

Study on the Digital Inheritance and Preservation of Chinese She Ethnic Minority's Costumes

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Abstract

The She Ethnic Minority is a minority group in the southeastern region of China, and it has developed unique ethnic costumes through continuous migration and transmission. The development of digital information technology provides new ways for the inheritance and preservation of traditional ethnic costumes. This study focuses on the traditional costumes of the She Ethnic Minority in China, analyzes the characteristic of the costumes, and presents strategies for inheritance and preservation of She Ethnic costumes by using digital technology, aiming to explore the new ways to achieve the long-term preservation and widespread inheritance of ethnic costume culture.

Keywords: She Ethnic Minority in China; Traditional ethnic costume; Digital technology; Heritage heritage and preservation

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Introduction

The She Ethnic Minority is a long-standing minority group residing mainly in the mountainous regions of Fujian and Zhejiang in southeastern China, with distributed populations in Jiangxi, Guangdong, Anhui, Hunan, Guizhou, and other areas. They refer to themselves as "Shanke" or "Shanha," while Han document presenting various names for them, such as "Nanman", "Baiyue", "Dongliao" and "Sheyao." According to historical records, the She Ethnic Minority originated from a branch of the Wuling barbarians and experienced many times of migrations [1]. They consider Pheonix Mountain in Chaozhou, Guangdong, as a sacred place, and their ethnic costumes are distinctive [1]. Influenced by their unique geographical environment and labor requirements, traditional She ethnic costumes are generally short yet durable and resistant to wear and tear. Furthermore, most of the traditional She ethnic costumes are passed down orally, making the characteristics of She ethnic costumes only retrievable from ancient texts and mythological descriptions. Moreover, she ethnic costumes carry rich cultural information and are of high research value. However, with social development, traditional costumes have become increasingly unable to meet modern aesthetic standards, and fewer young people today inherit traditional costume-making skills. Hence, the inheritance and preservation of She ethnic costumes are particularly crucial. Thus, this paper analyzes the styles, headwear, and patterns of She ethnic costumes, combining them with digital information technology to propose strategies for the inheritance and preservation, aiming to ensure the continuation of ethnic costume culture.

The characteristics of She ethnic costume

According to relevant literature, both men and women of the She Ethnic Minority engage in field labor, and their costume typically consists of upper garments and lower garments (pants). During the reigns of Emperor Qianlong and Emperor Jiaqing, Li Diao Yuan described She ethnic costume as, "Men and women have chignon hairstyles, go barefoot, and wear clothes predominantly in green or blue. Men wear short shirts without turbans or hats;

women have high chignons with hanging tassels, wear bamboo crowns covered with cloth, and adorn themselves with pendant ornaments” [2]. Besides, she ethnic men’s costume consists of a round-collared short jacket made of coarse linen fabric, paired with long trousers, and during winter, they wear cotton-padded trousers without waistbands. Elderly men wrap their heads with black cloth and wear a back apron. Especially, they wear green long shirts for weddings and red long shirts for ancestral ceremonies. She ethnic women’s costume is mostly made of self-woven hemp

fabric, primarily in black or blue. Their upper garments have a right-opening lapel with colorful floral borders on the collar, cuffs, and right lapel. The lower garment is a skirt (or trousers), tied at the waist with a waistband decorated with floral borders and “kun zhi yan” ornaments. The waist block used for daily work is not decorated, only worn for important holidays or hospitality, as shown in Figure 1. The traditional costume of the She Ethnic Minority is still tied with a blue printed fabric belt around the waist, with lace and embroidery at both ends, and tassels at the waist.



Figure 1: She minority costume.

The most representative traditional costume among the She Ethnic Minority is the Phoenix costume, as shown in Figure 2 [3,4]. The Phoenix costume was bestowed upon the third princess of Pan Hu when she married, by the emperor and empress. When the daughter of the third princess got married, she also wore the Phoenix costume. Since then, She Ethnic Minority’s women have considered the Phoenix costume as a symbol of beauty [5]. Different regions of the She Ethnic Minority have different Phoenix costumes due to geographical barriers. For example, in Fujian Province, she ethnic costume can be mainly categorized into styles from Xiapu West Road, Xiapu East Road, Fuan, and Luoyuan [3-5]. Among these, the cultural characteristics of the Xiapu West Road and East Road styles

are relatively well-preserved. Their rich colors, unique embroidery, and exquisite craftsmanship make them highly valuable [6,7]. As shown in Figure 2, the embroidery patterns of Xiapu East Road style clothing mainly include happy eyebrows, cranes and deer in the same spring, and double dragons spitting pearls. The shape is complete, and the patterns are complex, with blue, green, yellow and other colors embellished with bright red embroidery patterns. The collar is mostly a double neckline, decorated with yangmei red. The embroidery patterns of Xiapu West Road style clothing mainly include peonies, phoenixes, and eight immortals. The colors are mostly gold lines decorated with rose red, and the style is a small sleeved garment with a right lapel and a large collar.

