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LI JIANG PAINTING: THE SOCIAL LIFE OF ARTIFACT AND CULTURAL ECOLOGY OF LIJIANG RIVER PLACE, CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Lijiang painting is based on Lijiang River, it reflects the social life of artifact and cultural ecology of Lijiang River Place, it is the presentation of the relationship between man and nature, man and society, and man to man, and is a part of the cultural ecology of Lijiang River Place. The purpose of this research is to investigate the cultural ecosystem of Lijiang River Place and construct the relationship among the cultural ecology, Lijiang River Place and Lijiang painting. In the past, the research of Lijiang painting is mainly on the perspective of fine arts not Artifact, the connection between Lijiang painting and its background is ignored. In this research, we study the Lijiang painting in a new view, Lijiang painting is placed in the academic vision of social anthropology by using qualitative research methods, and adopted two major research concepts of "Cultural Ecology" and "The Social Life of Thing" of Arjun Appadurai to conduct academic exposition over "Lijiang painting". Through the study of the Lijiang Painting, we concluded that the development of Lijiang painting is closely related to the development of human beings, Lijiang painting is the combination of natural ecology and human society, in the symbol chain of landscape painting in different periods.

INTRODUCTION

The theme of this study is Lijiang painting, which is the social life of artifact and cultural ecology of Lijiang River place. Lijiang painting refers to the paintings with Lijiang River as the theme, it shows the natural ecological characteristics of Lijiang River. On the other hand, Lijiang painting developed in different historical periods of China, and has a close relationship with people in different periods. Therefore, Lijiang painting can reflect the changes

of Lijiang social life and Chinese culture. For example, in the Song Dynasty, Lijiang painting had practical value similar to maps, recording the changes of cities (Dove, Michael R. 2008). As a “commodity” of folk trade, it only circulates among the elite. Then, in modern times, due to the progress of society, Lijiang painting has not only existed in the elite class, but also gradually weakened its practical value, it is not only a kind of “commodity” of exchange, but also a kind of cultural symbol with the characteristics of multiple identities.

Previous studies can be roughly divided into two categories: the first is the text-based study of the development of Lijiang painting. The second category mainly studies the aesthetic characteristics of painting from the perspective of art. Few researchers study and analyze regional paintings from the perspective of Anthropology and Sociology. In fact, due to the development of society, the value of Lijiang painting is no longer limited to the art itself, but closely connected with nature, society, culture, politics and economy. Therefore, through this study, we can find and understand the relationship between Lijiang painting and cultural ecology, and understand Lijiang people and the social development process of China.

In this study, researchers use two research concepts: Cultural Ecology and Social life of things. Cultural ecology was first proposed by Steward to study different regional cultures, he believes that the generation and development of culture are inseparable from the environment (natural environment, social environment and cultural environment) (Dincauze. 2000). Arjun Appadurai put forward “the social life of things”. He thinks that “things” have the same social life as human beings. The life of things refers to the process of things going through commercialization, de-commercialization and even cycle.

This study adopts qualitative research method. In the process of research, the author applies the two major research concepts of cultural ecology and the social life of thing to conduct academic exposition over Lijiang Painting. This paper examines the relationship between human beings, society and artistic works against the backdrop of the ecological environment of Lijiang River from the cutting point of cultural ecology and reveals its influence on social life from the social life of thing through studying art works of different periods and their developments.

The research objectives of this study have the following two parts. The first is to study the cultural ecology at the Lijiang River Place. The survey and excavation of Lijiang culture enrich the research direction of cultural ecology. The second is to study Lijiang paintings in relation to the cultural ecology of Lijiang River Place. Analyzes the relationship between Lijiang painting, social life and cultural ecology in different periods. This research expands the scope of conceptual research, and is also an extension of the academic circle of art. At the same time, it also provides references for other researchers in research models and conceptual applications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lijiang Painting

Through the study of Lijiang painting, the research found that most of these studies regard Lijiang paintings as a kind of art and analyze Lijiang paintings with the thoughts and methods of art studies. It mainly studies the artistic expression and artistic value of Lijiang paintings, and explains the aesthetic characteristics of Lijiang paintings by studying the style and shape of Lijiang paintings.

