

**Yixing Zisha Pottery: Place, Cultural Identity, and the Impacts of Modernity**

by

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## **Abstract**

Yixing, a small town in the southeastern Jiangsu Province of China, has been promoted as the capital of pottery, the world of the karst cave, the ocean of bamboo, as well as the oasis of tea, attracting people's attention from all over the world. "Zisha", which literally means purple clay or purple sand, or pottery made up Yixing clay, has become collectible and popular in the contemporary China. Yixing *zisha* pottery, as an indispensable part of Yixing culture, plays a key role in producing locality and cultural identity as well as promoting the development of Yixing. As a native of Yixing, I have applied my personal experience to my study to provide general background and knowledge on the one hand, and employed anthropological theories in my research on the other hand, trying to develop theories that not only suit this question but also other topics. In my research project, I will focus on the place of Yixing, the cultural identity of Yixing *zisha* pottery, and modern technologies of travel, communication and production, offering evidence of the development of Yixing *zisha* culture in contemporary society. Moreover, I will use my parents' *zisha* studio as example to explore the influence of modernity on Yixing *zisha* industry through the change of people's everyday life.

**Key Words:** *Yixing, Zisha, Cultural Identity, Modernity, Tourism, Mass Media, Technology.*

## **Preface**

This thesis is an original work by Fei Wu. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Yixing *Zisha* Pottery: Cultural Identity and Impacts under Globalization”, No. Pro00038646, July 14, 2015.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Yixing, as the capital city of *zisha* pottery, tightly connects its destiny with the development of the *zisha* pottery industry. *Zisha* pottery is the dominant typical local product in Yixing, and its promoters have presented *zisha* to the world. The importance of *zisha* to Yixing is like red wine to Bordeaux, prosciutto to Parma, the cigar to Cuba, cross crafting to Lithuania, katana to Japan and so forth. Sometimes, when people visit Yixing, it is more like a pilgrimage to *zisha*. They seek for authentic *zisha* pottery, and have high expectations of the origin, clay and style of *zisha* pottery as well as the technique of *zisha* artists. This is similar to tourists visiting Bordeaux to taste its wines.

According to Fredrik Barth (1998:14), “The cultural contents of ethnic dichotomies would seem analytically to be of two orders: (i) overt signals or signs - the diacritical features that people look for and exhibit to show identity, often such features as dress, language, house-form, or general style of life, and (ii) basic value orientations: the standards of morality and excellence by which performance is judged.” In Yixing, *zisha* and *zisha* culture highly influence the values, traditions, and lifestyle of local people, and form a foundation for Yixing identity.

Arjun Appadurai (1996) points out that locality is relational and contextual, and that locality is created through the production of local subjects and local knowledge as well as the maintenance of neighborhoods, through which elements of locality can be variably realized and recognized. Locality as a property of social life, together with neighborhoods which work as social forms, builds contexts. Yixing *zisha* pottery, as a materially produced local object, develops locality by engaging with social activities of production, representation and reproduction. Correspondingly, Yixing builds its boundaries through clay as well as a unique lifestyle based on local tea drinking habits, creating a neighborhood in which *zisha* pottery achieves special meanings and local people present their own identities.

*Zisha*, as a traditional kind of arts and crafts in China, enjoys a long history, and *zisha* technique is recognized as intangible cultural heritage. In Yixing, the heritage of *zisha* technique is usually passed down through the traditional relationship between master and apprentice. Those who decide to learn *zisha* technique must find a willing master to provide the training. Teaching by precept and example, masters pass on their knowledge to apprentices. During my two months learning *zisha* technique from a master, I realized that even local people cannot really understand and appreciate *zisha* pottery properly unless they get the chance to become involved in this apprenticeship. This local knowledge enables people to have a better perspective on their local culture.

In China, people usually make full use of local resources to live a better life, just as an old saying goes: “If you live on a mountain, you live off the mountain. If you live by the water, you live off the water.” In Yixing, people benefit from local *zisha* clay, and various *zisha* products are necessities in every family. To be more specific, people use *zisha* teapots or *zisha* mugs to brew tea, cook traditional soup in *zisha* pots, cultivate house plants within *zisha* vases, decorate their homes with *zisha* sculptures and so on. *Zisha* plays a key role in the way that local people experience the details of everyday life.

Local people also feel proud of their culture and their *zisha* pottery. For example, they usually choose *zisha* pottery as a gift. When I first met my parents-in-law, I was worried about picking an appropriate first meeting gift. My parents recommended that I chose a teapot from their studio. I thought my parents-in-law, as local people, would already have a nice collection of *zisha* pottery at home, but, on second thought, I decided to add my parents’ best art work into my parents-in-law’s pottery collection. My parents-in-law appreciate my parents’ *zisha* pottery, and use it with great care. Later, my father told me that it was the best way to show respect, by gifting the best things to others as well as taking care of others’ work with thoughtful regard.

What is more, people think highly of the benefits of using *zisha* pottery. If you praise local people for their nice skin, youthful appearance or healthy body, for example, they will usually tell you it is all because they drink tea with local *zisha* pottery, a lifestyle widely appreciated in Yixing. If you ask local people what is the most suitable tea ware to brew tea, they will insist that it is *zisha* pottery. Local people believe that when they brew tea using *zisha* pottery, because of the physical structure of *zisha* clay they will develop the best qualities of the tea, and will also keep the original taste of tea. Also, since *zisha* clay is natural and reliable, local people consider *zisha* pottery to be the best tea ware for people's health.

Local people welcome visitors with the best tea and *zisha* pottery, and they are willing to share everything they know about this city and *zisha*. Locals will also recommend that visitors use *zisha* pottery to brew tea to maximize its benefits and they will show them the methods to produce *zisha* and the ways to brew tea with *zisha* pottery. Through the narratives of place and local products, as well as the experience of local lifestyle, outsiders understand *zisha* and local knowledge better. Cultural identity is formed through a long period of accumulation in locals' everyday life, hence, outsiders will benefit from experiencing local daily lifestyle and communicating with locals in order to get a clear perspective of their culture and cultural identity.

Although *zisha* is a local product, *zisha* pottery is sold throughout the world. The small unglazed *zisha* teapots are widely sold to Asian tea drinkers and collectors prize *zisha* pots, buying the work of well-known artists in high-end stores. Yixing *zisha* pottery is not so widely sold to western tea drinkers, but there is a long history of Yixing *zisha* pottery trading to the Europeans. In the Royal Ontario Museum, a collection of antique Yixing *zisha* pottery collected by westerners is display with a description that "Europeans were introduced to the



fine hard red stonewares from Yixing in China during the last decades of the 1600s when Chinese merchants placed red stoneware teapots in cases of tea” (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Yixing *Zisha* Teawares Displayed in the Royal Ontario Museum**



The Yixing National Ceramics Market is the largest *zisha* wholesale market in China. Merchants from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Korean and Japan visit here frequently to select and purchase Yixing *zisha* teawares for their stores and customers. There are also other major tea and ceramics markets carrying Yixing *zisha* pottery in big cities in China, such as the Ma Lian Dao Tea Mall in Beijing and Fang Cun Tea Plaza in Guangdong. These markets satisfy the demand of local tea drinkers or *zisha* collectors as well as *zisha* merchants from nearby cities. Stores selling Yixing *zisha* pottery can be found

almost all over China, and customers are also able to purchase Yixing *zisha* pottery through Taobao, a Chinese website for online shopping similar to eBay and Amazon.

As a prestigious item, Yixing *zisha* pottery is collected all over the world at high prices. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) claims that aesthetic taste is used to maintain social boundaries between dominant and dominated classes, or within classes that are subdivided. In today's China, the revival of class culture is happening, and people are using the consumption of prestige goods to claim their cultivation. Collecting high-end *zisha* pottery made by well-known *zisha* masters enables people to show their unique aesthetic taste, forming a sense of distinction and a boundary of social class.

One new development in the *zisha* business is the sale of high end *zisha* pottery through auction houses in China. According to the China News Website, when *zisha* pottery first appeared in Beijing's China Guardian Auction House in 1994, two of four *zisha* teapots were successfully auctioned for 40.7 thousand RMB (CAD \$69,000). The total bid price of two *zisha* auctions organized by the Guardian Auction in 2011 reached to 70 million RMB (11.67 million CAD), and the highest bid price for *zisha* pottery belongs to a teapot set made by Gu Jingzhou, worth 17.82 million RMB (2.97 million CAD) (Ma 2012)<sup>1</sup> (Figure 2). Chen Linlin from the China Guardian Auction claims that *zisha* art prices reached peaks in 2003, 2007 and 2011, and that this trend will definitely continue (Zhang 2012)<sup>2</sup>. In 2013, a Wen Dan teapot made by Gu Jingzhou was sold for CAD \$390,000 CAD at an auction held by Canada Leaderbon International Auction Inc. in Toronto (Figure 3).

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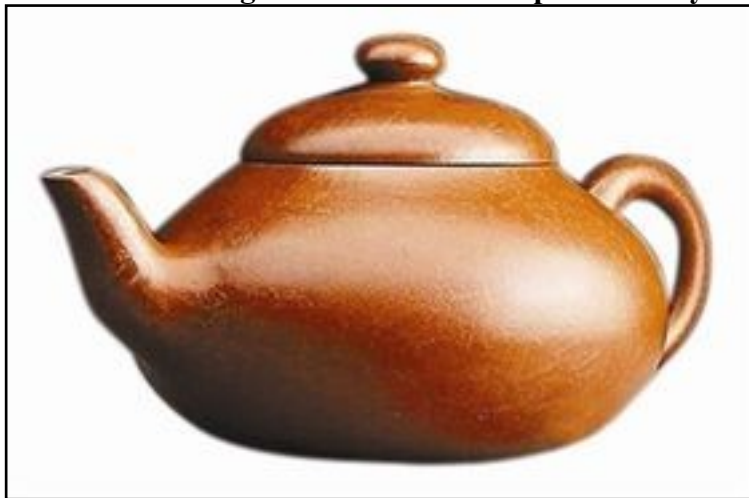
<sup>1</sup> Ma, Haiyan. 2012. "The Auction Market of Zisha Becomes Popular." <http://www.chinanews.com/cul/2012/05-16/3893810.shtml>. Consulted November 13, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Zhang, Yao. 2012. "Good Market Quotations Continue: A Zisha Teapot Bid for 12.88 Million." <http://collection.sina.com.cn/yjzx/20120703/104373446.shtml>. Consulted November 13, 2014.

**Figure 2: *Zisha* Teapot Set Made by Gu Jingzhou**



**Figure 3: Wen Dan Teapot Made by Gu Jingzhou**



The flourishing prospect of Yixing *zisha* in auctions contributed to the rapid growth of new auction companies in the 2000s. Before 2008, *zisha* mainly belonged to the category of “others” in auction houses, but every year since 2011 there have been more than 30 special auctions at which only *zisha* pottery was sold. Outstanding Yixing *zisha* potteries from the Ming and Qing dynasties as well as teapots made by “Seven *Zisha* Old Masters”, Ren

Ganting, Zhu Kexin, Pei Shimin, Wu Yungen, Wang Yinchun, Gu Jingzhou and Jiangrong, are highly valued in the auction industry by collectors. From functional tea brewing tool to valuable and collectable art, Yixing *zisha* pottery plays a pivotal role in attracting people's attention as well as raising people's awareness of the significance of Chinese traditional arts and crafts.

The Chinese auction companies not only focus on selling famous teapots made by well-known *zisha* masters, but also promote the new generation of *zisha* potters and *zisha* shops. Auction companies take advantage of the trend of *zisha* collection, for example, all-handmade pottery and antique style pottery, to draw collectors' attention as well as to popularize the art works of new-emerging *zisha* potters. Hence, some auction companies work as advertising agencies, expanding the fame of *zisha* pottery within the collecting industry through magazines, brochures, advertisements, posters and so on.

### **The Anthropology of Zisha**

Ulf Hannerz (1996) suggests that a theory is never finished, and that more thinking and rethinking will be needed to explore unthinking parts of a theory. Reflexivity, as an indispensable part of modernity, impels anthropologists to get a clear perspective of recent theories and keep improving them under varied circumstances, thereby avoiding stifling creativity or running contrary to the accuracy of current particular situations. From my point of view, how to value a theory or how to apply a theory in today's rapidly developing society has a significant meaning in helping us think and rethink our culture and society in a reflective way. Hence, thinking and rethinking a theory is not only a way to improve a theory, but also a meaningful approach to get a better understanding of the world we are living and the culture we are from.

Moreover, Hannerz (2010) points out that diversity is the anthropologists' business. Some scholars (Eisenstadt 2000, Sahlins 1999) who have clarified social theory have

pointed out that our theories have tended to be European-centered or west-centered, while Hannerz demonstrates that we should seek similarities as well as allowing diversity between different cultures. Therefore, I believe it is essential to investigate non western cultures and come up with theories which suit this global world of diverse cultures.

Alfred Gell (1992) questions how today's anthropologists apply an anthropological theory to the aesthetic or semiotic value of art in the book of *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. He argues that we should approach art in a different way, by looking not only at art itself but also the social relationship around its production, circulation, and reception, an approach that may suit not only Western art or ethnographic art but also all art. He also claims that art is not simply symbolic but also an action that intends to change the world. As Gell suggests, when we research art, we should focus not only on aesthetic beauty but also questions of social position and social value. In this thesis, I question the value and meaning of Yixing *zisha* pottery from the economical, social and cultural levels, and also try to clarify the relationship between Yixing *zisha* culture with the development of place and local community.

As I discuss above, Arjun Appadurai (1996) exhibits the relationship between place and culture through the idea of production of locality. What's more, Fredrik Barth (1998) makes me think about the way in which the identity of local people is influenced by *zisha* and *zisha* culture in terms of local people's value, tradition and lifestyle. Ulf Hannerz (1992) claims that a world culture is not a replication of uniformity but an organization of diversity, and he suggests that we investigate state, markets, movement and community in order to understand the meaning of culture.

The relationship between globalization and localization plays a pivotal role in our understanding of modernity. Also, the influences of new opportunities for travel and tourism, and new technologies of mass media and pottery production are topics worth our

consideration. Many have assumed that under the influence of these changes, local cultures will disappear. Many anthropologists disagree.

Marshall Sahlins (1999) believes in the continuity and diversity of culture. For example, Inuit take advantage of new technologies during fishing and make more money, allowing them to return home and live a traditional life. Similarly, Hannerz (1996) illustrates that when new resources or technologies are available, people will try to judge whether they are acceptable based on their tradition, thereby contributing to continued culture which also fits into a new circumstance. Also, John and Jean Comaroff (2009) clarify in *Ethnicity Inc.* that during performing traditional culture to tourists or outsiders, local people treat it as a way to think and understand their tradition by presenting it not only to others but also to themselves.

There are also negative opinions from other anthropologists. Arjun Appadurai (1996) focused on disjunctures rather than homogenization and heterogenization, and proposed a framework to understand global disjunctures based on five dimensions of global cultural flows: ethnoscaples, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes. Through analyzing the relationships between these dimensions, Appadurai divided a nation into variety disjunctures: there is inside threat if a nation is too open while international rejection will emerge if a nation is too unreceptive. To some degree, homogenization is a kind of imagination while heterogenization always exists, and they together provide a comprehensive reference to help us understand the real influences of modernity.

In this thesis, I explore the history and modern production of Yixing zisha pottery, which is one of China's most renowned pottery traditions. I investigate the reasons why *zisha* pottery is only produced in Yixing, and also research the way in which *zisha* helps to make place, locality and the identity of local community. At the same time, I explore how the development of tourism, mass media and technology have impacted the way that Yixing

*zisha* pottery makes place. I consider the question of whether local traditional *zisha* culture will disappear under the influences of new technologies of mass production, including laser engraving and 3D printing.

### **Methodology**

To investigate *zisha* pottery culture in Yixing, I conducted my fieldwork in Yixing in May to July of 2012, May to June and September to October of 2013 and May to June of 2014, researching the way that Yixing *zisha* pottery produces local cultural identity, as well as the influences of tourism, mass media and new technology on *zisha* pottery. I also compared the development of Yixing *zisha* pottery in different time periods to underline the important position of Yixing *zisha* in Yixing culture. Different departments of *zisha* industry, like advertisement and packaging, are also looked at to explore their functions and connections as essential parts in an integrated industry.

During my fieldwork in 2013, I paid my attention to tourism and mass media sections. I visited local Yixing pottery factories to interview pottery masters, and visited the Yixing *Zisha* Channel to interview media workers. I also observed Yixing tourism destinations, like local museums and the Changle Manor. Moreover, I studied the technique of all-handmade *zisha* teapot.

In 2014, I returned back to Yixing for further fieldwork to conduct more interviews and gather more materials. First of all, I revisited local tourism attractions and museums to improve and perfect my chapter related to tourism. Secondly, on the one hand, I attended Ningbo Tea Culture Festival to interview tea and pottery merchants, thereby understanding *zisha* markets outside Yixing. On the other hand, I also visited Yixing local ceramics market and interviewed local *zisha* sellers as well as pottery sellers from other parts of China, such as Blue and White Porcelain sellers from Jingdezhen and Ru Kiln pottery sellers from Henan. Thirdly, I learned how to make *zisha* teapot with moulds, comparing it with the all-handmade

technique, and also interviewed *zisha* masters like Pan Chiping, Yu Xiaofang, Wu Dongjun, regarding questions related to *zisha* technology. Fourthly, I explored *zisha* decoration technologies, like computer carving, manual carving, glazing and clay painting, by visiting local workshops and interviewing craftspeople. Fifthly, I focused not only on *zisha* culture but also Yixing local tea culture, and visited the a local library to obtain official documents and tea gardens to learn more about local black tea and green tea.

I conducted my research through a literature study, interviews, participant observation research, as well as comparative study.

