

The Aesthetic and Spiritual Value of Jingxi Zhuang Brocade

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Abstract

Jingxi Zhuang brocade is a significant ethnic handicraft of the Zhuang people, known for its rich cultural connotations and historical value. As one of the "Four Great Brocades" in China, it has played an important role in the daily lives and traditions of the Zhuang people, particularly among women. However, the impact of modernization and globalization has led to a decline in its cultural transmission, endangering its survival.

This study adopts a combination of literature research and fieldwork to analyze the aesthetic and spiritual values of Jingxi Zhuang brocade from a female perspective. The research aims to explore the cultural characteristics, historical development, and the roles of women in the preservation and innovation of the brocade. The findings reveal that the aesthetics and spiritual significance of Jingxi Zhuang brocade are deeply intertwined with the lives of Zhuang women, who are central to its transmission and cultural value. Additionally, the study highlights the bidirectional relationship between the brocade's aesthetics and the development of Zhuang women, emphasizing its continued importance in contemporary society.

Keywords: Jingxi, Zhuang Brocade, Aesthetics, Spiritual Value, Women.

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Introduction

Jingxi City, located in the southwestern border region of Guangxi and administered by Baise City, is a culturally rich area predominantly populated by the Zhuang ethnic group, which makes up approximately 99.4% of the population. The city is renowned for its ethnic heritage, particularly the exquisite Jingxi Zhuang brocade. This traditional craft holds a significant place in Chinese textile history. During the Ming Dynasty, Zhuang brocade was listed as a rare tribute to the imperial court, reaching its peak during the Qing Dynasty. It is one of the "Four Great Brocades" of China, alongside the Shu, Yun, and Song brocades, and is the only one created by an ethnic minority group. Historically, Jingxi Zhuang brocade played a vital role along the ancient Silk Road, serving as a valuable trade commodity. To this day, it is regarded as a "living fossil" of Zhuang culture. In recognition of its cultural importance, the "Zhuang Brocade Weaving Technique" was included in the first batch of the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006, reflecting the craft's continued relevance and historical value.

Jingxi Zhuang brocade is more than just an artifact of cultural significance; it has played a profound role in the everyday lives of the Zhuang people, particularly in the context of weddings, where it is an essential part of the bridal dowry, symbolizing skill, virtue, and good fortune. Zhuang women have traditionally learned the art of brocade weaving from a young age, with the craft becoming deeply intertwined with their personal and social lives, shaping their growth, marriages, and family dynamics. The brocade not only serves as a testament to their craftsmanship but also reflects their intelligence, emotional depth, and aesthetic values.

However, modernization and globalization have had a severe impact on the cultural ecology of Jingxi Zhuang brocade, threatening its transmission and survival. The aesthetic and spiritual values that have traditionally been associated with the brocade are increasingly at risk of being lost. As younger generations shift away from traditional crafts, the brocade faces the crisis of losing its cultural heritage. Given these challenges, this study seeks to explore the cultural characteristics and historical development of Jingxi Zhuang brocade in depth. By analyzing its unique

aesthetic and spiritual values, this research aims to rejuvenate the craft, ensuring its continued relevance and promoting its transmission to future generations.

Objectives

1. To analyze the historical evolution and transmission of Jingxi Zhuang brocade, with a focus on its development, decline, and the role of women in preserving this cultural heritage.

2. To explore the aesthetic dimensions of Jingxi Zhuang brocade, including the natural materials, weaving techniques, and symbolic patterns that contribute to its artistic and cultural value.

3. To examine the spiritual significance of Jingxi Zhuang brocade, in relation to Zhuang women's marriage customs, primitive beliefs, and ethical norms.

Methods

This study employs a combination of literature research and field research to analyze the aesthetic and spiritual values of Jingxi Zhuang brocade from a female perspective.

Literature Research: A thorough review of existing literature on Zhuang brocade culture was conducted to establish a theoretical foundation. This involved analyzing previous studies on the historical evolution, cultural significance, and transmission methods of Zhuang brocade. The review helped identify gaps in research and guided the focus on female artisans' contributions and the symbolic meaning of the brocade patterns.