However, researchers have found that these studies ignoring the relationship between people and society, art. With the development of the country and changes in economic and cultural policies, it affects the development of Lijiang Painting. Therefore, this research pays more attention to the relationship between Lijiang painting and people and society to understand the value of Chinese painting.

Cultural Ecology

The concept of cultural ecology originates from cultural ecology. In 1955, American cultural anthropologist Juliar Haynes Steward (1902-1972) put forward the viewpoint of cultural ecology for the first time (Mark Q Sutton & E.N Anderson. 2014). According to Juliar Haynes Steward, environment and culture are inseparable, and there are mutual influences, interactions and causalities between them (John Holden.2015).

On the basis of many scholars' understanding of cultural ecology, the author believes that cultural ecology is a dynamic network structure formed by cultural diachronic and synchronic factors. In this structure, there is an ecological relationship among each cultural node, each cultural node and the environment (natural environment, social environment, cultural environment). This ecological relationship is closely related to each other, and maintains the dynamic balance of the whole cultural ecology. Therefore, the cultural ecology of Lijiang River Place studied in this paper is constructed by such a concept.

The social life of thing

Arjun Appadurai, in the "social life of things - commodities in the cultural field of vision", holds that things have social life as well as people (Dorothy Ko. 2017). The life of things refers to the process of commercialization, de-commodification, and even cycle (Schafer Dagmer. 2011). It focuses on the whole life path of commodities from production, exchange, distribution to consumption. Throughout the history of Lijiang painting, it has experienced multiple changes of identity, which contains rich historical process. In this paper, the Lijiang painting reflects the social life. Arjun Appadurai's "social life history of things" provides an effective path for analysis. It is not only help

us to understand the Lijiang painting itself, but also help us to understand its social, historical and practical significance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative methodology, and the writing method used is descriptive analysis. In this research process, the researchers collected information in two ways: field work and literature review. First of all, in the field survey, the researchers interviewed some artists and historians of Lijiang painting. The interview mainly includes the development of Lijiang painting, the role of Lijiang painting in society, and the cultural and ecological characteristics of Lijiang. On the other hand, according to the collected literature, it summarizes and analyzes the cultural ecology of Lijiang River and the formation and development of Lijiang painting. Therefore, this study is completed.

CULTURAL ECOLOGY AT THE LIJIANG RIVER PLACE

A specific group of people in the living area where they live for a long time will create a culture that adapts to the environment, like Lijiang painting. Lijiang people, Lijiang culture and Lijiang environment constitute the Lijiang painting. At the same time, the Lijiang River Place has a special political and economic position in history, forming a splendid historical culture of more than 2,200 years. The perfect combination of nature and human constitutes the constitute of Lijiang River culture ecology. It has become a prominent tourist city of China and even the world. The unique ecological environment of Lijiang River Place and the precious cultural relics and landscapes left by people over the past thousand years make Lijiang River Place a very valuable River of civilization. Therefore, Lijiang painting is based on Lijiang River. In order to study Lijiang painting, we should first study Lijiang cultural ecology.

The ecology system of lijiang river place

The Lijiang River is located in southwest of China and northeast of Guangxi Province. The Lijiang River starts from Maoer Mountain at Xing'an Village, and ends at San Jiangkou, Pingle Village, with a total length of 164 kilometers (Xie Qikun. 2001). The Lijiang River Place of which the Lijiang River is the axis, is located in Guilin in the form of a narrow strip from north to south. The Lijiang River is the mother River of the Guilin people. It is one of 13 rivers under special state protection. Lijiang River Place is famous for its unique geographical location and typical karst landforms, which result in a beautiful natural landscape, and is famous for its green mountains, beautiful waters, strange caves and beautiful rocks.