First of all, I started my literature review by reviewing published works by accredited Chinese and Western scholars and researchers on the topic of Yixing *zisha* pottery. I also emphasized the areas related to my research thesis, analyzed what was known and unknown, and formulated questions which required further research in preparation for my fieldwork.

Secondly I used interviews as my main research method during my fieldwork. As a local, I know the Yixing dialect and have connections with some of my participants through my personal relationships and also from my work as a research assistant for Prof. Geoffrey Gowlland. I recorded my interviews by sound or image if I got the permission from my participants.

Thirdly, I also collected my data by participant observation. I visited government offices, tourist attractions, TV stations, *zisha* markets, Yixing *zisha* schools and the *zisha* factory to research Yixing *zisha* culture through informal interviews, direct observation, participation in the life of their group, collective discussions and so on. I also attended some festivals related to *zisha* pottery culture in Yixing. Moreover, I learned how to use *zisha* pottery to make tea during tea ceremonies, and how to make all-handmade and also molded *zisha* pottery to get familiar with the detailed processes, tools, techniques, knowledge and vocabularies used in *zisha* industry.



Fourthly, I compared the development of Yixing *zisha* pottery with other Yixing ceramics, like Yixing celadon and Yixing faience. By comparative study, I attempted to find similarities and differences between the two, emphasizing the important position of *zisha* pottery in Yixing culture.

### **Summary**

In chapter 2, I focus on the localization of Yixing *zisha* culture. I start through two dialogues, which take place frequently in my life, to question the relationship between *zisha* and the place Yixing and ask why *zisha* is only produced in Yixing. Then I offer the background of Yixing city and Yixing *zisha* pottery by looking at its origin, history, traditional style and classical decoration methods, and discuss the way in which place makes *zisha*, based on the natural environment and cultural environment in Yixing. Meanwhile, I also explore how *zisha* makes place at the economical, social and cultural levels.

In chapter 3 and 4, I focus on modernity and its impacts on local Yixing *zisha* culture. To be more specific, in chapter 3, I review a cultural tourism route recommended by the Yixing Tourism Official Website to the tourists who want to explore the culture of Yixing *zisha* pottery. By introducing popular tourist attractions like the Yixing Ceramics Museum, the Muni Krast Cave, the Yixing National Ceramics Market, the Changle Manor and Shushan Street, I investigate how *zisha* culture is being integrated into tourism. On the one hand, *zisha* pottery culture contributes to the promotion of Yixing tourism through the unique identity produced by *zisha* pottery, the cultural and commercial value of *zisha* as well as the involvement of *zisha* pottery masters in *zisha* industry. On the other hand, *zisha* pottery culture is also incorporated into tourism through different tourist experiences provided in Yixing, allowing tourists the opportunity to learn more about the beauty, artistry and functionality of *zisha* pottery in different time periods. Finally, I discuss the impacts of tourism on locals, tourists and local tourists.

In chapter 4, I started by examining how traditional and new mass media are used by the government, companies and individuals in *zisha* industry, and then focus on the influence of mass media. The Yixing government prefers to use traditional media to record the history and development of *zisha* industry, and also to form locality and identity for Yixing and branding Yixing *zisha*. Companies, especially auction company and advertising company, tend to use mass media as a promotion tool by selling culture and targeting consumers, while mass media also functions more personally and emotionally for individuals in Yixing. I conclude that the producers of mass media should be aware of audiences from different cultural backgrounds and try to disseminate simple, clear and authentic information.

In chapter 5, I use my parents' *zisha* studio as an example to research the development of Yixing *zisha* industry, and focus on the transformations of location selection, promotion, communication patterns and personal styles, offering evidence of how the everyday life of local people has been established in today's Yixing.

In chapter 6, I conclude the thesis by using furnace transmutation as an example to discuss how people's value of *zisha* pottery has changed due to the development of technology, production and communication. Issues occurring under the modernity, like clay supply, have also be explored to indicate the future of *zisha* industry.

## Chapter 2: Cultural Identity

*“Where are you from?” People asked.*

*“I am from Yixing, Jiangsu Province.” I answered.*

*“Oh, that is the place known for zisha.”*

*“Who are your parents?” People asked.*

*“They are zisha designers.” I answered.*

*“Oh, you must come from Yixing.”*

The above two exchanges take place frequently in my life, making me wonder why Yixing can be so tightly connected with *zisha*. In this chapter I will address the relationship between place and the cultural identity of *zisha* pottery in Yixing. In the first part, I explore two reasons why *zisha* is produced only in Yixing, clarifying how place makes *zisha*: the natural environment and cultural environment. In terms of the natural environment, I analyze Yixing clay and consider whether any other place exists with a similar natural environment, and especially, a similar type of clay. Yixing local tea culture and scholars will be discussed with respect to the cultural environment. In the second part, how *zisha* makes place will be explored in order to research the meaning of promoting local typical products as a local development tool at the economical, social and cultural levels.

### **Background of Yixing and Zisha**

Before we discuss the relationship between place and *zisha*, it will be beneficial to review the origin, history and traditional style of *zisha* as well as the place of Yixing. It can provide a background to understand Yixing and *zisha*, and also offer evidence for later discussion. What is more, I will also focus on the local stories about Yixing and its origin and history.

### ***The Place of Yixing***

Yixing is in the southeastern Jiangsu Province of China, bordering Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui Provinces (Figure 4). The map shows not only the geographical location of Yixing city, but also the special local product *zisha* pottery. Yixing was called Jingyi in ancient China, and changed into Yangxian in the Qin Dynasty (9th century-221 BC), and was not until the Song Dynasty (960-1279) that this city was called Yixing (Yixing Government Official Website 2012)<sup>3</sup>. As of 2013, there is one national environmental protection technology industrial park, two provincial economic development zones, fourteen towns, four subdistrict offices, 216 administrative villages and 93 communities, with 1.0773 million registered population in Yixing (Yixing Chronicles Compilation Office 2013)<sup>4</sup>.

Yixing has been promoted for her fabulous natural and cultural treasures, including the capital of pottery, the world of karst caves, the ocean of bamboo, as well as the oasis of tea. Yixing also has been awarded with many honors, including National Garden City, National Scientific and Technological Progress City, National Ecological City, National Sustainable Development Experimental District, Happiest Cities of China, National Historical and Cultural City, and so on (Yixing City Conditional Website 2013)<sup>5</sup>. Pottery is an indispensable part of Yixing and has been contributing to the flowering development of Yixing city for centuries.

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<sup>3</sup> Yixing Government Official Website. 2012. "Jian Zhi Yan Ge [History of town]." <http://www.yixing.gov.cn/default.php?mod=article&do=detail&tid=349054>. Consulted December 18, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Yixing Chronicles Compilation Office. 2013. "Yixing Yearbook 2013." <http://sqw.yixing.gov.cn/nianjian/2013/2013.html>. Consulted March 20, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Yixing City Condition Website. 2013. "Summarization of Yixing." <http://sqw.yixing.gov.cn/default.php?mod=c&s=ss06c0399>. Consulted December 18, 2013.

**Figure 4: Map of Yixing**



**Source:** “7 Things Every Chinese Should Know About Tea”<sup>6</sup>

Yixing, even as a remote and isolate place in old days, also witnessed the constant mobility of people. The following data will lead us to a clear perspective of the population and flow of immigrants from ancient times to nowadays in Dingshu and Yixing.

The Dingshu Town in Yixing, as a fountain of *zisha*, plays a pivotal role in establishing and promoting Yixing *zisha* culture. It is recorded in *Dingshu Town Annals* (The Commission of Dingshu Town Annals 1992) that native Dingshu people have the family names of Wen, Mou, Zhang, Wu, Gao, Zhou, Men or Pan. In 1453, the Bao family from Ningbo Zhejiang moved to Dingshu due to war and natural disasters, and some of them started to get engaged in the pre-existing *zisha* industry in Dingshu. Later, the Ge family, who had a relationship with the Bao family by affinity for generations, also immigrated to Dingshu. Till 1672, the Bao and Ge families gained fame and fortune in the *zisha* industry in

<sup>6</sup> Hong Kong Museum of Tea Ware. 2012. “7 Things Every Chinese Should Know about Tea.” [http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/ce/Museum/Arts/7thingsabouttea/en/ch7\\_2\\_1.htm](http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/ce/Museum/Arts/7thingsabouttea/en/ch7_2_1.htm). Consulted December 18, 2013.

Yixing, and became influential clans in Dingshu town. Before the Revolution of 1911, the ceramics industry achieved an eventful development, and immigrants from Anhui, Nanjing, Wujin, Wuxi and other cities moved to Dingshu to do manual work or ceramics. At the early stage of the War of Resistance Against Japan, since Dingshu was affected less by the war, many people escaped to Dingshu, raising the population to 120,000. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Dingshu town enjoyed a significant development in the ceramics industry, and population grew quickly. According to a sampling survey based on the population in four residential areas in Dingshu in 1986, there are 8569 residents, 60.75% of whom are immigrants from other regions of China.

Based on a report made by Jing Du and Yequn Fei (2012)<sup>7</sup>, Yixing native population growth rate is -1.41%, while resident population increased 6.1% from 2000 to 2010. Also, in 2010, the population of people from other regions of China is around 239,900, making up to 19.4% of the population in Yixing. The number of the population of people from other regions of China increases by 118,200 from 2000 to 2010, with a growth rate of 97.1%. Hence, it is easy to notice that the increase of Yixing resident population is mainly due to the boom of the population from other regions of China.

### ***Origin of Zisha***

*Zisha*, which literally means “purple sand” or “purple clay”, represents “The purplish hue of the main type of clay used in the craft” (Gowlland 2009: 130). Indeed, there are three basic Yixing clays according to the color of original ore: purple clay, red clay and green clay. By combining different colored clay together in proportion, it is easy to achieve five color of *zisha*: black, purple, red, yellow and green. Purple clay is the most common clay in market, which is why *zisha* or purple clay is widely used to represent Yixing pottery, a

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<sup>7</sup> Jing, Du. and Yequn, Fei. 2012. “Yixing Foreign Resident Population Increases over 110,000 in 10 Years.” <http://www.yixing.gov.cn/default.php?mod=article&do=detail&tid=373214>. Consulted December 18, 2013.

unique type of “ceramic ware with characteristics of both pottery and porcelain” (Pan 2004:3).

According to oral history, there is a famous story about the origin and legend of *zisha*. There are many different versions passed down from one generation to another, but they are quite similar, and only have some differences in detail. It is said that a really long time ago a monk came to the Dingshu town and spoke loudly, “Selling valuables! Who wants valuables!” Local people were confused and no one believed in this monk. And then the monk said, “Selling valuable clay! Who wants valuable clay!” villagers felt more confused and followed the monk to learn more about the clay. The monk led villagers to a mountain, which is now called the Yellow Dragon Mountain, and asked them to dig into the ground. The villagers did just as the monk requested, and they found different colored clay. However, the monk just disappeared without being noticed by anyone else. Villagers began to use this clay to make pottery, and actually this clay played a pivotal role in bringing wealth and fame to the town and local people. Today, people in Yixing still call their local colorful clay “valuable clay”.

The book *Yang Xian Ming Hu Xi [Yangxian Teapot System]*, which is the earliest reference to Yixing *zisha*, written by Zhou Gaoqi (1640) in the late Ming Dynasty, mentioned that a monk from Golden Sand Temple was supposed to be the first person who used Yixing local clay to make a *zisha* teapot. To be more specific, the monk liked to talk with people who make pottery jars, and used refined clay to make teapots by molding a round body and then adding a mouth, lid and handle. The name of the monk was not handed down.

However, Gong Chun is the first recorded *zisha* artist who brought *zisha* to the public. As is described in the Yixing County Annals (Han 1990), education administration official Wu Yishan, together with his young servant Gong Chun, studied in the Golden Sand Temple in Hufu (Figure 5). Also, Zhou Gaoqi (1640) pointed out that when Gong Chun waited on

Wu Yishan in the Golden Sand Temple, he also followed the way that old monk made teapots secretly at his leisure. It deserves to be mentioned that Gong Chun improved the *zisha* technique learned from the monk by using wood inside the mould to make the body of teapot. People highly valued the *zisha* techniques and design concept of Gong Chun and called him the founder of pottery.

**Figure 5: Sculpture of Gong Chun**



It is no coincidence that two monks have been mentioned in this chapter thus far. To some degree, tea culture has been highly developed in temples among monks in ancient China. It is recorded that monks use tea to keep them awake and provide them with energy during meditation. Pottery, which connects tightly with tea culture, may also benefit from monks in temples, though temples are semi-private places, and monks do not have the chance to promote pottery widely in public. That is may be why Gong Chun instead of the monk from the Golden Sand Temple became the first recorded *zisha* artist.



### ***Brief History of Zisha***

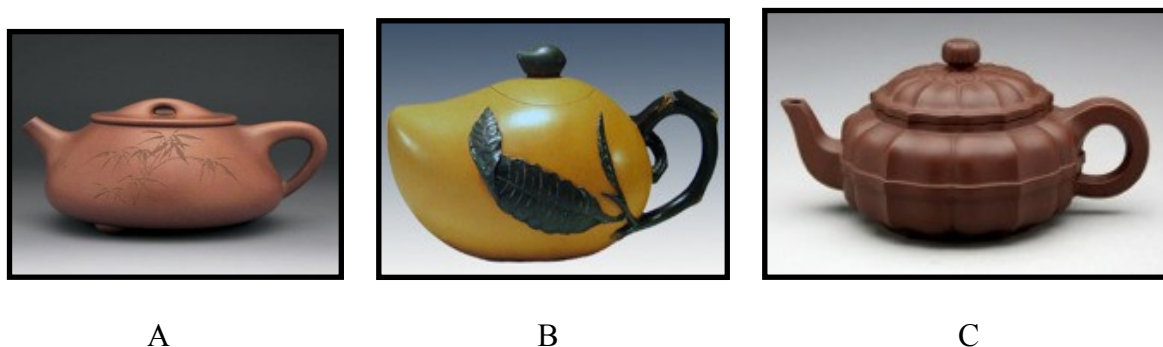
*Zisha* first appeared in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and began to flourish in the Ming Dynasty (1368- 1644) (Xiutang Xu & Gu Shan 2008: 24). According to Ye Rongzhi (1991), there are six main historical stages of Yixing *zisha* pottery. To be more specific, the establishment stage of Yixing *zisha* is from the later Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) to Ming Wanli Period (1573-1620), when people realized the characteristics of local clay and used clay to make pottery. The model stage is from Ming Wanli to the end of Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), and many *zisha* masters appeared during this time, for example Shi Dabing, and the technique of *zisha* and *zisha* tool improved as a scientific system. The middle of Kangxi (1662-1722) to the end of Qianlong (1736-1795) is the flourishing stage of Yixing *zisha*. The transition stage starts from Jiaqing (1796-1820), and the style and decoration methods of *zisha* pottery converted to elegant and classical under the influence of Chen Mingyuan, and *zisha* was preferred by emperors and scholars. Due to the war of the Taiping Rebellion, Yixing *zisha* declined from Xianfeng (1851-1861) to the end of Guangxu (1875-1908), while the development of the Yixing *zisha* industry started to revive at the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912).

With rising demand from China and all over the world, *zisha* production has become an active industry and many artists have begun to emerge. Today, Yixing *zisha* is highly appreciated for their beauty and artistry as well as functionality. Furthermore, Yixing *zisha* is an indispensable part of Yixing local culture because of its essential cultural and economical value, which plays a pivotal role in advertising and popularizing Yixing all over the world.

### ***Traditional Classifications of Zisha Pottery***

Yixing *zisha* can be classified into three main categories based on style and design. The first type is a plain teapot (Figure 6, #A), which uses minimalistic lines to create sound surfaces and then a balanced body, showing the simplicity as well as power of a teapot. Famous plain teapot masters include Shi Dabing in the Ming Dynasty, Shao Dahan and Huang Yuling in the Qing Dynasty, and Gu Jingzhou in contemporary society. The second type, which presents the beauty of nature through sculpture and the combination of different clays, is the decorated teapot with elements like fruits, animals, flowers and so on (Figure 6, #B). Gong Chun, Chen Mingyuan, Zhu Kexin, Pei Shiming, Wu Yungen and Jiang Rong, as representative decorated *zisha* teapot masters, contribute to the diversity of Yixing *zisha* culture. The third version is the pumpkin-shaped teapot (Figure 6, #C), whose body is separated into many equal parts. This kind of teapot calls for clear and smooth lines as well as perfect connection between lid and body, thereby requiring a high understanding of art and technique (Pan 1991). These three styles all contribute to Yixing *zisha* traditional styles.

**Figure 6: Three Classifications of *Zisha***



**Source:** #A made by Gu Jingzhou; # B made by Jiang Rong; # C made by Liu Mingxing

### ***Traditional Technologies of Zisha***

The technology of *zisha* consists of various and systematic patterns step by step, regarding the manufacturing ways of *zisha* clay as well as the processing and decoration

methods of *zisha* pottery. Here, I will mainly focus on the traditional technologies of *zisha*, discussing in Chapter 5 the influences of typical new technologies brought about by modernity.

Unlike many common earth clays, which come in the form of mud, Yixing clay comes in the form of rock. Only after corresponding manufacturing and refining can Yixing clay be used to make *zisha* clay pottery. Most of Yixing clay is located around the Yellow Dragon Mountain in Dingshu Town. After exploiting Yixing clay ore, miners will spread ores outside and also knock them into small pieces, letting them be weathered under sunshine and rain. Then they will pulverize granule clay into powder, and add water to blend into clay. At last, Miners will beat clay in order to get rid of the air inside of it, thereby improving the plasticity of *zisha* clay (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Production Processes of Yixing Clay**



(A) Exploiting



(B) Weathering



(C) Grinding



(D) Adding water and blending



(E) Beating

*Zisha* pottery made according to traditional technique without plaster mold is called an all-handmade teapot, while a semi-handmade teapot is usually achieved through traditional technique as well as plaster mold. Geoffrey Gowlland (2009:131) points out that “The clay is first beaten into strips and disks with a mallet. These components are luted together to form the body, which is patted into shape using a paddle. The various elements are then added one by one: food rim, neck, handle, spout and so forth.” Through beating, patting, agglutinating and other techniques, all-handmade *zisha* pottery relies on understanding and experience with the functions of various tools and the characteristics of *zisha* clay.

