Application and Research of Huashan Rock Paintings in Cultural and Creative Products

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Huashan rock painting is a representative of the rock art complex in Zuojiang River in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, and it is the largest and the most well preserved rock painting found in China, with a wide distribution of locations and the richest content of images. Due to its grand scale, spectacular scenes, and numerous images, it has become a typical representative of rock painting in Zuojiang River basin of Guangxi and is famous all over the world. In 1988, it was announced as a key cultural relics protection unit by the State Council, and in 2016, “Zuojiang River Huashan Rock Art Cultural Landscape” was successfully applied for the List of World Heritage, which makes it important to the inheritance and protection of Huashan rock paintings. In the past 10 years, with the successful holding of China-ASEAN Expo, the distinctive tourist products of Guangxi Zhuang nationality and the culture creative product industry have been vigorously developed and recognized by domestic and foreign markets. The culture of Guangxi Zuojiang Huashan rock painting can be presented in the form of cultural and creative products, so that Guangxi Zuojiang River Huashan rock art can be known by more people.

Keywords: Huashan rock paintings, cultural and creative products, application and research

Current Situation of Cultural and Creative Products of Huashan Rock Paintings

Single Culture Creative Design

With the development of Chinese economy and the yearly increase of per capita income, consumers have higher requirements in the material and spiritual level. The traditional tourism products cannot meet the new needs of tourists, and the tourism cultural and creative products with cultural connotation and excellent ideas are more in line with the needs of consumers today. While protecting Huashan rock paintings, Zuojiang River rock painting scenic spot also actively develops local tourism industry. In addition to the regular boat trips to enjoy Huashan and experience the Zhuang culture, it starts to develop the cultural and creative products. The types of cultural and creative products developed are mainly daily products, such as umbrellas, fans, clothes, backpacks, silk scarves, and the patterns are mostly expressed in pictures and patterns vector conversions of figures in Huashan rock paintings. Although they are daily products, the characteristics are not obvious and can be easily replaced by similar products that are more fashionable and novel on the market with poor affordability. It can seen that the developing strategy of cultural and creative products is rather conservative. Regardless of

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the type, quantity or creativity of cultural and creative products, the cultural and creative products of Huashan rock paintings are still in the primary stage and lack ingenious creative designs and practical carriers, making it not dominant in the consumer market.

**Failure to Meet the Actual Needs of Consumers**

Currently, the existing Huashan cultural and creative products are priced between RMB 20-60, and the main audience is mainly tourists who come to Zuojiang River Huashan rock painting scenic spot. In terms of price positioning, there is a lack of middle and high priced products to meet the needs of middle and high level consumers. The audience is narrow and it should be broadened to inspire potential consumers. Cultural and creative products of Huashan rock paintings are not only tourist souvenirs, but also symbols of Huashan rock painting culture and a new force that can drive the local tourism economy. The cultural and creative products of Huashan rock paintings lack practicality, fashionable beauty, and cultural connotation, and need to truly consider the consumption habits and preferences of the audience, thus making it difficult to stimulate consumers’ purchasing behavior.

**Influenced by External Tourism Environment**

Due to COVID-19 in recent years, the tourist flow volume of tourist attractions, museums, and stores around the country has been greatly reduced, and the offline culture creative industry has been affected to a certain extent. As the border of Guangxi, Chongzuo area has great pressure on epidemic prevention and control, and the number of tourists arriving at Zuojiang River rock painting scenic spot has also decreased compared with the past, which has a certain impact on the tourism industry, leading to the unsatisfactory sales of cultural and creative products. Most culture creative industries are in the same situation, seeking new breakthroughs and new developments. They should reorganize the previous ideas, find suitable sales channels for cultural and creative products under the current epidemic, and reduce the impact of the external tourism environment on the sales of the cultural and creative products.

**Research on Cultural and Creative Products of Huashan Rock Paintings**

**Research Values**

On the national level, *Outline of Culture Development Program for the Eleventh Five-Year Period* has clearly put forward the main tasks of national development of cultural and creative industry, and all major cities in China have also launched relevant policies to support and promote the development of cultural and creative industry. Under the historical background of the Belt and Road and Internet+, the successful holding of China-ASEAN Expo makes the economy of Guangxi region develop rapidly, and more and more Guangxi characteristic products are known to the outside world, meanwhile, Guangxi cultural and creative industry has been supported by the national and local governments.

