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Cultural Interweaving on the Silk Road: An Artistic Exploration of the Intangible Cultural Heritage - Shu Embroidery

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the development of Shu brocade and Shu embroidery in silk civilization and their cross-border application in modern design. First of all, through literature review, the development history of Shu brocade and Shu embroidery and their important role in the spread of the Silk Road are sorted out. Secondly, the cultural characteristics of Shu embroidery and its inheritance value as intangible cultural heritage are studied and analyzed, and the main themes of Shu embroidery art are detailed, including vivid flower and bird patterns, magnificent landscape patterns and realistic figure patterns. In addition, the research focuses on the application of Shu embroidery in modern fashion design and packaging design, and reveals its innovation and development through specific case analysis. The discussion part discusses the methods of optimizing the artistic theme and product structure of Shu embroidery, the strategy of accelerating the spread by using new media, and the mode of online and offline digital cooperation. The research conclusion summarizes the inheritance and innovation path of Shu embroidery art in modern society, and puts forward some suggestions for its future development.

Introduction

China traditional culture is an important part, and its protection and development are in a critical period. In this context, we must clear our thinking and find the correct development direction. In the process of inheritance and development, we should adhere to a correct and scientific attitude and actively explore inheritance and innovation. Only in this way can we carry forward China's excellent traditional civilization, promote rural revitalization and accelerate the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Strengthen the inheritance and innovation of intangible cultural heritage, dig deep into its market and cultural connotation, and promote the development of China's cultural industry. Building a rural economy with China characteristics is a new task in the new period. Drawing lessons from overseas rural development experience, this paper tries to find the core of cultural construction in rural areas

of China, so as to realize the inheritance and innovation of intangible cultural heritage under the background of "cultural self-confidence".

Literature review

Shu Brocade and Shu Embroidery: Pinnacles of Shu Silk Civilization Development

Through the study of the relationship between the Silk Road and Shu Embroidery, it can be concluded that Shu Brocade and Shu Embroidery represent the highly developed culture of Shu silk. Shu Brocade is one of the most precious fabrics in Chinese history, renowned for its exquisite craftsmanship and outstanding quality. Distinguished in ancient Chinese textile art, Shu Brocade exhibits unique colors, exquisite patterns, and fluid lines. Shu Embroidery, a handcraft involving silk thread embroidery on silk fabric, boasts a long history and profound cultural heritage. As one of China's four famous embroideries, Shu Embroidery is an integral part of traditional Chinese culture, esteemed for its exquisite craftsmanship, rich content, and distinctive personality. The flourishing development of Shu Brocade and Shu Embroidery not only showcases the inheritance and development of the silk industry in the Shu region but also reflects the integration of trade and culture between nations. Their glorious history and unique styles not only promote cultural exchange along the Silk Road but also exert significant influence on the fine arts and culture of other countries. This project plans to delve into the two typical traditional crafts from the perspective of Shu regional traditional skills, exploring their unique charm and influence, promoting the inheritance and innovation of Shu Embroidery, and facilitating international cultural exchange and cooperation.

The Silk Road: An Important Carrier for Shu Embroidery Dissemination

The Silk Road served as a vital link for ancient Sino-Western cultural exchanges and was also one of the main avenues for the dissemination of traditional Chinese culture and embroidery art. Shu Embroidery, an ancient embroidery technique, was widely spread globally through trade and cultural exchanges along the Silk Road. The prosperity of the Silk Road created favorable conditions for the international dissemination of Shu Embroidery. With the development of the Silk Road, inland regions of China experienced widespread inheritance and development, spreading to Central Asia, South Asia, West Asia, and Europe. Trade along the ancient Silk Road was not merely about the exchange of goods but also included cultural exchanges. As the Silk Road advanced, Chinese Shu Embroidery also stepped onto the world stage, playing a role in promoting exchanges between East and West. The exchanges and conflicts between different ethnic groups along the Silk Road also provide us with new creative directions and development. Through the Silk Road, Shu Embroidery gained broader influence, promoting integration and exchange with other ethnic groups, making national cultures more diverse, and playing a positive role in the progress of human civilization.

Conceptual Framework

Modern design

Modern design encompasses a design ethos characterized by innovation, functionality, and simplicity within the contemporary societal context. It emphasizes forward-thinking approaches, integrating technology, environmental considerations, and societal needs to create products, architecture, and user experiences that reflect the spirit of the times and enhance quality of life.

Shu Embroidery Art

Shu embroidery art, originating from the Sichuan region of China, embodies intricate craftsmanship and cultural significance. Renowned for its delicate stitching techniques and vibrant color palette, Shu embroidery art depicts a rich tapestry of flora, fauna, and landscapes, reflecting the region's natural beauty and historical heritage.