Besides self-decoration with unique lines and shapes, carving, glazing and inlaying are the most common decoration methods of Yixing *zisha* pottery (Figure 8). Carving calligraphy or painting on the surface of pottery is widely used in the *zisha* industry. At the beginning, potters only carved on the bottom of teapot to keep a record of their names and the year. Later, with the involvement of scholars, paintings and poems became popular elements for *zisha* decoration through the technique of carving. Chen Mansheng, a famous carver in the Qing Dynasty, plays a key role in promoting carving art in *zisha* crafts, pushing *zisha* art to a peak at that time period. To be more specific, Chen aspires to create harmony in the teapot itself as well as through a combination of the teapot and carving by participating in teapot design, poem writing and calligraphy carving.

Glazing enjoys a long history in art and crafts in China, and Jingde Town in the Jiangxi Province consolidates its dominant status in glazing technique through their fabulous porcelain art from long time ago. Painters draw on the surface of the final craft product with glaze pigments, usually focusing on the themes of landscape, human figures, flowers and animals. After firing the craft product again at the temperature of 800-850°C, lively and colorful painting will be visible on the surface of the craft forever.

Inlaying technique requires craftsmen to carve the outline of their designs on the surface of pottery. Then craftsmen can inlay precious materials, usually tin, silver or gold, based on the trail they carved before. Inlaying adds value to *zisha* pottery on one hand, and protects delicate part of pottery like the lid or mouth on the other hand.

**Figure 8: Traditional *Zisha* Decoration Methods**



**Source:** #A made by Tan Quanhai; # B made by No Name; # C made by Shao Jingnan

### **How Place Makes *Zisha***

When you Google images of Yixing, the pictures that come up first are all about *zisha*, and the pictures of Yixing's topography only appear on the fourth page of results. This experiment inspired my desire to investigate why place makes *zisha*, or, more specifically, why *zisha* is produced only in Yixing. Before we consider how place makes *zisha*, we should first think about what creates *zisha*. As far as I am concerned, it is the clay, technique and potter that achieve *zisha*. I will explore how place makes *zisha* from two aspects: the natural environment and cultural environment.

### ***Natural Environment***

Under the category of natural environment, I want to focus on local clay, which is a significant part of *zisha* teapots. In the poem *Pottery Shop Gives a Present to Chen Mingyuan*, written by a famous scholar Wang Wenbai in the Qing Dynasty, Wang asked what is more precious than jewelry and jade, and he responded that they cannot be compared with the clay beside the lake of Yangxian, which represent today's Yixing clay. According to Xu Li (2004), the exploitation of Yixing clay is mainly around the Yellow Dragon Mountain, the mountain mentioned in the story of wealthy clay.

According to research by Xu Xiutang (2010: 32), a national *zisha* master, Yixing clay contains an abundant sandy consistency that is perfect for making teapots. There are several characteristics of Yixing clay. First of all, high amount of iron oxide in Yixing clay provides the special color after firing. Also, because of varying levels of iron oxide, different kinds of clay will reflect different colors, contributing to the main five colors of Yixing *zisha*. Secondly, Yixing clay is sticky, which means no other adhesive material needs to be used during making *zisha* teapots. Potters can make the body, lid, mouth, handle and feet of a teapot separately, and then connect each part by applying *zini* (adding water to regular Yixing clay, and making it sticky) at the joints. Thirdly, Yixing clay maintains high elastic quality, and potters can use different techniques, for example, pressing, beating, carving, inlaying and so on, making it possible for *zisha* potters to achieve special design, like thin and large span handle. Fourthly, the excellent air permeability of Yixing clay provides the condition to store the flavor of tea and postpones the deterioration of tea. For instance, Han Qilou (1979) relayed a legend in which a plasterer fixed a house and left a *zisha* teapot inside ceiling. After a couple of years, people found that teapot when they fixed the house again, and noticed that the color, taste and flavor of tea inside the teapot did not change. Last but not least, Yixing pottery attains smooth and shining surfaces after firing, and the longer a teapot is being used, the more splendid its surface will maintain. Just like Terese Tse Bartholomew described,

“Yixing wares are noted for the variety of their surface textures, such as a natural gloss resulting from firing, a rich patina developed from years of handling, and a pear-skin effect that arose from mixing various types clay” (Bartholomew 1986:20).

In addition to clay, Yixing also benefits from its convenient transportation for the development of *zisha* industry. To be specific, Yixing is located in the connection of Jiangsu Province, Zhejiang Province and Anhui Province, and owns perfect water carriage system and road carriage system since the Song Dynasty, playing a key role in the promotion of *zisha* to all over China and even abroad.

However, is there any other place where exists similar natural environment, especially clay, like Yixing? Actually, clays similar to Yixing clay in color and general appearance can be found in some parts of China. For example, people find quite similar clay in a town named Changxing in Zhejiang Province, which is one hour’s driving from Yixing (Xu & Shan 2009). What is more, Wu Yun (2013) also points out that there is similar clay in Ningguo and Anhui provinces. Even the clay in Changxing and Ningguo is similar to Yixing clay, despite of the low amount of sandy consistency. Given these similarities, why is *zisha* not produced in Yixing? In my opinion, natural environment only supplies a firm material condition for the creation of *zisha*, and the production and development of *zisha* also rely on cultural environment.

### ***Cultural Environment***

As I mentioned before, tea culture has had an essential influence on the development of the teapot. *Zisha* started to flourish in the Ming Dynasty mainly because tea drinking culture had a big change at that time. To my knowledge, before the Song Dynasty, people used to boil fresh tea leaves, while whisking tea was the most popular tea drinking way in the Song Dynasty since people ground tea cake into tea powder at that time. It was not until the Ming Dynasty that people start to use teapots to brew loose tea, the way that has been handed

down till today in China. Yixing clay pottery, as a perfect teapot for brewing loose tea, benefitted from the development of tea drinking habit in China.

Yixing is the only place that produces tea and pottery in China (Lu 2010:19). Lu Yu affirmed that Yixing has enjoyed a long history for producing famous tea as well tribute tea in the book named *The Classic of Tea*. In the poem written by Lu Tong in the Tang Dynasty, Lu depicted all of the herbs dare not bloom unless the emperor has tried Yangxian tea. According to *Yixing County Annals* (Han 1990), Yixing has been the land of tea since ancient time, and local people have always drunk tea. Also, there are tea houses in Yixing and peripheral villages, and Yixing *zisha* teapots are widely used in these tea houses. Wealthy families prefer to use *zisha* teapots made by famous masters and cups from Jiangxi Jingde Town to host guests, and farmers usually bring high-capacity *zisha* teapot when they go to work. Hence, it is easy to notice that tea and teapots play an important part of Yixing local people's daily life regardless of their social level or economic power.

Yixing is famous for many scholars who were born and have lived here, which is a important motivation for the development of local culture in ancient China and also today. In ancient times, scholars preferred to achieve self-cultivation by drinking tea, which provided the condition for the development of teapot at the same time. Also, during the Northern Song Dynasty, the political and economic focus was transferred to the southern part of China, and promoted the development in the south of the Yangtze River, thereby scholars started gathering in Yixing to drink tea and write poems. What is more, Yixing *zisha* enjoys similar characteristics as Chinese scholars, they are all simple and unsophisticated, elegant and pure, enabling scholars to seek the beauty of *zisha* pottery. As Geroffrey Gowlland (2009:130) pointed out, "*Zisha* pottery has mainly gained this reputation thanks to its close association with late Ming and Qing dynasty scholars and the centrality of tea in the culture of that class."



For example, Su Dongpo, a famous poet, calligrapher, scholar, gastronome and statesman in Song Dynasty, was demoted to Yixing, where he noticed there were tribute tea, *zisha* teapot and Jingshan spring, a perfect fit for his tea drinking habit. It is said that since he preferred large teapots, he designed a lifting handle teapot, and later people copied this style, now called Dongpo Lifting Handle Teapot (Hu 2009). Local people built the Dongpo College to commemorate the contributions of Su Dongpo (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Dongpo College on Shushan Street**



Hence, unique clay, convenient transportation, plus tea drinking culture and the preference of scholars contributed to the unique Yixing *zisha* culture. Also, due to the natural and cultural environment, *zisha* is only produced in Yixing.

### **How Zisha Makes Place**

*Zisha*, as a typical local product in Yixing, is an indispensable part of local identity and tradition, playing a pivotal role in representing as well as promoting Yixing in cultural, social, economic and other levels. To be more specific, knowledge of *zisha* pottery as well as the local history, culture and tradition associated with *zisha* enable locals and outsiders to be aware of the meaningful value of *zisha* and, by extension, the whole circumstance of Yixing city.

As we discussed before, the appearance of *zisha* pottery is shaped by the natural and cultural environment, which collectively endows *zisha* with specific local touches due to Yixing's unique local history and tradition. *Zisha* simultaneously represents local culture and identity. Now I want to examine the ways that *zisha* makes place in the economic, social and cultural levels.

At the level of the local economy, the *zisha* industry contributes to the continually increasing GDP, tax revenue and employment opportunities. According to the statistics of Yixing government (Yixing Government Official Website 2013)<sup>8</sup>, there are 30 national arts and crafts masters, 67 provincial arts and crafts masters, and 4969 artists with professional title in ceramics industry. The number is still in a constant growth. Moreover, local tourism also benefits from the unique culture connected with *zisha*; cultural tourism in Yixing draws tourists' attentions to local *zisha* culture, which helps improve local infrastructures, such as transportation, restaurant, hospital, hotel and so on.

In term of social and cultural levels, *zisha*, as a calling card of the Yixing city, promotes not only the city itself, but also the natural and cultural environment, made by local history, knowledge and tradition, that surrounds the city. People who like Yixing *zisha* are willing to visit Yixing to experience the place where *zisha* is achieved through the accumulation of time and wisdom, thereby accomplishing cultural communication and exchange. At the same time, local people also feel pride about themselves and their traditions. The whole process can be also treated as the commodification of culture, since *zisha* embodies local natural and cultural resources, and the value of city and its typical product gains recognition in a context of trade.

However, under the development of local economy and the promoting of local culture, people should also pay attention to local environment. The production of *zisha* relies on local

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<sup>8</sup> Yixing Government Official Website. 2013. "The Culture of Ceramics." <http://www.yixing.gov.cn/default.php?mod=article&do=detail&tid=349050>. Consulted December 10, 2013.

natural resources, and only through abstemious protection can sustainable development be approached for a healthy ecosystem. The local government also has a duty to elevate the public awareness of the importance of ecological equilibrium.

### **Conclusion**

Paola de Salvo (2013:28) investigates the enhancement and promotion of olive oil in Italy and Spain, and considers olive oil as a potential local development strategy, arguing that olive oil should not only be treated as a food, but also “as a product depository of a complex culture, traditions, identity and lifestyle”. *Zisha* is an essential part of Yixing culture, and *zisha*, at the same time, contributes to the promotion and development of Yixing city. The unique natural and cultural environment of Yixing give birth to *zisha* pottery and local *zisha* culture. Place and its typical products work together to present the culture, traditions, identity and lifestyle of local communities.

### **Chapter 3:Modernity and Tourism**

With the development of modern technologies of travel, mobility becomes increasingly possible, and happens every day and everywhere. Travelling consists of various different forms of mobility, according to John Urry (2000), including corporeal travel, imaginative travel and virtual travel. Tourism, from my point of view, may include all these types of mobility, since tourists may first get information from mass media about a tourist destination, imagine the mobility before they travel, and then physically visit through different kinds of transportations.

Tourism has become a more and more popular topic for anthropological studies. Dean MacCannell (1976) points out that tourism makes people to think about places, events and symbols collectively, and this will be truly meaningful. Amanda Stronza (2001) also indicates there are several factors making tourism notably connected to anthropology. For example, tourism happens in most human societies and provides face-to-face communication for people of different cultural backgrounds, and the development of tourism and its economic importance also attract anthropologists' interest. Recent anthropological research on tourism is mainly based on two aspects: the origins of tourism and impacts of tourism. While "studies aimed at understanding the origins of tourism tend to focus on tourists," most research "concerning the impacts of tourism tend to focus on locals" (Stronza 2001:261). Hence, as an important method in my own thesis, it will be necessary to investigate tourism through focusing on both locals and tourists at all stages of tourism.

Though anthropological researches based on tourism usually pays more attention to western countries, China, as a rapidly developing country, also deserves study of its multiple cultural backgrounds and fast growing economy. In this chapter, I will first discuss the background of tourism in China and Yixing. Then, I will investigate the ways that *zisha* culture is integrated into tourism, and also discuss the impacts of tourism on locals, tourists, and local tourists by looking at the producers as well as consumers of tourism.

## **Background of China's Tourism**

In 2000, the State Council of the People's Republic of China approved the proposal of the Golden Weeks during the Spring Festival, the Labor Day and the National Day. What is more, three Chinese traditional festivals, the Tomb-sweeping Day, the Dragon Boat Festival and the Mid-autumn Festival, were included as Chinese official public holidays in 2007. Thanks to these developments, China's tourism industry has expanded rapidly in the past fifteen years. According to the research conducted by China Tourism Academy (2014)<sup>9</sup>, in 2013, domestic tourists reached 3.3 billion with an increase of 11.6%, and the income of domestic tourism showed a growth of 14%, reaching 2.6 trillion RMB. Meanwhile, CTA forecasts the total income of tourism would go up to 3.2 trillion RMB in 2014, including 2.91 trillion RMB from domestic tourism, and the number of domestic tourists would rise to 3.58 billion. The increase of tourism brings economic advantages for China and also encourages the exchange and communication among people of different cultural backgrounds.

Today, there are many different kinds of tourism, for instance, ecotourism, cultural tourism, gastronomy tourism, medical tourism and so on. Georgette Leah Burns (2004:14) suggests that "As the types of tourists and forms of tourism change, the focus shifts from economic and marketing justifications to consideration of environmental and cultural implications". Culture, as one of the most important reasons to travel, is also a "vital part of the interests of the tourist while at the destination" (Zbuche 2012:69).

According to ATLAS (2007)<sup>10</sup>, the percentage of cultural tourism increased from 17% in 1997 to over 30% in 2007. In China, slow living as a new lifestyle is highly advocated due to the high levels of pressure of life and environment in modern society. Chinese are willing

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<sup>9</sup> China Tourism Academy Official Website. 2014. "2014 Research Achievements of China Tourism Economic Blue Book (No.6)." <http://www.ctaweb.org/html/2014-1/2014-1-3-11-40-75744.html>. Consulted November 30, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> ATLAS. 2007. "ATLAS Cultural Tourism Research Program." <http://www.tram-research.com/atlas/previous.htm>. Consulted March 30, 2014.

to slow down for work and life, becoming accustomed to appreciating everything around them. This lifestyle is embodied in various more natural, comfortable and harmonic life choices, including the seeking of healthier food, high-quality living, simple cultures and so on. In terms of travel, people prefer to reduce speed in order to experience every detail, thereby absorbing the essence of different cultures more easily and thoroughly. Nick Osbaldiston (2013) argues that slow travel or slow tourism allows tourists to immerse themselves in the local culture, cuisine and landscapes, and then tourists, through their slow engagements with the social, are able to become part of the social life.

### **Background of Yixing Tourism**

Even though tourism industry in Yixing, comparing to the long history of the Yixing *zisha* industry, can be treated as a new development, it maintains a consistent growth in contemporary society. To be more precise, the annual revenue of tourism industry increased from 9.456 billion RMB in 2010 to 12.044 billion RMB in 2011 with an upward trend of 27.4% (Yixing Government Official Website 2011)<sup>11</sup>. The government plays a key role in raising the public awareness of the significance of tourism and fulfilling Yixing's tourism potential as a city full of culture and history. In 2013, the Yixing government came up with the slogan "China's Capital of Pottery, Let China be Intoxicated" [中国陶都, 陶醉中国], a pun which also means to intoxicate China with Yixing pottery.

What is more, governmental officials also put new ideas and expectations into practice, giving people a clear perspective of the excellent prospects of the Yixing tourism industry in the future. Shuxi Xia, director of Yixing Tourism and Landscape Bureau, points out that tourism without culture would be soulless. Yixing has the inherent advantages of combining local cultures, like *zisha* culture, tea culture, religious culture and krast cave

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<sup>11</sup> Yixing Government Official Website. 2011. "Guo Min Jin Ji Zhu Yao Zhi Biao [Main Indicators of National Economy]." <http://www.yixing.gov.cn/default.phpmod=article&do=detail&tid=349043>. Consulted March 30, 2014.

culture, with the development of tourism by activating cultural creativity, substantiating tourist attractions with heritage elements, and enriching local markets with typical local products (Bin 2011)<sup>12</sup>. Xia aims to build Yixing as a famous national ecological-cultural tourism destination.

Meanwhile, Xiaohong Shen, secretary of the Party Committee of Hufu Town, emphasizes the importance of establishing a model of tourism based on property, city and ecological culture and to congregate the advancement of tourism industry with the promotion of Yixing's external image by magnifying Yixing's distinguishing cultural characteristics (Chen 2011)<sup>13</sup>. Overall, Yixing has been promoted as a national ecological-cultural tourism destination, and culture has been consolidated as the dominant element for the future of Yixing tourism, thereby popularizing and demonstrating the brand of Yixing.

