

# Research on the Innovativeness of Chinese Tea Set Design Based on "Craftsmanship Spirit"

Huiqing Chen

Xiamen Academy of Arts and Design  
Fuzhou University  
Xiamen, China

Jian Zhang

Xiamen Academy of Arts and Design  
Fuzhou University  
Xiamen, China

**Abstract**—With a long history of tea culture, China has a formed a set of perfect tea cultural mechanism. Tea culture not only expresses the connotation of Chinese traditional culture, but also interprets the aesthetic value of tea set. Under the strategy of vigorously advocating "craftsmanship spirit", China's tea culture industry strives to achieve upgrading, transformation and sustainable development. Therefore, by referring to the connotation of "craftsmanship spirit", this paper analyzes its role in the innovative design of Chinese tea set and its important significance for the cultural development of tea set. From this, it explores the innovative design methods of current Chinese tea sets, so as to better produce "Chinese" tea sets and promote tea set culture and enrich tea culture.

**Keywords**—tea culture; craftsmanship spirit; tea set design; cultural creativity

## I. INTRODUCTION

China's broad and far-reaching tea culture shows the Chinese people's continuous pursuit and yearning for beauty, which occupies a pivotal position in the history of the world's tea culture [1]. Tea set plays an important role in tea culture. Xu Zishu in the Ming dynasty said in the book "Tea Shu", "The tea is mellow because of the sweetness of the water; water is sweet because of the exquisite vessel; nice boiled water comes from the appropriate degree of heating. These four elements supplement each other and the lack of any one of them will lead to the waste of all" [2]. Since ancient times, tea industry has been a driving force of social and economic development. One of the most famous export products of ancient China was tea. The tea set has social, educational and economic function, allowing people to better taste the aroma of tea while feeling its profound cultural connotation. In today's society, more and more people begin to pay attention to tea culture, thus increasing the consumption of tea set products and further promoting economic prosperity [3].

## II. THE DEVELOPMENT STATUS OF CHINA'S TEA SET INDUSTRY

The production of tea set comes into being with the concept of "tea is for drinking". Its development has gone through a process from nothing to something, from sharing to exclusivity, from roughness to delicacy, and has been continuously developed with the change of tea drinking

customs. Driven by the prosperous tea industry, the tea set industry presents a good upward trend. In terms of market demand, the overall sales of the tea set industry increased year by year. From 2010 to 2017 (as shown in "Fig. 1"), except 2012 and 2015, an increasing trend was shown compared with the previous year. Especially in 2017, the sales revenue of the tea set industry reached 192.48 billion yuan, with a year-on-year growth of 1.92% [4]. However, in the prosperous development of tea set industry, homogeneity gradually appears. Therefore, contemporary tea set designers need to grasp the opportunities of the times, give full play to the "craftsmanship spirit", and form unique features of utensils, so as to further enrich the connotation of tea set culture.



Fig. 1. Sales revenue and growth trend of tea set manufacturing industry from 2010 to 2017.

<sup>a</sup> Source: Prospects Industry Research Institute

## III. THE EMBODIMENT OF "CRAFTSMANSHIP SPIRIT" IN TEA SET DESIGN

### A. "Craftsmanship Spirit" in Modern Design

Craftsmanship spirit refers to the unity of hand and heart in the creation and manufacture. In the concrete production practice, the spirit of craftsman shows mainly from two aspects: skill and spirit and that is, craftsman show ingenuity in the utensil and keeps improving his artistry; at the same time, he respects the inheritance of technology and spare no effort to make utensils. The emergence of craftsmanship spirit is not only related to the improvement of our cognition of the whole production process, but also has an important

relationship with the continuous improvement of people's consumption quality. On the surface, craftsmanship spirit is only a slight improvement of artisans' production requirements for their own products, but small changes in the production requirements of products have substantial impetus to the entire production of products. Therefore, the application of "craftsmanship spirit" is necessary and inevitable [6]. With the increasing popularity of tea culture today, the application of "craftsmanship spirit" can further promote the prosperity and development of tea set industry and enrich the aesthetic connotation of tea set.

