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Innovative Transformation of Guangxi Yao Ethnic Embroidery Patterns in Lacquerware Daily Goods

Yunduan Gao[1], Shuaihao Zhang[1*]

[1] Guangxi University for Nationalities, Nanning, China

Email Address

z2026146657@163.com (Shuaihao Zhang)
*Correspondence: z2026146657@163.com

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Abstract:

The protection of intangible cultural heritage is no longer confined to preserving traditional practices in their original form but requires creative revitalization. Therefore, this project integrates the embroidery patterns of the Yao ethnic group in Guangxi with lacquerware, decoding traditional cultural elements from the perspective of fine arts. It also acts as a translator, transforming these elements into artistic language, and as a practitioner, incorporating traditional culture into modern life. The concept of "decoding—transformation—embedding—generation" is proposed to achieve the characteristics of timeliness, artistry, and practicality in intangible cultural heritage works. This ensures their application and dissemination in modern life, generating economic and social benefits while inheriting and promoting ethnic traditional culture.

Keywords:

Yao Ethnic Embroidery, Lacquer Craftsmanship, College Students' Innovation and Entrepreneurship

1. Paradigm Shift: Contemporary Challenges in Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance and the Multidimensional Mission of Fine Arts Majors

In the global effort to preserve cultural diversity, China has implemented the "Two Creations" policy for intangible cultural heritage, revitalizing it in the new era. However, practices such as Yao ethnic weaving and embroidery [1][2][3][4][5][6] and lacquer art [7][8][9] still face challenges in integrating with contemporary trends and the aesthetic preferences of younger generations while maintaining their traditional character. Therefore, we must promote the "Min Qi Cheng Ju" brand across various social media platforms to raise awareness of our ethnic and lacquer cultures. (Figure 1, Figure 2)

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Figure 1. *Introduction to the project on Xiaohongshu.*

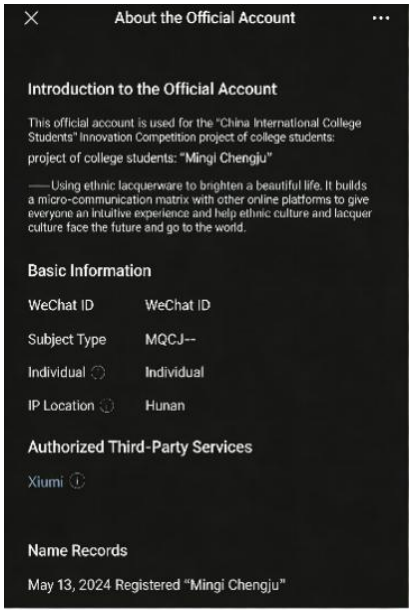

Figure 2. *Introduction to the official account of the project.*

1.1. Cultural Fracture and Memory Crisis

The weaving and embroidery patterns of the Yao ethnic group [1] [2] are the wordless history of the Yao ethnic group, as well as the life experience and wisdom of the Yao people. They are skills that require a long period of practice to learn, and this cultural inheritance has been greatly impacted in modern society.

In the fast-paced present, it is difficult for people to achieve the "slow work produces fine work" advocated in "Xiu Shi Lu", and it is also difficult to create the texture of ancient lacquerware. Therefore, the crisis between traditional lacquer art and modern lacquer art lies in the fact that both are detached from current life.

1.2. Cultural intermediary mission of art major

Art professionals can understand the meaning of these patterns, symbolize traditional culture, apply it to objects, connect the past with today, connect intangible cultural heritage with people's lives, and materialize our culture

2. Profound Description of the Essence: Two Aesthetic Systems of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Their Possible Dialogue

Only by deeply understanding and grasping the other party can true integration be achieved, which requires in-depth exploration and tracing from the perspectives of cultural semiotics, materials science, anthropology, and so on.