### **How can *Zisha* Culture be Integrated into Tourism?**

According to B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore (1999), there are different levels of marketing a product or service: commodity, goods, services and experience. Selling experience, which is also known as The Experience Economy, is the most advanced and commodified level in business economy. Kevin Meethan (2006:2) also pointed out that we can “see the production of tourist spaces as the creation of socio-spatial forms which, by referring to common discourses and imagery, provide a framework within which experiences can be organized”. Moreover, typical products can be considered as a strategic tool to help develop local identity (Salvo, Mogollon, Clemente & Calzati 2013). Hence, selling experience during tourism by marketing typical local products and creating certain tourism spaces will help to attract tourists and build a deep impression for them. In order to research

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<sup>12</sup> Bin, Ling. 2011. “Da Zao Quan Guo Zhu Min De Sheng Tai Wen Hua Lv You Sheng Di [Build a Famous National Ecological-cultural Tourism Destination].” <http://www.yixing.gov.cn/default.php?mod=article&do=detail&tid=349808>. Consulted April 4, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Chen, Li. 2011. “Jia Kuai Jian She Zhang San Jiao Xiu Xian Du Jia Lv You Mu Di Di [Speed up the Construction of Yangtze River Delta Leisure Tourism Destination].” <http://www.yixing.gov.cn/default.php?mod=article&do=detail&tid=349831>. Consulted April 4, 2014.

how *zisha* culture is integrated into tourism, I will discuss the activities or experiences provided in different tourist attractions, and emphasize the importance for tourists to explore the value of local culture.

According to the Yixing Tourism Official Website (2014)<sup>14</sup>, one route recommended to tourists is to explore the culture of Yixing *zisha* pottery. It includes tourist attractions like Yixing Ceramics Museum, Muni Krast Cave, Yixing National Ceramics Market, Changle Manor and so on. Now I will investigate these tourist attractions one by one to examine how *zisha* culture can be integrated into tourism.

### ***Yixing Ceramics Museum***

“As active agents in the construction of knowledge, museum displays are increasingly being recognized as discrete interpretive documents of great significance to the history of scholarly disciplines and the evolution of ideas” (Moser 2012:22). Yixing Ceramics Museum, previously named Yixing Ceramics Exhibition Hall, was founded on January 1st, 1983. Under the jurisdiction of Yixing Radio and Television Bureau, Yixing Ceramics Museum has been acting as a window for presenting Yixing ceramics culture to the world (Figure 10). It is composed of forty-eight ceramic studios, the Ceramic Art Exchange Center, the Tourist Information Center and four major pavilions, which are named “Ancient Ceramics”, “Famous *Zisha* Masters”, “World Ceramics” and “Yixing Five Golden Flowers”. It collects nine national first-degree cultural relics, forty-one of second-degree as well as fifty-seven of third degree and displays the long history and remarkable achievements of Yixing ceramics culture from the middle of the Neolithic Age to today (Chu, Peng and Wu 2013).

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<sup>14</sup> Yixing Tourism Official Website. 2014. “Experience Ceramics Culture in *Zisha* Pottery.” [http:// www.yxtour.com/lyxl/981.jhtml](http://www.yxtour.com/lyxl/981.jhtml). November 30, 2014.



**Figure 10: Yixing Ceramics Museum**



Nicholas Thomas (2010) emphasizes that the museum is not only a selection of art works on display, but also, more importantly, it helps people to discover and identify objects. When tourists enter into the Yixing Ceramics Museum, they will be guided by easily-followed arrow signs that mark a route from “Ancient Ceramics Pavilion”, where they can learn the trajectory of Yixing local ceramics in different historical periods regarding samples of unearthed potteries in Yixing, to “Famous *Zisha* Masters Pavilion” with the display of traditional *zisha* pottery making tools, Yixing *zisha* clays and high quality *zisha* potteries made by famous *zisha* masters from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) to today (Figure 11). Tourists can also explore the beauty of foreign potteries donated by Chinese and foreign artists in the “World Ceramics Pavilion”, and discover the multiplicity of Yixing ceramics culture in “Yixing Five Golden Flowers Pavilion” by comparing Yixing *zisha* pottery, fine earthenware, faience, celadon and Jun-glaze pottery. At the end of the trip, tourists will get the chance to watch videos showing how famous *zisha* masters make Yixing *zisha* teapots, and will be able to buy souvenirs in the gift shop, like books, *zisha* teapots and DVDs.

**Figure 11: Display of Different Clay Minerals and Preserved Clays in Yixing Ceramics Museum**



Ceramics are displayed in windows under spotlights with labels, which include the name of art works and artist. Even though the Yixing Ceramics Museum collects five major ceramics from Yixing and other ceramics potteries from all over the world, Yixing *zisha* culture is still highly emphasized and plays a significant role in the museum in various ways.

To be more specific, Yixing *zisha*, first of all, is the only kind of ceramic that has its own separate pavilion, while other ceramics are packed into a pavilion together. Secondly, there is detailed information about Yixing *zisha*, from tools to clays, and from famous *zisha* masters to their outstanding art works, introducing tourists to *zisha* culture in a scientific and integrated system. For example, for each *zisha* pottery, there is a label with the name and birth date of the master, and also his or her biography and artistic achievements in Chinese and English, while for other ceramics work, there is only the name of artist and art work on the label. Moreover, the display of *zisha* pottery covers the full chronology of its

development from ancient times to today, while there is no similar display or information provided for other ceramics. Honestly, in the “World Ceramics” and “Yixing Five Golden Flowers” pavilions, there is a mix of different art works, without the same standardized system as the *zisha* pavilion.

By exploring different exhibition areas of the museum, tourists have a clear perspective of the history of *zisha* culture from the origin of *zisha* to today’s flourishing developments. What is more, tourists can also notice the improvement of *zisha* culture in terms of tools, techniques and taste by comparing different teapot products from a range of time periods.

During an interview with the vice-curator, Shi pointed out that the main duties of the Yixing Ceramics Museum were to receive domestic and foreign delegations and also organize art festivals and exhibitions, thereby promoting Yixing traditional ceramics culture widely. As Stephane Martin stresses, a museum is “Making theater, not writing theory” (Naumann 2006:122). Shi also mentioned that approximately one hundred and twenty thousand tourists, including around ten thousand foreign tourists, visited Yixing Ceramics Museum in 2012.

With booming tourism and the advancement of techniques, they are trying to transform the Yixing Ceramics Museum from a traditional museum to a diversified center, combining exhibition with research, protection of *zisha* culture, tourism and an improved relationship between the academic and cultural portions of Yixing. Shi emphasizes that they, with the support of the Yixing government, have clear strategies to improve the different aspects of the museum.

Firstly, they founded the Yixing *Zisha* Culture Research Institute in 2012 to investigate Yixing *zisha* pottery and summarize the features of Yixing *zisha* culture, making a systematic presentation of *zisha* knowledge and culture to tourists. Secondly, they

established an integrated building for storing collections and enlarged the office area in 2013. Thirdly, they applied for the National AAAA Tourist Attraction to expand advertising and attract more tourists, and have already passed the provincial initial examination. Fourthly, they will use the technology of sound and light to remove the barrier of the traditional exhibition method, and increase tourists' interests by creating two-dimensional and three-dimensional models of art works and letting tourists feel different ceramics arts intuitively. Fifthly, they plan to build a *Zisha* Kiln Site Cultural Park, which will integrate and present the *zisha* manufacturing system to tourists, allowing them to experience the various processes of producing *zisha* pottery and the complex transitional techniques involved. As a consequence, the Yixing Ceramics Museum will enable tourists to see, feel and experience the culture of Yixing *zisha* pottery through different senses.

As Emily Utt and Steven Olsen (2007:302) discussed, "While many museums choose to present the world to the individual, an equally powerful and perhaps more popular pedagogy is for museums to represent local communities to themselves and to hope the world is listening to the conversation." Working closely with local communities, the Yixing Ceramics Museum also functions as a window, representing the development of the local community and its famous potters. It allows visitors to understand local culture based on their awareness of the local community.

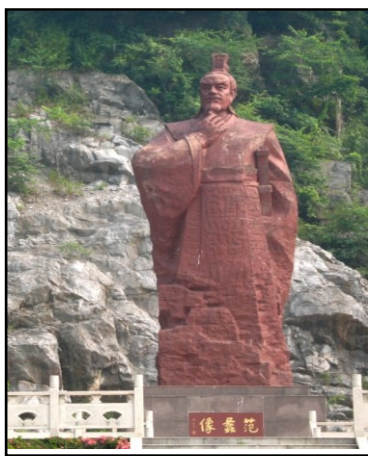
### ***Muni Karst Cave***

In term of destinations, some attractions are "powerfully and/or commercially made dominants, while others are subjugated, silenced or ignored" (Hollinshead 1999:9). Government and tourism producers play a key coordinating role in guiding tourists' attention and interest, and their power may also lead to the transformation of tourist attractions.

Muni Karst Cave is a famous scenic area in Hufu town of Yixing that focuses on the natural karst cave scenery. The Muni Karst Cave was discovered by a teenager from the

village in 1983, and after three years' development, it was open to the public in 1986 (Figure 12). I visited Muni Karst Cave many times when I was young. However, during my last visit for my field work in 2013, I noticed it was totally different from what it was before. Rather than promoting the unique landscape, it was rebuilt based on a touching love legend of Fan Li and Xi Shi as well as local ceramics culture.

**Figure 12: Muni Karst Cave**



Fan Li was a politician, strategist and economist in the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476BC). According to Yixing County Annals (Han 1990), Fan Li came to Yixing and lived in seclusion after he became successful and helped to develop Yixing ceramic wares with Xi Shi. It is said that because of Fan Li, the local ceramics industry became prosperous, as it still is today. To commemorate Fan, local people call him the founder of Yixing *zisha*. It is said in the tourist brochures that the Muni Karst Cave is built by local people in remembrance of Fan Li and Xi Shi. Since they lived in seclusion here to joyfully make pottery. It consists of the Fan Li Cultural Center, Fan Li Sculpture Square, Do-It-Yourself *Zisha* Center and many other attractions, where tourists can experience the beauty and history of the legend, the karst cave, and Yixing *zisha* culture.

Specifically, tourists can learn the story and achievements of Fan Li from the Fan Li Culture Exhibition Hall, which offers valuable historical references to Fan Li as a successful

potter, fisherman, governmental official and businessman. In the DIY *Zisha* Center, tourists get a piece of Yixing clay and some moulds, which will help them make *zisha* sculpture easily. When I entered into the *Zisha* Center, there were a couple of tourists from Huzhou, a town in Zhejiang Province, about one-hour's drive away from Yixing. They indicated that it is an interesting way to get involved into Yixing *zisha* culture, and they can also bring some *zisha* works made by themselves back to home as a souvenir, making this trip more vivid.

Nevertheless, as a local tourist, I was totally confused by all these “made-up” attractions based on the life of a historical figure. Then I talked to the office of the scenic zone manager, and told her all my experiences and wonders. She was really honest to me, saying that, since there are many karst caves in Yixing, there is a keen competition among these karst caves to advertise and promote their tourist attractions, creating it as a must-visit place for tourists. Also, since the government spares no effort to promote Yixing local *zisha* culture within the tourism industry, it is useful to take advantage of government's strategy. So they thought it would be a great idea to redevelop this karst cave based on the legend of Fan Li, making it different from other karst caves. Finally, I understood everything, and realized the terrible power of tourism and the government. For me, today's Muni Karst Cave is more like a “tourist trap,” making up all these attractions in order to lure in more tourists. However, what the tourists said in the DIY Center reminds me that people of different backgrounds will experience and value tourist attractions in distinct ways. A “tourist trap” for me may be a “tourist paradise” for them.

### ***Yixing National Ceramics Market***

The Yixing National Ceramics Market is the largest wholesale ceramics market in China, consisting of 1200 shops and a National Exhibition Center, and presenting the importance of Yixing *zisha* and other Chinese ceramics in art, culture and history. Tourists

can buy ceramics from all over China at a wholesale price, and the market also provides chances for tourists to communicate with local *zisha* artists.

The Yixing National Ceramics Market tends to be more vivid and busy during Chinese national holidays, and tourists, rather than merchants, become major characters. Full tour buses tourists usually stop at the market for half a day after tourists visit other tourist attractions in Yixing, allowing them to purchase Yixing *zisha* pottery here. During interviews with tourists, I notice almost everyone plans to buy some *zisha* pottery at the end of their trips in Yixing. Most of them purchase *zisha* pottery for themselves, since Yixing local tea drinking habits or easy lifestyle has left them with an indelible impression, and they are willing to bring these habit to their own daily life in order to achieve a healthy lifestyle. Many tourists pick *zisha* pottery as gifts for family, friends and coworkers, and they will choose the style, color and shape of *zisha* pottery according to the individual preferences of their family, friends or coworkers, making the gifts more unique. There are also some tourists who treat a trip to Yixing as a pilgrimage to Yixing *zisha* pottery, and most of them are senior tea drinkers or *zisha* pottery collectors. Through visiting local tourists attractions and *zisha* market as well as experiencing local *zisha* and tea culture, they get a better perspective of the city and its unique culture. Moreover, they not only are able to purchase *zisha* pottery at a wholesale price, but also get the chance to visit and communicate with their favorite *zisha* masters in Yixing.

In contrast to other shops, *zisha* pottery shops maintain a special interior plan and sales method. Usually, there are exhibition areas of Yixing clay and *zisha* pottery and also a large table with a tea boat and teawares. Store owners will invite tourists for a cup of tea while they explain the story of their *zisha* pottery. It is also common to have a work area in the shop where *zisha* artists can show customers how to make teapots. In this way, a unique

connection will be built between merchants and customers, and customers can learn more about Yixing *zisha* culture by communicating with local *zisha* artists.

### ***Shushan Street***

As an ancient street built in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Shushan Street used to be a flourishing *zisha* commercial and transportation centre, consisting of homes of famous *zisha* artists, *zisha* shops, tea houses, *zisha* communities, ancient kilns and wharfs (Figure 13). However, with the development of the local economy, most local people moved from this street to set up a home in a better neighborhood. Now it is occupied by immigrants from other cities because of the low rent rate. Still, some tourists will visit this street to feel the history of *zisha* culture through the antique architecture and important historic sites. Tourists can find many old buildings in Shushan Street with signs explaining their history and cultural meaning. The government is also planning to revive this street to reestablish the scene of prosperity of Shushan Street in old times, though it is a time and money-consuming task to relocate the people who live there.

**Figure 13: Shushan Street. Photo from *Wuxi News Weekly***





### **Changle Manor**

Changle Manor was founded by National *Zisha* Pottery Master Xu Xiutang. During my interview with Master Xu, he told me the aim of this manor was to build a lively museum of *zisha* culture and a spiritual home for *zisha* artists. Xu and his students live in the manor and they also plant vegetables and raise chicken there. Tourists can experience traditional *zisha* culture at the manor, while his students can also work and live there. In the manor, it shows the whole processes of making *zisha* pottery step by step with different tools used in different time periods. The most absorbing building is an archaistic dragon kiln (Figure 14), where people fired their teapots in the past. An art gallery leads tourists to explore the beauty of Xu and his students' artistic works (Figure 15). Just like Xu said, tourists are able to feel what potters' daily life is like there, and also get the chance to communicate with these potters, thereby enriching tourists' experience of learning local *zisha* culture multi-sensorially.

**Figure 14: Archaistic Dragon Kiln**



**Figure 15: Sculpture in Art Gallery**



### **Others**

Yixing tourism not only focuses on Yixing *zisha* culture but also on the abundant natural and cultural treasures in Yixing, like the bamboo sea, Yixing local black tea and local special food. However, these treasures also have connections with Yixing *zisha* culture. It is possible to buy *zisha* pottery in almost all tourist attractions in Yixing. In terms of the service

industry, huge *zisha* pottery sculptures are usually displayed in the centre of lobby of restaurants or hotels, and a zone of exhibition of high quality *zisha* pottery is also common. Meanwhile, tea ceremony with Yixing *zisha* in tea pavilions can be found in many tourist attractions, presenting the artistry and functionality of *zisha* pottery. Gastronomy is also a marketing strategy used to shape tourism destinations and attract tourists (Fox 2007). Many tourists pay attention to their food when they are travelling. To let tourists enjoy *zisha* culture, *zisha* pottery is even used as containers for bamboo chicken soup in a five-star restaurant.

In sum, *zisha* culture can be easily found in many tourist attractions in Yixing and also the Yixing government is trying to integrate *zisha* culture into local tourism.

### **Impacts of Tourism**

According to Scarlett Cornelissen (2005:678), “Tourism can be seen as the nexus between systems of international production and consumption.” Producers and consumers are indispensable parts of tourism, enabling it to become vivid and meaningful. Similarly, Amanda Stronza (2001) encourages anthropologists to focus on both tourists and locals in all stages of tourism, exploring social, economic and environment benefits for locals and local communities as well as different tourism experiences provided for tourists. In this section, I will investigate the impacts of tourism according to not only locals and tourists but also local tourists, who can be treated as producers as well as consumers and should not be ignored in Yixing tourism.

### **Locals**

Locals can benefit both economically and socially from the tourism industry. In terms of economy, tourism stimulates the local economy, providing labor opportunities and developing infrastructures. At the social level, it enables local people to feel pride about their cultures. Taking myself for example, when I was a little girl born into a family of teapot artists, I just thought *zisha* pottery should be common in every family all over the world, and

I did not even like *zisha* pottery very much since they were really delicate and easy to break. However, when I grew up and I had chances to communicate with tourists and merchants in my parents' *zisha* pottery shop, I knew why people came to Yixing for *zisha* and why they treated *zisha* as a high level art. I finally noticed the beauty and value of *zisha* pottery, making me continue my academic career in this area.

However, under the influence of tourism or, more generally, modernity, does local culture disappear? Some anthropologists worry that a community will lose its culture because of the influx of other cultures through tourism. However, Marshall Sahlins (1999) believes in the continuity and diversity of culture. Similarly, Ulf Hannerz (1996) illustrates that when new resources or technologies are available, people will try to judge whether they are acceptable based on their traditions, thereby contributing to a continuously developing culture, which also fits into new circumstance. Also, John and Jean Comaroff (2009) clarify that local people employ their performances of traditional culture to tourists or outsiders as an opportunity to think about and understand their traditions, not only presenting them to others but also to themselves.