#### B. "Craftsmanship Spirit" in the Design of Tea Sets in China and Japan

When it comes to "tea set", it is well known that Chinese and Japanese tea sets are the most representative. Since the development of tea culture in Japan is closely related to that in China, this paper will explore and analyze the innovative development of tea set design today through the craftsmanship spirit in the tea set design of China and Japan next.

1) *The embodiment of "craftsmanship spirit" in Japanese tea set:* What sells the highest price in Japan today? What occurs immediately to people's mind is tea set. "Daimyo collections" are the objects loved by the early tea people and those of the following dynasties also developed their appreciation towards these objects [7]. In the Japanese tea ceremony culture, the tea wares selected are extremely beautiful and exquisite, which reflects the respect and love of Japanese tea people for the tea culture. The beauty of these unique objects also gives a special flavor to its tea culture. In Japanese tea culture, tea set is full of perceptual cognition and unique artistic temperament of arts and crafts, showing deep humanistic feelings and obvious natural attributes while being highly ornamental. The wonderful Japanese tea sets reflect the vein of Japanese culture with its natural attribute, sending out the unique aroma of Japanese arts and crafts culture.

Masahiro Mori, a famous ceramic master in Japan, has a distinctive style, with pure color and strong sense of design. His design "White porcelain tea set" (as shown in "Fig. 2") has concise modeling. The spout is ingeniously connected with the body, with harmonious proportion and proper function. This tea set also features the collocation of porcelain and bamboo. The base of cup is made of bamboo, which matches the cup body in terms of color, and adds a practical function of preventing heat [9]. By use of the principle of human body engineering, every part of the tea set is carefully designed, which well reflects the "craftsmanship spirit" of Japanese craftsmen when they design the tea set.



Fig. 2. "White porcelain tea set".

a. Photo credit: Jiang Lei, Dai Yuxiang, Ceramic Creative Design



Fig. 3. Utensil for tea infiltration ·Tea Set.

a. Photo credit: Jiang Lei, Dai Yuxiang, Ceramic Creative Design

2) *The embodiment of "craftsmanship spirit" in Chinese tea set:* Tea set is the most important factor in tea culture. In Lu Yu's *The Classic of Tea* ·2 utensils, the utensils needed to pick tea-leaves are listed; in 3 *Tea Making* of it, the tea making process is recorded in detail; and in the 4 vessels of it, the tea sets for boiling tea are recorded [11]. The popularity of tea drinking stimulates the demand for professional tea sets, and the emergence of professional tea sets improves the cultural character and aesthetic taste of tea drinking, thus forming the "tea ceremony". This, in turn, has greatly pushed forward the popularity of tea drinks and the demand for tea sets, forming a positive cycle of interactions [10]. The design of ancient Chinese tea set emphasizes peace and tranquility, which is a kind of zen of life like drifting with the wind and floating like a dream — be neither restrained by form nor frivolous due to the nature [12]. Just as "Utensil for tea infiltration ·Tea Set" (as shown in "Fig. 3") designed by Chinese designer Zhang Wei has a strong breath of life, tea sets are all extremely simple in shape and decoration, with a strong vitality of life. His designs of tea sets recover to original simplicity and show the unity of hand and heart. With a combination of

"craftsmanship spirit", the designer integrated a clay pot holder, a wooden partition, and several different textured elements together. The integration of different elements doesn't evoke any feeling of abruptness, but reflects the understanding and yearning for life and tea ceremony.

3) *Summary*: Through the comparison of tea set design between China and Japan, it can be seen that the current Chinese tea sets design, compared with those of Japan in terms of design concept and cultural output, still lacks the morality of its craft and the application of "craftsmanship spirit", and there is a serious phenomenon of homogenization in the tea set market. Therefore, unremitting efforts should be made to make more innovation in the design of Chinese tea sets and better use of Chinese tea culture and "craftsmanship spirit" in the design of tea sets with Chinese characteristics.

