

Case Study of Taizhou's "Cultural Name Card" from the Perspective of Harmonious Culture——Taking the Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage of Tai Silk as an Example

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Abstract: As an important value component of Chinese culture, the culture of harmony refers to the harmonious unity of different nature, society and civilization, and the sum of new things that emerge from this dynamic process. Inclusiveness and innovation are the two important characteristics of the culture of harmony. The development process of the provincial intangible cultural heritage "Tai Silk" is based on the traditional embroidery art, integrating modern ideas and techniques, and constantly accommodating and innovating, producing embroidery products with distinctive traditional cultural characteristics and strong fashionable qualities, fully reflecting the penetration and influence of the culture of harmony. Based on the perspective of Chinese Harmonious Culture, this paper focuses on the inclusive and innovative characteristics of "Tai Silk" from three aspects: East and West, ancient and modern, and elegant and vulgar.

Keywords: Harmonious Culture, Tai Silk, Inclusiveness, Innovation

1. Introduction

As an important value component of Chinese culture, "Harmonious Culture" is the essence of the humanistic spirit of Chinese culture. "Harmony" refers to fusion, combination, cooperation. The "harmony" linkage refers to the conflict, integration, harmonization and unification among different nature, society and civilization, as well as the sum of new things, new phenomena and new results produced by this dynamic process. This mode of thinking, values and social attitude is the "Harmonious Culture".

Taizhou's "Harmonious Culture" is a typical form and a vivid model of Chinese "Harmonious Culture", with "harmony and difference" and "harmony generates vitality" as its basic elements. "Harmony and difference" refers to the combination of things with different characteristics to make them coexist harmoniously, and to recognize and retain their contradictions and differences, reflecting inclusiveness; "Harmony generates vitality" refers to the fusion of things with different characteristics and the derivation of new things, reflecting innovation. The development process of the provincial intangible cultural heritage "Tai Silk" is based on the traditional embroidery art, integrating modern concepts and technologies, and constantly accommodating and innovating, producing embroidery products with distinctive traditional cultural characteristics and strong fashionable quality, fully reflecting the penetration and influence of the Harmonious Culture. Based on the perspective of Chinese Harmonious Culture, this paper analyzes the inclusiveness and innovative features of "Tai Silk" from three aspects: east and west, ancient and modern, and elegant and vulgar.

2. Combination of East and West and Innovation

In the century-long development of Tai Silk, its turning point was the fusion of local and western embroidery methods. The carved flat embroidery also laid a solid foundation for the development of Taiwan embroidery. In the context of the culture of harmony, "Tai Silk" continued to learn from Western ideas, to achieve a harmonious blend of the West and China, and to innovate, which fully reflects the inclusiveness and innovation of the culture of harmony.

2.1 Embroidery Method: Single to Diverse

Before the Opium War, embroidery was already popular in Taizhou, and the main stitches at that time were flat embroidery. After the Opium War, the French Sisters of Mercy came to Jiaojiang, the mouth of Taizhou Bay, in 1906 and taught the orphans of the Catholic Church the art of embroidery [1]. It was different from the traditional flat embroidery which was only embroidered on cloth. It was a kind of openwork embroidery like carving, commonly called "Catholic Church flower", mainly using plain thread embroidery to draw, pull and carve stitches. After embroidering, the bottom of the cloth had to be cut off, and the embroidered dresses were mostly openwork or have mesh. It was also called 'carving embroidery'. This embroidery method pioneered the Taizhou carving and embroidery craft, and at the same time, carving and embroidery became one of the main crafts of "Tai Silk" (Haimen carving and embroidery). Later on, due to the increasing prosperity of foreign trade and the suitability of western aesthetic taste, carving embroidery and flat embroidery have been blended and innovated to form the unique "carving and flat embroidery". [2]

The formation of carving and flat embroidery has basically established the core technique of Tai Silk. Based on this, the inheritors of "Tai Silk" have continued to inherit and innovate, and have developed many new stitches based on the traditional stitches, realizing the integration of the core stitches and innovative stitches. After a hundred years of development, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that more than 200 stitches, such as drawing, pulling, carving, wrapping and winding, were fully developed in Tai Silk. Based on these traditional stitches, generations of Taiwanese embroiderers have continued to innovate, creating many new stitches such as layered embroidery, network embroidery, meridian embroidery, and large needle holes. Taking network embroidery as an example, it combined the traditional stitches of drawing and pulling with the innovative netting stitch, which had a more three-dimensional effect and could better express the dense texture of the spider web network all over.

