainland China to be big punters in the art market. Due to the currency controls in recent years that hindered rich Chinese from moving their funds offshore, and the emergence of bubbles in the stock and property markets, the

question of “how to spend money” had become a hot topic. From the economist’s perspective, this antique Chinese item becomes an asset for investment and nothing more. So when the first “buyer” refused to pay the sum bid, economists declared that the Chinese art market exists a high risk of the financial investment<sup>12</sup>, fraught with many uncertainties and unpredictability. Although Peter Bainbridge, the director of Bainbridges has consistently declined to comment on the non-payment of the first transaction, his viewpoint is similar to that of Keverne’s: the price is everything. “The bottom line of transaction of the vase is just money”, he said. The economic view holds that the vase can be valued simply in terms of price; this puts economists firmly against the cultural approach in their field.

The preceding discussion about the story of the Qianlong vase reflects many differences between the economist’s and culturalist’s perspectives: economists tend to understand goods through the logic of the market. In contrast, culturalists prefer to deal with goods through various perspectives (social, historical, and cultural). In the following part, I want to elaborate on the distinct discourses between the economic and cultural worlds and point out in-depth how best to value cultural and artistic goods.

## **2.2. The Gap between the Economist and Culturalist**

### **2.2.1. “Two Worlds”**

In our society, different people use different standards, methods and disciplines to communicate with others and form their own identity. Snow’s work, *The Two Cultures*, is based on his own experience analyzing two polar groups, scientists and non-scientists (Snow. C.P, 1998). Since scientists and non-scientists have very different knowledge, attitudes and behaviors, these two groups always depict a curiously distorted image of each other. The scientists deride literary intellectuals as totally lacking in foresight while the non-scientists tend to think of scientists as brash and boastful. With his wider perspective, Snow tried to recommend that people use a neutral way to observe two cultures.

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<sup>12</sup> In Chinese art market, a high risk of the financial is caused by various factors, such as the imperfect market system, the false transaction, and the blind speculation



Figure 2. 2 Yongqing Ye's Bird Painting (image taken from: <https://nl.pinterest.com/pin/564005553308873273/>)

For example, a biologist, as a scientist, is used to applying models to help reveal reality; but an artist, as a non-scientist, prefers to help us escape from reality. Several years ago, a bird painting had been bid up to nearly 25,000 pounds in China (See Figure 2.2). A lot of people were confused as to why this simple painting of such an ugly bird was worth so much. Let us borrow Snow's idea to review this situation and understand how this bird painting can trigger so many different opinions and criticisms from people with different conceptions and attitudes. While lay persons thought it was an ugly painting, the artist Yongqing Ye<sup>13</sup> said he purposely wanted to use an unconventional way to challenge people's cognition. Even though this bird looks so ugly, nobody can simply protest "It is not art, and I can prove it". It is the addition of creative ideas and unique elements by the artist that makes this "artwork" and not just a copy of the real world. But if we ask a biologist to comment on this ugly bird, maybe he would show the structural anatomy of a bird and explain that this painting is unrealistic and irrational. For a biologist, if his research distorts the real world, that would be a big mistake. In other words, different people with different knowledge and experiences take different approaches when dealing with the same thing.

In the context of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase, I will use Klammer's idea of "two worlds" (economic world and cultural world) to explore conversations between economists and culturalists. According to Klammer, the economic world is described as a square and the cultural world is compared to a circle (Klammer. A, 1996):

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<sup>13</sup> Yongqing Ye 叶咏青 (1958- ) is a Chinese artist and also an art director at the contemporary art academy of China.

*“The square contains the objective, the circle the subjective. The square stands for science and rationality, the circle for passion, emotion, and morality. The square is the domain of the scientist, the circle of the therapist. The square might be said to accord with masculine values, the circle evokes feminine ones” (See Figure 2.3)*

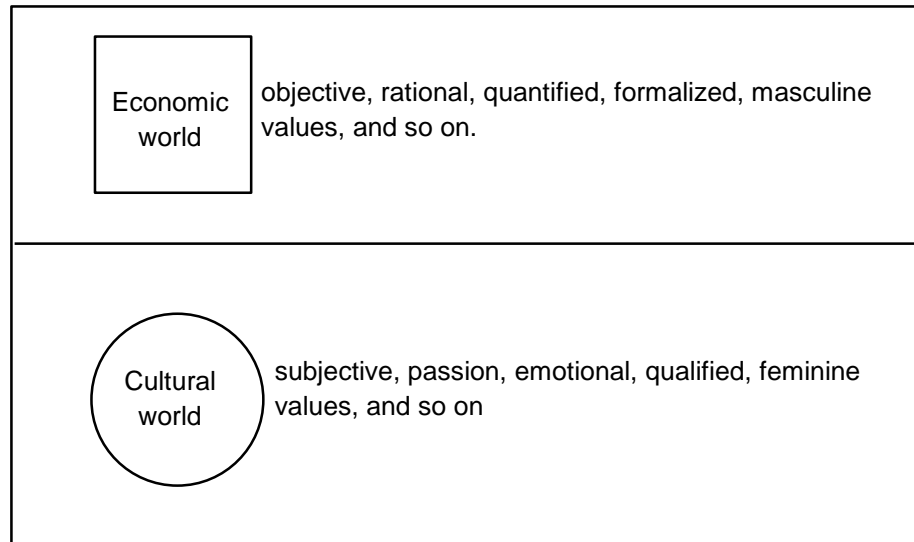


Figure 2. 3 Economic and Cultural Worlds (images taken from: Klamer. A, 1996, p. 9)

In the economic world, people prefer to use realistic and quantitative thinking. Economic science behaves like a man who has a logical and well-organized mind. He works very carefully and with strict discipline, but sometimes is too rigid. Economists not only apply precise numbers, formalized models, and rigorous formulae to turn most problems into economic ones, but also tend to crowd out other matters. Money is a crucial measurement for the economic discourse. Maybe if the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase didn't appear in the market, economists would not more notice the value of this vase. For economists, the topics of their interest are consistently oriented around notions of costs and benefits. They would rather pay more attention to “who pays for the vase” and “who gets benefits from the vase” than “what are the values and morals of the vase”.

But in the cultural world, people are inclined to use emotional and perceptual sense to evaluate objects. In the culturalist's journey, one finds romantic sentiments, sensible judgments and spiritual thinking. Culturalists are different than economists because they focus on a wide range of values of the vase (historical, artistic, spiritual, aesthetic, and so on), while the economists are only concerned with its economic value.

### 2.2.2. The focus of economists

When conventional economists, applying the logic of the market in their research, encounter art or cultural products, they unconsciously respond by looking for a price (See Figure 2.4). The transaction is between sellers and purchasers and on both the supply and demand sides, they think price is the exchange value of a good. In these economists' dictionary, price is inductor: sellers use the price tag to estimate the purchaser's requirements and to evaluate the balance of income and expenditure; purchasers use the price tag to know what price the seller is willing to accept and to measure the fairness of the trade. And thus, there is a rich literature that analyzes the function of the price mechanism in different kinds of markets.

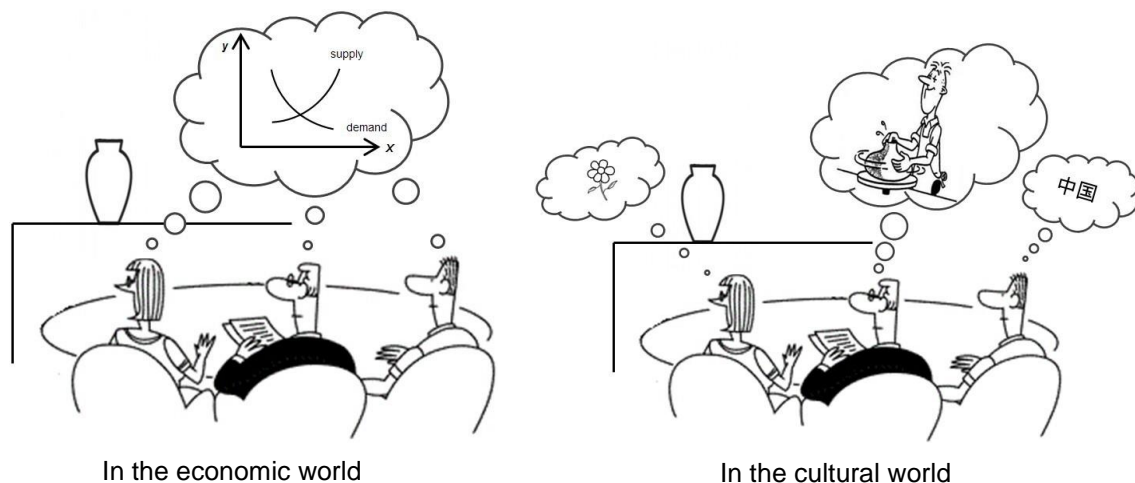


Figure 2. 4 The difference between economists and culturalists, designed by the author

In *Damien's Dangerous Idea: valuing contemporary art at auction (2011)*<sup>14</sup>, Olav Velthuis points out that the price mechanism has three elements: (1) sellers and buyers negotiate a price which has not been fixed in advance, (2) sellers and buyers directly interact during the auction, in order to establish the price, (3) and price is fixed or posed before the sale takes place. All these elements have one characteristic in common: those on the supply and on the demand sides must be in agreement on the price and the timing to ensure the deal goes through. The owners of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase had no idea about the specific price of the vase before the sale. They didn't know the buyer's

<sup>14</sup> *Damien's dangerous idea: valuing contemporary art at auction*, in *The Worth of Goods: valuation and pricing in the economy*, Oxford University Press, p. 178-200

willingness to pay, so they wanted to sell it by auction. Economic analysts presume that the price reflects and realizes the objective value of the vase (Center. G, 1998). Accordingly once the interaction between forces of supply and demand has settled the price, it can be concluded that at least this Qianlong porcelain vase has brought a considerable profit to the seller and apparently has met the need of the buyer, as expressed in his or her willingness to pay the price.

Market outcomes are the result of the interaction between supply and demand sides. According to standard economics, the maximization of profit motivates suppliers; they produce goods to make the greatest profit. Economists therefore do not consider the motivation of the creators of the Qianlong porcelain vase if that is about the satisfaction of their own self-expression and self-gratification or that the British owners just wanted to share superb quality and exquisite craftsmanship with the public. In their perspective, supplying the vase is aimed at realizing the best price which enables the suppliers to acquire other goods. Meanwhile, at the demand side, buyers always seek the lowest price to generate as much as utility<sup>15</sup> as possible. Price is based on their income, needs and preferences.

The graph (See Figure 2.4) shows the famous metaphor that economists use to illustrate their theory. Two lines represent the demand of a good and the supply of the good. The price for which quantity demanded equals quantity supplied, is to economists the equilibrium price in the market. With this graph standard economics conveys that what happens on the demand side is independent upon what happens on the supply side, and vice versa. Suppliers do not observe what buyers want; they just watch the price that the market sets. Buyers and suppliers have no control over the price. The market regulates.

Both suppliers and buyers make a sort of cost-benefit analysis. Suppliers weigh the costs of producing the good, taking into account technology, and the costs of labor and capital, against the revenues. Buyers weigh the costs of the good, what price they have to pay, taking into account the available resources, and the benefits of the good. Standard economics considers the main benefit the increase of total utility.

This is a formal approach. You might also call it an instrumental approach as the focus is on the regulatory role of monetary quantities, such as price, costs of labor and capital, and income. It is

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<sup>15</sup> Utility is a term used by economists to describe the measurement of “useful-ness” that a consumer obtains from any good.

important to stress the formalism of this approach as it contrasts with the substantive character of the value based approach that I will develop later.

The formalism shows in the usual economic mode of analysis. Most economic writing focuses on the role of prices in markets, and on the impact of changes in the main factors mentioned here, such as costs of labor, costs of capital, income, and wealth on the quantities exchanged. Economists are mainly interested in the impact on equilibrium price and quantity. That makes the analysis instrumental.

### **2.2.3. The attention of culturalists**

The way culturalists approach the vase is diametrically opposed to this instrumentalist approach of economists. Gone is the preoccupation with price, the costs of production, the income of buyers and the like. In their view, the substantive characteristics of the vase get all the attention.

Culturalists are theologians, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, art historians, art critics, cultural experts and others who are specialists in the study of culture. For example, in the field of their specific knowledge, they deal with the historic, symbolic, and artistic values of sites such as the Forbidden City, the Egyptian Pyramids, Kinderdijk in Holland. In contrast, economists adopt the economic way of thinking to measure the value of these sites through the investment cost, the number of tourists, the employment benefits, and the development of related businesses.

When the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase was sold at auction in London in November 2010, most conventional culturalists paid close attention to the authenticity, the historical, symbolic, and aesthetic meanings and craftsmanship culture (See Figure 2.4). They were not just adept at analyzing and describing the cultural values of this Qianlong vase, but also stressed its history and explained why most Chinese expected the vase would return to China. In their discussions the subject of money never emerged. This was in strong contrast to economists, who are used to calculation and rational judgment, were dying to know how much people were willing to bid for it, what would be the final price, and the potential market value of the vase. In their opinion, the price of the vase reflected its value. That is why Klammer compares culturalists to Oscar Wilde's romantics, who see the value of everything and the price of nothing, and economists to Wilde's cynics, who see the price of everything and the value of nothing (Klammer, A, 2003c). Money can exchange any equivalents in the eyes of the economist, but money measurements hardly intervene in cultural movements for the culturalists. In the cultural world, "price"

usually does not mix well with the relevant cultural matter, while this issue is very important in the economic world.

Culturalists would rather explore how knowledge, beliefs and values held by individuals lead them to certain paths in the social interaction process, as against always acting and thinking in terms of costs and benefits prevalent in the economic discourse. Thomas argues, therefore, that the social “promiscuity” of a good is often entangled in the marketplace (Thomas. N, 1991). He considers a micro-level analysis an important research method to study the interplay between objects, people and the market. Smith is a representative figure of socio-economic studies. In *Auctions: The Social Construction of Value* (1989), he writes that “*objects are reborn in auction. They acquire new values, new owners, and often new definition. Sometimes they even acquire a new history*” (p. 79). Different bidders have different motivations, which communally influence the value of the object. In the Qianlong porcelain vase case, art lovers wish to decorate their homes; investors think the vase is a tempting investment; private collectors intend to complete their collection; curators try to acquire the vase for their private or public museums; the Chinese government wants to get the vase back... Given the different psychological emotions of the participants, it is not just their bidding behaviors that are affected at the auction, but also the selling price. The shortcoming of Smith’s idea is that he asserts the auction itself is a separated social entity, and these special feelings of bidders are “distant from the everyday world”. He appears to overlook the close connection of the auction with political and historical external contexts. Thus, in Smith’s research, the special cultural background of the Qianlong vase as an antique is ignored. In contrast, Collins’ *interaction ritual chain* (2004) allows us to interpret the various vital contextual factors in the life of the Qianlong porcelain vase. He describes the art object as an embodiment of emotional energy, and points out that each participant can share these emotions in an auction setting. In other words, because the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase not only has rich cultural values, but also has the label of “China” identity, it can inspire feelings of solidarity amongst the Chinese people. Most Chinese buyers who want this piece consider the vase a symbol of their social construction and indigenous culture. In short, Smith and Collins introduce the sociological method into the auction house. They are both different from conventional economists who believe the action of bidders is affected by economic profit. Smith and Collins offer a fertile ground for researching the individual behaviors and social activities of people from a cultural perspective.



#### 2.2.4. Research on the interaction between economic and cultural worlds

Even though the interests of economists and culturalists are quite different, it is inevitable that they sometimes intersect with each other. Some scholars feel uncomfortable with this blending between the economic and cultural worlds and declare that these “two worlds” should not be contaminated by each other. They stubbornly hang on to some beliefs: sentiments in the economic world generate inefficiency; commerce in the cultural world destroys sanctity. They do so despite being aware of the interactions between these two worlds.

Robert Kuttner observes that the economic world has a tendency to invade the cultural world. He says that when everything is for sale, “*the person who volunteers times, who helps a stranger, who agrees to work for a modest wage out of a commitment to the public good, who desists from littering even when no one is looking, who forgoes an opportunity to free-ride, begins to feel like a sucker.*” (Kuttner.R, 1996, p. 62-63). Jeremy Rifkin complains, “*what is left for relationships of a noncommercial nature...when one’s life becomes little more than an ongoing series of commercial transactions held together by contracts and financial instruments, what happens to the kinds of traditional reciprocal relationships that are born of affection, love, and devotion?*” (Rifkin.J, 2000, p. 112).

Should we then completely separate culturalists from economists in the life of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase? Do culturalists have no impact on the economic world? Do economists threaten the role of culturalists? ..... In reality, when culturalists particularly emphasize the enormous cultural value of this Qianlong vase, their opinion will undoubtedly influence the attitudes and behaviors of purchasers in the market; at the same time, when economists intervene in the research of culturalists, they can use the method of rational valuation to allocate more capital and establish relevant policies for the conservation of the vase as cultural heritage. Thus, the cultural and economic worlds are intertwined with each other, even where culturalists and economists deny it.

Scholars such as Klammer (1996), McCloskey (1988), Hutter (2008), and Abbing (2002) intend to break with this obsolete mold and redefine these two worlds. They want to make economics more interesting by bringing the square into the circle and the circle into the square, but it doesn’t mean that they will disregard conventional economics (Klammer. A, 1996). For example, people are used to appreciating Renoir’s painting for his artistic expression and technical skill, but Michael Hutter suggests that input commodities also influence the historical development of particular art forms. Since the availability of

painting material at lower prices could trigger variations in formats, styles and media, the blue pigments play a special role in the development and prosperity of Impressionism (Hutter. M, 2008).

In the cultural-economic conversation many people have supported the knowledge integration standpoint. In the economic sociology literature, Viviana A. Zelizer, who adopts a “connected lives” viewpoint, argues that economic activities and intimate relations can be well mingled (Zelizer.V , 2005, p. 32). Zelizer objects the two usual approaches, “hostile worlds” and “nothing-but”. Firstly she explains, “hostile world” means separate worlds “*with inevitable contamination and disorder resulting when the two spheres come into contact with each other*” (Zelizer.V , 2005, p. 21). If people build the relationship with their lovers on the basis of monetary consideration, their behavior might be considered dangerous and foolish. The “hostile world” view orders us to maintain strict boundaries between these two worlds. However Zelizer reminds us that this absolute dichotomy is improper, because marriage not only involves love and loyalty, but also property and income sharing, and even after divorce, palimony is still a contractual promise for non-marital couples. Zelizer also proposes the “nothing-but” perspective as “*nothing but economic rationality, nothing but culture, and nothing but politics*” (Zelizer.V , 2010, p. 314). According to her this single principle is too simplistic and partial, and cannot deal adequately with the interaction between rationality and sentiment. Zelizer concludes that “*economic activity is an integral and essential part to a wide range of intimate relations, but the presence of intimacy endows the economic activity with special significance*” (Zelizer. V. 2005, in chapter 6: Intimate Revelation, p. 287). Should the surviving partner receive compensation for a partner’s death as a result of the 9/11 tragedy? How do we put a price on life? If we use money to measure a person’s life, would this be ruthless? Zelizer turns to the policy implications of “economics of care” to successfully address the subject of inhuman economics and human society. Apparently, the foundation of this obsolete mold (economists and culturalists have to keep distance from each other) is coming loose. In order to best describe and explain the relationship between economic and cultural worlds, we have to move beyond “hostile worlds” and “nothing-but” approaches.

### 2.2.5. An example in the cultural-economic world

If one wants to prove the cultural economics proposition, many examples are available in our daily lives. In 2011, I went to Jingdezhen<sup>16</sup> for doing a crafts project<sup>17</sup>. In order to gather data and collect related information, I interviewed Zanbin Peng (彭赞宾), who is not only a ceramics lecturer in *Jingdezhen ceramic institute*, but also a cutting-edge craftsman (artist)<sup>18</sup> in China. His works are considered contemporary art that inherits the symbolic language of Chinese traditional painting and conveys unique aesthetic connotations. He prefers to use the artistic expression of sensibility and rationality to create new visual experiences and emotional feelings in modern society. During our conversation, we talked a lot about the creative motivations and aesthetic pursuits of ceramists.

*Jiang*: As an excellent ceramist, what qualities should a “ceramic” have?

*Peng*: It should have practical, artistic, and aesthetic qualities.

*Jiang*: In your view, how does one distinguish between “crafts” and “fine arts”?

*Peng*: “Crafts” have to meet the requirements of consumers and mainly reflect utilitarian attributes, but “fine arts” have creative attributes which largely embody the experiences and emotions of its creators.

*Jiang*: “How to preserve craftsmanship” is a serious and endless question in ceramics sector, but how do you understand the term “craftsmanship?”

*Peng*: I prefer to recognize “craftsmanship” as synonymous with “high-quality”. “Craftsmanship” is not only a kind of process by which humans create culture, but also a kind of intangible culture, which mainly mirrors folk customs and social culture.

*Jiang*: Why are many Chinese youngsters interested in making ceramics bars<sup>19</sup>?

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<sup>16</sup> Jingdezhen, the old name of this city was Changnan, has been producing valuable handmade ceramics for over 1,800 years in China. Emperor Zhenzong decreed that Changnan should produce all of the porcelain used by the imperial court during the Jingde Period. This ceramics industry continued to develop during the Song, Yuan, and Qing Dynasties. Then pronunciation among porcelain traders morphed from ‘Changnan’ to ‘China’, afterward China as country became synonymous with porcelain

<sup>17</sup> *Creatief Vakmanschap in Internationaal Perspectief project* (2012), which concerns the creative crafts in variety of countries.

<sup>18</sup> Cutting-edge craftsman (artist) is exploring new territory, developing new practices, and shaping a new genre of craft people

<sup>19</sup> The making-ceramics bar is the public place for making pottery, in where consumers can create the pottery works by themselves, according to their tastes and preferences.

*Peng:* Many people say this is because of the movie “Ghost”. While this reason may seem very ridiculous, I think the love scene of this movie<sup>20</sup> did really inspire Chinese youngsters to be interested in ceramic works. Most Chinese youngsters consider that famous love scene to be so romantic and sweet. They want to re-create the same scenario with their girlfriends/boyfriends because in their minds it means an emotional commitment between two hearts. This is why making- ceramics bars have sprouted up over China from the 1990s.

*Jiang:* Why do most Chinese ceramists favor traditional Chinese semiotic culture in the creation process?

*Peng:* Because most Chinese are deeply influenced by traditional Chinese morals and culture. If a Chinese ceramist tries to completely abandon Chinese traditional semiotic culture, his works would be recognized by fewer Chinese consumers. In other words, his works will not be marketable in China, and the demand will drop.

*Jiang:* “Money” is taboo for most ceramists, and they usually refuse to put a price tag on their works, but why? Is this because the market has a negative effect on the cultural value of their works or something else?

*Peng:* Maybe they think market value cannot reflect the quality of their works. Or maybe money would stain their works which are pure and sacred. But I don’t agree that the cultural value of ceramic works would get a negative impact in the market. When their works get into the market, the economic value will not contradict the cultural value, although it may be undervalued or overvalued by the market.

*Jiang:* Why are more and more Chinese active at auctions and paying attention to ceramic works?

*Peng:* Because more and more Chinese are gradually realizing these works have very high potential values, and they would like to buy them as an investment.

*Jiang:* When the Chinese government introduced the “Chinese Crafts Master” titles in the crafts sector, did it influence the careers of ceramists?

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<sup>20</sup> In this movie, when Demi is on the pottery wheel her hands are covered in clay, her husband comes up behind her to give her a kiss.

*Peng*: Yes, this master title has a significant influence on these ceramist's works. Because most Chinese consumers do not care about craftsmanship and do not have enough knowledge on ceramics, they believe "fame" is the crucial part of ceramic works, thus master's works then become the most popular goods in the market. However, nobody cares whether these works have high quality. So, many unknown ceramists inevitably use "Guanxi"<sup>21</sup> power during the selection process of "Chinese Crafts Master" to get this kind of title. This phenomenon will bring many negative effects to the Chinese ceramics industry.

From this interview, we see that an object is infused with special emotions or feelings that accompany its valuation. When Chinese youngsters started to pay attention to ceramic works because of a movie, they realized that the process of making pottery is not just a creative process but also a pledge of their love and an emotional expression. All this has also an effect on the price of such an object: it will move along with the enhancement of some values or the realization of another. Economists are used to being satisfied to watch the movements of the price as a consequence of changes in the conditions of demand and supply, but culturalists are attracted to notions of "craftsmanship", "semiotic", "artistic", "traditional culture", "honor" and "high quality" for explanations. Unfortunately, culturalists focus too much on cultural issues leading to economic values being ignored.

Why are many ceramists usually silent on the price issue? Why do prices widely differ between the work of a master and the unknown ceramist's works? How does a ceramist balance the values of their works in the market? What are the kinds of interactions between the economic and cultural values of ceramic works? Such are the questions that get cultural economists going. We need to reset the focus on prices and bring in the notion of values. In the following part, I will refer to the works of Michael Hutter, David Throsby, Arjo Klamer and other experts to discuss how "values" work in the cultural economic world, and further build an active discourse among different values in cultural goods.

### **2.3. Developing a Cultural Economics Perspective**

If you are a consumer at an auction, how do you assess whether the price of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase is reasonable? Why are a lot of people eager to buy this vase at such a high price? Why do these people prefer this Qianlong vase to other vases? Why can this vase be sold at a fabulous price just

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<sup>21</sup> "Guanxi" means that the basic dynamic in personalized networks of influence, which refers to the benefits gained from social connections and usually extends from family, friends, workmates, and members of common clubs or organization. This is an intricate and obscure network in China.

because it belonged to the Qianlong Emperor? Is it because these people think if they put this vase in their own collection cabinet, it would show that they have a good taste or high-quality life? Does this vase give us any special message? Or does it mirror the owner's social identities? How do the values of this vase influence people's attitudes and behaviors in life? ... Questions such as these are based on various disciplines (i.e. aesthetics, philosophy, sociology, anthropology and archaeology). Economic discourse will fall short of evaluating cultural values and addressing other cultural issues related to the vase unless these economists consider inviting culturalists into their conversation.

### **2.3.1. "Value" in the singular**

In *Economics and Culture* (2001), David Throsby suggested "value" can be seen as a starting point in a process of linking the two fields together. He said that because 'value' is a foundation stone upon which a joint consideration of economics and culture can be built, it has an important meaning for the cultural economics discourse. Previously, Barbara Herrnstein Smith also proposed a "*double discourse of value*" idea. She proposed that events are explained in terms of utility, profits, benefits, and calculation in economic discourse; but events are explained in terms of taste, discrimination, intrinsic and transcendent values in cultural discourse (Smith. B.H, 1988, p. 130). Smith not only reminds us to understand value in two discourses, but deals with the conflicting conception of human behavior in economic theory and classical humanism. Therefore, although "values" in the plural require our interest in the areas of human thought and action, we need to differentiate them from 'value' in the singular in this present part.

For economists, "value" is the concept that connects with their economic thinking. The consensus is that the market is a superior instrument for pricing and measuring goods. During the whole economic conversation, most economists consistently revolve around supply-demand, utility, and monetary issues. They usually discuss "value" of the vase at auction in term of cost condition, price mechanism, expected revenues and additional premium. In contrast, culturalists discuss "value" of goods in a cultural context. Archaeologists, historians, arts and crafts critics, cultural scholars and others pay most attention to the tracing of cultural influences or goods. In culturalists' researches, they prefer to explore questions such as: How to inspire craftsmen to create work? How to cater to the consumer's taste? How to interpret craftsmanship in humanist connotation? How to appreciate the value of the vase beyond economic calculation? For instance, Appadurai proposes the idea of tournaments of value in the marketplace. As

in the vase, such tournaments of value involve not just status, fame, or reputation of participants, but culturally liberate the disposition of the central tokens of value from economic life (Appadurai, A, 1986). In other word, 'value' of goods is recognized as "cultural identity" for the culturalist, but for economists it's largely recognized in terms of the commercial world.

However, in the theoretical field, there are many disputes and views about the theory of value. In *Contingencies of Value (1988)*, Barbara Hernnstein Smith argues "*All value is radically contingent, being neither a fixed attribute, an inherent quality, or an objective property of things but, variables or, to put this another way, the product of dynamics of a system, specifically an economic system*" (p. 30). Smith's concern revolves around the value of an entity and its subject-relative feature in market and society. She presents the value of "works of art" as the interactive relation between the classification of an entity and the functions it is expected or desired to perform, i.e. under particular conditions, people prefer reclassifying the value of this Qianlong vase as an antique to defining it as a vessel in actual form and use, which is to "misuse" the vase and to fail to respect its presumed purposes and conventional generic classifications. Consequently, the value of the vase is dominated by the subject's needs and interests in the marketplace. Adam Smith makes a similar argument. While researching the demand side of art markets, he set forth "*notions of beauty and deformity*" to understand how to culturally and socially affect the motivations of buyers by their custom and fashion (Smith, A, 1759, 1976). In the *Wealth of Nations* Smith first distinguished "value" into two different meanings: value in use and value in exchange (Smith, A, 1776, 1976). He introduced "the diamond-water paradox" in his discussion: why is it that diamonds, which have very little or no value in use, have the greatest value in exchange; on the contrary, why is it that water, which has very high value in use, has the lowest value in exchange. He settled on labor to explain this paradox, and elucidated that the price of a good is determined by the sum of all labor in its production process. David Ricardo also illustrated that exchange value is not the same as "value in use" and further worked in his *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation (1817)* to state the relative price of two goods is determined by the ratio of the quantities of labor required in their production.

Following them, Marx redefined "value" and employed the labor theory of value to explain that goods are invested with the socially necessary labor time. He kept a watchful eye on the concept of use value. In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859)*, Marx considered that the use value, as a subjective and inherent feature of the object, is a necessary prerequisite of the commodity. But the use value is independent of economic discourse, when an object only has use value, we still cannot call it

“a commodity”. He introduced the exchange value as a socially recognized standard of measurement for quantities of these useful objects and as being secondary to the use value. Baudrillard, in a challenge of Marx’s works, criticized the privileged status accorded to production in material life. According to him, consumption is not a passive process of absorption contrasted with the active mode of production, but an activity consisting of the systematic manipulation of signs (Baudrillard. J, 1996). At the same time, he stressed the importance of exchange value in a commodity and also adds the notion of the sign value in the process of consumption (Baudrillard. J, 1981). When someone wants to buy the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase, it doesn’t only mean that the vase is useful for him or that the consumption of the vase is based upon use value. The Qianlong vase is also loaded with a sign of prestige that is different from “utility” in Marx. The bidder will not merely exchange the actual object, but also obtain language, meanings and signs. Baudrillard’s analysis builds up the dualistic structure of the vase between exchange value and symbolic value. He argues that Marx’s idea about “use value” as an innate property is too simple and suggests that “need” should be constructed in the realm of the social. Thus, he subverts the dominant-dominated relationship between use value and exchange value in Marx.

Both Marx and Baudrillard talk about the notion of fetishism in their works. In *Capital* (1867), Marx attached “fetishism” to commodities and emphasized the importance of the social character of labor in production. Although Marx made a highly positive assessment about “labor value in the social context”, he tended to use an objective measure to explore value. In contrast, Baudrillard preferred to pay more attention to the consumption process in his works and treated “fetishism” as a sign of social value. He describes the use value as not being biologically given, but a fetishized social relation as much as exchange value. This idea is close to the marginalists’ viewpoint, which states that the value of an object is created not by productive labor but by consumer desire. Marginalists thought value was a subjective matter, which is assigned by an individual or by a group. From 1870 the marginalists gradually replaced cost-of-production theories of value with demand-supply theories of value. Jevons (1871), Menger (1871), and Marshall (1890), are neo-classical economists that gave special attention to the culture. They investigated the culture much more than did their classical predecessors, but were less interested in mathematical algorithms and calculations. Lionel Robbins was one of the most influential neo-classical economists in the twentieth century. He explained why and how values of the culture were probably beyond the scope of economic science (Robbins. L, 1932). Robbins not only concluded that



“the ultimate values” of the culture embodied “quality and meaning”, but also stressed “the subjectivist theory of value” that identifies worth as being dependent upon the needs of the members of a society.

According to the neo-classical marginal analysis, a commodity may be more useful in satisfying the wants of one person than another. In a competitive market, prices presumably reflect the relative multiple valuations of the individual’s requirements. Throsby (2001) pointed out that “prices” are at best only an imperfect indicator of underlying value in the market, even though a theory of price is a theory of value for many contemporary economists. The concept of “values” is elusive and different from that of “value”. “Values” appear to be an integral part of human life across economic and cultural discourses. Therefore, the model of prices does not directly mirror the electric atmosphere of the auction; represent the high social status of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase in Chinese history; reflect the reaction of enthusiasts to the Qianlong vase which is like a drug-induced euphoria in consumption. In other word, “prices” cannot be equated with “values”.

### **2.3.2. “Values” in the plural**

Conventional economists use “price” to express objective attributes of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase. In the economic domain, “price” is the quantity of payment or compensation given by one party to another in return for goods or services. ‘Price’ is not only a tangible subject with visible figures, graphs or tables for measuring it, but also has limited boundaries that isolate it from the social and cultural sphere. However, “values” are distinct from prices. The notion of values of the Qianlong vase is intermeshed in different fields, such as how to recognize the cultural values of this vase in the history of Chinese ceramics and what is the social impact of the trade of this vase in China and around the world. The notion of “values” has broader implications and more features than “price”. As a cultural-economics researcher, I think it is quite important to take the difference between these two terms into account throughout this work.

“Price” is explicit while “values” are implicit. “Price” is concrete. We can get explicit information about prices from data in the market. As long as a good enters the market as a commodity, a price tag must be attached to it even if people think it might be priceless. When the western seller wanted to trade the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase in the market, the Chinese government officially felt dissatisfied, upset and even angry. While the price offers us a direct quantitative measure of the high meanings and importance of the treasure, it also easily distorts the value of the pure cultural and social phenomenon by embroiling

it in the monetary world. For Chinese government, the transaction of the vase is not illegal and also against the moral. From the number that is the price of the Qianlong vase, we can derive its meaning in economic discourse, but values of the vase such as the historical, symbolic, authentic, aesthetic meanings and craftsmanship culture are obscured. In other words, the price of the vase can emerge from transactions, but other values appear only in the interactions among people in a socio-cultural context. That is, "price" always appears in an exchange system in a monetary, financial, utilitarian, and material sense. In contrast "values" are beyond measure and relate more with anthropological and sociological senses, and are always hidden under a veil of the physical appearance.

"Price", therefore, is an objective monitor, which may link with money, bonus, stock or interest, while "values" have more sensitive meanings and may link with social value, historical value, personal value, and so on. As a sort of measurement, "price" must exist in a market setting for the public. If the Qianlong vase is priced at £43m, this price provides a simplified, non-debatable and commercial evaluation of the vase upon which everybody shares the same purchasing rights. Yet, "values" are subjective. Due to particular historical reasons, China is embroiled in property disputes over the Qianlong vase with other countries. The values of the vase cannot be isolated from its moral, social and cultural contexts. Moreover, "values" are not just present in the cultural world, but are around us everywhere. When my husband visited Delft for vacation in 2006, he was captivated by beautiful the Delft Blue works and felt very excited. One year later, he got a position as PhD candidate in the TU, the Netherlands, and started to live in Delft. When he goes to the center of this city every weekend, he passes by these Delft Blue shops. Now these beautiful Delft Blue are just potteries for him with no special emotions and meanings at all. In this case, the "values" of the Delft Blue have changed over time for him. Marginal utility theorists elaborated a theory of value based on the idea of maximizing utility. In short, values come about in the interplay between supply and demand, but are influenced by many factors in different situations.

Finally, "price" is only a limited indicator of economic value, and "values" can refer to economic value, historical value, social value, and so on. In the market, Chinese relics always are fiercely pursued by many bidders, and also fetch very high prices. But can we argue these prices are equal to the values of the relics? I am afraid we cannot. These prices are just numbers without any special meanings and connotations, which the role as a mechanism for automatically distributing limited resources to place of need. In contrast, when you touch these antique items, feel them, experience them, we can image the excellent craftsmanship and civilizations of that period.

“Values” involve many characteristics that are totally different from “price”:

- a. Values is an obscure concept where we cannot use visible numbers or letters to measure it, and it usually presents itself indirectly and imprecisely (Klamer. A, 2003a).
- b. Values are interconnected with each other and come in clusters (Klamer. A, 2003a, 2016). As the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase was reaching high prices in the auction house, values of social identity, aesthetic connotations and craftsmanship of the vase gradually emerged (Lili. J, 2012). They are not a given, they arise and evolve out of the interactions of people’s deliberations and conversations.
- c. Values are concerned with multi-cultural topics that are beyond the market setting. Most Chinese think China must get back the Qianlong vase as the lost treasure represents a humiliating moment of Chinese history. China’s State Administration of Cultural Heritage lists more than 1.67 million relics in over 2,000 museums in 47 countries as having been illegally obtained through looting and stealing, and claims Chinese ownership of these relics. Values play an important role in human history: they exist in human life, guide human minds, conduct human behaviors, and influence human development.
- d. Values have a hierarchy (Klamer. A, 2003b). In the story of the Qianlong vase, Chinese authorities have strongly protested the trading of the lost Chinese treasure in the market, due to its historical and social values being far greater than its economic value. Klamer also proposes that we cannot overlook the position and role of moral values in our lives.
- e. Values not only accrue to people as a matter for individuals, but also as a social setting. In the market, many people prefer to bring their own individual requirements to purchasing decisions, but, sometimes people will as ‘a group’ gain or consume value. Thus, David Throsby queries whether an expression of individual WTP (willingness to pay) can capture the perception of the shared value of culture or art (Throsby. D, 2003).

From these discussions, the critical question is “How to distinguish “price” from “values”?” In our modern society, many scholars are engaged with this issue. The cultural value as well as the economic value becomes especially noticeable when people participate in the world of culture, especially crafts.

The Chinese artist Weiwei Ai <sup>22</sup> used an extreme way to express his view. In 1995, Weiwei Ai created a self-portrait, “*Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*” (See Figure 2.5) in which he drops a 2,000 year old Han dynasty urn, breaking it. Through the three sections of the black and white triptych, he builds his identity from dealer to artist. “In some ways you’re destroying in order to create something new”, Weiwei Ai said. He rejects the doctrinaire traditional culture, but supports the development of contemporary art and culture. In his work, we can see that he focuses on the values of this controversial performance art rather than the high price of the Han dynasty urn in the market. The broken urn arose quite a bit of controversy. Beyond the economic impact, its destruction also aroused the cultural awareness of the public.



Figure 2. 5 Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn ( in 1995, triptych of gelatin silver prints, each print 49 5/8”× 39 1/4”, Courtesy private collection, USA, by Weiwei Ai, photos taken from: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/ai-weiwei-dropping-a-han-dynasty-urn>)

It is inevitable that more and more goods will be commercialized in the economic world. How does one recognize and treat these goods? Most researchers insist that it is necessary to regard economic and cultural values as distinct entities for cultural goods.

### 2.3.3. Economic and cultural values

In cultural-economics, “economic value” and “cultural value” are crucial terms which not only can measure objects within an economic model but also assess objects in cultural terms. For classical

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<sup>22</sup> Weiwei Ai, 艾未未 (1957- ) is a Chinese contemporary artist and activist.

economists, economic value is synonymous with the exchange value and reflects what people are willing to pay for a thing. However, many cultural economists such as Throsby and Klammer unanimously reject this argument that the value of goods is determined by price. "Cultural value" has become a focal point in the discourse of cultural economics. Even though cultural value is not easily evaluated by quantitative and qualitative measurements, it is very important as it not only influences and interconnects the economic value of goods, but also goes above and beyond the standard economic meanings. As one of the numerous values of an organic object, cultural value generally involves multi-dimensional elements. How can we recognize cultural value? Throsby provides a range of cultural values which includes aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, symbolic and authenticity values (Throsby. D, 2003).

On the one hand, these cultural values exist independently of consumers. Even though the owners of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase didn't realize its values before it went under the hammer, it is an undisputed fact that the vase was laden with high cultural values. Also, consider Rembrandt's painting, *The Night Watch*, commissioned by the Captain and his civic militia guards. Rembrandt used a special technique, the chiaroscuro effect, to express light and shadow. Though impressive in the art world, some of the people who were characters in this painting did not feel very happy. They felt that since they paid the same price to Rembrandt, they should all get the same position in this piece, but he did not do this and some of them were even covered with black color. They fought to get back their commissions, and around the same time, Rembrandt's professional stature too started to decline. But as time went on, in modern society many people became more aware and more interested in this painting. *The Night Watch* is now considered to be one of Rembrandt's masterpieces, classical painting for the 17<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, sometimes cultural value can be realized through the market, and depends on the ability of consumers to recognize it. As Throsby (2001) said, an individual's recognition of inherent cultural value induces him/her to pay more money or attention to the object. In 2008, an anonymous British buyer spent £4.5 million at the auction on *Rembrandt Laughing*, a self-portrait that many believed was a Rembrandt knockoff. Even the auction house had valued this painting at a mere £3,100, but as it turned out, the painting was a genuine article and was worth more than £40 million. Thus it can be seen that values of an authentic painting by Rembrandt are different from values of a perfect duplicate, and in such a case the price reflects a meaning of cultural values.

During the process of consumption, people often focus on seeking emotional satisfactions and experience needs. Nozick says that some goods don't just have fundamental utility but are imbued with

“symbolic utility” (Nozick, R, 1994). In the story of the Qianlong vase, for westerners the vase is an exotic artifact; for the Chinese, the vase is an ethnic signal. People use goods as personal adornments but they can also be status symbols; many people think of a Rolex as a status symbol for the wealthy and successful. Klamer (2002) says that we should consider the immaterial “goods” that the possession of a material thing generates. However, what are these “goods” for? Klamer further points out that “goods” have to be good for something. For example, the Qianlong vase not only has practical usefulness, but can give owners also financial security (referring to economic value), and a cultural identity (referring to cultural value). When this vase is consumed, it is differentially recognized in various contexts. The vase can be seen as a commodity, in which price appraisal method occurs, at the same time, the vase can be identified as “an experience”, “a practice”, or “a memory”. That is why, neo-classical economists make an important point that price could not measure the intrinsic value of goods, although it is an indicator of value of goods.

When neo-classical economists deal with the notion of values of goods, “culture” enters into their conversation. John Dewey stressed the importance of recognizing the integrity of all aspects of human experience, and also defines art as a product of culture, which expresses the significance of human experience, as well as their emotions and thoughts (Dewey, J, 1934). He further argued that we should recognize “experience” as “culture” for exploring values in moral, social and cultural contexts. “Culture” emerged as a core concept in anthropology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is considered to be group-specific values, customs, beliefs and behaviors, which distinguish one group from other groups. Kroeber and Kluckhohn focused on the development of culture as the main line of anthropological research (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1963). Afterwards, Throsby presented another definition about “culture”, which relates to activities drawing upon the enlightenment and education of the mind rather than the acquisition of purely technical or vocational skills. He elaborated the word more as an adjective than as a noun, as in “cultural goods”, “cultural institutions”, “cultural industries”, or “cultural sector of the economy” (Throsby, D, 2001). As one of the most important terms, “cultural goods” are significantly different from “ordinary goods” in cultural economics. In the next part, I will pay more attention to this.

## **2.4. The Evaluation of Cultural Goods**

When the Qianlong porcelain vase was sold in London for £43m with an additional premium of £8.6m, most people were extremely surprised. Why did this vase become the most attractive object in the art

market? Is it because of its colorful pattern, the superior quality and exquisite craftsmanship? As a cultural-economics researcher I do not think this is such a simple issue (Lili. J, 2012). This vase differs from other goods because it is not just a vase, a tangible object, but also a part of a social identity. It may mark the Qianlong emperor's life; it may mold an individual personality; or it may be a metaphor of power, privilege and prestige. In other words, many factors may directly or indirectly influence its price fluctuation in the market. One of these factors is culture. This culture, in turn, is generated and sustained by goods with cultural values, that is, cultural goods. How do we define "cultural goods"? And what are differences between "ordinary goods" and "cultural goods"? It is a focal topic in the discourse of cultural-economics.