Visual Communication

Visual communication refers to the conveyance of ideas, information, and messages through visual elements such as images, symbols, and typography. It encompasses various mediums including graphic design, photography, and videography, aiming to effectively communicate concepts, evoke emotions, and engage audiences visually. Visual communication plays a vital role in marketing, advertising, education, and multimedia content creation.

Research Objectives

(1) Explore the historical position and cultural significance of Shu embroidery in the Silk Road communication, and deeply explore its importance as a representative of Shu silk civilization, so as to deepen the understanding of the history of the Silk Road and Shu embroidery art.

(2) The research aims to analyze the characteristics and cross-border application of Shu embroidery art, reveal its development trend in the field of contemporary fashion design and packaging, and provide theoretical and practical support for the inheritance and innovation of Shu embroidery.

Research Methodology

In this study, literature method is widely used to comprehensively understand and analyze the development of Shu brocade and Shu embroidery and their position in silk civilization. By consulting a large number of historical documents and academic research, researchers can systematically sort out the inheritance value and cultural characteristics of Shu embroidery as an intangible cultural heritage. At the same time, the literature method is also used to explore the cross-border application of Shu embroidery art in modern fashion design and packaging design, providing theoretical basis and example support.

In this study, the case analysis method is used to deeply discuss the cross-border application of Shu embroidery art in modern fashion design and packaging design. Through the analysis of specific cases, researchers can learn more about the practical application and effects of Shu embroidery in these fields, thus revealing its innovation and development in contemporary design.

Results

Cultural Features of Shu Embroidery and Its Intangible Cultural Heritage Transmission Value

Cultural Features of Shu Embroidery

Shu Embroidery is one of China's traditional embroidery arts with a long history. Utilizing materials such as needles, threads, and fabric, it employs exquisite embroidery techniques to create various patterns and designs on cloth. Influenced by local culture, customs, and artistic aesthetics, Shu Embroidery possesses unique skills and cultural value. It encompasses a wide

variety of patterns, not only with high technical content but also with significant aesthetic value. Shu Embroidery patterns consist of two types: independent patterns and continuous patterns, which can be paired with garment patterns. Symmetrical patterns such as butterflies and bats were common in early Shu Embroidery, characterized by stability and balance, often used for the chest and shoulders of clothing. As research deepened, more asymmetrical patterns emerged, such as flowers and animals, which are vivid and lively, often used for the bottom of garments. Continuous patterns such as edges and quadrangles are commonly used to decorate garment pieces, providing excellent decorative effects.

Transmission Value of Shu Embroidery as Intangible Cultural Heritage

Shu Embroidery features unique thematic content. With delicate embroidery stitches, diverse variations, vibrant colors, and lifelike patterns, it exhibits a high degree of three-dimensional effects. As one of the four famous embroideries in China, Shu Embroidery integrates traditional Chinese painting, calligraphy, poetry, and other artistic essences into embroidery art. It is typically based on traditional painting and calligraphy and innovates artistically, expressing emotions through means such as symbolism, metaphor, and metonymy, incorporating folk elements such as animals, plants, objects, architecture, text, and geometric forms, showcasing diverse types and rich connotations. Due to its historical continuity, rich cultural connotations, and diverse technical skills, Shu Embroidery must be studied from its developmental history and comprehensively investigated when assessing its comprehensive value. Although traditional handicrafts are traditional, they possess unique characteristics in modern society.

Themes of Shu Embroidery Art

Lifelike Flora and Fauna Patterns

Chengdu, Sichuan, is the birthplace of Shu Embroidery, where its animal patterns inherit traditional Chinese motifs while incorporating local characteristics, resulting in uniquely styled animal patterns. These patterns often feature traditional animals such as dragons, phoenixes, cranes, deer, fish, and insects, as well as unique local animals like giant pandas and golden monkeys. For instance, animal patterns convey blessings for life, such as the combination of magpies and plum blossoms symbolizing "joyful moments," and the elephant carrying a treasure vase with three spears inserted, representing "auspicious peace." In auspicious patterns, a cheerful spider is added, symbolizing "joy descending from heaven." A representative folk theme, "Lotus Carp," with 32 vividly embroidered carp, showcases a variety of lifelike poses. The embroidery technique is delicate and precise, capturing distant and nearby elements realistically, with flexible and lifelike textures, creating a vibrant and lively artwork.

Majestic Landscape Patterns

Scenic patterns in Shu Embroidery are mostly derived from traditional Chinese landscape paintings. Landscape painting was an important medium for ancient Chinese literati to express their thoughts and emotions, depicting their emotions and showcasing their life experiences and aspirations. Mount Emei, as depicted in ancient scrolls, embodies the cultural heritage of the nation. By integrating Shu Embroidery with landscape painting, the scenic patterns are endowed with dynamic colors. Utilizing various materials, the landscape patterns in Shu Embroidery exhibit unparalleled luster, bringing the embroidered scenes to life. Distant mountains are depicted with fine lines and colors, displaying their contours; flowing water

nearby is portrayed using textures to depict the movement of water ripples; villages with bridges and curling smoke convey the simple and natural beauty of rural life.