Field Research: Fieldwork was conducted in Jingxi City to collect primary data. This included visits to the Jingxi Cultural Center, Jingxi Zhuang Brocade Factory, and Jingxi Folk Zhuang Brocade Collection and Exhibition Hall—Jin Yuan. The researcher conducted interviews with female artisans, factory workers, and cultural experts to gain firsthand insights into the techniques, materials, and designs used in Zhuang brocade weaving. Data collection also included observation of the brocade production process and documentation of the challenges faced by contemporary artisans in preserving and transmitting their craft.

Through the combination of literature and field research, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical, aesthetic, and spiritual dimensions of Jingxi Zhuang brocade, highlighting its cultural value and the role of women in its preservation and innovation.

Results

1. The Historical Evolution of Jingxi Zhuang Brocade

1.1 The Development and Decline of Jingxi Zhuang Brocade

In Zhuang language, Jingxi Zhuang brocade is called "kjabp (盖住, cover) faz (天, sky)," which literally means "the cover of the sky" and is interpreted as "the sky quilt" (Qian, 2014). According to legends, including "Bao Sang and Qiao Ni," "Da Wang," and "A Piece of Zhuang Brocade," the first weaver of Zhuang brocade was a woman. Jingxi Zhuang brocade originated from the five-colored hemp cloth of the Han Dynasty and evolved from the simple "綵" and "練子" of the Song Dynasty. It became widely popular during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. During the Ming Dynasty, Zhuang brocade was listed as a tribute to the imperial court, and by the Qing Dynasty, it had become a daily necessity and accessory for the Zhuang people. Weaving brocade was a required skill for Zhuang girls, making it an indispensable part of dowries (Yang & Wei, 2021). In the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, Zhuang brocade declined. It was not until 1956, under the call of national ethnic policy, that the Jingxi Embroidery Society was established, later renamed the Zhuang Brocade Factory in 1960, focusing on producing various Zhuang brocade products. However, after the 1990s, Zhuang brocade went into a decline again due to competition with modern high-quality textiles in the market economy. Today, the situation of Jingxi Zhuang brocade continues to steadily deteriorate, facing a crisis of transmission.

1.2 The Transmission of Jingxi Zhuang Brocade Among Women

In a traditional agrarian society, Zhuang women in Jingxi have preserved and transmitted the art of Zhuang brocade through their unique transmission methods, allowing the craft to continue across centuries. The transmission of Zhuang brocade culture among Zhuang women occurs through two main methods: familial transmission and master-apprentice transmission.

Familial transmission primarily involves female relatives such as mothers, grandmothers, older sisters, and mothers-in-law. In modern times, the master-apprentice model has become the predominant method, with experienced artisans teaching their skills to apprentices. Today, the transmission of Zhuang weaving techniques in Jingxi mainly takes place in the Zhuang Brocade Factory, where the documented inheritors, spanning seven generations, are all women. The sixth-generation inheritor, Li Cunling, is a Guangxi Arts and Crafts Master and a national-level intangible cultural heritage representative inheritor, currently serving as the head of the Jingxi Zhuang Brocade Factory. Regardless of the method, women remain the primary bearers of Zhuang brocade culture (Table 1).

Table 1 Genealogy of Jingxi Zhuang Brocade Transmission

Gene ration	Name	Gen der	Birth time	Education al Level	Transmission Method	Year of Learning Craft	Residence Address
First Gener ation	Peng Xiulin	Fem ale	1904	Unknown	Master- Apprentice Transmission	Unknown	Xinjiang Town, Jingxi City
	Liu Jinglan	Fem ale	1916	Unknown	Master- Apprentice Transmission	Unknown	Xinjiang Town, Jingxi City
	Yan Qizhon g	Fem ale	1918	Unknown	Master- Apprentice Transmission	Unknown	Xinjiang Town, Jingxi City
Secon d Gener ation	Huang Xuefan g	Fem ale	1927	Unknown	Master- Apprentice Transmission	1953	Xinjiang Town, Jingxi City
	Huang Xuefen	Fem ale	1929	Unknown	Master- Apprentice Transmission	1955	Xinjiang Town, Jingxi City
Third	Huang	Fem	1945	Primary	Master-	1962	Xinjiang