The continuous innovation and application of stitches not only enriched the expression of Tai Silk, but also injected a vivid vitality into it, laying a solid foundation for the creation of excellent "Tai Silk" works later.

2.2 Color: from One Color to Illusion

Traditional "Tai Silk" was mainly one color embroidery, which was elegant but not enough to meet the needs of different consumers. To solve this problem, Chen Ke, the second generation of Tai Silk, after repeated research, finally took inspiration from the dyeing and weaving method of embroidering patterns on the coronation clothes of the emperor of Zhou thousands of years ago, and reversed the operation, embroidering first and dyeing later. This method not only was suitable for mass production of Taizhou monochrome embroidery base, but also achieved rich colors and subtle changes. After repeated modifications and experiments, we finally invented the "Tai Silk" that could withstand sunlight and soap washing without deformation or fading. The use of this technique of "embroidery before dyeing" made the monotonous embroidery vivid and richer, and it was widely used on headscarves, handkerchiefs and scarves. As a result, "Tai Silk" gradually evolved from a single-color embroidery to a colorful embroidery.

Inspired by the colorful jumping of the western impressionist Van Gogh's paintings, Mr. Chen led a team of Taiwanese embroidery researchers to develop the "Van Gogh Art Thread": an embroidery thread with hundreds of color dots within 50 cm, and the dots can be graded or jumped as needed. This kind of embroidery thread can express a special effect beyond the tension of other types of embroidery by using different colors of threads or by using three or five colors of segmental dyed threads. [3] The emergence of illusion embroidery not only fuses multiple colors, but also makes the work more colorful and has a dreamy and novel effect.

3. The Intersection of Ancient and Modern and Innovation

Tai Silk is an embroidery with a long history. During the Tang Dynasty, there were detailed records of Xianju boneless lantern embroidery in the local chronicles. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Taizhou had a rich variety of embroidery patterns and techniques. In the 21st century, "Tai Silk" continues to develop in a fusion way, combining the cult of fertility and life consciousness, the unity of heaven and man with the aesthetics of embroidery, and the unique blend of embroidery and various crafts, and the fusion of flat and three-dimensional, which has become a unique cultural landscape of Taizhou.

3.1 Concept: Chinese Tradition to the Interchange of Chinese and Western Diversity

3.1.1 The Fusion of Fertility Worship and Life Consciousness

Entering the age of civilization, people were ashamed to talk about reproduction, but through embroidery the cult of reproduction was expressed in a metaphorical way, so that future generations could recognize the origin of human beings and the meaning of life. The bull and the deer symbols of life and yang, indicating the continuity of life; the maple leaf and the butterfly, the ancestors of all living things, are a must-have pattern on Miao embroidery; and the fish is a sacred object of marriage, fertility and reproduction worshiped by the ancient Chinese people. After May Fourth, China entered modern society, and western ideas such as emancipation of individuality and emphasis on the essence of man gradually took root. "Tai Silk" also absorbed the modern concept of life, innovated and created a series of works, such as "Origin·Derivation", "Purple Mulberry", "All Creatures Spirit" and "All Creatures Born". The work "Origin·Derivation" is one of Lin Xia's bold explorations in her artistic journey, boldly expressing the implicit theme of reproduction and reproduction in traditional embroidery, and sublimating it to life consciousness, highlighting the reincarnation of life. This embroidery uses full grape embroidery to show the initial cells, silk threads to show the meridians of life, positive and negative transfer stitches to show the metamorphosis of silkworms into pupae, and then real cocoons to show the reincarnation of silkworms into cocoons, and a set of works is a story of life reproduction and reincarnation.