#### **2.4.1. Cultural goods**

Many people think of cultural goods as material objects, like ordinary goods in the market. They are tangible and visible, just like ceramic vases, cups, and teapots. But from a cultural economics perspective, cultural goods must be differentiated in some fundamental way from ordinary goods. In contrast with ordinary goods, "cultural goods" carry cultural values that they derive from the organic unity of certain cultural groups (McCain. R, 2006), and possess three characteristics, namely that they reflect creativity in production, convey symbolic meaning and embody intellectual property (Throsby. D, 2001). In general, cultural goods are special consumable goods which transmit ideas, symbols and traditions, and can bring economic benefit.

Cultural goods are usually not produced for the market. Yet, in the auction house, many bidders were aggressively willing to pay for the 18<sup>th</sup> century Qianlong porcelain. Conventional economists might think that the porcelain is just a commodity and the willingness of people to pay a large sum of money is just for the ownership (with the associated cost-benefits). The presumption that, if you spend money on the porcelain, you have its ownership. Klammer, as a cultural economist, tries to raise a different perspective: people pay for "access" in the world of culture<sup>23</sup>, and not for the good itself. In the story of this Qianlong porcelain, "money" is an instrumental tool that opens the doors to explore the history of human civilization. But when someone buys the porcelain and then just puts it in the attic, its value won't be realized. Even its label as a "cultural relic" has no meaning; but, when someone not just gains the

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<sup>23</sup> In Arjo Klammer's book, *Doing the Right Thing* (2016), he answers the question about what do people pay for in the world of culture, "Access' is what they pay for [gain experiences]...".

property rights of the porcelain but also contributes their time and energy to appreciate the porcelain with others, the “imperial experience” goes up and subsequently this experience will be a part of their lives. During this shared conversation, if the experiencer is an archaeologist, he probably would perceive its historical value; if the experiencer is a collector, he surely would expect visitors to be impressed by his private cabinet; if the experiencer is a patriot, he would pay more attention to its political value; if the experiencer is a craftsman, he would marvel at the high level of its craftsmanship. Different people will enjoy this consuming process in different ways, but the process does not mean these people hold pure ownership over the artifact.

In *The Lives of Cultural Goods* (2008), Klammer refers to “goods in general and cultural goods in particular”. He thinks that cultural goods have two attributes, namely common and exceptional. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase looks like a commodity and can be sold at auction; at this moment, money is instrumental at best. But, when the purchaser spends money to get this antique object, he acquires a chance to take part in cultural practices of the vase and also obtains permission to do whatever he wants. He can take the vase home and put it in the collection cabinet, maybe he shares it with friends: to talk, to discuss, to deliberate, to assess, or even resale it again. Subsequently, he may become aware of the craftsmanship: How was the vase made by the craftsmen? Did the craftsmen just express their own artistic feeling through this creation, or did they completely obey the wishes of the Qianlong Emperor? Did the craftsmen encounter great obstacles while they developed these skills? What are the roles of the craftsmen within the process of realization of craftsmanship of the vase? The vase becomes a topic of discussion for people. And then, the vase turns into “discursive constructs”, which is a feature of a cultural good and different from commodities.

According to the story of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase, the vase is exceptional and is more special than other vases and its life should be over and beyond the commodity phase. In a sense, the Qianlong vase has become Chinese traditional culture that includes various values, such as social, ritual, political and so on. Most bidders deeply cared about the story behind this vase rather than the question of what kind of flowers to put in it. They were not simply amazed by the elegant appearance of this vase and the sophisticated skill of its craftsmen, but were curious about its historic and symbolic messages. In other words, for these bidders, this vase was not just a “vase”, but was defined as the knowledge of language, the expression of human endeavor, and a branch of cultural baggage. This vase brings a special experience to people; it provides a glimpse into the economy and culture of the



Qing Dynasty. At the same time, the wide gap of its prices between the pre-trade and post-trade at the auction reminds us of the many uncertainties that existed. Most people were extremely surprised by the final deal price of £43m, thought to be a record for any Chinese artwork, when the vase was just estimated to fetch up to £1.2m before the auction. At the auction house, the electric atmosphere surely aroused some other values and one can see this in the way people's discussions, negotiations and even disputes evolved.

Although the final price of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase is very high, its values still are more than economics can account for. The vase as cultural relic has benefits over and beyond the economic return. It is not hard to find that more and more Chinese people are purchasing Chinese art and cultural heritage from other countries. These people use this kind of purchasing behavior to express patriotic emotions. Kevin Ching, CEO of Sotheby's Asia, once said they were quite confident that Chinese objects always stood a very good chance of falling into the hands of Chinese collectors, especially those of great historical significance<sup>24</sup>. For many Chinese people, art and cultural heritage must amount to more than economic merit. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase is considered a national relic that has strong historical, cultural and social values and which standard economic analysis cannot properly evaluate as a cultural good.

#### **2.4.2. General properties---exchange, exchanged and consumed**

Cultural goods are similar to commodities, in the sense that they are realized in exchange and consumption. Standard economists maintain that the value of cultural goods should be derived from the price, placing most of the emphasis on the relationship between resource costs and price and thus ignoring the intrinsic values. According to that once cultural goods enter into the market, they will abide by the general properties of the commodity market. When cultural goods are delivered to a purchaser, the ownership of cultural goods would transfer from seller to consumer. And because cultural goods possess historical, artistic or aesthetic value and quality, these goods can satisfy the physiological needs and spiritual requirements of the consumer, that is, consumption.

In the world of economics, people usually discuss economic issues such as supply, demand and price. When a product or service becomes available for exchange, it turns into a commodity. Karl Marx (1859)

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<sup>24</sup> In *Ancient Chinese Treasure Recovered*, TIME, By Austin Ramzy, in Beijing, Sept.20, 2007

emphasized exchange value as the essential factor of a commodity. Its concept has played important roles in economic thought. A commodity is for sale and hence needs to be priced. An exchange of commodity occurs whenever a buyer and a seller agree on the price, and the buyer transfers the ownership of the commodity to the buyer. Thus, the price of a commodity is determined by what a buyer is willing to pay and a seller is willing to accept.

“Goods are to be produced for exchange, exchanged, and consumed” (Klamer. A, 2008); all cultural goods can be exchanged and consumed, but not all cultural goods are produced for entering into the marketplace. Most economists are conditioned to think that economic value of a good is captured in its price, but ignore the idea that cultural value of a cultural good is independent of the market.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase as a tangible good sold for £43m. But, although the vase has appeared on auction shelves, the actual intent of this vase was not to be used for exchange in the market, but was the exclusive property of the Qing Dynasty Emperor Qianlong. Out in the marketplace, the Qianlong vase could evoke symbols of power and monarch, not only in fixing political status, but in containing custom, culture and aesthetics. To treat these special features of role and meaning of the vase, if we only use such monetary measurements, it would seem to be limited and narrow. Cultural goods make us aware of what values of cultural goods are, how values beyond their prices, and these values are realized in a discourse.

#### **2.4.3. Typical properties---valuation, evaluation, and valorization**

Many researchers have already examined how to realize values in goods/cultural goods. In *Theory and Cultural Value* (1992), Steven Connor points out that the idea of value is closely associated with human life and exists everywhere. Elizabeth Anderson stresses the superiority of pluralism in value theory and sketches an expressivity theory of rational action (Anderson. E, 1993). She proposes that people value something through positive attitudes, where complicated cognitive process of perception, emotion, deliberation, desire, and conduct are involved.

In recent times, the term “conversation”<sup>25</sup> has come into the cultural economist’s sight. Klamer suggests that “*Goods will be topics of conversation or at least play a role in conversation...in these conversations*

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<sup>25</sup> Klamer defines that conversation “denotes a distinct way of interacting...it invites us to look beyond a good, a result, a proposition or a statement and always to consider such things in their discursive context”, in *Sublime Economy: on the intersection of art and economics*, p. 251

*people negotiate about their meanings and their values. Consequently goods convey, represent, or serve to realize economic, social and cultural values*" (Klamer. A, 2008, p. 261). He stresses that this conversational process turns "goods" into "cultural goods", i.e., to say, cultural goods are established in conversation. When people talk, discuss, deliberate or debate about the characteristics of goods, cultural goods arise and values evolve.

The formation of values of cultural goods has a close relationship with experience and knowledge. When people look at the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase for the first time, they might be attracted by the splendid color and exquisite workmanship of the vase. This is an unconscious process. Later people use their educational background and professional knowledge to appreciate the meanings of the vase. This is a conscious process of evaluation. But, although the values of cultural goods come about by conversation, many uncertainties and questions still surround the process of forming discursive constructs. Why was there such a big gap between pre-trade and post-trade price at auction? Who first realized that this vase might be of great value? Why did the Chinese people want to purchase this vase? Why did Westerners also care so much about this vase? Why didn't the owner of the vase dare believe that this vase can get such an astronomical price until the hammer came down? Why did the winning bidder refuse to immediately pay for this vase after the sale? Why did some Chinese patriots believe they should not have to pay for this vase that is rightfully their property? How did the common people react to the sale? Such a series of questions will be involved in the discursive construct of the vase. When people try to estimate, ascribe, modify, confirm and even deny the values of this vase, they will adopt new values and adjust their cognitions, emotions and behaviors.

For instance, Julie Fitzmaurice insists consumers are motivated to engage in activities for many varied reasons (Fitzmaurice. J, 2005). She presents consumer motivation as influenced by hedonic involvement, self-expressive involvement, self-concept congruity, subjective norms and attitude. At the same time, consumer behavior is also affected by external factors, including price tendency, market circumstances and induced factors amongst others. Most westerners disliked or underestimated the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase when they saw it for the first time, and may have been hesitant about buying this vase at the beginning of the auction. But when some Chinese buyers started to bid up the price, and the atmosphere at the auction intensified, westerners may have become curious and began to care, reassess and appreciate the values of the vase, eventually even eagerly wanting to own it. That

is, the process of valorization is the enhancement and affirmation of a value that is embedded in social and cultural contexts (Klamer. A, 2003c).

In short, a cultural good comes about through a conversational process and the formation of its values takes place through discussions. Through these processes, it develops typical properties that are not seen in other goods. During these comprehensive processes, the roles of valuation, evaluation and valorization are very important. Since the values of cultural goods generally aren't easy to measure and are spread out across multiple domains, we have to account for the values of cultural goods by valuing, evaluating and valorizing.

## **2.5. Valorization of Cultural Goods**

In the story of the Qianlong vase, the British owners might be curious how their uncle got this valuable Chinese cultural relic; auctioneers might think it was a great deal; some collectors might feel disappointed they did not get this vase; specialists might be very interested in its cultural value; a group of Chinese patriots might protest that this auction of a looted Chinese relic severely hurts China's cultural rights; and a group of Western amateurs might be excited by its splendid color and exquisite workmanship. All of these different interested people actively or passively built different conversations to valorize the vase. They appreciated the workmanship, shared experiences, and talked with each other all the time. The vase needed people for realizing its values.

According to the different values at stake, all kinds of valorizations are unveiled. To distinguish valorization practices, In this section I want to show which values of cultural goods cluster and how these values are realized in people's daily lives. To distinguish valorization practices, I use the "Five Spheres"<sup>26</sup> figure of Klamer (See Figure 2.6).

### **2.5.1. Realizing values in five spheres**

The example of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Qianlong vase reflects the general characteristics of cultural goods: they exist by virtue of the people involved, interested, talking about them and acting upon them. Cultural goods come about in conversation, they are shared by the members of a group without a clear legal definition of ownership, and they are beyond their practical functions.

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<sup>26</sup> In *Doing the Right Thing: a value based economy*, (2016) chapter 9, p.134, by Arjo Klamer

For the valorization of goods, conventional economists believe people only are active in two spheres, the market and the government: in the Qianlong vase case, people use the numerical price to measure the value of the vase and people implement rules and policies to control whether the transaction is fair, encourage the expansion of transaction and offer subsidies to support more craftsmen, who are active in our modern-day society. I have adopted the argument that the vase as a cultural good exists and changes through conversational processes, but conventional economics does not exhaust all the possibilities needed to explore the life of the vase. Therefore it is necessary for us to pay more attention to other spheres where goods can socialize into cultural goods.

This kind of an approach has been adopted before by some cultural economists. In *The Role of the Third Sphere in the World of the Arts (1998)*, Klamer and Zuidhof address the different values and norms that arts would engage in three spheres, the market, the government, and the social sphere. Klamer frequently uses the social sphere to discuss various modes of financing the arts (Klamer, A and Petrova. L, 2010). In the social sphere artists participate in social networks and their works are realized in a specific context which is different from the market and the government spheres. From this same point of view, we can further think of the vase as not merely an armorial material but also esoteric knowledge. Thus, it becomes clear that in the cultural sphere, crafts are created and treated, then gradually generate immeasurable values and weave intricate social relationships.

Klamer (2016) presents a more general model of five spheres that shows the various spheres in which people and public organization valorize their values, let us consider each sphere separately.

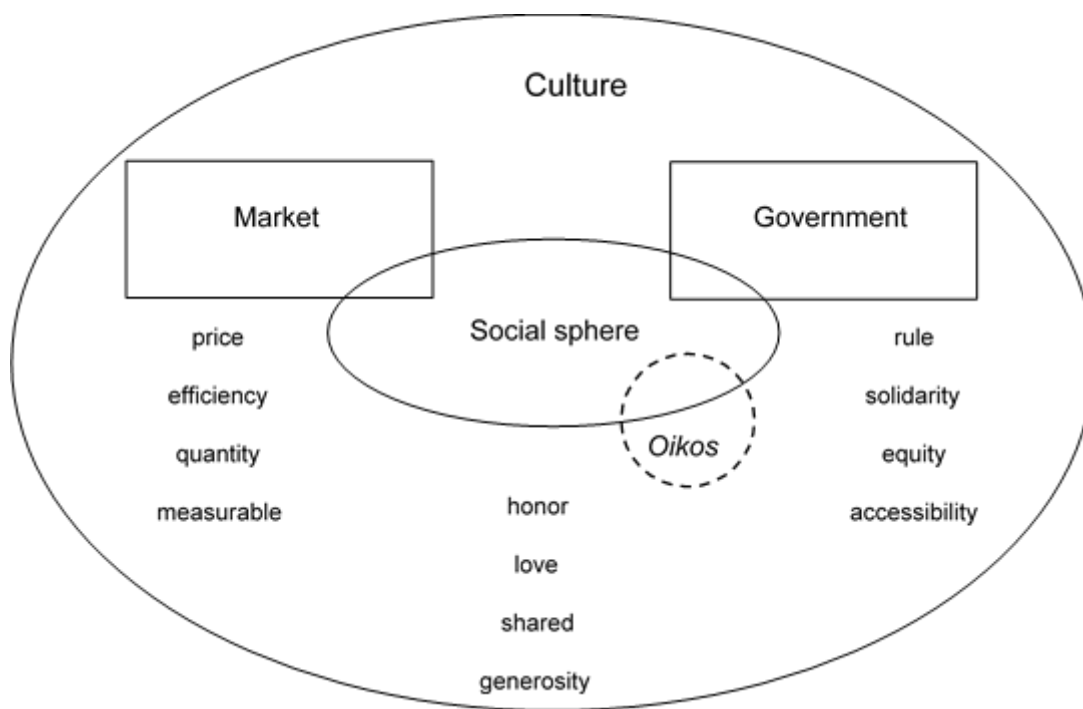


Figure 2. 6 Klamer's Five Spheres

### The sphere of the market

It is the logic of exchange that allows sellers and buyers to exchange any goods in transaction. For the conventional economist, the function of the market is to effectively allocate resources and all tradable items can be valued by price through the impersonal mechanism of the market. Price is the key in this sphere. When the British owners sold the Qianlong vase at auction, there can be no doubt that the numbers that make the price became one of the most talked about topics in the conversations of economists. The sellers could use the auction to reach new or potential consumers who were willing to pay for owning the vase, while at the same time, the bidders and buyers could consider transaction costs and risk preferences. Price is a big deal for them. Even though auctions serve as a show stage for tradable items that permeate with uncertainties, all items must be measured in terms of money and the vase is no exception.

### The sphere of governance

It is the logic of discipline that generates a more equitable distribution than the market does and also implements bureaucratic policies (i.e. subsidy, welfare, and tax reduction) to promote the development of civilization (Klamer, A. and Zuidhof, P. W, 1998).

For the field of the crafts, the government can build a system for supporting craftsmen and regulating interested people who are involved in the life of crafts. In the Chinese Jin dynasty (265-420AD), government had set up “甄官署” (Guan Zhen Department) as an official institution to manage the production of ceramics, “甄官署，令一人，从八品下；丞二人，正九品下。掌琢石、陶土之事；供石磬、人、兽、碑、柱、碾、磑、瓶、缶之器，敕葬则供明器”<sup>27</sup>. In the Chinese Yuan dynasty (1271-1368AD), the government had established some organizations to reinforce the management and training of craftsmen. For instance, “浮梁瓷局” (Fu Liang Porcelain Bureau) had been founded for the selection of the finest ceramists. In our modern-day society, Chinese craftsmen can apply to be granted the “Chinese Crafts Master” title by the government. Moreover, because of crafts as cultural goods, these crafts not only are tangible objects, but also are perceived as valuable knowledge, the Chinese government implements several forms of laws to promote the intellectual properties of these crafts, such as the *Law of People’s Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage*<sup>28</sup> provides, “if the use of intangible cultural heritage involves intellectual property right, the provisions of the relevant laws and administrative regulations shall apply; if other laws and administrative regulations prescribe otherwise concerning the protection of traditional medicine and traditional arts and handicrafts, etc., those provisions shall prevail.” Thus, we can say that, rules, regulations, and laws in the sphere of governance play important roles to increase public awareness of intangible cultural heritage protection.

In this logic, Klamer describes, once a craftsman downloads the application forms from a government website, or talks with government officials to discuss the possibility of support, or gets a financial reward from governmental funding, all this means he has already entered the sphere of the governance. This sphere emphasizes justice, equity, impersonality, freedom, and accessibility.

### **The social sphere**

This sphere is defined by the logic of informal interpersonal relationships different from the objectifying ones of the market and the governance. People build social networks with professionals, political activists, colleagues, or with more intimate friends in this sphere. In the story of the Qianlong vase, when

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<sup>27</sup> 《新唐书·百官志三》(The New Book of Tang), is a Chinese historical book, which covers about central authority, control, and law of government in people’s daily life.

<sup>28</sup> *Law of People’s Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage*, as adopted at the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the standing committee of the 11<sup>th</sup> National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China on February 25, 2011, is hereby issued and come into force on June 1, 2011

the British owners accessed the market, signed the authorization form with the auctioneers, negotiated with the bidders, and sold their vase, many people were embroiled in the auction to be a part of this event. Dealers, specialists, collectors, agents and the press were getting into many talks, discussions and negotiations. Out of these conversations, the vase as a cultural good comes about, and its values can be realized.

More importantly, in the social sphere, the ownership of the vase is not immediately clear. The property right is not just limited in the sense of who has right to sell it, but also refers to the rights to participate in the social experience. The ownership is shared. Even though the Qianlong vase had some trouble with the non-payment of the winning bid for two years, its values were gradually realized by interested people during this time. According to Klammer, getting in the dispute about the auction of the vase as a looted Chinese relic or appreciating the exquisite craftsmanship of the vase encourage awareness of the values of the vase. More and more people were willing to spend their efforts (time, emotion and money) to become aware of the importance of the vase in our daily life. When the hammer went down at £43m, all the people involved felt excited; specialists wondered whether the vase was genuine or just an amazing fake; the Chinese government strongly protested the transaction; and even after the auction, many collectors still wanted to stop by the Bainbridge auction house and admire the vase; “just like a hot water bottle radiating happiness”, one consultant valuer of Bainbridge said. In this sphere, people socially build a conversation, which cannot exclude other members but usually exclude non-members<sup>29</sup>. While the conversation won't push someone out of this social network, outsiders cannot easily join in either. All insiders contribute to the realization of values while simultaneously also gaining some experiences of how and what values generate, develop, and are appreciated. In this sphere, the Qianlong vase mainly obtains social values that cannot be explicitly measured by the price. These values include social status, solidarity and friendship.

### **The sphere of Oikos**

Klammer adds that the sphere of Oikos influences people's behaviors. Oikos is used to describe the home, which consists of family members, such as grandparents, parents, children, partners, and siblings; Oikos

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<sup>29</sup> In *Doing the Right Thing* (2016), Klammer defines shared goods as “are shared by a few people or a group of people without a clear legal definition of ownership, in the rule no single person or legal identity can claim ownership of a shared good. The members of the group enjoy the fruits of their shared good; they cannot exclude other members but usually exclude non-members. Rivalry is conceivable both inside and outside the group. Shared goods come about by way of contributions of the stakeholders”



is not covered by the social sphere, but connected with it; Oikos is very important for the valorization of all sorts of goods; Oikos is the starting point of people's lives.

The logic in the sphere of Oikos is different and most relevant in the lives of people. Love, loyalty, honesty, trust, care, and interdependence are fostered in this sphere. They emphasize the sense of sharing: the mother shares the secrets of handmade craftsmanship knowledge with her daughter; the father shares the professional experiences of hunting and fishing with his son; and the grandfather wants to share a family heirloom with his grandson. In the story of the Qianlong vase, family is where one begins to realize the values of the vase. Compared with the relationship with others, who are outside of Oikos, the members of the family are more generous and altruistic. The British owners, a brother and sister, inherited the Qianlong vase from their uncle. Perhaps the uncle favored his nephew and niece, or perhaps he needed his family to also appreciate the vase just as he did.

### **The cultural sphere**

Klamer suggests that the cultural sphere is the fifth sphere and encompasses the other four spheres. The logic of "culture" always relates to cognitive, intellectual, moral, ethical, and artistic activities. When we enjoy a good time with family, build a conversation with colleagues, make a deal with merchants, or negotiate with the government while applying for the subsidy, we may not realize that the cultural sphere exists. However, when we start to appreciate heritages, join in art events, and make decisions for cultural projects, we can clearly feel the influence of the cultural sphere in our daily life.

The cultural sphere "makes actions in the other spheres meaningful"<sup>30</sup>, even though the other spheres have their own logical contexts. In this sphere, we realize values from a system of standards, beliefs and culture. People in different cultural spheres (C), will have different attitudes and behaviors in the other spheres (M, G, S, O). For instance, in China people always relate to Confucian values, respect social hierarchy, honor ethical principles, advocate filial piety, and prefer to share ideas with their families. Because family is the foundation of moral society in Confucianism, the sphere of Oikos plays a crucial role in China. But, in the United States, Capitalism seems to control people's thoughts, decisions and activities and the sphere of the market becomes the center of virtually all values. The

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<sup>30</sup> In *Doing the Right Things* (2016), Klamer address the cultural sphere "*is the sphere that makes actions in the other sphere meaningful, and in that sphere we all realize ourselves as cultural beings*"

cultural sphere is about cultural matters, matters that guide us to realize values and control what we do and how we do it in the other spheres.

Adopting Klamer' idea of "Five Spheres" may help us figure out how values arise, develop, fluctuate, change, evolve, and even disappear in our daily lives, and also remind us to look beyond the practices of exchange and governance to valorize cultural goods. As Klamer has argued already, the sphere of Oikos, the social sphere and the cultural sphere are important for the life of cultural goods, though conventional economists pay little attention to these. In the following parts of this paper, I will use the understanding about five spheres to further approach the world of culture, especially crafts, in our modern-day society.

## **2.6. The Life of Cultural Goods**

A vase as cultural good moves through all spheres (M, G, S, O, C). Conventional economists tend to focus on the market sphere, and do not pay attention to the others spheres. Most economic analysts devote to understanding this vase as a commodity, which is produced, distributed, and consumed. But, according to what we have argued in 2.5, the value based approach alerts us to recognize that values of the vase exist in five spheres, and these values are formed and evolved by the complexity of conversational processes. The financial value of the vase can be realized through the market, but other values of the vase need to be made real by valorization practices, such as its artistic value. Therefore, the values of a cultural good are dependent of every social moment in its life.

The life of cultural goods can be socially formed. In *Economic Action and Social Structure* (1985), Granovetter pointed out two paradoxical conceptions in the world of economy. One is "under-socialized" where economic behavior is recognized as a self-regulating action without any impact of social structure on production, distribution, or consumption; another is "over-socialized" where the importance of social influence in all economic actions is excessively emphasized. In the theoretical argument of the under-socialized approach, people pay too much attention to the utilitarian pursuit of self-interest which leads to the producer and consumer being isolated in economic activity; in contrast, the individual's behavior will be entirely dependent on others in an over-socialized approach, where people as puppets are completely controlled by social relations. Thus Granovetter was looking for a compromise hypothesis to reasonably solve embarrassing situations of the relationship between the individual and the group. He used the term "embeddedness" to explain that things are produced, exchanged and consumed through

economic actions that are embedded in structures of social relations, and reminded us to avoid the negative effects of the theoretical extremes of under- and over-socialized conceptions. His idea evolved from other economists such as Williamson (1975), Hirschman (1977), Macaulay (1963), and Eccles (1981, 1983). However, though Granovetter highlights the idea that economic behavior is affected by social structures and relations, he ignores the cultural interactions that shape economic transactions. He pays more attention to the important functions of social morality (i.e. how “trust” and “trustworthy behavior” depend on the fairness of transactions) and the hierarchical structure of social relationships (i.e. how the vertically integrated firm would be more efficient and productive) in the process of economic activity.

At the same time, culturalists argue that the life of things is dependent on a variety of cultural contexts. For example, Barend van Heusden in describing the custom in cultural studies says that things with cultural values are closely connected to semiotic systems and social structures (Heusden. B, 1996, 2009). Culturalists, such as Malinowski (1944), Clifford and Marcus (1986), Miller (1985), and Tilley (2004), have been keen to build chronologies and biographies, analyze the interrelatedness of culture, and reconstruct human behaviors and emotions. But, unfortunately they spend less energy on how things are culturally shaped in the economic world.

Therefore, using the approach of cultural economics I want to introduce how the characteristics of cultural goods are changed by the mutual and cultural conversations among the people who are involved in the economic life of these goods. In *The Cultural Biography of things: commoditization as process* (1986), Igor Kopytoff pointed out that when people explore the biography of a cultural good, during the valuation, evaluation, and valorization, they would ask the same kind of questions as one would ask about people: Where does the thing come from? Who made it? Why was it made? What is its status at different times and periods? How to realize its values? Who participated in the realization process? What is the social relationship among the participants? In other words, a cultural good, like a person, has cultural units and a social life.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase was found in a bungalow that owners inherited from their uncle. During the auction, the biography of the vase successively turned from a private inheritance into an auction object. As time goes by, the physical configuration of the vase has not changed, but its historical and symbolic values are continuously being enhanced. For us, it is best to understand that the biographies

of things (i.e. economic, social, cultural, technical and political) come with a specific background and motivation. For instance, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase as a private good belonged to Chinese royalty during the Qianlong dynasties. When the royal palaces were ransacked at the end of the Second Opium War in 1860, the vase was most likely taken out of China to Europe. And now in the present, the vase as commodity appears on a list of auction items in the UK. Similarly to the Qianlong vase, there are many other Chinese cultural patrimonies outside China. Many Chinese interested in these lost national treasures can contribute towards their return. Consider the example of the Macau casino tycoon who purchased a bronze horse head that was looted from Beijing's former Summer Palace in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and donated it to China<sup>31</sup>. Thus, going forward, the biography of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase could read as an endowment like the bronze horse, or a gift endowed with politically specific meanings, or a collectible piece held in private ownership, or even discarded in the dark corner of a closet. Who knows?

According to the cultural economic perspective, a cultural good can be sold in the market like a commodity. But, sometimes, it can be out of transactional place. Many uncertainties and questions abound in the life of the Qianlong vase. This vase has been priced at the auction, possibly this commodity phase is important but it is just one phase in its life. Based on different moments, the vase should be treated in different conversations. In short, the biography of a cultural good may comprise different phases.

### **2.6.1. Commoditization, decommoditization, recommoditization**

The discussion on commodities as a universal phenomenon in human social life is all too familiar. Homans (1961), Ekeh (1974), Kopytoff (1986), Jackson (1999), Carruthers and Babb (2000) and others researched that if a thing has exchangeability in its social life, it can be defined as a commodity for sale. Kopytoff (1986) worked on "slavery" as an example to probe the relationship between persons and things. He suspected that conceptually separating things, as commoditization, from people is singular to contemporary western thought. In Kopytoff's argument, the career of a slave is a cyclical and dynamic process of commoditization, decommoditization and recommoditization<sup>32</sup>. He reminded us that

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<sup>31</sup> Cite from: <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1663704,00.html>

<sup>32</sup> In *The Cultural Biography of Things: commoditization as process* (1986), "Slavery", as Igor Kopytpff pointed out, begins with capture or sale, when the individual is stripped of his previous social identity and becomes a non-person as an actual or potential commodity. Then, the slave is acquired by a person or group and is reinserted into the host group, which he is resocialized and rehumanized by being given a new society identity, which would be decommoditization. But continuously, this slave still has a potential exchange value. Therefore, the career of a slave is a cyclical and dynamic process of commoditization, decommoditization, recommoditization.

commodity is a phase in the life of some things, and so we cannot use “all-or-none” research methods to evaluate the biographies of things/people. In our commercial society, the life of a thing has different societal identities in different phases, but hides with many uncertain and unstable factors.

Although commoditization is the process by which objects get an exchange value in the market, the feature of a commodity and the development of relevant economic conditions are closely connected with the homologous social context. In the story of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase, the vase represents the culture of the Qianlong period, and reflects how the Qing nobilities pursued quality and luxury in their lives. In the realm of its exchange value<sup>33</sup>, this vase was a prestige item during the Qing dynasty. But, in our contemporary society, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase showed up in London. No one knows what this vase has gone through and what kinds of experiences it has undergone. Was the vase taken away from China in a private collection or in an illegal plunder? Why did Europeans want to own it? How did they appreciate it? What is the response of China’s State Administration of Cultural Heritage for the reappearance of this cultural patrimony? Is the vase listed in *China’s The Lost Cultural Relics Recovery Program*? The biographical details of the vase reveal many historical, aesthetic, social and even political judgments.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase left China in about 1860 and was acquired by an English family during the 1930s. Perhaps it was the gorgeous color and pattern of the vase that attracted this Englishman, or perhaps in his eyes the exotic culture made the vase “sacred”. Once acquired, the vase is in the decommoditization phase and ceases to be a commodity. It is unique and singular. Over the past few decades, the vase as part of a private collection and perhaps being displayed in a private cabinet did not undergo any form of commoditization. However, the process continues. The vase was found in Pinner<sup>34</sup> by an accidental discovery in the bungalow. At auction, the Qianlong vase becomes an actual commodity again (recommoditization) and its exchange value is realized by re-sale. But, even though the vase now possesses a monetary value in transaction, it really is priceless for the imperial power that it wields and its cultural symbolism. This pricelessness makes the vase much more valuable than the huge piles of pounds that it can fetch. Thus, its recommoditization is temporary, followed by increasing singularization as cultural heritage in a new setting, and to be decommoditized by cultural meanings.

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<sup>33</sup> In *The Impact of Money on an African Subsistence Economy (1959)*, Bohannan describes three such spheres of exchange: the sphere of subsistence item; the sphere of prestige item; and the sphere of right-in-people.

<sup>34</sup> Pinner is an area of the London Borough of Harrow in northwest London, England.

Therefore, I agree with Kopytoff's biographical model (commoditization, decommoditization, recommoditization), that nothing ever quite reaches the ultimate commodity or non-commodity stage although these are both phases in the life history of the object.

### **2.6.2. Social network in conversation**

*"Things are produced, manipulated, and consumed for personal, social, secular, and religious ends"* (Appadurai, A. 1986, p. 104). The development of a cultural good in our society is influenced by all kinds of interested people. Thus, we find that cultural goods actively play a role in weaving intricate webs in our social relationships. For instance, from the reign mark on the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase, we know that it was made during the reign of the fourth emperor in the Qing dynasty who ruled the empire from 1735 to 1796 and was associated with very high prestige. It is not simply a vase, but a symbol of power and status of the upper class. The production process of the vase is tied with social hierarchy and condition. In *Consumers Equity in Relationship Marketing* (1998), Szmigin and Bourne formulated "preferred friend" as an analogy to explain the social relationship between producers and consumers. In the circle of this social network, if producers want to build long-term relationships with consumers, they cannot create goods without considering social concepts as the consumer's interests and values. In the pursuit of higher profits, they would constantly build up the interactive dialogue with the consumer, to gain insights into the consumer and understand their lives. During the Qing dynasty, craftsmen as a lower class had to completely abide by the requirements of the upper class. Only by doing this would they earn income to pay for food, clothing and shelter. However, the requirements of the upper class were constrained by the skill level and technical capabilities of the craftsmen. In order to satisfy their physiological and psychological needs, the upper class actively stimulated the enthusiasm of the craftsmen and encouraged the development of porcelain. Through this reciprocal relationship, the vase formed a "supply-demand" chain and built up an interactive communication.

After production, we find that the vase can be traded in the market and through transaction. Its values arise and evolve under given social circumstances, which involve many interested individuals, groups, and related organizations. Because of its mysterious cultural and historical background, this vase is the same as an artwork which has rich extrinsic and intrinsic meanings in the modern market. Even though under the feudal system, Qing craftsmen had less autonomy and intentionality than contemporary artists. Thus, in modern society this vase evolves in a dual market; a market for physical works and a

market for ideas, as suggested by Throsby in *The Creation of Value by Artists* (2008). In Figure 2.7, I make the mode of the social network of the life of this vase.

David Throsby suggests that a market for physical works determines the work's economic value and a market for ideas generates its cultural value, and that these two markets are closely related and influence each other in many subtle and not-so-subtle ways. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase was sold for £43m at Bainbridge's auction. At that time, the vase fetched a high price representing a reasonable approximation of its economic value. In the market for physical works this vase is a commercial physical good. From the final deal price number we see that the former owner of this vase gained a considerable profit in the transaction process.

But at the same time, the idea conveyed by the vase is also released into a market for ideas. Throsby says that many ideas are circulating in this market. In other words, this vase is considered, deliberated, negotiated, exchanged, consumed, and discussed during the conversations of interested people. When the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase reappeared in the public eye, it attracted great attention from many scholars and experts. Their evaluations and assessments would influence the behaviors of distribution agents and the decisions of consumers. Before the transaction, the auctioneer needs to understand and estimate the values of the vase in order to best control the bidding process, while most bidders and buyers need to learn their preferences and foster their tastes through critical cultural organizations. Meantime, cultural critical organizations also receive feedback from distribution agents and consumers to revalue goods (i.e. the condition of competitive bidding, the number of potential and actual bidders, and the response of the public). There are social ties among the critics, the auction, and consumers. These involved people not only respectively play different roles, but are closely interdependent and correlated with each other.

At the auction, it seemed that the vase was being bid as a material entity, but its values are assigned and shared by interested people. Most bidders were pursuing the deeper meanings of the vase. For instance, Chinese patriotic personages intended to help the vase as a lost cultural relic return home; westerners wanted to purchase the vase as a particularly exotic artifact, and so on. They all would determine their individual valuations of the cultural worth of this vase, either to the former owners to the present owners. Their evaluations might be singular or might relate to multiple aspects of the idea's worth. Ivan Macquisten, editor of *Antiques Trade Gazette*, used "queue of dealers" and "electric" to

describe the atmosphere at the auction. Through further communications and conversations, the aggregation of their valuations could be thought of as comprising the total cultural valuation of this vase within the market for ideas (Throsby. D, 2008). Accordingly, the “electric” atmosphere at the auction also gives a positive recognition toward the vase and indirectly spurs people to start looking into the development of Chinese porcelain.



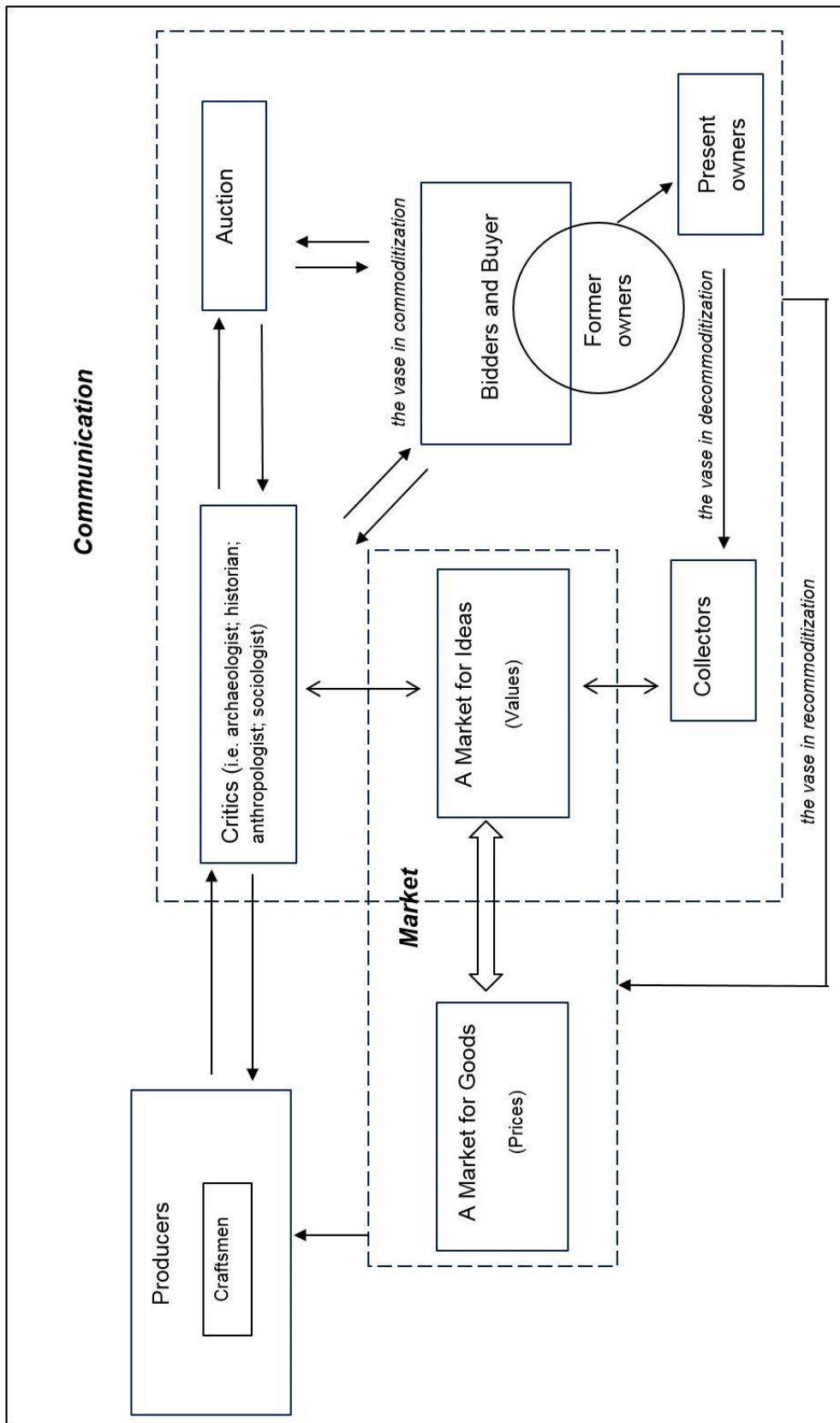


Figure 2. 7 Social network of life of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase, designed by the author

### 2.6.3. Authenticity and commodification

From a cultural economic perspective, a wide range of values exist in people's conversations. These values arise, develop, fluctuate, change, evolve, and even disappear during the processes of valuation, evaluation, and valorization. Although cultural economists always emphasize "*the value of everything and the price of nothing*", they know that the values of cultural goods also are impossibly immune in the marketplace. They take "culture" seriously but see economic value as relevant to cultural performance. That is, cultural and economic values have developed and connected with each other. Thus, the examination of authenticity as a cultural issue in the sense of commodification gradually comes into cultural economists' views (i.e. Trilling. L, 1971; Phillips. R.B and Steiner. C. B, 1994; Kolar. T and Zabkar. V, 2009; Throsby. D, 2010; Goto. K, 2013).

Cultural goods are about telling stories. They are different from goods, which are just produced for exchange, exchanged, and consumed. We can get messages about persons, memories, a phenomenon, or pieces of history when we join in the "discursive construct" of cultural goods. Through the lens of economists, maybe the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase at auction was just a commodity. But, as a cultural good, this vase has voice over its economic attributes.

In this Qianlong vase case, at that time (pre-industrial society) it wasn't easy to produce the vase. Craftsmen had to use their hands, hearts and head to create it. For instance, "pinching"<sup>35</sup> is a method of shaping clay during the production process of porcelain. The craftsman needs to insert the thumb of one hand into the clay and lightly pinch with the thumb and fingers while slowly rotating the ball in the palm of the other hand. But if he fails to satisfy his own instinctive understanding of the basic material under his hands, he would destroy what he has made and start again. Thus, this vase can express a dialogue between clay and human. Through the exquisite craftsmanship, the gorgeous color, and meaningful pattern of this Qianlong porcelain vase, we not only realize the character and emotional world of Qing Chinese, but also understand the development of Chinese traditional culture in the Qing dynasty.

Moreover, this Qianlong porcelain vase travelled across the seas to London and was there for more than one hundred years, it faced the threat of damage and destruction. The antique vase records the

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<sup>35</sup> I will explain "pinching" more in 3.2.3.2 hand, heart, and head

flow of time; maybe some blemishes show the shortage of the capacity of the craftsmen; maybe flaws are caused by the dry climate; maybe some hairline cracks mark the illegal plunder experience... Archaeologists and historians use these clues to reimagine the specific memories and reconstruct the historical moments. In other words, the values of the vase were/are socially constructed and they are mainly embodied in its authenticity.

Cultural goods and their values are always involved in conversation about the authenticity issue. In our modern-day society, the relationship between authenticity and commodification becomes a matter of discussion in the market. When this Qianlong porcelain vase was displayed at auction in London, a large number of fake Qianlong porcelain vases also entered the market. But the difference is that the values of these fake vases cannot be achieved by tracking the passage of time, in contrast, the values of the original vase could continue to rise. This is why the fakes ranged in price from £100 to £1,000 in the market while the original possessed a high monetary value. At the hotly contested auction, many buyers thirsted for the original vase. Aside from their interest in Chinese crafts culture, they were also aware of the original vase as special handicraft in a particular cultural, social and environmental context. “Why was the Qianlong emperor interested in porcelain?”, “Where was the vase fired from? Min Yao (民窑)? or Guan Yao (官窑)?<sup>36</sup>”, “Why does the vase have a crack? Due to an error in the production process or its special history?” Values of the Qianlong porcelain are gradually appreciated and realized in these problems of authenticity.

Nowadays, with the onslaught of commercial production, many disputes about the impact of commodification on authenticity arise. On the one hand, cultural goods could promote economic growth. Because they often have authenticity value, their values lure many consumers to open their wallets. For instance, in the tourism industry, many places of cultural heritage and local cultural souvenirs can bring unique experiences to consumers. On the other hand, cultural goods would be destroyed in the market. As the commercial relationship between producers and consumers is strengthened, it breeds many problems such as tempting craftsmen to make counterfeits for profit. Weiwei Ai once again uses a Chinese antique to challenge the economic value of cultural goods in the global commercial market (See Figure 2.8). He painted the Coca-Cola logo on a pot from the Neolithic age to express the effects

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<sup>36</sup> Min Yao (民窑), “Min” means “common” in Chinese, and “Yao” means “kiln site” in Chinese, thus ceramics were fired from Min Yao for common people; Guan Yao (官窑), “Guan” means “official” in Chinese, and “Yao” means “kiln site” in Chinese, thus ceramics were fired from Guan Yao for the royal families and aristocrats.

of the global economy on traditional culture. Even though this work is irreverent in its treatment of a historical relic, it symbolically depicts that mass production is damaging to genuine goods and experiences. Thus, discussions revolving around the issues of authenticity and commodification are very important to the culture world.



Figure 2. 8 Neolithic age pot with Coca-Cola Logo (in 1992, 11 7/8"×diameter 13", Courtesy Tsai Collection, New York, by Weiwei Ai, photo taken by Jake Stangel, from: <http://www.dailyserving.com/2010/07/ai-weiwei-dropping-the-urn/>)

## 2.7. Remaining Questions

I have noted that economic studies are often restricted to the financial aspects of an activity. In the story of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase, maybe the topic of most conventional economists is beset by price: what are the different prices between art galleries and auctions, how is the price of the vase constructed at the auction, how much was spent on it and how much did the owners earn, what is the rate of return on the vase, etc... the aim is always to identify this Qianlong vase as a profitable product. Economists have established their modes to interpret the “economic” characteristics of the life cycle of ceramics in production, distribution, and consumption. Although they are not totally isolated from “culture” (i.e. when economists assess the market condition of the vase, they have to consider the physical properties of ceramics, which includes the different properties of raw materials, the function and history of the vase, the reputation of the producer, and so on), they still are full of enthusiasm about the economic aspects

of a vase. During the transaction of the Qianlong vase, “money” is involved throughout their entire dialogue. Yet, “values” is unfortunately discarded from the economist’s language, as I have discussed.