Moreover, the landscape or ecology of the Lijiang River is in a circular pattern, with a unique natural appearance. Most of the mountains in the Lijiang River Place are small in size, forming a circle with Du Xiufeng (Solitary Beauty Peak) in the center, where the Lijiang and Taohua Rivers form a ring. Diecai Mountain, Elephant Trunk Mountain and Tower Mountain form the second ring. Parrot Mountain, Pingfeng Mountain and West

Mountain form the third ring. Yao Mountain and other distant mountains are on the outside. In order to protect the overall beauty of Lijiang River landscape, most of the surrounding buildings are decorative buildings. Further, the density of buildings is not high. The buildings and landscape look very harmonious, and are integrated with the Lijiang River landscape. "One River runs around the city," and is a combined landscape structure that is concise and clear, which is also the characteristic of the Lijiang landscape. There is reflective beauty in the Lijiang Mountains and waters. There is water in the mountains (lakes and streams) and mountains in the water (islands), which make Lijiang Mountains and waters different while showing a symmetrical beauty.

Furthermore, the Lijiang River Place belongs to the subtropical monsoon climate area, so the vegetation coverage around the Lijiang River Place is dense while the types are diverse. There are also many plantations, banana trees, ficus microcarpa trees, moso bamboo and other types of plants. Also, because of its abundant rainfall, the Lijiang River Place often includes a landscape of water mist intertwining among the peaks (Qin Weijian. 2007).

In addition, the Lijiang River is divided into upper, middle and lower reaches. Upstream is the water source, with high forest cover and complex terrain, which has played an important role in supporting and guaranteeing the development of Guilin City. In the middle reaches, mountains and Rivers blend with the city, while the unique landscape environment is suitable for human habitation, and has become the center of Lijiang River Place. The downstream reaches from Guilin down to Guangzhou. At the same time, its karst landforms are typical, becoming the representative area of the Lijiang River which is called the golden channel. Each part of the Lijiang River has different landscape characteristics and functions. Also, each part of the Lijiang River is different, but it is connected with each part and supports each part, forming its own ecosystem.

Culture Ecology in Lijiang river place

The Lijiang River connects to the Yangtze River, the Pearl River and the central plains. Therefore, Lijiang River Place has undergone extremely complex changes in its history. The combination of central plains culture¹ and southwest culture, the change of dynasties and administration, the migration of highlanders to the south, the criminal exile laws of successive dynasties and other factors have caused the population composition of Lijiang River Place to have distinct Placeal characteristics. Furthermore, the formation of the cultural ecology in Lijiang River Place has a long history (Liu xiuzhen. 2010).

As long ago as thirty thousand years, Lijiang River Place was the residence of the Baiyue nationality in ancient times (Li Jiemin. 2010). After Qin Shi Huang

²Central Plains Culture is the general term of material culture and spiritual culture in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River, and it is the mother and main body of Chinese culture. The Central Plains Culture takes Henan as the core and the vast middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River as the hinterland, radiating outwards layer by layer, extending its influence overseas.

unified the Lingnan area² in 214 B.C, Guilin began to set up counties. The excavation of the Lingqu Canal connects the north and the south, making it an important waterway transportation channel. The Central Plains Culture can reach the whole Lingnan area quickly and smoothly. At the same time, its military status is prominent, and its main function is military defense. In the Tang and Song Dynasties,³ the military function began to weaken, and the landscape tourism function began to be prominent. The number of officials and scholars sent by the central government to the Lijiang River Valley increased gradually. The Lijiang River Place was named as “the best landscape in the world” by Mr. Wang Zhenggong, famous literati and official, and it was already famous in China and abroad at that time. During the Ming and Qing Dynasties⁴, the landscape pattern of mountains surrounded by water gradually developed (Ren Yuanyuan.2006) At the same time, the Lijiang River Place was the political center of Guangxi. The eight scenic spots of Guilin put forward by the scholars in Lijiang River Place add brilliance to the history and culture of Lijiang River Place. During this period, a large number of famous educators and cultural celebrities appeared in Lijiang River Place, such as monk Shi Tao, a great painter.