Form my point of view, whether local culture will disappear or not under the impact of tourism depends on the way local people treat and maintain their culture within the tourism industry or more generally in today's society. On the one hand, if they notice the importance of the *zisha* industry in the development of tourism and try to preserve *zisha* resources for next generations, tourism will be a good way for them to have a clear perspective of their culture, encouraging them to maintain local traditions properly. On the other hand, if they make up tourist attractions or promote *zisha* culture inadequately, the advancement of tourism will also be attended by severe danger of unsustainable development of *zisha* culture.

Similarly, whether tourism may protect or destroy the environment also depends on how people treat *zisha* culture. Some people may notice the value of *zisha* pottery in the

tourism markets and will overly exploit clay without governmental permission, which runs contrary to protecting the ecosystem. Alternately, the government may draw on the aim of ecological tourism and control the exploitation of Yixing clay, a crucial method for the further sustainable development of *zisha* pottery. In this way, tourism will be a double-edged sword for local people in term of social, cultural and environmental influences.

### ***Tourists and Local Tourists***

Tourism enables tourists to experience different cultures and lifestyles, broaden their horizons, and let them know more about the history and tradition of Yixing *zisha* pottery. Moreover, it is also a way of cultural exchange, and tourists' opinions may refresh local people's traditional art values. For example, furnace transmutation, a chemical change on the surface of teapot because of a sudden change of the temperature of fire during the firing process of pottery, has been transformed from being perceived as a waste product to art in today's market, and I will discuss more about furnace transmutation in Chapter 6.

In Yixing, local people can buy a year long pass to get access to eight main tourist attractions for only 108RMB, including the Yixing Ceramics Museum, Muni Krast Cave, Shanjuan Krast Cave, Lingu Krast Cave, Zhanggong Krast Cave, Bamboo Sea, Yangxian Tea Cultural Museum and Yunv Pool. Local people can benefit from the pass to conduct less expensive travel. Whereas local tourists explore the authenticity of tourism by making connections between tourism and their real lives, the authenticity for tourists is based on their knowledge and expectation of the community, the culture, and the tourist attractions. As a consequence, it is easier for locals to experience sympathetic responses as tourists.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, *zisha* is an essential part of Yixing culture, producing unique locality. On the one hand, the *zisha* pottery culture contributes to the promotion of Yixing tourism through the unique identity produced by *zisha* pottery, the cultural and commercial value of

*zisha* as well as the involvements of *zisha* pottery masters. On the other hand, *zisha* pottery culture is also incorporated into tourism through different tourist experiences provided in Yixing, allowing tourists the opportunity to learn more about the beauty, artistry and functionality of *zisha* pottery in different time periods. What is more, tourism has positive and negative impacts on locals, tourists and local tourists. It is essential for local government to raise people's awareness of the significance of *zisha* culture and try to maintain the sustainable development of the *zisha* industry and the tourism industry.

## **Chapter 4: Modernity and Mass Media**

Mass media, as an indispensable part of contemporary modern society, plays a pivotal role in various areas of everyday life, like information, education, entertainment and socialization, attracting the attention of anthropologists, philosophers, economists, sociologists and scholars from other fields. The relationship between modernity and mass media tends to be inextricable. Arjun Appadurai established an elementary framework for researching the disjunctures of modernity based on five dimensions of global cultural flows: ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescape and ideoscaples, and he claims mediascaples seem to be “Image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strip of reality” (1996:35).

Francisco Osorio (2005:36) points out that anthropology is “the social science that studies culture. Therefore, mass media anthropology is the field within anthropology that studies the way in which culture shapes society through the mass media.” Mass media provides various methods to enable people to get a clear perspective of the world we are living in as well as different societies and cultures under modernity. According to Richard Gabriel Fox (1991), we are able to have a better understanding of the factors affecting people around the world and create an anthropology of the present by studying media anthropology. Also, ethnography of media can “Help us see not only how media are embedded in people’s quotidian lives but also how consumers and producers are themselves imbricated in discursive universes, political situations, economic circumstances, national settings, historical moments, and transitional flows” (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod & Larkin 2002:2). The ways we analyzing mass media will empower the public’s understanding and awareness of a particular society and culture in the modern world.

In this chapter, I will first introduce the background of mass media in China and Yixing. Then, on the one hand, I want to investigate how traditional and new mass media are used by the Yixing local government, companies and individuals to achieve their respective

purposes in the Yixing *zisha* industry. Audiences of mass media will also be discussed on the other hand to explore the influences and functions of mass media.

### **Background of Mass Media in China**

Mass media in China has developed rapidly under the direction of the government of the PRC. To achieve a successful social transformation, new media are highly valued as a strategic resource in China. During the executive meetings of the State Council in 2013, Li Keqiang, the premier of the State Council, emphasized the importance of integrating industrialization and information, and gave priority to the development of Internet and communication facilities (Li 2013)<sup>15</sup>.

What is more, during the Sixth Plenum of the 17th CPC Central Committee, which was held in Beijing from October 15 to 18, 2011, President Hu Jintao (2011)<sup>16</sup> came up with the aim to build the People's Republic of China with a strong socialist culture and to treat the development of the soft power of culture as an important strategy to enhance China's core competitiveness. Experts from different fields analyse the main purpose of this committee according to their own understandings. For example, Zhang Xixian, professor of the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, explains that promoting the improvement of the Internet will contribute significantly to cultural development in China, and that digital culture, information culture and media culture play a meaningful role in this process (Chen & Yang 2011)<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, Liu Yuzhu, director of the Ministry of Cultural Industry, argues that culture is the blood of a nation, and that the Chinese party should have a high level of cultural

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<sup>15</sup> Li, Chun. 2013. "Strategy of Broadband China and Increase Internet Speed." [http://news.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2013-07/12/c\\_125001216.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2013-07/12/c_125001216.htm). Consulted March 23, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Hu, Jintao. 2011. "Adhering to the Socialist Cultural Development Path with Chinese Characteristics and Striving to Build a Country with a Strong Socialist Culture." <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64093/64094/16778578.html>. Consulted March 23, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Chen, Yejun. and Yang, Xin, 2011. "Four Highlights of the Sixthe Plenum of the 17th CPC Central Committee regarding Cultural Development." <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/15945771.html>. Consulted by March 23, 2014

consciousness and confidence to satisfy people's cultural needs at different levels (Chen 2011)<sup>18</sup>.

More and more scholars have focused their research on Chinese mass media. For example, the Shanghai World Expo 2010 has been investigated by Goran Svensson (2013) to explore how China goes global as well as how Sweden accesses China through media. Svensson also suggests that digital communication and media facilitate collecting, "sorting, analyzing and distributing information," and that a country can be heard through social media. Hence, people will benefit from the study of mass media to gain a better understanding of different societies, cultures and traditions in today's society.

## **How is Mass Media Used in *Zisha* Industry?**

### ***Government***

Under the influence of the CPC Central Committee, the Yixing local government also aims to consolidate its status as a city of fabulous traditional cultures by contributing to the development of mass media at different levels. In particular, the Yixing government has long been involved in branding Yixing *zisha* culture through television, advertisements, magazines, posters, websites and so on, thereby fulfilling the potential of Yixing *zisha* to a larger degree in this media-saturated world.

### **1) *Yixing Zisha Channel***

Since 2012, the Yixing *Zisha* Channel has been mentioned quite often in my life in various situations. My friends recommended that I research the Yixing *Zisha* Channel as a part of my fieldwork. My parents invited me to watch the Yixing *Zisha* Channel with them when I was at home. My grandpa collected magazines that were textual records of the Yixing *Zisha* Channel for me as research materials. Even my interviewees used the cases discussed

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<sup>18</sup> Chen, Yejun. 2011. "Main Programme of Building A Country with a Strong Socialist Culture." <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/15939871.html>. Consulted March 23, 2014.



in the *Zisha* Channel as examples to answer my questions. All of these references contributed to my attention and interest in this channel in my later research (Figure 16).

**Figure 16: Yixing *Zisha* Channel**



Under the regulation of the Yixing Broadcasting and TV Station, the Yixing *Zisha* Channel was founded on April 26th of 2012. It aims to popularize Yixing *zisha* culture by drawing support from traditional mass media. At the first broadcasting ceremony, Xu Weiyong, minister of the Yixing Advertising Department, pointed out that the channel was not only important for the Yixing broadcasting and TV industry, but also that it could provide an opportunity to publicize Yixing and its *zisha* culture (Broadcasting and TV Info 2012)<sup>19</sup>.

There are four main TV programs made by the Yixing *Zisha* Channel: *Pottery Goes Everywhere* (*Tao xing tianxia*), *Masters Talk about Pottery* (*Dashi shuo qi*), *New Discovery* (*Xin faxian*) and *Cultural Space* (*Wenhua kongjian*). These four TV programs insist on their own unique characteristics and special market orientation. To be more specific, *Pottery Goes Everywhere* focuses on collecting the latest news of pottery from all over the world and telling the stories of pottery artists, especially new generations of *zisha* artists. *Masters Talk*

<sup>19</sup> Broadcasting and TV Info. 2012. "First Broadcasting Ceremony of Yixing Broadcasting and TV Zisha Channel." <http://www.tdcm.cn/gd/gdxx/107182.shtml>. Consulted April 4, 2014

*about Pottery*, as a high-level talk show, discusses masters' classic representative work as a starting point to present masters' artistic lives in all directions. *New Discovery* is about the stories of treasure hunting, evaluation and auction, exploring special experiences of collection pottery artworks. *Cultural Space*, a new TV program founded in 2013, lays emphasis on *zisha* and ceramics advertisements.

*Masters Talk about Pottery*, which lasts for around one hour every week, focuses on the interview with famous *zisha* masters and specialists (Figure 17), usually starting by introducing a representative art work of a *zisha* master, and then exploring the master's artistic life and art achievements. Masters get the chance to talk about and comment on the history as well as the future of the *zisha* industry and *zisha* market. Pottery is used as a medium to enable masters to share their personal views of art and inspirations from life with audiences. Audiences, who participate in the recording, are able to communicate with *zisha* masters face to face. Moreover, people can also post their questions on the Weibo page of Yixing *zisha* channel, and the TV program will select from these questions and let masters respond in the show.

**Figure 17 “Masters Talk about Pottery”**



During my interview with Xiang Dong, the director of the Promotional Department of the Yixing *Zisha* Channel and the presenter of *Masters Talk about Pottery*, he described in detail to me previous preparation of this channel, feedback from audience and society, difficulties during production processes and expectations for the future.

The audience rating increased rapidly at first, and then flattened out gradually and even dropped slightly in the middle of 2012. Xiang believed that the introduction of a new TV channel would definitely attract a high degree of attention from the audience at the beginning, since people usually prefer to follow new things. However, because the Yixing *Zisha* Channel addresses a niche market by focusing on Yixing *zisha* culture, low-entertainment and high-specialization make it difficult for most audiences to enjoy. In order to maintain a high level of audience rating and attract audiences' attention, the Yixing *Zisha* Channel introduced another TV program called *Find a Lucky Star (Zhuang Fuxing)* in August of 2012. When *zisha* TV shows are broadcasted, a group of production teams from the Yixing *Zisha* Channel will go to different neighborhoods and knock on a door randomly. If someone in the house is watching the Yixing *Zisha* Channel, he or she will be a lucky star and get a gift prepared by the programme groups. Apparently, *Find a Lucky Star* is more entertaining and interactive compared to the other four TV programs, and audiences became interested in the Yixing *Zisha* Channel again in this way.

Many difficulties have occurred during different stages of producing *zisha* TV programs. Much effort and planning has gone into the promotion of *zisha* culture to a larger degree through the Yixing *Zisha* Channel. First of all, in order to guarantee the authority, objectivity and justice of the *zisha* channel, staff is professionally trained in *zisha* culture and techniques. According to the *zisha* training diary of Yu Jiao (2012)<sup>20</sup>, systemic training started on February 6th by visiting many main *zisha* attractions in Yixing, like the Yixing

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<sup>20</sup> Yu, Jiao. 2012. "Zisha Impression: Zisha Training Diary of Staff of Zisha Channel." <http://www.tdcm.cn/zt/tbch/108758.shtml>. Consulted April 4, 2014.

Ceramics Museum, China Ceramics Exhibition Hall, Yixing *Zisha* Factory, Yellow Dragon Mountain, Changle Manor and Old Dragon Kiln, watching *zisha* masters making *zisha* pottery, and attending seminars related to *zisha* history and culture hosted by national *zisha* masters and the president of the *zisha* committee. Furthermore, the Yixing *Zisha* Channel also invites famous *zisha* masters and members of the Yixing Ceramics Committee to help to maintain a strict standard for TV program production as special advisers. Secondly, since the Yixing Broadcasting and TV Station is a local station and the signal of TV programs only covers Yixing, the Yixing *Zisha* Channel is trying to cooperate with other provincial or national channels on the one hand, and hoping to incorporate satellite technique in the future on the other hand, thereby broadcasting *zisha* TV programs nation-widely or even overseas. Thirdly, due to the proliferation of the Internet and the impacts of new media in this information overloaded age, traditional media suffers from stiff competition. The Yixing *Zisha* Channel is well-advised to give priority to integrating Internet resources, providing timely and interactive services. Fourthly, the Yixing *Zisha* Channel produces diverse TV programs to suit audiences in different cognitive levels of Yixing *zisha*. Xiang emphasized that the focus of the *Zisha* Channel is not so much on people who already know *zisha* culture, but rather on educating and piquing the curiosity of people who are unfamiliar with *zisha*.

All of the focus of the *Zisha* Channel reminds me of anthropologists' work regarding the use of media among Indigenous groups. For instance, Faye D. Ginsburg (2002) suggests that we should re-signify the traditional use of media for aboriginal people, and that mass media is actually a way to produce local identity, sociality and national imaginary by documenting their lives, cultures and histories. Also, Terence Turner (2002), based on the cultural imagination in Kayapo video, points out that cultural media is part of social communication among cultural knowledge, and videos made by Indigenous groups are usually documented for new generations of their people. Similarly, for me, the Yixing *Zisha*

Channel is recording the history and development of Yixing *zisha* culture, and also forming locality and identity for Yixing and her traditional culture. What is more, it is also a way of nurturing locals to become reflexive, impelling people get perspective on, protect, as well as promote their culture.

## **2) Official Website**

Alex Jones (2009) claims that all traditional news organizations cope with the assault of the digital world by finding new ways to transform themselves. Similarly, the Yixing government also tries to transform itself under the pressure of new media. For instance, the audience will benefit from the Yixing government official website, which provides informative and up-to-date current affairs through the Internet. From the Yixing governmental official website, audiences gain awareness of technological developments, the geographical environment, tourism, history and culture in Yixing, and also be kept updated with everyday news and important announcements. By Feb 4th of 2015, the total page views of the Yixing governmental official website is 6,632,436. Also, mobile phone clients find it convenient to check information by cellphone. However, the Yixing government official website only transports information published from their newspaper or magazine to their website without effective communication function with audiences, depriving audiences of interaction and motivation. More efforts should be made by the Yixing government to improve its use of digital media, and the government should also provide more opportunities for audiences to communicate.

## **Company**

Orvar Lofgren and Robert Willim (2005) suggest that companies begin to draw on and take advantage of cultural resources, making culture a pivotal role in today's new economy. In the Yixing *zisha* industry, if selling culture can be regarded as a new strategy for

differently scaled companies, then selling culture through mass media is definitely an indispensable part of this strategy. In the Introduction, I mention the auction company, which is a recently emergent way of selling *zisha* pottery. Here, I will focus on advertising agencies, which have been part of the *zisha* industry for a long time.

### **1) Advertising Agencies**

Advertising agencies work as an indispensable part of the *zisha* industry, playing a pivotal role in designing certificates, portfolios, and websites for *zisha* shops and promoting their brands widely. Advertising messages are usually spread through various kinds of mass media. Though advertising agencies often use traditional advertising strategies, such as radio advertisements, newspapers, magazines, television advertisements, or outdoor advertisements, I will focus on how these agencies utilize new media and culture as a new way to achieve the proliferation of their advertising messages.

WeChat, literally meaning a micro-message, is a popular text and voice messaging communication service in China. Rather than solely adding friends, users can also follow public accounts to get access to the latest news or particular information from different areas. A friend brought a particular link from WeChat to my attention, a public account named “*Zisha Creating Culture*” (*Zisha Chuang Wenhua*). This account sends its followers several articles related to *zisha* every day, such as the legend of *zisha*, traditional *zisha* decoration methods, famous *zisha* artworks in different time periods and so on. Each article is quite short, around one or two paragraphs, often includes images, and is easy to understand. As a bonus, followers can share these chapters with friends or forward them to their WeChat Space freely. It seems to be quite reliable and instructive, and also a smart and meaningful strategy to popularize *zisha* culture by following the trend of new media.

However, after almost four-months’ following, I noticed alterations in this public account. First of all, they changed the account name from “*Zisha Creating Culture*” to

“Creating *Zisha* Promotion” (*Kaichuang Zisha Tuiguang*). Secondly, they sent articles about particular *zisha* stores to promote their products and potters. Thirdly, in the end of each chapter, they attached links to several *zisha* companies’ websites or WeChat accounts. Fourthly, they sent advertisement to find sponsors and to broadcast their abilities to promote the *zisha* industry. Finally, I discovered that the account is in fact an advertising agency that camouflaged itself as educating its followers about *zisha* culture. When they gained enough followers and market target, they started to promote the products and stores of their sponsors. In this way, culture is used to attract audiences’ attention within the digital world in order to achieve the goals of advertisement in the end.

### ***Individual***

Individuals in the *zisha* industry also effectively use mass media. Studying individuals in the *zisha* industry will offer us unique insight into how mass media has functioned in the development of *zisha* culture. To explain my point, I will examine how personal certificates and personal Weibo are used by *zisha* potters.

