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Study on Yancheng's Sea Salt Cultural Resources for Regional Cultural Diversity Development—An Analysis of the Inclusive Architecture of China's Sea Salt Museum

Mengze Wang[1]*, Hetian Tang[2], Shuwen Shi[2]
[1] University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
[2] College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yancheng Institute of Technology, Yancheng, China
*Corresponding author, e-mail: nancywang98@163.com

Abstract: *This paper focuses on the historical origins and contemporary connotations of Yancheng's sea salt culture, and takes the inclusive planning and design of infrastructure and public space as the starting point. The China Sea Salt Museum, a typical representative of Yancheng's urban cultural branding, is selected as a case study, and its infrastructure and public facilities are analyzed to highlight the innovative design of the museum based on inclusive connotations. The research,therefore,provides some theoretical references for the construction of urban infrastructure and public space architecture with cultural diversity.*

Keywords: *Sea Salt Culture; China Sea Salt Museum; Inclusive Design; Cultural Diversity*

Introduction

General Secretary Xi Jinping believes that a country's prosperity cannot be achieved without inheriting and applying its excellent history and culture to the development of today's society. Yancheng is a city of which development process is closely related to salt, and of which the regional culture takes salt as its core. If the soul of the city lies in the culture, then the sea salt culture can be known as the soul of Yancheng. As the carrier of a city's life, urban infrastructure and public spaces are important tools to promote social integration and participation in social improvement, which simultaneously are the most direct manifestation of the vitality of this place. As a fundamental unique feature of Yancheng's local history and culture, sea salt culture is viewed as an essential factor in the construction of urban infrastructure and public space in this city.

The Historical Origin and Contemporary Connotation of Yancheng's Sea Salt Culture

The Historical Origin of Sea Salt Culture in Yancheng

According to the ancient book "Lv's Spring and Autumn", China has a long history of sea salt development, and the story of "boiling the sea for salt" can be traced back to the time of Emperor Yandi, more than 5,000 years ago. This city is famous for its sea salt, owing to its relatively stable coastline and lush reedbeds, which provided a suitable environment for the production of sea salt. Therefore, Yancheng became the only city in China named after "salt". In 119 B.C., Yancheng had a county of Yandu in its territory, which was eighty kilometres in length and was presumed to be supervised and managed by the Salt and Iron Official Department Division based on various artifacts excavated at that time. In 411 B.C., with the continuous development of handicrafts, the small bay was developed into a small town with a dense population and a well-developed salt and iron industry, thus the name of the area was changed to Yancheng County. After the period of the Government of Zhenguan, the economy of salt industry in Yancheng achieved better development. In the context of the prosperous economic development of the Tang Dynasty, the supervisory courts were set up in Yancheng and other areas to recruit ordinary people to go to Huainan-Huaibei area to boil the sea water for salt. According to historical evidence, Yancheng could produce 54,000 kilograms of salt a year during the peocess of boiling, and the scale of making salt and production efficiency were improved as never before. In the Song Dynasty, the book, "Annals of Food and Goods" recorded, "half of the world's taxes was from the profit derived from salt. During the Yuan You period, the amount of salt production in Huainan-Huaibei area and Jiechi can be four million coins a year, which accounted for two-thirds of the world's taxes." (Li & Chen, 2020). This is sufficient to prove that salt industry occupied an important development position in ancient times.

The Connotation of the Sea Salt Culture of Yancheng in the Contemporary Era

Sea salt is born out of the vast sea, experiencing the process of steaming and boiling. It is the unity of countless particles of salt, which are closely related to each other. At the same time, it obtains the absence of falsehoods and the presence of the genuine, undergoing severe training and hammering, which is equipped with selfless dedication by melting itself. Sea salt is the flavor of life, which is indispensable and beneficial to all things. The richness of this sea salt culture brings new hope and direction to the young generation, which is the primary content of the study and inheritance for the development of contemporary society.

(1) The Spirit of Arduous Struggling and Being Brave and Resolute

On the basis of historical materials recordations, the salt farmers themselves lived under conditions with extreme hardships and dangers. Nevertheless, The unique long-term salt production method and the ruthless exploitation by landlords strengthened the will of the individulas who produce salt to struggle arduously and be brave and resolute. Since ancient times, there have been countless uprisings of salt farmers in Yanfu County (one ancient name of Yancheng). In modern times, the arrival of the New Fourth Army in the Yanpu Plain, which is in the east of China, encouraged people living in that region to become more courageous and decisive, leading to the rapid exploration and growth of the salt and cotton resources in the area. Owing to this, the red culture gradually developed. After the implementation of the policy, reform and opening up, these outstanding qualities have become the spiritual resources for residents to strive for better life in Yancheng in the new era.

(2) Team Style of Unity, Hard Work and Entrepreneurship

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From the Song and Yuan dynasties to the Ming and Qing ones, the government offices used to strictly controlled the source of sea salt tax and strictly prohibited individuals from producing salt. As a consequence, they took advantages of the way of using tools to control ordinary people in case they disobeyed relevant regulations. When making salt cookware, the pan iron was deliberately divided into dozens of shapes of different sizes and was kept in the residences of different salt farmers. Once the salt was decocted, the parts of the pan had to be assembled and the process would go on around the clock. As a result, each family had to take turns cooking the salt until the brine was completed decocting, the whole process of which was required to last for half a month. Therefore, salt farmers attached great importance to the team spirit of unity and hard work, and the team spirit of the people of Yancheng in the new era is thus succeeded and continued.

