

The Cultural Value and Characteristics of Mongolian Woodcarving Art

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Abstract: The Mongolian woodcarving art is a major genre of Chinese woodcarving art. It originated from the scenes of human production and life thousands of years ago, and developed in the long history. It still shows its unique charm and vitality in today's society. This paper takes the Mongolian wood carving art as the research object, focusing on four aspects of the development history, cultural value, cultural characteristics, protection and inheritance strategy of the wood carving art, focusing on the research of the Mongolian wood carving art which carries the national folk custom, spirit and unique charm, highlighting the cultural value and aesthetic value of the wood carving art in ancient, modern and contemporary society, hoping to show the unique national art and its charm to the world while protecting and inheriting the wood carving art.

Keywords: Mongolian; Wood carving art; Cultural value; Cultural characteristics

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1. Introduction

In the long history of the Chinese nation, many art forms are mostly produced in people's social production and life scenes. Driven by the motivation of people's life and production demand, utensils for the purpose of serving life are produced, giving birth to primitive art. With the decorative behavior of carving patterns, early art concepts and forms are gradually formed. Due to the lack of metal materials such as iron and copper and casting technology, the Mongolian people in the northern prairie often develop and use wood to make yurts, wooden beds, wooden barrels, wooden bowls and other production and living appliances to meet their living needs. In the long-term practice of life and production, people have endowed the concept of life utensils with artistry through processing and production, and carved various patterns on wooden boards, tables and columns, which led to the emergence of the earliest art, wood carving, and derived an independent wood carving art. Based on the perspective of cultural protection and inheritance, studying the cultural value and characteristics of Mongolian wood carving art can tell the art story, inherit art and culture in modern society, show the Chinese wood carving art and its profound connotation and unique charm to the world, and enhance the national cultural soft power and national centripetal force.

2. The development history of Mongolian woodcarving art

Like other arts, woodcarving art is born with the production and life of human beings. At the beginning, it is people's unconscious behavior. Until people have the concept of aesthetics, woodcarving gradually develops from an unconscious and unconscious behavior to a real art. Wood carving originated from the Hemudu culture in Yuyao, Zhejiang Province, more than 7000 years ago. During the Qin and Han Dynasties, wood carving techniques tended to be mature, and painting and carving techniques were exquisite and perfect. The Tang Dynasty was a period of rapid development of China's technology, and wood carving technology tended to be perfect. The themes of wood carvings in the Ming and Qing Dynasties are mostly life customs and myths, such as the wood carvings of bumper crops, auspicious dragons and Phoenix, peace and Ruyi, pine and crane longevity. Most of our wood carving schools are distinguished by region, and the Mongolian wood carving art is an important part of it^[1].

The Mongolian wood carving art originated from the life practice in ancient pastoral areas. Early Mongolians used wood to make wooden bowls, shepherd boys, yurts, wine cups and other daily necessities to meet basic living needs. In the long history of development and daily life, the Mongols gradually formed an independent form of wood carving art by carving patterns on wooden bowls and barrels to meet practical needs, but the main themes of wood carving art in this period were reflecting pastoral life scenes and animal husbandry labor. With the development of Mongolian wood carving art, Mongolian wood carving art in modern times has been protected and inherited.

At the current stage, with the strong support of the party and the state, the Mongolian wood carving art has developed rapidly, and the unique charm of this craft art is shining on the domestic and international stage^[2]. For example, in 2015, Mongolian wood carving art was listed as a representative project of intangible cultural heritage at the autonomous region level; In November, 2018, Aori budolji established the Abaga banner wood carving intangible cultural heritage employment workshop, with 16 professional training classrooms, which has driven 80 people to work and start businesses^[3].

3. The cultural value of Mongolian woodcarving art

3.1. Focus on national spirit and show regional cultural characteristics

The wood carving art of several major schools in China has distinct regional differences. The Mongolian wood carving art originated from the nomadic lifestyle of the Mongols. With the vast prairie as the carrier, the Mongolian people have formed a wood carving art with thick, strong and bold as the typical style^[4]. Mongolian woodcarving art not only retains the spiritual core and profound connotation of Chinese traditional culture, but also has distinctive regional characteristics, which is the symbolic artistic language of Mongolian. It can be seen that the Mongolian wood carving art, which was produced and developed in the long history, contains the national spirit and shows the unique regional cultural characteristics, and is a typical representative of the Mongolian history and art development. For example, influenced by the Mongolian history, culture and lifestyle, Mongolian woodcarving art can be basically divided into character modeling and animal modeling.