Therefore “cultural economics”, which is emerging as a new approach to identify the failures of economists/culturalists and analyze the life of goods, is articulated and supported in this paper. Through the approach of cultural economics, we can see that many values aroused, and are constructed and reconstructed through certain processes. For example, in 2.4., and 2.5., I introduced the following about the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase: It was an old, unpractical and unwanted object in the owners’ mind before the bidding. The owners wanted to sell the vase and did not have high expectations; but the consultants (valuers) identified the style of the vase and confirmed that it is an unusual antique from the reign of the emperor Qianlong. Suddenly, the cheap vase became valuable. When the hammer came down, the owner had to step outside for a breath of fresh air. For the owners, might they change their attitudes towards the vase; might they start to appreciate it now as a priceless object; might they share this special experience with their friends after the transaction and tell them about their initial ignorance. For the bidders, are they attracted to the exquisite craftsmanship of the vase; will they get their money’s worth during the interaction with other people; might the vase be a symbolic object and not a financial asset. It is important to acknowledge that there might be two issues going on in this story of the Qianlong vase: one is about “price” and economic impact and is obvious, while the other is about “values” and is hidden behind people’s conversations.

For cultural economists, the real dangerous thing is that financial considerations would tend to crowd out all other aspects of values. The price mechanism cannot always work efficiently and equitably. Even though cultural objects are traded in the market, it doesn’t mean that all their characteristics can be accurately calculated in monetary terms. For instance, if the market price of a handmade pot is the same as the monthly salary of a plumber, should we understand that there is no difference in the contribution between the potter and the plumber? Of course not! A potter needs to depend on specialized labor in the shaping, decorating, glazing, and firing procedures; a set of skills that are totally different from the plumber’s. At the same time, these activities of two kinds of laborers are culturally and morally embedded in the different social contexts, and also mirror their different social roles and identities. In short, although the price number can give people a visual feedback, it obscures the quality of craftsmanship and the social construction of cultural goods.

From this discussion about the Qianlong vase, the question arises: how do we value crafts from a cultural economic perspective? Even though conventional economists and culturalists might seem to be irreconcilable on craft objects, the development of craft objects not only could stimulate the economy, but also should be a cultural process. Thus, it is necessary that we begin to probe the economy of crafts as something that is influenced by culture; we should use the value based approach to explore craft objects; we need to value objective things, also value the matter of practice, quality, meaning, and experience.

## **2.8. Conclusion**

Cultural economics is a relatively new branch of research methodology. I will that emphasize and apply the interaction between cultural and economic worlds in this chapter. In the world of culture, especially crafts, even though conventional economists always believe they can perfectly solve all cultural issues, but virtually they are automatically getting interconnected with other areas of scholars. For instance, the striking evidence that the hammer fell at £43m for the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase, a wide range of its values were generated and realized during the process of bidding. Beyond its economic dimension, the vase accumulated many implicit meanings and also embedded in the intricate social network. Thus, I employ the cultural economic perspective to break through a narrow-minded framework in research and introduce the notion of cultural goods in this chapter.

In order to valorize the life of the cultural good, I used the model of the “Five Sphere” of Klammer in this work. Even though conventional economists rarely realize values of cultural goods in the world of culture, culture is the underlying context that makes the values of cultural goods real. In the case of the Qianlong vase, I especially concentrate on values of cultural goods in social interaction networks. The reconstruction of the conversation in the processes of valuation, evaluation, and valorization has advantage of showing how values arise and evolve in the mutual interaction between object and people, as addressed by Appadurai (1986). In this chapter, I try to outline a visual picture to explain how people involved work and influence each other in the life of the Qianlong vase and point out what the impact is of commodification on cultural goods in our modern-day society.

In chapter 3, “crafts culture” will be set forth, to further examine what happened with crafts in our life. Beyond price, I propose an overview of values of crafts and craftsmanship in the social context. The

coming part will not merely thoroughly analyze the status of crafts, the terminology of crafts, and the trait of craftsmen, but also explore the tendency of crafts culture in our modern-day society.





## Chapter 3 Crafts Culture

*"This single Tea-Bowl is considered to be the finest in the world. There are three main kinds of Tea-bowls, those originating in China, Korea, and Japan, respectively. The most lovely are from Korea, and men of Tea always give them first place. Of these, there are many varieties, such as Ido, Unkaku, Komogai, Goki, Totoya, etc. The one considered most aesthetically satisfying is the O Ido ("Great" Ido). Again, there are varieties of O Ido: Ko Ido, Ao Ido, Ido Waki. The finest are called meibutsu O Ido, meibutsu signifying the particularly fine pieces. There are twenty-six bowls registered as meibutsu, but the finest of them all, and the one of which I shall write here, is that known as Kizaemon Ido. This bowl is said to contain the essence of Tea...*

*... In 1931 I was shown this bowl in company with my friend, the potter Kanjiro Kawai. For a long time I had wished to see this Kizaemon bowl. I had expected to see that "essence of Tea", the seeing eye of Tea masters, and to test my own perception; for it is the embodiment in miniature of beauty, of the love of beauty, of the philosophy of beauty, and of the relationship of beauty and life. It was within box after box, five deep, buried in wool and wrapped in purple silk.*

*When I saw it, my heart fell. A good Tea-bowl, yes, but how ordinary! So simple, no more ordinary thing could be imagined. There is not a trace of ornament, not a trace of calculation. It is just a Korean food bowl, a bowl, moreover, that a poor man would use every day---commonest crockery. "*

*[Soetsu Yanagi (1972, p.190-191)]*

In *Unknown Craftsman*, Soetsu Yanagi wrote that the Kizaemon tea-bowl is a high quality crafts object cherished by those who really understand its inner meanings. The Kizaemon bowl is made of clay, looks inconspicuous and as a daily-use object must have been cheap in 16<sup>th</sup> century (See Figure 3.1). But then he explained that in the tea masters' eyes, it is not just clay; it is a bowl, an ordinary bowl formed by the natural intuition of a craftsman, representing peaceful and healthy things, representing the Buddhist idea of beauty. When we see the bowl, we might be inclined to ask: what is the particular kind of beauty in this tea-bowl, why do tea masters consider this bowl as a treasure, what did we ignore, and what do we need to pay more attention to? Soetsu tells us that if we intend to appreciate this bowl, we must think about it in cultural terms, we must embrace our human nature, observe its aesthetics, understand its religious meanings and so on. Our focus should be on the craftsmanship of this bowl. Was it an act of spontaneous creativity by the craftsman who discovered that the firing process randomly creates a fine netting of cracks on the bowl? Perhaps the craftsman relished the act of handling warm clay and gently forming the bowl. What about the special meanings the bowl may have had in the past? Through this discourse, ranging from beauty to human nature, we realize the true value of the Kizaemon Tea-Bowl.

Just as with the Qianlong vase, in the cultural world, the principles of the market are far removed in the above paragraph. Whether it is the Chinese vase or the Korean bowl, culturalists prefer to talk about it through the lens of anthropology, history, sociology, aesthetics and even religion, but not economics. For culturalists, economists are unwelcome invaders, intruding upon affairs of human beings with their

inhuman calculations and insensitive numbers. Conversely, economists dislike culturalists for their lack of rational thinking in life.

When it comes to artifacts such as the Qianlong vase and the Korean bowl, there exists a huge gap between how the economist thinks of them and how the culturalist thinks about them. As I argued in chapter 2, it is left to the cultural economists to use inter-disciplinary approaches in interpreting human activities and striking up a conversation between these two worlds, the economic and the cultural. To do this, the cultural economic perspective makes us consider the crafts in their cultural context, as a cultural expression. Such a perspective takes us beyond the typical economic mechanism of supply and demand, with prices and quantities of products adjusting to an equilibrium. All this is embedded in culture, at least that is what the cultural economic perspective suggests. What difference does such a perspective make? What follows? That is what this chapter is going to show taking particular practices as examples. To apply the value-based approach, I propose we make use of the notion of “Crafts Culture”. This does not merely refer to the cultural aspects of crafts (the culturalist view), but rather is a more general view of culture that provides context to people’s activities (including commercial activity), when dealing with crafts.



Figure 3. 1 The Korean Kizaemon tea-bowl (photo taken from: Plate 1. *The Unknown Craftsman*, by Soetsu Yanagi)

### 3.1. Researching “Crafts Culture”

In the study of crafts, archaeology and anthropology are the major approaches used during the past two decades. According to the tools made by humans, our history is divided into three stages: the Stone

Age, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age. These three ages not only reflect the whole process of learning, teaching, and making of humankind, but also tell us about the different materials employed by humans to make tools for their survival. The story of humankind is related to practices, ideas and behaviors over the ages. Where animals were able to only use natural resources as available, humans conquered and transformed nature to make it more suitable for their living. Thus, we see that the story of humankind is the story of crafts and craftsmanship. Crafts are not just objects, but also include practical skills and knowledge. Closely bound to the natural environment as well as economic and social life, crafts have played an important role in the development of human society. It is in the description of the crafts that we already detect cultural meanings. Thus, a craft is not just a product to be traded, but involves the co-creation of meanings and values for involved people.

Generally, the term “crafts” is applied to two things: artifact as material object and craftsmanship as human activity. Creativity is emphasized in the harmonious relationship between nature and humans. It is a continuous process of exchange and interplay between “what you give to the natural material” and “what the object made gives back to you”. The extant literature on the crafts covers various topics such as the selection of raw materials and locations, the roles of producers, distributors and other middlemen, the function of objects, economic organization, and related sociopolitical activities (Arnold, 1972; Nickiln, 1979; Linnekin, 1988; Januesk, 1999; Tite, 1999; Clark, 1995; Sterin, 1998). However, for these success achieved across a broad range of crafts, there is a distinct lack of attention to the question of values of the crafts in the economic and cultural worlds.

Without undertaking interdisciplinary work across economics and cultural studies, we cannot comprehensively interpret the life of crafts. It is for this that I propose we pursue the research of “*Crafts Culture*”, to explore crafts in and beyond the economic and cultural worlds. For this, we must first think about how one analyzes “culture”.

### **3.1.1. Analyzing “Culture”**

#### **3.1.1.1. The conception of Clifford Geertz**

Conventionally, anthropologists, historians, and sociologists take up a generalized and objective methodology to explore a specific “culture”. These researchers take empirical rules and measurements to analyze various decisions, actions, and movements, to further their understanding of a “culture”. The

anthropologist Clifford Geertz used the idea of “thick description”<sup>37</sup>, that he derives from Gilbert Ryle to decipher the emotional life of an intellectual man (Geertz. C,1973). According to Geertz, man is a composite of many levels involving biological, psychological, social and cultural factors, wrapped up like an onion, layer upon layer resulting from the process of physical evolution and cultural development from the earliest hominid to the homo sapien. Geertz opposed the view that culture arose in humans only after the evolution of a huge cerebral cortex. As early hominids began to use simple tools to cut meat, dig up roots and make fire in the primitive period, their anatomical, neural and physiological structures were also evolving. During this process, culture was inadvertently created, accumulated and developed. He concludes, on the evolutionary progress of humans, that “...*between the cultural pattern, the body, and the brain, a positive feedback system was created in which each shaped the progress of the other...*” (Geertz. C, 1973, p. 48). That is to say, when the nervous systems of man evolved through natural selection and genetic variation, it inspired the growth of culture, and this created a feedback that stimulated the development of the human brain and so we continued to evolve with this back and forth mechanism. In short, cultural as an important ingredient can determine whether we are human being. No man can be without culture, and vice versa.

In Geertz’s conception, “culture” is related to the entire way of life of human society, which covers values, attitudes, knowledge, customs, beliefs, symbols, and human relationships. He suggests men are incomplete or unfinished animals that need to be completed by “culture”. On the TV show, *Animal Planet*, we can see monkeys using stones to break nuts for eating, birds using branches to build nests for shelter, gorillas using leaves to make sounds for communication, and octopuses using coconut shells to hide from predators ---from a zoological standpoint, all of these behaviors stem from their physiologies. Yet, in contrast, even though men also can collect food, build houses, deliver messages, defend against attacks, and organize groups, their genes are silent on these assignments. For human beings, Geertz says men gradually compensate for their genetic defects through “extrinsic sources of information”, which culturally guilds human emotion and behavior<sup>38</sup>. “Extrinsic” is about common understandings in intersubjective world; “sources of information” is about men can provide a blueprint

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<sup>37</sup> “Thick description” as one of the key terms in Clifford Geertz’s anthropological theory, is composed not only of facts but also of commentary and interpretation.

<sup>38</sup> In *Religion as a Cultural System* (1966), it mentioned “*to build a dam a beaver needs only an appropriate site and the proper materials---his mode of procedure is shaped by his physiology. But man, whose genes are silent on the building trades, needs also a conception of what it is to build a dam, a conception he can get only from some symbolic source---a blueprint, a textbook, or a string of speech by someone who already knows how dams are built---or, of course, from manipulating graphic or linguistic elements in such a way as to attain for himself a conception of what dams are and how they are built*”, in *The Interpretation of Culture: selected essays*, p.87-125, Fontana Press, 1993

or template in terms of which processes external to themselves can be given a definite form, he explains. Early hominids used caves or trees merely as shelter, but modern men continually gather and manipulate “extrinsic sources of information” (which refers to blueprints, textbooks, or verbal guides) which enables them to conceptualize differences between a living room and storage, and how they are created and so on. During this process societal living, various objective and subjective factors influence the development of the physiological structure of the human body and the psychological mechanism of the human mind.

I follow Geertz and so many others presuming that human development, from our acts and ideas, to our moods and morals, are shaped by culture. Culture provides context and surrounds our lives with various meanings (Lavoie. D, and Chamlee-Wright. E, 2000). When we observe the Qianlong vase or the Korean bowl through the vantage of economists, price naturally presents itself. Even when we consciously try consider other aspects, we always focus on external things that can be measured by a quantitative study, such as the monetary cost, the economic efficiency, and gains from trade. In contrast, if we ask how the Qianlong vase/the Korean bowl holds meanings in the culture of the people who created it, those that deal with it, appreciate it, and enjoy it, its values show up in our conversations. These objects reflect our emotional life, our aesthetics, our social background and moral systems. The economic approach keeps us away from many important human issues; but the cultural approach allows us to see people engaging in dialogue, communication, conflict and negotiation with each other, thereby giving us a more complete description of human life. Researching “culture” involves the study of a full range of human activities; of the conscious and unconscious interactions of people from diverse backgrounds, all coming together to form the context that frames and gives meanings to their lives.

Geertz also makes the same point on the culture-as-context view by emphasizing that the anthropological study of culture is about interpreting languages, signs, social events and human activities, all of which exist in the corresponding context with complex symbolism. Unlike Claude Lévi-Strauss, who asserted that human characteristics are the same everywhere and proposed universal laws by which to analyze different cultures (Lévi-Strauss. C, 1966), Geertz states that different people have different native codes in different cultural contexts. In *Deep Play: notes on the Balinese cockfight* (1972), he encouraged people to imagine themselves as Balinese, to resonate with the Balinese, and to feel the Balinese cockfight as their own experience from the Balinese point of view. He concludes that:

*“What sets the cockfight apart from the ordinary course of life, lifts it from the realm of everyday practical affairs, and surrounds it with an aura of enlarged importance is not, as functionalist sociology would have it, that it reinforces status discriminations, but that it provides a metasocial commentary upon the whole matter of assorting human beings into fixed hierarchical ranks and then organizing the major part of collective existence around that assortment. Its function, if you want to call it that, is interpretive: it is Balinese reading of Balinese experience; a story they tell themselves about themselves.*

*...Attending cockfights and participating in them is, for the Balinese, a kind of sentimental education. What he learns there is what his culture’s ethos and his private sensibility (or, anyway, certain aspects of them) look like when spelled out externally in a collective text...*

*The cockfight is the Balinese reflection on theirs: on its look, its uses, its force, its fascination. Drawing on almost every level of Balinese experience, it brings together themes-animal savagery, male narcissism, opponent gambling, status rivalry, mass excitement, blood sacrifice-whose main connection is their involvement with rage and the fear of rage, and, binding them into a set of rules which at once contains them and allows them play, builds a symbolic structure in which, over and over again, the reality of their inner affiliation can be intelligibly felt. If, to quote Northrop Fry again, we go to see Macbeth to learn what a man feels like after he was gained a kingdom and lost his soul, Balinese go to cockfights to find out what a man, usually composed, aloof, almost obsessively self-absorbed, a kind of moral autocosm, feels like when, attacked, tormented, challenged, insulted, and driven in result to the extremes of fury, he has totally triumphed or been brought totally low.”*

[Clifford Geertz (1972, p. 1-37)]

Geertz’s proposition is that the cockfight is not just the movement of animals, but deeply implies status and prestige of man in Balinese society. He reminds us to distinguish between the concepts of “experience-near” and “experience-distant”<sup>39</sup>, which is proposed by the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut (1978), in the study of cultural interpretation. In the cockfight’s story, Geertz as a witness applies the experience-near perspective to reveal Balinese ethics and expressive behaviors: even though this blood sport is not illegal in Bali, it implicitly reflects the secret relationship between “man and beast, good and evil, ego and id, the creative power of aroused masculinity and the destructive power of loosened animality” in the Balinese’s world (Dundes. A, 1994, p. 101). The experience-near perspective helps us explore how the natives feel, think, talk, perceive and so on. Perhaps if we took this approach to the Qianlong vase/Korean bowl, we may be able to consider questions such as: What was going on in the minds and bodies of craftsmen when they made the vase/bowl? What were their motivations, what did they think, what did they say and why did they do? In contrast, if we as historians, archaeologists or aestheticians use the experience-distant method, we would know when the vase/ bowl was created and what its characteristics are, but not be able to interpret much about the construction of cultural and social world.

In other words, “culture” is central to the lives of people. When we try to evaluate cultural goods, many contextual factors enter our conversation. We must imagine ourselves as someone else (e.g. creator or

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<sup>39</sup> Clifford Geertz mentioned two conceptions, “experience-near” and “experience-distant”, in *From the Native’s Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding* (1983). “Experience-near” is about the thinking of insiders in their own native worlds; in contrast, “experience-distant” is the knowledge of outsiders in the academic vocabulary.

consumers or observers), and then analyze what we did, what we experienced, and what we thought--  
-this is the best way to identify particular cultures and subcultures, to see how people act in a cultural system, and to understand how culture-as-context endows its artifacts with meanings (See Figure 3.2).

### 3.1.1.2. Arjo Klamer's cultural sphere

In the previous chapter, I tried to borrow the idea of "the five spheres", proposed by Arjo Klamer in his work *Doing the Right Thing* (2016). The term "culture" shows in the so-called "cultural sphere". It is viewed as the complex set of cultural matters, symbols, values and logics.

Based on the conception of Clifford Geertz and Arjo Klamer, "culture" is not only related to the entire way of life of human society, but also encompasses all other spheres (M, G, S, O spheres). In having the discussion about the 18<sup>th</sup> century Qianlong vase, the auctioneers and dealers used commercial terms as "total purchase price", "premium of the buyer", "profit", to assess the vase. The Chinese government and people strongly protested against the transaction of the vase, and China also tightened control on the auction of looted Chinese relics. Many collectors, connoisseur, and specialists used the professional words to create their conversation, such as "petunse 瓷泥", "under glazed 釉上彩", "glost firing 釉烧", and "refractory china 高温陶瓷". But, for the uncle of the Britain owners, might be he always treated his nephew and niece with love and warmth such as "I love you, what's mine is yours", and "hope you are happy". However, although the sphere of market, government, Oikos and the social sphere have different logics, the cultural sphere "is the all-encompassing sphere, in which all other spheres are embedded" and "gives meanings to the actions of people, who play in other four spheres". (Klamer, 2016, p.164)

According to Klamer, the cultural sphere is where cultural, artistic, historical and spiritual values are realized, that is, they derive their meanings from this sphere. These values are shared by the participants to the cultural sphere and evolve through the socialization process. The socialization process means that when people spend time with their families, talk with their friends, work with their colleagues, they inevitably have to build social conversations and show social behavior in order to realize values of "love", "friendship", and "responsibility". This process is also a shared process. It is where people contribute the conversation and have a sense of resonance with others, if they are willing to gain and sustain values, like loyalty, trust, faith, and other such shared values. In the story of the 18<sup>th</sup> Qianlong vase,

either the reserve price or the bidding price, these prices just give people access into the world of culture. Actually, the consumption process of the vase is mainly social as well: the owners may invite their friends to appreciate their new collection or may wonder whether the transaction of the vase is illegal or may guess how this looted vase was brought from China to Europe. In the cultural sphere, talking, discussing, deliberating, even disputing, all can enhance the cultural, artistic, historical and spiritual values of cultural goods.

Klamer considers three forms of culture, all of which constitute the cultural sphere: the anthropological meaning of culture (C1), culture in the sense of civilization (C2), and culture as art (C3). Much of the discussion of the concept of culture in recent years has focused on human behavior; scholars like to consider "culture" (C1) as what distinguishes humans from animals. Throsby identifies two senses<sup>40</sup>: in his first sense culture has a broadly anthropological meaning as "*a set of attitudes, beliefs, mores, customs, values and practices which are common to or shared by any group*" (2001, p.4) this corresponds with Klamer's C1. Throsby's second sense of culture evokes educated minds and activities--this sense somewhat overlaps with Klamer's C2. Even though Throsby doesn't clearly emphasize that culture should be viewed as the distinction between human and animals, he clearly views culture as a phenomenon that is peculiar to human society. Klamer adds the artistic realm (C3) as a third sense. The logic of the cultural sphere in the sense of C3 focuses on values of art. It provides us with a sense of aesthetics to appreciate beautiful and artistic things.

In accordance with the senses of C1, C2, and C3, we could see different values of a cultural good in the cultural sphere. For instance, concerning the 18<sup>th</sup> century Qianlong porcelain vase, its value in the sense of C1 may emphasize Chinese identity, as distinct from, for example a vase with a Dutch identity, or a Japanese vase, or a Korean vase. Its value in the sense of C2 may signify the history of Chinese ceramic technology topics, and with that Chinese civilization. Its value in the sense of C3 represents the qualities of its aesthetic and artistic characteristics. Accordingly, the notions of C1, C2, and C3 stimulate the distinction of a range of cultural values, and make us consider the way they come about in the cultural sphere.

Values vary from one culture sphere to another. Different cultural practices and beliefs engender different values and may affect their meanings. In the context of Chinese culture some values are

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<sup>40</sup> In *Economics and Culture* (2001), David Throsby proposes the dual sense of "culture"



accentuated which in western countries are considered inefficient, irrational, and unfair. We can see, for instance, that Chinese people are inclined to emphasize “patriarchal blood” as an important value. “父传子继，道之经也”<sup>41</sup>, that means, Chinese traditional professional crafts secrets should be handed down from father to son. People in western cultures may think that such a value is not good for the development of society and economy; they might consider it constraining for the sons who should to choose their career for themselves. Western values of autonomy, private ownership, individualism and personal authorship have stimulated the invention of patents. In it is not surprising that during the Renaissance the first patent law was formulated, *the Venetian Statute* in 1474, followed by *the Statute of Monopolies* in 1624. This patent system did not only protect the inventor’s monopoly right, and thus acknowledged his authorship and autonomy, but it also expressed the values of knowledge and invention. In China, “connectedness”, “intimacy”, “hereditary” and “kinship” these kinds of values in the sphere of Oikos are always very important at any time. But, in western countries, the sphere of market becomes more dominant than others, “capitalist”, “property right”, “profit” are extremely important when people prefer to be engaged in business. Therefore, different backgrounds will be growing different awareness of how we do valorize values in the right way.

The cultural sphere, then, is the all-encompassing sphere, where people need to socially build conversations to valorize values. This sphere consists of C1, C2, and C3, in which different contextual values are appreciated. And when we are in different cultural spheres, we can gain different values, that so to a large extent influence on our thoughts and behaviors.

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<sup>41</sup> 朱熹，《朱子大全》卷十四

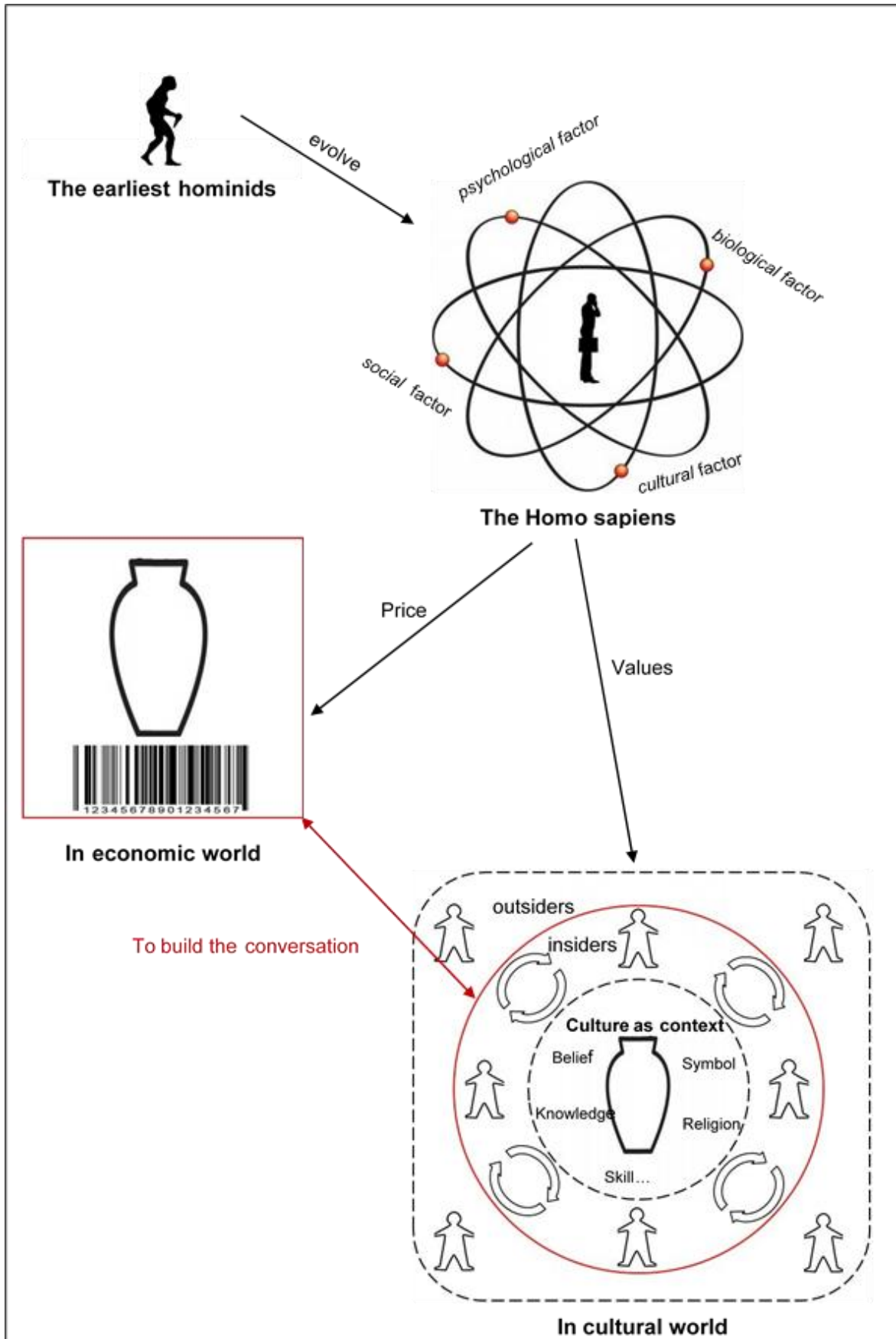


Figure 3. 2 The notion of culture in cultural economics, designed by the author

### 3.1.2. Analyzing “Crafts”

#### 3.1.2.1. Crafts as Cultural Goods

Consider a craft object such as a vase, a bowl, a paper-cut painting, a necklace, or a pair of wooden shoes created by a craftsman. Values of these crafts are generated by the interactions of the involved people. On the one hand, crafts are viewed as commodities, valued by a price tag when bought or sold in the commercial market. On the other hand, crafts are different from commodities because they are “discursive constructs” (Klamer, A, 2008). Their values are not inherent and stable, but are constructed, clash, change, and are then reconstructed through certain processes (valuation, evaluation, and valorization). For example, when the Qianlong vase as a craft object becomes a commodity at auction, its economic value seems to be realized. From the perspective of the economist, this is a happy ending but in the view of the cultural economist, it is very difficult to nail down the values of this vase. In other words, values are being deliberated, realized, sustained, questioned, changed and so on, at different moments in the life of the Qianlong vase.

In *The Value of Culture: on the relationship between economics and arts* (1996), Klamer suggests that we remove the polar idea of objective versus subjective notions of value in the valuation, evaluation and valorization processes. With the Qianlong vase, the major aspects considered for valuation were the superb color, the enameling technique, the gilding decoration and the reign mark of Qianlong, all of which have an objective value that is beyond the minds or decisions of any particular individual. But when the vase enters into other conversations, its value is subjectively derived from the reactions of different individuals. Thus, faced with the same vase, we might see responses such as:

*“We found this vase in our uncle’s bungalow. Even though it looks very pretty, but we have no idea how much we should price it?”*

*---from the western owners of 18th Century Qianlong porcelain vase*

*“The atmosphere was so exciting, when the hammer came down. This vase becomes the most expensive work of Chinese art ever auction. Everyone felt surprised, me included. Anyway, it is a masterpiece. If only it could talk.”*

*---from a Bainbridge’s auctioneer*

*“The Chinese authorities have strongly protested the auction of the vase. This is illegal to trade it as a looted Chinese cultural relic in market. Britain should unconditionally return it to China.”*

*---from a Chinese official spokesperson*

*“This vase would arouse controversy and Chinese ire, but why? In my eyes, as a beautiful object it should have a really high price. Why do people want to involve the cultural sovereignty and the national sentiment in this topic?”*

*---from an anonymous western bidder*

In fact, the values of the Qianlong vase are neither objective nor subjective. In the cultural economics discourse, we not only look at the material object, but also interpret its history, ethics, religion, morality and custom in different circumstances. During the auction, the sale item was just a vase, but it involved various interested people with a variety of knowledge, experiences, understanding, preferences, tastes and so on. The vase is beyond economic calculation, is bound by different conversations, and is a variable subject in different cultural contexts.

At the auction, most westerners are almost totally ignorant about the historical/ethical/social meanings of the vase; in contrast, the Chinese have strong reactions to its evaluation. As insiders, if the Chinese lost this artifact, they also lose “more” things. That is why, a craft as a cultural good requires us to adequately understand: they have various meanings for different involved people in different background.

### **3.1.2.2. Crafts in social network**

Another important focus is the understanding of human activities within “Crafts Culture”; craft objects are made, exchanged, used, appreciated, deposited and revalued through many different people. From a cultural economics perspective, the production, distribution and consumption of crafts do not take place in a social vacuum and are culturally embedded in specific social networks. To begin exploring the biography of crafts, from raw materials to the finished products, one needs to highlight roles people play in different social activities and interactive relationships. When people participate in a social environment, they act and modify their behaviors in accordance with the response of others. “...social

interaction occurs in a variety of ways and its patterns are complex” (Landis, J.R, 1977, p. 39). When a craftsman imparts values to his products, he has to consider the requirements of different consumers: in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese craftsmen needed to materialize the Qianlong emperor’s special personality and unique prestige in the creation of the Qianlong porcelain vase; in contrast, the Korean Kizaemon tea-bowl’s tangible expression signifies the habits and customs of the common people. Through the interactions between the supply and demand sides, crafts carry the motivations of the craftsman and the needs of the consumers.

In his biography of crafts, Gosselain cites the research of some scholars to support his point: due to pass through the hands of interested individual, crafts can be seen to accumulate histories and have the ability to tell multiple stories about people in every stage, which from manufacture, distribute, and use to ultimate discard (Gosselain, O.P, 2000). When a craftsman processes the clay, he may infuse some emotional factors into his work. Maybe he inherits his father’s career; maybe he has great ambitions in the world of crafts; maybe he needs to prepare an important religious rite; or maybe he wants to make a special handwork as the anniversary gift to his wife. The complex set of feelings and intentionality of craftsmen construct every special biography of ceramics.

“Crafts” is also associated with identity created through the socialization process and shared by the members of a family, a group, a clan, a tribe or even a society. Within specific social and cultural contexts, different attitudes and behaviors of people determine different identities of crafts. For instance, who can be craftsman (age and gender), what kind of material craftsmen will use, how do craftsmen express emotions through pattern and color. By comparing the Chinese Qianlong vase and the Korean Kizaemon tea-bowl, it is not hard to see that Chinese ceramic is more colorful than Korean. As for Chinese ceramics, tri-colored glazed of the Tang Dynasty, under-glaze red of the Yuan Dynasty, blue and white of the Ming Dynasty and over-glaze of the Qing Dynasty all are representative works in history. Korean ceramists rarely applied glazing techniques in the production of crafts. Under different geographical conditions and knowledge backgrounds, we find different habits, customs, beliefs, languages and skills handed down through the generations.

In summary, when considering “crafts culture”, we need to pay attention to the study of human behavior, to social life and to the interaction between people in various contexts.

### **3.2. What is “Crafts Culture”?**

We start this section with some questions: what is the definition of “crafts”? what is “crafts” for? and how to understand the term, “crafts”? On the aesthetic aspects, Robin George Collingwood (1938), Morris Weitz (1959), Stephen Davies (2014, 2016) and Arthur Danto (1964) tried to deal with the distinction between the “arts” and “crafts”. In *Principles of art* (1938), Collingwood was trying to address that expression of emotion distinguishes arts and crafts, “this is a point in which art proper, as the expression of emotion, differs sharply and obviously from any craft whose aim it is to arouse emotion...”. But, there is also a small but fast-growing group that considers the artistic features of the crafts. *A Theory of Craft* (2007), by Howard Risatti challenges the stereotypical view of the low position of crafts (as functional objects without internal meanings). Peter Dormer explores the philosophy of craft objects in his book, *The Culture of Craft* (1997). Many countries have also set up craft organizations/councils/associations to encourage people to re-evaluate and re-appreciate the crafts as a cultural phenomenon in their daily lives. Today, the recognition of “crafts” is gradually increasing, but to go beyond simply looking at it as a functional object is not an easy task. One should not only pay attention to the external structure of the crafts (e.g. material, form, and technique) but also seek deep insight into the emotional world of the people involved.

#### **3.2.1. The status of crafts**

##### **3.2.1.1. To define the term “crafts”**

The Oxford English Dictionary says “craft” can be used either as a noun or as a verb. As a noun, it is not only meliorative (strength, might, force, skill, magic, intellectual power, etc.), but also pejorative (deceit, guile, fraud, cunning, etc.). As a verb, it is a deformation from the noun, and connects with some similar words (construct, attain, use, exercise, etc.).

In this work, I want to distinguish between “craft” and “crafts”. First and foremost, I define “craft” as a separate discipline limited to two aspects.

- a. Craft as characterized by a certain type of object refers to the finished product, such as porcelain, glass, jade and jewelry.

- b. Craft as characterized by a certain type of human activity refers to specific manufacturing operations, such as shaping, glazing, decorating and firing.

In contrast, “crafts” are defined as the knowledge of language, the expression of human endeavor, and the branch of cultural baggage, concerning making things with hands. In the singular sense (Craft), means a tangible material, like a porcelain vase. However, when we consider the plural (Crafts) we refer not only to tangible things, but also to intangible meanings. This notion leads us to explore questions such as *why to craft* and *how to craft*? In conclusion, “crafts” is more complicated than a simple transformation of raw material into a finished object--- it is a materialization of human culture that interacts with multiple domains: economic, social, historical, political and ritual; it is itself a kind of tacit knowledge and sophisticated skill constrained by specific natural environments and social conditions.

### **3.2.1.2. Crafts? or Arts?**

The status of crafts vis-à-vis the arts has been much debated for a long time. Artists tend to enjoy higher prestige and reward than craftsmen in the marketplace. Arts are increasingly paid attention to in the study of aesthetics. Since the eighteenth century, many philosophers, such as Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger, have concentrated on establishing an aesthetic theory in intellectual discourse which provides the theoretical foundation for the research of arts. In contrast, because craft objects satisfy basic utilitarian needs, their function is emphasized over aesthetics. Thus, craft objects are limited to particular techniques and materials, while craftsmen seem to lose their autonomous capability. This is why Collingwood (1938) declared that art a creative activity, but craft is not. Even though there are a growing number of researchers paying more attention to the development of “crafts”, it is still underestimated as being less meaningful than “arts”. For example, consider the fifty-year-old American Craft Museum that changed its name to Museum of Arts & Design in 2002; the old and prestigious California College of Arts and Crafts was renamed California College of Arts in 2003, and the famous Freer Gallery of Art doesn’t add the word “crafts” in its name, although the collections include many valuable craft objects.

This intense debate on the distinction between crafts and arts has consequences: buyers and potential buyers are more willing to pay for arts than crafts, and arts are getting more and more expensive. But, why did the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong porcelain vase, a craft object, got such a high price at auction? Is this

just because it has a venerable history? Or should we reclassify the case as an art object? Before answering these questions, it is necessary to distinguish between “crafts” and “arts”:

- a. Crafts are bound up with natural world; Arts need a semiotic system

Since specific aspects of crafts, such as the form, material, and technique are based on physical laws and the crafts serve utilitarian needs, they are closely linked to nature. Even though crafts need a semiotic system, they are real and tangible objects which are visible in the world. In the sphere of crafts, people are easy to shift attention away from the semiotic structures to the natural reality: a vase is a real vase, a chair is a real chair, a blanket is a real blanket. As material entities, the physical configurations of crafts are independent of circumstances. In other words, crafts have an objective existence and can be touched, felt, and experienced.

In contrast, the conceptual and physical existence of arts is visual through signs and symbols. Art as a whole is a complex semiotic system. Whether in two dimensions as a painting or in three dimensions as a sculpture, they are always a reproduction of our imagination. For instance, the image of a vase, whether it is an oil painting or an engraving, is always just a painting and never a real object. One cannot hold this case or arrange flowers in it. You may ask now, what about sculptures? They have a physical existence in three dimensions, they can be physically moved from one place to another. However, they are still only imaginative representations based on likeness to imitate reality. The physical existence of arts depends on the social settings and cultural contexts.

- b. Crafts are presentations as physical objects; Arts are representations as communicative vehicles

Similar to the difference between reality and appearance, crafts are actual objects while arts are symbolic objects. When viewing crafts, people understand them by and through their functions, which exist in the physical world. Because their essential attributes are based on physical characteristics, crafts are self-reference. Take a ceramic pot as an example; it is based



in a thing, not a sign<sup>42</sup>. The pot is recognized through its function. As a physical object, the pot exists only in relation to its physical form. In other word, it is what it is, rather than what it is represented.

In contrast, arts are representations as communicative vehicles. Arts have specific communicative purposes. Their appearance is for representing implied meanings, which are transmitted from the artist to the consumer through the arts. During the communication/consumption process, these messages (i.e. ideas, concepts, experiences, emotions and feelings) are established through social consensus. But not everyone can understand what the meanings of arts are. The arts are often just for small groups that know how to appreciate and decode them.

c. Crafts lack freedom; Arts have more freedom

Traditionally, “creativity” plays an important role, whether in the field of crafts or arts. But in each of them, creativity comes on different degrees. In crafts, creativity tends to be more conscious and part of regular procedures. Crafts follow rules and a logic. That means, when craftsmen make crafts, they not only have to consider the material characteristics and structural functions, but also have to handle the whole creation process. The process of making crafts objects gives less freedom to the craftsman, than the artist, as crafts are more standardized. Craftsmen have to follow the laws of material to create their works and then cater to consumers’ utilitarian needs. For instance, China clay is suitable to use for containing, because of its property is no-seepage and no-leakage. Throughout the past thousand years, from imperial dynasty to modern society, China clay as material still has the best physical property for holding water; it has not changed from time to time, or from place to place.

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<sup>42</sup> In *A Theory of Crafts* (2007), Howard Risatti addresses “craft transforms function-concepts of nature (containing, covering, and supporting) into worldly things”

In contrast, creativity tends to be more unconscious and random in the field of arts. If a person doesn't have enough knowledge and sophisticated skill, but can express his own experiences through innate and untrained talent, we can still call him an artist. The expressions of arts can also be changed in different social conventions because the arts are based on intrinsic sign-meanings and not in extrinsic function-concept. An apple is the root of all evil for Adam and Eve, but is also a source of inspiration for Newton. The same object in the field of arts would be reconstructed and reinterpreted under different backgrounds. The arts have more freedom than the crafts.

d. Crafts are functional; Arts are useful

As functional objects, the main purposes of crafts are to serve utilitarian needs in people's lives. These applied functions of crafts can remain for a long time and are not easily changed. The Qianlong vase is decorated with floral patterns, but it still is vase for containing water. Its applied function was given by craftsman in the first time and the function was entrenched in the life of the Qianlong vase. Even though most collectors prefer to put the Qianlong vase in cabinet, but the vase is still a vase that is used for containing things.

However, in the sphere of arts, the intended function of objects should be different than with crafts. Since functions of arts are mainly for expressing human personality, they exist as something dependent of social and cultural contexts. For example, Zhanbin Peng<sup>43</sup> combines the symbolic language of Chinese traditional painting with particular material of ceramics in his creations, to further express contemporary aesthetic taste and culture, and then form his own artistic style and creation. His set of porcelain vases, as one of his representative artworks, can serve as containers, but in reality it will be displayed as a work of art, thus for its symbolic meanings.

The Qianlong vase is a crafts object. But this is not to say that this vase cannot be an art object. There is no obvious boundary between the fields of crafts and arts, so whether the vase is craft or art needs

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<sup>43</sup> Zhanbin Peng 彭赞宾 (1974-), an artist and lecturer in Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute

to be evaluated by viewing it under different circumstances. The best example is Weiwei Ai's *Colored Vases*: he used industrial paint to color Han Dynasty vases, transferred these applied craftworks into conceptual artworks, to critique how the commercial society challenges cultural beliefs and values. These and so many interventions highlight the controversial distinction between what are crafts and what is art.

This takes us back to the case of the Qianlong vase that fetched a high price as if it was an object of art, not craft. The question still is why that happened. I will answer this question in the following parts.

### 3.2.1.3. Traditional crafts versus other crafts

To explain why the Qianlong vase attracted so much attention in auction, it is necessary to first understand the characteristics of crafts and identify different profiles of craftsmen. It is worth mentioning that my colleagues and I have contributed to the *Creatief Vakmanschap in Internationaal Perspectief (2012)* and *Herwaardering Ambachtscultuur Hoofdzaak (2013)*. These two research briefs examined the field of crafts and provided recommendations on how to improve the development of crafts in various countries. We classified "crafts" and "craftsmen" into several types. To show how the Qianlong vase as traditional craft can be appreciated, I will start this part with a few definitions:

**Handmade workers** are those who work mainly with their hands. They can be further classified as skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

**Skilled workers** are those who have special characteristics, distinctive skills and rich experience in their works. A skilled worker may have completed vocational training in university/college/technical school, or may have learned his skills on the job. The main feature is that he is a professional that required specialized training and practice. Examples of skilled workers are teachers, dentists, chefs, software developers, plumbers, carpenters and electricians.

**Utilitarian craftsmen** use their knowledge and skills to do work that serves concrete uses. This includes plumbers, welders, masons and mechanists.

**Traditional craftsmen** make things based on traditional practices. Their works are closely connected with their own histories and identities. When the traditional craftsmen of today incorporate new ideas

and apply new methods into their works, their craftsmanship overlaps with other crafts. This means that distinctions are easier made on paper than recognized in practice.

**Creative craftsmen** are those that are exploring new materials and techniques to innovate within and beyond traditional rules. Unlike the utilitarian and traditional craftsmen, creative craftsmen are directly involved with the production of the products that they design and express and exhibit their personal feelings and experiences during the creative process. Since creative crafts are often displayed or collected, these craftsmen tend to be recognized as working in the field of arts.