#### IV. INNOVATIVE RESEARCH ON CHINESE TEA SET DESIGN

With the changes in the way people drink tea and advances in tea set technology over dynasties, China's tea set

design has always been from the practical function of serving the life all the time, rich full-bodied humanities concern, shine with the brilliance of the humanity [13]. In response to the national call, to realize the integration and deepening of "craftsmanship spirit" in the tea industry requires a good external environment to promote the innovative design of tea sets, so as to endow its design with "ingenuity" and "artisan wisdom" and fill the products with the milk of human kindness [14].

##### A. Research on Innovative Design of Tea Set

With the continuous improvement of China's level of industrial development, the application of "craftsmanship spirit" is increasingly extensive. Accordingly, the fusion of "craftsmanship spirit" in tea set design must be developed with the attitude of elaboration and delicacy. The emotional investment in the design of the whole tea set must be achieved through delicate mind. Combined with the specific needs of current tea set production, the systematic work of tea set innovation design (see "Table I") is summarized as follows:

TABLE I. SYSTEM OF INNOVATIVE DESIGN WORK OF TEA SET

systematization of the innovative design of tea set		
serial number	key point	objective
1	Lay emphasis on and take into consideration the needs and attention of consumers	Through the analysis of tea consumption market, it can be known that consumers' consumption concept is more mature. Therefore, in today's market dominated by consumers, only by integrating consumer needs can the designed tea sets be infused with human touch.
2	It is necessary to take the cultural connotations with Chinese characteristics into consideration	It can not only effectively improve the production quality of tea set, but also enable consumers to deeply understand the specific connotation contained in the whole utensils and feel the unique Chinese taste.
3	It is necessary to incorporate elements of the times and modern design concepts	The application of "craftsmanship spirit" in the innovative design of tea sets should keep pace with the times and follow the path of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics in response to the national call.

##### B. Innovative Design of Tea Sets Under "Craftsmanship Spirit"

In modern tea art activities, people attach great importance to the practical function of tea set, and pay more attention to the artistry and appreciation of tea set. Delicate arrangement and combination forms a static visual art on the tea table, which gradually develops to an independent art form and is welcomed by people [16]. The concrete formation of tea set is an emotional mechanism formed between the cultural elements and artistic design related to tea. The basis and premise of tea culture is the systematic "tea element". Extracting this element and integrating the specific tea culture concept and technology through tea set will endow the tea set with emotional characteristics and value connotation. Therefore, in the specific use of utensils related to tea in the modern design, designers should form distinct cognition and deep understanding to them from the holistic view of the artistic design and emotional expression, so as to design the tea set with rich human touch [17].

Tea set design needs an uncompromised spirit of innovation. The so-called innovation mainly means that with

the continuous deepening of tea culture system, the things enabling the design to maintain its influence and value in various stages and periods. The ideological culture of tea set mainly focuses on the integration of artistry and practicality. The emotional concept and thinking cognition cannot be ignored whenever people use the tea set. Whether it is the interpretation of elements deeply combined with the public tea drinking activities, or the specific emotional display of the public tea drinking activities, there are unique emotional display and expression. In the exploration of the ideology and culture conveyed by tea set, it is also necessary to pay attention to the integration of practical demands and emotional understanding. By basing on and incorporating the necessary inclusive thinking, combining with the mature perception of tea culture and the emotional factors of tea set design, the art display of tea set and the maximum value of its comprehensive utilization can be realized. Therefore,

- in terms of decoration, designers can show different cultural characteristics according to their own wishes and through different style of decoration to decorate tea sets;

- in terms of modeling, designers can combine modern fashion sense with traditional customs, boldly imagine, and create tea sets with both ornamental and practical virtues;
- in terms of packaging, designers should integrate packaging as part of the product into the production process and unify the style of adornment, modeling, packaging of the tea set works, so as to add to the richness of the product, and increase its commercial value at the same time [18].

Of course, it is also needed to see the continuous deepening and improvement of design style and artistic thinking in tea sets in the daily life of the public, ask for not only people's continuous requirements for improvement of quality in the process of tea drinking, but also the whole transformation form of the way to drink tea. Innovative tea set design should seek the innovation and breakthrough of the development of tea set in the new era with a new way of thinking, and redesign its products in form on the basis of preserving traditional techniques, materials and spiritual outlook [19]. The research on the innovative design of tea set under the "craftsmanship spirit" is a diversified research based on the inheritance and innovative development of traditional culture. Designers should use innovative thinking and design means to show the unique cultural connotation of tea sets without giving up the promotion of traditional culture for commercial interests, so as to make the tea sets made with innovation the carrier of "craftsmanship spirit".

