

The Influence and Expression of Shaoxing Tea Culture on Local Identity

Fang Jin

Network Communication College, Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing, China

Email: 20042008@zyufl.edu.cn

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Abstract

This paper explores the influence and expression of Shaoxing tea culture on local identity. Through the method of literature research, it analyzed the local symbolic role of Shaoxing tea culture from the correlation between Shaoxing tea culture and local identity, focusing on the inheritance and innovation of tea culture, social practices and activities, media and cultural products, etc., to reveal the important role of Shaoxing tea culture in deepening local identity and promoting social cohesion. The study found that Shaoxing tea culture has become an important cultural symbol of the Shaoxing region through the inheritance of historical traditions and innovative development. It has promoted exchanges and interactions between local residents and tourists through the organization of a variety of tea culture festivals and activities, and it has further enriched the forms of expression of local identity through media publicity and the promotion of cultural products. Future research can explore the differences in the influence of tea culture on the identities of different social groups, as well as the relationship between tea culture and other local cultures, so as to provide more in-depth theoretical and practical support for the construction of local cultural identity. This study aimed to provide theoretical and practical references for the inheritance and development of Shaoxing tea culture, and to provide new perspectives and ideas for the study of local cultural identity.

Keywords

Shaoxing Tea Culture, Local Identity, Tea Event, Expression

1. Introduction

As one of the important birthplaces of Chinese tea culture, Shaoxing has a long history of tea culture, which contains rich historical deposits and cultural con-

notations. In recent years, with the rapid economic and social development and the acceleration of the globalization process, the local cultural identity has received increasing attention in China and even globally. In this context, exploring the influence and expression of Shaoxing tea culture on local identity is of great significance for an in-depth understanding of the formation mechanism of local cultural identity, and the position and role of tea culture in local society.

This study aims to explore the influence and expression of Shaoxing tea culture on local identity from both theoretical and practical levels. Theoretically, it deepens the understanding of the formation mechanism of local cultural identity and expands the theoretical framework of local identity research; practically, it promotes the inheritance and development of Shaoxing tea culture, enhances the cultural pride and identity of local residents, and promotes the stability and development of the local economy and society.

This study will be divided into five main parts in order to deeply explore the influence and expression of Shaoxing tea culture on local identity. The first part will introduce the history and tradition of Shaoxing tea culture, including its origin, development history, and representative tea varieties. The second part will explore the concept and characteristics of local identity and its relationship with tea culture from a theoretical perspective. The third part will analyze the impact of Shaoxing tea culture on local identity, including the local symbolic role of tea culture, social interaction and economic development. The fourth part will explore the expression of Shaoxing tea culture in local identity, including the inheritance and innovation of tea culture, social practices and activities, as well as its expression in media and cultural products. Finally, Part V will summarize the findings and look forward to the future direction of the study of Shaoxing tea culture on local identity.

2. Overview of Shaoxing Tea Culture

Shaoxing tea culture is an important part of Chinese tea culture with a long history and rich connotation. Since the Song Dynasty, Shaoxing tea has been famous for its unique varieties and exquisite production technology.

2.1. History and Tradition of Shaoxing Tea

The history of Shaoxing tea can be traced back to before the Song Dynasty. According to historical records, Shaoxing tea culture has a long history and carries a rich historical tradition and cultural heritage. The Southern Song Dynasty tea scholar Lu Yu in his book “The Book of Tea”, there was “Longjing out of the West Lake, tribute tea has been” record, revealing the historical origin of Shaoxing Longjing tea. In addition, the Song Dynasty tea culture works “Da Guan tea theory” also mentioned the Shaoxing region of tea production areas and varieties. According to the evidence, Shaoxing area tea in the Song Dynasty has been a large-scale planting and production.

With the changes in history, Shaoxing tea culture in the Yuan, Ming, Qing

and other dynasties have been further developed and inherited. Yuan dynasty poet Wang Zhen's "tea mountain line", Ming dynasty tea scientist Xu Guangqi's "tea record", Qing dynasty tea scientist Gu Yanwu's "tea record examines the different" and other literature on the development and characteristics of the Shaoxing tea culture are described in detail, for future generations to understand the history and tradition of Shaoxing tea provides an important information.

Shaoxing tea is famous for its unique varieties and exquisite production technology, among which Longjing tea is the most famous. Shaoxing tea production process is delicate, including picking, sun green, frying and other procedures, the process is complex and delicate, reflecting the Shaoxing tea people to the pursuit of quality and the inheritance of traditional craft (Figure 1). Shaoxing tea is not only a beverage, but also a culture, integrated into people's daily life and social activities, and has become one of the cultural symbols of the Shaoxing region.