3.1.2. The integration of the unity of heaven and man with the aesthetics of embroidery

Traditional China is concerned with the relationship between man and nature. For example, Zhuangzi developed the thought system of "the unity of man and nature" from Laozi, who held that "man follows the law of earth; earth follows the law of heaven; heaven follows the law of the Tao; and the Tao follows the law of nature", to the thought system of "the unity of heaven and man", and put forward the state of thought that man and nature live in harmony. "Tai Silk" has incorporated the concept of harmony between man and nature into modern color usage and composition design, interpreting a new concept of Chinese embroidery aesthetics, such as "The Spirit of All Things", "All Things Born" and "Harmony of Flowers". The large square work, "All Creatures Born", is one of Master Lin Xia's gold medal works. In the center of the large square work is a splendid garland of flowers, dotted with various creatures such as small fish, butterflies and birds, and the edges of the work are surrounded by flowers and plants of various shapes, presenting a vibrant appearance. Lin Xia explains the inspiration for the creation of "All Creatures Born", "The movie Avatar gave me an inspiration to use unique colors and stitches to express a beautiful picture of the harmony and coexistence of all creatures." [4] The embroidery's fusion of color, composition and meaning reflects China's concept of tolerance that stretches back thousands of years, and its innovation in the process of integrating the unity of heaven and man with the traditional aesthetics of embroidery.

3.2 Techniques: Single embroidery to a combination of multiple crafts

3.2.1. Technique: Mixing embroidery with multiple techniques

In the course of its development, "Tai Silk" has always pursued tolerance and innovation in its techniques. Traditionally, "Tai Silk" used only embroidery techniques, but with the development of the times, "Tai Silk" has fused carved and flat embroidery with various techniques such as wan wan silk, pan banding, beading, and patching to make unique and mixed products, such as yellow and white tablecloth, pan banding embroidered garments, beaded embroidered garments, and fully carved embroidered garments with georgette. [5] These modern embroidery techniques are different from the traditional single embroidery products, which makes the works more layered and ornamental, giving people a new visual experience.

The yellow and white tablecloth is a typical embroidery of the two techniques of Tai Silk: carving embroidery and silk embroidery. The white part of the yellow and white tablecloth is a traditional carved embroidery with a small hollow area, while the yellow part is the newly created wisps with a large hollow area. The combination of silk and carved embroidery is seamless, breaking the monotony of traditional embroidery and highlighting the contrast between light and dark, real and imaginary, and sinking and floating, making it more visually layered. The yellow and white tablecloth becomes the main brand of Chinese drawn silk products, civilizing the world and favored by European customers.

Pan-belt embroidery clothes, are crafts combining the traditional carved embroidery with the new system of pan-belt craft. Firstly, the satin cloth is cut into diagonal strips and sewn into a long tube, and

then this side of the hair stitch is turned into the tube and ironed into a band. The tape is then pinned to the printed paper and fixed with "8" threads around the tape, and finally the front, back and sleeve pieces are sewn together to form the garment. The intricate and detailed stitching adds a sense of softness and lightness to the embroidery.

"Craft innovation is a sharp sword that enables "Tai Silk" to keep pushing forward from its century-old history." "Tai Silk" also tries to mix and match various crafts, such as inlaid georgette fully carved embroidered garments, with means such as grass and wood printing and digital printing. These mix-and-match embroideries break the monotony of traditional Tai Silk, inject more fresh creative inspiration into Tai Silk, and enhance the value of "Tai Silk" artworks.

3.2.2. Light and shadow: the fusion of flat and three-dimensional

Modern "Tai Silk" inherits the traditional technique of drawing and carving, and transforms the original flat embroidery into three-dimensional relief, and invents patents such as "spider web embroidery stitching method", "embroidery method of winding fat in the air and embroidery with cocoon", and naturally integrates the changes of light and shadow. For example, Lin Xia has created works such as "Purple Mulberry" and "Original Derivative", which are hollowed out. Among them, "Purple Mulberry" adopts the carving of mulberry remnants and the process of potassium stitching at the bottom of the leaf vein relief carving, and the purple mulberry screen in warm bloom scatters a garden of vivid red, a mulberry leaf, a silkworm egg, a transparency, a hollow, a stitch, and the rhythm of silk and the beauty of the Chinese nation are elegantly displayed; the shadow produced by the light projection is another picture of a silkworm eating mulberry leaves, the stillness of the branch and the movement of the purple mulberry make the original simple picture seem vivid, giving people a feeling of simplicity.

