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Problems and Countermeasures in the Inheritance of Chinese Traditional Culture: Example of Chinese traditional patterns

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Abstract

China is one of the world's ancient civilisations and has a long history of cultural forms. These traditional cultural forms are the carriers of the message of civilisation and have played an important role in the inheritance of the message of Chinese civilisation throughout the course of history. Because of the twists and turns of history, the challenges to the development and inheritance of Chinese culture have been innumerable. However, on the whole, the preservation and development of traditional Chinese culture has been relatively effective and successful in the modern era, and with the main force of the relevant policies and measures of the Chinese government, together with the collaboration of various institutions and international forces, traditional Chinese culture is moving into the future with a classical legacy and a new look in the new era. However, in the course of the author's research and study, some improvements can still be found in the system of preserving Chinese traditional culture. Chinese patterns are one of the brightest pearls of traditional Chinese culture, which comes from ancient times and is still very much alive today. However, there are also problems in their development and conservation. Therefore, this paper will use Chinese patterns as an example to study the way in which traditional Chinese culture is passed on and preserved and discuss the problems and propose countermeasures, in the hope of inspiring improvements to the issues involved.

Keywords: Problems and countermeasures, Inheritance, Chinese traditional culture, Patterns

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1.0 Introduction

Chinese patterns are an important part of traditional Chinese culture. In addition to this, Chinese patterns have always had a high practical and decorative value in the everyday life of the Chinese people. Therefore, as an important form of Chinese traditional culture, the conservation and exploitation of Chinese patterns has received much attention from all sectors of society. Among the cultural vehicles related to Chinese patterns, such as porcelain, textiles, architecture, etc., there is already an official system for the protection of intangible cultural heritage, as well as a number of private organisations and individuals who have been collecting and exploiting them. The current system of intangible cultural heritage for Chinese patterns is well established at all levels. However, as China is a vast, multi-ethnic and multicultural country, it is clearly not enough to rely solely on the government-led intangible cultural system for the protection and study of patterns. China has 42 items that have been included in UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage, a number that is the highest when comparing the number of items that have been included in countries around the world, but only nine of these items are related to patterns, which is far from enough for the vast size of China and the vast Chinese culture of patterns. The number of intangible cultural heritage items protected as a supplement at the national, provincial, municipal and even district levels in China is around 1,400, and is increasing year by year. This policy of the Chinese government can more than adequately complement the effectiveness and scope of protection of

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the former. In the information age, the collection and use of Chinese patterns has become more accessible, and there are official and unofficial motif search sites, among others, that provide more direct and convenient access to Chinese patterns for the general public. These sites include: Yi Pin Bo Wu, Tatoo Collection, and the National Palace Museum's Digital Heritage Library, to name a few. The conservation and development of Chinese patterns has been very successful to date, and it is clear that efforts have been made to connect the patterns with the new technologies and needs of the new era, but even so, Chinese patterns are still facing enormous challenges. A significant proportion of traditional Chinese patterns are still on the verge of extinction, the space for survival is narrow, activity is low, some inheritors are at an advanced age and have no successors, and productivity is low and audiences are shrinking. Not only that, but the dilemma of cultural invasion between regions, the rapid advance of time and technology, etc., have all led to a huge impact on traditional Chinese patterns. Chinese patterns, an art form that comes from tradition, come from the distant past. From a psychological point of view, the human subconscious consciously taps into elements of déjà vu, which have become deeply ingrained in the group memory of the Chinese over the course of their development. This group memory has a direct influence on the aesthetic orientation of the nation and is an important part of its psychological structure. In today's cultural climate, traditional Chinese culture should be better developed and utilised, and as a form of culture that has a strong visual message and can be used on a variety of carriers, it has a very strong development value. It deserves to be explored in depth and widely used.

2.0 Methodology

This study is about to be conducted in a qualitative research paradigm. Using the documentary research method, relevant literature will be collected and explored. On top of this a case study and participant observation using the field research method was used to gather realistic and grounded information, which was then categorised, analysed and explored to draw conclusions. In the process of using the documentary research method, this study has categorised the literature into the following areas: Chinese patterns, the development of patterns, the use of patterns, and the transmission of patterns. This is followed by a summary of the current theoretical status and findings of the academic community, which is combined with the previous literature to draw new conclusions. In conducting the field study, this author will conduct interviews and participant observation research in two locations in China, Changchun, Jilin Province, and the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region. Changchun is a city with a multi-ethnic population of Han, Korean, Manchu and Hui, where the cultures of the various ethnic groups are intertwined, so participant observation of educated people and art and design practitioners in Changchun is of great interest. Case interviews with Chinese Koreans in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region, a region with a majority Korean population, can provide insight into their lives and the use and perception of Chinese patterns, particularly Chinese Korean patterns. However, the interviews will be conducted online and by telephone, as the author will not be able to conduct field visits due to the restrictions of the New Crown Pneumonia epidemic and policy requirements.

