

Analysis of Jingdezhen Yaoli Ancient Town's Ceramic Culture: Historical Threads and Modern Inheritance

Na Zhong

Nanjing Forestry University, Nanjing, Jiangsu, China

Abstract: This paper aims to thoroughly explore the unique status and contributions of Jingdezhen Yaoli Ancient Town as a significant birthplace of traditional Chinese ceramic culture. By analyzing its long history of ceramic production, exquisite craftsmanship techniques, extensive cultural influence, and paths of inheritance and development in modern society, it reveals the irreplaceable role of Yaoli Ancient Town in promoting Chinese and even global ceramic art and cultural exchanges.

Keywords: Jingdezhen; Yao Li; Ceramic Culture; Cultural Heritage.

1. Introduction

Jingdezhen is renowned as China's 'Porcelain Capital,' with a long history of over a thousand years in pottery production, imperial kilns, and several centuries of imperial workshops. Its ceramic culture has a profound heritage that has endured for millennia[1]. The millennium-old Porcelain Capital holds a significant place in both Chinese and global ceramic history due to its extensive ceramic history, unique geographical location, abundant mineral resources, rich cultural inheritance, and broad international influence. Of course, these accolades and positions owe much to Yaoli Ancient Town, one of the birthplaces of Jingdezhen ceramics. The following sections will explore the historical trajectory of Yaoli Ancient Town's ceramic culture, ceramic techniques and methods, as well as the protection and development of Yaoli Ancient Town's ceramic culture.

2. Historical Context of Ceramic Culture in Yao Li Ancient Town



Figure 1. Photograph taken by the author in Yao Li

Yao Li Ancient Town (see Figure 1), located in Fuliang County, Jingdezhen City, Jiangxi Province, is a historic town with rich cultural heritage. Historically known as 'Yao Li,' it earned its name due to being the birthplace of Jingdezhen ceramics [2]. The ancient town is situated at the heart of three World Heritage sites: Huangshan, Lushan, and the villages of Hongcun and Xidi, making its geographical location highly advantageous. Yao Li Ancient Town is renowned not only for

its ceramic history but also for its abundant natural resources and captivating natural scenery (see Figure 2). The town is celebrated as the 'Origin of Porcelain, Land of Tea, and Sea of Forests,' titles that reflect its richness in ceramic production, tea cultivation, and forestry resources[3].



Figure 2. Photograph taken by the author in Yao Li

The ceramic production history of Yao Li Ancient Town dates back to the middle Tang Dynasty, when there were already ceramic handicraft workshops[4]. It was named 'Yao Li' due to its famous kilns, and it was only renamed Yaoli after the kilns were relocated at the beginning of the 21st century. During the Yuan and Ming dynasties, Yaoli's ceramic industry flourished further, with major existing sites including the Rao Nan Ancient Kiln Site and the Yaoli Ancient Kiln Site. However, by the early 20th century, with the rise of Jingdezhen official kilns, Yaoli's ceramics industry gradually declined [5], and many kilns were forced to close. Nevertheless, with modern development, Yao Li Ancient Town, as the birthplace of Jingdezhen ceramics, still holds historical significance and cultural heritage that is cherished and passed down by later generations.

3. Ceramic Craftsmanship and Techniques of Yao Li Ancient Town

3.1. Ceramic Raw Materials

The ancient town of Yao Li has a pleasant climate and dense forests. The primary raw material for Jingdezhen porcelain, kaolin, is sourced from nearby Gaoling Mountain. Gaoling Mountain is renowned worldwide for its rich ceramic



Figure 4. Photograph taken by the author in Yao Li



Figure 5. Photograph taken by the author in Yao Li

The ceramic culture of Yaoli Ancient Town is not only a manifestation of material culture but also a symbol of spiritual culture. It demonstrates the Jingdezhen people's love and pursuit of ceramic art and highlights the outstanding talent

and innovative spirit of the Chinese nation in ceramic manufacturing. This spiritual culture plays a crucial role in promoting the development of Jingdezhen's ceramic industry and has profound implications for the cultural inheritance and development of the entire Chinese nation.

5. Conclusion

The ceramic culture of Yaoli Ancient Town is not only a manifestation of material culture but also a symbol of spiritual culture. It demonstrates Jingdezhen residents' passion and pursuit of ceramic art and highlights the outstanding talent and innovative spirit of the Chinese nation in ceramic manufacturing. This spiritual culture plays a crucial role in promoting the development of Jingdezhen's ceramic industry and has profound implications for the cultural heritage and development of the entire Chinese nation.

References

- [1] Zhang Ming. The Historical Evolution and Modern Inheritance of Jingdezhen Ceramic Culture. *Journal of Cultural Studies*. 2022 (09): 50-53.
- [2] Yang Baolin. Primitive Forests Along the Ancient Pathways of Yaoli. *Forest and Humanity*. 2015 (12): 42-43.
- [3] Cheng Cheng. Thousand-Year-Old Ancient Town, Tranquil Yaoli. *Chinese and Foreign Architecture*. 2013 (08): 22-27.
- [4] Jia Yi. The Ceramic Charm of Jiangnan's Yaoli. *North China Land Resources*. 2015 (04): 18-21.
- [5] Xiao Fabei. A City of Mountains and Waters, Poetic and Picturesque, the Thousand-Year-Old Ancient Town of Yaoli. *Chinese Cultural Heritage*. 2014 (03): 40-45+10.
- [6] Zhang Weifu. Series Report on Famous Chinese Towns: Yaoli Town. *Chinese Place Names*. 2009 (06): 14-21.
- [7] Jin Wenxue. Reflections on Tourism Brand Building for the Ancient Town of Yaoli Based on Repeat Visit Intention Survey Data Analysis. *Rural Economy and Science & Technology*. 2022, 33 (24): 75-78.