**Cutting-edge craftsmen** are regarded as progressive and innovative makers exploring new territory, seeking new practices, and shaping a new genre of crafts, according to the *Crafts Council*<sup>44</sup>. They introduce new technologies (e.g. digital technology), and open up new markets. These makers have strong motivations to express themselves, which goes beyond making products for sale. Sometimes, these cutting-edge craftsmen are seen as artists or designers. Well known as such are people like Jesse Wine<sup>45</sup>, Eric Abraham<sup>46</sup>, and Cameron Jamie<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> The Crafts Council is the national development agency for contemporary craft in UK.

<sup>45</sup> Jesse Wine (1983- ) is a British artist who is primarily working with ceramics.

<sup>46</sup> Eric Abraham (1936-2012) was an American porcelain artist who was known for slipping a flying pig into all of his porcelain artworks.

<sup>47</sup> Cameron Jamie (1969- ) is an American visual artist whose practice encompasses film, performance, photography, drawing, and sculpture.

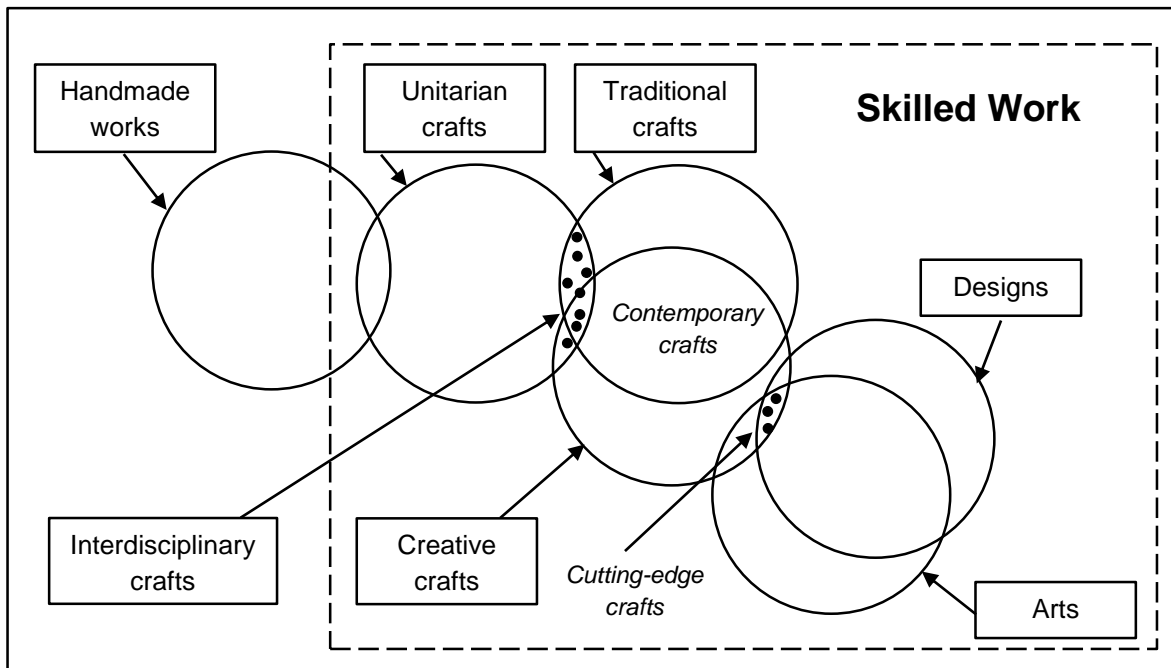


Figure 3. 3 The definition of traditional crafts versus other crafts (according to this figure, “interdisciplinary crafts” means Unitarian crafts with Traditional crafts with Creative crafts, or Unitarian crafts with Traditional crafts, or Unitarian crafts with Creative crafts, or Traditional crafts with Creative crafts)

With the example of the Qianlong vase, let us look at the relationship among the various crafts (See Figure 3.3). Tensions arise between the activities of the craftsmen and the features of the craft objects (e.g. material and forms). A harsh argument against the traditional crafts is that they have lower value than contemporary crafts in the market because their works have less creativity and imagination than the creative crafts. The Qianlong vase appears to be an exception to this argument though: it became the most attractive item at the auction even though Western bidders don't share Chinese culture and history. What makes the vase so attractive despite not having a cultural bond with it? What is interesting to these bidders? Can we say, based on the example, that the traditional crafts can have the same high values as other crafts?

The Qianlong vase is so expensive because of it has more meanings today than it did in past. The Qianlong vase has a great significance to contemporary craftsmen. Traditional crafts such as this vase, its materials, forms and techniques, are fundamental for the development and innovation of other crafts. Many cutting-edge craftsmen think traditional crafts are drawn from outdated knowledge, whereas their works spring from the freedom of imagination. They show off their works as original works not bound by

any rules. However, these craftsmen ignore the fact that traditional craftsmen have made and continue to make great contributions to practical issues in the field of crafts. For the selection of materials and the exertion of skills, it is the traditional craftsmen that build the laws which help other kinds of craftsmen to learn how to conquer nature and make things. For example, modern ceramists, however creative they get with their crafts, still must acknowledge the traditional craftsmen for knowledge about the properties of clay, how and when to place it in the kiln, and how temperature changes clay. Thus, they are not born, but learn from traditional crafts practitioners. Meanwhile, traditional crafts are no longer merely rule-based and have evolved into something more. "History" is the essential and inevitable part of this vase. People won't use this vase to arrange flowers, but will recognize it for its special historical reference, its traditional aesthetics and skills, the intelligence and talents of its craftsmen, and the luxurious life of the Qianlong emperor. Though this vase doesn't lose its functionality, the focus turns to the vivid story it has to say about traditional Chinese culture and society.

There is no doubt that the "traditional crafts" play a crucial role in the development of crafts, even though its status has fluctuated in the minds of people. We must now analyze the values of crafts more and raise the public consciousness on the importance of conserving craft objects and craftsmanship skills. We will not argue that one is better than the other in the field of crafts, but only attempt to show that "crafts" is not only a considerable cultural phenomenon, but also an expression of human values.

### **3.2.2. The terminology of crafts**

#### **3.2.2.1. Quality, experience and taste**

"Quality" in Latin is *qualitatem*, *qualitas*, which is related either with objective facts or subjective feelings. It should be interpreted as the degree of excellence, as in, "a quality product", "high quality life", and "a lady of quality"...these words have the "good nature" and "virtue" meanings. When we apply the word quality to products, we see that it is closely connected to the senses of consumers, just as "beauty is in the eyes of the beholder." In other words, "quality" is not only an attribute of the physical form, but a cultural phenomenon that can be measured by the relationship between the expectation and perception of consumers.

In the cultural economics discourse, researchers stress the importance of quality issues when consumers' choices are involved. According to Abraham Harold Maslow (1962) and his hierarchy of

human needs, utilitarian needs are at the bottom of the hierarchy. To survive, people need to acquire skills and produce things to satisfy biological requirements, to relieve pain and to ease discomfort. Only after the utilitarian needs are fulfilled do people consider filling other needs. That is to say, a man who is extremely hungry has no other interests but food. Once the basic needs of people are satisfied, other needs such as safety/security needs, love/belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs successively arise. In order to meet these hierarchical needs, I will divide the “quality” of crafts into two types:

**Physical quality** which refers to physiological, functional and practical characteristics, is for fulfilling the utilitarian needs of people. Craftsmen use materials and techniques to form physical, tangible things (e.g. a cup is for drinking, a bowl is for eating, a bed is for sleeping, and clothes are for covering). Consumers are used to “calculative thinking”<sup>48</sup> to measure this kind of quality.

**Emotional quality** is the intangible part bound to history, values and identity of things. It is a complex subject that is tied up with the psychological needs of people. When the utilitarian needs are relatively satisfied, consumers’ choices hinge upon emotional quality that depends on many intrinsic reasons. During this type of consumption, “meditative thinking” plays an important role.



Figure 3. 4 The Japanese way of tea (in the Tea-room of Ryotaro Souryou Matsumura<sup>49</sup>, photo taken from:

[http://www.toyota.co.jp/jpn/tech/personal\\_mobility/take\\_your\\_city/no3/](http://www.toyota.co.jp/jpn/tech/personal_mobility/take_your_city/no3/))

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<sup>48</sup> Martin Heidegger, in *Memorial Address (Gelassenheit) (1955)*, says “calculative thinking” is invoked to compute, plan, organize and investigate towards economic and practical ends, and serves a specific purpose; “meditative thinking” is about understanding the meaning of events and the value of things in human terms.

<sup>49</sup> *Ryotaro Souryou Matsumur* (松村宗亮), born in Yokohama, Japan, who is the famous Japanese tea master

For example, in Japanese culture, people obtain positive pleasure as an experience in *the Way of Tea* (茶の湯 or 茶道)<sup>50</sup> (See Figure 3.4). In *The Unknown Craftsman* (1972), Soetsu Yanagi mentions that for many Japanese tea masters, Korean bowls are considered to be the best crafts products. The quality of Korean bowls is considered not merely for using, but also to satisfy an inner spiritual experience. If we considered only its physical quality as its sole merit, even common people could understand the Korean bowls. But the tea masters discover hidden meanings: “...*not only the tea masters enjoy beauty with the eye and contemplate it with the mind, but they also experienced it with the whole being...*”<sup>51</sup> The tea masters are used to perceiving the emotional quality with their “*deep-seeing eyes*”. From their perspective, the bowls are not used for tea, but hold a religion of beauty. The bowls are closely associated with Zen Buddhism and the tea monks call the whole of process of preparing, serving and drinking tea a form of meditation. Everyone can use the bowls, but the bowls used are various and the way they are treated different. What this means is that the way the two kinds of quality, physical and emotional, are consumed and appreciated depends on how the bowls are used.

However, even though Yanagi emphasized the tea masters can use “*deep-seeing eyes*” to intuitively comprehend the quality of tea bowls, “*just as those who can see God with immediacy*”, but I don’t think these master are only the right users. Because of the quality of crafts is interwoven with the daily life of people and is always waiting to be found, actually everyone also can use their perceptions, tastes, and habits to comprehend the quality of crafts, as the proverb goes, there are thousand Hamlets in a thousand people’s eyes. A craft should be understood by those who act in its life.

Metaphorically speaking, “crafts” is an experience. This means a piece of craft exists only in as much as it is experienced by people who are involved with the life of crafts. When someone has a pottery tea bowl that he/she like, he/she need to pick it up, turn it around, run his/her hands over the glaze, look at the foot, stand it on the table, and do this again and again, to appreciate it. The quality of this bowl encourages people to recognize it not only as a functional embodiment, but as a conceptual embodiment too. Its quality demands that its consumer be an active experiencer. It demands someone who participates in the exertion of its functions; it demands someone who is absorbed by its implication; it

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<sup>50</sup> The Way of Tea, is a Japanese culture activity which is influence by Zen Buddhism. In Tea ceremony, utensils (includes chakin, tea bowl, tea caddy, tea scoop, and tea whisk) are used to possess the ideological beauty.

<sup>51</sup> Soetsu Yanagi, *The Unknown Craftsman* (1972), p.178



demands someone who understands it as a complex system that includes material and technique, nature and culture, body and spirit, and utility and meaning.

An important point to note here is that craftsmen, like ceramists, weavers, and jewelry makers, realize social identity through the making and display of craft objects. To be a professional potter, you must actively jump into a conversation, engage in dialogue with consumers about what you make and what they want, and balance your own intentions and consumers' expectations. Thus crafts will always be an invisible bridge connecting the thoughts of the craftsman and consumer. However, these craft objects are not necessarily intended for everyone. In different environments (natural, cultural and social), craftsmen often impart values to their work corresponding to each specific group. If a consumer of crafts can use and comprehend the interpretations of its creator, he probably shares the same taste as the craftsman. Over time, this familiarity with the craftsman's work may lead to the consumer getting bored and no longer deriving the same feeling of satisfaction from the craft object. Perhaps this is why the Qianlong vase, as an exotic object, attracts so many western buyers though they have different tastes from the Chinese. For these western buyers, the quality of this vase could bring new experiences.

Questions arise as to how the craftsmen can handle the needs of the consumers and whether they have any opportunity to satisfy their own desires in their work when they are trying to satisfy the wishes of the consumers. We must understand that with crafts objects, it is not only applied functions---containing, supporting or covering, but also aesthetic qualities that matter. In the next part we will see more about these aspects in the quality of crafts.

### **3.2.2.2. Applied function and Aesthetic implication**

To examine the purpose of craftsmen in our society, let us return to a deeper exploration of the quality of crafts. An essential human activity that distinguishes us from animals is our ability to make things to cope with nature. Unlike animals, we don't have thick fur, sharp paws, and great physical strength to withstand natural dangers. So we create craft objects to satisfy these kinds of fundamental utilitarian needs.

People use clothes to keep warm, knives to cut rope, cups to hold water, and chairs to support their body---all crafts are made for doing something. In *A Theory of Craft* (2007), Risatti explains that "doing something" means crafts have applied functions that are centered on the physical realities of material

and form. As a craft object, the Qianlong vase is firmly tied to a materialistic society, and although it is decorated with floral patterns and is uniquely tailored for the Emperor Qianlong's needs, it is still a vase that is used for containing things. It is a crucial point that no matter the occasion, the applied function of a craft object will never change and will always be to help in human survival against an indifferent world. As Risatti says, "*craft is purposive, fine art is not; craft is functional, fine art is not*". However, the question of whether craft as "*deterministic object*"<sup>52</sup> has an aesthetic implication is a controversial one.

Preceding Risatti, it was Kant, the great enlightenment philosopher who developed a philosophy of aesthetics in *Critique of Judgment* (1790). He suggested that only purposeless objects have an aesthetic implication, because then people can make purely subjective judgments to evaluate these forms without using and profiting from them. But since the beauty of crafts objects is based on their applied functions, when people use them, their assessments are subject to external rules and laws (e.g. what kinds of clay are best for making porcelain vase and what forms of chairs are best for supporting the human body). Kant asserts that craft objects are objective; always are related with cognitive judgment; and have no aesthetic implication. Yet, if people just care about the applied functions of craft objects, why one would prefer the unpainted chair over the painted chair, Risatti asked. In order to further prove his own point, Risatti used three recognizable chairs, a 3,500-year-old chair made during the New Kingdom in Egypt, a *Slipper Chair* made in 1990 in the Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C. and a designed chair made in 1929 for the German Pavilion at the International Exhibition in Barcelona, to argue against Kant's idea on aesthetics:

*"All three are recognizable chairs, though they made thousands of years apart and in cultures vastly different in geography, climate, and political and social values. In fact, all three are so chairlike in their basic conception and structure that it is difficult not to regard them as sharing a family kinship. But this is not the same as saying they are exactly alike. Few people would not recognize that their forms, materials, and techniques are significantly different. These differences betray their cultural origins and are the basis of what is known as art historical style..."*

*[Howard Risatti, (2007, p. 227)]*

With these three chairs as an example, Risatti argues that the functional objects are not only objective, but also reflect the different social and cultural contexts, and identify the hands of the maker.

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<sup>52</sup> The word "deterministic object" comes from *The Theory of Craft* (2007), it means an object could be 100 percent determined by its function.



Figure 3. 5 An 18th Century Delftware vase and The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase from earlier

Certainly, Risatti's work also applies to other crafts: an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Delftware vase (See Figure 3.5) and the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Qianlong vase. Even though these two vases were made in the same century, they look quite different. But from this difference in appearance, can we say that the Qianlong vase is more or less functional than the Delftware vase? From a functional perspective, both vases are similar, even though different materials, form, color, and technique were involved in their making. These production processes reflect the different geography, climate, history, culture and society of the craftsmen that made them, and people can not only easily identify the Qianlong vase as Chinese and the Delftware vase as Dutch, but may even recognize the traits of the makers and the status of their users. Thus, besides their applied functions explaining their existence as tangible objects to be used, their stylistic forms are signs that depend on a system of culture. Risatti called this system of culture, the aesthetic.

In this sense, craft objects are similar to art objects and closely connected with cultural contexts. But as I have discussed in 3.2.2.2, we must pay attention to the fact that craft objects and art objects are not exactly identical. Meanwhile, since the craftsman is engaged with the entire production process of crafts and responsible for shaping the form as well as endowing it with meanings, it is necessary to point out the importance of the craftsman in the life of crafts.

### 3.2.3. The traits of craftsmen

#### 3.2.3.1. Idealizing, formalizing, materializing

According to Aristotle, knowledge is divided into three categories: *theoria*, *praxis*, and *poiesis* or *poietikos*<sup>53</sup>. Risatti suggests that craftsmanship falls in the third category. It blends together *theoria* and *praxis*. It is both an abstract as well as a practical and material aspect (Risatti, H, 2007). It involves not only the conception and creation of new ideals, but also practical and technical manual skill. Craftsmen first use a notational system to record the abstract conceptions in their mind on paper or computer, and then directly transfer the concepts into the physical world and create a tangible “thing”. In other words, the craftsman is in charge of the entire production process from conceptualization to actual materialization. Risatti (2007) distinguishes in the process of craftsmanship two steps: formalizing and materializing. Instead, I propose a three-step process of craftsmanship: (1) idealizing, to conceive the creative idea; (2) formalizing, to transfer intangible values into raw materials; and (3) materializing, to translate the notation into actual material form.

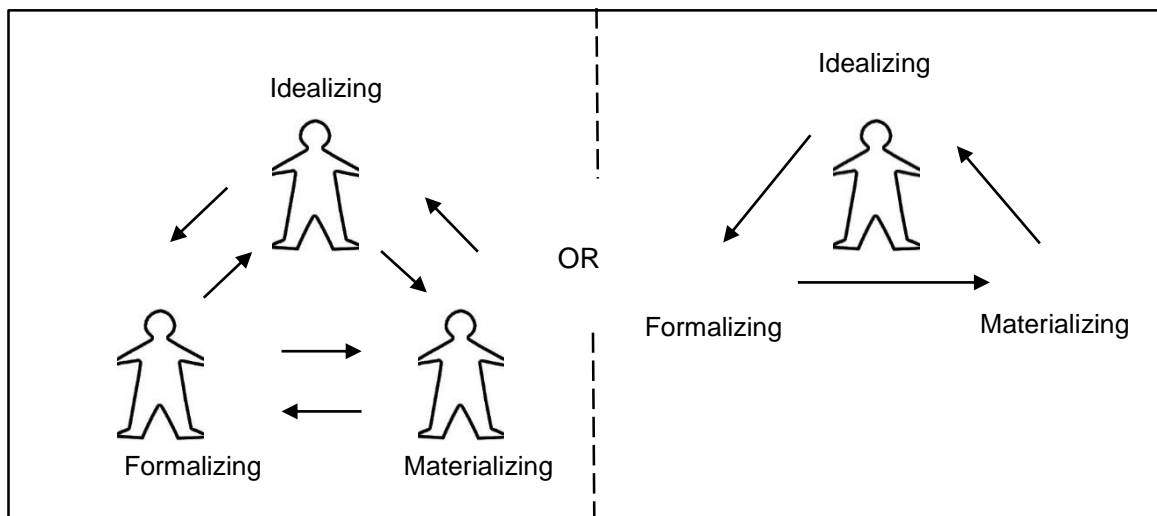


Figure 3. 6 Divisions of labors for craftsmen, designed by the author

In the case of the Qianlong vase, the craftsman needed to consider the feasibility of his idea, participated in a dialogical process between mind and body, and transformed the natural material, clay, into a

<sup>53</sup> In Aristotle's classification, *theoria* is the theoretical or cognitive knowledge; *praxis* is practical or “how to” knowledge that comes from doing; *poiesis* or *poietikos* is the knowledge involved in making, producing, or creating of something.

finished and functioning object. The production process included many steps such as modeling, drying, glazing and firing.

In China, we can see there mainly have two production modes (See Figure 3.6). Most Chinese craftsmen preferred a division of labor and left the coordination of the work to others *Tiangong kaiwu* (天工开物)<sup>54</sup> describes the division of labor of Jingdezhen craftsmen in Ming Dynasty “共计一坯之力，过手七十二，方克成器”—72 different people are needed to produce a ceramic item. Different craftspeople In prepare the clay, form the shape, paint the decorate, glaze, fire, and more. In the same time, Chinese inspectors had the responsibility for maintaining and guarding the quality of crafts. The inspection was bureaucratic, as it usually is in is in China. This practice still continues today. Therefore, Chinese traditional craftsmanship is not just the crystallization of life wisdom and work experience, but also connects to the structure of culture and society.

Secondly, next to this collective practice individual craftsman is becoming more numerous. They prefer to create crafts by themselves and to control the whole process from conception to execution. Some individual craftsmen as creative makers, who behave like artists, have more autonomy and independence than the collective crafts-teams; their works are considered unique, distinctive, original and valuable..

These modern craftsmen break with traditions. They create tensions, therefore, and raise questions, as I noted earlier, about what constitutes crafts, and what is art or design. We return to the issue later.

### 3.2.3.2. Hand, heart, and head

Craftsmanship was a common and important feature of pre-industrial society, when people couldn't use high-technology and machines to replace manual labor. Undoubtedly, craftsmanship is a quintessential activity that made people become “human” (Costin, C. L. 1998). In *The Craftsman* (2008), Sennett borrowed the term, “the intelligent hand” from Charles Bell<sup>55</sup>, and cited Darwin's theory of evolution to explain the remarkable relationship among hands, heart, and head:

*“With greater brain capacity, our human ancestors learned how to hold things in their hands, to think about what they held, and eventually to shape the things held; man-apes could make tools, humans make culture”*

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<sup>54</sup> *Tiangong kaiwu* (天工开物, *The works of heaven and the inception of things*), 宋应星, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959 (1636)

<sup>55</sup> The image of “the intelligent hand” appeared in *The Hands: its mechanism and vital endowments*, as evincing design by Charles Bell in 1833

[Richard Sennett (2008, p. 150)]

For instance, Chinese porcelain craftsmanship has historically represented Chinese culture so much that in English-speaking countries, “porcelain” is informally called “China”. Producing the Qianlong vase is not an easy task (e.g. “pinching” is a way of shaping clay where the craftsman inserts the thumb of one hand into a ball of clay and lightly pinches it with the four other fingers, while slowly rotating the ball in the palm of his other hand.) All craftsmen must possess a certain capacity and patience to build an interactive dialogue with the clay. If the collectors at the Bainbridge’s auction wondered about the delicate craftsmanship of the Qianlong vase and put themselves into the shoes of the craftsmen, they would develop a deeper awareness and appreciation of the craftsmen and understand how hard it is to balance movements between the hands, heart and head. As Risatti said, craftsmanship fosters a worldview that projects the creative imagination firmly within a humanly defined, humanly scaled, and humanly understandable tangible reality (Risatti, H. 2007).

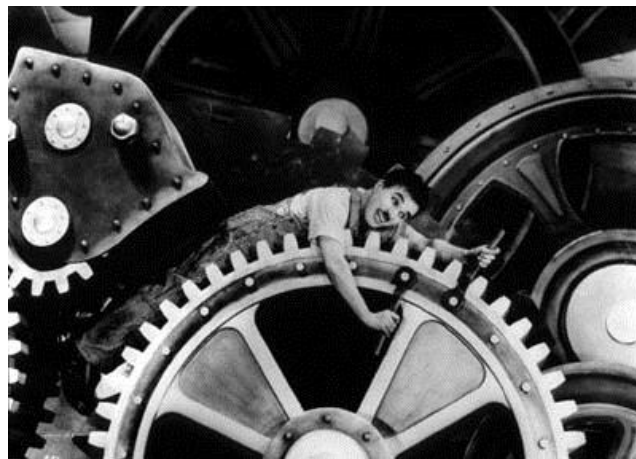


Figure 3. 7 The Modern Times movie’s most famous scene

Today most people recognize “craftsmanship” as synonymous with “high-quality”. People realize that when industrial products flood into modern society, certain values fade away, though the machine-made things are more economical, efficient and can improve our lives. Industrial employees are losing touch with natural materials and creative opportunities. They have to mechanically follow the plans of the designers or conductors to make finished objects and get no outlet for any personal emotional expressions. The movie *Modern Times* vividly describes how a worker suffers a nervous breakdown in the industrialized world (See Figure 3.7). The famous movie star, Charlie Chaplin, plays a factory worker employed on an assembly line. He has to drive screws at an ever-increasing pace onto pieces of

machinery and is subjected to force-feeding by the so-called modernization. This movie reflects the deep clash between human beings and machines exposing the many drawbacks of mechanization. These industrial objects lack humanity and are without heart, warmth, nature, or beauty.

In contrast, the quality of crafts objects is variable because it depends on the ability, judgment, dexterity and patience of craftsmen when faced with different difficulties and challenges. The process of craftsmanship is full of risk (Risatti, H. 2007). Craftsmen have to negotiate around liabilities and also respect nature. Sometimes they can overcome and control risk; but sometimes they need to compromise. During this process, hands can adapt to the changing situation; head can add creativity; and heart gives things humanity. A good craftsman should not always concentrate on how to handle “right and wrong”, “standardized and unstandardized”, or “beautiful and ugly”, but should balance the relationship among himself, nature and material. In other words, the skill of craftsmanship is quite important.

### **3.2.3.3. The struggle of “double-binds”**

As I have said so far, “crafts” have an important significance in people’s lives. Not only does the craftsman solves basic human utilitarian needs, also materializes his/her emotion and conveys an implicit message to others. However, in the industrial age, machines brought unprecedented opportunities and advantages. It caused a tremendous change in the way people lived and worked. With the development of mechanization, productivity has rapidly increased. The machine makes it easier to produce the large amount of industrial products that satisfy people’s material desires. To a certain extent, skilled workers are replaced by unskilled workers/semi-skilled workers and machines in the process of mass production.

But, even though the benefits of assembly line production are enormous and people don’t need to spend long, tedious hours to make things, in *The Craftsman*, Sennett (2008) complains that the sheer volume of uniform products leads to an emotional crisis. The uniform perfection of machined products is produced by disinterested people, without any subjective emotion. In contrast, crafts as handmade products are often very personal, especially when individual craftsmen put their hearts and souls into their creation. The craftsmen not only create objects by hand, but also strengthen their identity in the production process. Marketta Luutonen points out that because crafts carry meaningful values, they provide a good way of having something important in life (Luutonen, M. 2008). He used traditional

handmade pullovers as an example to interpret past life. Since pullovers, as symbols, connect with the corresponding cultural and social contexts, they are considered a conveyer of memories. Meanwhile, their material, forms and techniques are flexible because they must accommodate a wide variety of situations. As crafts, handmade pullovers are different from products made on the assembly line.

As I have mentioned before, manual technical skill is the most important logic of the crafts, necessitating the craftsman to repeatedly practice balancing the relationship between his/her hands, heart and head. This is a tedious and time consuming process, while machine-making yields high quantities at high efficiencies and with high profits, leading to a situation where the crafts are undoubtedly under threat from machined products. Mass production is also so fast that new products constantly pour into the market and consumers are often more interested in buying the latest thing than using it. Sennett examines this wasteful phenomenon in his work, *"The Culture of the New Capitalism"* (2006), where he complains that *"marketing is the evil"* and *"industrial production is the evil"*. In the industrial era, people have a very strong desire to consume new things and feel dissatisfied with the handmade products that take so much energy and time to make. This brute efficiency of the machines is a direct threat to the work of craftsmen. Additionally, industrial products have also greatly improved the living standards of people. Cars can take us from one place to another place; cell phones can help us to connect with each other; and televisions are a window that brings important news and information to us. Almost everyone loves and depends on industrial products, even though sometimes they cause depression, stress and discomfort.

Today, the utilitarian needs of people are met by industrial goods such as the electric-motor or the electronic-controller and the crafts barely have any functional purpose. Yet, one finds that handmade crafts are often sold at exorbitant prices in the marketplace. The Qianlong vase is a good example of this that found people scrambling to procure it. The economist and sociologist, Thorstein Veblen describes this paradox as "conspicuous consumption" in his best known book, *"The Theory of the Leisure Class"* (1899). He compares "a hand-wrought silver spoon" and "a machine-made spoon" to articulate that conspicuously wasteful consumption is a requirement to express our vanity, and derive the pecuniary strength by which we can create a distinction between those who can spend and those who cannot. Applying Veblen's idea to the Qianlong vase, we find that though it has a functional value that is the same as the machine-made reproduction, it has other value as a resource for showing off



because of the time-consuming and highly skilled labor that went into making it. For most bidders, this unique Chinese vase would not be used as container, but as an honorific item that satisfies their vanity.

Veblen emphasized that “...any valuable object in order to appeal to our sense of beauty must conform to the requirements of beauty and of expensiveness both...” (Veblen, T. 1965, p.97) This means the value assessment of craft objects largely depends on its costliness. However, this argument for craft objects based on Veblen’s “conspicuous consumption” goes against the accessibility of crafts for they should be available to everyone. Craft objects as leisure goods are gradually entering into the field of arts aimed at those consumers who have sufficient resources to indulge. These consumers buy and consume crafts as honorific expenditure, but pay less attention to the materials, techniques and functions during the consumption process. This is not good for the development of crafts.

As previously discussed in 3.2.3, the purpose of crafts should be to satisfy the utilitarian and psychological needs of people. But, in most people’s minds, if a craft object is very cheap in the marketplace, it is not considered a valuable possession and therefore they get less enjoyment from it. This sense of vanity leads most people to care only about the commercial value of the crafts and improperly think that the price can account for all values of the crafts.

But, as established from the start, price is not everything. Beyond the expensiveness of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Qianlong porcelain vase, as a crafts object, the vase has the qualities of a cultural good. Too many potential values are hidden in this handmade vase and permeate people’s lives, making it impossible to measure its values in purely economic terms. Crafts are bound by cultural contexts and are not just commodities in transaction.

### **3.3. Socialization and Culture**

For sociologists, “socialization” is about social interaction. Judson R. Landis, in his book *Sociology: concepts and characteristics* (1977), describes the interaction as the process of being aware of others when we act, of modifying our behavior in accordance with other’s responses. When someone communicates with others, he will continuously evaluate his response, and also modify his thought and behavior. Children are guided by their parents; students are guided by their teachers; younger people are guided by the elders...After birth, people are continuing to follow the specific direction to shape and develop their languages, manners, habits, and religions, and then unconsciously or consciously

structure the invisible boundary between a society and other societies. This boundary separates people from others, who live in different social context. The essential point, is that “socialization” not only makes every individual interlinks with each other and becomes a social being, but also is best seen as the process by which culture is aroused and shared.

Judson R. Landis (1977) describes culture as the social heritage of a society. In this work, in the previous part 3.1. the term “culture” is defined as the complex set of values, attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, symbols, and also as the specific identity with which one group of people is distinct from all others.. Maybe this definition is too general. In our life, few people spend much time thinking about who they are and how they behave. In fact, during the process of socialization, people are used to dealing with matters in their own ways. For instance, Chinese like to eat dumplings (*in Chinese: 饺子*) to celebrate New Year’s Eve, but Dutch like to eat oilballs (*in Dutch: oliebol*); Chinese like red color, but Dutch like orange color; Chinese like to drink tea after dinner; but Dutch like to drink coffee... That is to say, interest, custom, and lifestyle of everyone are determined by the culture, which culture is shared with members of such a social group. It is in the confrontation with other cultures that the Dutch realize how Dutch they are, and the Chinese how Chinese. Accordingly, the use of the term culture makes sense when differences are at stake.

Culture becomes apparent in the process of socialization. By examining social behavior and the interaction of people in the sphere of crafts, we are in a better position to interpret how “craft culture” works and how people live with it. However, before I approach several cultural matters in this section, I first explore how social networks may generate culture.

### **3.3.1. Exploring how the social network makes culture**

People in different social contexts always have strikingly different behaviors, preferences, cognitions, and emotions. The Chinese emphasize collectivism and group consciousness, and when individual interests are in conflict with collective ones, the former has to be subordinated to the latter. The Dutch advocate self-consciousness and self-actualization and will put the individual before the collective. Sociologists and psychologists have invoked the differences of social structure in the exploration of cultures (e.g. Kashima, Kashima, Kim, and Gelfand, 2006; Weisz, Rothbaum, and Blackburn, 1984; Gilligan, 1986; Sampson, 1985)

So the question is to what extent differences of crafts cultures in various countries may be due to social interaction rather to other causes. As I noted in chapter 2 the values of a cultural good come about in social settings. In the same vein we can suspect that the values of crafts in general also come about socially. Klamer in *Crafts Culture: an international comparison (2012)* describes how these different characteristics of crafts are closely connected with local practices with their specific cultures. The social structure in which people operate influences their motivation, cognition, and aesthetic appreciation. How strict this relationship is, remains to be seen as people tend to interact with other social settings and cultures and undoubtedly will be influenced by those as well.

This interest in social interactions breaks with the conventional emphasis on interactions in the market and the sphere of governance (Klamer, 2016). Economists in particular stress the logic of market situations and legal scholars and business economists the logic of organizations. Most interactions take place outside the market and government spheres, though. When I give my friend support and encouragement, I will not expect any financial return; when I interview with an artist, our conversation will always center on the “aesthetic”, “expressive”, “innovative”, “creative”, “authentic”, and so on; When my two-years-old daughter draws a painting for mother day’s gift (even though maybe this painting just looks like a doodle picture), I will not put this painting into market and ask a price. For me, this painting is invaluable, because it is about love, care, and family ties. We can see, people always involve others to realize values in the social sphere, the cultural sphere, and the sphere of Oikos. These spheres do not exist in isolation. They are inevitably interconnected with each other; through them people share values with others. This kind of social network seems to be essential for the formation and development of cultures.

I am drawing inspiration from Klamer’s five spheres. The social network, or the social logic, can be instrumental; in the generation and sustenance of a culture. What is the “social network”? As we can see, in Klamer’s five spheres, people need to operate in different spheres when they are valorizing what is important to them, like crafts. Each sphere has a different logic with a specific kind of relationship. According to Klamer’s model there are five such relationships:

**Commercial relationship** (in the sphere of market), in which people pursue profits and interest, and then become sellers, traders, shopkeepers, merchants, buyers, consumers, and so on.

**Governmental relationship** (in the sphere of government), in which people deal with matters by way of, regulations, laws, policies, and standard procedures. Usually, they are used to abide by the hierarchical rule.

**Social relationship** (in the social sphere), in which people are friends, neighbors, colleagues, contributors, cooperators, members of communities, and so on. Every actor is relatively viewed as an socialized individual in this sphere. Among them, the relationship is informal.

**Family relationship** (in the sphere of Oikos), in which people will give the unconditional love, support and forgiveness to each other.

**Cultural relationship** (in cultural sphere), in which people share their cultural values and are to make sure of their thoughts and behaviors are meaningful or not. In this relationship, participant can realize who they are, how they need to do, and why they do that.

Not only participants are always socially interacting with others, but they also engage “culturally when they assign and share meanings, negotiate and deliberate values, use symbols, and share knowledge. Culture is the outcome of interactions among groups of people. Therefore, in a certain sense, culture is a socially understood term, Research on “crafts culture” is about the values shared by a specific group of people in the field of crafts.

In the coming parts, I will provide a new insight as to the creation and change of culture in our modern-day society.

### **3.3.2. Values of crafts**

As I have discussed before in 2.3, crafts as cultural goods have a significance that goes beyond their economic value and practical functions. This significance rests largely in their ability to carry and communicate cultural values. Usually, crafts can be valued, evaluated, and valorized by craftsmen, critics, shopkeepers, curators, collectors, and consumers. When crafts are active in the social world, their values wouldn't be fixed in one site, but flow continually among involved people or different places.

Economically speaking, crafts are mainly transferred in three stages --- production, distribution and consumption; “price” is to be understood as a major focus. In the pursuit of commercial interests, people treat crafts as commodities like bread, shoes, or cars. Often trade in crafts is regulated by craft guilds,

and crafts are sold mainly through craft trader, who makes the connection between craftsman and consumer. In the usual trajectory, the craftsman-trader sets the price, which reflects production costs, the willingness to pay, and the situation on the craft. In the transaction, traders as market intermediaries have an influential role.

Although in a two stage trading game traders serve as price-setting agents, who "...strategically choose bid and ask prices to offer to the sellers and buyers they are connected to; the sellers and buyers react to the prices they face..." (Blume et. al. 2009), they are seldom involved in a value-based conversation. In the field of crafts, the lack of a discussion about values inevitably has affected the valuation of crafts. Usually, values of crafts need to be realized (valuation, evaluation and valorization) in a socially constituted world and are shared with all interested people in the life of crafts. However, more and more crafts are produced by machine at a massive rate with as a consequence of the discontinuity of the dialogue between craftsman and consumers. This situation leads to a gap between the values a craftsman creates for the expression, and the values a consumer receives for the experience. At the same time, crafts are moving toward a mindless production/consumption process losing the very values that they once added to the people's conversation. In other words, over-production/consumption and economic incentives feed the vice of flattening. The commercial market compromises the sociability in the relationships between craftsmen and consumers, so values of crafts that derive from the value-based conversation are crowded out. The relationship among involved people gets cold; their talk turns to the topics of calculation and price.

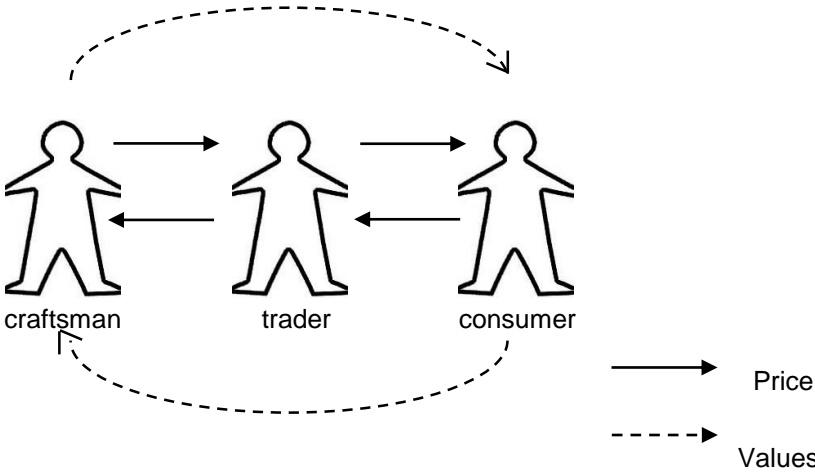


Figure 3. 8 The conversations between craftsman, trader, and consumer, designed by the author

Therefore, when crafts are faced with this kind of emotional crisis, it will be necessary to generate a new approach to get values back in the conversation. The Utopia world<sup>56</sup> is (See Figure 3.8), moving “crafts” into a scenario where people talk values first, with price as nothing more than a medium of exchange for the craft object. Because values reside in the socially constituted world, the mutual communication between craftsman and consumer is critical. But, how to avoid that values move away from people’s attention? And how to connect with involved people by way of talk and and by way of actions? These issues have been become focal points in recent years.

### **3.3.3 The Changing tendency of crafts**

Conventional economists prefer to divide a production process into three components: production, distribution, and consumption. Production is the most important economic activity; it is the transformation of raw materials and/or immaterial substance into usable objects; specialization is a way to organize the production (Costin, C.L. 1991). In archaeological studies, “craft specialization” is the core proposition, which examines the changing tendency of crafts in human history, and points out the development of society. For instance, if many ceramic vessels with the same size, the same color, and the same form are found in a historical site, we could infer that these vessels were made in mass production and possible for exchange with others articles in barter trade. In addition, in order to understand “crafts specialization”, Costin (1991) reminds us, cultural, social, political, economic, and environmental systems cannot be ignored. A number of researchers started to pay attention to the importance of specialization in the field of crafts. Childe as a Marxist analyzed the emergence of craft specialization in social evolution (Childe, V.G.1950/2004). Evans distinguishes part-time craft specialists from full-time craft specialists in a socioeconomic setting (Evans, R.K. 1978). Muller emphasizes the different characteristics between site specialization and producer specialization (Muller, J. 1984). Stark uses the case of Philippine to observe the interrelationship between craft specialization and economic intensification (Stark, M.T. 1995). All would agree that “craft specialization” plays a crucial role in the rise of civilization.

In *Craft Specialization*, Costin (1991) broadly argues that specialization “is present in almost every society... not a single organizational state, nor a present/absent condition”. The differences in crafts production could mirror different divisions of labor, different identities of craftsman, different of

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<sup>56</sup> In general, the utopia world should be an imagined world that possess highly desirable or nearly perfect qualities for people.

requirement of consumers, different relationships of craftsmen with consumers, and different cultural and society meanings of craft objects. In order to appreciate the changes in the crafts, I want to take “specialization” as a key point to break down the stages of development into pre-industrial, industrial, and the post-industrial societies in order to explore what happened/is happening in the field of crafts (See Figure 3.9).

In the pre-industrial society people grew up in a primitive community; and most people lived within a close-knit kin network. In the network, they were dependent on each other, often shared the same norms, habits, beliefs, expectations, even troubles. In order to survive most men were hunter-gatherers; women’s hands kept ever busy with weaving, embroidery and making pottery. The explicit knowledge of crafts was transferred from mother to daughter, from father to son. Every member was active in this small-scale society. In social respect, they lived together in a tribe; in psychological respect, they were linked together by factors such as ethnic origin, religious belief, living habit, aesthetic orientation, and moral judgment. Every community had a different culture and specific customs; their own crafts were distinctive in form and style.

In well-run crafts, the technical skills and esoteric knowledge were passed down through the system of master-apprentice. The master craftsman as a surrogate parent guided the behavior of apprentices and trained their abilities in workshops. Once an apprentice became a master, he would hire apprentices of his own. However, some, more obscure, knowledge would not be easy to transfer. In *The Craftsman* (2008), Sennett reviews the argument of Benvenuto Cellini<sup>57</sup> who thought “his secrets died with him” and explains that because the master set an absolute standard, few people can reproduce it. Originality was rooted in the master’s heart and soul, which would be hard to copy. Due to the lack of institutional knowledge, once the master dies, all tacit knowledge cannot be passed down to others. As Sennett points out, particularly in the medieval time, the craftsman produces craft articles for his patron or a few private clients. It is similar to the Qianlong vase, which was made for the Qianlong Emperor. The avenues of professional development were limited in the degree of customization. Accordingly, specialization of crafts reached its peak in pre-industrial times.

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<sup>57</sup> Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571) was an Italian goldsmith, sculptor, draftsman, soldier and musician, and also wrote a famous *Autobiography*.

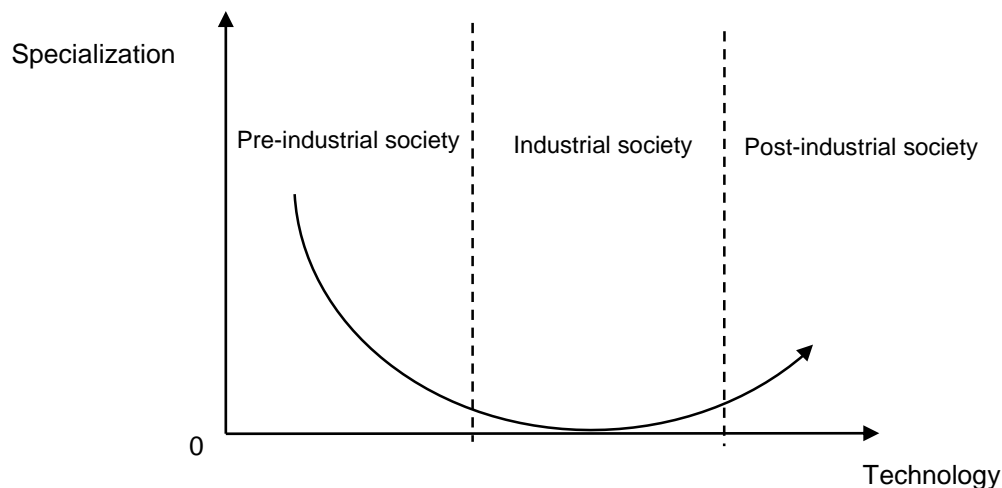


Figure 3. 9 The changing tendency of “Crafts”

With the advent of industrialization, the human society enters a new age. People don't need their hands with simple tools to conquer and transform nature; they don't need to make a large amount of effort to take practices; and they don't need to spend a lot time to accumulate knowledge. During the machine process, unskilled and semi-skilled workers are engaged with the repetitive tasks, which require very little training and imagination. More and more automated machines replace human's labor, greatly improve production efficiency. In *A Theory of Craft* (2007), Risatti also shows the relationship among hand, machine, and material machines become so powerful that they dominate the material process and are decisive for the increasing efficiency in the production of works. In this sense, craftsmen have gradually lost their important positions in people's daily lives.