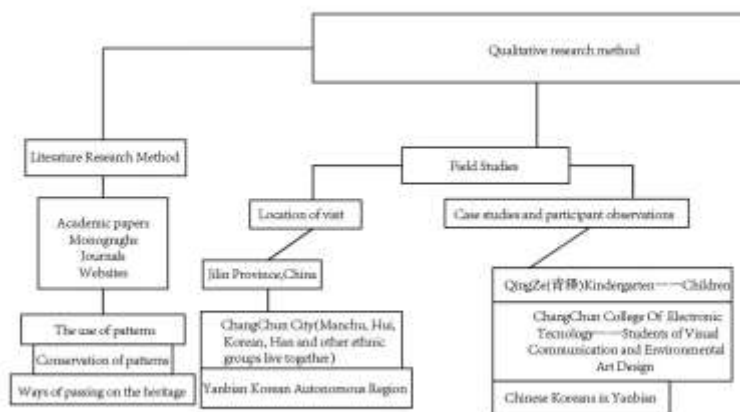


Fig.1:Research Plan
(Source:) Made by the author.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The history of the participatory research in this author's fieldwork is almost three months, between 12 June 2022 and 24 September 2022, which is slightly insufficient because of the limited time available, but the information obtained is more reflective of the real situation because of the immersive observation. In the course of the participant observation, the author filmed some video and visual and audio material of the subjects of the scenario observation (the preschool-educated population, the higher-educated population in visual communication, and the local graphic designers), and also made diaries and memos of the lives of the corresponding characters. The preschoolers in this study are the children in the Qingze Kindergarten in Changchun. In the observations of the preschool children, the author found that the parents and kindergartens of the children were conscious of the heritage of Chinese traditional culture, and that the kindergartens or extra-curricular institutions for the education of children in traditional culture offered classes in Chinese character writing,

traditional Chinese tea ceremony, traditional Chinese dance and traditional Chinese painting. In these courses there is little to no connection with Chinese patterns. However, these courses play an important role in the transmission of traditional Chinese culture in terms of initiation. Education in traditional Chinese culture has always been part of the overall education of children from kindergarten to primary school and beyond. This is why education in Chinese traditional culture has always been a part of the education system, both in the consciousness of Chinese families and in the education departments and institutions of the government. However, the only opportunity for young children to be exposed to the educational content of Chinese patterns during the three months of observation was a museum visit. The provincial museum in Jilin province, located in Changchun, held an exhibition on the theme of Manchu embroidery in August 2022, which was visited by many of the children in the kindergarten because of its proximity to the museum. In terms of the opportunities for children to engage with Chinese patterns in their own lives, the observations were plentiful, as they were made during a period of warmer temperatures in northern China, when children were often dressed in cooler styles and many girls wore traditional Chinese dresses. Such dresses are also worn by girls from ethnic minorities in the nursery and are very popular with parents and girls because of the delicate Chinese patterns on the dresses and the flowing style and comfortable materials. In contrast, traditional Chinese dress is also worn by boys in the nursery but not very often. It has been observed and recorded that the children have access to more Chinese patterns on traditional Chinese clothing than any other type of pattern carrier. Other ways in which children are exposed to Chinese patterns are through household objects, architecture, film and animation, interior decoration, etc. The range of exposure is broad but not intensive.

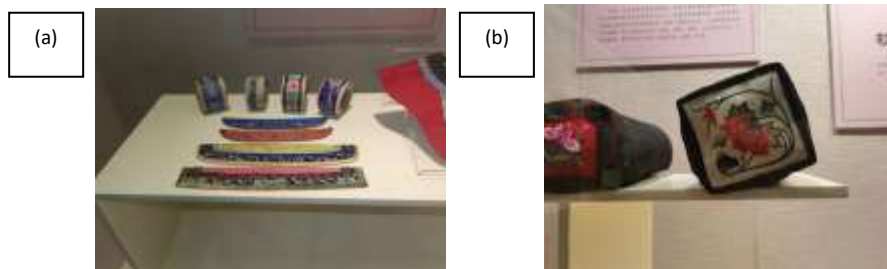


Fig.2: Artefacts on display at the Manchu Embroidery Exhibition.
 (Source:) (a) Photo taken by the author. (b) Photo taken by the author.