Moreover, in modern times, especially during the Second World War in Guilin, a group of cultural celebrities came to Guilin using speeches, words, songs and paintings as weapons to inspire and support the whole of the Chinese population against its foreign enemies, making Guilin a famous cultural city of the Anti-Japanese War in Chinese history.

After the beginning of the 21st century, Lijiang River Place went through a period of transformation. Its urban nature has gradually changed from a historical military town and a local political center to a scenic tourist city and a famous historical and cultural city (Huang Weilin. 2010). With its beautiful scenery, long history and rich culture, the Lijiang River Place is becoming the core of the Guilin tourism circle, taking on the sacred mission of “leading tourism in Guangxi” and being the “Pearl of international tourism”. It has won the double laurels of “national historical and cultural city” and “international scenic city”.

The Lijiang River Place has the most beautiful landscapes, old history and various cultures in the world, as it is in a relatively open geographical location. From ancient times to the present, it has been attracting many people to live there and travel there. In the process of adapting to the natural environment and social environment, people in Lijiang River Place have formed not only the cultural heritage of the Central Plains, but also the strong ethnic characteristics of the Lijiang River Place. Within the Lijiang River Place is a

³Lingnan is the general name of the area south of Wuling in South China. The mountain range is composed of five mountains: Yuecheng Mountain, Dupangling Mountain, Mengzhu Mountain, Qitian Mountain and Dayu Mountain, all of which are generally distributed from the east of Guangxi to the east of Guangdong and the junction of Hunan and Jiangxi provinces.

⁴The Tang Dynasty: Name of an ancient Chinese dynasty, which existed for 290 years from 617 BC to 907 BC. The Song Dynasty: Name of an ancient Chinese dynasty, which can be divided into Northern Song Dynasty and Southern Song Dynasty, existed from 960 to 1279 for 319 years.

⁵The Ming Dynasty: Name of an ancient Chinese dynasty, existed 1368 to 1644 for 276 years.

The Qing Dynasty: Name of an ancient Chinese dynasty, existed 1636 to 1911 for 275 years.

thousand-year-old town dominated by the Han clan system, as well as villages, costumes, food, festivals, dwellings, festivals and other ethnic customs with Place and ethnic characteristics (Berliner Nancy. 2003). In the course of its social and historical development, the Lijiang River Place has formed its unique cultural ecology with the harmonious coexistence and mutual integration of diverse cultural factors (Huang Zhengquan. 2015).

LIJIANG PAINTINGS IN RELATION TO THE CULTURAL ECOLOGY OF LIJIANG RIVER PLACE

The development of the Lijiang River landscape has led to the development of Lijiang painting. The historical and cultural relics accumulated by the city have become an integral part of Lijiang painting. Conversely, the Lijiang River Place has mountains as geographical coordinates, and one can use Lijiang painting to restore the human history of the Lijiang River Place through analyzing the orientation. The landscape painting of Lijiang River reflects the natural geographical information and human history of Lijiang River Place. It is the presentation of humans and nature, human society, and human relationships in the Lijiang River Place. It is also a result of the cultural ecology of the Lijiang River Place.

The social life of things is a favorable perspective to explain the relationship between Lijiang painting and Lijiang cultural ecology. This paper will consider the Lijiang River as a tourist city in 1978 as the time node, while the process of explaining Lijiang painting is divided into two parts: before the tourism process and after the tourism process.



Figure 1: “The Yangshuo Mountain Scroll” by Zou Diguang (Ming Dynasty)
Source: Xie Yuxuan, 2019, photography

The social life of Lijiang painting before tourism process (960-1977)

During the Song Dynasty (960 to 1279), the economic development level of the Lijiang River Place surpassed that of any other period in its history. In such a social context, and according to historical records, the Song Dynasty (960-1279) painters started to shed light on the portrayal of landscapes in the Lijiang River Place (Ebrey Patricia Buckley. 2008). This period of aesthetic

painting emphasis highlighted the painting of literature and ink, thus advocating lyric and freehand brushwork.