From the perspective of regional development, after understanding and utilizing Huashan rock paintings, the cultural tourism industry of Huashan in Chongzuo area is developed to create a cultural tourism brand of Huashan rock paintings without destroying the original natural resources. Studying the development research and design of cultural and creative products of Huashan rock painting elements, with a focus on the excavation of Zhuang Huashan rock painting elements, and forming culture creative product design that can spread Huashan rock painting elements after refinement help to protect the cultural resources of Huashan rock paintings in Chongzuo area, improve the visibility of Huashan rock painting, and lead the development of local tourism economy.
On the academic research level, the earliest scholar who studied the Zhuang Huashan rock paintings was Mr. Huang Zenqing, the first archaeological researcher in Guangxi. He successively published two papers: “Study on Ancient Cliff Paintings and the Age Issue in Western Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Prefecture” and “Ancient Wall Paintings on Both Sides of Ming River and Zuojiang River in Guangxi”, and took the lead in studying Guangxi Huashan rock paintings. Subsequently, a large number of works on the study of Huashan rock paintings came out, thus providing the world with a comprehensive understanding of the important value of Huashan rock paintings. The published works such as *Rock Paintings of Zuojiang River in Guangxi* and *Inspection and Research on Rock Paintings of Zuojiang River in Guangxi* have dived into Huashan rock paintings and Baiyue culture. Li Ping (2018), a professor of Institute of Culture, Guangxi Academy of Social Sciences and a postgraduate tutor in Folklore of Guangxi Normal University, analyzes the color of the images, artistic painting techniques, and the content of Huashan rock paintings in the paper “Aesthetic Pursuit and Custom Culture of Zhuang Nationality from Zuojiang River Huashan Rock Paintings”, giving the readers an in-depth and intuitive understanding of the “past life and present life” of Huashan rock paintings. The paper “Strategic Thinking of Constructing a World Brand of Huashan Cultureunder the View of The Belt and Road” written by Ms. Li Ping (2018) analyzes the construction of a world-class cultural brand of Zuojiang River Huashan culture under the background of the Belt and Road based on the strategic level of the country and the region, and it not only emphasizes the need to strengthen academic research to build a perfect Huashan cultural system; but also has innovative forms of promotion and publicity, so that the world can really know “Huashan”. It also hopes to make Huashan culture as a bridge to strengthen the exchange and cooperation among the people of the countries along the Belt and Road through “academic research”, “economic exchanges”, and “civil communications”. These scholars and academic views provide valuable theoretical information for the design of cultural and creative products.

The pictorial elements of Huashan rock paintings have high research value, and the culture creative research needs to keep pace with the development of the times. Studying the images of Huashan rock paintings in Zhuang culture in the region can provide a deeper understanding of Zhuang culture and Huashan culture, thus converting academic research into cultural resources for regional services and inspiring more people to explore and understand Huashan rock paintings.

**Application Research**

Cultural and creative product refers to an emerging industry with creativity as its core, which arises in the context of economic globalization and emphasizes a subject culture or cultural factors, relying on individuals (teams) to develop and market products extended from intellectual property rights through technology, creativity, and industrialization. Cultural and creative products can meet people’s needs for material and non-material forms of services.

Taking Japanese tourism, cultural and creative industry for example, the Japanese government has been actively developing cultural and creative industry, making it the most developed country in Asia in terms of cultural and creative industry. For example, the Kumamon cartoon image of Kumamoto Prefecture has made the prefecture, which was originally an agricultural prefecture, achieve fame and has become a well-known IP on the Internet. For example, the line friends family in South Korea, which was originally just an expression in a communication application, has made itself known outside of fixed circle for the cute and fashionable images and became the sales champion of that year with the help of the network and the joint launch of cultural and
creative products. Most of these cultural and creative product designs are related to the relaxed and pleasant cultural and creative culture that is popular among the consumers.

Taking the Palace Museum for example, the Museum has changed the image of the ancient collection according to public demand, extracting some elements to play a young and fashionable role, and the Museum has become a leader in the industry with creative design. The cultural and creative products of the Palace Museum hitting the record reaching hundreds of millions are not achieved by selling high-priced tourist souvenirs, but through cultural and creative products designed in conjunction with the elements of the Forbidden City, such as the “Forbidden City Cat”, the “Sky Umbrella”, and the “A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains” series. Cultural and creative products not only have excellent creativity, but also have a very strong practical value. At the same time, the Palace Museum adopted “Internet+” marketing model with online and offline marketing to broaden the sales channels of cultural and creative products, so that consumers who have not been to the Forbidden City can also buy the latest products. The success of the Palace Museum has also inspired museums around the world to innovate on cultural relics and cultural products, such as the Tangniu, a cultural and creative IP based on a Tang Dynasty lady in Shaanxi History Museum, the Flying Fairy in Dunhuang Museum, the stone rhinoceros in Chengdu Museum, and the brothers and sisters of Zhuang nationality in Anthropology Museum of Guangxi, all of which attach importance to the creativity of cultural elements. These successful cases of these museums’ cultural and creative products also provide valuable reference for the cultural and creative products innovation of Huashan rock paintings.