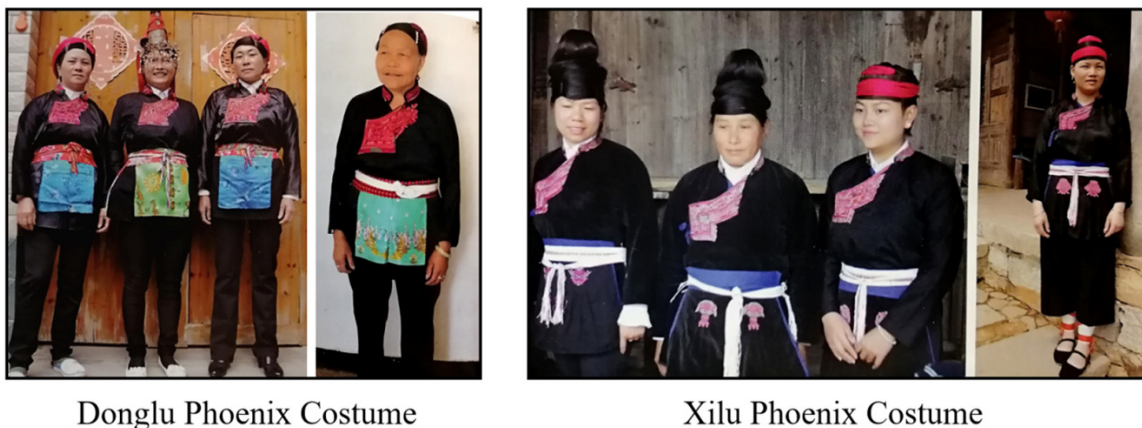


Figure 2: Fujian She Pheonix costume.

The current situation of the inheritance and preservation of She ethnic costume

Firstly, the traditional costume of the She Ethnic Minority is distributed across different regions, such as the West Xiapu Road and East Xiapu Road styles of Xiapu, which, despite their historical and cultural significance and unique craftsmanship, are at risk of losing continuity in heritage. Local efforts in the cultural heritage and preservation of traditional costume are inadequate, and there is a lack of effective advocacy and market-driven profit, resisting the sustainable development of the traditional costume. Although national support is provided, the practice of She ethnic costume culture remains barely profitable, or even at a loss, struggling to engage the younger generation in its inheritance and advancement.

Secondly, the heritage of She ethnic costume culture largely depends on the generational hand-down of craftsman, and these skills usually require a lot of time and labor and are difficult to bring matching economic returns. Therefore, with the development of social economy, foreign cultures have had an impact on the values and aesthetic orientation of the younger generation of the She Ethnic Minority. Unfortunately, dyeing, embroidery, weaving and other techniques have been rarely passed down, and traditional costume has gradually lost its market. Costume fabrics and embroidered silk threads have disappeared from the market, while craftsman is slowly aging, and the She ethnic costumes are facing extinction.

Finally, the traditional costume of the She Ethnic Minority lacks diversity in design and expression, often limited to collection or customization, which resists its appeal in a wider market. At the same time, the shortcomings of these costumes in innovation and fashion integration make it difficult for them to capture the attention of modern consumers, limiting the dissemination of culture and the development of industries.

The strategy for digital inheritance and preservation of She ethnic costume

Constructing a digital archive for She ethnic costume: Detailed digital archives are crucial for the inheritance and preservation of She ethnic traditional costumes. High-definition photography and three-dimensional scanning technology can be utilized to establish an accurate database of She ethnic costume, precisely recording the design, colors, patterns, and craftsmanship of each costume. This not only ensures the accuracy of cultural heritage information but also enables reconstruction or research in cases where the original pieces are damaged.

Expanding online promotional resources for She costume culture: By establishing an online platform for sharing She ethnic costume culture and creating digital exhibition spaces such as virtual museums, combined with multimedia and interactive technologies, we can provide cross-regional learning resources and experiences. This encourages scholars, students, and the public to understand and appreciate the cultural significance and craftsmanship value of She ethnic costume. Additionally, utilizing social media and content creation to promote traditional costume

helps bridge the gap between young people and traditional culture through narrative and storytelling approaches.

Developing modernized products based on digital platforms for She ethnic costume: By integrating the digital archive of She costume with marketing; an ethnic costume customization service can be established along with an array of cultural and creative products. Utilizing e-commerce platforms to commercialize traditional She ethnic costume can create profit channels for craftsmen. Moreover, customizable digital services and personal design tools can be developed to increase efficiency, reduce costs, encourage original design and innovation, and promote the modern inheritance of She ethnic costume.

Expanding cultural dissemination channels for She costume with digital collaboration and government support: The government's provision of funding and implementation of tax incentives play a crucial role in promoting the digital inheritance of She ethnic clothing. At the same time, craftsmen establish partnerships with technology companies and related studios to jointly develop new technologies and platforms, which can promote the comprehensive protection and development of She ethnic costume.

The above strategy constructs a complete framework for the digital inheritance of She ethnic costume, with the aim of achieving the coordinated development of traditional costume culture and modern information technology, thereby ensuring the continuous inheritance of ethnic traditional culture and revitalizing it in the new era.

Conclusion

Traditional ethnic costume art is rooted in people's lives and is also a carrier of ethnic culture. The costume culture of ethnic minorities has a unique national memory, witnessing the history and beliefs of the nation. Therefore, inheriting and protecting the costume culture of ethnic minorities is of great significance. It not only helps to maintain ethnic characteristics and cultural diversity, but also promotes communication and understanding between ethnic groups. The development of information and technology is affecting people's way of life and providing more opportunities and ways for more and more young people to come into contact with and understand the She ethnic costume culture. This paper combines digital information technology to explore modern methods for the inheritance and preservation of She ethnic costume, attempting to transform traditional art forms into digital assets and achieve digital activation and lively inheritance of traditional costume with technological support.

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