The earliest Lijiang River landscape was painted by painter Mifu, who created the “Yangshuo Mountain Map.” This work cradled this artistic field in the early stages. Moreover, the “Jinjiang Mansion Map” was carved on the Grand Stone of the Parrot Mountain in Guilin during the Southern Song Dynasty (1272) (Ko Dorothy. 2009). It contained the depictions of landforms, water lines, and had the salience of the early landscape paintings. From “The City of Jingjiang Prefecture” it can be seen that Guilin City in the Song Dynasty had formed three waterways around the city, which were connected with each other and formed a scene of “wild land surrounded by thousands of peaks and One River which embraced the city”. It formed the general landscape pattern of Guilin in the Song Dynasty and became a real landscape city. People can enjoy the integration of mountains, water and city through tours on water, which became a major feature of Guilin landscape tours during the Song Dynasty.

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, it became an important cultural city in the Lingnan area. At the same time, the art of painting in the Lijiang River Place also developed to a new stage of prosperity. In the Qing Dynasty, there were nearly 100 painters, including Shi Tao, Luo Cunli, Luo Chen, Li Xiyuan and others (Rawski Evelyn S, 2001). There were also more than 50 non-local painters, such as Meng Jinyi, Song Guangbao, and Ju Chao Among them, the most famous is Shi Tao, who is one of the four greatest monk painters in the early Qing Dynasty. He is a descendant of king JingJiang of the Ming dynasty. Shi Tao also has high attainments in poetry, calligraphy and seal-cutting. Among these painters, most of them are still officials and professional painters; they belong to the elite class (Hay Jonathan. 2004). In the performance of technique, there are colors of meticulous brushwork and ink freehand brushwork, showing the characteristics of diversification.

During the Ming dynasty, Zou Diguang created an imitation of the “Yangshuo Mountain Map” by Mi Fu, which presented a Budding period for the landscape of the Lijiang River. The period from the late Qing Dynasty until the Republic of China witnessed the emergence and rise of Lijiang paintings. Among them, Luo Chen, a painter from Guilin in the Qing Dynasty, was a representative. Therefore, it reflects the exchange of ideas among authors. “The Famous Mountain Map of Guilin” played an important role in promoting the landscape of the Lijiang River. It is believed that the audience of this map is not only limited to the cultural communication of the small circle of literati, but might have also played a role similar to that of today’s guidebook from that time.

This is a special period in Chinese history. As a result of the Second World War Lijiang society underwent great changes, and the cultural ecology of Lijiang also changed. The People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949. During this period, Lijiang painting was no longer a work of art enjoyed by

the literati class. Lijiang painting added the function of new politics and became a tool for people to reflect the new era. They use some expression techniques in western paintings and combine them with Chinese paintings. Painters pay more attention to the real life, while Lijiang painting and the feudal dynasty have a clear difference, thus beginning the process of modernization. (Liu Lydia H. 2004).



Figure 2: "The Hundred Miles of the Lijiang River" by Huang Gesheng (1985)
Source: Xie Yuxuan, 2020, photography

The social life of Lijiang painting in the process of tourism (1978-2020)

After 1978, Lijiang River began the international social process. In this development process, Lijiang painting also developed, while Lijiang painting in the country also began to produce a certain influence. Further, with the efforts of generations of local painters, the cultural brand of the Lijiang painting school was finally formed. Therefore, the cultural brand and cultural symbol of Lijiang painting, which represents Lijiang, Guangxi and even the national image, has formed, taking Lijiang painting to a level of new glory (Gongkai. 2012).

