

Analysis of the Application of Regional Cultural Symbols in Qinzhou Nixing Pottery Souvenirs

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Abstract:

Qinzhou Nixing pottery souvenirs have been developed in recent years, with recognition and encouragement gained by winning awards in the national souvenir design competitions. For the general public, tourist souvenirs carry the memories of the scenic spots or cities they have visited. However, a large quantity of fakes as well as inferior but expensive tourist commodities flood China's souvenir market, causing the chaotic prices and affecting the interests of the formal manufacturing enterprises. This paper analyses the development of the Nixing pottery souvenirs and proposes opinions on the design of the Nixing pottery souvenirs with regional and ethnic characteristics.

Keywords: Nixing Pottery, Tourist Souvenirs, Regional Culture, Ethnic Design

1. Overview of Tourism Development in the Guangxi North Bay Economic Zone

Guangxi is a multi-ethnically-inhabited area, which has rich and diverse ethnic customs as well as regional cultures shaped by unique geographic features. Its complex hierarchy of ethnic cultures makes Guangxi distinguished in its tourism development. Its distinctive regional tourist brands have attracted lots of visitors to Guangxi, such as the Karst landscape topography, ethnic enclaves, the ancient cultural sites, etc. For long the natural landscape and ethnic culture has been the focus of Guangxi tourist brands.

And after years of development, a considerable number of world-famous tourism brands have been created such as the Guilin landscape, "Third Sister Liu" culture, Yangshuo West Street, the ancient town culture, etc.

Qinzhou has a wealth of both natural and cultural tourism resources. Its natural tourism resources include seventy-two Stream, Sanniang Bay, Malan Isle, Nawu Ridge, Liufeng Mountain, etc. And the cultural tourist attractions include the Sanxuan Hall, Fenggong Chateaux, Feng Zicai Tomb, Tianya Pavilion, etc. The development of marine tourism resources in Qinzhou started later than in other coastal cities in Guangxi, such as its neighboring cities Beihai City and Fangchenggang, respectively with a national-level marine tourism resort and a district-level tourist resort. Since Qinzhou is a major transportation hub from Nanning to Beihai, many tourists just pass by instead of staying there. The phenomena above in Qinzhou result from the unsystematic development of its tourist resources as well as lack of external publicity. As for the existing resources, Qinzhou has the same subtropical marine monsoon climate as Beihai and Fangchenggang which has a warm and pleasant winter. The coastline in Qinzhou is no longer than that of the Silver Beach in North Sea, but its favorable location in the estuary as well as in a relatively flat inland sea has created a unique advantage for its long history of river and sea transportation.

From the above we can see that Qinzhou is abundant in tourism resources. Its unique marine and inland scenery as well as the cultural

heritage all deserve great development. Besides, Qinzhou has become a major place of origin for seafood and subtropical fruits in Guangxi because of its geographical particularity. And the well-known South Pearl Group is based in Qinzhou. What's more, the craft Nixing pottery, one of China's four famous pottery crafts are also produced in Qinzhou. Generally speaking, Qinzhou possesses lot of natural advantages and the development of its resources is just a matter of time.

To a certain extent, the promotion of regional tourist culture is an important way to attract tourists. And both ideological and material factors constitute the tourist culture. And the development of Qinzhou's soft power such as the tourist culture needs a clear self-analysis and tailored program. The lagging soft power of tourism is also a reason for the slow development of the tourism industry in Qinzhou, which is reflected in the inadequate understanding of their own tourist culture, lack of professional tourism employees and relatively weak development of tourist souvenirs, etc.

2. Development Status of Qinzhou Nixing Pottery Souvenirs

People buy souvenirs that reflect regional cultures to remind themselves of the tourist spots or cities they have visited. And when they visit friends or relatives, they always take souvenirs as special gifts. What's more, souvenirs can reflect the cultural identity of a region. A souvenir with mature design alone can convey diversified messages. Roughly speaking, good tourist souvenirs should combine unique regional aesthetic cognition, specific craft process and materials with local characteristics. In other words, souvenirs are the symbols of a city in a sense. However, in China's souvenir market now, the vast majority of tourist souvenirs are old-fashioned in style and inferior in quality. Branded tourist souvenirs with superior quality are in bad demand.

Souvenirs in China's tourist market are made of diverse materials, including both natural materials and synthetic materials, bringing about the flexible artistic expression of souvenirs. Bamboo, wood and ceramics are the most common natural materials in Guangxi. There is a variety of ceramic tourist commodities. Its material plasticity helps shape the products with various styles, diverse types as well as profound interpretation of its local culture. As far as the Yixing purple clay is concerned, its fame among China's ceramic products derives not only from the exquisite craftsmanship and large quantity of finished products, but from the profound cultural connotation and aesthetic values it carries fundamentally speaking.