(3) Innovative Spirit of Reforming and Bold Experimentation

The production methods of salt-making have been improved through the generations, from the original "boiling seawater to produce salt" to "pouring brine to decocte salt", and then to the more mature way,"drying seawater into salt". The "boiled seawater" is the simplest method that the ancestors directly got salt by making use of water and fire in ancient times, while the "pouring brine to decocte salt" is divided into four processes: preparing firewood, drying ashes, pouring brine and then being decocted to salt. When it comes to the "sun-dried sea salt", it makes use of wind and solar energy, evaporating salt into the form of crystallisation. Whichever the stage is, it is composed of a variety of wisdom of the ancestors. It is the continuous reform and search for the best way to produce salt that made the sea salt we see in the modern world come into being. The innovative spirit of the salt makers to reform and make bold attempts has also been reflected in daily life, encouraging people of Yancheng to have more courage and confidence to achieve better development in the future in the new era.

Analysis of the Cultural Inclusiveness of the Architectural Design of the Chinese Sea Salt Museum

From a cultural point of view, the culture of sea salt is deeply rooted in the city's urban construction. There is a direct relationship between many of the Chinese characters in modern Yancheng and sea salt, such as "chang" (field), "tuan" (regiment), "zao"(stove) and other special words. Some of the modern buildings and landscapes are also on behalf of a continuation of the ancient sea salt culture, such as the Hai Tower, an important beacon for sea salt transportation, the Fan Zhongyan Dyke, which protected sea salt from flooding, and the Chuanchang River, an important transportation channel for sea salt transportation. The completion of the China Sea Salt Museum in 2008 within the city of Yancheng is a further indication that Yancheng is the core city for the inheritance of sea salt culture. The museum not only stores historical information on the development of China's sea salt culture lineage, but also showcases modern research on sea salt culture through wax figures and sculptures.

Overview of China Sea Salt Museum

The China Sea Salt Museum is located on the banks of the Chuanchang River, in Yancheng City, Jiangsu Province, and is the first museum in China to reflect the history of sea salt culture. In addition, it is the first

key construction project ever approved by the state under the title of China in Yancheng. In terms of design, the pavilion was designed by Cheng Taining, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and the winner of the "Liang Sicheng" award, the highest award for architectural design in China. Throughout the entire museum, the basic structure and spatial layout are full of historical and cultural characteristics. This museum comprehensively and systematically reflects the situations of researches on the history of China's sea salt development, along with introductions of the formation, development and latest achievements. It collects and preserves and displays artifacts and materials which are representative of China's sea salt history while also scientifically presenting the richness of China's sea salt culture. Due to this, the image of Yancheng as a famous historical and cultural city will be built with a higher standard.

Study and Analysis of the Inclusive Structure of Sea Salt Cultural Resources into the Architecture of China Sea Salt Museum

The architectural shape of the China Sea Salt Museum is a regional cultural symbol of Yancheng's sea salt culture. This wonderfully shaped sea salt museum is said to be a handful of crystals that were scattered by the Jade Emperor during his tour of the nine heavens and then fell on the upper reaches of the Chuanchang River in Yancheng. This story, which has been passed down since the opening of constructing the China Haiyan Museum, is deeply rooted in the design philosophy of the designer, Mr. Cheng Taining. Viewed from the overall shape and appearance, the museum is in the form of an irregular square. It is as if the Jade Emperor scattered several salt crystals stacked on top of each other. The whole building shape closely follows the design concept of "salt crystal" and is repeatedly used to pursue unity in the changes, forming a visual impact and making the sea salt culture revealed in the building deeply rooted in people's hearts. At the same time, the combination of layers of fallen pedestals metaphorically scattered salt crystals on the receding mudflats, namely, the banks of the Chuanchang River, incorporating the element of the receding mudflats into the architectural design. The outer envelope of the Sea Salt Museum is made of blue and pale yellow as the main colors, which are set off with the sea and salt. The appearance of the entire museum is artfully designed, combining the three elements of "crystal, mudflat and sea". In other words, this museum combines the white, green and blue cultures together, which are represented by Yancheng's sea salt culture. The white culture represents sea salt itself, and the green one is on behalf of wetlands. As for the blue culture, it is representative of the Yellow Sea. All of these are composed of the exterior environment of Yancheng. To a certain extent, it promotes the exchange of urban culture in Yancheng and the dissemination of cultural diversity.