2.1. Yao ethnic weaving and embroidery patterns are visual expressions of cultural cognition system

Yao Tiaohua is a visual cognitive symbol with Yao ethnic characteristics, and is one of the identification symbols of the Yao people. Its symbolic features include (Table 1):

Table 1. *Semiotics Analysis Framework of Traditional Weaving and Embroidery Patterns of Yao Ethnic Group.*

Analysis dimension	Form of expression	Cultural connotation	Contemporary translation potential
Spatial structure	Two dimensional grid composition, latitude and longitude dot matrix system	Symbolizing the cosmic order of the three realms of heaven, earth, and man	Adapt to pixel art and modular design
Morphological grammar	Natural objects are geometrically transformed into basic shapes such as crosses and diamonds	Condense the concept of animism in all things	Provide modern design symbol resources
Color semantics	Blue, white, red, black, yellow five color arrangement with high contrast juxtaposition	Related to the worship of Panhu and the concept of the Five Elements	Enhancing the modern expression of color symbol
Narrative logic	Pattern combinations narrate myths, epics, and everyday life	Storing collective memory and constructing ethnic identity	Enrich product narrative and emotional experience

Yu Shijie stated, “The Yao people have a strong sense of identification with this pattern, and it can be said to be a cultural totem of the Yao people.” [1]

2.2. Contemporary transformation of traditional lacquer art: from craftsmanship to material philosophy

Chinese lacquer art is currently facing a collision between traditional craftsmanship and modern design. Lacquer artists are constantly experimenting with combining lacquer with other materials such as gold, silver, copper, silk, and cotton, allowing lacquer to interact with objects. Techniques like “application”, “polishing”, and “inlaying” are testimonies to time and materials. Lacquer art is no longer just something for people to admire and play with; it can also be a part of life, worn on the body, and used in daily life. Thus, the combination of lacquer art and weaving and embroidery culture becomes possible. (Figure 3)

Figure 3. *Finished product pre-design drawing.*

2.3. Theoretical Basis for Integration: Deep Resonance in Cross-Cultural Aesthetics

Meanwhile, the grid patterns of Yao embroidery and the inlaying techniques of lacquer art both embody the logic of mathematics. The five colors of Yao embroidery

can also be found in corresponding colors in lacquer art. Yao embroidery is two-dimensional, while lacquerware is three-dimensional, allowing people to touch and feel, transforming two-dimensional patterns into three-dimensional ones.

3. System Construction: An Innovative Path of Cultural Translation Driven by Artistic Specialty

Therefore, the most crucial aspect of art majors in the innovation of intangible cultural heritage is how to effectively transform it, from culture to design and then to life, utilizing a systematic transformation method.

3.1. Fourth-order translation model: A complete chain from cultural resources to lifestyle products (Table 2)

Table 2. *Four-stage Translation Model of Yao Weaving and Embroidery Patterns in Lacquer Art Design.*

Translation phase	Core mission	Theoretical tools and methodology	Specific practical cases
Decoding Cultural Genes	Extract core symbols and analyze cultural significance	Semeiotic deconstruction, fieldwork	Establish a digital gene library of Yao embroidery patterns and analyze the geometric structure of the King Pan seal
Translation of visual grammar	Translate into modern design language	Plane composition, parametric design	Simplify the dragon and dog pattern into a vector graphic, and simulate the texture of embroidery threads using lacquer art and shikiri painting
Product placement in life scenarios	Integrate into contemporary usage scenarios	User experience design, emotional design	Develop lacquerware daily necessities to bridge the gap between intangible cultural heritage and everyday life
Value Ecological Cycle	Build a sustainable inheritance system	Social design, brand building	Establish a collaborative network of “craftsman workshops + design colleges + e-commerce platforms”

3.2. In-depth Practice of Narrative Translation

Telling compelling stories is a new expectation for design in today's society. In art majors, lacquer products can be narrated from different perspectives, endowing them with new meanings, and making them the key to awakening people's beautiful memories.

3.3. Creative dialogue in material language

Material innovation is the key to cultural translation.

Firstly, material. The texture of Yao embroidery is conveyed through "material". For instance, the texture of lacquer art, such as linen and powder application, is tangible, just like the warp and weft threads of Yao embroidery.

Secondly, in terms of color, the color characteristics of lacquerware materials are utilized for transformation. For example, vermilion, titanium dioxide, and mother-of-pearl are used to replace the five colors in Yao embroidery, and the meaning of the original colors is reflected in the work

Thirdly, in terms of craftsmanship, the techniques of "Zhangxiu" (a decorative technique in lacquerware) and "Jinyin Pingtuo" (a decorative technique in lacquerware featuring gold and silver embossing) are employed to embody the rugged and ancient characteristics of Yao embroidery.