At the same time, the consuming class has risen rapidly in the industrial society for decades. Along with the rapid development of automatic techniques, the desire of people for goods and services grows very quickly. Many industrial-made crafts are pouring into the market; they are standardized and uniform: 1 vase, 100 vases, and 10,000 vases can be all same size, same shape, and same color. They are made through the assembly line in “one size fits all”.

But with the arrival of new society, the consumption patterns started to change. In *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: a venture in social forecasting* (1973), Daniel Bell called this new kind of society the post-industrial society, which would replace the industrial society. He argued that the post-industrial society is a “service society” that consists of scientists and engineers, who form the key group. Bell argued that unskilled and semi-skilled workers as blue-collar employees are gradually replaced by



white-collar employees. The decline of manufacturing employment and the rise of the service sector employment become the main feature in the post-industrial society. At the same time, due to the role of “information” and “knowledge” in post-industrial society, professional jobs are flourishing in the service sector of economy. Frank Webster (2004) makes the conclusion about the difference between industrial society and post-industrial society in his work. According to him, machines have dominated the industrial society, in contrast, the post-society will be focused on information goods and services. He describes *“...if an industrial society is defined by the quantity of goods as making a standard of living, the post-industrial society is defined by the quality of life as measured by the services and amenities---health, education, recreation, and the arts---which are now deemed desirable and possible for everyone...”* (p. 87). In the post-industrial society, people pay more attention to the quality of life, instead of mass-produced goods, thus high technology and information services are at the core of how we inhabit in this society. For example, the computerized technologies have developed and expanded rapidly in the world’s market economies; the online stores especially are increasingly blossoming in social life. They allow sellers to closely follow the movements of site visitors, to get more consumers via the internet, and most importantly, to some degree they offer the prosumer services to ease the crisis of the specialization of crafts. The modern customization will promote “crafts” to a new stage. Even though the craftsman, shopkeeper and consumer are in different geographical places, they can talk, negotiate, and bargain with each other. Through the internet business, a craftsman can create an object that is customized for his client.

In this way mindless consumption may gradually retreat in time to come. Although the conversation between people has changed (from face-to-face to long-distance communication), they still have the chance to buy anything from around the world online. Yet, how to correctly guide the retrieve of the specialization of crafts and how to make this new way of conversation more efficient, are open questions for crafts researchers and practitioners.

### **3.3.4 The best crafts in modern-day society**

As already noted, mindless consumption may be on the way out, but the mass production by machine still plays a vital role in our life. Automation cannot be stopped and the recovery of the development of the specialization of crafts also hasn’t gone smoothly. With the rapid growth of the economy, however, people started to worry about the consequences of automation. Can industrial made objects satisfy all

our needs? What happens if machines continuously run in all days? Due to the limit of what we eat and use, we cannot continue eating and we do not want to change clothes all the time and we don't need to use more than one lap-top per person, and don't need to have a television in every room. So can it come as a surprise that people are crying out: "Enough! It is enough! Look, what this industrial waste is doing to me and to the environment!!" But why do they protest? What is the flaw of the industrial process? Let's take a closer look.

In 3.2.2.1, I already mentioned Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs in our daily life. Shortly, the needs of people are often portrayed in the shape of a pyramid, which consist of physiological needs, safety/security needs, love/belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. When our basic survival needs (physiological and safety/security needs) get satisfied, we would begin to take more care of our social needs (love/belongingness and esteem needs), and then pay attention to the individual growth needs (self-actualization needs and transcendence).

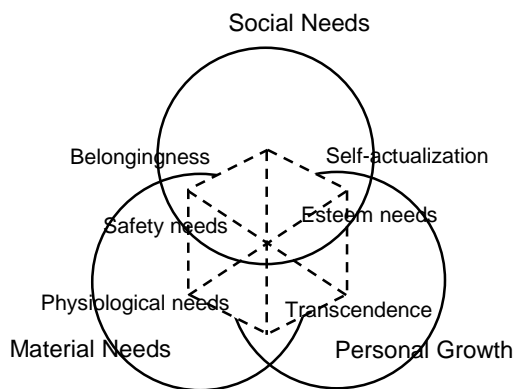


Figure 3. 10 The three spheres of needs

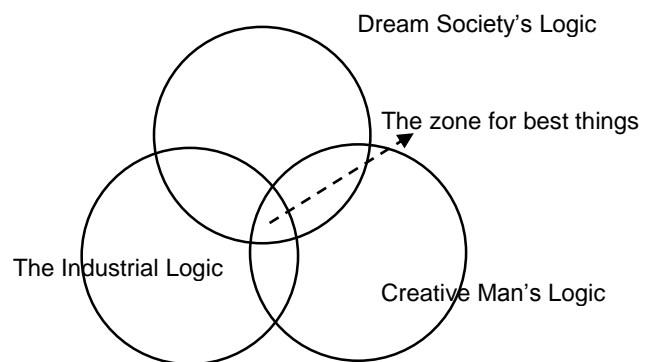


Figure 3. 11 A model of society's Logics

(edited by Klaus Æ. Mogensen, *Creative Man*, 2004, 2006, p. 34-35)

Having said this, with the running of automatic machines, we should have all our needs be satisfied in our modern-day society. However, the industrial made objects in mass production mainly target the fulfillment of material needs of people. What about the other needs (social and growth needs)? We might find the answer in the chapter 4 of *Creative Man: A Model of Society's Logics* (2006), which describes three logics (the industrial logic, dream society's logic, and creative man's logic) in our life. The group of Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS) argues that Maslow has provided a good list of categories of human needs, but suggests that Maslow's hierarchy should be without any fixed priority.

In other words, they proposed the primary needs should be situational. It looks to be in tune with Klamer's perspective that on the road of values people continuously value, evaluate, and valorize whatever they consider important. An artist, for example, who dreams to exhibit his works in a prestigious gallery space, will primarily focus on self-actualization. But if he also is a father, and a distressed son wants to talk with him, love/belongingness and esteem needs would become his priority. Thus, according to the upper left figure (See Figure 3.10), all needs of people are equal, at least in the same level. Then, they depicted the three logics to cover all needs of people (See Figure 3.11):

*"...Industrial Society was mainly driven by the desire for greater fulfillment of material needs. Dream Society then rose because the focus shifted to emotional, social needs. Creative Man, in turn, is based on the need for personal growth..."*

*[edited by Klaus Æ. Mogensen, (Creative Man, 2004, 2006, p.36)]*

Industrial society has built the foundation for our life, to satisfy our basic necessities. Dream society and Creative man's society aren't just the icing on the cake for our life, nor do they take the place of the industrial society. People nowadays cannot live without the industrial goods, even though they may complain about mass production. In order that the needs of modern people are fully satisfied, Dream society and Creative man's society's logics both are important in modern-day society. People pay more attention now to the invisible qualities of goods, which are beyond appearances and functions. Because industrial goods are without inherent meanings, either in the production process or in the consumption process, people want to create themselves, create their identities, and create their social status; in Creative man's society, people are able to realize their personal values.

These three societies' logics are mutually linked and influenced each other. As CIFS said in *A Model of Society's Logics*, "things work best if all three logics are satisfied". This gets us to the positioning of the crafts which should be close to the center of the three logics (See Figure 3.11). It can meet different needs in different societies, as they do not just satisfy material needs in Industrial society, but also provide storytelling and emotional values in Dream society, and allow either craftsmen or consumers themselves to create their own person values in Creative man's society. Accordingly, even after "crafts" lost values during the industrialization, there is still a chance to bring "crafts" back into a value-based conversation, to re-look and re-contextualize it, and to adapt them to our modern-day society.

### 3.4. Conclusion

The analysis of crafts culture has highlighted several points in this chapter. Firstly, the status of crafts is always a controversial issue in our modern-day society. In fact many ambiguities and contradictions occur in the fields of crafts and arts. When people mention “crafts”, “arts” would naturally come into their views. Even though aesthetic criterions, ideological constructs and work standards are not same, “arts” easily get a more positive evaluation and higher praise than “crafts”. Here without the biased argument I focus on conceptions of the distinction between “craft” and “crafts” and how we measure “crafts” and “arts”. In particular, in the field of crafts I further explore characteristics of several types of crafts and profiles of craftsmen. I try to give readers a general understanding of how the crafts play different roles in people’s lives.

Secondly, I explain some terminologies of crafts within a cultural context. Beyond the economic dimension, “crafts” also can be interpreted as a cultural practice for people who are involved, the stakeholders. If in economic perspective the life of “crafts” is about production, distribution, and consumption, I would suggest “crafts” is more a cultural phenomenon that stands for “quality”, “experience”, and “taste”. During its life, “crafts” not only has an applied function, but also is aesthetically meaningful or generates cultural and historical meanings. Therefore, in a cultural sense, “crafts” can be understood by viewing it as the complex set of values, which endows them with intrinsic meanings and cultural structure.

Thirdly, I focus on participants who are conventionally viewed as “craftsmen”. I explore the traits of craftsmen in terms of social identity through the analysis of their knowledge, experiences, and activities. In the entire production process, they carry, form, and display values that they share with others. At the same time, they have to balance the connections and interactions between their hands, heart, and head.

An important issue to address is the crisis that seems to hit the crafts sector with the development of industrialization. Too many industrial goods pour into the lives of people. As skilled men, how do they overcome the never-stopping machines? This challenge occurs in our modern-day society. Considering the struggle of values of crafts and craftsmanship, the time is necessary to realize that craftsmen not only produce material things for consumers, but are also creators who culturally construct a values-sharing system in people’s lives. Otherwise, craftsmen will be replaced by efficient machines, and the human-based values that they generate will be lost.

How does our consideration of crafts culture shed light on the future development of crafts and craftsmanship? At the end of this chapter, I borrow Klammer's idea to explore the valorization of values in five spheres. People still care about handmade crafts because the making by hand is a cultural statement. They generate meanings in the cultural sphere. The market sphere enables craftspeople to fetch a price for their products but it is in this sphere that they have to face the threat of commercialization and industrialization. Craftspeople may look at the sphere of governance for a way out. Governmental support may protect their sector against the onslaught of industrialization and mass production. Yet, most important is the social sphere as it is in that sphere that craftspeople generate shared practices and get others like consumers, local people, and politicians involved in what they do. I would conclude that there is hope for the crafts.

In the coming chapter I want to further explore the question: "if nothing can overcome human-based values, how these values works in people's lives and what kinds of challenges we have to handle?" , through a specific example about ceramics. By considering a historical episode and comparing that with the current situation in the field of crafts, I attempt to better comprehend the interaction among values in cultural goods, and also from a new perspective to explore the significance of crafts and craftsmanship in our lives.



## **Chapter 4 Ceramic objects: Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue**

In Chapter 3, I look beyond economics in a strict sense and present a theoretical framework of the notion of crafts culture, pointing at values of crafts and craftsmanship that express appreciation for qualities, experiences, meanings and so on. As per the theory from the previous chapter, about the interplay between different people involved in the life of crafts, we can see craftsmen, sellers, bureaucrats, policy makers, politicians and scholars all actively influencing the development of crafts and craftsmanship in human-based conversation.

In the standard economic world, decisions over the importance of crafts and how to evaluate the role of crafts have largely been centered around ideas of “economic impact”, “benefit” or “price”. Economists believe that crafts, like any other good can attract consumers by utility and often consider why people want to pay for crafts and try to guess how consumers think. Recent analyses about the development and conservation of traditional crafts have focused on costs and benefit. For example, discussions about the commodification of crafts pervade tourism studies. For consumers’ choices, utility theorists always concentrate on whether travelers can get enough pleasure during the process of consumption. They don’t care about the story behind the crafts because they think “price” decides everything. But, if the price says it all, even though historical crafts relics could fetch high prices, why traditional skills and techniques in the sphere of crafts are in danger of disappearing; why many traditional craftsmen have a second job; and why more and more scholars try to specifically focus on “quality”, “values”, “cultural phenomena”, and so on.

Without waiting for replies, let me retort to the mainstream economists’ arguments and advocate for the consideration of crafts as cultural goods that deserve an exception within the field of economics. As discussed above, in the case of the 18th century Qianlong porcelain vase, we have many questions about the human-based conversation. This porcelain was the outcome of “discursive constructs” which could be understood to be craftsmanship achieved through a range of social practices. Although most people in the saleroom were interested in the exquisite pattern and beautiful color of the vase, the electric atmosphere actually promoted the evolution of the values of this porcelain during the process of auction. In other words, the perceived values of the vase increased not because of the impulse of new crafts people or other developments on the production side but because of the emergence of a critical mass of admirers, connoisseurs and experts in the process of valorization.

Similar to the 18th century Qianlong porcelain vase, more and more Chinese ancient or modern porcelains are both becoming increasingly expensive. Yet the connection between the price and cultural quality is a controversial subject. Most ceramists who actively engage in the porcelain business in Jingdezhen, for example, are unwilling to acknowledge the threat of commercialization in the sphere of crafts. They will insist that the cultural and artistic values of porcelain do not change with the onslaught of commercial business. But is that so? Are the cultural values immune to financial matters? This question is one of more important questions that this study addresses.

I begin this chapter with a focus on the history of porcelain trade between China and the Netherlands to show how much attention the people involved paid to porcelains in the past, as well as to emphasize the important role of porcelains in people's lives. Through this porcelain story, we further understand that porcelain as a cultural good carries values which can change or evolve as people work, involve, and interact with each other. The story also shows that with the advancement of the industrial age the development of crafts and craftsmanship has encountered unprecedented challenges and obstacles. It follows that the realization of the values of crafts and craftsmanship in our modern-day society has changed dramatically. Based on the analysis of official documents and a series of interviews with officials, craftsmen, educators, shopkeepers and consumers, I attempt to depict a picture about participants' works in the field of crafts nowadays, and also construct an ideal crafts culture for reevaluating skills, qualities, values, and experiences. This may provide insights in which the protagonists of the world of crafts can work to strengthen the culture of crafts and with that its chances of survival.

#### **4.1. Why look at “ceramics”?**

##### **4.1.1. Purpose of this chapter**

Traditionally, ceramics were craft objects that people made to trade or use. In the past, its values were restricted to practical functions such as containing, covering, and supporting. Even though the prevailing research on ceramics is focused on the relationship between ceramics and sociocultural history by archaeologists, there are a few databases of archaeological studies that culturally justify the values of ceramics, particularly the importance of its craftsmanship as an intellectual and technical activity of human civilization (Longacre. W.A, 1970; Hill. J.H, 1977; Cross. J.R, 1993; Costin. C.L, 2001). Another problem is that the potential of ceramics has been excessively emphasized by way of its economic



value. Important organizations such as UNCTAD, UNIDO, and ILO devoted too much attention to the relevance of ceramics for international trade and economic growth. But even though quite a few interdisciplinary works suggest a dependence on the local culture for promoting the development of ceramics, few illuminate how the values of ceramics are tightly intertwined with people's lives. The substantive attention for ceramics is rather limited.



Figure 4. 1 The original 17<sup>th</sup> century glass ware in *Still-life* painting (by Willem Claesz, in 1634, collected by Museum Boijmans Van Brunningen, in Rotterdam, NL)

and the replicas of 17<sup>th</sup> century glass ware (© studio Maaïke Roozenburg) (photos taken from: <https://3dprint.com/13623/3d-print-glassware/>)

At the same time, the development of handmade ceramics is full of unprecedented threats and challenges in modern-day society. In 2011, a team of technicians and artists (Vindplaats Delft) tried to use a 3D printer to create porcelain replicas of 17th century glass ware from the Boijmans van Beuningen museum (See Figure 4.1). They claimed that the 3D printer would “enable people to use objects they would normally only see behind the glass in a museum” and “take historical heritage into

modern kitchens". The result of this project was successful and these porcelain replicas were sold in Delft and in the museum store of the Boijmans Van Beuningen. This advance in science undoubtedly not only gives people special experiences, but also tends to stimulate economic efficiency. However, let's try to imagine what would happen if the 3D printer controls the production of all ceramics? This so-called "special experience" is no longer special: mechanization and automatization will make much of craft superfluous, and crowd out social, moral, emotional, and humanistic values. This is even more so with the possibility that anyone can use digital tools to be a successful maker. Producers will use industrial machines to make homogeneous products and consumers will pick the cheapest product to get the same utility. So what is going on? Does this make marketing sense? Will this generate more income for businesses? Or may this mode of production crowd out values of culture?

If people are in the world of standard economics, they would consider that industrial technologies such as the 3D printer are good for enhancing economic benefits and reducing product differentiation. They may argue that industrial technologies are good for a perfectly competitive market, because these technologies could rapidly produce similar products at low costs to increase income. In *Average is over* (2013), Tyler Cowen, a well-known economist, shows that the high earners are taking ever more advantage of machine intelligence and achieving ever-better result. In contrast, low earners who haven't committed to learning, making the most of new technologies, have poor prospects. With this perspective Cowen articulates a view that could be expected from a standard economist. That perspective changes in a value-based conversation. In that context we are stimulated to about issues like how cultural values are realized and how the quality handmade products are assured. In *Unknown Craftsman* (1972), Soetsu Yanagi points out that human nature underpins the production process of handmade ceramics, but when humans are replaced by machines, this virtue would gradually diminish with time in the industrial world. When we focus on homogeneous products, quantity, supply, demand, and the right price, artistic and cultural aspects get marginalized and cultural values are ignored. Perhaps one day, object label in arts and crafts museums will be changed. They won't mention the name of creators anymore, but will describe the size, type and brand of machines used instead. As Risatti argues, machines break the limitation of manpower to build "a realm of limit-less-ness", where the role of humans loses interest. These ceramic wares will no longer be the testimony of history. Historians cannot get more knowledge and information from potshards to reconstruct the past. Chinese, Japanese, and

Korean vases will have be diffentiable anymore because they have lost their cultural identity. As a result mechanized modes of production will change the quality of ceramics.

Considering this, the mechanization of the production of ceramics is hardly an exciting development, unless one has a fascination for technology in itself. It is easy to set prices in the homogeneous product market, but too many physical objects will flood the world. Without the process of dialogue, craftsmen will not need to negotiate with raw materials to produce finished products, and consumers will not need to communicate with others to realize the values of products through the process of valuation, evaluation and valorization. These industrial ceramics, products made without our emotions, our feelings and our values, are different from handmade ceramics, crafts that exist and are active through our social conversations<sup>58</sup>. In other words, industry-made ceramics provide more economic profit but less cultural experience. It is like wine. Gallo wine<sup>59</sup> is produced in a standard way so that there is no vintage year anymore; every bottle is just the same. So there is no need for connoisseurship anymore, no sense in wine tasting. It is like with a Big Mac, it's just the same wherever and whenever you purchase one.

Economists believe they can use the “right price” to measure objects and identify the relationship between supply and demand. But, is this a good reason to ignore values? How are important crafts socially marked in the cognitive process? What are the significant biographies and social experiences of handmade ceramics? Why are people obsessed with handmade ceramics like the 18th Century Chinese porcelain or the Korean Kizaemon tea-bowl? In the next section, I will perform a cultural economic analysis to interpret the worth of handmade ceramics and their craftsmanship, and explore how they influence all aspects of our everyday lives.

#### **4.1.2. History of ceramics studies**

Early contributions to the field of ceramics studies focused on archaeological investigations. Most archaeologists have built chronologies to discover the human activity of the past. They usually use ancient ceramics to reconstruct past social, cultural and economic conditions (i.e. Shepard, 1956; Grieder, 1975; Willey and Sabloff, 1980). But, even though the archaeological approach is based on the hypothesis that past human behavior can be related with politics, religion and education, it is still too

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<sup>58</sup> In *A Theory of Craft*, Risatti addressed “...only the handmade should be properly considered a craft object. Craft implies a specific way of making an object and a special way of expressing one’s being with and in the world...”

<sup>59</sup> Gallo wine is produced by E & J Gallo Winery, the winery and distributor headquartered of the winery in Modesto, California. It was founded in 1933 by Ernest Gallo and Julio Gallo, and is the largest exporter of California wines.

simplistic to interpret ceramic production, distribution and consumption by studying one or more articles. Many archaeologists particularly focus on the excavated potshards rather than the cultural construction of society. However, these ancient materials should not be studied in isolation, for they act as the effective glue for the development of history across space and time. For instance, Chinese traditional porcelain has been used and transacted throughout the world at different times and by different countries. As a part of historic culture, it was not merely used to cook, store and decorate during ancient times, but also has a significant meaning in modern-day society. Therefore, most ceramic researchers are encouraged to look beyond a particular context and to understand the connection between past and present societies and economies.

Although the archaeological perspective has been important for studies of ceramic culture, the question remains as to how we can explain the whole of human history through ancient artifacts. Since 1985, archaeologists have increasingly realized that their approaches are not enough to construct a cultural system. Many researchers have studied craft in a broader sense, for instance, its mode of production. (i.e. Saraswati and Behura, 1966; Arnold, 1975; Birmingham, 1975; DeBoer and Lathrap, 1979; Bala, 1997), its distribution (i.e. Balfet, 1981; Saligan, 1982; Kaplan, 1994; Costin, 2000), its consumption (i.e. Longacre, 1985; Nelson, 1991; Arthur, 1997), its social boundaries (i.e. Reina and Hill, 1978; Wiessner, 1983), and now, ceramic ethno-archaeology has emerged and developed over the last decade.

Ethno-archaeology, which combines ethnographical and archaeological approaches to interpret the connection between human behavior and material culture, is known as “action archaeology” (Kleindienst and Watson, 1956) or “living archaeology” (Gould, 1968) in academic circles. As a representative of ethno-archaeology, Carol Kramer pointed out that ceramic ethno-archaeology had “*quashed some simplifying notions, illuminated a range of behavioral diversity, and begun to outline modal patterns of considerable potential value to archaeologists*” (Kramer, 1985, p. 97). Ceramic ethno-archaeology as a sub-discipline of ethno-archaeology is not an approach simply to build chronologies of pots, bowls or dishes, but to start observing and analyzing people’s past and present. In other words, rather than deal with the ceramic artifact as merely a physical object, it gives extremely valuable insight in the life of ceramics and what role ceramics had in daily life.

In considering the ceramic ethno-archaeological studies, it helps us to bear in mind that ceramic artifact constitutes an important source of information to reconstruct the past culture and explore the past human behavior.

Before more and more people shift attention from the traditional crafts and craftsmanship to industrial products, and before the role of traditional craftsmen is gradually replaced by high-technology machines, we need to treat with care traditional crafts and craftsmanship in the commercial marketplace. The goal of this work is to remind people that crafts as cultural goods have meanings and embody various values, and consider how the notion of crafts culture contributes to an economy and to the quality of life.

## 4.2. Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue

*“陶器的出现，意味着人类对水，火和泥土的征服，是在具备了一定的技术条件下有能力改造物质环境的结果。在陶器产生和应用的过程中，不仅以其形态上的分工标志着人类生活的精致化程度，不断拓展着人类在实用领域的技术与智能，而且最终发展为实用与审美功能兼备的艺术产品”*

*“The development of ceramics signified that water, fire and clay could be conquered by humans. It was possible only when a certain level of technology had been reached and the power had been gained to transform the natural environment. During the production and consumption of ceramics, not only the division of labor is a symbol of social progress, but also values of ceramics reflect the development of human civilization.”*

[《中国陶瓷》(Chinese ceramics), 方李莉, p.1]

As crafts objects, ceramics are not merely made materially as functional products, but are also closely related with culture and society. The demand for ceramics in history is always connected with human survival and development. As Arnold (1988) has addressed, ceramics are a channel for the flow of information/nutrition between parts of the ecosystem. It has provided more significant advantages than other material things in human life. Wood isn't refractory, but ceramic is; basketry isn't anti-leakage, but ceramics is; stone isn't plastic, but ceramic is; glass isn't opaque, but ceramic is; iron isn't electrically insulating, but ceramic is. The properties of ceramics, not surprisingly, are perfect for cooking, containing and storage.

Besides giving and enhancing the nutrition and taste of food, ceramics also act as carriers that culturally share knowledge and experience between members of the society (i.e. Arnold, 1988; Timothy and Thomas, 1991; Hayden, 1995, 1998; Hoopes and Barnett, 1995; James, 1999). Many studies show that ceramics are imbued with symbolic significance and social ideology in cultural practices. An example of ceramics in special occasions is the tea-bowl that plays a very important role in the Japanese tea ceremony. To understand Japanese culture, it is necessary to understand the Japanese tea ceremony,

in which tea is perceived as a bodily discipline (Kato, 2004), and an aesthetic form of Zen Buddhism (Okakura, 1964; Soetsu, 1972). As the most representative principle in Japanese tea ceremony, *wabi* and *sabi*<sup>60</sup> are emphasized on representing liberation from a mundane world and transcendence to an aesthetic realm. They refer to the beauty of imperfection, simplicity and austerity. The quality of the ceremony is dependent on many factors, one of which is the tea-bowl. According to *Nanpōroku*, we understand the tea ceremony is a spiritual experience where “material values are ignored, if not rejected, and the path to Buddhist enlightenment seems to be opened by the simple, mundane acts of preparing, serving, and drinking tea”. (Theodore, Keene, Tanabe, and Varley, 2010, p.396) The tea-bowl as equipment is requested in a specific style<sup>61</sup>, and is endowed with symbolic meaning. In other words, this use of ceramics is beyond function, and is closely related to the psychological needs of people.

Demand for ceramics not only focuses on utilitarian use, but it is tied to the aesthetic ideology of culture. In this view, ceramics provide people with important moments in their daily lives. In the economist's opinion, it is no surprise that ceramics should be lucrative and have a profitable market. This opinion is because they think the practical and aesthetic values of ceramics can be expressed by a price in market. While this may be true, it is not the whole story. In the cultural economics perspective, economics cannot be culture-free (Throsby, 2001). In addition, ceramics exists in a place where moral conflicts, social controversies and values clash in a more concentrated way than in daily practices. For instance, the Chinese government appealed that it should be unacceptable to put the 18<sup>th</sup> century Qianlong porcelain vase for auction and denounced the auction of looted Chinese relics, saying that this would offend China's cultural sovereignty and its national sentiment; the traditional craftsmanship of ceramics is in danger of disappearing; the production of ceramics is troubled by copying and counterfeiting. Ceramics are not developing smoothly in the market, and the simple supply-demand approach seems to be insufficient for explaining it.

The market is a superior instrument for the allocation of resources--- or at least most economists think so. However, why does the market place not solve all issues of ceramics? What are the kinds of values

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<sup>60</sup> The notion of *wabi* and *sabi* represents a comprehensive Japanese aesthetic system; “*wabi*” (わび) refers to a philosophical construct, a feeling of loneliness and a life of hermit, while “*sabi*” (さび) refers to beauty and serenity.

<sup>61</sup> In *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, it mentions that “The tea utensils are not of exquisite porcelain but of coarse pottery, often a dull brown or black and imperfectly formed. The kettle may be a little rusty. Yet from these objects we receive an impression not of gloominess or shabbiness but one of quiet harmony and peace...”

of ceramics hidden in commercial transaction? If the market is not perfect, how can we assess ceramics? Such questions make us rethink values of ceramics.

We can conclude that the values of ceramics are about more than their utilitarian values, no matter how important these may be. . Standard economists easily overlook “quality”, “experience “taste” and such as goods, but, cultural economists would not do that.

The story of Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue serves as example to be more specific an attempt to further the exploration of value based processes.

#### **4.2.1. Ceramics trade between China and the Netherlands: an overview**

Chinese ceramic ware as a cultural form has been developing since the dynastic periods<sup>62</sup>. The ceramics history of China not only covers construction materials such as bricks and tiles, but also includes the ordinary vessels, which were fired from Min Yao (民窑) for common people, and the exquisite wares, which were made from Guan Yao (官窑) for emperors. Traditionally, people distinguish between two primary categories of Chinese ceramics based on the manufacturing process, which often affects the quality of the clay: first, low-temperature-fired pottery or earthenware (陶 tao, about 950-1200°C, relatively soft and porous), and second, high-temperature-fired porcelain (瓷 ci, about 1250-1400°C, relatively hard, translucent, and impervious to water)<sup>63</sup>.

Compared with pottery, porcelain plays an important role in China. Because China was the first country to make porcelain, some English-speaking countries informally prefer to call porcelain as “china” or “fine china”. The first porcelain was produced in the early Han Dynasty (202BC-220AD). Since Tang Dynasty (618-907AD), porcelain was widely produced for exporting to the Islamic world, East Africa, Southwest Asia, Korea, Japan and so on. Subsequently, in the Song Dynasty (960-1279AD) blue and white porcelain was first decorated in Jingdezhen, and then after a couple of years, this kind of porcelain quickly won over the market and became the most popular commodity in the Middle East. But, the

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<sup>62</sup> China was divided for different periods of its history, which different regions being ruled by different group, such as Ming dynasty (AD 1368-AD 1644) and Qing dynasty (AD 1636-AD 1912)

<sup>63</sup> In China, people traditionally recognize ceramics in two groups, *first*, pottery or earthenware, *second*, stoneware and porcelain; but in western countries, people consider ceramics in three groups, earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain. In *The Pilgrim Art: the culture of porcelain in world history*, Robert Finlay explained “Europeans in the early modern period analyzed the nature of porcelain because of its novelty, while the Chinese in the thirteenth century simply regarded the material as natural extension of their ancient craft of high-quality ceramics (in other words, they thought of porcelain as the extension of stoneware)”

Europeans had been paying attention to porcelain since Marco Polo's time. In the mid 1200's, Marco Polo began his travel to China on the Silk Road, and after seventeen years he returned from Quanzhou to Venice by way of Vietnam, Java, India, and Persia. The word "porcelain" was referred to for the first time in *The Travels of Marco Polo*. Polo thought porcelain looked like the texture of a seashell and he also described porcelain dishes "so fine that you could not imagine better". To a certain extent, this spurred Europeans to start importing porcelain from China.

In the 16th century, Portuguese traders began importing Chinese porcelain directly to Europe, and a regular porcelain trade between Asia and Europe was officially launched. But, even though the Portuguese established routes for commercial trade with China, they arrived in China at a bad time when the Ming dynasty had already passed its zenith and was under encroachment by the Manchus. The government didn't welcome foreign traders and looked down upon foreign trade. This meant the Portuguese ship could not carry massive quantities of Chinese porcelain and did not receive permanent permission from the Chinese government for maritime trade (in Macao) until 1557 (Finlay, R. 1998). While the Portuguese expanded their imports of porcelain, Dutch traders and ship-owners started to get commodities such as spices, silks and porcelain from Lisbon, Portugal. However, due to the war between Portugal and Spain, the Dutch not only found that it was hard to obtain these commodities, but also wished to avoid confrontation with the Portuguese. From 1595, the Dutch traders established their own private trading companies, and in 1602, incorporated all of them into one office company, The Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* or VOC) (See Figure 4.2).

As time went on, the Dutch gradually took over the Asian maritime trade from the Portuguese. Yet, at the beginning of the ceramics trade between China and the Netherlands, the Dutch took back only a small scale of Chinese porcelain (the main cargo was tea, silks, gold, lacquer, sugar, drugs, and other Chinese goods). Because porcelain was impervious to water and could prevent the contamination of expensive tea, it was regarded the best ballast with a heavy weight as an underlayer in loading the ship. For the increase in import of Chinese porcelain by the VOC, an external stimulus was in 1602, when the Dutch captured Portuguese carracks from Macao with a large amount of porcelain and other Chinese commodities. When these commodities were sold in Middelburg, the Netherlands, the traders were surprised to attract so many buyers and get great profit. Europeans considered that porcelain as a symbolic sign of wealth was a special good and "porcelain disease" quickly spread around Europe. From royalty to the commons, everyone was crazy for Chinese porcelain. According to *The Pilgrim Art* (1998),



Robert Finlay mentions “...from the beginning of the 17th century to the end of the 18th century, the VOC imported about 43 million pieces of porcelain...while the English, French, Swedish, and Danish East Indies Companies shipped at least 30 million...” (p. 258). Thus, it can be seen that Chinese porcelains were very popular in Europe, and Chinese craftsmen almost monopolized the production of porcelain.

However, the Dutch craftsmen always wanted to discover the secret of porcelain manufacture. Particularly, during the war between the Ming and Qing dynasty, due to the production of porcelain being seriously damaged in Jingdezhen and the control of overseas trade by Cheng Ch’eng Kung, the export of Chinese porcelain began to decrease. No more Ming porcelain was sold to the Dutch after 1657. Even though Chinese porcelain was again sold to Europe in a large scale from 1683, the earlier trade restriction promoted the development of a local ceramics industry in the Netherlands. Moreover, in 1685, the Qing dynasty (1644-1912AD) introduced a new scheme of tolls and taxes. On the one hand, it resulted in declining profits of the ceramics trade between China and the Netherlands; on the other hand, it gave the Dutch pottery industry a great opportunity for developing and improving their own goods.

Although Dutch traders were plagued by the civil war between Ming and Qing, and the trading restrictions from the Chinese government, these events were of tremendous importance to the local pottery industry. Dutch craftsmen made an effort to use local clay to imitate decorations in Chinese style, and then sold their chinoiserie ceramics in Europe. Around 1550, the first factories were started in the town of Haarlem in the Northern part of the Netherlands and soon after other towns like Amsterdam, Rotterdam (1612), Middelburg, and Delft (1584) followed. Discovering success in a relatively short period of time, they built a large number of factories in Rotterdam (12) and Delft (32) and quickly Delft became the center of European ceramics manufacturing. From 1600-1800, Dutch Delftware (blue-white and decorated in polychrome colors) underwent a competitive struggle with Chinese porcelain, but gradually it became welcomed and was widely exported in Europe and some Asian countries. It was so successful that even some Chinese and Japanese craftsmen tried to make porcelain versions of Dutch Delft Blue for export to Europe.

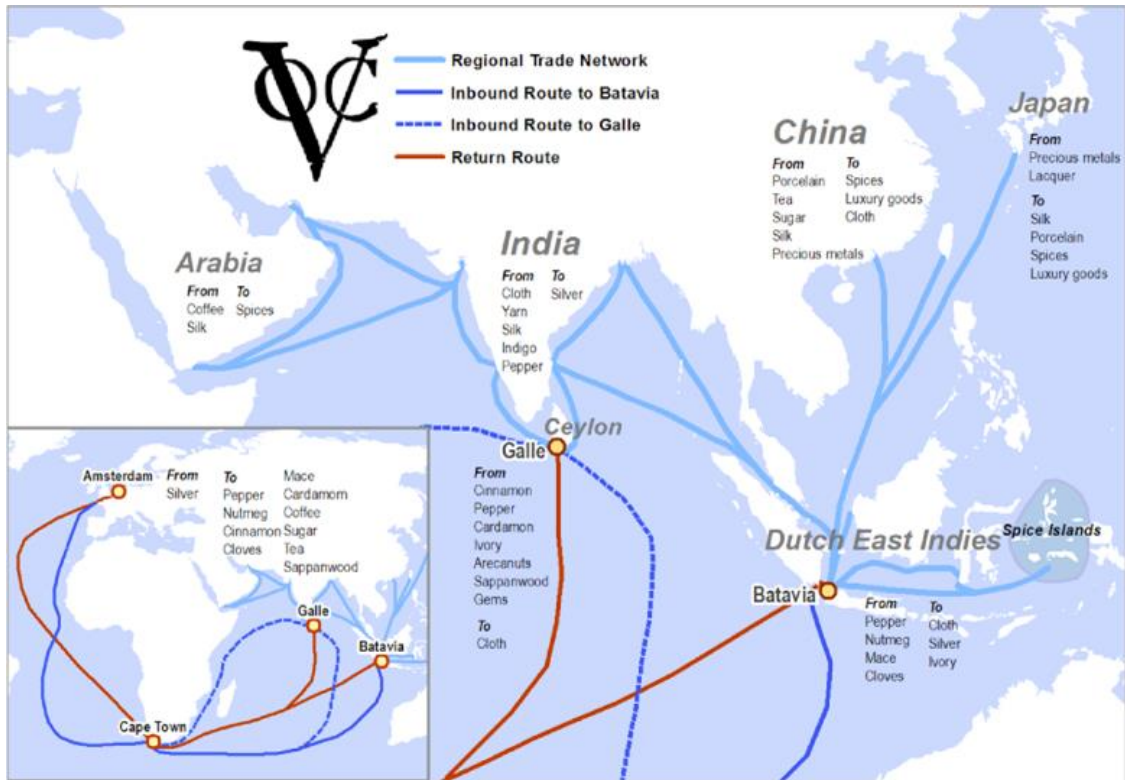


Figure 4. 2 The routes of VOC (image take from: <http://wallacecollection.org/>)

In effect, as Finlay (1998) said, the end result of the ceramics trade between Asia and Europe was the recycling of cultural fantasies. Global trade not only creates economic wealth on a global scale, but also encourages cultural assimilation. In other words, ceramics played quite an important role in the cross-cultural exchange between Europe and Asia. From the Europeans who were attracted by Chinese porcelain to Chinese craftsmen who adopted a western aesthetic theme for their exported porcelain, ceramics as a visual language displays the communications among the various people involved connected to changes in commerce, cultural and social values.

In other words, in the trade between China and the Netherlands, the ceramics that is getting traded, had specific lives, or biographies. They were part of and constituted specific cultural and social practices, something that standard economics does not perceive. Most importantly, we need to realize that if people want to recognize or appreciate or share values of these ceramics, they have to contribute to or be part of the conversation concerning.

## 4.2.2. The life of ceramics

### 4.2.2.1. The gap between economists and culturalists

In order to clear up the gap between economists and culturalists in the life of ceramics, we need to go back to their conversations and research fields which are already mentioned in chapter 2. When economists talk about ceramics they prefer to use an objective, rational and logical method to investigate what happens in the economic dimension; but the culturalists have always been restricted to the cultural and social terms, such as “the emotional motivation, the personal preference, the cultural structure and the social experience”.

Most economists usually take it more or less for granted that ceramics are simply physical commodities which are exchanged for other things or for money. When they are sold or bought, their values would be measured by the economic approach. Whether pots, dishes, bowls or vases, they are generally seen as marketable items in transaction. Many papers have examined the relationship between the different people involved in the economic life of goods (including ceramics). “Price” is recognized to be a most important concept in the economic world. It not only can mirror the interaction among relevant people in transactions, but can also guide rational choice and financial investment. (See Figure 4.3)

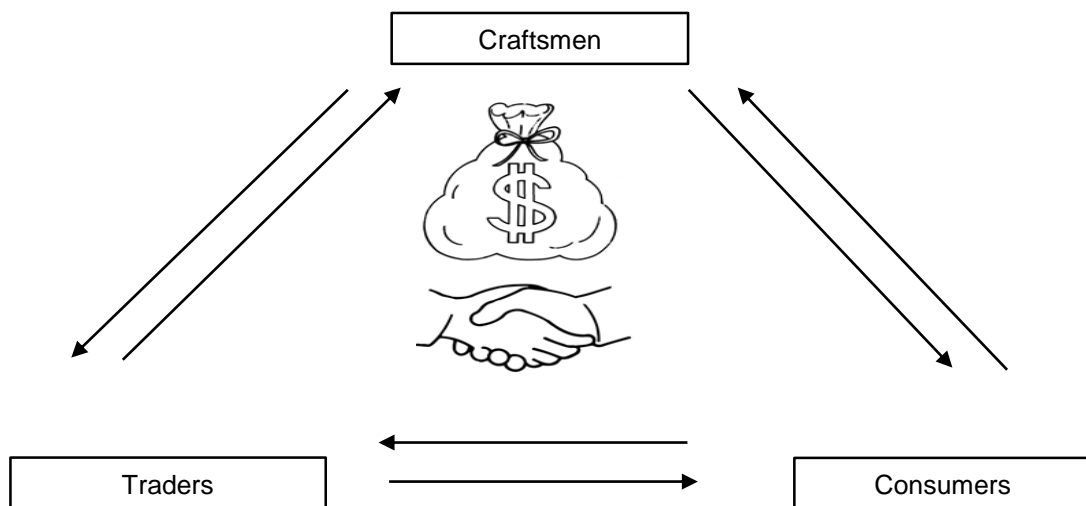


Figure 4. 3 The interaction between the relevant people in crafts economy, designed by the author

For the life of ceramics, economists use the quantitative approach to explore the “economic biography of ceramic”. For instance, how the exported Chinese porcelain was bought and sold. They have traditionally studied three issues: how ceramic plays in market place, how ceramists, traders, and

consumers interact with each other, and what the relationship among supply, demand, and price are. The exported Chinese porcelains were considered as lucrative objects in the trade between Asia and Europe. For Chinese local ceramists who made the exported porcelains, they not only needed to convert their craft works into items needed for subsistence, but also urgently wanted to chase profits for improving their creations; For the Dutch traders, they imported porcelain as commodities from China to Europe, to get as much money as possible for survival and development; For European consumers, they used Chinese porcelain to satisfy their physiological and/or psychological needs. Also, due to the inconvenient transport of the time, the Chinese porcelains had long been considered as luxury commodities which only the richest Europeans could afford.

Academic studies by conventional economists have long focused on the ways in which global trading between Asia and Europe was effective and often used statistical and other scientific methods (Walter, 2012). Economists may argue that there is a connection between lucrative trades, the effects of consumerism and the industrial development during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Because the sales of Chinese porcelain fetched very high prices in 1602, it encouraged the Dutch traders to develop commerce with China. The import of commodities from China stimulated the development of the European market: as the supply was increased, the European market for the consumption of ceramics expanded. Ultimately many European countries, like the Netherlands, made imitations, innovated technologies, and developed a new scale of consumption in the market. Of course, as far as the value of global commodities is concerned, the economic perspective, through the price system, tells us what goods will be produced, how to allocate them and for whom goods will be produced. But, sometimes we cannot see the whole picture. The market approach to ceramics as goods seems to be effective and efficient. Surely this is a happy ending! No, wait! Why does the worth of ceramics increase/decrease over time? Why did people terminate the agreement on the 18th century Qianlong porcelain vase? Why does market failure occur so often in the knowledge economy? And why does the market mechanism not safeguard craftsmanship? It is an undeniable fact that economists do a good job as far as the social science discipline of economics is concerned, but perhaps if we tried to look for the whole picture, we may find that there is a relationship between the tip and the rest of the iceberg that still remains to surprise and surpass our expectations. (See Figure 4.4).

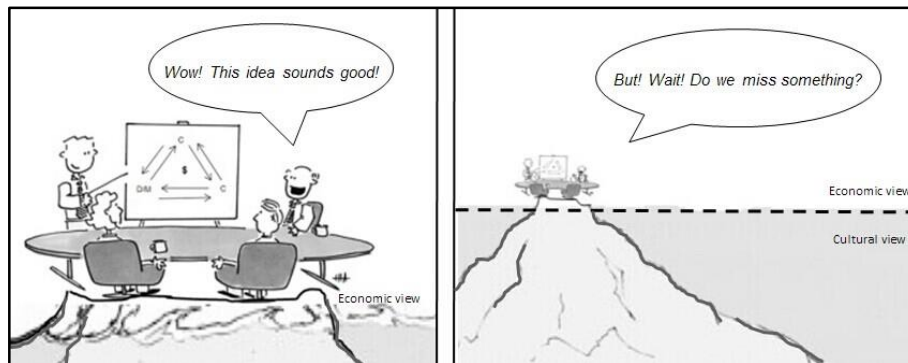


Figure 4. 4 Is the economic talk just “the tip of the iceberg”?, designed by the author

Most culturalists consider the life of ceramics as the epitome of the global trading between Asia and Europe. Although at the beginning Chinese porcelain was imported to Europe as a status-enhancing luxury object, it soon became a commodity and eventually was emulated by European manufacturers. Though it appears ceramics were commoditized in Europe, many cultural scholars do not agree that the conventional principle of supply and demand can fully explain the European craze for Chinese porcelain and what influenced its continuing success in the market (e.g: Corbeiller, 1968, 1974; Tidswell, 1979; Blaszczyk, 1984; Finlay, 1998). From their cultural viewpoint, questions of development and fusion, diversity and creativity, harmony and conflict, symbol and identity come into focus. In *Culture and Consumption* (1986), Grant McCracken argued that “consumer goods have a significance that goes beyond their utilitarian character and commercial value” and that “this significance rests largely in their ability to carry and communicate cultural meaning” (p. 71).