It's obvious that ceramic souvenirs can be kept longer than other easily consumed materials. And ceramic souvenirs also have more cultural and commemorative values. In Qinzhou, the most famous tourism "souvenirs" are locally produced food, including various types of dried and fresh seafood, sea duck eggs, pearl and shell jewelry, seasonal fresh fruits, tea, wine, etc. All these items beside pearls and shells can only be called "tourism products" because they can't be preserved for long. Its commemorative attribute is only reflected in sense of taste. However, the pearl and shell souvenirs are lacking in uniqueness. Such market atmosphere fosters a natural advantage for the local specialty craft product –Nixing pottery. The National "Golden Phoenix Cup" Innovative Design Competition for tourist commodities and crafts was held in 2010 in Yangzhou during the 45th National Trade Fair for handicrafts, souvenirs & household products. Guangxi declared 29 entries and 20 of them won awards. It's worth mentioning that the majority of the awards went to the Nixing pottery works, among which 3 won the gold prize, 4 won the silver prize, 1 won the Bronze prize and another 9 the Excellence Award. Under the influence of such event, Qinzhou City organized two development design

contests for the Nixing pottery tourist products respectively in 2008 and 2011. There appeared a lot of excellent and innovative works which tell the difference between tourist commodities and handicrafts on the one hand, and make clear the target consumers and specified design background.

The "People's Republic of China Tourism Law" implemented since October 1, 2013 provides a legal basis for regulating the chaotic tourism market. It's a double-edged sword for the souvenir market. The regulations clearly specify that tourists have the right to choose tourist commodities and refuse compulsory transaction. Therefore, the Nixing pottery souvenirs have no choice but offer attractive products for good sales. Actually tourist souvenirs have many limitations since it should not only reflect the local culture of the tourist attraction, but should be convenient for tourists to carry.

Every part of the processes from design to production to sales needs detailed investigation and analysis. Otherwise, the products may be unsalable. Suppose that the products are designed and produced without taking into account the consumer psychology. It will lead to sluggish sales, which may finally result in old inventory or forced transaction. Either result can strike a fatal blow at the manufactures. Therefore, it is the first and most critical step to design souvenirs that meet the consumers' demand.

3. Principles for the Development and Design of Nixing Pottery Souvenirs

In the paper "Research on the Design Features and Development of Qinzhou Nixing Pottery", the existing Nixing pottery products are divided into household pottery and craft pottery. The former includes tea and coffee sets, purple clay rice cooker liners, electric soup pots, boilers, steamers, flower pots, daily ceramic pots, etc. And the latter includes flower pots, smoked tripod, arts and crafts style pottery, antique

pottery specialty kiln treasures, tourism craft souvenirs, etc. Although the Nixing pottery has a specific category for tourist souvenirs, the author found from the research that the small items of both household and craft pottery products can also be sold as souvenirs as long as these principles concerning tourist souvenirs are followed in the production. First, the production should be market-oriented, which means the needs of the consumer should be taken as the main production targets. Secondly, the souvenirs should possess unique geographical characteristics, which is the most prominent principle for tourist souvenirs. Thirdly, souvenirs should be innovative. All kinds of tourist souvenirs need to keep with the times and meet different psychological needs of tourists while inheriting the traditional craft. It's critical for a company's long-term survival and development. Fourthly, souvenirs should be functional since tourists demand less souvenirs that can only serve as ornaments and furnishings. Fifth, souvenirs should have artistic values, which is crucial for a high-end tourist souvenir. The best example is the Tianjin clay figurine Zhang. Sixth, diversity is also important. The same material can be made into products for different people with different spending power and different demand. Last but not least, it is necessary to enhance the hardware inputs and the quality of relevant staff. High quality is the best attraction to tourists since souvenirs are non-essentials of life to some extent.