3.4. Empowerment and Transcendence of Digital Technology

In addition to enhancing efficiency, digital technology can also present and disseminate Yao embroidery in a novel way. For instance, Yao embroidery patterns can be digitally captured using scanners, 3D modeling, and other methods, and then deconstructed and recombined using digital technology to create new patterns that embody Yao cultural characteristics while maintaining a fashionable feel.

AR scans the patterns on lacquerware, watches the animated stories of creation myths, and enters the secret realm of the Yao people's mountain forests through VR for an immersive experience. Combined with CNC precision carving machines and digital printing, it ensures that craftsmen can operate with ease, balancing tradition and mass production.

3.5. Collaborative construction of industry-university-research ecosystem

The protection of intangible cultural heritage requires collaboration from multiple parties to build a sustainable ecosystem.

Universities can establish innovation laboratories for intangible cultural heritage, conducting theoretical research, talent training, and exploring innovative prototypes, such as the Key Laboratory of Traditional Crafts and Materials Research at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

At the community level, we can adopt the approach of "intangible cultural heritage + design" by establishing an intangible cultural heritage workshop within the Yao village. We can invite designers to visit the Yao village and collaborate with the inheritors in design, ensuring that the design works are innovative yet retain ethnic characteristics.

From the perspective of the brand, lacquer art products with high value and practicality can be developed to create a brand effect; from the perspective of users, workshops can be held and crowdfunding can be initiated to attract users to participate in design creation, realizing the idea of social innovation advocated by Teacher Ji Tie.

4. Value Reconstruction: Multidimensional Exploration of Art as a Hub for Cultural Innovation

The combination of weaving and embroidery with lacquer art of the Yao ethnic group in Guangxi reflects the role of art.

At the level of cultural inheritance, for the intangible cultural heritage of the Yao ethnic group, we can turn these "dead" things into "living" things through creation and design, integrate them into our lives, and allow us to feel, touch, and use them.

At the aesthetic expression level, the beauty of Yao embroidery in the field of fine arts is showcased through aesthetic education. The aesthetic education of Yao embroidery is global in scope, and the aesthetic education in fine arts reflects this globality through its national characteristics. Conversely, the aesthetic education of Yao embroidery manifests its globality through its ethnic characteristics. Furthermore, the beauty of Yao embroidery in fine arts is embodied by the beauty of lacquer art, and the beauty of Yao embroidery is also the beauty of lacquer art.

At the sociocultural level, the project has fostered collaborations across different age groups and fields, jointly generating economic income for the local area and deepening the local people's identification with their own culture.

In terms of socio-economic development, from a product perspective, we aim to assist local artisans in producing diverse product types to sustain themselves. We also provide introductory design education to locals, making them aware of the value of design and enhancing their aesthetic appreciation and self-confidence.

5. Looking Ahead: Long-term Planning for Building an Innovative Ecosystem for Intangible Cultural Heritage

With the goal of building a strong cultural nation by 2035, we must carry out innovative transformation of intangible cultural heritage and make good top-level design.

Firstly, it demonstrates the necessity of innovation in intangible cultural heritage, highlights the significance of such innovation, evaluates its effects, and provides a theoretical basis for intangible cultural heritage innovation.

Secondly, strengthen technological innovation, develop intelligent equipment and environmentally friendly materials suitable for the innovation of intangible cultural heritage, and reduce the burden on intangible cultural heritage inheritors in traditional craftsmanship production. Thirdly, enhance supporting infrastructure, improve hardware and software facilities for the innovative development of intangible cultural heritage, and strengthen intellectual property protection. Fourthly, strengthen external exchanges, and utilize innovative products of intangible cultural heritage to promote our traditional culture.

6. Conclusions

The innovative design of "intangible cultural heritage" is not for the sake of painting, but to inherit ethnic culture through one's own works and embody a sense of responsibility. How to integrate the elements of the Yao ethnic group into modern design is not just about cross-disciplinary artifacts of intangible cultural heritage, but also about culture. It's about finding a balance between globalization and localization, finding one's own roots, and revitalizing ethnic traditions.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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