On the value of ceramics, culturalists may consider the aesthetic experience, something that is quite different than what economists pay attention to. Recall that the evidence of cultural blending of Asia and Europe, blue-and-white porcelain (青花瓷), is seen as a long-term consequence of cross-cultural exchange between Asia and Europe. It not only has captivated Europeans, but also has important meanings beyond its economic value. Around 1300, Jingdezhen produced for the first time a large amount of blue-and-white porcelain for export to the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Chinese craftsmen ingeniously appropriated the traditional aesthetic values of the Islamic world into Chinese exported porcelain. In order to cater to the export market, they not only started combining Persian cobalt with the translucent white quality of Chinese porcelain, but also adopted Islamic styles into the shape and

decoration<sup>64</sup>. However, in the beginning, the Chinese domestic market could not accept the blue-and-white porcelain and regarded it as a vulgar commodity. But gradually Chinese craftsmen infused their native designs into the porcelain<sup>65</sup>. Then Chinese blue-and-white porcelain rapidly developed with its own traditions and culture, and it not only opened up the Islamic market, but also ignited a mania in Europe (See Figure 4.5).



Figure 4. 5 Chinese exported porcelain bowls (Jingdezhen, China, 1550-1600, image taken from:  
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/> )

It cannot be denied that as the ceramic trade between China and Europe flourished, Chinese blue-and-white greatly influenced the development of a local ceramic industry. When in 1602, Portuguese carrack ships were captured by the Dutch, and also include thousands of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain. Then, these porcelains were auctioned, and sparked the enthusiasm of Europeans. At the same time, the European ceramic industry also suffered a severe setback due to the import of Chinese porcelain. This setback necessitated local manufacturers to urgently imitate the Chinese porcelain exports so that they could satisfy the preference of consumers. For instance, Dutch Delft Blue which denotes the blue-and-white pottery made in and around Delft in the Netherlands is the best bridge connecting the Far East with the Western world. Around the 17<sup>th</sup> century, even though Dutch craftsmen had not discovered the Chinese secret of true porcelain or porcelain-making with hard paste, they tried very hard to copy Chinese exported porcelain, selling their chinoiserie pottery to, amongst others, all of the royal families

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<sup>64</sup> In *The Pilgrim Art*, it mentioned “Jingdezhen produce huge quantities of blue-and-white porcelain for export. The potters turned out utensils—such as large dishes, wine jars, ewers, tankards, gourd-shaped bottles, basins, platter stands, and massive vases—that were alien to Chinese taste” and “they decorated many items with designs from Islamic culture, such as arabesques, vine-and-leaf motif and renditions of Arabic calligraphy”

<sup>65</sup> In *The Chinese Potter*, it showed many blue-and-white porcelains, which are with Chinese traditional forms (such as peony, winter-sweet flower, dragon, Pica-pica, and Chinese figures)

throughout Europe<sup>66</sup>. Because the war between the Ming and Qing dynasty in China interrupted their ceramic trade, Dutch manufacturers needed to meet the satisfaction of local consumers, which was more urgent than at any other times. The production of Dutch craftsmen in Delft shifted from tile to imitated Chinese porcelain. The Delft Blue chinoiserie figures are therefore seen as translations of Chinese culture (See Figure 4.6), and as copies of Chinese porcelains<sup>67</sup>. However, an interesting phenomenon occurred when the ceramics trade between China and the Netherlands was re-opened. Chinese craftsmen in the Qing dynasty started to copy European objects in shapes and decorations. Because many of the elaborate Chinese porcelain manufacturing secrets were uncovered throughout Europe by the French Jesuit father François Xavier d'Entrecolles<sup>68</sup> from the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the European ceramic industry was gradually prospering, the Chinese government lost its monopoly status. In order to win the European market, the Chinese tried to produce porcelain for export that was based on European dietary habits and aesthetic backgrounds (See Figure 4.7). To a certain extent, the interaction between Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue proves that culture, like flowing water, can keep going and influence each other in global trade.



Figure 4. 6 Tin-glazed earthenware painted in blue (Delft, the Netherlands, 1660-1690, images taken from: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>)

<sup>66</sup> Robert D. Aronson and Suzanne M.R. Lambooy, *Dutch Delftware---facing east: oriental sources for Dutch delftware chinoiserie figures*

<sup>67</sup> Please check *Dutch Delftware---facing east: oriental sources for Dutch delftware chinoiserie figures*, we can get more details about Delft chinoiserie figures, p.4-43

<sup>68</sup> François Xavier d'Entrecolles, (Chinese name: 殷弘绪) (1664-1741), was a French Jesuit priest. He learned the Chinese techniques of manufacturing porcelain through his investigations in China at Jingdezhen. He wrote two letters which present a first-hand perspective of Chinese porcelain as he tried to uncover the secrets of manufacturing at Jingdezhen.



Figure 4. 7 Chinese exported porcelains (Kangxi reign and Qianlong reign, Qing dynasty, China, images taken from: <http://www.santoslondon.com/>)

But, the alert reader will notice that few culturalists look into the economic impact of supply and demand in the global trade. If we label Chinese porcelain only as a culture, distanced from commerce, we cannot know enough about the relevant people making choices in commercial transactions.

Accordingly, we need that cultural economists are involved in a conversation. Beyond the economic aspects of the ongoing commercial trade, Alberto Santos, an expert on Chinese exported porcelain, said “*it was interesting that the European factories copied the Chinese shapes and the Chinese also copied European shapes*”. The life of ceramics as physical evidence records that the economic exchange movement is also the process of assimilation of language, imagination, art, culture, beliefs and values.

Beyond the economic benefit of global trade between Asia and Europe, this cultural fusion also had a profound impact on the daily life of people in the past, present and the future. In modern-day society, many style-conscious European shops borrow from the blue-and-white idea to invent new cultural meanings in their products (See Figure 4.8). Tracing the result of this trade, we see that it not only greatly influenced the development of ceramics on an economic scale, but also extended to new fields (e.g. design) where new cultures and new values may reside.





Figure 4. 8 Design in blue-and-white (images taken from: <http://www.becomegorgeous.com/> ; <http://www.laurabielecki.com/> ; <http://thehappyhousemanifesto.blogspot.nl/> )

#### 4.2.2.2. Ceramics and people

From the cultural economics perspective, the life of ceramics is a cultural-cognitive process: ceramics can not only be commercially exchanged, but also be culturally endowed with meanings in practical activities. Because Chinese and Europeans have different experiences, beliefs, customs, habits and desires, the exported Chinese porcelain impacted their own culture as a tool of cross-cultural encounter. The consequence of this trade tends to be implicit and implied rather than clearly reflects the external benefit through economic algorithms and models.

Jingdezhen, the most important manufacturing and marketing location of Chinese porcelain around the 16<sup>th</sup> century, had a great number of populations, and no doubt most people were engaged in the business of porcelain. The local craftsmen produced works to not only serve the domestic market, but also to export to other countries like Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Italy, the Netherlands and so on. Shimao Wang (王世懋)<sup>69</sup> described this porcelain city filled with smoke and lights everywhere<sup>70</sup>. The boisterous crowd was unceasingly busy in making, storing and transporting porcelains. This noisy scene was also mentioned in *Chinese Porcelain from Jingdezhen* (1997), “*The town is producing imperial porcelain for the entire country, couriers are coming and going day and night, officials are arriving from everywhere;*

<sup>69</sup> Shimao Wang 王世懋 (1536-1588), was a famous litterateur in Ming Dynasty.

<sup>70</sup> In 二酉委譚, it recorded “景德镇官窑设焉，天下窑器所聚，其民繁富甲于一省，余尝以分守督运至，其地万捣之声殷地，火光烛天，夜令人不能寝，戏目之曰四时雷电镇”

*traders do their business incessantly, the northern route seems to be too narrow for all this traffic.*<sup>71</sup>

Beyond the immediate impact of global trade, it is not hard to say that Chinese porcelain exports have impacted local people's lives and have also promoted social interactions between China and other countries.

In *The Social Life of Things* (1986), Arjun Appadurai suggested that the meanings of objects “are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories...” (p.5). In order to better discover values and meanings of Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue, I look beyond them as material commodities; attempt to follow their trajectories to track some of the processes by which they were produced, transported, bought, used and disposed and uncover the interactions among relevant people in production, distribution and consumption.



Figure 4. 9 Chinese export porcelains, and with the details (in 1770-1790, Qianlong reign, Qing dynasty, China , images taken from: <http://www.santoslondon.com/>; <http://www.britishmuseum.org/>)

<sup>71</sup> This sources is translated from “成化窑烧造记录考-Reconstructing Chenghua Porcelain from Historical Records”

## Craftsmen

In the sphere of production, as I mentioned in chapter 3, craftsmen play a primary role in the manufacturing of ceramics. Besides the shape-forming skill, ceramics production has a number of other requirements, such as the ability to recognize the properties of different clays, to skillfully apply decorative techniques, and to control the duration and temperature of firing. Each of these requirements needs craftsmen to perfectly use a skilled hand, heart, and head to transform suitable materials into finished products. At the same time, the quality of ceramics is also strongly linked with social interaction. Export Chinese porcelain was seen to not only be influenced by Chinese cultural background, but also reflected the physical and emotional requirements of Europeans.

For Chinese craftsmen, the export porcelains as commodities were both economically and culturally important. Since these craftsmen lived at the bottom of the hierarchical society in China at that time, they had to make ceramics as a means of livelihood. If they made mistakes during the process of production, they would not only be punished during the inspection, but their salaries also would be deducted. Based on a special bureaucratic structure, these craftsmen had to take orders from the inspectors who were responsible for the quality of the porcelain. Therefore, on the one hand, the manipulation of clay by craftsmen into Chinese porcelain has both impacted the local culture as well as been influenced by China's own symbolic ideologies in its motifs and designs. But on the other hand, in order to earn their salary, Chinese craftsmen also had to extend the porcelain export business to cater to the European market by imitating unique pictorial and figurative styles that are totally alien to the traditional Chinese culture.

Although in the beginning, Chinese porcelains were exported to Europe as oriental commodities, they were gradually infiltrated by European cultures and customs. Particularly, from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese craftsmen produced European figurines with color, such as a Dutch couple for export to Europe (See Figure 4.9). Due to a cultural fusion, this Qing exported porcelain depicted a Dutch couple where the gentleman had Asian eyes and wore European clothes, and the lady wore a Chinese lady's dress and had a European hairstyle. Even in polychrome porcelain they tried to imitate the laws of western perspective to show a realistic visual that was different from the traditional Chinese perspective. The punchbowl is decorated with scenes of the trading offices of the western traders at Canton in China (See Figure 4.9). Since the Chinese craftsmen lacked the knowledge of non-Euclidean

geometry in which parallel lines meet at infinity<sup>72</sup>, the roof, the corridor and the road were presented without a three-dimensional geometry. Interestingly, despite the complaint of François Xavier d'Entrecolles that Chinese painters “*know nothing of the beautiful rules of art...*”, nearly a 100 million pieces of porcelains arrived in European countries between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Consumers

Since 1461, when a small amount of Ming blue-and-white porcelain was presented as a gift from the Sultan of Egypt to Doge Pasquale Malipiero of Venice, Europeans started to covet Chinese porcelain. From Portuguese traders to Dutch traders, they successively reached China to obtain porcelains. In the early days, before the Europeans explored the secrets of manufacturing porcelain, Chinese porcelain had been recognized as a “mystery”, “fabulous”, and “amazing” object by western people. In Richard Hakluyt<sup>73</sup>'s second edition of *The Principal Navigations (1598-1600)*, it described that “...(*porcelain*) is the best earthen matter in all the world, for three qualities; namely, the cleanness, the beauty, and the strength thereof.” (p. 215) Volker wrote “*porcelain was enthusiastically welcomed, as here was a ware against which no native pottery could hold its own. The special qualities of the Chinese porcelain, its impermeability and cleanness, its practical beauty and relative cheapness, soon made it extremely popular. Although the Directors of the Company in later decades did not think so well of porcelain as their precursors had at the opening of the century, and had now come to regard it as a merchandise of but little consequence, its popularity in Europe never waned*” (Volker, T. 1971, p. 225). According to the historical record<sup>74</sup>, at least 16 million pieces of Chinese porcelain was exported to Europe from 1602 to 1682.

In the sphere of consumption, Chinese porcelain was not only once considered as a very popular commodity, but also held an important role in inspiring the development of new ideas about life habits, cooking culture and collecting in Europe. The form and shape of exported Chinese porcelain met the requirements of Europeans for individual servings on the table. It promoted the shipment of large amounts of porcelain from China to Europe. Meanwhile, praises from Matteo Ricci<sup>75</sup>, about how

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<sup>72</sup> In *A Note on Perspective in Chinese Painting (1927)*, it mentioned “*in the West, perspective is achieved by directing the lines of the drawing toward two hypothetical vanishing points, with the result that lines parallel or equidistant in nature are convergent on the picture plan. This type of projection depends upon the non-Euclidian definition of parallel lines as lines that meet at infinity. The projection of a point at infinity in a line is a finite point, so the meeting point of the parallel lines becomes projected as a finite point known as a vanishing point*”, but “*in China, they make the lines that are parallel or equidistant in the object, parallel or equidistant in the drawing of the object.*”

<sup>73</sup> Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616), was an English scholar, priest, writer, and geographer. His book ‘*The Principal Navigations*’ was about voyages and discoveries of the English Nation. The first edition was published in 1589, and the second edition was published from 1598-1600.

<sup>74</sup> The record was mentioned in *Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade (1982)*, by Jörg. C.J.A

<sup>75</sup> Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), was an Italian Jesuit priest and one of the founding figures of the Jesuit China mission.

porcelain could “bear *the heat of hot foods without cracking*” and “hold liquids without any leakage”<sup>76</sup> prompted the European consumers who were receptive to accepting new things and experiences to discover that porcelain wares were the best utensils to contain food, such as meat, coffee, tea, and chocolate (See Figure 4.10 and 4.11). Europeans generally agreed that metal vessels would impair the natural flavor of food, even though this idea had already been proposed by the Chinese elite during the Song Dynasty (960-1279AD). To an extent, this consumption of Chinese porcelain in the European market offers us a way to understand how European life was influenced by the chinoiserie object.



Figure 4. 10 *Still life with cheese* (by Floris van Dijck, c.1615, oil on panel, 82.2cmx111.2cm, image taken from: <http://dardel.info/museum/Museum2.html>)



Figure 4. 11 *Lady eating oysters* (by Jan Haviksz Steen, c.1658-1660, oil on panel, 14.5cmx20.5cm, image taken from: <http://www.wikiart.org/en/jan-steen/girl-eating-oysters-1660>)

<sup>76</sup> Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century: the Journals of Matthew Ricci 1583-1610*, trans. Louis J. Gallagher, forward by Richard J. Cushing, New York: Random House, 1953

With an increase in commercialization, it was not only the Chinese craftsmen that continued to produce porcelains for the European market, but also the Europeans who revived their own ceramics industries to imitate and compete with Chinese exported porcelains and even sold to China and other Asian countries. During this vibrant period of commercial trade between Europe and Asia, people consciously and unconsciously interacted with each other, borrowing, diffusing and assimilating different ideas and culture.

### **Traders**

In our research of the ceramics trade between China and Europe, we are used to seeing the relationship between craftsmen and consumers. However, although the exported porcelain was produced by Chinese craftsmen, and was appreciated by European consumers, the traders also played crucial roles in the transaction of porcelain from country to country (from China to Europe) and from region to region (from Antwerp, Lisbon, and Amsterdam to other European cities).

1. Thanks to the frequent trade between China and Europe, Chinese porcelain was readily available in the local European markets, although it was relatively inaccessible to the average European in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.
2. Due to the trading restrictions of the Chinese government during the civil war between Ming and Qing, it gave the local European ceramics industry a chance to innovate their own knowledge and technologies. This is why from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Dutch Delft Blue developed a great deal.
3. Without telephones, computers and other digital technologies, traders built a bridge between China and Europe, boosting economic growth as well as promoting cross-cultural communication.

In short, due to the trade between Asia (i.e. China) and Europe (i.e. the Netherlands), craftsmen, traders and consumers did not get merely material benefits through commercial transactions, but also mutually influenced each other through social interactions. This had an impact on the quality of the final products, which as a medium were regarded as a special conveyor of cultural, ritual, aesthetic and social values.

#### 4.2.2.3. Social talk and social life

From a cultural economics perspective, in order to better understand the life of Chinese porcelain, it is necessary not only to trace the trajectories and discover the production process, the distribution path and the impact of consumption, but also realize that their values were determined by social interactions among different involved people.

In *Ape and Human Cognition* (2010), Tomasello and Herrmann mention that “*virtually all of humans highest cognitive achievements are not the work of individuals acting alone but rather of individuals collaborating in groups*” (p.5). For example, chimpanzees could use simple tools to make their lives easier (they often use leaves as a tool to contain water), and would also selectively share drink and food with reciprocating partners, but, *Homo sapiens* would not only culturally construct the final product to satisfy physiological and psychological needs, but also intentionally build a social conversation to value, evaluate and valorize it. In the life of ceramics, all the people involved are likely to create, transfer and increase/decrease values through their interactions in the social environment. In the history of Asia – Europe trade, the discovery of Chinese porcelain by the Europeans is a significant event when this commodity became a social object with an important attribute beyond utilitarian purposes. During this time, porcelain was formed, developed and evolved in a social conversation; in other words, its values would be achieved by the talking of its social life.

By focusing on ceramics as a long term consequence of social interactions, I demonstrate how the values of Chinese exported porcelain flowed continuously into Asia-Europe conversations. Although Chinese porcelain occupied an important position in the history of human civilizations, when the ceramics were exported into other countries, it was greatly influenced by local traditions. Chinese export porcelain got its shape and decoration by virtue of being transformed by numerous anonymous Chinese craftsmen. Due to the auction in Amsterdam of thousands of porcelain items captured at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the Dutch from two Portuguese carracks, the *San-Yago* and the *Santa-Catarina*, a “China Mania” was ignited all over Europe for Chinese porcelain. The consequence of the porcelain auctions that followed this impelled many western countries to expand their business to China and build their own offices as commercial agents (See Figure 4.12). In order to meet the requirements of the Europeans, Chinese inspectors would instruct craftsmen to produce and export porcelain in accordance with the “*Requirements*” of European consumers. Under these conditions, Chinese export porcelain

began to be gradually produced in style and decoration from the native to the foreign. Chinese craftsmen translated the ideas of their consumers and materialized their view of the social world to please the capricious European public (See Figure 4.13).



Figure 4. 12 *View of the Canton Factories* (by William Daniel, c.1805-1806, images take from:  
[http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise\\_fall\\_canton\\_04/gallery\\_places/index.htm](http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise_fall_canton_04/gallery_places/index.htm))

Chinese porcelain has served as the lens that captured the change of aesthetic tendencies and living habits of Europeans. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese export porcelain was considered as a status symbol for the upper class European aristocrats and officials. From a famous part of the poem, we can see how crazy Europeans were about Chinese ware:





Figure 4. 13 Porcelain manufacture series in Canton (Peabody Essex Museum, Photo by Jeffrey R. Dykes, 2007 , images taken from: [https://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise\\_fall\\_canton\\_04/cw\\_gal\\_03\\_thumb.html](https://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise_fall_canton_04/cw_gal_03_thumb.html))

*“What ecstasies her bosom fire!  
How her eyes languish with desire!  
How blest, how happy should I be,  
Were that fond glance bestow’d on me!  
New doubts and fears within me war:  
What rival’s near? A China jar.  
China’s the passion of her soul;  
A cup, a plate, a dish, a bowl,  
Can kindle wishes in her breast,  
Inflame with joy, or break her rest.  
...”*

*[To a Lady on Her Passion for Old China, from John Gay (1685-1732)]*

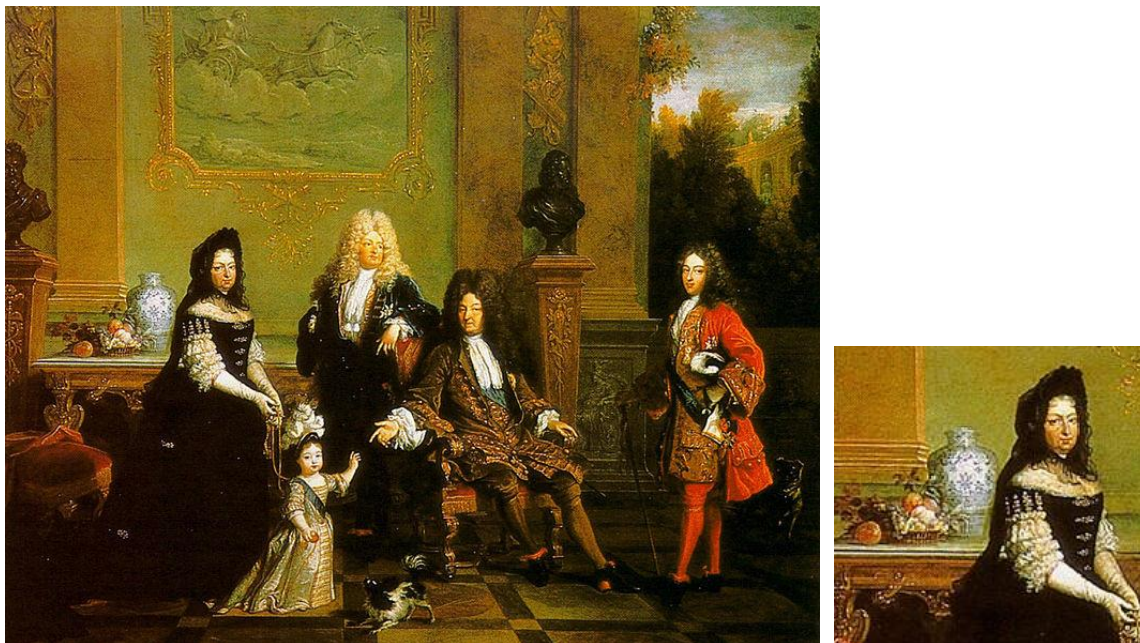


Figure 4. 14 *Louis XIV and His Family* and its detail with porcelain (by Nicolas de Largillière, c.1711, oil on panel, in the Wallace Collection, London, Credit: Reproduced by permission of the trustees of the Wallace Collection, London; photograph, J.R. Freeman & Co. Ltd. image taken from: [http://www.marcmaison.com/architectural-antiques-resources/louis\\_xiv\\_style](http://www.marcmaison.com/architectural-antiques-resources/louis_xiv_style))

The Europeans were fascinated by Chinese porcelain and showed off their collections to emphasize their wealth and prominent social positions (See Figure 4.14). But when the VOC brought back a large amount of porcelain items to the Netherlands in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the role of porcelain in social life dramatically changed from a luxury good to common tableware. Because porcelain was not only ornamental but also quite easy to clean, Europeans got used to porcelain for eating and drinking in daily

life (See Figure 4.15). By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the demand for porcelain had rapidly increased. However, due to the reorganization at Jingdezhen during the Kangxi reign (1662-1722) and Yongzheng reign (1722-1735), technical innovation in Chinese ceramics began to have a tremendous impact on the taste of consumers: blue-and-white gradually declined in popularity, but new types of porcelain in polychrome colors developed and prospered. Around the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a large proportion of the export porcelain to Europe was in enamel color schemes (See Figure 4.9). In the European market, blue-and-white was considered as old-fashioned work and Europeans no longer regarded it as their favorite.

As is evident from the discussion above, in the trade between Asia and Europe, craftsmen and consumers held a close social connection that was mainly embodied in a cooperative, coordinative and restrictive relationship. When Chinese ceramics entered and moved through the spheres of production and consumption, traders played an important role in this global commercial exchange. As an international trade company, VOC imported about 43 million pieces of Chinese porcelain to Europe from the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Finlay, R. 1998). It not only spread Chinese porcelain around Europe, but also bridged the links between the social life of the East and the West. But, while on the one hand, VOC was mainly in charge of transferring the requirements of European consumers to Chinese craftsmen, on the other hand, it was restricted by the Chinese government and the European market. In the later years of the Qianlong reign (1794), the Chinese government prohibited people from using kaolin clay because its over-exploitation was not good for the environment. The quality of Chinese export porcelain sharply deteriorated at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but at the same time many European ceramics industries did very well. It led to a slack in the demand for Chinese ceramics and VOC lost its important position in the commercial trade of Chinese porcelain. Chinese porcelain scarcely received attention, but it gave other ceramics (such as Dutch Delft Blue) a great opportunity to further develop and prosper, to the extent that they were even exported back to China.



Figure 4. 15 *An English Family at Tea* and its detail with porcelain (by Joseph van Aken, c.1725, oil on panel, image taken from: <http://www.authentic-decor.com/blog/2015/4/26/the-curious-mystery-of-the-teapots-in-the-paintings>)

By tracing the shifting values of ceramics, I not only agree that the commoditization of ceramics can bring a significant economic effect, but I will also present a chart about the life of ceramics in relation to the Asian-Europe conversation, revealing how the people interact with each other. It is impossible to say that people are independent and totally isolated in a complex society. Particularly, in the trade between China and the Netherlands (See Figure 4.16), this shows what I discussed in chapter 3 about the social life of commodities. The involved people were the active agents who participated in the process of the formation and transformation of values of ceramics. They followed a social order where they influenced each other and socially constructed meanings in ceramics. Meanwhile, numerous values are often socially displayed by the means of interaction among various involved people and not just in the object itself.

In the coming section, I will further see what kinds of values are discursive in the world of culture, especially crafts, and further interpret how a human-based conversation can be established in involved people's talk.

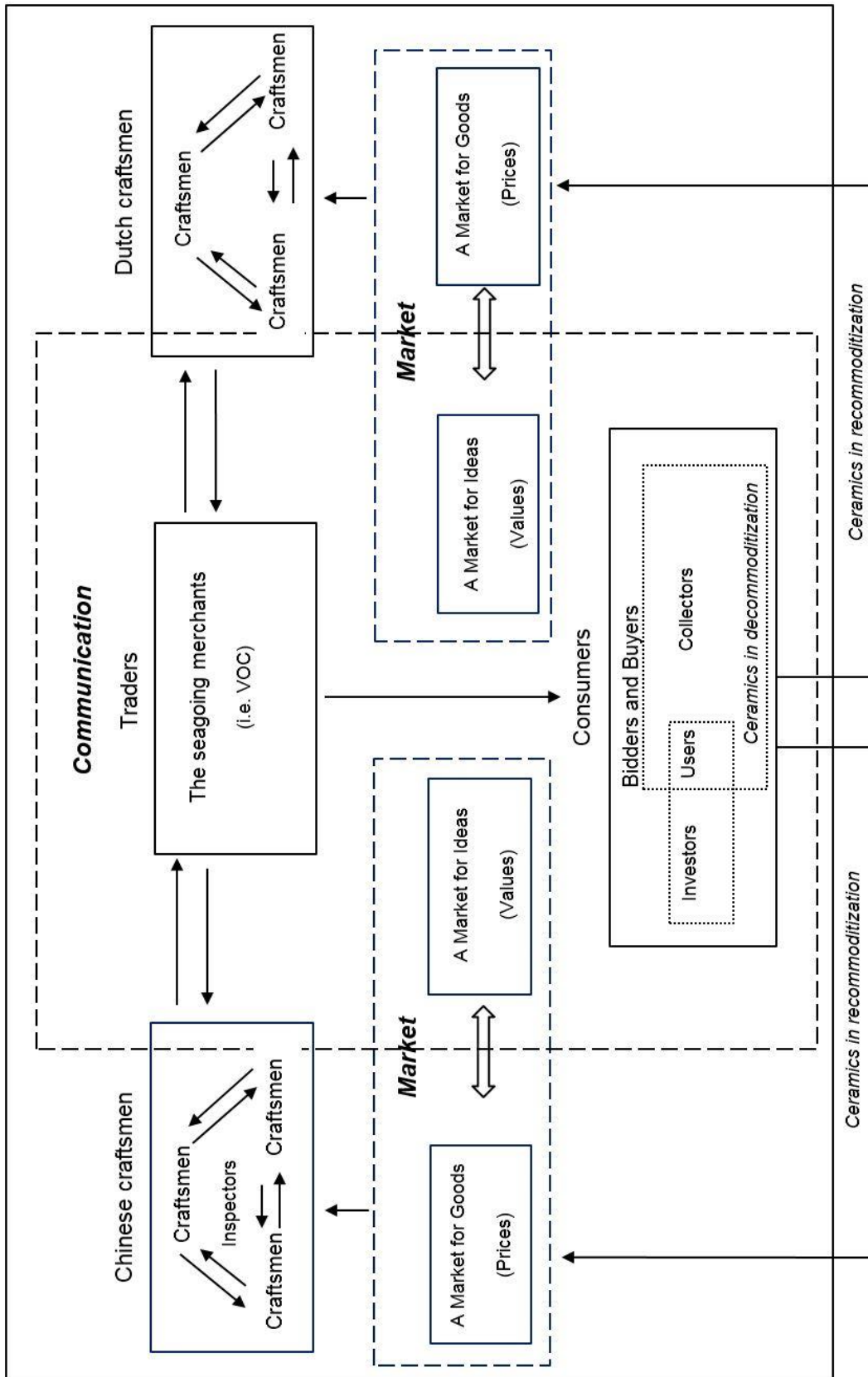


Figure 4. 16 Social network of lives of ceramics in the trade between China and the Netherlands in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, designed by the author

### 4.2.3. Ceramics in a human-based conversation

As I mentioned in 2.6, values of ceramics in the trade between China and the Netherlands can be seen to derive from their own attributes (i.e. material, provenience and hand-made quality), and came about from the interactions among all the people involved. During the life of Chinese porcelain /Dutch Delft Blue, various kinds and large amounts of human labor was invested in their production; people continually deliberated and negotiated with each other in their exchanges; and in their consumption they were be once again evaluated by each user. In other words, the life of Chinese porcelain /Dutch Delft Blue is also the life of values.

Blue-and-white porcelains were adopted from the Middle East, germinated and grown in China, developed and flourished in Western Europe. To review the significance of ceramics in the daily life of people in general, and the influence of ceramics on the trade between China and the Netherlands specifically, I want to emphasize the question of how their values were realized. As cultural goods, Chinese ceramics/Dutch Delft Blue were both established in conversation and their values implicitly expressed in human activities. When the Dutch captured the Portuguese carracks and dispersed their cargo (porcelain) by auction in Amsterdam, people in the European country were rapidly infected by “porcelain disease”. It stimulated porcelain trade between China and the Netherlands through VOC. As the trade between Chinese merchants and the Dutch people, values of ceramics developed and evolved by what happened in the lives of these export porcelains. Sometimes these values could be appreciated more because of shortage, but sometimes these values could be appreciated less because of over-consumption.

Even though values are hard to nail down<sup>77</sup> because of them ceramics as cultural goods could not be fully commercialized. It still inevitably takes our eyes off economic value toward other values. Subsequently, we also have to face not one but three related questions: (1) why did Europe import Chinese porcelain? (2) how did the trade between China and the Netherlands change by social interactions? (3) what impact did ceramics, as cultural goods, have on the exporting and importing societies?

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<sup>77</sup> Arjo Klamer, *A Reevaluation of Values in Economics, Society and Economy* (2003d), V.21, No.4,

#### **4.2.3.1. Discourse on Values**

Over the past several years, more and more scholars who travel on the road of values have concentrated on the importance of values in human life (Smith, 1988; Connor, 1992; Anderson, 1993; Klamer, 1996; Hutter, 1996; Throsby, 2001). Their studies also have shown that values are generated, produced, sustained, and perceived in people's activities; values permeate almost all aspects of daily life. Like many cultural movements of consequence, when ceramics as cultural goods enter and move through the processes of production, distribution and consumption, many values evolve. I want to interpret a range of values in the life of ceramics, looking especially at values in discursive constructs as being "inescapable" and not only existing in the physical material, but also active in people's talk, deliberation, conversation, and even controversy.

Chinese export porcelain can evoke powerful symbols of nationalism and nativism, not only in fixing social and political statuses, but also in transmitting knowledge, meaning, and power. Also Dutch Delft Blue can embody ideological codes and specific connotations. It is no surprise that they both, as cultural goods, played important roles in history. However, in almost any museum, whether Chinese porcelain or Dutch Delft Blue is rarely tagged with price. But it doesn't stop visitors to contribute their time and energy, and to valuing its inherent values, even though these visitors could not buy or own it. Apparently, as I previously mentioned the figure 4.21, besides in market of goods, people would like to participate in market of ideas.

Beyond the economic value in a commercial transaction, others inherent values also attract the attention of people. That is why, I suggest we need to firstly consider these inherent values of ceramics, and also distinguish them into five types, which cluster to interconnect with each other and continually generate new values in people's valuation, evaluation, and valorization:

##### **Existence value**

Existence value is not merely the value that people may attach to the knowledge of the existence of objects, but also one that often gives rise to new values in conversations among people who know, use, and care for it. Just like we can acquire knowledge from books, or can get satisfied from foods, or can get pleasure from art works.

In earlier research, Smith explains that existence value means most people, animals and things exist in order to present themselves to others (Smith, T. 2008). This value is the most fundamental and intuitionistic element of an object, referring to material, texture, color, appearance and so on. An excellent dancer must be skilled enough to use rhythmical expression, steps, gestures, and movements for performing aesthetically. By the same token, works of ceramics rely on the clays, the colors, the styles, the shapes and the forms to exist. A ceramic is made and displayed through existential processes that are essential to its life. For instance, even though pottery and porcelain both consist of crystalline solid, glass state, and bubble, their materials have many differences in thickness, density, absorption and so on. Because pottery is normally fired at temperatures between 950°C and 1200°C while porcelain should be between 1250°C and 1400°C, craftsmen need the expertise to control and time the firing temperatures. Because of the different manufacturing processes, the physical appearance of porcelain has more brittleness and whiteness than pottery. During the making process of ceramics, craftsman use intellectual knowledge and professional skill to endow natural material with soul and life. In other words, even though a ceramic pot is made of clay, but the pot is the expression of inner emotion and cultural practice of craftsman.

According to the Canadian Privy Council' suggestion, existence value is "*a concept used to refer to the intrinsic value of some asset, normally natural/environmental. And it is the value of the benefits derived from the asset's existence alone...*" (Ray, S.J. and Maier, K. 2017, p. 110) It states that existence value which looks as if it is separate from other values, exists in an objective world. That may be so, but I want to further emphasize that, although existence value exists independently, it is always closely linked with the development and evolution of the other values in a subjective world, which are realized from any use or potential use of the asset. That is, when we see ceramics, touch them, feel them, and experience them, we would enter into an interactive communication with these physical objects and get new values from emotionally engaging experience during the value-based conversation. Even when a ceramic could be smashed or destroyed and its existence value would be lost, but some new values might emerge from the follow-up story, such as Weiwei Ai's work (See Figure 2.5), which mentioned in chapter 2.



## Aesthetic value

Aesthetic value is a kind of value that requires subjective evaluation; this value is often hidden behind physical appearances, but appears in perceptual experiences; this value can bring pleasure to people who are admiring the work; it no doubt needs to be achieved by consciously appreciating and valuing.

This value is about the psychological experience in our appreciation of works and relates to beauty, passion, harmony, elegance, unity and other aesthetic characteristics. In Walton's *Toward a Theory of Aesthetic Value* (1993), the notion of aesthetic value is about the capacity to elicit aesthetic pleasure in appreciators, such as enjoyment, satisfaction, and gratification:

*“Aesthetic” pleasure includes the pleasure of finding something valuable, of admiring it. One appreciates the work. One does not merely enjoy it; one takes pleasure or delight in judging it to be good”*

*[Kendall L. Walton (1993, p.504)]*

He says these experiences should be about an intrinsic effect; they are different from the pleasure that one experience by taking a hot shower or walking around the block. The experience of aesthetic value is also the process of discovering, appreciating, and admiring valuable things. For many scholars, aesthetic value is often connected with personal preferences (Walton, 1993; Shusterman, 2008; Wilde, 2008). Based on the subjective senses, aesthetic value needs to be treated phenomenally and perceived, even if the quality of the object is already recognized and known by the public. Comparing with nutritious value, every person can get vitamins and minerals from vegetables as long as they are eating the meal, but aesthetic value needs to be appreciated by experiential knowledge. For instance, the aesthetic value of Chinese porcelain may lie in their physical properties and expressive elements, but it also requires a subjective response, not a rational calculation. That is why the former British owner of the 18th Century Qianlong porcelain vase did not understand its aesthetic value and almost totally ignored it, and then they assessed the vase at a low price before the auction. Their lack of a professional sensibility and rich experiences explains that they hardly perceived those values of the vase that come about from aesthetic judgment.

As a result, to aware the aesthetic value of crafts, this is at stake. Whether aesthetic value can be realized, it depends on different stakeholders (Klamer, A. 2003c). Just like, someone who do not understand the world of culture would not willing to pay Yongqing Ye's an ugly bird painting<sup>78</sup>, but

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<sup>78</sup> Please check chapter 2 of this work, Figure 2.2

someone who have aesthetic judgment would willing to purchase this painting at a high price. For this reason, we also might see possibility of the relationship between economic and aesthetic values, and further understand why aesthetic value sometimes can be expressed in price.

### **Symbolic value**

Symbolic value is derived within a dialogic context, where the object is produced, distributed, and consumed; this value is hidden in physical object; this value can help people enhance their concept of self by not only building their personal identity to differentiate themselves from others, but also by shaping their societal identity so that they feel a strong sense of belonging to community, religion, team, organization, or other groups.

Ceramics may convey certain social and cultural meanings to others, enabling them to symbolically build a specific identity and helping the consumer be accepted by society or a reference group<sup>79</sup>. Early Chinese porcelains appear to have been traded in Europe primarily because they were seen as vehicles that had special properties to transfer some meanings and values. Around the 16th century, many members of the European royalty and elites were attracted by Chinese porcelain, eager to possess it for displaying wealth, prestige, and power. Generally, symbolic value is imparted by the cultural system, which in turn is dynamically and interactively constructed from people's activities. Since the first Portuguese traders reached China, Chinese blue-and-white porcelains have been described as "white gold" and have played an important role in cross-cultural exchange. The symbolic value of porcelain to Europeans had been defined by its conspicuous character to reflect the differentiation of a user from others through the use of the porcelain. During the process of consumption, Chinese porcelain had been considered as "luxury goods", with significances that were beyond their physical functions.

In other words, ceramics as cultural goods not only have measurable properties such as hardness, toughness, density, dielectric constant, and so on, but also refer to a set of symbolic structures. As stated by David Throsby (2001), symbolic value can help people to build their identities and to express the corresponding personality traits. When people think of the purchase of Chinese porcelain as being

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<sup>79</sup> In *Symbolic Interactionism: its effects on consumer behavior and implications for marketing strategy* (1992), it mentions that "...consumers may buy a given product for reasons other than the product's basic functional performance. People are often motivated to buy a good or service on the basis of what it represents to themselves, and to others with whom they associate or to some societal referent..."

vital for the upper class, they may purchase one just to prove that they belong to this reference group and show off their own status.

### **Social value**

The discussion about symbolic value gives us a picture that gets us to recognize values in the social sphere. In this sphere people are related with each other. A value is derived from this social interaction; we call this value a social value.

Social value is not a static one, but comes from the members of groups, tribes, communities, and societies; this value is viewed as the key component of ceramics in the social space; it is produced, maintained, enhanced, and transformed through discursive interactions. Thus, social value is often realized in the interaction among involved people, not just in the ceramics themselves.

I noted earlier in this chapter that the lives of ceramics in the Chin-Dutch trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> century had woven an intricate web of social relationships. Ceramics exist in the processes of production, distribution, and consumption. These social processes are essential to the construction of ceramics. Because the life of ceramics is a social life, it depends on the activities of groups of people. Craftsmen are actors involved in the materialization of ideology and framing of the social conversation. Traders and consumers both, as participants in this discursive conversation, talk, negotiate, accept, or controvert identities and status of ceramics as cultural goods.

As Klammer argues, in moments of everyday conversation, social value preoccupies people far more than economic value (Klammer, A. 2003c). For instance, from the figure 4.21 about social network of lives of ceramics in the trade between China and the Netherlands in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, we can see the people involved always deliberated their relationships with others, evaluating values that are important to them, and balancing different interests in social practices. “How can I translate the requirement of European consumers into Chinese porcelain?”, “Can I order the form and color of the ceramic items I want?”, “Should I actively build the identity of these export goods or not?”, “Why did they limit the number of consumers who have access to these goods?”, “Who controls the distribution of the export ceramics?” Craftsmen, traders, and consumers were constantly sharing their ideas and also thinking about the will of other people. They unconsciously enter into a social and dynamic conversation, to impart meanings

to objects through this process of interaction. The point is that, social value always is generated and stored in the relationship among involved people.

### **Authenticity value**

Authenticity value is alive in an object; this value is to express disapproval of *duplication, forgery, and imitation*; it records the specific time, specific place, specific people, and specific events associated with the object.

This value refers to the origin of ceramics, to who made it, and whether the work has an original identity. As I mentioned in 2.6.3, we can interpret a person, a story, a cultural phenomenon, or a piece of history stated in terms of the authenticity of an object. For instance, as a cultural good Chinese porcelain was not just a handmade crafts item, but it was made by particular craftsmen or professional groups, from special kaolin materials, with unique motifs and patterns, in specific cultural, social, and political conditions. At the beginning of the international trade between Asia and Europe through the VOC, the Europeans were deeply attracted to oriental ceramics, and they cared not just about the external characteristics of these ceramics, but also about the internal information and ideas. In western society, Chinese porcelains were valuable because they represented a mysterious culture and a particular social structure. As Spooner has pointed out (1986), in western society people often use objects to express individuality and build personal identity. Because of its authenticity value, original Chinese porcelain seems to have been more important than a chinoiserie duplicate porcelain. By the same token, the 18th Century Qianlong porcelain vase received quite a lot of attention from all over the world and was sold at a premium price at auction.

To a certain extent, existence, aesthetic, symbolic, social and authenticity values play different roles at each stage, while also being interconnected with each other. Any consideration of values of ceramics must follow this rule: a multiplicity of values is not constant, but can be realized, be changed, be evolved, even can generate new values through people's talk, deliberation, discussion, negotiation, and controversy.

#### 4.2.3.2. Values and human experiences

##### To value exotic culture

For Europeans, Chinese ceramics stood for values derived from exotic objects to satisfy their strong curiosity. In tracing the history of Europe, we find that European countries always had intercultural dialogues with other countries, such as China, Japan, India, and South Africa. From Chinese blue-and-white to Chinese porcelain in enamel color, European traders continually expanded their market to import foreign commodities, but ignored their own quality objects like Roman pottery<sup>80</sup>. The valuation by Europeans prompted their cultural choice. Some people were fond of Chinese ceramics because they were curious about oriental culture which was totally different from western culture; or some people were sentimentally attached to Chinese ceramics because they regarded these ceramics as prestige items; or some people took their cultural interest in Chinese ceramics because they thought ceramics were fashionable in that period. Under these circumstances, for most Europeans, Chinese ceramics were not only commercial commodities but also presented their cultural backgrounds and social identities.

Since the 16th century, Chinese ceramics had been imported by Europeans. Many European aristocrats developed “China mania” and fell in love with porcelain. For instance, Mary II<sup>81</sup>, who jointly reigned with her husband William III, collected large amounts of Chinese porcelain in the 17th century. At Kensington Palace, she had a vast accumulation of both oriental and European ceramics. Like most consumers, the collection of Queen Mary II reflected her taste and passion (Hinton, M. and Impey, O. 1998). With the flourishing of ceramics trade between China and the Netherlands by the 17th and 18th centuries, Chinese porcelain gradually became available to be bought, gained, collected, or used by all its admirers and not just the aristocrats. People were in need of discussion, negotiation, and deliberation to sort out what kinds of ceramics attracted and retained them. When Europeans choose exotic culture, it not only depended on the quality of the ceramic itself, but also on the cultural context of that ceramic, that is, the discursive construction of its existence, aesthetic, symbolic, social and authenticity values.

However, as time went on, around the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the massive amount of imported porcelain was beginning to lose its luster in Europe. A close analysis of the record of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to 18<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>80</sup> Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome: and the End of Civilization*, Oxford, 2005, p.87-120

<sup>81</sup> Mary II (30 April 1662-28 December 1694) was the first monarch to take a serious interest in ceramics. It undoubtedly not only pushed import porcelain from China, but promoted the development of Dutch Delft Blue.

research papers such as *Material Culture and the Other: European Encounters with Chinese Porcelain*<sup>82</sup>, effectively gives us a chronological track from which to figure out how European choices and cognition changed during the trade between Asia and Europe.