#### ***1) Personal Certificate***

A *zisha* certificate is not a certificate in the traditional sense, since there is no strict standard or regular form. Customers who request a *zisha* certificate when buying a *zisha* teapot may receive a brochure or a thick book or even just a paper, it depends on how potters want to present or advertise their art works. The *zisha* certificate functions as the primary method for individuals to promote their shops and art works. It is affordable and effective, and it can be also treated as a record to documentary potters’ artworks, experiences and memories. I will discuss more functions of personal certificates in Chapter 5 based on the case study of my parents’ *zisha* pottery studio.

## 2) Website/Weibo

In the summer of 2012, I got the chance to work with Dr. Geoffrey Gowlland in Yixing, and he introduced me his *zisha* master Zhao Jianghua. On a muggy morning, we met Zhao in his own workshop in an old building within the Yixing *Zisha* Factory. Zhao was born in 1950, and worked as a factory doctor in the Yixing *Zisha* Factory since 1978. At the same time, he was also the health physician of Gu Jingzhou, one of the most famous Yixing *zisha* masters in the factory. Because of the influence of Gu, Zhao started to learn *zisha* technique under Gu's direction in 1991.

After exchanging greetings graciously, Geoffrey asked Zhao whether he had some new *zisha* works this year. Instead of showing his new work, Zhao turned his eyes to me and said in the Yixing local dialect, "Do foreigners know about Chinese Weibo? I was told people from all over the world could check my Weibo through the Internet. You can ask Geoffrey to follow me in Sina Weibo to see my new work." To be honest, I was quite surprised, since most people in China at his age do not know about Weibo, let alone having a Weibo account and communicating with other people on the Internet. I finally understood the real purpose of the tiny DIY photography studio in the corner of his workshop. At the end of this meeting, Zhao and I followed each other on Weibo, and I check out his new *zisha* works quite often in Canada.

Weibo, which is the Chinese word for micro-blogging, is similar to Twitter. According to the statistical report from the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC 2013)<sup>21</sup>, there were more than 309 million Weibo users in China at the end of 2012, with an increase of 58.73 million from 2011, and the percentage of Weibo users among Chinese Internet users reached 54.7% in 2012. According to Lixuan Zhang and Iryna Pentina (2012:312), "Weibo allows rich media uploads into user feeds, provides threaded comments,

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<sup>21</sup> CNNIC. 2013. "Statistical Report on Internet Development in China." <http://www.cnnic.cn/hlwfzyj/hlwxzbg/hlwtjbg/201301/P020130122600399530412.pdf>. Consulted April 20, 2014.



and offers applications, games, and Weibo medals.” In general, Weibo enables people to easily share thoughts, interests and situations with people all over the world.

Registered on September 11th of 2011, Zhao’s Weibo now has 404 followers, 331 following and 84 posts. In his personal profile, Zhao wrote: “Through my close association with Gu Jingzhou and being influenced by what I constantly saw and heard from the 1970s to 1990s, I became a *zisha* potter naturally and my work follows the traditional *zisha* technique. Just a *zisha* potter” (Zhao 2011)<sup>22</sup>. Most of his followers are his friends and collectors of his pottery. Usually when Zhao finishes a *zisha* work, he will photograph the teapot and post it to his Weibo along with several comments about the design and his own experience of this art work.

From my point of view, the functions of Weibo for Zhao can be summed up as follows. First of all, it is a space where Zhao can update his latest news and present his new art works. In this way, Weibo removes the barrier of distance and provides timely and accessible information for people all over the world. Secondly, Weibo creates communication opportunities for Zhao and his followers. Under each post, there will be couple of comments from his followers. Some of them will “thumbs up” the post, some will discuss with Zhao their personal understandings and evaluations, some will ask Zhao questions about Yixing *zisha*, and some will forward the post to let more people get the chance to see Zhao’s work. Indeed, Weibo promotes cultural communication and interactions between people of similar interests. Thirdly, Weibo also functions as a notebook to record Zhao’s memories, sentiments, attitudes and stories.

On November 4th of 2013, Zhao posted his new work, named Xiaoying Teapot, which is inspired by one that Gu made (Figure 18). He stated that the officials in the Yixing *Zisha* Factory asked Gu Jingzhou to make a small-sized teapot. Since the traditional Xiaoying

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<sup>22</sup> Zhao, Jianghua. 2011. “Zhao Jianghua’s Weibo.” [http://www.weibo.com/p/1005052353785967/info?from=page\\_100505&mod=TAB#place](http://www.weibo.com/p/1005052353785967/info?from=page_100505&mod=TAB#place). Consulted April 20, 2014.

teapot was too simple and cliché, Gu renovated the shape of the mouth and lid, and also added a line in the shoulder of the teapot, creating a harmonic sense of design rhythm. That is where this Xiaoying Teapot comes from. In his posts, followers can feel Zhao is telling his stories and confiding his understandings, and can even imagine they are sitting in his workshop and chatting with him when he is making this teapot.

**Figure 18: Xiaoying Teapot Made by Zhao Jianghua**



You may ask whether Zhao will treat Weibo as a promotion tool to promote his pottery or gain attention. To be honest, it is a quite common marketing strategy in today's society. However, I think Zhao uses Weibo for emotional and spiritual, rather than economic, reasons. As the student of Gu Jingzhou, Zhao insists on using the traditional *zisha* style, and he believes that a *zisha* potter should make pottery as simple as water rather than emphasizing some aspects of the work. An artist who is trying to make a teapot as simple as possible will not care much about fame or wealth.

## **Audiences of Mass Media**

Elena Abrudan (2012) invites people to pay attention to two important aspects of mediated text: production and reception. Denis McQuail (2005:399) defines an audience as “aggregated of actual or potential consumers of media services and products, with a known social-economic profile.” Hence, it will be imperative to view the impacts of mass media from two integrative angles of both producers and receivers in the media world. We have already considered the producers of mass media in a previous discussion. Now, let us move to explore the audiences or receivers of mass media by investigating how they are influenced by mass media when they obtain, analyze and value information.

First of all, the development of mass media enables audiences to get access to *zisha* culture at anytime and from anywhere. To be more specific, audience can gain information related to Yixing *zisha* from different kinds of mass media, and it breaks the barrier of time and distance, producing opportunities for audience to broaden their horizons. For instance, in Yixing, information about Yixing *zisha* can be easily acquired through newspapers, magazines, televisions, brochures, posters, billboards, potters’ portfolios, and even business cards. If, on the other hand, you are away from Yixing, like me, the Internet will be the most convenient and timely method to pay close attention to news related to Yixing *zisha* pottery. Practically speaking, the Yixing government official website will keep you updated with latest news in Yixing and the *zisha* industry, and *zisha* masters’ personal Weibo will let you appreciate their recent art works. Moreover, it is convenient to watch videos from the Yixing *Zisha* Channel online, and communicate with *zisha* potters through social media.

As Xiang Dong told me, the Yixing *Zisha* Channel breaks through the limitations of traditional communication methods. Rather than simply visiting *zisha* market or talking with *zisha* merchants, audiences are able to communicate with famous *zisha* masters and learn *zisha* knowledge from them through the *zisha* channel. What is more, audiences can access

both *zisha* culture and the environment surrounding it. Similarly, in the case study of *couro vegetal* from the Brazilian Amazon, Richard H. Wallace (2009:308) claims that mass media provide details of local livelihoods and build bonds between buyers and Amazon extractors, thereby bringing “remote cultures into the homes of consumers worldwide.”

Secondly, due to access to different kinds of mass media, audiences are no longer simply the receivers of mass media. Instead, they can gather information from different media to considerate and judge it all together, thereby analyzing and valuing effectively.

Thirdly, under the influences of new media, audiences can get involved with mass media enthusiastically and actively, becoming part of it. As Lev Manovich (2009) suggests, the web had transformed from a publishing medium to a communication medium in the twenty-first century, meaning audiences can not only judge information by themselves, but also communicate with each other and share ideas by commenting on different mass media.

## **Conclusion**

Mass media is widely used by the local government, companies and individuals in order to promote *zisha* culture in Yixing. Additionally, the Yixing government prefers to use traditional media to record the history and development of *zisha* industry, and also to form locality and identity for Yixing and branding Yixing *zisha*. Companies, especially auction company and advertising company, tend to use mass media as a promotion tool by selling culture and targeting consumers, while mass media function more personally and emotionally for individuals in Yixing. Hence, mass media affects Yixing *zisha* culture in social, economic, emotional, cultural and other levels within the *zisha* industry.

In term of the audiences of mass media, under the development of mass media, they are able to get access to different culture, and the environment around the culture through multiple methods. However, according to *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain* (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod & Larkin 2002), audiences of different backgrounds and social

classes will differently interpret information obtained through mass media. As a consequence, in order to promote *zisha* culture through mass media, producers of mass media should be aware of these differences and try to disseminate simple and clear information, enabling a wide range of audience to understand their meaning. Furthermore, authenticity of mass media is required to guarantee a positive environment in the media world. Nevertheless, open and easily accessed new media tend to run contrary to this to some degree. In fact, audiences should analyze and value information on the one hand, and producers of mass media should notice the power of mass media as well as their duty as media people in contemporary society on the other hand. What is more, the spread of new media also calls for authenticity to maintain a better and healthier media world.

## Chapter 5: Case Study

Dorinne Kondo (2009), as an American-born person of Japanese descent, examines how Japanese people live in a today's society and how they form their identities in their workspace by examining a small family run enterprise in Tokyo. Moreover, her fieldwork also brings reflective thinking and shapes on her own identity as an American-born Japanese woman. As far as I am concerned, each *zisha* shop in Yixing is the history of the *zisha* industry in miniature, and every *zisha* potter individually bears the larger dream of whole *zisha* industry. Therefore, it is possible to get a clear perspective of the development of the whole industry by studying small businesses in the Yixing *zisha* industry. Also, it will offer unique insight into the influence of modernity on Yixing *zisha* industry through the change of people's everyday life, since the impact of modernity is continuous and varied.

In this chapter, I will investigate the development of the Yixing *zisha* industry based on my research on my parents' *zisha* enterprise, focusing on the transformation in location, promotional techniques, communication patterns, *zisha* processing and decoration technology and personal styles. Based on observation and experience, I discuss how small family-run businesses acclimatize to the new surroundings due to the influence of modernity. First, however, I want to introduce typical enterprises in the Yixing *zisha* industry, providing a brief background of the overall situation for local *zisha* businesses.

There are three typical enterprises in the Yixing *zisha* industry according to the size, employee number and operating mode of enterprise. The first one is the small family business, usually consisting of 2-5 people with a small amount of invested funds. For this kind of business, a typical model is that the wife usually makes teapots at home or at their shop, and her husband helps to buy clay, fire the teapot and do other physical labour. Sometimes they will hire relatives to help out, for example, with quality inspection and teapot packaging. This type of business is the most common in *zisha* industry, since it functions as well as bigger businesses but enjoys lower risk and requires less management.

The second one is the medium size family business, which usually consists of around 8-30 employees. It is often developed from small size family business, and then expanded by hiring potters and/or training apprentices. Taking my parents' business as an example, they started their enterprise all by themselves, making teapots, finding customers and advertising their products. With increasing fame and market demand, it was difficult to operate their business successfully only by themselves. They started to pay relatives to help manage the store, hired other potters to make teapots to provide customers more variety of choices, and taught apprentices, usually relatives or children of their friends, how to make *zisha* pottery and operate a *zisha* business. Later, these apprentices helped out in the store, and even started their own business, thereby sharing customers and resources.

The big private company, as the third type of enterprise, is quite different from the first two types since it is more like a semi-automatized industrialized manufactory. One of my parents' friends, who owns this kind of enterprise, runs a successful business by supplying *zisha* pottery to one of the biggest tea company chain Tenfu. He told me that most of his employees were immigrants from nearby cities, since local people usually were not willing to work in this kind of company. It is quite different from what Kondo (2009) discussed in her research of the Japanese workplace. Kondo explores why Japanese prefer to work in a bigger firm than family run enterprise due to personal values, social status, career prospect and other aspects. However, in Yixing, local people are not willing to work in a bigger firm because of the pressures of bigger cities and personal values.

In 2009, my cousin Wu Jun, who graduated from a technical college with a major in numerical control, quit his promising technician job in Suzhou, a big city close to Yixing, and returned to learn *zisha* technique as an apprentice in my parents' studio. Now he is operating his own *zisha* shop together with his wife who is a *zisha* carver. This kind of phenomenon is

really common in my generation in Yixing. Young people are willing to work in their hometown after obtaining higher education in big cities. They enjoy staying close to their families and doing what they are interested in, rather than working for a big company in a stressful city, even with a better salary. Moreover, I notice that parents in my hometown usually instill the same value to their children: it is better to be your own boss than working for big companies, because you can manage your time and follow your own interests, thereby enjoying a life of more freedom and less pressure. I think that is also a significant reason why Yixing is lauded as one of the Happiest Cities of Mainland of China.

My mother, Zhou Jianhua, was born in Dingshu Yixing in 1963. She started to learn craft art in 1980 after she graduated from high school, and then she was selected to study Style Design at the Central Academy of Craft Art from 1981 to 1983. After working at the Dingshu Hexin Ceramics Factory for two years, she took an opportunity for advanced development at the Jiangsu Light Industry School in 1985, majoring at Sculpture Design. Later, she was assigned to work as an accountant at the Dingshu Hexin Ceramics Factory. In the 1990s, my mother transferred her focus from *zisha* sculpture to *zisha* pottery by learning from a famous *zisha* master Zhou Dinghua.

My father, Wu Dongjun, was born in an artist family in Dingshu Yixing in 1963. After graduating from a junior high school, he entered Dingshu Town Technical School to study fine arts and painting for three years. In 1981, my father started to work at the Dingshu Hexin Ceramics Factory as a design technician. In 1983, he engaged in advanced studies at the Central Academy of Art and Design in the area of Art Deco. The Cultural Revolution mainly did not affect my parents' childhood, all they knew was that, since there were almost no teachers in the school, they did not have to take examinations, and they got the chance to spend their free time in painting and design, which contributes to the success in their art careers.



## **Location Selection**

In the early 1990s, my father resolutely resigned from a good position in the Dingshu Hexin Ceramics Factory, and decided to start his own *zisha* pottery business. Indeed, his resignation was a terrible blow to my grandparents, who considered losing a secure lifetime job from a state-operated enterprise as risky behavior due to the lack of health care and social security in the future. Through the introduction of his acquaintances, my father started to do business with merchants mainly from Taiwan and Hong Kong, since the trade market in the mainland was not quite open. Without enough initial capital, my father basically started his business at home.

At that time, many things were happening in our small house. I started kindergarten, and my mother still worked in Dingshu Hexin Ceramics Factory as an accountant. My father made his own pottery at home as well as collected teapots from other potters. Our guest room was always occupied by my father's clients, and they even had to schedule their visits in advance with my father, just to avoid the time conflict with other clients. They came regularly, usually once every season, and stayed for 15-30 days.

Among all these merchants, Mr. Dai left me with an indelible impression, because he not only concentrated on his work, but also always brought me delicious Taiwanese specialties as gifts. As a foodie, he always expected quality food for each meal, and my father, who is a skilled chef, constantly provided him with good meals, which was a bonus for me. Even now, I still believe the success of my father is attributed by not only his pottery technique but also his abilities in the culinary arts. He is always willing to share his cooking with others, and many of his clients highly praise his cooking skill. Besides preparing meals for Mr. Dai, my father also introduced potters to Mr. Dai, and helped him to collect, package and sent potteries to Taiwan.

Starting in 1997, financial crisis smote most areas of Asia, especially Taiwan and Hong Kong, and the recession prompted consumers to cut down on non-essentials like pottery. In 1999, the Taiwan 921 Earthquake brought another hard time for the Asian economy, and almost paralyzed the Taiwanese economy. As is recorded in the website of 10th Anniversary of the 1999 Chi-Chi Earthquake (2009)<sup>23</sup>, “Altogether, the earthquake and thousands of aftershocks killed 2455 people, injured more than 11000 and left 50 people missing,” and caused a total of NT\$360 Billion (US \$11.25 billion) worth of damage. As a primary schoolgirl, I could barely remember anything about the earthquake. However, I noticed was that our guest room was unoccupied for a long time and our house became quiet. I asked my father why Mr. Dai did not visit as usual, he told me Mr. Dai’s business was badly influenced by the earthquake, and he planned to transfer his business focus from pottery to tea. I can imagine what would happen to a shop full of delicate pottery during a disastrous earthquake. Since then, I have never been able to meet with Mr. Dai again.

Like the butterfly effect, my father’s business also suffered a dramatic decline due to the earthquake that was almost 900 km away from Yixing. To make matters worse, my mother was informed that she was being furloughed indefinitely because of factory bankruptcy in 1999. These difficulties enabled my parents to rethink and re-plan their careers. My mother was willing to making *zisha* pottery again and manage my father’s business, instead of finding a job in a different company as an accountant. Chinese leaders, Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji, are committed to continuing Deng Xiaoping’s path of opening up China and economic reform, and initial results have been achieved in economic reconstruction. Meanwhile, the openness of the market provides more opportunities for trade and foreign investment. My parents noticed the potential of China’s mainland market, and decided to mainly focus on merchants from the mainland.

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<sup>23</sup> 10th Anniversary of the 1999 Chi-Chi Earthquake. 2009. “Foreword of Taiwan’s Sept. 21, 1999 Earthquake.” <http://921.gov.tw/eng/921index.htm>. Consulted October 19, 2014.

In 2001, my parents bought a store and opened their first *zisha* shop named Jingxi Artist Teapot Workshop in a market in an important transportation hub. This type of market was quite common and popular in many cities. Intercity buses stopped off briefly there to allow drivers and passengers to get some rest, food and even shopping. For touring buses, the market is kind of a “must”, where tourists can spend hours shopping for Yixing local souvenirs, especially Yixing *zisha* pottery. Also, many merchants from big cities, like Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou, visit here regularly to replenish their stocks.