Among them, the character modeling is mainly composed of historical heroes such as Genghis Khan and Kublai Khan; Animal models are mostly cattle, sheep, horses, camels, dogs and other animals related to the nomadic lifestyle. Mongolian woodcarving art works convey to people a way of life and regional culture belonging to the nomadic nation, Mongolia. At the same time, the core of wood carving art works is the condensed national spirit, which shows the spiritual quality of unity, fraternity and patriotism. The Mongolian woodcarving art goes out of the region and abroad, and can show the world the art form with profound connotation, national spirit and unique charm^[5].

3.2. Carrying national folk customs and displaying national social changes

Mongolian wood carving art was first produced in daily production and life scenes. It is a tool created under the trend of production and life demand, and has been given the attribute of "artistry" in long-term life and production practice^[6]. Wooden bowls, barrels, wooden beds, wooden tables, etc. are closely related to life. The lines and decorations carved on

these living objects are also closely related to life. For example, the typical animal patterns of nomadic peoples such as cattle, sheep, horses, etc. are carved on wooden beds. With the development of the times, wood carving art has gradually been organically integrated with Mongolian traditional festivals, weddings and other folk activities.

As an important part of the festival, it is endowed with the beautiful meaning of “blessing”. For example, adopt wood carving techniques to make decorations and sacrificial utensils that symbolize good luck. It can be seen that the Mongolian wood carving art not only serves the national daily life, but also carries the function of folk inheritance, and is an important carrier of the nation and folk customs. At the same time, the woodcarving art produced in the long river of national history is also the physical carrier of national memory. The evolution of woodcarving art forms is accompanied by the changes of Mongolian living customs and ways, reflecting the social changes of the Mongolian people^[7].

4. Cultural characteristics of Mongolian woodcarving art

4.1. Show the national spirit of loving life and respecting nature

Most of the Chinese woodcarving art schools are based on regions, forming a woodcarving art school with unique regional characteristics. Different from Quanzhou puppet carving, Southern Hubei woodcarving, Jianchuan woodcarving, Wuhan woodcarving boat, Ningbo Zhujin woodcarving and other woodcarving art schools, the Mongolian woodcarving art produced in the process of Mongolian daily life and historical development has distinct regional characteristics, that is, the Mongolian woodcarving art has distinct personality, which not only conveys the tough and heroic national spirit, but also symbolizes the Mongolian love for the prairie, nomadic life and reverence for nature with woodcarving art works^[8].

Specifically, Mongolian wood carvers express their admiration and reverence for nature by incorporating natural elements of animals or plants such as cattle, sheep, horses and camels into their works, and convey the philosophical thinking and spiritual sustenance of harmonious coexistence between man and nature. For example, as one of the popular Mongolian wood carvings, the Xia Te Ri wooden carvings have the shapes of camels, horses, lions and Nuoyan. Nuoyan is the general in chess and the only figure wooden carvings in Mongolian chess. These vivid woody round carvings have a strong flavor of grassland life and express the worship and awe of artisans and Mongols for grassland life. It can be seen that the Mongolian woodcarving art has the cultural characteristics of loving life and respecting the national spirit of nature^[9].

4.2. Reflecting the historical imprint and religious belief of nomadic people

As an art form originated from social production and life scenes, wood carving art is endowed with unique connotation by social life. Mongolian woodcarving art is closely related to life. Social habits, customs, national culture, religious beliefs, historical allusions and so on have a far-reaching impact on the emergence and development of wood carving art. Mongolian woodcarving art comes from social life scenes, and reflects the historical imprint and religious beliefs of nomadic people^[10]. On one hand, Mongolian wood carvings retain the historical memory of ancient nomadic peoples, such as war figures, scenes and tribal totems. By reasonably selecting materials, designing, creating and carving, the craftsmen carved war scenes and other scenes in the process of Ancient Mongolian history on the wood, creating wood carvings with the theme of ancient war, reflecting the war history of Mongolia.

On the other hand, religious beliefs have a subtle impact on people's lives and thoughts, and its impact on wood carving art cannot be ignored. For example, the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism has a direct impact on the production, life and artistic development of the Mongolian people, including wood carving art. The Shamanism worship of the early Mongolian belief includes heaven and earth, ancestors, five livestock and other natural things. This religious belief can be integrated, continued and transformed in wood carving art. The themes of horses, cattle, sheep, camels, goats and other common Mongolian wood carvings in Haixi contain gratitude for natural gifts and blessings for animal husbandry production. It can be seen that the Mongolian woodcarving art has the cultural characteristics of reflecting the historical imprint and religious beliefs of nomadic people^[11].