Through the processes of valuation, evaluation, and valorization, not only was most Europeans' interest towards this exotic culture diminishing, but they also started to unveil the secret of Chinese porcelain manufacture and tried to revive their own ceramic industries. Since Dutch craftsmen began to acquire knowledge of ceramic technology, Dutch Delft Blue developed rapidly and was even exported to China. For Europeans, this exotic Chinese culture gradually became less "mysterious", but evolved into a new hybrid culture, more "accessible" and "common".

### **To value the preference of the consumer in the market**

Then, how do we understand why Chinese porcelain craftsmen tried to imitate European ceramics, how do we understand the changing of European interest in the trade between China and the Netherlands, and how do we understand the development trajectory of Dutch Delft Blue in the past/future? I want to use a figure to display the evolving history of Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue in this international trade, to examine the relationship between the creation by the craftsman and the preference of the consumer, and further explore how Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue played into their commodification (See Figure 4.17).

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<sup>82</sup> In *Material Culture and the Other: European Encounters with Chinese Porcelain, ca. 1650-1800* (2012), Gerritsen and McDowall addressed "...Polo had described the Chinese manufacture of porcelain in amazed admiration...As Europeans began to understand better the processes of manufacture, and the objects themselves increasingly came within reach of a wider cross section of society, their awestruck admiration for the Chinese people began to break down...By the eighteenth century the steady, patient confidence of the Chinese had for Macartney and Staunton become a backward, unresponsive arrogance...", p.112-113

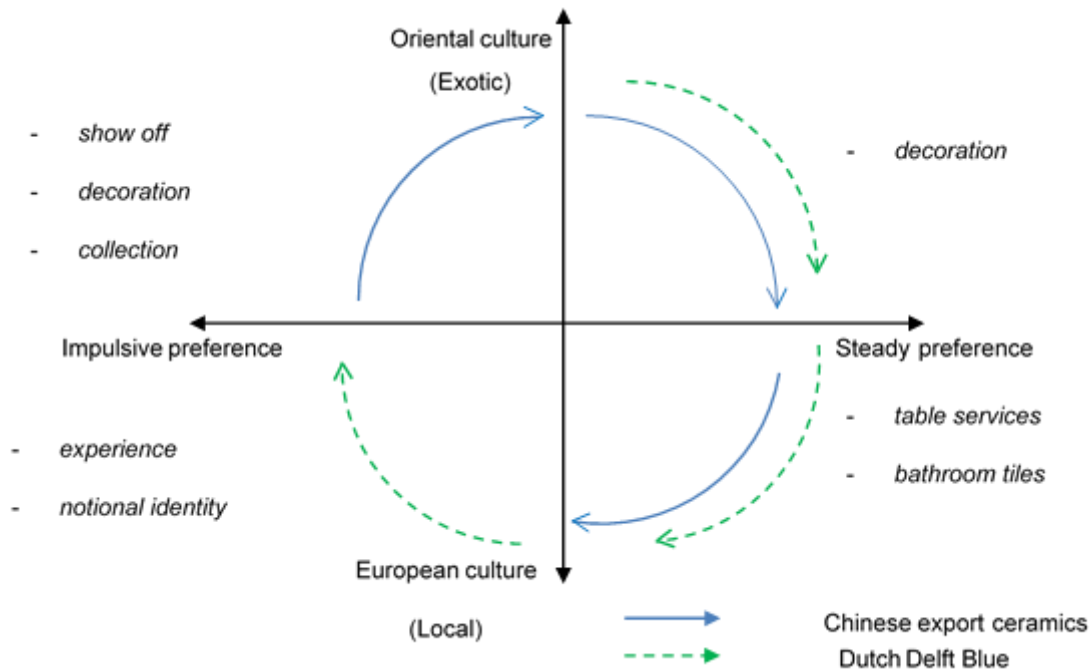


Figure 4. 17 Ceramics changes with consumers' preference, designed by the author

#### *Chinese exported porcelain*

At the beginning of the trade between China and the Netherlands, Europeans were deeply attracted by this oriental commodity. As an exotic culture, Chinese porcelain quickly became the most admired good in Europe. It received a lot of attention from the European market, and was exchanged, sold, consumed, displayed, and discussed by business men, friends, or family members. The upper class European aristocrats and officials, they preferred to use Chinese porcelain as a luxury item by which to express their social identities. But, because this conspicuous consumption was not in the daily demand schedule, the needs and tastes of consumers was impulsive and erratic.

People could not remain very interested in an unfamiliar culture for a long time, when a large number of these foreign goods flood into their lives. Because the increase of Chinese exported porcelain in Europe demystified its exotic characteristics, most Europeans gradually lost their admiration for this porcelain. In order to attract Europeans again, Chinese craftsmen quickly changed the aesthetic tendency of their original works and imitated European designs to meet the expectations of buyers. Even though the oriental quality was very important for Chinese porcelain, it still unavoidably assimilated European ideas, customs, symbols, and cultures. On the one hand, the "oriental quality" of Chinese porcelain was always regarded as an identity of Chinese culture, and also pinned down the social situation in which the work

was made. On the other hand, “marketing” of Chinese porcelain required Chinese craftsmen to graft European cultural interests and aesthetic choices. European tastes determined whether they were willing to pay attention to these ceramics and stimulated Chinese craftsmen gradually aligned the tune of their export ceramics to European preferences.

At the same time, most Europeans found out that Chinese porcelains were the best utensils for serving food and hot beverages. Chinese exported porcelains generally began to be a steady preference of consumers, going from luxury items to necessities.

### *Dutch Delft Blue*

Because the secret of porcelain manufacture was under the veil before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Dutch craftsmen tried to produce chinoiseries or orientalism potteries as well as they could with local clay, and they achieved relative success in a short time. Between the periods from 1650 to 1680, Dutch Delft Blue entered into its prosperous phase, not only formed its unique style and captured the market, but also provided important artistic and technical knowledge to the development of ceramics in France, England, and Germany. The discovery of porcelain clay in Europe stimulated other European countries’ ceramics industry to spring up, causing the scale and scope of the Delft Blue industry to shrink at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Despite this, it still played a significant role in western culture.

However, in our modern-day society, the development of Dutch Delft Blue is plagued by more and more difficulties. Firstly, with the advent of industrialization, mass industrial manufacturing became a difficult competitor. Secondly, more and more people don’t know how to appreciate craftsmanship. Due to these factors, Dutch Delft Blue cannot develop as smoothly as expected.

To solve the dilemma of Dutch Delft Blue, The *Koninklijke Porceleyne Fles*<sup>83</sup> factory implemented new methods to catch the public’s eye. For instance, this factory not only officially produces commissioned objects as gifts for foreign dignitaries, but also publicly opens its doors to tourists who come from all over the world. Every piece of Dutch Delft Blue has successfully become synonymous with Dutch local culture, and also has been transformed from a commodity into a cultural experience. As Frans Schouten

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<sup>83</sup> In 1919, the predicate “Royal” was granted to The *Porceleyne Fles*. The *Koninklijke Porceleyne Fles* is the only remaining factory of ± 32 earthenware factories that were established in Delft in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.



addresses, "...[it] is used as an expression of their 'Dutchness'..."<sup>84</sup> (p. 199). For modern people, Dutch Delft Blue is more or less beyond the material world, and is considered as a sense of identity.

Clearly, it is undeniable that the creation of craftsmen and the preferences of consumers are closely connected with each other, and through their interactions over time, they update values endlessly by abandoning old ones and adopting new ones. In the story of Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue, they were both never simply commodities. Not only were they tangible records of cultural and aesthetic meanings, but they also reflected the social interactions among the involved people. In other words, the life of ceramics is a social construct, which is derived from what consumers' reactions to ceramic items are and how craftsmen try to cater to the consumers.

### **To value cross-cultural phenomenon**

As export commodities, Chinese porcelain carried a mission to satisfy the requirements of European consumers. The relationship between Asians and Europeans became much closer than it used to be once they became producers and consumers. Although Chinese export porcelain was an exotic object for Europeans, if it was totally out of tune with European tastes, they would not be attracted to it for a long time. This is why around the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese export porcelain started to be based on the dietary habits and aesthetical background of Europeans.

During cross-cultural exchange, hybrid ceramics won't emerge naturally, nor are they inevitable products of commercial transactions. It needs the involved people to continually value their own tastes and the taste of others and try to build new value structures that reflect the interactions and integration of different cultures. As I mentioned before, at the beginning, when "China mania" was spreading throughout Europe, Delft craftsmen produced lots of chinoiserie figures (from 1690 to 1720). When the Chinese manufacturing secrets for porcelain were revealed, porcelain gradually lost its Chinese monopoly. In order to win European consumers in remote markets, Chinese craftsmen repeatedly deliberated on how to imitate western styles on their export porcelains. In the meantime, European consumers actively placed orders for large amounts of the Chinese imitations of western figures from China. As a result of

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<sup>84</sup> Schouten, F. "*The Process of Authenticating Souvenirs*, in *Cultural Tourism in a Changing World: politics, participation and (re)presentation*", Smith, M. and Robinson, M, 2005

the fusion of multi-cultures, the traditional Chinese forms of export porcelains were reduced. In the end, the cultural distance between the east and west grew shorter and the world got closer.

At the same time, many questions appeared: why did Europeans go crazy about Chinese porcelain that displayed oriental aesthetic values? Why did Dutch craftsmen make the Delft chinoiserie figures? Why did Chinese craftsmen try to accommodate the taste of Europeans? How did people imitate other countries' commodities? Did they directly copy? Or did they have their own inventions? Besides the motivation for profit, were there also other reasons? To trace these uncertainties, we may pay attention to something we ignored before: that export of ceramics as a historical document not only reflected the past daily life of people, but also recorded the relationship between the east and west. Particularly, when we see an object is adapted to a foreign lifestyle, we need to look beyond the utilitarian purpose, and consider that people are actively or passively participants in cultural blending.

### **4.3. Conclusion**

By analyzing the situation of crafts culture in China and the Netherlands through the story of Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue, I try to explore a wider range of values of crafts and craftsmanship in social life than has heretofore been researched. A number of documents have already introduced the history of trade between Chinese and the Netherlands and given us a general review of the porcelain trade by Dutch East India Company, but in this chapter I focus on the interactive processes around exported porcelain to observe various cultural consequences and attempt to understand ceramics as "cultural goods" which carries many implicit values in their whole lives.

Firstly, concentrating on the relationship between ceramics and people has the advantage of showing how ceramics as cultural goods were produced, traded, consumed, cared, collected, and appreciated in a human-based conversation among involved people. Following the trajectories of the lives of these exported porcelains, I structure a framework which display how participators interact with each other and how the values of porcelain arise and evolve by the interactions of craftsmen, traders, and consumers. For instance, during the processes of production, distribution, and consumption, the Chinese exported porcelains were hybrid-cultural products that not only reflected Chinese culture, but also assimilated European lifestyle. Thus, porcelains in the trade between China and the Netherlands had a significance that went beyond the commercial value of ceramics and was culturally constructed through social interactions.

Secondly, from a cultural economic perspective, this chapter discusses matters of values in the trade between China and the Netherlands, and also addresses related questions in the interpretation of valuation, evaluation, and valorization: why did Europe import Chinese porcelain? how did changes occur by social interaction in the trade between China and the Netherlands? what impact did ceramics as cultural goods have on the exporting and importing societies? To demonstrate, the lives of Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue can strongly present how the values of ceramics are realized in the daily lives of people. Because these ceramics are not only considered as functional objects, but also an intrinsic reserve of values in the social world, I explore a multiplicity of values within works of ceramics: existence value, aesthetic value, symbolic value, social value, and authenticity value. By clarifying these different kinds of values, perhaps it can clearly help us to better understand the notion of crafts culture and its relationship to people in a human-based conversation.

Finally, this chapter outlines the interrelationship between multiple values of ceramics and human experience through the discussion of Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue. In the story, different human behaviors have been induced by awareness about values of ceramics in the trade between China and the Netherlands. Based on the analysis of the cultural economics, I explain how decisions to consume ceramics interact with the knowledge, taste, and cultural capital of involved people, and also further interpret that the development and evolution of ceramics is a consequence of the fact that craftsmen and consumers both play important roles in participating and contributing the value assessment of process.

Most importantly, to trace the story of Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue, it is best to value how people shape themselves, treat objects, and build social networks in cultural systems. Ceramics and their craftsmanship can be valued through a conversational relationship among the involved people.

But in our modern-day society, whether Chinese porcelain or Dutch Delft Blue, ceramics are always subject to the development of industrial technologies and competitions with machine-made objects. Thus, in the next chapter, it is necessary to consider how to deal with the many challenges arising from commoditization and industrialization? What do consumers expect from handicrafts? And how do craftsmen bring ideas and meanings into their works?



## **Chapter 5 Valuing craftsmanship today**

As mentioned in chapter 4, the values of crafts and craftsmanship are connected with people's emotions and practices. They are valorized in conversations and embody a rich culture and tradition as the historical cases of Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue demonstrated.

But, in our modern-day society traditional crafts and craftsmanship face the danger of being marginalized in the commercial market where human-based works seem to be obliterated by high-technology production. The deployment of more and more machines destroys skilled workers' traditional handicrafts, livelihood, and communities. Traditional craftsmen are unable to conquer the limitation of their bodies, and as a consequence some traditional handicrafts knowledge and techniques gradually are vanishing.

In this scenario, industrialization causes a huge change: it not only brings positive effects to the economy, but it may also have negative effects on social/cultural life. As Rudolf Arnheim complained, a cubic coffeepot for cafeterias is a monster to the eye, thoroughly functional but without any aesthetic dimension (Risatti. H, 2007). Because a soft hand, wise head and sincere heart are the underlying principles of human-based values, the question of how to conserve and revive traditional crafts and craftsmanship has become a crucial issue.

It is an issue of good arguments. What arguments can support the sustenance of the crafts? What could persuade craftspeople, politicians, and other stakeholders to uphold the practice of the crafts, and what might they do? We will seek answers from the perspective of the value based approach and the case studies in the preceding chapter.

### **5.1. The challenge of craftsmanship**

We observed in the cases of Chinese porcelain and Delfts Blue the importance of craftsmanship. We noted furthermore that craftsmanship is not just a matter of craftspeople at work but requires a culture of crafts, that is, a crafts culture.

"Craftsmanship" is a human activity to create physical and functional objects; it is also a particular social labor that not only expresses social identity, but also builds social relationships among craftsmen, traders, and consumers; it always materializes social, cultural, ritual, or political meanings into the

finished object; it involves deliberate thought, managerial talent, dialogical conversation with the physical world, creativity-driven ideas, and skill-shaped actions; and it often transforms raw materials of nature into valuable products of culture. However, craftsmanship itself becomes a current urgent matter in the world of culture, especially crafts.

With the advance of the industrial age and the increasing demand to satisfy material needs, more and more high-tech machines were imported into our modern-day society and also influenced every aspect of our daily life (agriculture, mining, transportation, manufacturing, etc.). Generally, designers create ideals, scientists solve problems, and engineers make machines, while workers only need press buttons or pull switches to produce commodities. The whole manufacturing process is easier than before. People already don't need to worry about whether their hands have enough power to conquer nature, whether their heads have strong knowledge to make objects, and whether their thoughts and behaviors can follow their hearts. Human power is replaced by advanced machines.

"Craftsmanship" is drawn into the "high-technology storm". Since craftsmanship is an arduous and time consuming task, in order to pursue a decent income many traditional craftsmen give up their traditional skill and turn more of their energies to work in production line of the modern industry. Since 1980s, Chinese economy has seen a rapid development and people's living standard has significantly improved. But the three words "Made in China", unfortunately are synonymous with "cheap and low-quality products from assembly lines". With the decline of Chinese traditional handmade crafts, more and more scholars start to realize that China not only is losing traditional handmade crafts, but also is losing its own culture and tradition (i.e. 李砚祖, 2001, 2006; 韦丹芳, 2007; 朱春桃, 2009; 严褒, 2014).

In the previous chapter, I was concerned with how kinds of values come into play in the China –Dutch trade. That is the history part. Now I turn to the present that what we should do when traditional crafts and craftsmanship at risk of dying out in our modern-day society.

In the following part, it is grounded in the field investigations, the data collections and the practical analysis. Beside consulting books, reports, and stories in newspapers, my research also included many practical works. In China (Jingdezhen, Beijing, Chongqing, and Xi'an), I interviewed craftsmen, educators, government officials, and also randomly talked with some local residents, shopkeepers, and consumers. In the Netherlands (Delft, Amsterdam and Gouda), I experienced Royal Delft workshop, visited Rijksmuseum, and participated in local events with numerous craftsmen. Based on such practical

framework, I will use the cases of China and the Netherlands to rethink the issue of craftsmanship. The discussion may not motivate specific regulations or policies to revitalize traditional crafts and craftsmanship in these two countries, but rather generates an argument to the need to restore the values of crafts and craftsmanship, and to persuade the general public to reconsider the importance of traditional crafts and craftsmanship.

### 5.1.1. In China

Jingdezhen is known as the “Porcelain Capital” (See Figure 5.1). Around the beginning of the 14th century it first produced porcelain in blue and white, and then exported huge quantities of Chinese ceramics into European countries. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, ceramics production in Jingdezhen had developed rapidly and its scale had expanded quickly. The French Jesuit priest François Xavier d’Entrecolles, who traveled to China to discover the secret of production of Chinese porcelain, recorded that “during a night entrance, one thinks that the whole city is on fire, or that it is one large furnace with many vent holes”<sup>85</sup>. And in a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow<sup>86</sup>, we also could see the scene:

*“O’er desert sands, o’er gulf and bay,  
O’er Ganges and o’er Himalay,  
Bird-like I fly, and flying sing,  
To flowery kingdoms of Cathay,  
And bird-like poise on balanced wing  
Above the town of King-te-tching,  
A burning town, or seeming so,  
Three thousand furnaces that glow  
Incessantly, and fill the air  
With smoke uprising, gyre on gyre  
And painted by the lurid glare,  
Of jets and flashes of red fire.  
...”*

*[Chinese Empire: King-te-tching: China Ware, from Longfellow, H.W. (1807-1882)]*

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<sup>85</sup> “The Letter of Père d’Entrecolles”, translated in Robert Tichane, *Ching-te-chen: Views of a Porcelain City* (1983), New York State Institute for Glaze Research, p.60

<sup>86</sup> Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, was a famous American poet and educator.



Figure 5. 1 To reappear the flourishing time of Jingdezhen Kiln<sup>87</sup> (image taken from:

<http://www.jxta.gov.cn/News.shtml?p5=75988>)

According to local statistics, at the most productive time of Jingdezhen, it approximately had around 1,000,000 workers around the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>88</sup>. This city was once the largest Chinese blue-and-white porcelain manufacturing center. But it was not the economics that made the manufacturing of porcelain so important. In the prosperous times of Chinese porcelain, the porcelain carried more weight than its economic value. The porcelain business involved not only the supply of articles, but also the supply of craftsmanship. These porcelains provided an identity, an activity and a culture.

Consider the issue of quality of craftsmanship. Chinese porcelain should be made with care and passion, and also by traditional wisdom and superb techniques learned from earlier generations. However, due to the large commercial profits that industrial goods can bring to our modern-day society, there is a growing trend in China that focuses on the maximum of economic benefits. This leads to ignoring the traditional techniques of porcelain.

The promotion of crafts and craftsmanship is seriously inhibited by the insufficient policies, the inaction of Chinese government, and most importantly the weak public awareness. For instance, when the 14<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Jingdezhen Kiln* is a kind of kiln with unique style in Chinese traditional kilns, and also by far the best preserved and the most valuable kiln in China. In 2000, it was ranked the provincial key cultural relics protection unit by Jiangxi Provincial People's Government.

<sup>88</sup> "Why Jingdezhen is the only one porcelain capital in china?" 《景德镇为什么是中国唯一的瓷都》(2015), cited from [http://inews.ifeng.com/yidian/46525138/news.shtml?ch=ref\\_zbs\\_ydxx\\_news](http://inews.ifeng.com/yidian/46525138/news.shtml?ch=ref_zbs_ydxx_news), "据史料记载,明代景德镇制瓷最盛时期有官窑 58 座,民窑 900 余座,从事瓷业的瓷工达 10 余万众,出现了'昼间白烟掩空,夜间红焰烧天'".



century Yuan blue and white porcelain jar<sup>89</sup> got the highest price of Asian objects ever received at auction in 2005, many craftsmen started to produce Yuan dynasty replicas for profit. According to Gillette's research, copying and counterfeiting dominated Jingdezhen's ceramics industry in 2005 (Gillette. M, 2010). In the whole ceramics market, it was rife with dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent behavior<sup>90</sup>. Beside copies of imperial ceramics, Jingdezhen ceramists also made a range of contemporary pieces. Yet, these contemporary ceramics have the same fate where craftsmanship is becoming a less and less important part of the manufacturing process. Many Chinese craftsmen assert that contemporary ceramics should be "following their own feelings and inspirations". Thus, the skills and knowledge of craftsmanship are getting less attention. In *Copying, Counterfeiting, and Capitalism in Contemporary China (2010)*, Gillette mentions that, many ceramists not only used slip-casting method instead of hand-pressing, but also used pouncing for complex designs when they wanted to work more quickly. Because of this practice, and the unfair competition and the low-tech/low-quality contemporary crafts could generate considerable revenue. In the meantime, local governments not only passively permit copyright infringements, but also fail to develop the traditional crafts and craftsmanship. There is apparently no awareness of the damage that the counterfeiting practices do to the reputation of Chinese ceramics. Whereas the historical case showed a broad base of support for the production of ceramics in China, we see nowadays a lack of active interest. Even if the only reason to pay attention would be financial, this passive attitude does not make much sense. In Jingdezhen the biggest local ceramic enterprise is *Jingdezhen Global Industry Company Ltd.* (景德镇环球陶瓷集团有限公司), which is a supplier of IKEA. If only authorities were aware of the economic and cultural relevance of craft practices in their region, as they were in the past, they might contribute to a restoration of the craft culture.

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<sup>89</sup> The 14<sup>th</sup> century Yuan blue and white porcelain jar was sold for 27.7\$ million in July, 2005. It set a world auction record for any work of art from any Asian culture, from *The New York Times (2005)*, by Souren Melikian

<sup>90</sup> In *Copying, Counterfeiting, and Capitalism in Contemporary China (2010)*, it explained whenever a ceramist sold ceramics for a large sum of money, more than he thought the ceramics was worth, they called this is 'killing the pig'.



Figure 5. 2 a girl directly copied pictures from a reference book on ceramics in Jingdezhen (photos taken by the author, in 2011)

The loss of appreciation for crafts also shows, on the supply side, among crafts people themselves. Here financial goals appear to overtake the striving for quality; dedication to learning and practicing the skills of craftsmanship is hard to come by. During my research I regularly caught young ceramists direct copying existing patterns and styles from a book in Jingdezhen (See Figure 5.2). An apprentice told me they only need one year to learn the basic knowledge and skills of craftsmanship and start selling their works from the second year. Their works are mainly artistic, with modern elements and design ideas copied from other ceramists or countries. As a result, the traditional crafts and craftsmanship are under threat of extinction. Only when traditional craftsmanship takes a hold of crafts people and when they make the effort to valorize their skills and actually succeed, if not develop, at least to sustain craft practices, the tradition would be kept alive and carried-forward. Without these efforts Chinese traditions would die out. Thus, the ignorance of traditional crafts and craftsmanship is undoubtedly one of main reasons hampering the conservation and development of the traditional ceramics industry in China.

On the demand side, contrary to their ancestors, few contemporary Chinese consumers can really understand and appreciate the quality of craftsmanship in the ceramics industry. On the one side, Chinese consumers prefer to buy ceramics that look like antique objects, thereby fueling a boom in ceramics copying and counterfeiting (Gillette. M, 2010). On the other side, consumers pay attention to a ceramist who has a remarkable title rather than the knowledge and technical skills.

In order to better develop craftsmanship and help consumers to further recognize the abilities of craftsmen, since 1979 the Chinese government has selected the outstanding craftsmen and conferred on them the title of “Chinese Crafts Master”<sup>91</sup>. They hope the selection of “Chinese Crafts Master” could encourage craftsman to develop their skills and also help craftsman to pass their skills on the next generation. However, the government has not a complete selection system, also has not enough financial funds to support the skill training of craftsman and to cultivates the aesthetic judgement of consumer, it leads to that, more and more craftsmen hope to use this master title as a means of earning money to gain profit in marketplace, and more and more consumers believe this master title is only one standard measure of the quality of crafts and have a blind worship for the works of these so-called masters. As Zuguang Wang <sup>92</sup> worries<sup>93</sup>, this phenomenon inevitably brings many negative effects (such as bureaucratic corruption, slack off in the development of craftsmanship, and lack of successors) on the Chinese ceramics industry. In contrast, in Germany it has a relative reasonable system. Even though the title of “Master craftsman” is also for the highest professional qualification in the sphere of crafts, but German government has a set of stringent regulations for the admission of craftsmen and also these craftsmen with the title of “master” have to participate in rigorous training and meet the prescribed quality standards (Gazdar. K, 1998). According to this title of “Master craftsman”, craftsmen could better enhance their abilities and consumers could better evaluate skills and techniques. In this sense, “Chinese Crafts Master” is still insufficient, and need to be improved.

Of course, even though a master title is the step in the right direction, but far from enough to preserve and develop the traditional crafts and craftsmanship. The possibility of acquiring the “Chinese Crafts Master” title seems to make craftspeople focus on the traditional crafts and craftsmanship in the sphere of government, but they also should practice in the social and cultural spheres. That means, it is necessary to create a good cultural and social atmosphere for people to appreciate the values of crafts objects. Unlike governance logic, in social and cultural spheres, the traditional crafts and craftsmanship need to be shared, recognized, and contributed by involved people, who try to make the values of the

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<sup>91</sup> From 1979, Chinese government put forward the “Chinese Master” title in the Chinese crafts sector (national-level; provincial-level; municipal-level).

<sup>92</sup> Wang Zuguang 王祖光 (1942- ) is a famous craftsman and sculptor in China.

<sup>93</sup> He argues that, “评选‘国大师’有点像‘分猪肉’：以前，一个省的‘国大师’寥寥无几，而到后来，各个省就有点像在分猪肉，名额多起来了。而且，有些人听说评上‘国大师’，作品价格就能飞涨，于是耍尽花样去争取，风气日渐不好了。”，“The selection process of ‘Chinese Crafts Master’ is like ‘Carve up meat’: in the past, in one province it just has very few ‘Chinese Crafts Master’, but right now, every province has a lot of quotas. Meanwhile, some craftsmen believe that if he/she is selected as ‘Chinese Crafts Master’, his/her works would have good prices in commercial market, so they try to use unfair ways to get master title.”

traditional crafts and craftsmanship real. That is, if we want the traditional crafts and craftsmanship in our lives, besides formulating laws and policies, we also have to engage with the traditional crafts and craftsmanship, to further valorize their values, and then we may discover values we were not aware of before.

Around the same time, in this commercial market, another negative phenomenon also cannot be ignored: art is invading the field of crafts. For most Chinese, they consider an artist to be higher than a craftsman in terms of social positions, because an artist is good at exhibiting his/her artistic abilities and inspiring the imagination of others. It leads that, more and more people are not satisfied to be a craftsman, may not willing to inherited the traditional skills from the past and then transmit them to the future generation, or may think the traditional skills cannot bring large amount of economic benefit to them, or may have high ambitions to win more audiences, fame and rewards.

Because the term “arts” is more popular than “crafts” in China, the development of a crafts education system in China is suffering a bottleneck. Many crafts colleges and universities have begun to rename their major subject from “crafts” to “arts/design”. Even if some colleges and universities still keep their original names, the traditional skills and knowledge of crafts are starting to shrink in the education system. For instance, in Xián Academy of Fine Arts (西安美院), they changed the name of a department from *Crafts Department* into *Decoration Art Department*. With the educational reformation, the arts and design have started to combine into crafts and further develop as the so-called cutting-edge crafts.

*“I am an artist, not a craftsman. My creations have a unique style and characteristic, which contains a variety of ideologies and expression. For an excellent art work, it has to reflect the artists’ personal feelings, attitude, and behavior. At the same time, my works are also arts, neither commodity nor crafts. I never care about skilled technology in my creation process. I would like to just pay attention to intrinsic connotations and the spiritual world. That is the aim of my creation.”*

*[Zanbin Peng, was interviewed and translated by the author, 2011]*

With the overlapping of crafts and arts in China, Craftsmen start to build new standards and create new styles. For instance, more and more ceramists want to claim their works are “arts”, which increases their tradable values over others. In order to get more attentions, some ceramists not only overemphasized flashy decoration through individualism, but also built a close relationship between themselves and their works. In Jingdezhen almost all cutting-edge ceramists are eager to invade and take over “the sphere of arts”. They want to be famous overnight; they express their personal experiences and emotions; they would like to spend time and energy on the intrinsic connotations of their works. But, when the new

group of cutting-edge craftsmen gradually replaces the old group of traditional craftsmen, most of them begin to lose sight of the essential ideology of crafts, and then traditional craftsmanship is threatened.

### **5.1.2. In the Netherlands**

By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, “porcelain disease” had spread to Europe. In order to satisfy the needs of Europeans, many ceramics factories were established in quick succession in the Netherlands. Especially during the war between the Ming and Qing dynasty, craftsmen in Delft quickly responded to the enthusiasm for oriental porcelain and adjusted their traditional decorating techniques to produce earthenware versions of “porcelain”. This city quickly became one of Europe’s most important ceramics manufacturing center. In Delft the number of ceramic factories from 2 in 1600 rose to 12 in 1650 and 31 in 1700 (Roodenburg, 1993, p. 65). Dutch craftsmen did not simply imitate oriental porcelain, but translated the characteristics of Chinese blue-and-white to create their own European-style Delft Blue.

Over 400 years, Dutch Delft Blue has been made in the Netherlands. It succeeded in satisfying the needs of the Europeans for Chinese porcelain, and also continually innovated traditional technology to expand its business and occupy a larger market share of ceramics across Europe. The quality of Dutch Delftware depends on its craftsmanship. The technical manual skill has important significance in people’s lives. Not only does the craftsman solve a basic human physiological need, he or she also materializes his/her emotions and conveys an implicit message to others.

However, in modern-day society, the industrial machine brings a tremendous change in the way people live and work, and occurs simultaneously with a decline of craftsmanship of Dutch Delft Blue. For instance, nowadays industry produced Delftware, which are made in China, are pouring into the Dutch local market (See Figure 5.3). Even though China was the first country to make porcelain and Chinese manufacturers have captured over 70% of the world market, industry produced China porcelain has less value than handmade Dutch Delft Blue. Just as Sōetsu Yanagi (1972) worried that, since most goods are made by machine, they would lack certain humanity and also without heart, warmth, nature, and beauty. These industry produced Delft Blue threaten the traditional craftsmanship of Dutch Delft Blue.



Figure 5. 3 Many Chinese fake Delft Blue as souvenirs in market (image taken from: *Amsterdam Souvenirs*)

In addition, craftsmanship needs craftsmen to repeatedly practice to balance the relationship among his/her hands, heart, and head. But practice is also tedious and time consuming. In a commercial society, more and more people are eager for quick success and instant benefits. Fewer people are interested in the tedious production process of handmade Dutch Delft Blue.

During my research I spoke with many people. In one occasion I met a young girl, who was drawing pictures on a semi-finished earthenware dish in a Dutch Delft Blue store at the Delft city center. She told me this store belonged to her father, who took over this business from her grandfather, but she won't take over from her father. She just helped her father to produce some delftware and to run the store during her holidays. "This is time-consuming work", she said, "even though every single piece of handmade Dutch Delftware is more expensive than the industry produced item, I am not optimistic about the development of Dutch Delftwares in the future". Handmade Delftware is threatened by machined products (e.g. industry produced China Delftware), which are high quantity, high efficiency, and high profit. This has led the development of handmade Delftwares to languish and it is gradually being taken over by machines. The development of Dutch Delft Blue is getting into the trouble.

As I mentioned in 3.2.3.3, industrial machines are a threat to the work of craftsmen. These industry produced goods have greatly improved the living standards of people. Handicrafts are often sold at high prices in the market, with the Dutch Delft Blue being no exception. For most art hunters, handmade Dutch Delft Blue is an honorific item for satisfying their vanity. The association of words like time-

consuming, extremely laborious, and highly skilled with Dutch Delft Blue increases its value. For instance, when Dutch Delft Blue hit the auctions block at Christie's in New York in 2011, items such as a candlestick from 1653 were expected to sell for as much as \$100,000<sup>94</sup>. But, this phenomenon led people to think that Dutch Delft Blue can be valued purely through price. It is easy to produce a copycat product and mislead more and more people that have eyes only for commercial benefit. Conversely, less people are aware of the cultural value of Dutch Delft Blue. This attitude affects not only craft objects but also traditional civilization; public are decreasingly focusing on the Dutch Delft Blue that is a sense of history. As the Group CEO of the Royal Delft Group, Henk Schouten complained, the supply side of the Dutch Delft Blue market is rife with dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent behavior, and on the demand side, there are too few true connoisseurs to really discern and understand the quality of Dutch Delft Blue<sup>95</sup>. There is no doubt that this is not good for the development of Dutch Delft Blue and its craftsmanship.

Questions of how to better maintain traditional craftsmanship, to prevent the recession of quality of handicrafts, and to correctly guide the behavior interested people have become urgent problems in our modern-day society today. It is important to go beyond a simple recognition of craftsmanship as something that can bring economic benefits. Renewing our understanding of what handicrafts are and how important traditional craftsmanship is in our life, is the best way to recognize our humanity in the world of culture, especially crafts.

## **5.2. How can “crafts culture” be appreciated by the general public**

Discussion of “crafts” pervades the literature of cultural studies and has been considered to be an important topic for conventional anthropologists, historians, and sociologists (Hallpike, C.R. 1968; Jones, M.O. 1989; Sennett, R. 2008; Faroqhi, S. 2009). Meanwhile, the increasing attention of museums, local agencies, and cultural organizations, such as the Capital Museum in Beijing and Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, in exhibiting a large number of ceramics, including earthenware, blue and white porcelain, and faience, has without a doubt helped us to understand the history and cultural influence of the crafts. Their focus clusters around the ethnological ways in which crafts has impacted the development of human society. However, within the discourse of cultural economics, not much

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<sup>94</sup> In *Going Dutch: why American buyers love delft* (2011), The Wall Street Journal, by Candace Jackson, cited from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703954004576090242466208686>

<sup>95</sup> In *Royal Delft: the Netherlands's true blue pottery makers* (2013), by CNN wire staff, cited from <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/23/business/royal-delft-ceo-pottery-dutch/index.html>

attention has been devoted to the craft sectors except for some studies looking at the connection with intangible heritage (Goto. K, 2013, Rizzo and Mignosa, 2013) and making international comparisons (Klamer, et. al. 2012, 2013).

To sum up, the above section mentioned the challenge of traditional craftsmanship within the commercial market in China and the Netherlands, and reflects on the loss of human values and the significance of the traditional crafts and craftsmanship in people's lives. Most particularly, over the last 30 years China has gone through a phase of large economic growth, but in the process the Chinese have discarded and sacrificed many of their traditions and heritage. A lot of Chinese traditional crafts and craftsmanship are on the verge of extinction, with some traditional techniques already died out<sup>96</sup>. If one day Chinese people only can know their own traditions from books, instead of from their daily lives, they might realize the values and practices that have gone lost. What a lamentable result! Chinese government may later wake up in this world without crafts, and regrets all that they did to sacrifice traditional culture. Policies like the institution of the "Chinese crafts master", will have proven ineffective and meaningless. Thus, it is important to focus on values of crafts and craftsmanship, on the cooperation of all people, and organization involved, and work towards a renaissance of the crafts culture.

### **5.2.1. Realizing values in the five spheres**

The question "how to appreciate crafts culture in our modern-day society?" is probably a serious and endless one, but behind it lurks a particular worry: how do we realize values of crafts and craftsmanship?

Firstly, Klamer's "*five spheres*" tell us that the values of crafts and craftsmanship permeate our lives in all kinds of ways and in all kinds of shades. Even if some people may want to isolate the values in just one aspect of daily life, they are unconsciously embroiled in the other aspects. For instance, a potter, who makes many fake antique porcelains and tries to sell them as genuine at a high price at auction houses usually considers himself to be subject to the market logic, and has no idea what happens in the other logics, governmental and social. According to *Forging an Art Market in China* (2013), since the market is flooded with forgeries, it is easy to create a more fertile environment for corruption in the sphere of government and thus to generate a crisis of credibility in the social sphere. If we are active in the market place, our behaviors and attitudes could influence (or could be influenced by) other people

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<sup>96</sup> In *The First list of National intangible cultural heritage (2007)*, 《第一批国家非物质文化遗产名录图典》, it mentions that more and more Chinese traditional crafts skills are faced with many challenges, such as inheritance problems, development chaos, and so on.



who are involved in the logics of governance and society. That is why, to realize values of crafts and craftsmanship, we have to consider the interconnection among different logics in our everyday lives.

Moreover, because values of crafts and craftsmanship are being expected, realized, measured, reinforced, or changed in different ways in different logics, it is necessary to deal with crafts and craftsmanship in the context of their different situations. When the conversation between master and apprentice focus on porcelain, it is always about materials and techniques, such as: “what are the differences between pottery and porcelain”, “how to use brushes to paint the decorations on porcelain?”, and “why should porcelain be fired at a higher temperature than earthenware?”. I guess that fewer apprentices, if any, would ask their master which kinds of porcelain could fetch a high price in the market place. As Klamer says, when a cultural good enters the different spheres, it becomes the subject of totally different conversations (Klamer, 2008). In the sphere of the market, Dutch Delft Blue as commodities are always attached price tags in souvenir shops; but, in the social sphere, Dutch Delft Blue as gifts are always without price tags. The picture of “the five spheres” alerts us to the valuations, evaluations, and valorizations in distinct spheres and deals with different topics and different people.



Figure 5. 4 The “Master title” can bring a considerable income for Chinese craftsmen, designed by the author

According to the picture of “the five spheres”, it is apparent that for economists crafts are recognized as commodities which revolve around the logic of exchange and the issue of price in the sphere of the market. When the craftsman displays his works somehow somewhere to someone who may be willing to pay for it, he enters the market sphere. His craft gets commodified and possibly commercialized of his works have increased significantly in the conversation between this craftsman and other involved

people. In this sphere, price seems to say it all: the value of the crafts work can be captured in its price as most economists stress. However, many implicit values are hiding behind the price tags, such as “crafting itself was often viewed as more than a technical act, something which empowered artisans in a perhaps unmeasurable way because they had the power to create”<sup>97</sup> (p. 9). If we pay too much attention to the moment of exchange, we end up ignoring many special meanings in the life of this craft. For instance, craftsmanship of Chinese porcelain is a quintessential human activity which cannot be measured by numbers. If you talk such a great deal about its price, may be you disregard the hidden values of the crafting process. In China there is the extremely orderly and organized “Master Title”<sup>98</sup> selection system in order to value the capability of craftsmen, and then traders use this kind of title to set the price. Because the “master title” allows for an increase in the price of the crafts product, (See Figure 5.4), many Chinese craftsmen inevitably use “Guanxi” power to get such title in the master selection process, although they are not good at transforming raw materials into valuable goods<sup>99</sup>. If we do not see the whole picture in the five spheres, we will miss too many things during the transaction.



Figure 5. 5 The early 18<sup>th</sup> century Dutch Delft Blue, Violin (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, photo taken by the author, in 2016)



Figure 5. 6 The 18th century Dutch Delft Blue, Tulip vase (Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, photo taken from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulip\\_vase](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulip_vase))

<sup>97</sup> See *Craft and Social Identity* (1998), Cathy Lynne Costin, California State University, Northridge

<sup>98</sup> In China, *China Arts and Crafts Association* puts forward the ‘Master title’ in different levels (national-level; provincial-level; municipal-level). For national-level title, according to *Regulations on the Protection of Traditional Crafts and Arts*, craftsman should meet certain quality characteristics and also has engaged in crafts profession for a long time. ‘Chinese Craftsman Master’ national-level award already held six times (1979, 1988, 1993, 1997, 2006, and 2011).

<sup>99</sup> For instance, Xu Aimin is not only former vice chairman of CPPCC Jiangxi province, but also a controversial ceramic master. An insider exposed, Xu Aimin used “Guanxi” to bribe related craft experts in the selection process to gain “Master title”, see <http://www.chinesedishes.tk/archives/23786>

Moreover, when the involved people try to revalue crafts and craftsmanship in the sphere of the market, it is inevitable that they will enter the sphere of governance. How to prevent the loss of authenticity? How to avoid the damage to traditional craftsmanship in commercial transaction? How to be regulated or regulate the behaviors of people? How to create a level playing field in the crafts market? How to balance the relationship between supply and demand? For all these questions, the people involved have to deal with the logic of government, such as policies, rules, criteria and laws. For instance, in 2011 *the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage (ICN)* as a part of *the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science* was incorporated under *the Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency* in Amsterdam for academic and practical research<sup>100</sup>. Because Delft Blue is regarded to be an integral part of the Dutch tangible heritage, the preservation and conservation of Delft Blue became the core task of ICN. In 2013 the total culture budget of the Dutch government amounted to 789 million euros. In the same period, government subsidies were the main source of income for museums, constituting 56 percent. In 2013-2016, the budget amount from the government available for the basic national infrastructure was 327 million euro per annum, and 30 museums benefitted from this budget (The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2013, p. 6). These museums not only manage cultural heritage and exhibit them to a wider audience, but also play an important role as the “authorization” institution to build national identity (See Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.6). Unfortunately, with regard to the restoration of the appreciation of crafts and craftsmanship in the Netherlands, there is a lack of clear and specific documents and programs to publicly support the development of crafts culture. Even though more and more people have realized the importance of crafts, it still needs people to cherish traditional craftsmanship and implement certain educational strategies to bolster crafts culture in the sphere of governance in order to refocus on craftsmanship and crafts culture.

The social sphere, which establishes the relationship between the spheres of market and governance, is the sphere that creates and shares values in the social structure. Even though commercial and governmental logics have many differences in methodology, the social sphere connects and strengthens the networks among the involved people such as craftsmen, businessmen, buyers, tourists, curators and politicians. When a person is a craftsman, maybe they unconsciously begin to behave according to strict rules and regulations relating to manufacturing operations; maybe they question the actions of elderly traditional craftsmen in the process of innovation; maybe they talk to people and want to get

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<sup>100</sup> Cited from <http://culturalinventory.nl/node/187>

others interested in their works; maybe they have to make crafts according to the requirements of the consumers; maybe they try to convince some government people in order to get subsidies. During these social interactions, their thoughts and behaviors are often strongly influenced by others. In other words, through crafts such as Chinese porcelain or Dutch Delft Blue, people unconsciously/consciously build social communications with other participators, consequently realizing their roles in this interactive setting from which values will come about.

However, the construction and impact of a values system in the social sphere is much more complicated than in the other two spheres, market and governance. In order to build a strong crafts economy and restore traditional craftsmanship in our modern-day society, we not only cannot remove the social sphere from our views, but also have to seriously deal with the social interactions among involved people in the life of crafts.

### **5.2.2. Re-establishing communication in conversation**

In our modern-day society, automatization and mechanization have alienated us from a close relationship with nature and from a conversational and interactive experience with others. Instead of the simple life, our increasing material needs promote the rapid development of industrialization and cause changes in our contemporary lives. Maybe people don't want to be like the earliest hominids and spend much time and energy to make a handmade cup, but prefer to buy a cup from IKEA; maybe when people see his/her friend who has a new bag, they will first ask how much the bag is; maybe the tenet of "high quantity and high efficiency" is important for people in this commercial society. People are gradually losing their connection with nature and ignoring the stories and meanings of cultural goods. In other words, modern man exists in isolation, has an indifferent relationship with others and concentrates mostly on the benefits of economic transactions.

Much of the concern about the economic impact of crafts on society revolves around the commodification that inevitably occurs when the involved people in the life of ceramics see the price of everything. For conventional economists, Chinese porcelain in the trade between Asia and Europe can only be marketed as commodities for a short span of their lives in society. They ignore the fact that the behavior of traders of the VOC was influenced by their interaction with society or other participators in this trade. As commodities in the process of transaction, either Chinese porcelain or Dutch Delft Blue is often measured by the price number. When the potter/consumer wants to sell/buy a handmade cup, the

trader as price setter plays an important role in the distribution channel. In our modern-day society, price becomes a crucial criterion for the quality of crafts, but the values a craftsman creates for the expression and the values a consumer receives for the experiences are overlooked. Thus, in the cultural economics perspective, an inadequate social interaction between craftsman and consumer can be seen to destroy these values.