Generation	Yueping	ale		School	Apprentice Transmission		Town, Jingxi City
Fourth Generation	Chen Ye	Fem ale	1948	Vocational College	Master- Apprentice Transmission	1969	Xinjiang Town, Jingxi City
Fifth Generation	Chen Luzhen	Fem ale	1957	Junior High School	Master- Apprentice Transmission	1975	Xinjiang Town, Jingxi City
	Yang Lihe	Fem ale	1959	Junior High School	Master- Apprentice Transmission	1978	Xinjiang Town, Jingxi City
Sixth Generation	Li Cunling	Fem ale	1967	Vocational Secondary School	Master- Apprentice Transmission	1987	Xinjiang Town, Jingxi City
Seventh Generation	Gu Ruijie	Fem ale	1973	High School	Master- Apprentice Transmission	1998	Xinjiang Town, Jingxi City
	Qin Huixian	Fem ale	1976	High School	Master- Apprentice Transmission	2002	Xinjiang Town, Jingxi City
	Feng Yuzhen	Fem ale	1978	High School	Master- Apprentice Transmission	1998	Xinjiang Town, Jingxi City

In the process of transmission, Zhuang women have innovated the tools, materials, and patterns used in weaving brocade. They have invented tools such as spinning wheels and shuttles and have utilized modern products to enhance weaving efficiency. They extract natural fibers and plant dyes from nature and continuously create and innovate Zhuang brocade patterns based on their life experiences,

expressing their emotions and recording Zhuang life. Therefore, women are the main innovators of Zhuang brocade culture.

Zhuang brocade woven by Zhuang women is typically used for everyday items such as clothing, quilt covers, bed sheets, and curtains. The patterns of Zhuang brocade not only reflect the historical memories and folk beliefs of the Zhuang people but also display unique aspects of female and ethnic culture. Thus, women are central to manifesting the cultural value of Zhuang brocade.

Currently, the production of Jingxi Zhuang brocade is primarily undertaken by middle-aged and elderly women, who generally have low educational levels. Young women are reluctant to learn the art of Zhuang brocade, and even when training opportunities are available, they often do not persist in learning. Many brocade artisans face the challenge of having no apprentices, and the craft is gradually becoming a means of livelihood rather than a fundamental skill. The living conditions and social status of inheritors have not significantly improved despite the growing fame of Zhuang brocade. They have low wages, and the long-term work of weaving is harmful to their health. Due to family opposition and life pressures, many find it difficult to continue in this industry. Additionally, in terms of practical function, Zhuang brocade has been superseded by more cost-effective modern textiles, which accelerated the loss of this craft.

2. The Bidirectional Shaping between Aesthetics of Jingxi Zhuang Brocade and the Growth of Zhuang Women

2.1 Women's Weaving Customs: The Natural Beauty of Materials

Under the traditional custom of "men farming and women weaving," Zhuang women in Jingxi infuse their emotions into the threads to create exquisite Zhuang brocade. The Zhuang region has abundant hemp resources, and the earliest weaving materials used by the Zhuang ancestors were ramie and hemp (Liang, 2000). Due to their coarseness, lower comfort, poor insulation, and complex processing, these materials were gradually replaced by cotton threads. During the Qing Dynasty, with the popularization of sericulture, Jingxi Zhuang brocade was woven with cotton threads for the warp and colorful velvet threads for the weft, without twisting the two types of threads. As silk threads were expensive, Zhuang women gradually

shifted to using coarse cotton yarns for weaving. The materials for Jingxi Zhuang brocade evolved from hemp threads, cotton threads to a blend of cotton and silk threads, and eventually to coarse cotton yarns.

Additionally, Zhuang brocade dyes are primarily plant-based, with a few mineral and animal dyes. The Zhuang people have long used plant dyes and are among the earliest ethnic groups in China to master plant dyeing techniques (Wu, 2014). The plant dyes used in Jingxi Zhuang brocade include turmeric, indigo, madder, purple gromwell, safflower, and sappanwood, which produce a range of colors such as red, blue, and purple. Mineral dyes include ochre and azurite, while animal dyes including lac and cochineal, are also used. Plant dyes are not only environmentally friendly and harmless to the skin but also durable. Many of them are common traditional Chinese medicinal materials, as they have certain health benefits. For instance, indigo has antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties, turmeric detoxifies and reduces swelling, and safflower promotes blood circulation and relieves menstrual pain. These natural fibers and dyes, skillfully processed by Zhuang women, create the exquisite Zhuang brocade infused with natural aesthetics.