With the rapid development of the *zisha* market in the mainland of China, my parents’ other shop was opened on the main street of the town of Dingshu in 2006. This location is better than the former one in many reasons. First of all, the bus passenger terminal is just across the road, so this street is usually the first port of call for many merchants from other cities. Secondly, there are many restaurants and hotels available on this street, so merchants find it convenient to shop there, especially at night, while the former store is at the edge of the city. Thirdly, most *zisha* stores on this street are more like boutiques with higher quality and well-known potters, attracting more merchants and tourists to visit here. Hence, my parents spent most of their time in this store, and hired my aunt to take charge of the old shop.

Later, in 2009, transportation hub markets turned to be not as popular as usual due to the convenience of mobility and the development of transportation. The local government shut down all the transportation hub markets in Dingshu, and established a new ceramics market to gather as many pottery shops and potters together as possible, promoting it as a one-stop ceramics shopping paradise. In order to encourage local potters to open their shops in the new market, government started from the premise that people could trade in their stores in the old markets and get a brand new store in the new market with a little extra money. By this way, my parents got another store. Instead of operating the new store by themselves, they rent it at a really low price to my two cousins and let them open their own pottery shop. Since

my parents already enjoyed a certain amount of regular clients, they wanted to help my cousins to build their own business.

**Figure 19: Parents' Art Studio**



In 2011, my father renovated our house, and redid the main floor as the studio, which displays my parents' representative art works at different time periods and their personal collection of paintings, calligraphy, tea wares, sculptures and other traditional Chinese art and crafts (Figure 19). Also, there are two large decorated tea tables where people can sit down for tea and a chat. My father will usually cook on the second floor, and invite his customers or friends to stay for lunch or dinner. This space, unlike their other store, is more private and cozy. People are more likely to visit their old friends than do business, making it perfect for communication.

### **Promotional Techniques**

It is like an axiom in the *zisha* industry that excellent personal art work is the best advertisement for potters and their pottery shop. The *zisha* certificate, which presents potters'

art works and their personal experience and art values, attaches great importance to potters and their stores (Figure 20).

**Figure 20: Different Kinds of Zisha Certificates**



At the beginning of 1990s, my father attached a manuscript certificate to each teapot he made. This kind of manuscript certificate is usually written in traditional Chinese characters, including a description of the design concept and a personal profile, emphasizing that it is a real work made by this potter at a particular time period. As I discussed before, almost all of my parents' clients were from Hong Kong or Taiwan at that time, which may explain why traditional Chinese characters were used in the *zisha* manuscript certificate. Moreover, my father told me that *zisha* as a traditional craft of long history worked better

with traditional Chinese characters in presenting the historical accretion and cultural essence, thereby adding collection value to an artwork.

In the middle of 1990s, some of the Hong Kong and Taiwan merchants brought their customized certificate with the name and description of their own shop, requiring my parents to use the merchants' certificates instead of their own. From then on, instead of spending a lot of time writing manuscript certificates, my parents started to photograph their artworks in a standard way, with their right hand holding the handle of the teapot in front of their chests and their left hand holding up the bottom. Then, my parents signed and stamped the customized certificate and attached the photo to the back of the certificate.

When my parents opened their first *zisha* shop in 2001, in order to promote their workshop, my father designed their own certificate, which is more like a brochure with detailed introduction of my parents, their artworks and their shop in text and photographs. Also, the standard photo has been kept as a tradition, attached to the back of the certificate.

In 2011, my parents got an invitation from their Singapore merchant to organize a personal *zisha* exhibition in Singapore. However, most of their certificate only describes old works. In order to present the latest artwork to their customers, my father decided to edit another certificate, which is more like a portfolio book, collecting high-quality photographs of their most satisfying and representative teapots and awards they got throughout their careers. Instead of using the standard photo, my father signed under the photograph of a particular teapot as proof that this teapot was made by him. However, he started to write manuscript certificates again, as he told me it was the best way to present *zisha* pottery even it is kind of “retro.”

At the same time, my father decided to build a website to post personal works as well as pottery made by his students. In this way, my parents' clients are able to get access to their

latest work easily, and it also provides them a better reference when they order teapots from them.

For my parents, *zisha* personal certificates and websites work as proof to present their teapots, a window to share their works to audiences at large, a strategy to promote their brand nationally, a record to collect their representative artworks, a witness of their improvement in technique and thoughts, and finally a memory of special experiences in their *zisha* careers. It is not only a promotional measure, but also a reflection of their own identity.

### **Communication Patterns**

The development of technology makes the world smaller and closer by making not only human mobility but also information flow more easily and effectively. A new information society is formed through the improvement of information technology. Daniel Bell (1979) indicates that the new information society changes from a commodity-producing society to a service society, with focus on organizing theoretical knowledge for technological innovation, thereby creating a new intellectual technology. In the *zisha* business, there is a definite link between the improvement of information technology and the change of customer behavior. Meanwhile, telecommunications also transform business pattern by achieving productive information flows.

In the 1990s, not all families in Yixing had a telephone, not to mention a mobile phone or computer, and texting or email, today's most common communication methods, were also beyond people's reach. Hence, face-to-face communication was the primary contact method between my parents and their clients at that time, especially since most were from Hong Kong and Taiwan and would have to spend a couple of days travelling to Yixing, which is like an isolated city because of traffic inconveniences. For this reason, they would also stay longer and try to finish as much work at each visit. My parents would help to arrange their visit in advance. For instance, they would sweep our guest room, make the bed

with clean and cozy bedding, set up meetings, and so on, making their visits more convenient and effective. While clients visited, my parents had no weekends or holidays. Their clients would bring their order list, and my parents would assist them to buy, collect, package and ship their potteries. Their visits usually lasted more than half a month, and we spent a lot of time together. We knew each other's living habits, food preferences, hobbies and interests, and we became just like old friends or even families.

Nowadays, my parents' customers are from almost all over the world, which renders travelling and communication more and more straightforward. The whole world benefits from the proliferation of mobile phones, the Internet and satellites in the information age. Most of their clients will only spend a few days in Yixing, and they stay in a hotel in most cases. They usually pre-order my parents' pottery, and then collect them when they come. They fill their vehicle with cases of teapot if they are driving, or they can choose a company to send back their goods. Sometimes, they do not even show up during the whole process of the business trade. I call Mr. Jiang, one of my parents' regular clients, the "mysterious merchant," since my parents have never met him even though they have been working together for almost ten years. When Mr. Jiang first saw my parents' teapots and a brochure of their studio in his friend's shop, he called my mother, using the number on the business card inside the brochure, and asked if he could order teapots from them. After he transferred the payment, my parents shipped his order. This kind of business pattern is effective and popular. Customers can get access to new products from the studio's website, order *zisha* pottery through fax or email, and even pay the bill through online banking services. Hence, developments in technology generate a less time-consuming and more economical shopping experience. My parents can do their business even when they are travelling. However, less face-to-face communication also makes them feel unfamiliar with their clients.



In the early of this August, I got a message from my old friend Ping, who wanted to purchase my parents' *zisha* pottery as a gift to her employer. Ping lives in Shanghai, which is only 2 hours' drive from Yixing, while I am about 9280 km away from home. When she told me her requirements and budget through email, I Skyped with my mom, who was in Yixing, asking her to choose some teapots and send the price and photograph of each one to me. Later, I forwarded the images to Ping. When Ping decided, I called my mom again with all Ping's requirement. After packing and mailing, my mom received a money transfer through online banking and Ping got her *zisha* teapot in two days. If someone, twenty years ago, had told me that I could do my family business in this way in a foreign country, to be honest, I would not have believed it.

Actually this kind of situation happens quite often in my daily life. I am curious to know the reason why people still contact with me when they plan to purchase Yixing *zisha* pottery, despite the fact that I am far away from Yixing. In the end, Ping told me that she felt I was just sitting in my parents' *zisha* studio and doing all the business, rather than typing in front of my computer in Canada. Ping also notices that long distances, nowadays, seems less problematic than before, and communication, regardless of space and time, has become more convenient due to the rapid development of smart mobile phones and the Internet.

My cousin Wu Jun, who is also one of my father's students, opened his own store in the Yixing National Ceramics Market in 2009 after two years' practices of *zisha* technique under the guidance of my father. At first, my parents introduced him to many of their old customers, and also displayed Wu Jun's *zisha* works in their own store to help him develop business. In the first year, almost 90% of his business was from my parents' customers, whereas, in 2014, 50% of his customers are retail dealers from other cities, 20% are individual buyers, 20% are online buyers and 10% are tourists. Wu Jun mentions that 70% of these retail dealers have their own shops in other cities, like Shanghai, Wuxi, Nanjing,

Xiamen, Tianjing and so on to sell not only *zisha* pottery but also tea and other ceramic teawares, while 30% are *zisha* wholesalers in primary tea and teaware market in big cities, like the Ma Lian Dao Tea Mall in Beijing. For individual buyers, they are usually tea drinkers or *zisha* pottery collectors, who love *zisha* pottery and visit Yixing regularly to choose *zisha* pottery for themselves and their friends.

In term of online buyers, they usually do not have the chance to visit Yixing in person, but they take advantage of the Internet to purchase Yixing pottery at a lower price than they can get from a *zisha* pottery store in their cities. Wu Jun emphasizes that even though there are only 20% online buyers, but he believes the number will go up rapidly with the development of modern communication technology, and he even predicts that online buyer will be the main force of *zisha* sales in the future. In Wu Jun's personal WeChart, he posts his *zisha* works regularly, and people who are interested in his pottery contact him to ask price and make an order. During a festival, Wu Jun usually comes up with some unique promotions; for example, he packaged a delicious moon cake and a *zisha* teapot with moon shape decorations in a nice box in last Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival and sold them on a special discount. This package has been well received by many online buyers, and Wu Jun also got many large quantity online order since some online buyers think it is a nice gift for friends during Chinese traditional festival.

Altogether, due to the proliferation of information technology, like mobile phones, the Internet and satellites, people enjoy multiple convenient communication methods, achieving efficient business experiences as well as modern life styles. It is a speedy and efficient way to build a business, but sometimes it also builds barriers for further communication and deep understanding of each other.

## **Zisha Processing and Decoration Technologies**

My childhood is filled with the sound of beating clay. My mother told me that when I was an infant my grandma set my cradle beside her working table to take care of me, and the sound of beating clay was like a lullaby to me. Before I entered primary school, I spent many hours playing with my cousins at the Hexin Ceramics Factory and the Shushan Street with clay beating sound as background music. When I grew up, I did my homework with my mother's clay beating sound surrounding me after school. Sometimes, she also let me play with a small wood hammer and some clay. Beating clay is the most fundamental technique of *zisha* making. Often, authors like to use the sound of beating clay to represent a thriving and vivid life in Yixing or Dingshu.

Peter Schran (1964:152) emphasizes that Chinese communists treat handicrafts as “A traditional and technically outmoded method of production which combines labour with a few simple tools and implements without the aid of mechanical power”. However, *zisha*, as one of the most important treasures in Yixing, is experiencing both advantageous and detrimental influences of technology in today's global world, and is on its way to transforming from a handicraft to a craft.

In the summer of 2013, I formally started to learn *zisha* technique from a *zisha* master named Yu Xiaofang, an old friend of my parents. Even though I got the chance to witness the processes of making *zisha* pottery as a little girl by observing my parents when they were working, I still believed I could get a better understanding of this traditional culture by participating in the whole production process. At the beginning of my study, I asked Yu to teach me the most traditional *zisha* processing technique, which is also called the all-handmade technique, as my parents learned when they were young. From getting acquainted with different tools to beating clay cubes into various sized slices, I spent most of my days practicing these basic techniques to lay a better foundation for future study. After gained

the recognition of my master, I started to learn how to make each part of pottery and then to put parts together to create *zisha* pottery.

In the spring of 2014, I returned back to Yixing for my further fieldwork, and also continued my study of *zisha* technique. This time I insisted on learning the technique of molding to make semi-handmade *zisha* potter, since I noticed that most of my mother's *zisha* pottery were semi-hand-made, while my father still preferred to make all-handmade teapots. I wanted to experience how technique changes in each *zisha* making process, and then compare traditional and modern techniques through personal learning and practicing.

Molding, from my point of view, is an excellent example of how technology impacts *zisha* technique, both to its benefit and detriment (Figure 21). Molding is widely used in today's *zisha* industry to speed up the whole *zisha* process and also to achieve consistency of technique. Plaster mold, which was introduced to the *zisha* industry in 1958, is a production of the Great Leap Forward, which aimed to transform the country from an agrarian economy into a communist society by speedy industrialization and collectivization.

**Figure 21 : Zisha Molds**



Through learning and comparing, I realize that plaster molding technique, is easier to understand and faster to practice than the traditional technique, which involves a long learning period. For example, when I learned how to use the traditional technique to make a round body of a teapot, I spent almost ten days practicing and finally came up with a nearly qualified work, while plaster mold enabled me to obtain a perfect round body through one day's learning. Moreover, the productivity and success rate of the plaster molding technique is much higher than that of the traditional technique.

During my interviews with many famous *zisha* masters, they all came up with their own opinions about plaster molding technique. Most of them believe that molding is an outcome of technology in modernity, and it conforms to the development of manufacturing techniques and the current market. Some of them highly recommend the use of molding in *zisha* design, since it make it possible to achieve special details, like the long span arch. For example, Xu Xiutang (2010) believes that molding enriches and varies the design of *zisha* pottery, as well as simplifies the whole process at the same time, enabling the appearance of industrial standardization and unification. Others worry that since molding is easier to learn, more and more people will insist on using the molding manufacture technique and give up traditional processes, thereby exerting a detrimental influence on the inheritance of local traditional *zisha* technique.

My mother mainly made semi-handmade *zisha* pottery for the following reasons. First of all, her artwork is at a reasonable price, which is around 300 -600 RMB (\$50-100 CAD), and enjoys a larger market. High market demands make it unrealistic for my mother to create the time-consuming all-handmade pottery. Secondly, most of her customers are amateurs of *zisha* culture, they desire a nice design, basic function and a reasonable price, unlike experts of *zisha* pottery, who have better insights into *zisha* culture and focus on elaborate processing techniques. On the other hand, my father, who insists on using the traditional all-handmade

technique, believes that semi-handmade pottery is more like a commercial trend with the development of technology. By focusing on the traditional technique, he is also trying to keep the most traditional essence of *zisha* culture. Hence, my father's art works also sell at higher prices than my mother's (Figure 22&23).

**Figure 22: Zhu Yun Teapot Made by Wu Dongjun**



**Figure 23: Shi Yuan Teapot Made by Zhou Jianhua**



Geoffrey Gowlland (2009) also mentions in the paper “*Style, Skill and Modernity in the Zisha Pottery of China*” that the plaster mold, as a significant innovation in the 1950s, suffers from a reversal due to a renewed interest in *zisha* pottery in the 1980s, when traditional skills gained value again. In today's *zisha* market, many potters advertise that all their teapots are all-handmade instead of using molding. However, one famous *zisha* master told me more than 80% of *zisha* teapots in the market are made by molding. Gowlland (2009) explains the relationship between vision and value, and suggests that teaching customers to see in a particular way will have a meaningful influence on the economic value of *zisha* pottery. The way people value a *zisha* teapot will contribute to the transforms of potters' manufactory processes, advertising patterns and many other behaviors. Hence, it is meaningful to teach people how to distinguish and value *zisha* pottery suitably.

I still remember the scene when my friend asked me whether 3D printing would be used to manufacture *zisha* pottery in the future, and I believe the incredible expression on my face surprised my friend. Because, at that time, I believed that if people can utilize 3D printing technology to manufacture *zisha* pottery, the death of traditional technique will ensue to some extent.

3D printing, also known as additive manufacturing, “Maintain(s) the distinction of building whole objects from the ground up, layer-by-layer, using only as much material as necessary for the intended purpose” (Peacock 2014:1937). Instead of ink, 3D printing used metal or polymer, making it an inappropriate technology for producing the clay-based *zisha*. Notwithstanding, with the development of technology at a staggering rate, everything seems to be possible in future. Scientists may be able to transform the physical or chemical property of *zisha* clay, making it suitable for 3D printing technology. *Zisha* pottery made by 3D printing instead of by a *zisha* potter may show up prominently in the market in future.

In my opinion, the application of 3D printing technology in the preliminary design stage of the *zisha* industry would enable more functional and effective innovations. Nevertheless, if 3D printing technology is used in the manufacturing process of *zisha* pottery, there will be a remarkable threat to traditional *zisha* technology. Under this situation, potters could be easily substituted by machines, and the identity and culture behind *zisha* may also be replaced by the meaningless products of industrialization.

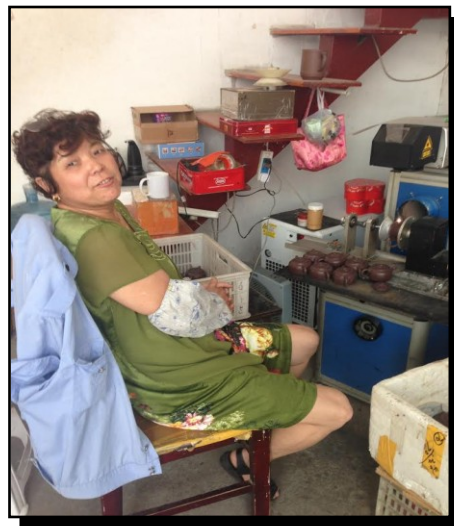
Technology has a consequential influence on not only the *zisha* processing technique but also the *zisha* decoration method. Carving calligraphy or painting on the surface of pottery is a common decoration method widely used in the *zisha* industry. When it comes to the relationship between the *zisha* teapot and calligraphy carving, experts in *zisha* culture would say that the teapot is more valuable due to calligraphy carving and calligraphy passed down because of the teapot, which is commonly spread among the local people. Unlike other

decoration methods, such as glazing and gold or silver inlaying, carving maintains the simplicity and modesty of *zisha* without the decoration of florid colors or precious materials.