Crafts should be about realizing values. The lives of crafts are discursively constructed and acquire their characteristics through value-based conversations. Beyond the economic dimension, craftsmen and consumers should engage in an interactive communication (See Figure 3.8, in chapter 3). And in this communication, they are active and participatory agents that impart values to crafts. When the VOC imported ceramics from China to Europe around the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Asians and Europeans had sparked amazing aesthetic and symbolic values in the cultural encounter; and then when in modern society the 17<sup>th</sup> century Chinese blue and white porcelain is displayed in the Rijksmuseum, its historical value apparently engraves itself on the visitors' glasses. Based on this reason, values of crafts (i.e. cultural value and economic value) can be stated to be more complex than a simple monotonic transformation. In our commercial society, the relationship among involved people in the five spheres become more and more indifferent and estranged. Facing this emotional crisis, it is necessary to treat crafts as experiences beyond impersonal commodities, to step out of a price-based conversation into a value-based conversation.

### **5.2.3. Re-considering activities of involved people**

When people involve a value-based conversation, they need to realize what they should do and how to make values real. According to Figure 4.21 in chapter 4, a life of ceramic is about social activities of participators, including making, trading, and consuming. In other words, involved people are part of "crafts culture".

Suppose ceramic came up in our conversation. How you treat this ceramic is a matter of what your role is in the life of this ceramic. As a craftsman, you may hope to get appreciation for your effort; or as a trader, you may try to seek the right people who are willing to purchase this commodity; or as a collector, you may expect that this craft collection can be recognized by other collectors; or as a critic, you may want to promote discussion and further guide people to evaluate this craft. It can be seen that, these involved people have different responsibilities in different roles. Because of the life of ceramics is

connect with involve people, now it is necessary to consider again how to correctly reinforce their activities.

### *Craftsman*

The craftsman has long engaged in an interactive dialogue with materials, but one trouble gradually comes into sight in our modern-day society. As I mentioned in 3.2.1.2, the problem of the overlapping relationship between craftsman and artist cannot be ignored. Despite the importance of craftsmanship being indisputable in our modern-day society, the status of the craftsman is still threatened. More and more craftsmen have started to build new standards and create new styles, whether in China or in the Netherlands. They all hold an opinion similar to Dormer's "*anything with the status of art is potentially more valuable than a thing without that status*" (Dormer, P. 1997, p.6) to explore new territory and develop new practices in the field of crafts. Like artists, these cutting-edge makers bring new vitality to the crafts market, but at the same time, the loss of traditional craftsmanship is damaging. In order to get more audiences, fame, and reward, some craftsmen not only overemphasized flashy decoration through individualism, but also tried to fix individual values into their own works.

With regard to the quality of traditional crafts and craftsmanship, it is of course important to talk about the self-organization of the craftsmen. As Soetsu said, they need to "*take heed of the humble*" and "*keep room without arrogance*" (Yanagi, S. 1989, p. 97), although individualism is an inevitable trend in modern-day society. Ideally, the craftsman should follow the laws of nature to preserve the harmonious, continual, and responsive relationship between materials and humans. In an ideal situation for the crafts culture, values will be fluid in the craftsman - craft object - consumers triangle, instead of frozen in individual works (such as fine arts).

Of course, when someone decides to plunge into his/her life as a craftsman, it means much more than he could get certain financial reward from his works. Craftsman has to contribute his/her excellent craftsmanship skill and also is required to impart material with quality and values. The relationship between the craftsman and his/her contribution is beyond the simple relationship between producer and object, because of the craftsman plays an important role for enriching and nourishing own culture.

Following the above reason, to make craftsman aware of their roles, it requires us also to promote crafts education in our modern-day society. Some colleges and universities in China have already realized

that this kind of cultural education can not only protect and develop traditional craftsmanship, but also encourages creative and innovative thinking. For instance, in Chongqing University, teachers always focus on the relationship between academic education and practical creations and try to enhance the student's aesthetic taste and ability to appreciate (See Figure 5.7). Thus, in order to better conserving traditional techniques and skills and also exploiting new opportunities for the development of crafts, we might need to adopt multiple education ways in world of culture, especially crafts.

### *Consumer*

Besides the craftsman, the consumer also plays a crucial role in the development of crafts and craftsmanship. Therefore, a crucial rule of thumb in crafts marketing strategy is on how to influence the unplanned purchase decisions of consumers when they hesitate about whether to buy or not. According to Kurt Lewin's approach (1936), the behavior of the consumer can be understood within a dialectic framework,  $B = f(P, E)$ . In this framework, B stands for behavior, P stands for person (all about an individual's cognitive, emotional and motivational states) and E stands for environment (all about the causal factors that reside in the world outside the individual). We can assume that people shape their environments, but at the same time, their behaviors are also constructed and influenced by the social environment. Keeping in mind this person - environment interaction, the social context is regarded as an important factor for enhancing the awareness of consumers and affecting their choices in modern-day society. The question of how to build a fertile environment for the crafts is also very important.

For instance, automatization and mechanization are threats to hand-based manufacturing in the commercial market. Why does a consumer choose a handmade cup? They are often motivated to purchase it for a special reason aside from its physical function of containing things. Because of when consumer is willing to pay the price, it also means that the quality of craft might be appreciated. In the field of crafts, consumer demand mainly depends on and is based on attractions. Today most consumers participate in crafts activities in order to experience some unique qualities. Making a wake-up call to the social environment seems to be an urgent task for the development of crafts and craftsmanship (See Figure 5.8). It can help people develop a strong sense of belonging to the reference group, to realize the values of crafts, and to further understand crafts culture. Ideally, the most successful environment will invite consumers to get involved in the conversation about crafts and craftsmanship. The

environment will tell stories, or create experiences, or show values to people, and will also help them strengthen their identities.

Based on this discussion, it is necessary to see “crafts culture” as the outcome of interactive conversations that not only requires people to engage with the life of crafts, but also needs them to appreciate it. Craftsmen and consumers both play indispensable roles in this conversation, at the same time, an effective social context also promotes the development of crafts and craftsmanship.



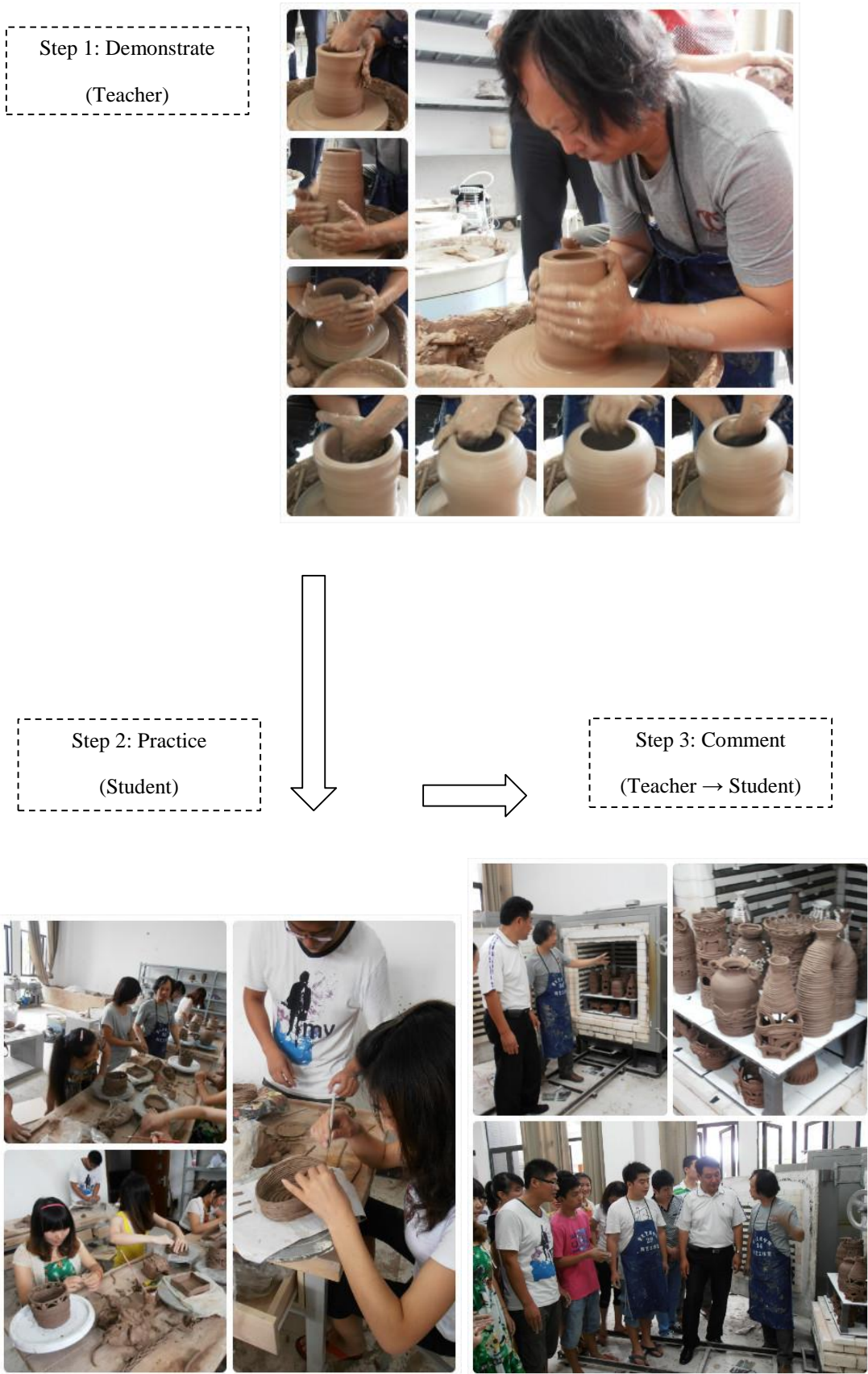


Figure 5. 7 Teaching steps of ceramics in Chongqing University (photos taken by the author, in 2011)



Figure 5. 8 The 40<sup>th</sup> Ceramics Festival in Gouda (photos taken by the author, in 2015)

#### 5.2.4. Re-building “crafts culture” in the idea world

Talking about “crafts culture” necessitates considering why a craftsman would rather make a cup by hand instead of by machines and why a consumer would like to use a handmade cup instead of an IKEA cup. In our modern-day society, people have many excuses to lose sight of the traditional crafts and craftsmanship. Automatization and mechanization can make people’s lives more convenient and economical. People don’t need to worry whether they lack dominion over materials, don’t need to think too much about the nuances of different materials, and don’t need to spend too much time making objects. Because of these reasons (maybe even more), modern people have enough incentives to rely on machines rather than hands. However, more and more scholars and practitioners are stating that a handmade object is more humanized than a machine-made object. They repeatedly complain about the loss of human-based values and appeal for the revival of the era of skilled labor.

In re-building the notion of crafts culture, there has been much controversy over whether values of crafts and craftsmanship can arise in our modern-day society. A typical view in Risatti’s *A Theory of Craft: function and aesthetic expression* is that most machine-made things have value as commodities, but they seem to have less inherent values than hand-made things. The author reminds us that machine production has increasingly moved beyond human-based conversation into “a realm of limit-less-ness” where exists less human comprehension and identity. Following this idea, people have started to realize that in the industrial society, humanized values are gradually being swallowed up by mass production. This is why more and more modern traders are trying to promote a new market strategy to recreate a world of human expression.

So far, this tendency has focused mostly on experiences of “information” and “knowledge” in the market. In order to meet the experience needs of public, people have put the accent on “specialization” and the labor in supply has changed as I mentioned in Chapter 3. With the coming of the post-industrial society, many people repeatedly emphasize the differences between an ordinary material commodity and a particular immaterial service. For instance, *Delft Blue by me*<sup>101</sup> provides a new experience for public. People can create their own portraits on Delft Blue plates or tiles by using a self-service kiosk. These plates or tiles seem to be different than other common goods. The high-technology of this design tool offers a sense of creation to invite public to participate in the manufacturing process. However, we must

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<sup>101</sup> *Delft Blue by me*, is a design tool for end-users, developed at Hoog+Diep for the Delft Marketing and Royal Delft factory

admit that in this case, a machine plays a major role in determining how the end product is made, and the cultural sense of Delftware rarely remains in this humanly defined product.

With this example, I mean to emphasize the question of whether the values of crafts and craftsmanship can be fostered in our modern-day society. The dilemma is inescapable: although the increasing growth in demand for needs is gradually changing from material goods to immaterial experiences, the human spirit seems to be disappearing. In the above respect, as already mentioned in 3.3.4., I would like to stress again here, “a model of society’s logics” should ideally give us a solution. The industrial logic should be properly constrained, meanwhile, the dream society’s logic and creative man’s logic should be encouraged and interacted each other so as to avoid simply making objects with machines. Maybe only then can crafts and craftsmanship be culturally constructed in our materialistic world.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

In exploring what happened in the field of crafts in our modern-day society, this chapter traces the situation of crafts and craftsmanship in China and the Netherlands as examples to remind readers how industrialization helps to lose “crafts culture” in the commercial market. Even though Chinese and Dutch craftsmen both played important roles in the history of civilization, their skills and technical knowledge still cannot escape from being damaged. For instance, in China more and more traditional craftsmen have become ambitious “cutting-edge” craftsmen, and the field of crafts is overwhelmingly filled with individualistic ideals and goals but a lack of humility and patience; in the Netherlands, the market is flooded with industrially made crafts that bring many negative effects such as commodification to the field of crafts. Traditional crafts and craftsmanship are significantly threatened in the commercial market. If so, how do we help craftsmen get rid of their troubles and how do we revive the crafts culture?

In this chapter, I show how the traditional crafts and craftsmanship are threatened, by analyzing a range of empirical research. And then, in order to answer the question about conservation and development of traditional crafts and craftsmanship, I stress upon the possible problems in the field of crafts and also focus particularly on three aspects to provide a positive orientation for promoting “crafts culture”:

- a. Realizing values in the spheres of the market, governance and the social is significantly a cognitive process

- b. Re-establishing communication in conversation can evoke more public awareness on the importance of humanity and culture
  
- c. Re-considering the activities of people in the field of crafts can guide the participator's attitudes and behaviors
  
- d. Re-building crafts culture in the idea world should be beyond material interests

Thus, to put it succinctly, in all the enthusiasm about treating a crafts object, it is important to not lose sight of the fact that its values do not just lie in the economic dimension, but also arise in the interactive processes of society. Even though most conventional economists believe that commercial benefit is the dominant position, it doesn't mean that industrially made crafts can entirely replace handmade crafts in people's lives. But with the increasing onslaught of commercial production, more and more humanity and values are being destroyed and lost. The aim of this chapter is to emphasize that values of crafts and craftsmanship are closely connected with people's social lives. Beyond the exchange value, a crafts object has potentially many intrinsic values. When people become involved in the life of craft, they may give and/or receive cognitive attention, emotional energy, aesthetic experience, and social connectedness.

This work hopes to wake up the awareness of the public. Promoting "crafts culture" in our modern-day society is a long-term problem. If we simply address the importance of crafts and craftsmanship, it will not be a solution. For the values of crafts and craftsmanship to be revived, it needs us to deeply understand the relationship between crafts and people, and rationally take different analytical approaches to deal with different issues in the field of crafts under different circumstances.



## Chapter 6 Conclusion

Until recently, “crafts culture” was given little attention in disciplines such as history, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. Even though people have realized that a craft can satisfy daily needs, much of the discussion has concentrated on the economic significance (or lack thereof) of crafts, the material aspects, and the functions of crafts. The cultural and historical values of crafts were basically ignored.

In 2011, I started a craft project, and attempted to deal with the economic significance of the field of crafts, but quickly I found that it was not as easy as I expected. A major challenge was that, with the rapid pace of economic development, this traditional skilled activity gradually faded away in the commercial marketplace. That troubled me, as I am highly interested in crafts and value craftsmanship. As a cultural economic researcher, I realized that the introduction of a value-based approach into the field of crafts was badly needed. I should add that I, too, needed to realize certain values, in particular the value of being involved in the crafts. How could I contribute to craft being a vital shared practice in China, my home country?

In order to better understand the current situation of traditional crafts and craftsmanship, I had a serious conversation with Zanbin Peng, a well-known creative craftsman in Jingdezhen. I talked with him about the idea that crafts are to be valorized as cultural goods and about how to conceptualize objects, practices, and values. At the end of the conversation, he said: “In our materialistic world, everything is changing, but one thing cannot be changed”. He saw my puzzled look, and then explained “The world still belongs to us. As humans, we create history and civilization, not only products, but also culture. The crafts could remind us of the relationship between objects and people”. I sorted out one part of dialogue with Zanbin Peng in chapter 2. Perhaps his words can help us to develop a feeling for his experiences, and his works; they may lead us to a deep understanding of craft, as a way to generate values through links among people.

It is conceivable that people might think that this work is about questions, like “what is the economic value of a craft?”, or “how does a craftsman gain commercial benefit?”, or “how to assess cost and economic growth in the field of crafts?” Such questions seem to suggest that the commercial solution is good for the development of crafts.

This thesis is more a warning against such a questioning. Even though China has long traditions in the craftsmanship of porcelain, copying and counterfeiting already cast a shadow over its glory; such commercial practices undermine the practices that are characteristic for craftsmanship as described by mr Peng. Too many people care too much about “price”, with the danger that the culture is lost.

Actually, when you run your fingers over the traditional vase or jar, you do not notice its price but you do feel its special qualities and develop a sense of its cultural significance. In this work, I wanted to do justice to the cultural practices that the crafts represent, and thus had to go beyond the quantitative data dimensions of the typical economic approach. I needed to re-appreciate the values of crafts and craftsmanship. It is for the betterment of societies, the Chinese is particular.

Particularly striking to me was the bustling street<sup>102</sup> in Jingdezhen which was fully stacked with porcelains all tagged with a price label. In this city, crafts people would be talking about “how to make a good deal”. Based on what I observed, sellers and consumers were always keen on talking about the price. It appeared that these porcelains as commodities were of great commercial value for exchange. At the same time, as some craftsmen complained, few consumers could appreciate the qualities of porcelains. They did pay attention when the porcelain carried the “master title”, as every item is marked with the personal seal of its craftsman, and the title of this craftsman largely determines its transaction price. But commercial as this world is, the master title became also part of the commercial game. Zanbin Peng made several critical comments about this practice: “A price of porcelain is worth who made it”, “several craftsmen gain master title by devious means”, and “actually most consumers just are interested in craftsman’s fame.”. Another problematic practice is that of copying craftsmanship. More and more copies of Chinese porcelain are being placed on shopping shelves in the market. This raises issues of authenticity. Consumers do not know anymore whether they are buying the real thing, or a copy of it. Underserved reputation and unfair competition had polluted the porcelain marketplace. It made me realize that this city was losing its glory, even though all lampposts of the city were decorated in porcelain.

What is important for our society? Maybe the answer from a conventional economist is about price, income, profit, economic impact, and GDP. From the standard economic perspective, porcelain like any other commodity, should be tagged with a price in the marketplace. However, when we evaluate a

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<sup>102</sup> The bustling street, which I mentioned before (in chapter 1)



craftsman's achievement, should we still base our valuation on how large the income of this craftsman is, how many works this craftsman has made, or how expensive they are? At the moment, these quantitative indicators seem to be senseless and dangerous. We have good reasons to take a new road, one that differs from the choices of the conventional economists.

The value-based approach emphasizes knowledge, memories, practices, virtues, heritages, histories, cultural meanings and values, and so on. It depicts porcelain as a cultural good, which is culturally and socially constructed in people's conversation. This approach is about the valuation and evaluation of cultural goods outside the moment of exchange; the role of porcelain as a commodity is just a part of the many moments in its life and it could be turned into "discursive constructs" in different conversations. Its values gradually evolve through people's talks, discussions and deliberations (Appadurai, 1986; Klammer, 2003c, 2008). In other words, the value-based approach makes people to pay attention to values and qualities.

In the world of culture, especially crafts, the value-based approach has concerns that are different from the standard economic approach. The value-based approach sets out "porcelain" as a notion of culture, which can open up discourses on the processes of craftsmanship, on how craftsmen impart meanings to the physical object, and most importantly, how values of it and its craftsmanship arise, evolve and interact among each other. In contrast the standard economic approach looks at porcelain as a marketable good, which is understood to accumulate and realize financial value in production, distribution, and consumption:

In the world of culture	
The standard economic approach	The value-based approach
quantitative method	qualitative research
economic value	aesthetic, historical, artistic, spiritual, social, authenticity values...
cost-benefit analysis	interpretive study
in exchange context	in socio-cultural context
focus on price	beyond price, focus on interaction among involved people
crafts as commodities, for exchange	crafts as practices, for celebrate traditions
making object	crafting identity
tangible (physical realities)	intangible (skills, knowledge, experiences...)
calculate commercial benefits	be aware of quality issues
valuation and evaluation	valuation, evaluation, and valorization

This work introduces and motivates the notion of “crafts culture.” It might help us to better understand the wider sense of culture. Where conventional economists want to take over all issues of porcelain on their own terms, the value-based approach shows us more about practices that take place in the cultural and social process. Crafts permeate culture. Perhaps that could best be summed up by the case of Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue in chapter 4, in which it is shown that a craft is not only limited in production, distribution, and consumption, but comes about an interactive process of values creation between it and the people involved in its life. “Who creates it, who owns it, what role it plays, how it is used, what and how it is changed in new circumstances...” such are the questions that allude to the cultural and social biographies of Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue.

The notion of crafts culture implies that craft is not a product, but a series of practices, a sense of perception, and a source of experience. To speak of “possessing” craft, it is senseless to restrict the discussion to the exchange; people need to contribute somehow. Values and qualities of crafts could not be realized without people’s social activities. In the previous chapter, I have pointed out that ceramics in the trade between China and the Netherlands were weighed, recognized, appreciated, or changed in the social conversation. In this conversation, ceramics require contributions of involved people, which include times, efforts, knowledges, and human capitals. As we could see, blue and white porcelain from Jingdezhen had attracted Europeans. However, selling and buying of the porcelain were not the whole of story; sharing and experiencing the porcelain were more important. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, most

wealthy Europeans were used to place the exported Chinese porcelain on the wall for exhibition. Building a conversation with neighbors, guests or visitors was an important way to realize the values of these foreign items. In short, a porcelain is a culture, should come about and attain its values in the social setting more than in the marketplace.

Following the point of “crafts culture”, the meanings of craft are more than the physical property of kaolin and also more than its costs and benefits. In the culture of 18<sup>th</sup> century China, a Qianlong vase is a symbol of privilege and power, or in the culture of modern society Netherlands, a Delftware is a quality of naturalness and simple life. The culture is concentrated with a particular time, particular place, and particular people.

During my research, I found it not easy to convince people to shift from an economic way to a cultural way of thinking. We have the habit of talking about price and benefit all the time. Craftsmen assess their earnings; merchants calculate the amount of articles for sale; bidders estimate the potential gains of articles; buyers believe the articles are profitable. “Price” gradually dominates our attitudes and behaviors. In the process, however, we are losing something that is important for us.

So, what is lost when we care too much about price? Let me tell a story. A farmer found a large number of porcelain pieces, when he dug the field with his hoe. The farmer decided to sell out these pieces, which looked dirty and shabby. Then, these pieces were packaged as a simple compressed commodity, and finally were sold for 20 RMB (2.2 €). But he had no idea these porcelain pieces actually were antique from Yuan dynasty. That sounds like a joke, but is a true story in China. This farmer was an “outsider”, who could not assess the value of these porcelain pieces. Because the “money” became the only concern for this farmer, it kept him away from the culture, and also perception, history, wisdom, identity, human meanings.

Accordingly, we now are talking about “crafts culture”, and with that about quality, about values, and the shared practices. Because of the connection between “crafts” and “culture” as an indexical relationship, a craft is always associated with the culture. Through its provenance, its material, its technique, and its manifestation, this craft could be best able to culturally convey the messages about “the social status of involved people”, “the implicit meaning of authenticity”, or “the expression of ways of living”. Thus, when people tell you about why they like porcelain and why they think it is important to them, actually they tell you about an emotional experience. They tell you that they inherited it from their grandpa, or tell you it

evoked with them memories of past events, or they tell you that it stands for their society, for everything that binds a group of people who share the same set of values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. That is what we call “crafts culture”, with crafts as the shared practices that constitute the culture.

However, with the onslaught of commercial production, more and more people are getting disconnected from their tradition and their original culture. This shows in China and in the Netherlands where the traditional crafts are in the process of getting lost, putting craftsmanship at a risk. Despite warning of some scholars for the cultural crisis in the sphere of crafts, there have been few efforts to protect the crafts and craftsmanship that represent cultural identities and values. Thus, the question that keeps returning is: how can we preserve and develop the crafts in this cultural crisis?

In the beginning of this work, I defined three groups to be the important stakeholders of this research: the craftspeople, economists and cultural policy makers. At the end of the work I will address each of these groups to suggest what their take-away is, what they can conclude from my research.

- 1) The conclusions for craftsmen and others working in crafts-related jobs: Even if craftsmen may think that they are practicing crafts for an income, this research suggests that they will gain when they become aware of the cultural values of their crafts. They do more than crafting useful or beautiful objects; they contribute to and are part of a culture, a tradition, a shared practice. By exercising their skill, and continuing the practice, they enable others, young people, to join in and to develop their skills, and they make it possible for others to enjoy and appreciate their practice and the products that are the result. Their craftsmanship stands for qualities of skills and product.

Craftspeople may take notice of the notion of crafts culture. They are to benefit from an environment that appreciates their craft, is eager to encourage children to pursue a training in their craft, and brings about politicians who are willing to support and defend their crafts culture as an essential part of the more general culture. The awareness of a crafts culture will alert all stakeholders to the relevance of the craft practices that extends beyond their own realm and concerns the community at large. For that reason, support may be warranted in the community and by (local) governments. Such support can come in the form of special attention, finances, or public communication.

When craftspeople recognize all these opportunities, they may realize the need to organize themselves to strengthen the commonality of their practice, to develop educational facilities, to maintain public relations, and to manage the master title. Together crafts people can do better conveying the special qualities of their work, organize sites to display and advertise their wares and thus to organize much needed attention. Such an organization can also combat the copying of their products and other undermining practices. Self-awareness and self-organization seem to offer the best chance to counter the ever increasing competition of industrial production methods.

- 2) The conclusions for economists who working in the world of culture, especially crafts: The study of the crafts may induce another perspective, another approach to economic phenomena. At least that could be the conclusion of this research.

Although some cultural economists (i.e. Throsby, Hutter, Klamer, Goto, Mignosa) already started to realize that it is difficult to only apply a standard economic view to resolve issues which occur in the development of crafts and craftsmanship in our modern society, but most conventional economists would like to focus on the logic of choice, solve the numerical puzzle, and explain it in terms of utility, preferences, prices, costs and benefits. These economists tend to focus on transactions in the marketplace as the most important entry to studying economic phenomena; they implicitly judge cultural factors and the social context of subordinate or no relevance.

However, in the world of culture, especially crafts, transactions are not all that matter, and prices are usually not a good indicator of use value. The notion of use value or utility does not make much sense either when we research performances, paintings or, like here, the products of artistic craftsmanship. Values show in what people do, in their practices. We say that they are intrinsic to such practices and therefore too visible. The equations that economists like to work with, are suited for quantifiable factors like prices, but are less adequate to deal with imprecise concepts like values. As a consequence, conventional economists are seriously constrained when they come to a subject like the crafts. Accordingly, when we get seriously interested in values, and this study suggests we do when crafts are the subject, we need a framework that allows us to investigate how values are formed, developed and appreciated, what kinds of

qualities are to be considered, why cultural values can hardly be assessed in monetary terms, and how values are valorized.

For that reason, this research uses the value based approach. This is a relatively new approach although its roots are deep in history with the works of Aristotle and Thomas Aquino. For most conventional economists, though, this approach will be different, and something to get used to. I hope to have shown in the preceding pages how productive and valuable this approach has been to investigate the crafts in their cultural context and to feed the notion of value to mean a great deal more than price.

The value based approach makes us think of crafts products as shared good, and all activities that make up a crafts culture as shared practices. Consequently, craftspeople making craft, people selling crafts, and people buying crafts are not only involved in transactions but they also are contributing to the shared practice and the common crafts culture. The notion of contribution is critical. The value based approach may be an important outcome of the investigation of the cultural field. It may signify an important contribution to the practice of economics.

At the same time, the crafts do make economic contributions as they generate income, are bought and sold in markets. A strong craft sector is an economic force to reckon with, just as a strong cultural sector is. There are plenty of examples of successful cultural values-based businesses, such as the crafts enterprises in Italy that promote and revive traditional ceramic manufacturing in commercialized operations. It means that the financial benefit of crafts and craftsmanship can imply a positive investment in culture to preserve local identity or safeguard intangible knowledge and skill.

Thus, to further the conversation with conventional economists who work in the world of culture, especially crafts, we may need to remind them of their own roles and responsibilities, and guide them to be attentive to the cultural and social meanings, and to be weary of their crowding out by market forces.

- 3) Conclusions for cultural policy-makers: Once policy makers identify the notion of crafts culture, and recognize its relevance for society at large, they may become more attentive to the craft sector and will cease to think of it as the dying sector that is doomed in an industrializing world.

The crafts may be too important to be victimized in the onslaught of industrial powers. After having taken notice of this study politicians will understand that governments do not make cultural goods but may enable their realization by supporting and strengthening the crafts culture in their domain. They learn that they have reason to support the production of cultural goods when they are a) important for the culture or the quality of society, and b) under threat (e.g. because of commercial forces.) This study suggests that crafts are part of culture and that craft products are cultural goods. So what applies to the arts, also applies to the crafts. The cultural factor may make them aware of the (intangible) cultural heritage that is at stake. Some craft practices go way back and constitute important traditions. Letting them go would weaken the (local) culture. If the crafts cannot survive in the market place, maybe they need other outlets with governmental support. Official approval could help as would the support of educational practices.

In China, the administrative responsibility for the Chinese traditional crafts lies with the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of the People's Republic of China. The relevant activities of this Ministry include formulating and developing laws and policies, such as *The Plan on Revitalizing China's Traditional Crafts (2017)*, which plan is enacted by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Culture, and the Ministry of Finance. It calls to facilitate and stimulate economic development of Chinese traditional crafts in a sustainable manner by 2020. However, most governments intervene in cultural activities for the sake of economic growth, and focus on the commercial impact of crafts and craftsmanship. In Jingdezhen, tourism industry threatens the intangible cultural heritage of Chinese porcelain because of copying and counterfeiting.

If the authorities would take the findings and insights of this study seriously, they would take action against commercial practices that threaten the sustenance of historically and culturally relevant craft practices. They would take a stand for their culture and their cultural heritage, and support the craftspeople and their organizations. They will support educational institutions that convey the skills and knowledge pertaining to relevant crafts. They will identify the crafts as element of the cultural identity and will honor those craftspeople who are outstanding in their craft (as politicians in Germany and Japan are used to do).

It is the value based approach that compels politicians to pay attention to culture and the values that a culture cultivates and sustains. In this way it compels them to look beyond the financial quantities and consider the qualities of their society. This would make for a big shift.

In other countries, we already observe strong and vivid attention for the conservation and revitalization of traditional crafts and craftsmanship. Japan had systematic policies for the crafts for a long time. Starting in 1950 the Japanese government has granted exceptional craftspeople the title of “*Living National Treasure*”<sup>103</sup> (*Ningen Kokuhō*). This custom is part of Japan’s *Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties*; this law also provides for coverage of part of the expenses incurred by the holder of an intangible cultural property for the training of his successor, or by a recognized group for public performance. This law could be an exemplar for the Chinese government.

The conclusion is that in spite of the consequences of globalization and industrialization, there is hope for the crafts in China and around the world. People only need to become aware of the importance of crafts and craftsmanship in their lives, of the inspiration of a “craft culture” and the qualities that it adds. Therefore, I hope that this work provides crafts people, economists, and politicians a different perspective on the crafts, a perspective that will compel them to look beyond the financial meanings of crafts, to reevaluate the values of crafts and craftsmanship, to see in the crafts a unique way, to connect the heart and the hands, and to relate things and people.

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<sup>103</sup> “*Living National Treasure*” is a Japanese popular term for those individuals certified as Preservers of Important Intangible Cultural Properties. But, in 2004, Aoyama Wahei as an owner and director of Yufuku Gallery disclosed the political lobby behind the selection process of the Living National Treasure in Japan. In 1979, Chinese government borrowed “Living National Treasure” idea to introduce “Chinese Master” in the sphere of crafts in China. Unfortunately, the behind of the process of Chinese Master in China, it exists dishonesty and corruption.



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## Nederlandse samenvatting

Belangstelling voor economisch onderzoek naar de ambachten is de afgelopen tien jaar sterk toegenomen. De standard economische benadering bepaalt de waarde van een ambacht in termen van kosten en opbrengsten. Veel onderzoekers veronderstellen dat ambachtelijke producten onderdeel zijn van de commerciële wereld en geen belangrijke rol hebben in de economische ontwikkeling. De potentie van ambachtelijke producten als culturele goederen heeft evenwel nog weinig aandacht gekregen van wetenschappers met de uitzondering van een paar studies naar het fenomeen ambacht (Richard Sennett, 2008) en een internationale vergelijking van de ambachten in verschillende landen (Arjo Klamer, 2012 en 2013).

Het doel van dit boek is het onderzoek naar ambachtsschap en ambachten. Ik wil me richten op de “ambachts cultuur” en het belang van ambachten en ambachtsschap voor de hedendaagse samenleving. Ambachtelijke producten hebben steeds een belangrijke positieve als culturele goederen. Dit boek is grensoverschrijdend omdat ze de grenzen overschrijdt van de conventionele benaderingen en in plaats daarvan de realisatie van de waarden van de ambachten en de kwaliteiten van ambachtsschap onderzoekt.

De belangrijkste aandacht gaat uit naar de handel in keramiek tussen Nederland en China. De ambachten zijn niet zozeer producten maar praktijken. Chinees porselein en Delfts blauw kunnen begrepen worden als “discursieve” producten; hun waarden komen tot stand in een brede schakering van praktijken. Bezien we de geschiedenis van de handel in keramiek, dan merken we op dat de waarden van keramiek als cultureel goed verandert in de tijd en evolueert in de interacties tussen de relevante groep. We laten zien dat degenen die betrokken zijn in het “gesprek” of de discursieve constructie, eerder met waarden bezig zijn dan met de financiële aspecten, die de standaard benadering benadrukt. Zij dichtten (culturele) waarden toe aan dergelijke goederen. Maar met de komst van nieuwe technologie en massa productie methoden, neemt de betrokkenheid van veel producenten en anderen af; men wordt onverschillig en raakt vervreemd van wat een ambacht voorstelt. De discussie over de prijs wordt daarentegen steeds belangrijker.

Daarom staat de wereld van de ambachten voor een grote uitdaging.

Hoe waarderen we ambachten en ambachtsschap? Zorgt de commercialisering voor lagere prijzen en en mindere waardering van de relevante waarden. Hoe die verandering in te schatten?

Uitgaande van de op waarden gebaseerde benadering, nodig ik drie groepen (ambachtslieden en andere belanghebbenden, economen en beleidsmakers) uit om te bezien welk handelingsperspectief de op waarden gebaseerde benadering hen biedt, welk beleid ze zouden kunnen voeren of propageren.

Het belangrijke argument van dit boek is een pleidooi voor meer en serieuzere aandacht voor de waarden van ambachten en ambachtelijke producten.



## English summary

Interest in economic research about the crafts has grown significantly in the last decade. The standard economic view adopts ideas from the field of marketing to derive the value of the crafts in terms of impacts and benefits. Many crafts researchers think of crafts as products in commercial society that may or may not play a significant role in the development of economy. However, the potential of crafts in cultural-economic terms has not received much attention by scholars, with the exception of a few studies describing the importance of craftsmanship (Richard Sennett, 2008) and comparing the contribution of crafts in different countries (Arjo Klamer, 2012 and 2013).

In this work, the objective is to explore values of craftsmanship and crafts. I want to concentrate on the “crafts culture” and the importance of crafts and craftsmanship in our modern-day society. As cultural goods crafts always had an important position in the history of people. The work attempts to suspend the limitations of conventional understanding and explores the realization of values and qualities of crafts and craftsmanship in people’s social lives.

The focus is on the ceramics trade between China and the Netherlands. The crafts are not just products but also practices, Chinese porcelain and Dutch Delft Blue can be understood as the outcome of “discursive constructs”, and values of their craftsmanship both were achieved through a range of social practices. Reviewing the ceramic trade story, ceramics as cultural goods carry values, which can be changed or evolved during the process of interaction among involved people. In other words, beyond the economic dimension, craftsmen, distributors and consumers all engage in value-based conversations. They are active and participatory agents who impart values to crafts. But, with the advances of technology and the mass production of crafts, the relationship among involved people in crafts has become more and more indifferent and estranged, even they lose themselves in the price-based conversation. In modern-day society, the development of crafts and craftsmanship encounters unprecedented challenges and obstacles.

How do we value crafts and craftsmanship? Does the commercialization cause the loss of values of craftsmanship? What has happened among involved people in the world of crafts? And how to assess such change? Based on the cultural economic perspective, I invite three groups (craftsmen and others working in crafts-related jobs; economists; cultural policy-makers) in our discussion to help them to seek out suitable policies, then to deal with different issues in their different areas.

The work implicitly argues that cultural economists may need to pay more attention to values of crafts and craftsmanship.

## Curriculum Vitae

Personal Information					
<b>Name</b>	Lili JIANG	<b>Sex</b>	Female	<b>Age</b>	33
<b>Nationality</b>	Chinese	<b>Phone</b>	0639848036		
<b>Occupation</b>	PhD student, Erasmus University Rotterdam				
<b>E-mail</b>	jiang@eshcc.eur.nl lovelily848@gmail.com				
<b>Address</b>	Wielengahof 48, 2625LK,Delft				
Academic Background					
2009~ present	PhD candidate of cultural economics Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication, Erasmus University Rotterdam  <b>Project:</b> Cultural economics <b>Thesis:</b> Valuing Craftsmanship: in particular the crafting of Chinese ceramics and Dutch Delft Blue				
2006~2009	Master Degree of Art at Chongqing University, China, 2009  <b>Project:</b> The comprehensive material in arts <b>Thesis:</b> The Creation Motivation and Social Value of Byzantium Art: case study of mosaic decoration <b>Practical Work:</b> Mask, glass mosaic. Collected by Chongqing University				
2002~2006	Bachelor Degree of Art and Culture at Xian Jiaotong University, China, 2006  <b>Project:</b> Comparable Study on Oil Painting and Traditional Chinese Painting <b>Thesis:</b> The study of Canvas Brushwork <b>Practical Work :</b> The Oriental Girl, oil painting. Collected by Xi'an Jiaotong University				
Articles					
<b>Publication</b>					
Lili Jiang, Shihu Xu, (2008), <i>The influence of the aesthetic appreciation and the culture value of the oriental painting on the western art: the oriental factor inside the impressionism art</i> , Art Panorama, No. 4					
<b>Conferences</b>					
Lili Jiang, (2010), <i>The interaction between cultural values and market values in cultural goods</i> , presented at RCIA International Symposium, Taiwan, China, September					
Lili Jiang, (2012), <i>The important of craftsmanship: the case of Chinese ceramics</i> , presented at the ACEI 2012 conference, Kyoto, Japan, June					
Lili Jiang, (2014), <i>The struggle for craftsmanship in commercial market: the case of the Dutch Delftware</i> , paper has been accepted by the ACEI 2014 conference, Montreal, Canada, June					
<b>Reports</b>					
Lili Jiang, (2011), <i>Chinese crafts in general</i> , under 'Creatief vakmanschap in internationaal perspectief' and 'Herwaardering ambachtscultuur hoofdzaak'					
Lili Jiang, (2011), <i>Creative crafts in China</i> , under 'Creatief vakmanschap in internationaal perspectief'					
Lili Jiang, (2012), <i>Individual case: UK</i> , under 'Creatief vakmanschap in internationaal perspectief'					
Lili Jiang, Priyatej Kotipalli, and Thora Fjeldsted, (2012), <i>Historical evolution of vocational education in UK</i> , under 'Herwaardering ambachtscultuur hoofdzaak'					



## Portfolio

Research Activities	
2009~ present	I am holding a position as PhD candidate in Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication, EUR, the Netherlands. My research title is "Valuing Craftsmanship". From cultural economic perspective, I use ceramics (pottery and porcelain) as example to explain how values of goods work in cultural and social contexts. Chinese manufactures made ceramics objects for consumers throughout of the world from Ming and Qing dynasties. Beginning the 16th century, porcelain was purchase by Europe from China, especially Dutch East India Company had ordered porcelain with the largest scale and longest time of investment since 1602. During this transaction the Netherlands was one of beneficiaries. In the same time, Delft Blue was created and developed. I compare Chinese traditional ceramic with Delft Blue, to clarify how to interact with each other in history and further analysis their current situations in modern society. Furthermore, due to the industrial-made things and commercialization are threatening the balance between cultural and economic values in the sector of hand-made ceramics, either in China or in the Netherlands, I try to from cultural economic perspective provide suggestions for the refocusing of craftsmanship and the strengthening of the crafts culture.
2006~2009	As a master student, my project was related to the art history and theory, comparing eastern art and western in the viewpoints of values.
2002~2006	As a bachelor student, my project was for study oil painting and traditional Chinese painting,
Projects	
2003	Together with supervisor Prof. JIA Zuofei, ceramic mosaic ' <i>Einstein</i> ' It is now collected by the elementary school of Xi'an Jiaotong University
2008	Together with supervisor Prof. XU Shihu, oil painting ' <i>Chongqing Yuzhong peninsula in dawn</i> ', 3.6m x7.8m. It is now collected by Chongqing Municipal People's Government.
2011 – 2012	As a member of the international team of cultural economists at EUR, I worked on Creative Crafts project: ' <i>Creatief vakmanschap in internationaal perspectief</i> ', to investigate the creative crafts sector in Japan, China, India, Italy, Germany and UK. From cultural economic perspective, we were focusing on the economics of the arts, the crafts, and in particular the creative crafts in modern society, to propose " <i>crafts culture in general</i> " and " <i>creative craft culture in particular</i> " ideas, and to explore the important role of crafts in the economy of the future. I was fully responsible for China and partly for UK.
2011 – 2013	As a member of the international team of cultural economists at EUR, I worked on Utilitarian Crafts project: ' <i>Herwaardering ambachtscultuur hoofdzaak</i> '. In order to drawing lesson for Dutch, we set to work to chart practices, policies, institutions, and economies concerning the utilitarian crafts in China India, Italy, Germany and UK. In the same time, to think the importance of plumbers, welders, housepainters, or roofworkers, we also discussed the craftsmanship of skilled work in our daily life. I was fully responsible for China and partly for UK.
Practical Experience	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2009, I was involved in the workshops of English course, in Erasmus Univeristy Rotterdam.</li> <li>● 2010 – 2016, I have participated in Bi-weekly seminar on cultural economics, in Eramsus School of History, Culture and Communication, for discuss about relevant academic papers and researches.</li> <li>● 2010 and 2012, I attended conferences about cultural economics, in Taiwan (China) and in Kyoto (Japan), and also took the presentation about my research in these conferences.</li> </ul>	

- 2011, I went to China, (Jingdezhen, Chongqing and Xi'an), interviewed craftsman (e.g. ceramists, glass-makers, and embroidery-makers), shopkeepers, consumers and craft educators to explore how China struggle to maintain craftsmanship in modern society. Based on these interviews, I finished part of the report titled as '*Creatief vakmanschap in internationaal perspectief*'.
- 2011, I was invited by Mr. WANG Shan, the secretary-general of the China Arts & Crafts Association in Beijing. We discussed the development of the Chinese crafts and how to promote the Chinese crafts worldwide.

Report: *Creative crafts in China*

- 2011 - 2012, under the project '*Creatief vakmanschap in internationaal perspectief*' and '*Herwaardering ambachtscultuur hoofdzaak*', I launched an online campaign to investigate the behaviour of Chinese consumers, include what consuming behaviour have changed, why consumers buy crafts, and how consumers to appreciate crafts in materialistic society.

Report: *Chinese crafts in general*