2.2. Varieties and Characteristics of Shaoxing Tea

Shaoxing tea is represented by famous varieties such as Longjing tea, Majian tea, Xianhao tea and White tea (Figure 2). Among them, Longjing tea leaves are bright green, straight, fragrant and long-lasting, sweet and refreshing taste, known for its tenderness and freshness; Tieguanyin tea leaves are curved in shape like iron ropes, the tea soup is bright orange and yellow, the aroma is strong and long-lasting, the taste is smooth and mellow, and it has unique rocky rhyme; Bi Luo Chun tea leaves are thin, straight and even, full of white hairs, the soup color is clear and emerald green, the fragrance is fresh and elevated, the taste is fresh and refreshing, and the taste is fresh and sweet, it is one of the green tea varieties with unique characteristics. These tea varieties are not only unique in flavor, but also in taste. These tea varieties not only taste unique, but also has a rich nutritional content, loved by tea drinkers (Fan et al., 2012).



Figure 1. Growing area of Shaoxing tea.



Figure 2. Varieties of Shaoxing tea.

3. Relationship between Local Identity Theory and Tea Culture

3.1. Concept and Characteristics of Local Identity

Local identity refers to an individual's emotional identity and sense of belonging to the region to which he or she belongs, and it is the identification and attachment to the culture, history, customs and other aspects of the place where he or she is located (Leo Srole, 1956). This concept was first proposed by social psychologist social psychologist Leo Srole, who first took local identity as an aspect of social identity in his book *Social Integration and Certain Corollaries: An Exploratory Study* was explored.

The characteristics of local identity include: first, emotional attachment, i.e., individuals have emotional identification with and attachment to the place they belong to; second, cultural identity, i.e., individuals identify with and recognize the cultural traditions and values of the place they live in; third, a sense of belonging, i.e., individuals believe that they have a close relationship of belonging to the place they live in, and they feel that they are a part of the place; fourth, a sense of participation, i.e., individuals are willing to participate in and support

social activities and development of the place they live in (Zhou, Tang, & Dai, 2011). The fourth is the sense of participation, which means that individuals are willing to participate in and support the social activities and development of the place they live in (Ren, Lu, & Diao, 2011). These features together constitute the connotation and characteristics of local identity.

3.2. Formation and Influencing Factors of Local Identity

The formation and influencing factors of local identity involve many aspects (Feng et al., 2012). Studies have shown that the formation of local identity is influenced by a number of factors such as regional culture, social interaction, and economic factors (Zhu, Qian, & Lv, 2012). Smith (1991) pointed out that the existence and inheritance of local culture is one of the foundations of local identity. Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams (1992) pointed out that social interaction is an important factor in shaping local identity, and individuals gradually form a sense of identity with the place they live in by participating in the interaction activities of the local society. In addition, economic factors also have an impact on local identity (Harrvey, 1989), for example, the economic situation and employment opportunities of a place affect the individual's sense of identity with the place where he or she lives (Vargassanchez & Porrassuano, 2011). Therefore, the formation of local identity is the result of a combination of factors, involving a number of aspects such as regional culture, social interaction and economic factors (Wang, Xie, & Zhang, 2020).

3.3. Association between Shaoxing Tea Culture and Local Identity

There is a close association between Shaoxing tea culture and local identity. First of all, Shaoxing tea, as a characteristic industry and cultural symbol of the Shaoxing region, is one of the prides and symbols of Shaoxing.

Shaoxing tea is mainly distributed in various counties and districts of Shaoxing City, among which Zhuji City, Keqiao District, Shengzhou City and other places are the most famous. Tea gardens in these areas are spread over mountainous and hilly areas, with humid climate and fertile soil, which is very suitable for the growth of tea trees (Feng et al., 2012). Shaoxing has a rich variety of homegrown tea. Shaoxing Pingshui Pearl tea, Xinchang Big Buddha Longjing tea, Zhuji Green sword tea, Zhuji Xishi Yinya, Shangyu Zhangzhen tea, Shengzhou Qiangang Hui White Tea, Shengzhou Yuexiang Longjing. Each tea has its specific production area and unique flavor characteristics, enjoys a high reputation in the national tea market, and has also become one of the symbols of Shaoxing region. Every spring, when Shaoxing tea picking season comes, local farmers and tea farmers actively participate in the work of tea picking and making, showing the value and inheritance of traditional tea craft (Feng & Jin, 2019). These tea farmers are not only the inheritors of Shaoxing tea culture, but also the symbol of Shaoxing local identity. By participating in the production of Shaoxing tea, they expressed their identification and attachment to Shaoxing tea culture and strengthened their sense of belonging to Shaoxing region.

