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Huei-Mei Shih
University of Wollongong

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Volume One: Thesis

**An Overview of Cochin Ceramics in Taiwan with an
Emphasis on the Influence of Hong Kun-Fu and His School –
1910s to 1980s**

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

From

University of Wollongong

By

**Huei-Mei Shih MA MFA
Fontbonne University Missouri**

Creative Arts

2008

CERTIFICATION

I, Huei-Mei Shih, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Huei-Mei Shih

-- March 2008

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I dedicate this dissertation to my parents – Chen-Su and Lee Ching-Hsiang.

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Abstract

The Cochin ceramic is a fragile and delicate folk art, with a high aesthetic value. It was introduced to Taiwan from China two hundred years ago, and gradually developed and matured in Taiwan, resulting in a unique Taiwanese art form. Cochin ceramic was extensively used as architectural decorations for temples, family worship sites or luxurious houses in Taiwan before the 1950s. The ceramic figurines have the functions of decoration, and their auspicious symbols can fend off wicked forces and are emblems for a fortunate life. The legendary stories have scenes with Chinese moral and ethical adages which serve as cultural messages to the population.

Cochin ceramic scenes and figures were closely bound with the people's lives, and contained the essence of Taiwan folk art as a distinctive artistic history. After the 1950s Cochin ceramic was mainly used only in Taiwanese temples. Due to a lack of recognition of its important heritage significance, most of the early made Cochin ceramic in Taiwan is disappearing. My research emphasizes that it is important to preserve and keep a record of this valuable ceramic history.

This thesis explores the decorative Cochin ceramics in Taiwanese temples from the 1910s-1990s, mainly focusing on the investigation of one of the most famous Chinese potters Hong Kunfu (ca.1885-1945) and five of his Taiwanese apprentices. The main purpose of my research is to document Hong's origins, development of his school, their technique, and the stylistic characteristics of their works. This study demonstrates how their achievements have contributed to the development of Taiwanese Cochin ceramic.

Through my fieldwork in Taiwan and China, I discovered more details of Hong's School and the techniques and culture of Taiwanese Cochin ceramic. Based on the data collected, I have classified and compared the different features of Cochin ceramic work,

and identified the difference styles among Hong School craftsmen.

The thesis is organized as an exploration of the origin of Cochin ceramic, its evolution in Taiwan and a biographical sketch of Hong Kunfu and his successors, and their art works in Taiwan.

This documenting of the existing Cochin figures helps the appreciation of a precious heritage in Taiwan.