With the introduction of the policy “The Belt and Road” and the vigorous development of China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, more and more tourists, businessmen, and scholars come to Guangxi for tourism, trade, study, and life, and the Zhuang cultural and creative products have also entered the domestic and international markets. The successful inscription of Huashan rock paintings makes it urgent to create a cultural and creative brand image of Zhuang Huashan rock painting. As a part of world heritage culture, Huashan rock painting should draw the attention of the world, so that Huashan culture can be understood and recognized by people. The model of cultural and creative products of the Palace Museum can be referred to develop and study the elements of Huashan rock paintings, to establish young cultural and creative products with accurate positioning, making the elements and products appear and stand out in domestic and international markets, thus promoting the sales of cultural and creative products, and better publicizing Zhuang Huashan rock paintings.

Artistic Characteristics and Connotations

Huashan culture is regarded as the symbol of Rice Cultivating Culture, the treasure of Zhuang culture and the best rock painting in the world. The ancient and rugged brushwork and style of Huashan rock paintings and the lifelike dynamics of the characters reflect the aesthetic interests and superior artistic standard of the ancient Luoyue people. Therefore, the development of cultural and creative products of Huashan rock paintings has a bright future and deep development potential.

Patterns of Zhuang Huashan rock paintings. The cliff walls of Zuojiang River basin and its tributaries in Guangxi are painted with various ochre-red images of people, animals, and utensils. Among them, there are two kinds of portraits: frontal and lateral. The central figure usually stands in the center of the crowd and is a frontal portrait, with both hands bent at the elbows and raised high, five fingers open, and two legs squatting. The lateral portraits surround the figures, with two hands raised high, five fingers open, and two legs slightly squatting into a jumping style, in the shape of a frog, like soldiers practicing martial arts, or like a tribal crowd
singing and dancing. The whole painting is spectacular with grand scene and simple painting method. According to the custom of folk livestock raising in Guangxi Zhuang area and the analysis of materials, animal images are mainly dominated by Guangxi native dogs, and most of the dog images surround the main figure images. The patterns of utensils are mainly bronze drums and swords, and there are also a small number of images of boats.

**Colors of Zhuang Huashan rock paintings.** The color of the rock paintings is red ochre, which has been analyzed by the scientific researcher as hematite. Chongzuo area is rich in hematite, and hematite mixed with animal skins and blood is used for drawing. Additionally, hematite has been chosen for several hypothetical reasons as follows:

Firstly, in the consciousness of Luoyue ancestors who advocate frog totems and prosperity, red ochre represents life, and the birth of life is associated with blood. Red ochre signifies the prosperity of the community for thousands of generations and the continuity of their descendants.

Secondly, red ochre represents passion and enthusiasm in color emotion, and it also represents passion, fire, war, etc. in the minds of Luoyue ancestors. The sacrificial ceremony that appears in the figure scenes of Huashan rock paintings requires a color atmosphere like maroon that represents passion, sacredness, and grandeur, while red can also represent symbolic meanings such as the pursuit of victory.

Thirdly, among all the visible lights, red light has the longest wavelength and the strongest penetrating power, which can better attract the eyes in the green mountains and water along Zuojiang River, and Luoyue ancestors hope that the river gods or the people of ethnic group can feel the presence of colors and images no matter how far away they are.

**Connotations of patterns of Zhuang Huashan rock paintings.** Some scholars regard the Huashan rock paintings as evidence of witchcraft, believing that it initially reflects the scenes of worshipping the god of water and pray for reproduction by witches of Luoyue ancestors, and is the cultural heritage of the Luoyue people. At present, according to the contents of the paintings, the times analyzed by the researchers, the ethnicity reflected in the rock paintings and the literature, it is generally believed by archaeologists and experts in ethnic studies that the ancient Luoyue ancestors made the paintings on the rock wall in order to worship the gods and pray for blessing the ethnic group with good weather for the crops, and for a peaceful and prosperous life. Even though every viewpoint is derived from part of the book records and folklore, these views and theories are currently hypotheses because there are no exact historical data to support, which are shown as follows:

Witchcraft believes that the Luoyue ancestors depicted and made the Huashan rock paintings in reverence for heaven and earth, nature and the gods, and drew the paintings to worship the heavens, to sacrifice to the gods, and to pray for the peace and prosperity of their ethnic groups.