2.2 Women's Needlework Skills: The Ingenious Beauty of Craftmanship

Jingxi Zhuang brocade was once an essential "female embroidery" skill for Zhuang women, characterized by its complex and meticulous weaving process. The primary tools used include looms and scissors. The weaving process involves ten steps: designing the pattern, spinning the thread, sizing the thread, twisting the thread, threading, preparing the warp, combing and rolling the warp, setting up the loom, creating the flower pattern, and finally weaving the brocade. The core technique is the creation of the flower pattern, which directly affects the beauty of the brocade. Flower patterns include motifs such as chrysanthemums, sun, and "Wan" (swastikas). Before weaving, artisans must create the flower pattern based on design sketches, a process that is both technically demanding and time-consuming. Each pattern has a specific name corresponding to the final design, and many weavers opt to use pre-made patterns to ensure accurate replication due to the difficulty of creating patterns manually.

2.3 Women's Creativity: The Beauty of Simplicity in Patterns and Symbolism

Jingxi Zhuang brocade features a wide range of patterns, mainly including six categories: geometric patterns, celestial patterns, plant patterns, animal patterns, text patterns, and daily life scene patterns. Each pattern carries specific meanings and is rich in symbolic beauty.

Zhuang women extract elements observed in their daily lives and production and combine them with their rich imagination and ingenious design. Through abstract and simplified expression techniques, they create Zhuang brocade patterns marked by their unique beauty of simplicity. The characteristics include the following aspects:

Abstract Geometric Shapes: Due to the limitations of weaving techniques, Jingxi Zhuang brocade rarely features winding curves, primarily consisting of abstract geometric shapes with geometric characteristics. Geometric patterns in Zhuang brocade have symbolic traits and are attributed with multiple meanings and cultural connotations. Their simplicity and regularity stimulate people's thought and imagination (Figure 1).



Figure 1 Weaving Pattern

Source: (By researcher, 2023)

Continuous Composition: Jingxi Zhuang brocade utilizes a continuous composition, creating a sense of infinite extension. This method generates a visually

flowing and rhythmic beauty, characterized by continuity. The continuous symbolic elements reflect Zhuang women's exploration of life's origins and embody their aspirations for the endless vitality of humans (Figure 2).



Figure 2 Composite Geometric Designs

Source: (By researcher, 2023)

Rhetoric: Zhuang women use a variety of rhetorical devices to represent observed or imagined elements in symbolic graphic forms, enhancing their expressiveness and emotional impact, thereby exhibiting distinctive artistic characteristics. The rhetoric of metaphors in Zhuang brocade uses symbolic elements or scenes from nature to convey different spiritual values, reflecting the emotional desires of Zhuang women. For instance, floral motifs may symbolize female virtues, such as chrysanthemums representing steadfast character. Additionally, Zhuang women often use homophones to express personal preferences and taboos. They weave patterns that best represent beauty into the brocade to embody their emotions. For example, the “bat” pattern, with “bat” (fu) sounding like “fortune” (fu) in Chinese (Figure 3), symbolizes wishes for good luck and prosperity. Similarly, the “fish” pattern, with “fish” (yu) sounding like “surplus,” (fu) signifies wishes for abundance and a bountiful harvest.



Figure 3 Bat pattern

Source: (By researcher, 2023)

2.4 Women's Emotions: The Beauty of Completeness in Design

Zhuang brocade is a folk art with emotional and aesthetic significance, reflecting the rich aesthetic sentiments of the Zhuang people (Kang, 2017). When creating Zhuang brocade patterns, Zhuang women emphasize the use of even numbers, often arranging them symmetrically. Examples include double fish, paired doves, two bats ascending to the sky, double happiness, two horses galloping, and two oxen calling for plowing, which all convey harmony, perfection, and good fortune. Influenced by the philosophy of yin and yang, even numbers in brocade patterns are considered auspicious, reflecting a strong consciousness of fertility and reproduction worship. fertility and life-reproduction awareness. This results in pattern rules with corresponding relationships and underlying themes of life and fertility. Thus, Jingxi Zhuang brocade patterns exhibit a sense of completeness in their aesthetic form (Figure 4).