In the interior design of the China Sea Salt Museum, the "sea" element of the sea salt culture is innovatively refined and used. The hall is surrounded by hollow aluminum panels as decoration, and the light revealed from the gaps is like the form of ocean waves. It is a metaphor for the hard work of the salt people in the mudflats, reflecting the spirit of "he zhong gong ji, fen fa tu xing " (making a concerted effort and mutual cooperation and working hard for prosperity) of the sea salt culture. The design of the "salt crystal" at the top of the museum is made of blue glass with a steel structure, which combines the cultural characteristics and historical origins of the city and connects with the sea salt culture embodied in the Sea Salt Museum. The overall design is very coordinated, bringing a strong sense of visual impact and making the sea salt culture reflected to the fullest. At the same time, the interior design of the exhibition hall adopts the intention of "kaleidoscope". Decorated with spliced triangular lights, the glass exhibition window is hollowed out in the midst of the solid

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wall of the exhibition, showing the radiant beauty of the sea salt culture. On the other hand, through the flexible combination of "point, line and surface", the China Sea Salt Museum uses ingenious design techniques to integrate each element together to form a better functional complex, which truly shows the multi-dimensional space inside the museum. This not only meets the requirement of displaying the historical information of sea salt, but also is a good embodiment of the cultural connotation of "yi dian ji mian, yin ling shi fan" (leading demonstrations from point to surface) in the new era of the sea salt culture.

In the landscape design of the China Sea Salt Museum, the design is based on the unique regional culture of the particular area. For example, the water vapor nozzle on the sea salt square, at the upper end of which the salt crystal is covered with water mist. With the yellow light, it is like a grand scene of salt brine salt production by the salt people. Besides,salt crystal sculptures in the Salt Sculpture Museum, which belongs to the Sea Salt Museum,are based on salt crystals. It is the crystallization of the wisdom of the salt people supported by the concept of pushing forward and keeping up with the times. Therefore, the museum not only embodies and spreads the culture of sea salt, but also carries a variety of sculptural architectural culture, which is an important symbol linking sea salt culture and sculptural architectural culture.

The Integration of Sea Salt Cultural Resources into Urban Infrastructure Construction Promotes Cultural Diversity

The sea salt culture is an iconic symbol of regional cultural characteristics, and the integration of this kind of culture and urban architectural facilities in the new era has its unique charm. Culture cannot be separated from the development of nations and peoples. In order to achieve a national renaissance and prosperity, cultural soft power has to be used adeptly. Cultural and creative industry is an emerging industry developed in the 21st century, with the characteristics of high knowledge, integration and added value. Cultural and creative products are innovative transformations of cultural content relying on the thinking characteristics of human brain and the applications of science and technology. The Yancheng sea salt culture is the essence of the spiritual culture of the people of that area over the generations. Combining this regional culture with cultural and creative products will not only be beneficial to promote the history and culture of sea salt, but also be conducive to boosting the regional economic development of this city.

Highlighting the Sea Salt Culture of Yancheng

From a cultural point of view, because the dissemination of regional characteristic culture and things is easily trapped in local areas, instead of reaching further places. Under this circumstance, the general public in other regions may not have high awareness of them except for local habitants. As design objects, the type of cultural and creative products which is related to similar cultures tend to have strong regional characteristics and aim to better spread and inherit the distinctive culture. Owing to this, it is a good opportunity to explore the essence of sea salt culture, find the "excitement" and "key points", and discover its uniqueness to enrich the cultural connotation of the product.

To Exploit The Continuity of Regional Cultural and Creative Products

In terms of the purpose of designing , the refinement of Yancheng's sea salt regional cultural elements can get rid of the traditional concept of designing for design's sake and abandon the rigid form of cultural and creative products which was used to be applied mechanically. On the basis of the theory of designing, cultural creative products re-examine the relationship between regional culture and environment, thus their positioning will be clearer, which in turn will make Yancheng regional cultural and creative products have a strong continuity.

To Realize the Organic Combination of "Culture + Creativity"

From a business perspective, the promotion of sea salt culture not only accelerates the socio-economic development of Yancheng, but also creates specific regional branding characteristics. In order to satisfy consumers' spiritual needs and at the same time trigger their desire for consumption, sea salt culture can be created into a distinct regional brand, thus showing its distinctive features. This will be then followed by making it sustainable to promote the local economic development of Yancheng.

Conclusion

The design of the foundation structure of China Sea Salt Museum is appropriate and ingenious, embracing the features of innovation and inclusion. It is a landmark of Yancheng, therefore the design process is innovative in extracting and using elements from Yancheng's characteristic culture.The China Sea Salt Museum is not only a reflection of Yancheng's sea salt culture, it also incorporates the green, red, blue and sculptural architectural cultures of this area. With strong inclusiveness, it promotes the exchange and integration of different kinds of culture of Yancheng and also enhances the diversity of Yancheng's culture. The culture and history of the city is one of the most distinctive and precious parts of the city's infrastructure and public space construction. Urban infrastructure and public space construction is the carrier of history and the external image of culture. Cities thrive thanks to history and culture, and history and culture cannot be preserved and developed without cities. The China Sea Salt Museum is a unique visual experience for the people of Yancheng by linking the culture of sea salt with the city's culture and presenting it to the greatest extent possible. In the modernization process of the city, such architectural facilities are based on a unique regional culture with deep roots, providing a platform for the city to show and develop its culture, while also reflecting the uniqueness and characteristics of the city.

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