In addition, Shaoxing tea culture also strengthens local identity through activities such as tea culture festivals. For example, events such as the annual Shaoxing Tea Expo attracts a large number of tourists to visit and taste Shaoxing tea, demonstrating the charm and characteristics of Shaoxing tea culture. These events not only promote the development of the local tea industry, but also strengthen the pride and identity of local residents in Shaoxing tea culture, which in turn deepen their identification with the local identity of Shaoxing. Through these concrete examples, the close association between Shaoxing tea culture and local identity can be further illustrated.

4. The Impact of Shaoxing Tea Culture on Local Identity

As a local symbol of the Shaoxing area, Shaoxing tea culture, through its unique varieties, exquisite production techniques and rich cultural connotations, has gathered the common identity and sense of belonging of local residents, which in turn has deepened the sense of identification with the local identity of Shaoxing.

4.1. The Local Symbolic Role of Shaoxing Tea Culture

Shaoxing tea culture as a unique sign and symbol of the Shaoxing region, the local identity has an important local symbolic role. First of all, Shaoxing tea has become one of the representative products of Shaoxing region with its unique varieties and exquisite production technology, which has won wide reputation and popularity for Shaoxing region. For example, Shaoxing Longjing tea, Tieguanyin tea and other varieties have become the business card of Shaoxing and one of the cultural symbols of the Shaoxing region.

Secondly, through its long history and rich cultural connotation, Shaoxing tea culture has gathered the common identity and sense of belonging of local residents. By participating in the inheritance and development of tea culture, local residents express their love and attachment to the Shaoxing area, which in turn deepens their sense of identification with the local identity of Shaoxing. Tea culture festivals, tea garden tourism and other activities have also become an important cultural brand in Shaoxing, further strengthening the local symbolic role of Shaoxing tea culture.

In addition, the local symbolic role of Shaoxing tea culture is reflected in the prosperity of the tea industry and tea culture tourism. Shaoxing tea as a local specialty industry, the economic development of Shaoxing region plays an important role. The development of the tea planting, processing and sales industry chain has promoted local farmers to increase their income and get rich, driven the development of related industries, and become one of the economic pillars of the Shaoxing region.

4.2. Shaoxing Tea Culture and Social Interaction

Shaoxing tea culture interacts with society in many ways, such as organizing tea culture activities, tea garden tours (**Figure 3**), and tasting tea in social occasions,



Figure 3. Families participate in tea picking study program.

etc. These activities fully demonstrate a deep concern for and expression of local identity. These initiatives have not only strengthened the Shaoxing people's identification with their own regional culture, but also enhanced the influence and cohesion of Shaoxing tea culture in the local community.

By participating in tea culture activities, people not only enhance their understanding and experience of tea culture, but also strengthen their social ties and cohesion. This social interaction not only enriches the connotation of tea culture, but also promotes the harmonious development of the local society. It strengthens the formation and development of local identity.

4.3. Shaoxing Tea Culture and Economic Development

Shaoxing tea culture has made an important contribution to the economic growth and social development of the Shaoxing region by promoting the development of the tea industry and the flourishing of tea tourism. Data from the Shaoxing Municipal Bureau of Statistics as of 2022 show that the production of tea in Shaoxing has grown steadily over the past decade. In 2014, total tea production in Shaoxing reached approximately 50,000 tons, and this figure is expected to increase to nearly 70,000 tons by 2024.

Tea cultivation and processing has led to income growth for local farmers. According to Shaoxing City 2023 statistics, the tea industry has directly driven the employment of hundreds of thousands of farmers, adding a steady source of income for local farmers.

The promotion and development of tea culture in Shaoxing has also led to the prosperity of the local tourism industry. Tea garden tourism, tea culture experience and other projects have attracted a large number of tourists to visit, bringing considerable income for the local tourism industry (Jin & Lu, 2019).

The popularity and brand value of Shaoxing tea has been increasing. The export volume and sales of tea products have continued to grow, bringing lucrative profits to local tea enterprises and promoting the upgrading and development of the tea industry.

5. Expression of Identity in Shaoxing Tea Culture

Shaoxing tea culture has fully demonstrated its profound concern for and ex-

pression of local identity through a variety of ways, including inheritance and innovation, social practices and activities, media and cultural products. These initiatives have not only strengthened the Shaoxing people's identification with their own regional culture, but also enhanced the influence and cohesion of Shaoxing tea culture in the local society.