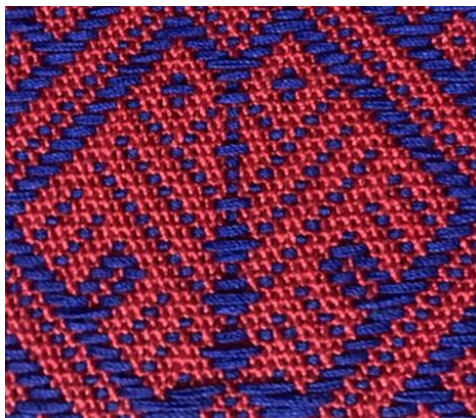


Figure 4 Double Fish Pattern

Source: (By researcher, 2023)

2.5 Women's Psychology: The Beauty of Vibrant Colors

Jingxi Zhuang brocade is a traditional craft deeply imbued with feminine characteristics. Its color palette is rich and diverse, predominantly featuring red, yellow, blue, green, purple, and black, with red being the most prevalent. This color scheme is closely related to local wedding customs. Zhuang brocade is an indispensable bridal item. Its bright colors create a vivid aesthetic impression and reflect the optimism, kindness, and industriousness of Zhuang women. Therefore, Jingxi Zhuang brocade possesses a vibrant and colorful beauty.

3. The Spiritual Value of Jingxi Zhuang Brocade and the Formation of Female Virtues

3.1 Zhuang Women's Marriage Expectations: Harmony Between Heaven and Humanity

Zhuang brocade plays a significant role in the marriage customs of the Zhuang people in Jingxi. Traditionally, it was used in wedding-related items such as quilts, blankets, tents, curtains, socks, boxes, pots, bowls, and cups. Over time, it evolved from being incorporated into carrying straps to a wider range of household items, including wall hangings, tablecloths, pillowcases, door curtains, window curtains, sofa cushions, seat cushions, and bed sheets (Feng, 2019). In old Jingxi, the

skill of weaving Zhuang brocade was regarded as a crucial criterion of a woman's dexterity. This not only helped them gain respect and attract the attention of prospective husbands but also directly affected their status after marriage. As a result, Zhuang women diligently practiced the art of Zhuang brocade from a young age to prepare their dowries meticulously.

When creating marriage-related items, Zhuang women often use thematic and totemic symbols to express their reverence for love and duality. This reflects a departure from traditional customs and marriage concepts, pursuing a romantic emotional expression. For example, the “butterfly and flower” motif is a vivid metaphor for romantic love between men and women, symbolizing companionship, enduring affection, and the ideal of harmony. Butterflies pollinating and collecting nectar from flowers in nature led Zhuang women to perceive, based on their emotional feelings, that there is a romantic relationship between butterflies and flowers. Zhuang women associate butterflies and flowers with a mystical and romantic union of men and women, expressing their yearning for beautiful love. Additionally, traditional Chinese patterns often use butterflies to symbolize talented individuals and flowers to represent beauty. The combination of butterflies and flowers perfectly captures the sweet and harmonious nature of love.

One of the most common dowry items is the “quilt of happiness” adorned with Zhuang brocade. The frog pattern in these quilts is inspired by Zhuang women's innovation and integration of natural symbolic elements, carrying rich and profound meanings.

Firstly, it contains a spiritual pursuit of favorable weather conditions. In Zhuang rice culture, frogs are considered daughters of the thunder god. By worshipping frogs, the Zhuang people pray for rain to ensure agricultural abundance. This motif reflects a desire for harmony and prosperity with nature.

Secondly, the frog pattern embodies a desire for fertility and reproduction. The shape of a frog's belly resembles a pregnant woman's abdomen, and the frog's mouth resembles the female genitalia.

Additionally, the homophonic relationship between “frog” and “child” in Zhuang (both pronounced “wa”) signifies offspring. Thus, the frog motif on the

blanket of happiness conveys the hope of having offspring in the near future. Through these natural elements which are rich in symbolism, the frog pattern in Zhuang brocade quilts reflects Zhuang women's respect for nature and their spiritual pursuit of harmonious coexistence within their marriage. This motif not only beautifies wedding items but also profoundly expresses the spiritual value of unity between heaven and humanity.