Cross-Border Application of Shu Embroidery Art

Application of Shu Embroidery in Modern Fashion Design

In today's fashion design, people pay more and more attention to fashion and personality in clothing. Shu Dance is a traditional art in China. It must be integrated with contemporary cultural factors, creative modeling, various combinations and various design elements, so as to better meet the aesthetic needs of contemporary people. The ancient dance art in China paid attention to the balance between the whole and the part in costume modeling, and seldom divided the patterns. Traditional China clothing is a flat organizational form. When embroidering patterns, too much emphasis on integrity may not be conducive to reflecting the human body shape.



Figure 1 Application of Shu Embroidery in Modern Fashion Design

In application, an incomplete structural composition method can be adopted, dispersing the overall embroidered pattern and flexibly arranging the scattered patterns on various parts of the clothing. Taking Figure 5.1 as an example, in the Mack Zheng 2022 collection, floral and bird embroidery patterns were designed and embroidered on smooth and shiny fabrics, appearing lifelike and injecting vitality into the clothing. When designing floral and bird embroidery patterns for clothing, the designer first decomposes the overall content into several small pieces, then disperses the original overall graphic and places each small piece on different parts of the clothing. Embedding embroidered patterns on suits creates a novel and avant-garde playful charm through contrast, resulting in strong visual effects and sensory experiences.

Shu Embroidery is divided into two main categories: heavy and light. Bold color choices and meticulous coordination are required to infuse contemporary vitality into embroidered flowers, adjusting and controlling the purity, brightness, and saturation of various colors. Even with the same color, layering is necessary to present a rich artistic aesthetic. Some renowned fashion brands often utilize color contrasts when using embroidery, such as the Armani Privé 2021 spring-summer collection, which cleverly integrates main colors like magenta, aqua, blush, and navy, embroidering flowers on fabrics and embellishing with pearls and sequins to showcase the delicacy of each style.



Figure 2 Application of Contrast Embroidery in Fashion Design

Application of Shu Embroidery in Modern Packaging Design

Shu Embroidery is renowned for its delicate and intricate needlework, characterized by smooth stitches, bright lines, extreme tension, dense but non- overlapping stitches, and sparse but concealed stitches, comprising twelve major categories and nearly a hundred varieties. In the production process, besides emphasizing aesthetics, attention is also paid to time. When selecting needles, they are required to be exquisite and easy to handle.

Figure 5.3 illustrates the embroidery process for internal packaging in Shu Embroidery. Figure 3(a) shows the embroidered pattern already drawn on the base material, Figure 3(b) displays the sewn product, and Figure 3(c) depicts the finished product. This exploration involves a tea cake with a total weight of 357 grams, with a diameter measured at 18 centimeters using a caliper. When making the inner bag, the size of the flower tray needs to be determined based on the specifications of the tea cake, generally slightly smaller than the tea cake's diameter, approximately around 16 centimeters. The embroidery pattern is first drawn with sulfuric acid paper and then transferred to the embroidery baseboard through a copying box. Subsequently, embroidery, tightening, and ironing are carried out at low temperatures. According to requirements, the work is cut into a circular shape with a diameter of 35 centimeters and tied with a rope to complete the process (see Figure 3).



(a) (b) (c)

绣制过程图



Figure 3 Embroidery Process Diagram

In the internal package of Shu embroidery, as shown in Figure 4. Fig. 4(a) shows an outer box sewn by the author himself, fig. 5(b) shows the finished outer box design, and fig. 4(c) shows the hanging process of the outer box. This product is embroidered on both sides, please use a white pen when copying to avoid staining the edge of the cloth. The technical requirements of double sewing needles are very high. In order to ensure the fineness and exquisiteness of embroidery, each needle should be embroidered with silk. In order to highlight its exquisiteness, the pattern size of embroidery is 12 cm. Because the double seam ventilation effect is better, it must be framed with transparent glass or plexiglass, and the size of the framed glass should be 19 cm. This is specially developed for tea cakes. In order to make full use of its internal space, it is made into a round shape. In order to facilitate taking and placing, the diameter of the round wooden box should be greater than 3 cm, that is, 21 cm. This product is not a one-time use, and the unique golden nanmu in Sichuan is selected as the main raw material. The circular box structure is relatively thick, with a thickness of 1.5 cm. The packaging focuses on the box, which is decorated with Shu embroidery, and both sides are beautiful (as shown in Figure 5). I have increased the thickness of the cover in the design of the box, so that the box can stand upright without any support, and the thickness of

the outermost edge of the box is 3.5 cm. When opened, the box cover can stand upright in the box to play a decorative role. This structure can be selected as required in practice. The material selected in this paper is precious nanmu, which is unique to Sichuan, which plays a very good role in the prevention and control of pests, and the wooden box also has certain air permeability, which has a very good role in promoting the aging of tea.