Live and multiply believes that the Zhuang nationality is the first nationality in the world to invent artificial cultivation of rice, and people often encounter frogs when they work in spring. According to Zhuang mythology, the frog is the son of the thunder king and can call upon the thunder god to rain and irrigate and bless the farmland. At the same time, frogs are extremely fertile, which also reflects that people at that time prayed for good weather, prosperity of the ethnic group, and more—children—more—happiness.

Wars say that the rock paintings are made by the Luoyue ancestors to inspire their ethnic group to fight bravely before a war or to celebrate their victory afterwards.

Competitive entertainment says that there is a picture of a feather man riding a boat in Huashan rock paintings. It is similar to the dragon boat race at the Dragon Boat Festival and the daily scene of the Luoyue
ancestors crossing the river. Zuojiang River twists and turns, and the ethnic groups on both sides of the River are settled by water. When the floods are fierce, people hope to eliminate floods while worshipping the god of water. When the River is quiet, people entertain themselves with water, so they have competitive entertainment similar to dragon boating, reflecting the expectation and strength of the ethnic group, and recorded on rock paintings. All of this expresses the vision of the Luoyue ancestors who both revere nature and also wish to live in harmony with the nature.

**Design Direction of Cultural and Creative Products of Huashan Rock Paintings**

**Product Positioning**

Clear product tone, positioning, audience, price, etc. can better enable the culture creative design of Huashan rock paintings to be accurately positioned in the market, recognized and purchased by consumers. Clear positioning of the product means that people of high consumption may need products that deeply reflect the connotation of Huashan rock paintings with a sense of technology; medium consumption group may need fashionable and funny products with a sense of story; low consumption group may need simple daily necessities or souvenirs, etc. The four parts of target consumers (such as tourists of Zuojiang River Huashan rock painting scenic spot), potential consumers (tourists of Chongzuo Zhuang Museum), target purchasing group, and potential purchasing group (such as online shopping crowd after opening online shopping platform, etc.) should be sorted out. According to the preliminary research, the cultural and creative products of Huashan rock painting for different people can be designed to meet the needs of various groups, thus being recognized by consumers and promoting local tourism economy.

**Extraction of Elements**

Huashan rock painting is rich in image resources, and the image elements of figures, animals, and objects can be extracted from the rock paintings. At present, most of the existing cultural and creative products are directly extracted and converted for use, which is indeed a more common method. However, in order to meet the needs for different people, the designers can consider using “combination”, “splitting”, “grafting”, “anthropomorphism”, and other methods in the process of extraction and use. For example, the character images in Huashan rock paintings, which are very numerous, can be designed as mascots and given character traits to be sold as mystery boxes. Another example is that the images of dogs in Huashan rock paintings can be made into IP like Gayer-Anderson cat in the British Museum, designing a series of cute cultural and creative products. The cultural and creative products of Huashan rock paintings not only reflect the regional culture, but also reach the emotional resonance of consumers to achieve the purpose of purchasing and spreading the culture and providing the image of Huashan rock paintings.

**Selection of Colors**

The color of the rock painting image is ochre. However, the color from a distance is not as intense because the maroon color on the rock wall has been blown by the wind and the sun, so extracting the exact image color of rock paintings may not be the most suitable for the products. After understanding the color and story hypothesis of Huashan rock paintings, it would be a better solution to choose to use the same series of red color to express in culture creative product design.

**Combination of Carriers and Technology**

The carrier of cultural and creative products can keep some handcrafted technology on ordinary carriers,
but it will be difficult to have amazing expectation. In this intelligent era of technological development, if traditional elements can be combined with technological products, it is more in line with the current development trend and can also broaden the imagination of cultural and creative products of Huashan rock paintings.

**Conclusions**

Although the Zhuang Huashan rock paintings are not very well known as the first rock painting world cultural heritage in China and even in Guangxi, it deserves to be better known and seen by more people. To study the image elements of Huashan rock painting in Guangxi and design the cultural and creative products with the content of Huashan rock painting elements innovative, original and high recognition local characteristics, I hope that the image elements on Huashan rock paintings can exist in life in an interesting way as cultural and creative products, thus meeting people’s demand for cultural and creative products of Huashan rock paintings, and presenting them to consumers on behalf of Huashan rock paintings. To a certain extent, it not only boosts the popularity of Huashan rock paintings, but also plays a protective role for Huashan rock paintings resources, and helps to develop local economy as well.

**References**