5. Strategies for the protection and inheritance of Mongolian wood carving art

5.1. Excavate cultural materials and enrich the connotation of wood carving art

Mining and innovation are important measures for the protection and inheritance of traditional art and culture. When protecting and inheriting the Mongolian wood carving art, the national and local governments should go deep into the real life scenes of the Mongolian people, fully explore, develop and make use of the rich cultural elements such as history, culture and religious beliefs, promote and support artisans to develop the Mongolian cultural elements into the material of wood carving art creation, and integrate history, culture and religion into the Mongolian wood carving art, so as to enhance the richness of the theme and connotation of wood carving art. Mongolian natural landscape, nomadic life, unearthed cultural relics, traditional culture, festival customs, religious beliefs and other cultural symbols and materials can be developed, which provides rich creative elements for the inheritance and innovation of Mongolian wood carving art. Local governments should actively respond to the policies and documents of “protecting and inheriting excellent traditional culture”, support and guide wood carvers to excavate, develop and utilize national unique cultural materials and transform them into cultural symbols for artistic creation^[12].

For example, the Hongshan jade dragon (also known as “C-shaped Jade Carving Dragon”) unearthed in Sanxingtala, Ongniud Banner, Chifeng City in 1971 is an important symbol of the source of Chinese dragon culture, Chinese jade culture, Chinese ritual culture and grassland culture. It is not only unique in shape, but also contains profound national spirit and culture. In the creation of Mongolian wood carving art, the craftsman can use Hongshan jade dragon as the creation material, develop it as the material for wood carving art creation based on the in-depth understanding of the appearance and cultural connotation of Hongshan jade dragon, and display the Chinese dragon culture and ritual culture with profound cultural connotation with wood carving art works as the carrier^[13].

Another example is the horse spirit, a symbol of the spiritual pedigree of Mongolia, which is used to carve various forms of Mongolian horse wood carvings to convey the spirit of hard-working and courageous Mongolian horse as well as the grassland civilization and agricultural civilization that gave birth to this spirit. That is, when protecting and inheriting wood carving art, the Mongols should fully explore, integrate, develop and utilize the local rich cultural and material resources, and gradually integrate cultural materials into wood carving art, so as to enrich the connotation of wood carving art and broaden the scope of wood carving art.

5.2. Build a research platform to support national art exchanges

Due to the differences in physical geography, history and culture, traditional customs, folk customs and so on, the wood carving art produced with human production and life also has obvious regional differences. In the vast land of China, there have been many schools of wood carving art with regional units^[14]. For example, Quanzhou wood carving art is exquisitely carved and colorful; Zhejiang Dongyang wood carving has been formed in the long-term artistic practice, and has a set of unique and complete carving techniques.

Relief, round carving, hollow double-sided carving, Yin carving, and color wood carving inlay are all unique techniques of this school; Boxwood carving uses boxwood with distinctive texture and texture as carving materials to show the unique charm of the woodcarving works of this school; Mongolian Charteri wood carvings mostly use a combination of round carving and line carving. The animal image is plump and powerful. Through careful and vivid carving techniques, static wood carvings are given dynamic forms and forms of expression. Wood carvings seem to “come alive”. Therefore, the state should build a unified research platform to provide a platform for the exchange, discussion and research of wood carving artists and other artists from all over the country and all schools, so as to maintain the vitality and development vitality of wood carving art by promoting the integration and development of local arts^[15].

For example, the first academic website with the theme of intangible cultural heritage in China, intangible cultural heritage academic outlook, is hosted by Fengjicai Institute of literature and art, Tianjin University. The platform is committed to building a platform for intangible cultural heritage discipline exchange and resource sharing to meet the needs of intangible cultural heritage artisans in various regions, schools and art forms to obtain resources and communicate

with each other, so as to promote national intangible cultural heritage theoretical research and international academic cooperation. Mongolian wood carving artists can rely on the intangible cultural heritage website to obtain local wood carving skills and work resources, or be inspired by other art forms, integrate the cultural elements excavated and developed into wood carving art creation, and rely on this platform to communicate, communicate and discuss with wood carving artists of other genres.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, Mongolian wood carving art originated from the nation's special social environment, production and life, and cultural and historical scenes. National spirit is the soul of wood carving art works. Studying the cultural value and characteristics of Mongolian wood carving art can show the profound culture, national spirit and unique charm of Mongolian wood carving art schools in modern society and the world, and further enhance national identity, cultural consciousness and cultural confidence. According to the characteristics of wood carving art genres in different regions, the state should promote the exchange, communication and research of wood carving art in different genres across the country from three aspects: excavating cultural materials, building research platforms, and establishing intangible cultural heritage workshops, so as to enrich the connotation of wood carving art, and ensure the protection, inheritance and development of wood carving art and its culture by promoting the employment of artisans.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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