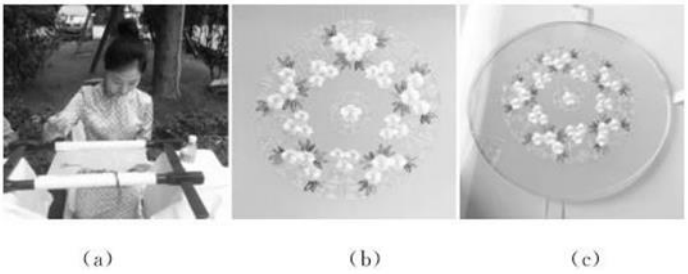


Figure 4 Embroidery process of outer packaging



Figure 5 Application of Shu Embroidery Technology in Tea Packaging

Conclusion

This study delves into the connection between the Silk Road and Shu embroidery, the artistic characteristics of Shu embroidery, and the inheritance and innovation of Shu embroidery art under the Silk Road. Firstly, the research points out that Chengdu, as the birthplace of silk civilization, has provided an important historical background and cultural foundation for the development of Shu embroidery. Secondly, Shu brocade and Shu embroidery represent the unique status and influence of the silk civilization in Shu region on the Silk Road. Further analysis shows that the Silk Road, as an important avenue for the spread of Shu embroidery, has promoted the interaction and integration of Shu embroidery with other cultures, enriching the cultural diversity worldwide. In addition, the study delves into the artistic characteristics of Shu embroidery, including vivid and lifelike animal and plant patterns,

majestic landscape patterns, and delicate and lifelike figure patterns, as well as innovative applications in modern clothing and packaging design.

Recommendations

Optimization of Themes and Product Structures

From the perspective of intangible cultural heritage protection, to promote the inheritance and development of Shu embroidery techniques, it is essential to deeply understand its development process, embroidery techniques, and other key elements.

Only in this way can we create new products that not only inherit traditional values but also meet the needs of the masses in a constantly changing market environment. Firstly, the theme of product development should be centered around the needs of the audience, targeting the younger generation. Shu embroidery enterprises can collaborate with design institutes to integrate local characteristics such as Bashu culture, scholarly culture, and culinary culture into their works, creating unique creativity. Traditional realism embroidery patterns can also be combined with popular film and television elements to create new visual effects and attract attention to Shu embroidery. In product design, it is necessary to clarify the needs of users at various levels, enhance the artistic beauty of high-end products, increase practicality, and increase the proportion of household items, educational toys, and other commodities to integrate them into daily life.

Utilizing New Media to Accelerate Dissemination

Utilize short videos to promote the active development of Shu embroidery. While preserving traditional culture and techniques, it is necessary to follow the trend of the times and actively explore ways to expand inheritance and popularization. In recent years, the rise of short video platforms such as TikTok has brought development opportunities to traditional industries, and some tourist attractions and intangible cultural heritage projects have also increased their exposure through this, re-attracting public attention. In order to promote Shu embroidery, these practices can be learned from. For example, inheritors and research units can set up Weibo accounts to disseminate Shu embroidery knowledge to the public through short videos, and use the influence of internet celebrities to livestream, thereby enhancing the influence of Shu embroidery. At the same time, embroidery products can be sold on short video platforms. Additionally, programs about Shu embroidery culture can be recorded on TikTok, inviting experts and scholars to participate in discussions to explore new directions for the active development of Shu embroidery.

Digital Collaboration for Online and Offline Sharing

Digitalization can effectively protect and restore Shu embroidery materials, promoting the conservation and development of Shu embroidery cultural heritage. There is a wide variety of preserved Shu embroidery materials, including embroidered pieces and traditional craftsmanship displays. To standardize the preservation of these materials, they need to be categorized, archived, and presented in digital format. Firstly, scanning of artwork data and re-colorization of faded artworks due to long-term preservation should be conducted to convert them into electronic versions. This will establish the "Shu Embroidery Digital Museum," integrating with the actual collection to enrich display forms. Secondly, through restoration of interview and teaching audio and video materials and the introduction of 3D holographic

projection, real and three- dimensional restoration of Shu embroidery art can be achieved, allowing viewers to more intuitively experience the charm of Shu embroidery art. These measures contribute to the organic integration of technology and folk culture of Shu embroidery.

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