3.2 Zhuang Women's Primitive Worship: Balance of Yin and Yang

The rice cultivation culture and mythological legends of the Jingxi Zhuang people form the basis of their primitive worship of animals. In Zhuang brocade patterns, there are numerous hidden symbols representing the source of life and femininity, reflecting philosophical concepts of life and fertility worship. For example, in ancient times, diamond and fish patterns symbolize female genitalia. The various patterns on brocade straps are closely related to the Zhuang people's reverence for flowers, which originates from their veneration of the goddess of creation, Muliujia. These floral patterns, resembling female genitalia, carry profound meanings of fertility worship.

The frog pattern in Zhuang brocade is imbued with Yin-Yang philosophy. Frogs, known for their strong reproductive capabilities, are typical symbols of femininity. This symbolism is deeply rooted in the Jingxi Zhuang culture's fertility worship and directly reflects a reverence for women. The frog, as a natural element, is personified as an ethnic symbol representing feminine aesthetic consciousness. The "frog" symbol metaphorically conveys the relationship between the frog's image and female qualities, expressing a rich symbolism of femininity.

The saying "In ten pieces of Zhuang brocade, nine feature phoenixes, as if the phoenix emerged from the brocade itself." demonstrates the Zhuang people's admiration for the phoenix totem. According to legend, the phoenix, with its extraordinary longevity, is an ancient female divine beast, representing supreme authority rule and the ideal of female virtue. Consequently, Zhuang women from Jingxi revere the phoenix for its good fortune and moral excellence, resulting in the idea of "wishing one's daughter to become a phoenix," among Zhuang families. This

phrase has spread from the Zhuang people to other ethnic groups in China, becoming a cherished aspiration for raising girls.

From a symbolic perspective, the phoenix pattern in Zhuang brocade is abstract and simple. It has three facets of meanings:

Dispelling Disasters and Encouraging Fertility: Commonly found on quilt covers or brocade straps, representing spiritual pursuits of safety, happiness, freedom, and harmony through cultural and spiritual aesthetics. The phoenix pattern is also used in ceremonial clothing as a talisman to ward off evil spirits.

Love and Marital Harmony: Often paired with dragon patterns on wedding items, forming the "dragon and phoenix of auspiciousness" design. The dragon typically symbolizes virility, while the phoenix represents the beauty of femininity. The combination symbolizes good fortune and the hope of having offspring in the near future.

Nobility and Splendor: During the Ming Dynasty's Emperor Wanli reign, Zhuang brocade with dragon and phoenix patterns was highly esteemed, symbolizing imperial power and often used as tribute items. The dragon and phoenix patterns in Zhuang brocade are expressions of primitive worship and reflect the spiritual value of Yin-Yang harmony.

3.3 Zhuang Women's Folk Beliefs: Harmony of Beauty and Virtue

Traditional folk beliefs are the source of Zhuang brocade patterns, with the patterns serving as the materialization of these beliefs (Wang, 2023). The flower patterns in Jingxi Zhuang brocade are particularly diverse, including designs such as chrysanthemum, plum blossom, kapok, hibiscus, peach blossom, osmanthus, and multiflora rose. Influenced by primitive animism, the Zhuang people regard the flower goddess as the deity responsible for marriage and childbirth.

The goddess is believed to grant children to families by sending flowers, with red flowers and white flowers signifying girls and boys, respectively. Therefore, the Zhuang people in Jingxi celebrate the Flower Goddess Festival. (Ma, 2007). Zhuang women, with their deep affection for flowers, weave various floral designs into their brocade, using flowers as the main motif to express their reverence and gratitude to the flower goddess, hoping for her protection and blessings.

The flower patterns on Zhuang brocade not only pursue visual beauty but also incorporate rich meanings. For example, the chrysanthemum pattern, one of the "Four Gentlemen" flowers in Chinese symbolism, carries two main meanings:

Longevity and Good Fortune: Chrysanthemums are commonly used in festive occasions such as housewarming, childbirth, and weddings, reflecting the Zhuang people's pursuit of a happy and prosperous life.

Fortitude and Purity: Women use this pattern to express their own virtues and moral integrity.

Thus, the floral patterns on Zhuang brocade, through their unique designs and meanings, deeply reflect the Zhuang women's reverence for the flower goddess and embody the spirit of the harmony between beauty and virtue.