5.1. Inheritance and Innovation of Tea Culture

Shaoxing tea culture demonstrates the expression of local identity in terms of inheritance and innovation. In terms of inheritance, Shaoxing tea, with its long history and exquisite production techniques, reflects the cherishing and inheritance of traditional culture. For example, the picking and frying process of Longjing tea has been passed down from generation to generation (Figure 4), which has become part of Shaoxing tea culture. At the same time, Shaoxing tea also demonstrates local identity in innovation. Tea farmers continue to promote the development of the Shaoxing tea industry by developing new tea varieties and improving the production process. This combination of inheritance and innovation not only continues the historical tradition of Shaoxing tea culture, but also shows Shaoxing people's identity and confidence in their own regional culture.

5.2. Social Practices and Activities of Tea Culture

The social practices and activities of Shaoxing tea culture have unique significance in the expression of identity. Through tea culture festivals, tea performances and other activities (Figure 5), Shaoxing tea culture is not only a way of social interaction, but also a form of identity expression. In the social practice of tea culture, people meet friends with tea, tasting tea and listening to tea performance together, and this common experience deepens people's identity and



Figure 4. Tea worker teaches pupil how to fry tea.



Figure 5. Local hotel launches Tea Salon.

sense of belonging to Shaoxing tea culture. Unlike ordinary social activities, tea culture activities are organized based on respect for and recognition of Shaoxing's tea traditions, and by participating in these activities, participants express their identification with and pride in Shaoxing's tea culture, thereby strengthening their sense of local identity. Therefore, the social practices and activities of tea culture are not only a way of cultural transmission and communication, but also an important expression of identity, which helps to strengthen the cohesion and cultural identity of the local community.

5.3. Expression of Tea Culture in Media and Cultural Products

The expression of Shaoxing tea culture in media and cultural products further deepens the sense of local identity. Through the publicity and promotion of TV, Internet and other media channels, the image of Shaoxing tea has been widely spread and become an important cultural symbol of the Shaoxing region. At the same time, cultural products such as tea packaging design and tea utensils artwork also reflect the local characteristics of Shaoxing tea culture, and have become an expression of the pride and identity of the people of Shaoxing in their own region.

5.4. The Contribution of Shaoxing Tea Culture to Local Identity

The contribution of Shaoxing tea culture to local identity is reflected in several ways:

First, Shaoxing tea culture is one of the important cultural symbols of the Shaoxing area, and it is closely connected to local history and tradition. By participating in the inheritance and experience of Shaoxing tea culture, local residents can deeply feel their identity. For example, the production process of Shaoxing tea, the way tea utensils are used, and the etiquette of the tea ceremony all reflect the characteristics of the local culture, making people's sense of belonging to Shaoxing stronger.

Shaoxing tea culture, as a representative of local characteristics, provides an important support for the development of the local tea economy. According to the *Shaoxing Daily* on May 19, 2023, in Shengzhou County alone, tea farmers earned 220 million yuan, 200,000 people were engaged in tea and related industries, and the value of tea production accounted for 18% of the city's agricultural output. These economic gains from tea further strengthened local residents' sense of pride in and identification with their own region.

In addition, Shaoxing tea culture also plays an important role in social occasions and daily life. Whether it is a family gathering or a business meeting, Shaoxing tea is an essential component. By sharing Shaoxing tea culture with others, local residents not only deepen their communication and understanding with each other, but also further strengthen their sense of identity with their own culture.

Overall, Shaoxing tea culture has made an important contribution to the shaping and transmission of local identity through its long history, unique charm, and impact on local economic and social life.

6. Conclusion

The influence and expression of Shaoxing tea culture on local identity have been fully demonstrated in this study. By analyzing a number of aspects, it is clear that Shaoxing tea culture plays an important role in deepening local identity and promoting social cohesion. However, there are still some aspects that deserve further research and exploration.

Future research will further explore in depth the differences in the influence of Shaoxing tea culture on the identity of different social groups. There may be differences in the expression of identity on tea culture among different ages, genders, occupations and other groups, which can be studied through field surveys and in-depth interviews. Second, the relationship between Shaoxing tea culture and other local cultures can be further explored to explore the position and role of tea culture in local identity construction. Finally, the influence mechanism of Shaoxing tea culture on local identity can be deeply explored through interdisciplinary research methods, combining the perspectives of cultural anthropology, social psychology and other disciplines, so as to provide more in-depth theoretical and practical support for the inheritance and development of local culture.

In future research, we have reason to believe that Shaoxing tea culture will continue to play an important role in the shaping and expression of local identity.

ty, and we also hope that the conclusions and outlooks of this study will provide inspiration and reference for scholars and practitioners in related fields.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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