4. Design Strategies for the Nixing Pottery Tourist Souvenirs

4.1. The Strategy of Applying Ethnic Culture

Let's take the winning entries in the 45th National Trade Fair for Tourist Crafts as examples. First comes the "Festive Pot" (Figure 1) made by Cui Longxi. The main body is created in the image of a large percussion section, the pot hand in the image of the drumstick, pot

handle in the shape of a highly abstract drummer and the spout in the shape of a raising dragon head. Both the whole body and the details reflect distinctive Chinese traditional elements. Next example is the "Eternal Book Soul Vase" produced by Zhang Chuanrui (Figure 2) which combines the traditional Identical design without geographical characteristics is a common problem faced by most tourist souvenirs. Tourist products in Guangxi are no exception. For example, costumes, tapestries, bags, and silver jewelry that are made with the image of the Third Sister Liu or the pattern of Guangxi landscape flood the market, which are produced with simple technology, low cost and little creativity in spite of the clear geographical identity. According to incomplete statistics, metal, wood, glass, paper, and ceramics are preferable materials for souvenirs because they are low-carbon, environmentally-friendly and can be preserved for long if properly protected. In this sense, the Nixing pottery is a good choice. First, the Nixing pottery is absolutely low-carbon and environmentally-friendly product. Second, it possesses geographical uniqueness as a specialty product in Qinzhou. Third, it is very suitable for carving thanks to the excellent stability of its clay material, which also lays a foundation for its artistic expression during the production.

Poetry, calligraphy and carving and demonstrates the good artistic expression of the Nixing pottery. In contrast, the bronze award work "Zhuang Women" (Figure 3) designed by Wang Zhiping shows strong local characteristics and excellent design. It has a concise and fluent overall shape. The ethnic patterns on it are modern, abstract but not cumbersome. Although it's small in size, the details are carved exquisitely.



Fig.1



Fig.2



Fig.3

4.2.The Strategy of Applying Marine Culture

The unique location of Qinzhou alongside the coastline of Guangxi fosters favorable conditions for its ocean and river transportation as well as the sea and subtropical fruit production. The marine environment in Qinzhou consists of three ecosystem components, namely the coral reef ecosystem, the mangrove ecosystem and the wetland ecosystem. Located in the estuary, the coast in Qinzhou is in the shape of a ring. The

relatively flat coastal environment with a wide range of shoal has nourished a large amount of small marine fishes, which attracts the white dolphins feeding on them to reside there. Also known as the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, white dolphins live in subtropical and tropical waters. As the state level I protected animals, white dolphins are compared to the "Sea Panda", which shows its preciousness and rarity. The number of white dolphins has been on the increase as Qinzhou enhanced the protection of the marine environment in recent years. A large number of tourists have been attracted to Qinzhou since the North Bay White Dolphin Conservation and Research Center was established in Qinzhou in 2011. Under the influence of such geographical factors, white dolphins become the exclusive source of inspiration and theme for designing the Nixing pottery tourist souvenirs, which is extremely rare for other ceramic souvenirs. (Figure 4)



Fig.4

4.3.The Strategy of Applying Tea Culture

The Tropic of Cancer goes across Guangxi, which brings about the great climate for the famous tea growing there. The northern area of Guangxi mainly grows the green tea, jasmine tea and Oolong tea, while the south Guangxin black tea and six Fort tea. Guangxi has a dozen of tea varieties, among which the Xishan tea in Guiping, Yin hao tea in Guilin and the six Fort tea in Wuzhou are the most famous.

Since ancient times, good tea has always needed proper tea-making sets to display its flavor. The Nixing pottery tea sets are made of purple clay and its dual pore structure can help

prevent the tea water from being rancid overnight. Besides, the Nixing pottery can adapt to various water temperatures, satisfying the need of tea making with hot water. According to the existing literature, the production of Nixing pottery tea sets doesn't last long. The introduction of modern machinery and deep accumulation of traditional craft have laid a food foundation for the creation and production today. Tea sets serve as both functional and artistic products. Local ethnic symbols are integrated into the design of tea sets, such as the Zhuang drums and Huashan rock paintings, which add a unique flavor to the design. All these make the Nixing pottery tourist souvenirs excellent templates. (Figure 5)



Fig.5

5. Conclusions

The majority of the existing Nixing pottery souvenirs take the Zhuang symbols, the local marine culture in Qinzhou, the figure Fengzi and other cultural elements as the main motif. In style some are complicated and others are relatively simple. And the portability of the Nixing pottery souvenirs is constantly improved by various workshops. But most quality works just pursue the craft creation. Of course, for handicrafts, the modern technology and the mechanical production have improved the efficiency and substantially increased the yields of ceramic souvenirs on the one hand, but have brought down the quality and value to some extent on the other. After all, the positioning of crafts should be based on the irreplicable emotion instead of being confused with the concept of industry. Thus, well-made and artistic

handmade products will remain the major direction for the high-end tourist souvenirs. In summary, the author believes that the Nixing pottery tourist souvenirs need to make proper use of modern mechanization for its development and at the same time it should not lose its original role as tourist handicrafts.

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