For example, the most representative work is "The Hundred Miles of the Lijiang River" by Huang Gesheng (1985), which became the pioneering work of the Lijiang painting school. It symbolizes the rise of the "Lijiang Painting School" in the circle of contemporary Chinese painting. Huang Gesheng's "Hundred Miles of the Lijiang River" is the first artwork that truly studies the natural environment and cultural characteristics of the Lijiang River. It is the peak of Lijiang painting and the pioneering work of the Lijiang Painting School (Wang Minju. 2006). At the same time, "Hundred Miles of the Lijiang River" is also a symbol of the rise of the "Lijiang Painting School" in contemporary Chinese painting circle. The "Hundred Miles of the Lijiang River" is a cultural symbol which was gifted to the President of the United States.

In summary, Lijiang painting appeared as early as the Song Dynasty. Lijiang painting has become a "commodity" traded among the people. Apart from its practical value, it also serves as a social intercourse for people to exchange ideas and convey emotions. With the continuous expansion of folk trade, Lijiang painting began to develop in the Ming and Qing Dynasties and boom

in the 20th and 21st centuries. Lijiang painting has multiple identities. On one hand, it is a commodity. On the other hand, it is also displayed as a cultural symbol in art galleries and other places. It is a cultural card and used as a symbol of the state for political and diplomatic activities.

Arjun Appadurai's "Social Life of Things" perspective provides an effective analysis path. Therefore, we can view the Lijiang painting as a "thing". Lijiang painting as an artifact, the development of Lijiang painting is closely related to the development of human beings. Throughout the development process of Lijiang painting, Lijiang painting is also in dynamic development, it will continue to develop and diversify with social progress and Lijiang cultural ecological changing. The historical situation and social outlook of Lijiang River have a profound impact on the development of Lijiang painting, which has continued to the modern times.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Through this study, we can find that, Lijiang painting is not only a thing, it is the epitome of Lijiang society and Chinese social life. It is our perspective of social life and culture of another perspective. Through the study of works of art in different periods and their development, it is found that Lijiang painting has changed from "exchange gift" to local cultural symbol. As the objective existence of "things", its meaning is constantly changing. It can be seen that it never existed alone. Lijiang painting has always been in the development and change of Lijiang's cultural ecology. With the social progress and the development of Lijiang cultural ecology, Lijiang painting has been developing in diversity. Lijiang painting is closely related to Lijiang cultural ecology.

Therefore, it is not only to the study of the value of Lijiang painting itself, it is also necessary to study the social and cultural information behind it. In the development process of Lijiang painting, because its connotation is constantly changing, it has better integrated into the Chinese society, and has played an important role in the Chinese art circle. At the same time, the relationship between human and society and art works can be understood through the Lijiang painting.

Significance of Research

For Lijiang painting, the content of this study promotes the development of Lijiang painting and makes up for the blank in the relevant literature. More importantly, this study puts the study of Lijiang paintings into a dynamic system, which breaks away from the single research perspective that previous studies of Lijiang paintings only focus on the artwork itself, proves the relationship between Lijiang paintings and cultural ecology, and deepens the research depth of Lijiang Paintings. This will help to strengthen people's understanding of the value of Chinese painting and the social life in China.

In terms of research concept, this study expands the scope of application of cultural ecology and social life of things, and makes a new interpretation of

the specific content of the concept. On the other hand, as a research model, it is not only suitable for the study of social life and cultural ecology of Lijiang artifacts, but also can be used as a research template for the study of other art forms in the world, providing guidance for other research topics.

Limitations and future research direction

This study describes the relationship between Lijiang cultural ecology and Lijiang painting, and analyzes the fact of the phenomenon. However, there are still some limitations in this study. Firstly, the data sources of this study are based on field survey and literature review. In the process of field investigation, interviewees may make subjective judgment on the development of Lijiang River according to their own occupation and position. The fact of the phenomenon can be further analyzed by collecting as many opinions as possible to avoid mistakes. On the other hand, in this study, the attention of non-professional folk artists is not enough. They are also part of the development of Lijiang painting. Therefore, in the future research, we should pay more attention to the role of different groups in the development of Lijiang painting.

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