3.4 Zhuang Women's Ethnic Identity: Harmony and Unity

Jingxi Zhuang brocade profoundly reflects the ethnic identity of Zhuang women, primarily through aspects of cultural heritage, identity markers, emotional bonds, and cultural exchange. For example, the sun motif, which is prominent in Jingxi Zhuang brocade, carries a deep historical and cultural significance and shows notable stability throughout its transmission. This stability not only represents the continuity of traditional culture but also strengthens cohesion and cultural identity within the ethnic group.

The sun motif symbolizes light, life, and prosperity. For Zhuang women, this pattern not only helps them establish self-identity within their community but also manifests their cultural identity to the outside world. By incorporating the sun motif into Zhuang brocade, Zhuang women express their deep affection for their ethnic culture and their sense of belonging. This also allows them to present the essence and values of Zhuang culture to others. Therefore, the meaning and graphic elements of the sun motif, with their profound cultural connotations, encapsulate the pursuit of harmonious coexistence and unity.

3.5 Zhuang Women's Ethical Norms and Moral Education of Zhuang Women: Virtue Conveyed through Art

Zhuang women integrate their understanding of ethics into the designs of Zhuang brocade, making the brocade not only a reflection of the weaver's moral

values, aesthetic preferences, and moral identity but also a guide and constraint on the ethical norms and education of its users. For example, the “Wan” (swastika) pattern in Jingxi Zhuang brocade is more than just a decorative motif as it embodies the ethical norms and moral teachings of Zhuang women.

This pattern, inspired by the shape of a snake, symbolizes the continuity of prosperity and fertility worship. Its origin is associated with an abstract representation of the solar halo, signifying the prosperity of life. In Tibetan Buddhism, the “Wan” represents auspiciousness and happiness. When used in wedding quilt covers, the combination of the “Wan” and chrysanthemum patterns expresses wishes for a good life and fertility, reflecting respect for and the continuation of traditional ethics. Thus, the “Wan” pattern not only decorates wedding items but also conveys the importance of family happiness and moral norms, embodying the principle of “virtue conveyed through art.”

Discussion

Compared to other studies, this research delves deeply into the aesthetic and spiritual values of Jingxi Zhuang brocade from a female perspective, focusing on the following two aspects:

The Relationship Between Jingxi Zhuang Brocade and Women: This study highlights that women are both the inheritors and creators of Jingxi Zhuang brocade. The brocade not only accompanies women throughout their growth but also shapes their unique qualities.

Characteristics and Cultural Connotations of Jingxi Zhuang Brocade Patterns: This research identifies the main characteristics of Jingxi Zhuang brocade patterns, including their geometric abstraction, continuity, artistic expression, and stability. It deciphers the cultural connotations, including marriage expectations, primitive worship, folk beliefs, ethnic identity, and ethical norms, associated with these patterns.

Conclusions

In summary, Jingxi Zhuang brocade boasts a long history, originating in the Han Dynasty, developing in the Song Dynasty and flourishing during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Through an in-depth study of Jingxi Zhuang brocade, this research reveals the central role of Zhuang women in both the preservation and innovation of the brocade. The aesthetics of Jingxi Zhuang brocade encompass the beauty of nature, exquisite craftsmanship, simplicity, symbolism, completeness, and vibrant colors. Its spiritual values comprise the harmony between heaven and humanity, the balance of yin and yang, the harmony between virtue and beauty, harmonious coexistence, and the integration of moral teachings into art. These aesthetic and spiritual values complement each other, epitomizing the artistic achievements and cultural depth of the Zhuang people.

Recommendations

Explore the Specific Meanings of Jingxi Zhuang Brocade Patterns: It is advisable to conduct a detailed investigation into the specific meanings of Jingxi Zhuang brocade patterns and create a “genetic map” of these patterns to reveal their cultural significance. This would help in understanding and documenting the intricate cultural connotations embedded in each design.

Strengthen Support for Brocade Preservation and Transmission: To address the challenges in the transmission of brocade techniques, it is recommended to enhance policy support for its preservation and transmission. This includes fostering the transmission of skills, supporting master artisans, and safeguarding traditional craft projects to ensure the continuation of this cultural heritage.

Utilize Digital Technology for Preservation and Promotion: To facilitate broader dissemination and education outreach about Jingxi Zhuang brocade in modern society, it is recommended to leverage digital technology for its preservation and presentation. This could involve creating digital archives, virtual exhibitions, and interactive platforms to showcase the brocade and its significance to a wider audience.

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