Nowadays, carving is a common and popular job in Yixing. Every year, there is a qualification test for *zisha* professional titles held by Yixing government and Yixing Bureau of Education, and carving and making the *zisha* teapot are two main categories. However, more and more computer carving shops appear in Yixing in recent ten years. Computer carving, also named laser carving, is based on numerical control technology, and uses laser light as a processing medium to carve pre-set character or design on the surface of different material, like *zisha*, glass and so on (Figure 24 & 25).

**Figure 24:** Teapots Decorated by Computer Carving    **Figure 25:** A Computer Carving operator

Chatting with me while Working.



Everything happens for a reason. Firstly, computer carving is fast and inexpensive comparing to traditional carving. Generally, it takes less than one minute to carve the body of a *zisha* teapot, and the larger amount of teapots carved in the same pattern, the cheaper the teapots are produced. Secondly, unlike traditional carving, employee do not need to be



professionals. An owner of a computer carving shop told me if you had basic knowledge of computer, you could operate the whole laser carving system easily. Thirdly, since it is controlled by computer, consistence and accuracy can be smoothly achieved. Fourthly, traditional carving is conducted before the firing process of *zisha* pottery, while computers carve on the surface of fired pottery, which reduces the risk of rejected products and increases the rate of finished products.

However, will people be interested in learning computer techniques rather than traditional carving? Will computer carving take the place of human carvers? Will customers prefer computer carving to traditional carving? Let's move to the shortcomings of computer carving. Unity, standardization, accuracy, efficiency may lead to mechanized production rather than art. Inflexible lines, boring composition and changeless calligraphy style make computer carving easy to distinguish from traditional carving, and also are completely superfluous to the balance and harmony of a *zisha* teapot. That is also the reason why computer carving is usually utilized in middle- and low-grade *zisha* pottery. As a consequence, I think computer carving will not pose a big threat to traditional carving at this stage, but it also exists as another option for the market besides human carving.

### **Personal Styles**

The establishment of personal style calls for many years' hard work, and sometimes, even after decades of effort, people may fail to achieve their personal styles. Like my father said, it was easy for a potter to make an excellent teapot, but it was really difficult to show personal style through his or her art work. Also, Geoffrey Gowlland (2009: 140) emphasizes that one should understand the interpretation by artisans that, rather "than the signs of skills becoming material in the clay, it is artisans who create style by claiming to 'see' the signs of the maker in the lines of the pot." The relationship between skill and style is also a question for *zisha* potters to think about regarding the form of their personal style.

In the 1990s, my father insisted upon making typical traditional *zisha* teapots, like Shi Piao and Shui Ping, which could be found in almost every *zisha* potters' work desks. At that time, he did not know what his personal style was, all he knew was that he had to learn from tradition and practice his *zisha* technique. When he started doing business with merchants from Hong Kong and Taiwan, he got the chance to appreciate other masters' art works when he collected teapots for his clients. What is more, they brought many ceramics magazines for my father as references. In this way, my father was able to push his horizons and learn from other artists' works in not only the *zisha* industry but also other types of ceramics.

When the mainland *zisha* market became increasingly open, more and more potters started their own business in the *zisha* industry. In order to survive and even make a success amidst stiff competition, my parents took advantage of their sound educational backgrounds in appearance design, and started designing their own pottery rather than simply copying traditional style, molding their particular personal styles. Meanwhile, they also tried to play to their strengths by adding their respective art and aesthetic value into their pottery. To be more specific, my mother is good at making small teapots with delicate detail and feminine elegance, which are highly valued by female customers and tea drinkers in southern side of China. While my father's works are more preferred by male customers and northerners due to bigger size and grand momentum of the teapots.

Today, their art work is well known for innovation. This kind of creativity is not fancy, but a result based on the understandings of traditional style as well as the abstraction from classical works. For example, when my father designed a teapot named Tripodal Dabing Ruyi, he improved the body from traditional style and brought a new visual feeling, making the teapot creative as well as traditional. He tries to reflect his own personality through his work, an essential way to consolidate the status of the teapot as a lively art.

As a gratifying result, my father has been awarded many national prizes in recent years. For example, he designed Main Power, which won a bronze medal in Shanghai International Art Festival, and a silver medal for Tripodal Dabing Ruyi in 2007. My mother's works have been published in many different books and magazines, like *Selected Works of Chinese Light Industry Artists*, in which she won a silver medal. Also, her teapots and sculptures are popular in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia, and many have been collected by different museums. Due to the fame and popularity of their teapots, my parents are frequently invited by different organizations in many cities to show their outstanding teapots and mature *zisha* skills.

## **Conclusion**

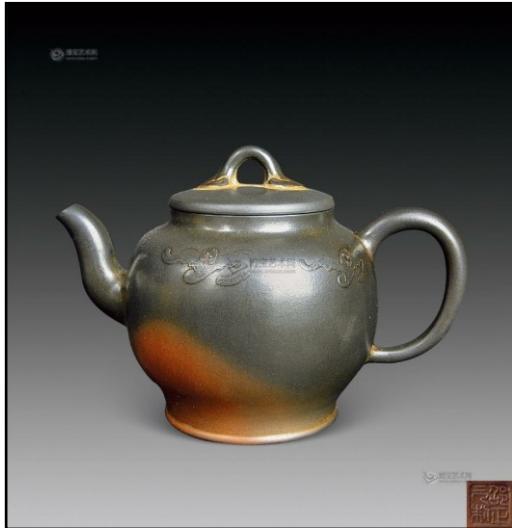
When I first started to write this chapter, I was totally lost since I did not know how to organize all the materials I gathered during my fieldwork researching my parents' studio, nor what I should emphasize and highlight. However, when I put all the documents and materials aside and started to recall our everyday life in this small studio, everything became fluent, concordant and meaningful, similarly to how reading about history may be boring, but when you connect yourself to that history, things turn out to be reasonable and clear. Since we are the witnesses of the history of Yixing *zisha* industry, our daily life makes the history.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

Farhang Rajaei (2000:69) points out “The four pillars of modern life - technology, society, humanity, and the media - have reached full interaction, both horizontally and vertically, thereby influencing politics, economics, and culture”. In Yixing, technology, tourism and mass media play a pivotal role in developing local society and traditional culture, contributing to a dramatic change in people’s everyday lives. Meanwhile, all these changes enable local people to get a clear perspective of their identity and culture. However, issues occurred under the impacts of increasing production for a wide market, for instance, the shortage of *zisha* clay supply, also deserve our attentions to give priority to the long-term environmental and cultural gain. Here, I would like first to use furnace transmutation as an example to discuss why damaged *zisha* product can transferred to unique art due to the improvement of technology, and how people’s value changed because of the development of society. And then I will explore the problem of *zisha* clay supply, coming up with appropriate solutions.

Furnace transmutation is a chemical change on the surface of teapot because of a sudden change of the temperature of fire during the firing process, usually leading to unexpected colors (Figure 26). It is said that pottery is a combination of clay and fire. Actually, furnace transmutation, to be simple, is the change of clay based on the change of fire. Old dragon kilns, first appear in Tang Dynasty (618-907), are designed specifically for firing *zisha* pottery along a hill slope with semicircular or arch roof “providing with a number of openings through which firewood could be thrust when it was necessary to raise the temperature to the required degree” (Lo 1986:29). However, it is also difficult to control and maintain stable fire artificially.

**Figure 26: Furnace Transmutation Pottery**



Jiang Rong, a famous *zisha* artist, points out in her memoir that it was a big day for her family when they picked up fired *zisha* products in an ancient Dragon Kiln (Xu 2006). The expression of her father will tell her whether there is any furnace transmutation pottery. Since in local people's traditional belief, this kind of product is treated as worthless damaged pottery, making all efforts meaningless.

However, nowadays, shops only sell furnace transmutation pottery can be found in *zisha* market, and artists who mainly focus on researching and practicing this kind of technology get an important position in *zisha* industry. With the demand of furnace transmutation in market raises a topic of deep contemplation, which concerns why people change their attitudes to this kind pottery from damaged product to art. To my knowledge, such a phenomenon should be attributed to the involvement of outsiders as well as the development of technology, mass media and market.

First of all, it is the opinions of people from outside that refresh local people's traditional art values. Without the fetter of tradition, outsiders treat furnace transmutation as a new way to present Yixing pottery like a special decoration method, leading local people to rethink its value as a gift from nature. Secondly, the improvement of technology also contributes to the change of people's attitude. "The last dragon kiln in Yixing ceases fire in the 1960s and was replaced by electric kiln and tunnel kiln which uses coal and petrol as

fuel” (Ateatime 2012)<sup>24</sup>, making it possible to control the temperature accurately during firing. What is more, people can also get advantage of these technologies to avoid or seek furnace transmutation, a consequence that makes furnace transmutation controllable rather than mysterious. Thirdly, mass media broaden people’s horizons by presenting nice furnace transmutation artworks and the design concepts of *zisha* masters, raising people’s understanding of furnace transmutation. Last but not least, market also plays a key role under this situation. Multiple anthropologists (Eisenstadt 2000 & Hannerz 1996 & Sahlins 1999) emphasize the important of diversity. Today’s market also allows and even calls for diversity, which enables the existence of different styles of Yixing *zisha*, meeting people’s different aesthetic values. Meanwhile, the market affords people inside and outside Yixing the chance to communicate and exchange their understandings of art. Hence, from my point of view, it is not only the improvement of technology and mass media, but also art values from outsiders, and diversity of market that contribute new meanings to furnace transmutation as well as today’s *zisha* culture.

Through researching Yixing *zisha* culture, I got the opportunity to rethink and revalue the culture into which I was born, and I took the inherent advantage as a local to introduce readers to the background and identity of Yixing city, local *zisha* culture and local community, the impacts of tourism and mass media, as well as changes of people’s everyday life in Yixing in today’s society. It seems to be an endless debate between modernity and tradition, between globalization and locality, between industrialization and handicraft, as well as between economy and culture.

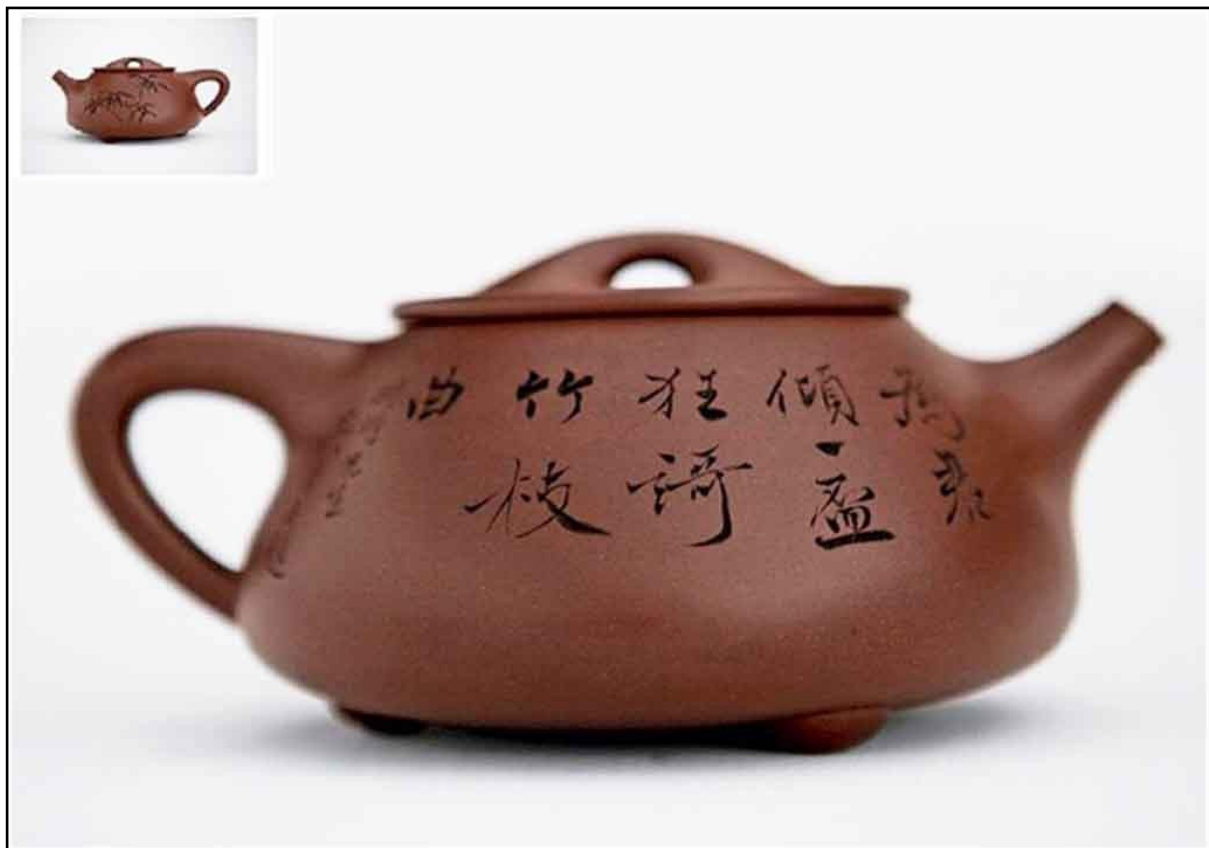
The May of 2010 tends to be an impressive month in Yixing *zisha* history. Firstly, *Xiangming Shipiao*, a teapot made by Gu Jinzhou and painted by Wu Hufan, was bid at the price of 12.32 million RMB (2.05 million CAD) in China Guardian Auction on May 16th

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<sup>24</sup> Ateatime. 2012. “The Dragon Kiln.” <http://www.ateatime.com/the-dragon-kiln/>. Consulted August 20, 2013.

(Figure 27). It is an exciting news to the whole *zisha* industry and *zisha* market. However, CCTV reported the quality problem of Midea *zisha* electronic pot, and questioned the quality of *zisha* clay and Yixing *zisha* pottery in the market at the end of May. This report poses a threat to customers' trust on *zisha* pottery, *zisha* potters and *zisha* market, and has detrimental influences upon the national brand of Yixing *zisha* pottery. Overnight, Yixing *zisha* pottery became chemical and toxic in many audiences' minds.

**Figure 27: Xiangming Shipiao Teapot Made by Gu Jinzhou and Wu Hufan**



Many *zisha* masters worked together to dispel rumors. Xu Li points out it is common that some ceramics additives are added during the manufactory processes of *zisha* clay in order to guarantee the quality of final *zisha* product, and also the category and amount of additives meet national standards. After firing under high temperature, final *zisha* products are safe and nontoxic. However, some *zisha* masters also admit there are also minor

undesirable people who sell shoddy *zisha* pottery with substandard material, like clay with over amount of additives or bad quality of additives, going contrary to national safety standards.

With the rapid growth of market demand in Yixing *zisha* pottery, more and more potters appears, while *zisha* clay as a rare form of clay cannot satisfy the demand. The supply and quality of *zisha* clay become an issue. After liberation, the mines of *zisha* clay belonged to the state, and the Ceramics Material Factory was founded in 1956 to exploit *zisha* clay reasonably. However, because the factory ran into debt for various reasons, many mines were shut down. Since then, violent exploitation takes place, creating tension and conflicts between environment and development. It is unwarranted behavior at the expense of sustainable development, leading to today's disordered market.

The Yixing local government is intensely aware of the importance of *zisha* pottery and *zisha* clay to Yixing and even China. They have come up with various methods to solve this problem. First of all, a citywide campaign against problem clay began immediately in May, and factories manufacturing problem clay and stores selling problematic *zisha* pottery were shut down. Secondly, the government protects *zisha* mines from exploitation by building guard fences, hiring security guards and setting monitor cameras (Figure 28). Moreover, in the *Wuxi Yixing Zisha Protection Regulations*, it is illegal to exploit *zisha* mines without governmental permission. Thirdly, Yixing government has formed a group of *zisha* masters and specialist to consult advisable approaches to take use of *zisha* clay and regulate the *zisha* industry.



**Figure 28: Sign of Closed *Zisha* Mines Protected by Government**



I believe it is a consequent but crucial phenomenon in today's society under the impacts of modernity, especially for industries rely deeply on natural environment. Indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources should be condemned rather than condoned. The other side of development should not only be destroy. As someone from this kind of traditional culture, we should feel grateful for the gifts of nature. In term of Yixing *zisha* culture, I believe that the reader will come up with his or her own understanding and decision after experiencing and reflecting on the history and present situation of *zisha* industry.

Alfred Gell (1998) questions how today's anthropologists put an anthropological theory on the aesthetic or semiotic value of art, and also argues we should look at not only art itself but also social relationship around production, circulation and reception. As a time-honored material culture, Yixing *zisha* pottery are highly valued and appreciated by local people. For further research in the future, I plan to research the diversity of subjectivity as well as cultural consciousness among local communities regarding Yixing *zisha* pottery

culture, and also explore the social relationships of Yixing *zisha* culture and autonomy of local people in social transformation. What is more, I plan to focus on the future of *zisha* industry, and the problems raised as the result of the expansion of the *zisha* industry, and to propose methods to help *zisha* culture maintain its own traditions as well as to gain new meanings.

It seems to be difficult to indicate the future of *zisha* industry due to its rapid modernization. However, it does bring more possibilities, not only for *zisha* final products but also for the ways how people think, value and appreciate this pottery tradition. For all art and crafts, we should give priority to considering the ways to take advantage of tourism, mass media and new technology, to respect our own cultures, as well as to maintain and improve traditional techniques.

In the end, I want to point out that many arguments are based on my personal understanding and experience of *zisha* culture. I do hope to use my points to emphasize how a local sees the value and influences of *zisha* culture in tourism, mass media and technology under the impacts of modernity. This is also my way of showing my deep love of and respect for my hometown.

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