## V. CONCLUSION

With the improvement of science and technology and the continuous development of humanities and arts, people's aesthetic and spiritual pursuit of tea drinking utensils are also changing. Tea set as a kind of articles for daily use, need to change constantly according to the change of people's demand, always maintain its fashion, and at the same time have elegant taste. While maintaining the tradition, it should keep up with the development of modern fashion frontier, so as to reflect the taste of modern life, give tea drinkers beautiful enjoyment. Therefore, innovation is the most important in the design of tea sets. And designers are required to stay true to their heart, always bear in mind the "craftsmanship spirit", and treat every piece of work with the attitude of making perfection more perfect so as to ease the homogeneity in market and carry forward the "Chinese spirit" of the new era.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Li Zhe. Comparative study of Japanese tea culture and Chinese tea culture [J]. Tea in Fujian, 2017.12. (in Chinese)
- [2] (The dynasty of Ming) Xu Cishu. Tea Shu [M]. The Complete Library of the Four Treasuries, the 25th year of Emperor Wanli of Ming dynasty. (in Chinese)
- [3] Wang Yunhai. Connotation and social function of Chinese tea culture [J]. Journal of Guizhou Tea, 2015. 9. (in Chinese)
- [4] Prospects Industry Research Institute. "Prospects and investment strategic planning analysis report on 2018-2023 China tea set industry market" [Z]. (in Chinese)
- [5] Li Hongwei, Bie Yinglong. Historical inheritance and contemporary cultivation of craftsmanship spirit [J]. Studies in Dialectics of Nature. 2015. 8. (in Chinese)
- [6] Wang Huang. The thinking and application of artisan spirit in tea packaging design [J]. Tea in Fujian, 2017. 5. (in Chinese)
- [7] Liu Zongyue. Xu Yiyi trans. Technology culture [M]. Guangxi Normal University Press, 6th edition, 2015. 5. (in Chinese)
- [8] Chen Le. On the application of arts and crafts in Japanese tea ceremony culture [J]. Tea in Fujian, December 2017. (in Chinese)
- [9] Jiang Lei, Dai Yuxiang. Ceramic Creative Design [M]. China Academy of Arts Press, 1st edition, 2017. 10. (in Chinese)
- [10] Chen Wenhua. Appreciation of ancient Chinese tea sets [C]. Jiangxi Education Publishing House, 1st edition, 2007. 12. (in Chinese)
- [11] Lu Yu, Zhong Qiang. "The Classic of Tea" [M]. Heilongjiang Science. 1st edition, 2010. 12. (in Chinese)
- [12] A Tianjin examinee. "Tea Sets · Lacquer Ware · Ting" [N]. Chinese Monthly, 2018. 8. (in Chinese)
- [13] Wang Ziyi. The enlightenment of ancient Chinese ceramic tea ware [J]. Decoration, 2014. 3. (in Chinese)
- [14] Liu Cuilian, Shen Can. On how to carry forward craftsmanship spirit and deepen China's tea culture industry [J]. Tea in Fujian, 2018. 3. (in Chinese)
- [15] Wang Yun. The thinking and application of craftsmanship spirit in tea packaging design [J]. Tea in Fujian, 2017. 5. (in Chinese)
- [16] Qiao Musen. Tea mat design [M]. Shanghai Cultural Publishing House, the first edition in 2005. (in Chinese)
- [17] Hu Changchun. Ceramic tea ware design style and ideological and cultural embodiment [J]. Tea in Fujian, July 2018. (in Chinese)
- [18] Yang Yi. Research on innovative design of ceramic tea ware [J]. Tea in Fujian, 2017. 1. (in Chinese)
- [19] Li Hui. Ceramic design based on cultural needs [J]. Packaging Engineering, 2015. 4. (in Chinese)