4. The fusion of elegance and vulgarity and innovation

Through branding and commercialization, Lin Xia, the third-generation inheritor, brings the "museum display" to the market, realizing the harmonious unity of "art" and "commodity". This development idea is a profound reflection of the culture of harmony. "Art" and "commodity" may seem to be two opposite sides, but Lin Xia's development idea breaks the opposite frame of mind and transforms the traditional business into a microscopic cultural and creative industry chain, achieving a perfect fusion of "art" and "commodity", i.e. "elegance" and "vulgarity". The perfect fusion of "art" and "commodity", i.e. "elegance" and "vulgarity", not only promotes the sales of Tai Silk, but also promotes the benign development of "Tai Silk" in contemporary society.

The development concept of "culture-art-commodity" is clearly defined, ensuring that "art feeds clothing". The development direction of "art feeds apparel" is to use the artistic character of "Tai Silk" to improve the quality of apparel and guarantee sales. After clarifying the development path, Taiwan embroidery relies on its own unique artistic style and pays attention to the construction of industrial culture brand. In the 20th century, although "Tai Silk" garment factories once flourished, they neglected to build their own cultural brand and eventually closed down in the market economy and retired from the historical stage. [6] When Lin Xia founded Zhejiang "Tai Silk" Garment Co., Ltd, she paid attention to the brand building of "Tai Silk" and created her own special style. In 1998, the company registered the trademark "Taixiu", and later created the sub-brand "Jintaixiu", specialized in high-end embroidered garments and hand-made garment customization to create an international luxury brand with fine Chinese art elements. The newly opened "Art Space (T-YSKJ)" brand is positioned as a high-end clothing art, dedicated to creating a high-end leading brand that integrates traditional Chinese hand embroidery art and western modern contemporary art.

The artistic elements of "Tai Silk" are integrated into the sales of goods. The "symbolic" consumer nature of the cultural industry dictates the importance of the artistic aspect in the production of "Tai Silk" products. Nowadays, "Tai Silk" brands under Lin Xia's leadership are based on the art of "Tai Silk" in the design of products. For example, works such as "Everything is Born" and "Purple Mulberry" were originally created as art appreciation pieces and won awards in various art and craft exhibitions and competitions. Using the artistic elements, "Tai Silk" designs and manufactures related series of clothing, tablecloths, and bedding, realizing the process from "art" to "merchandise" and completing the "symbolization" step in the cultural industry. The "symbolization" step is completed. At the same time, in order to expand the scope of consumption, "Tai Silk" focuses on extending commercial product lines and integrates artistry into fashion bags, fashion shoes, scarves, accessories and other products.

Merchandise sales led to artistic development. In the last century, "Tai Silk" garment factories closed down in the market economy because they were settled in the label business, and "Tai Silk" was once in a difficult situation with shortage of capital and loss of technical personnel, and its development was close to stagnation. Since the new century, "Tai Silk" garments have developed well, occupying a certain proportion of the garment market at home and abroad and gaining recognition from customers, providing a material basis for further survival and innovation of "Tai Silk" art and promoting a new round of vigorous development. In 2005, the "Tai Silk" Research Institute was established, with professional staff and equipment, identifying more than 200 kinds of stitches and further exploring and innovating the new art of "Tai Silk" in contemporary times. Meanwhile, in order to better inherit the "intangible cultural heritage", "Tai Silk" has built the "Tai Silk" Art Museum in 2008 to promote "Tai Silk" among the public. To this end, the museum has invited old artists to recall, compile and organize materials to accurately restore the history of Tai Silk, and invited teachers from China Academy of Fine Arts to design the museum according to the most professional museum standards, and showcased the art of "Tai Silk" to the outside world. We hope to attract more talented people to join the development of Tai Silk. Lin Xia, as the third generation of Tai Silk, has also taken the lead in the development of the art of "Tai Silk" by fitting in with modern artistic aesthetics and further expanding the artistic expressiveness of Tai Silk. With the implementation of various initiatives, the development of modern artistry in "Tai Silk" has made great progress.

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