Fig.3: QingZe Kindergarten children dressed in costumes with Chinese motifs.
 (Source:) (c) Photo taken by the author. (d) Photo taken by the author.

The observation period for the higher education population is from March 14, 2021 to July 3, 2021. During this observation period, the authors focused on undergraduate students of Changchun Institute of Electronics, majoring in visual communication and environmental art design, in the class of 2021. The main themes of observation and research were the relevance of Chinese patterns in their studies and the frequency of contact with Chinese patterns in the lives of the students. It was found that the students did not make much use of traditional Chinese elements in their professional studies or in their creative work, but that they were relatively more involved in the visuals and other teaching materials they were exposed to in their studies. As the university's students come from all regions of China, the student population is also multi-ethnic, and they are interested in the visual and reference resources, as well as the traditional Chinese and ethnic minority cultural content presented in the teaching and support materials for their major, and occasionally present it in their art design work, although not very often. In contrast, there is less involvement in traditional Chinese patterns and relatively little use of Chinese patterns by the students. Through observation, it was found that the range of Chinese patterns available to this group of undergraduates in their daily lives, the objects they were exposed to, architecture, film and television productions, interior decoration, etc., was wide but not dense. This case study of the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region was conducted by telephone and through the mobile phone app WeChat. The Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region is a region of China with a large Korean population, and because of the ethnic policy enshrined in the Chinese Constitution, which states that "All ethnic groups in the People's Republic of China are equal. The State shall safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of all ethnic minorities and maintain and develop relations of equality, solidarity and mutual assistance among them. Discrimination and oppression of any ethnic group is prohibited", the ethnic culture of the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region has been able to develop in a relatively intact and distinctive manner, despite the influence of cultural phenomena such as multi-ethnic integration. The author has visited the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region on several occasions, and the Korean people often wear Korean dress for special occasions such as festivals, parties and celebrations, and the contemporary Korean dress is more colourful and elegant than in previous periods. When contacting the Korean community in the autonomous region, interviewees

indicated that the Korean people are taught about their own culture in depth from pre-school onwards. The parents of Korean students also place a high value on the aesthetic education of their ethnic group and are often exposed to traditional cultural vehicles related to Korean patterns, such as Korean ceramics and Korean textiles. The field research process was complex and often unexpectedly rewarding during the observation process, allowing the research to occasionally shift direction beyond what was expected, but beneficial to the study as a whole. The field research revealed that the young children at Qingze Kindergarten, the subject of the observation, are taught traditional Chinese culture from an early age because of the education of their parents and the kindergarten authorities as well as the government education department, but the correlation with Chinese patterns is weak. Observations of two art and design students at Changchun College Of Electronic Technology show that they are also exposed to traditional Chinese culture, but the correlation with Chinese patterns is weak. Interviews with people from the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Region revealed that the ethnic education in the region is more developed and has its own ethnic art education, which has a medium correlation with Korean patterns. In the course of the literature research, a search of the CNKI (<https://www.cnki.net/>), as well as a search of related works and websites, revealed that there is a wealth of research on Chinese patterns, and that the research results presented between 1983 and 2022, particularly on auspicious patterns, have been on the rise. Most of the research topics focus on the use of patterns in a particular field, regional patterns, the application of patterns and single types of patterns. Much of this literature has explored ways of translating traditional patterns into contemporary decorative arts in the current era. However, in exploring the promotion and inheritance of Chinese patterns through the direction of art education. In this study, a comparison between field research and documentary research shows that China's efforts to preserve traditional culture are relatively strong, both in terms of the means of preservation and in terms of the possibilities for cultural development. However, there is still much room for effort in the preservation and exploitation of Chinese patterns as a cultural form, especially in the field of education. Analysis of the literature shows that the development of Chinese patterns is promising, but from the data in this study, it is clear that Chinese patterns are not widely recognised by society, and therefore not widely valued in terms of education and development for the transmission and development of Chinese patterns.

4.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

A study of Chinese patterns in the population using the field study method shows that the role of education in the transmission and preservation of traditional Chinese culture is widely recognised and pursued by all sectors of society, but the knowledge and preservation of Chinese patterns as a traditional culture is relatively weak. It is important and feasible to introduce Chinese patterns into education. The creative direction of Chinese patterns in education is a powerful means of keeping Chinese patterns alive as a cultural form.

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